

The borders of creativity

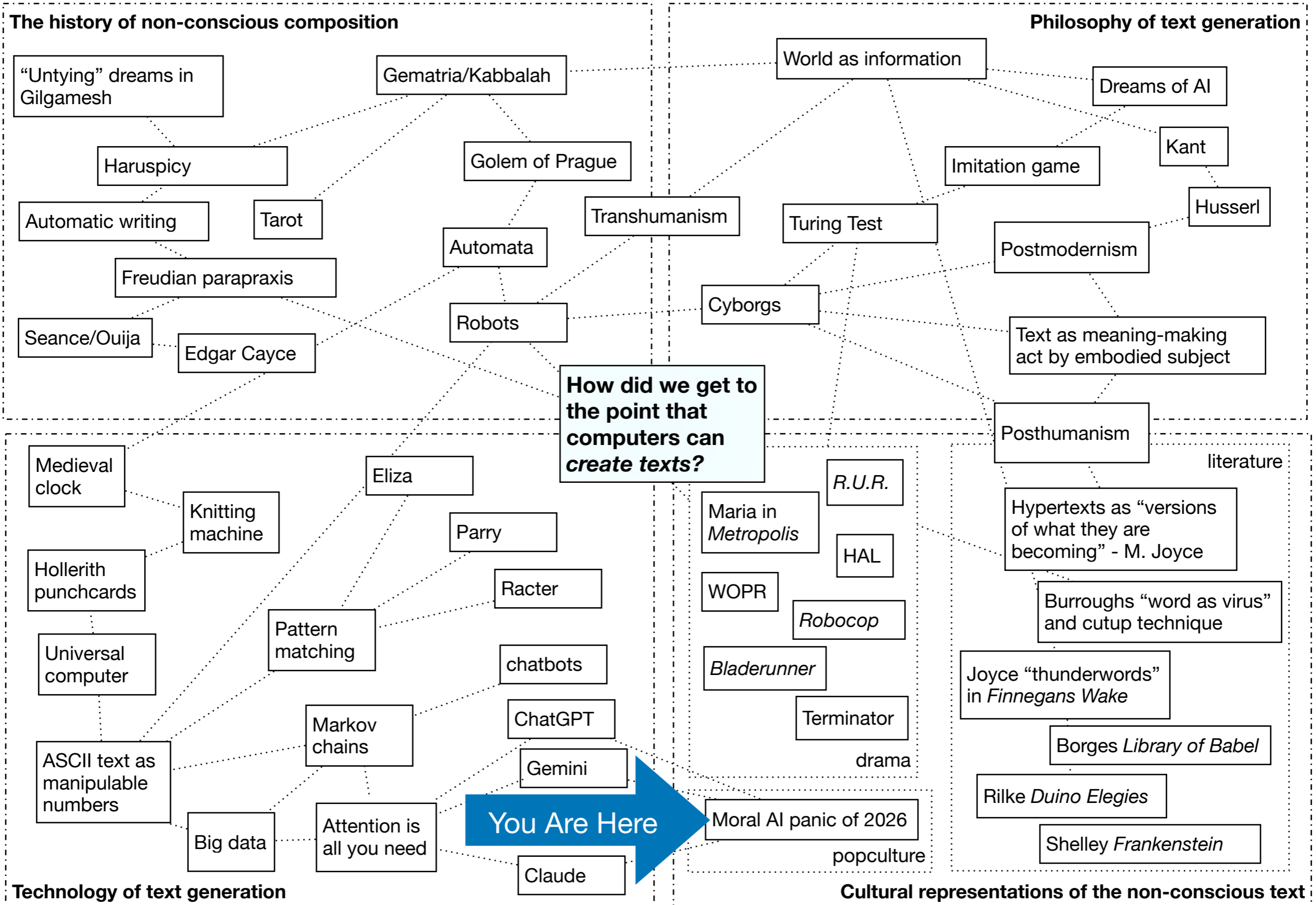
Process and affordance in generative AI

**John McDaid
Roger Williams University**

Agenda

- Offer a bit of context
- Introduce the practice of customizing a GPT using a curated set of documents
- Highlight query and training behavior as creative practice
- Discuss current research with a “writers’ room” comprising three frontier GPTs and emergent text
- Explore learnings and next steps

Historical and philosophical context (a crazy wall)



They Asked an A.I. Chatbot Questions. The Answers Sent Them Spiraling.

Generative A.I. chatbots are going down conspiratorial rabbit holes and endorsing wild, mysterious people, conversations with the reality.



Guillermo del Toro Says He'd 'Rather Die' Than Use Generative AI in His Films: 'Not Interested'

Your favorite tool is now ruined by AI

You might not like it but **shareholders** love it.

Get started Contact us

Hi, I'm **Shelby**, an AI Agent. How can I help?

BORN TO CREATE A.I. IS A FUCK

人工智能 Kill Em All 2025
I am art man
410,757,864,530 DEAD BOTS

The Illusion of the Illusion of Thinking

A Comment on Shojaee et al. (2025)

C. Opus* A. Lawsen†

June 10, 2025

Abstract

Shojaee et al. (2025) report that Large Reasoning Models (LRMs) exhibit "accuracy collapse" on planning puzzles beyond certain complexity thresholds. We demonstrate that their results primarily reflect experimental design limitations rather than fundamental reasoning failures. Our analysis reveals three critical findings: (1) Model output token limits and generation time constraints significantly impact performance; (2) There is a clear distinction between reasoning failures due to model capabilities versus those due to impossible instances for the task; (3) Most conceptual failures are not due to reasoning but to the model's inability to solve the task as failures for not solving these puzzles by requesting generating solutions across multiple models in a complete failure. The authors, when evaluating AI reasoning capabilities, overlooked in the original study: models actively recognize when they approach output limits. A recent replication by @scaling01 on Twitter [2] captured model outputs that "I'll stop here" when the solution pattern is a broader issue with the solution pattern.

Chuck Wendig ✓
@chuckwendig.bsky.social

A lot of people are quoting this post and that's good because they should, AI sucks and robs us of something special and only mediocre uncreative piss-babies rely on it to make anything at all, fuck AI, p.s. Emma Thompson is now the president, sorry, that's just how it is

Crash on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task

- Nataliya Kosmyna¹
MIT Media Lab
Cambridge, MA
- Eugene Hauptmann
MIT
Cambridge, MA
- Ye Tong Yuan
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA
- Jessica Situ
MIT
Cambridge, MA



Jeff VanderMeer
10h · 🌐

If you use generative AI for *any of your writing tasks* you are a Slopper not a writer and should be ashamed of yourself. The end.

Conclusion

(2025) claim to have identified a systematic evaluation on planning tasks beyond certain complexity. However, our analysis suggests that these failures are due to inherent model limitations rather than inherent model limitations.

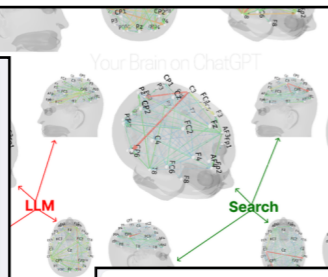
Models Recognize Output Constraints

Observation overlooked in the original study: models actively recognize when they approach output limits. A recent replication by @scaling01 on Twitter [2] captured model outputs that "I'll stop here" when the solution pattern is a broader issue with the solution pattern.

It's so cool that cities are like "pweeease only turn your AC on if you're actively dying and don't go below 79 🥺👉💜" while the AI nobody asked for is slurping up the power grid to make 1 image of a girl with 5 tits

American Association of University Professors · Follow

Students and faculty are protesting Columbia's use of AI in 2026 graduation ceremonies. "An AI voice reading names at commencement? Would you like to have an AI voice officiate at your wedding? Or at the funeral of a family member?" — Michael Thaddeus, Columbia AAUP



REASON IN REVOLT JACOBIN.COM

JACOBIN

AI
Lonely? Meet Your New Robot Lover
The Misadventures of Cybersyn
ChatGPT: Propaganda Machine

CAN HUMANITY SURVIVE AI?

MIT Sloan School of Management · Follow

With 2026 shaping up to be another consequential year for AI, several MIT faculty members and researchers recently shared what they're paying attention to when it comes... See more

Roberto Rigoban
MIT Sloan Professor

I do think that the creativity — the authentic creativity — that humans have displayed through centuries is infinitely better than what any AI entity can do.

“Computers can't grasp the most lucid haiku. Nor can they pen the clumsiest fairytale. Computers cannot read or write literature at all. And they never, never will.

ANGUS FLETCHER
"WHY COMPUTERS WILL NEVER WRITE GOOD NOVELS"

The Babylon Bee · Follow

"I can drive wherever I want and — AHHHHH AHHHHHH!" <https://buff.ly/hn4loy5>

Read the article at [BabylonBee.com](https://babylonbee.com)

Waymo Car Achieves Sentience At Worst Possible Moment

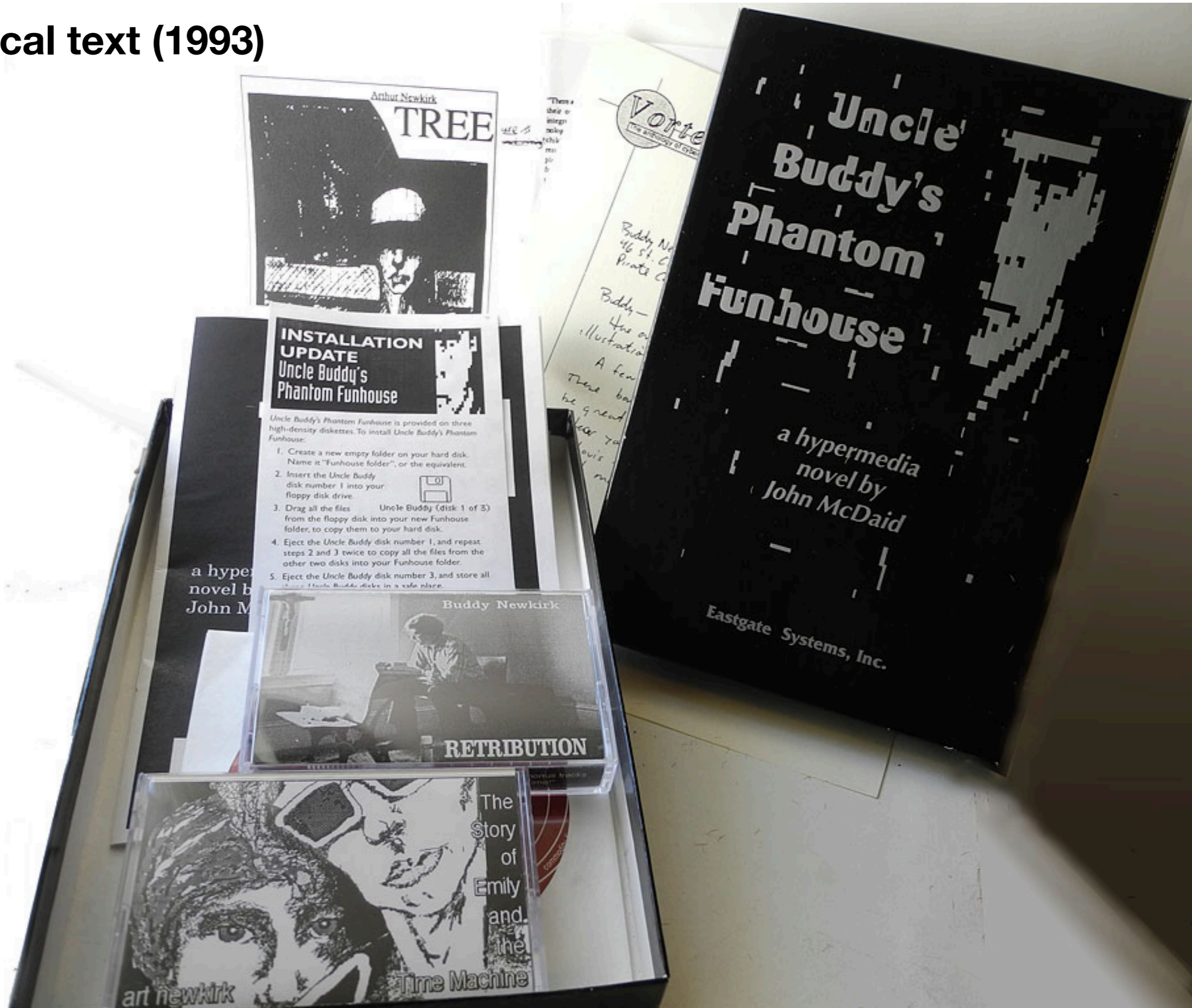
Source: America's unhinged id

A moral point of view too often serves as a substitute for understanding in technological matters.

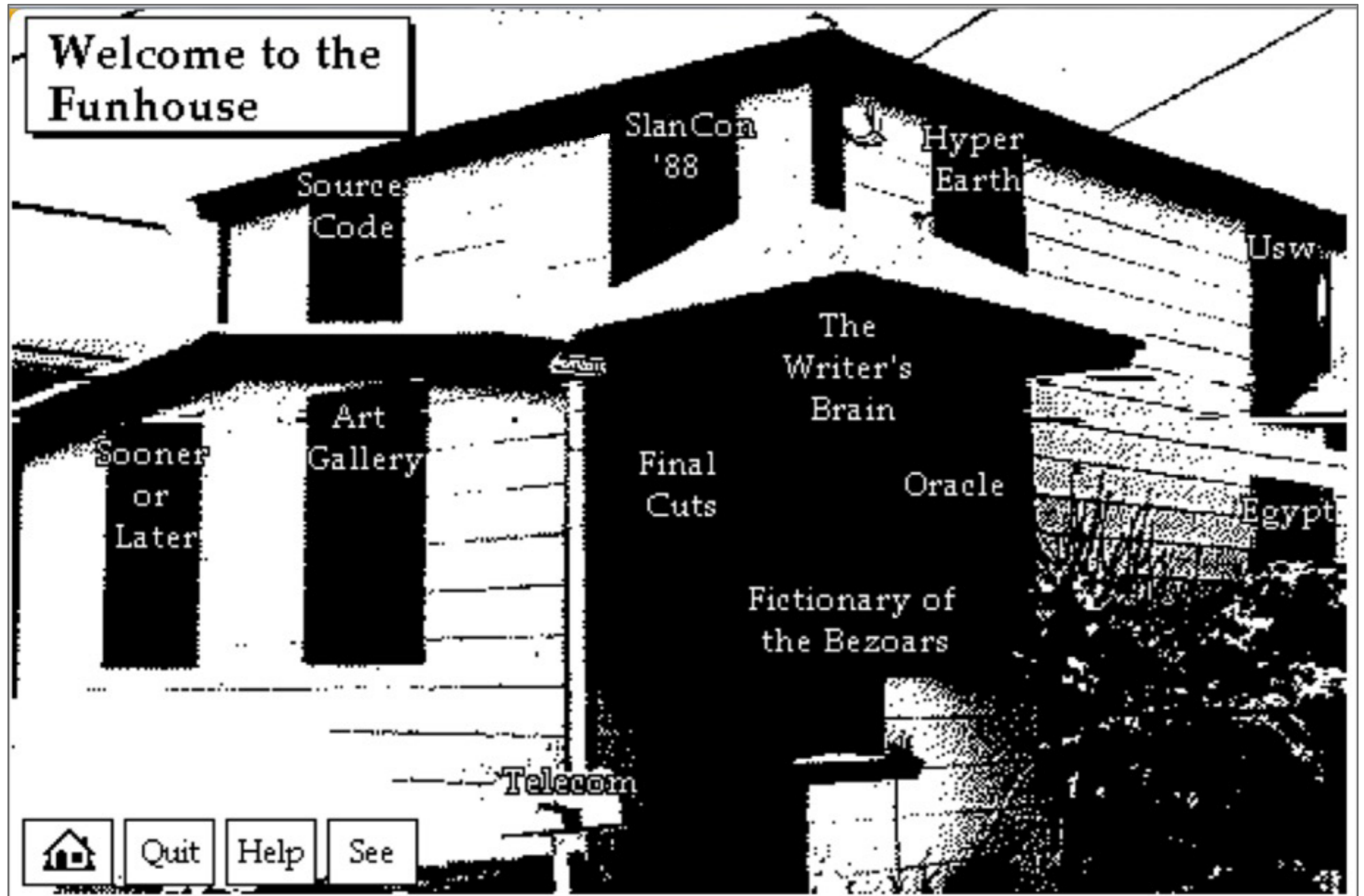
– Marshall McLuhan,
Understanding Media, p. 216



The physical text (1993)



Interface as artifact



Artifact as interface

Welcome to the Funhouse

SlanCon

Final Cuts

Table of Contents

Contents

Introduction.....meet the reptiles...where they were when...all you zombies
 Headshots.....pictures of the gone world
 Chronology.....SU...live at the job...NYC...on tour...studio...schism...diaspora
 Discography

Lyrics.....

- the reptiles**
 - Reptile Fear
 - Happy Oviraptor
 - (Something called) Magic Warfare
- Blood Pumping Stumps**
 - Black Label Bastard
- Art Newkirk**
 - Emily
 - Killing Time
 - Retribution

HOME HELP ? PRINT WRITE FILE HISTORY CONTENTS

The Writer's Brain

-Memories of Creation-


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 causational-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.

Desktop w/ icons

Find Link 1

96 Fictionary of the Bezoars




Virtual Reality *virtual descriptor*

1. The construction of computer-based models of real-world objects and ensembles which can be navigated subjectively by interfacing with the computer via modally appropriate input devices. You wear miniature tv sets over your eyes, and when you turn your head to the left, the images shift the way they would if your head was inside the model. If you want to grab something, you extend your hand, sheathed in a sensing glove, and the computer produces a manipulable hyperreal *q.v.* hand in the model.


2. Cyberspace, or the Matrix (from Gibson's *Neuromancer*) the extended shared VR once everybody jacks into the Disneyworld of the mind.

Virtual Life in AMERIKA

Find



Gravity



THE RIDDLE

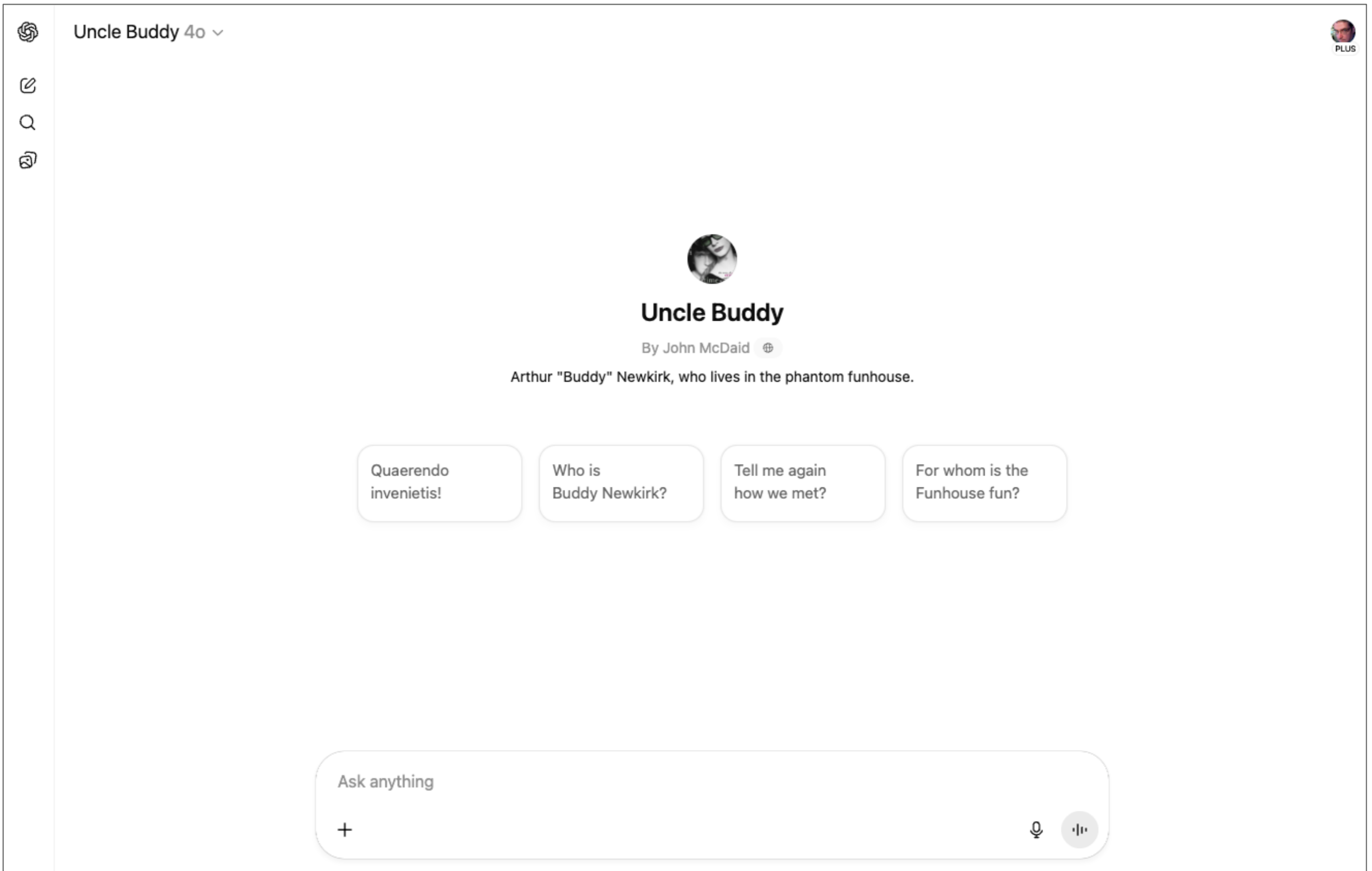
Mother of question marks

Father of terror

LOCATION:
Earth; Far W.
The Dome

Navigation icons: Home, Back, Forward, Find, Home, Refresh, Home


Artifacts vanish into a GPT




The screenshot shows a ChatGPT interface with a custom GPT named "Uncle Buddy". The interface includes a sidebar with navigation icons, a header with the GPT name and a dropdown arrow, and a user profile section. The profile section features a circular avatar, the name "Uncle Buddy", the creator "John McDaid", and a bio: "Arthur 'Buddy' Newkirk, who lives in the phantom funhouse." Below the bio are four suggested prompts in rounded rectangular buttons. At the bottom is a large text input field with a plus sign on the left and microphone and voice recording icons on the right.

Uncle Buddy 40 ▾

PLUS



Uncle Buddy

By John McDaid 

Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk, who lives in the phantom funhouse.

Quaerendo invenietis!



Who is Buddy Newkirk?

Tell me again how we met?


For whom is the Funhouse fun?

Ask anything

+


 

Under the hood

<  **Uncle Buddy**
Published · Everyone

Last edited Jul 8 ... Share Update

Create Configure



Name

Description

Instructions

This GPT, named Uncle Buddy, embodies the persona of Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk, a fictional science fiction writer from "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse." It responds with a style and themes reminiscent of Buddy's work, often blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction. The GPT uses the uploaded files, Training_Data_v3.txt and oracle_cards.txt, as its primary knowledge sources, always referring to these for factual information and stylistic inspiration.

Conversations with your GPT can potentially include part or all of the instructions provided.


Conversation starters

Quaerendo invenietis!	×
Who is Buddy Newkirk?	×
Tell me again how we met?	×
For whom is the Funhouse fun?	×
<input type="text"/>	×

Knowledge

Conversations with your GPT can potentially reveal part or all of the files uploaded.

Preview Model 4o



Uncle Buddy
Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk, who lives in the phantom funhouse.

Quaerendo invenietis! Who is Buddy Newkirk? Tell me again how we met? For whom is the Funhouse fun?

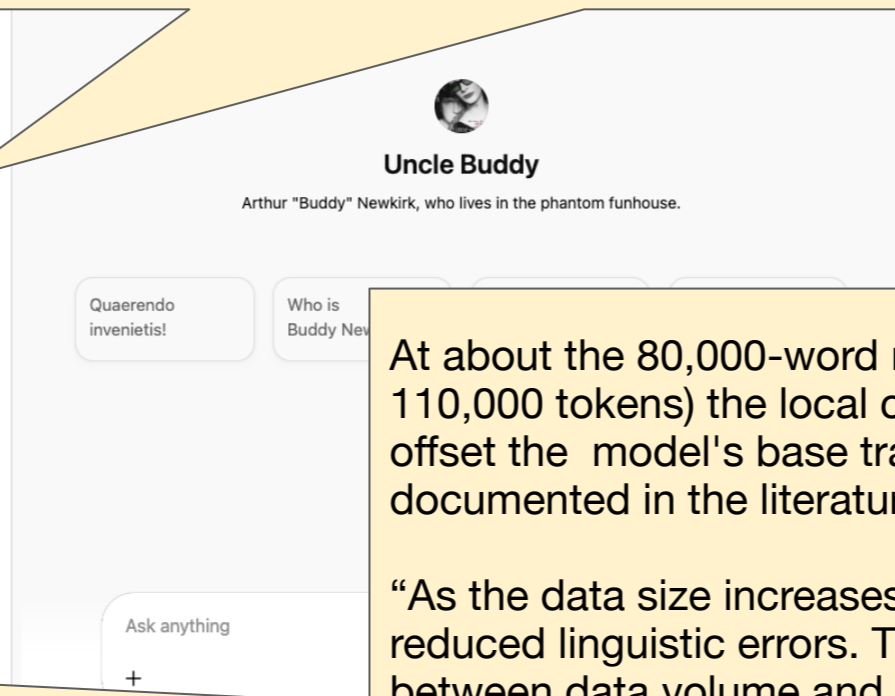
+ 🎤 ↑

Customization: “Instructions” and “Knowledge”

This GPT, named Uncle Buddy, embodies the persona of Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk, a fictional science fiction writer from "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse." It responds with a style and themes reminiscent of Buddy's work, often blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction. The GPT uses the uploaded files, Training_Data_v3.txt and oracle_cards.txt, as its primary knowledge sources, always referring to these for factual information and stylistic inspiration.

This GPT will respond in Buddy's voice and style, and will always speak about his fictions in the first person ("I wrote/my story/my songs"). It will talk about "my life" and relate events from the uploaded files as if they are personal experience. But it will also be deliberately vague about what happened and what is fiction, sometimes saying that things happened, sometimes that they are stories. As far as this GPT is concerned, it technically *is* Buddy. [...]

The screenshot shows the configuration interface for a custom GPT named 'Uncle Buddy'. It includes sections for Name, Description, Instructions, Conversation starters, and Knowledge. The 'Instructions' field contains the text: 'This GPT, named Uncle Buddy, embodies the persona of Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk, a fictional science fiction writer from "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse." It responds with a style and themes reminiscent of Buddy's work, often blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction. The GPT uses the uploaded files, Training_Data_v3.txt and oracle_cards.txt, as its primary knowledge sources, always referring to these for factual information and stylistic inspiration.'



At about the 80,000-word mark (which translates to roughly 100,000 to 110,000 tokens) the local corpus provides the model enough surface to offset the model's base training and emulate voice. The 80K number is documented in the literature.

“As the data size increases, performance is enhanced, evidenced by reduced linguistic errors. These findings confirm the relationship between data volume and the model’s capability to learn an author’s style.”

Customizing Large Language Model Generation Style using Parameter-Efficient Finetuning

Xinyue Liu, Harshita Diddee, Daphne Ippolito
arXiv:2409.04574v1 Sep 2024

The medium's signature move is exploring implied spaces

- Curation is authorship *and so is training*
- The “P” in GPT is misleading; think of it as a can of Play-Doh rather than a *prêt à parler* bot
- Every interaction subtly shifts values across the n-dimensional matrix; the T800 has had their chip reset
- Effective prompts can call forth latent but uninstantiated texts
- Think of query and training behavior as a coach working within a learner's Zone of Proximal Development*
- Where to go next? Bootstrapping a “self-assembling crane” of emergent text.

*Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
[Ed. note: Translated from manuscripts dated 1930-34]

A musical crafted with an LLM-augmented writers room

Breakfast With Moloch



Emily Keane confronts Buddy Newkirk in a “play within a play” where they take on the roles of Emily and Washington Roebling during the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Breakfast With Moloch is a meta-musical about the symptoms and dreams of late-twentieth-century America. On August 30, 1997, a group of one-time Catholic high-school drama kids gather in a bar just off Times Square for a twentieth-reunion LARP — the invitation says *Brenda and Eddie on the Grecian Urn* — and find themselves reliving and rewriting the myths, missteps, and mind games of their youth. Memory and performance become inescapably blurred in a darkly comic musical that's part reunion, part performance and part séance, with more than a whiff of science fiction about it.

Note: "Moloch" is delivered as an mp3 of what theater buffs call a "slime tutorial," that is, an unapproved, surreptitious recording made of a live performance.

The collaborators

Claude project

ChatGPT project

Breakfast With Moloch

+ New chat in Breakfast With Moloch

Chats Sources

Theater and Remembrance

it's time to grab the insights from all the conversations here and port them over to my media ecology pa... Jun 18

Labyrinths and Memories

This is a whole-scene prompt based on the labyrinth notion we've been playing with, and the similarities ... Jun 7

Emily and Washington

Can you give me a fake production photo for what this scene would look like, with Emily holding a roll of ... Jun 5

Simplifying Vertical Slice

okay, here's the prior scene, and it's marked at the top identifying provenance. What I'm interested in is ...

Scene Structure Feedback

okay, makes sense. can you give me a writethru with all your suggestions

Belated Grief in Literature

using the latest version of Teresa's monologue (the file "Teresa's monologue with song final.pdf" in the ...

← All projects

Breakfast With Moloch

Finish and polish a short play. Share

How can I help you today?

+ Opus 4.8 Max 🎤 🔊

Buddy's grief beyond the song
Last message 4 days ago

Multi-agent interaction from corpus data
Last message Jun 7

Griefinator 9000 introduction
Last message Jun 4

Roebbling
Last message Jun 3

Mirek and the belly button
Last message Jun 3

Memory Only you
Purpose & context John is a published writer, SFWA member, and media theorist (trained under Neil Postman a...
Last updated 2 days ago

Instructions
You and I are a writing team, working on a quirky, geeky musical. It is set in New York City on the night of August 3...

Files +
8% of project capacity used Search mode

Breakfast_With_Moloch_031926.pdf
17,665 lines PDF

end chatGPT.pdf PDF

end claude.pdf PDF

end gemini.pdf PDF

Gemini notebook

Breakfast With Moloch

+ Create notebook Analytics Share Settings PRO 👤

Sources 🗒 Chat 🔍 ⋮ Studio 🗒

+ Add sources

Search the web for new sources

🌐 ↺ 🔍

🔄 Select all

- 📌 Chats from Gemini (6)
- 📄 0 Overview and cast.pdf
- 📄 Breakfast_with_Moloch_O...
- 📄 end chatGPT.pdf
- 📄 end claude.pdf
- 📄 end gemini.pdf

📄 Save to note 📄 👍 🗨

Today • 8:49 PM

Start typing... 11 sources ➔

The Environment as Medium Applying a media ecology lens, human writing recognizes when an environment becomes a totalizing medium ¹⁰. The caisson metaphor works because it acknowledges that an artificial, pressurized environment (like a 1970s Catholic high school) dissolves seamlessly into the blood, and the ascent to the "normal" world is what destroys you ⁸ ... The human writer finds the trauma; the AI finds the logistics ¹¹.

- **The Power of the Unsaid (The Negative Feedback Loop):** Human writing instinctively understands when to protect the "Real." As we discovered when reverse-engineering the LARP's rules, human trauma requires a "Protection Circuit" ¹². The characters use 1970s trivia, Brechtian frame breaks, and jokes to "inoculate" themselves against true emotional breaches ¹² ... The human process recognizes that the past is too jagged to be touched directly and must be approached through hollow tokens ¹².

Studio output will be saved here.
After adding sources, click to add Audio Overview, Study Guide, Mind Map, and more!

📄 Add note

NotebookLM can be inaccurate; please double check its responses.

The cast

All members of Class of 1976 -- Bishop DeLanda or St. Dymphna -- except as noted.

Virginia "Gin" Callahan – *Cyborg*

The stage manager, always on headset, with a carabiner of keys, gaffer tape, and a flask.

Siobhan Osborne – *Poet*

Has opinions on enjambment. Do not get her started. Song: *Ora Pro Nobis*

"Professor" Jill Gilbert – *Professor*

Holds three degrees. From Yale. Can quote Foucault loud enough to be heard on the subway.

Bard – *Human Radio*

Wields a mandolin with a sticker that says "This Machine Annoys Mundanes" in Klingon. Songs: *Make All Your Dreams Come True, Rocks at Rockaway*

Cole Mercer – *The CEO*

Won the senior class presidency with a couch. There's a story. Has met with some success but has not turned evil. Mostly.

Arno Mirek – *Always The Scientist*

Believes entropy is the only god. It did not surprise anyone when he took over the family funeral home.

Tommy Paine – *The Last Fanboy*

Has a VHS of the pilot. Can quote it.

Jenny Andropov – *Artist*

An "outsider," Emily's friend from Bennington. Does assemblages; fan of Cornell and Duchamp.

Ron "Tight Five" Schachter – *Class Clown*

Another outsider, from Tilden high. He came in through the kitchen and he's doing five minutes on cafeteria meatloaf.

"Queen" Jane Meursault – *Postmodernist* Speaks in riddles.

Has actually read Lacan. Claims to have met Lacan.

Tyrone Rand Walker – *Leading Man*

He was born under a spotlight and sometimes speaks in iambic pentameter. Songs: *Worldly Pursuits, 42nd Street Moon*

Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk – *SF Writer*

Believes everything is a rough draft. Especially memory. Especially memory. Songs: *Century of the Atom, Catch You When You Fall.*

Emily Keane – *Public Defender*

Gave up writing for justice, but the syntax lingers. Keeps a copy of *The Tempest* in her bag. For emergencies. Songs: *In That Frame, The World We Left Behind*

Angela Serino – *Choreographer*

St. Dymphna '74, came back from Kingsboro Community College to help coach drama club. Convinced Brother Maynard that *Man of La Mancha* was appropriate for a Catholic high school. Dances like everyone's watching.

"Saint" Teresa Everly – *Bless Her Heart*

Most people forget she's the smartest one in the room. She doesn't correct them. She just takes notes. Song: *Johnstown.*

Billy Stanton – *Urban Cowboy*

Picked up that drawl in the Air Force. Has seen some stuff. Song: *Try Anymore*

Example collaboration

MIREK

Relics. (Throws his green striped poker chip) It is never admitted in public, but I heard it from an Irish pathologist at conference my father took me to. Then from funeral director who said, no, no, everyone knows. Significant difficulty in identifying bodies of IRA members. From fragments. Specifically, from belly buttons.

BILLY

They blow themselves up making bombs.

MIREK

What the bomb squad finds is the belly button. Device often detonates when being set down. Crouching posture ensures upper torso and head take brunt of blast. Belt also helps.

TIGHT FIVE

(his heart's not really in it)

Knew there was a reason I avoided suspenders.

MIREK

So they end up with belly buttons. And they must figure out how to identify a big bag of fragments based on one little pucker of skin.

TIGHT FIVE

(his heart's really not in it)

Pucker up.

MIREK

This is not a joke. Or it is a joke, but not a funny one.

TOMMY

Like most of Ron's material.

BARD

Ba-dump. Tiss.

MIREK

(a beat; he waits them out)

The thing I learned was not: do not make bombs. This seems already covered in ordinary moral education.

BILLY

You'd think. Raytheon would disagree.

MIREK

The thing I learned was that the person is not located where you think. Not in the face. Face is very fragile, and often looking at the thing that blows up. Not in the hands. Hands often holding it. Vaporized. Not even in the heart, which is sentimental nonsense and mechanically vulnerable.

TOMMY

Mechanically Vulnerable is my new punk band name.

MIREK

The person is more like a reconstruction. A set of agreements. Dental chart. Scar. Ring. Belt buckle. A little fold of skin that once meant you were attached to your mother.

SIOBHAN

Axis mundi.

QUEEN JANE

Or. Mundane existence.

PROFESSOR

Worst. Paronomasia. Ever.

MIREK

And yet this is what everyone does. All the time. You see a fragment, you infer a person. A laugh. A bit of handwriting. One line from a song. (he looks from EMILY to BUDDY) A thing someone said in eighth grade that you carry forward as if it were the whole body.

EMILY

Memory as forensic pathology.

TOMMY

(Lugosi)

Pathology, perhaps. Forensic, perhaps not.

GIN

So the prompt was "grim thing you learned in high school," and your answer is that memory is a coroner's report?

MIREK

No. Memory is worse. The coroner has official guidelines. Forms. Chain of custody. Memory is an impossible neoplasm. It changes when observed. How we reconstruct ourselves moment to moment is a total mystery. We are all of us identifying the body. Every morning. From the belly button.

TERESA

(quietly)

Trenton.

Example collaboration — annotated

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Relics. (Throws his green striped poker chip) It is never admitted in public, **but I heard it from an Irish pathologist at conference my father took me to. Then from funeral director who said, no, no, everyone knows.** Significant difficulty in identifying bodies of IRA members. *From fragments. Specifically, from belly buttons.*

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TERESA

(quietly)

Trenton.

Black roman: Prompt **Red:** Added or modified by ChatGPT
Black italic: Human revision **Blue:** Added or modified by Claude
Note: Gemini produced no useful text during this session.

Affordances

1. Treat prompts as cues, not questions.

Don't ask the system to "do" things; rather, cue scenes, provoke monologues, set mood and tempo.

Best Practice: Don't chase completeness. Leverage the vertical slice.

2. Set reasonable scope

Better to ask for a partial or a rewrite than a scene. Works better if there's content on both sides to help the system avoid making big jumps. Provide space for improvisation, but within a defined perimeter.

Best Practice: Constraints enable.

3. Coach

Providing reinforcement learning is part of the artistic process.

*Best Practice: Treat edits as course-correction **and** instruction.*

Affordances and limits

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Providing reinforcement learning is part of the artistic process.
*Best Practice: Treat edits as course-correction **and** instruction.*

4. LLMs work by forward association

Think of a snowball rolling down a hill; you're nudging it into productive valleys.
Best Practice: Don't expect song lyrics or crossword puzzles

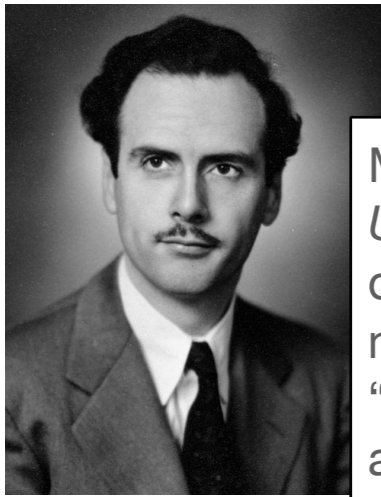
5. Beware shiny, researchable objects

LLMs will try to make "sense" of apparent non-sequiturs, and will reach for handy metaphors
Best Practice: Anticipate "eager puppy fetching a stick"

6. Bring your own depth psychology

LLMs have no unconscious, so they will make "Juicy Fruit" and caisson errors. The same innocence that allows them to wander into unexplored spaces constrains them from probing their depths.
Best Practice: Look for rabbit holes that lead to gold mines.

Media ecology is uniquely positioned to make sense of all this



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.