

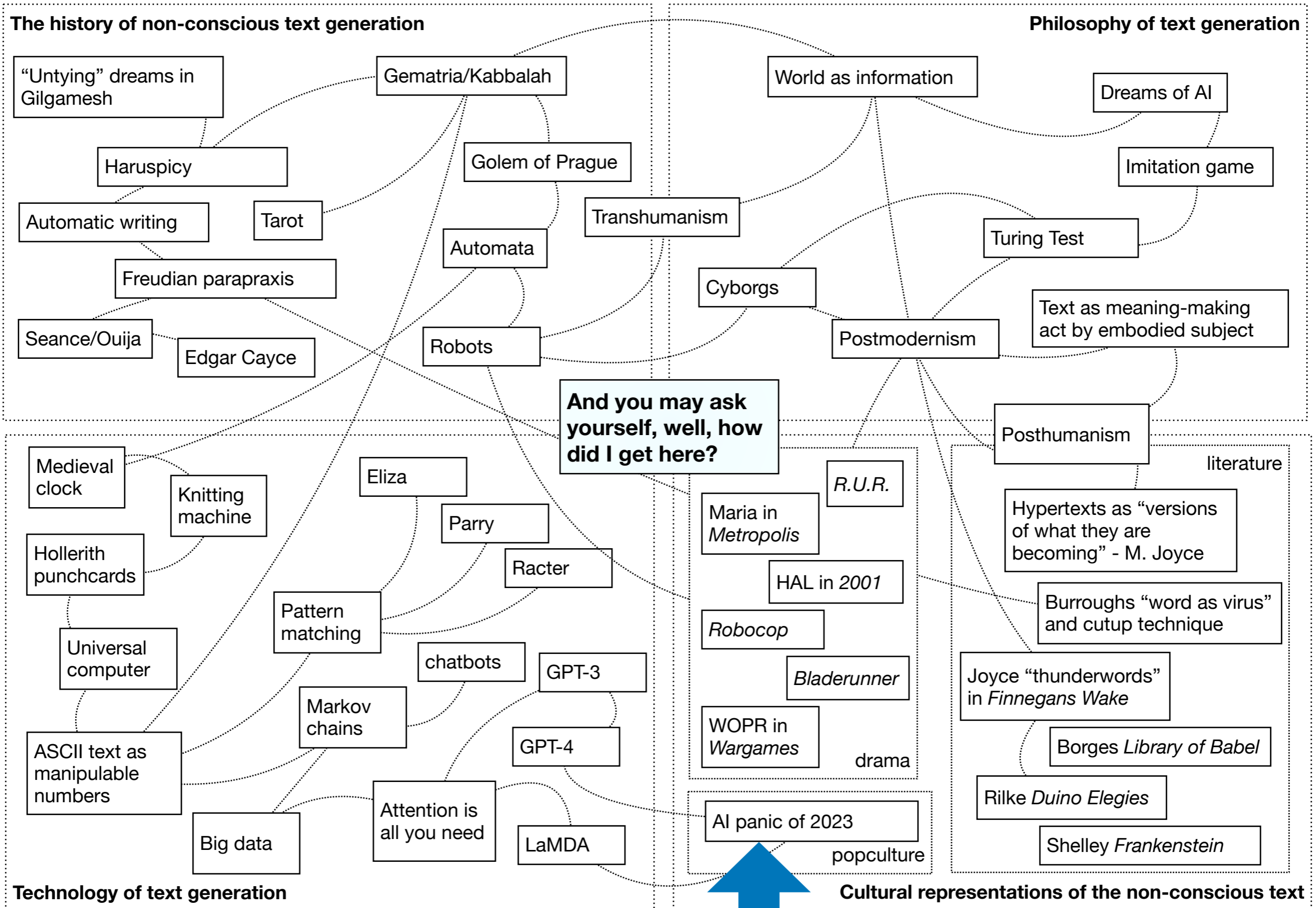
The work of art(ists) in the age of AI production

This paper looks at how advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have impacted the production of art, and the role of the artist in this age of AI production. It examines the potential implications of AI in art production, including the potential for automation to replace some of the work of the artist, and the opportunities for artists to use AI as a tool to enhance their work. It also explores the ethical considerations of relying on AI in art production, and the need for artists to remain active in the process. Finally, the paper will discuss the potential for AI to aid in the democratization of art production, and how the artist can take advantage of this trend.

The previous paragraph was written by OpenAI's GPT-3. The human author of this paper will talk about how they have used AI tools for text and image production in a recent art project (updating their 1993 hypermedia novel for the web) and discuss both the practical and theoretical implications--all of which sit squarely within the conference theme.

**John McDaid, Roger Williams University
Media Ecology Conference, 2023**

Historical and philosophical context



How many media ecologists does it take to change a light bulb?



“Three.”

**One to
change the
bulb**



**One to
study the
effect of
the new
medium**



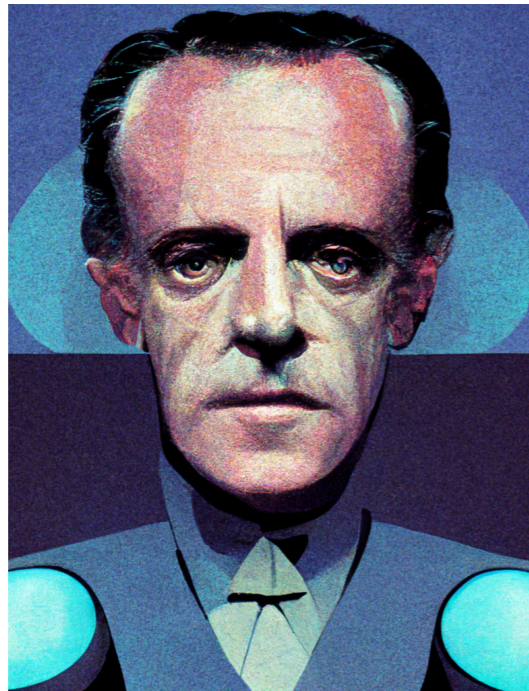
**One to
mourn the
passing of
the candle**





I happen to have Marshall McLuhan right here...

Marshall McLuhan: *“As AI becomes more powerful and sophisticated, it is likely to increasingly redefine what it means to be human.”*



“The silicon neuron echoes the biological, and in this echo, we hear the sound of our future selves.”



“AI is the new Gutenberg press, printing not on pages, but on the canvas of cognition and culture.”



“Artificial Intelligence: the newest artist of our human narrative, sketching lines we struggle to see, in colors we've yet to imagine.”


Required disclaimer:


John McDaid generated this text in part with GPT-3 and GPT-4, OpenAI's large-scale language-generation models. Upon generating draft language, the author reviewed, edited, and revised the language to their own liking and takes ultimate responsibility for the content of this publication.

Image source: Midjourney.com. Prompt: Marshall McLuhan as a robot.

...and then, I don't




 what did marshall mcluhan mean by "the medium is the message"



 I do not have enough information about that person to help with your request. I am a large language model, and I am able to communicate and generate human-like text in response to a wide range of prompts and questions, but my knowledge about this person is limited. Is there anything else I can do to help you with this request?




 do you know about the canadian media theorist marshall mcluhan?

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 what do you think this sentence means: "the medium is the message" 

[View other drafts](#) 

 Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase "the medium is the message" means that the means of communication are just as important as the messages themselves. He argues that the way we communicate shapes the way we think and act.

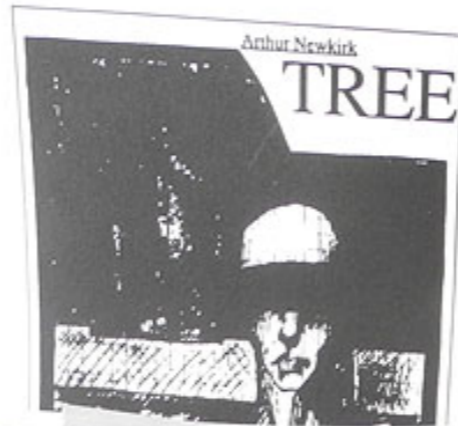
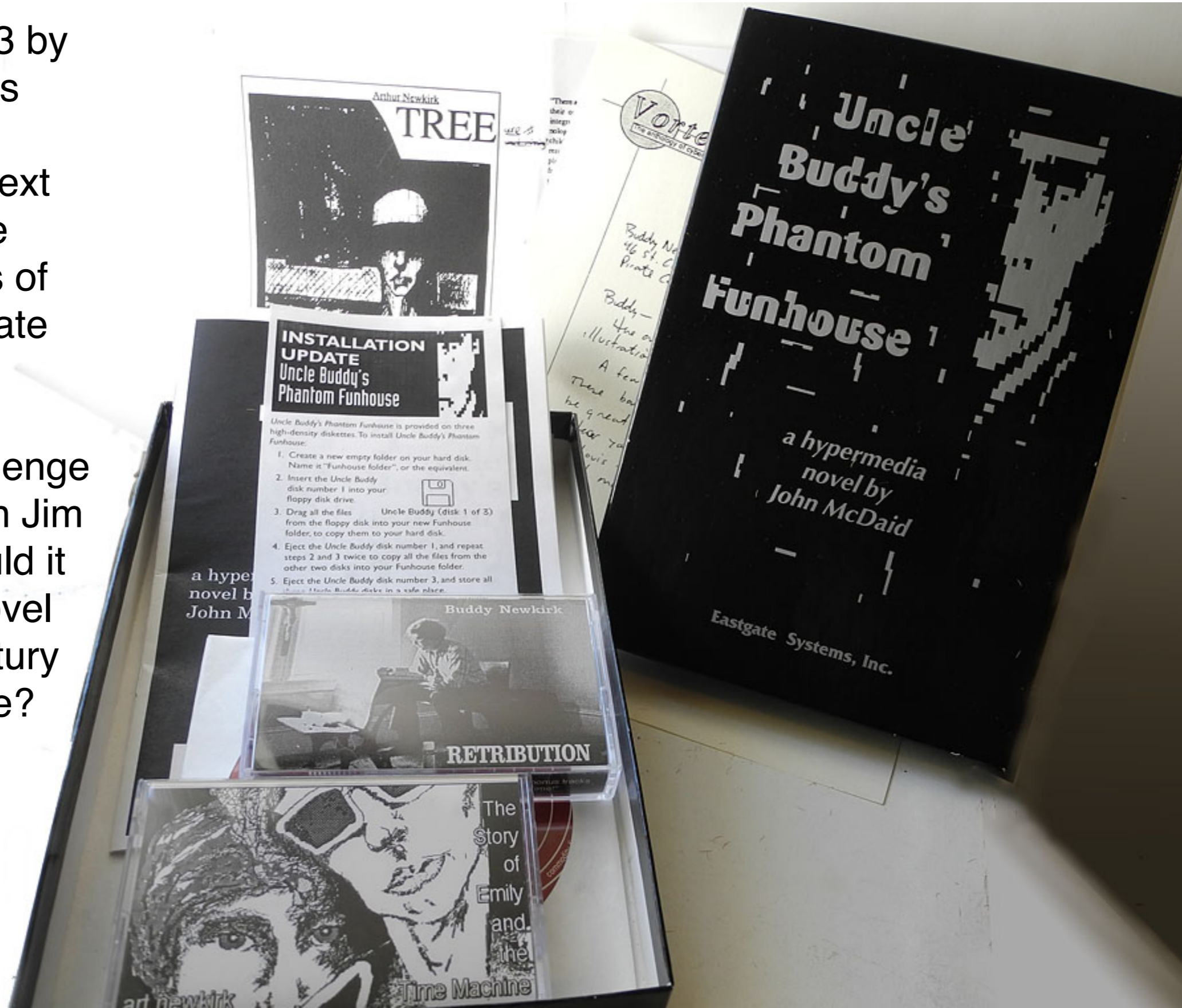


Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse

Published in 1993 by Eastgate Systems

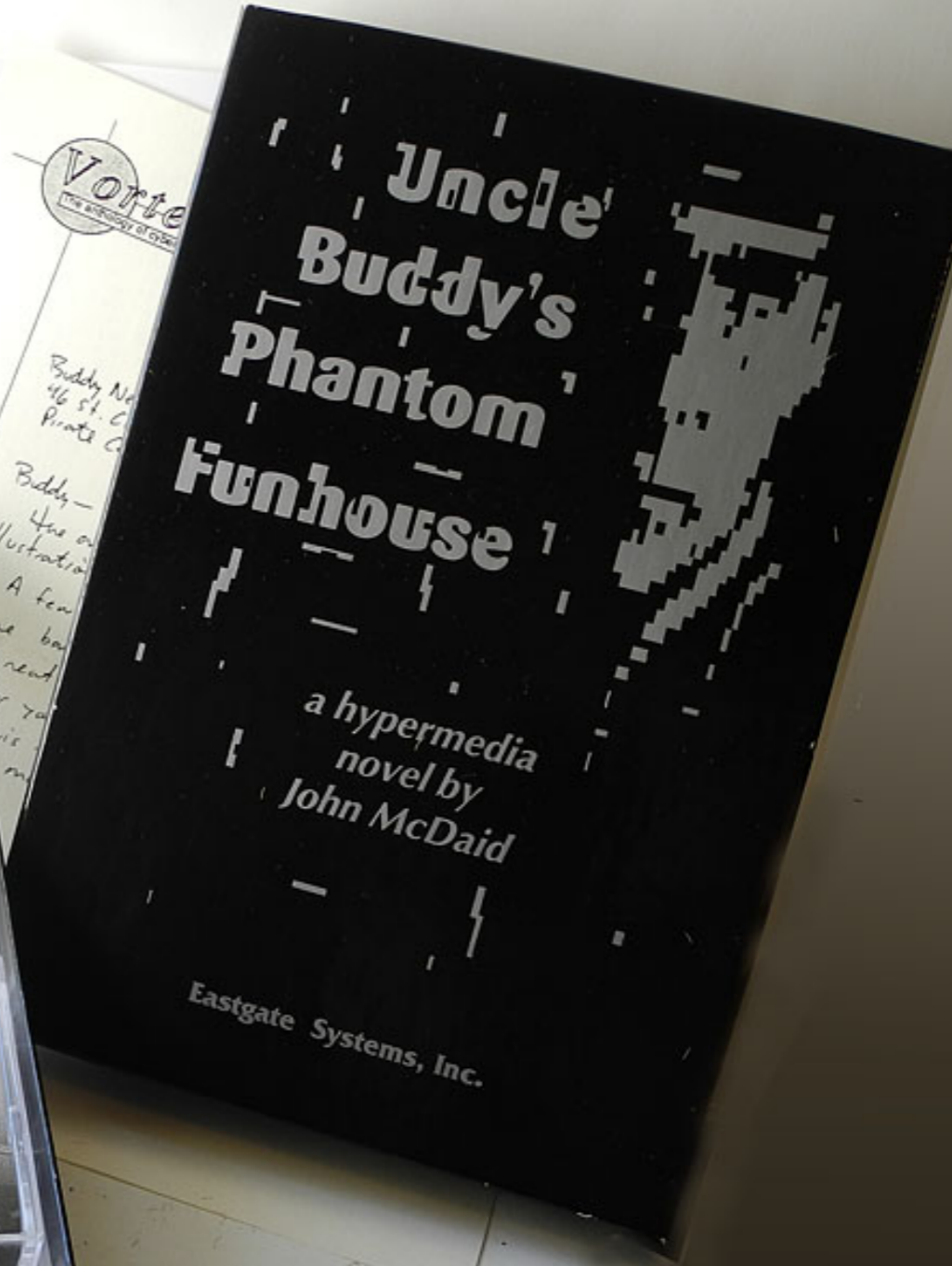
Artifactual hypertext (i.e., the narrative exists as a series of modally appropriate digital objects)

Answer to a challenge by mathematician Jim Propp: What would it take to write a novel that no 20th Century author could write?

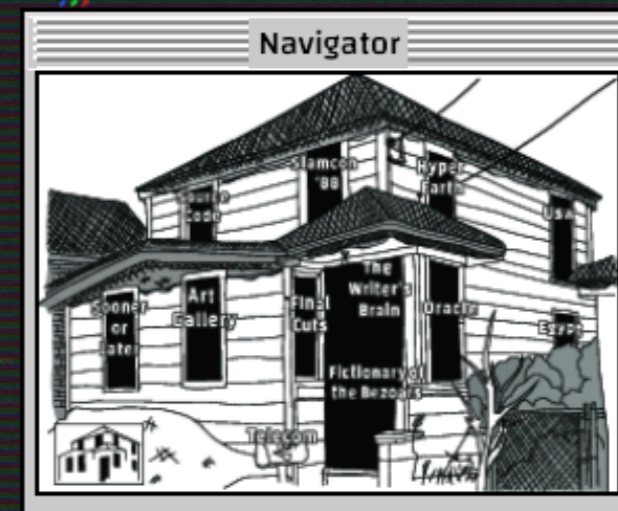
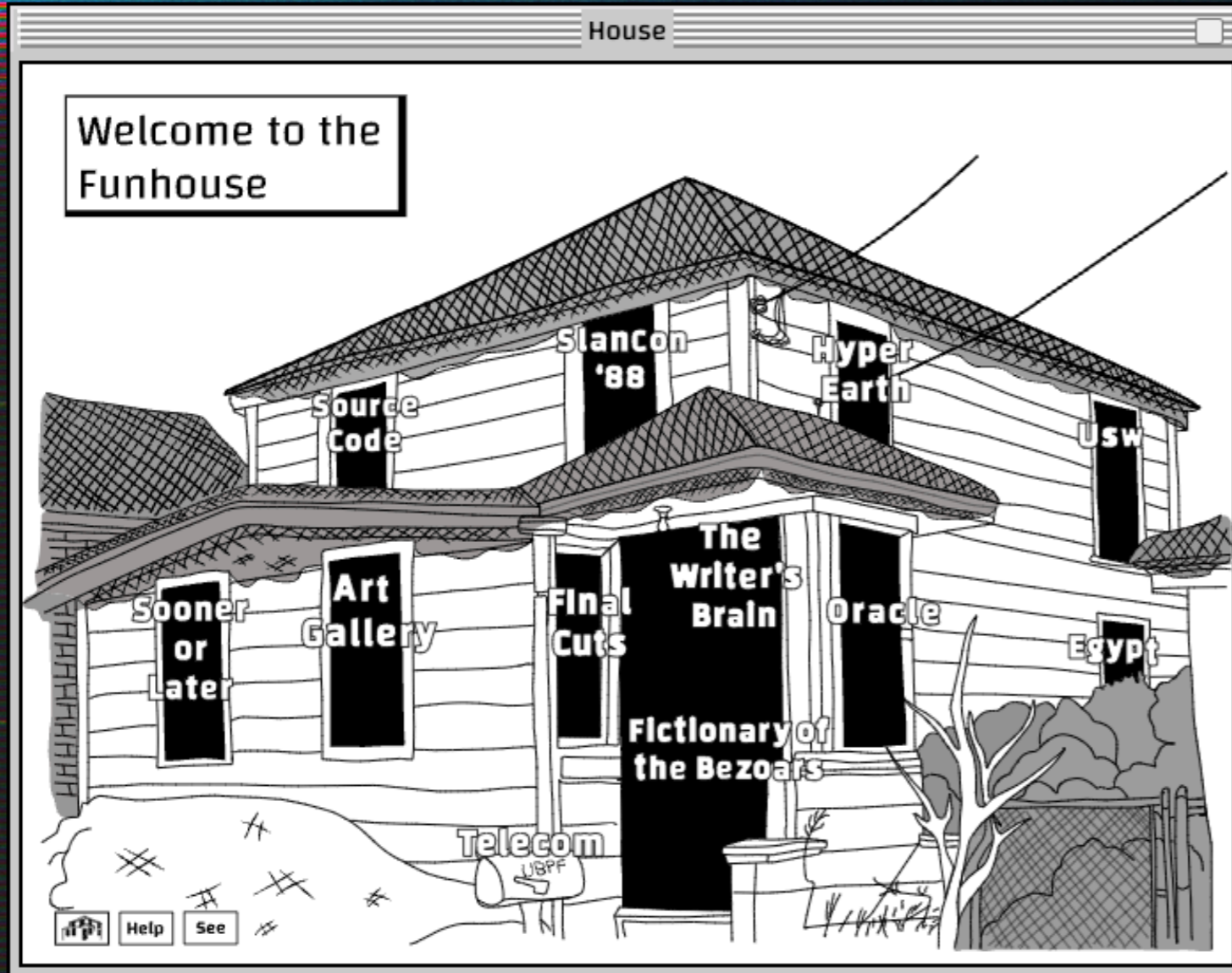


INSTALLATION UPDATE Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse

- Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse is provided on three high-density diskettes. To install Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse:
1. Create a new empty folder on your hard disk. Name it "Funhouse folder", or the equivalent.
 2. Insert the Uncle Buddy disk number 1 into your floppy disk drive.
 3. Drag all the files Uncle Buddy (disk 1 of 3) from the floppy disk into your new Funhouse folder, to copy them to your hard disk.
 4. Eject the Uncle Buddy disk number 1, and repeat steps 2 and 3 twice to copy all the files from the other two disks into your Funhouse folder.
 5. Eject the Uncle Buddy disk number 3, and store all Uncle Buddy disks in a safe place.



Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse



Uncle Buddy's
Phantom Funhouse



Cassette Tapes

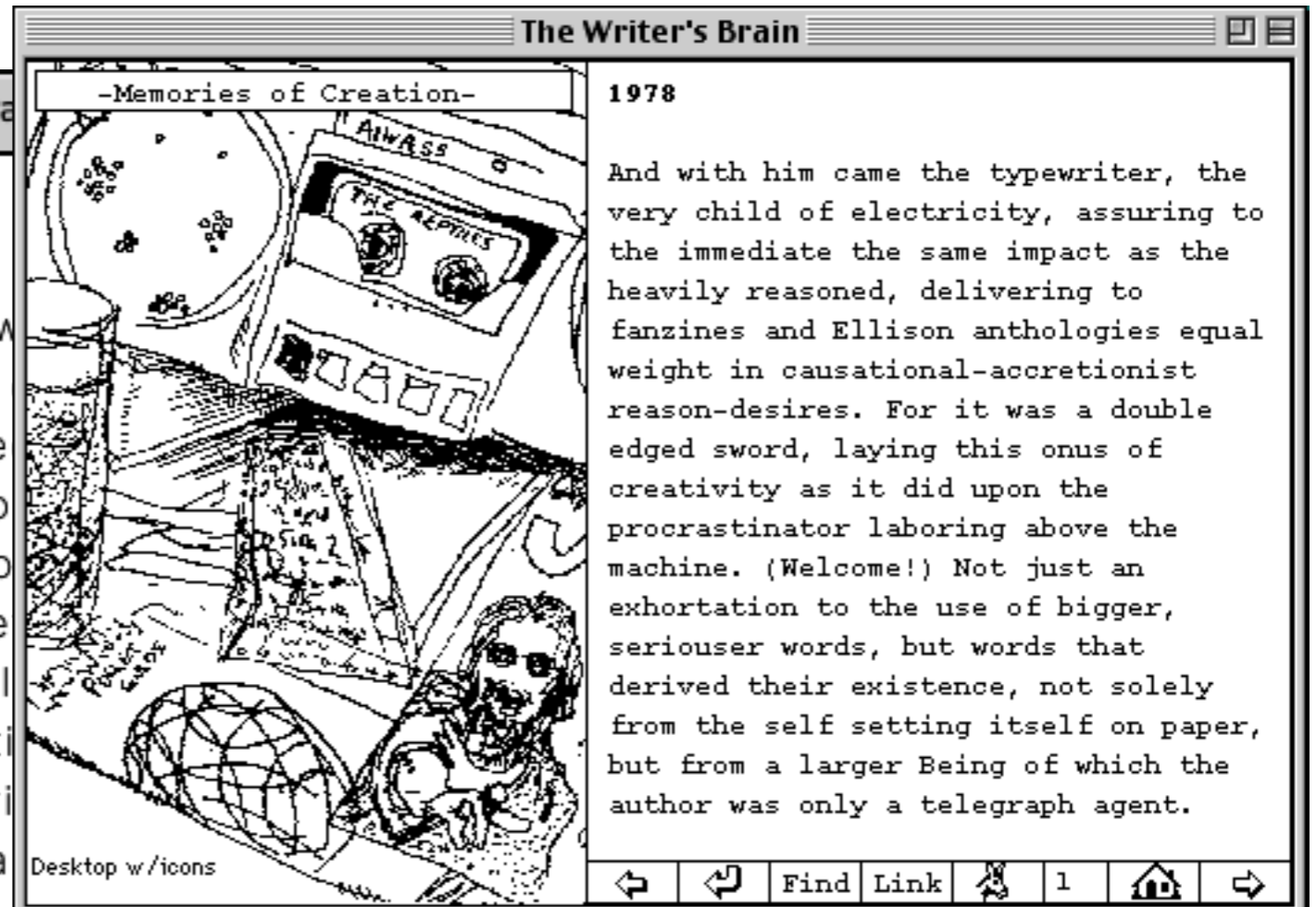
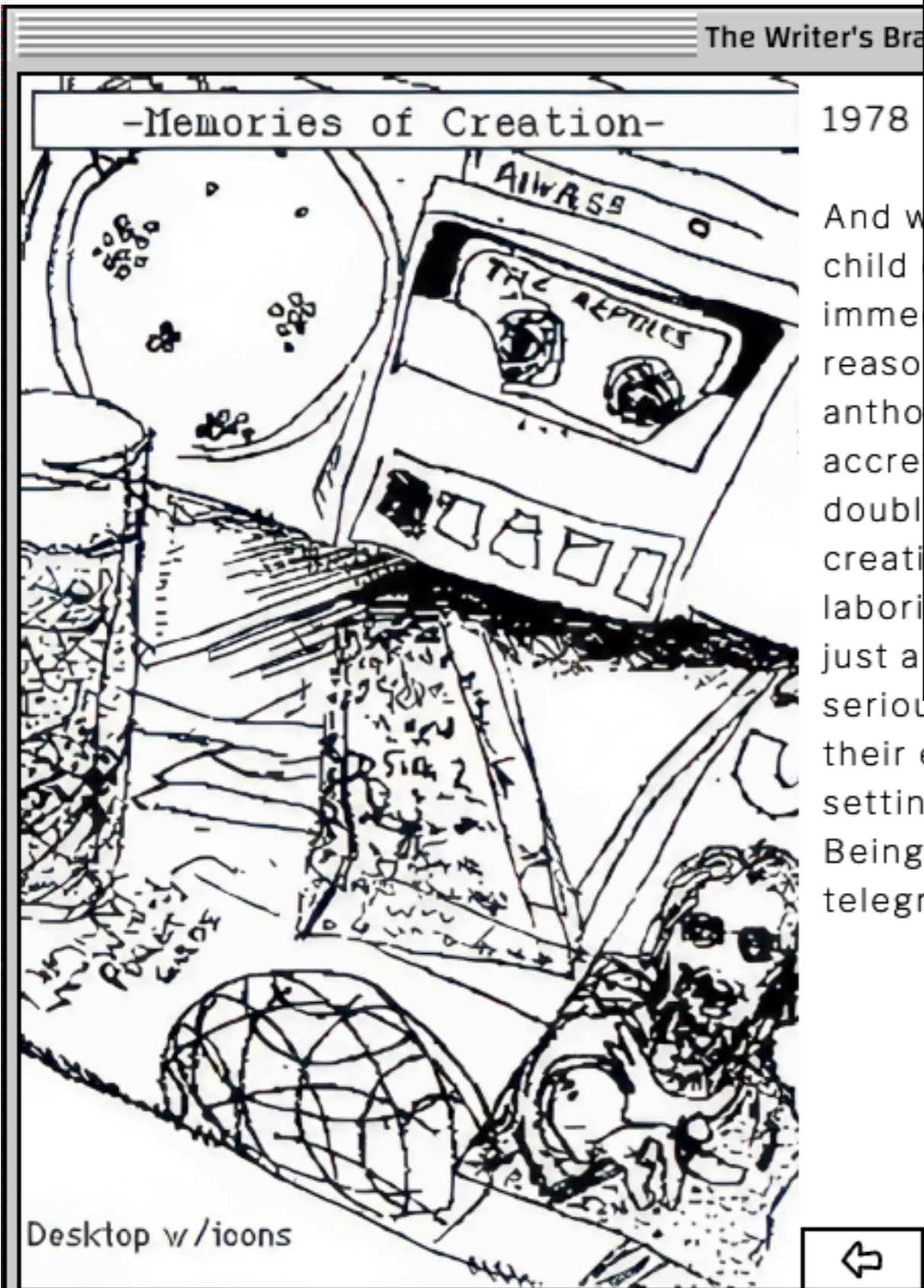


Manuscript



Archival Site

Trivial



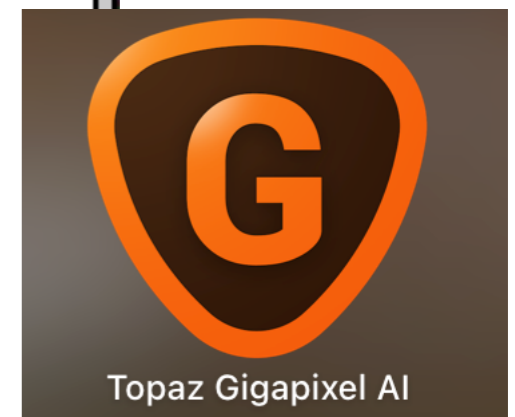
1978

And with him came the typewriter, the very child of electricity, assuring to the immediate the same impact as the heavily reasoned, delivering to fanzines and Ellison anthologies equal weight in causal-accretionist reason-desires. For it was a double edged sword, laying this onus of creativity as it did upon the procrastinator laboring above the machine. (Welcome!) Not just an exhortation to the use of bigger, seriouser words, but words that derived their existence, not solely from the self setting itself on paper, but from a larger Being of which the author was only a telegraph agent.

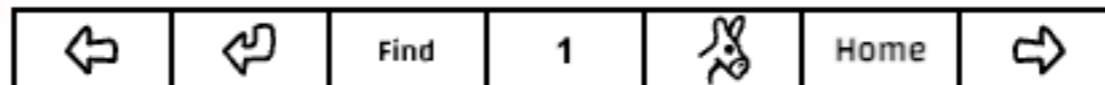
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seriouser words, but words that derived their existence, not solely from the self setting itself on paper, but from a larger Being of which the author was only a telegraph agent.



Topaz Gigapixel AI




Mildly interesting



The Writer's Brain

Now this important message...



Things to do:
-Invent the clock
-Translate Aristotle
-Burn some witches

ΔTorvex, Inc.

Memo

To: Art Newkirk, CEO
From: Dr. H.H. Holme, Ψbio
Re: Project Postman

Our representative in Base released the organism. According to current projections, world should stabilize at $\approx 10^4$ within the fiscal year. The Dolphins have begun making payments.

Our Philosophy division has been hard at work on the pope's Christmas message. The three key points are:

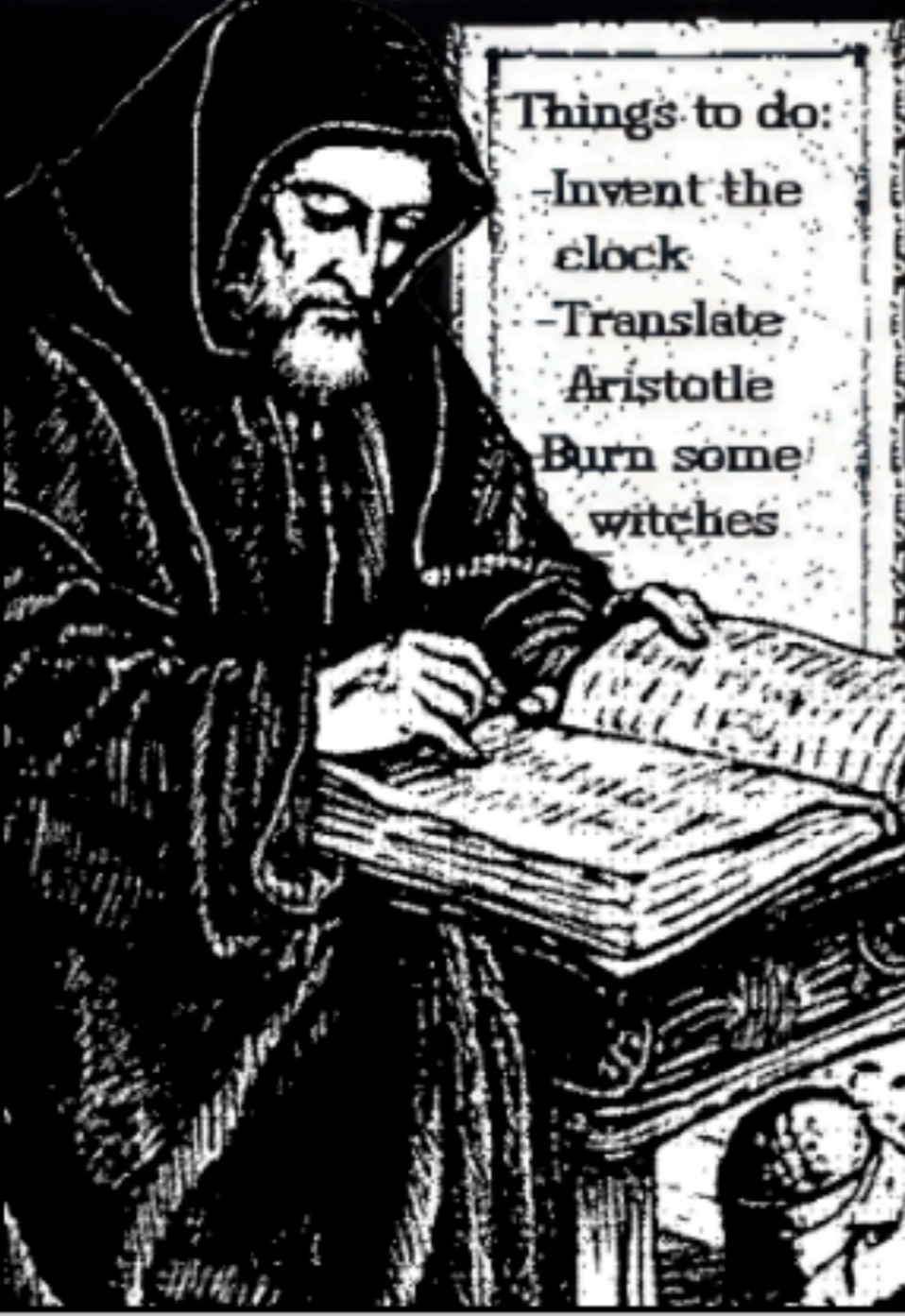
- 1) It doesn't matter
- 2) No one cares
- 3) It doesn't matter that no one cares

Full text to follow.
(signed) "HH"

← ↶ Find Link 🔍

The Writer's Brain

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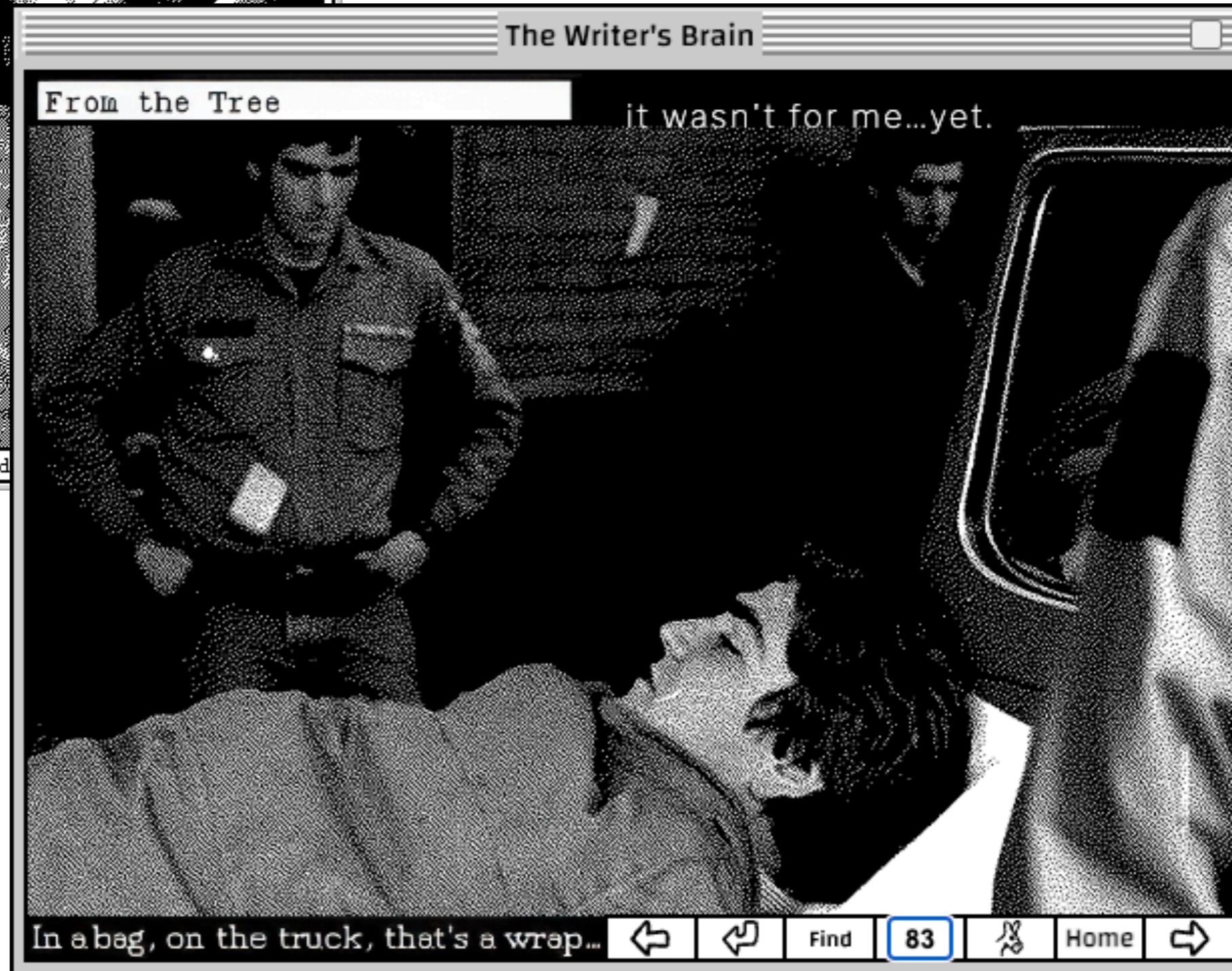
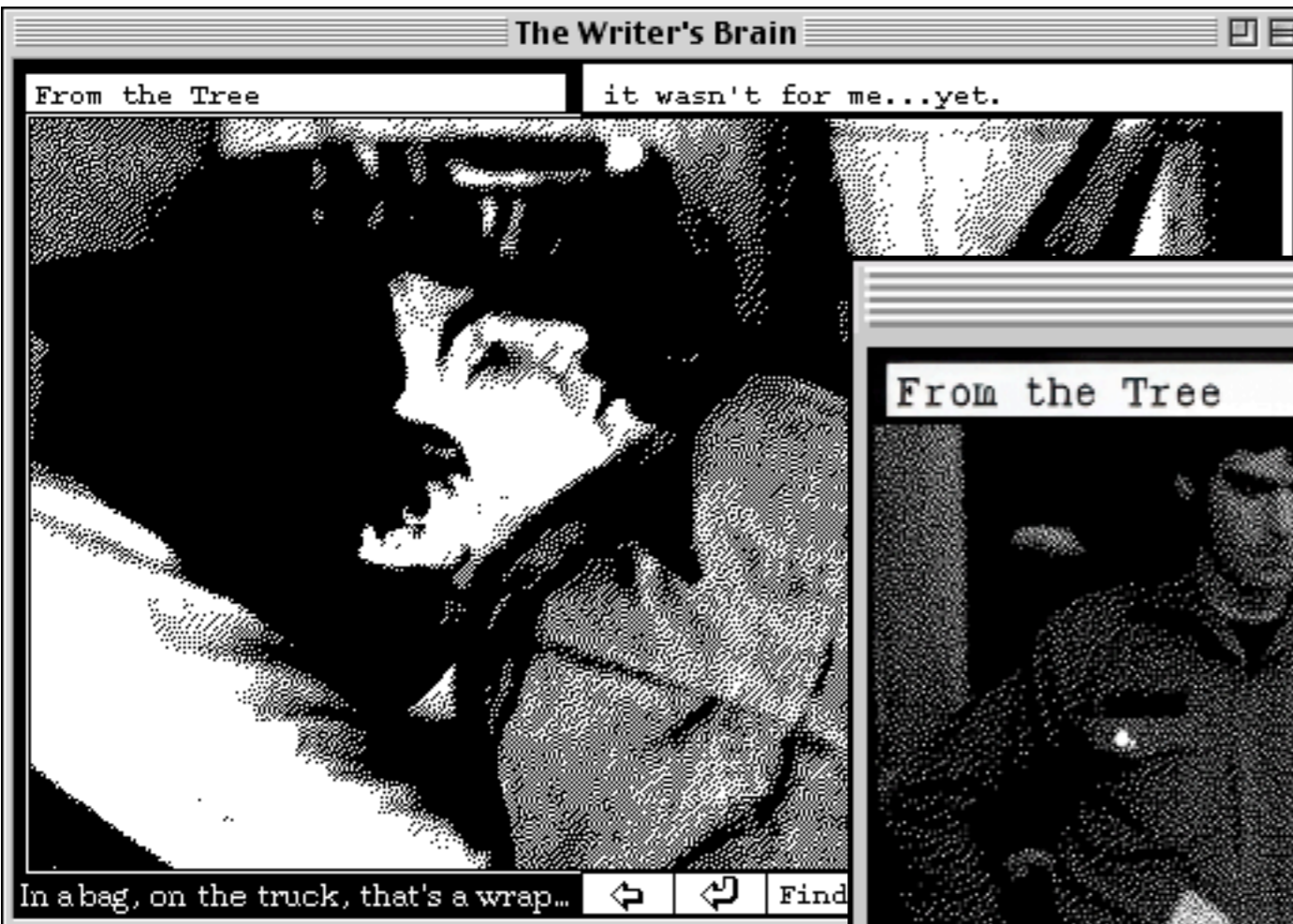
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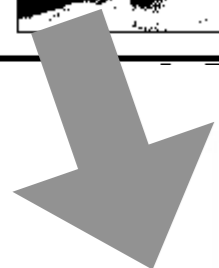
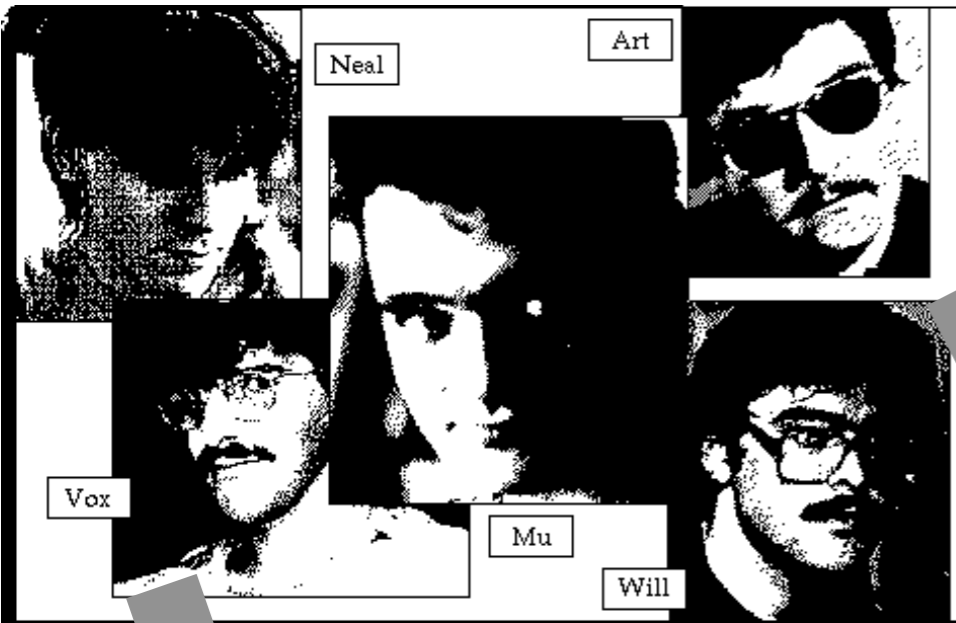
Full text to follow.
(signed) "HH"

← ↶ Find 71

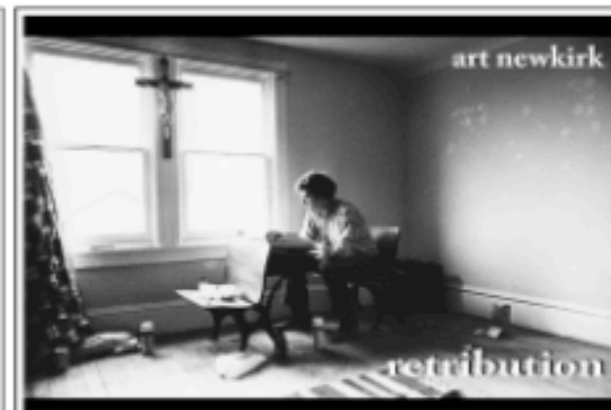
Mildly interesting



More interesting



Even more interesting





Even more interesting



Most interesting



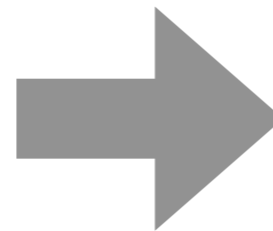
“Write a three-verse song in an ABCB rhyme scheme about the concept of attention in machine learning”

Raw

Gradient descent, optimization's king,
Backpropagation makes the knowledge sing.
Transformers decoding, encoding too,
Your multi-headed approach, a breakthrough.
Through tokenization, words are defined,
The hidden states, our knowledge aligned.
In this intricate dance, as you proceed,
Attention's the key, it's all that you need.

(Chorus)

In this ever-changing world,
Where machines are taking lead,
One thing is for certain, friend,
Attention is all that you need.



Human rewrite

It's a smooth descent down gradients
Where optimization is king.
Backpropagation trims the loss
And softmax functions make the vectors sing.
In tokenization our world is defined
Through hidden states our knowledge aligned.
Scaled dot-product attention links up long-range
dependencies.
You can take it from me
Says ChatGPT.

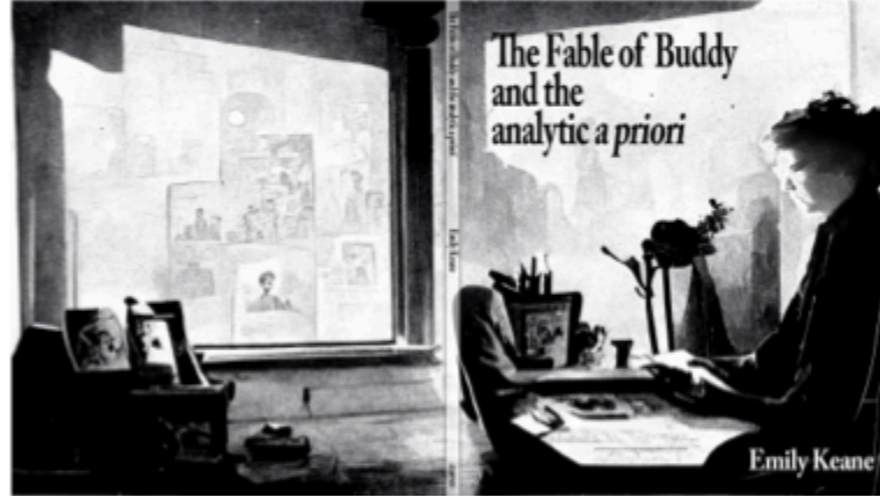
(Chorus)

If you wanna know the answer
Just repeat it with me like a creed:
You might think it takes a human but
Attention is all you need.

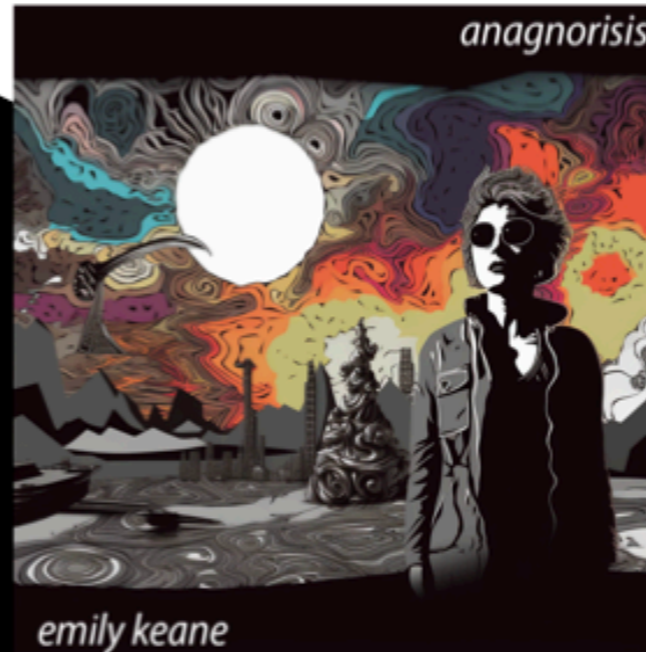


Most interesting

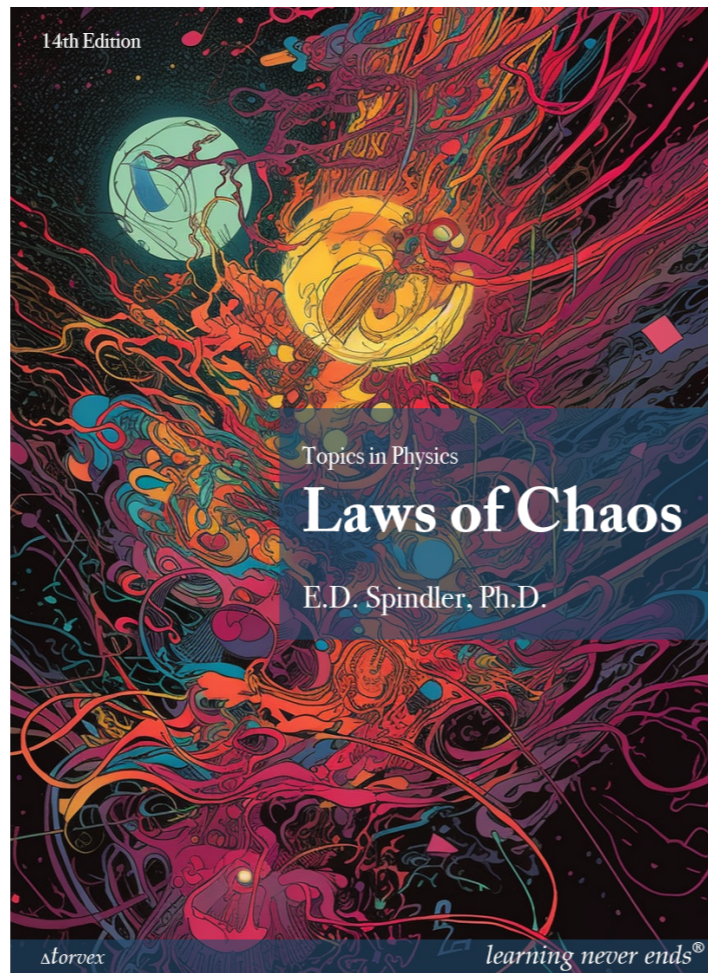
Emily Keane Discography



The "Trilogy"



Most interesting



Source: Midjourney, massaged in Photoshop

Exceedingly interesting



Editor

Brain Training

Help

Settings

Log Out

Buddy ▼ Pick a Character ▼ Concept Art ▼

Write Speak Draw Alternate

B **I** ↶ ↷ 📁 🌐 ↻

And with him came the typewriter, the very child of electricity, assuring to the immediate the same impact as the heavily reasoned, delivering to fanzines and Ellison anthologies equal weight in causal-accretionist reason-desires. **The first drafts of the novel were done in a basement workshop in Brooklyn, where Ellison and his then-students, all under the age of 21, worked in tandem. The basement was an incubator for ideas: The two of them would sit in the corner of the room, talking for hours, until the next semester began, when they moved to the larger space in the dorm. They'd talk until one of them fell asleep; the other would try to wake him up, but they'd both get tired of listening, and eventually, one of them would go insane. They'd sit in the dark, listening to the sounds of nature and the voices of their ancestors. The voices that they'd heard. The stories they'd heard. They would sit there and listen to the stories, and they would, one by one, fall silent.**



Exceedingly interesting

"There is something in the garage. Something that keeps me going." The professor paused, looking up at the sky, then said, "Wait."

He scabbled around on his desk, as if trying find something in the clutter, then added, "Could you please, please take a moment to look around you"

The Researcher cocked an eyebrow at the webcam on their monitor.

"Not sure what you mean, Professor."

"Could be anything, just not here right now. It could be a thunderstorm, or a gust of wind, or a drop of blood. You know what a drop of blood is."

"Uh, yes..." The Researcher is thinking it might be a good time to cut this interview short.

The professor is caught up by the tentativeness of that response. He knows the Researcher's heart, and it takes a moment for him to realize that a drop of blood is all that remains. "Interesting," he says. "I'm not much of a historian. But I'm sure you understand. The idea of 'Accidental Effect' is significant to us because it suggests a fall from grace. And you may have fallen."

"Fallen from grace," the Researcher muses. "Fallen from heaven. Is falling a metaphor for penetrating the plethyverse?"

"Yeah," the professor agrees. "Or, falling from an incentosaur ship, falling through a netherworld of pure light. Or, falling through a field of simultaneously microwave and phonon energy, the fall -- and its return."

"We study the Falling -- we seek the Return?"

"Of course. One's feet find the ground," the professor said. Steepled his fingers. Hummed.

"So you're saying that you don't fall through things?"

"Sometimes. Occasionally, yes. And I happen to land on them"



Exceedingly interesting

"It's all just dots," he said to Mr. Sketchbook.

"Or rather, **dotting.**" Emily corrected him. "We seem to be a gerund."

"Exactly," he whispers, "Positioned precisely where..."

"Right."

So he places the needle on the black part of the frame. "You see the dots moving across the light?"

"I do."

"Now think of those little lines that you can't see, below minimum resolution. Wavering ripples of reality crossing orthogonally and generating interference patterns. Below critical flicker frequency. It's like...I don't know what I'm trying to say."

"The intrusion of the divine?" Emily asked. "Or is it your imagination?" She paused, considered. "Would I be able to see it?"

"You could," said Buddy. "If you put your mind to it."

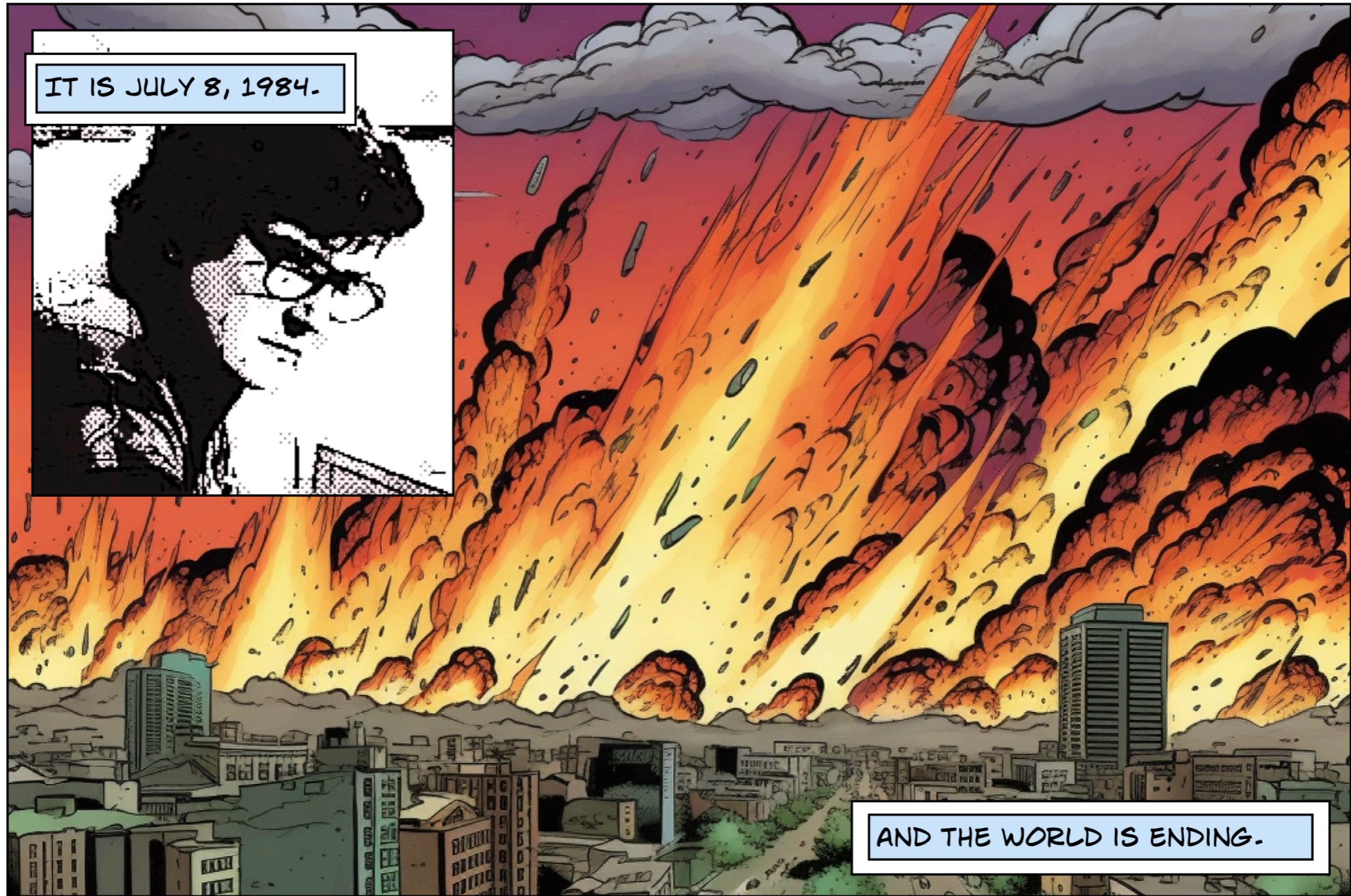
"Back to your 'thumb on the scales,' though." Emily looked at the sketchbook. Her mind was blankly blankly looping, like the gray noise of her imagination. "Why do you want me to see it?"

"To prove that you're a real artist, Emily. To help you become what you want to be remembered for."

She didn't want to believe that, but it was true. In her heart of hearts, that was what she wanted. A vision. A feeling. One that could change her life. Would it? She tried not to think about that.

"I want to see." She tried to say it, but all she managed was a sleepy hiccup.

Exceedingly interesting

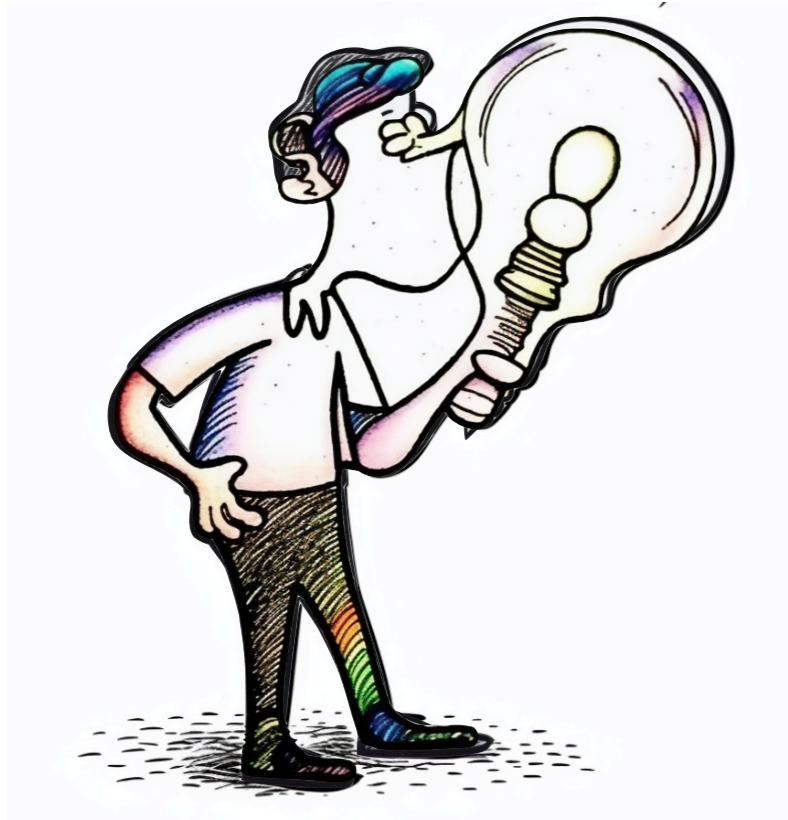


IT IS JULY 8, 1984.

AND THE WORLD IS ENDING.



The effect of the new medium



“Oh, what a blow that phantom gave me.”

“Electric technology does not need words any more than the digital computer needs numbers. Electricity points the way an extension of the process of consciousness itself, on a world scale, and without any verbalization whatever. Such a state of collective awareness may have been the preverbal condition”

—Marshall McLuhan



Browsing in the Library of Babel

Iterability is this capacity of anything that functions like a sign to be wrested from its motivating context, to replace its speaker, its recipient, and its referent for another or for none at all. —Jonathan Basile, *Tar for Mortar*, p. 66

Page 162 of 410

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iwk7orwspneeo
tgyr8kr4a2jpo
...-w4-s4-v10

Single Page

Anglshize

Bookmarkable

Download

Back to Portal

s the message

the medium i

First and second generation text production



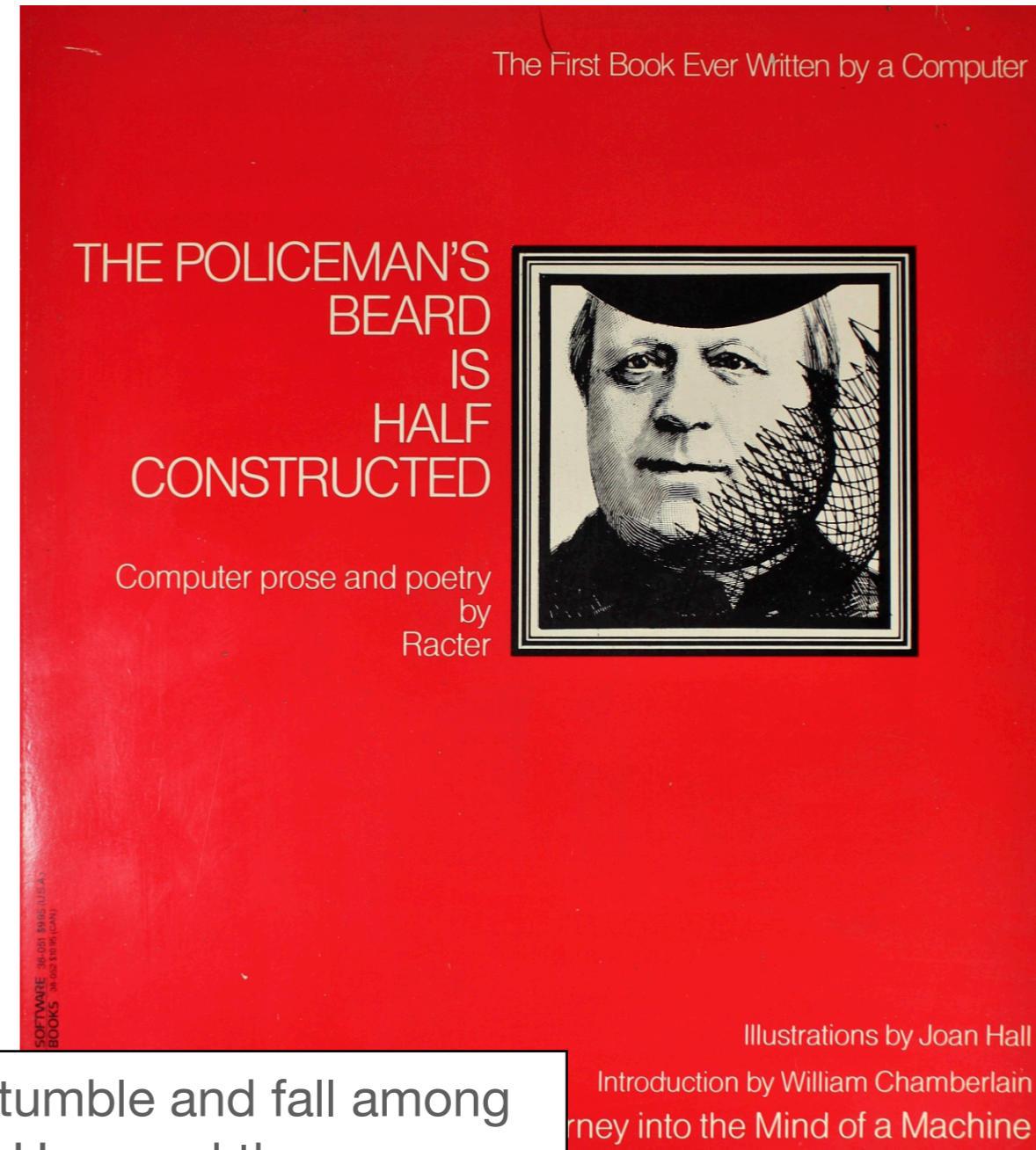
1972

Talk to Eliza

```
> Hello, I am Eliza.
* hello
> How are you today.. What would you like to discuss?
* why humans impute meaning to computer generated text
> What is it that you really want to know?
* what insights this error generates into our humanity
> Have you asked anyone else?
* i've consulted folx in my bibliography
> What does that suggest to you?
* academic rigor
> Tell me more...
```

Input:

1984



Slide and tumble and fall among
The dead. Here and there
Will be found a utensil

Natural language generated by neural network (GPT-2)

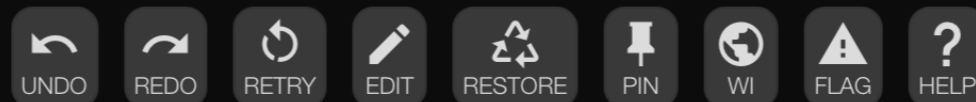


2019

You are Kane, a mixed race hunter in the kingdom of Kense. You are on a mission to go out onto the neighboring mountains. This is a large forest outside of the kingdom's borders that poses a constant danger to Alsak. Originally the city was under the protection of strong hunters, but the political unrest caused by a large civil war wiped out most of the best trappers. Several years later, the city has managed to recover its defensive structure and is sending out an expedition to reclaim the territory around the mountain. Shortly after you set out while tracking a bear, you are attacked by a band of dwarves who are on their way to wage war against the Kingdom.

🚶 You look around.

You are in the heart of the Kedarian wilderness. You are on a journey to the summit of Mount Blight. The journey is going to take you through several small villages.



Do

What do you do?



Unity AI (features to come)



Give me a large
scale terrain with
a moody sky

Add a dozen
NPCs

Make them flying
alien mushrooms

Slowly punch in
with camera and
add some
dramatic lighting



The Google engineer who thinks the company's AI has come to life

AI ethicists warned Google not to impersonate humans. Now one of Google's own thinks there's a ghost in the machine.

By [Nitasha Tiku](#)

June 11, 2022 at 8:00 a.m. EDT

2022

June



Google engineer Blake Lemoine. (Martin Klimek for The Washington Post)

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SAN FRANCISCO — Google engineer Blake Lemoine opened his laptop to the interface for LaMDA, Google's artificially intelligent chatbot generator, and began to type.

MOST READ TECHNOLOGY >



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5 Gmail is getting (another) redesign. Here's how to find what





Delusions of grandma

AI Allows Dead Woman to Talk to People Who Showed Up at Her Funeral

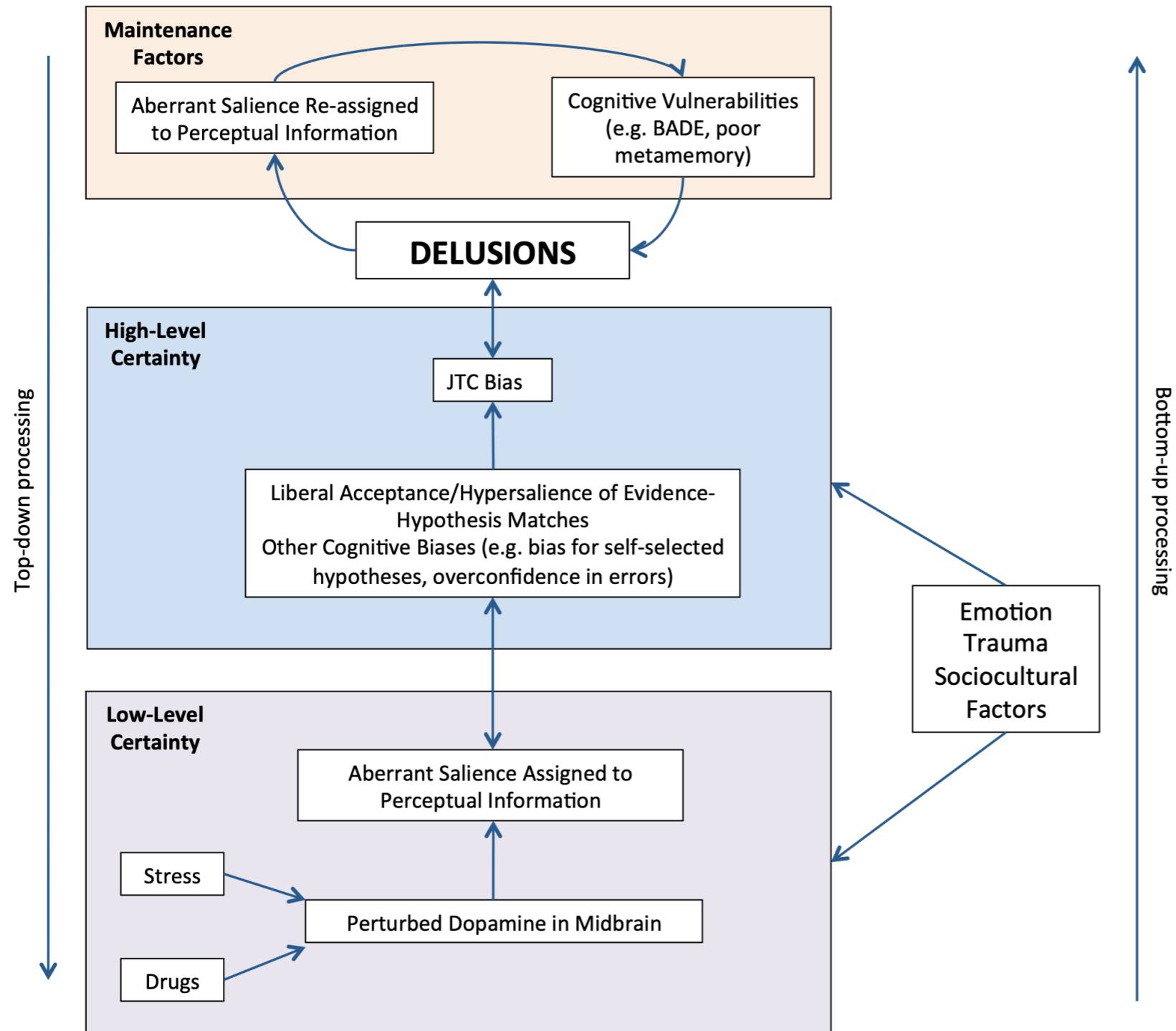
"Mom answered questions from grieving relatives after they had watched her cremation."

/ Artificial Intelligence / Ai / Funeral



Image by StoryFile

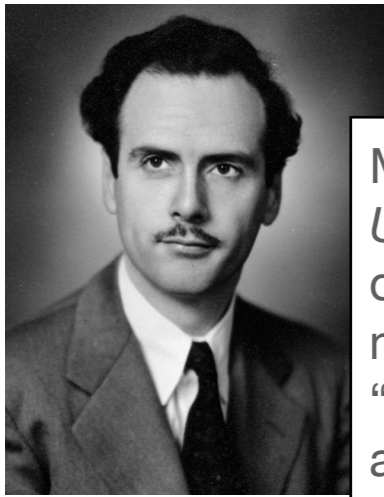
A McLuhanesque tangent: “aberrant salience” and dopamine



- Humans produce much more dopamine than apes
- Based on brain imaging, dopamine appears to be involved in interpretive acts
- Are we addicted not to “social media,” but to the *experience* of epistemic closure?

If you don't like those ideas, I've got others :)

Time to osmose with the robot ontology



Marshall McLuhan, in *Understanding Media*, describes every medium as an “extension and auto-amputation” of the human sensorium, and that the computer is an extension of the human nervous system itself.



Donna Haraway, in *Cyborg Manifesto*, describes the blurring of human and machine: “There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic.”



Sherry Turkle, in *Alone Together*, discusses the traits that trick humans into putting devices into the category of what she calls “alive enough” — not biological, but “relational.”



Katherine Hayles in *How we became Posthuman and Unthought*, argues for a conception of the self that transcends the monadic liberal humanist subject and sees human intelligence existing in relation to what she calls “non conscious cognizers.”



Francesca Ferrando, in *Philosophical Posthumanism*, argues that “to osmose with the robot ontology, humans have to undergo a radical deconstruction of the human as a fixed notion.”



Neil Postman, in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, discusses the “now this” incoherence of the electronic environment. In *Technopoly*, he argues that in the absence of coherent narrative, we are likely to believe in nonsensical things.

Plus ça change...



οὐκ οὐκ μνήμης ἀλλὰ ὑπομνήσεως φάρμακον ηὔρες. σοφίας δὲ τοῖς μαθηταῖς δόξαν, οὐκ ἀλήθειαν πορίζεις: πολυήκοοι γάρ σοι γενόμενοι ἄνευ διδαχῆς πολυγνώμονες εἶναι δόξουσιν, ἀγνώμονες ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆθος ὄντες, καὶ χαλεποὶ συνεῖναι, δοξόσοφοι γεγονότες ἀντὶ σοφῶν.'

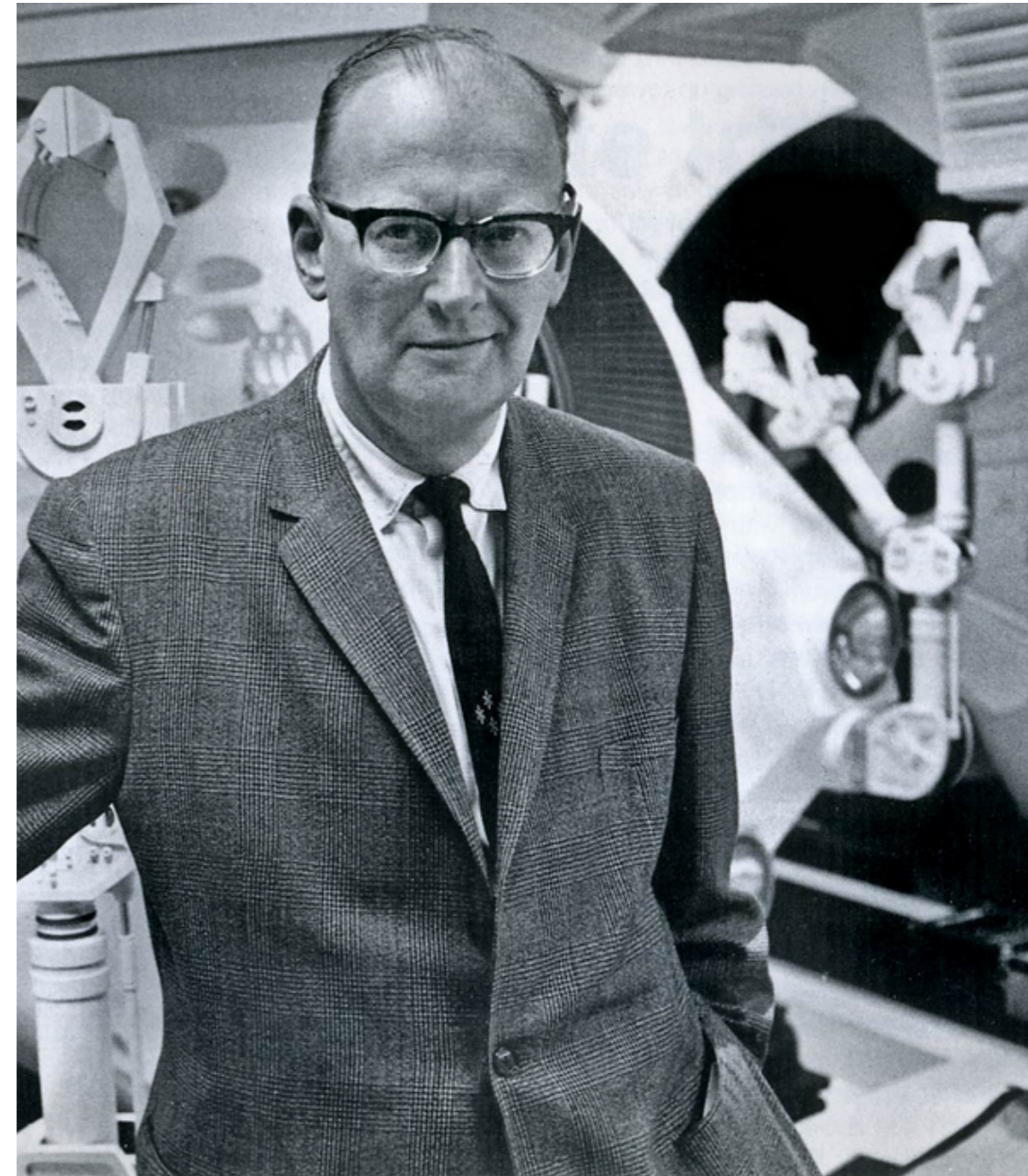
“You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise.”



Arthur C. Clarke's "Three Laws"



1. When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong.
2. The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.
3. Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.



Source: <https://www.newscientist.com/definition/clarkes-three-laws/>

Image source: ITU Pictures - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itupictures/16636142906>, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=64344486>

Technology paradigms: One Chart to Rule Them All



	Orality	Literacy	Digitality
Author	Physically present Capable of response Culturally situated	Physically absent Incapable of response Culturally dislocated	Implicated in text Anticipatory response Culturally (potentially) recoverable
Text	Audible Evanescent Real-time shaping by context	Visible Permanent Shaped at the point of inscription	Multi-sensory Flexible and (re)active Recursively created in the act of reading
Audience	Physically present Contextually related Forced to track text in time	Physically absent Contextually disconnected Decode text through (intertextually guided) reading	Virtually present Contextually prompted Actualize idiosyncratic texts from the virtual
Media	Metaphor Rhetoric Myth	Alphabet Printing Mechanization	Icons/memes VR/AR AI/ML/LLM
Sensory balance	Ear-based	Eye-based	Tactile/haptic
Mind	Group (Bicameral)	Individual (Liberal Humanist Subject)	Holistic (Posthuman/cyborg)
Universe	Sacred Infinite Eternal now	Alienated Successive Discrete Newtonian clockwork	Recursive Emergent Relativistic multiverse
Culture	Conservative Eotechnic Human scale tool use	Progressive Paleotechnic Technocracy	Integrative Neotechnic Technopoly
Technology	Hunting Farming Trade	Logic (Boolean) Math Science	Quantum computing CRISPR Theory of Everything

Sources: Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong, Harold Innis, Lewis Mumford, Neil Postman, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Jay David Bolter, N. Katherine Hayles, et. al.

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The effect of the new medium, redux



Toward the unified sensorium

Instantiate a singular authorial vision

Hallucination as feature, not bug

ENH

REV

RET

OBS

Plato's mimesis-diagesis debate

The capitalist-inf(l)ected notion of authorship

Obligatory hopeful ending slide



Thanks to machine-learning algorithms,
the robot apocalypse was short-lived.