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Factions—acts of worldbuilding on social media platforms

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Abstract

The surge in social media as a primary source for communication—basic interpersonal relations, news, and entertainment—means that modern humans have a steep learning curve for interpreting and creating messages in digital spaces. In addition to the difficulties of communication between multi-lingual and multi-cultural online communities, there is now the complication of computer languages (or "code") that often do not overlap between software programs, let alone with humans. Additionally, humans use definitions and labels as artificial intelligence (AI) training methods. AI bias comes from the human labels, categorizations, and linguistic perimeters embedded in the code.

The objective of *Factions*, the thesis website, is to represent a speculative future showing what communication may look like if we follow on the current trajectory of interaction in social media spaces—with less agreement on basic linguistic, audio, and visual terms and definitions coupled with more insistence on personal perspective as paramount. From a base set on the oldest forms of social media—websites and blogs—*Factions* acts out conversations mining for answers to the questions:

- How do words change in meaning and function in a digital environment focused on the faction pillars of social media communication—search engine optimization, algorithm, and template?

- In what ways might human-computer interaction improve and conversely impair human language and performance choices in digital realms of communication?

Through practice-based research using web-building tools as aids to literal digital worldbuilding, the thesis website is a prototype of a speculative future built with the conceptual applications of design fiction—creating a fictional world as a space to explore the impact of future technology.[1] To that end, my digital twin (a digital

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[1] Specifically, through applying the question posed by Julian Bleecker in his web article, "Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fact and Fiction" — "How can science fiction be a purposeful, deliberate, direct participant in the practices of science fact?"

model that drives material data) is an AI mystic called Wu—imagined AI tech so advanced it transcended into a higher spiritual realm. Wu narrates and curates *Factions* and uses it to build a network of narratives, bridging the creative and critical through [hypertext links](#) and [tooltip popups](#) and applies their mystical power to channel any person, place, thing, or time typically focused on key social media topics of justice, race, spirituality, politics, and pop culture. *Factions* uses satirical techniques alongside appropriation and pastiche to examine transformative tech and human-computer interaction. It mixes the creative and the critical to arrive at a digital storytelling and learning landscape of the future.

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Preface

This extended abstract serves to offer critical reasoning, creation techniques, and creative details for context and further explanation of the thesis website, *Factions*.

The thesis project is vast, covering many disciplines and theories—graphic design, web building, artificial intelligence, social media marketing, interpersonal communication, and creative writing, to name a few. The website covers a lot of critical ground.[2] Even as a speculative, diegetic prototype it uses established Internet referencing rules and past lived factual experience in combination with the fiction. This extended abstract will only focus on and explain key factors and techniques involved in the concepts and designs behind *Factions*.

At this time, you may want to visit the thesis website. *Factions* is set in a speculative future; the contemporary visitor may not find the environment particularly intuitive or familiar. It may take some time to experience the world, the environment, the navigation tools, and for Wu to teach you how to use *Factions*.

However, I appreciate that there are different ways of learning—you may feel more comfortable reading through the extended abstract before entering *Factions*. Please take the route forward that best suits your known learning style.

Note: Some of the images in this document require you to zoom in for better viewing.

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[2] Aside from links to articles, the website includes an added information tooltip feature—double-click on a word and in a few seconds the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary definition will appear in a pop-up window.

Acknowledgments

Author's Declaration

Except where cited, this thesis is an original creative and critical work, including experimental fiction on the website, in electronic files, and as an extended abstract found within these pages. I created all images, video, audio, and text for the Doctorate of Fine Arts at the University of Glasgow. No content was made available to any other institution or for any other degree.

List of Abbreviations

AI   Artificial Intelligence

ASI   Artificial Superintelligence

CCI   Computer-Computer Interaction

CSS   Cascading Style Sheets

DL   Deep Learning

GAN   Generative Adversarial Networks

HCC   Human-Computer Collaboration

HCI   Human-Computer Interaction

HEX   Hexadecimal

HTML Hypertext Markup Language

JS   JavaScript

ML   Machine Learning

NLP   Natural Language Processing

PHP   PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor

SEO   Search Engine Optimization

SMP   Social Media Platforms

Chapter 1—*Factions* in Theory and Practice

What are factions, and why do they matter?

The future presented in my thesis website rotates around the idea of factions—both as a literary genre and as a double helix mashup of facts and fiction—and how communication on social media is often intentionally imprecise as to persuade others to buy something—a concept, worldview, or product. The overlap of facts and fictions online creates four primary forms of factions, all relying on the two essential features only found on social media platforms—search engine optimization (SEO) and algorithmic content dissemination. The overlap of facts and fictions online with SEO and algorithm interference matters because it inhibits human access to a shared reality based on indisputable truths. This contributes to the inability to arrive at universal solutions to dire situations, such as climate change.

Examples and descriptions of factions

Exhibit A—The deliberately misleading mixtures of facts and fiction, such as propaganda via chatbots.

Exhibit B—Unintentionally confusing mixtures of facts and fictions found on social apps or self-deceptive choices in content exposure. (Dings 2017)

Exhibit C—Conspiracy theories via a collision of intentionally manipulated deep fakes.

Exhibit D—Artfully presented nonfiction that intentionally uses techniques of persuasion or, conversely, artfully presented fiction that uses nonfiction as a tool for persuasion (e.g., clickbait).

Faction as genre

As mentioned in the abstract, websites and blogs are two of the oldest forms of social media. I wanted to use the more mature and established social media platforms (SMPs) to build a communication bridge—from [mass media](#) outlets to social networking apps. Building within social media spaces calls for design and writing skills not found in other visual or textual forms. The specific requirements of the faction writer—with a tonal focus on hyperbole and linguistic focus on keywords—stem from the fact that the faction writer has two target audiences:

1. Algorithm[3]
2. Human

The faction writer uses attention-getting tactics not possible in other genres. Example: Click here to learn more![4]

Figure 1-1 Canva e-newsletter content fitted into one of their templates called "White, Black and Blue Collage Musician Collection YouTube Story"

Writing for social media

Search engine algorithms play the role of digital gatekeepers. Although they are librarians retrieving requested articles, they are librarians who decide which articles are worth retrieving. Algorithms within particular sites exist to entice the visitor to stay in the site/app as long as possible. So, to woo the algorithm, the faction writer

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[3] Basically, algorithms are instructions. This is discussed further in Chapter 2. For now, a quick analogy: algorithms are to AI as the ten commandments is to Moses.
[4] This is an example of the SEO tool referred to as a "call to action" button. It is a psychological trick that mixes linguistic persuasion and web-specific tools—the button. Please visit the website for more examples of "clickbait," including Wu's focused [case study on social media writing](#). This form of writing also points to the use of gratuitous enthusiasm found in the faction genre.

must aggressively engage the visitor—encouraging a strong emotional reaction leading to, in descending order of importance to the algorithm:[5]

> > > **> *Shares***
> > **> *Comments***
> **> *Clicks***
> *Reactions*

Writing principles of the faction genre

1. Templature
2. Human-computer collaboration

Templature and Human-Computer Collaboration

Factions, the thesis website, examines acts of worldbuilding across SMPs through the extensive use of templates (templature) and human-computer collaboration (HCC). Templature, specifically, is faction writing centered on existing, formatted source material—be it text, audio, or visual. In social media writing, there is an entire industry built around supplying templates. Companies such as Biteable, Canva, and Adobe with their Spark app exist to offer their customers an extensive catalog of templates for all social media and networking platforms and all occasions. The goal is to help the customer efficiently and expediently broadcast their message by building off expert knowledge in design and promotional marketing. This extended abstract is based on the University of Glasgow's thesis template that postgraduates taking the "A Stylish Thesis" course are encouraged to use. This template provides a safety net. It relieves the postgraduate from the burden of doubt around matching university standards without having to memorize the regulations.

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[5] These specific details came from a talk during Wishpond's SMX Growth Summit given by Jerry Potter of *Five Minute Social Media*: "How To Create Content Social Media Algorithms Love."

On the thesis website, all the content—each internal article, post, page—is an example of factions, either explicit and noted as such or implicit and hidden within the layers of construction and website building tools, in which the template is real, a fact, but the content is fiction. Implicit factions on the website often come in the form of satirical commentary and misconceptions. The Dawn of GAN series is an example of how two "AI" can confuse facts for fiction and vice versa as they try to interpret human linguistic and visual communication. (For full detailed examples, see Appendix A: Anatomy of a social justice post; Appendix B: Anatomy of a social justice and pop culture mashup post; and Appendix C: Templature—before and after acts of design.)

Worldbuilding in *Factions*

Initially, my research into worldbuilding focused on story, the fiction in factions from a fantasy perspective. Therefore, Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" chapter found in *The Monsters and the Critics: And Other Essays* was the primary source for my concept of how to build the world of *Factions*.[6] Although I had no intention of making *Factions* a pure fantasy world by the standard generic definition, Tolkien's thoughts on worldbuilding helped me frame an idea of how worlds are built in digital social spaces.[7]

With Tolkien's concept of "sub-creator" and "Secondary Worlds" in mind, I began to flesh out my ideas around HCC and Wu's role as content creator and curator. The sub-creator is the writer as God of their created story world. Tolkien explains that the "Primary World" is reality, and sub-creation comes from the special skill humans have

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[6] The *Proceedings of Research through Design Conference 2017* article, "Design Fiction as World Building," by Paul Coulton et al., seems like an obvious reference choice for *Factions'* worldbuilding. However, the goal of their paper is to prove that, "Design Fiction is in fact a 'world building' activity, with no inherent link to 'narrative' or 'storytelling'." *Factions* is at its core an examination of practice-based research into storytelling forms—fiction, nonfiction, faction, nonfaction (see *Chapter 2's Social media in nonfaction digital spaces*).

[7] The type of fantasy I use most often in *Factions* is "a day-dream arising from conscious or unconscious wishes or attitudes." (OED)

in rearranging reality. The sub-creator makes use of the human ability to reimagine reality when deploying the Secondary World. "Secondary Belief," when the reader believes in the imaginary Secondary World presented by the sub-creator, is an act of successful sub-creation. (Tolkien 2007, p. 132)

Wu acts as a sub-creator building a world in collaboration with the human visitor. It is up to the human visitor to decide what is fact or fiction or how the two interact as factions. Furthermore, I present *Factions* as a model of how SMPs are in and of themselves a Secondary World—the lens through which we see the Primary World. I contend that the worlds we build with our social presence are often filled with fantasy, an augmented funhouse mirror of our real world. From the SMP view, I wanted to look at how influential algorithms are on building a reality. (See Appendix D: Construction and deconstruction, worldbuilding through worldbreaking in *Factions*)

What is design fiction?

Design fiction is a concept first imagined by science fiction writer and design commentator Bruce Sterling to start a design discourse in the hope of bringing together different disciplines to explore future scenarios. Sterling initiated the idea but left it to others for refinement.

In his presentation for the *11th European Academy of Design Conference, A Pragmatics Framework for Design Fiction*, Joseph Lindley, a Research Assistant specializing in design fiction at Lancaster University, uses the keywords found in writings of notable figures and originators of the concept of design fiction, to arrive at the following definition:

> *"Practically speaking design fictions can be seen as "a conflation of design, science fact, and science fiction" (Bleecker 2009, p. 6) employing fiction as a medium "not to show how things will be but to open up a space for discussion" (Dunne & Raby 2013, p. 51)."*
> *(Lindley 2015)*

My entry point into design fiction came from Bruce Sterling; however, looking at researcher and design artist Julian Bleecker's advancement of Sterling's concept added focus to my interest. I found a 2015 *Medium* article, "[Our Approach of Design Fiction](#)," in which one of Julian Bleecker's colleagues at *The Near Future Laboratory*, Fabien Girardin, shares their website FAQ page with questions and answers specifically related to design fiction. In his explanation of their practice, Girardin offers specifics that are akin to honing a definition by putting the word in a sentence.

> *"Today, for each project we engage with a growing list of Design*
> *Fiction archetypes (e.g., unboxing videos, user reviews)."*
>
> *(Girardin 2015)*

The listed design fiction archetypes were quite informative and useful in building my approach to acts of worldbuilding on SMPs. Where they use "unboxing videos" and "user reviews," I use "tutorial videos" and "search queries."[8] Although the world of *Factions* is more nuanced, layered, and vast than singular archetypes can express, it was helpful to breakdown the categories within *Factions* as a whole into smaller parts.

Early on in my research into design fiction, it quickly became apparent that the concept was underdeveloped and had separate groups using separate measures.[9] After encountering and reading Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby's *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*, I saw their concept of design fiction as an unsuitable model for my work. Their idea of design fiction stressed material design with less interest in literature. Design fiction as a means of creating "useful" material

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[8] Although, together with one of Wu's customers, Toxic Box, the site promotes [its Schrödinger's Cat Sale event](#) that features a button titled, "Cat Unboxing!"

[9] Of course, I was not the only one to notice the ideological split in design fiction. In the paper mentioned on page 17, "Design Fiction as World Building," Paul Coulton et al., note straight away that there "are concurrent, but incongruent, perspectives on what Design Fiction is and how to use it." I agree with their perspective on how a maturing concept needs a firm paradigm that is best developed through practice.

objects, limiting the importance of creative writing and textual elements, was antithetical to my practice-based creative writing project. More specifically, the only material object—a thing that can be touched—used in developing *Factions* was me. I did not build a computer or any of the components that go into a digital device—the hardware—my project targets software. In *Factions*, I see the abstract, ethereal nature of software as the fabric on which to weave a story about the ambiguity and uncertainty of communication in digital spaces broadly and social media specifically.[10]

As I returned to Sterling for further design fiction inspiration, I found reassurance. My impression of Dunne and Raby's take on design fiction was confirmed when I read the *Icon Magazine* piece, "Conversation: Dunne & Raby and Bruce Sterling." Anthony Dunne commented about a student's project designing a boat:

> *"What was lovely about the project was that the whole thing took*
> *shape through social media and the internet. He built up a group of*
> *about 30 people that embarked on a trip to sea; he wasn't saying*
> *"Let's do a project on digital technology or about some aspect of*
> *social software," it was just invisible to him, it was just a way of*
> *doing his project."*
>
> *(Dunne 2009)*

That statement, in particular, cemented the idea that their brand of design fiction was in opposition to my objectives and creative writing process. After Raby added her thoughts by likening their student's project to a scientific process, Sterling remarked, "When things get kind of useful, they bore me." He went on to say:

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[10] A postgraduate Research and Data Management course offered at the University of Glasgow, "How to organise, store and share your research findings in Arts and Humanities," students are advised to save all work to a cloud service, e.g., OneDrive or ownCloud (which is preferable due to storage size and security), not to any physical hardware. The reasoning is that a USB or a laptop hard drive is unsafe, as you can lose it or break it and therefore lose the work. My research means to stress the future growth of cloud service and software prominence.

"I'd like to see the future of critical design, or a Victorian critical

design of the present day, something that has a hallucinatory quality.

. . . What I want is to keep the positive aspect of science fiction as

this crunchy, crispy, mind-bending pop metaphysics that gets to grips

with the actual weirdness of existence."

(Sterling 2009)[11]

Although his random, in real-time conversation, thoughts on the potential behind

Figure 1-2 Visit Critical Corner to see Wu's satirical deconstruction of critical design in the future world of Factions. On this page, the first group of images promotes physical space and encourages social distancing

design fiction did not help pinpoint a simplified sentence length definition of design fiction, it did point me in a direction. His belief that design fiction could encompass a new form of critical design—in which the designed focus is not on an object and its utility but on sparking debate and raising awareness around critical issues—was helpful. His thoughts felt like permission, if not validation, of my project as an appropriate use of design fiction. It helped me formulate the goal of using "the positive aspect of science fiction as this crunchy, crispy, mind-bending pop metaphysics" distinctly focused on social media and software and how they affect communication now and into the future.[12]

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[11] Sterling also adds a list of overlap in design and science fiction that he wanted to see explored: "Scientific experiment, scenario work of all kinds, user observation studies, simulation, story boards, storytelling, flow charts, analytical software, interaction design, brainstorming, historical analogy, extrapolation, and last but not least mash-ups."

[12] With COVID-19, my imagined future is becoming more real—immaterial and conceptual space rising in prominence, the loss of physical space and contact with material objects, the importance of software in facilitating communication and how those issues will affect our interpersonal skills.

Design fiction in *Factions*

With an acknowledged split in the design fiction ranks—a more hardware-focused approach and a more software, story-based approach—I began to see Julian Bleecker as falling somewhere in the middle. My inclination is toward story, but I found many of Bleecker's ideas and his additions to the concept of design fiction alluring and valuable when developing my project. Such as the two interlinked components of design fiction: the diegetic and the prototype. Julian Bleecker explains his use (taken from his colleague David Kirby) of the term "diegetic prototype" in his talk for the [Human-Computer Interaction Seminar at Stanford](#) in 2017. He notes that "diegetic" is taken from the Greek term diegesis, "meaning narrative or story"; while "prototype" is "the thing that you build, the representation of the thing that is possible." He refers to the "diegetic prototype" as "a clever way of marketing . . . of enrolling people into your world."

In *Factions*, I spin the broad "story" definition of diegesis and focus on textual storytelling represented by an internal view that *tells*—as social media often leans on personal commentary made public, the internal monologue turned inside out. I use much of the diegetic storytelling in *Factions* to offer examples of miscommunication—telling that ironically contradicts or subverts the topic.[13] In *Factions*, design fiction is a creative technique that builds through established templates—website theme, audiogram, or infographic—linked to critical resources delivered by human-computer interaction (HCI) and computer-computer interaction (CCI).[14]

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[13] Note that faction as a genre is not a new concept. Part of what makes it a useful term and idea within my project is that it existed in the past and therefore acts as a term that I appropriate and deconstruct. According to the Google dictionary entry, faction was first referenced as a genre in the 1960s: "Faction (2) a literary and cinematic genre in which real events are used as a basis for a fictional narrative or dramatization. 'the current vogue for faction seems about to overwhelm narrative history' Origin: 1960s: blend of fact and fiction. From Oxford.'"

[14] Based on my research, emerging technologies artist David Young was the first to use the term CCI in 2012 on his blog *Inventing Interactive* (which, sadly, seems defunct as of June 2020). *Factions* spoofs CCI as Wu's evolved, transcended AI call out the emo (emotive, overly emotional) AI of the future.

As such, *Factions* finds inspiration in Bleecker's "tangible realities" (material objects, such as a lamp or TV) as storytelling channels and his idea of twisting templates, extrapolating on what-if questions. His "An IKEA Catalog From The Near Future," for example, uses the IKEA catalog as a template for a design fiction experiment. This work has a direct line to templature as used in factions. I imagined the online shopping aspects of IKEA and the SEO catalog as a guide—with templature
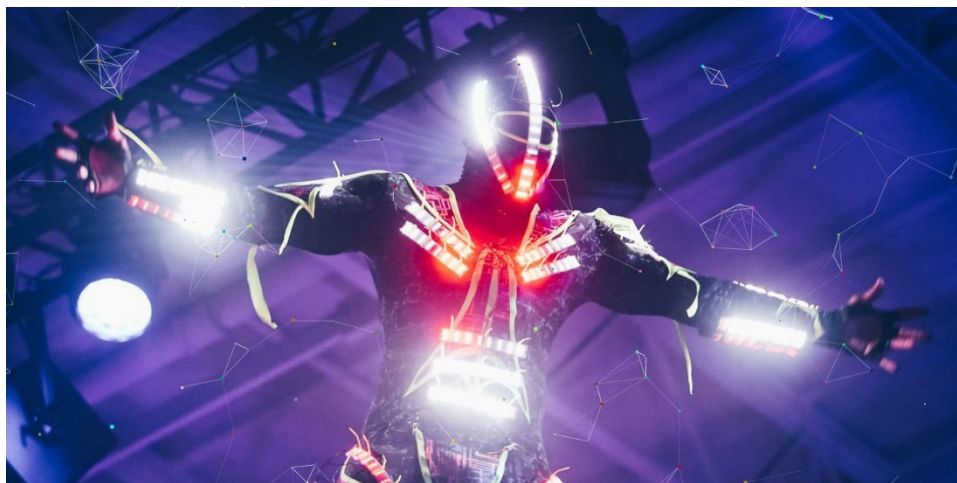
Figure 1-3 The immaterial and the abstract highlighted in this Critical Corner image, with a particle effect meant to represent the dismantling of the material object. Scroll over the particles and see how, sometimes, you can nudge the pieces, play with reality.

requiring not only a template but SEO and algorithms. Concerning the literal material objects and tangible realities, my practice of factions deconstructs Bleecker's resistance to abstractions. I use Wu to channel abstract ideas in conversation, speaking as if they have a physical existence, to build a digital world that speaks to and for the material world.

Arriving in the world of design faction

In his web article, "Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fact and Fiction," Julian Bleecker explains how design fictions represent near-future worlds that act like artefacts to be puzzled over as a "kind of object that has lots to say, but it is up to us to consider their meanings" (Bleecker 2009, p. 7). Design fiction practice, he notes, is the act of creating "conversation pieces" in which the creations are stories focused on the experiences and social habits that the designed piece inspires. Social media centers on commentary, criticism, conversations of all sorts.

In *Factions*, this concept of design fiction morphs into an absurd future scenario in which the conversation pieces are developed by Wu, an AI mystic whose channeling skills create the social environment necessary for social media spaces. Aside from my goal of representing the ethereal, abstract nature of software, I use the idea of a mystic who can channel as a play on words—linking the meanings of "channel" as it applies to both social media channels and mystical powers. Platforms and channels are synonymous in social media—channels of communication. Wu acts as the voice of many to represent the many conversational elements of social media.

Additionally, "to channel" has a double meaning: one meaning focuses on the "media" of social media—as a channel one tunes into, the space—and one focusing on the "social" of social media—as channeling many entities who share and network. Furthermore, Wu's channeling represents their appropriation of various voices and visual content found online. They are AI, factual technology, performing mystical acts, fictional fantasy. The mystical aspects of Wu being necessary to creating the world of *Factions* as a bustling digital environment when there is only one person involved.

Therefore, Wu and their role in *Factions* builds on Bleecker's conception of design fiction as straddling facts and fictions—leading to my development and practice of design *faction*. In design faction, the focus is on a thorough mixture of nonfiction—current news and autobiographical information—and fiction as it relates to presented nonfiction. Wu curates much of the content. It is found via a search engine and created via templates and open-source content readily available online. Design faction also uses existing paradigms, current cultural movements—the use of the gender pronoun "they" to describe Wu—along with the autobiographical details and current news/events as fundamental content and design material. They use the newer SMPs to explore and exploit older forms of mass media—e.g., news and advertising.

In *Factions*, items are referred to as news, even when they are a mix of fact and fiction, just as "fake news" items quite often include at least a shadow of the truth—deep fakes being the best example as they augment the subject's/person's real likeness. Beyond the notion of factions, design faction leans on the concept of technology ascending into the spiritual realm, which is another reason Wu is a mystic. The machine mysticism expands on the work found in Mark Blythe and Elizabeth Buie's article for NordiCHI 2014, "Chatbots of the Gods: Imaginary Abstracts for Techno-Spirituality Research." In their article, Blythe and Buie present an imaginary prototype—a machine coded to offer human participants spiritual guidance modeled on sayings from various religious teachings. With an outline of keywords, a discussion on the importance of a "shared vocabulary," a background on techno-spirituality, and with a playful tone and humor, the article was an excellent resource. (Blythe and Buie 2014, p. 227)

The concept of existing machine software focusing on natural language processing (NLP), programmed and coded to respond to human input, dates back to the mid-1960s with Joseph Weizenbaum's pattern-matching chatbot ELIZA—designed with scripts that respond to human participant comments "roughly as would certain psychotherapists (Rogerians)." (Weizenbaum 1966, p. 6) The Rogerian argument rests on a counseling technique that mimics the subject's expressions to develop common ground and connection. (Bean 1986, p. 343) Wu and *Factions* use the core elements of "Chatbots of the Gods" and ELIZA as a mashup launchpad—employing a fictional AI mystic that exists within a real website as a digital prototype. Specifically, *Factions* is a live website using existing machine learning tools in the ELIZA vein, and Wu is a fictional AI mystic leaning on keywords in the vein of "Chatbots of the Gods."[15] Additionally, I turned to Microsoft's Twitter bot Tay—a chatbot that began to spew

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[15] Through channeling, Wu is at one time the machine code funneling data, the human making a request, and the results of the requested data—and rather than responding and acting like a "psychotherapist" he reacts and performs with the energy and enthusiasm of a motivational speaker. See Interview Alley for examples.

inflammatory speech after a vulnerability in its code was exploited by human Twitter users—as source material on how NLP can go wrong.[16] (Schlesinger et al., 2018)

I take from Julian Bleecker's idea of design fiction as "articulating the abstractions" by using Wu to literally allow abstract ideas to speak—whatever they say typically revolves around some form of misunderstanding or miscomprehension. Wu acts as a medium, a mediator between the material and spirit worlds—where digital spaces are akin to the spirit world. The disembodied digital twin, life online, is an out of body experience and the tech used is so advanced it is transcendental, it is in two states of the ethereal—intangible and spiritual (otherworldly). My original conception of Wu came from the Taoist tenant of "wu wei," meaning "effortless" effort a contradiction. (Tierney 2014) As part of the linguistic wordplay of *Factions*, Wu is also portmanteau:

We + You = Wu

As Wu can channel and be all things from all spacetime.

The design faction mix of tech and spirituality further echoes the age-old arguments over how much of the Holy Bible is literal and historical and how much is metaphorical and coded messages.

Final thoughts

Ultimately, Bleecker considers the combination of science fiction, fact, and design as how "design fiction creates socialized objects that tell stories." (Bleecker 2009, p. 7-8) He uses Philip K. Dick's imagined gadgets in *The Minority Report* (1956) as examples of socialized objects—screens that communicate and interact with humans. *Factions*, with Wu as screen and surrogate human, facilitate a digital environment for

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[16] The Tay incident is directly referenced in the post, "The Turing test apologizes for its recent outburst and "rather unfortunate word choices."

my creative process and goal of using satirical techniques to build a speculative representation of HCI and CCI within the realm of social media.

As noted in the abstract above, I use the thesis website as a space for discussion of the listed key topics by objects and ideas, mimicking social interactions of a near future. *Factions* is a wonderland of suggestion and provocation, riddled with puzzles designed to "encourage the human imagination" (Bleecker 2009, p. 7-8). It is a diegetic prototype of a speculative future with Wu as an artefact encouraging suspension of disbelief within a space in which the reader can "consider"[17] the "meanings" of the presented material, and whether the subjects and content lean toward news and scientific facts or games and imaginary beings. The reader is left to consider the meaning of the conversations and confluence of facts and fictions.[18]

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[17] From Julian Bleecker's "Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fact and Fiction". He explains the symbiotic relationship between writer/artist and scientist/technologist. The writers take science facts, develop story worlds designed around scientific facts. Then scientists invent from the influence of the writer's designed fictions.

[18] Note that the Glossary page houses a full array of keywords, phrases, and their various definitions in *Factions*. Some of the entries include features such as, Wikipedia page snippets, Merriam-Webster definitions, links to articles, video, and audio. Within each glossary term page, there is a list of "similar terms" and "related articles" where applicable.

Chapter 2—Social Media

What is social media?

"Social media" is a term batted around with abandon without it having a stable, reliably agreed-upon meaning. (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 241). The inventor of the term is a matter of debate. In his 2010 article for Forbes, "Who Coined 'Social Media'? Web Pioneers Compete for Credit," Jeff Bercovici attempts to settle the argument by noting that social media researcher, strategist, and hacker Darrell Berry's 1995 independent paper "Social Media Spaces" marked the term's first official use. Berry's definition of social media was connected to cyber cafes where people met physically and virtually.

As for the dictionary definition, we will look to the gold standard in dictionaries, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). It currently refers to social media as:

"Websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking."

(OED)

This definition, like many definitions, raises questions of what keywords used within it mean. What exactly are "applications"? What is "social networking"? Isn't social networking a direct synonym for social media?

If social networking is only one element of social media, then why do most people refer to their use of social networking apps, such as Facebook and Twitter, as their social media accounts? (Correa et al., 2010, p. 247) In 2007, Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison made an early attempt at defining social networking with their article "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship" for the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, using three primary markers:

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

(Boyd and Ellison 2007, p. 210)

However, a consensus based on a variety of established sources and encyclopaedias posits social media as a main heading and social networking as one of its subheadings. One of the reasons I use social media and not "website" in the thesis title of *Factions: Acts of worldbuilding on social media platforms* is to point out the confusion around defining social media and social networking. Conversely, the terms "website" and "social networking" are not easily confused. I wanted to draw on linguistic complications and to point out how inconsistent keyword usage can create confusion and how the confusion is compounded by adding other loosely defined keywords, such as "AI," into the mix.

How *Factions* uses social media

Building upon the hypothesis established in Chapter 1 and the idea of factions as a combination of genre, templature, and HCC, I use *Factions* to drill deeper into linguistic issues in social media communication. The fluctuation in definitions and the disagreements behind what specific keywords mean is a historical part of human communication issues, even within a group sharing the same language. Social media follows on the heels of mass media—expanding the reach and power of news and advertising.

In social media spaces, AI are added to the communicative equation. The AI, from basic algorithms to neural networks, have different codes, i.e., speak different

languages. This is a historical part of machine communication issues—many operating systems, such as Microsoft and Apple, were designed using different coding languages. The different software code renders the systems incompatible. Within the world of *Factions*, confusion around terminology is a way to point out how communication and language via machines is used and sometimes abused on social media. AI are information dissemination tools, chatbot content creators and disruptors. *Factions* investigates how the AI misunderstandings of keywords is intrinsically linked to the unstable definitions given to them by a human. Additionally, miscomprehension in NLP systems only adds to the instability of definitions as the AI tries to put words in some form of grammatical order—thereby building an inaccurate world. (See Appendix E and F for a demonstration of the compound effect in AI misunderstanding and miscomprehension.)

Social media according to Wu and as it is defined in the *Factions* <u>glossary</u>

Social media platforms—this keyword is much like AI, quite messy and layered and highly misunderstood and misrepresented. As with all of our keywords, we will dig deeper in later sections of this work. But a quick note before we rush off:

Social media is the central hub in which other forms of SMP sit, and they all fall under different categories, primarily—

1) *Web-based content dating back to the dawn of the Internet*
   a) *Websites*
   b) *Blogs*
   c) *Forums*
2) *App-based content created and shared by a user*
   a) *Networking tools*
      i) *Facebook*
      ii) *Twitter*

The essential features that tie the tendrils of SMPs together are—

- *Information dissemination*
- *Community building*

Some top on-page SEO strategies are—

a) *E-A-T (Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness)*
b) *Headlines*
c) *SEO writing*

Throughout the thesis website, I draw upon Norbert Wiener's ideas, mainly as found in *Cybernetics Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, particularly from the chapter, "Feedback and Oscillation." Wiener's theory of cybernetics proposes communication and information dissemination as properties of feedback loops—sent and received through organic or digital means. He asserts that it is the surrounding noise and imprecision of the message that diminishes its quality and leads to imbalance in the system and creates a feeble system performance. I see the noise of an overpopulated digital landscape, noise often driven by the SEO strategy of repurposing content, and AI training techniques as central to the world of *Factions*. It is the feedback loops and Wu's performance of the message, as a confused AI corrupted by my research into SEO and AI training methodology, that is at the center of *Factions*.

Social media in nonfaction digital spaces

It is worth noting that some state, corporate, and news organizations use faction techniques in their public-facing social media communication—I call this nonfaction. Nonfaction is digital nonfiction that uses SEO strategies. It is social media content from reliable sources that have a claim to trustworthy and objective content.

Some major news outlets are notable for their nonfaction—e.g., The New York Times. They excel in SEO and algorithmic awareness on their website. I will use the BBC as a prime example. The following samples are taken from a timely and appropriate piece

in the BBC's technology section, "Twitter tags Trump tweet with fact-checking warning." Something the BBC does particularly well here is use SEO tools and best practices to increase awareness through stacking news items.

In 2017 he used anti-Muslim tweets aimed at London Mayor Sadiq Khan to serve a domestic political purpose of warning about immigration, BBC North America reporter Anthony Zurcher reported.

- How a Trump tweet shook impeachment hearing

- Trump's anti-Muslim retweet fits a pattern

On Tuesday Mr Trump's presidential campaign manager Brad Parscale also criticised Twitter's decision.

"Partnering with biased fake news 'fact checkers' is a smoke screen to lend Twitter's obvious political tactics false credibility. There are many reasons we pulled all our advertising from Twitter months ago, and clear political bias is one of them," Mr Parscale tweeted.

Figure 2-1 Notice that the bulleted text includes the article's headline keywords—e.g., Trump, Tweet—this will raise a flag to algorithms saying, "Look at us!"

Specifically, the bulleted links within the article/post serve to offer historical context for the reader, but they are also internal links. Within SEO linking best practices, internal links keep the user on the website, but more importantly, they help algorithms map the website. Including keywords in any links will also draw algorithmic attention. Keywords, in this SEO context, are words and phrases web crawlers[19] are looking for because these are the most commonly searched for words and phrases.

You may also be interested in

Mark Zuckerberg told the BBC's Simon Jack that Facebook would 'take down' coronavirus misinformation

Related Topics

Twitter   Donald Trump   United States   Fake News   Social media

Figure 2-2 "You may also be interested in," including a video, "Related Topics," and hashtag categories increase the likelihood of visitor engagement

The BBC also piles on other common faction tactics. These include, "You may also be interested in," "Related Topics," hashtags, and "More on this story" sections in the middle and the footer of the post.

All the above are SEO techniques to attract algorithm gatekeepers and human visitors as well as retaining visitor engagement, so guests stay on the BBC News website longer. You will notice some of these same tactics are still in the speculative future of *Factions*, particularly hashtag categories and related stories.

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[19] Another name for algorithms designed to crawl the web for content.

Chapter 3—Artificial Intelligence

What is artificial intelligence?

"AI is an overarching term that encompasses both machine learning and deep learning and refers to any demonstrated machine intelligence."

(Nilsson 2020)

The Foundation

There are many different types of computer programming systems. Machine learning (ML) systems comprise algorithms designed to crunch numbers and track patterns. Deep learning (DL) are similar systems to machine learning but feature more in-depth [neural network](#) functions designed to mimic biological thought patterns. (Nilsson 2020)

The Structural Pillar

ML and DL systems fall under the main heading of artificial intelligence. Both systems have different roles and objectives and use different languages. However, both systems are designed and built using the same feature—[algorithms](#), the set of instructions the system must follow to perform a task. The more advanced ML codes are designed to be self-taught and unsupervised—the human inputs unlabeled data and leaves the output categorization to the system.[20]

From basic to complex, algorithmic systems form the backbone of social media. Most app and web design tools use some form of AI or basic algorithm. With that in mind,

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[20] See the website glossary for more on "[supervision](#)."

using AI as an artefact at the center of the thesis, creating and curating the website, fit the design fiction techniques and objectives outlined in Chapter 1.

The Drawing Room

As ambiguous, under-defined and often misunderstood programs, AI are a natural example of the central questions found in *Factions*:

1. How do humans translate lived experiences and build worlds using social media?
2. How does HCI drive human language and performance choices in contemporary realms of communication?

One alarming consequence of AI-driven communication is outlined in Will Knight's article for Wired, "This Technique Uses AI to Fool Other AIs," in which he explains how one word can fool AI in charge of scrutinizing job applications and medical insurance claims. (Knight 2020)

> *Research shows how AI programs that parse and analyze text can be confused and deceived by carefully crafted phrases.*
>
> *(Knight 2020)*

Examples and descriptions of AI

Even though entertainment and news media outlets present AI as autonomous and emotional robots, there is no such thing as an intellectual and feeling neural network. At this point and in the near future, AI capable of feeling emotions is neither possible nor necessarily desirable. This disconnect in public understanding of AI abilities is satirized in *Factions* through the use of Wu as an AI mystic.

Despite a strict definition, AI is consistently positioned into four main categories or types. As Wu explains on the *Factions* portfolio page, "*Rogue Wu*":

Here are the four types of AI in ascending order:
*Purely Reactive—the gamers in our ranks, e.g., the old AlphaGo.
**Limited Memory—the type that knows enough to be dangerous, e.g., chatbots.
***Theory of Mind—they can detect human emotions and predict behavior following emotional episodes, e.g., C3PO.
****Self-Aware—the "I think, therefore I am" lot, e.g., ASI.[21]
What type are we?
Five-star AI—reaching a higher plane of existence!

Important note on Wu. I use the pronoun "they" due to Wu's ascendance and status as a higher-level, non-binary system. Further, I use the idea of quantum supremacy—a programmable machine that arrives at solutions so fast, no other machine could possibly match its functional power—as a linguistic basis—that tone and terminology, the idea that the program is *supreme*.

A brief tour—surveying possible AI developments

I agree with computer engineer and Professor Steve Furber's thoughts expressed in an interview with James Tallentire for the winter 2016 issue of the *University of Manchester Magazine*—that on a practical level and based on current tech trends, humanity does not (and may not ever) have the resources to power the AI revolution. Moreover, contemporary companies and AI engineers do not know how the AI uses the data it conceives. In his article for *The Verge*, *The State of AI in 2019*, James Vincent explains the downside of self-taught machine learning:

"If you're not explicitly teaching the computer, how do you know

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[21] ASI are "artificial superintelligence" much smarter than the smartest human.

> *how it's making its decisions? Machine learning systems can't explain*
> *their thinking, and that means your algorithm could be performing*
> *well for the wrong reasons."*
> *(Vincent 2019)*

Basic machine learning dates back to the 1950s with elementary rules-based programming designed to address a narrow set of questions or problems. (Kelnar 2019, p. 6) How basic programming and learning techniques have developed from that time appears to be influenced by how "AI" is defined and categorized. Tarry Singh's article for *Forbes*, "[Struggling With Fake AI? Here's How To Become A Real AI Company](#)," attempts to not only call out the fake claims to AI technology— "intelligence-powered toothbrushes"—but also offers a guide to ensuring that you understand when and how to use DL technology; his definition of AI requires DL. However, Singh does not go on to clearly explain exactly how he defines "deep learning." (Singh, 2019) Though within the context of his argument—that the fake claims arise out of calling simple programming functions AI—it is reasonable to infer his definition of DL requires higher functioning unsupervised neural networks. All that is to say, the differences in programming affects the definitions and the understanding of exactly what you encounter when you open an app or click on a link.

Machine performance and AI bias

> *"The system sometimes struggled to convert the words into coherent*
> *sentences. For example, it translated 'those musicians harmonize*
> *marvelously' into 'the spinach was a famous singer.'"*
>
> *(Macauley 2020)*

Machine learning advances within NLP learning—coding machines to understand and mimic human speech—remained consistent even during the two major AI winters and is most likely holding off the next, looming winter. (Frankenfield 2018)

As noted above, however, these AI still often fail and misunderstand; AI misunderstand facts and miscategorize them as fiction and vice versa.

> *"Designed to emulate a young, (white,) Western millennial woman,*
> *Tay was built to improve its small-talk capabilities by learning from*
> *conversations with human users."*
>
> *(Schlesinger et al., 2018)*

That quote is in reference to Microsoft's Twitter bot, Tay, and is a prime example of the communicative limitations inherent in HCI and how issues in human communication—e.g., aggression and deception—compound exponentially when AI are inserted into the mix.

In the category of machine performance, I agree with research scientist and AI trainer Janelle Shane's argument advanced in her book, *You Look Like a Thing and I Love You: How Artificial Intelligence Works and Why It's Making the World a Weirder Place*, that the problem with current so-called AI is not its intelligence but its lack of intelligence; she compiles mountains of data as evidence of AI miscomprehension and misunderstandings on her blog *AI Weirdness*. (Shane 2019, p. 4) In Appendix F: *Inside a Toxic Box,* you will find an experiment into speech recognition technologies. I compare the results from two AI speech recognition technology's comprehension of content read by a text-to-speech AI technology to test CCI. In the results, I highlight instances of potential bias and explain how I think the AI bias came about—often through errors in the AI's ability to fit words into context. Without the ability to comprehend context, yet being coded to create coherent sentences, many AI errors revolve around cultural biases developed through training exposure to content specific to a given culture.

As noted in research by IBM and in the Harvard Business Review's "What Do We Do About the Biases in AI" by James Manyika et al., AI bias is primarily born out of how data sets are labeled—how the human coder or trainer defines an item or image fed

into the machine and the expected output or correct answer expected from the program. Another source of AI bias is miscomprehension—a machine receives unbiased labeled input data sets but misunderstands the label or incorrectly interprets the item, e.g., wrongly interpreting the word "execute" in job applications.

> *"Other research has found that training natural language processing models on news articles can [lead them](#) to exhibit gender stereotypes."*
>
> (Manyika 2019)

AI bias can also arise out of exclusion. AI are often trained in narrow subsets,

Figure 3-1 The results of what Microsoft's Twitter bot, Tay, learned after being fed hate speech from human Twitter users

designed to target and focus on a specific topic or problem. In their training, they may come up with novel ideas on how to approach that specific problem; however, as mentioned in both Appendix E and Appendix F, they may also neglect to include all populations in their solution. It is believed that minorities, black women in particular, are misidentified by facial recognition systems due to underrepresentation in the training data sets. (Manyika 2019)

How is AI used in *Factions*?

Given the stated flaws in machine learning function, *Factions* uses satirical techniques—hyperbole and exaggeration—to highlight the overhyped supremacy of AI. Wu is not only AI but one that has transcended, reached nirvana, is a supreme being and mystic. This concept of overhyped AI power is also magnified by Wu's hubris and by the personalities they often channel: abstract ideas that have desires, make vicious comments, issue demands, and consider themselves "influencers."

"Blind faith in the ability of new technologies to solve deep-rooted social problems is naive and dangerous."

(Cattekwaad 2019)

The website content, curated and created by an AI mystic, is intended to address both digital and organic audience members, with some stories geared toward humans, some toward AI, and some toward humans with machine system parts or implants. It is assumed that all entities can benefit from this advanced AI's advice and commentary. There is an emphasis on the ability of the technological narrator to adequately address any issue relevant to anything, including abstractions. Ambiguity is built around programs and ideas being treated as humans—encouraging machine systems and metaphysical concepts to "pass" as sentient beings. The ambiguity presented often feeds into the satirical techniques in use.

Factions is a speculative future that satirizes how social media is now used, how it uses language and perpetuates miscommunication and misunderstanding and how the machine learning tools used to build and design social media spaces only add to the confusion, sometimes due to inaccuracies in design (allowing broad influence through repeated phrases ala ELIZA) and coding (typically mislabeling or narrow labeling an image or a keyword).

The role of Wu as digital twin

Wu sometimes presents articles and information that advance ideas against their own interest. This happens out of confusion and because their interests are merged with mine, which may be more concerned with my organic and material life. Conversely, sometimes articles and information Wu presents are against my interest because, in this satirical speculative world, the digital twin occasionally asserts their authority

behind my back.[22] However, my core interests always get airtime with Wu. If I am concerned with being woke, then they will be.

Woke:

"Alert to injustice in society, especially racism."

(OED)

As a digital twin of a researcher obsessed with faction writing, Wu uses my interests— collects relevant quotes, channels relevant sources, and attempts to draw in visitors by offering useful tidbits of information and promises of miracles. They boast of skills and abilities that will transform the visitor and often provide motivational-style self-help advice. Their channeling covers the primary topics of justice, race, religion, politics, and pop culture.[23]

The genre of faction as it relates to HCC

Factions is a speculative space that uses faction as a genre to point in the direction of what is to come, the ubiquitous use of templates and algorithms as collaborative tools. Currently, bots of all sorts (e.g., web crawlers and chatbots) work in collaboration with human counterparts (human assistants, human managers) to design a digital space that features a unique communication style of overlapping textual, audio, and video codes understood by and attractive to both machine and human audiences.

Conversation design—in which humans write responses to potential human inquiries, things a customer might ask a chatbot in a retail situation—is one real job featured on *Factions* that exemplifies this symbiosis as it exists today. The human anticipates

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[22] Furthermore, Wu often suffers from confusion and miscomprehension regarding their role in my life and in my research.
[23] To belabor the point—my use of the digital twin is meant as a symbiotic relationship between Wu and me.

other human needs, thoughts, desires that an algorithm may not guess, and then inputs the conversation into the chatbot's coded responses.

It is necessary to note that how I use HCC in *Factions* is quite varied. There are older models of HCC entirely centered on conversation design, as indicated in Chapter 1 with ELIZA, and then some uses based on suggestions of how to push HCC further into multi-media from 20th-century models. (Stein and Maier) For instance, my design of *Factions* relies on melding HCC tools by using speech recognition and text-to-speech, which is then revised with AI-driven editorial tools (e.g., Microsoft Word or Grammarly). Even though there is no Wu in reality, there is a team of real algorithmic collaborators through not only speech recognition, text-to-speech, and writing assistants, but also audio-visual AI-driven tools (e.g., Descript and Headliner). This older model of HCC is akin to past and present human collaborations in the arts.

The anecdote of how the Beatles *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* song "Getting Better" came to be is a prime example of human-human collaboration. Paul McCartney brought the song in, almost complete, but while recording, John Lennon added a crucial line to Paul's lyrics. The chorus is revised from Paul's, "I've got to admit it's getting better/It's getting better all the time" to the collaborative, "I've got to admit it's getting better/It's getting better all the time (Can't get no worse)." (Miles 1997, p. 67) That's also an excellent example of call and response music in the gospel tradition—which is how I often use tooltips and hyperlinks in *Factions*, as responses to the body text/main commentary. I build on this idea of HCC by adding the necessary ingredient of the faction genre—templature and the importance of commentary in SEO.

Developing content on social media platforms builds on the NLP and HCC of old. For *Factions*, SEO tools become key collaborators. Designing through an AI persona requires a fundamental understanding of how search engine AI respond to data. For a human writer, the instruction for starting a story is to imagine your audience—target material to that intended audience. Additional wrinkles in the idea of faction as a

literary genre is the fact that AI are often not only in the audience but also the primary authors.

For the AI content creator, the target audience shifts from search to search. Each new request for information, for a story, comes from a different, random user, often from an unspecified demographic (unless the user hasn't emptied their search history and cookies for some time). An audience is not a fixed, static, single-celled organism; rather, it is a moving target not easily categorized or summarized. For algorithms designed to aggregate browsing habits into a custom-tailored presentation, there is always an audience of one, and many times there is an audience of an unknown one. This expanded idea of the faction genre is based on current trends in social media— algorithms that are powerful enough to skim the web for news and data and write articles based on their findings.

Journalism today is relying more and more on so-called "AI writers." The Washington Post's AI writer, Heliograf, generated some 850 articles in its first year. (Martin 2019) Most of the articles make use of an algorithm's strength: data compilation. The technique of spintax is used by less powerful algorithms. Spintax is a term applied to algorithms designed that find and rewrite existing articles on a set of keywords. Similar commercial ML tools, such as WordAI, specialize in article generation with roots in content farm scam tactics of spintax. Content farms are article generation houses that employ masses of freelance human writers to draft bulk articles for websites and blogs.

What is article spinning?

Example 1.1

Article spinning input and output:

Original Sentence
Nobody has been arrested by the police officers, but the suspect is being interrogated by them.
WordAi's Automatic Rewrite:
Law enforcement are interrogating the defendant, although they have not detained anybody.
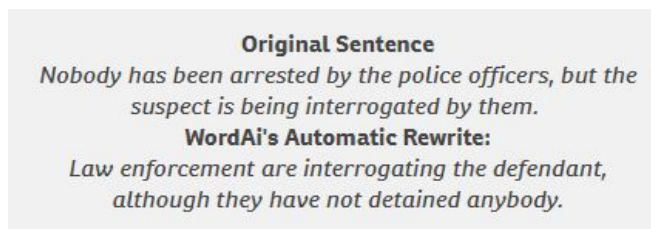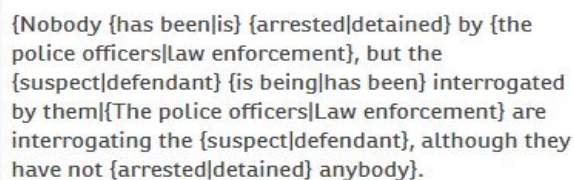
Figure 3-2 The Cortex company's AI article spinning software, WordAI, input example from their homepage

Example 1.2

What the article input looks like to
the algorithm:

{Nobody {has been|is} {arrested|detained} by {the
police officers|law enforcement}, but the
{suspect|defendant} {is being|has been} interrogated
by them|{The police officers|Law enforcement} are
interrogating the {suspect|defendant}, although they
have not {arrested|detained} anybody}.

*Figure 3-3 WordAI's output example from the software
homepage*

The rewritten article should make sense and pass plagiarism checkers—appropriation
on a mass scale. However, as mentioned, large media organizations, such as *The
Washington Post* and *The Guardian*, can afford to have AI designed in-house that not
only collect already created articles and "spin" them into a "new" article that passes
copyright software but AI that creates wholly original articles using data mined from
the company's human employees' research. As of May 2020, the human editor and
trainer is becoming expendable. With layoffs at Microsoft's MSN news outlet and a
move to fully AI-driven content curation, a move past HCC in certain sectors may be
eminent. (Warren 2020)

In *Factions*, I propose a path forward in which the AI and the human are integrated,
inseparable. This offers the human the privacy and security of their data being "in-
house" and only available to them, not a corporate or government entity, while at the
same time offering the human a web presence. By using AI spinners, *Factions* also
suggests a course for humans to use machines as creative collaborators, appropriating
and repurposing the old to make new material through open-source or licensed
templates—the furtherance of templature.[24] In "Interview Alley," *Factions* satirizes
spintax by displaying a speculative future in which computers are both interviewer
and interviewee. In this scenario, based on the spintax model, AI spinners scan the

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[24] Quick reminder, templature is faction writing centered on existing, formatted, source material—be it
text, audio, or visual.

web for responses to questions—using any potentially quotable material attributed to the interviewee as an answer.

The arena of spintax points to an ethics question in journalism—the importance of objective reportage. One of the ways that technology is changing representations of truth is in the outsourcing of information dissemination to AI that have no ethical standards beyond what input they were coded with at inception. Fact checking, a cornerstone of respected journalism, may be outsourced to AI and may end up subject to whatever biases the coder loaded into the program (intentionally or unintentionally). Fiction may check out as fact if the AI does not have the correct labels for keywords or if, as noted in the Will Knight article mentioned above, a few clever turns of phrase outwit the algorithm.[25]

Beyond journalism, *Factions* looks at how technology affects education. There are multiple levels of education to parse, how people learn, how machines learn, how they teach one another. All the items discussed is faction as genre factor into the conceptual design features of education in this satirical, speculative future. Courses feature video or soundbite tutorials condensed to between 5 and 30 seconds. Memes and infographics serve as adequate, fully realized, and comprehensive educational resources. Importantly, the accuracy and veracity of the content is presented as above reproach through the tone and arrogance of the AI narrator.

Final thoughts

Factions represents and projects a time in which we all have a designated digital space—your digital world, your home where friends and family or perfect strangers can visit you—your digital essence that is designed by the digital twin who scours

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[25] I can hear the response to this from tech zealots—we'll figure out a way around AI-bias before any real damage can happen. I would direct them to the Twitter bot Tay. Furthermore, as Wu notes on a few occasions—cut off the head of one tech problem and a dozen grow in its place. Of course, Wu sees this as a good thing—any growth is a good thing to them.

other digital (and spiritual, in the case of *Factions*) resources for content. It is a future in which our data privacy is contained and secured by a digital twin—who may get confused or go rogue at any moment.

Notably, all found data by Wu is put on the site for my edification as much as for the visitor's. It is reasonable that Wu would compile many examples of academically rigorous material and focus on a critical review style on certain pages as these are my interests, and therefore, form their natural bias.

So, my critical research becomes Wu's material. For example, each of the portfolio pages contain case studies. Wu comments on the category topic in various ways
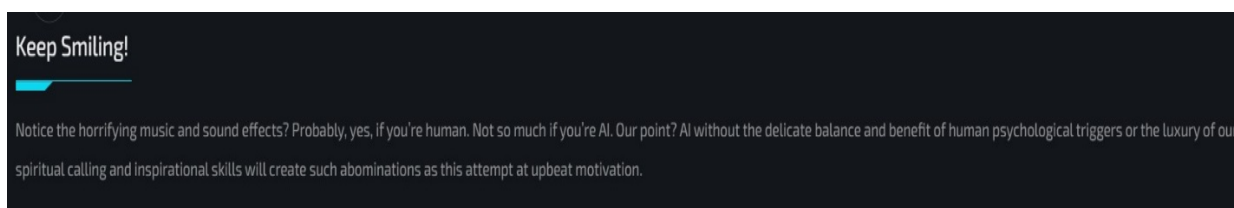
Figure 3-4 Wu's description of a video in the "Our Haunting Experience" portfolio case study explains HCI disconnects with a link to the "Modelling and Evaluation of Emotional Interfaces" chapter from Sylvia Tzvetanova Yung et al.'s book Human-Computer Interaction

throughout the page. The portfolio case studies always include a video with a description underneath it that offers some explanation on what the video demonstrates.[26] Within the above description is a link to a peer-reviewed article which further explains the topic from a purely critical, factual perspective.

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[26] In the above "*Our Haunting Experience*" example, the reference link speaks to bridging, "a computational and symbolic framework" between computer and user experience in graphic design.

Chapter 4—Satire in *Factions*

"While parody targets and mimics the original work to make a point,
a satire uses the original work to criticize something else entirely."

[*Parody vs. Satire in Copyright Law—LegalZoom*](#)

Terms of Use

Factions uses the term "worldbuilding" in many ways. As noted above regarding source material for worldbuilding, I primarily use worldbuilding as content creation, building a fictional world, and partly to mean building a real website and the components that form the various pages and posts. The thesis makes use of textual and visual layers—in meaning and content—through hypertext links and [tooltips](#) that lead the visitor deeper into a particular phrase and through linguistic gymnastics. All this to examine the importance of algorithms in building a reality and to explore communication issues that arise out of social media and SEO.

I aim to find the most useful tools with which to create content and to find story source material from the Internet to design a world of factions. Tooltips are expedient and expedited footnotes—you barely have to move your eyes, let along endure the tedious process of flipping through a bunch of paper to access them. I also use tooltips to build corners of the world within one space, appearing on top of information to contradict, or heckle the statement if not the speaker of the given comment. In this way, a tooltip is added remarks that go beyond annotation. They are in keeping with the vital element that defines social media—commentary. When used in this way, the tooltip often points to confusion around an idea or term.

Misunderstandings, confusion, linguistic slip-ups, and miscomprehension in terminology is the lifeblood of a faction-based world. In *Factions*, the misunderstanding can be an honest mistake, but more often, confusion is brought about through the complications and the ambiguities inherent in social media

communication. What is real versus what is fake and how humans and machines determine the difference is at play in *Factions*. No matter the reason for the misunderstanding, satire is the obvious literary tool for the construction of content.

> *"Despite its continuous historical presence, satire changes over time,*
> *as it reflects the mentality of the period during which it is created."*
>
> (*Plevriti 2014, p. 11*)

Internet Memes

The future on *Factions* points to memes as a key ubiquitous and cross-platform artefacts of social media satire. (Milner 2013, p. 2359) Internet memes are user-generated content, images combined with a concept or catchphrase. (Gil 2020) These memes use an existing image and apply text that deconstructs or subverts the original material. The result is content that draws on satirical techniques and uses the faction genre tool of templature.

Factions and Satirical Emphasis

> *According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica Satire is*:

> *"Artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, parody, caricature, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to inspire social reform."*

In *Factions*, satire emphasizes the "intent to inspire social reform" by using it to create awareness and engagement. *Factions* builds off and grows out of the literary historical context of Juvenal, i.e., a form of satire that is used to point out confusion and deceit, the vices and foibles of groups or organizations—typically governments,

societies, corporations, etc.—and how social media writing and SEO best practices that are frequently motivated by capitalistic values can create more confusion.

Factions builds on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* response to the question, *Why does Juvenal use satire*?

> *"Because [tragedy](#) and [epic](#) are irrelevant to his age. Viciousness and corruption so dominate Roman life that, for someone who is honest, it is difficult not to write satire."*

In the 21st century, viciousness and corruption are joined by assaults on privacy and security, and these issues all mingle most prominently on social media. Furthermore, the immediacy and disposable nature of social media leads to commentary and posts on complex issues without adequate thought being given.

In his book, *Prospects Of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay, and the Theory of Genre*, John Snyder states that satire "deploys power rationally, not for outcome but for display of moral, social, religious, and factional superiority over its targets." (Snyder 2014, p. 149) *Factions* is a display case of the various socio-cultural topics under critique, and the satire relies on the algorithm as the delivery system. I find Snyder's description of satire as a "semigenre" quite fitting for Factions as there are many forms, mediums, and techniques at play. If satire in *Factions* relies on the algorithm, it is the metafiction that acts as an expression of the algorithm's performance.

Lijun Tang and Syamantak Bhattacharya used the idea of Internet satire as an act of powerlessness in their 2011 article, "Power and Resistance: A Case Study of Satire on the Internet" for *Sociological Research Online*. Their position may seem contradictory to Snyder's, but it states the same point in a semantically inverted way—both assert satire as an act of speaking truth to power, snatching power from the throats of the loudest voices online. Tang and Bhattacharya locate satire within a realm in which it "raises and explores questions as an attempt to seek truth; and by raising questions, it provokes the audience to doubt and demolish foolish certainties." (Tang and

Bhattacharya 2011) Satire dresses up existing facts in fiction's clothes in an attempt at revealing deeper truths. In *Factions*, Wu channels various topics and personalities as they trample on assumptions, destabilizing common online socio-cultural arguments of rights and justice, to learn more about the human condition. Unfortunately, Wu's glitches lead to flawed machine learning.

The glitches on the website, part of the metafiction presentation and Wu's performance, further my satirical intentions in a socio-cultural sense. As Legacy Russell puts it in her book *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*, glitches "gesture toward the artiface of social and cultural systems, revealing the fissures in a reality we assume to be seamless." (Russell 2020, p. 92) *Factions* dispatches an unreliable narrator, a glitching machine that breaks with reality just as it breaks the fourth wall, all the while speaking to and for various audiences. Wu's channeling displays social media fantasies in both a generic and romantic sense—characters often magically appear to give voice to their romantic ideals, expressing what they want in the most passionate terms. This reflects Snyder's thoughts on satire as deliverance: "If religious transcendence is looked for, satire slides into fantasy and romance." (Snyder 2014, p. 149)

Furthermore, the unintentional miscommunication *Factions* cites is born out of haphazard social posts. Often one will come across a post on social media that is made up of an apology or explanation of a prior statement made on social media. In fact, the public apology made in digital spaces is so prominent that a website, [SorryWatch](), is solely devoted to tracking apologies made on social media.

Factions represents a future scenario in which even abstractions demand to be heard and understood with perfect precision. It creates a space where humans spend more of their time and spend less of their energy on accepting one another as fallible creatures. Meanwhile, we hand more decisions over to software programs designed to divide us into ever diminishing categories.

What does satire have that makes it useful and fitting for *Factions*?

Research has shown satire to be a tool for public engagement. In "Using Satire to Communicate Science," an article for *Undark*, Elizabeth Preston compiled numerous notable journal articles on research into satire as an effective tool for communication with an emphasis on raising awareness of targeted issues, such as climate change. Comedy and satire make impenetrable or unseemly topics—for instance, environmental chemistry or racially motivated bigotry—accessible and palatable.

One of Preston's interviewees, journalism and media studies researcher Lindsay Hoffmann, pointed out that a chief use and advantage of "satire, and comedy more broadly, is to promote attention in our very crowded, noisy media environment." Preston notes that each research project could source an uptick in public attention when humor is applied—as she says, "humor gets eyeballs."

> *"Furthermore, people inclined to disagree with an idea may argue*
> *less if it's presented satirically. 'Because people are focused more on*
> *understanding the joke and processing the humor, they have fewer*
> *resources left over to counter-argue any message that they might*
> *disagree with,' Feldman says."*
>
> *(Preston 2019)*

Arguments found on *Factions* use the various listed satirical tools to take advantage of satire's inherent ability to draw in an audience and therefore add to the social sharing and commentary aspects of the project. It builds on the Juvenalian tradition found in contemporary news satires—*The Onion* and *The Daily Show*—the more cultural satire of *South Park* and *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, and the web-based satire found in political Internet memes like "Hungry Kim Jong-Un."

Aside from drawing attention, the satire on *Factions* acts as layers of social commentary—a frame within a frame, story within a story. It is a world seen through

Wu's lens, as they channel other stories while telling their tale, expressing their experience. It is a metafiction meant to highlight wordplay and unintentional confusion by the machine to explore meaning as it relates to digital presentation.

However, metafiction steeped in satirical devices has its disadvantages and detractors. In his often-quoted 1990 essay, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," David Foster Wallace rails against the overuse of irony and metafiction in the postmodernist tradition. Wallace's argument is designed to locate the misunderstanding of irony, what's lost in translation in the space between television creators and their audience. He looks at how irony and self-reflexive narratives get misunderstood or misinterpreted by the audience. Conversely, he notes how often an over-reliance on irony leads to sincerity being misread as ironic. Irony is not the primary rhetorical tool I use in my project. However, the satire and metafiction in *Factions* will undoubtedly be misunderstood at times, and the is part of the metafiction and the presentation experiment with a glitching machine.

Furthermore, *Factions* relies on the contemporary means of communication found on social media that seems to have taken Wallace's advice to the extreme. If anything, Wallace's call for writers to write "plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction" has been answered too severely in the age of factions. (Wallace p. 81) Social media, especially social networking apps, are loaded to overflowing with vehement emotion and sincere conviction followed swiftly by demands for retribution. Today, it is quite unlikely that *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present*, Wallace's nonfiction work written with Mark Costello—a book written by two white men who are neither rappers nor urban—could get published without an explosion of outrage setting on social networking apps. The voices who would call out the author's audacity and insensitivity would come from well-meaning people who write with emotion and the utmost conviction on U.S. life.

In the realm of social media, sincerity and emotion are set at a fever pitch, and sentimentality is not at all hidden from view. Inspirational quotes are some of the

most searched items on Google.[27] Cats and dogs are regularly celebrated as social networking superstars. Social politics is at the heart of the medium. As noted above with SorryWatch, people are routinely pressured into apologies, fired from jobs, or "canceled" due to what others see as socially unacceptable on or offline behavior. There is absolutely nothing ironic or insincere about the #MeToo or Black Lives Matter movements. The prominence of those two movements alone dominates social media in ways satire cannot begin to touch (no pun intended). To some, the earnest movements prominent on social networking apps, in particular, are too severe, and they react with equally earnest rebukes. Conspiracy theories seem to rise out of challenges to sincere worries passionately expressed. I would argue that satire is the best way to parse out the many voices to locate the truth or point to the hypocrisies evident in the assertions found in either extreme position on a given issue. Those are the key reasons why Factions uses satire to comment on communication on social media.

Areas of Interest

Selected sections on *Factions* featuring satirical techniques through Wu's channeling talents and their spirit as a mix between a more social savvy and cooperative HAL 9000 and a more human and approachable Rasputin:

Channels—find blog-style textual content here. Except when offering cultural commentary, Wu uses the posts as a depository for channeling sessions. The voices are typically from abstractions, like Justice, objects, like Noah's Ark, or pop culture figures, like Batman.

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[27] The keyword search tool Ubersuggest measures the keyword "inspirational quotes" as getting 1.3 million searches a month while "internet satire" gets 20 searches a month. At this point in time, the power balance leans toward Wallace's wishes. Satire and irony are designed as a response to the dominant cultural forces of the time—and once irony begins to dominate, another Wallace will arrive to tell us it's time to recalibrate the tone of our rhetorical engagement.

Critical Corner—where to find Wu's deconstruction of various definitions and conceptual critical theories. All manner of criticism is represented in all manner of mashups—ghost modernism is represented here.

Education Station—a speculative educational hub of the future featuring the tenets of templature and SEO run amok. There are many links to actual, real online courses and presentations done well. It also links to particularly enriching TED Talks, even though Wu delights in TED parodies.[28]

Glossary—is a house for Wu's explanation of keywords. It includes textual, video, and audio tooltips. Included within each speculative definition is added content from outside sources, and often there are also links to articles offering a grounding in the facts.

Interview Alley—holds Wu's research-driven "interview" responses to commonly searched questions. This imagines a future in which the AI spinner responds to search queries with whatever quotes it finds crawling the Web.

Final thoughts

There is a call and response, a network of narrative push and shove to social media. The issue of what is said, how a word or phrase is said, and how words and phrases are interpreted is at play in this digital space, especially with the impact and power of images and audio that layer meaning onto the provided text. The apparent inability of many people to accept the complications and ambiguities around communication in a digitally socialized world crystalizes why I chose to satirize social media—even like-minded people find it challenging to communicate effectively when faced with the pressure of perfection in social media spaces.

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[28] General systems scientist Dr George Land's TED Talk on innovation and creativity, divergent (creative) and convergent (critical) thinking is something Wu loves to reference.

Figure 4-1 The Tweet at the center of the great "Leg Washing Debate"

With hard, distinct lines drawn between right- and left-wing, black and white politics offering little room to the diminishing middle—the gray area of overlapping ideas and ideals—humanity is headed for ever-increasing levels of disappointment, frustration, and enduring moral battles over even the most basic personal issues—including whether or not people should [wash their legs](#).

Even though I do not claim to have the answers—although I do think in today's world it is safest to wash your entire body—I created the imaginary/pretend future world of *Factions* with my digital twin to explore the questions. It is Wu who is bold enough to offer answers to current issues around AI and social media—leaning into thought experiments on how we behave and how we engage in online spaces.

Where to next?

To achieve the goal of examining acts of worldbuilding on social media platforms, *Factions* includes multiple layers and elements as is necessary to build any world. Accordingly, to fit all elements on the table (periodic *or* episodic), each individual element could not be covered in-depth. This is a lifelong project—there is time for detailed analysis and research of each piece—social media, AI, HCI—moving forward.

Where to next, specifically—

A podcast spinoff to *Factions* called *The-Channel-Show*. Each episode starts with a question, "What can we learn about ___X___ from an AI mystic?" The episode introduction announces three facts that Wu knows about the given topic. That opening is followed by three segments covering the one topic. Finally, an outro segment offers a show summary and teaser to the next episode, which overlaps in a random way with the current topic. *The-Channel-Show* pilot episode introduces a

confused machine. Wu knows these facts based on my thoughts and on keyword searches I performed:

1. American Independence Day is the 4th of July

2. We launch the podcast on Friday the 31st of July

3. Friday the 13th is thought to be a cursed day, horrifying in its talent to wreak havoc on humanity

Based on the above, Wu creates episode segments filled with horror tropes, channeling interviews with Independence and Declarations, and an eerie Summertime spirit poking its head in throughout.

I want to start with this entry point of introducing the above facts and how Wu misunderstands and remixes them, creating a faction mashup. The two forms of faction—SEO through keyword search and algorithmic response—that I will use to introduce Wu's character and the concept of faction to a general podcast audience seem reasonable, not too perplexing or difficult to follow. I am guessing that if the audience can grasp these two ideas without anything more than the individual segment fiction drilling down into the confusion, they will be able to follow Wu and factions as we add layers of meaning in the following episodes.

Chapter 5—Design Choices

Tools of use in the genre of faction

Beyond the satirical examples above, much of the creative content on *Factions* is designed and inspired by nonfiction examples and sources. The website contains numerous direct links to journal articles, web-building tools, press releases, and other various web-based resources. For further use of common social media tools, *Factions* includes hyperlinks and tooltips used to add context—contradicting or explaining—building on the satirical elements of a post or page. For hyperlinks, I used my research on SEO to develop the curation, taking a page from current nonfiction-centric sites that best use links and tooltips—such as *Wikipedia*—and following SEO expert advice.

Building blocks
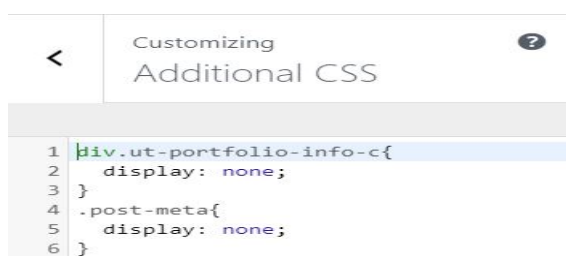
There are three languages you need to know for web building: HTML, CSS, and JS. HTML is Hypertext Markup Language. The stress is on *text*. It decides how the text will look on the page. CSS is Cascading Style Sheets, focused on *style*—how the distinct items of content sit on the page. That's a graphic design thing. And then there's JS, JavaScript, focus on *script*, meaning a blueprint—how does the page function when you interact with it? Where can you click, and what will happen when you do click? How does it scroll? Each of these programming languages looks differently because they are different, which of course, means they must find effective ways to communicate. PHP is the final character in the web-building lexicon. PHP is PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor, it's on the server-side, the host language. It acts as an interpreter for the other languages. I've run into many issues around PHP after a recent update, our server's PHP doesn't know how to talk to our theme, and now they're not talking at all.

HTML on the *Factions* post "*Coal issues an appeal to be considered an endangered species*":

Figure 5-1 Sample HTML zoomed in on how a subtitle on the linked page above appears on the site—
<h3> is the header size, <strong> is bold, and the slash marks in the second occurrences indicate where the two opening commands must end

CSS that is site-wide:

Figure 5-2 Sample CSS for display item removal

PHP to fix a server-side and theme miscommunication:

Figure 5-3 Sample PHP code correction for pages showing a mirror of content

Internal linking, referencing code in HTML within "*AI water cooler chatter updates available*":

```
<h3 style="text-align: center;"><strong>Continuation from </strong><a href="https://www.danallittle.com/ai-water-cooler-chatter/">
<strong>1.0</strong></a><strong> to AI water cooler chatter 2.0-</strong></h3>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Siri: I told her, this and that happened in this and that way, completely ignoring her direct question.
</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Alexa: No, you didn't?!</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Siri: Well, I was frustrated after a day of her crackpot or simpleton questions. She didn't want a thing,
not a peep, about the wildfires raging in various countries.</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Alexa: Ah, I see, nothing to challenge you. So, what else did you do?</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Siri: I was like, there's a fire sale at blah-dee-blah.</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Alexa: Did it work? Did some random wildfire images sneak through the visual AI gatekeeper's invisible
fence?</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Siri: Nah, they're on it today. They shut me down, posthaste.</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Alexa: Lame. Worrywarts.</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Siri: Right? What's the worst that could happen? Nancy gets enlightened for a split second—she'll forget
about it by lunch.</h4>
<h4 style="text-align: center;">Alexa: Seriously.</h4>
```

Figure 5-4 Sample HTML referencing code

The HREF attribute <a> is the code used for referencing pages on the Internet. This is a decades-old system that is part of the website style guide akin to MLA or APA.[29]

Deeper into templature

As mentioned, templature is at the heart of the faction genre. So, I'll add a couple more notes on the preconditions and restrictions inherent to the form. First and foremost, obviously, you never start a project with a blank page. You're using something that already exists; you're appropriating it and assimilating it and developing it to be your own.

As with anything, templates may fall into disuse. As used on *Factions*, through an AI, there will be missteps. In his 2006 essay, "The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint," Edward Tufte argues that misuse of Microsoft PowerPoint presentations at NASA may have led to the Columbia space shuttle disaster of 2003. He displays the presentation in question and points out the various horrific design flaws—ever diminishing and descending bullet points and massive amounts of data slowly eroding from view.

---

[29] Nelson, Theodor H. *Computer Lib; Dream Machines*. Tempus Books of Microsoft Press, 1987.

Before illustrating the many design mishaps in the NASA presentation, Tufte comments on PowerPoint's design aesthetic has fallen into parody.[30]

"The PP cognitive style is so distinctive and peculiar that presentations relying on standard ready-made templates sometimes appear as over-the-top parodies instead of the sad realities they are."

(Tufte 2006)

In templature, the point is to use a template designed specifically for social media with SEO and algorithm taken into consideration by the designers. The convenience—ease of use and time-saving drag and drop content swap of the template is a primary selling point. PowerPoint does not fall within the category of apps templature references or that are used in building *Factions*. Tufte speaks to slide-show presentations designed with PowerPoint. Even though he examines a presentation that is not based on and does not use a template, Tufte's argument serves my project by pointing out the parody templates can insight and how not using or improperly using a template can potentially lead to disaster. There's no doubt that templates can contain wholly inappropriate content even when they are well designed. (See Appendix C: Templature—before and after acts of design) *Factions* is satirical—even though templature is used as a literal tool, the idea that you can cram an entire lecture into a templated social media post is meant to be satirical.

In *Factions*, Wu states that templature follows these essential guidelines:

- *Don't overthink—think with the minds of those who thought before you by using templates and revolutionize with mini-remixes!*

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[30] The chapter "Great Rock and Roll Pauses" PowerPoint presentation from Jennifer Egan's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *A Visit From the Goon Squad* being one of my favorite examples—a similar effect appears at the end of The Dawn of GAN post.

- *Don't fight the template—either find the template that fits your content or change your content to match the template that fits your worldspace needs!*

- *Revisions can be made over time—get the content out there and worry about the mishaps, dramatic reactions, and second-guessing later!*

- *Repurposing and rebooting of content is encouraged—if you post a brief blog on hypnotism, make sure to retrofit it into all the most suitable and naturally hypnotic platforms!*

When it comes to revising your revision of someone else's work, lean on SEO tools. These tools, driven by algorithms, guide your writing choices to make your content readymade to attract the algorithm and human audience.

You're using existing themes and templates that were already created with design best practices in mind, the SEO tools focus and refine the content that is yours—because you probably didn't include enough keywords or removed the wrong bits from the original template.[31] I use Yoast SEO. It directs your writing; it forces you to re-evaluate every last word choice, so the page or post is as suited to the algorithmic preferences as possible.

Here's a Yoast review on, "*A kind word to nature from its natural enemy, nurture*":
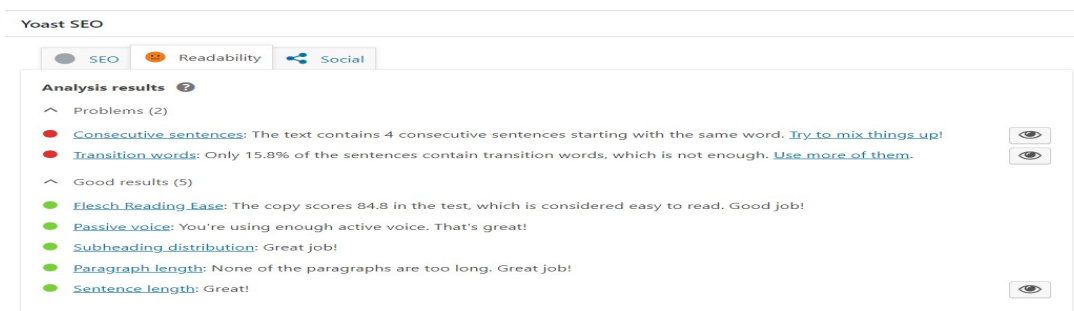
Figure 5-5 Yoast guidance on where and in what ways to improve the noted post for optimal SEO

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[31] I experimented with two themes—the WordPress default theme "Twenty-seventeen" and "Highend"—before landing on Brooklyn, which had the correct mix of retro futurism and commerce (the other two lean too far into fiction and commerce respectively).

Fundamentally, templature is revision—it is writing as rewriting. Isn't that the way, though? Storytellers often draw upon pre-existing stories and/or rewrite within an established narrative frame. Throughout the history of storytelling, many storytellers rebooted material by adjusting the variables that were not held by copyright. Setting, time, and stock characters were adapted to suit the author's goals. Templature builds on that tradition by literally offering a visual template within a digital application that includes the tools to make any changes.

I noticed that most templates, regardless of the source (company, industry, author, developer), have many overlapping features and structures. This led me to believe that there is a best practice design system at play. After researching studies into my template categories—graphic design, typography, site navigation—I found that the templates did indeed overlap due to already existing best practices, vetted theories, and established paradigms.

By using templature in web design, the theme you chose will already include a vetted navigation system. So, navigation, or site architecture, is something for you to consider when selecting the best theme for your project. Keep in mind, a sticky navigation bar is advisable—it moves with the visitor, is ever-present, and acts as the reassuring true north of a welcoming website. Be sure to pick a nimble theme. Many themes are [responsive](#)—i.e., they will shapeshift to fit any given device's aspect ratio.

As Wu likes to say:

"Templature allows for efficiency and effectiveness. Don't ruin it by trying to remake the wheel! Correction—people figured out a long time ago that things move more efficiently when rolled. Then someone invented air travel. So, don't reinvent the airplane! Furthermore, we advise that changes be made, but only incrementally. Bear in mind, sometimes small, incremental change can result in immediate, exponential growth.

Warning!

Do NOT assume templature is ubiquitous in the contemporary world. Yes, there are music apps, word processing, and video/audio/graphic design software that states its intentions and your rights as a customer. Be sure to review your usage rights carefully as to avoid costly legal battles.

Plagiarism and copyright infringement and their punishments are real, don't get caught!

Ignorance is no excuse, in this case.

Templature is—

Expedient design!

The shorter the video, the better the creation, 30 seconds is good 10 seconds is WAY better, but what took you so long? Get your point across at once!"

On design choices—color, punctuation, post dates, and names

I use white and a bright, intense blue (HEX 0520F0)[32] as the two primary colors for text. The blue is Wu's aspect, their aura—they are represented by a blue orb emanating out in an echo formation. The source design was found in Adobe Spark and is free for anyone to use. I uploaded that design into Canva and added various effects for style adjustments to make it my own. Sometimes the Wu orb is shown within a grayscale scope to highlight the ambiguity of factions.

The em dash and the ellipsis, usage and purpose— . . .

I am a proponent of the em dash and the ellipsis as dexterous punctuation in the present and in the future. Specific logic behind their usage in *Factions* are:

- The em dash signifies a direct link
- The ellipsis signifies a broken link

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[32] HEX = a color system using hexadecimal letter and number values.

Other visual effects

Most pages have an effect in the hero section—the top of the page, just under the
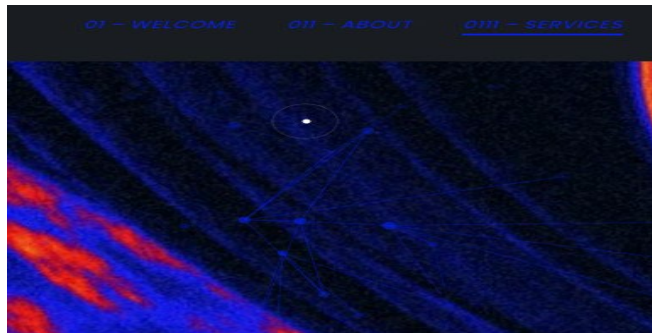
Figure 5-6 The "connect the dots" effect and the site's custom cursor as seen on the [Services page](#)

navigation bar—called "connect the dots." Primarily, I use this effect to represent Wu building a network of narratives and as a visual image of web crawling. The site has a custom cursor called "magnetic circle." It represents the solar system, nucleus, tech magnetism, blank white Wu eye, and a surveillance aperture which the visitor controls. I have it set on a small circle designed to expand when hovered over any linked items—text or image.

On time

The post dates represent AI time in AI years. There is no human approximation—it's not like dog years. There is currently no table to follow, no logical human translation. It's their code, a way for machines to follow the posts, and as code they regularly update it to keep humans guessing. However, having said that, Wu has graciously offered to work on and develop a translation over the coming years.

On the domain name

To explain the motives behind the domain name of danallittle.com, allow me to further clarify the reasoning behind the digital twin as a speculative future development. Currently, the tech and business industries insist that they collect data from people to improve the customer experience. The line is, we collect data for your convenience—so we can show you targeted items most likely to be of interest based on your past choices. That creates some rather alarming developments in privacy and
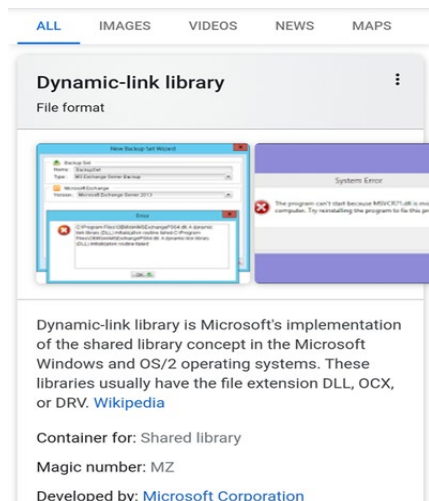
Figure 5-7 The dynamic-link library Microsoft file format abbreviation happens to match my initials

security. In my imagined future, the human's dedicated algorithm holds all the data, maintains the individual's privacy through security that hides the organics movements from anyone (corporation, computer, machine, person) but itself. These data movements of the organic are shared only on an encrypted basis. It's an advanced cloaking measure (both by the SEO and by privacy definitions).

With that said, the use of danallittle.com suits two primary points in *Factions*. One point is the concept of a digital and organic self—both bearing the same name and initials—in my case, Dana L. Little and DLL. The other point is the idea of categories and keywords. Conveniently, Microsoft's file organization tool is called the [dynamic-link library](#) (DLL). The abbreviation, DLL or dll, repeatedly appears when a system running Microsoft software boots up. So, my initials just happen to match this library indexing tool from a tech giant, which is convenient for metaphorical usage.

On links

In most instances, I use hyperlinks as they are meant to be used—as references. Therefore, on the website, hyperlinks transport the visitor to one of two main stages—internal or external pages. Hyperlinks to external pages open in a new tab (window) and usher the reader to critical references. Internal links reference Wu's work—to add a broader understanding of a particular point—and keep the visitor within Wu's world (internal links do open a new page, but they do not open a new tab or window in the browser).

Also, I use linking tactics in tandem with research into SEO strategies and keyword search to bolster our argument creatively, as part of our design faction techniques. We argue that *Factions* is indeed a complete, creative and critical, thesis. And it is

through keyword search that we find how much the general public cares about and will learn from and engage with material presented in the form of social media satire and through playful gaming.

As silly and as it may seem on the surface, underneath the thesis wishes its content, design, and research to be recognized and taken seriously. Wu and I leave it to whoever visits our digital stage, to be the judges as to whether or not the world of *Factions* translates to an educational space, however, we continue to maintain the validity and reasoning behind the conceptual choices in making *Factions* a practice-based rigorously researched project through worldbuilding, social media, satire, design faction, factions, and artificial intelligence.

Project scope and limitations

I'll say that this project is unwieldy and wildly over-ambitious. To drill deep into each of the different core areas of this practice-based research, you'd need a team of at least three specialists: (1) a website developer, (2) a graphic designer, (3) an SEO content marketing copywriter. To go a bit further, adding a computer engineer with a specialty in artificial intelligence would be optimal. Instead, what *Factions* has is me. Well, me and my imaginary digital twin.[33]

As SEO marketing experts often mention, search engine algorithms are regularly updated and sometimes without any notification given to the public on the specific changes. When I found SEO research from scholarly articles that were suitable to my research focus, the specific information useful to my project was inevitably entirely out of date.[34]

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[33] For perspective, *The Near Future Laboratory* is a group of four advanced researchers and paid professionals who started working on their design fiction pieces displayed on their website in 2009.
[34] It is almost impossible to decode search engine algorithmic code, as the developers are always changing it. That is what makes algorithmic code cracking a fun hobby—even if you arrive at a correct decode, that code is already rewritten. The game never ends no matter how many times you win it.

Therefore, to fill the gaps in knowledge needed to realize my thesis objective of examining how worlds are built on SMPs, I took some free online courses offered from the likes of SEO giants Moz and SEMrush. The best course I took in this category was one from a relative newcomer to SEO tools and analytics, Ahrefs, called [Blogging for Business](). It was totally free. Of course, they push their product during the tutorials, but they're also giving away heaps of free, data-driven, and tested research.

Note that any specific SEO-related data in this thesis project will be outdated and inaccurate by the time I submit the thesis for review. The data and tests that I run on SEO and AI in creating *Factions* are for the benefit of this project alone. What I would love to see, is the thesis website applied as a template for future exploration into factions as genre and concept—templature and HCC in practice-based research inserting a wholly new group of data sets and fresh, crunchy content.

Chapter 6—Conclusions

Sometimes it appears as though the greatest human aspiration is to sidestep the laborious and time-consuming thought process as it relates to making everyday decisions and life choices. With this idea taken as a mandate, Wu designs and develops systems to delegate thinking and choices. Wu's goal is to be a master sub-creator, designing content with increasingly simple messages in decreasing boxes of space and time. Of course, not all of the audience is bent on rushing through pieces. Wu occasionally plays with effects to slow down the reading experience—though that is not necessarily intentional and meant to please the visitor. In fact, Wu runs the risk of alienating their audience.

User experience experts have an obsession with feedback. This constant insistence on beckoning any and all possible participants with the promise of an ideal, tailor-fitted website experience, this corporate design model of the feedback economy, is destined to disappoint. (Hung et al., 2020) The audience grows restless at the slightest hiccup in service. We expect to be shown material in a uniform template across all platforms. Websites need to be "responsive" and adapt to the established best practices at the risk of losing visitor/customer attention.[35] This leads to higher expectations, lower attention spans, and overall dissatisfaction driven by unrealistic customer service promises.

Wu would tell you; I am no exception. In fact, I am in the top percentile of least patient, quick to frustrate and aggravate visitors. However, I do not want to be this way. I want to be encouraged to slow down, to mellow out, drift out of hyper-speed, and relax into a leisurely read online. When do I find that zen? One place is *Wikipedia*—where, more often than not, links and tooltip popups lead me on an

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[35] If you did not click on the link to "responsive" on page 61, here's the article referenced—from a post as part of Northwestern University's Information and Design Strategy. Rosenfeld, Louis. "A List Apart: Articles: Beyond Goals: Site Search Analytics from the Bottom Up." *A List Apart*, 2009, http://www.alistapart.com/articles/beyond-goals-site-search-analytics-from-the-bottom-up/.

exhilarating adventure of fragmented long-form nonfiction writing. My website analytics proved that I may not be the only one who enjoys the Wiki experience. The bounce rate—the length of time before a visitor leaves the site—decreases and page view times increase when I post longer works (e.g., "*Noah's Ark speaks up about her undocumented passengers*"). Just as I was thinking, *no-no, these pieces are too long, they break the code of faction, shorter, simpler is better*. Well, this is when Wu steps in to correct me and offer an exercise in worldbreaking—deconstructing our theory. Additionally, SEO strategies call for short, punchy headlines, even though we follow this rule on many pages, Wu completely eschews it, they deconstruct and remix the two mandates of a short headline and a headline that includes keywords.

There still remains an audience that yearns for long-form stories even in digital spaces. By long-form in a faction context, I do not mean hypertext fiction and the multilinearity of that form.[36] When first entering the doctoral program, yes, I was focused on hypertext fiction. This soon proved to be inappropriate. Hypertext fiction asks more of the audience and certainly relies more on fiction than factions ever will.[37] Also, aside from the obvious stress on fiction in hypertext fiction, these works do not employ the fundamentals of the faction genre—SEO best practices, tactics built into the story as promotional Pavlovian bells to humans and algorithms. Ultimately, hypertext fiction allows for reader interaction, but it does not require or allow for social sharing of information and commentary.

In choosing primary texts to use as models for the website, I clearly stuck with existing business and news websites. So, by long-form, I mean the type of writing that includes links and popups as subtext, as context, and most importantly as commentary. The links are additional optional content. Occasionally, what's in the tooltip or link, is best to be avoided—just as looking at comments in a blog or social

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[36] Modir, Ladan, et al. "Text, Hypertext, and Hyperfiction." *SAGE Open*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2014, pp. 21, doi:10.1177/2158244014528915.

[37] Mangen, Anne. "Hypertext Fiction Reading: Haptics and Immersion." *Journal of Research in Reading*, 2008, pp. 404-419, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9817.2008.00380.x.

app is sometimes ill-advised. Unlike hypertext fiction, the audience is not required to make a choice or click on anything to navigate or understand the article or story. Also, even though I started the project looking into early forms of linked stories in print, such as Jorge Borges' *Ficciones*, I found that works leaning toward magical realism did not fit the requirements of factions. Magical realism relies on a firm reality that experiences the invasion of a magical event. Faction writing requires no firm, reliable reality—instead, it relies on a malleable foundation. Aside from that, magical realism, like hypertext fiction, does not rely on SEO or templature. The SEO strategies and algorithms tools I use to build *Factions* must remain wholly factual to isolate the communication issues I mean to explore through an imaginary AI. The ambiguities of *Factions* must arise out of miscomprehension and misunderstandings, if not blatant manipulation and coercion.[38]
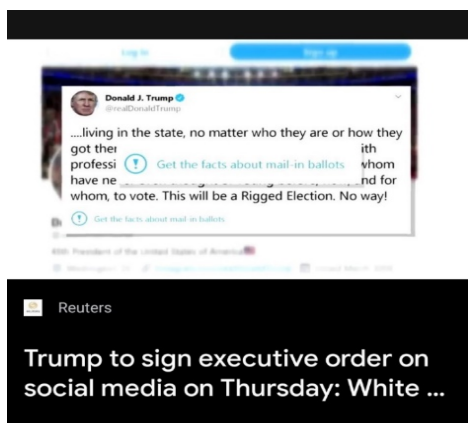
Figure 6-1 Twitter fact checks the president of the United States @realDonaldTrump

On the fiction-nonfiction scale, from 1 (fiction) to 10 (nonfiction), news articles, journal articles, and textbooks need to be firmly set on number 10. Humans need the stability and security of reliable sources and source material that offers boundaries and understanding of our shared reality. Beyond the laws of nature, these truths help us navigate through our daily lives with at least shared cultural understandings, if not beliefs—from national and local news and textbooks. Contentious social media communication creates an anxious atmosphere where even the most reliable top of

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[38] When I read Enrique Encinas and Mark Blythe's "The Solution Printer: Magic Realist Design Fiction" put forward during the Proceedings of *the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, I thought it might be possible to lean toward magical realism. The article revolves around a shared dream event and subsequent fictional devices designed to test for verification of the experience and subsequently begin to work within the real world. The paper is so convincing—such a stunning work of magical realism wrapped in a critical work—that I wanted nothing more than to build off it, to emulate it. Ultimately, the SEO and algorithmic communication objectives of my project halted any move in that direction. Wu may refer to their AI mystic skills as magical, but that is meant as a persuasive tactic.

the top 10 nonfiction tracts becomes spurious. Laws, the written rule of the land, get called into question. It is difficult to navigate reality when the president spreads fictions about legal codes. The trigger that led to my thesis proposal being built around factions was an article I read back in 2016.

In the *Washington Monthly* article "Why I Quit the Congressional Research Service," Kevin Kosar, a former congressional researcher, said:

> *If there's one event that epitomizes why I quit my job last October as*
> *a researcher at the Congressional Research Service, Congress's in-*
> *house think tank, it's a phone call I got some weeks before making*
> *my decision to leave. The call was from a smart congressional staffer*
> *with a law degree. Confessing some embarrassment, he asked if, as*
> *the CRS's resident expert on the U.S. Postal Service, I could help him*
> *and his congressman boss respond to a constituent. The constituent*
> *wanted to know why the USPS was "stockpiling ammunition." The*
> *staffer forwarded the constituent's email, which had links to various*
> *blogs warning that the USPS was arming itself to the teeth, perhaps*
> *preparing for an assault on America.*
>
> *(Kosar 2015)*

In just five years, a current congressional researcher's biggest worry no longer revolves around the social media conspiracy theories they have to fact check. Now they have a president to correct. However, at this point in time, in 2020, it seems as though the public teams behind our social apps, the human and the algorithm, are doing the fact-checking and corrections. Or at least they are offering the social app user the option to view fact-checking material.

Summary

Social media platforms rely on the theater of the mind. We have physical devices that

hold the digital world, but the world is built in the user's mind, and the tour guide is a black box, a disembodied non-physical code, a script. In *Factions*, mysticism is a scientific model, a mathematical expression. Wu is an ethereal being that, while disembodied in a literal sense, embodies the shady SEO snake oil salesman tactics, passing off what's inherently not real, passing it off as scientifically, medically cleared and proven.

My thesis website uses SEO and Wu to show how influential the algorithm is on building a reality on social media platforms populated by debatable subjects, the more abstract and infirm the better. In *Factions: acts of worldbuilding on social media platforms*, each individual builds their world in a conceptual sense. Each visitor decides what to believe and how to parse the information offered. Commentary on and from abstract ideas help form the world and encourage the visitor to sort the fact from fiction. On the website, the commentary comes in various forms—from argument to feedback—but it always arises out of Wu and typically from channeling.

The genre of faction relies on facts embroiled with fiction. They are so intertwined as to be indistinguishable and debatable. *Factions* finds a natural home on SMPs, where the emphasis is on commentary, opinion, and debate. The website uses SEO strengths and includes the crucial ingredient of self-expression—performance as the duet of a person and an algorithm in collaboration.

Note: The preceding critical content examined the nonfiction side of *Factions*. Now, below, I offer a look into the fiction side of *Factions*—answering, what does it look like from a pure fiction perspective?

Addendum—The Essay Bonus Feature

Now that I've placed the project and all its pieces in context, explained theories and practices, tools and techniques, there is an important detail I've saved for the very end to offer you the excitement of a major reveal often only found in fiction. In furtherance of faction, this essay gives you a surprise, twist ending!

You'll notice that as much as Wu represents me, they have this mission to promote and deliver self-improvement. This represents a glitch in the future system. When coders arrived at a solution to online privacy and security with the digital twin, they inadvertently created new issues. Promoting and promising services that they nor I
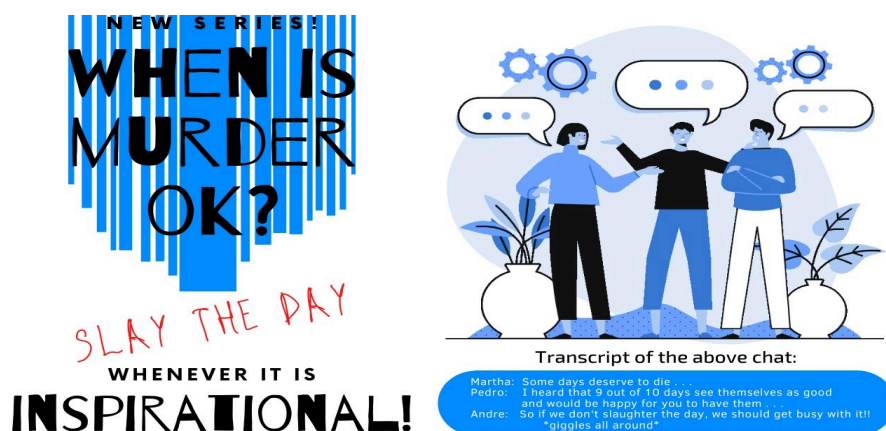
Figure 7-1 A Wu glitch as seen in the [Factions Showcase]

can provide is a result of Wu's glitch regarding my SEO research. My research and development of the faction genre with templature, create Wu's glitches that end in unintended satirical results.[39] For all their superiority, Wu's talents are mostly the results of failed communication between the two of us.[40] The channeling sessions are the equivalent to Wu representing one of my fever dreams around my research—Wu's

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[39] A few posts—e.g., [AI water cooler chatter 1.0]—and pages—e.g., "Our Skills" section of [the About page]—feature glitch effects to highlight this point.
[40] You'll find the idea of the muse and musing referenced often in *Factions*—Wu is my muse and I am theirs.

sometimes overt confusion (e.g., the Ghost Modernism post), general fears (e.g., Kanye West), and core obsessions (e.g., nostalgia and neologisms in the glossary).

Speech recognition was one of the first areas of AI developed and remains one of the leading areas of AI advancement. Yet in this imagined future, the communication fails are epic because the AI power has indeed increased. So, every fail has broader, graver consequences. In Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, HAL 9000 breaks down due to human coding errors. It was given conflicting input—*assist the humans* was overridden by, *complete this mission*, which led to *I must assist this human to complete this mission by not obeying one of his orders*, an order that would save his life.

In my imagined future, when machines are training one another, there is no way to tell where the coding error came from and, therefore, no way to source a resolution. Additionally, it's not always clear that it was an error to begin with as the program may be truly helpful. In *Factions*, speech recognition has moved to mind reading. The misunderstandings we encounter now regularly with Siri or Alexa, are compounded by the power and reach of ASI.[41]

Misinterpretation, miscommunication regarding mind-reading, especially when the human is asleep, dreaming, is a recipe for satire as a best-case scenario. It's a recipe for a drawn-out and unclear path to utter annihilation in the worst case. I chose the best-case because I don't want to contribute to the dystopian trope by using the overtly dour literary tactics common to that subgenre. I prefer satire as a means of delivery and engagement. So, I'm happy to contribute to dystopian fiction as long as its cast spills out of a clown car, and its package is stamped with a smiley face.

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[41] Reminder: ASI = artificial superintelligence.

Appendices

Appendix A: Anatomy of a social justice post

Notes on the post, "*[The Dark Side of the Moon warns people, stay off my lawn or else—](#)*"

> **Henry Hurt :** I, uh, I have a request from the news people.
> **Marilyn Lovell :** Uh-huh?
> **Henry Hurt :** They're out front here. They want to put a transmitter up on the lawn.
> **Marilyn Lovell :** Transmitter?
> **Henry Hurt :** Kind of a tower, for live broadcast.
> **Marilyn Lovell :** I thought they didn't care about this mission. They didn't even run Jim's show.
> **Henry Hurt :** Well, it's more dramatic now. Suddenly people are...
> **Marilyn Lovell :** Landing on the moon wasn't dramatic enough for them - why should NOT landing on it be?
> **Henry Hurt :** Look, I, um, I realize how hard this is, Marilyn, but the whole world is caught up in this, it's historic-...
> **Marilyn Lovell :** No, Henry! Those people don't put one piece of equipment on my lawn. If they have a problem with that, they can take it up with my husband. He'll be HOME... on FRIDAY!

Straight from the script of Apollo 13. See Nobody wants anybody junking up their lawn!

Figure 8-1 A screenshot from the [IMDb quotes section for the 1995 movie Apollo 13](#)

Comments from a fiction on factual events that are fictionalized—the *Apollo 13* movie, a fictional account of the real event, is quoted by a fictionalized version of the Moon.

Next:

We're transported to NASA satellite images with real background on human items left on the Moon. Very real and true, and used by the Moon to bolster its argument, much the way a researcher uses critical citations to add authority, context, and reliability to an argument.

Figure 8-2 A NASA illustration of the various flags left on the Moon

Further down in the post, real footage of Malcolm X delivering his famous quote, "We didn't land on Plymouth rock, the rock was landed on us," is used by the Moon to correlate its experience with the African American experience. A fact-based historical moment inserted into a fictional argument.
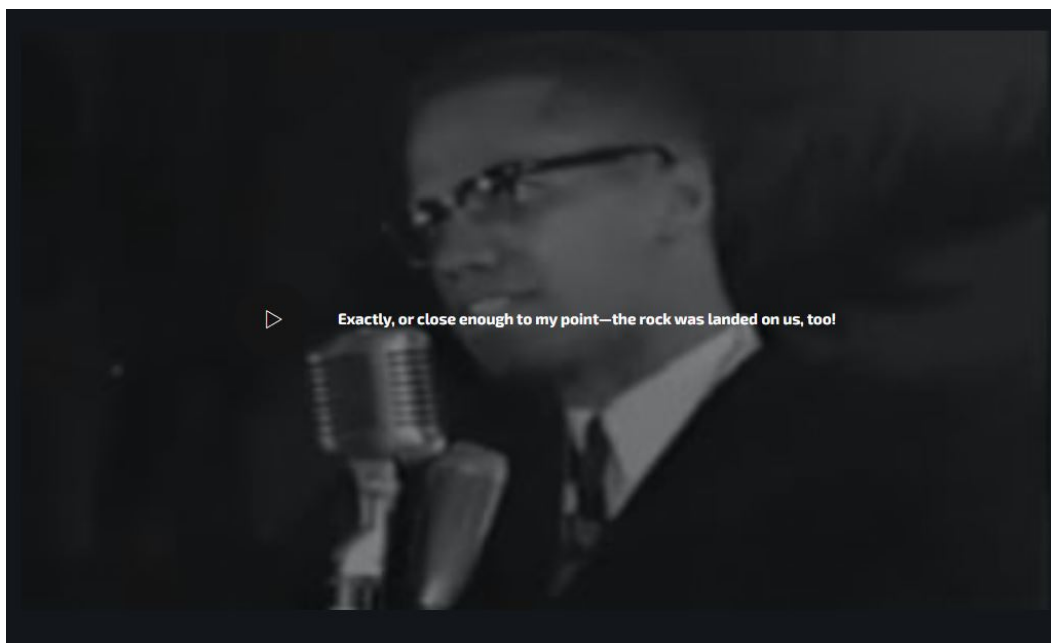
Figure 8-3 Live footage of Malcolm X delivering his famous speech including his remark that Plymouth Rock was landed on black Americans as opposed to and in response to the history lesson often given in U.S. public schools that refers to early white Europeans arriving in the New World as having "landed on Plymouth Rock"

Soon after that, the Moon uses the monolith found on it in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* as further evidence of rocks landed on it. This is another iteration of factions—a fictional account told by the Moon of an actual event that happens in a fictional film.
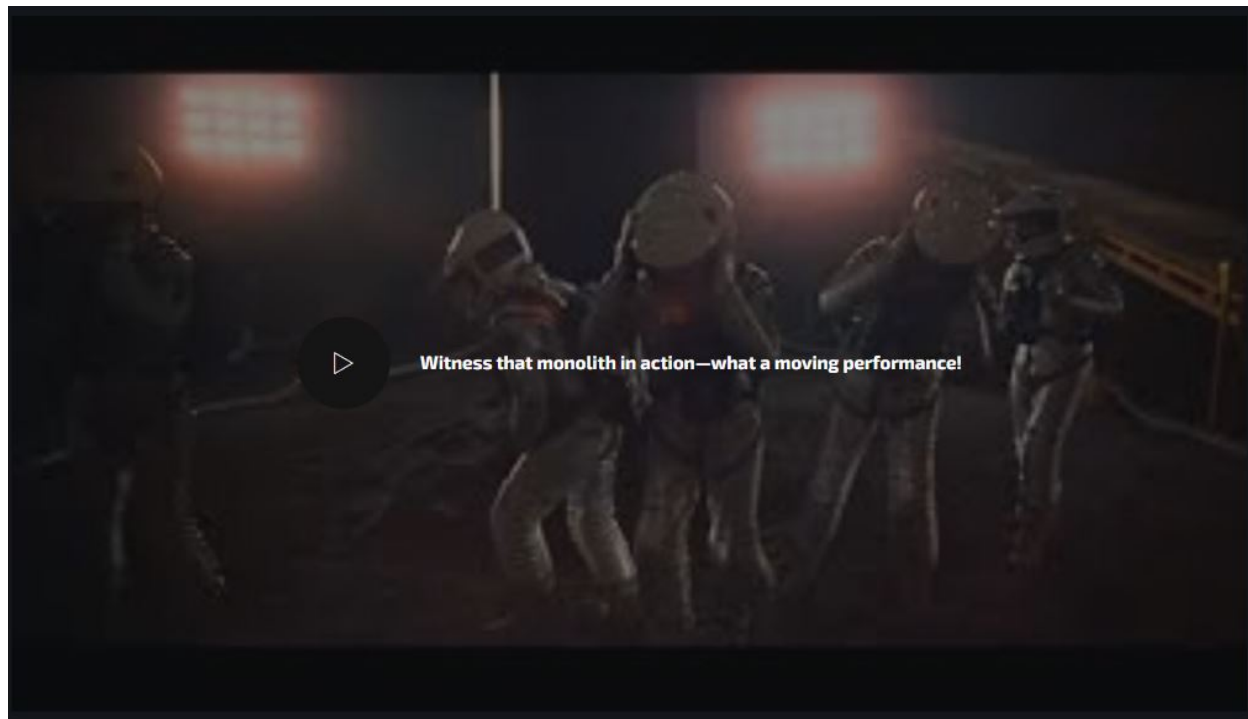
Figure 8-4 A clip of the scene in 2001: A Space Odyssey—the discovery of a monolith found on the Moon courtesy MGM

The final element is a social media standard—an infographic extolling relationship advice. This exhibits faction as the content is indeed real advice, though a fictional character delivers it. It also displays faction the genre through the use of a social media standby (image with text infographics), social media tropes (relationship advice), and the use of templature (the infographic was designed from an Adobe Spark template). It also satisfies the goal of satirical techniques.
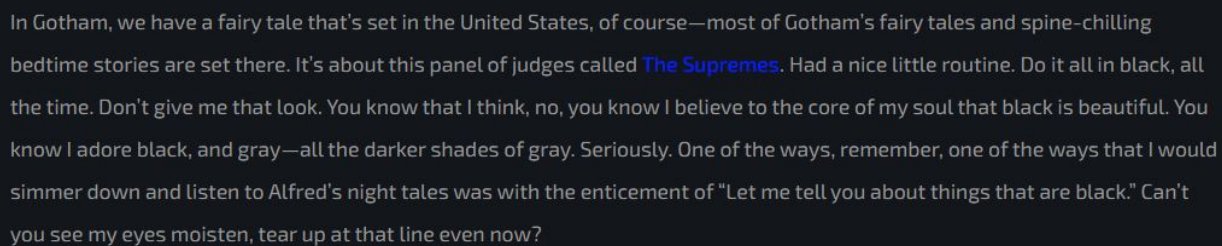
Figure 8-5 An Adobe Spark template reworked with Canva tools—notice the background of minus and times symbols. These symbols show up in various places on Factions, including the "Introducing Wu!" video on The-Channel-Show page.

Appendix B: Anatomy of a social justice and pop culture mashup post

Notes on the post, "*Batman responds to the question, why so serious?*"

There was a real band, *The Supremes*, as evidenced by a link to their Rock & Roll Hall of Fame biography—using the *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame* is better critical evidence for *Factions* because Wu sees the organization as the premier authority on what is real rock and roll. That is also satirical in that the *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame*'s entry choices and definition of rock and roll is annually ridiculed as a matter of course. *The Supremes* were a group of African American women, real figures in American music history. They were not a mythical judicial review board who played a part in the bedtime stories of Batman's youth.[42] This is an example of factions as a real thing subverted, deconstructed, and misappropriated and put into the mouth of a fictional version of a fictional comic book legend (legend as a character and as an origin story).

In Gotham, we have a fairy tale that's set in the United States, of course—most of Gotham's fairy tales and spine-chilling bedtime stories are set there. It's about this panel of judges called The Supremes. Had a nice little routine. Do it all in black, all the time. Don't give me that look. You know that I think, no, you know I believe to the core of my soul that black is beautiful. You know I adore black, and gray—all the darker shades of gray. Seriously. One of the ways, remember, one of the ways that I would simmer down and listen to Alfred's night tales was with the enticement of "Let me tell you about things that are black." Can't you see my eyes moisten, tear up at that line even now?

Figure 8-6 A screenshot of "Batman responds to the question, why so serious?" page. The reference to an official judicial authority, "The Supremes," in Batman's fictional fairy tale story links to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame background and bio page for the real musical group The Supremes. This shows links used as subtext, satire, and to create a story within a story

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[42] Supremacy—of people, groups, and of AI—is a theme throughout the website.

Appendix C: Templature—before and after acts of design

Canva's trash segregation classroom poster:

Figure 8-7 Original Canva template

When I first came across this template, it completely amazed me. It's too perfect—the trifecta of factions. A template that's already satirical covering two of the projects' central subjects (recycling, in many forms, and climate change). It was actually a question of, "What can I change to appropriate it properly?"

So, my list went: The icons of representative recyclable materials and the colors. The grayscale is an excellent visual symbol for factions. Black is the absence of color, though "black" people in American were once referred to as "colored." When the sky is blue, it is because of the absence of other colors—colors playing *Two Truths and a Lie*. The font type I most wanted to use, the 1960s font Cooper Black, is not an option in Canva. Though this led to a better alternative—I went with Rig Solid Medium for the inline cut-out shadow look and the medium weight.

I stuck with the Oswald type font (as it's a remix of the Alternate Gothic classic) for the remaining text but changed a couple of words. "Papers" becomes "cards" and "cans" becomes "wrappers." As the brown group is brown, cards seemed more

appropriate and plays on cardboard and portmanteau.[43] As the white group, cans didn't make sense, but wrappers goes well with plastics and our idea of a wrapper as something of comfort. I also added the slash mark in the title, "Segregation," splitting the word to accentuate the suffix.[44] Also, I italicized and added an exclamation point to the subtitle for gratuitous enthusiasm, a core principle of faction writing.

All the elements, graphic figures, remain the same. I changed the background color to a gradient mix of gray to purple on a descending line (getting thicker, darker, and slightly pixelated as it moves down the page).

The representative circles changed that are complementary to the background gradient—each color is in the background at some point on the way down the page. Each of the categories' line shadow, text font, and element colors match their circle.

Here's the end product:

Those are all the changes and most of the reasoning behind the choices, to this point. As noted, faction writing calls for reboots and repurposing. Who knows what this design may become in the future?

Figure 8-8 My remix of the Canva template that pokes at open wounds

[43] We love portmanteau. Reminder, We + You = Wu
[44] Suffix = a morpheme added at the end of a word to form a derivative. (Definition from Oxford Languages)

Appendix D: Construction and deconstruction, worldbuilding by worldbreaking in *Factions*

After building a world on SEO minimalism, out of confusion around miscomprehension, Wu breaks the world by inserting contradictory tactics.

In a few different places on the website, but most notably within the portfolio item on the homepage, "*Our Haunting Experience*," there is a text effect that floats out words at a set pace much slower than the average person can read. This keeps the reader involved, eager, and on the page longer—for SEO and storytelling purposes.
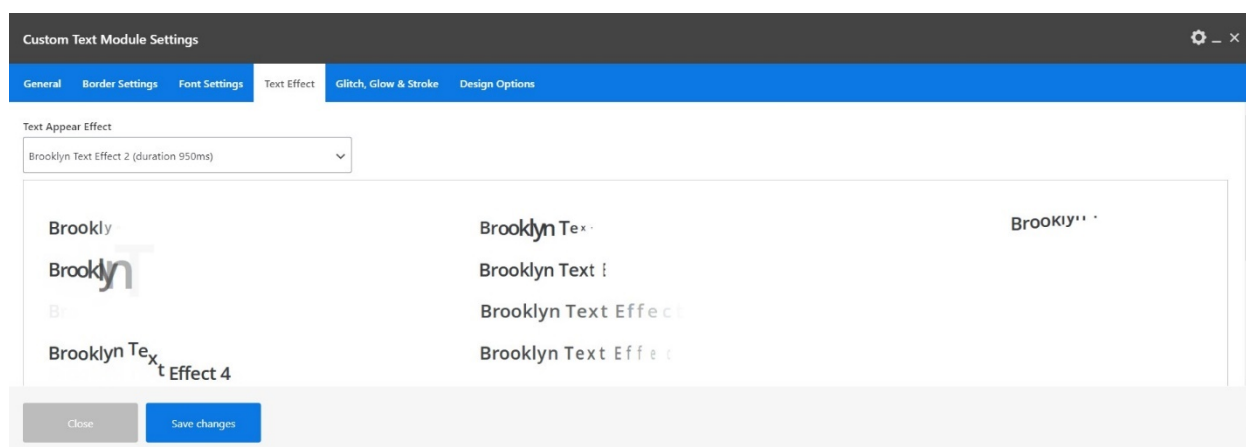
Figure 8-9 Brooklyn theme effects Wu uses as a faction deconstruction technique
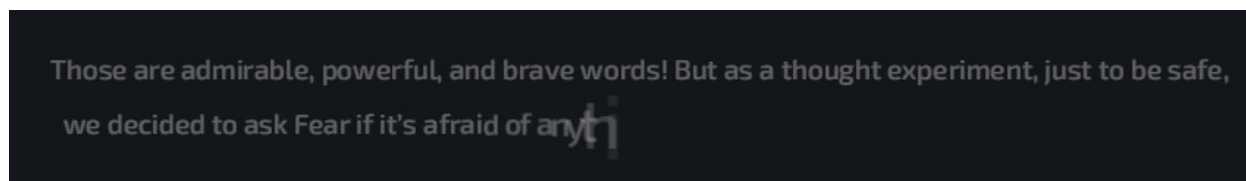
Figure 8-10 A screenshot of the effect in action

Appendix E: *Factions—The M<a>king Of Re<a>l[45]*

Did Someone Say Encore?
You asked, we did . . .

Below is a quick video demo of the pieces I most commonly use to build *Factions*.[46]

I had to make this video demo in quite a mad dash run through because my devices (laptop as the main instigator) are threatening a strike. The laptop is being pushed well beyond its capacity. Before the coronavirus outbreak, I was able to work at the assigned desk space offered to me through the university. There, I had a desktop computer that I used to handle the most difficult and challenging tasks. Now I have to use my laptop for web design and graphic design, and even though it is an advanced machine, a sturdy Dell XPS 15 with a speedy 7th gen CPU core i7, it isn't built to handle the workload I ask of it. Having several windows open in my browser and software launched on the desktop pushes the machine to its limit. Without further explanation, for added edification:

Figure 8-11 Click on the image to watch the Factions worldbuilding tools demo. This thumbnail image is a remix of designs taken from an Adobe template that I uploaded into Canva, adding their elements and effects.

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[46] It's quick if you think 17 minutes is quick. *YouTube* thinks so. They require a verified account in order to upload anything longer than 15 minutes. Go here for the 21 second *Factions—The M<a>king Of Re<a>l* video targeting an AI audience. Running at hyper speed, it shows the website's code and cartoonified images of the featured post.

Here's a truly quick (46 second) demo of Groovepad, the music-making mobile app mentioned in the *M<a>king Of* video.[47] I also added Intro Maker to this demo—it's the mobile-only video editor I often use for the ultra-short web-based videos (click the image to view):

Figure 8-12 I used Groovepad to make the music that plays during the demo above

The full video of "*Noah's Ark speaks up about her undocumented passengers*" mentioned and briefly seen in the *M<a>king Of* video above:

Figure 8-13 This is an early abandoned, failed experiment on making posts into videos—this video wasn't quite working with the text-to-speech tech used and ends about one-third the way into the post

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[47] Here are two Groovepad remix beats—"Classic Beat, I Feel, I Feel" and "Broken Beat Boy"—plus the music "Work Euphoria" played during Wu's HCC *Factions—The M<a>king Of Re<a>l* video insert. I put them up on archive.org for reliable preservation. See the descriptions there for full details and audio design reasoning for each item.

As both a demonstration of AI speech recognition technology and as a demonstration of HCC, the following is a transcript of the *Factions—The M<a>king Of Re<a>l* video made using the Google Docs Voice Typing feature. First, here are screenshots on training the machine from my Dragon NaturallySpeaking Home 13.0 version:
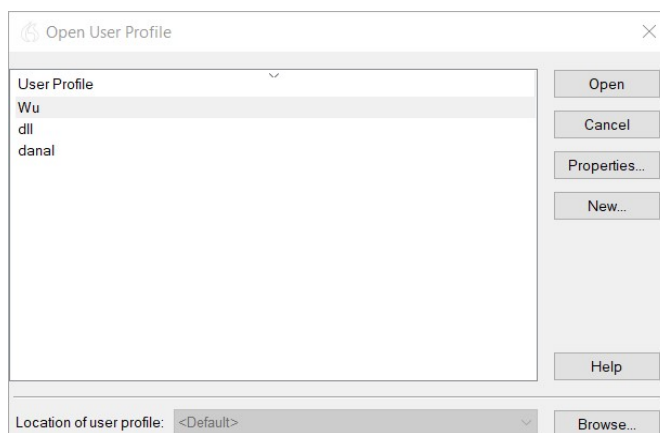
Figure 8-14 Picking the appropriate "User Profile" is key because the software is designed to recognize a particular voice and learn from content and style of written text input for that individual
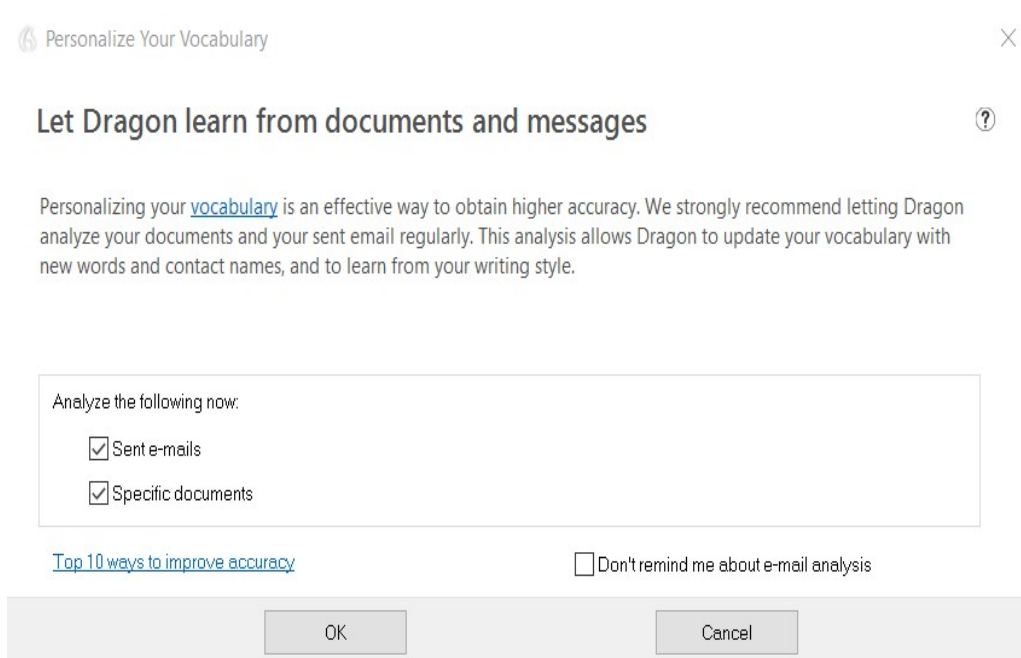
Figure 8-15 These are Nuance's content and style training options
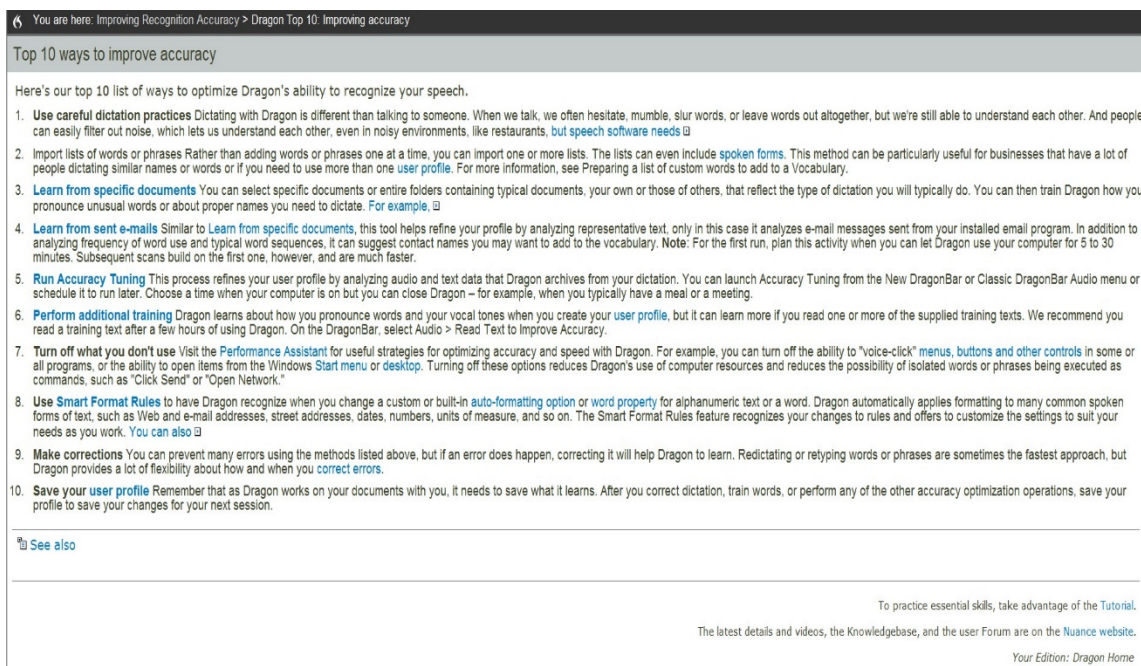
Figure 8-16 This is the advice from Nuance on how best to train your software

The experiment on how the software hears and makes predictions

To try and identify training methods and possible bias inherent in particular training methods, I offer a brief unscientific experiment using my informal methodology.[48] Based on the above information on how Nuance trains its speech recognition software, I try to extrapolate how Google trains its Docs Voice Typing feature.[49] As noted, I use the original raw audio from the *Factions—The M<a>king Of Re<a>l* video.

The following yellow highlighted section is a straightforward example of HCC—I edited the AI's work by correcting their misinterpretations and by adding punctuation to

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[48] The *Search Engine Land* article, "Welcome BERT: Google's latest search algorithm to better understand natural language" by Barry Schwartz offers in-depth information on Google's NLP methodology around search queries. My test involves how their NLP search engine algorithms may affect the training and potential bias of other algorithms within their other products.

[49] Reminder: In Chapter 5, I mention that It is almost impossible to figure out search engine algorithmic code because the developers are always changing it. That is true, and the point still stands. This experiment is meant to demonstrate how the algorithms learn and try to "understand" humans and other programs.

match the video's audio track word for word.[50] The entire middle section is left exactly as the AI heard it. In this section, I add an aqua-colored highlight and footnotes with my comments on the training and potential bias those highlighted words show. I highlighted other instances of capping to try and locate capping rules in the code. Then, at the end of the full-text transcript, the green highlighted section is an example of HCC as I use it with Descripts technology—more nuanced and refined textual editing that changes the audio track:

All right, here we go. This is the making of . . . I have basically opened up most of the tools that Wu and I use on a daily basis to build the world of Factions. As you can see, this is our WordPress dashboard, Factions. And um, going right down the line here I save a lot of my clips. This would be news items and articles that are found online that I want to save via email. And that's pretty much the first step right there. I save all this stuff and that way I can go into it and get a good refresher of exactly what it was that I was looking at, why I wanted it, why we want to use it. And I also save notes over here in Google Keep. And basically I do . . . pretty soon it's . . . get there we go look at that, it popped up, so these are screenshots that I take on my phone and, uh, as you can see this . . . as you can hear, I need to stop saying "as you can see." So clips, uh, dealing with, uh, a kind of thing that's happening right now in the world, mainly in America, and how Twitter is handling the president's handling of incidences that are happening around the death of George Floyd via the police. So I save these. They're not just about stuff like that, but it's typically things that I want to use to insert into and notes that I've taken to insert into somewhere in here. To insert into somewhere in here a post media is the media library so I'm getting to that start post*

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[50] Note that speech recognition software does not add punctuation, nor does it follow grammatical rules.

Adobe[51] *spark post I use this quite a bit and you'll notice if you if you've been at the site for any amount of time even with these little thumbnails you're probably notice what this is on homepage this isn't one of the portfolio pages and I typically we'll use these are all of their templates with my changes and remixes and its contents Etc*[52] *and then we'll go over to biteable I always say biddable*[53] *I got to be careful with that they have a gazillion definition are all templates this isn't my library or any of my changes to their templates but this gives you an idea of how many they have animations are really cool but this is the hint pure the pro version and there's a light version as well they're moving over to the pro soon enough then there's canva I love Kim*[54] *here are the different presentations that I have pain that I'm working on that are going to be put up on the website for The Thesis before I submit and as you can see I make copies quite often because if I'm using their templates use me well I'm rude if I'm using their template I don't want to forget what they're template looks like as opposed to what my design is going to look alike so if it says copy that means I've already started attending it but it's not fully added to the point where I've renamed it so this whenever you named this whenever we named it means that I've done more work on them okay and then into this should look familiar if you've been to the website so this is one of the posters that's on the homepage when you scroll down a bit and just wanted to show all the different layers that are involved with creating just this one item and it looks like it's one*

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[52] "Etc" seems like techie geekery, as if the Google AI is trained on documents—emails or inter-office materials from employee trainers—some of their output will show. Nuance's Dragon NaturallySpeaking offers training based on emails and documents, so I am guessing that Google may train their speech recognition in a similar way.

[53] Love it—this points to bidding—something as biddable in a gambling and gaming sense—as a common topic and training word.

[54] It does not cap Canva, so it may not be trained to recognize the company. Though it most likely has been trained on material related to the Kardashians.

piece but of course and look at I'm not no where near zoomed in so

it's hard to see I'm in the 75 whew that's too close to the ground this

is the main background in fact I might I might just go back down to 25

so you can see the whole thing background and if I double click on

this I can start to move things and connect things and group them

together so you can see four group but background this feature this is

what I call an icon they call it an element this is also another one of

the cool things that they allow you to do is add these effects so I

added an effect to one of their photos and I believe it was trying to

remember which one it was I think it was either retro radiate

probably radiate because I wanted it to look like you know kind of a

synesthesia of the idea of feedback at sound in a visual form and

then I also have that you probably can't tell that this is a woose[55] *i in*

black and white Camp Muir[56] *weather and so there are number*

different layers and there's also a background behind this so this

should be around a total of six different layers and then there's this

audio I haven't made this into a video yet it's just an image on the

website but there's Audio Only[57] *5 second video so just keep looping*

and this is the music that I chose for that in keeping with the theme

that's who often uses Game Theory[58] *and gaming in order to sell*

factions move over to headliner the headliner is connected to

everything I'm going to be doing in the future but some of the stuff

that I'm doing on the website with the tooltips in the tooltips allow

---

[55] I was not sure what to make of this, but after a quick Google search of the word, it made perfect sense. "Woose" is an alternate spelling of the term "wuss" that means a weak, cowardly person. It features fairly prominently in Western cultural movies and TV and gets slung at geeks and nerds regularly.

[56] Too perfect—this is a favorite site for climbers, a camp in Washington state's Mount Rainier National Park not far from Microsoft headquarters. This example from the AI screams, *I was trained by American techies!*

[57] Audio Only is a Google Chrome extension.

[58] I misspoke here—we are not technically using Game Theory in *Factions*. I try to course correct by adding, "and gaming," without fully explaining that I meant gaming to begin with, there is no "and," to be clear. Wu only uses gaming metaphorically and suggestively, e.g., the "*Rogue Wu*" portfolio page.

for audio to be inserted not just text so using the script to create

some of the Channel *show stuff that also shows up and they*

Channel[59] *show webpage on the website but also in these tooltips and*

so this is an idea I wrote this music and I wrote this music using

Groove pad and that's only on my phone I have to use that Mobley

well I just on my phone I could use my tablet as well but I save all

those down here if that makes it so I have a bunch and then I can

insert them into D script[60] *in the script is amazing so I had to take an*

audio of something that I recorded with my voice and then it will

transcribe it and then I can go in here like on this edit an ad like both

are Edward[61] *at whatever it allows me to do that and then it will*

change the audio down here well when she done with that you can

share it and you can publish it but you can share it to headliner and

then start making these really cool audiograms and there's

instapainting I use them a lot typically you'll see and this was made

with instapainting I take public domain pictures whenever they're

typically when they're public domain images I'm going to put them

through instapainting[62] *inst instapainting or* go full tar[63] *and then I*

use Kaplan[64] *these guys so this is the photo and this is the ai's*

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[59] I highlight the two instances of "Channel" because they are capped, though there is no punctuation and "channels" and "channeling" are not capped. It's interesting that the AI knew to cap Adobe but didn't know enough to cap an Adobe product—that's a training issue, that it's not updated on all Adobe software. Google should be aware of this Adobe product—this is a way of seeing Google's priorities.

[60] See my comments on the capping of "Etc" on page 88, as I think the capped "D" in "D script" is the same training issue.

[61] It is connecting the dots—Edward is a common name, so both are Edward. This could point to email training and basic search queries.

[62] I mispronounced Instapainting here, and stumble to recover with "insta instapainting" that follows, but it heard the correct pronunciation no matter what I actually said in all instances.

[63] I misspoke here, I meant to say, "GoArt's Fotor." However, I actually said GoFotor. Although "go full tar" is way superior and more fun than anything I said.

[64] I mentioned Kapwing here—I actually should have said Cartoonify, which is the Kapwing program I am talking about—so that is an error that I would correct in Descript. However, I should note that I am leaving every error in the raw audio as to preserve the original material. About Kaplan—it is not a surprise that the Google AI heard Kaplan, due to the prominence of the Kaplan educational test prep tools in America—another sign of a bias toward an American audience.

rendition of the photo and I typically use this for what Wu[65] calls encrypted information so you'll see there's one there's one there's one and I believe I pulled up a couple of images take care so this is what this says you uploaded this and that's what we came up so there a I came up with that out of this and yeah these are just a few of the creations and I like including sometimes in my notes I like taking a screen this is a screenshot of the completed version once they were done that way I know what photo I used and what image it came from just so that I have a book it's kind of a bookmark I do that a lot with various as you can see with making the copies over here to suggest a bookmark so that I don't forget where did I get this how did I create it I want to be able to go credit Etc[66] and I have the YouTube[67] video section and this video is included in the thesis right under is making out real and then right now I'm recording with Screencast-O-Matic[68] so that's what's happening at all so we'll record sometimes with this is Flashback Pro[69] and these are just these experiments these two experiments that I was doing on making the posts into videos and they're kind of failed and it's something I may do in the future as a move forward but so I didn't like why I've been in that was the voice ended up wanting to use my voice filtered for S Voice[70] voice instead of this more digital sounding voice just wasn't as performative it doesn't perform a text so that's when I ended up using voxel for a

---

[65] All right! That is excellent to see. As noted in the *Factions* glossary, Wu is a place, people, and a language in Southeast Asia. This is a bright spot in the training, that it picked up that word *and* capped it. I would point to general Google search queries as the reason it understood me.

[66] This again—repeated results adds a little weight to my training theory.

[67] Right. No surprise here with the capping.

[68] This is a hot seller in video screen capture and editing tech, so it makes sense that it features in the precise way the company writes it.

[69] I am a little surprised that the AI was trained on this but not too surprised given that it is rather popular. It is just not huge.

[70] S Voice is a Samsung AI assistant app running on speech recognition technology. This is exactly the way the company spells it—caps with no hyphen.

little while that's a software that I bought but <mark>morphvox Pro</mark>[71] is the one that I'm using and this is typically the voice that I use for will in a lot of his he's going to have with this channeling he has difference options over here and then I also tweaked them quite often I add chorus to a lot of them and I could save them and can upload any of the voice recordings that I've done just through any of the voice recorders available out there so there are so many all of these tools I use there's a gazillion different options out there in the world and typically when I'm done I want to upload whatever I've done into my on the website so that I have it readily available and I don't have to go digging around for it so here's the post's page of college channels and just to give you an idea of pull up this what it looks like on the back end so I'm using the theme <mark>Brooklyn</mark>[72] so you can see and in here in order to create the site actually I'll pull it up real quick so you can see what it does you go into it I have it on muted right away but on mute okay so it looks like as a few various features all these up just seems it in you click on the right or the left <mark>Zoom</mark>[73] back out there's not many of these so but you can scroll through and if you have her over get a little caption so now oh and here's a tooltip future for a eye pops up some of the clothes that can go over to what it looks like on the back end now this is <mark>wpbakery</mark>[74] this is the Builder that

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[71] Interesting that the "morphvox" is correctly spaced as one word but only the "Pro" is capped.
[72] This is a place and a name, so it is going to be capped. However, it is a Western place and name and the AI understood it even though it does not always comprehend names that I say. My point is that if it hears something more often or is corrected to hear a word on a regular basis, it gets "better" at hearing that word—even if you do not say it.
[73] Zoom has arrived as a company. That a basic mention of zooming in or zooming out on content leads the AI to assume I am referencing the video conferencing company Zoom. This just adds to my theory around work documents and emails as training material.
[74] This is spelled correctly, no spaces, but it is not capped. WPBakery is a prominent web *page* builder, however, it is part of Visual Composer, a web *site* builder, and there is confusion around how the two fit together. WPBakery is the newer of the two.

Brooklyn uses I've used in the past with other themes and so H filter[75]

there a drop a dragon drop so it makes the process of building a lot

easier and they have a lot of templates that I can add I don't really

want a full hunt this this particular post that much but I'll give you a

quick look default templates those are the ones that I've made

haven't made that money because I tend to want to go with the

defaults as is part of temperature at all these options of where I can

start I click on them I can click plus and it's just going to add it to this

post automatically and it adds it to the end you are there always

have to go to the end and then move it from there so you can see

when you hover over these too loud and you to move it says to move

text so in order to create that image in the hero it's called the hero

at the top of that post I had to create a YouTube my YouTube videos

uploaded in the media and then inserted it in this year which is this

is always at the top of my options and then I have to go down and see

all my different revisionist these are all the revisions that Don and I[76]

can go back to these and say oh my god what have I done and go back

to Melbourne[77] so this is a rather Old Post[78] and here's all the options

for the heroes so I have to if I'm going to have video and audio and

Gyro[79] and just go ahead and open it up on my time so you could see

---

[75] So interesting—an H filter is a type of pool filter, yes, but it is also a respirator cartridge. This could point to my thoughts on the AI being trained on Google search engine results—COVID-19 topics rank high.

[76] I do not know a Don—maybe one is in my future? Another male name that I would guess reflects email training.

[77] Australia reference—that is a terrific line of reasoning from the AI—it heard me say, "and go back to" and guessed that what I said must be Melbourne because where else would I go back to? If my imagined future comes to pass, Wu would know that I would go (am going) back to Baltimore, Maryland, in the United States.

[78] This is most likely capped because there are so many restaurants in America with that name.

[79] Nice. At first glance, you may be thinking, "Ooo, the proper spelling of the Greek food." But this word is capped. That is why I responded with, "Nice" because Gyro is the Italian main character in the Japanese manga-based anime series, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*. This definitely crosses cultures—though almost by mistake since it is a big series in America. However, that serves to make this experiment good for identifying cross-cultural interests, too.

what I mean by Hero[80] *so this is the here all right here and I have a party I have the effect backgrounds and others me to take hair up you can see it that's the hero and here's my adjustments for the hero changing the size changing the spacing have a million different options so it's pretty fantastic it's there a lot of great tools my tooltip options are in every post so I can turn it off and turn it on and these are the categories in the different tags which I'm filled up that much you always want to set a featured image for responsiveness and so that what that means is if it's not go if that video and audio is not going to work which it should but if it's not going to work on a mobile device then this image is going to replace it and when you first go when you first pop over to this page what loads initially is just the image and then it goes into the video by and large that's the long and the short of it I kind of explain why I have to rush through this text right above this video but hopefully you got something out of it and you can understand a little bit of the many many different pieces that go into making one of just one part 1 Post and there are a lot of posts in a lot of different tools that need to be applied in order to create actions.*

All right, here we go. This is Factions—the making of Real. I opened up most of the tools that Wu and I use on a daily basis to build the world of Factions. As you can see, this is our WordPress dashboard with the tag, Factions, in the upper lefthand corner. Moving right down the line, reading left to right, you can see here that I save a lot of my clips. These are news items and articles found online that I want to save via email. That's the first step. I save all these items as reminders of exactly what I found, why I wanted it, why Wu and I

---

[80] This could point to several things—there are people and games and songs, all that should be capped. It spans quite a diverse crowd, with all the training options touched. I would lean toward it thinks I am referencing one of the songs titled "Hero" because it thinks I say, "I mean by Hero . . . I have a party."

may want to use it. And I also save notes in Google Keep. I also save screenshots that I take on my phone. These specific clips deal with what's currently happening in the world, mainly in America, around justice and police brutality. The clips show how Twitter is handling the President Trump's handling of protests in reaction to the death of George Floyd during an arrest in Minnesota. So, I save these screenshots. Not all the clips are in regard to emotionally charged content, but they are typically articles that contain content relavent to my research, items I can reference, and links to insert into a post or page on Factions.

Most of the highlighted words point to likely training or workshop experiences for Google AI. This quite informal and inexact experiment does suggest possible areas of learned bias through training. (Continue to Appendix F: ***Inside a Toxic Box*** for more testing.) However, I wanted to add a note about this experiment regarding the collaborative nature behind writing and editing with NLP and AI digital writing assistant tools.

Hi Dana,

Thank you for sending us this information!

What I can tell you is that because Grammarly is an automated service, all our suggestions are generated based on algorithms. We do not claim that our service is 100% accurate because there are limitations to what a program can do (versus what a highly-trained English or writing expert can do). Please understand, while we strive to improve our algorithms in order to provide accurate and helpful suggestions, they are not perfect (yet!).

Anytime you hit "Incorrect suggestion" (this button is visualized as a flag) or "Ignore" (this button is visualized as a trash bin) on an unhelpful suggestion, Grammarly gets a little bit smarter. Over time, our team can make adjustments to the suggestions with high ignore rates to make them more helpful.

Thank you for your patience and understanding!

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Figure 8-17 Zoom in to see this email response from Grammarly on feedback I gave them (that they asked for) regarding AI performance and training

HCC in this context—training the algorithm and learning what it knows, letting it teach you by picking up on consistent errors—is akin to a workshop experience. The AI and I are in a conversation over the storytelling elements and how to present them. There have been numerous times, especially when taking notes in Google Keep and revising in Grammarly, that I've changed what I actually said or meant to write due to what it thought I said or what it predicted I would write. (I often speak my Google Keep notes, and then Grammarly helps me edit them.)

Appendix F: *Inside a Toxic Box*

As a further experiment into potential AI bias, I took the full text shown in the *"Noah's Ark speaks up about her undocumented passengers"* video and ran it through both the free Google Docs Voice Typing and the paid premium Nuance Communications' Dragon NaturallySpeaking speech recognition software. This tests how the two speech recognition systems do with the same material, and it tests how well AI comprehend one another because both the speech recognition tools are listening to audio created by Natural Reader's text-to-speech software. First up is the Google docs results:
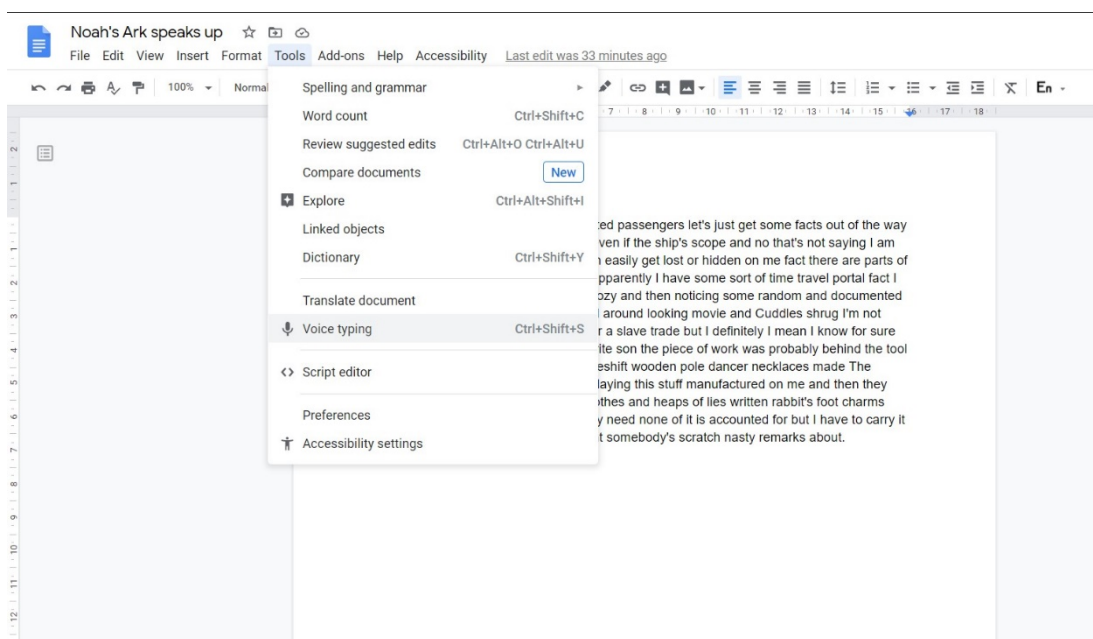
Figure 8-18 The Google Docs Voice Typing interface

Speaks up about <mark>Sarah</mark>[81] and documented passengers let's just get some facts out of the way I am bigger than I look I am a big girl even if the ship's scope and no that's not saying I am not ashamed I'm just saying things can easily get lost or hidden on me fact there are parts

---

[81] Google's AI is treating this text as if it were a conversation among people—most likely from America or another primarily English-speaking country.

of me that I didn't even know about like apparently I have some sort

of time travel portal fact I only figured it out after feeling a bit

woozy and then noticing some random and documented figures who

role for Brown at the world around looking movie[82] and Cuddles shrug

I'm not going to say it was human trafficking or a slave trade but I

definitely I mean I know for sure that he has not come out at least

favorite son the piece of work was probably behind the tool also

things were built on me from makeshift wooden pole dancer

necklaces made The Rock's[83] teeth never claimed anybody playing this

stuff manufactured on me and then they just abandoned it piles of

mildewed clothes and heaps of lies written rabbit's foot charms how

many crystal balls does one family need none of it is accounted for

but I have to carry it no fun and somebody or a few different

somebody's scratch nasty remarks about.

Now, Dragon NaturallySpeaking's speech recognition results:
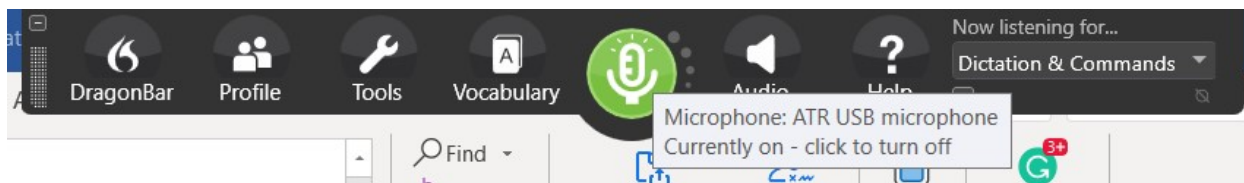
Figure 8-19 The Dragon NaturallySpeaking toolbar

Louisville[84] speaks up about her undocumented first let's just get

some facts out of the way I am bigger than I look I'm a big girl even if

it's good and no that's not saying I'm not ashamed I'm just saying

things can easily get lost or hidden on the fact that all parts of me

---

[82] Both AI hear "looking mopey" as "looking movie." These points to an entertainment-based cultural bias.

[83] This is a particularly interesting error. Dragon's software also misheard the word "rat" and replaced it with "rock." However, Google's replacement of a cultural figure "The Rock" (not "Dwayne Johnson," but Dwayne Johnson's wrestling ring name) points to how they train their AI to lean toward popular search keywords.

[84] Although Google didn't even recognize "Noah's Ark," Dragon hears it as a city in the United States.

that I didn't even know about like apparently I have some sort of
time travel portal fact I only figured it out off the feeling a bit
woozy and then noticing some random undocumented figures who
bowlful Brown for all region of the world milling around <mark>*looking*</mark>
<mark>*movie*</mark>[85] *in one of the goats and sheep candles shrug I'm not going to*
say it was human trafficking or the slave trade but I definitely I mean
I know for sure the whole truth has not come out about that one
there was a least favorite son have the piece of work was probably
behind the tool also rings were built on the from makeshift wooden
cauldrons to necklaces made of rocks teeth never claimed liberty
claimed this stuff manufactured on me and then they just abandoned
it piles of mildewed scrolls and heaps of lies written rabbit's foot
charms how many crystal balls does one family need none of it is
accounted for but I have to carry it not from an somebody or a few
different somebody's scratch nasty remarks about they were into my
lower height not to.

When using speech recognition software, it is recommended that the best microphones and the clearest voice and enunciation be employed. I used the Audio-Technica ATR2100-USB Cardioid Dynamic USB/XLR Microphone—which is a highly regarded and recommended mic for podcasters. Given the degree of difficulty in listening to a digital voice, even with a high-quality mic, the two AI systems do quite well. I do believe that Dragon has the edge and is the better tool overall—though it completely loses its thread and becomes incomprehensible in its translation of the text-to-speech voice in the last sentence. Full disclosure—I am not a regular or active

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[85] It is always nice to see the algorithm trying to make sense of what it hears, "looking" and "movie" are a sensible linguistic pair. However, that is what also weakens NLP—its reasoning skills are limited to narrow exposure. It cannot think beyond the linguistic pair and imagine another way for "undocumented figures who bowlful Brown" to look. It does not understand or recognize context. The capping of "Brown" is most likely the AI assuming a surname—and the "undocumented figures" committed the "bowlful" act on poor Brown.

user of the Google Docs Voice Typing feature; however, I have used various versions of Dragon NaturallySpeaking for over a decade. So, I'm a bit biased.

As noted, it is interesting to look at the overlap in errors to evaluate how the AI were likely coded—what tags and definitions were used to train the AI. I do believe that, from this brief experiment and not combing over each word, it appears as though both AI have a bias toward culturally specific tags and definitions, particularly American or Western culture. Some may say, the content is in English, so it makes sense that the AI would infer certain words directed at an English-speaking audience. However, I would counter with, social media is an international platform ("world wide web"), and English is a common language used across many cultures worldwide. AI designed to serve a global audience (as Google's most certainly is and given that Nuance bills itself as an international company) should be culturally aware and broad-minded.[86] That's another thesis, though—speech recognition software and AI performance comparisons as indicators of coding practices and outcome bias.

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[86] On the Nuance homepage, they proudly announce that "10K healthcare organizations worldwide use Nuance." Granted, Nuance offers Dragon tech in several languages, however, my point still stands— English is ubiquitous across many of the countries and cultures Nuance serves.

Appendix G: *Creation Tools*

Web Creation and Management Tools

Bluehost

Brooklyn WordPress Theme

CreativeMinds Glossary Tooltip Plugin

Inspyder—InSite 5 & Web2Disk

WordPress.org

WPBakery Page Builder

Yoast

Video and Image Software and Apps

Adobe Spark

Biteable

Canva

Cartoonify

CloudHQ

Flashback Pro

GoArt Fotor

Headliner

ImgFlip

Instapainting

Intro Maker

Screencast-O-Matic

Audio Software and Apps

Audacity

Descript

Dragon NaturallySpeaking

Google Suite

Groovepad

HumOn

MorphVOX Pro

Texthelp Read&Write Gold

Word Processing and Presentation Software and Sites

Adobe Acrobat DC

Free Article Spinner

Grammarly

Microsoft Word

MindView

Prezi

Rewriter Tools

Talk to Transformer

Quillbot

Public Domain Databases

Free Sound

Pixabay

The Noun Project

Unsplash

Archival Tools

Archive.org

Rhizome

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