

# Chapter 9

## GAI in the 2023 WGA Strike: English Speaking Media Coverage of GAI's Impact on the Screenwriting Industry and Authorship

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) on the screenwriting industry from the perspective of the 2023 Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike, an event that publicly aired the ethical and industrial questions around the emergence of GAI. This study uses qualitative content and thematic analysis to assess English-speaking media coverage from March to December 2023, covering the duration and aftermath of the strike. It analyses 218 valid media articles, categorised into three main themes and nine sub-themes. The findings highlight three critical areas of concern: (1) the potential reduction in narrative diversity and authenticity in storytelling, (2) significant changes in the roles and professional environment for screenwriters as technology is used in the creative process, and (3) ethical challenges regarding copyright and authorship, as well as the risks associated with misinformation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) revolutionises numerous fields, largely impacting authorship (Brown, 2018), creativity (Amato et al., 2019), and the future of the profession (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). GAI is a branch of artificial intelligence capable of generating text, images, or other data based on its training data (Feuerriegel et al., 2024; Fui-Hoon et al., 2023). Large language models such as ChatGPT can produce natural language almost reaching the Turing test standard, indicating that AI can simulate human-like reactions (Gams & Kramar, 2024; Mei et al., 2024), which challenge traditional concepts of originality and intellectual property (Kaminski, 2017). This rapid technological advancement raises critical questions about the role of GAI in creative processes (Lee, 2022) and its potential to replace human workers (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Illéssy & Makó, 2020). Media discourse has played an important role in reflecting and shaping these debates, highlighting issues such as the potential erosion of narrative diversity (Epstein et al., 2023; Watt, 2023), replacing human writers or diminishing their role in the content creation process (Halff, 2023; Lauer, 2023; U-Wire, 2023) and ethical issues including the copyright of AI-generated content (Cho, 2023; Quinn, 2023; Marathe, 2023). As GAI continues to be integrated into the film industry, it is critical to understand its impact on screenwriting, especially in the context of labour disputes such as the 2023 Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike, which has brought these concerns to the forefront.

The WGA organised the 2023 Hollywood Writers Strike, which represented 11,500 screenwriters and was initiated due to a protracted dispute with the AMPTP (Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers). This strike commenced on May 2, 2023, five months after OpenAI released ChatGPT, with an overwhelming 97.85% support from the participating writers. The strike lasted 148 days and ended on September 27. Looking back historically, Hollywood screenwriters have initiated strikes in 1945, 1960, 1980, 1985, 1988, and 2007, reflecting recurring issues regarding pay, creative rights, benefits, and job security (Henderson, 2010; Larner, 1989; Wilson, 1991). This history of labour disputes in the film industry highlights the ongoing challenge of maintaining fair working conditions and wages, ultimately contributing to the development of the Hollywood industrial relations narrative.

During the 2023 WGA strike, the impact of GAI on the screenwriting industry and screenwriters' authorship rights became an important focus, which led to writers' strike (Faughnder, 2023). Authorship refers to the quality of an individual's creativity, originality, and intellectual property ownership, and involves the core position of power and ultimate responsibility for the content and form of the work (Hick, 2014). This advancement opens the door to collaborative screenwriting between human writers and AI. Moreover, screenwriting has always been an art form

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