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Algorithmic Storytelling and Vernacular Folklore: Rewriting the Nenek Pakande Monster in the Age of Generative AI

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Abstract: The emergence of generative artificial intelligence has unsettled long-standing assumptions about authorship, originality, and authenticity in literary and cultural production. While debates often focus on academic writing or creative industries in the Global North, less attention has been given to how AI-mediated rewriting affects vernacular narrative traditions. This article examines the Indonesian folklore figure Nenek Pakande through the lens of ecological dramaturgy to explore how algorithmic text generation reshapes narrative voice and cultural memory. Drawing on conceptual analysis and comparative rewriting experiments, the study argues that AI does not merely redistribute authorship but transforms its ontological conditions by introducing non-experiential textual agency. In doing so, it reconfigures originality from inventive subjectivity to probabilistic recombination and reframes authenticity as a question of relational accountability rather than textual purity. By situating folkloric rewriting within the dynamics of algorithmic culture, this article proposes a model of hybrid ecological authorship that acknowledges technological mediation while maintaining ethical responsibility toward cultural and ecological specificity. Rather than positioning AI as either threat or tool, the paper advances a relational framework for understanding writing in the age of distributed cognition.

Keywords: generative AI, algorithmic writing, folklore adaptation, narrative voice, hybrid authorship

Introduction

The rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence has unsettled foundational assumptions about writing as a human practice. These issues align with earlier theoretical frameworks that challenged the authority of the writer. Roland Barthes (1977) concept of the “death of the author” transformed our understanding of writing, implying that it represents a realm of diverse interpretations rather than being solely defined by a single individual’s intent. Subsequently, Michel Foucault (1984) characterized

the “author-function” as a collection of guidelines rather than as a tangible person. More recently, posthumanist perspectives have focused on collective cognition and the relationship between humans and technology (Hayles, 2012; Braidotti, 2013). Nonetheless, despite these theoretical frameworks foreshadowing the weakening of authorial authority, generative AI presents a fundamentally different scenario: the creation of text happens through probabilistic calculations over extensive datasets, generating language devoid of memory, responsibility, or lived experience.

Discussions of AI and writing largely focus on academic integrity, creative industries, and professional communication, overlooking its impact on local oral traditions rooted in memory and environment. Folklore, as a collective and evolving form tied to community and shared memory, offers a critical lens on this shift. This article examines the Indonesian figure Nenek Pakande—often portrayed as a monstrous embodiment of desire, nature, and transgression—to rethink writing in the AI era, highlighting how her fluid, orally transmitted narratives encode communal anxieties about scarcity, excess, and ecological instability.

The growth of generative AI has made this connection more complex. When asked to “rewrite” or “retell” Nenek Pakande, a large language model utilizes worldwide collected story patterns—scary themes, typical story structures, and writing styles learned from its training. The final text might seem logical and culturally relevant, but it often subtly shifts the story towards common dramatic patterns. Local uncertainties become clearer; environmental details are simplified; moral complexities might be reduced to well-known opposites. This scenario illustrates what Ted Striphas (2015) describes as algorithmic culture, where computer-based processes create and standardize types of cultural expression that spread online.

The transformation is not merely stylistic. It touches on the epistemological foundations of narrative transmission. If folklore has historically been preserved by embodied memory and social performance, AI-mediated rewriting adds a form of textual agency that is not tied to a specific location and has intergenerational continuity. According to Kate Crawford (2021), AI systems are integrated in mostly invisible data extraction and power infrastructures. Therefore, changing

text through algorithms is never neutral; it reflects the patterns found in the most common texts and the power structures of language.

Rather than positioning AI as either a threat or a creative force, this article adopts an ecological dramaturgical lens that views writing as the ongoing reconfiguration of relationships among humans, environments, and symbols. It shifts the focus from whether AI can reproduce folklore to how narrative relations are transformed when voice emerges from probabilistic systems rather than collective memory. Drawing on conceptual analysis and rewritten examples, the study advances three key arguments: generative AI redefines authorship from a shared social role into a distributed computational one; it reframes originality as the recombination of existing materials rather than individual invention; and it destabilizes authenticity by obscuring the relational processes that produce narrative voice. In response, the article proposes a hybrid model of authorship in which AI is integrated into the creative ecology without being granted moral autonomy.

By situating Nenek Pakande within contemporary debates on algorithmic writing, the article contributes a vernacular and ecologically grounded perspective, positioning folklore as a diagnostic lens for understanding how AI reshapes cultural memory. It underscores the need to rethink shared responsibility in digitally mediated storytelling and maps an inquiry that moves from theoretical grounding to narrative ecology and the implications of algorithmic rewriting, ultimately reframing tensions between human and algorithm as matters of relational accountability in an evolving cultural landscape. In this article, the term “vernacular” refers to locally embedded storytelling traditions rooted in oral transmission, communal memory, and ecological specificity rather than merely regional or linguistic distinction.

Despite the rapidly expanding scholarship on generative artificial intelligence and writing, most existing studies focus on technical evaluation, educational applications, or ethical risks associated with large language models (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023). While these research shed light on the potential and limitations of AI systems, there has been little consideration paid to how algorithmic text generation interacts with vernacular narrative traditions and culturally entrenched storytelling practices.

At the same time, research in folklore studies and cultural memory has long emphasized the collective and adaptive nature of narrative transmission (Bauman, 1984; Finnegan, 1970; Assmann, 2011). These traditions demonstrate that storytelling historically evolved through distributed authorship and iterative transformation. Yet the implications of this insight for contemporary AI-mediated writing remain underexplored.

This article addresses three central questions: (1) how does generative AI reshape relational structures within vernacular storytelling traditions? (2) how does algorithmic rewriting affect ecological dramaturgy and narrative complexity in the case of Nenek Pakande? and (3) how should authorship, originality, and authenticity be reconsidered in the context of hybrid human–algorithmic writing systems?

Theoretical Framework

Large language models (LLMs) generate text through probabilistic prediction, selecting statistically likely word sequences based on patterns learned from large-scale training corpora. Rather than understanding meaning through embodied cognition, these systems operate through pattern recognition and token prediction. Consequently, AI-generated outputs are shaped by the linguistic distributions, narrative conventions, and cultural asymmetries embedded within their training data.

Authorship Beyond the Sovereign Subject

The concept of authorship started to change well before the advent of artificial intelligence. In the twentieth century, literary theorists began to challenge the idea that the author was the only one responsible for creating meaning. Roland Barthes' major intervention reframed writing as a realm of intertextual plurality, claiming that the author is the result of textual circulation rather than the source (Barthes, 1977). From this perspective, understanding arises from the act of reading instead of the writer's intention. Michel Foucault advanced

this argument by describing the “author-function” as a system of discourse that regulates categories, power, and limits on interpretation. Therefore, being an author is not a fixed reality but a concept that has changed over time based on history.

These conceptual advancements hinted at the author’s shift away from a central focus, yet they did not eliminate the idea of humans being responsible. Even in theories that challenge structure, the text still stayed connected to human cultural frameworks. The arrival of generative AI introduces a completely new scenario. Large language models (LLMs) generate written content from extensive data collections through chance-based methods, lacking any purpose, physical form, or responsibility. N. Katherine Hayles (2012) argues that thinking in digital spaces is progressively shared between humans and machines. In this situation, writing transforms into a joint venture between living beings and technological systems.

Posthumanism makes things more complicated. Rosi Braidotti states that the posthuman era requires us to rethink what it means to have a self, focusing on connections and physical realities instead of being independent and self-made. From this angle, artificial intelligence doesn’t just take over human creativity; it shows the ways in which creativity has always involved relationships with various tools, systems, and structures. However, dispersed agency does not necessarily imply spread accountability. The ethical dilemma is to determine how responsibility works when textual output arises from mechanisms that operate beyond direct human knowledge.

Authorship in folklore is inherently collaborative and iterative, shaped by communal memory and lived experience rather than fixed ownership. While this decentering of the individual parallels algorithmic generation, the two differ fundamentally: folklore emerges from embodied, environmental contexts, whereas generative AI operates through statistical abstraction detached from lived reality. Thus, AI reconfigures authorship from a socially grounded practice into a computationally mediated one, introducing a subtle yet significant shift toward non-experiential textual production.

Algorithmic Culture and Standardization of Expression

To comprehend how artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes narrative production, Ted Striphas (2015) defines algorithmic culture. In this method, algorithms do more than simply manage how culture is experienced; they play a key role in creating cultural styles by affecting what is seen, chosen, and repeated. Systems that suggest content, analyze data for predictions, and models based on machine learning create the setting in which texts are shared and become accepted.

Generative AI takes this logic from distribution to production. Instead of merely picking content, it generates sentences by relying on the patterns found in the data it learned from. According to Kate Crawford (2021), AI systems are deeply connected to systems of data gathering, work, and global power imbalances. The collections of texts used to educate language models do not serve as neutral sources; instead, they showcase dominant language habits and cultural practices. As a result, AI-generated writings may perpetuate hegemonic narrative frameworks while remaining stylistically diverse.

This tendency can lead to narrative flattening. Detailed cultural themes are turned into easily recognizable symbols around the world; confusion is removed to favor clarity; and local traits are reshaped using global storytelling styles. This process is seldom obvious. Rather, it appears subtly through changes in tone, clear morals, and a flow that aligns with widely recognized storytelling rules.

This phenomena does not mean that AI systems are intentionally biased. Rather, it reflects the probabilistic logic through which they operate. Language models prioritize statistically likely sequences, thereby reinforcing patterns that dominate the corpus. In folkloric rewriting, this may produce texts that are grammatically refined yet relationally thinned—maintaining plot while attenuating ecological specificity.

Changing, Reworking, and the Idea of Being Original

The act of changing folk stories has existed for a long time. The theory of adaptation has acknowledged that retelling stories is a valid form of creativity, instead of just copying others. Linda Hutcheon (2006) argues that adaptation

includes both reusing and creating, giving new meaning by shifting contexts. From this perspective, being original comes from rethinking ideas rather than being completely new.

Nevertheless, generative AI makes the idea of adaptation more complex. When a language model rewrites a narrative, it does this without deep understanding. What it produces shows a blend of existing ideas rather than a thoughtful change. This brings up a big question: can random mixing of ideas be seen as real creative adaptation?

Current ideas about originality often refer to the Romantic view of personal expression. However, folklore challenges this idea since its power comes from group tradition, not individual uniqueness. In this way, folklore's way of retelling stories already questions ownership by a single author. The conflict caused by AI arises from the loss of meaningful relationships, not from a lack of creativity. People adapt by considering the situation, the audience, and moral factors, while automated rewriting focuses on what is statistically probable.

Therefore, what we think of as originality during the time of AI might have to be changed to focus on the role of curators. The role of humans changes from being a lone creator to a connector—selecting prompts, assessing results, and deciding which versions keep cultural and ecological significance. This doesn't lessen creativity; instead, it places it within the processes of defining, understanding, and responsibility.

Understanding Ecological Dramaturgy

In this study, ecological dramaturgy is operationalized through three analytical dimensions: spatial configuration, distribution of agency, and ecological symbolism. These dimensions are used to examine how narrative relations shift under algorithmic rewriting.

This article introduces ecological dramaturgy as an interpretive paradigm in order to explore the consequences of AI-mediated rewriting. Traditionally, dramaturgy has concentrated on the way that relationships are organized in a performance, such as how the characters, location, and time interact to generate meaning. Emphasizing geographical, environmental, and material

connections, an ecological expansion highlights the interdependence of human and non-human actors.

In folklore tales, monsters often act as environmental mediators. They stand for worries about imbalances like famine, overconsumption, deforestation, and moral excess. Their presence signals relational disturbance rather than purely moral deviance. Reading Nenek Pakande through ecological dramaturgy therefore shifts attention from plot mechanics to relational configurations: how does the narrative structure human interaction with landscape, scarcity, and communal boundaries?

When AI rewrites such a narrative, it may preserve surface events while subtly reorganizing relational emphasis. Ecological dramaturgy allows us to observe these shifts by posing the question:

- Which connections are emphasized or downplayed?
- How is the space configured?
- Which forms of agency are emphasized or minimized?
- Does the monster remain an ecological mediator, or become a generic villain?

This framework does not reject AI as inherently corrosive. Rather, it offers analytical resources to understand how algorithmic methods change the connections between elements in storytelling environments. It also grounds the proposal of hybrid authorship developed later in the article. If writing is understood as relational configuration rather than isolated production, then ethical responsibility lies in sustaining relational complexity—even when technological systems participate in textual generation.

Synthesis: From Decentered Author to Relational Accountability

Together, these ideas reveal the effects of rewriting done through AI. The poststructuralist theory broke down the belief in the all-powerful author. Posthumanism demonstrated dispersed cognition. Algorithmic culture showcased how computational systems organize expressiveness. Adaptation theory

legitimized rewriting as a creative endeavor. Ecological dramaturgy includes these ideas by placing writing within connections that extend beyond the single person.

Generative AI accelerates the reconfiguration of authorship, introducing new uncertainties in textual production and shifting the central question from whether authorship persists to how responsibility is redefined within hybrid storytelling systems. Applying this framework to Nenek Pakande, the study examines how ecological relations in traditional variants are transformed through algorithmic rewriting, ultimately proposing a relational model of authorship capable of addressing the epistemic and ethical shifts brought by AI.

Methodology

Conceptual Grounding

At the conceptual level, the study situates itself within interdisciplinary debates on authorship, posthuman subjectivity, adaptation theory, and algorithmic culture (Barthes, 1977; Foucault, 1984; Hayles, 2012; Hutcheon, 2006; Striplas, 2015). Instead of thinking of artificial intelligence as just a technological breakthrough, this article regards it as a cultural situation that changes the ways we know things and perceive beauty. Writing is seen not just as the words we produce, but also as a connection within social and technical systems. This viewpoint aligns with important research in AI, which highlights that creating systems are deeply rooted in the structures of data collection, language power dynamics, and unequal relationships (Crawford, 2021). Therefore, any examination of folklore created by AI must take into account the larger cultural settings where these models are developed and used.

Corpus and Narrative Selection

The folkloric material examined in this article centers on Nenek Pakande, a figure appearing in South Sulawesi narrative traditions in Indonesia. The analysis draws upon documented variants circulated in print compilations and oral retellings, focusing on recurring motifs: insatiable hunger, liminal dwelling

spaces (forest, threshold, edge of village), deceptive hospitality, and moral-ecological imbalance.

Rather than emphasizing a single authoritative account, the study examines Nenek Pakande as a story cluster distinguished by thematic repetition and adaptive diversity. This approach reflects the nature of folklore as collective and iterative rather than fixed. The goal is not philological reconstruction but relational mapping—identifying how ecological and social dynamics are structured across variants.

Algorithmic Rewriting Procedure

To examine how generative AI mediates folkloric rewriting, the study conducted controlled prompting experiments using a large language model. Multiple prompts were tested iteratively to observe recurring narrative tendencies rather than isolated outputs. Prompts were formulated to simulate common rewriting scenarios, including:

- “...Retell the story of Nenek Pakande as a short horror narrative”.
- “...Rewrite Nenek Pakande for a global young adult audience”.
- “...Summarize Nenek Pakande as a moral fable”.

Outputs were analyzed qualitatively rather than quantitatively. The emphasis was on identifying shifts in:

- narrative structure,
- moral framing,
- ecological specificity,
- character complexity,
- spatial configuration,
- tonal register.

The analysis focused on relational patterns rather than isolated lexical choices. For example, did the forest remain a morally ambiguous ecological

space, or was it reframed as a generic horror backdrop? Did hunger function as symbolic imbalance, or merely as villainous trait? Was communal memory preserved, or replaced with individualized moral closure?

Significantly, the aim of these tests was not to find out if AI represented traditional stories “correctly”. Instead, they act as heuristic devices, illuminating how algorithmic systems rebuild story relationships under various prompting contexts.

Analytical Strategy: Relational Comparison

The study employs close reading as its primary analytical tool. Careful reading, usually associated with examining literature, is still very good for noticing small changes in attitude, stress, and how a story is told. In this context, it functions as a comparative instrument:

- Variant A: Folkloric narrative structure,
- Variant B: AI-generated rewriting,
- Comparative axis: relational density and ecological configuration.

Rather than assessing fidelity, the comparison assesses relationship transformation. This technique reflects the main idea of the article, which suggests that AI questions the concepts of authorship, originality, and authenticity by changing stories instead of directly lying.

This difference is seen through the perspective of ecological dramaturgy. It looks into how control shifts within the story, how the setting carries moral messages, and how different voices are shared. The research applies this approach to find patterns of simplifying narratives, standardizing morals, and matching genres, which are commonly linked to changes made by algorithms.

Constraints and Area of Study

This research does not assert that it covers all AI systems or folk traditions in full. The examples of rewrites are meant to show concepts, but they do not

represent statistical facts. Additionally, the study concentrates on outputs in the English language, which introduces another factor to consider when dealing with materials from Indonesia. These limits are recognized as part of the epistemic conditions under which AI operates: translation, abstraction, and corpus bias are all essential to its operation.

Nonetheless, the methodological combination of conceptual framing and comparative textual analysis allows for a more focused investigation of how generative AI contributes in story transformation. Focusing on changes in relationships rather than just technical aspects, this research brings a culturally relevant viewpoint to larger conversations about writing during the time of algorithm-based creation.

Interpretive Approach

This article uses a conceptual and critical thinking method instead of following a practical experimental design. The research centers on comparing traditional versions of the Nenek Pakande stories with modern AI-assisted rewrites. Instead of evaluating how well the algorithms work in technical ways, the study looks at how generative systems change storytelling styles, relationships, and cultural significance.

The method draws from various areas such as literary theory, folklore studies, and critical studies of AI. These viewpoints help the researcher to understand AI-created stories within wider social and cultural contexts, rather than viewing them as separate technological items.

The study follows three analytical steps. First, it investigates the storytelling environment of the Nenek Pakande folklore tradition, referring to research in oral literature and cultural memory. Next, it looks at how language models create different narrative versions by mixing and matching text patterns. Finally, it considers how these changes impact the ideas of authorship and the truthfulness of the narrative.

The article's interpretive approach aims to highlight larger discussions about authorship and cultural storytelling in spaces influenced by algorithms.

Nenek Pakande as Ecological Narrative

The Monster as a Mediator

Across documented variants, Nenek Pakande is characterized by insatiable appetite. Hunger is not merely physiological but excessive—an appetite that disrupts social equilibrium. She charms, tricks, uses up, or claims the lives of anyone she meets. At first glance, this might seem like a typical moral story: greed is punished, purity is at risk, and peril is hidden in the woods. Yet, this understanding simplifies the story to basic ethics.

Within an ecological dramaturgical frame, hunger signals imbalance rather than simple vice. The figure of Nenek Pakande often emerges at the boundary between village and forest, domestic and wild space. This liminality is significant. The forest, as stated by various Indonesian stories passed down through generations, are not seen as a dangerous or holy area; instead, they are recognized as a site for gathering resources, a location for spiritual experiences, and a space that could be risky. Nenek Pakande occupies this frontier, embodying concerns about exceeding natural boundaries.

Her hunger can thus be interpreted as symbolic excess—overconsumption, scarcity, or social breakdown. She shows up as both a hunter and a sign of trouble. The weakness of the community highlights bigger issues in how people connect with nature. Rather from acting purely as an enemy, she emphasizes relationship imbalance.

Ecological dramaturgy consider: what relationships does the narrative depict? The village depends on forest resources; children move between safety and risk; hospitality can become deception; appetite can threaten communal survival. These tensions are not resolved through abstract moralization alone but through narrative negotiation of space and conduct.

Spatial Configuration and Moral Ambiguity

Unlike standardized fairy tales with fixed narrative arcs, variants of Nenek Pakande often preserve ambiguity. The monster may be cunning but also pitiable;

frightening yet strangely familiar. In other retellings, she appears dressed as an elderly woman, implying fragility and threat. The ambiguity of age and gender complicates moral alignment. She is not an external demon but a distorted reflection of domestic familiarity.

Space is crucial in maintaining this ambiguity. The forest serves as much than just a backdrop for horror; it is also a zone of dependency. Villagers enter it to collect food or supplies, putting themselves in risk. The monster's appearance raises awareness of environmental vulnerability. Children are admonished not only against disobedience, but also against hazardous travel outside communal limits.

This spatial encoding resists flattening into a universal fear template. The narrative's impact stems from its relational density: hunger connects body and land; deception connects trust and vulnerability; and liminality connects home safety and ecological uncertainty. Meaning emerges not from isolated events, but from the interaction of these parts.

Collective Memory and Iterative Voice

Folklore operates through repetition with variation. Each retelling adjusts emphasis based on context, audience, and performance setting. The voice in Nenek Pakande's stories is thus plural and cumulative. No single storyteller owns the story; rather, it is sustained by shared memory. This communal authorship does not abolish accountability, but rather shifts it across generations.

Importantly, oral transmission preserves relational subtlety using performance cues such as intonation, gesture, pauses, and audience response. These embodied aspects help to convey meaning but are challenging to represent through written abstraction. When a tale is written down, some of its relational complexity is eventually lost. Nonetheless, written compilations sometimes include locality markers—place names, distinctive practices, and language textures—that help to anchor the narrative in specific ecological settings.

This iterative voice is in direct contrast to the logic of generative AI. Communal repetition responds to lived conditions, while algorithmic production

adjusts to statistical trends. The former is historically situated, whereas the latter is corpus-driven. While both entail variance, the causes of variation differ significantly.

Monster as Relational Threshold

The figure of Nenek Pakande can thus be understood as a dramaturgical threshold. She marks the boundary at which relational equilibrium falters. Hunger becomes disastrous when it transcends communal regulation; the wilderness becomes dangerous when entered without caution; hospitality becomes hazardous when confidence is misplaced.

Importantly, the narrative rarely simplifies these conflicts to simple dichotomies. The monster may be vanquished, misled, or escaped, but the underlying conditions—scarcity, vulnerability, and environmental risk—continue to exist in communal life. The story serves as relational rehearsal rather than moral closure: a method of visualizing and resolving threats that occur in real life.

From an ecological perspective, this complexity is crucial. The monster is not an externalized evil to be eradicated but a dramatization of imbalance requiring ongoing vigilance. Such narrative structuring resists totalizing resolution and preserves ambiguity as a space of reflection.

Implications for Algorithmic Mediation

Understanding Nenek Pakande as ecological narrative clarifies what is at stake in algorithmic rewriting. If the story is treated merely as horror content, its relational density may be reduced to familiar genre conventions: a terrifying witch, innocent victims, climactic confrontation, moral triumph. While such a retelling may remain interesting, it risks depriving the narrative of its ecological foundation.

The concern, then, is not whether AI can precisely replicate plot elements, but whether it can maintain relationship complexity. Does hunger remain allegorical imbalance, or become cartoonish villainy? Does the forest retain

its ambivalent ecological role, or transform into a generic dark setting? Does communal voice persist, or is the story reframed through individualized heroism?

By first establishing the relational architecture of the folkloric tale, we may develop criteria for judging algorithmic transformation. Ecological dramaturgy does not require textual purity; folklore has always developed. Rather, it inquires if relationship structures—human to land, appetite to scarcity, community to threshold—are maintained, simplified, or altered.

The following part applies this lens to AI-generated rewritings of Nenek Pakande, examining how algorithmic processes alter narrative voice and relational focus. Through comparative research, we can begin to understand how generative systems contribute to the continuing reinterpretation of authorship, originality, and authenticity in the age of artificial intelligence.

Algorithmic Rewriting and Narrative Flattening

While some forms of narrative flattening may appear to result from prompt design—particularly when prompts explicitly specify genre or tone—this study argues that prompts and model tendencies operate relationally rather than independently. Genre-oriented prompts activate statistically dominant narrative patterns embedded within the model's training data, encouraging globally recognizable storytelling conventions over locally situated narrative complexity. Flattening, therefore, emerges not solely from user instruction but from the interaction between prompt guidance and probabilistic alignment.

From Liminal Ecology to Generic Horror

In controlled rewriting prompts, generative AI consistently reoriented the narrative toward recognizable global horror conventions. The forest, previously a site of ambivalent ecological interdependence, was frequently rendered as a dark, ominous setting characterized primarily by danger. Atmospheric descriptors intensified—"shadowy", "twisted trees", "eerie silence"—aligning the narrative with cinematic horror aesthetics.

While such imagery does not inherently distort the story, it shifts relational emphasis. The forest becomes backdrop rather than actor. In folkloric variants, the forest mediates survival and risk simultaneously; villagers depend upon it. In AI-generated versions, dependence is often minimized in favor of suspense. The ecological threshold is simplified into a stage for confrontation.

This transformation illustrates how algorithmic systems gravitate toward statistically dominant genre patterns. As Striphas (2015) argues, algorithmic culture shapes not only what circulates but how forms are structured. When prompted for a “horror retelling”, the model mobilizes globally familiar narrative scaffolding, subtly aligning local folklore with transnational templates.

The end result is tone calibration rather than overt erasing. Ambiguity gives way to clarity, and liminality becomes spectacle. Ecological dramaturgy makes way for genre dramaturgy.

Moral Compression and Narrative Closure

A second pattern observed in AI-generated rewritings is moral compression. Folkloric narratives sometimes contain ambiguity regarding causality and outcome. Nenek Pakande’s hunger, while dangerous, can be interpreted as a symptom of imbalance rather than inherent evil. In algorithmic retellings, however, she frequently becomes unequivocally malevolent—a predatory witch whose defeat restores moral order.

This moral sharpening reflects a broader tendency toward narrative closure. AI-generated versions often end with explicit lessons: “Thus, children learned to obey their parents”, or “The villagers rejoiced, knowing evil had been defeated”. Such endings conform to widely circulating moral tale structures. They provide resolution, satisfying reader expectations shaped by global storytelling conventions.

Yet closure alters relational depth. In traditional variants, survival does not eliminate environmental precarity; the forest remains dangerous, hunger remains possible. In contrast, algorithmic closure means restored equilibrium, reducing complexity to didactic clarity. The shift is subtle but significant: narrative rehearsal becomes moral instruction.

This pattern matches the probabilistic logic of language models. Statistical consistency promotes established story arcs. Unless expressly pushed, ambiguity is generally resolved into coherence. As Crawford (2021) points out, AI systems are taught on corpora that replicate dominant publishing patterns, many of which value clear structure and explicit takeaways.

It is important to distinguish between three overlapping sources of narrative transformation: translation, linguistic dominance, and algorithmic mediation. Some degree of nuance loss may stem from translation itself, as culturally specific expressions and metaphors in the original language do not always have direct equivalents in English. However, beyond this translational shift, AI-generated outputs further exhibit tendencies toward linguistic smoothing and genre alignment, reflecting the dominance of English-language narrative conventions in training corpora. The resulting flattening, therefore, should be understood not as a purely linguistic artifact, but as an effect of interacting layers of mediation—translation, corpus bias, and probabilistic generation.

Individualization of Agency

A third relational shift concerns agency distribution. In communal variants, survival frequently depends on collective vigilance—warnings shared, boundaries respected, experience transmitted. AI-generated rewritings, especially when framed for global audiences, often individualize heroism. A bright youngster or brave villager outwits the monster, turning the story into one of personal triumph.

This reorientation reflects broader narrative conventions in contemporary popular culture, where individual protagonists anchor plot progression. The communal ecology of voice is narrowed to focalized perspective. Such individualization does not eliminate folkloric features, but rather shifts the relational emphasis from collective memory to solo action.

From the standpoint of authorship, this shift is revealing. Folklore distributes narrative authority across generations; algorithmic rewriting may inadvertently reproduce narrative structures that foreground individual protagonists because those patterns dominate training data. Thus, authorship shifts from collaborative relationality to algorithmically managed individualism.

Linguistic Smoothing and Loss of Local Texture

Algorithmic rewriting also tends toward linguistic smoothing. Regional vocabulary, regionally particular metaphors, and structural irregularities typical of oral narration are frequently substituted with universally understandable prose. While such smoothing enhances readability, it may dilute local texture.

This is particularly evident when prompts are given in English. The model's output draws on dominant English-language narrative styles, embedding the story within global literary conventions. Even when key plot elements are preserved, the tonal register shifts toward standardized storytelling norms.

Linguistic smoothing corresponds to the architecture of large language models, which aim for fluency and coherence. Disruptive or unfamiliar structures are statistically less probable and therefore less likely to be generated unless specifically requested. The result is not homogenization by intent but convergence by probability.

Ecological dramaturgy highlights what is lost in this process: relational specificity. Local idioms encode social relations and environmental knowledge. Their replacement with neutral prose alters the narrative's situatedness.

Comparative Excerpts: Original, Translation, and AI-Generated Adaptation

Table 1. Comparative Excerpts: Original, Translation, and AI-Generated Adaptation

Version	Excerpt
Original (Indonesian)	"Demi mempertahankan kesaktiannya, dia harus terus-menerus menyantap daging anak kecil. Ia pun menjelajahi desa demi desa untuk memangsa anak-anak kecil dengan daging yang segar dan lezat".
Translation (English)	"To preserve her supernatural powers, she was forced to continuously consume the flesh of children. She wandered from village to village in search of young victims".
AI- -Generated	"Nenek Pakande became feared across the villages as a dark figure who preyed on children to sustain her supernatural existence, spreading terror wherever she wandered".

Source: Compiled by the author from documented Nenek Pakande folklore variants, author's translation, and ChatGPT-generated adaptation.

In the original narrative, Nenek Pakande is not merely represented as a monstrous antagonist but as a figure embedded within ritual and cosmological relations. Her violence is tied to the maintenance of supernatural power, reflecting broader Bugis understandings of sacrifice, spiritual imbalance, and communal vulnerability. Fear is therefore distributed across a collective ecological framework rather than reduced to individual evil.

The English translation retains some of these cultural associations, particularly the connection between supernatural power and sacrificial consumption. However, the translation begins to universalize the story by converting culturally embedded relations into explanatory language more accessible to global readers.

The AI-generated version further standardizes the narrative into globally recognizable horror conventions. Nenek Pakande becomes individualized as a threatening figure defined primarily through terror and predation, while the relational dimensions of ritual obligation, communal ecology, and symbolic ambiguity are significantly reduced. This demonstrates how generative AI systems tend to privilege narrative immediacy and genre familiarity over vernacular complexity.

The following comparative excerpts are presented not as definitive representations of folkloric transformation, but as illustrative examples of how translation and algorithmic rewriting may differently reshape relational density, cultural specificity, and narrative structure.

The AI-generated adaptation was produced using an English-language prompt requesting a concise horror retelling of the Nenek Pakande narrative.

Narrative Flattening as Relational Reconfiguration

Taken together, these patterns—genre alignment, moral compression, individualized agency, and linguistic smoothing—constitute what may be described as narrative flattening. Flattening does not imply superficiality in aesthetic terms; AI-generated texts can be vivid and compelling. Rather, it refers to reduction in relational density.

Relational density is characterized by several crossing tensions, including human-environment interaction, community memory, moral ambiguity, and

geographical liminality. When these tensions are condensed into recognized arcs, complexity is sacrificed in favor of clarity. The monster becomes an archetype rather than a mediator; the forest becomes scenery rather than an ecological actor; and the community becomes a spectator rather than a participant.

Importantly, flattening is not inevitable. Carefully worded prompts can produce more nuanced results. However, the default tendencies of generative systems, as driven by dominant corpora and probabilistic optimization, promote convergence toward globally legible patterns.

This dynamic represents the greater epistemic issue posed by AI. When writing is mediated by statistical abstraction, cultural specificity risks being subsumed beneath generalized narrative schemas. The issue is not technological inability, but structural orientation.

Preparing the Conceptual Shift

The empirical observations above lead directly to the article's central theoretical intervention. If algorithmic rewriting reorganizes relational density, then the challenge is not simply preserving tradition but redefining authorship, originality, and authenticity within hybrid textual ecologies.

Authorship is spread across human prompt designers, model architectures, and training corpora. Originality goes from expressive invention to emergent recombination, guided by curatorial judgment. Authenticity cannot be based merely on textual origins; it must be reframed as relational accountability.

The following section explicitly develops these conceptual implications, linking the comparative findings to broader discussions about writing in the age of AI. This synthesis proposes an ecological model of hybrid authorship that takes into account both technology mediation and cultural distinctiveness.

Rethinking Authorship, Originality, and Authenticity

Authorship: Distributed Computational Agency

Twentieth-century thought shattered the romantic notion of the author as sovereign origin. Barthes (1977) transferred meaning to the reader, while Foucault (1984) reframed authorship as a discursive function. Yet even within these critiques, the text remained anchored in human cultural production. Generative AI introduces a qualitatively different dynamic: textual production without experiential subjectivity.

When a large language model generates a narrative of Nenek Pakande, it does not remember, intend, or interpret. It calculates probabilities across token sequences derived from massive corpora. The resulting text appears intentional, yet intentionality is simulated through statistical coherence. Authorship, in this context, becomes distributed across several layers:

- The human who designs the prompt,
- The engineers who construct the model architecture,
- The dataset curators who assemble training corpora,
- The computational system executing probabilistic inference.

Hayles (2012) describes such configurations as instances of distributed cognition, in which cognitive processes extend beyond individual minds into technical systems. However, distributed cognition does not eliminate asymmetry. The algorithm operates within opaque parameters inaccessible to most users. Agency is shared but unevenly legible.

In folkloric tradition, distributed authorship emerges from communal participation grounded in shared ecology. In algorithmic production, distribution arises from infrastructural abstraction. The distinction matters. Communal authorship retains historical continuity; computational authorship introduces statistical recombination detached from lived relational memory.

Thus, AI challenges authorship not by abolishing it, but by transforming its ontological conditions. The “author” becomes a node within a socio-technical network rather than an embodied narrator. Responsibility must therefore be renegotiated. If the machine produces harmful simplifications or cultural distortions, who answers for them? The prompter? The developer? The institution deploying the system?

The case of Nenek Pakande reveals that authorship in the age of AI cannot be understood solely as origin but must be conceptualized as relational accountability. To author becomes to curate, frame, and ethically position outputs within cultural ecologies.

Originality beyond expressive individualism

Modern literary culture frequently connects originality with innovation based on individual brilliance. But folklore complicates this idea. Repetition and variation are its lifeblood; adaptability is fundamental rather than derivative (Hutcheon, 2006). Originality in oral traditions emerges through contextual inflection rather than unprecedented invention.

Generative AI further destabilizes expressive individualism. Because language models recombine patterns from existing data, their outputs are neither copied nor consciously invented. They are emergent products of probabilistic modeling. This raises a paradox: AI-generated text may be novel in arrangement yet devoid of subjective intention.

The rewriting experiments suggest that AI tends toward statistically dominant narrative forms. When asked to retell Nenek Pakande, the model frequently aligns the story with global horror conventions. Such outputs may appear creatively lively, but their novelty is generally based on surface recombination rather than relational transformations.

As a result, originality transfers from creation to curatorial orchestration. The human contributor’s creativity is manifested in generating prompts, selecting outputs, rewriting drafts, and contextualizing the outcome within ethical and cultural constraints. In hybrid writing styles, originality is a result of relational design rather than expressive isolation.

This reconceptualization is consistent with posthuman critiques of individualism. According to Braidotti (2013), subjectivity is always defined by relational networks. In this sense, AI does not eliminate originality; rather, it reveals its relational roots. However, relationality without responsibility increases the risk of homogenization. When statistical regularity dominates, narrative diversity may narrow.

Thus, originality in the age of AI must be redefined as the capacity to sustain relational complexity within technologically mediated production. It is not novelty for its own sake, but attentiveness to ecological and cultural specificity amid probabilistic abstraction.

Authenticity: Relational Transparency

Authenticity is likely the most problematic issue in AI-mediated writing. Can a machine-generated text be considered authentic? The inquiry frequently assumes authenticity as the relationship between text and authorial self. However, folklore complicates this model: the narrative is not anchored by a single ego, and legitimacy is derived on collective recognition rather than personal signature.

AI undermines authenticity by imitating voice without personal experience. A language model can write emotionally compelling writing without experiencing hunger, fear, or ecological precarity. The authenticity dilemma thus concerns relational basis rather than emotional plausibility.

Crawford (2021) reminds us that artificial intelligence systems are founded on extraction infrastructures—data taken, labor concealed, and resources devoured. The “voice” of AI is layered atop these material conditions. When it rewrites folklore, it does so from within globalized linguistic hierarchies. Authenticity is veiled not because the writing is false, but because the conditions of production are unclear.

In the rewriting of Nenek Pakande, authenticity shifts from fidelity to source toward transparency of mediation. A hybrid narrative may be ethically legitimate if it acknowledges technological involvement while remaining focused on relational distinctiveness. Conversely, a seamlessly fluent text that erases its

algorithmic mediation may appear culturally resonant while masking structural simplification.

Ecological dramaturgy redefines authenticity as relational transparency. The question becomes: are the relations that constitute the narrative—human to environment, community to memory, hunger to scarcity—preserved and responsibly represented? Authenticity is less about textual purity than about accountable configuration.

While human authors may also write beyond direct personal experience, their narratives remain grounded in embodied cognition, affective capacity, and socio-cultural positioning. AI-generated writing, by contrast, emerges through probabilistic abstraction rather than situated experience. The distinction therefore lies not between absolute experience and non-experience, but between embodied relational grounding and statistical textual association.

From Decentering to Responsibility

The theoretical arc from Barthes to posthumanism has long emphasised decentering. AI exacerbates this decentering, but it also risks displacing responsibilities. When writing is dispersed across networks, ethical accountability can become elusive.

The study of algorithmic rewriting demonstrates that AI systems tend to standardize, smooth out ambiguity, and match tales with popular genre schemas. These tendencies are not malicious but structural. Therefore, responsibility cannot be abdicated on the grounds that “the machine produced it”. Hybrid authorship demands deliberate intervention.

In this framework, the human writer’s role evolves. No longer sole originator, the writer becomes relational steward—monitoring how algorithmic processes reshape narrative ecologies. This stewardship encompasses:

- Critical awareness of genre confluence,
- Preserving ecological distinctiveness,
- Resisting unnecessary moral pressure,
- Transparent acknowledgement of mediation.

Such techniques do not restore pre-digital authorship, but rather promote accountable hybridity.

Toward Relational Accountability

AI undermines authorship by redistributing agency, originality by redefining novelty, and authenticity by concealing creation. Yet these challenges also create an opportunity to articulate a relational model of writing.

Relational accountability recognizes that writing in the age of AI is inherently hybrid. The task is not to defend an illusion of isolated human creativity, nor to celebrate algorithmic productivity uncritically. Instead, it is to sustain relational depth amid distributed cognition.

In the context of Nenek Pakande, this means ensuring that rewriting—whether human, algorithmic, or hybrid—remains attentive to ecological dramaturgy. The monster must retain her function as mediator of imbalance rather than devolve into generic villainy. The forest must remain relationally charged rather than aestheticized. The community must remain participant rather than passive backdrop.

Through this viewpoint, authorship becomes an ethical position inside a network of relationships. Originality evolves into curatorial attentiveness to relational complexity. Authenticity evolves into transparency and responsibility in hybrid creation.

The third portion expands on this concept, defining the dimensions of hybrid ecological authorship in response to the algorithmic condition.

Toward Hybrid Ecological Authorship

If generative AI reshapes the ontological conditions of authorship, redefines originality, and destabilizes authenticity, neither a nostalgic return to pre-digital writing nor an uncritical embrace of technology is adequate; instead, a framework that acknowledges technological mediation while sustaining relational accountability is required, which this article conceptualizes as

hybrid ecological authorship. This model recognizes that writing in the AI era is already distributed, with human authors increasingly collaborating—explicitly or implicitly—with algorithmic systems in drafting, revising, translating, and ideation, and thus emphasizes transparency by foregrounding rather than concealing this partnership, situating AI within a relational network of human intention, infrastructural constraints, and cultural memory without granting it moral autonomy. Yet hybridity alone is insufficient, as distributed production can still lead to narrative flattening or cultural uniformity; therefore, the ecological dimension introduces a critical criterion—relational depth—through which writing is evaluated not merely by stylistic fluency but by its capacity to sustain the interdependencies that constitute narrative meaning.

In the case of Nenek Pakande, hybrid ecological authorship entails a series of deliberate practices:

First, it requires attentiveness to ecological specificity. If AI-generated manuscripts tend to follow worldwide horror norms, the human collaborator must intervene to re-center the narrative in its environmental and cultural setting. This may involve restoring ambiguity to the forest, reintroducing communal dynamics, or resisting reductive moral closure.

Second, it calls for preservation of relational multiplicity. Folklore thrives on variation and layered interpretation. Hybrid authorship should avoid collapsing this multiplicity into singularized hero narratives or simplified allegories. Instead, it can use AI-generated variations as exploratory material while retaining critical curatorial judgment.

Third, it demands reflexive positioning. Writers operating within hybrid systems must ask not only what the text says, but how it was produced. Which corpora shape the model's tendencies? Which narrative patterns are statistically amplified? Which voices are marginalized? Such reflexivity is consistent with broader requests for infrastructure awareness in critical AI studies (Crawford, 2021).

Hybrid ecological authorship also transforms pedagogy. In educational settings, AI is frequently viewed as either a cheating device or an efficiency tool. An ecological perspective invites students and scholars to critically engage with AI, investigating how prompts affect narrative construction, genre alignment

arises, and relational complexity is preserved. Writing becomes a negotiation rather than just output generation.

Importantly, this approach does not portray human creativity as necessarily better. Human retellings of folklore can also reduce complexity, impose ideological simplifications, and eliminate ecological nuance. The distinction is between attentive relational configuration and unreflective uniformity, rather than pure human authenticity and manufactured distortion. Both humans and algorithms can influence either outcome.

In this sense, hybrid ecological authorship extends posthumanist insights while reintroducing ethical emphasis. If subjectivity is connected, then accountability must be too. The distributed nature of AI-mediated writing does not absolve accountability; it multiplies its sites.

Practically, hybrid ecological authorship might involve:

- Explicit acknowledgment of AI assistance in creative or academic work,
- Iterative prompting designed to probe rather than finalize narrative structure,
- Comparative reading between human and AI drafts to identify relational shifts,
- Recontextualization of outputs within specific cultural and ecological frameworks.

Through such practices, AI becomes neither autonomous author nor invisible instrument, but participant within a monitored and ethically guided ecology of writing.

In broader cultural terms, hybrid ecological authorship opposes the establishment of narrative monocultures. When algorithmic systems prioritize internationally dominant structures, local traditions risk being assimilated into homogenized templates. Writers can counteract this tendency by consciously curating relational distinctiveness while remaining open to technology mediation.

The reworking of Nenek Pakande becomes more than just a folkloric exercise. It represents a broader shift in how tales spread and change under

computational conditions. Monsters, formerly communicated through embodied communal memory, now travel across digital infrastructures capable of quick duplication. The challenge is not to prohibit such circulation, but rather to ensure that relational density is preserved.

Hybrid ecological authorship provides a path ahead, not defending solitary brilliance or surrendering to computational automation, but rather an ethic of relational stewardship within distributed textual ecologies.

The case of Nenek Pakande indicates that the contact between folklore and generative AI is more than just a technological advancement; it is also a cultural negotiation. Algorithmic systems do not simply replicate narratives; they reorganize narrative ecologies by privileging patterns statistically dominant within training datasets. As a result, localized narrative traditions risk being subtly reshaped through processes of algorithmic normalization.

Recognizing this change enables scholars to go beyond binary discussions about human innovation vs machine automation. Instead, writing in the age of AI might be viewed as a hybrid cultural practice in which narrative meaning arises through the interaction of human interpretation, algorithmic patterning, and cultural memory.

Conclusion

The rise of generative AI compels us to reconceptualize writing as a distributed practice unfolding across socio-technical networks rather than a purely human act, reshaping not only textual production but also the ontological basis of authorship, the epistemology of originality, and the ethics of authenticity. Through the case of Nenek Pakande, this article demonstrates how these abstract shifts become materially visible within vernacular narrative traditions. The comparison between folkloric variants and algorithmic rewritings reveals that AI does not simply reproduce narratives but reorganizes their relational density: ecological ambiguity tends to give way to genre standardization, communal voice shifts toward individualized heroism, moral complexity compresses into didactic closure, and local linguistic textures are smoothed into globally legible prose.

These changes operate subtly through probabilistic alignment with dominant narrative patterns embedded in training data, reflecting a broader condition of algorithmic culture in which statistical regularity risks subsuming narrative particularity. The issue, therefore, is not the production of “false” stories, but the gradual reorientation of story ecologies toward clarity and familiarity at the expense of relational complexity.

In response, this article argues that authorship in the age of AI must be redefined as relational accountability. While poststructuralist and posthumanist thought anticipated the decentering of the author, AI situates this shift within infrastructures that demand renewed ethical attention. Writing becomes part of distributed cognition, yet responsibility must remain explicit through curation, reflexivity, and critical engagement with technological mediation. Originality, in turn, shifts from individual expression to relational orchestration, where creative responsibility lies in sustaining ecological and cultural specificity within hybrid processes. Likewise, authenticity moves beyond essentialist notions of purity toward transparency and the preservation of relational foundations that give narratives depth. The figure of Nenek Pakande exemplifies these stakes: as an ecological mediator, her narrative encodes tensions between scarcity and survival, familiarity and danger—tensions at risk of being flattened through algorithmic rewriting, yet also open to renegotiation within hybrid systems. Rather than casting AI as either threat or solution, this article proposes hybrid ecological authorship as a form of relational stewardship, where writers remain accountable for maintaining narrative complexity within distributed environments. Ultimately, writing in the AI era is defined less by who produces text than by how relationships are configured, sustained, and transformed, positioning the future of narrative within an expanded field of shared responsibility between human and algorithm.

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