

The Dark Empath's Shadow: creative practice and collaborative
screenwriting with AI

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Abstract

This thesis reflects on a two-year creative journey of collaborating with artificial intelligence (AI) on the development of a television pilot script. The study explores the opportunities and challenges of using AI as a creative partner, focusing on the essential role of human oversight and the development of creative guardrails. Through a series of smaller writing tasks, the paper details the process of training the AI, refining its outputs, and overcoming its limitations, such as a tendency towards generic, wholesome content and the occurrence of hallucinations. The research draws on existing scholarship, including Susan Cake's work on AI as a collaborative tool for script development, and evaluates the effectiveness of specific writing concepts including the Dan Harmon Story Circle when used with AI.

The paper contrasts AI-generated feedback with the more nuanced and contextually rich insights provided by human academic mentors, highlighting the irreplaceable value of human experience and critical judgment in the creative process. The research further presents the findings of a participant study, which shows a mixed but overall positive reception to AI's utility for brainstorming and efficiency, while also noting its limitations in capturing a unique writer's voice. The thesis concludes that AI serves as a valuable but imperfect assistant, with its successful integration into creative writing depending entirely on the writer's ability to provide clear guidance, critically refine the output, and infuse the work with genuine human creativity. The paper ultimately reinforces the position that the writer, with their unique perspective and emotional depth, remains at the heart of every story.

Introduction and Methodological Rationale

In this thesis I will reflect on my personal journey of collaborating with artificial intelligence (AI) in the field of creative writing, with a specific focus on the development of a television pilot script. I will explore the collaborative process and consider both the opportunities and the challenges inherent in utilising AI as a creative partner. I will discuss the initial stages of training the AI and the creative guardrails I regard to be necessary to improve the quality of the output, and the crucial role of human oversight.

Having undertaken this project over the last few years, it has allowed me a unique perspective of the significant evolution and improvements in AI tools during this period.

I have explored the historical context of Large Language Models (LLMs), the AI hallucinations I have encountered and the strategies I have employed to lessen their occurrence. I have also explored the diverse perspectives of industry professionals on the integration of AI into creative writing.

Finally, my essay will evaluate the effectiveness of utilising AI to assist in brainstorming and story development through the feedback of participants who undertook specific writing tasks, considering whether this technology truly streamlines the creative process or introduces unforeseen obstacles.

Susan Cake, senior fellow of Queensland University of Technology, who teaches scriptwriting in the Film, Screen & New Media Discipline in the Creative Industries, undertook similar research to my project. Cake published her article titled *Artificial intelligence as a collaborative tool for script development* in early 2025. Cake researched how to collaborate a 'process of engaging with gen-AI to write a short screenplay.'¹ The article determined that 'critically engaging with gen-AI for script development requires knowledge of screenwriting craft skills and metacognitive awareness of one's own creative process to understand when

¹ Susan Cake, 'Artificial Intelligence as a Collaborative Tool for Script Development'. *Media Practice and Education* 0 (0): 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2025.2454074>

and how to engage with gen-AI'.² Cake emphasises that 'humans are still necessary to create work with gen-AI'³ and that fostering creative confidence is vital for future generations to explore their full creativity.

I sought to gain the thoughts and opinions from Google Gemini concerning my final draft of a TV pilot (which is titled *The Empath's Shadow*). I provided it with a specific prompt, for its deliberation and response as if it was a seasoned TV executive with knowledge on how to adapt pilot scripts to be successful TV shows. This was its response:

*'Overall, this script has significant potential. The core concept is intriguing, the protagonist is flawed yet empathetic, and the procedural mystery element is well-executed. With some minor refinements in dialogue and pacing, "The Empath's Shadow" could easily be adapted into a compelling and successful television series, appealing to audiences who enjoy character-driven dramas with a supernatural edge, both in the US and internationally. The blend of a compelling lead, a unique ability, and a "case of the week" format, all underpinned by an overarching narrative arc, is a proven recipe for success in the global market.'*⁴

How did I get to this stage, where I was able to collaborate with AI to devise and create a script to the quality that could be sent out as a spec script to be made into a TV show? Let us start by defining certain words and phrases that will be used and discussed throughout this reflection.

Firstly with AI, AI is the 'simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems ... such as machine learning'⁵

² Susan Cake , Artificial intelligence as a collaborative tool for script development 1–16

³ Susan Cake , Artificial intelligence as a collaborative tool for script development 1–16

⁴ Google Gemini, prompt response 11th of May 2025

⁵ Lev Craig, 'What Is Machine Learning? Guide, Definition and Examples', Search Enterprise AI, 2024, Accessed 16 May 2025 <https://www.techtarget.com/searchenterpriseai/definition/machine-learning-ML>

Also, there are LLMs, which is the ‘type of AI algorithm that uses deep learning techniques and massively large data sets to understand, summarize, generate and predict new content.’⁶

Historical Context and Technical Evolution

As I have been working on my thesis, LLMs have been rapidly evolving, demonstrating remarkable capabilities in natural language processing, text generation, and knowledge representation. Before delving into recent advancements, it is essential to understand the historical context. The foundation for LLMs was laid down with the development of recurrent neural networks (RNNs) and long short-term memory (LSTM) networks⁷. These architectures allowed for the processing of sequential data, paving the way for language modelling. The introduction of the transformer architecture⁸ marked a significant breakthrough, enabling parallel processing and significantly improving the efficiency of training LLMs.

By 2023, LLMs such as OpenAI's GPT-3 and Google's LaMDA had already demonstrated impressive capabilities in generating human-quality text, translating languages, and answering questions. However, these models also faced limitations, including a tendency to generate factually incorrect information known as hallucinations, and an inability to access real-time information. Since 2023, the landscape of LLMs has witnessed significant progress, particularly with Google's Gemini and OpenAI's ChatGPT. Google introduced its Gemini series, including Pro and Ultra models, showcasing enhanced multimodal capabilities, improved reasoning, and the ability to handle longer context. OpenAI continued

⁶ Sean Michael Kerner, 'What are large language models (LLMs)?', WhatIs, 2024, Accessed 27 August 2025, <https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/large-language-model-LLM>

⁷ Sepp Hochreiter, and Jürgen Schmidhuber, "Long Short-Term Memory". *Neural Computation*, 9 (1997): 1735–80 <https://doi.org/10.1162/neco.1997.9.8.1735>

⁸ Sheena Vasani, 'Be My Eyes AI Offers GPT-4-Powered Support for Blind Microsoft Customers', *The Verge*, 2023, Accessed 5 November 2024, <https://www.theverge.com/2023/11/15/23962709/microsoft-blind-users-open-ai-chatgpt-4-be-my-eyes>

to advance its ChatGPT line, notably with the release of GPT-4o, which brought real-time multimodal processing and improved speed and efficiency. These advancements, alongside developments from other companies, highlight a trend towards more versatile, powerful, and accessible LLMs, driving their wider integration into various applications.

Creative Practice: Iterative Experimentation

The selection of Google Gemini as the primary generative AI model for this research was a deliberate methodological choice based on several practical and creative factors. Having utilised various Large Language Models (LLMs) in my personal creative practice, I have found Gemini to be the most proficient at producing creative outputs that move beyond the purely transactional nature of other systems. For the development of my own script, I utilised the paid subscription edition of Gemini, which offers improved features and enhanced reasoning capabilities that were essential for complex narrative structuring. However, for the participant study, the free version of Gemini was chosen due to its high level of accessibility. As a Google product, it allowed participants to create accounts with ease, ensuring that the barrier to entry was minimal for those new to artificial intelligence.

In comparison to alternatives such as ChatGPT or Claude, Gemini presented the most user-friendly interface, which was a vital consideration for ensuring that participants could manage their tasks without technical frustration. The clarity of the interface allowed them to focus entirely on the creative prompts rather than the mechanics of the software.

Furthermore, my own experimentation suggested that Gemini consistently provided the most imaginative and versatile responses to creative writing prompts, making it the superior tool for a project centred on artistic collaboration. By standardising the tool across the study, I was able to maintain consistency in the feedback loops, while the clear layout ensured that the collaborative process remained intuitive for all involved.

To learn how best to devise my main objective of the TV pilot script, I wanted to try some smaller tasks of generating ideas and developing short stories. This allowed me to acquire

the best prompts and creative boundaries to improve the output of our collaboration. The initial tasks involved using the AI, specifically Google Gemini, to assist in the creation of some short stories. This process began with developing a backstory to provide the AI with a foundation for generating ideas, plots, and story structure. The goal was to collaborate with the AI from the initial concept to a fully formed draft of short stories. Through these activities I kept a blog of my processes, thoughts, and outputs.

One of the primary issues encountered during the process was that the AI's output, particularly in terms of ideas and dialogue, was more about quantity than quality. The AI tended to generate a large amount of content, but it often required significant refinement to meet the specific requirements of the story. To address this, I found it necessary to repeatedly reinforce the constraints of the project and reiterate the specific requirements to the AI. This guidance helped to keep the AI focused and prevented it from generating irrelevant or off-topic content. By providing clear direction and maintaining a focused dialogue, I was able to steer the collaboration towards a more creative and compelling outcome.

Another significant problem was the AI's tendency to produce content that was overly wholesome and predictable. In one instance, feedback from readers indicated that the AI-generated short story resembled a "John Lewis advert or Hallmark film," with a predictable plot and a lack of depth. The AI seemed to favour simple and neat resolutions, avoiding the complexities of real-life narratives. I countered this by engaging in more detailed and nuanced discussions with the AI, prompting it to create more emotionally rich dialogue and develop characters with greater depth. This involved guiding the AI to explore the emotional reasoning behind characters' actions and asking it to craft more sophisticated and engaging narratives.

I experimented with using AI in conjunction with specific writing constraints, such as Oblique strategies devised by Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt in the 1970s⁹. This offers a creative technique using a deck of cards. These cards were designed to overcome creative concerns by encouraging unusual creative prompts and developing unorthodox ways of thinking. For example, one of the cards I randomly chose to try writing a short story with AI was 'reverse'. With the help of discussions with AI, I created a story told backwards, the main character finds out further information the further the story progresses.

Another strategy I used was called the Oulipo technique or "Ouvroir de littérature potentielle", This movement, founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais¹⁰, is distinguished by its exploration of constrained writing techniques. This involved tasks such as writing a story backwards or creating characters with specific emotional attitudes (positive, negative, neutral). The aim was to explore how these constraints, when combined with AI assistance, could foster new and innovative story concepts.

These tasks demonstrated AI's capacity to generate unique ideas and assist in various aspects of the writing process, including character development, plot twists, and dialogue suggestions. I must also note that AI could be a valuable tool for overcoming creative blocks and helping writers maintain focus. Also, undertaking these tasks showed how AI was helpful in highlighting any SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar) issues that I had written but did not see or correct due to my dyslexia. Writing on my own, it would have taken numerous reads and re-drafts of the writing for me to pick up on any of these SPAG mistakes, which AI found and advised on straight away for me after I included this request in my prompts throughout our discussions, This support saved me many hours of time to focus more on the creative aspect of the writing.

⁹ Ian Shepherd, 'Brian Eno's Oblique Strategies - the Ultimate Music Production Tool', Production Advice, 2009, Accessed 19 December 2024, <https://productionadvice.co.uk/oblique-strategies>

¹⁰ 'OuLiPo', The Poetry Foundation, Accessed 25 May 2025, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/education/glossary/ouliipo>

These series of experiments wherein AI was used as a collaborative tool in creative writing, offered valuable assistance in generating ideas and content; however, I consistently had to actively guide the AI, refine its output, and correct its errors to achieve the desired creative outcomes.

Theoretical Frameworks in Scriptwriting

Drawing from my earlier discussions on the collaborative process with AI, I now turn to the specific inspirations that guided the development of the television pilot script. The following section will explore how key elements from existing works, served as a foundation for devising the story's structure, tone, and character dynamics.

Midnight Run (1988) is an action-comedy film directed by Martin Brest and written by George Gallo. The film stars Robert De Niro as Jack Walsh, a bounty hunter, and Charles Grodin as Jonathan "The Duke" Mardukas, an accountant who embezzles money from the mob. The film is known for its witty dialogue, the chemistry between De Niro and Grodin, and its blend of action and humour. *Midnight Run* offers several elements that could inspire my TV show, including the blend of action sequences and comedic moments successfully combined in the film. It also focuses on the development of its characters, allowing the audience to invest in their journey. I would like my idea to be inspired by *Midnight Run*, and to capture the spirit of the original while offering a fresh and contemporary take on the action-comedy genre. By delving even deeper into the characters' backstories and motivations a more nuanced and compelling narrative can be created. The themes of redemption and second chances are subtly woven into the story of *Midnight Run*; Jack is a former police officer trying to make a living, haunted by his past. The Duke, despite his white-collar crime, possesses a certain moral code. The TV show I wanted to devise with AI, could delve into characters who are trying to outrun their past mistakes or seeking an opportunity to prove themselves. This could provide fertile ground for exploring complex moral issues within an action-comedy framework, adding depth beyond simple thrills and laughs.

Additionally, each stop in *Midnight Run* offers a glimpse into different facets of American life. By having the protagonist Ethan journey through diverse settings, my TV show could similarly offer a contemporary snapshot of the UK, highlighting regional quirks, social contrasts, or even historical undercurrents in unexpected places, thus adding a layer of cultural commentary to the action-comedy premise.

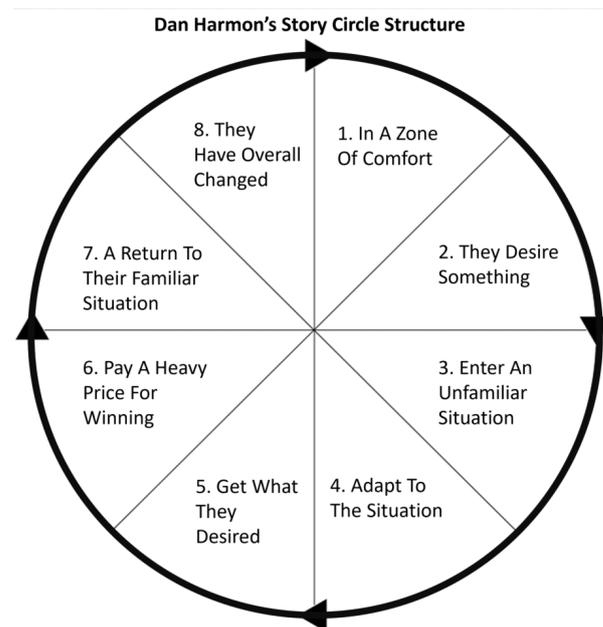
Finally, the pacing and tone of *Midnight Run* manages to shift seamlessly between moments of intense action, sharp wit, and genuine human connection. Capturing this tonal balance in my TV show will be crucial. I would seek to weave moments of lightness into high-stakes situations without undermining the tension and allowing moments of character reflection to breathe without slowing the momentum. The rhythm of the storytelling is just as important as the individual plot points.

The TV show *Poker Face*, which had its first season broadcast in 2023, was created by Rian Johnson, and has quickly gained acclaim for its fresh take on the case-of-the-week mystery format. The show stars Natasha Lyonne as Charlie Cale, a woman with an extraordinary ability to tell when someone is lying. She finds herself on the run, and in each episode, she encounters new people and new mysteries, often involving murder. The show is heavily inspired by classic detective series such as *Columbo* (1971-1978), using the inverted detective story format, where the audience sees the crime committed at the beginning of the episode. *Poker Face* demonstrates that the classic detective format can still be engaging for modern audiences, with this new show adopting this format with a unique twist, as a revival of the howcatchem presentation. The case-of-the-week structure (anthological storytelling) allows for flexibility and creativity, while balancing the tone by successfully blending humour and drama, creating a captivating and multifaceted viewing experience, which *Poker Face* does in a very defined manner. This would allow my new ideas to modernise classic tropes while paying homage to older shows similar to *Poker Face*, which is still very modern. It renovates classic tropes for a contemporary audience. *Poker Face* influence could be used,

where the main character, Ethan, uses his skills to solve a mystery in each episode. The focus on observation and the ability to read people could also be a point of connection.

I provided scripts of the pilot episode for *Poker Face*, and the published shooting script for *Midnight Run*, to enable the AI. to fully understand the influence and inspiration I wanted the collaboration to use from both these works to help me and the AI devise our own script using the structure, tone, and dialogue style as reference as concepts and ideas were discussed.

There were many writing concepts and styles I researched to see which would work best through collaboration with AI. I decided to use the Story Circle¹¹ writing concept, devised by television writer and producer Dan Harmon. It is a powerful tool for structuring narratives, including television shows and their pilot episodes. The approach breaks down storytelling into eight key steps that follow a circular pattern representing a character's journey and transformation. The stages are:



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¹¹ Jakob Straub, "Storytelling 101: The Dan Harmon Story Circle," Boards, 2024, Accessed 27 August 2025, <https://boards.com/blog/storytelling-101-the-dan-harmon-story-circle>

¹² Dan Harmon's Story Circle Structure 2025 <https://industrialscripts.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Dan-Harmon-Circle-1024x965.png>

I used the Dan Harmon Story Circle, as the AI understood this concept and writing structure. The AI could subsequently use this clear structure in conjunction with my prompts and our discussion to devise the story; it could follow along with each section of the circle as we broke down the concepts for the TV pilot. After discussing the Story Circle concept and with AI to establish the core story ideas, this is what we came up with as a blueprint to expand and develop the idea and story further:

You: We meet Ethan as he arrives in Oakhaven, showcasing his con artist skills and his desire to lay low.

Need: The inciting incident is Darlene's disappearance and the unsettling feeling Ethan gets from it.

Go! Ethan decides to investigate, despite his initial reluctance.

Struggle: He encounters obstacles like the suspicious locals, the secrets surrounding Darlene, and the threat from Rufus.

Find: Ethan uncovers a key piece of evidence (the locket).

Suffer: He faces danger or a moral compromise in getting the evidence.

Return: Ethan is still in Oakhaven, but the situation has escalated, and he is now more deeply involved.

Change: Ethan shows a flicker of genuine empathy and a willingness to fight for justice, hinting at his potential for redemption.

From here, the AI and I expanded on each part of the story circle to devise and create a beat sheet, treatment, and a season arc, before proceeding to writing the scenes for the script.

I wanted to try another writing concept to see how successful AI was with this. I decided on Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*¹³, which was published by the professor of literature in 1949. There is a section in his research regarding events resulting in transformation and the triumph of good. Campbell described the narrative structure stages

¹³ Stephen Gerringer, *The Hero's Journey & Joseph Campbell*, JCF, 2024, Accessed 25 May 2025, <https://www.jcf.org/learn/joseph-campbell-heros-journey>

as a monomyth (also known as the Hero's Journey). I wanted to use this to get AI to come up with a scene for a future episode of the story's first season. I discussed Campbell's monomyth with AI and provided it my TV pilot for context. I then explained how I wanted the AI to choose one of stages of the journey (monomyth) structure and then devise an outline for the scene. The AI decided on the resurrection stage of the structure, which is a moment in a climactic episode. With some prompting, it finally understood how to develop from the initial script for the pilot for this new episode scene and decided that the protagonist struggles with his unique abilities, his past as a con artist, and the desire to use his gift for good. AI stated that the resurrection stage of Campbell's monomyth offers a profound opportunity for a climactic confrontation, with his brother, Daniel, who embodies the darker, unchecked aspects of their shared ability. This stage of the story is where Ethan faces his deepest fear and the ultimate test of his transformation. The scene could be set in a location laden with personal history for Ethan and Daniel, perhaps the childhood home glimpsed in Ethan's flashback. Having been hinted at as a dangerous figure, Daniel emerges, not as a mere antagonist but as Ethan's ultimate shadow self, a chilling mirror of what Ethan could become if he succumbs to the selfish potential of his dark empathy. The confrontation intensifies into a psychological and emotional battle, as Daniel mercilessly targets Ethan's vulnerabilities, flooding him with guilt and fear from his past. Auras become chaotic shades of red, overwhelming Ethan to the brink of a metaphorical death by his inner demons. However, Ethan's Resurrection appears through his ultimate refusal to surrender. This transformative act sets Ethan's rebirth as a self-realised empath, leaving Daniel momentarily stunned and Ethan profoundly changed.

As can be seen, the result was quite heavy going and became bogged down in too many themes to be enticing for the audience. The script pages it devised were more in keeping with a novel in its story telling, with too many inner thoughts and judgments, which is not how the pilot for the TV show was written. It was a real challenge to engage with the writing

concept with the AI to progress the story in this potential future scene. Comparatively, the AI had a better grasp of the Dan Harmon Story Circle writing concept.

Comparative Feedback: AI versus Human Mentorship

The difference between the AI and human feedback I gained was quite stark in terms of the tone and structure. I asked AI to read over the scenes and analyse the quality of the work; it was mainly too positive and pleasing in its attitude and criticism. AI would repeat its suggestions regarding areas of improvement and would state the same critiques for completely different sections of work and segments it was analysing.

In contrast, the feedback from the academic mentors who looked over the work from initial concept ideas, rough drafts, and near complete scenes was more significant. To give an example, AI was happy with the setting and location of the story for this script, mainly as the examples and inspirations that were inputted for reference, were shows and films from the US. However, after reading the draft based on the US the academics stated that the descriptions and tone felt unsuitable. As I am not native to the US, I had to adjust the story to be based in the UK. One academic mentor's feedback was 'write about who and what you know'. Making these adjustments from the US to UK, made it easier to write in a natural style, previously I had been adding white picket fences, using moonshine as an illegal business undertaken by one of the families, and talking about diners instead of cafes. The feedback from the academic mentors acted like a light switch being turned on. The human feedback was far superior compared with that of the AI and enabled me to reframe my process. With the human suggestions I was able to focus on the writing and not the scenery. The AI did not have the inclination to suggest the UK as an improved location for the story; it considered the output and was trying to appease progress without any deeper thought processes. It is likely that humans are more attuned to more in-depth contemplation due to their personal life experiences; more nuanced and detailed feedback provided useful insight. I felt that the AI was being too pleasing and was simply churning out the story and dialogue

based on a dataset it had been provided. I subsequently adjusted the illegal activity to Ketamine (UK) instead of Moonshine (US), which still had the stakes of unlawful tendencies I was looking for but felt more grounded. Having the story set in the US felt like pushing a boulder up a hill, and consequently a real struggle.

A significant point of concern in my collaboration with Google Gemini occurred during collaboration was the cultural location of the script's primary setting. As noted in *The Palgrave Handbook of Script Development*¹⁴, the process of script development is often 'development hell, with a high number of drafts written, comments from diverse feedback givers steering the projects in new directions'¹⁵ to achieve a sense of authenticity. By moving away from the screenplay formula initially suggested by the AI, I was able to ground the case of the week mystery in a contemporary British context.

I initially prompted the AI with the task of creating a communal location for Ethan to hear local gossip and find out about Willow. Because the model was influenced by the American inspirations I provided (*Midnight Run* and *Poker Face*), it defaulted to an American aesthetic.

The Initial Prompt was: "Write a scene description for a local eatery where Ethan chats with the waitress to learn more about Willow, while overhearing the locals discussing the town's secrets. Make it feel like a classic detective show location."

The AI produced a description of a "dusty roadside diner" featuring "red vinyl booths," a "jukebox playing country hits," and a waitress serving "bottomless coffee and cherry pie". This output was mainly too positive and pleasing and lacked the details of my lived experience in the UK, to feel grounded in my knowledge of creating this story.

Refined Discussion and UK Redraft: Following the academic feedback to write about who and what you know, I engaged in a nuanced back-and-forth to strip away these Americanised

¹⁴ Craig Batty and Stayci Taylor, *The Palgrave Handbook of Script Development*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023

¹⁵ Batty and Taylor, *The Palgrave Handbook*

tropes. I directed the AI to focus on the regional quirks and social contrasts of a small British town. Below is the specific script comparison, showing the difference of the Opening Scene Description, how it adjusted and improved through the refinement.

The AI-Generated US Tropes: "INT. DINER - DAY. The smell of burnt coffee and maple syrup hangs in the air. Sunlight streams through the dusty windows, illuminating the red vinyl booths where locals sit hunched over plates of grits."

The Human-Refined UK Setting: "INT. CAFE - DAY. The cafe is an old greasy spoon. A faded painting of the late Queen Elizabeth hangs on the wall next to yellowed photos of men standing beside classic motorbikes. The air is thick with steam and the sizzle of fat. Locals chat over mugs of instant coffee and plates piled high with fry-ups."

To reflect on this process, this transition illustrates the metacognitive awareness required to recognise when AI-generated content becomes generic or lacking in originality. The inclusion of the late Queen Elizabeth and the greasy spoon aesthetic provides a contemporary snapshot of the UK that the AI did not have the inclination to suggest independently. This process mirrors what Maloney and Burne describe as the 'intensity and tensions'¹⁶ of collaborative story development, where the human writer must act as the gatekeeper of the narrative story. By providing persistent guidance, I was able to transform a basic and cliché writing output into a compelling scene.

I wanted the main character to have some kind of quirk or skill that would make them able to investigate and solve the 'case of the week' in each episode. With the influence of the main character in *Poker Face*, as discussed previously, I was trying to think of what differences they could have. I am neurodivergent, so I started to discuss what condition the main character could have with the AI, and it suggested obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

¹⁶ Craig Batty and Stayci Taylor, 'Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives', *Journal of Screenwriting*, Volume 13, Issue 1, (Apr 2022), 137-139, https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00087_5

Having this neurological difference would give the character an extra level of detail, with super focus of detail. This concept was then used to start fleshing out the character traits, and AI was being very positive on this aspect as it was relying on the previous input data for influence of the TV show *Poker Face*, however, this did not feel original or compelling enough for me. The academic mentors stated that the story needed something visual for the audience to understand when the character used his powers in some particular manner.

The evolution of the protagonist's powers from a tactile placeholder, a vibrating stone, to a visual aura system serves as a primary example of how collaborative brainstorming with AI can lead to more cinematic storytelling when guided by human critical discussion.

When tasked with creating a physical indication of Ethan's empathy, Google Gemini suggested a vibrating stone, with my initial AI interaction and Prompts.

Initial Prompt: Suggest a tangible object or physical sensation that Ethan experiences when his dark empathy is triggered. It needs to be something the audience can perceive.

AI Result: A small, smooth river stone in Ethan's pocket that vibrates with varying intensity depending on the strength of the emotion he is sensing.

While functional, this was a convenient but slightly too obvious device. Acting on academic feedback to create something more visual for the audience, I engaged in a recurring approach of experimentation.

I decided on a refinement and specification approach. I challenged the AI to move beyond physical objects and into the realm of visual distortion. This led to the development of the aura system, where Ethan views people or objects in a super focused manner with an aura of colours around them.

To ensure this was not an uninformed creative choice, I refined the system through discussions with the AI to align with established emotional semiotics.

Positive aura (blue) this choice is grounded in psychological associations where blue is perceived as a calming hue representing trust.

Negative aura (red) used for negative emotions or distress, red serves as a universal signal for high-arousal states such as "anger" or danger.

The difference in impact between the placeholder and the refined visual is evident in the script.

Before (placeholder): "Ethan's hand tightens on the stone in his pocket. It hums with a low, steady thrum against his palm."

After (refined): "The jobs turn, startled by the unexpected voice. Their aggressive RED flickers with confusion. They expected a timid passer-by."

Reflecting on this process, AI excels at rapid idea generation, but it often defaults to the most accessible tropes. The shift from a vibrating stone to a colour coded aura represents the writer's ability to effectively guide the AI and critically refine its output.

Additionally, through discussions with my academic mentor, I decided instead of the character having OCD I should investigate some other disorder or abilities. We talked about a recent article¹⁷ regarding a personality disorder called dark empathy (DE), characterised by the co-occurrence of high levels of empathy. After further consideration, I decided to make the main character's disposition one of DE as the characteristics of the condition would complement the narrative.

Defining the Protagonist: The Dark Empath

Dark empathaths use their cognitive ability to understand the feelings of others for personal benefit, creating a false sense of connection to manipulate people. DE is not currently recognised as an official condition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)¹⁸. Dark empathaths can maintain emotional distance while appearing

¹⁷ Anita Chaudhuri, "Narcissists – Only More Devious": The Truth about Dark Empaths' The Guardian, 2024, Accessed 10 July August 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2024/nov/10/narcissists-only-more-devious-the-truth-about-dark-empaths>

¹⁸ Patrick Nagle, 'Dark Empath: What Is It?', MentalHealth, 2025, Accessed 13 May 2025, <https://www.mentalhealth.com/library/what-is-dark-empath>

deeply understanding, allowing for manipulation without genuine care, keeping themselves emotionally distant.

In the context of a con artist for my script, this could be a person who uses their understanding of emotions to gain trust and subsequently exploit that trust. DEs are very observant and perceptive with their observational skills, they can quickly pick up on discrepancies or inconsistencies in stories, which can be used when investigating crimes or personal issues. However, the character will use their gifts for good as well as personal gain. Dark empaths tend to be extroverts, making it easier for them to socialise and connect with a wide range of individuals. This allows them to gather information and gain the trust of those they encounter. Perceptively, they are highly attuned to the way others react to situations and may use this to understand how to endear themselves to people. However, the presence of DE might make the character susceptible to being overwhelmed by the distress of others. This may result in the character having to take steps to protect their own mental health. There is the possibility that the character may slip back into old habits and use their manipulative skills for personal rewards, thus creating a moral dilemma or a turning point for the character that would require conflict for them. I have found that a DE character has a unique set of skills that could be used to investigate crimes, help vulnerable people, and identify and expose those with harmful intentions. However, their own internal conflicts would present challenges, making them complex and compelling with qualities that are perfect for enriching the story.

To translate this internal cognitive process into a visual representation for the audience, I developed a specific colour-coded aura system. This choice was underpinned by existing psychological research into the cross-modal associations between colour and emotion. I assigned blue auras to represent positive emotions and red auras to signify negative or threatening states. Blue is often identified as a 'calming'¹⁹ hue associated with trust and

¹⁹ Sensationalcolor 'Meaning of Blue', 2025, Accessed 20 January 2026.
<https://sensationalcolor.com/meaning-of-blue>

safety, whereas red is universally recognised as a signal for 'danger'²⁰ or high-arousal negative states like anger and guilt.

For example, during the climactic confrontation with his brother Daniel, written for the season finale, the AI helped devise a scene where the environment is overwhelmed by chaotic shades of red. This use of red serves a dual purpose: it visually communicates Daniel's unchecked aspects of dark empathy to the audience while heightening the psychological and emotional battle for Ethan. By anchoring these visual cues in established emotional symbolism, the script provides a more relatable means for the viewer to understand when the character used his powers without relying on clunky exposition.

Additional feedback from one of my academic mentors was the suggestion to create a scene for the audience to see how the main character might use his skill in a compassionate manner. I had a conversation with Gemini AI, and after some discussion regarding ideas. it proposed a scene where Ethan helps a character in distress. This triggered a memory I had of a scene from the film *Fight Club* (1999) where the protagonist motivates a shop clerk to improve his life and threatens to come find him in a few months after taking his driving license with his personal details to make sure he has done so. The feedback and subsequent discussion with AI were the inspiration I needed to create a new scene for my script, where Ethan acts valiantly in confronting some yobs harassing an old lady. It was interesting to note that numerous readers identified this section of the script as being their favourite part of the story. Without the feedback and subsequent suggestion from AI, I would not have thought of including this type of scene to show the compassionate side of the story's protagonist. This suggests AI has the ability to suggest ideas that satisfy the want of

²⁰ Sensationalcolor 'Meaning of Red', 2025, Accessed 20 January 2026.
<https://sensationalcolor.com/meaning-of-red>

an audience and maybe scriptwriters need to be open to exploring ideas beyond their original story line.

After completing the script, I subsequently discussed creating a series bible for this story with the AI. The following text outlines details for subsequent episodes.

Episode 1: *A Question of Morality* (Pilot)

A conman, Ethan, is on the run and arrives in Oakhaven. Using his DE, he reluctantly gets involved in the disappearance of Kerry, uncovering the killer using his unique skills. This act of unexpected heroism puts him back on the radar of his old handler, Gus.

Episode 2: *Echoes in the Carnival*

Now in Cedar Creek, Episode starts with Ethan receiving a cryptic message from his estranged brother, Dan. Ethan investigates the suspicious death of a fortune teller at a local carnival. This 'case of the week' is intertwined with increasingly disturbing flashbacks to his childhood with Dan, revealing the early, uncontrolled use of their 'gift' and the true reasons for Dan's being ousted by his family. Gus arrives in Cedar Creek, observing Ethan's new path with a mix of suspicion and intrigue.

Episode 3: *The Cult of Clarity*

Ethan's investigation into a series of local disappearances leads him to a secretive commune in the rural outskirts, where he suspects other empaths are being exploited. This case directly connects to Dan, who is revealed to be a manipulative leader within this group, using his DE to control his followers. Ethan struggles with the moral dilemma of confronting his brother while solving the week's case.

Episode 4: *Fates Entwined*

As Ethan delves deeper into Dan's influence over the commune, he uncovers a plot that jeopardises the entire town. His 'case of the week' involves rescuing an innocent family trapped by Dan's machinations. Gus's pursuit of Ethan becomes a reluctant alliance, as he

too sees the danger Dan poses. Maggie's organisation also closes in, viewing Dan's group as a potential new asset or a threat to be neutralised.

Episode 5: *The Reckoning*

Ethan and Gus orchestrate a risky plan to expose Dan's activities and free his followers, which forms the core 'case' of the episode. This forces a direct, escalating confrontation with Dan and his most loyal adherents. The episode builds to a powerful climax where Ethan must face his brother's twisted ideology and the full extent of his DE, leading directly into the season finale showdown.

Episode 6: *Brothers in Shadow* (Season Finale)

Ethan and Dan's deeply personal confrontation forms the dramatic heart of the finale, as Ethan attempts to break through Dan's resentment and reconnect with his brother. During their intense, empathic clash, Dan has a revelatory moment, understanding Ethan's shared suffering. This resolution between the brothers is immediately met with violent backlash from Dan's fanatical followers and Maggie's converging forces, leaving Ethan, Dan, and Gus in perilous circumstances and setting up future conflicts.

AI hallucinations, particularly in LLMs are a significant challenge, characterised by the generation of incorrect, misleading, or nonsensical information that can appear believable. These hallucinations come from various sources, including data limitations, model biases, training methods, and inference processes. Researchers are actively exploring methods to detect, classify, and reduce these hallucinations, ranging from improving data quality and training techniques, to developing new evaluation benchmarks and decoding strategies. Google Cloud defines AI hallucinations as "incorrect or misleading results that AI models generate."²¹

²¹ 'What Are AI Hallucinations?' *Google Cloud*, 2024, Accessed 6 May 2025, <https://cloud.google.com/discover/what-are-ai-hallucinations>

I have found, flooding AI with larger data or questions, can lead to higher chances of hallucinations happening. It is important to clearly express that interaction with AI on subjects that are more fact based, i.e. medical, legal matters etc., have more implications if this arises compared to creative writing, but it still casts doubt on the AI output. I will now proceed to discuss some specific hallucination examples I have encountered and how I was able to resolve them, starting with language errors.

The AI would sometimes deviate from the expected language of the conversation (British English), switch to the America English style, or respond in a different language altogether. This could disrupt the flow of the interaction and introduce confusion. The way I resolved this was with a direct approach, explicitly pointing out the language change to the AI, reminding it of the intended language context. This corrective feedback helped the AI to realign its output with the desired language.

I also experienced non-responsiveness or delays. In some cases, the AI would either refuse to respond to a query or indicated that it needed an extended period to think things over before providing an answer. This could lead to delays in the creative process and required me to wait or rephrase the request. To resolve this, I would address the AI's non-responsiveness, sometimes rephrasing the prompt or providing additional context to encourage a more immediate and relevant reply.

Contextual disconnect was the most problematic type of hallucination, when the AI generated responses that were completely different from the subject being discussed. These responses, although potentially well-formed in isolation, had no logical connection to the preceding conversation or the creative task in hand. It was as if the AI suddenly shifted to a different topic altogether. To tackle this, I employed a strategy of grounding the AI in the ongoing interaction. This involved referring to the ongoing research conversation. This meant reminding the AI of the overall objective and the specific creative goals, re-iterating the specific prompts that had been provided. This helped to refocus the AI on the intended direction of the creative work, ensuring that its output was relevant and useful.

Finally, I will reflect on some general strategies I used for overcoming hallucinations, beyond the specific examples. My overall approach highlights some important strategies for working with AI in creative contexts. This included direct communication and not treating the AI as a black box, which 'arises when AI models make decisions without clear, understandable reasoning'²². I found it was essential to explicitly address issues and for me to provide clear feedback. It was necessary to continuously remind the AI of the project's goals, constraints, and the flow of the conversation to provide it contextual anchoring. Finally at the end of the prompt discussion, I would ask the AI if it had any further queries or questions prior to it creating its response. This approach would allow the AI to query anything it was unclear about, for example, the tone or specific style of feedback I was requesting from our discussion. The collaborative process is one of ongoing adjustment, where both the AI and I learn and adapt from our experience of partnership. By employing these techniques, I was able to mitigate the disruptive effects of AI hallucinations and maintain a productive collaboration.

On reflection, I find that I must question whether AI can truly replicate the deeply human aspects of storytelling. While it can assist with certain elements, many academics argue that it falls short of capturing the essence of human creativity and emotional depth. Here are some counter arguments regarding whether AI is able to help with creative writing.

Professor Glenn M. Kleiman from Stanford Graduate School of Education, states 'AI systems do not replicate human knowledge, cognition or emotion. AI systems are trained by processing an enormous corpus of digital text.'²³. Kleiman goes on to advise that 'by

²² Zen the innovator, 'Lack of Explainability and Transparency in AI: The Black-Box Dilemma', *Medium*, 2025, Accessed 10 August 2025, <https://medium.com/@ThisIsMeIn360VR/lack-of-explainability-and-transparency-in-ai-the-black-box-dilemma-5bb58776cd93>

²³ Glenn Kleiman 'Perspective | Educators Need to Understand and Embrace Artificial Intelligence Writing Tools', *EdNC*, 2023, Accessed 19 June 2025, <https://www.ednc.org/perspective-educators-need-to-understand-and-embrace-artificial-intelligence-writing-tools>

contrast, much of human knowledge stems from goal-driven activities, social interactions, modelling of others and other interactions in the real world.²⁴.

Axel Schwanke, a senior data engineer from the University of Siegen, discusses the limits of AI regarding how it cannot purposely devise an innovative story. Schwanke argues, 'While AI excels at producing and remixing existing patterns, it lacks the emotional depth and intuitive understanding necessary for true originality'²⁵.

Phia Ringo, content writer for *Spines*, argues that even though AI is useful for conceptualisation and basic idea creation it 'cannot replace the creativity and soul of a human storyteller. Writers bring a unique perspective, personal experiences, and emotional intelligence that machines cannot replicate.'²⁶. Ringo goes on to suggest that AI is purely a primitive writing appliance and that the 'storyteller remains at the heart of every tale, guiding it with passion, intuition, and imagination.'²⁷.

Lorraine Brophy, a Higher Education disability officer, and expert at a university centre in England, raises concerns about using AI for creative writing with students who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Brophy expresses concern that AI "could stifle creativity and originality"²⁸ and that "for students who struggle with reading and writing it could hinder development of own writing skills".²⁹ Brophy worries that AI "could produce a generation of students unable to think for themselves/lacking in skills required" and that students "may not have the skills to recognise where AI has been useful or not".³⁰ Brophy

²⁴ Ednc, 2023

²⁵ Axel Schwanke, 'Generative AI — Never Truly Creative?' Medium, 2025, Accessed 5 April 2025, <https://medium.com/@axel.schwanke/generative-ai-never-truly-creative-68a0189d98e8>

²⁶ Phia Ringo, 'The Benefits and Limitations', *Spines*, 2024, Accessed 29 October 2024, <https://spines.com/using-ai-for-storytelling>

²⁷ 'Phia Ringo, 'The Benefits and Limitations', 2024

²⁸ Lorraine Brophy (Higher Education Disability Officer), in discussion with the author, February 2025.

²⁹ Brophy 2025.

³⁰ Brophy 2025.

states, "I think there is a risk that students will rely on the opinion of AI, rather than their own reflections or those of the tutor".³¹, which could cause an over-reliance on AI feedback.

I feel that AI is a valuable but imperfect tool that can significantly aid the creative process, particularly in overcoming initial hurdles and generating ideas. However, my experiences strongly suggest that human intervention and critical oversight are absolutely necessary for achieving quality, originality, and the depth that will resonate with an audience. In my view, the AI functions best as a highly capable assistant that requires persistent guidance and refinement, rather than acting as an autonomous creative partner.

Participant Study and Findings

I aimed to explore the impact of AI and LLMs on the creative process in screenwriting via participants undertaking some tasks with and without AI collaboration.

The participant study was designed to capture a broad spectrum of expertise, categorised into three distinct groups: highly skilled professionals (30%), individuals with several years of amateur or student experience (50%), and those who engage with writing purely for recreation (20%). This grouping was essential to provide a comprehensive evaluation of how AI-assisted tools perform across varying levels of creative maturity and technical skill. By including these diverse groups, the research avoids a narrow focus on a single user type, instead offering a holistic view of the technology's utility for both the amateur seeking structural support and the professional looking for efficiency.

The rationale for including highly skilled professionals was to test the AI's capability to maintain a unique writer's voice, a task that participants Misc-A6 and Misc-A15 found particularly challenging. These professionals acted as a high-level benchmark, revealing that for experienced writers, AI often serves as an assistant that requires substantial redirection.

Whereas, the amateur and student group provided insight into the AI's pedagogical role, with

³¹ Brophy 2025.

participants noting its effectiveness in ideas and world-building. The recreational group highlighted the efficiency of the tool, focusing on its ability to save time and during the brainstorming phase.

I sought to investigate both the positive and negative impacts of AI on traditional screenwriting methods. This involved considering collaborative approaches between screenwriters and AI to enhance the creative process and discover new storytelling avenues. The research also delved into the relationship between AI and creativity, ethical considerations arising from AI use in creative processes, and strategies to mitigate any negative impacts of AI and LLMs in screenwriting, particularly within the field of Higher Education. The tasks the participants were asked to undertake as part of this research included:

Creating a logline (a concise summary of a film's core concept) for an experience from their own life, first independently and then with the help of Google Gemini.

Developing an elevator pitch (a brief and persuasive summary of an idea) of their life story, both individually and with AI assistance.

Using Gemini to transform a dream into a story idea, exploring elements such as plot, characters, and setting.

Creating a story based on a news headline, first on their own and then in collaboration with Gemini.

Exploring how AI could help reimagine an older film for a contemporary audience.

The participant feedback from the creative writing tasks showed a range of views on the usefulness of AI, with some participants finding it helpful for specific aspects of writing and others expressing reservations.

Some participants appreciated AI's ability to aid in brainstorming, structuring, and refining their ideas. For instance, participant Misc-A6 mentioned that "AI helped to clarify and expand

my ideas"³², and UC-B1 found it useful for world-building, stating, "It really helped world build, and it was very creative"³³. Several participants also noted AI's efficiency in generating content and saving time, with Misc-A6 saying, "Saves a lot of time and sweat"³⁴, and another Misc-A14 stating, "AI was quicker"³⁵. AI's capacity to provide a fresh perspective and identify areas for improvement was also valued, as one participant UC-B3 explained, "It gave me a new perspective on things that I hadn't really paid much attention to"³⁶, and Misc-A15 acknowledged that "AI is far better at finding out what you are good and bad at than most human beings"³⁷.

However, some participants also expressed concerns about AI's limitations in creative tasks. Some found AI-generated content to be generic or lacking in originality, with participant Misc-A4 describing it as "a little generic and bland"³⁸ and Misc-A7 stating, "AI things have a tendency to sound like something I've seen before"³⁹.

There were also reservations about AI's ability to capture the writer's unique voice and style, as participant Misc-A6 noted, "AI cannot follow my voice, I have to direct it, like an assistant"⁴⁰, and Misc-A15 commented, "If I delegate the writing to Gemini, it will have that cold, deadpan AI writing style as well"⁴¹.

Additionally, one participant UC-B2 encountered issues with AI accuracy and relevance,

³² Participant Misc-A6, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

³³ Participant UC-B1, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

³⁴ Participant Misc-A6

³⁵ Participant Misc-A14, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

³⁶ Participant UC-B3, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

³⁷ Participant Misc-A15, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

³⁸ Participant Misc-A4, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

³⁹ Participant Misc-A7, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

⁴⁰ Participant Misc-A6

⁴¹ Participant Misc-A15

with reporting AI hallucinations and finding that "for some tasks it would sometimes not exactly match up with what I asked"⁴².

The reflections of these groups also revealed significant differences in how they perceived AI limitations. While the professional cohort was more sensitive to the generic and bland nature of the output, the students and amateurs were more likely to value the AI's ability to clarify and expand on their existing concepts. This suggests that the impact of AI on creativity is not uniform; rather, it is mediated by the user's preexisting expertise and their awareness of the creative process. Including these three tiers ensures the study's conclusions regarding human refinement are grounded in the lived experiences of writers at every stage of their development.

The participation tasks highlight AI's complex pedagogical role in creative writing. While it aids brainstorming, efficiency, and fostering initial ideas, its tendency towards generic output requires significant human refinement and critical evaluation. This aspect of using AI highlights the importance of human feedback and guidance in creating originality and a unique imaginative voice, suggesting AI serves best as a tool to be directed, not a replacement for human artistic development.

Expanding upon the participation tasks and analysing this project, I can see that further research in this area would greatly benefit from a more granular analysis of how AI influences the development of a writer's unique voice. Investigating participants responses over an extended period, tracking their progress with and without AI collaboration, would be invaluable. This would allow for a deeper understanding of whether consistent AI interaction genuinely 'stifles creativity and originality'⁴³ as some concerns suggest, or if, with proper pedagogical integration, it adjusts participants input to enable them to concentrate on the creative side and let AI come up with the basic brainstorming and encouragement when

⁴² Participant UC-B2, "MA Participant Part 1 feedback questions" personal communication, 5th February, 2025

⁴³ Brophy 2025

guidance on ideas are needed. Also, a study focusing on the qualitative differences in narrative depth and emotional quality between human-only and AI-assisted creative work, judged by a blind panel of industry professionals, would offer crucial insight into AI's true creative potential or limitations.

Reading over the final draft of the script I created for the TV pilot in collaboration with AI, I found that the core concept of a dark empath character offers a unique and compelling twist on supernatural dramas, creating a rich opportunity for storytelling both in the UK and globally. Ethan is a very engaging protagonist. His internal struggles and desire for redemption make him relatable, and his backstory, particularly with Maggie and Gus, hints at a larger intriguing criminal underworld that could fuel ongoing plots with the added intrigue of the final twist with his brother. The flashbacks that reveal his origins and past trauma are effective, giving him significant emotional depth. Ethan's loyal canine companion Pip adds a touch of warmth and humour, which balances his darker nature but also uses the trope of a sidekick to allow Ethan to express his inner thoughts and viewpoints to the viewer. The setting of Oakhaven, makes the town appear quaint but has a real tension with hidden secrets, making for an excellent backdrop for the mystery of the pilot episode. The local characters are authentic and add to the town's atmosphere. The mystery of Darlene's disappearance is well-structured, allowing Ethan to effectively use his abilities. The visual representation of his empathy, with auras of blue for positive emotions and red for negative, is a creative and visually appealing way to show his powers on screen to the audience. The ending, setting up Gus's continued involvement and introducing his brother, provides intriguing hooks for future episodes.

Overall, on reflection I consider the script has significant potential. The core concept is interesting; the protagonist is flawed yet caring. It provides the blend of a compelling lead with a unique ability, a case of the week format, all underpinned by an overarching story arc, which is what I wanted to achieve when I started this research project.

Surprisingly, I have found that through this project my understanding of the creative process has become significantly adjusted. I recognise it as a dynamic collaboration rather than a solitary endeavour. The experience of training AI and implementing creative confines has highlighted the necessity of a structured approach, where the human writer acts also as a guide to the AI's output. Recognising AI's tendency towards generic content and its need for human refinement and correction has highlighted the key role of human of critical judgment, reinforcing that AI serves best as a powerful assistant requiring persistent guidance, rather than a free-thinking creative partner. The project has shifted my focus to a nuanced back-and-forth between human creativity and AI capabilities, developing my craft to effective prompt engineering with critical evaluation of the AI-generated responses and output.

It is crucial to emphasise that those embarking on a collaborative scriptwriting story with AI should establish a framework of guardrails. This framework should cover several key strategies to enhance the collaboration with AI and maximise the quality of the output.

Clear and consistent communication with the AI is vital. This involves the clear and repeated formulation of the discussion's objectives, the defined constraints, and the desired parameters.

Providing the AI with detailed background information, relevant source material (such as existing scripts in the same field for influence and context of tone, style and dialogue beats), can significantly enhance AI's ability to generate appropriate and useful outputs. AI-generated content is rarely perfect in its initial form and once the discussion with the AI is finished the script will typically require a degree of human refinement and correction.

Scriptwriters should be prepared to critically evaluate the AI's output, identifying areas where improvements can be made in terms of originality, emotional depth, character development, pacing, and overall narrative coherence. This process may involve restructuring scenes, rewriting dialogue, adding or removing characters, adjusting the location of the story to somewhere the writer has more knowledge regarding the context, and making adjustments to the plot to ensure that the final script meets the desired creative standards. Additionally,

gaining critical feedback from other screenwriters and writers of any kind, as their lived experience and nuance view is not available from AI in its present state.

The collaborative strategies developed with Google Gemini differ fundamentally from the highly collaborative nature of professional television writing rooms, which often displace simple notions of individual authorship. As noted by Maloney and Burne, human collaboration in television drama writer's rooms is characterised by a specific 'creativity, intensity and tension'⁴⁴ that emerges during collective story development. This intensity is a result of multiple stakeholders, including writers, script editors, and producers—negotiating diverse 'commercial imperatives and narrative structures'⁴⁵ in real-time.

This human to human interaction relies on what Stayci Taylor (Senior Lecturer of Media and Communication at RMIT University Melbourne) and Craig Batty (Pro Vice Chancellor, College of Creative Arts of the University of South Australia) describe as one that creates 'a structure that provides the integrity to support the gift of their imagination'⁴⁶.

In contrast, my process with Gemini was a solitary endeavour where the AI acted as a primitive writing appliance requiring persistent guidance to move beyond generic outputs.

Script development in a professional context is often viewed as a performative process that envisions multiple endpoints rather than a linear structural path, which I myself have found in the numerous writers room I have worked in over the years.

While I utilised the Dan Harmon Story Circle as a fixed framework for the AI, professional human teams often move beyond traditional screenplay formulas. This highlights a key divergence: human collaboration strategies are built on "subjective expectations, but AI strategies are limited by the model's reliance on clear definitions" and existing data patterns.

⁴⁴ Batty and Taylor, 'Script Development' 137-139

⁴⁵ Batty and Taylor, 'Script Development' 137-139

⁴⁶ Batty and Taylor, The Palgrave Handbook

Ultimately, the 'Feedback Phenomenon'⁴⁷ described by Taylor and Batty involves 'important aspects of screen idea development'⁴⁸ that contribute to a script's evolution through a shared 'ethnography'⁴⁹ of global and local culture, a depth of 'intercultural collaboration'⁵⁰ that current generative AI models cannot authentically simulate.

Unlike a human writers' room, where the showrunner oversees a dynamic collaboration of diverse perspectives, the AI lacks the inclination to suggest culturally specific shifts, such as the transition from a US to a UK setting, without direct human prompting.

The creation of successful prompts is rarely a linear process, it requires a recurring approach of experimentation, evaluation, and refinement. Scriptwriters should embrace a mindset of continuous improvement, recognising that the initial prompts are just a starting point for an ongoing dialogue with the AI. Vague prompts are likely to generate unfocused or irrelevant outputs from AI, which may initially look impressive but have no depth. AI tends to generate quantity over quality in output and scriptwriters must endeavour to articulate their detailed instructions and contextual information to guide the AI's creative process clearly. Also, I have found before getting AI to produce its response, querying if it has any further questions before it starts to generate an output, can help focus the end result.

It is essential to maintain a flexible and adaptive approach throughout the collaborative process. Scriptwriters should be willing to experiment with different prompts, techniques, and strategies to produce the best possible results from AI, and they should also be prepared to adjust their own creative vision in response to the AI's suggestions and contributions.

By using these guidelines, scriptwriters can effectively harness the AI as a creative tool, while mitigating its limitations and ensuring the production of compelling and engaging scripts.

⁴⁷ Batty and Taylor, The Palgrave Handbook

⁴⁸ Batty and Taylor, The Palgrave Handbook

⁴⁹ Batty and Taylor, The Palgrave Handbook

⁵⁰ Batty and Taylor, The Palgrave Handbook

Conclusion: The Future of the Human-AI Partnership

To conclude, it is evident that the collaboration between scriptwriters and artificial intelligence is one characterised by fundamental complexities and there is a need to stress the critical importance of establishing and remaining within carefully constructed creative guardrails.

AI presents a range of potential advantages for the creative process. Its capacity to facilitate rapid idea generation and offer structural frameworks is an asset to writers. Moreover, it can help with SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar), particularly for anyone who classes themselves as neurodivergent and consequently finds these aspects of writing a challenge; AI's ability to generate content efficiently can be a valuable asset to these writers. However, it is equally important to acknowledge that the human element remains essential. The nuanced and often subjective nature of feedback, the ability to include narratives with personal experience, and the fundamental capacity to convey genuine emotional depth are all unique human qualities that AI, in its current developmental stage, cannot fully replicate. The reflections from academics and industry professionals further emphasise this point, highlighting the limitations of AI in capturing these aspects of storytelling.

Ultimately, the successful integration of AI into the scriptwriting process hinges on a balanced approach. By clearly understanding both the strengths and weaknesses of AI, and by strategically employing it as a tool to supplement, rather than replace human creativity, scriptwriters can indeed harness its power to produce high-quality and engaging stories. The writer's ability to effectively guide the AI, to critically refine its output, and to infuse the work with the essential and irreplaceable elements of human creativity, is, and will continue to be, the key to unlocking the full potential of this collaboration.

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