

Say a Body Where None: The Blood Sport Between AI, Authorship, and Humanities on the Cusp of Revolution

Francesca Luppino

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0007-5942-734X>

University of Warwick, UK

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the revolutionary impact of AI-generated literature within the field of humanities. This new model of non-authorship and texts reception considers a democratic approach, thus a reduced and compressed alternative to experience literature. Generative AI can generate ‘unpublished’ or ‘posthumous’ contents in the style of deceased authors and conversational supports to virtually speak to undead avatars of authors. However, a rather popular opinion is that AI-generated literature represents a degradation of literary contents, especially in the transformation of texts into reader-user-consumer products of entertainment, increasing pathological socio-phenomena such as Necromanticism and Foreverism.

INTRODUCTION

According to theorists of literary reception, the efficacy of texts is defined by their adequate actualisations, thus interactions between authors, texts and public (Jauss 1970) which results in a convergence of original texts and reinterpretations of them (Iser 1985). This is experienced especially within the AI era, where two different – if not opposite – dynamics regarding the reception of literary texts can be recognised, that is a *traditional* and a *new* one, yet both trying to keep literary contents *alive*. Thus, a common goal is shared. However, methods implied are different. The traditional – *authorial* – one implies authors’ original corpora gaining immortal legacy by virtue of a well-defined authorship related to an identity which is perpetuated together with texts associated to it. Within the new – *performative* – one instead, conveyed through generative AI tools, the stress is on literary performance, thus texts alone, totally detached from notions of historical authenticity, since associated to ‘digital ghosts’ of authorship – or ‘non-authorship’, such as AI avatars, chatbots and thanabots. Therefore, immortal legacy is here gained by virtue of texts themselves and their potentially never-ending influence on the community of readers. Nevertheless, traditional literary legacy has been dominating throughout history until the advent of AI within the literary field, such an impressive phenomenon which completely changed the literary

DOI: 10.4018/407615

paradigm in its rules, definitions and tools. The two are gradually levelling out, making real the fear of scholars and doomsayers towards a possible overrun of the traditional literary paradigm.

Speaking of which, during the 20th century an important philosophical debate dealt with differences and contradictions between “first” and “second technology” (Benjamin 1936, p. 107), that is painting and photography. Walter Benjamin claims that the authority of artistic works lies in their “aura” (p. 103) which guarantees their status and legacy as unique manifestations of a distance, namely the “sign of history” (p. 105). On the other hand, when works are technologically reproduced, they detach from their original context of production and their uniqueness gets infinitely repeated within mass consumption. Reproduction is then a continuous process of actualisation which potentiates the legacy of authorial works by converting them into useful objects for any present receiving context (Benjamin 1936). On the contrary, Carl Einstein claims that the legacy of authorial works is a-historical, thus related to a material and sentimental immortality which is “in contradiction to every historical process”¹.

Recent debates on AI and literature could mirror the disruptive Benjamin-Einstein debate on first and second technology, highlighting how these two legacy models carry on the ambivalence of a past socio-cultural phenomenon which is lately reoccurring in terms of controversy. AI generated literature promises a “software-based” (Lagerkvist 2014, p. 5) post mortality which has to do with both the perpetuation of the self – in order to avoid death and oblivion – and the “artistic appropriation” (Schröter 2019, p. 307), conveyed by *stealing* or *borrowing* authorial contents so as to generate new ones on users’ demands.

AUTHORIAL IMMORTALITY: A NEVER-ENDING DIALOGUE WITH THE DEAD

Benjamin (1936) argues that the source of power of an artwork lies in its “authority” (Haxthausen 2004, p. 50), thus its *aura*. According to the German philosopher, the potential uniqueness of art resides in its “shell” (Benjamin 1936, p. 103) or superficial “veil” which ensures its status as a “unique manifestation of a distance” (p. 104). Benjamin further highlights the intrusive presence of the sign of history as a dimension basically ‘enveloping’ the artwork, and inevitably subjecting it. As soon as an artwork is consistently placed within its context of origin and production, it cannot escape the process of historicization, whereby artistic objects are defined in “the here and now” (p. 103) – a form of pursuit enduring even when material, functional, and property changes occur. This eventually confers upon the artwork a potential identification with immortality, grounded in its “uniqueness and duration” (Haxthausen 2004, p. 52) as “the original image” (p. 50) engaged in a never-ending dialogue with its past.

To this end, associations can be drawn with the traditional *topos* of the intrinsic incompleteness of art itself. The American art historian Paul Barolsky (2015), analysing incompleteness as a symptom of infinity in Renaissance artistic forms, mentions Pablo Picasso’s idea of ‘never finished’ art – totally aligning with the painter’s well-known artistic theory according to which great artists *steal* rather than *copy*, thereby creating an infinite circuit of intertextual references. Barolsky then focuses on a graphic peculiarity of Italian Renaissance artworks: artists used to sign their works with the Latin imperfect *faciebat* instead of the perfect *fecit*, suggesting an ongoing or incomplete work. Following this path, reception theories developed during the 20th century by critics like Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss directly relate to this discussion. In the 1960s, at the University of Konstanz, the so-called reception theorists emerged. Jauss’s (1967)² research on literary studies proposed shifting the perspective focusing on reception rather than production of texts, understanding the history of literature not as a mere chronological list of works and authors, but rather as a network where

author-public interactions cannot be avoided. By emphasizing the agency of the audience in dynamics of literary value and propulsion, Jauss identified readers as fundamental agents of changes, directly affecting works and their roles in literary history. This ‘external intervention’ prevents works from ‘dying’ or being forgotten, while simultaneously protecting their potential immortality. Wolfgang Iser, another Konstanz School scholar, suggested that literary works are inherently indeterminate:

For this reason, one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled. (Iser 1972, p. 285).

Texts, rich in omissions or unspoken elements stimulate and allow readers' imagination whose active – though often unconscious – literary function is to formulate points of convergence without pre-existing correlations or education. In this sense, one can speak of immortality of texts via reception as a field of potentially infinite interpretations, that is revisited, enhanced, and expanded readings across different reception contexts, finally enabling actualisation. The actualisation process, consciously or unconsciously carried out by the reader, is facilitated by the “lifelessness” (Lehner 2019, p. 477) of texts – that is, their inherent lack of vitality. As Nikolaus Lehner (2019) highlights:

Walter J. Ong highlights, did not realize that writing is something deeply paradoxical: the lifelessness of text not only enables its durability but also the re-entry of textual messages into other contexts. Since the invention of writing, the best friends of the living are the dead who speak to the living through their books. Consider Francis Bacon's advice: ‘*optimi consiliari mortui*’ (Bacon 2001, [1625], 78). The best advisors are the dead. (p. 477).

The lifelessness of texts is directly proportional to their potential immortality, which aligns with the notion of “durability” (p. 477) and “re-entry of textual messages into other contexts”. This is exactly what literary actualisation is about. Firstly, the new context appropriates a code; secondly, the code transfers the communicated message in self-referential terms, thus converting an initial *appropriation* into a *reappropriation* as soon as the code becomes coherently integrated into the new context. Lehner explains the fundamental utility of lifeless codes, that is all those *dead* texts that continue to “speak to the living” – a metaphor highlighting their exclusively literary communicative level. Immortality can be then understood as a condition where life has never truly been acquired by texts. Their ontological deprivation endows them with an intrinsic ability to persist and resist as “symbols” which can be filled up by virtually anyone. These symbols act as containers which reception contexts can fill up by appropriating and revitalising their meaning through the actualisation process. Haxthausen (2004) reports that in response to Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), Carl Einstein expresses a different opinion:

It was not the survival of the “auratic” trace of another subjectivity with the capacity to “look back at us” that constituted the problem, but the continuing presence and influence of the forms of the past. (Haxthausen 2004, p. 54).

Not concurring with Benjamin, Einstein argues that the resistance and uniqueness of an artwork are not guaranteed by traces of temporal distance, but by the “continuous presence and influence of the past forms” constituting it. Einstein describes the past as a “shadowy, distant memory”³, yet artworks, even as “old images”, are provided with a “material and sentimental immortality that stands in contradiction with every historical process”, remaining “concretely available to us” in any present. Once again, the process of ahistorical revitalization of works through reappropriation and actualisation in new contexts, beyond historical processes, is crucial. Haxthausen (2004) claims that artworks shape our worldview. As a

consequence, changes in artistic forms correspond to changes in our construction of reality, a mechanism which perpetually offers the opportunity to “remake ourselves and the world” (p. 55).

In *Vita Activa* (2018), Hannah Arendt defines immortality as the “endurance in time” (p. 18), a dimension directly linked to the “task and potential greatness of mortals” (p. 19) as the “ability to produce things – works and deeds and words”. Immortality is guaranteed by the fact that works, deeds and words are “non-perishable traces” (Platovnjak and Svetelj, 2023, p. 978) through which humanity can reveal its “divine” (Arendt 2018, p. 19) nature. In this sense, authorial immortality arises not from the intrinsic qualities of the work itself, but from human agency creating the work. By producing immortal objects, humans deny the ontological mortality to which they are physically and unavoidably bound. Humans transcend art, making it immortal precisely when they choose to use it as a mean to project their own mortality.

Amos Niven Wilder (1965) claims that “death is a catalyst of transcendence” (p. 8), meaning that mortality – or rather, the certain expectation of dying – stimulates a process of life emergence, particularly in its immortal and transcendent sense. Martin Hägglund (2015) in his essay *Beauty That Must Die* also emphasizes the interplay between mortality and immortality, highlighting the awareness of the former as a driving force for the latter. The essay focuses on “chronophobia” (p. 101) or the “fear of the passage of time”, which Hägglund links to the uniquely human desire to fully live in the present, a desire he calls “chronophilia” (p. 102) or “love of temporal life”. The anxiety stemming from the awareness of the passage of time fuels the desire for prolongation, which, in literary terms, translates into creative outputs: “If you remove the exposure to loss, you also remove the value and intensity of the experience itself” (p. 103). His essay is a response to the American critic and writer Michael Clune associating instead the fear of time with the desire to remain “timeless” (p. 102), despite humanity’s inevitable “temporal existence”. Clune’s understanding of eternity implies a continuation of life while preserving its “positive qualities” (p. 103). In contrast, Hägglund argues that *the exposure to loss* – that is mortality – is essential so as to confer value to each experience. Literature is helpful to express the “urgency to absorb the situation” with a constant focus on the manifestation of the present. The same applies to the past as well, where the value emerges from “the pathos of being lost”, while for the present attention shifts toward potential loss. In this light, John Keats’s (1977) assertion that beauty is always ‘Beauty that must die’ highlights that it is precisely this ontological finiteness which brings forth the “vital interest” (Hägglund 2015, p. 106) perpetuated over time, finally making a work of art immortal. Authorial immortality reveals then a paradoxical tension with mortality, framing writing as a deeply personal experience rooted in the human understanding of time. On this note, Allan Gurganus in his essay *What Makes Literature Immortal* (2012), identifies the crucial element for ensuring literary timeless existence as “the funniest paradox of all” (p. 150):

Along with living language, with tenacious guardian empathy, with essential design sense, and a saving sense of humour, in order to achieve immortality, you must be most eloquent about one topic: your own and everyone else’s mortality. (*ibid.*).

PERFORMATIVE IMMORTALITY: MINIATURIZATION AND THE DIGITAL UNDEAD

Benjamin (1936) makes a distinction between the *auratic* object, which resists time due to its historical manifestation, and the “technology of reproduction” (p. 104), which instead resists time by virtue of its detachment from any original historical context. According to Benjamin, the principle behind

reproducibility is the never-ending potential duplication of the original work, resulting in two effects: “uniqueness” is supplanted with “mass quantity”, and “the reproduced object” is separated from its “domain of tradition”. These two dynamics finally converge in a single consequence, that is reaching the “receiver in his own situation” or the new context of reception. The reproduction of a work is a process which enables the actualisation of the object making it “useful” (Haxthausen 2004, p. 47) once more “in the present”. The reproduction process metaphorically strips away the veil and destroys the *auratic* shell, removing the object from its “embeddedness in tradition” (Benjamin 1936, p. 103), making it functional within the new present context. The assimilation of “great works” (p. 348) is possible only via a “reduction in size”, a “miniaturization”, which allows the ever-changing public to “achieve the degree of power over the works” and integrate them coherently into the new context. What Benjamin calls ‘first technology’ – meaning painting – emerges from a mimetic approach to nature, while ‘second technology’ – meaning photography – arises from a gradual distancing from nature – yet exposing the status of ‘copy’ and ‘duplication’ common to both.

Einstein (1929) claims instead that reproductive mechanisms are deeply problematic: the repetition of an *auratic* object, thus irreproducible and authentic, generates “the illusion of the immortality of things” (p. 165). However, Benjamin (1936) acknowledges the inherent limitations of reproductions as well:

In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence – and nothing else – that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject. (p. 103-104)

Nikolaus Lehner (2019) concurs on these limitations:

The messages communicated by media always tell us something about unavoidable and insurmountable distances between us and other people, whether these are distances in time, space or understanding. Moreover, a message or an image always is an artefact of the past, something that has been rescued from the past into the present. (p. 478).

Lehner refers to Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida* (1980) where photography is argued – as a medium of technical reproducibility – as always referring to the person’s or object’s death it portrays, “whether in the past or future”: both the sense of loss that devalues its authenticity and the fetishist dimension that, conversely, enhances its utility are then justified. Benjamin (1936) claims that miniaturization is the only process capable of making works accessible in the present. Performative immortality, moving from Lehner’s reasoning, must always be understood with reference to its past dimension, from which it cannot fully detach. Any reproduced or replicated work manifests in the present as an “artefact of the past” (Lehner 2019, p. 478) which can be “rescued” and integrated through an actualisation process.

Ivan Platovnjak and Tone Svetelj (2023) take into account mortality from an historical point of view as a limit to be overcome by ceaselessly seeking an “elixir of eternal youth” (p. 974). This notion is related to the ancient Greek mystery cults, which employed the formula *soma-sema*, portraying the body – *soma* – as the prison – *sema* – of the soul. Within the broader context of seeking liberation for the soul from the body, authorial and performative immortality might appear diametrically opposed. Authorial immortality aligns with a traditional Christian concept of immortality, while performative or “technological immortality” (p. 982) rather aligns with the Greek – proto-posthuman – expression *soma-sema*, where immortality is envisioned through life’s continuation freed from the body by means of technical reproducibility. Addressing the topic in the context of the digital world, Amanda Lagerkvist in her essay *The Netlore of the Infinite* (2014) discusses death within the “digital memory ecology” (p. 1). She defines the society of the digital age as a “culture of connectivity” (p. 2), where two models of digital actors or “user bodies” (p. 3) can be encountered: the “act body”, representing individuals who

actively and consciously engage in social networks, and the “trace body”, representing individuals who are not digitally active, though actively present in social networks under their “names”, where a vast and constantly updated data archive always “remembers everything”. This refers to an “algorithmic memory” in which our trace bodies are continuously “recorded and monitored”, even “beyond our sense of control”. Building on these reflections, performative immortality takes the form of a “software-based” (Lagerkvist 2014, p. 5) post-mortality, where the very notion of immortality is translated into a scientific promise, made possible through external agents – calculations and algorithms – rather than intrinsic qualities of artistic objects or infinite reception processes: “With the new technologies that allow the post-selves to be seen and heard by others far removed in time, the illusions of death transcendence and permanence are preserved” (Kearl and Jacobsen 2013, p. 75). The “return” of the post-self – that is, the digital version of a person or author, for example through chatbots – exists exclusively through “practices of remembrance” (Lagerkvist 2014, p. 5), thereby elevating the notion of artistic reproducibility to that of a tool for achieving immortality beyond any potential transcendental eternity. Return and remembrance are removed from the realm of eternity as a “physically constructed context” (Brubaker et al. 2013, p. 162) and redefined as mechanisms of potentially infinite “information circulation” through practices of the so-called “self-perpetuation” (Lagerkvist 2014, p. 5). In this context, Lehner (2019) defines the condition of the “digital undead” (p. 481) as an “algorithmic perpetuation” (p. 479) of a person or artistic object in a digital duplicate, “eternally trapped in the repetition of a former present” (p. 481):

Digital media enable [...] something one might want to describe as fragmentary immortality of individual communication structures. These communication structures can be actualized and valorised by algorithms. Of course, this is not immortality in a biological sense, it is just the persistence of communicative fragments or speech acts of a former living system. In case of books, what remains is loose data [...]. (p. 478).

This is particularly true for chatbots of deceased authors generating new literary contents by appropriating or stealing existing textual corpora in order to perpetuate and emulate their literary style from the afterlife. Lehner emphasizes the fragmented nature of this type of non-biological immortality, defining it as “the persistence of communicative fragments or speech acts of a former living system”. Furthermore, he highlights its ability to preserve “communication structures” in their entirety, thereby mimicking authors’ voices. In this regard, performative immortality seems to hold an advantage over authorial immortality – which is strictly dependant on textual corpora –, since it effectively avoids death, if understood as the “loss of information” (p. 479) or, more precisely, a “non-distinctive oblivion”:

Therefore, the loss of information is in convergence with death. That is why, in the history of thought, we usually think death as pure identical, static and non-distinctive oblivion. As long as the information is processed by a system, as long as a system draws distinctions, death may be avoided. (*ibid.*).

Moreover, Lehner identifies six different types of death, though only two are relevant to our topic of discussion: “social death” (p. 480) and “communicative death”. The first refers to true oblivion which, from a sociological standpoint, is “the most radical form of exclusion”, as it entails the death of a “social persona” – for instance, an author. The second one is based on the premise that individuals are embedded in an “unending stream of communication”, where the loss of “active and current communicative involvement” inevitably leads to the loss of a fundamental aspect of their identity, that is their personal “communicative structure”. AI has the ability to ensure the survival of a deceased author’s communicative frameworks, even when they succumb to social death and to the other forms identified by Lehner. However, as previously mentioned, AI merely “mimics the communicative structures of the dead” (p. 481) through algorithmic calculations, infinitely reproducing them in a process of eternal repetition of

a former present which can no longer manifest itself as authentic in phenomenological terms. Lehner mentions the example of Caravaggio, whose genius lay not in the repetitive reproduction of his stylistic patterns, but in his regular “transgressions of himself”, a distinctly human creative mechanism which AI might struggle to convincingly replicate.

Anna Puzio (2023) highlights how, in the realm of “Death Tech” (p. 428), the goal is to “upload” (p. 432) virtual figures that are as physically and psychologically similar as possible to their deceased counterparts, thereby allowing them to possess a “new body” and continue existing. To this end, Puzio explains, it is essential to acquire a comprehensive archive of information and data which are reprocessed via algorithmic calculations to produce new outputs. This process, however, does not guarantee true immortality but rather a “virtual representation” of a deceased individual devoid of consciousness. That is exactly what happens with interface-chatbots of deceased authors, with which the reader-user-consumer can speak by directly asking questions or by asking to generate new literary posthumous contents *in the style of* the deceased author.

From a broader perspective, considering the social context in which we now live, that of *dataism* – or the omnipresence of technologies collecting vast data (Harari 2016) –, the main role of performative-technological immortality may not be the substitution or the digital resurrection of deceased authors, but that of entertaining masses when faced with thanatological themes. The British sociologist Ruth Penfold-Mounce (2020) analyses the concept of “thanatological imagination” (p. 56), defining it as a “subcategory of the sociological imagination”, where representations of the “undead” serve as “morbid spaces” (p. 55) for grappling with topics of death – or, more accurately, “thinking sociologically through the lens of death” (p. 56) – while avoiding the terrifying emphasis typically associated with. Penfold-Mounce compares the digital undead to “zombies and deceased celebrities”, that is “reanimated corpses consumed as entertainment” (*ibid.*). Following this path, the products of performative immortality, thus AI chatbots of authors, are offered to the public alongside the opportunity to “consume issues of mortality” (Nowaczyk-Basińska and Kiel 2024, p. 4) and the associated social topics through less aggressive or unsettling frameworks. In their essay *Exploring the Immortological Imagination* (2024), Katarzyna Nowaczyk-Basińska and Paula Kiel borrow Penfold-Mounce’s expression, identifying in the “immortological imagination” a stimulating space where the public can critically analyse society by thinking “sociologically through the lens of immortality” (*ibid.*).

A PARADIGM SHIFT

In *Redefining the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Artistic Production* (2023), history of art is defined as a history of “breaches with paradigms belonging to the past” (Gagliardi et al 2023, p. 3), where art is the ‘synthesis’ “of those breaches” and, consequently, a dimension which not only refers to style and aesthetics, but also to the stabilization of a “new relationship with reality”. A paradigm shift is then a fundamental condition for art to be evaluated as such: “For an artifact to be considered “artistic,” it must represent a paradigm shift, embody some sort of revolution” (*ibid.*). The notion of ‘revolution’ is understood within the semantic boundaries of the artistic domain, where some specific conditions of revolutionary scope are necessary to recognise a *paradigm shift*, such as “the existence of a collectivity”, “the emergence of a controversy”, and “an actual change in collective representations”. The digital era undoubtedly reflects all of these preliminary conditions, so it would not be far-fetched – especially considering AI’s contribution to the artistic field – to signal a true paradigm shift. As briefly mentioned

before, the advent of generative AI models demonstrates its artistic impact primarily in the generation of unprecedented posthumous contents and in the creation of chatbots for conversational support with deceased authors. To this end, it is necessary to reflect upon the idea of a “Copernican revolution in the artistic field” (p. 9) eventually associated with AI’s generative influence in the arts. However, it is claimed that these functionalities, though revolutionary, are not sufficiently advanced to claim that “this technology could replace human creativity”. Thus, the most evident shift remains confined to the artistic paradigm – namely, status and reception of artistic objects – in terms comparable to the diffusion of photography at the end of the 19th century – as previously discussed. This new technology, “able to reproduce reality” more faithfully than paintings, not only challenged the artists of the time but, more broadly, the entire artistic framework, especially regarding status and role of art as a vehicle for immortality.

Jens Schröter (2019) highlights that the right perspective to adopt when discussing AI in the artistic field is not the one focusing on the “reproduction of the product” (p. 305) as a work of art, but on the “reproducibility of the work that produces the work of art”:

The work of art is the result of a work in which body and knowledge, i.e., the knowledge of how this specific work is to be produced, cannot be separated—and that means that the function of the ‘author’ is central. (p. 306).

Traditionally, a work of art is understood as the collaboration of two inseparable components: the “body” – the author – and the “knowledge” – the technique. In the case of AI generated literary contents, the former is replaced by a “false body”, resulting in a condition often defined as “forgery”. Based on this premise, Schröter recounts a striking example of a paradoxically authorial, and thus authentic, false body in the artistic panorama:

Elaine Sturtevant borrowed the screen-printing matrices from Warhol for the *Flowers* and printed the *Flowers* again, in 1991 even making an entire exhibition with Warhol *Flowers*—and Warhol, referring to the production process of the *Flowers*, is frequently quoted for saying: “I don’t know. Ask Elaine.” (Quoted in: Arning 1989: 44) Nevertheless, Sturtevant’s appropriation of Warhol’s knowledge is not a rationalization of Warhol’s work in the sense that Sturtevant now simply makes ‘cheaper Warhols,’ but she rather makes ‘Sturtevents.’ [...] ‘Sturtevents’ can become more important and more expensive than ‘Warhols’ in the future. It could even be argued that Sturtevant, by her appropriation, makes the author-function of Warhol visible in the first place. (p. 307).

The action undertaken by the American artist is defined as an “appropriation” devoid of “rationalization”. Sturtevant borrowed Warhol’s silkscreen matrices to replicate the technique underlying his works, subsequently repainting the *Flowers* series nearly thirty years after Warhol’s original, and finally exhibiting it under her own name, albeit with the title *Warhol Flowers* – thus, explicitly acknowledging the original author. This serves as an example of a false body replicating the technique of an original, thereby creating authentic products, though not constituting counterfeiting. Warhol himself, confronted with the exhibition, deferred all questions about Sturtevant’s work, finally recognizing her as the author. Schröter argues that Sturtevant’s authorial appropriation process did not overshadow or diminish Warhol’s original authorial function, since it made it “visible in the first place”. Nevertheless, authenticity and originality continue to be commonly associated with the artist’s body. Despite there being no technical difference between Warhol’s originals and Sturtevant’s copies, the two are placed on distinct ontological levels. Schröter seeks to demonstrate that Warhol’s silkscreen prints from the early 1960s pervasively transformed the paradigm of artistic authenticity and originality, precisely because they were reproducible art objects – similarly to early photography. The trajectory of Warhol and Sturtevant illustrates that neither a false, nor a computerised body appropriating original communicative structures jeopardises

the artistic value and status of a work. However, Schröter highlights that the artistic market would certainly resist a democratisation of artworks, since artists' death typically increases their works' value. In a capitalistic context, Schröter explains, "no one can have an interest in a 'democratic' production of artworks". George Newman and Paul Bloom (2011) show some experiments examining the relationship between audiences, artworks, and artifacts. According to the two psychologists:

We identify two key dimensions that are particularly important to the valuation of original artworks: the assessment of the art object as a unique creative act (performance) and the degree of physical contact with the original artist (contagion). (p. 1).

Their findings show that individuals tend to value originals over copies due to the technical effort involved in their creation and the object's "scarcity" (p. 3) as a unique, authentic specimen. Schröter (2019) also briefly addresses the economic implications of institutional acceptance of technological immortality in art. He argues that capitalistic market dynamics would oppose renouncing or omitting authorship, whether false, computerised, or anonymous, as this would represent a true revolution in the art world. Commercial dynamics would shift from exclusive attribution models toward a general democratization of artistic merit, even for reproducible performances or works without direct contact with their creators, such as AI generated literary contents.

Conversely, Lehner (2019) – referring to Foucault's theories in *Discipline and Punish* (1976) – discerns an unsettling point of convergence between the concept of performative immortality – not only in the artistic field – and contemporary capitalism:

Already Foucault (1976, 117) pointed out that man's life and time are marked by pleasure, feast and rest, coincidences, desires, and even violence, while capital seeks to turn this momentary, raw and explosive energy into workforce. The digital undead is the phantasmatic, albeit quite real, endpoint of this transformation, the perfect object of exploitation, a 24-hour working machine: A non-person without any capability to resist, without hopes, anger or desires. That's why I argue that we should understand fantasies of digital immortality as a reflection of our predominating work ideology. (p. 483-484).

Lehner claims that the notion of 'digital undead' is nothing more than a simulacrum, eventually impossible to ignore since it is "quite real", thus representing the culmination of a capitalist transformation in which we have long been wholly immersed. He mentions Foucault's discourse on capitalism as a force converting "momentary, raw and explosive energy", consisting of "pleasure, feast and rest, coincidences, desires, and even violence" into "workforce". In so doing, humanity abandons every minor distraction to exploit every ounce of energy in a purely and exclusively productive perspective. At this point of Western capitalism, the digital undead, on one hand, represents a "phantasmatic" presence of an ideology that 'has gone too far'; on the other, it presents itself as the "perfect object of exploitation" – constantly active and resilient, since embodying a "non-person". The inhumanity of the digital non-subject is exploited in its lack of individual will or opposition and in its potential immortality, perfectly reproducing and justifying the socio-labour ideology in which we are, after all, still entrenched.

Speaking of the technological development of AI, it is also necessary to reflect upon the adequacy of both the quantity and quality of training data and its potential consequences:

These models exhibit specific combinatorial properties, with their performance typically mirroring the quantity and quality of the data on which they were trained. Consequently, AI models excel in recreating widely recognized artistic styles—such as the expressive works of Van Gogh—where the dataset is extensive and rich in examples. However, they face challenges when reproducing more obscure or lesser-known artistic styles. In essence, AI effectiveness depends on the quality and appro-

priateness of training data, as it is through these data that AI systems learn to make informed decisions and produce accurate results when deployed in real-world scenarios [...]. This production raises the question of whether these models inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of well-established artists and styles, potentially overshadowing and hindering the dissemination of lesser-known or emerging artists. (Cascales 2023, p. 23-24).

Robert Cascales highlights that the quantity and quality of data directly reflect the performance of generative models, whose outputs rely exclusively on the adequacy of their preliminary training. This underscores the inherently exclusive artistic character of such programs and training datasets. These models reprocess only the data provided to them, and they recombine it with greater precision and effectiveness when there is a larger volume of data available. To this end, the issue emerging in this section pertains to generative models' contribution to the "perpetuation of established artists and styles" at the expense of lesser-known artists. Hence, it is crucial to reconsider the impact and implications of this "unintentional contribution" for emerging artists, for whom less information is available. Faced with the disproportionate perpetuation of renowned artists, we must acknowledge an additional factor in artistic capitalisation, namely, an involuntary yet disruptive bias. While innovative in providing large amounts of data at all levels of consumption, this bias proves exclusive in distributing differing data qualities. In this sense, the performative or technological immortality currently does not represent a fully democratic dimension, since it involves not only the devaluation but also the hoarding or freezing of fame for certain artists, to the detriment of others. However, a more democratised dimension in the dissemination of higher-quality data remains possible, thanks to the implementation of improved training data. Finally, the paradigmatic shift arising from the general acceptance – both in the narrow artistic field and in the broader sociological context – of performative immortality could be, on one hand, an advantageous legacy that promotes the democratisation and actualisation of artistic products and, on the other, a troubling performative immortality which legitimises the typically capitalist exploitation, both financial and ideological, of an infinitely performing and, therefore, non-authentic non-subject.

Within the context of the devaluing nature often associated with generative models in relation to certain topics, it is essential to consider the narcissistic perspectives tied to the notion of perpetuation and performativity:

One of the basic features of pathological narcissism is unreasonable fear of death, which manifests itself as complete denial (or concealment) of the idea of the mortal Self. Truth be told, this is not merely a characteristic of pathological narcissism. Freud (1914) was extremely persistent in his claim that primary narcissism disables one's ability to think one's own death. (Vrtačič and Sporčič, 2010, p. 105).

Digital society bears the marks of narcissism, precisely in the idea of extending one's self in virtual terms, as a consequence of denying the bodily self and death itself. In this sense, the idea of performative immortality represents a perspective for understanding how the digital era's subject lacks the ability to process grief, both in the physical sense of bodily loss and in the digital sense of data loss. Instead, it favours an alternative form of memorial habit, namely that of virtual extension. On this matter, we could ask ourselves as human beings how much eager we are to the "exposure to loss" (Häggglund 2015, p. 103), especially on the basis of the birth of prehistorical memorial or mourning practices which, thanks to technological and digital devices, evolved into the necessity of life extension or life perpetuation of the dead. In the context of dataism, the term 'loss' does not refer only to physical or corporal death, but also to the digital "loss of information" (Lehner 2019, p. 479), namely a "non-distinctive oblivion" where unarchived or unremembered data will be forever lost.

A NECROMANTIC WUNDERKAMMER

By proposing digital undead chatbots of deceased authors which still perform in the present on users' demand, generative AI challenges traditional understandings of authorship by replicating original texts, thereby perpetuating a facsimile of their literary voice and identity. These tools synthesize great amounts of data, easily accessible online, to generate literary posthumous texts. This process engenders digital ghosts of authors whose existence is perpetuated by chatbots – or thanabots – of themselves through emulation and vampirization of existing textual corpora (Mari 2004)⁴. In so doing, authors can digitally resurrect in the form of “digital undead” (Lehner 2019, p. 481). On the cusp of this revolution, the blood sport is led by two opposed forces: authorial immortality – associated to the traditional notion of authorship – and performative immortality – emerging from literary products of digital chatbots of deceased authors. Stuck in the middle is the reader, or user-consumer of AI generated contents ‘trapped’ in the algorithmic repetition of communicative structures of past authors still speaking, writing and performing from the afterlife. Users share a “urge” (Hendrix 2012, p. 1) to “meet the dead”, whose roots can be found in ‘Necromanticism’ (Westover 2012): a Romantic cultural practice and phenomenon related to the desire of visiting graves and sepulchral monuments of authors. Westover traces its first appearance in Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), right before becoming a mass practice, highly commercialised from the 1860s onward. Westover claims that our desire to communicate and share our space with the dead is something specifically literary, related to readers who want to “intensify their contact” (Hendrix 2012, p. 3) with authors seen as “friends” (Westover 2012, p. 2) “to keep in view”. This is also related to Lord Kames's expression “ideal presence” (Kames 1762, p. 68), according to which our desire is driven by an *ideal presence* rather than an “actual one” (Hendrix 2012, p. 6). This interpretation could explain why we enjoy communicating with chatbots of authors which merely replicate some of their scattered verses, quite far from their authentic social and literary identities.

AI could be understood as a new digital version of the *Wunderkammer*, that is a “cabinet of curiosities” (Gunzburg 2010, p. 57) where “strange objects” are arranged in order to “arouse awe and aesthetic pleasure”. The *Wunderkammer* represented an example of encapsulation in few meters of a single room of an “entire cosmos”, similar to generative AI which collects all the widely accessible information about an author's life and texts, thereby elaborating a summary of his or her communicative structures through which encapsulating the whole of his or her literary and social cosmos into a single chatbot. As the *Wunderkammer* represented the illusion of all the wonderful things in the world, AI illusively incarnates deceased authors, together with their personal attitude, verbal and lyrical style, placing the reader-user-consumer in the apparent condition of speaking with a resuscitated dead. The experience of ‘speaking with the dead’ is rather ambivalent, since it blurs all boundaries “between the fictional and the real” (Hendrix 2012, p. 4), building up a “mixture of admiration with disappointment or irony” in the reader-user-consumer who stands in front of an “authorially sacralised site” – that is the thanabot. This paradoxical dynamic shows strong similarities to the practices of “Thanatourism” (p. 3), the 19th century habit of traveling and visiting houses and graves of deceased authors, evoked by the “thanatological condition of contemporary society”. We should ask ourselves at what extent the user-consumer of authorial AI chatbots is also a true reader of the author digitally evoked. At the end of the day, exactly as in literary tourism, also within AI literary dimensions the reader “seeks not the real author but only the reflection of a cliché derived from reading” (p. 6), for instance, stereotypical descriptions or re-incarnations which resemble to parodic imitations rather than believable resurrections. This means that authors are virtually ‘visited’ through chatbots not for “the sake of intelligent conversation”, but “to be

gazed at as a monument”, or as “literary characters” (D’Israeli 1822, p. 1). Westover specifically refers to “literary pilgrimage” (Stone 2013, p. 1) as an “attempt to bridge the distance between life and death” (Westover 2012, p. 3), a desire to get in touch with the dead which superimposes to AI generated literary contents. He traces the Necromantic culture as a cultural phenomenon in which the reader, in the age of revolution and mass print, is submitted to antiquarian revivals, ghost-hunting and monument-building, thus completely surrounded by “a sentimental cult of the dead”. Then, the question is: is AI generated literary content author-centred or text-centred? These chatbots convey the “ideal presence” (Kames 1762, p. 68) or “waking dream” effect, a paradoxical phenomenon according to which dead authors are remembered and imagined at the same time. Similarly to literary tourism, AI chatbots have the capacity to “enact readers’ fantasies” about authors, thereby seeing “history coming to life before them”. Finally, these virtual encounters could be understood as an “allegory of reading” (Westover 2012, p. 12), that is “a trial of presence and absence, and of sight and imagination”, thereby still “contributing to a mortality consciousness” (Stone 2013, p. 2):

Romantic-era writers and readers continually returned to burial places because graveside encounters staged the inherent tensions of biographical reading particularly well. At the grave, the dead author was both there and not there, and therefore both material and imaginary. At other sites of pilgrimage—say, a poet’s birthplace—tourists could find traces of the dead genius’s presence. But at the grave, as Godwin wrote, you seemed to have “the great man himself.” The draw of the grave was that literal, material proximity and limit, that sense that the author *was*, not just had been, there. Still, imagination proved as crucial at the grave as it was in any other location. Thus, the encounter at the grave became an allegory of reading—a trial of presence and absence, of sight and imagination. (Westover 2012, p. 12).

As well as travel and reading “reinforce one another”, also AI chatbots and literature do, though allowing “for a distortion of the dead” (Hendrix 2012, p. 3). To this end, it is still not clear whether AI literary chatbots are truly literary means, encouraging reading and literary knowledge, or digital products of a mass society unavoidably obsessed with still-performing, and still alive forms of the past. Similarly to literary tourism, the question about the importance of texts remains open: AI chatbots do re-elaborate actual textual corpora of authors, but does the reader-user-consumer get interested in that, at all? Or does the text become less important than the author’s fictional resurrection? On one hand, AI literary chatbots, by placing the user-consumer in an informal situation with the deceased author – to which questions can be asked –, fulfil his desire of the author, followed by the activation of his desire of the text, finally transforming him into an actual reader. On the other hand, AI literary chatbots appear as contents of mere scattered and randomly extracted words which convey an immersive and intimate living display for the user in order to supply the author’s absence.

In his interview for *Czas Kultury*, Simon Reynolds (2013) explains that in the expression ‘retromania’ the term ‘mania’ conveys the idea of “something out of control, an addiction or obsession, something on the edge of madness” (Marzec 2013), while also conveying “the idea of excitement and enthusiasm” toward *past things*. Our “anxiety about an excess of history and historical consciousness”, says Reynolds “is not a new thing”, probably referring to Nietzsche’s (1874) notion of “superabundance of history” (35). Reynolds claims “we have somehow gone past the future” (Marzec 2013), for instance through the practice of “recreativity”, that is “remixing, reenactment, mash ups, parody”, practices attacking the ideas of originality, innovation, copyright and intellectual property. He also mentions the 1970s “appropriation art”, the 1960s Pop Art, readymade and the early 20th century collages, together with postmodernist ideas of rejection of originality and origins. To this end, literary contents generated by AI chatbots of de-

ceased authors seem to mirror a general attempt of the reader community to get close to authors understood as creators of texts. This “hauntology” or obsession for the past could be related to a number of effects of the act of reading itself, since if we look for literature corpses and contents on AI, then it must be literature. What is probably still uncanny about this phenomenon is the performative factor: the dead is not just remembered, re-elaborated, re-appropriated or evoked, but it is re-acted. After resurrecting deceased authors, we also want them to speak again in an impressive way which could resemble the original one. This probably makes literature a spectacle, a *Wunderkammer* again, a necrophile practice which is not limited to the interest or the devotion to the past, since it clings to a performing spiritistic reincarnation on demand.

Taking into account the capitalistic side of this phenomenon, what is specifically beneficial in commercialising dynamics of these historical-like interfaces is what Tanner (2023) calls “foreverism”:

Foreverism maintains that the old can’t be merely preserved or re-released; it must be revived, given new stories, de-aged to provide the illusion of vitality, updated, rebooted. The impulse to foreverize content might be driven by nostalgia initially, but in practice, by keeping things forever present, it can eliminate the conditions of yearning. (p. 30).

In this context, the reader – who has already become a user – totally becomes a consumer, who is guaranteed never to “feel a sense of longing for the past” mainly for two reasons. Firstly, because it is extremely tough for the subject of dataism to overcome the loss of the past, thus metaphorically archived data. Secondly, because the past comes back eternally, “rehashed in new forms” which are “constantly available” in any present. To this end, performative immortality chatbots assume the paradoxical role of means to honour and dishonour the past at the same time, by controversially capitalizing it in never-ending stories spreading distorted fantasies, while exhuming or unearthing deceased authors forcing them to perform through modernised and actualised communicative structures. In some way, it might be the price to pay for legacy, in its pros and cons, that is the fact of never believing in one’s own death⁵ and of still haunting the living community in both functional and dysfunctional ways:

The dead are part of the community of the living. There is no community without them. Society brings together not only living beings, but also the dead and ancestors. To speak of the human community as a group made up exclusively of the living is to mutilate reality. (Gil 2023, p. 207-208)

CONCLUSION

What is then AI generated literature and authorship: a fully-fledged actualisation or an artistic depreciation? A revolutionary paradigm shift or a necrophile spectacle? Probably both. Benjamin (1936) describes the process of actualisation through mechanical reproducibility, where the *auratic* object is duplicated as a reproduced object entirely detached from its original context, thus kept perpetually and potentially *useful* in any present of reception. According to the German philosopher, the mechanism of technical reproducibility of an artistic object should be understood as a *reduction in size* that paradoxically enables an authentic reception by virtue of both a complete integration into the new context and a profound understanding by the subject, who is addressed as a *receiver in his own situation*. Contrary to Benjamin, Einstein emphasizes the nature of *second technology* associated with technical reproducibility, which, by doubling the distance from nature in a Platonic sense, highlights the consequent risk of the *illusion of the immortality of things*. Lehner (2019) revisits Einstein’s critical reflection, claiming that reproduced objects cannot entirely abandon their historical past to project themselves into an infinite

present, since they unavoidably exist as artifacts of the past, testifying to an evidently forced attempt at recovery.

Platovnjak and Svetelj (2023), on the other hand, reflect on the notion of *technological immortality* as the only possible liberation from the Greek *soma-sema*, the material body conceived as the prison of the soul. In the context of digital reproduction, death no longer represents an insurmountable limit to artistic performativity. Lagerkvist (2014) defines this purely digital dimension as a *software-based* post-mortality where *trace bodies*, inactive but present in the digital network, are preserved and accumulated in enormous data archives which can be reprocessed through algorithms. From the perspective of post-mortality, memory practices develop through mechanisms of potentially infinite *circulation of information*, thereby transforming traditional memorial practices into an innovative notion of digital *self-perpetuation*. We might reflect upon how individual communicative structures of social figures can survive their biological death through digital tools reproducing their stylistic patterns, albeit always outside any possibility of creative transgression. Lehner emphasizes this aspect, defining *algorithmic perpetuation* as a mechanism for digitally duplicating an authentic object, eternally trapping it in the *repetition of a former present* stripped of any authenticity. At the same time, the communicative structures of authors, although collected and processed as *loose data*, would primarily retain their performative nature, framing digital undead practices as a way to escape the dimension of oblivion, understood as *loss of information*. Finally, AI, while providing the deceased being with a *new body* in digital form, entirely detached from any kind of creative intentionality, is nonetheless tied to the realm of immortality – especially when considered as a thematic container for addressing thanatological topics. Nowaczyk-Basińska and Kiel (2024) define *immortological imagination* as the possibility of *thinking sociologically through the lenses of immortality*, tackling the culture of horror and the realm of death through less aggressive and interactive structures, where virtual representations of the undead assume the role of *reanimated corpses consumed* by the receiving audience as *entertainment*.

Through AI generated chatbots of authors we basically end up *saying a body* “where none” (Beckett 1983, p. 7), ineluctably involving ourselves in practices of spiritism, thus re-collocations of the immanence of the dead. All of this, contextualised in the era of dataism and foreverism – where we are not particularly eager or used to accept that things come to an end – raises new questions about both memorial and literary practices. Is it a new way to remember? Does it imply a shift in belief practices too? Both a scientific and a religious promise of reincarnation is guaranteed, not without controversy, through these AI chatbots of authors and historical figures who do not want to die. Is all of this getting us closer to authors and to the *past*? Is AI generated content a midcult phenomenon, that is, something falsely presenting as belonging to high culture? Where do we look for literature?

To conclude, taking inspiration from the parable narrated by one of the greatest exponents of contemporary German literature, Heinrich Böll, in the novel *Billiards at Half-Past Nine* (1959), it is important to highlight the necessity of a constant “awareness of the present” (Varsava 1986, p. 414), similar to the members of the Fähmel family who suppress knowledge and memories of the past to ultimately “embrace the mystery of life” lived fully in the present. The element of historicity is significant in the context of memory and immortality, understood both from an authorial and performative perspective. In the first case, memory represents the historicity of the past, a dimension defined in its monumentality as a present that can never be repeated or reached again – thus enjoyed from a distance. In the second case, instead, memory represents the historicity of the present, that is, of one’s existence contextualised, thus separated from the past of the literary content being approached. Nonetheless, the parable of the Fähmels offers a rather “protean” (p. 415) conception of time and memory, characterised by the dual recognition of both

monumental historicity and the historicity of present existence. Effective actualisation occurs when both the constant neglect of one's historicity in the present and the morbid devotion to the memory of the past simultaneously cease. Under these conditions, it becomes possible to put the two poles together, by employing authorial memory as a tool for "hermeneutic" (p. 423) understanding of one's present. The end of the novel describes the occasion of a party where there are not enough chairs to seat all the attendees. As a result, the company's filing cabinets and annual records, previously useless ornaments abandoned to gather dust on the shelves, are converted into "surrogate chairs" for the guests to sit on. Interpreting this moment metaphorically, the parable of the Fähmels offers a key to understand the relationship between authorial and technological realm of immortality and legacy. While the company filing cabinets represent the organised preservation of the past, retained in a dimension of anachronistic monumentality, their conversion into objects useful for the present situation – namely the context of reception – represents actualisation. This is the moment when history and its memory are "figuratively integrated within presentness" in terms of performative utility for the benefit of the receiving community. Here, among many other places, readers look for literature.

REFERENCES

- Arendt, H. (2018). *The human condition*. The University of Chicago Press. DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226586748.001.0001
- Barolsky, P. (2015). The interpretation of art is never finished: Some Renaissance examples. *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 23(2).
- Beckett, S. (1983). *Worstward Ho*. Grove Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1936). *Selected writings* (1996) (Vol. 3, W. Jennings et al., Eds.). Harvard University Press.
- Brubaker, J. R., Hayes, G. R., & Dourish, P. (2013). Beyond the grave: Facebook as a site for the expansion of death and mourning. *The Information Society: An International Journal*, 29.
- Cascales, R. (2023). Interpreting AI-generated art: Arthur Danto's perspective on intention, authorship, and creative traditions in the age of artificial intelligence. *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, 71(4), 15–28.
- D'Israeli, I. (1822). *The Literary Character: Illustrated by the history of men of genius, drawn from their own feelings and confessions*. John Murray.
- Einstein, C. (1929). *Notes sur le cubisme: Werke Band 3. 1929-1940*. Hermann Haarmann and Klaus Siebenhaar, Berlin: Fannei & Walz, 1996. English translation by C. W. Haxthausen.
- Gagliardi, D. M., Chiarella, S. G., Marengi, F., Focareta, M., Cuono, S., & Torromino, G. (2023). *Redefining the role of artificial intelligence in artistic production*.
- Gil, J. (2023). *Morte e democracia. Relógio D'Água*. English translation by A. M. Gerner.
- Gunzburg, D. (2010). Art and artifact: The museum as medium by James Putnam. *The Art Book*, 17(4), 26–28. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8357.2010.01137_9.x
- Gurganus, A. (2012). What makes literature immortal. *The Iowa Review*, 42(1).
- Hägglund, M. (2015). Beauty that must die: A response to Michael Clune. *The New Centennial Review*, 5(3).
- Harari, Y. N. (2016). *Homo Deus: A brief history of tomorrow*. Harper.
- Haxthausen, C. W. (2004). Reproduction/repetition: Walter Benjamin/Carl Einstein. *October*, 107.
- Hendrix, H. (2012, February 16). Review of Paul Westover's *Necromanticism: Traveling to meet the dead, 1750-1860* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 25(1), 104–106.
- Home, H. (2005). *Lord Kames. (1762) Elements of criticism*. Liberty Fund.
- Iser, W. (1972). The reading process: A phenomenological approach. *New Literary History*, 3(2), 279. DOI: 10.2307/468316
- Kearl, M. C., & Jacobsen, M. H. (2013). Time, late modernity and the demise of forever: From eternal salvation to completed bucket lists. In *Taming Time, Timing Death: Social Technologies and Ritual: Studies in Death, Materiality and Time*. Ashgate.

Keats, J. (1977). *The complete poems* (Barnard, J., Ed.). Penguin.

Lagerkvist, A. (2014). The netlore of the infinite: Death (and beyond) in the digital memory ecology. *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/13614568.2014.xxxxxx

Lehner, N. (2019). The work of the digital undead: Digital capitalism and the suspension of communicative death. *Continuum (Perth)*, 33(4), 475–488. DOI: 10.1080/10304312.2019.1627289

Marzec, A. (2013).. . *Interview with Simon Reynolds for Czas Kultury*, 2, 12–16.

Newman, G. E., & Bloom, P. (2011, November 14). Art and authenticity: The importance of originals in judgments of value. *Journal of Experimental Psychology. General*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1037/a0027127 PMID: 22082113

Nietzsche, F. (1997). *On the use and abuse of history for life* (Hollingdale, R. J., Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Nowaczyk-Basińska, K., & Kiel, P. (2024). Exploring the immortological imagination: Advocating for a sociology of immortality. *Social Sciences*, 83(13).

Pataranutaporn, P., Danry, V., Blanchard, L., Thakral, L., Ohsugi, N., Maes, P., & Sra, M. (2023). Living memories: AI-generated characters as digital mementos. In *Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Intelligent User Interfaces* (pp. 889-901). <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1145/3581641.3584065>

Penfold-Mounce, R. (2020). *Death in contemporary popular culture: The cultural politics of media and popular culture* (Teodorescu, A., & Jacobsen, M. H., Eds.). Routledge.

Platovnjak, I., & Svetelji, T. (2023). Technology as the elixir of immortality: Resurgent philosophical and spiritual enigma of human imprisonment. *Bogoslovni vestnik: Theological Quarterly*, 83(4).

Puzio, A. (2023). When the digital continues after death: Ethical perspectives on death tech and the digital afterlife. *Communicatio Socialis*, 56(3), 427–436. DOI: 10.5771/0010-3497-2023-3-427

Schröter, J. (2019). Artificial intelligence and the democratization of art. In Sudmann, A. (Ed.), *The democratization of artificial intelligence: Net politics in the era of learning algorithms*. Befeld. DOI: 10.14361/9783839447192-018

Sorč, C. (2023). Dovršitev sveta in cloveka. In Platovnjak, I., & Svetelji, T. (Eds.), *Technology as the elixir of immortality: Resurgent philosophical and spiritual enigma of human imprisonment*. *Bogoslovni vestnik: Theological Quarterly*, 83 (Vol. 4).

Stone, P. (2013). Necromanticism: Traveling to meet the dead, 1750-1860 [Book review]. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 9(1), 84–86. DOI: 10.1080/1743873X.2013.780415

Tanner, G. (2023). *Foreverism*. Polity Press.

Varsava, J. A. (1986). Escape from Lethe: “Unforgetting” in H. Böll’s *Billiards at half-past nine*. *CLA Journal*, 29(4), 426–439.

Vrtačič, E., & Šporčič, A. (2010). Digital death in the age of narcissism. *ELOPE*, 7(2), 19–32. DOI: 10.4312/elope.7.2.101-110

Westover, P. (2012). *Necromanticism: Traveling to meet the dead, 1750-1860*. Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/9780230369498

Wilder, A. N. (1965). Mortality and contemporary literature. *The Harvard Theological Review*, 58(1), 1–20. DOI: 10.1017/S0017816000019039

ENDNOTES

¹ Carl Einstein unpublished notes from the late 1930s, Werke 4, p. 419 quoted in Haxthausen, C. W. (2004). “Reproduction/repetition: Walter Benjamin/Carl Einstein”. *October*, 107, p. 55.

² See Jauss, H. R. (1967). *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory*. Any edition.

³ Carl Einstein unpublished notes from the late 1930s, Werke 4, p. 419 quoted in Haxthausen, op. cit.

⁴ See Mari, M. (2004). *I demoni e la pasta sfoglia*. Il Saggiatore.

⁵ For instance, see DALI Lives performing at the Salvador Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida USA and claiming “I do not believe in my death”, <https://thedali.org/exhibit/dali-lives/>