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Original-Forschungsarbeit

Dekolonisierung der literarischen KI im Zeitalter von LLMs und digitalem Neokolonialismus

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Zusammenfassung:

Abstract: Große Sprachmodelle (Large Language Models-LLMs) werden üblicherweise als neutrale technologische Fortschritte betrachtet. In den kritischen Digitalstudien wird jedoch zunehmend die Notwendigkeit empfunden und hervorgehoben, ihr Potenzial zur Aufrechterhaltung kolonialer Machtstrukturen im Cyberspace zu hinterfragen. Dieser Artikel argumentiert, dass LLMs als wirkmächtige Apparate des digitalen Neokolonialismus fungieren. Ziel ist es, dieses Phänomen im Bereich der literarischen KI zu diagnostizieren und einen dekolonialen Rahmen für deren zukünftige Entwicklung vorzuschlagen. Die Studie zeigt auf, wie die Protokolle der Datenextraktion und -verarbeitung systematisch westliche Epistemologien privilegieren. Anschließend entwickelt sie einen konzeptionellen Rahmen für die Praxis dekolonialer KI, der auf den Prinzipien der Reziprozität und epistemischen Gerechtigkeit basiert. Die Analyse hat ergeben, dass die extraktivistische Datensammlung, die von dominierenden LLMs genutzt wird, kulturelle und sprachliche Daten als ein Territorium der Aneignung behandelt, was den westlichen Literaturkanon privilegiert und marginalisierte Sprachen und Traditionen auslöscht. Dies hat zu sprachlicher Homogenisierung und epistemischer Ungerechtigkeit sowie zur Auferlegung ästhetischer Standards des globalen Westens geführt. Als Antwort darauf erzwingt der vorgeschlagene dekoloniale Rahmen einen Paradigmenwechsel von der Extraktion hin zur Reziprozität, der eine von Gemeinschaften geführte Datengovernance beinhaltet. Zudem muss KI von literarischen Autoren und Forschern als kollaboratives, ko-kreatives Werkzeug genutzt werden. Als weiteren dekolonialen Schritt müssen die eurozentrischen Bewertungskriterien in diesem Bereich konkret reformiert werden. Der dekoloniale Ansatz, der in diesem Papier vertreten wird, zielt darauf ab, die literarische KI grundlegend neu zu positionieren. Das ultimative Ziel dieser Neupositionierung ist die Förderung eines pluriversalen ästhetischen und epistemischen Regimes.

Schlüsselwörter: Große Sprachmodelle (LLMs), Digitaler Neokolonialismus, Epistemische Ungerechtigkeit, Dekoloniale KI, Datengovernance, Kulturelle Vielfalt

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مقاله پژوهشی

استعمارزدایی از هوش مصنوعی ادبی در عصر مدل‌های زبانی بزرگ و استعمارنو دیجیتال

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چکیده:

مدل‌های زبانی بزرگ (LLMs)عموما به‌عنوان پیشرفت‌های فن‌آورانه‌ای در نظر گرفته می‌شوند که بدون جانبداری و بی‌طرف هستند. با این حال، در مطالعات انتقادی حوزه دیجیتال، لزوم به چالش کشیدن پتانسیل این مدل‌ها در تداوم بخشی ساختارهای قدرت استعماری در فضای سایبر نیازی است که به شدت احساس می‌شود. این مقاله استدلال می‌کند که مدل‌های زبانی بزرگ ابزارهایی قدرتمند برای استعمارنو دیجیتال هستند. هدف این مطالعه تشخیص این پدیده در حوزه هوش مصنوعی ادبی و ارائه چارچوبی استعمارزدایانه برای توسعه آن در آینده است. این مطالعه نشان می‌دهد که چگونه پروتکل‌های استخراج و پردازش داده‌ها به شیوه‌ای نظام‌مند، معرفت‌شناسی‌های غربی را برتری می‌دهند. سپس، مقاله یک چارچوب مفهومی برای پراکسیس (عمل) هوش مصنوعی استعمارزدایانه ارایه می‌دهد که مبتنی بر اصول اشتراک برابر و عدالت معرفتی می‌باشد. تحلیل انجام‌شده نشان می‌دهد که داده‌ها با شیوه استعماری استخراج‌گرایانه گردآوری شده و مورد استفاده مدل‌های زبانی بزرگ غالب قرار می‌گیرند. این رویکرد داده‌های فرهنگی و زبانی را همچون قلمرویی برای تصاحب محسوب کرده، و منتج به برتری سنت ادبی غرب و حذف زبان‌ها و سنت‌های حاشیه و پیرامونی می شوند. از تبعات دیگر این نوع از استعمارنو دیجیتال همگن‌سازی زبانی، بی‌عدالتی معرفتی، و همچنین تحمیل معیارهای زیبایی‌شناختی غرب، به‌عنوان پنداشت‌هایی جهانی و مسلم می‌باشند. در واکنش به این نوع استعمار، چارچوب استعمارزدایانه پیشنهادی، تغییر پارادایمی از استخراج‌گرایی به سمت تقابل و اشتراک را ایجاب می‌کند که مستلزم حاکمیت داده به رهبری همه جوامع جهانی است. همچنین، هوش مصنوعی باید توسط نویسندگان و پژوهشگران ادبی به‌عنوان ابزاری مشارکتی و هم‌آفرین مورد استفاده قرار گیرد. یک گام استعمارزدایانه دیگر، اصلاح مشخص و عملی معیارهای ارزشیابی اروپامحور در این حوزه می‌باشد. رویکرد استعمارزدایانه‌ای که در این مقاله ترویج می‌شود، به‌دنبال این است تا هوش مصنوعی ادبی را به‌شکلی بنیادین بازتعریف کند. این بازتعریف، کمک می‌کند تا بستر لازم برای توسعه یک رژیم زیبایی‌شناختی و معرفتی چندجهانی فراهم شود.

واژگان کلیدی: مدل‌های زبانی بزرگ، نواستعمار دیجیتال، بی‌عدالتی معرفتی، هوش مصنوعی استعمارزدایانه، حاکمیت داده، تنوع فرهنگی

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Original Research Paper

Decolonizing the literary AI in the age of LLMs and digital neocolonialism

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Abstract

Large Language Models (LLMs) are usually considered neutral technological advancements. However, critical digital studies increasingly emphasize the need to challenge their potential to perpetuate colonial power structures in cyberspace. This paper argues that LLMs function as powerful apparatuses of digital neocolonialism. It aims to diagnose this phenomenon within the field of literary AI and to propose a decolonial framework for its future development. This study demonstrates how the protocols of extracting and processing data privilege Western epistemologies in a systematic manner. Then, it develops a conceptual framework for the praxis of decolonial AI based on the principles of reciprocity and epistemic justice. The analysis reveals that the extractivist data collection utilized by dominant LLMs treats cultural and linguistic data as territory for appropriation, privileging the Western literary canon and erasing marginalized languages and traditions. This has led to linguistic homogenization and epistemic injustice as well as the imposition of aesthetic standards of the global West. In response, the proposed decolonial framework has necessitated a paradigm shift from extraction to reciprocity, which involves community-led data governance. Furthermore, AI should be used as a collaborative, co-creative tool by literary writers and researchers. As a further decolonial step, Eurocentric evaluative criteria in this field must be reformed in concrete ways. The decolonial approach advanced in this paper, seeks to fundamentally reposition literary AI. The ultimate goal of this repositioning is to foster a pluriversal aesthetic and epistemic framework.

Keywords: large language models (LLMs), digital neocolonialism, epistemic jnjustice, decolonial AI, data governance, cultural diversity

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1. Introduction

Contemporary humanity is still grappling with the legacies of colonialism. However, there is a new and urgent existential and epistemological problem: *digital neocolonialism*. This type of colonialism operates within the very architecture of AI systems to homogenize narrative patterns around the globe and impose a monolithic hegemonic worldview. It is being done behind the façade of IT breakthroughs. Thus, it is urgent to interrogate the cultural and political dimensions of Large Language Models to unmask their biases and to expose the fact that the models are trained on ideologically sorted data. LLMs and AI systems perpetuate inaccuracies in representations and contribute to the erasure of literary diversity. The future belongs to those whose corpora LLMs are trained on. The contemporary man's existential and epistemological challenge is to preserve pluriversal aesthetic and epistemic regimes of truth. This paper argues that LLMs function as potent apparatuses of digital neocolonialism through a systematic homogenization of narratives around the globe, therefore the position of literature, with its philosophical and cultural value, requires a well-structured and radical decolonial framework for the development and deployment of AI. The paper examines the issue through the concept of coloniality. It understands coloniality as cultural and linguistic control and the imposition of standardized narratives.

The paper aims to address two primary research questions. The first question is as follows: In what specific ways do the foundational paradigms of LLMs function as apparatuses of digital neocolonialism in the literary domain? The second question asks: What are the main principles and practical strategies of a decolonial framework, that can reorient literary AI tools toward epistemic justice?

2. Literature Review

Scholars have established that the rapid rise of LLMs is not merely a technical shift but also strongly perpetuates what is known as digital neocolonialism. This concept and practice constitute the cyber counterpart of neocolonialism that embeds colonial legacies. It also marginalizes non-Western narratives. Mohamed et al. (2020) and Muldoon & Wú (2023) argue that these technologies strengthen epistemic hierarchies. Similarly, Muldoon & Wú (2023) frame data extraction from the Global South and the concentration of

power in Western corporations as as continuation of historical resource appropriation. Their studies are extended by Mohamed et al. (2020) and Shelby et al. (2023), who detail how this power matrix leads to significant harms such as labor exploitation in data annotation and the reproduction of biases from colonial-era data. Shelby et al. (2023) locate these biases at several stages, from data collection to model architectures. In literary applications, the consequence is stark, as Bird's (2020) findings show that the biases result in homogenized narratives that preserve stereotypes. The empirical study conducted by Qadri et al. (2023) on text-to-image models, which can be adaptable to literary AI, demonstrates that the outsider's gaze misrepresents South Asian contexts systematically, which examplifies the epistemic erasure of non-Western characters. Together, these scholars show how AI can commodify Indigenous stories and embed neocolonial structures by extracting cultural knowledge without reciprocity. This critique is expanded through concepts of structural injustice and governance. Weinberg (2022) understands the issue as a kind of predatory inclusion, through which marginalized groups are integrated into AI systems unfairly. Vallor (2024) adds that the exclusionary cultural biases in the outputs of the LLMs significantly limit creative potential. In governance, Roche et al. (2022) observe that Western-dominated AI policies tend to sideline non-Western ethical paradigms.

In response, some studies have proposed decolonial frameworks for AI. Mohamed et al. (2020) offer a foundational plan, which prioritizes reciprocity, epistemic justice, and community-led governance. In a similar manner, Bühler et al. (2023) operationalize the principle of reciprocity through models of equitable benefit-sharing. Meanwhile, Birhane et al. (2022) introduce and explain community-led governance, and Delgado et al. (2023) advocate for participatory design and data sovereignty. Additionally, Bühler et al. (2023) suggest data cooperatives as a mechanism to develop digital commons, that is, shared digital resources. This perspective aligns with calls by Dolata et al. (2021) and Weinberg (2022) for a holistic approach to algorithmic justice that moves beyond mere technical fixes. However, Lazem et al. (2022) inject a necessary note of debate and caution that decolonial approaches must be enacted with great cultural sensitivity so as to avoid (accidentally) reinforcing the very power imbalances they seek to address. Finally, some researchers have begun to specify applications for decolonizing literary AI. Bird (2020)

and Qadri et al. (2023) argue for promoting narrative plurality by means of more inclusive language technologies. Bird (2020) emphasizes the importance of recognizing diverse linguistic repertoires. Qadri et al. (2023) provide empirical methods and suggest evaluations centered on communities and participatory assessments to enhance cultural representation. Delgado et al. (2023) illustrate what collaborative design could look like if marginalized creators directly co-author training data. In the same fashion, the governance models highlighted by Bühler et al. (2023) and Birhane et al. (2022) offer a way to create more pluralistic stories.

3. Findings

3.1. Neocolonial Foundations of LLMs

To build a decolonial response to the issue of digital neocolonialism, the neocolonial apparatus must be diagnosed first. This section analyzes the pillars of LLMs in order to show how each main aspect of LLMs perpetuates colonial patterns in a systematic manner. Every component of LLMs, including their input, architecture, and output, is not neutral. They are produced by specific data economies that primarily perpetuate colonial patterns. This section suggests that foundational processes of data collection for LLMs constitute digital neocolonialism. It is closely connected to what Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias refer to as *data colonialism* in the preface to their seminal book, *The Costs of Connection* (2019): "data colonialism's power grab is... the capture and control of *human life itself* through appropriating the data that can be extracted from it for profit… data colonialism paving the way for a capitalism based on the exploitation of data" (xi). These terms are closely related; however, it must be clarified that data colonialism, as explained by Couldry and Mejias, refers to the economic practice of appropriating human life through data for the sake of profit. Digital neocolonialism, which constitutes the broader framework of this paper, includes this extractive practice and extends to consequential cultural and epistemic domination exercised through apparatuses like LLMs. These apparatuses are built upon the already extracted data. The data are first colonized, and power is then exercised through them. Gathering and sorting data for the mainstream LLMs is understood as a type of digital neocolonialism since they collect linguistic, cultural, and creative data from

various parts of the world selectively (Varshney, 2024: 1472). The structural power, in this way, is replicated in the global north first by treating digital data as territory and second by privileging Western systems of knowledge over the marginalized ones.

3.2. Data as Cultural Territory

LLMs are developed based on an extractivist paradigm, which treats cultural data as raw materials to be extracted and processed by the Global North for their cognitive and economic value and capital. This type of paradigm is grounded in colonial reasoning, in which the acquisition of resources takes priority over ethics, thereby mirroring historical models of exploitation (Mohamed et al., 2020: 668 & 663). In fact, the data that are used to train LLMs are not only words but also expressions of human experience. As every person or community has the right to own and govern the use of their data (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016: p. 2), the curation of this data without consent or compensation, without due regard for their cultural and social contexts, is a violation of sovereignty over cultural data.

The web is thought to be a source free of charge and open for appropriation, which is a legacy from the colonial period. Web scraping denies the established ethics of data collection, which underlines the existence of informed consent and limitation of purpose, as Zuboff (2023) explains the process undertaken by Google, "At first those raw materials were simply 'found,' a by-product of users' search actions. Later those assets were hunted aggressively and procured largely through surveillance" (203). What actually happens is the scraping of data belonging to users from marginalized communities which are then used for commercial purposes and promotional activities. Moreover, these users come under surveillance and are usually misrepresented, as Benjamin (2019) explains how "race as a form of technology—the sorting, establishment, and enforcement of racial hierarchies with real consequences—is embodied in robots" (35). Cultural expropriation commonly happens in this process as traditional knowledge and creative or cultural works are scraped without permission. They are converted from cultural heritage to mere statistical information (Crawford, 2021: 18 & 100) because, while being decontextualized, the data are stripped of their original meaning (bleached) and lose their native audience.

The datasets built for training LLMs reflect a deep linguistic and cultural bias. There has been research on major datasets such as C4 (Colossal Clean Crawled Corpus) and the corpora used for models like GPT (Generative Pre-training Transformer), whose findings show that the data in the English language (Bender et al., 2021: 611), especially collected from Western sources, have formed a large percentage of the training material (Bender et al., 2021: 613; Kreutzer et al., 2022: 56). The high percentage of this material indicates the extent to which the models understand the world with a Western, particularly Anglo-centric, bias, which is often presented as a universal and unbiased truth. Abid et al. (2021) show how "GPT-3, a powerful language model, captures strong negative stereotypes regarding the word, 'Muslim' that appear in different uses of the language model" (10). The model understands and generates the world through biased lenses, and it creatively extends Western media-driven stereotypes as if they were universal truths. It is obvious here that the Western literary canon is constantly being recreated and amplified digitally. The Western canon has long been criticized for its white, male, European, or American composition, as Said (1978) meticulously exposes the orientalist orientations (12, 19-20) in Western knowledge traditions. Naturally, the same critique can be directed at the models as well. When LLMs internalize Western values, structures, narratives, and epistemological lenses, Western epistemic hegemony rises. Gramsci describes this mechanism as "the 'philosophy of non-philosophers', or in other words, the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed" (Gramsci, 1971: p. 419). In this framework, LLMs are learning from vast datasets that are commonly produced within and processed by a predominantly Western intellectual and cultural milieu. They act as powerful, non-coercive agents of Western epistemic hegemony. The problem intensifies when developers—who are mostly based in the Global North—act as modern "organic intellectuals" through their curation of data (Gramsci, 1971: 10-13). These intellectuals technically codify and disseminate Western-centric epistemologies. As generated knowledge accumulates, it forms a new, born-digital *common sense* that solidifies Western narratives and lenses as the default, universal standards. For example, an LLM understands key concepts like freedom or justice through the lens of the Enlightenment tradition, liberal humanism, and individualism. These traditions have historically been imposed on global

knowledge production, where alternative epistemic lenses are either stripped of their nuances, decontextualized, or entirely absent (Birhane, 2021: 2).

LLMs, created with this approach and mechanism, reinforce the Western literary canon in which Western works are overrepresented and non-Western ones, i.e., others, are underrepresented or erased. It is important to note is that in AI research, some languages are classified as low-resource because there are no large digital corpora of them (Joshi et al., 2020: 3-4). This classification reinforces the marginalization of non-Western, Indigenous, and other languages (Joshi et al., 2020: 5). A loop of segregation is created: marginalized languages are low-resource, so they are not or less included in the training datasets, and consequently, they are rendered obsolete (Bender, 2019: para. 6). Once rendered obsolete, they are further categorized as low-resource and remain excluded from datasets. This colonial loop produces *epistemic injustice*. Fricker (2007) explains, "epistemic injustice… as consisting, most fundamentally, in a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (1). The epistemic injustice caused by the colonial loop is "*hermeneutical injustice*… [that] occurs at a prior stage, when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences" (Fricker, 2007: 1) primarily because users of marginalized languages are deprived of the linguistic and conceptual frameworks of their native languages.

When it comes to the oral traditions of these marginalized languages, the problem is much more critical. The consequence of the fact that LLMs are text-based is *epistemic violence*, which is, according to Spivak (1988), "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (76). In other words, it leads to the priority of (cyber) literacy over orality and the exclusion of a vast bulk of human knowledge in spoken form or in the form of performance (Emigh, 2024: 721-725). In this way, literary forms like Ta'zieh in Persian and Urdu, Naqqali in Persian, Mu'allaqat in Arabic, Kathakali in India, or Sundiata in Africa are under dire threat of epistemic violence and exclusion through the formation of dominant LLMs. Obviously, LLMs trained mostly on Western genres and forms of fiction appear unable to recognize and generate non-Western literariness. It does not mean that the models do not possess the technical capabilities to do so. Their ability to recognize non-Western literariness is impaired because their training data that lack the aesthetic patterns that define the alternative or

peripheral traditions. Imagine that a Western model is prompted to engage with non-Western forms; the model is likely to incorporate, if not impose, Western narrative frameworks as a default. In other words, it will filter the non-Western literary articulation through a Western lens in a meaningful manner. This erosion of cultural diversity makes the process of cultural assimilation of the marginalized languages' users far easier by forcing them to abandon their native language.

3.3. Linguistic and Narrative Homogenization

Homogenization through LLMs extends to the mechanisms of linguistic expression as well as narrative form. LLMs are, in fact, apparatuses of cultural homogenization (Wright et al., 2025: 9-10) since they systematically erode diverse traditions of storytelling and their linguistic patterns. They privilege and reproduce a limited subgroup of Western norms (Bender et al., 2021: 613-14) and grammars of narrating, which perpetuate epistemic injustice, as mentioned before. The epistemic injustice that silences alternative ways of knowing can be ontological as it is capable of silencing ways of being as well (Fricker, 2007: 17-18): styles and stylistic diversity are flattened, leading to outputs that conform to standardized, homogenized English (of the Global North) which functions as a form of global cultural currency—the linguistic counterpart of the dollar in global commerce. The character limit on Twitter and threading promotes aphoristic density and non-linear storytelling (Shabanpour, 2025: 697); in a similar manner, LLMs impose their constraints derived from Western narrative templates. They homogenize linguistic and cultural expressions. The acceleration of linguistic homogenization by LLMs has resulted in pervasive usage of AI-generated content in education, business, media, and, more critically, in art and literature. There is a troubling irony when the content generated by LLMs is valued. It is seen as indicative of professionalism and high quality. On the surface, it often appears so. (English) Linguistic imperialism, which Phillipson (1992) rightly defines as "the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (47), is the primary outcome of this linguistic and narrative homogenization.

There is a prediction that half of the world's languages could disappear in the coming decades through this homogenization (Romaine, 2015: 31). Non-

Western writers use AI tools to correct their content and level their narrative structures to satisfy Western readers' narrative tastes, which consequently shapes the narrative taste of the global audience who have compromised to read standard English.

LLMs replicate Western narrative prototypes as universal storytelling norms. Five-act or three-act plays, Aristotelian plot, three-part narration (beginning-middle-end), Joseph Campbell's prescription/description of the hero's journey have been institutionalized as universal norms in storytelling. The narrative grammar of Hollywood mass-produced movies is the template for literary works, screenplays, and media products. The critical question is what is going to happen to the four-act narrative structure of Kishōtenketsu from East Asia, which does not rely on central conflict like Western narratives do. Will the Native American narrative tradition, which is nonlinear, cyclical, moral, non-individualist, and in harmony with nature, be obliterated by Western storytelling?

That LLMs privilege Western narrative structures and threaten non-Western forms like *Kishōtenketsu* is not simply a theoretical risk. The issue is empirical and can be demonstrated in the outputs of the available Western models. For example, recent research exploring the capabilities of LLMs for literary analysis reveals the systematic prejudice in favor of Western narrative norms. Whittle's findings help demonstrate this more concretely. She probes the use of generative AI for digital pedagogy and finds that models like ChatGPT are set to replicate common scholarly tropes when they are prompted to analyze themes of gender in Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale* using an intersectional lens. The model's response focused on the Pardoner's physical description, failing to develop a more nuanced argument based on the notion of intersectionality (Whittle, 2025). It is reasonable to expect that such models would behave similarly when prompted to analyze a literary work based on a postcolonial theory or even any other non-mainstream alternative or non-Western reading. Karpouzis (2025) argues this in his study, explaining that the biases are not accidental; they stem from the fact that AI systems are "trained on datasets predominantly sourced from Western contexts, with methodologies rooted in Eurocentric epistemologies" (1). This has been shown quantitatively by an interesting study that analyzed the colonial gaze in AI image captioning. Alenichev et al. (2025) examine more than 3800 captions generated by the

latest AI platform MidJourney for 100 archival images of human zoos, the colonial-era exhibitions of non-Western people. The research findings show a systematic replication of colonial epistemology. 54.5% of captions exhibited cultural erasure, and 41.6% of the captions exhibited a kind of essentialism (Alenichev et al., 2025), showing the colonial epistemology of the models.

What will happen to the tradition of frame narratives from West Asia and North Africa, which once profoundly influenced canonical Western literary works such as Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*? Linguistic imperialism, imposed through LLMs, now extends to narrative imperialism, teaching writers and readers that there is only a limited number of *correct* narrative structures. The mechanism of imperialism is not new. Fanon, Said, Chakrabarty, and other postcolonial scholars explained it in various ways. This digital neocolonialism, which can be called digital neorientalism, is an algorithmic form of the colonial mindset that dismisses indigenous knowledge as primitive or unsophisticated. It is the same as the hegemony of the global North that "reduces the understanding of the world to the Western understanding of the world, thus ignoring or trivializing other non-Western understandings of the world" (Santos 2014: 21). The consequence of digital neocolonialism is the same: representing the non-Western writers and readers as well as their ways of storytelling, as inferior or uncivilized. Neocolonialism , in practice, undermines human dignity mainly because non-Westerners, such as a Nigerian poet or a Persian novelist, are forced to assimilate Western cultural and literary norms and abandon their cherished cultural modes of expression. Thus, addressing the linguistic and narrative homogenization requires a revolutionary reorientation of LLM development toward a pluralistic foundation that embraces and prioritizes diverse epistemological and cultural traditions.

3.4. The Political Economy of AI

The remarkable development of LLMs and their broad application has created a major geopolitical and economic transformation. At its core, this phenomenon can be simply rendered as the intense concentration of power (Crawford, 2021: 18 & 20). Note that the concentration has occurred through certain giant Western-based technology corporations' accumulation of data, hoarding of computational resources, and monopolization of technical knowledge and skills. This critical situation is called AI capitalism (Dyer-

Witheford, Kjosen & Steinhoff, 2019: 2, 34, 43). These Western corporations usually win over their rivals due to their competitive advantages. Their primary advantage is, their infrastructure which allows them to outperform the others, showing a growing global power imbalance in this respect (Zuboff, 2023: 206). The political economy of AI is an example of digital neocolonialism in which the power in the field of technology has led to economic and cultural imperialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019: xix-xx), which also manifests in the intellectual property regimes. The advancement in the technology of LLMs is geographically concentrated in North America, especially in the United States, by a few corporations such as OpenAI, Meta, Google, Anthropic, Cohere, Microsoft, etc. They have a unique edge: restricted datasets from their users, exceptional computational resources with their cloud infrastructure, and their financial power to attract and merge with AI startups and talents (Crawford, 2021: 19-20). The primary geopolitical implication of this concentration is an asymmetric dependence of other (subordinate) nations and communities on their technology. Recent research examining global discourse on AI similarly shows that discussions of artificial intelligence are structured around U.S.–China technological rivalry, infrastructural sovereignty, and concerns over digital dependency, with actors from the Global South explicitly articulating exclusion and asymmetrical power relations in the emerging AI order (Salehi et al., 2025). The Global South is in a tech taker position (Abdalla & Abdalla, 2021:9); that is, it is forced to adopt AI systems that have been developed according to Western economic interests and the cultural mindsets of the Global North. However, China is a promising actor for its investment and breakthroughs in this technology with its models. The second geopolitical implication is data extractivism. Western technology corporations extract large-scale data from global resources to create value for their own benefit (Thatcher, O'Sullivan, & Mahmoudi, 2016: 9-10). This mirrors the colonial powers, back then, which extracted natural resources from their colonies. Similarly, AI corporations are currently extracting cultural and linguistic data from global users to train their LLM models without providing compensation or sharing the benefits. The process is often called data colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019: xix-xx) as well. In this mode of colonialism, humans and their experience are the raw material that is mined and processed by the colonizers for profit. It should be noted that although China, with corporations such as DeepSeek, is a serious

rival for Western AI corporations, the ecosystem is still very far from getting rid of Western dominance.

The intellectual property regimes do not work for the benefit of the users or communities from which the data are extracted without their consent. Interestingly, the regimes disadvantage them. Liang gives a genealogy of this (Liang, 2004). Under the names of Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs), literary productions and artistic traditions, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), are part of the public domain or collective memories. They are available for commercial exploitation and do not require the exploiter to obtain consent from anyone or to share the benefit with the source communities (Anderson, 2010: 774). The disregard within Western legal systems for Indigenous communities' right to govern their cultural property and heritage constitutes another form of epistemic injustice. Drawing on Fricker (2007), such communities may be described as "*hermeneutically marginalized*" (6). There are several mechanisms through which the appropriation of cultural heritage is implemented. LLMs are trained on a vast body of cultural materials, including literature, folklore, and any other artistic expressions. These materials are scraped, as discussed in the previous sections, from the Internet without giving credit or recognizing the rights of their creators. The second mechanism is that after these cultural materials are processed, they come under the protection of the intellectual property laws, so they become privatized or copyrighted. This is exactly what David Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004). Appropriation of cultural materials through these mechanisms has both material and symbolic consequences. LLMs may produce literary content in the style of a particular Indigenous narrative tradition in ways that devalue that tradition, as such content is generated without context, without recognizing its creators, and without providing compensation or attribution. Again, this type of digital neocolonialism requires a radical shift from an extractivist paradigm towards an alternative paradigm grounded in ethics and sovereignty.

3-5. Decolonizing Literary AI

The previous section has discussed the mechanics and mechanisms of digital neocolonialism in LLMs. This section turns from critique to possibility. It aims to propose a decolonial framework for literary AI that moves from extraction towards reciprocity.

3.6. From Extraction to Reciprocity

Digital neocolonialism, with its diverse aspects and forms, requires the resistance of those being digitally marginalized and colonized and their launching of decolonizing practices. What is needed primarily in the process of decolonizing (literary) AI is a foundational paradigm shift from an extractivist model towards a reciprocal one in order to establish epistemic justice. It is also needed to recognize the rights of non-dominant cultures. This shift would recognize cultural data as valuable expressions of human experience. The expressions must be approached with ethical considerations, so that "models for articulating an alternative worldview" (Couldry & Mejias, 2019: 80-81) will be at hand. The paradigm shift to a reciprocal framework must be based on a set of principles, the most important of which is that the cultural heritage is an integral part of people's identity and sovereignty. This principle requires a hermeneutic justice as well. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when marginalized groups lack access to the conceptual resources needed to articulate their experiences within dominant epistemic frameworks (Fricker, 2007: 6-7). The establishment of hermeneutic justice requires decentering dominant hermeneutic resources and integrating diverse epistemological traditions into AI systems.

Reciprocity is established when the political economy of AI development is rethought. Benefit-sharing and community-led data governance are integral to a reciprocal model. These communities must be provided with compensation for the use of their cultural data. They must be involved in the processes of decision-making. In other words, their sovereignty must be recognized so that they have agency and voice in the representation and use of their knowledge (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016: 5). Developers must obtain consent from non-dominant communities before scraping their data or indigenous stories. In this way, AI applications benefit all parties, and intellectual property is collectively owned. Writers, storytellers, scholars, and community elders must be involved in every stage of AI development, from dataset curation to model evaluation, so that narratives from low-resource languages are not erased. AI development must not culminate in the production of homogenized narratives. To do so, ethical reciprocity must also be established to counter digital neocolonialism. There must be mutual understanding and respect across cultures in the process of designing AI systems. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are essential in building ethical

reciprocity. An AI that is trained on global literary traditions should recognize the specific cultural significance of a particular community, rather than treating it as an artistic or literary commodity.

3.7. Decolonizing Data Layer

The data layer must be decolonized to dismantle digital neocolonialism. All AI systems are built on a data layer. Data colonialism, the practice of scraping data indiscriminately, must be replaced by the development of consensual datasets to train LLMs. Data colonialism considers the cultural products in the world as free resources for appropriation (Couldry & Mejias, 2019: 5). This type of colonialism replicates colonial hierarchies. The data layer can be decolonized by replacing the extractive model with curated datasets (Della Ratta, 2025). It requires a shift from quantitative metrics of size and diversity toward qualitative assessments of origin and authenticity. Some important measures must be taken: First, the provenance of each data element must be documented. As a result, the contextual information about literary works, their significance in the native culture, and the restrictions on using them are recorded, so they are not mere numbers or vectors for AI developers. The next measure to take is a data collection based on consent, as discussed. The development of consensual datasets creates partnerships with cultural representatives of community institutions. This way, appropriate and reliable materials are identified, and then the terms of using them are established. The third measure is contextual preservation. Preservation must occur at the level of the relationship between cultural or literary expressions and the systems of meaning from which they emerge. If it is done, complex narratives will not be decontextualized and reduced to mere stereotypes (Della Ratta, 2025). Thus, curated, consensual datasets include rich contextual metadata.

To decolonize the data layer, data governance must be collectively directed. The agency of communities must be privileged over the agency of corporations. As discussed, a few Western technology corporations control the collection, management, and use of data, replicating colonial power structures. A model of data governance that is community-led can challenge the concentrated power over data in corporations. It can also support communities' right to their cultural data. Significant challenges, including the absence of models that build true power-sharing between communities and

external organizations, must be successfully confronted (Brookings Institution, 2024).

A relevant experimental model is the Hiku Media project done in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The project was led by an Indigenous organization to develop an automatic speech recognition model for the Reo Māori language. A notable aspect of the project's initiation was its proactive and locally driven approach, that is, no one waited for Western tech initiatives. The project aimed to control its own data. They also relied on the local values to build the infrastructure. Thus, it retained sovereignty over the local linguistic heritage (Daubs, 2025; Jones et al., 2025). Another example is the Masakhane African Languages Hub, which has produced community-based language data to create the foundation for AI tools. With its collaborative structure, the project brought together NLP researchers working on African languages to preserve the African cultural, linguistic, and epistemic norms and values in the new translation and language tools for the African community. This is in sharp contrast with extractive paradigms and practices. However, it must be noted that the aim of such projects must not be to essentialize the local traditions as monolithic.

3.8. Decolonizing the Creative Process

A decolonial intervention is needed when it comes to literary production mediated by generative AI. This intervention can challenge digital neocolonialism, in general, and target the colonial, extractive, and homogenizing practices of AI systems, in particular. Humans use AI applications as a collaborative tool to create literary works, so it must be emphasized that AI systems cannot be autonomous authors. The output is not a fully AI-generated work, but, in fact, an AI-*mediated* literary *creation*. The first step in decolonizing the creative process is to reject considering AI as an autonomous creator. AI must be considered and used as a tool that stimulates and develops human creativity (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022: 608). It is now a common belief among literary scholars that generative AI systems are marginalizing human artists. This belief has created a technological determinism that must be challenged by maintaining the agency of humans at the center. The capacity to develop participatory design (PD) techniques (Bermudez, 2022) suggests that AI systems can democratize literary production, so AI, in a decolonial approach, should function as a digital pen.

With an *artisanal* approach, as Kawash calls it (Della Ratta, 2025), towards the tools, literary AI enhances human creativity, not replacing it.

Then, we get to the point that tools are not neutral. An apparatus embodies the values and assumptions of its creator (Benjamin, 2019: 35, 52-53), so AI systems are expectedly to privilege forms of creative expression aligned with Western commercial narrative structures (Della Ratta, 2025), though the systems are said to emulate human creativity. The result of decolonizing the creative process using AI systems is literary co-creation (Hansen & Rafner, 2025: 11-12). For instance, AI may assist with word choice and the technical execution of human prompts, including elements such as tone, theme, motif, and contextual refinement (Moruzzi, 2025). The suggestions given by AI must be considered as just possibilities, with a decolonial approach. This way, authors can mold AI output at various levels, e.g., the lexical level or the narrative structure; they have the ultimate control over the creative process.

Another way to decolonize the creative process is to implement a participatory design by involving writers, storytellers, and cultural scholars in the development of literary AI. Participatory design diversifies the values, narratives, and practices involved in the creation and development of literary AI tools. The exclusionary practices of AI development that exist within homogeneous technical teams, such as the teams in Silicon Valley, are strongly challenged by implementing participatory design. The important point here is that the implementation of this design bridges the epistemological gaps between developers and cultural scholars (Bermudez, 2022). The result of participatory practices is the development of literary AI tools that have learned diverse cultural values and narrative traditions, which enable AI users to engage in the co-creation of Indigenous literature.

Crafting a prompt is a critical step to decolonize the creative process. Prompts are not neutral technical instruments. They can reinforce or challenge hegemonic narratives (Della Ratta, 2025). The most meaningful decolonial practice in creating AI-mediated literary works is to develop prompts that explicitly subvert Western hegemonic norms and center marginalized narratives and aesthetic traditions, thereby contributing to the creation of pluriversal aesthetics. Literary AI, as discussed before, is inclined to generate and reinforce homogenized and stereotypical representations.

Such representations always affect the outputs of the systems and, in a sense, shape future narrative production. However, decolonial prompts counter such inclinations, for instance, centering joy, resistance, indigenous values, and specific cultural details. Writing decolonial prompts requires appropriate theoretical training and knowledge, so authors need to acquire decolonial promptcraft literacy. One way to promote this literacy is to use participatory methodologies (Bermudez, 2022) through inclusive and cultural diversity spaces in which authors can experiment and explore the outputs of prompts.

3.9. Decolonizing Evaluation and Criticism

The decolonization of literary AI requires a reform in the evaluation and criticism of AI-mediated literary works. Many current critical approaches towards literary works are imbued with Western liberal humanism, or Eurocentrism in general. In other words, the criteria for evaluating (the quality of) literary works are grounded in Western aestheticism. We need to challenge Eurocentric aesthetic standards in order to decolonize literary AI by developing alternative metrics for good literature specific to particular cultural traditions. Certain narrative structures, stylistic features, and thematic approaches are privileged and identified as universal prototypes. Literary AI will likely emphasize linear plotlines, (psychological) realism, white heroes, and individualist anti-heroes. Decolonizing literary evaluation can simply include developing metrics that give equal or more credit to circular or episodic plots or even plotless stories, non-realist narration, non-white heroes, etc. For instance, a Western metric might deem an episodic narrative as *loose* or *digressive*. In contrast, when a literary work in the Arabic tradition of *maqāmāt* or a cyclical story in the Native American tradition is evaluated by a decolonial metric, it will value the 'loose' or 'digressive' features of the work as signs of literary sophistication and authenticity. One may argue that the universal yardstick must be abandoned and replaced with a toolbox of evaluative frameworks so that in each evaluation the appropriate tool can be chosen based on the literary tradition in which a work is created. Moreover, one way to implement this decolonial approach in literary evaluation is to design prompts that instruct literary AI systems to evaluate literary works through alternative cultural metrics. Writing such prompts or training AI systems to do a decolonial evaluation requires the formation of diverse non-Western metrics.

Apart from that, scholars must cultivate critical AI literacy in literary studies. This literacy enables them first to identify the Eurocentric biases that are embedded in AI systems and even their own critical studies, and then challenge those biases. It involves teaching literary scholars to acquire technical proficiency with AI tools and to develop the ability to question values, power structures, and hierarchies underlying the AI systems, and resist them. Furthermore, the critical AI literacy must be combined with alternative theoretical frameworks such as postcolonial studies, critical race theory, and even indigenous methodologies. Critical AI literacy can be practiced by critically examining AI-generated responses to prompts for analysis of a literary text. Decolonial literary evaluation can foster a more inclusive literary ecosystem in which the global literary diversity is celebrated and enriched.

4. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the rapid advancement of LLMs is not neutral technological progress, but that LLMs function as apparatuses of digital neocolonialism. It also discussed the foundations of LLMs and how the extractivist paradigm of data collection considers cultural and linguistic data as territory. Focusing on the issue of digital neocolonialism, it argued that it is a systematic process that privileges the Western canon, erases marginalized languages and oral traditions, thereby perpetuating epistemic injustice. The consequence of this cycle of epistemic injustice is a profound linguistic and narrative homogenization. The paper, proposes a decolonial framework for the future of literary and critical AI. This framework requires a foundational paradigm shift from extraction to reciprocity. The development of LLMs and their deployment must be regulated in accordance with epistemic justice, ethical consent, and cultural sovereignty. This must be done through several types of decolonial measures. At the level of data collection and management, decolonization requires the formation of curated, consensual datasets with rich contextual metadata. The next decolonial step is to decolonize the creative process by rejecting the notion and application of AI as an autonomous author. The subsequent decolonial practice is the creation of a participatory space in which a critical decolonial promptcraft is developed, that center marginalized narratives in AI-mediated literary production.

Finally, a decolonized literary ecosystem must reform its criteria and metrics of evaluation and criticism. Thus, alternative metrics specific to diverse cultural traditions must be developed. The first step is to foster critical AI literacy among scholars. The ultimate goal is to incorporate diverse cultural traditions into the evaluation of global literary works and, more importantly, to foster a *pluriversal* aesthetic and epistemic regime.

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