

*I'm still here inside something  
I'm still out there in the open*

I can only generalize about it, but here goes: an artificial neural network is meant to model the neural networks in our brains. The one we are using (a recurrent neural network, or RNN) 'learns' sequences of characters based on the dataset we've given it. Each character can be seen as a node in the network, and the probability of any other character occurring before and after it is the 'weight' or 'strength' of the link between that node and the other character node. In a sense, it 'looks' for patterns or habits based on the datasets - the more repeated a particular sequence is, the 'deeper' the neural pathways are. A model is produced based on this training, and you can generate new text by sampling from the model.

J and G created and used this type of RNN as a base mechanism to generate the script for this work. The dataset used to train it was a compilation of work by the following writers: Anne Carson, E.E. Cummings, Frank O'Hara, Federico Garcia Lorca, William Carlos Williams, Lyn Hejinian, Jack Spicer, Rae Armantrout, Allen Ginsburg, Gertrude Stein, James Wright, Robert Creeley. Vols. 1-7 of *Caketrain*<sup>1</sup> were also added to this dataset.

Little or no reasoning for the particular authors chosen beyond the fact that they are writers whose work I could find online relatively easily. The RNN needs quite a large dataset to train on before producing reasonable results. Of course I do respect and like every single one of those writers, too, but they are not necessarily my favourite favourites. It's difficult to find sizeable digitizations of contemporary writers/writing. This is one of the reasons why I used *Caketrain*, as it's a large journal of contemporary writing that I could find in a clean-enough format to pass into the RNN.

G consolidated the text generated by the RNN, excerpts chosen 'manually' by G from *Crude*<sup>2</sup>, *Heart of Darkness*<sup>3</sup> and *Dreams for Kurosawa*<sup>4</sup>, and samples of freewriting by G and J into an initial draft. The draft was then subject to a rotating edit by both J and G; during this phase both authors continued to add and subtract text from the document. Final edits were completed in an aural phase: ZK Steiner-Fox read the draft aloud repeatedly; changes were made by all three collaborators in response to these readings.

The output of these processes is intentioned and consciously refined, but can't be traced to any one author or source material. The RNN has no notion of 'writing'. It has no concept of sentences or even words. It identifies sequential patterns between nodes, and creates patterns based on these identifications. It has no consciousness or conscience. There is something of

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<sup>1</sup> [www.caketrain.org](http://www.caketrain.org)

<sup>2</sup> Sonia Shah

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Conrad

<sup>4</sup> Raul Zurita

the bureaucratic labyrinth in this. A lack of traceability combined with the eschewal of consciously controlled processes creates openings through which personal and ethical responsibility can disappear. J and G seem to implicitly admit this problem in our conversations: the RNN isn't neutral or objective, it is trained. The unconscious is primordially personal.

We are invested in sampling culture, and the augmentation of human agents by various means. More specifically, we are interested in the limits of conscious control and how we can enact chance-driven exchanges with anonymous materials. We believe that works/processes driven by anticipatory planning, conscious control and output orientation almost always, by definition, fails to surprise. We also take reference from the notion of 'centaur teams' in the chess world, where human-AI collaborations seem to always trump humans or AI working separately.

This is not to advocate for a particular model of prosthetic hybrids as superior to any other mode of mental operation, but to note how they might be utilised within particular contexts to solve problems. A 'winning' team is imbued with the construct of success; this focus on success distracts from the shape that collaborations between the human and the technological can take on, even within the contrived context of chess. The pathways toward a win or a loss begin to fork and proliferate. These pathways offer space for experimentation and divergence, even though the possible destinations remain static.

the background noise is circular breathing with a saxophone

which we like as attempted but impossible continuity of the body

J purchased a camera and had it modified to capture full spectrum light. This involved removing the infrared and ultraviolet blockers on top of the sensor inside the camera. The video is structured in three chapters – one shot in infrared light, one shot in ultraviolet light, and one shot using found footage from the visible light spectrum (light that is visible to the human eye). This is augmented with animated components created using the now-discontinued motion capture software FaceShift. J used FaceShift to map Z's real-time facial movements on to three-dimensionally rendered animations.

*To know that what I get  
has little to do with the force of my intent*

Outcome remains malleable/speculative during each phase. Outcome is driven and moulded by changes to process. Processes are not altered in accordance with a planned/desired outcome. But the outcome is still important; thinking about how the treatment and attention given to process is reflected in the result. We want to like the outcome. I'll pay attention to this circularity; process delivers an outcome which drives a revision of process.

I like to get caught up in definitions. The word 'process' is also a verb, as in 'data processing' or 'photo processing.' We use it in this sense to describe an intermediary step. Processing is a between-time and a between-space when we wait until a transformation or change is completed. This is when the processing ends. Think about that reading of 'process' and impose it on to its noun counterpart: if we are process-oriented, we're positioned towards the incomplete, unfinished, transformable. We're anticipating transformation, actually (although we might not know what it will look like, or whether it will 'work').

Notions of completion are inherently arbitrary. This becomes more obvious in a process-oriented project. If we are not driven by the image of a desired, 'completed' outcome, how to decide when it ends? The outcome is the point where we agreed to stop. It could equally be just another point in the process where we decided to continue.

*And I want to seem to myself the very same thing that I am*

do you have anything you want to add about the connection between processes/ coping btw?

One overarching principle of our process is the notion that we are finite beings, that we are incomplete, have limits, and are too much and too little at the same time.

This notion of finitude affects our process in two different ways. first, being incomplete, we see the benefit of augmentation in our creative processes - by collaborating with each other as human agents, with other texts, the neural network, etc. this is a way to supplement and elude our conscious, rational inclinations towards anticipation and control, inclinations that are necessary but limiting at the same time. we hope that these augmentations expand the space of possibilities beyond that of our anticipatory, controlling selves.

But finitude also speaks to our psychic and emotional experience of vulnerability as individual beings in the world. this world is largely unknown and often unknowable, and the entities within it are also largely unknown and often unknowable. our exchanges with these entities can thus often be traumatising and unaffordable. we see our creative processes as productive explorations and transformations of trauma, and, in that sense, a tribute to both a traumatic past and its many possible futures.

But trauma also - by its nature - distorts time and memory. It washes over us silently until a sudden intake of breath causes our bodies to splutter and choke. Our crude, primordial shadow. It makes the future feel like a cul-de-sac. It makes the present feel like looking down into the sky, trying to hide the fact that we're clenching our toes into the ground for fear of falling into the clouds.

I have an input-driven coping mechanism for the traumatic present. I'm feeding a restricted dataset to my own neural network. I like to listen to books now instead of reading them. I like to listen to the same audiobook over and over. I'm on the 11<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> repeat now; this one is more than 32 hours long.

I'm on a train and I'm trying to take in the detail of everything I see from the window. Repetitive aural input puts my train on to a loop within a confined landscape. All I can see from the window are snow-covered mountains and swarms of ravens. Each time the train completes a loop, the ravens form a different pattern in the sky, and I think I might know what they mean. But then I remember they're the bodies of birds; their meaning is flesh, vomit, sex and survival. Their meaning is an alien, toothless existence in an aerial sphere. Each time the train completes a loop, the snow falls a little bit thicker on the mountains. The snow melts a little on the mountains.

- Laura Suzuki, 2016