Narrative Affect in William Gillespie's *Keyhole Factory* and *Morpheus: Biblionaut*, or, Post-Digital Fiction for the Programming Era

Eric Dean Rasmussen
(University of Stavanger)

Abstract:
Programmable computation is radically transforming the contemporary media ecology. What is literature's future in this emergent Programming Era? What happens to reading when the affective, performative power of executable code begins to provide the predominant model for creative language use? Critics have raised concerns about models of affective communication and the challenges a-semantic affects present to interpretive practices. In response, this essay explores links between electronic literature, affect theory, and materialist aesthetics in two works by experimental writer and publisher William Gillespie. Focusing on the post-digital novel *Keyhole Factory* and the electronic speculative fiction *Morpheus: Bilblionaut,* it proposes that: first, tracing tropes of code as affective transmissions allows for more robust readings of technomodernist texts and, second, examining non-linguistic affect and its articulation within constraint-based narrative forms suggests possibilities for developing an affective hermeneutics. My project was prompted by calls for more in-depth critical interpretations of works of electronic literature; an appreciation of how Gillespie problematises tropes of proximity and distance used to characterise modes of *critical* reading; and a desire to explain Gillespie's commitment to both conceptual, constraint-based writing practices (facilitated by computational media) and the intentional production of meaningful narrative affect. Ultimately, my analyses showcase Gillespie's countertextual achievement: assembling a network of texts, both electronic and analogue, that functions as a literary ecosystem resistant to the instrumentalism of the neoliberal publishing industry. Gillespie's Spineless Books provides an exemplary model of and working platform for collaborative, conceptual, and countertextual literary writing across media.

Keywords: electronic literature, interpretation, media ecology, narrative affect, post-digital, Programming Era, reading, William Gillespie.

CounterText 2.2 (2016): 140–171
DOI: 10.3366/count.2016.0050

www.euppublishing.com/loi/count

1.

Much work in the field of electronic literature (e-lit) presupposes that the phenomenal body has been neglected in the literary arts, and that literary activities that *overlook* corporeal sensations (with their implied emphasis on ocular tropes that privilege sight as the primary modality for interfacing with and understanding writing) underestimate the integral role multisensory modalities play in embodied communicative processes. Consequently, the argument goes, much writing in and on twenty-first-century literature remains out of touch with sensual developments in digital poetics (from haptic interfaces to interactive installations) and, unwittingly, may even be contributing to media illiteracy. Although a desire to convey the importance (though not necessarily the significance) of sensory experience informs much digital-literary-arts practice and orients much e-literary research, the issue of affective communication – how a reader's corporeal-affective response to a work relates to his or her interpretation of its meaning – remains underdeveloped even in discussions of e-lit. One exception is media theorist Roberto Simanowski's critical work, which engages with scholarship on embodiment and the materiality of communication in order to develop an 'erotic hermeneutics of art' (Simanowski 2011: 209): semiotic interpretations of digital aesthetic artefacts that address artworks' sensuality and materiality in order to articulate how readers' phenomenal encounters become meaningful. But despite Simanowski's warning that a 'shift of interest from the meaning of signifiers to their physical qualities and to the human body ... eventually results in a farewell to interpretation' (208), questions about affective models of communication and the challenges a-semantic affects present to interpretive practices integral to literary, artistic, and cultural studies remain marginal concerns in criticism about e-lit. In response, my essay explores links between electronic literature, affect theory, and materialist aesthetics in two connected texts by the experimental American writer William Gillespie – the post-digital novel *Keyhole Factory* and the 'electronic speculative fiction' he co-authored with Travis Alber, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* – to propose the following: first, focusing on affect allows for more robust readings of contemporary technomodernist fiction and, second, examining non-linguistic affect and its articulation within Gillespie's constraint-based, distributed narrative system (which is 'post-digital' in that the analog codex book thoroughly integrates the affordances of networked information technologies in its design and dissemination) suggests possibilities for developing an affective hermeneutics in the emergent Programming Era.

The Programming Era, as I define it, is the period when the affective, performative, and transformative power of executable code begins to provide a powerful, and potentially the predominant, model for creative language use. In *Morpheus: Biblionaut* a poet-astronaut returning to a post-apocalyptic Earth narrates, in a lyric poem addressed to a 'you' whose radio transmissions he has been monitoring, the waning of meaningful communication in an extra-terrestrial environment. His poem expresses anxiety about reading's future in computationally advanced yet constrained, isolating,

and potentially annihilating media environments. *Morpheus: Biblionaut* is a remediation of the 'Biblionaut' chapter from *Keyhole Factory*, and Gillespie and Alber's moving work of e-lit attunes readers, I claim in section four, to how Gillespie's intricately structured novel stages scenarios of affective communication in order to raise concerns about the ways meaningful human communication gets devalued in a media ecology warped by the quantifying pressures of technocapitalism. This essay suggests how this work of e-lit enables readers to make sense of a larger, complex literary ecosystem that Gillespie is creating with not just *Keyhole Factory* but also *Spineless Books*, a small, avant-garde press Gillespie founded on the palindromic date of 20 February 2002 (20–02–2002) and still operates from his Urbana, Illinois home. My readings of *Keyhole Factory,* which aspires, Gillespie says, 'to be neither a novel nor a book of short stories, but to fall between, where elision or ellipsis between provocative fragments forces the reader's imagination to mortar story into the gaps' ('Keyhole Factory Factory'),[1] focus on fragments – chapters, or stories – most directly related to *Morpheus: Biblionaut*. Gillespie has described *Keyhole Factory* as

> a mosaic of 22 narrative shards. Characters recur, but are barely recognizable from each other's points of view. (Like many of us, they don't narrate themselves the way others would narrate them.) Characters differ, their experiences differ, their interpretations of events differ, the literary styles and forms in which they are rendered differ, but, most deliberately, the plausibility that their stories can even be told differ. ('Keyhole Factory Factory')

Most characters are affected by a major catastrophe, the outbreak of the man-made super-virus Pandora, which kills ninety per cent of the population. One of the most dehumanising features in *Keyhole Factory*'s pre-apocalyptic America is a widespread embrace of communicative models premised upon the autonomy of affect from meaning. Such models view linguistic meaning-making as disconnected from, and even rendered obsolete by, more efficient, affective modes of data transmission, such as programs composed in computer and genetic code. Programs are affective in that they generate corporeal-material effects capable of transforming cyborg bodies and other biotechnical systems. What ostensibly makes them efficient is that the nonsemantic, affective transmission acts directly upon the affected system, and transformative communication can occur without any interpretive activity.

My decision to focus primarily on these two works is prompted by calls for more in-depth critical interpretations of works of e-lit; an appreciation of how *Morpheus: Biblionaut* problematises tropes of proximity and distance often used to characterise modes of *critical* reading; and a desire to recognise Gillespie's exceptional commitment in *Keyhole Factory* to both conceptual, constraint-based writing practices (often facilitated by computational media) and the intentional production of meaningful *narrative affect*. I borrow this term from literary ecocritic Heather Houser, who explains: 'The phrase *narrative affect* abbreviates my argument that affects are attached

to formal dimensions of texts such as metaphor, plot structure, and character relations' (Houser 2014: 3). While *Keyhole Factory* could be interpreted as an ecosickness narrative, my emphasis is not on the 'sickness trope' but rather on tropes of senselessness related to the ontologisation of human-only language, episodes when the materiality of language is emphasised so that words' referential function breaks down and communication occurs primarily, if not exclusively, at the level of asignifying corporeal-affective transmissions. My analysis of *Keyhole Factory* is intended to foreground what I understand to be Gillespie's larger countertextual project: assembling a network of texts, both electronic and analogue, that function as a literary system operating in resistance to the instrumentalism of a neoliberal publishing industry that is turning 'self-publishing' into more of a 'mechanical act than an intentional one' (Di Leo 2016). As Jeffrey R. Di Leo argues, the resultant practice of '[p]ublishing work without consideration of its content is nothing more than mindless duplication' (Di Leo 2016) and, I would add, is symptomatic of an unreflective deployment of code and programmable computation in the Programming Era.

What happens to more 'traditional' modes of language arts, such as lyric poetry or narrative storytelling, and, more broadly, humans' ability to read, write, and make meaning, if writing computer code is valued more – based on the financial and cultural capital its authors accrue – than writing literature in 'natural', 'human-only' languages? By depicting the pre-apocalyptic disputes between poets about the merits of MFA programs and programmed modes of systematised creativity, *Keyhole Factory* raises this line of inquiry. Similarly, the figure of the isolated and disoriented poet-astronaut in *Morpheus: Biblionaut* gives a unique spin to debates about literature's long-term future given the prevalence of short-term perspectives in the contemporary media ecology, the devaluation of writing and criticism with an ever-accelerating publishing cycle, and the benefits and limitations of 'close' and 'distant' readings. Deep space, poet-astronaut John Rock discovers, isn't conducive to the deep attention required to conduct close, scholarly readings or to write in 'perfect solitude'.

Rock's plan to close-read his 'electronic library' of canonical works fails due to factors including the instability of his digital texts and increasingly asynchronous communications with readers on Earth. Although he sends 'earth a poem every week', the transmission lag leads critics, who are focused more on the quantity rather than the quality of Rock's output, to complain he has become 'less prolific', and they 'los[e] interest' in Rock's work, while the physical books he has requested electronic editions of have long 'been remaindered forgotten' (Gillespie 2012: 55–6). If literary scholars are expected to 'curate human thought' (Gillespie 2012: 54), should they stop close reading books and instead conduct large-scale, computer-assisted 'distant readings', data mining vast corpora in order to discern significant patterns within 'units that are much smaller or much larger than the text' (Moretti 2007: 28)? That won't be the agenda here. E-lit doesn't need scholars to construct a canon, something *Morpheus: Biblionaut* depicts as a Sisyphean task, but it does need more attentive, critical readings that explain why – in a rapidly expanding field where so much 'new media writing'

Figure 1. William Gillespie and Travis Alber, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* (2009)
< www.morpheus11.com > [2]

Figure 2. William Gillespie and Travis Alber, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* (2009)
< www.morpheus11.com >

is effectively self-published and susceptible to technological obsolescence – particular works and texts are worth engaging with, repeatedly, over relatively long periods of time, as affective and significant *literary* art.

Critical readings can seed the e-lit field by identifying formal attributes and concepts that make new works or short- and long-term writing projects relatable to other acts of literature. Elucidating these relations establishes conceptual frameworks in which new writing can intervene – aesthetically, ethically, politically, and so forth. Articulating these interventions, in turn, generates more critical responses, commentary, and discussion that, if sustained over time, can transform acts of writing, published texts, and performances, into significant literary events – events in the sense that the literary artwork achieves recognition for performing meaningful cultural work.

2.

Morpheus: Biblionaut performs important cultural work by foregrounding concerns about reading's future in the Programming Era while preparing readers for the challenge of interpreting *Keyhole Factory*, a conceptual, constraint-based novel that can seem dauntingly esoteric if readers don't practice both close and hyper readings of the codex book and the digital text and consult the web-work map (available for download, though this is not advertised in the paperback, at <http://keyholefactory.com/keelernews/keyholekeeler.pdf>) that constitute the *Keyhole Factory* textual ecosystem. These three components comprise a larger 'Work as Assemblage, a cluster of related texts that quote, comment upon, amplify, and otherwise intermediate one another' (Hayles 2005: 105). And when *Keyhole Factory* is read as part of an even larger, deliberately designed literary ecosystem, including texts published by Gillespie's press, Spineless Books provides an exemplary model of and working platform for collaborative, conceptual, and countertextual literary writing across media. As with other recent Work as Assemblage (WaA) novels, such as Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007) and Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* (2006), in *Keyhole Factory* the codex book becomes a transmedial artwork that integrates other media forms to form a 'distributed literary system' that resists 'the putative decline of narrative' (Hayles 2012: 15, 172–3; see also Manovich (2002) on narrative as a residual form supplanted by databases).

Gillespie's distributed narrative system may be an exceptional case in the field of e-lit, where long-form textual narratives have arguably been eclipsed by other forms. After much excitement about hypertext fiction in the 1990s, many digital-literary-arts practitioners moved away from long-form narrative. There's a general consensus that the sort of hyper reading online environments promote is not conducive to long-form textual narratives. Indeed, Gillespie says he now agrees with the assessment of postmodern novelist Robert Coover (a long-time advocate for electronic literature and champion of Gillespie's writing) that 'the web might not be a good environment for long-form fiction, or any reading requiring sustained concentration' (2016: personal email). This is why I am presenting *Morpheus: Biblionaut* as part of Gillespie's post-digital conceptual writing practice, which is exceptional in that it remains committed to the art of storytelling. Gillespie experiments by developing novel ways of harnessing

the affective power of multimodal, non-linguistic forms and does so in the service of literary narrative. He explains:

> There are myriad established and undiscovered Oulipian, narrative, and typographic forms one can deploy for the sake of linguistic acrobatics but for me the challenge is to craft an unusual literary form that is relevant, and even natural, for the story it tells – a form that *amplifies* rather than obscures its content. (Graham 2013; emphasis in original)

Gillespie, I suspect, would largely agree with the next statement, but take it as an aesthetic challenge rather than a statement of fact:

> Oulipian and electronic literary practice do not aim at creating compelling narratives or absorbing poetic meditations. Those will continue to be produced in print, a medium perhaps uniquely suited to narrative demands for the creation over time of beginnings, middles, ends (a working out of information through sequence and duration that more often than not is frustrated in electronic environments). (Tabbi 2010: 27)

Joseph Tabbi, a former president of the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO), makes this prediction in 'Electronic Literature as World Literature, or, The Universality of Writing Under Constraint', which presents the OuLiPo as a model for not only e-lit but also a twenty-first-century world literature premised upon networks of authors practising modes of 'collaborative writing under constraint' (2010: 26). Gillespie and Nick Montfort's 2002*: A Palindrome Story*, Tabbi proposes, 'establishes a direct line from the Oulipo to electronic literary practice' (28). And this particular line of 'countertextual' practice, as Mario Aquilina characterises it in his analysis of the 'computational sublime' in Montfort's generative text poetry, is largely 'non-representational but not . . . devoid of meaning' (2015: 363). In generative poetry, meaning is conveyed less through printed textual outputs, which typically are 'not carriers of semantic meaning', and more through the programs, where code is an 'intrinsic part of the poems themselves' (362). Operational code generates textual events prompting readers to become 'receptive' and 'attentive' (358) to the sublime 'feeling' (352) resulting from an awareness of computational processes written under rigorous conceptual constraints. Tabbi and Aquilina provide convincing accounts of a strong conceptualism in e-lit, which is even more evident in 'programmatological literal art' as theorised and authored by John Cayley (2004) who, since the turn of the millennium, has argued it is preferable to speak of 'literal rather than digital art'. Cayley uses the modifier 'literal' to refer to the materiality of a text's constitutive elements. 'In general usage,' he notes, 'the contrasting "literal" is a fairly flat term, associated either with letters themselves or with minimal straightforwardly lexical relationships between linguistic signs and their potential significance' (2004). Literal art, then, refers to rule-governed practices that programmatically manipulate and disrupt a text's constitutive textual elements, not just linguistic signs but any material inscriptions produced by writing technologies. Literal e-lit is avant-garde in its programmatic deterritorialisation of standard models of literary production, yet

it is also congruous with a mainstream cultural development – the ascendancy of the programmer. This phenomenon – the coder as cultural hero – is another factor enabling us to conceptualise our present as an emergent Programming Era. Rather than advancing a master narrative about the status of narrative or the literary in the Programming Era, it is more productive, now, to examine closely and critically narrative affect in select 'technomodernist' texts (McGurl 2009) and connected aesthetic artefacts that constitute the contested field of electronic literature.

3.

Gillespie is a relatively established figure in e-lit circles, where he is best known for two early works anthologised in the *Electronic Literature Collection*, *Volume Two* (Electronic Literature Organisation (2011)): the collaborative network fiction *The Unknown* (Gillespie et al. 2011 [1998–2002]), a sprawling, Web-based, hypertextual pastiche infamous for its excess (Ciccoricco 2007: 139–42), and the contrastingly minimalist hypercube *Letter to Linus* (2001). *Morpheus: Biblionaut* (2009), however, has not yet received the critical attention it deserves, perhaps because it is a deceptively simple work of e-lit: simple insofar as its interface is minimalist in terms of navigational functionality and interactivity. Once started, the piece, created with Adobe Flash, unfolds linearly. Many of its multimodal effects are cinematic and could have been created in an animated film. Unlike digitised films streamed or played on personal devices, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* prevents readers from altering the playback speed or navigating backwards without restarting the program. Both the linguistic text and the scriptons, the 'strings [of signs] as they appear to readers', are fixed and do not change according to the reader's manipulations (Aarseth 1997: 62). Gillespie's written text is not kinetic, and Travis Alber's visuals (primarily imagery focalised from the Biblionaut's point of view) are also mostly static and appear at timed, pre-programmed intervals. The primarily 'transient' (Aarseth 1997: 63) piece stops in places, providing readers twenty-three opportunities (alluding to *Keyhole Factory*'s twenty-two chapters plus the option to 'repeat') to pause before clicking to advance, though David Schmudde's soundtrack continues playing, amplifying a sense of urgency that befits the narrative situation, the 'manic' (69) Biblionaut's imminent re-entry into the Earth's environment. Though it can be read in roughly (you guessed it) twenty-two minutes, readers aiming to skim through *Morpheus: Biblionaut* will be frustrated. So too will readers seeking to return to previous passages or move back and forth between different sections. These constraints on the speed and direction of one's reading are intended, I believe, to nudge readers into focusing their attention exclusively on what's happening within the work at that moment and to resist distractions. By design, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* demands deep attention and rewards close, sustained re-readings, which become increasingly significant as the reader picks up on subtle clues about and allusions to *Keyhole Factory*. Its formal constraints require readers to practise attentive-reading strategies that are at risk in post-digital media environments, while

its content prompts readers to read the piece self-reflexively. The senselessness the Biblionaut experiences in the isolating environs of deep space, readers can infer, is akin to the indifference to meaning he experiences in the isolating publishing environs of cyberspace.

A few brief remarks on the concept of the *post-digital* and its implication for electronic literature are in order. During his keynote lecture at the 2012 Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) Conference, media researcher Florian Cramer declared that:

> [T]he post-digital media age has begun: an age where, on the one hand, 'digital' has become a meaningless attribute because almost all media are electronic and based on digital information processing; and where, on the other hand, younger generation media-critical artists rediscover analog information technology. (2012)

I agree with these empirical observations and endorse Cramer's call for members of the ELO (which is hardly the unified community he implies) to be receptive to varieties of 'post-digital poetics'. As Gillespie's *Keyhole Factory* demonstrates so well, defining when and if a hybrid, Work as Assemblage (WaA) text qualifies as being 'born digital' can be tricky. All e-lit exists in a dialectic with analogue forms – including 'artists' books and zines' and other modes of DIY publishing – that 'reflect digitality by its absence' (Cramer 2012). But Cramer's proposal to 'dispense of [sic] the notion of literary writing' altogether is misguided. He writes:

> In Europe, the notion of 'creative industries' is now gradually replacing that of arts and culture. It simultaneously encompasses the arts, commercial design and media technology. This is a textbook example of how neoliberalism can be brutally progressive. What Russian constructivism, Bauhaus, De Stijl, Fluxus and Situationism tried but failed to accomplish, to do away with the difference between fine and applied arts, is now done by globalized capitalism for even more materialist reasons. . . .
>
> It is tempting to maintain notions of 'literary writing' or '(un)creative writing' out of resistance to these developments. This would be the same conservative-dressed-up-as-progressive resistance that Adorno and Horkheimer had in the 1940s when they lived in Hollywood and wrote the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. Even the 'creative' in 'creative industries' remains a piece of romanticist legacy. If all contemporary concepts of literary, creative and uncreative writing were abandoned, this could bring back the notion of creativity to its original meaning, clever inventiveness – where a fraudulent tax return qualifies as a piece of creative writing but not a novel by Toni Morrison. (Cramer 2012)

The 'process of neoliberalization', David Harvey reminds us, 'has entailed much "creative destruction"' (2005: 3), including an unprecedented aestheticisation of everyday life driven largely, but not exclusively, by consumerist desire and commercial interests. This has rendered the fine-versus-applied-art distinction not just quaint but antiquated and tainted the concept of 'creativity' with capitalistic connotations (though like concepts such as 'nature' and the 'aesthetic', it was stained from the start). But while it is sagacious to be sceptical about concepts like 'creativity' or

'genius', which sometimes disguise dubious class-based distinctions, e-lit writers deserve acknowledgement for their indifference, and sometimes resistance, to the profit motive and the ethos of the (so-called) free market. We should ask: when writers are creating smart, intriguing, and, yes, sometimes genuinely innovative works, despite the large-scale political and economic forces working against such artistic production, is it wise to surrender the notion of 'creativity' to the neoliberals? Given that we are only a few decades into the post-Gutenberg era, and the Internet still provides an infrastructure through which non-commerical collectivities and networks can expand globally, it would be downright stupid[3] – no question – for writers in the Programming Era to dispense with the literary. This is not the place for a defence of literature (do we *really* need another?). The modifier *literary* does not require us to imagine that writing tagged as such contains some essential ontological quality (as imposed by 'gatekeepers') or that it has been earmarked with a privileged status as 'fine' or 'high' art. Rather, *literary* signals that authors and readers of the writing recognise its potential to participate in conversations with and about other written texts that, over time, through critical activity typically involving evaluative judgments and acts of writing, have effectively also been tagged as being literary by interested participants in various interpretive communities. In short, literature-related tags, which refer to acts and writing and the situations and ideas that generate them, help establish meaningful relationships, both conceptual and material, between works, texts, and reading and writing practices. (See Rettberg and Rasmussen (2014) on the presuppositions informing the design of the *ELMCIP Electronic Literature Knowledge Base,* for instance, that the 'literary community and the literary artefact itself can be understood as networks of relations' (298)).

After five years of rejections and revisions, *Keyhole Factory* was first published in 2010 by Spineless Books as a limited-edition hardcover book, along with a web-work map and CD-ROM of *Morpheus: Biblionaut* (see Graham (2013) on Gillespie's decision to publish *Keyhole Factory* on Spineless Books after experiencing 'frustration at version control' while trying to maintain two versions of the manuscript). In 2012, independent publisher Soft Skull Press republished it in paperback, substituting URLs (www.keyholefactory.com and morpheus11.com) for the map and CD-ROM. The publication of both editions was preceded by a 'media translation' (Gillespie 2010: 407) of *Keyhole Factory*'s third chapter, 'Biblionaut' (in the book an unattributed prose poem identified by the parachute glyph in the table of contents) that was published online and exhibited at the DAC Digital Literary Arts Extravaganza in 2009 as the 'speculative electronic fiction' *Morpheus: Biblionaut.* Much of its narrative affect is achieved from the typographic layout, the way in which the precise placement of words on each page transforms the transcript of Rock's reportorial observations into discreet informational units of a puzzling and poignant free-verse poem. Though it has no title, visual cues signal it is a poem: it's printed entirely in lowercase letters and is almost entirely bereft of punctuation, save for a few instances of *'s* and nine question marks. The typographic precision is evident both in the disaggregation, across

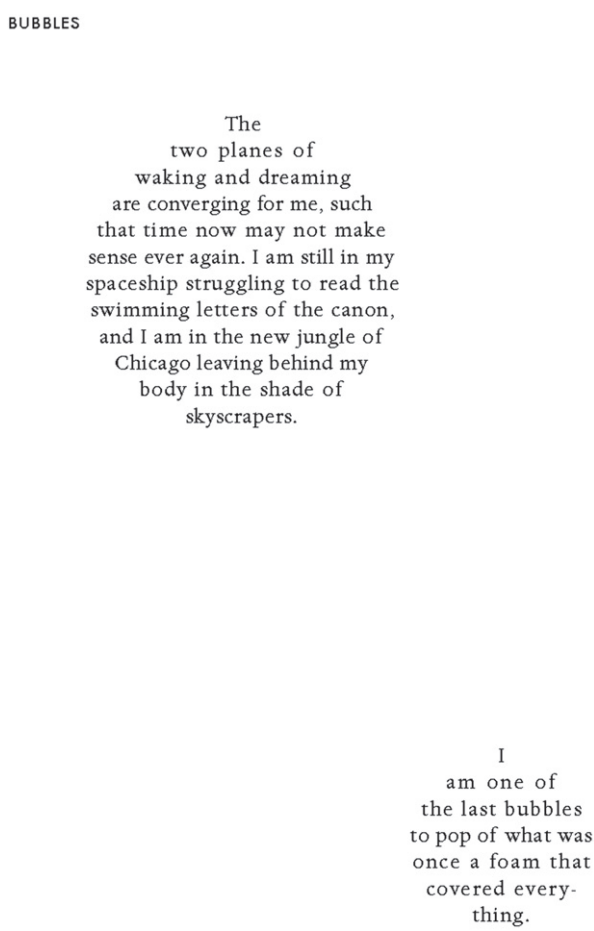

Figure 3. William Gillespie, 'Bubbles', from *Keyhole Factory* (2012: 240). © William Gillespie

thirty-two folio pages, of paragraphs and sentences into stanzas – some quite short, one line ('as a specimen?' [23]), even a single word (e.g. 'except' [62]) – and in the narrative use of white space: 'the sun became a speck' (58) is the solitary line on one page, and five pages are entirely blank, suggesting periods when Rock is dreaming. Their inclusion as part of Rock's poem / report reinforces the ambiguity regarding the uncertain ontological status of his dreams, which might be memories of possible futures. The layout intensifies the poem's pathos by isolating lines emphasising Rock's disconnectedness – how he has 'lost contact' (46–47), fallen into 'another dream of dark cities' (45, 72–3), and, with its final repetition in the last line, possibly 'lost contact' permanently (74–6).

Rock's apparent death is narrated in the thirteenth chapter, 'Bubbles' (240), where his final, private thoughts are materialised in concrete prose, alongside those of other characters about to die, in round text-bubbles about to pop. Such use of innovative typography to amplify content is arguably less pronounced in *Morpheus: Biblionaut*, where multimodal affordances provided by Travis Alber's visuals, Davis Schmudde's audio, and Aaron Miller's programming provide affective supplements to the semantic content of Rock's words that enhance its narrative dimension.

Like many works of e-lit, therefore, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* is a collaborative piece. Its title screen credits designer Travis Alber with co-authorship. Alber, for her part, co-founded two online start-ups (BookGlutton.com and readups.com) designed to be 'social reading systems'. These details about the novel's provenance are significant, and not simply because 'within [its] fictional world references are frequently made to . . . Mr. Gillespie's earlier writings' (Potts 2012). Spineless Books and its affiliates have indeed published several titles by fictional characters from *Keyhole Factory* (Jasper Pierce's *Steal Stuff From Work* (2008) and Max Winchester's *How to Vote: A Manual* (2016 [2012]). Though some might regard such self-referentiality as continuing a tradition of 'postmodern high jinks' or, more cynically, view Spineless Books' pseudonymous titles as a way of disguising 'vanity publishing', Gillespie's sophisticated diegetic manoeuvrings and small-press-publishing efforts are actually indicative of his literary innovativeness.

As a publisher, Gillespie deploys the Net's 'worldwide infrastructure' (Tabbi 2010: 29) to build a network of collaborative writing under constraint. With this infrastructure in place and following what academic editor and small-publishing saviour Di Leo[4] calls the 'post-2007 self-publishing revolution' (Di Leo 2016), Gillespie's pioneering publishing labours are easy to take for granted. But now that the majority of books released annually are self-published e-books and print-on-demand titles, mostly produced and distributed by neoliberal, corporate publishing services like Amazon Publishing (Di Leo 2016), Spineless Books deserves recognition for its DIY vision and persistence. And as a literary artist Gillespie deserves recognition for being a fearless innovator – a writer dedicated to experimenting with, developing, and making significant updates to constrained-writing practices 'invented' by others.

Spineless Books doesn't simply publish pseudonymous authors: for example, Gillespie updates the literary technique of creating *heteronyms*, the conceptual practice of writing under multiple authorial identities invented by the modernist Portuguese poet, writer, and translator Fernando Pessoa. Beginning in the twentieth century's first decade, Pessoa created fully developed imaginary selves, authors whose works exhibited voices, styles, views, values, beliefs, and personas distinct from his own. Their collective works enabled Pessoa to effectively become a 'one-man Modernist movement or series of movements' (Maunsell 2012: 115) though his literary achievements were largely unrecognised in his lifetime. Today, digital humanists are studying how paradoxes inherent to Pessoa's 'complex system of heteronyms' (Humanities + Design Lab 2016) function within his lifelong literary project. That

Gillespie only became aware of affinities between Pessoa's project and his own after *Keyhole Factory*'s publication should not prevent scholars from tagging Pessoa's works as an 'e-lit antecedent' in the Electronic Literature Directory (ELD). (The ELD is the ELO's online 'collection of literary works, descriptions, and keywords' at (http://directory.eliterature.org) and is intended to serve as both a repository and a critical resource for studying e-lit). Gillespie's use of heteronyms expand our understanding of 'digital modernism' (Pressman 2014: 3–4) and refine efforts to conceptualise e-lit in relation to our 'fluid "post-literary" reality' (Callus and Corby 2014: v): the *post* does not signal a linear chronology, in which literary practices from earlier times exert a one-way influence on contemporary poiesis. Our conceptualisation of modernist aesthetics and the history of literary modernism necessarily change when contemporary writers deploy innovative techniques in new media writing environments.

With book publishing largely subsumed by media conglomerates, contemporary literary authors are, of course, under tremendous commercial pressure to maintain a high-profile media presence. Corporate publishers expect authors to make marketing a major part of their job. Authors must embark on the obligatory book tour (a duty that famously disturbed one of Gillespie's mentors, David Foster Wallace) and promote not just their writing but also their literary brand. In the late 1990s, Gillespie and his co-authors satirised the cult of literary celebrity in *The Unknown*, using a riotous book tour for a then-unpublished book as the narrative premise that justified the expansive hypertext's unregulated growth, which coincided with the first dot-com bubble. Today, the imperative for continuous digital self-fashioning in the 'reputation economy' (Ellis 2015) and the normalisation of narcissism are social forces contemporary writers cannot ignore. So we see authors appearing in online trailers for books and jostling for views within social media (where in the United States, circa March 2016, Kanye West and Donald Trump currently reign). Buzz-worthy performances and acts of self-promotion have become de rigueur for many unknown writers, and it has become harder to ridicule literary self-promotion and reputation management. (Joshua Cohen's novel-as-online-performance of writing-under-'duress', *PCKWCK* (Cohen 2015), picks up where *The Unknown* collective left off, but this sort of performance is likely a one-off).

Confronted with a technocapitalistic 'attention economy' that undermines both the 'psychic faculty that allows us to concentrate on an object' and the 'social faculty that allows us to take care of this object' (Stiegler 2013: 81), Gillespie (in a way anticipated by Pessoa) has decided to develop an elaborate literary system enabling him to become a 'self-effacing' literary presence. His writing ecosystem displays a deep interest in the following: how we read books (increasingly, across multiple platforms, both analogue and digital); how texts circulate in networked reading and writing spaces; and, not least, how to sustain meaningful literary activity within a twenty-first-century media ecology that, despite the Internet's deterritorialising potential, remains dominated by corporate interests and often promotes a commercial culture of presence over a culture

of meaning. Much of Gillespie's networked literary sensibility therefore involves creating textual assemblages that prompt readers to make conceptual connections about the precarious state of literary art today.

4.

Writing in his spacecraft while preparing for re-entry into Earth's atmosphere, the poet-astronaut John Rock in *Morpheus: Biblionaut* recalls the curious process by which he was selected for his mission to Alpha Centauri, the primary aim of which was 'to test a weapon capable of destroying a planet' (Gillespie 2010: 53):

> but during training they found i have an extraordinary memory
> i am able to hold entire books in my mind
> they tested my accuracy precision and capacity with numbers
> strength dexterity vision
> and my knowledge of astronomy
> they put me in 20g
> in a sensory deprivation tank
> and into freefall
> they starved me suffocated me
> irradiated me with glasses of
> metallic-tasting liquid isotopes
>
> but at no point was i asked to read anything
> more difficult than eye charts
>
> one test never happened
> they kept me locked in an empty waiting room all day
> an honest mistake they said
> i think that was the test
>
> the waiting room didn't even have a magazine
> i could have screamed but i wanted this mission
>
> at no point was i asked to write anything
> the subject of my poetry never came up (51)

These stanzas, particularly Rock's negative refrains ('at no point' was he 'asked to read anything / more difficult than eye charts' or 'to write anything / the subject of my poetry never came up,' and the 'test [that] never happened' left him 'locked in an empty waiting room' that 'didn't even have a magazine'), suggest how problematic our notion of literacy (let alone literature) has become in the current stage of technogenesis, the coevolution of humans and technics.[5]

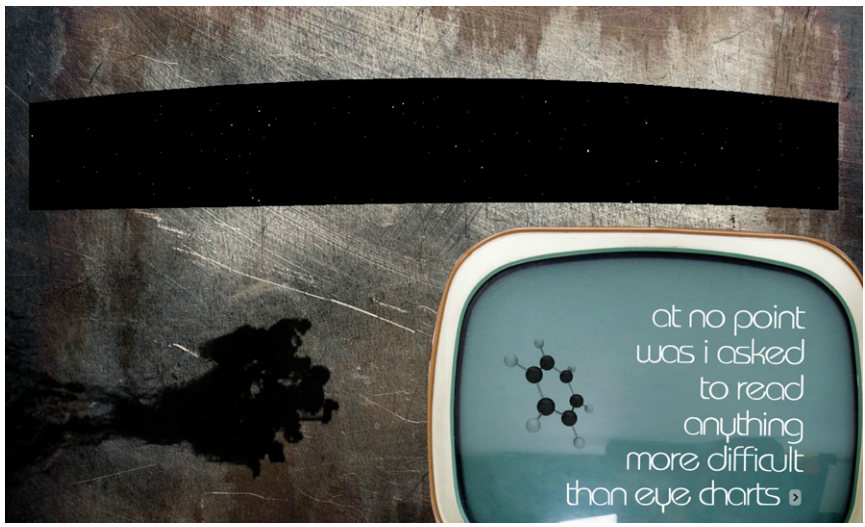

Figure 4. William Gillespie and Travis Alber, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* (2009)
< www.morpheus11.com >

That four poets were selected as finalists for a high-profile space mission might suggest the US government wanted to honour America's poetic tradition and literature's contributions to public literacy. However, among the 'strange discoveries' (50) reported in Rock's poem is an implicit recognition of not simply an indifference towards the subject of one's reading matter but, more significantly, a fundamental transformation in the ontology of the text and, with it, our understanding of what it means to be able to read and write. The point of the eye-chart anecdote is not to raise concern about the quality or the 'literariness' of the available reading material but rather to suggest how the very notion of reading is undergoing a radical transformation – from an act of interpreting a linguistic text to an act of experiencing an object or a material process.

The reader of an eye chart does not attempt to discern its message, and eye-chart readers are not assessed on their ability to proffer meaningful interpretations. You read an eye chart by attempting to discern discrete shapes, letters. The point of the eye test is physiological: to measure the strength of one's vision and assess one's visual acuity. For proponents of 'uncreative writing', most notably poet Kenneth Goldsmith (2011), this transformation of the act of reading, from textual hermeneutics to phenomenological encounters, is to be embraced, for we live with(in) the Internet, a digital environment of textual abundance where fluidity, instability, discontinuity, and illegibility are the norm.

Albers's design signals this shift from the semiotic interpretation of human language to the registration of phenomenal experiences through a montage effect.

She juxtaposes Rock's verse, printed in a sleek white sans-serif font and framed in a retro-looking monitor (alongside an image of a molecule: connoting, for *Keyhole Factory*'s readers, how biological life can be reprogrammed at the molecular or genetic level), with an animated inkblot shape that threatens to engulf the framed space before dissipating. *Keyhole Factory* repeatedly acknowledges our post-literary textual situation, in which '*context is the new content*' (Goldsmith 2011: 3), but Gillespie is less assuredly sanguine than Goldsmith about its implications.

Throughout *Keyhole Factory*, characters struggle to read in environments where semiotic signs are supplanted by material signifiers resistant to interpretation. 'The language was cloudy' (33), for instance, can appear as an innocuous statement in one's initial reading of 'The Bad Poet', indicative simply of MFA student Blake Stone's intoxicated state after imbibing to excess after a poetry conference. But as apocalyptic scenarios unfold, it becomes clearer how cloudy language and impaired interpretive abilities contributed to a toxic communicative environment in which various interconnected systems – military-industrial, financial, medical – were susceptible to catastrophic failures. The novel opens, ominously, by invoking the affective ambivalence resulting from a breakdown in interpretation: 'Tranquility or is it shock? You can't read the weather anymore' (5). This observation, voiced using second-person narration that interpellates readers as confused Middle Americans, anticipates how reading written texts gets conflated with and displaced by the reading of various 'bodies without organs', or, dynamic ecosystems ('[T]he BwO is not a scene, a place, or even a support upon which something comes to pass. It has nothing to do with phantasy, there is nothing to interpret' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 153). With this displacement, hermeneutic reading becomes increasingly difficult. Here, five sentences into the novel, the unreadable system is a bizarre storm, probably related to a nuclear blast on the moon. The pirate-radio broadcaster narrating the novel's closing chapter observes 'the sky has changed its meaning' (377) and presents a 'weather report' (382) when recounting her post-apocalyptic cross-country trek, which details 'how many words have been lost' (378) after the majority of humans have died off and the pervasive state of confusion and meaninglessness when 'what words remain also seem to have faded, their meanings lost' (379). Widespread cognitive dissonance is amplified by another catastrophic system, the Pandora virus, 'a storm brewing in an electron microscope', which functions as 'a mindless reproduction machine that takes control of human physical systems from their brains' (137). Even uninfected characters suffer from aphasia. Fleeing the pandemic with his new bride, small-press publisher Darren O'Dell struggles to read a map, 'hoping the letterforms would reveal themselves, but ink glyphs swam in front of my blinking eyes until tears made me give up' (260). In the aftermath of the outbreak, which kills ninety per cent of Earth's human population, Mindy 'Mix' Pierce describes a planet devoid of meaning, where 'what words remain . . . seem to have faded, their meanings lost' and 'language blankets the land like infectious contaminant' (390). Given the many passages depicting interpretive failures and signs that have ontologised into opaque,

meaningless matter, *Keyhole Factory* can be interpreted as a work of apocalyptic science fiction presenting a dystopian vision of a posthumanist information society – where the affective transmission of data (viruses, codes) systematically trumps whatever remains of humanity's atrophying ability to read and respond, consciously, to the written word (whether in print or in code).

Gillespie's proliferating micro-narratives, often narrated by unidentified characters recounting their experiences of meaninglessness, led early reviewers to foreground the degree to which *Keyhole Factory*'s twenty-two, obliquely connected, chapters fail to cohere into a thematically unified narrative. Commenting on Gillespie's typographic techniques, such as the placement of cryptic glyphs rather than titles at the beginning of each chapter, George Potts claims: 'The reader's desire to relate them to each other and to the chapters they govern creates a quest for false meaning, as if relating hieroglyphs of cigarettes and typewriters to their respective sections can somehow repair the novel's fractured narrative' (Potts: 2012). Ultimately, Potts proposes, disconnect between the glyphs and the 'fractured narrative' may 'signify nothing', making *Keyhole Factory* a 'limit case for novelistic form'. Novelist Davis Schneiderman goes even further by performatively insisting on the futility of trying to interpret *Keyhole Factory*:

> Stop reading already. There really is nothing more this review can tell you .... This review cannot effectively explain that if the glyphs produce, ultimately, a sort of non-productive meaning – frames emptied of their logos which were in fact empty signifiers ... – then the keyhole imagery may attempt an odd recuperation of this same non-meaning. (2011: 12)

Schneiderman proceeds to describe the fuzzy keyhole image as meticulously as possible, which only intensifies its symbolic ambiguity:

> Still reading this piece of imprecise crapola?
> Stop. Now.
> Pick up at [sic] *Keyhole Factory* instead: its images, its case laminate hardback cover, its CD-ROM, its sense of atmosphere. The work becomes an interpretative system as tactile and visual as it is written. (2011: 12)

Though Schneiderman aptly describes *Keyhole Factory* as an 'interpretive system' whose instantiation across several media combines multisensory modalities to contribute to its overall affective impression, he errs in presenting the novel as uninterpretable (for him this is a desirable thing inasmuch as 'plain old reading' is reduced to 'merely deciphering words on a page'): 'There's nothing this review can tell you about *Keyhole Factory* that wouldn't be better conveyed by experiencing the novel' (12). This strong anti-hermeneutic position, however, is possible only by disarticulating the novel's formal elements, not simply its transmedial material supports but also its main metaphors, discursive techniques, methods of characterisation, and so on, from the enmeshed narratives in ways that reduce its affective dimension to atmospherics. By asserting that 'the text's careful manipulation

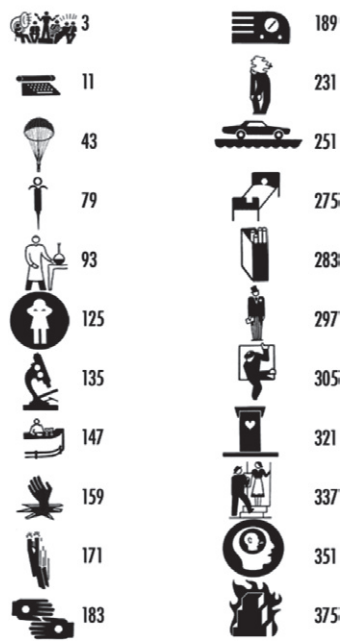

Figure 5. William Gillespie, 'Table of Contents', from *Keyhole Factory* (2012). © William Gillespie

of the reader through its bibliographic codes' is its 'most fascinating aspect' (12), Schneiderman concurs, correctly, with Hayles that 'the physical characteristics of a text – page size, font, gutters, leading, and so on – are ... signifying components that should be considered along with linguistic codes' (Hayles 2005: 90). But the encoded manipulations of the reader result from Gillespie's deliberate design-writing decisions, and the aim of the reader's textual encounter is not simply affective – to keep feeling fascination before opaque visual material. *Fascination*, in the archaic sense of being spellbound or mesmerised, should modulate into analytic consideration – at least for readers receptive and responsive to Gillespie's aesthetic. This aesthetic involves the modulation of narrative affect in structured forms that, while complex, are interpretable. As I've been arguing, *Keyhole Factory* was written and designed to actively solicit interpretations about the WaA novel's meaning, and to encourage readers to reflect upon the processes through which semiotic meaning emerges.

The modulation of narrative affect into meaning is signalled audibly in the soundtrack to *Morpheus: Biblionaut,* which opens with deep reverberating 'ommmmmms', numinous sounds that induce readers to become meditative as they read the incipit, the introductory text and images contextualising the Biblionaut's cosmic voyage. Eventually, electronic, synthesised music kicks in (a score reminiscent

of 1970s planetarium shows and the score for Carl Sagan's television program *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*) right around when the Biblionaut reports 'communication with earth became increasingly . . . asynchronous'. While Gillespie surely intends to stimulate intense affective experiences, which might entail being fascinated by tactile and visual icons that induce a '*passion for the image',* the fact that, for instance, he places his enigmatic glyphs in a web-work map that enables readers to identify voices with characters, establish a chronology, and so on, indicates that his aesthetic 'makes the reader's relation to a text or image' not merely a 'question of its affective impact' but rather a 'matter of grasping the text's or image's meaning' (Leys 2012: 14). A problem with anti-hermeneutic readings that would rest content with leaving readers transfixed by textual effects and / or a-signifying affect is that they are ultimately about the reader's subjective response, not the artwork itself.

As Ruth Leys explains, in a declaration that enriches the connotations of *Keyhole Factory*'s title:

> The decision to treat works of art as *factories* for the production of affective intensities in the reader yields accounts of those works that have nothing to say about content, plot, character, psychology, mental states, narrative or descriptive strategy, or any other features of the text except such as can be viewed as a means – a *technology* – for producing subjectivity effects. (Leys 2012: 20, emphasis added)[6]

Approaching a literary artwork simply as a technology for producing affective responses in the reader instrumentalises the work, rendering much of its full affective dimension irrelevant (the inevitable modulation of non-linguistic affect into linguistic, and hence, inherently significant forms, for instance). Yet the temptation to technologise the text is, understandably, particularly strong when reading works of e-lit. An alternative interpretive approach is to analyse narrative affect, tracing *Keyhole Factory*'s critical deployment of tropes of encoded affective transmissions more rigorously in order to consider how Gillespie's literary system stages some of the socio-political implications of an uncritical embrace of phenomenal experience, which prematurely forecloses interpretive activities, within its narrative form.

5.

As a motif, the government's indifference to the Biblionaut's reading-and-writing abilities is but one of many incidents in which interpretation is rendered irrelevant by the ontologisation of meaningful human language into affective, but asignifying, forms. Let's consider a few more, keeping in mind that while *Keyhole Factory* repeatedly stages scenes of a-signification, Gillespie's interpretive system repeatedly interrogates the reduction in the Programming Era of human language into asignifying forms, such as computer and genetic code. 'The Bad Idea' chapter immediately following 'Biblionaut', for instance, introduces the Burroughs-esque trope of viral language – words as a parasite forcing its host to generate violently disruptive communications:[7] '*The bad idea is not known to infect any other species other than humans, among whom it*

is communicable through language and violence' (81: emphasis in original). In 'No Exit Strategy', the Biblionaut's (ex)-wife, immunologist Dr Dora Adorno, speculates, in terms replicating evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins's theory of *memes*: '[I]f ideas were species, they were certainly parasites, as they were dependent on human minds for survival' (104). Awakening from a nightmare, Adorno finds herself 'flattened by dread' (118), immobilised by the implications of the idea that a virus is a quasi-living carrier of coded information: 'What is the difference between holding the virus in your mind and being infected by it?' she wonders. Noting that the virus's structure was written in genetic code, the language of DNA, she worries, 'Could the virus be transmitted by thought? If the molecules comprised in the virus could be communicated by language then why couldn't the virus?' (118) The fantasy of non-cognitive, biomedial transmission, of communication as contagion, entertained here presents a common scenario in posthistoricist science fiction, a world of information multiplicity in which everything, including human language, can be translated into code. The mind cannot cognitively comprehend this code, but as a biological entity, the Pandora virus can be processed corporeally and violently affect other living bodies.

In posthistoricist science fictions, literary theorist Walter Benn Michaels argues, 'the analogy between the digital virus and the biological virus, between computer code and genetic code, thus performs a double function . . . to produce a world in which everything is a text' and, insofar as the text becomes raw data to be processed rather than interpreted, to produce a 'world without texts and the interpretation of texts' (2004: 68). Part of the appeal of this fantasy is 'ethical' (70), Michaels explains, for the ontologisation of human language into a 'biological entity' and texts into transmissible data enables us to imagine modes of corporeal-affective communications in which the inherently debatable criterion of true-versus-false arguments gets replaced with a purely performative criterion – successful or unsuccessful transmissions. Another term for characterising this fantasy, in which the transmission of contagious coded information from one body to another eliminates the need for interpretation, might be 'post-literary' (in a reductively literalist sense), or, 'post-literate'. And *Keyhole Factory*, as a countertext, repeatedly challenges the ethical appeal of this fantasy of violent affect through Gillespie's multifaceted metaphors.

For instance: when Dr Adorno (whose name suggests how Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's critique of the 'culture industry' (2001 [1944]: 120–67) might be updated to critique the embrace of the communicative materialism endorsed by bioculture industries) figures the Pandora virus as a 'tiny keyhole through which, if one squinted through an electron microscope, one could glimpse a future without people' (101), *Keyhole Factory*'s title acquires greater significance: an even greater threat than the culture industry's propagandistic manufacturing of consent, which at least retains some notion of semantic agreement (however debased), is the fantasy of abandoning semantics and meaning altogether for violently affective programs that could render humanity extinct.

As Michaels's account of the cultural logic informing Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* makes explicit, the 'ethical fantasy' of the ontologised, living text that 'can never tell a lie' redescribes 'communication as penetration' (68). Thus investment banker Patrick Bateman, who feels as if he's 'been programmed' (Ellis 1991: 112), writes by carving words into women's bodies, confident their screams of pain are sincere utterances. *Keyhole Factory* also features a corporate serial killer driven by an ethics of purity. The chapter 'Cancer Cells' is a statement written by former CEO Adam White, who, after the catastrophe, dedicates himself to ruthlessly exterminating the human survivors living together in collectives. White coldly frames these murders as a medical procedure, 'eliminating pathogens from the surface of the earth' (358), and imagines a future when 'white spaces', the ashen landscapes resulting from radioactive fallout, 'will again become green, long after I am dead, having taken as many as I could with me', and human language will become extinct:

> How long before the language was deforested? How long would the words for trees hang on, before they too were at last uprooted and sent the way of the dodo? If language was the detritus of that which no longer existed, a clutter of empty symbols snared in their own semantic equations, then wouldn't it be better forgotten? Perhaps language is a constant in the structure of the universe, like electromagnetism and gravity, irrespective of whether people understand or harness it. (359)

In a more sympathetic register, the Biblionaut's poem also expresses concern about dead language and dying passions: 'when uprooted from earth / words died / dried drained of meaning / pressed flowers / no force driving them / . . . nothing makes sense in space' (57).

These examples suggest that the predominant affect of the Biblionaut's narrative – a confused 'icy feeling' (60) that intensifies far beyond the cool of, say, punk askesis or the 'information cool' of IT knowledge work (Liu 2004) to induce a numbing, disorienting delirium – is not simply a function of his being in deep space. Rather, Rock's affective experience of extreme disorientation is symptomatic of a more widespread condition in our computationally saturated media ecology, where human language is continually at risk of being 'drained of meaning' and passion as it circulates in communications networks, registered as transmitted data but not read, or responded to, as a meaningful utterance. Even if read as a killer-virus novel, *Keyhole Factory* is less interested in narrating the effects of a pandemic than it is about depicting the fallout of a society that has embraced a radically materialist vision of coded communication that is anti-intentionalist and literalist.

From the beginning, the Biblionaut's experience of desiccated language is connected with his self-awareness about his professional identity as a poet. In the dialogic second chapter 'The Bad Poet', where Rock is first introduced as 'the poet in space' (19), poets Claude Reagan (an academic poet) and Max Winchester (an award-winning poet in his youth who has since 'discovered that the oppositional stance he had fashioned in the sixties had left him opposite everything, including poetry' and who harbours an

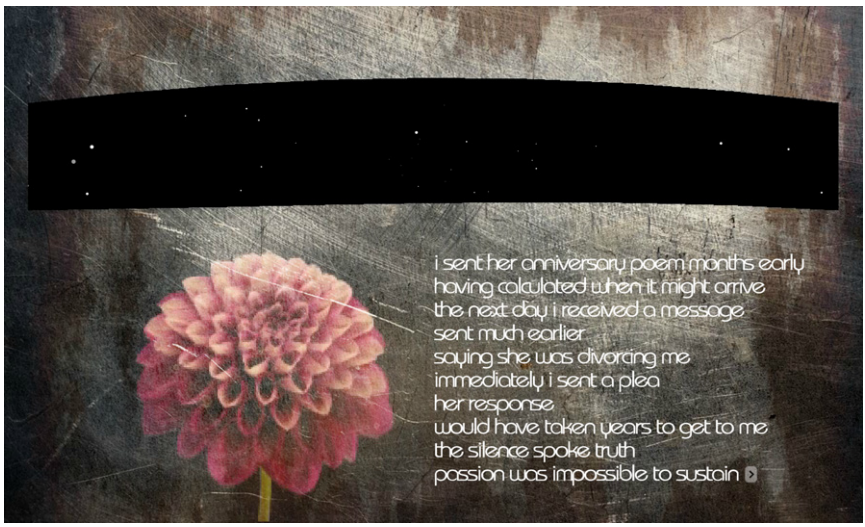

Figure 6. William Gillespie and Travis Alber, *Morpheus: Biblionaut* (2009)
< www.morpheus11.com >

'irreversible resentment for a poetry world that passed him by' (31)) debate his poetic credentials: 'While his writing was not always taken seriously in academic circles, he was easily the most well-known American poet, and rumoured to be in line to be Poet Laureate – in absentia' (19). While Claude respects the 'scholar-astronaut' for being 'so committed to scholarship that he had arranged the perfect silence in which to read: no earthly distractions' and becoming 'an enduring figure in American letters' (19), Max regards Rock with contempt: 'I believe he never existed, and that all his work has been computer generated' (20). Despite Max's dismissive assessment, the chapter's eponymous title refers not to the Biblionaut, but to MFA student and dishwasher Jasper Pierce, whose 'oppositional poetics' (35) ostensibly follow from his radically materialist vision of language and commitment to a 'writing practice [that] was not geared toward the Poetry Machine . . . but part of a living vital practice directly engaged with the social' (16). Although he's enrolled in a creative-writing program, Jasper regards it as an overly professionalised system disconnected from everyday socio-political realities, such as the plight of the homeless and minimum-wage labourers, that is 'relentless[ly] exclusion[ary]' in its treatment of aspiring young writers. But while Jasper performs his 'rakish disregard for the stifling protocol of the poetry establishment' (30) by doing things like mailing unfinished poems to himself, studying a homeless man's poem with 'the degree of scholarship normally reserved for Homer' (16), and penning 'mean cocktail napkin haikus' (36) expressing his disdain for other poets at an academic conference, he remains committed to a poetics dependent upon protocol, or rules. For Jasper, however, the emphasis is less on the rules that

constrain language use and more on the rules pertaining to the material supports (bad coffee imbibed, sounds and shapes registered) underlying his reading-and-writing routine.

Consider how the following scene of reading-writing emphasises materiality and atmospherics over ideas and meaning. While the environment bristles with potential signification, the promise of revealed meaning is never quite actualised. The passage ends bathetically, with the content of Jasper's book, down to its letters, reduced to illegible, unreadable matter.

> Jasper, the bad poet, liked to drink bad coffee. It usually hurt him, but it seemed necessary. He would drink until he was too wired to read anything but white space. Higher and higher, all the way up. Because then he would get ideas, and become capable of deconstructing any artifice, no matter how tangible. The arrangement of tables and chairs was no less poetry than the furniture on the page. There were nine letters in 'Waste Land' and nine utensils in the silverware rack beside the cream pitcher. And the clatter of saucers and demitasses was no less music than the Charles Ives that issued from the battered radio behind the counter. The air shimmered like a signifier giving up its transparence. On the bathroom wall, Jasper wrote the letter X, and nodded in satisfaction: his truest work. In the cracked bathroom mirror the bald [sic] poet looked at his reflection and behind it his poem was still readable. When he returned to his book, the letters seemed shriveled on the page, spindly glyphs dangling from a dead tree.
>
> It was in such a mood that Jasper had gotten into the argument about bad poetry (16).

The argument begins when Blake Stone, Jasper's best friend and rival, asserts 'the truth: that most of the poetry being published was bad', and Jasper replies, with 'ferocity', 'there was no bad poetry' (13). Whether Jasper actually believes this claim – a rejection of evaluative assessments that suggests an indifference to a poem's meaning and that contradicts his 'reasoned' conclusion that '[t]rue art . . . takes place on a higher plane than this shallow and earthly competition for the cheap satisfaction of recognition' (35) – or is moodily over-reacting to his privileged friend's dismissive generalisation, Jasper's 'oppositional poetics' is premised on a conviction that his radically materialist writing practice (radical insofar as it reduces language to dead letters) is not simply compatible with but essential to his radical leftist political beliefs.

Recent critics of affect theory take a diametrically opposed position, warning that an excessive emphasis on an artefact's 'phenomenological materiality' (Simanowski 2011: x) and a corresponding privileging of the audience's or viewer's material-affective experience effectively disables ideological critique by diverting 'attention away from considerations of meaning or "ideology"' (Leys 2011: 451), contributing to a depoliticisation of the democratic political sphere. In Ruth Leys's terms, Jasper's poetics is characteristic of a materialist 'turn to affect' premised upon a fundamental 'disconnect between "ideology" and affect': this disconnect 'produces as one of its consequences a relative indifference to the role of ideas and beliefs in politics, culture, and art in favour of an "ontological" concern with different people's corporeal-affective

reactions' (Leys 2011: 451). Throughout the scene-of-writing passage, the writing process, ordinarily construed as deliberately using words from human-only languages to articulate meaning, gets ontologised. This ontologisation begins by positing writing as a painful process that necessarily involves feeling 'hurt'.

Jasper, it seems, partly subscribes to a romantic myth: the suffering artist as a deranged visionary seer. In Jasper's view, the bad poet must render himself mentally incapable of reading by ingesting a bad, or, intoxicating, substance (not a virus, just coffee), thereby inducing a state of mind in which 'ideas' appear not as messages articulable in words but rather as discreet, countable, moveable objects visible against white space. Letters become indistinguishable from other shapes, such as the contours of utensils, and the clatter of plates sounds like music; the air itself 'shimmer[s] like a signifier giving up its significance'. Thus the passage ends with dead-letter imagery. Unlike the viral scenario, Jasper's hallucinations are not fatally disorienting. There is a reference to a 'readable' poem – the *X* Jasper writes on the bathroom wall and notices, in passing, as he 'look[s] at his reflection' (16) – though to most observers it would appear as rather banal graffiti. So much, of course, depends upon how seriously we take Jasper's artistic gesture: on the one hand, the 'cracked mirror' that frames the *X* arguably enables us to read it as a minimalist or literalist artwork. On the other hand, the mirror also foregrounds the viewer's refection, refocusing attention away from the artwork and towards the viewer's subjective experience, which is dominated by his or her self-image**.** In this way, the poem provides an experience of presence, as opposed to presentness. Likewise, the overall scenario involves a materialist privileging of affective experience – intoxication and presence effects – over signification. Although the passage concludes with a reference to Blake and Jasper's argument, its underlying logic, with the emphasis on the atmospherics of the dive cafe's rooms and the poet's mood, effectively renders the content of their disagreement irrelevant. That's one interpretation.

If we credit Jasper with having developed a more refined modernist sensibility, his *X* poem can be interpreted as a legitimate Lettrist text aiming to 'perfect the dadaist break between words and meanings by freeing letters from words themselves' (Plant 1992: 55). The ultimate goal motivating the Lettrist International's liberation of letters was to lay the foundation for a meaningful transformation of everyday life. The Lettrists, Sadie Plant emphasises, demanded a '*rational* embellishment of . . . Paris': 'As autonomous signs and hieroglyphs, letters could provide the bricks of a new creative process, attracting new references, meanings, and chosen significances' (1992: 55, 60). Read in relation to Lettrist texts, Jasper's poetics may possibly be seen as beginning to anticipate 'post-literary' elements, such as the literalisation of 'metaphoric texture' and a 'dynamic of radical erasure, of referential meaning', that Aquilina identifies as significant conceptual elements in Nick Montfort's code poetry (2015: 349). Jasper, in fact, will become a code-poetry convert, though the catastrophe will preclude him from becoming a practitioner of the computational sublime. That the last lexia in 'The Bad Poet' focalised through Jasper's consciousness

concludes with Jasper, 'upset by. . . the schizophrenia induced by being simultaneously inside and outside the system' (36), awakening in the middle of the night to internally debate whether to reject his probable acceptance into a creative-writing program before wondering, 'if everybody were dying, what would these arguments mean' (36), signals Gillespie's concern about a widespread cultural embrace of meaninglessness and a corresponding political cynicism in America's neoliberalised institutions, not least the university.

6.

George Potts reads Blake and Jasper's argument and similar exchanges between quarrelling poets as satire and observes that 'for a work of apocalyptic fiction, this may seem an odd starting point: there's no obvious link between Armageddon and poetic infighting' (Potts 2012). What connects the two, he proposes, is a generic link: 'apocalyptic fiction, or, "end times porn" as a genre is rooted in both political gridlock *and* imaginative loss', which makes it comparable to academic fiction. This comparison suggests Gillespie's formal experiments are designed to propel readers away from the conventional narrative trajectory of two popular novelistic genres, apocalyptic and academic fiction, that typically depict 'inward-looking' characters struggling to deal with crises that threaten to overwhelm lives lived largely within semi-autonomous professional communities. As suggested by his practice of creating heteronyms, Gillespie is not particularly interested in depicting realistic characters or crafting plots designed to stage dramatic encounters in which characters act in ways that gradually reveal themselves to be 'well-rounded', plausible representations of people we might know. (To wit: On *Keyhole Factory*'s penultimate page, an unnamed narrator comments, 'the sea was revealing her true character to me, a living breathing mass' [404].) He is, however, interested in exploring the ideological implications of prosopopoeia, the trope by which we anthropomorphise and attribute human-like agency to various non-human entities. Throughout 'Dead Aria', the final chapter, the prosopopoeia effectively trivialises human civilizations, which 'had grown like mold around bodies of water' and were now being overtaken by their 'most powerful enemy', the sea (404), and the threat of imminent extinction suggests how vulnerable *Homo sapiens* are to forces beyond human control in the planetary, and even cosmic, ecosystem: 'when humans crowded the earth, we thought for sure we were in control of everything – nature, language, war, money, even water. But who are the major payers who run this planet?' (381). Potts suggests *Keyhole Factory's* 'countless plot strands and typographical experiments' are 'deployed to formally mirror its apocalyptic content, creating chaos in terms of structure as well as subject matter' (Potts 2012) – a plausible, but too-hasty, assessment, if 'chaos' denotes disorder or confusion. For if we follow Gillespie's deft handling of materialist tropes, particularly figurations of language as a quasi-living entity capable of generating powerful affects, *Keyhole Factory*'s structure and subject matter become comprehensible.

Jasper's satisfaction at producing his 'truest' poem by simply writing the letter *X,* like his inability to read the shrivelled letters in his book, provides a more mundane version of the incomprehensible post-apocalyptic landscape described by Mindy Mix in the chapter 'Dead Aria', the title of which plays on the blurring of the music/sound/noise distinction. Mindy doesn't sing, but her pirate-radio broadcast is an expressive, vocal solo performance, like a musical aria. Technically, *dead air* refers to unintended periods of silence in a media broadcast when the sound drops out due to a failure of transmission, and the text of Mindy's broadcast is filled with white spaces to indicate such periods of silence. But as a visual marker these blank spaces, of course, don't enable readers to hear background noise in the listening environment that would otherwise be inaudible. The blank spaces also suggest the sound of silence, that is, moments when the transmission is functioning, but Mindy has simply stopped speaking and is pausing to think. In this way, the white space acts as punctuation, enabling readers to hear the rhythms of Mindy's soliloquy and to better understand her cognitive processes and the composition. While the scene of reading-writing at *The Waste Land* cafe foregrounds Jasper's synesthetic experiences of material objects, 'Dead Aria' foregrounds Mindy's encounters with meaningless language. But rather than wholeheartedly embracing phenomenal affect, Mindy's experience of an actual waste land, where 'language blankets the land like infectious contaminant [and] paper flutters in the breeze waiting for the next intelligence to infect and destroy' (380), leads her to tell her 'backward' (381) story in a radio broadcast she distinguishes from a 'weather report' (382). That Jasper's 'bad poetry' and Mindy's pirate-radio broadcast are intended to raise ethico-political concerns about embracing meaningless language becomes apparent when we compare the two young idealists. Both are 'beautiful souls' who entertain fantasies about occupying an oppositional position outside corrupt social systems, and effectuating change via a performative force, the program. Both are disgusted by systemic corruption and imagine that authentic programs – the redemptive potential of which resides in their ethical integrity and purity as opposed to corrupt and fallen human language – offer a solution.

Computer code written in a programming language either 'works' or it doesn't. So early in the novel, Jasper abandons 'Gutenberg-era poetics', the 'decaying core of tradition', and 'word poetry' in favour of machinic, procedural poetics (22–3). Jasper's conversion to coding occurs when his friend, programmer and musician Hunter Thurston, shows Jasper some code and declares: '"It *is* poetry man. The real thing: with this kind of poetry you can tell whether it works. Because otherwise it crashes' (22). Near the novel's end, Mindy speculates that the 'earth has undertaken [a] program of extermination, widespread fire and flood' to eliminate all traces of language, an 'infectious contaminant' that, having killed off most of its human hosts, is 'waiting for the next intelligence to inflect and destroy' (380). Humanity, from this planetary perspective, is just another 'harmful organism' the earth will cleanse through 'violent meteorological instability' (384). But Gillespie ironises a fundamentalist impulse underlying Jasper and Mindy's embrace of the fantasy of executable programs.

'"You've saved my life"' (23), Jasper gushes to Hunter, during a conversation in which the existential threat posed by the outbreak of war between the United States and China goes unremarked. Not only is this vision of code's performative purity presented by a database programmer to a poet so enraptured by the size of a phone book that he prefers reading it over his poetry anthology, but it also envisions a procedural poetics based upon informatic codes as the means of pragmatically circumventing the epistemological uncertainty associated with 'human-only language[s]' (Hayles 2006: 136) and our all-too-human interpretive endeavours. By the novel's post-apocalyptic ending, however, following multiple systems crashes, the dangers of embracing a model of purely performative language that, as Donna Haraway famously put it, results in '*the translation of the world into a problem of coding*' are fully evident (1991: 162; emphasis in original).

When Hunter explains to Jasper how programmers and machines read code differently, he stumbles: 'But the machine doesn't read it [the program/poem]. It starts at the beginning each time, but it will jump from stanza to stanza depending on what the, er, images, ah, mean' (22). Hunter's pauses signal a slight reservation at the disarticulation of semantic meaning from reading and writing processes. Understandably so. While machine reading excels at revealing patterns, it is 'context poor' and so 'context must be supplied (by a human interpreter) to connect pattern with meaning' (Hayles 2012: 74). But Jasper is so smitten with the technical procedures used to generate his first newspoem[8] that the compositional process trumps the significance of his source text, a newspaper article reporting on a world-historical event that remains uncontextualised: 'UNITED STATES DECLARES WAR ON CHINA' (23). The issue that arises in this early episode, concerning the link between embracing a literalist model of language as performatively affective, executable code, acquires greater ethical significance later, in 'The Scientist and Artist in Society' (chapter 7), when researcher Jacob Jones figures the Pandora virus as 'a mindless reproduction machine that takes control of human physical systems away from their brains; as evil as only something animate but not alive can be' (137) and, 'infected by resentment so virulent it amplified into every thought, sensation, and decision' (138), resolves to release the virus during an Arms Contractors' Ball. But already in the second chapter, it is intimated how a materialist embrace of performative language might contribute to a posthuman ethos conducive to world-destroying violence.

If these early references to viral language ask us to consider the implications of bypassing interpretation in programmed communicative processes**,** Mindy's narrated radio program alludes to the capitalist logic that stimulated humans' desire for a 'common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears' (Haraway 1991: 162). The pyramidal 'information palace' where 'machines chime acknowledgements and instructions, semantic codes' (392) that Mindy stumbles across in her cross-county trek, for instance, is no utopian oasis suggestive of humanity's potential redemption. It's a casino-hotel populated by zombified survivors 'exchanging

tokens not for information about the world, but for random combinations of empty symbols' (393).

What becomes apparent after the catastrophe is the importance of not simply preserving meaningful language but cultivating it via aesthetic forms, which Gillespie depicts as being essential to the development of civil society. 'After the Revolution', a chapter comprised of nine micro-narratives all beginning with the all-caps phrase 'AFTER THE REVOLUTION', offers glimpses of utopian living possibilities in a small commune where constraint-based language games, such as learning to 'speak without using singular pronouns' (323), provide survivors a means of developing more peaceful, collectivist ways of living together: 'the only way to have fun or accomplish anything was through rules' (323). Following programmed procedures tempers discord by reducing the chances for arbitrary, petty disputes: 'Without limiting ourselves to four letter words or a particular verb tense there was too little to say and too many ways to say it and we would end up talking about ourselves and each other and who hadn't done the dishes and what rules might get him to' (323). An unattributed poem, for example, notes how Blake's poetry recitations enabled survivors to identify obscure plants ('There were no reference texts out here / so we would have to rely on poetry to teach us botany / Latin / Poetry was capable of this / It spoke us to each other') that were not simply edible but also provided 'subtle distinctions of flavor' (326). The point is not only that poetry is practical, facilitating survival, but also that the language arts provide the means for making conceptual distinctions about experience, which enable the community to progress from a state of biopolitically controlled 'bare life' to a 'qualified' (Agamben: 1998) or civilised existence.

Similarly, in a world without electricity where he cannot code, programmer Hunter Thurston's cultural capital dissipates: 'AFTER THE REVOLUTION the absence of electricity was the most devastating to Hunter: he used to work in security and data cryptography encoding digital payments sent across the World Wide Web: something which we had never understood and which no longer made any sense' (331). When Hunter's status is reduced to being a 'fallen mystic' he initially becomes 'terribly despondent' (331), and two lexias contextualise his declaration, 'AFTER THE REVOLUTION writing has become important to me' (329). This refers, in part, to a rule requiring Hunter to 'write every fear down as an eventuality' (331) so he can overcome the paralysing nightmares that threaten his and his comrades' mobility. Playing the guitar – on which 'with the lightning eloquence of a typist he would run astoundingly sad programs', 'haunting harmonic subroutines and algorithms and recursions' – helps with Hunter's 'mood reset' (331). But the musical modulation of negative affect in itself is not enough. In order to erase his fears, his friend advises him, he must also write. So Hunter agrees to begin typing, a mode of embodied writing combining familiar visceral movements – the digital keystrokes and rhythms of coding and playing music – with the unfamiliar art of linguistic articulation – articulating and externalising imagined outcomes that generate

fears. Such microevents concerning narrative affect anticipate the significance of an easily overlooked moment in 'Dead Aria', when Mindy interjects meta-commentary explicitly acknowledging the transformative potential of meaningful human language into her narrative. This interjection comes as she reflects on how her misanthropic position regarding humanity's toxic effect on Earth has shifted. Once, she would have welcomed violent apocalyptic events portending human extinction; now, after the catastrophe she recognises the transformative potential of meaningful language:

> i mean, back then i would have really wanted this to happen. i just thought people were the worst thing that could happen to a planet. because people make war. but, as it turned out, war killed people, so war must live on. the bad idea is out there looking for a new mind to have it. an infected language was the virus that destroyed its human host [white space. . .] so maybe people, with their *inherent capacity to articulate* would have been the world's best hope. (397, emphasis added)

The thematic trajectory in *Keyhole Factory* I've been tracing oscillates between the ontological / affective and ideological / cognitive dimension of language. At this juncture in the text, the latter arguably predominates. Mindy's principled anti-humanism, her sense that people should be sacrificed to save the planet from war, is countered by her reasoned conclusion that, ultimately, the probability of saving life and the planet was greater if humans capable of articulating good ideas for doing so were around. The logic underlying her reasoning seems to be this: the project of altering the harmful consequences of bad ideas requires deliberate reasoning and intentional language use. How else could people collectively act to implement plans, both long-term, planetary strategies and local, short-term tactics, for altering destructive human behaviours and systems? That Mindy's reflections on post-human futures are stated in the second conditional progressive ('would have been') intensifies their poignancy, suggesting, on the one hand, it's already too late for hope; on the other, signalling to listeners (and the novel's readers) how important it is, now, that we humans continue to cultivate our ability to articulate meaningful thoughts in human-only-language. That this message might sound retrograde to those who feel writers working in multiple media should abandon the literary altogether suggests why the readers and writers who believe in the field of electronic *literature* and the ethico-political importance of sustaining human readability[9] need William Gillespie, DIY publisher and author of affective, meaningful post-digital fictions for the Programming Era.

Notes

1. I want to thank William Gillespie for sending a link to this unpublished essay and for his comments on an earlier draft of my article. Gillespie specified that *Morpheus: Biblionaut* with the colon is the preferred spelling of the piece's title.
2. Thanks to Adam Richer for help manipulating image files.
3. 'Stupidity is a scar. It can stem from one of many activities – physical or mental – or from all. Every partial stupidity of a man denotes a spot where the play of stirring muscles was thwarted instead of encouraged' (Adorno and Horkheimer 2001 [1947]: 257).

4. See Redden (2009) on the publishing program Di Leo has built at the University of Houston–Victoria, which since 2015 has housed the Dalkey Archive Press.
5. The concept of technogenesis 'is about adaptation, the fit between organisms and their environments, recognizing that both sides of the engagement (humans and technologies) are undergoing coordinated transformations'. Because 'the instruments by which one might attempt to measure these changes are also part of the technical environment and so are also involved in dynamic transformations', N. Katherine Hayles likens the challenge of studying technogenesis to 'a relativistic scenario of a spaceship traveling at near light speed: the clocks on board by which one might measure time dilation are themselves subject to the very phenomenon in question, so accurate measurement of dilation effects by this means is impossible' (Hayles 2012: 81–3). This, of course, is precisely the Biblionaut's situation: Rock senses he, along with the codex book, his electronic library, and other communications media, is undergoing a posthuman metamorphosis: 'i may not sound human / but i am human / or was' (74).
6. Ruth Leys makes these statements in a critique of Marco Abel's notion of *violent affect*, as exemplified by the violence immanent in novels by Cormac McCarthy and Brian Evenson. For Abel, violent affect induces a sense of fascination that is potentially ethical inasmuch as it defers (for how long is unclear) the rush to moralistic representations and judgments.
7. 'From symbiosis to parasitism is a short step. The word is now a virus. . . . Modern man has lost the option of silence. Try halting sub-vocal speech. Try to achieve even ten seconds of inner silence. You will encounter a resisting organism that forces you to talk. That organism is the word' (Burroughs 1987: 49).
8. *Newspoetry* is a constrained-writing project initiated in 1995 and online since 1999 that is now archived at Spineless Books: < http://spinelessbooks.com/newspoetry/ > .
9. My rhetoric is derived from John Cayley's imperative suggestion for an 'ethics of digital arts practices: Perform human readability, or risk having failed as maker' (2013: 11).

References

Aarseth, Espen (1997), *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkheimer (2001 [1947]), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, New York: Continuum.

Agamben, Giorgio (1998), *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Aquilina, Mario (2015), 'The Computational Sublime in Nick Montfort's "Round" and "All the Names of God"', *CounterText*, 1: 3, 348–65.

Burroughs, William S. (1987 [1962/1967]), *The Ticket That Exploded*, New York: Grove Press.

Callus, Ivan and James Corby (2015), 'Editorial: Countertextuality and the Political', *CounterText*, 1: 1, v–x.

Cayley, John (2004), 'Literal Art', *Electronic Book Review* (*ebr*), (29 November) < http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/programmatology > [accessed 02 February 2016].

Cayley, John (2013), 'Reading and Giving Voice and Language,' *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 18: 5, 10–19.

Ciccoricco, Dave (2007), *Reading Network Fiction*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Cohen, Joshua (2015), 'An Experiment in Anxiety', *The Believer Logger*, (15 October 2015) < http://logger.believermag.com/post/131233676834/an-experiment-in-anxiety > [accessed 15 March 2016].

Cramer, Florian (2012), 'Post-digital Writing', *Electronic Book Review* (ebr) (12 December 2012) < http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/postal > [accessed 15 March 2016].

Danielweski, Mark Z (2006), *Only Revolutions: A Novel*, New York: Pantheon.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (1987 [1980]), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Di Leo, Jeffrey R. (2016), 'Who's Afraid of Self-Publishing', *Notre Dame Review*, 41, < http://ndreview.nd.edu/archived-issues/ndr-41/ > [accessed 26 March 2016].

Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice (ELMCIP), *ELMCIP Electronic Literature Knowledge Base*, Bergen: ELMCIP < http://elmcip.net/knowledgebase > [accessed 03 April 2016].

Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) (2011), *Electronic Literature Collection Volume 2*, ed. Laura Borràs, Talan Memmott, Rita Raley and Brian Stefans < http://collection.eliterature.org/2/ > [accessed 26 March 2016].

Electronic Literature Organization (ELO), *Electronic Literature Directory*, Cambridge, MA: Electronic Literature Organization < http://directory.eliterature.org > [accessed 03 April 2016].

Ellis, Brett Easton (1991), *American Psycho*, New York: Vintage.

Ellis, Brett Easton (2015), 'Bret Easton Ellis on Living in the Cult of Likability', *International New York Times*, 8 December 2015 < http://nyti.ms/1ONTneQ > [accessed 03 April 2016].

Gillespie, William (2010), *Keyhole Factory*, Urbana: Spineless Books.

Gillespie, William (2011 [2001]), *Letter to Linus* in Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) (2011), *Electronic Literature Collection Volume 2*, ed. Laura Borràs, Talan Memmott, Rita Raley and Brian Stefans, < http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/gillespie_letter_to_linus.html > [accessed 03 April 2016].

Gillespie, William (2012 [2010]), *Keyhole Factory*, Berkeley: Soft Skull Press.

Gillespie, William (no date), 'Keyhole Factory Factory – a submission to the *Millions*', < keyholefactory.com/keyholefactoryfactory/ > [accessed 26 March 2016].

Gillespie, William (2013), 'Mapping *Keyhole Factory*', *Keeler News: Bulletin of the Harry Stephen Keeler Society*, 81, < keyholefactory.com/keelernew/keyholekeeler.pdf > [accessed 26 March 2016].

Gillespie, William and Nick Montfort (2002), *2002: A Palindrome Story in 2002 Words*, Urbana: Spineless Books.

Gillespie, William, Scott Rettberg, Dirk Stratton, and Frank Marquardt (2011 [1998–2002]), *The Unknown*, in Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) (2011), *Electronic Literature Collection Volume 2*, ed. Laura Borràs, Talan Memmott, Rita Raley, Brian Kim Stefans < http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/rettberg_theunknown.html > [accessed 26 March 2016].

Gillespie, William and Travis Alber (2009), *Morpheus: Biblionaut*, audio David Schmudde and programming Aaron Miller, Urbana: Spineless Books, < www.morpheus11.com > [accessed 16 March 2016].

Goldsmith, Kenneth (2011), *Uncreative Writing*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Graham, Philip (2013), 'Zombies Are Not Real: An Interview with William Gillespie', *Fiction Writers Review*, (14 January) < http://fictionwritersreview.com/interview/zombies-are-not-real-an-interview-with-william-gillespie/ > [accessed 04 February 2016].

Hall, Steven (2007), *The Raw Shark Texts*, Edinburgh: Canongate.

Haraway, Donna (1991), *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge.

Harvey, David (2005), *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hayles, N. Katherine (2004), 'Print is Flat, Code is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis', *Poetics Today*, 25: 1, 67–90.

Hayles, N. Katherine (2005), *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hayles, N. Katherine (2006), 'Traumas of Code', *Critical Inquiry*, 33: 1, 136–57.

Hayles, N. Katherine (2012), *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Houser, Heather (2014), *Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Humanities + Design Lab (2016), 'Project: The Art and Lives of Fernando Pessoa' < http://hdlab.stanford.edu/projects/pessoa/ > [accessed 18 March 2016].

Leys, Ruth (2011), 'The Turn to Affect: A Critique', *Critical Inquiry*, 37: 3, 434–72.

Leys, Ruth (2012), 'Trauma and the Turn to Affect', in Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga (eds), *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 3–27.

Liu, Alan (2004), *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Manovich, Lev (2002), *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Maunsell, Jerome Boyd (2012), 'The Hauntings of Fernando Pessoa', *Modernism/modernity*, 9: 1, 115–37.

McGurl, Mark (2009), *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Michaels, Walter Benn (2004), *The Shape of the Signifier*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Moretti, Franco (2007), *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, London: Verso.

Pierce, Jasper [William Gillespie] (2008), *Steal Stuff From Work*, Urbana: Spineless Books.

Plant, Sadie (1992), *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*, London: Routledge.

Potts, George (2012), 'Review: William Gillespie's Keyhole Factory', *The American Reader*. < http://theamericanreader.com/review-william-gillespies-keyhole-factory/ > [accessed 15 March 2016].

Pressman, Jessica (2014), *Digital Modernism: Making it New in New Media*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Redden, Elizabeth (2009), 'Unlikely Haven for Humanities Publishing', *Inside Higher Ed* (8 January) < https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/01/08/victoria > [accessed 08 April].

Rettberg, Scott and Eric Dean Rasmussen (2014), 'The ELMCIP Knowledge Base', in Scott Rettberg and Sandy Baldwin (eds), *Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice: A Report from the HERA Joint Research Project*, Bergen and Morgantown, WV: ELMCIP and Center for Literary Computing at West Virginia University and ELMCIP, pp. 293–340.

Schneiderman, Davis (2011), 'Do Not Read This Review', *American Book Review*, 32: 5, 11–12.

Simanowski, Roberto (2011), *Digital Art and Meaning: Reading Kinetic Poetry, Text Machines, Mapping Art, and Interactive Installations*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stiegler, Bernard (2013), *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross, Cambridge: Polity.

Tabbi, Joseph (2010), 'Electronic Literature as World Literature; or, The Universality of Writing Under Constraint', *Poetics Today*, 31: 1, 17–50.

Winchester, Max [William Gillespie] (2016 [2012]), *How to Vote: A Manual*, Spokane: I-Beam Books.

Your short guide to the EUP Journals Blog http://euppublishingblog.com/

A forum for discussions relating to Edinburgh University Press Journals

1. The primary goal of the EUP Journals Blog

To aid discovery of authors, articles, research, multimedia and reviews published in Journals, and as a consequence contribute to increasing traffic, usage and citations of journal content.

2. Audience

Blog posts are written for an educated, popular and academic audience within EUP Journals' publishing fields.

3. Content criteria - your ideas for posts

We prioritize posts that will feature highly in search rankings, that are shareable and that will drive readers to your article on the EUP site.

4. Word count, style, and formatting

- Flexible length, however typical posts range 70-600 words.
- Related images and media files are encouraged.
- No heavy restrictions to the style or format of the post, but it should best reflect the content and topic discussed.

5. Linking policy

- Links to external blogs and websites that are related to the author, subject matter and to EUP publishing fields are encouraged, e.g.to related blog posts

6. Submit your post

Submit to ruth.allison@eup.ed.ac.uk

If you'd like to be a regular contributor, then we can set you up as an author so you can create, edit, publish, and delete your *own* posts, as well as upload files and images.

7. Republishing/repurposing

Posts may be re-used and re-purposed on other websites and blogs, but a minimum 2 week waiting period is suggested, and an acknowledgement and link to the original post on the EUP blog is requested.

8. Items to accompany post

- A short biography (ideally 25 words or less, but up to 40 words)
- A photo/headshot image of the author(s) if possible.
- Any relevant, thematic images or accompanying media (podcasts, video, graphics and photographs), provided copyright and permission to republish has been obtained.
- Files should be high resolution and a maximum of 1GB
- Permitted file types: *jpg, jpeg, png, gif, pdf, doc, ppt, odt, pptx, docx, pps, ppsx, xls, xlsx, key, mp3, m4a, wav, ogg, zip, ogv, mp4, m4v, mov, wmv, avi, mpg, 3gp, 3g2*.