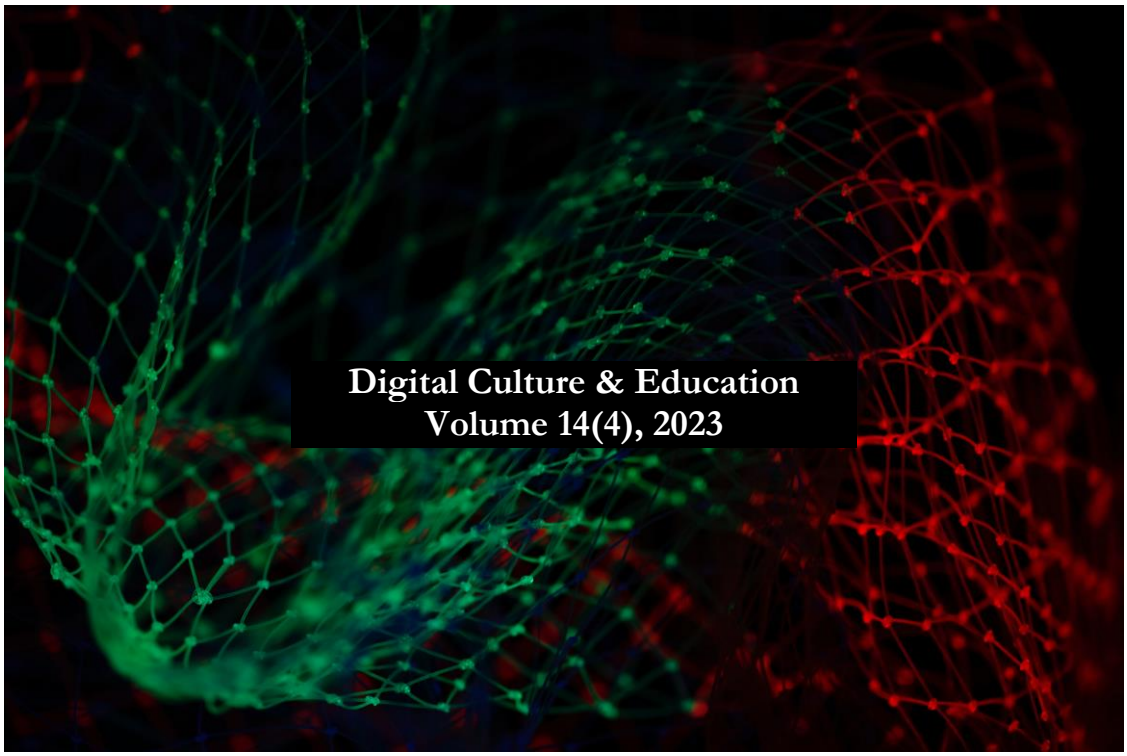

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Search and consume: Consummation of desire among the database animals

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Search and consume:

Consummation of desire among the database animals

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Abstract: *This paper is born out of conceptual work stimulated in the construction of a literary search engine for the PhoneMe project (www.phonemeproject.com), social media for spoken-word poetry. Drawing on Hiroki Azuma, we explore the ways in which desires are located and consummated through acts of searching and propose a pedagogy of search literacy which embraces spontaneity and accidents to break out of the algorithmic guidance. Azuma sees the postmodern as an historical period characterized by a shift away from grand narratives to database culture, whereby information is consumed not as a cohesive unit stabilized by collectivized narratives, but as a protean association of data fragments made available through searching databases. Such a cultural shift not only transforms the media, but also subjectivity. We propose a theory based on the idea of inadvertent semiosis we call anti-signs. In the database environment, these anti-signs are aggregated to produce the consumers' Antibody. This Antibody, or one's algorithmic guide, begins to direct the user's desires and attentions. We present a way to bring contingency back into the act of searching through prompting glitches to occur–what Azuma calls misdelivery–and through the aesthetic (as opposed to efferent) textual representation of literary search results.*

Keywords: *Hiroki Azuma, search engines, subjectification, database*

Introduction

This paper draws upon our conjectures concerning the development of a literary search engine for the PhoneMe project (www.phonemeproject.com), a social media app for spoken word poetry supporting a mobile phone-native genre of literary expression. Freely available in both App Store and Google Play, this app hosts hundreds of spoken word poems in audio and textual format, along with an interactive map on which these place-based poems are pinned accompanied by Google Street View images of their specific locations. The goal of the PhoneMe project has been to create a mobile app capable of streaming poems by location or user preferences, and perusal of contents whether by topic, location, poet-user, hashtags, sub-genre (rap, limerick, etc), and keywords. These services require the use of personalized data related to search histories, likes, and other voluntary user profile data that can be maintained in a database. In building the database architecture and developing data models for this literary, user-generated-content driven application, our aim has been to innovate with the notion of literary search, and provide the artificial means of serendipitous encounters with aesthetic texts and sound files.

Created as an alternative to the more ephemeral discourses of social media, PhoneMe is a platform for saying something memorable in poetry and connecting the digital generation with place-based awareness and a celebration of localized knowledge. It is a project we have shared through workshops in Indigenous and settler, rural and urban marginalized community settings (Balyasnikova and James, 2019), schools and universities (Horst et al., 2021) libraries, community centres and online for not-for-profit writers collectives. In this paper we explore an approach to search engine results that challenges rank bias displays and incorporates aspects of accidental encounters.

We have taken inspiration from the writings of Hiroki Azuma (2007; 2009; 2017), a philosopher well known for his work on Japanese otaku culture which arises out of the fan-world of anime and manga. In adopting Azuma's work, we draw connections between how surface layer (user interface, screen-based) and deeper layer (database) interactions with search operations and results have impact on searching, subsequent understandings, and identity-rooted behaviours, along with the cultures that emerge from these searching practices. We argue that searches arising out of aesthetic behaviours develop differently than searches that primarily serve within capitalist informatics and utilitarian practices. As Katz (2010) suggests, in order to understand search behaviours and the influence of aesthetics "on user's attitudes and behavior with those systems" we need research that offers "finer

grain perspectives of perceived aesthetics" and that takes into account "various contexts of use (such as user goals and tasks, application genre, etc.)" (p. 443).

In the following paper, using the PhoneMe project as a catalyst and use case, we theorize that provoking deeper aesthetic and agential search practices can occur through the cultivation of accidental *misdelivery* of information and programmatic search results that cause fissures in the smooth reflection of personalized desire so that deeper knowledge of other possibilities within the database erupt (Peña and James, 2016). We end this paper with search results from phonemeproject.com represented as a hyperlinked poem.

Information's Tourists

Perhaps the greatest search of all is the search for that which does not exist (or as Walter Benjamin often quoted Hofmannsthal, *to read what was never written)*; through persistence and tenacity, the searcher creates the necessary conditions for its emergence into being. What is commonplace today was once only imagined. It is not the imagination that makes it real, but imagination which extends beyond the beleaguered desire of the individual and instills in the collective *a need* that will make it so.

While such pioneership is widely shared among the entrepreneurs of today's information society, in which the Internet, and more recently social media, is analogous to the blue ocean for voyagers and colonizers, the modes of search promoted by online search engines allow the average user to engage in an excursion of tourism rather than a voyage of conquest. Without risking their lives on the journey, Hazel Hahn (2012) suggests tourists enact what Baudelaire calls *flânerie*: 'dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flo, the bustle, the fleeting' (Baudelaire, 1972, p. 399). As they flânerie, tourists gaze upon the sites and objects with a particular mode of vision: expecting to witness something outside of their ordinary and consuming (often through the act of recording) cultural objects and practices that are packaged as authentic (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Through "authentication," cultural objects and practices become commodities of the tourism industry, and those commodities constitute a database of entertainment that guides the tourist gaze and tells them what is attention-worthy and "instagrammable." In other words, tourists engage with what Azuma (2009) calls "database consumption," through which tourists consume instances of entertainment that are made out of the elements of attraction picked up from the database.

It is far too easy to critique such a posture as superficial and frivolous, but according to Azuma (2009), database consumption often involves a cynical attitude. In his book, *Philosophy of the Tourist*, Azuma

explores with characteristic duplicity tourism's potentiality for accidental encounters. Tourists are often fully aware that they are consuming "staged authenticity" (McCannell, 1973) and performatively entertained by its uncommitted footlooseness and superficiality that does not fundamentally shake their values and beliefs. This is because tourism by definition presupposes that people can go back to their ordinary life undisturbed. The superficiality of tourism, therefore, functions as a cushion for the tourists to be safely guided and mesmerized by the exotic life of the other, as well as a protection of the locals from intrusions of the tourists into their lives. This perceived safety and lightness makes tourism a massively popular industry in the (post)modern era.

Yet, no matter how fully planned, tourism cannot completely foreclose the possibility of accidents. Accidents here not only include physical harm, but also unexpected encounters with impressive things. For example, referring to MacCannell (1999), who argues that tourists in early 20th century Paris were given tours at sites like "the sewers, the morgue, a slaughterhouse, a tobacco factory, the government printing office, a tapestry works, the mint, the stock exchange, and the supreme court in session" (p. 57), Azuma (2017) says that the "essence of tourism lies in [its possibility of] the misdelivery of information, and how that misdelivery may lead to a certain kind of enlightenment" (p. 159). Tourists go to places they would never visit in their hometown, and their interpretations of what they see in those places are full of misunderstandings. However, "such a misdelivery can be a catalyst for new understanding and communication," says Azuma (2017, p. 159), "that is what is attractive about tourism."

Following Azuma (2017), we take this accidental, therefore non-substantial, aspect of tourism seriously, given that PhoneMe is a geotagged, map-based application in which one tours different locations with a poet's-eye-view. Our matter of concern is around the sophisticated algorithms embedded in search engines that increasingly erode the possibility of misdelivery and therefore are changing the meaning of "search" in today's information environment. Like neatly packaged guided tours one can purchase from a travel agency, more and more, we outsource the agency of our searching to powerful search engines of Google, AI-powered Bing, TikTok, and others. As Takano (2015) argues, the ultimate goal of the search engines is not to have humans do the search, but to prefetch the information they want and present it before they search.

Search, Serendipity, Cultivation of Tastes

To search is to become that which objectifies the search, to fashion oneself after the object of desire, to lose oneself once the search begins so that in the finding there is a form of self-discovery. This self-

discovery in the process of searching enables intuition, which is a sensing beyond apparent stimuli. Intuition is never more clearly revealed than through obsessive searching, when pattern recognition is no longer deliberate but is subsumed below consciousness and rationality. Arising from organic database expertise, intuition plays a formidable role in decision making that can exceed the capacity of intelligent algorithmic analysis when uncertainty exists in the data (Acar and West, 2021; Salas et al., 2009). There are abundant examples of this, which almost anyone who has ever engaged in prolonged searching is familiar with.

Let us harken back, not far, to the age of print and books of all description. Consider the scholar who absently draws a book down from her shelves, perhaps one purchased a decade prior on a whim, and one she barely if ever glanced at over those intervening years, only to open it and behold on that very first glance on some middling page, the quintessence of the information which she had been assiduously seeking for hours or days. The discovery is almost invariably tangential to the steely compass of the starting point of that desire.

In their work examining happenstance interaction, Antle, Matkin, and Warren (2016, p. 746) state:

> *Research has shown that simply accessing information that exists "out there" in the world lacks a personal connection to our real world and rarely results in long term awareness or behavioral change regarding our habits. We propose that a more effective approach is using happenstance interaction, in which information retrieval is passively directed by our hands-on interaction with the world.*

If one is by nature superstitious or alert to energetic alterities, fortuitous happenstance does seem to be propelled by something outside oneself, beyond simply willing it to be. For those readers who have grown up with self-driving search engines that do the work for them, this whole portal of nostalgia might seem unnecessarily romanticized. *Browsing* the stacks was a library goer's pastime and lent its name if not its character to Internet browsers and search engines that drive them. For desire is at the core of searching, and the hunt for some kind of material or immaterial treasure is its fullest expression (Burnett et al., 2014); those most addicted to such manifest desire become "pure collectors" (Kleine et al., 2021).

Consumerism is itself a form of search behaviour which seeks elusive satisfaction of desire. Superficial consumerist behaviour elicits steady critique from scholars in all areas, and the critique is really of the desire's superficiality. For when the desire deepens, the seeking behaviour turns autodidactic, reflective and awakening, becomes a desire motivated by a love of *something*, a form of amateurism and fandom, which through repeated engagement develops into a finessed expertise, a knowledge that extends

deeply and cognizes the categories and elements that comprise the objects of obsession into a conceptualized database. It tells the story that has not yet been written, that pulls together these disparate elements into multiple frames of reference. "In the shift from modernity to postmodernity, our world image is experiencing a sea change, from one sustained by a narrative-like, cinematic perspective on the entire world to one read-up by search engines, characterized by databases and interfaces" (Azuma, 2009, p. 54). Azuma (2009) reads deeply into this sublated type of search, this shift from assimilating simulacra framed within a grand narrative to processes of identification by drawing resemblances from a repertoire of recombinant affective elements and characters through the act of "database consumption."

This type of search, which abandons the grand narratives to feed its desire within the grand databases, characterizes the "consumer behavior of the otaku, which might seem like a chaotic inundation of simulacra, becomes more ordered and understandable once we turn our eyes to the level of the database" (Azuma, 2009, p. 58).

Although Azuma is speaking about a specific subculture in Japan, the behaviour of the otaku is symptomatic of a much greater shift in contemporary information society. Once the stigma associated with it had been dissolved through popularization, all specializations and bearers of deep knowledge of the associated elements of a database became associated with otaku (Azuma, 2009).

Much like a literacy that when practiced attains a degree of automaticity in recognizing the quality of authenticity in cultural objects, both material and virtual, and typically induces a practice of collection, whether music recordings, books, shoes, cars, toys, seeds and plants, recipes, travel destinations, scholarly articles, hair styles and so on. Collectors, as epitomized by Water Benjamin in the monumental Arcades Project (Benjamin, 1999) and the critique it sustained by longtime friend Theodor Adorno, are an antidote to consumerist ideology. As Adorno writes in his personal response to reading the drafts:

> *This would be a central place for the doctrine of the collector as the one who liberates things from the curse of utility... His class consciousness, precisely by the very perfection of the commodity character in a Hegelian self-consciousness, inaugurates the explosion of its phantasmagoria. To understand the commodity as a dialectical image is also to recognize the latter as a motif of the decline and 'sublation' of the commodity, rather than its mere regression to an older stage. On the one hand, the commodity is an alien object in which use-value perishes, and on the other, it is an alien survivor object that outlives its own immediacy.* (Adorno and Benjamin, 1999, p. 107)

The sublation of consumerist search—consumption being the direct intent, if not necessarily proudly proclaimed, of the dominant search engines—is thus to lead people to the revaluation beyond the refuse of superficial signs, symbols and luring images, to drop below the surface and drown the constructed "smart" image of the commodified self in the virtual depths of the ocean of information. Consumerism from these depths requires expenditure of money and time, in return offering considerable pleasure–a type of treasure hunt, and pride, as well as social and cultural capital. In the background of such expertise there remains a consumerist impulse, however, a knowledge of the value, often reduced to monetary terms, of the collection and/or its use (hence, we argue, a greater fluidity of personality type than that offered by the psychological portraits of three types of collectors, "consumers, investors, and pure collectors" [Kleine, et al, 2021, para. 5], when considering Azuma's theory of database consumerism). Often, the collection manifests in a type of archival activity, a structuring and ordering of the collection using criteria that create, in themselves, the simulacra of desire, that arrange the intellectual environment so that it can logically and memorably hold the contents of the collection in a retrievable mental display, with categories in which identifiable types of contents can be stored. This animal behaviour is also the structuring principle of the database. Databases are automated, (sometimes) rapidly morphing collections by code-based collectors. The code incorporates the intentions and ideologies of its authors. How could it not?

Database consciousness manifests consumerist desire turning obsessive, deep, and sophisticated. Those who share these desires often exhibit a sense of insiderism, an exclusive group who understand the categories; sometimes, those who do not are shunned (e.g. in gamer communities, see Paassen et al., 2017). All those with authenticated privileges have access to the database, but only those with consciousness of its range of reproducible elements form a database culture. We may just as well be describing a vinyl record collector in Vancouver, a gamer collecting cheats in Georgia, or an insider of Japan's otaku culture. Stimulated originally by obvert (advertising, forums, endorsements) and covert (product placements, young rebelliousness, friends) messaging, and increasingly addictive (as the collection grows, so does the desire, and these in turn feed into expertise), desire is transformed into its manifest supplement and courses through personality as an identity-enhancing passion. Behind the search is an alterity of being as becoming something beyond the self, entering a structured system of values. However, the algorithms now tasked with serving up the vast cultural databases and programmed to enhance monetization of the collection have further complexified social relations arising from search engine bias and skewed results (Kumar, 2019).

Desire, Identification, Consummation

The object of desire concretizes itself at the moment of its discovery. The searcher keeps on searching, without knowing what it is exactly that they desire. In illustrating the ontology of desire in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Judith Butler (1987) provides great insights into the link between pursuit of desire and recognition of one's own identity:

> *The intentionality of desire is always also informed by its reflexive project; desire always reveals the desiring agent as intrinsically other to itself: self-consciousness is ek-static being, outside itself, in search of self-recovery. The proliferation of objects of desire affirm for self-consciousness the persistent realm of alterity. (p. 39)*

For a consciousness to become a self-consciousness, the necessary addition is not the "self" (first, in Charles Sanders Peirce's [1955] semeiotics) but something outside the self (second), so that reflection (third) becomes possible.

Desire is always desire *of* or *for* something outside oneself. The fulfillment of desire (i.e., identification of oneself with the object of desire) requires one to step outside of oneself, and the moment of its realization inevitably alters the self. Thus, although self-consciousness, according to Hegel (1807/1977) is "essentially the return from otherness" (p. 105), once outside, one cannot go back to what one used to be. This dual movement of consolidation with the objects of desire and dissociation from one's past self is the very definition of Life in Hegelian terms:

> *the simple substance of Life is the splitting-up of itself into shapes and at the same time the dissolution of these existent differences; and the dissolution of the splitting-up is just as much a splitting-up and a forming of members.* (Hegel, 1807/1977, p. 108)

Butler (1987) notes that "the German word for desire, *Begierde*, suggests animal appetite rather than the anthropocentric sense conveyed by the French *le désir* and the English desire" (p. 33). If this desire is driven merely by the satisfaction of hunger, the opportunity for reflexivity may be missed—what Azuma (2002), borrowing from Kojève (1980), called "animalization". For the fulfillment of desire to lead to the fuller sense of self, Butler (1987) argues, the needs must be owned:

> *When the satisfaction of needs becomes integrated into the pursuit of identity, we find that needs are but the alienated forms of desire; the need to live, formulated as such, affirms the view of life as mere exigency, and confirms the faulty distinction between the desire to live and the desire to achieve a self-determining identity. When needs are owned, they are experienced as desire.* (pp.56–57)

The sense of self-determination, an essential element of freedom, is an achievement at the level of reflexive thirdness (i.e., stepping outside of oneself and seeing self through the eyes of the other), and

the act of searching—searching for the objects of desire and means to attain them—plays a crucial role in this achievement. Yet, the intense alteration of the meaning of search that is evident in today's information environment exhibits potential foreclosure of reflexivity that is thought to accompany the fulfillment of desire. With the absence of otherness, hence the possibility for reflexivity, what database consumption increasingly promotes is fulfilment of appetite, rather than desire.

Search in the Information Environment

The argument here–that search is born out of consumerism, but is transformable, and transcendent as a form of auto-reflexive knowledge finding, a literacy of things–has been left open ended, for abstract desire and sensorial consumption are inextricably intertwined. In the online world, although we tend to consume only with eyes and ears, we are alive in an environment built on code, a code which functions at the level of machine language. As humans we rely on the user interface to fulfill our desires (in the same way that the physical collector might rely on auctions, galleries, stores, and yard sales). Of all interfaces, it is the search engine which makes possible our conception of the Internet. The browser may provide a look and feel, but it is the search engine that facilitates the most base desire of the data consumer. And by 'data consumer' we mean pretty much everybody. There is so much searching going on that Google expends a larger carbon footprint than all worldwide air travel combined (Quito, 2018).

From this perspective, search is the most vital form of information literacy— what would the Internet be without search and the service of bots crawling that vast wasteland of information, packaging it up for delivery to our eyes and ears. Via the search engine, the searcher learns how to search, what words to use, as well as what counts as valuable findings. This puts search engines in a crucial position in today's knowledge/web-based economies, as evidenced by the dominant corporate empires of the major AI search engines worldwide. The immediate connection between searching and desire, as the mainstay of consumerist behaviour, also favours search engines economically, because they are in a position to direct desire and thus profit companies or individuals engaged in production of the object of the desire (Mager, 2012). Studies of user behaviours with search engines (Bar-lian et al., 2009) have shown that placement bias is the most predominant factor in determining the efficiency of ranked results. Knowing this, Google, for example, places paid ads (Google Ads, wherein content providers pay a per-click fee for specific search terms) so that when a chosen word is searched, their website appears above generally ranked results—each click is convertible into capital value. Search engine

optimization of websites has also resulted in a secondary industry that facilitates higher rankings based upon factors which reflect an expert (typically AI) database knowledge of non-expert "organic" understanding of relevant search terms (Erdmann et al., 2022). Nonetheless, it is readily noted that hierarchical display of search results precludes neutrality. Providing access to the informational database of the Internet is big business, even if some search engines disguise their full profiteering intent. Indeed, most people remain (somewhat willfully) ignorant of the exchange taking place when searching online, an exchange which is conducted in bytes of data. The server is also a taker of data.

In 2012 Big Data came of age, along with the dawn of the Internet of Things, things with sensors that stream data in real time like fridges, lights, shipping containers, and so on. Amassing data from billions of users and from the billions of products they desire, in turn accelerates advances in intelligent computing, which New York Times columnist Steve Lohr (2012) called the "virtuous cycle of Big Data". Cross-referencing multiple data inputs from government as well as public and private sector entities based on unique individuals—users and things, a new environment arose in which an ecology of information stored in exceptionally massive post-relational databases gave rise to forms of artificial life, predictive search engines, aesthetically personalized data streams, as well as new forms of surveillance and predation. The three V's of Big Data, volume, velocity, and variety have been increasing exponentially, doubling every two years. Already in 2012, Lohr wrote:

> *Data is not only becoming more available but also more understandable to computers. Most of the Big Data surge is data in the wild—unruly stuff like words, images and video on the Web and those streams of sensor data. It is called unstructured data and is not typically grist for traditional databases. But the computer tools for gleaning knowledge and insights from the Internet era's vast trove of unstructured data are fast gaining ground. At the forefront are the rapidly advancing techniques of artificial intelligence like natural-language processing, pattern recognition and machine learning.* (np)

One of the primary inputs to this ecology—a prime flow of nutrient to big data—is browsing behaviour, alongside financial transactions, phone conversations, email exchanges, medical records, and so on. Selling data makes even charitable enterprises rich if their pool of data is large enough and useful for the purposes of aggregation, packaging and segmentation into target audiences for particular products or services.

These data identification processes begin very early in childhood—as soon as the personhood is established online, either by parents, siblings, or even friends, and thus integrated into the Big Data ecology. Every action and movement the individual makes leaves a trail, the traces of which are

recorded—this is what we call *anti-signs*, a semiosis unknown by the individuals producing them (James, 2015).

With the automation of information retrieval, original points of reference become diffuse and more difficult to ascertain or authenticate. It is not only that grand narrative truths have dissolved within the pantheisms of subjectivity subsumed in the simulacra of degraded copies and imitations, but that veracity of knowledge is measured "by its distance from the database" (Azuma, 2009, p. 61). The likely outcome of systematic automation of information retrieval and personalized AI info-feeds is that *the smarter the search engine is, the less cognizant the user, or searcher, needs to be.*

One place of resistance to this trend of relinquishing user agency to AI manipulation, is to *re*introduce the avant garde notion of chance operations, fortuitous accidents, and serendipitous intellectual encounters in search operations. The potential for misdelivery plays a strategic role in the promulgation of an informed populous, populations capable of critical assimilation of information and the accretion of knowledge made possible when fissures in the surface membrane of spectacle provide openings through which one apprehends and gradually begins to synthesize possibilities within the database.

Enter the anti-sign. Azuma sees how identity among the otaku is formulated as a function of becoming/knowing within the database. The accumulation of anti-signs occurs within the database, the traces of individuals scurrying over the surface of information. With the advent of big data, the database attains the same status that once grand narratives held, as Azuma rightly predicted—The database is where mysteries unfold. We know nothing, truthfully speaking, of the workings of the database. Although humans create the data models, tables and arrays, and the algorithms that feed and harvest it (and us), the mystery unfolds in machine language, and with AI, once set free, these machine learning beings run their own course, self-programming their own life lessons. Within the wild realm of big data, the database animals run free. Almost anything can live, hide, and come to life in the invisible, virtual reservoir that is the database—it is here where the Antibody is born from the unseen aggregation of millions of data traces, or anti-signs. The Antibody is an algorithmic other, it is not a multifaceted copy of the organic being; You are the tourist and the Antibody is your guide.

Via data streams, the Antibody is tethered to the organism. Once the bond is made, the Antibody becomes teacher, and in this role it is far more efficient than traditional systems of education which reason their way to social order. The Antibodies tell you not what you *should* know, they calculate what people like you *want* to know, serving your evolving tastes and desires and eventually guiding these

through the power of "recommendation". (Beginning in infancy, the child is inculcated in the database through parents, siblings, friends, and until they start playing with digital devices of their own.) Eventually the Antibody becomes not an effigy or replicant but an executive, minding your business, reminding you of your business, speaking for you, taking notes, building your networks, driving for you, driving your desires. Appreciating this facilitation and the ease and heightened knowledge of what lies below the surface of the ocean of information, we happily sail along blithely ignorant that we are being marketed, subsumed in a late capitalist torrent of data and giving up agency over the desires that define us as individuals. The algorithmic Antibody is apparent only when it becomes unpredictable, when utility is infused with irregularity, when mass-production is qualified by craft, and when systems glitch.

Imaginary, Symbolic, In/dividual

The Antibody born out of ever more sophisticated algorithms prefetches one's desire with uncanny accuracy. Once people recognize that following the navigation of the Antibody provides the safest and quickest way for the discovery and fulfillment of desire, having "smart" life will mean to be subjected to the algorithmic calculation of the corpus of anti-signs.

Azuma (2007; 2017) speculates on the new pathways for subjectification under the postmodern condition, which is characterized by the significant decline of grand narratives. Drawing on Lacan, Azuma (2007; 2017) argues that the formation of modern subjectivity involves dual modes of identification: the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Whereas the Imaginary identification is an identification with what is visible (e.g., the image of the self in the mirror, parents, celebrities on screen), the Symbolic identification is an identification with what is invisible (e.g., the Big Other, grand narrative). For the consummation of subjectivity, it is not enough for one to just identify themselves with other subjects, but one also needs to identify themselves with the very order that regulates the meanings of those subjects. In other words, it is the Symbolic Order that enables reflexivity through which one becomes cognizant of their own subject positions.

However, the postmodern condition produces a dysfunction of the Symbolic. Thanks to the World Wide Web and social media, contingency of the social order has become visible on screens. On computer screens, everything is juxtaposable on a flat display, and ultimately, everything can be reduced to a binary code. The invisibility that once characterized the Symbolic is no longer applicable—it is visible as a form of database. Big Data becomes the new symbolic order.

Following Azuma's line of thought, we argue that this Symbolic identification is increasingly becoming an identification with the Antibody. Because the Antibody is essentially an aggregation of probable selves that are always already embedded in the database of the Symbolic, the ease of identification with it and the depth of interpellation are nothing comparable to the previous model of the Symbolic identification with the Big Other.

Unlike the identification with the Big Other, the Antibody is personalized, coming with an illusion of individuality. However, the Antibody is a fully decomposable and analyzable divisual made of billions of anti-signs that characterize probabilities mapped within the database, the singularity of which is not about unique existence as "one," but its oneness within the mathematical universe of the database.

Search and Devour

There is a question regarding what happens to the hyper-literate expertise of the tireless searcher, their ability to elicit their own serendipity, intuitively attuned, unencumbered, unprovoked, without ulterior motive. For when every song you want to hear streams seamlessly into your ears without the need for recall, or extensive collections of music, well, you are lulled into a sense of trust that it will always be so. You do not need to fiercely identify with particular kinds of knowledge. The details of its production dwindle and fade in significance. Google it and you will know, watch a YouTube demo or ask ChatGPT to do the research for you. Why need to know anything more than the terms of desire and have it served to you? No need for excessive concentration, for intuitive grasping which often returns an empty hand. No need for a catalogue of differences to tune the senses to authenticity's minutia.

Search and (Pro)Create: The Poetics of Misdelivery

We return now to the search engine project at PhoneMe and our desire to engineer an alternative to the expected outcomes of searching, with the recognition that aesthetic search is interwoven but distinct from seeking information for its use-value alone. As we have discussed, searches in which the desire for information is already prefetched and the fulfilment of that desire is imbricated within capitalistic regimes is a wicked problem our digitally inundated society will increasingly contend with. Seen in context of an educative, transmodal social media poetry app, we propose a form of *creative search*, a prosumerism of information (Lam, 2019) where the searcher and their search engine collaborate in poetry-generative search practices. We believe this will facilitate mis-delivery on the part

of the automated agent, thereby promoting reflective, self-awakening on the part of the human in their roaming of the poetic database. We embrace the notion of the snippet, a crucial aspect of many search engine results insofar as it supplies a very brief sonar signal to what lies just below the surface of returned search results, a snapshot of the textual information environment that can take one outside of the marketing gestures and optimizations. We do not claim originality for this idea: Indeed, the snippet is by name closely connected to the Dadaist and avant garde literary notion of cut-up, a textual predecessor of the multimedia remix and mash-up (James, 2009; 2015). In the purely digital domain there are also numerous examples, such as *The Longest Poem in the World*, developed by Andrei Gheorghe (https://github.com/idevelop/longest-poem-in-the-world#longest-poem-in-the-world) using Twitter's search api to find random rhyming tweets and present a constantly streaming, multi-authored, hyperlinked poem, a precursor to what we suggest for creative search. The end-of-millennium Flarf poetry movement, "dedicated to the exploration of 'the inappropriate' in all its guises" (Murdoch, 2011, np) combines use of creative search terms with human poets compiling poems from typically unpoetic search engine results. Flarf and related literatures try to poetically resist the capitalizing empire of the Internet and its massive animalizing database of 21st Century culture.

Creative search relies on immanent serendipity, its ability to mis-deliver and mis-take. It appears as random, but true randomness is rare and deeply refined. Instead, it is quasi random, a kind of fakery that exudes the unexpected: in other words, it fulfills aesthetic criteria as opposed to logical ones, and thus displays patterns that are analogic in nature. It reassembles components of a system in a manner that seems predictably irregular, but still predictable. It is about surprise, and for surprise to occur, we must comprehend the circumstances in which something surprising occurs; it must break with an a priori of probable options for what comes next. So, for search behaviours to be impregnated with creative energy, there must be a medium of norms and typical assemblages for it to arise out of, a systematicity which is ideologically preconfigured. For it to be appreciated, the norms must be known, and thus new knowledge is initiated in a guild that at once maintain conventions and then, by generations, revolts against them (much like Bakhtin [1984] frames the role of the carnivalesque as recovering "a folk culture from which the folk had been banished and replaced by a perverse double: Folklore" [Lachmann, et al, 1988, p. 118]), excreting new assemblages, as an otaku might do. This is one way to bring contingency back into the system, resonating with Azuma's (2017) proposal:

> *New resistance in the 21st century is born out of the gaps between the Empire and nation-states. It is neither about critiquing the Empire from the outside nor about deconstructing it from the inside, but is about re-performing the misdelivery. By meeting people who one was never expected to meet, going to places where one*

> *was never expected to go, and thinking about things that one was never expected to think, one brings contingency back into the system of the Empire and re-link the branches that are concentrated in order to move from prioritized choices back to misdelivery. (p. 192)*

A poetical search experiment

Here we want to perform by way of conclusion for these speculations a search experiment, returning to the existing PhoneMe search engine. The procedure is quite simple. To begin with a search term, limited by language, limited by the ignorance of the engine not knowing any context, any user's profile, with no relative data points to consider. We begin by typing in the alphabet, that code of natural language, starting from A. By the letter D we have results. And from each poem we extract the first and last line, hyperlinked to its original, pinned location on the PhoneMe map, and to add the next top line below the preceding, and the next bottom line above to the preceding, moving downward, and upward, respectively, on the page. After exhausting those search results, to choose a single content word from the preceding line to make the next query, and to repeat the procedure as many times as would make a poem's length, a top and a bottom poem, thus to include in the experiment an examination of placement bias using a literary lens, not a commercially motivated one.

In enacting this procedure on the limited corpus of poem-data stored on PhoneMe, we imply a kind of process that could be automated to investigate creative search practice, that is, to rank not according to page ranks of frequency, or of capital investment, and so on, but to have one result lead to the next, the way an autodidact learns and explores a mystery, as a scholar uses citation chaining, as a music collector makes connections between a single musician in different bands, happening upon information. This provocation to discovery indeed leads past surface constitutions of desire toward drawing connections, filling in gaps, creating subjective narratives and thus penetrating the mysteries of the database we host on PhoneMe. In the true manner of cut-ups and recombinant procedures, serendipity is almost inevitable, revelations occur that seem uncanny. We do this without violating the original, which is linked but also renewed by evolving context, as an otaku does. What we have been thinking and discussing seems compelled to emerge. And if this appears like blind faith, it is a faith that seldom fails, a faith that we will discover ourselves within the chance operation of a programmatic treatment of data that introduces a pedagogical and learning system, a form of relationship between elements that will, owing to our pervading intent to creatively play, find a way to mimic intuitive states of mind, and provide a statute of our bond with the phantasms of signs. In the end, no exegesis of

the poem is required, and these results are incommensurable with proofs, although they are empirically derived. There will be no extracting our subjectivities from such an exercise, rather we are birthing our subjectivities in the process. Our words and worlds resonate with others but display results that are unique; to each their own.

The presentation of search results as poetic cut-up

Cutting the PhoneMe Lines Top Down[1]

Fisheye lens at a bulbous sky
Amber aspens amass on alpine arêtes
The fields are damp and filled with mist,
Rolling fields rolling on an antique tractor
Generations and generations of farmers

Once a neighbourhood, Hogan's alley
The cool dirt cascades between my toes as I slip
Rhythm, tone, harmony, chords theory
Here, the world is fitness
Bittersweet memories Filled with nostalgia, and sunsets
You can see skies as clear as freshwater
Lose yourself to find yourself
Beside the Pacific Ocean lies a city of many spectacles
My small sanctuary in amongst the city streets
Here, the world is full of tranquility
The freshest air surrounds you
A pipeline for smokestack dreams
This place is made of duty free cosmopolitan consumerism
Here, the snake loved the man

[1] Each line is hyperlinked to the original PhoneMe poem, If you open the links on a smartphone or a table that has PhoneMe app installed, the link takes you to the poem, If the link is opened on a computer, it will take one to phonemeproject.com page. There, you can find the web version of PhoneMe map. You may find the original poem by searching the line on the map.

You were nothing more than a concrete barrier
Here, the world is tired of waking up tired
Come back to me, exciting daily first delights
Danger trapped behind a wall
atop of mountains
Here, the world is relaxed
filled with delicate fragrances of ink

Cutting the PhoneMe Lines, Bottom Down

And the world is focusing, full of satisfaction.
And the world is relaxed
though you are not with me
Do they know that they're not home?
Leave me, empty heart and your desire to be young
And the world is having an average weekend
Because for me you were more than just some rooms, windows, and wall
his gift of sound through motion
Carefully crafted people's movements
of these greedy and small-minded fiends
As you watch it disappear into the night
Awaiting to be emptied in this place that feels safe.
For now I'm here, sighing, breathing, seeking
To that I say, welcome to San Francisco
Find yourself losing yourself
And the world is now more open to everyone
She's still glowing where she is not
It's time to leave the place
I am the most famous musician in the world
not brave enough to trust the current yet
Way too wild for suits and bridge contractors
Circles, Circles. ...smells like shit.

is a part of your identity.

Just to feel the sun

And Nutcrackers nest on north facing slopes

There, where a dripping bittersweetness diverges.

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