INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION STUDIES (IJELR)
A QUARTERLY, INDEXED, REFEREED AND PEER REVIEWED OPEN ACCESS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
http://www.ijelr.in (Impact Factor: 5.9745) (ICI)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 13. Issue 1. 2026 (Jan-March.)

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

The Simulated Hermeneutic: Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Literary Interpretation

Dr. Ghulam Mohammad Khan
[1]Department of English, HKM Government Degree College, Bandipora, Jammu & Kashmir, India
Email: gluoomkk@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-8009-2539

doi: 10.33329/ijelr.13.1.53

Article information
Article Received:29/12/2025
Article Accepted:21/01/2026
Published online:26/01/2026

Abstract

This paper examines the drastic transformation of literary interpretation driven by artificial intelligence and digital materiality. Moving beyond 20th-century theoretical paradigms, the analysis argues that hermeneutics is becoming a distributed process involving human readers, algorithmic agents, and platform infrastructures. Through a longitudinal case study with educator-peers and a synthesis of contemporary critical theory, the study identifies key shifts: the rise of AI-generated "simulated hermeneutics," the construction of algorithmically curated readers and contexts, and the ethical challenges posed by embedded biases and eroding textual stability. While recognizing the scalable analytics of computational tools, the paper concludes that a sustainable future for literary study requires a critical symbiosis—an ethically literate practice that leverages technological capacities while safeguarding the humanistic core of interpretation.

Keywords: literary interpretation, artificial intelligence, digital humanities, hermeneutics, algorithmic bias, critical symbiosis, post-digital, textual analysis.

Introduction

The act of interpreting literature has never been a static endeavour, but a practice historically reshaped by prevailing cultural, philosophical, and technological forces. Throughout the 20th century, literary theory institutionalized a series of powerful, often competing, methodologies that structured academic discourse and defined horizons of meaning. Today, we stand at another transformative juncture, where the digital turn and the advent of Artificial Intelligence are fundamentally altering the hermeneutic landscape. This paper argues that interpretation is undergoing a seismic shift from a predominantly human-centric activity to a distributed process mediated by algorithms, generative AI, and digital materiality. Through an analysis of a longitudinal case study with educator-peers and a synthesis of contemporary critical theory, this work explores how technologies like large language

models create persuasive yet potentially biased *simulated interpretations*, how digital platforms curate hyperreal contexts for reading, and how traditional concepts of authorship, textual stability, and ethical discernment are being challenged. Ultimately, while acknowledging the analytical scale offered by computational tools, this study contends that the future of literary study depends on forging a critical symbiosis—one that harnesses technological capabilities while rigorously preserving the irreplaceable human capacities for historical empathy, nuanced understanding, and ethical responsibility in the face of the text.

Objectives

This research aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To trace the historical transition in literary interpretation from dominant twentieth-century theoretical paradigms towards contemporary, technology-mediated hermeneutic practices.
- To analyse the specific impact of generative Artificial Intelligence and algorithmic curation on the processes, reliability, and very nature of textual interpretation.
- To investigate how digital materiality—encompassing multimodality, algorithmic mutability, and platform-driven paratexts—reshapes the reader's encounter with the literary object.
- To identify and critically evaluate the epistemological and ethical challenges posed by AI-driven interpretation, including simulated hermeneutics, embedded bias, and the erosion of traditional authorship and textual stability.
- To propose a framework for a critical symbiosis between humanistic reading practices and computational tools that prioritizes ethical literacy and preserves the core values of literary study.

Literature Review

In the rapidly evolving domain of literary and critical theory, discourse surrounding textual interpretation has undergone a significant transformation. Throughout much of the twentieth century, academic criticism was dominated by a series of distinct, often competing, methodological paradigms. These ranged from the formalist precision of New Critical close reading and the historical investigations of contextual scholarship to the psychological depths of psychoanalytic critique, the ideological exposures of postcolonial and Marxist theory, and the philosophical dismantlings of postmodern deconstruction (Leitch et al. 1-28). While such approaches sought, in their early iterations, to establish authoritative or definitive readings, their collective legacy has been to widen, complicate, and politicize the very mechanism of interpretation. As Rita Felski notes, these methods function as "diagnostic toolkits" that not only categorize literary texts but also generate the specialized discourses that surround them, thereby structuring intellectual inquiry within academia (10). Consequently, the act of interpretation has shifted from a pursuit of stable meaning to an acknowledgment of a plural, often contested, field of engagement where method itself becomes a statement of critical values (Anker and Felski 4-7).

Towards the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the proliferation of specialized critical frameworks has further expanded—and implicitly challenged—the categorical divisions established by prior theoretical models. The academic landscape has witnessed the rise of numerous interdisciplinary and politically urgent approaches, including ecocriticism, the blue humanities, new materialism, post-humanism, affect theory, and the digital humanities (Alaimo 558; Cohen 3-7). While the application of these lenses undoubtedly broadens and reinforces the possibilities of textual interpretation, their emergence also fundamentally subverts the very logic of rigid categorization. As these methodologies often intersect and blend—consider the confluence of post-humanism, queer theory, and ecology in "queer ecology" (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 5)—they expose the

artificial constraints of applying a singular, monolithic framework to a literary work. Such one-dimensional interpretation risks negating what Mikhail Bakhtin theorized as the novel's inherent "polyphony" or "heteroglossia"—its dialogic capacity to sustain multiple, competing voices and meanings (Bakhtin 263). Consequently, the contemporary critic is faced with a fluid and discreet interpretive field where, as this study argues, a single methodological technique is insufficient to fully evaluate a text's formal, historical, psychological, and thematic dimensions. The act of interpretation now necessitates a conscious engagement with this multiplicity, often requiring a synthesized or strategic application of perspectives to attend to the text's complexity (Neimanis 12).

However conflicting or enriching, these critical methodologies have fundamentally shaped the phenomenon of literary interpretation through a recursive relationship with the texts they examine. They have not only provided frameworks for analysis but have also actively encouraged and shaped the production of new literature, thereby blurring the line between critical theory and creative practice. This dynamic is particularly evident in the case of postcolonial studies. As theorist Helen Tiffin argues, postcolonial critique and postcolonial writing exist in a symbiotic relationship; the theory provides a "conceptual vocabulary and political urgency" that directly informs narrative strategies, while the literature itself becomes a primary site for testing and expanding theoretical paradigms (154). This pattern extends beyond post-colonialism. For instance, the rise of ecocriticism has been concomitant with—and stimulative of—the proliferation of climate fiction, or "cli-fi" (Heise 210). Similarly, the digital humanities have fostered new forms of electronic literature that are both created by and necessitate innovative interpretive tools (Hayles 3). Thus, critical methods do more than categorize existing texts; they participate in a generative feedback loop, influencing aesthetic forms, authorial concerns, and the very subjects deemed worthy of literary attention. This study will therefore consider interpretation not as a secondary activity applied to a finished text, but as an engaged process that exists in dialogue with literary production itself.

The advent of artificial intelligence, alongside pervasive machine and algorithmic mediation, has introduced a transformative and arguably drastic shift in the processes of textual interpretation. The surprise lies not merely in its influence, but in the unprecedented speed at which this complex, hybrid human-AI dynamic is generating novel hermeneutic pathways. Generative AI's capacity to instantly synthesize, remix, and output text based on vast training corpora poses a fundamental challenge to traditional, human-centric models of reading. As Katherine N. Hayles foresaw in her work on technogenesis, human cognition is co-evolving with its technologies, creating new "cognitive assemblages" where interpretation is distributed between human and machine actors (Hayles 33). This partnership does not simply accelerate old methods; it potentially reshapes the foundational ways we approach literary meaning, from pattern recognition at a scale impossible for a single reader to the generation of simulated readings and paratexts. Below, the study will focus on crucial modalities through which AI is influencing interpretation: by facilitating a form of quantitative distant reading that complements close analysis, by creating a new kind of algorithmically-assisted reader, and by guiding us into a labyrinth of what might be termed simulated hermeneutics—a realm where interpretation is both generated and complicated by the probabilistic logic of large language models (LLMs) (Underwood 5).

Methodology

This study employs a multi-modal qualitative methodology to examine the evolving landscape of literary interpretation in the digital age.

- Longitudinal Qualitative Case Study: The primary empirical data was gathered through a curated, longitudinal dialogue among a closed WhatsApp group of ten peers, all former BA and MA classmates in English literature who have subsequently pursued careers in education.

This group served as a focused cohort to track shifts in interpretive practice over time. The dialogue centred on their shared historical experience studying *Hamlet* and their contemporary approaches to teaching and interpreting the same text, providing comparative personal narratives.

- Theoretical and Critical Synthesis: The analysis is grounded in a synthesis of established and emerging literary and digital humanities theories. Frameworks from hermeneutics (Gadamer), reader-response theory (Iser), postcolonial studies (Said), and affect theory (Ngai) provide the foundation for analysing traditional human-centric interpretation. These are juxtaposed with critical digital humanities and technology studies scholarship (Hayles, Noble, Bender et al., Gillespie, Zuboff) to analyse the impact of AI, algorithms, and digital materiality.
- Auto-ethnographic Reflection: The researcher's own position as a participant in the peer group and as an educator is incorporated as a reflective, auto-ethnographic element, adding a first-person perspective to the observed phenomenological shifts in reading and interpretation.

Analysis and Discussion

The Human Baseline and the AI Disruption

The burgeoning agency of AI in interpretation can be sharply illuminated by contrasting it with traditional, human-centric modes of reading. To trace what influences textual understanding over time, I conducted an informal longitudinal study via a WhatsApp group comprising close friends and former classmates from my BA and MA programs, all of whom shared a foundational experience of studying core literary texts, including *Hamlet*. The group's consensus was to reflect on their interpretative journeys with the play, from initial college and university exposure to their present perspectives, many now as educators themselves. The collective recollection of their early engagement highlighted a distinctly textual and experiential paradigm of interpretation. Their focus resided in close reading practices—parsing plot, character motivation, thematic depth, and the sublimity and felicity of Shakespearean diction, often savouring what one member called the "aesthetically relaxing experience" of immersing in the language itself. This approach aligns with the New Critical tradition, which isolated the text as a self-contained aesthetic object, valuing the "verbal icon" and the unity of its form and content (Brooks 72; Wimsatt and Beardsley 3-4). The ease with which they could recall and quote the sonorous and majestic passages underscores an interpretation rooted in memorization, personal aesthetic response, and the authority of the text as a fixed entity. This historical baseline of human, affective, and formally focused reading establishes a crucial counterpoint against which the disruptive, pattern-driven, and generative agency of contemporary AI interpretation can be measured.

However, these same reflections inevitably highlighted the profound role of the reader's personal and situational context in shaping interpretation, underscoring the principles of reader-response theory long before the respondents encountered the theory itself. My own recollection involves reading *Hamlet* in the shade of willows, with a preoccupation less about textual unity and more about how to philosophize its soliloquies for a learned friend in a dusty, smoky street later that evening. This aligns with Wolfgang Iser's concept of the "implied reader," where meaning is actualized through the reader's pre-occupations and active engagement with the text's "gaps" (Iser 34). The difficulty of bridging the vast historical, linguistic, and cultural chasm to the text led me—and others—to initially rely heavily on summaries, a pragmatic step that nonetheless foregrounds the reader's positionality. For one friend, reading the play on a train crossing the baking Indian plains fostered a deeply personal, existentialist and partly absurdist interpretation, a clear example of how physical environment and affective state—heat, loneliness, travel-induced contemplation—filter literary reception. This echoes affect theory's insistence on the embodied nature of reading, where interpretation is not purely cognitive but is coloured by "ugly feelings" like enervation or alienation (Ngai 6). Another friend, politically attuned to the conflict in Kashmir, found immediate and profound

relevance in the line, "There is something rotten in the state of Denmark." For him, the text became a framework for diagnosing contemporary political decay, demonstrating how literature "travels," in Edward Said's sense, accruing new meanings in different geopolitical contexts (Said 226). In each case, while the textual interface remained central, the act of contextualization became aesthetically and intellectually liberating, moving beyond formal analysis to a deeply situated, almost dialogic relationship with the work. This underscores the inherently subjective and constructed nature of meaning, a human-centric process of interpretation that stands in stark contrast to the data-driven, pattern-recognition protocols of AI.

Furthermore, the friends who have continued to teach *Hamlet* in recent years—now operating within an ecosystem of ready-made digital notes, vast online archives, and, most pivotally, artificial intelligence—report that the very phenomenology of interpreting the text has undergone a massive transformation. Their collective observation points to a concerning trend: the primary text itself has gradually disappeared from the classroom, a displacement for which both instructors and students share responsibility. This shift aligns with Sven Birkerts' warnings about the erosion of "deep attention" in digital culture, where the immersive engagement with a single, complex text is supplanted by the fragmented browsing of secondary summaries and resources (Birkerts 74). The heavy and increasing reliance on internet-sourced lesson plans and AI-generated content for lecture preparation creates a double distancing; both stakeholders often engage with algorithmic synopses and synthesized criticism rather than the literary work's raw language. One member candidly confessed a diminished capacity to recall passages directly from the text, noting that his classroom interpretations are now largely curated from secondary sources and, increasingly, AI-generated material. This practice reflects a broader pedagogical shift identified by Mark A. Schiffman, wherein "convenience technologies" risk creating a "hermeneutic bypass," where the challenging but essential process of constructing one's own close reading is outsourced (Schiffman 112). He maintained that this reliance is now normative among his colleagues, suggesting that AI is not just a tool but is becoming the primary mediating agent of textual analysis. This represents a fundamental departure from the earlier, text- and context-driven modes of interpretation described previously, moving towards a model where human interpretation is filtered through, and often initiated by, the probabilistic outputs of large language models. This new dynamic invites critical examination of what is gained in efficiency and perhaps intertextual scope, and what is lost in terms of unmediated aesthetic experience, personal cognitive struggle, and the development of independent critical judgment (Cavanagh 48).

This fundamental shift from human-centric to AI-mediated hermeneutics presents serious challenges not only to the process of interpretation but, more critically, to its very reliability and ontological status. The epistemological chain is becoming increasingly complex: the literary text is itself an interpretation of the world, filtered through the author's knowledge and consciousness. This primary artefact is subsequently interpreted by readers, whose responses are shaped by personal, cultural, and theoretical contexts, as previously outlined. However, the interpretations generated by AI constitute a distinct third-order layer. They are fundamentally different from the critical analyses written by human scholars available online, as those sources originate from a situated consciousness with accountable, if diffuse, authorial intent. In contrast, as Emily M. Bender and colleagues critically note, large language models are "stochastic parrots"—systems that expertly remix and reproduce patterns from their training data without comprehension, referential understanding, or communicative intent (Bender et al. 616). Therefore, an AI's interpretation is a simulated interpretation: a statistically plausible, syntactically coherent performance of critique generated without the grounding of lived experience, intentionality, or genuine semantic competence (Floridi 3). This simulation is not born of engagement with the text as an aesthetic experience but is instead derived from an aggregated, flattened corpus of pre-existing human discourse about the text. Consequently, the reliability of such an interpretation is inherently contingent on the biases, gaps, and ideological contours of its training data, while being framed with a persuasive authority that belies its mechanistic origins. This simulation risks

creating a hermeneutic feedback loop, where AI interpretations, based on past human readings, begin to dictate the terms of future human understanding, potentially homogenizing and dehistoricizing literary critique.

This computational prowess, however, renders AI simultaneously intoxicating and problematic as an interpretive agent. The ability of GPT variants and other large language models to instantly generate coherent analyses creates a seductive efficiency, making them addictive tools for educators and students under pressure. This aligns with what media theorist Natasha Dow Schüll, in a different context, terms the "machine zone" of compulsive engagement—a state of captivated dependency on algorithmic output (Schüll 10). One group participant confirmed this dependency, admitting to disseminating extensive AI-generated notes to students, who in turn relied on them for examination preparation, creating a closed loop of synthesized, unverified commentary. The central critique, however, lies in the fundamental unreliability and inherent bias of these simulations. As scholars of algorithmic bias consistently warn, AI does not generate neutral analysis but amplifies and reifies the prejudices, gaps, and perspectives embedded in its training data (Noble 1-5). There are numerous documented instances where AI fails to provide authentic interpretations of historical events or culturally situated texts because its training data is skewed. For example, an AI's interpretation of an Israeli political novel versus an Iranian one would likely reproduce and even accentuate the geopolitical biases present in its predominantly web-sourced corpus, lacking the capacity for critical self-reflection or ethical discernment (Bender et al. 617). Ultimately, as demonstrated by the earlier, context-rich reflections of the reading group, AI-based interpretations lack a fundamental understanding of authorial intention, historical situatedness, and the phenomenology of reading. They cannot, as philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer argued, perform a genuine "fusion of horizons" between the text's context and the reader's lived reality (Gadamer 306). While AI can map surface patterns at an inhuman scale, it remains incapable of the empathetic, historically grounded, and morally nuanced interpretation that arises from embodied human experience.

Digital Materiality and Multimodality

This evolution underscores the critical dimension of digital materiality and multimodality in contemporary interpretation. The literary text is no longer solely a conventional print artefact but is increasingly encountered as a digitized product embedded within a network of videos, images, hyperlinks, algorithms, and interactive elements, transforming it into a fluid, unstable space. As N. Katherine Hayles argues, we must attend to the "materiality of the medium" itself, recognizing that the digital substrate fundamentally conditions the processes of reading and meaning-making (Hayles 33). This is evident in digital archives like the Internet Shakespeare Editions, where, as two teacher-friends from the group noted, accessing *Hamlet* requires an interpretation that accounts for multimodality. These users confessed that paratextual elements—visuals, audio performances, slide layouts, colour schemes, typographic design, and the overall screen experience—played a significant, often unconscious, role in shaping their understanding of the play. Johanna Drucker's concept of the "aesthetic agency" of digital interfaces is relevant here, as the design itself "performs epistemological work," guiding attention and privileging certain readings over others (Drucker 4). More profoundly destabilizing is the algorithmic mutability of these digital texts. Unlike a stable printed edition, a digital artefact can be algorithmically altered, updated, or dynamically curated at any time, challenging the very notion of a fixed textual object for interpretation. This continuous potential for revision, as Lev Manovich notes, shifts the text from a "finished object to a process," undermining interpretive stability (Manovich 230). Such algorithmic curation significantly affects a text's meaning, visibility, and cultural prominence, complicating interpretation and radically dispersing or obscuring traditional authorship. The author, as Foucault theorized, becomes further subsumed within a network of "author functions" executed by platform designers, algorithm engineers, and digital archivists (Foucault 124). This digital materiality, therefore, does not merely present a new version of a text but constitutes a different

ontological category of literary object, demanding a hermeneutics adapted to its procedural and multimodal nature.

Selection and Circulation of Content

The algorithmic curation and preferential selection of content within this growing digital paradigm constitute a powerful, nonhuman form of editorial power that fundamentally reshapes the interpretive landscape. Platforms and search engines, governed by engagement-driven metrics, systematically filter and circulate texts to reach target readerships, creating what media scholar Tarleton Gillespie calls "calculated publics"—audiences defined and served by algorithmic logic (Gillespie 182). This space does not merely influence interpretation; it actively constructs a desired reader and a managed context for reception. This process operationalizes what Hans-Georg Gadamer philosophically identified as "prejudices" (Vorurteile)—the pre-judgments that constitute our historical consciousness and horizon of understanding (Gadamer 278). However, in the digital sphere, these prejudices are often engineered, as algorithms systematically reinforce existing user preferences and ideological leanings, creating insular "filter bubbles" (Pariser 9) that can preclude the challenging encounters with otherness that Gadamer saw as essential to genuine hermeneutic experience. The result is the rise of a hyperreal interpretive space, following Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation, where the algorithmically generated model of the reader, the context, and even the "ideal" interpretation precedes and replaces the complex reality of unmediated engagement (Baudrillard 2). This intervention of nonhuman agents shifts the foundational value of interpretation from a pursuit of authentic understanding or aesthetic appreciation toward a logic of engagement—measured in clicks, dwell time, and shares. As Shoshana Zuboff argues in the context of surveillance capitalism, such systems are designed to optimize for predictable behavioural outcomes, not epistemological depth or ethical insight (Zuboff 8). Consequently, the interpretative act is increasingly framed within and incentivized by an economy of attention, where the most circulatable reading may be prioritized over the most nuanced or critically rigorous one.

Distanced Hermeneutics

This computationally enforced perspective can be understood as a form of distanced hermeneutics. While traditional hermeneutics seeks a dialogic engagement with a text, the application of AI models to a literary history spanning millennia and cultures necessitates a prior reduction of those rich, qualitative texts into quantifiable data points. This methodological shift is an extension of the "distant reading" paradigm articulated by Franco Moretti, where computational analysis reveals broader patterns, genres, and trends across vast corpora that are invisible to close reading (Moretti 1-3). AI amplifies this potential exponentially, capable of mapping intertextual networks and stylistic evolutions at an unprecedented scale, thereby supplementing and complementing macro-level literary-historical interpretation. However, this comes at a significant cost to qualitative depth and particularity. As Ted Underwood cautions, algorithmic models inherently privilege features that can be counted and measured, potentially side-lining elements of texture, tone, ambiguity, and affective resonance that are central to literary meaning (Underwood 12). This raises grave epistemological concerns: when a Shakespearean sonnet and a social media post are flattened into equivalent tokens in a training dataset, the ontological specificity of the literary artefact is eroded. The resulting interpretations, while potentially revealing broad patterns, risk being what scholar Katherine Hayles might call "nonconscious cognitions"—derived from logic that is operational but not understandable, producing conclusions without a traceable hermeneutic pathway grounded in human sensibility (Hayles 21). Distanced hermeneutics thus creates a critical paradox: it unveils systemic insights previously beyond human grasp while simultaneously obscuring the very singularities and contextual nuances that have traditionally defined literary study.

Authorship and Originality

This AI-mediated ambiguity fundamentally challenges canonical notions of authorship and originality. The intent behind an AI-generated text, being an algorithmic synthesis of its training data, is inherently illegible and non-human, compounding traditional questions of creativity, originality, and stable reader response. This phenomenon accelerates what media theorist Florian Cramer terms a "postdigital" condition, where the digital is so deeply enfolded into cultural production that it ceases to be a separate category and instead becomes the default milieu (Cramer 15). Interpretation within this space necessarily expands to include a new layer of algorithmic paratexts—the social media likes, shares, comments, and paid promotional shortcuts that constitute a text's digital aura and visibility. As Gérard Genette's concept of the paratext is updated for the platform age, these metrics become active, crowd-sourced, and commercially modulated signals that guide reception and legitimize certain interpretations over others (Genette 2; Bucher 31). This reveals the profound extent to which technology mediates interpretation, capable of magnifying a text's reach through viral logic or algorithmically redacting its visibility through shadow-banning and content moderation. The reader is thus landed in an interpretive environment where meaning is co-constructed not only with a distant author but with platform architectures, recommendation algorithms, and networked publics. This represents a seismic shift from interpreting a text's internal coherence to navigating its externally manufactured algorithmic reputation, further destabilizing the authority of the solitary author and repositioning interpretation as a practice of tracing diffuse, often commercially interested, digital pathways.

Ethical Layers

Furthermore, the integration of AI into literary interpretation adds complex ethical layers that demand critical scrutiny. Beyond epistemological concerns, AI systems actively complicate analysis by reproducing and often amplifying embedded racial, gendered, territorial, and ideological biases present in their training data. As Safiya U. Noble demonstrates in *Algorithms of Oppression*, computational tools are not neutral but reflect and reinforce existing societal power structures, potentially widening the gulf between human creative expression and reductive computational modelling (Noble 1-5). This bias manifests in interpretation when, for instance, an AI overlooks or misconstrues the nuances of postcolonial, feminist, or indigenous texts, having been trained on a corpus that historically marginalizes such voices (Risam 45). Consequently, the use of AI in analysis risks perpetuating what Ruha Benjamin calls "the New Jim Code"—a technological replication of systemic discrimination under a veneer of algorithmic objectivity (Benjamin 5-6). These ethical complications necessitate a vigilant, critically aware approach to AI-assisted hermeneutics. It is imperative that its application is guided by a framework of ethical literacy, where the tool's outputs are continually audited for bias and contextual insufficiency. Ultimately, navigating this new landscape requires a commitment to ensuring that computational aids serve to expand, rather than contract, the pluralistic and equitable understanding of human creativity.

Findings

The analysis reveals several key findings:

- The Shift from Immersion to Mediation: Interpretive practice among educators has demonstrably shifted from deep, text-immersive close reading towards a dependency on AI-generated synopses and digital secondary sources, leading to what is termed a "hermeneutic bypass" where direct engagement with the primary text is often circumvented.
- The Rise of Simulated Hermeneutics: AI generates a form of simulated interpretation—statistically plausible, syntactically coherent critique derived from pattern recognition in training data, but lacking genuine understanding, intentionality, or capacity for a Gadamerian "fusion of horizons."

- The Primacy of Digital Materiality: In digital environments, interpretation is fundamentally conditioned by multimodal paratexts (design, audio, hyperlinks) and algorithmic mutability, which challenge the stability of the textual object and disperse authorship among human and non-human agents.
- Algorithmic Bias as an Interpretive Filter: AI tools do not offer neutral analysis but actively reproduce and amplify the racial, territorial, and ideological biases encoded in their training data, risking the perpetuation of a "New Jim Code" in literary analysis and potentially marginalizing non-canonical voices.
- The Construction of the Algorithmic Reader: Platform algorithms curate content and create "calculated publics," actively shaping readerly context and privileging engagement metrics over depth, thereby manufacturing a hyperreal interpretive space where the model of the reader precedes the reading subject.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the crucial transformation in literary interpretation, traced from twentieth-century theoretical paradigms to the contemporary AI-driven landscape, reveals a field in significant flux. The rise of algorithmic mediation, digital materiality, and simulated hermeneutics has not rendered traditional modes of close reading or contextually grounded criticism obsolete but has irrevocably complicated their practice. Interpretation is now increasingly a collaborative, sometimes contested, process distributed among human readers, nonhuman agents, and platform architectures. While AI offers unparalleled scale in pattern recognition and generative synthesis, it remains critically limited by its lack of embodied experience, its susceptibility to algorithmic bias, and its incapacity for genuine semantic understanding or ethical discernment. The future of literary study, therefore, lies not in the wholesale adoption or rejection of these technological tools but in cultivating a critical symbiosis. This requires developing a new literacy—one that strategically employs computational distant reading and AI-assisted analysis while rigorously insisting on the irreplaceable value of human empathy, historical consciousness, and the nuanced, often unpredictable, act of reading as a deeply personal and culturally situated event. The task ahead is to ensure that our hermeneutic frameworks evolve to harness the productive capacities of AI while steadfastly preserving the humanistic core of literary engagement.

References

Alaimo, S. (2014). Your shell on acid: Material immersion, Anthropocene dissolves. In S. Iovino & S. Oppermann (Eds.), *Material ecocriticism* (pp. 554–568). Indiana University Press.

Anker, E. S., & Felski, R. (2017). Introduction. In E. S. Anker & R. Felski (Eds.), *Critique and postcritique* (pp. 1–28). Duke University Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation* (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press.

Bender, E. M., Gebru, T., McMillan-Major, A., & Shmitchell, S. (2021). On the dangers of stochastic parrots: Can language models be too big? In *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (pp. 610–623).

Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race after technology: Abolitionist tools for the new Jim code*. Polity Press.

Birkerts, S. (2006). *The Gutenberg elegies: The fate of reading in an electronic age*. Faber & Faber.

Brooks, C. (1947). *The well wrought urn: Studies in the structure of poetry*. Harcourt, Brace & World.

Brouillette, S. (2021). Algorithmic creativity and the literary. *College Literature, 48*(1), 1–26.

Bucher, T. (2018). *If…then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press.

Cavanagh, S. (2018). The digital humanities and the reception of AI in literary studies. In *Literary studies in the digital age* (pp. 42–55). Modern Language Association.

Cohen, J. J. (2013). Introduction: Ecology's rainbow. In J. J. Cohen (Ed.), *Prismatic ecology: Ecotheory beyond green* (pp. xv–xxxv). University of Minnesota Press.

Cramer, F. (2015). What is "post-digital"? In D. M. Berry & M. Dieter (Eds.), *Postdigital aesthetics: Art, computation and design* (pp. 12–26). Palgrave Macmillan.

Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, politics, and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence*. Yale University Press.

D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2020). *Data feminism*. MIT Press.

Drucker, J. (2021). *The digital humanities coursebook: An introduction to digital methods for research and scholarship*. Routledge.

Felski, R. (2015). *The limits of critique*. University of Chicago Press.

Finn, E. (2017). *What algorithms want: Imagination in the age of computing*. MIT Press.

Floridi, L. (2023). AI as agency without intelligence: On ChatGPT, large language models, and other generative models. *Philosophy & Technology, 36*, Article 15.

Foucault, M. (1984). What is an author? In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault reader* (pp. 101–120). Pantheon Books.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and method* (2nd rev. ed.; J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Continuum.

Gebru, T., Morgenstern, J., Vecchione, B., Vaughan, J. W., Wallach, H., Daumé III, H., & Crawford, K. (2021). Datasheets for datasets. *Communications of the ACM, 64*(12), 86–92.

Genette, G. (1997). *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation* (J. E. Lewin, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press.

Grassilli, C. (2024). AI in the literature classroom: Partner or preceptor? *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 23*(1), 78–95.

Hayles, N. K. (2002). *Writing machines*. MIT Press.

Hayles, N. K. (2008). *Electronic literature: New horizons for the literary*. University of Notre Dame Press.

Hayles, N. K. (2017). *Unthought: The power of the cognitive nonconscious*. University of Chicago Press.

Heise, U. K. (2016). *Imagining extinction: The cultural meanings of endangered species*. University of Chicago Press.

Iser, W. (1974). *The implied reader: Patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Leitch, V. B., Cain, W. E., Finke, L., Johnson, B., McGowan, J., & Williams, J. (Eds.). (2018). *The Norton anthology of theory and criticism* (3rd ed.). W. W. Norton & Company.

Liu, A. (2013). The meaning of the digital humanities. *PMLA, 128*(2), 409–423.

Manovich, L. (2001). *The language of new media*. MIT Press.

Moretti, F. (2000). Conjectures on world literature. *New Left Review, 1*, 54–68.

Mortimer-Sandilands, C., & Erickson, B. (2010). Introduction: A genealogy of queer ecologies. In C. Mortimer-Sandilands & B. Erickson (Eds.), *Queer ecologies: Sex, nature, politics, desire* (pp. 1–47). Indiana University Press.

Neimanis, A. (2016). Bodies of water, human rights and the hydrocommons. *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies, 35*, 5–24.

Ngai, S. (2005). *Ugly feelings*. Harvard University Press.

Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. New York University Press.

Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: How the new personalized web is changing what we read and how we think*. Penguin Books.

Risam, R. (2019). *New digital worlds: Postcolonial digital humanities in theory, praxis, and pedagogy*. Northwestern University Press.

Said, E. W. (1983). *The world, the text, and the critic*. Harvard University Press.

Schiffman, M. A. (2022). The algorithmic sublime: AI and the future of reading. *Pedagogy, 22*(1), 109–125.

Schüll, N. D. (2012). *Addiction by design: Machine gambling in Las Vegas*. Princeton University Press.

Tiffin, H. (2023). Post-colonial literatures and counter-discourse. In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The post-colonial studies reader* (3rd ed., pp. 151–154). Routledge.

Underwood, T. (2019). *Distant horizons: Digital evidence and literary change*. University of Chicago Press.

Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.

Wimsatt, W. K., & Beardsley, M. C. (1946). The intentional fallacy. *The Sewanee Review, 54*(3), 468–488.

Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. PublicAffairs.