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ABSTRACT Natural Language: An AI-Powered Approach to Creative Writing

I situate my work between three discourses: posthuman rhetoric and composition, creative writing, and artificial intelligence (AI) studies. My presentation will synthesize posthuman theory and the history of AI with a poetry reading. Though posthuman rhetoric scholars have begun to map the implications of a distributed, contingent subjectivity for composition pedagogy (Boyle 2016; Dobrin 2015), their reach has not extended to include creative writing practice. This may be because creative writers hold tightly to authorial control. Even poets who write into the feminist construct of the cyborg (Choi 2019) employ an individualistic writerly subjectivity. While poets working in experimental veins engage computer technologies through erasure and appropriation of existing code (Dobson and Mosteirín 2019), they use these texts as material for manipulation and do not interact with computers as agential co-creators. My poetry practice, however, leverages contemporary AI objects (such as text generators and chatbots) and midcentury AI research ecologies to co-produce language, formal structure, and affective insight.

The poems I will weave throughout this presentation both explore the creative dynamism of human-bot interactions and rely on natural language processing technologies for their composition. The series “Blocks World” is written as a performative script between a human and a computer interface who collaborate to compose lyrics about the natural world. The format is inspired by the dialogues generated in the 1960s between human interlocutors and Weizenbaum’s ELIZA and Winograd’s SHRDLU programs. I will also read from a series titled “Cluster Analysis” that uses a technique inspired by the machine learning procedure of the same name to identify commonalities between seemingly disparate data. Both “Blocks World” and “Cluster Analysis” are experimental demonstrations of the potential for AI to be, not a replication of human subjectivity or creativity, but a rhetorical object capable of producing shared subjectivity and creativity through intra-action.

Works cited:

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- Choi, Franny. *Soft Science*. Alice James Books, 2019.
- Dobrin, Sidney I. *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing*. Parlor Press, 2015.
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