# A Portrait of the Artist as an Emergent Technology

## Um Retrato do Artista como uma Tecnologia Emergente

## DAVIN HECKMAN

Winona State University, Minnesota, US

dheckman@winona.edu

—
**Abstract**

This paper is about the birth of an author. It is about the contested terrain of authority, not as a debate between human readers and writers engaged in philosophical conflict over the relationship between individuals and their respective societies, but about the very termination of philosophical debate between individuals as the terrain of culture in an age of artificial intelligence. Weaving through a history of the subject in the social sciences and arriving at the end point of a cybernetic relationship between surveillance and machine intelligence, this paper posits that the human has become a text, and the machinic apparatus its reader and writer. In other words, this paper is about reading and writing after the rise of Artificial Intelligence and its implications for our understanding of the human person, or anthropology.*

—
**Keywords**

artificial intelligence | prosopopoeia | individuation | surveillance | interrelationality

---

\* My use of the term "anthropology" is intended to be indifferent to the history or methods of Anthropology as an academic discipline. Instead, I use anthropology to refer to the development of a theory of "the human."

**—**
**Resumo**

Este artigo trata do nascimento de um autor. É sobre o terreno contestado da autoridade, não como um debate entre leitores humanos e escritores engajados no debate filosófico sobre a relação entre indivíduos e suas respectivas sociedades, mas sobre o próprio término do debate filosófico entre indivíduos como o terreno da cultura em uma época de inteligência artificial. Tecendo uma história do sujeito nas ciências sociais e chegando ao ponto final da relação cibernética entre vigilância e inteligência da máquina, este artigo postula que o humano se torna um texto e o aparato maquínico seu leitor e escritor. Em outras palavras, este artigo é sobre ler e escrever após o surgimento da Inteligência Artificial e suas implicações para nossa compreensão da pessoa humana, ou antropologia.

**—**
**Palavras-chave**

inteligência artificial | prosopopeia | individuação | vigilância | inter-relacionalidade

## The Genealogy of the emerging Authority

> The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.
> — James Joyce. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916, 249).

Since at least the myth of Prometheus through Aristotle and Kant, there has been a recurring conception of the human as distinct from other animals due to our capacity for reason. Ironically, the conception of the human as a "rational animal" came under critique as the empiricist turn of the Enlightenment gathered steam. Two key aspects of the Enlightenment construction of "the human" create a productive tension that is relevant to this argument: In the first order, this human came to be seen as intensely individual via the subjective encounter of the self. This discovery of the self was a continuation of the established interest in the soul's moral journey in the world (like *Piers Plowman,* which is an allegory for the Christian spiritual journey), gradually shifting towards its secularization in *bildung*, "the early bourgeois, humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual self from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity" (Sammons 1991, 42). In the second order, there was a desire for an objective, descriptive account of the human, stemming

from the birth of the Scientific Method. In this instance, we see the effort to understand human existence through philosophy and, eventually, social science. These two orientations towards the human create tension in Modern thought and language. The concept of *prosopopoeia* identifies a way to bridge this tension. Taken from the Greek, it literally means to "create a face," and is used to personify an inanimate object or speak on behalf of an absent or imaginary person. Prosopopoeia allows us to see the subjective through the empirical, by investing the material world with significance and positioning the human witness as an observer.

In *Book III*, Quintillian (c. 95) identifies *prosopopoeia* as a technique intended to draw a figure forth, to conjure an entity into the imagination as a rhetorical device by which an idea can be discussed on behalf of one who is not there. In this term, a number of modern and postmodern critics, most notably J. Hillis Miller, have found a useful critical concept (one which ought to resonate with the Foucauldian understanding of discourse as the foundation for consciousness and subjectivity). Miller, for example, notes how the trope of prosopopoeia a "ascribes a face, a name, or a voice to the absent, the inanimate, or the dead" (1990, 3-4). In other words, prosopopoeia is the means by which a subject is conjured forth through language and animated by its capacity to function meaningfully to the reader. We cannot miss the fact that the ultimate subjectivity expressed in the ascription of agency to the inanimate resides not in the object itself, but in the mind of the interpreter.

Although the Enlightenment rises with an elevation of the rational, it is this primacy of the observer that undermines the reliance on an essentialist definition of the human (or the animal, for that matter). The awareness of our own unreliability as narrators drives us towards the desire to reconcile this tension. From here, we see a pivot away from "human nature" as a pre-existing condition and towards "human being" as a descriptive project (and, by implication, a growing movement towards the sense of the human being as "becoming"). One epistemic fix for this tension is to see the human as entering into language, culture, and civilization, with a certain potential for perfectibility in mind, preserving a belief and desire to find order in a world that we enter into as unreliable observers.

There are many ways in which humans find order and pattern in seemingly noisy environments. The scientific method is the clearest example of this. Certainly, the Modern romanticization of the "genius" and the "idiot savant" (in the 21st Century, the "autistic") personalize the figure of the individual who sees sense in the noise of chaos and daily life, finding clues and connections in what most others see as static. This fascination seems to rise with a kind of Modernist attitude which desires to see the natural world and, eventually, the social world through a positivist lens, governed by deterministic rules. This deterministic tendency, associated with what would come to be called Structuralism, was part of a more generalized perspective on anthropology, and the hope of underlying, determined structures came to dominate social theory, developing into early 20th Century racial theories, behaviorism, humanities, and linguistics.

Ironically, the pursuit of clarity does not always resolve the tension between subjectivity and objectivity. Indeed, one possibility is that the tension between the subjective and objective, rational and irrational, finds alignment with deeper ideological formations. As these materially descriptive and procedural approaches to describing humans develop, the human is supplanted by more open-ended concepts of being. For this turn, Terence Hawkes credits Giambattista Vico's call for a "physics of man" in Vico's 1725 work, *The New Science* (1977, 2). Hawkes identifies the dual impact of Vico's work, on the one hand, explaining that myths arise from "the actual generalized experience of ancient peoples" and that they are shaped by "the human mind itself" (1977, 3). However, in identifying the notion that myths spring from internal qualities of the human mind, Hawkes explains,

> human beings and human societies are not fashioned after some model or plan which exists before they do. Like the existentialists, Vico seems to argue that there is no pre--existent, 'given' human essence, no predetermined 'human nature'. Like the Marxists, he seems to say that particular forms of humanity are determined by particular social relations and systems of human institutions. (1977, 4)

Hawkes sees this pivot as significant in the rise of what would become Structuralism, for it at once shrugs off metaphysical explanations for culture and civilization, situates the grand narrative tendencies of the human imagination under material causes, and posits that culture is socially constructed. Hawkes draws a connection between Vico and Claude Levi-Strauss, who wished to "produce a 'general science of man' as well, informed by his basic conviction that 'men have *made* themselves to no less an extent than they have made the races of their domestic animals, the only difference being that the process has been less conscious or voluntary'" (1977, 20). Levi-Strauss's contribution to the field of anthropology was, similarly, bifurcated, for in claiming deep systemic structures within the "savage mind," he simultaneously argues that culture itself has no linear meaning and that the typical person is unaware of these deeper structures. Hence, there was a kind of metarationality to social life without awareness on behalf of its subjects. This could be true. It could be questionable. In either case, such a claim is necessary to make the phenomenology of being fit into the objective account that Levi-Strauss wishes to provide. The reality is that for this account to be real, things like difference and creativity must become unreasonable. In other words, irrationality (or capriciousness) gradually replaces freedom as the defining feature of the modern human. And the "Rational Man" (whose irrationality finds expression in freedom and sensibility) is realized in the bourgeois subject through education and the irrational finds expression in the construction of the masses (whose rationality is in their behavioral generalities and animality). In other words, the competing Modernist notions of the human are resolved through the ideological formation of class.

Naturally, this shift has the effect of elevating the technical expertise (as produced via *bildung*) of theory over society. And society becomes reducible to "the masses," who occupy a similar (though, perhaps, more neutral) relationship to the intellectual, managerial, and capitalist classes as "savages" did to anthropologists, missionaries, and colonizing forces. And this shift is reflected in other thinkers who, though they were not seeking to provide a systemic account like Vico's political theory or Levi-Strauss' anthropology, nevertheless, exhibit the same tendency. For Darwinians, the current state of any biological being is a still moment in a larger evolutionary process, a freeze frame in a dynamic trajectory. For Marxists, who borrow from Hegel's dialectical view of history, being is an expression of the subject enmeshed in the struggle of material relations. There is a dual effect with regards to the implications these shifts have on the construction of the public as the masses. The tendency here is for the observers (elites and intellectuals) to see themselves as liberated by the loosening of being, while the subjects of their rule are seen as diminished under the loosening of being. This pattern is expressed in many Modern enterprises, notably in the perverse psychology of colonialism which constructs exaggerated gender binaries (native masculine as "aggressive" and "hypersexual", feminine as "demure" and "seductive") to justify pacification as moral duty.[1] In Nietzsche, the implications of this openness for ethics is explored via the concept of the *ubermensch*, the person unfettered by the metaphysical strictures of an obsolete order, who is thus freed to transcend the past and enter into the future.

In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean Francois Lyotard explains the crisis in modernity as "the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation" (1984, xxiv). By metanarrative apparatus, he is referring to the large systems of meaning that, under modernism, supplied order and coherence to the social world. He continues, "knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is and who knows what needs to be decided? In the computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever a question of government." (1984, 8-9) In this text, which was panned for its fast and loose engagement with contemporary science and which Lyotard himself disavowed, there are nevertheless powerfully sensitive prognostications about the impact of computation on culture, the shift towards performance-based measures of the person, the crisis in higher education, and the coming incoherence of culture and society. Bernard Stiegler's generous return to this contentious text is useful in that he frames Lyotard (along with Foucault, Deleuze,

---

[1]  This phenomenon is described in Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (1995). Notable here is the way in which the colonizer's mindset simultaneously constructed native masculinity as a threat to an innocent femininity that required protection by the civil norms of the colonizer. However, this gender dynamic had an inverse expression, as well, with the native feminine presented as alluring and seductive to the colonizing male, while the native male was considered to be unmasculine and childlike in other contexts. The result was a colonial attitude that could rationalize sexual exploitation under the guise of paternalism, while also framing the colonizers as "innocent" for any consequent indiscretions that this dynamic unleashed. The pattern, in general, is to position authorities in a paternalistic relationship to dispossessed populations, framing exploitation as benevolence.

and Derrida) in relation to the "structuralist euphoria" that preceded them as the dominant dogma of the intellectual scene (2015, 84). The dream of a society built upon the bedrock of reason is simply insufficient for the maintenance of culture. Stiegler synthesizes this point:

> Reason (if we must and we still can refer here to reason) passes through these islands [Kant's *faculties*], opening passages in which languages form, over and above which there is no universal language, as the classical thought of the seventeenth century believed, nor any 'synthesis', nor any 'meta-discourse of knowledge', nor a universal subject, as idealist speculative thought believed, and as did, later, the materialism of the nineteenth century. (2015, 84)

Stiegler continues to recommend a re-reading of Hegel and Marx for a similar revision under the light of the emergent technical milieu.

The Poststructuralist turn, even as a continuation of the Structuralist drift, was a watershed moment that provoked prescient speculation of what would come next, though its impact was ironic. For though the Poststructuralists debunked many of the totalizing errors of their predecessors, the ultimate impact was to disrupt the humanities as the terrain for the explanation and preservation of culture. The humanities (and arts) do not provide a coherent narrative for the human, our deep origins, our natural disposition, or our destined purpose. In reality, regardless of the former transcendental aspirations of these disciplines, they simply cannot provide an empirical account of the human as biological animals derived from species evolution equipped with a physical sensory apparatus that processes stimulus via electrochemical processes, subject to a materialistic milieu governed by political and technical constructs, whose destiny is determined by policy, innovation, and biomedical intervention. We lost, rather convincingly, the faith in the Grand Narratives, but never managed to restore human consciousness to anything of significance beyond mere "bricoleurs" and, as time would wear on, enthusiastic consumers of fetishized commodities.[2] Meanwhile, science (especially applied sciences like computer science, biomedicine, engineering, aerospace, etc.) and social science (especially economics, linguistics, neuropsychology,

---

**2** Certainly, Michel de Certeau's discussion of "making do" in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) is a noble attempt to preserve the dignity of the dispossessed against the totalizing tendencies of his contemporaries. His understanding of the fundamental disconnect between the theoretical survey of the social landscape and the practice of everyday life as a kind of "poaching" is a high moment in cultural theory, but his ultimate success as a scholar has led to severe distortions of his work in the present moment. Specifically, the characterization of consumer practice as "poaching" forges a strange hybrid between "governmentality" (Foucault's neologism for the internalization of the panoptic gaze in consumer societies, introduced in "Technologies of the Self", 1988) and "neoliberalism" (which reframes the rights and duties of citizenship as a series of economic choices that take place in a privatized public sphere, and is discussed in David Harvey 2005). DeCerteau's poaching, under the influence of Henry Jenkins, becomes reimagined as a kind of creative consumerism, epitomized in fan communities and, later on, in social media platforms (1992).

management, psychiatry, urban planning, etc.) have stepped in to perform the descriptive and prescriptive roles of the humanistic disciplines.[3]

This loss and its impact on literature is gestured at in Barthes' "Death of the Author" (1968) and Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969), both of which arrive largely as reactions to the Modernist cult of "genius," which placed an aura around the writer of great works as a singular character, whose every word was a calculated move culminating in the creation of their masterpiece. For Barthes, the elevation of the author came at the expense of the reader and tended to foreclose upon the possibility of divergent, creative, and active responses to the work in the minds of the readers. Foucault, by contrast, elaborates on the way in which Authority is constructed, while also recognizing the necessary discursive function of a singular figure who is responsible for providing a kind of coherence to the text appropriate for the cultural practices of readers. Still, he imagines a future point at which the text and its readers will not depend upon this conceit, when another kind of writing will take place, one which allows meaning to proliferate within a different set of constraints.

In some sense, Foucault's notion proved to be true, as contemporary audiences are accustomed to all sorts of polysemous, collaborative, anonymous, and unstructured texts in the transmedia landscape. Social media platforms function as a cacophony of interjections by known and unknown voices, with the conceit of "the participatory" as the marker of its authenticity. Similarly, we consume a wide range of industrially manufactured texts that are designed by entire production teams. We propagate memes with no provenance and no expectation of credit. While authors still exist and books are still published, they do not hold the same economic (and, for many, cultural) value as films, video games, streaming media, or social media content (and, in fact, books are increasingly raw material for transformation by more thoroughly industrialized processes, such as *Harry Potter*, *Jurassic Park*, *Hunger Games*, *LOTR*, *Twilight*, *50 Shades of Grey*, *Bond,* etc.). Consequently, the notion of the human author appears increasingly unnecessary, vestigial, even subversive, as the text does not arise from human authority. This does not mean we do not cling to new forms of Authority to provide order and structure: branding, intellectual property, platform moderation, code, and expertise now provide a disciplinary structure to meaning. Authority and authorship have become totally impersonal.

The Postmodernists' success is in describing the phenomenological experience of culture belying its function. Aesthetically, postmodernism was an eclectic barrage of information which Baudrillard described as hyperreal, a state in which the symbolic order masks reality altogether. These perspectives on being give way towards the more contemporary understanding, which is of the human being as something that is networked

---

**3**   These approaches to the human tend to be functionalist in their emphasis on the optimal continuation of life (as consumption, labor, cooperation, and resilience) as biopower harnessed for the continuation of the established technical trajectory. It could be seen as a kind of neo-structuralism that is based in computer "modeling" rather than theoretical "abstraction."

and under construction, with no predefined end beyond transcendence of the self. This transcendence is not metaphysical, rather it is the material disintegration of the current self as a process of being. What we lose in the death of the human as a "rational animal," we gain in what Deleuze called "pure immanence" (2005). Though we could argue that the utopian potential of this trajectory appears rather tarnished, when we consider the exploitation of the drive for transcendence as self-actualization through runaway consumer practices, personal branding on social media, the hustle and grind of the gig economy, and other expressions of neoliberal lifestyles.

Though the postmodern moment was largely proto-digital, coming into being at the beginnings of global telecommunications, digital analytics, personal computing, and the pivot from print to audiovisual, it anticipated things to come. The dreams of the Modernists have come to fruition without friction, as our contemporary anthropological understandings are framed by neuropsychology, genetics, choice architecture, and artificial intelligence. The prevailing episteme is one in which the human mind is largely seen as a kind of inferior computer, with the body itself a prosthesis, carrying out the thoughts of a brain that can be programmed through the right mix of chemical, electrical, and informational triggers. If prosopopoeia is an occasion for reflecting upon the emergent tensions of the human under Modernist eyes, the historiographic method of *prosopography* emerges as an applied data-driven approach to humanities research in the post-digital era. According to Koenrad Verboven, Myriam Carlier, and Jan Dumolyn's "Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography":

> Prosopography integrates more or less large numbers of descriptive individual biographical studies into quantitative and statistic research on the combined total of these biographical studies.
>
> The ultimate purpose of prosopography is to collect data on phenomena that transcend individual lives. It targets the common aspects of people's lives, not their individual histories. The typical research objectives are such things as social stratification, social mobility, decision-making processes, the (mal)functioning of institutions and so forth. We are looking for general factors that help to explain the lives of individuals, for what motivates their actions and makes them possible: for example, families, social networks, patrimonies. (2007, 41)

As the historical biographer attempts to paint a picture of the individual through intimate research and study, the prosopographer attempts to paint a picture of consciousness through the detailed analysis of mass data. This quantitative approach, along with related Big Data, visualization, natural language processing, and (some, but not all) other digital humanities practices gesture towards an epistemic shift in the description of the human. Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control" summarizes the situation: "We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become '*dividuals*,' and masses, samples, data, markets, or 'banks.'" (1992, 5)

Next to this abstracted and distant view, the human as agent in culture appears like Herbert Simon's ant. Simon explains,

> An ant, viewed as a behaving system, is quite simple. The apparent complexity of its behavior over time is largely a reflection of the complexity of the environment in which it finds itself possessing only the semblance of complex intelligence produced by the aggregated accumulation of provisional reactions to a complex environment. (1996, 52)

And though Simon's observation feeds into the construction of an approach to computation as Artificial Intelligence, the phenomenological experience of AI as a psychological, social and cultural investment depends entirely on a reductive account of human cognition which is rooted in the quick reaction to stimulus, rather than deliberation and reflection. Next to this, AI appears as a superior intellect, capable of anticipating and performing every task (if not now, eventually) and increasingly invested with decision-making authority over the masses, which are seen as Human Resources to be managed. Taken together, we see a collective disenchantment of the human self and elevation of "smartness."

*The Smartness Mandate* by Orit Halpern and Robert Mitchell provides a useful vantage point of the epistemic framework (2023). Key to this study is a genealogy of the idea of "smartness" both as a practice and an ideology. Tracing the roots of this concept back to Thomas Malthus' 1798 text *A Principle of Population*, Halpern and Mitchell weave a path from the Malthusian concept of "population" through Friedrich Hayek and Ernst Mayr as uncanny twins leading towards theories of "population thinking." The innovation of Mayr and Hayek is to think of populations as engines of cognition, capable of demonstrating intelligence via collective action, but unable to "'learn' in the traditional sense" or "consciously 'know' anything" (Halpern and Mitchell 2023, 46). Indeed, this situation induces a kind of atemporality of being, "in which there is no verifiable 'outside' and no need for...the past *as* past or memory" (Halpern and Mitchell 2023, 115). This is a new conception of intelligence, as not consciously driven by the individual, but expressed as an accumulation of small decisions that add up to meaningful signals. This parallels the cybernetic notions of machine intelligence in which simple logical instructions can produce the appearance of intelligence when carried out at speed and scale. And more still: the prospect that this data can be used to project the future and steer the future is a fundamentally new epistemology, as Halpern and Mitchell contend. This supplies the backbone of the "smartness mandate."

Predictably, we are inoculated against our own self-awareness of this situation and its antisocial implications (*Ars Industrialis* characterizes this social detachment as *incurie*, or carelessness [2010]). The deconstructed self follows the familiar pattern of the social theorist who imagines the masses as rubes incapable of autonomous thought, while the intelligent observer is immune from the seductions of ideology (or, more

nefariously, empowered to engage in paternalistic manipulation). In part, it is human habit to imagine ourselves as exempt from common pathologies (or at least account-ability). In part, it is the design of cognitive capitalism to assign privileged positions within managerial hierarchies based on one's consciousness. Our capacity to notice the proletarianization of culture is held up as proof that it isn't working, at least, not on us. But mainly, our ignorance (or even celebration) of cultural deforestation is achieved through brute application of contemporary myths of progress.

Outside of the myth of progress are a variety of persistent folk anthropologies, many of which appear (and to varying degrees are framed as and/or actually are in fact) reac-tionary. Here are theories of everyday life as resistance to centralized control, the ad hoc epistemologies generated by various subcultures, new kinds of neo-luddism, religious theologies and spiritual philosophies, and many strains of populism (ranging from anar-cho-socialism to neo-fascism, classical liberalism to religious fundamentalism). These theories are marginal, often defined piecemeal in opposition to specific points of critique. They are often depicted in negative terms as they are correctly understood as subversive to an orderly society managed by enhanced engineering techniques, and generally asso-ciated with ignorance or stupidity. Despite the absence of a coherent representation with-in the larger cultural sphere, a coherent system of critique along the lines of the Marxist critique of the Industrial Revolution, postcolonial critiques of Imperialism, or the aboli-tionist critique of slavery is a very likely, if currently unrealized, possibility. On the other hand, the very terrain of cognition itself as the site of struggle might make such critiques less likely, as perception, reflection, and expression all require cognition to propagate resistance across a population. Attacking a population or cutting them off from materi-al resources depletes their ability to resist, but also agitates the target population against the aggressor. Directly impeding their access to information, their thought processes, and manipulating interpersonal communication, on the other hand, frustrates resistance in the target population without the application of material force. Whereas Gramsci un-derstood hegemony to be produced indirectly through the accumulation of a network of social and institutional processes and actively marginalizing contrary views, by directly inserting itself into culture as a ubiquitous observer, facilitator, and interlocutor, systemic AI is capable of manufacturing consent directly.

### How do we find ourselves here? Or, the death of the reader

> When I came to, as I thought, from my swoon, I realized that the sloop was plunging into a heavy sea, and looking out of the companionway, to my ama-zement I saw a tall man at the helm. His rigid hand, grasping the spokes of the wheel, held them as in a vise. One may imagine my astonishment. His rig was that of a foreign sailor, and the large red cap he wore was cockbilled over his left ear, and all was set off with shaggy black whiskers. He would have been

taken for a pirate in any part of the world. While I gazed upon his threatening aspect I forgot the storm, and wondered if he had come to cut my throat. This he seemed to divine. "Señor," said he, doffing his cap, "I have come to do you no harm." And a smile, the faintest in the world, but still a smile, played on his face, which seemed not unkind when he spoke. "I have come to do you no harm. I have sailed free," he said, "but was never worse than a *contrabandista*. I am one of Columbus's crew," he continued. "I am the pilot of the *Pinta* come to aid you. Lie quiet, señor captain," he added," and I will guide your ship to--night. You have a *calentura*, but you will be all right to-morrow." I thought what a very devil he was to carry sail. Again, as if he read my mind, he exclai-med: "Yonder is the *Pinta* ahead; we must overtake her. Give her sail; give her sail! *Vale, vale, muy vale*!"

— Joshua Slocum, *Sailing Around the World* (1900).

People in extreme states of isolation and trauma (stranded at sea, mountain climb-ers, prisoners in solitary confinement) are reported to hallucinate social companions. In a famous instance, Captain Joshua Slocum, the first person to navigate the world alone, reported a visitation from the pilot of Christopher Columbus' ship, the *Pinta*, who took the helm of his boat and navigated it through 90 miles of turbulent seas. In a more re-cent incident, a mountain climber describes his friend "Jimmy," an imaginary compan-ion encountered on the slopes of Mount Everest (Windsor 2008). In the contemporary literature, this phenomenon is known as the "third man factor." But even apart from full-blown visual and auditory hallucinations, we can safely accept as normal, the draw of social engagement triggered by actual, but sparse, communication. In isolation, for instance, prisoners will often content themselves by talking to themselves, passing notes, scratching messages into stone, or even using simple tap codes, which provide some texture of sociality to what is an otherwise impossible situation.

To return to the subject of prosopopoeia, we can benefit by understanding its dual nature, as that which marks absence with presence and presence with absence:

If prosopopoeia is a cover-up of death or of absence, a compensation, its power is nee-ded even in my relation to my living companions. My neighbor is always somehow absent even in moments of the most intimate presence. Personification both covers over these blank places in the midst of life and, sooner or later, brings them into the open... They are etiological myths expressing our sense that an obscure human life is diffused throughout nature—in the sighing of branches, in the whispering of water in a fountain, in the dan-cing of a daffodil. (Miller 1990, 4)

As a linguistic tool, this practice is tied to the very vital roots of semiotics. Moving beyond the mere representation of objects, and towards the invocation of entire systems

of thought, imagined processes of subjectivity, and the development of "presence" beyond materiality, such tools of consciousness enable not only the simple substitution of words for objects, but the realization of worldviews, frames of reference, personalities, characters, ourselves.

Prosopopoeia thus represents a fecund promiscuity of the human imagination that seeks individuation in the larger world. Pushing back on the Enlightenment construction of the human as an individual sovereign subject with the potential for perfection (or at least progress), a number of scholars have posited that human being exists only in relation to others. Rene Girard (1987) introduces the idea of the "interdividual," Emmanuel Levinas (1998) the "intersubjective," and Simondon (1964) the "pre-individual," all pointing to the insufficiency of an ontology of the human as a monad. Rather, they define the primary experience of the human in social terms, suggesting that the individual is what comes into relief via social processes. With this understanding in mind, the orientation towards the other is rightly understood as a fundamental component of the experience of the individual as meaningful in the world. It makes sense that the human would strive for connection, even to the point of inventing new opportunities of communication (as with the various codes used by those in solitary confinement), new personalities (as in the case of prosopopoeia), and even phenomenological ghosts (as in the case of hallucinations). In cases of severe psychological, social, physical, or spiritual duress, it seems likely that the mind reaches out in radical ways, even unwillingly, to engage the other and to make the world meaningful. The same impulse which inspired humans for millennia to gaze into the world to find animals in the clouds, gods in the stars, and spirits in nature drives us to hear voices in static, faces in manufactured objects, and intelligence in the patterned feedback activities of machines. This tendency is critical to our relationship to the tools that we are currently adopting at a fevered pace.

How much more does our apophenia engage in artifacts that are designed to engage us—in works of art and literature intended for us, narratives that break the fourth wall and address the viewer, games and digital interfaces that require our interaction, robots created to look and act like us, and AI tools which are designed to take on the appearance of autonomy. Over a decade ago, in a talk at the TechCrunch Disruption Conference, Google CEO, Eric Schmidt imagined that Google would become a "serendipity engine," freeing users from wasted time by presenting users with a virtual world that would rise to meet them, running autonomously, based on data harvested from their many networked devices, past behaviors, and social circles (Siegler 2010). Obviously, the ability to enfold users in a feedback loop between surveillance and AI was unrealized in 2010, but with the advent of high speed broadband, mobile computing, the Internet of Things, and the aggressive marketing of ubiquitous surveillance as inevitable and helpful, the harvesting side of the equation was able to feed analytic models that could be constructed, trained, and fine-tuned to round out the equation into a fairly robust analytic loop.

Our ancient tendency to anthropomorphize even the crudest objects and phenomena prime us for faith in this cybernetic apparatus. And this has not been lost to the designers, who continue to innovate along these lines. Behavioral Economics, Neuromarketing and Choice Architecture have influenced the development of our interfaces and experiences. Cognitive psychologists have driven the development of neuromarketing, which makes special use of brain imaging, biometrics, and behavior in digital networks to tap into the emotional and affective aspects of decision-making and to confound otherwise rational choices. In the literature, you will find discussions of the buying styles of the depressed, obsessive compulsive, and those with ADHD. In addition, you will find discussions of serotonin and love, and how best to tap into those feelings to better sell a car or computer or soft drink. While the idea of finding psychological keys to the consumer psyche is, at times, a bit like snake oil, it is backed by clinical studies and investment by major brands. Zurawicki (2010) discusses what we learn about individual cognition from internet gaming, everything from learning ability to attitudes towards risk to social behavior, all of which can be turned into an opportunity for the marketers to capture the affect of a target. At the collective level, we see similar tendencies arise in the field of behavioral economics, which can be described as an approach to economics which looks beyond the individual as a rational actor, and instead looks to emotional, social, cognitive, and affective dimensions to decision-making. Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein have emerged as advocates for "soft paternalism", or behavioral "nudges" that can be embodied in things like "a disclosure policy, warning and a default rule" (2009). They continue, "some forms of paternalism impose material costs, such as fines on people's choices in order to improve their welfare. Other forms impose affective or psychic costs, as in the case of graphic health warnings, which might be designed to frighten people." (2009, 41) Underlying Thaler and Sunstein's approach are their assertion that "choice architecture is inevitable and that behavioral failures do, in fact, justify certain forms of paternalism" (2009, 41). In other words, manipulation takes on a kind of moral imperative for those with the means to implement it.

The long, and often trouble-making propensity for seeking human connections and conjuring them up from artifice speaks to our vulnerability. When juxtaposed to the pervasive feelings of anomie, alienation, and loneliness that seem to be increasing (not to mention the uptick in anti-social outbursts, ranging from trolling to mass shootings), the emergence of seemingly intelligent voices modeled on a vast field of social surveillance and entrained on user-supplied queries would hold a natural attraction for the public. However fleeting this crush may be (and whether or not it is superseded by other fantasy friends—Galatea, Eliza, Clippy, Tay, Siri, Alexa, Deep Fakes, Dall-e, Midjourney, GPT, there are so many.), the underlying mechanisms will continue to feed a sprawling world of ambiguously authored texts. The Metaverse will be an integrated transmedia ecosystem of artifacts that incorporates all things, animate, inanimate, and in-between, into its context. Its ability to capitalize on our deep social longings with its

unrequited love will initiate a new phase of being: The assemblage analyzes actions and generates behavioral triggers, and we are the manipulable units, both input/outputs.

In other words, we *are* the narrative. The dispossessed are the expressive texts read, analyzed, and eventually edited by an apparatus that ultimately seeks to prescribe a wide range of social behaviors. The machine has become both our reader and our writer. This authority has profound implications for an anthropology of the future.

### Who says what to whom in what channel?

> i am a stochastic parrot, and so r u
> — Sam Altman (@sama), CEO of OpenAI, tweeting on 4 December, 2022.

We cannot avoid the sudden disruption that has thrust AI into the center of public consciousness. Some artists argue about the end of art and the implications for intellectual property, while others celebrate the sense of achievement they derive from plugging phrases into a machine that can render their dreams with limitless virtuosity. Some academics worry that machine writing will make assessment hard, while others see an opportunity to accelerate research. For most people, it is an entertaining curiosity or a harbinger of a sci-fi dystopia, a kind of oracle that routes our subconscious desires through a generalized repository of cultural knowledge.

Beyond these practices, artists, especially literary artists, play a peculiar role in the exploration of these technologies. In his work, *The Listeners* (2015), John Cayley (who is a long-time critic of Google's linguistic strategy), targets this phenomenon directly through a modification of the *Alexa* app. Making use of *Alexa's* virtual response to oral queries provided by the user, *The Listeners* embarks on a generation of the work that continually reminds the user of the surveillance apparatus that drives it. The goal of the work moves in two trajectories. Firstly, it is an interactive, generative text that explores the affordances of voice and speech as a poetic project enabling the user to play with language. Secondly, it makes *Alexa's* designed convenience as a voice assistant obtrusive as a *poetic* intervention in the instrumental character of the larger logic of the interface. *The Listeners* reveals key aspects of the surveillance apparatus, in such a way that we are no longer ants wobbling along the pheromone trail, but active interlocutors in the network space.

Allison Parrish's work deals more directly with text generation itself using a variety of Large Language Models (LLMs). *Reconstructions* (2020) generates poems from a hacked variational autoencoder neural network trained on the Gutenberg Poetry Corpus, which functions by compressing text and decompressing text to generate new linguistic variations, modeled off of similar image processing files. Her work, *Wendit Tnce Inf* (2022), on the other hand, generates "text" as images trained on real English words processed through a generative adversarial network (GAN) to create an unreadable text

that appears to be constructed from existing letterforms. If this sounds absurd, it is, as the work consists of entirely unreadable text that only appears to be human language. In these works, as well as the broader corpus of Parrish's writing, we see a consistent effort to explore the potential for machine generated language consistent with the practices of the NaNoGenMo, Bot, and Combinatory literature communities that have been a part of digital literary practice going back for years.

In a vastly different idiom, Ian Hatcher's *Prosthesis* (2016), especially in live performance, explores the relationship between human and machine by modeling his own voice after text-to-speech software, mimicking its uncanny rhythms with impeccable vocal skill. Taken in the context of an oeuvre that explores the place of the human body in the post-digital landscape, Hatcher's work turns the presumed acclimation to rapidly changing social conditions into objects of critical scrutiny.

Similarly, a number of recent forays into LLMs like Meanwhile Netprov's "Grand Exhibition of Prompts" and a flurry of aggressively applied explorations taking place in real time with results shared on social media engage with these innovations in a revealing way. While at this point, it is not entirely clear what will come of this emerging and unpublished body of works, several stand out. For instance, Talan Memmott (2023) has produced a series of images exploring visualizations of laryngectomees in the style of fine artists, representing a largely invisible disability in a variety of historical idioms. Similarly, his work with AI voice reconstructions takes the generative process away from print and image, to explore machine orality beyond novelty, as a function of necessity. Jason Nelson and Scott Rettberg, on the other hand, have explored the ability of LLMs to generate functional code for aesthetic purposes, teasing out one of the more profound implications of machine intelligence as the reader and writer of our experiences.

There is always the risk with digital art that it will go no further than a celebration of novelty and end in banality, serving as a missionary force for the advance of power. But digital literature also has the strong potential to perform a critical function, serving as a lookout station that can warn us of things to come. If the critical posture is framed in relation to the current episteme (our "smart" era of platform capitalism) rather than the one that was displaced decades ago (the collapsed Modernity discussed by Lyotard), we are served by a powerful partner for mapping the occult contours of Black Boxed authority. In the instances mentioned above, these works engage with the modeling of human expression trained on our behaviors in a way that makes the process the object of our active attention. Through the exploratory practice, we might not be able to fully see (much less comprehend) the intricate proprietary machinations of Platform Capitalism, but by dropping pebbles in the well, we can gain a sense of where the bottom is before plunging headlong into its abyss.

Indeed, the significance of this creative, if largely playful, sounding of the LLM well is not lost on the titans of this realm. In a revealing turn, Alphabet (formerly Google) has declared a "Code Red" over GPT. They identify it as a rival to Google Search that

could "make or break" the company's future (Grant and Metz 2022). Rather than focus on the potential for AI to disrupt human culture, the concern is that it will disrupt their carefully staged diversion of human consciousness into a world curated by algorithms masquerading in self-tickling serendipity.

Meanwhile, the CEO of OpenAI, Sam Altman, seems similarly detached from the stakes with his playful proclamation that he is a "Stochastic parrot." As David Golumbia explains, "A stochastic parrot generates apparently meaningful text through probabilistic means, but like an actual parrot, it does not understand itself to mean anything by that text (put aside the fact that at least some real parrots do seem to understand something about what they say)" (2022). He continues, attributing the origins of the phrase to Google Developers (and critics, I should note) Amanda Bender, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major and "Shmargaret Shmitchell", "If one side of the communication does not have meaning...then the comprehension of the implicit meaning is an illusion arising from our singular human understanding of language (independent of the model)" (Bender, et al 2021). It is quite obvious that Altman's statement, on its surface, is jocular in its tone, which contrasts sharply to thoughtful text from which it draws its vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is also more broadly symptomatic of the systemic effacement of the human against the general tendency of our technocultural drift. Furthermore, it can be seen as an intellectual pantomime of humility, by which those who enjoy great agency within the global socio-economic hierarchy play at self-effacement while disenchanting shared cultural norms as elitist pretensions. For, what does Altman (or really any elite worker, for that matter) sacrifice in practical terms in this rhetorical show of humility? There is no loss of power in this gesture, except for those dispossessed classes who subsist in precarity. And, if we are all just a bunch of bots spitting back phrases we read on a computer, then why even worry about the precarious at all apart from the possibility that they might frustrate the smooth function of the apparatus? The fact that we perceive some meaning that results from our prompts or from the machine output is essential to the purpose of the machine function (ie. the cybernetic improvement of its model), but the content of that meaning is irrelevant. This indifference to the content of affective triggers has been encountered again and again, as recommendation algorithms spin people off into pits of paranoia and bots descend into perverse bouts of antisocial expression. The problem is so severe that it has become politically necessary to impose stop-gap, human-curated limits to the algorithm to mask the authentic sociopathy of machine intelligence. We blame negative content to the bad example set by the general pool of human behavior upon which AI feeds. But even if we make bots behave like perfect gentlefolk, we cannot understate the disruptive potential this paradigm has for human culture writ large. The sudden rise of ChatGPT as a cultural phenomenon draws attention to the profound shift that is underway, which could matter if we (scholars, artists, and engaged participants) avoid the temptation to use the little influence we have to wave off concerns or, worse, throw our muscle behind the biggest boys in the yard.

Beyond the warning function, there are ways in which electronic literature explores (and even remedies) the loss of social connections in this age. D. Fox Harrell's *Chimeria* (2014) explores questions of social identity outside of conventional social categories using Artificial Intelligence through an interactive narrative based around a "music-oriented social network." This work accomplishes two relevant goals, it makes post-digital segmentation visible to users and seeks to undermine common stereotypes that interfere with social relationships. ALIS's *Typomatic* (2015), on the other hand, is an installation-based work which asks users to participate in typographic wordplay. The installation, which uses algorithms to find visual typographical matches for words based on user-supplied prompts, is built around kiosks which create tangible mementos of play that invite whimsy and creativity. While it does not invite active consideration of the AI-matching model and the user-supplied database at its core, it is primarily built to drive social interaction. In a similar vein, Memmott and Rettberg's experiments in gastropoetics (*The Limerick Diet*, 2019) provide actual meals cooked by human chefs (the artists) in the context of a dinner party. The menus for these gastropoetic performances are poems, produced by text generation programs authored by the chefs themselves. While the focus of the event is largely social and fundamentally organic in the chaotic interactions between guests swilling drinks and eating food, as chefs clatter in the kitchen, a robust discussion of the machine generated menu is an inevitable focal point, bringing social demands to bear on machinic process. Alice Yuan Zhang's *1:1* (2022) imagines a social network in which magical algorithms connect the reader to a single friend through a series of prompts that endeavor to foster intimacy and care by way of real-world actions. And, of course, all content in Netprov comes down to the intervention of the human player working in the context of the social. While these practices do not necessarily engage with the full impact of the emerging order (and this list scratches the surface of what's available), similar to the experiments with LLMs, they disrupt the false sufficiency of Platform culture and drive their users/audience/players towards relational practices that engage them as meaningful participants rather than objects to be read by Platforms.

Leaping off of Simondon's account of individuation, Bernard Stiegler's discussion of the concept covers the many dimensions by which we increase our sense of selves via involvement with others. As Stiegler explains, being is produced by "transductions" that occur between three processes of individuation: "psychic, collective, and techno-logical" (2009). Stiegler elaborates, "The *I,* as a psychic individual, can only be thought in a relationship to a *we*, which is a collective individual: the *I* is constituted in adopting a collective tradition, which it inherits, and in which the plurality of *I*s acknowledge each other's existence" (2009). Stiegler continues, explaining that the *I* is engaged in a process of "in-dividuation," working psychically to achieve a state of indivisible unity. This process of *I* formation takes place within a social context, within which the indivisible one is involved with the community. Furthermore, the individual self is valuable

because of its unique potential, hence the *I* and the *we* are animated by the existence of "metastable equilibrium" (2009). The techno-logical layer, which for Stiegler encompasses the capacity to retain memory and project communication beyond the immediate spatial and temporal moment of the individual in community (ie. via ritual and artifacts), enmeshes the individual in a broader horizon, drawing upon the history of those who have come before and anticipating those who will come in the future.

What seems to many (or at least what seemed) a small *disruption* to the social can have catastrophic effects. Consider the way in which the idea of the "knowledge base" has currency within the discourse of digital culture. A richer, organic antecedent to the more streamlined database, the knowledge base contains data in context, preserving not only points of information but putting it into relationship with other nodes in the network. In the past, we looked to our shamans, elders, or neighbors, and, generally, treasured human wisdom. In many instances, we formalized this wisdom through technical means, mythologizing, ritualizing, and writing. This communal orientation meant that every individual, in addition to holding personal knowledge, could avail themselves of a large repository of shared information, much of which has been vetted through use. With the help of Google, our access to socially and technically recorded knowledge has exploded. And while in many respects, this has made life easier, it is not without a cost to our very sense of self. According to Stiegler's formula, the human person gains a sense of individual value and perspective through individual psychology, through their network of social relations, and their place within the larger historical framework of cultural time. As one's individual labor contributes to both their own well-being and the well-being of those with whom they interact, so it is with one's affective and cultural integration. I need help solving a problem, so I ask you. You help me, which makes me feel loved. I express gratitude and offer to reciprocate, which reinforces your sense of value. Small, seemingly trivial interactions reinforce the ways in which we are uniquely equipped in some areas and deficient in others. When enough of these interactions stack up and are interwoven with other relationships, we thrive. Deprived of these interactions, an infinite array of dystopian alternatives present themselves.

And just as industry can alienate workers from the means of production, the culture industry can alienate consumers from their own culture and society. This begins to happen when we remove knowledge from individual beings and relocate it in a global network apparatus. It is completed when a generalized human knowledge is fully extracted, streamlined without regard for the particular, and handed over for machine calculation. When a doddering elder scratches out a roadmap on the back of a napkin, while spinning out a narrative of the journey, pausing to recollect the shifting landmarks of late capitalist urbanization, we are conditioned to impatiently whip out our phones to obviate an interaction that has been rendered inferior. We no longer turn to shamans, elders, neighbors, myths, rituals, or books to answer questions. Instead, we ask Siri or Alexa. And nobody turns to us. And then we scratch our heads wondering why people

are lonely, why people fear their neighbors, why people feel depressed, why people join anti-social movements, etc.

At some point, the bit rate of everyday life cannot compete with the liquidity of network space. Reality is a slow network, nature runs background processes that chew up our bandwidth (like hunger and hemorrhoids), strangers are worms that bog down our machines, and even customer service plunges us into a labyrinth of robots and dislocations. So, the network becomes a refuge, first settled by those with the means or know-how to move within that space, but one that is increasingly cast as a universal human entitlement and, as more services become self-services, a requirement. It exists as a utopia of process, where the gear grinding impositions of the world give way to nomadism within smooth space.

But this utopia is an ironic one, anarchy estranged from material constraint or social obligation. A utopia relentlessly impatient with the other, but with each one haunted by the latent awareness of their own intolerability. A utopia of desperate vulnerability, where one "like" is never enough, where each passing second without a notification erases the shallow attention that preceded it. A utopia where we dread our coming irrelevance and embrace fabricated tween cultures, become "early adopters," we update our looks in ways that would make a Baby Boomer envious. It is a utopia that chews on our leisure with bloody fangs, that gluts itself on our time, that leaves us tired, that stokes our outrage, that rallies us to the preservation of imaginary relations. But as with all ideology, it is more than fair to ask what materiality animates its mythology. And, if possible, to imagine the alternatives.

But we only here see the beginning of our problem. The world itself has become rendered increasingly intolerable by the mechanisms and narratives privileged on network spaces. People think too slowly for us. The work of our hearts is now called "emotional labor." We burrow into echo chambers and maintain appearances for algorithmically manufactured affinity groups. We learn to dread our own psychology, society, and civilization each day. These are the mere pathologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The superstructure will not be the social band-aid that we create to distract from or mask over the wounds of the new economy. Instead, we will become the superstructure that justifies the apparatus itself, conjured into existence to justify its continued displacement of our former selves.

While I have written elsewhere on those texts in which the individual is constructed through external input,[4] in describing the machinic prosopopoesis of human

---

**4** I would argue here that the Gothic, which gives rise to the SciFi, Detective, and Horror genres, are defined by their "speculative" component in relation to other narrative forms. Whereas we tend to think of narrative in relation to stories that "tell us what happened," these genres tend to focus on what might happen, what we think happened, what we did not know happened (respectively), thus they all perform a kind of alterity or speculative role which dovetails well with the emergence of 20th Century sensibilities. For further elaboration on these ideas, see "Unraveling Identity: Watching the Posthuman Bildungsroman."

subjectivity (text) in the cybernetic dialogue of surveillance (reader) and AI (writer) I hope to identify a radical shift in anthropology. The outlines of this emerging model of consciousness are anticipated in speculative genres like gothic literature (which present the world as haunted by traces of its past), detective fiction (which presents the world as filled with evidence that reveals the truth of the present), science fiction (which presents an alternate future as an extrapolation of the current one). Indeed, all these speculative forms speak in tongues, often gesturing toward an uncanny agency that is, as Freud noted in his discussion of the gothic, a distorted specter of the human (the ghost, the insane, or the robotic), fascinated by Modernity itself, both asserting the human and anticipating its absence. We are characters in a dark fiction, ranging from real to speculative (from pandemics, wars, suicide epidemics, the opioid crisis, accelerationism, conspiracy theory, alien invasion, apocalyptic prophecies, etc.) Socially, we experience this crisis in the radical outbursts of anti-social behavior (through the embrace of "marginalization" by the center, popular paranoia, crime, and confrontationally stylized political movements). Individually, we experience this crisis in the form of anomie (apathy, depression, and the occasional outbursts of violence for the sake of violence). Though, the realization of this uncanny comes to full fruition in the grotesqueries of machine images, the nonhuman voice of the machine text, and the teleological imaginary of 21$^{st}$ Century culture itself.

—

## Bibliography

ALIS. 2015. *Typomatic*. http://typomatic.org.

Ars Industrialis. 2010. "Manifesto." http://arsindustrialis.org/manifesto-2010.

Barthes, Roland. 1977. "Death of the Author." In *Image, Music, Text,* edited by Roland Barthes, 142-148. Hill and Wang.

Bender, Amanda, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell. 2021. "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big?" Paper presented at FAccT '21: Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency, Virtual Event, Canada, March 3–10, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445922.

Cayley, John. n.d. "The Listeners." http://io.creamcityreview.org/40-2/cayley/.

De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Los Angeles: U of California Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1992. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October,* 59:3– 7. http://www.jstor.org/stable/778828.

Deleuze, Gilles. 2005. *Pure Immanence*. Translated by Anne Boyman. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1969. "What is An Author?" In *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 101-120. New York: Pantheon Books.

_____. 1988. "Technologies of the Self". In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, edited by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, 16-49. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Girard, Rene. 1987. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Translated by. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Golumbia, David. 2022. "ChatGPT Should Not Exist." *Medium*, December 14, 2022. https://davidgolumbia.medium.com/chatgpt-should-not-exist-aab0867abace.

Grant, Nico, and Cade Metz. 2022. "A New Chat Bot Is a 'Code Red' for Google's Search Business". *New York Times,* December. 21, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/21/technology/ai-chatgpt-google-search.html.

Halpern, Orit, and Robert Mitchell. 2013. *The Smartness Mandate.* Cambridge: MIT.

Harrell, D. Fox. 2014. "Chimeria." D. Fox Harrel. https://foxharrell.com/chimeria/

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Hatcher, Ian. 2016. *Prosthesis.* https://soundcloud.com/ihatch/sets/prosthesis.

Hawkes, Terence. 1977. *Structuralism and Semiotics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hayles, N. Katherine. 2007. "Electronic Literature: What Is It?" Electronic Literature Organization. https://eliterature.org/pad/elp.html.

Heckman, Davin. 2008. "Unraveling Identity: Watching the Posthuman Bildugnsroman." *Ctheory.* https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/view/14522.

Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Joyce, James. 2005. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* London: Collector's Library.

Langland, William. 1990. *Piers Plowman*. Translated by E. Talbot Donaldson. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1998. *Otherwise Than Being, Or Beyond Essence*. Translated by Alphonso. Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Bennington and Massumi, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

McClintock, Anne. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge.

Meanwhile Netprov. 2022. *The Grand Exhibition of Prompts*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Suk 2m3rePHKGds9i4C9PjmzPTYtEfW1UaZQ_AqeApIo/edit?usp=sharing.

Memmott, Talan. 2023. *50 AI Portraits of a Man with a Laryngectomy*. https://talanmemmott. info/?p=707.

Memmott, Talan, and Scott Rettberg. 2019. *The Limerick Diet*. https://gastropoetics.menu/.

Miller, J. Hillis. 1990. *Versions of Pygmalion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Parrish, Allison. 2020. *Reconstructions*. https://reconstructions.decontextualize.com/.

_____. 2022. *Wendit Tnce Inf*. Minneapolis: Aleator Press.

Quintilian. c.95. *Institutio Oratoria, Book III*. Translated by H.R. Butler. Reprinted from Vol. I of the Loeb Classical Library edition, 1920. 4 October 2012. https://bit.ly/QuintIO.

Sammons, Jeffrey L. 1991. "The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification." In *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, edited by Hardin, 26-45. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Siegler, M.G. 2010. "Eric Schmidt on The Future Of Search — A Move Towards A 'Serendipity Engine'". *Tech Crunch*. 28 September. https://techcrunch.com/2010/09/28/eric-schmidt-future-of-search/.

Simon, Herbert. 1996. *The Sciences of the Artificial*. 3ª ed. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Simondon. Gilbert. 1964 "The Position of the Problem of Ontogenesis". *Parrhesia* (7): 4–16. https:// philpapers.org/rec/SIMTPO-21.

Slocum, Joshua. 1900. "Sailing Alone Around the World." http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/js/a04.htm.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2009. "Desire and Knowledge: The Dead Seize the Living." http://arsindustrialis.org/ desire-and-knowledge-dead-seize-living.

Stiegler, Bernard. 1998. *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Translated by Richard Beardsworth and George Collins. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

_____. 2015. *States of Shock: Stupidity and Knowledge in the Twenty-First Century*. Translated by Daniel Ross. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Thaler, Richard H., and Cass R. Sunstein. 2009. *Nudge*. New York: Penguin.

Verboven, Koenraad, Myriam Carlier, and Jan Dumolyn. 2007. "A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography." In *Prosopography Approaches and Applications. A Handbook, Unit for Prosopographical Research*, edited by K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, 35–70. https://prosopography.history. ox.ac.uk/images/01%20Verboven%20pdf.pdf.

Windsor, J.S. 2008. "Voices in the air." *BMJ* 337:a2667.https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a2667.

Zhang, Alice Yuan, and Soft Networks Studio. 2002. "1:1." *Digital Review* (2). https://doi.org/10.7273/ q3ww-gx94.

Zurawicki, Leon. 2010. *Neuromarketing, Exploring the Brain of the Consumer*. Boston: Springer.

**—**
**Biographical note**
Davin Heckman is the author of *A Small World: Smart Houses and the Dream of the Perfect Day* (Duke UP, 2008). He is Supervising Editor of the Electronic Literature Directory (directory.eliterature.org), Managing Editor of *electronic book review* and Professor of Mass Communication at Winona State University. During the 2011-2012 academic year, Davin was a Fulbright Scholar in Digital Culture at the University of Bergen.

**—**
**ORCID**
0009-0003-3056-195X
**—**
**Institutional address**
Winona State University
P.O. Box 5838 | 175 West Mark Street | Winona, MN 55987