

From Fiction to Simulation: Rethinking Rhetorical Narratology From the Perspective of AI-generated Stories

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This paper challenges Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh's theory of fictionality (2015a and 2015b) by demonstrating its fundamental inadequacy for analysing AI-generated narratives. Their rhetorical framework fails on multiple levels when applied to algorithmic outputs: the absence of clear authorial intent in AI generation, the questionable status of rhetorical purpose in algorithmic processes, the unclear relationship between invention and reality in data-derived content, and the problematic notion of communicative strategy in AI systems. Through analysis of ten AI-generated stories about Polish academics, I demonstrate how these texts operate not within the paradigm of fictionality but rather as Baudrillardian simulations. While Phelan's rhetorical model offers analytical tools for understanding narrative components (synthetic, mimetic, thematic), AI-generated content transcends these categories, producing simulacra - copies without originals that generate their own authenticity in a hyperreal space where the distinction between actual and generated academics dissolves. This theoretical reframing suggests that simulation theory might better capture the unique ontological status of AI-generated content and its role in transforming traditional boundaries between creator, character, and recipient in contemporary digital fiction.