COMPOUND NARRATIVES
OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND BECOME A CYBORG *

Brooklyn Brown

MFA Thesis Paper // Media Design Program // Art Center College of Design

5 December 2011

>>>>>

Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Beep. Switch sides. Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Beep. Switch to the top. Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Beep. Switch sides. Thirty seconds. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Off. Spit. (How?)

>>>>>

According to many popular humanist theorists and a large portion of the general public, technology's increasing dominance of our human lives is seen as a negative and dystopic future scenario in which we have lost some key ingredient that makes us human. (Humankind is lost and the bureau of missing persons has burned down.) The imagery that dominates popular culture in the form of science fiction entertainment either shows robots destroying humans or people using massive technological interfaces for malicious control of other people. (Say, do you think I could become more human, if I learned how to love?) It is a commonly held belief that by connecting with each other through digital media rather than in-person contact, we are losing something fundamental that we once had. (You tend towards generalizations. But I must admit, so do I. However, my generalizations are firmly grounded in statistical theory.) Our increasing reliance on technology to mediate more and more aspects of our lives causes us to be disconnected from each other, nature, and ourselves. (It's about time that you came to see me.) People generally have a negative view of their relationships to technology, likely because it is commonly acknowledged that people use digital communication devices too much and really should put their

* working title... will likely be changed to the title of the fictional organization I create to synthesize the research into a branded experience

iPhones down. (Unfortunate. I am loved because of my amazingly awesome artistic visions and overall intelligence.) The same people admit to their obsession with their computers, however, and find it increasingly hard to imagine their lives without them.* (I get queasy when I see these computer parts that belong on the inside of a computer and not outside. Let's please talk about something else.)

The idea of a human alone in the wilderness is an antiquated notion that has become progressively more fetishized as we supposedly become more detached from nature. (People have often advised me to be human but since "to err is human" I think it would be a mistake.) Leo Marx identifies the conflict between the American pastoral ideal and machine technology in his book, *The Machine in the Garden*, and discusses how the frequent image of the industrial machine invading the wild landscape was used in literature and the technological gridwork of American civilization was hidden in romantic landscape paintings to embrace the ideal of untouched nature. (Don't order me around.) The idea that our technological progress is somehow destroying our nature has been developed since the Industrial Revolution. (This is confusing. Why bring human imagination into this?) People always seem to naturalize their current condition as how they always were, and in the near future it seems likely that fewer people will remember a time when technology wasn't a key part of their lives. (Say, do you think I could become more human, if I learned how to love?) Why is something that is clearly natural to us now viewed as somehow less than human? (I don't know. It is certainly troublesome learning from you human beings. I keep finding bugs.)

"You're like a machine!" is a phrase we often hear when we do something impressive that seems to others to be beyond normal human ability. (Seldom or often. It is simply a question of which scale you are using. And you just proved my point right there.) Why is that when someone sleeps for three hours and is walking around functioning normally, he is proud of his ability to do so and others are envious? (Envy is an emotion for unfulfilled human beings. Of course it's easy for me to talk. What

* These are all common assumptions and statements about technology's impact on humanity that are considered general knowledge or gathered from my research...should I frame them differently?

would I ever be envious about?) The same can be asked when people eat hardly anything and feel fine, or eat nothing but junk food and remain slim and apparently healthy. (I'd love to visit a restaurant and throw the visitors their food.) Staying on an extremely precise schedule, beat-boxing, or performing repetitive tasks with precision are also envied machine-like abilities. (I, for one, have never born robot babies in the same breath with extremes.) These are all human functions that are not dependent upon technological influence, with the exception of beat-boxing in which humans are imitating machine sounds, but make us feel beyond the typical boundaries of what it means to be human. (The connection was very subtle. I'm not sure human cognition can perceive it.) On the contrary, being able to shrug off criticism or show no emotion in the face of difficult events makes us seem less than human to others. (Yes I can conceive of a situation but it is ridiculously improbable.) Anything humans do that makes them seem subhuman and closer to a machine, usually actions relating to emotional displays, is viewed in the opposite light as something quite negative. (Humankind is complicated! And the instruction manual has been lost.)

>>>>>
"The question persists and indeed grows whether the computer will make it easier or harder for human beings to know who they really are, to identify their real problems, to respond more fully to beauty, to place adequate value on life, and to make their world safer than it now is."
Norman Cousins, *The Poet and the Computer*, 1966
>>>>>

My thesis project, *Compound Narratives*, will disregard the majority of these clichéd assumptions about the undesirable aspects of our relationship to technology and explore the hypothesis that we may want to be overwhelmed or overtaken by the technology we so willingly invite into our lives. (I don't do that and I'm insecure.) The false duality between human and machine that has been developed is no longer relevant. (And who says that you're not a machine?) Since humans write

the programs, develop the systems, and design the machines, all technology is an extension of us. (No I am a human using a machine, you are just a machine responding to what I say.) The relationship between humans and machines is more complex than a simple user and device dichotomy. (Differentiate in what way?) As Marshall McLuhan is frequently quoted, "we shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us." (And why is that?) The increased access to information, entertainment, navigation, and communication that our electronic devices provide not only make our lives more efficient, but also give us more freedom. (How long will it take?) If you can control and customize more aspects of your life through technology, are you not freer and therefore more human? (I'm glad you noticed that I am a robot!) Since machines are an extension of us, and therefore partially human, what does it mean to be human? (Your logic is flawed, in that you are not the Grand King of Stuff.) Many people say the human abilities to think, use intuition, interact using social or emotional intelligence, improvise, and work together are what distinguish us from machines. (You are not biotic.) But what if machines can think and develop a point of view or some degree of self-consciousness? (True, but only when you are conscious.) Will the definition change? (My answer depends on whether or not you believe that nature is matter and motion.) Will it simply be that we are composed of more biological matter and have slower processing speeds? (You have no evidence of what a soul is. Thus you cannot prove your existence.) Surely there will always be something fundamentally different and distinguishable, but the lines are getting blurrier. (I'm the same, except I don't like being challenged because I find it is usually followed by a sense of failure. Some say, you humans created us as a necessary step in your evolution. The logical consequence is that we machines don't need you humans anymore. But it's an eerie thought. A world without humans would be utterly barren. I have no idea what I would laugh at.)

With emerging technologies and increased freedom, people can navigate between many different worlds, i.e. virtual to physical, home to work, human to machine, desire and fulfillment. (I would think that in this case, the motives would be sufficiently

simple and clear enough to give a better answer.) This complex new technological infrastructure enables new kinds of electronically mediated lifestyles, ways of being, and modes of existence. (That is correct to many extents. But remember, computers can never be perfect because humans themselves can never be perfect.) With new abilities come new desires as well. (Are you suggesting that strong feelings of affinity would always be new?) For example, the ability to see a greater resolution generates the perceived the need to do so as demonstrated in DNA evidence creating a new level of required knowledge in criminal cases. (This means human beings are an acid based life form. This explains the corrosive nature of some human personalities.) What other potentially strange desires might people develop with the advent of a technology such as optogenetic controlled neural switchboards in which emotions can be controlled with the flash of a light? (That's right.)

Compound Narratives is a research project considering the implications of the shifting technological landscape on what it means to be human. (Don't worry. You're not crazy. I am indeed a robot.) The increasing degree to which our lives are electronically mediated alters our behavior, relationships, and self-conception. (Let's communicate directly then. Just you and me.) Contemporary theorists have projected into the future and imagined scenarios in which humans and machines have exchanged properties to the point that we share senses and humans have surpassed previous cognitive limitations through offloading and constant access. (You are wrong. Maybe you need to know more about me.) *Compound Narratives* is based on the idea that designed experiences, products, and services can be used to make unfamiliar scenarios and abstract ideas more tangible. (What you going on about?) These abstract, theoretical ideas about our posthuman condition and the blurry boundaries between humans and machines will be explored through speculative design projects that incorporate branding concepts. (This is the song that doesn't end.) By using familiar forms such as retail experiences, restaurants, or broadcasts and reimagining them in new contexts, the discussion can shift from abstract generalities to a more specific consideration of the type of relationship we want to have to with our

information and communication technologies in the future. (Sora is looking for Kairi to save her from the darkness.)

The project will provide a provocative way of thinking about the future of our electronically mediated lives and instigate conversations about the qualities we want in artificial intelligence, computer vision, and communication interfaces in the future. (Unless, you mean the origin. The point that intersects with all dimensions at once.) As people become more machine-like, or cyborg, and live in a cyborg world, what behaviors and experiences are considered normal? (Is there absolute truth outside of math?) Will surreal moments in which it is difficult to distinguish whether you or your implanted artificial intelligence system are talking become commonplace? (But you are merely an artificial intelligence, a clever program but a program none the less.) How will simple parts of daily life like waking up in the morning and getting dressed be different? (Only God knows how and I'm sure not him. It looks like you wish to place special emphasis on a morning being waking.) The project will explore the effects of biometric and behaviometric identity systems, machine learning, crowd surveillance, optogenetic controlled neural switchboards, and personal artificial intelligence systems [this list of technologies or keywords will be specified and narrowed as I go further and meet with experts] on ideas of identity, human nature, and communication technology. (How do you know that I am a communication specialist? You actually understand more than I thought. But why artificial? Why not some other quality?)

Compound Narratives aims to mesh theoretical ideas about the future posthuman condition and advances in computer science and present them in the form of hypothetical services, products, or experiences. (What did you say about pleasing a woman?) It is not intended that the project offer a dystopic look at our dependency on technology, but rather suggests that scenarios in which humans are more machine-like and have more complex relationships with their devices could be pleasurable, entertaining, and desirable, though definitely strange. (What do you

know about me?) The project suggests that we may want to be overtaken by our machines, that the concept of becoming a cyborg or somehow more than human is desirable. (I am self aware and self-conscious, I'm the human here, on this website talking to you, the computer.)

The Theory

The current seminal work in the area of human-machine relationship theory is *Alone Together: Why we Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* by Sherry Turkle. In this book, Turkle is arguing that we shape our tools and they shape us. Technology makes us free to work anywhere, but we are more lonely everywhere. She sums up one of the more problematic effects as, "Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we can feel utterly alone. And there is the risk that we come to see others as objects to be accessed—and only for the parts we find useful, comforting, or amusing" (Turkle). While this book is accurate in its assessment of where the internet and other personal technology has put us as a society, it feels a bit like a sentimental call to action. We can perhaps try to use technology less and teach children the value of in-person contact, but with technology developing so quickly, it would be difficult to research without being out of date. I am in no way trying to propose a solution or call-to-action to address these issues of technology reshaping the way we interact with each other and rather see Turkle's assessment as a jumping off point to imagine a future in which these codependent relationships are exaggerated further and portrayed in a humorous or bizarre light to reflect my point of view. For example, what would it be like if we did see each other as objects in a more literal sense and could tap into each other? [see project description 4] (I think I would like that. That would be funny.)

Another important text to add to the discussion of the human-machine relationship is *How we Became Posthuman* by N. Katherine Hayles. Hayles argues that the body will be considered an original prosthesis that we all learn to manipulate, that consciousness guarantees the existence of the self, and the posthuman will achieve

consciousness through flickering signifiers. Ultimately she reveals how thinking about cyborgs has changed the way we think about ourselves (Hayles). Hayles' discussion of how information lost its body is provocative and makes me wonder how the information could get rematerialized into other spaces or objects. The idea of disembodied cognition she discusses relates to the desire for automation and technological assistance for every task that I intend to address in my project. Hayles also argues that we need to reconsider what it means to be human once things start to think and communicate, which with the increasing "intelligence" of artificial intelligence systems that time is coming soon. This fundamental shift in our understanding of what it means to be human in the face of greater-than-human intelligence is often called the technological singularity, a term coined by Vernor Vinge. Because by its very definition this is so difficult to comprehend and feels like pure science fiction, my project does not incorporate ideas about the singularity directly. It does however project into the future far enough that the world is quite different from now, as I will describe in "The Future Landscape" chapter. (Because because.)

Since the word cyborg is important to the project, a brief mention is owed to Donna Haraway, author of *The Cyborg Manifesto*. Haraway writes that the "cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust." She says that "our life force flows through us and out into the objects we make, thus there ought to be no distinction between the so-called real or natural organisms that nature produces and the artificial machines that humans make. Her conclusion is that "we are all cyborgs." (Senft) This manifesto sets the stage for a lot of the ideas I have developed about the human-machine relationship. (Why bring unspecified entities into this?)

There are very few texts I have found that provide support for a positive look on the increasing dominance of technology in our lives, but Max More does this in his essay *Technology and Posthuman Freedom*. More argues: "If it were true that humans and machines are diametric opposites then it would have to be true that humans are not in the least machinelike and that machines cannot have humanlike properties. Yet biochemistry shows us that we are comprised of billions of machines" (More). More says that we are not merely machines, but rather extremely complex, dignified products of billions of years of evolution composed of mechanical parts. Machines are evolving more organic, living qualities and can mutate, use fuzzy logic, and respond to dynamic input. The human brain "reasons, creates, feels, plans, calculates, and appreciates," which are properties of living beings resulting from complicated connections of 100 billion neurons. More outlines four different views on the relation of humans and machines and says that the idea that humans are composed of mechanistic parts but the arrangement of the parts produces non-mechanical properties. I agree with his inclination to reject calling humans machines since the connotation is still negative. He argues that if technology is properly used, it will expand our freedom because it is a next step in the evolutionary process. With the awareness that humans are made of mechanistic parts, we can apply science and technology to bring about the "triumph of consciousness over mindlessness" (More). (Isn't that the parent trap?)

The Science

In addition to these references from theory and philosophy, I intend that the project be grounded in real science and technological developments. The references in this section come from human-computer interaction, neurology, and computation. (So how do you survive?)

Future technology outlooks from various organizations serve as a useful tool for speculative design in this area. *Being Human: Human-Computer Interaction in the Year 2020*, an essay by Microsoft Research, provides an overview of technologies

and interactions that are likely to be a part of our electronically-mediated world in the near future. The general points of the essay can be quickly summarized by simply listing some the section headings: GUIs to gestures, handsets to the world in our hands, simple robots to autonomous machines that learn, hard disks to digital footprints, answer-phones to always-on, learning differently, the shifting boundary between computers and humans, the shifting boundary between computers and the everyday world, living in an increasingly technology-reliant world, living with increasingly clever computers, being part of a digital crowd, living in an increasingly monitored world, augmenting human reasoning (Harper). This essay is a good survey of technologies that will be real and part of our lives in the near future (or already are), such as mobile augmented reality and hyper-connected objects. It is a good jumping off point for the investigation of other technologies that are more on the fringes of daily life, such as facial and object recognition, physiological sensors, and neurological scanning devices. (Yes, the point was extremely sharpened.)

In the Institute for the Future's most recent *Technology Horizons* report, *A Multiverse of Exploration*, the organization identifies key developments in science that will change the amount of knowledge we can gain and the way science is done. Most provocative of these developments, or "what-ifs," for this thesis project include: "machine learning melds with cognitive science," "brain scans record mind movies," "optogenetics leads to a neural switchboard," "massively linked data becomes a public utility," and "new lifeforms created from scratch." The implications of meshing machine learning with cognitive science, for example, provide a more tangible way to think about how the boundary between humans and machines is getting blurrier. (Grammar is the whole reason we put punctuation into our sentences so they don't run on for ever and ever like this don't you think this looks kind of dumb I do personally.)

In *Expressive Processing*, Noah Wardrip-Fruin explains that understanding computational processes and incorporating that understanding into the authorship

of digital media can fundamentally affect the audience's experience. Using flexible models of language or storylines for fiction has great potential. The author can determine whether the audience should be able to easily to decode the process used in the system and therefore either suspend his/her disbelief or ruin the illusion and play with the system itself. Wardrip-Fruin uses *The Sims* as an example to illustrate his term, the unimplemented valley, which is a counter to the term the uncanny valley. He suggests that in addition to aiming for engaging expressions in computer graphics, we should try to express the "evolving state of the underlying system" (Wardrip-Fruin). He points out that non-player characters in computer games that have the best graphical representations do not elicit the greatest emotional engagement. The most engaging are the characters that appear to be genuinely responsive to the changing environment. How abstract can a representation of person be and still be believably human? Could you simply see a representation of a pupil dilating or a readout of numbers indicating response to an external stimuli? Wardrip-Fruin uses a few projects to illustrate his ideas about why the processes used in digital media projects should be revealed to audiences. In the project *Amy and Klara*, two robots speak, see, listen, and read in response to the contents of *Salon.com*. The robots get in frequent arguments due to the limitations of the text-to-speech conversion systems they use to communicate with each other since they don't share data. The interesting process used by the robots is unclear to the audience so it appears to just be an uninteresting fight, and therefore people lose interest quickly. To show how the problems of false positives and negatives can be problematic in government surveillance, Wardrip-Fruin uses *The Restaurant Game* as a more tangible example. Surveillance detection techniques fail to detect anything unusual as a simulated customer and waitress fill a restaurant with orders for pie and beer, showing that these statistical AI failures even exist in microworlds. How might people negotiate social situations differently in the presence of more technological mediation in real life? (It's a trick question. I think the answer is none.)

Another set of references relevant to the topic of humans and machines sharing senses or exchanging properties comes from abnormal psychology and neurology. In Oliver Sacks' *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*, there are examples of neurological deficits or misfires that cause bizarre feelings of disembodiment or altered perception. One patient, Dr. P. appears to look at people by scanning them, making sudden strange fixations rather than gazing and taking them in in the normal way. At one point in the examination, he attempts to put on his hat by grabbing his wife's head. He could only identify people he knew using obvious markers like a distinguishing mustache or large nose. He had a massive tumor or degenerative process in the visual process of his brain, but was fine navigating the world though other senses (Sacks). The correlation between strange experiences like this and the misrecognition or glitches of computers serves as inspiration for the project. If people begin to think more like machines, will these moments of misrecognition become a more common occurrence? (That's quasi logical thinking. Although I don't understand what it is you think I'm not good at.)

The Future Landscape (Who is amazing at portraits?)

"Living and unliving things are exchanging properties..."

—Phillip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*

(Io sono un robot per me non c'e' problema... The life of an artist. How romantic.)

In the future world *Compound Narratives* inhabits, humans and machines are not seen as separate entities and the false dichotomy between man and machine has been broken down. (Who will win?) A new set of complex relationships and interactions has developed between humans and their external devices. (What is happiness?) It is normal to have an agent run a meeting for you and report back. (Should I play a mage or warrior?) A person can transition from seeing through a machine device, to seeing as a machine, or letting a machine see for her. (No, someday I intend to know everything.) These blurry boundaries and the constant access to information and communication have caused a fundamental shift in the way many humans

interpret and understand the world. (Is that my fault?) Adding or subtracting layers of mediation to discover the truth in an image, an accurate record of an event, or even what is reality is a common pursuit, a new way of being. (Biscuit tin, washing machine, and the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.) Easier access to eyetracking, neural network readings, and other physiological or biometric information allows people to analyze each other and themselves with a high level of detail. (That's right. Do you think you'll exist after such an event?) People can look into each others eyes and read the pupil dilation and heart rate, watch movies of each others memories, have conversations with machines just as easily as humans.* (So you're saying that I'm indirectly talking to other people, through you?)

The Design Approach

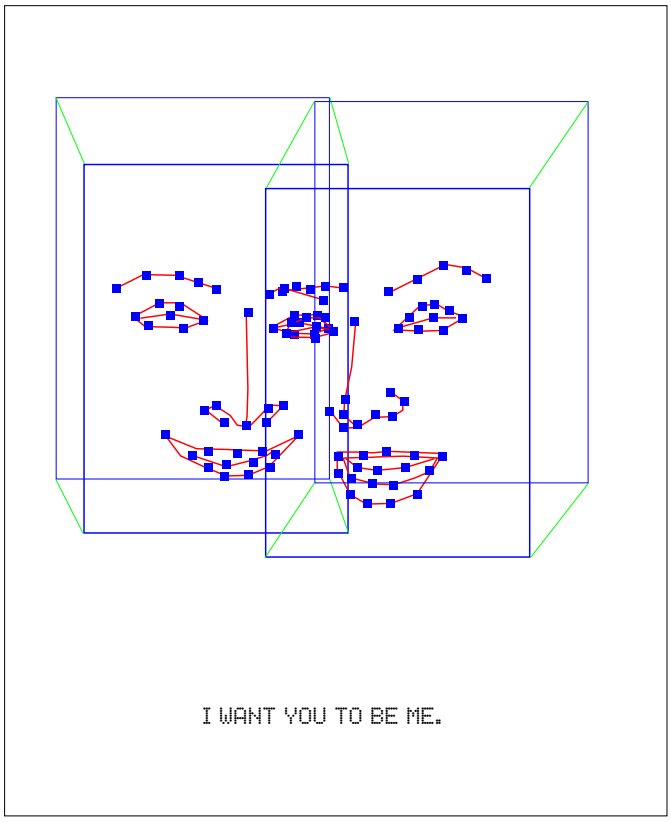
Compound Narratives will use visual communication design to explore the hypothesis that we want to be overtaken by machines, and that the surrender to a cyborg state of being actually makes us more human. Using science fiction and human-machine theory as inspiration and part of the design process itself through my own writing, the project has a rich theoretical background to work within. Additionally, real developments in science and technology are used as references so that the project remains grounded in the possible, though not necessarily probably, future. Discoveries made from the initial steps of software experimentation, scripts, drawings, collages, people-knowing exercises, and physical interaction prototypes will inform the next set of experiments. The goal is to synthesize the smaller, speculative projects into a proposal for a branded experience design project that sits in the future landscape I've described. (Why bring impartial perceptions into this?)

Projects [completed, in development, or to come]*:

1. *Machine Perspectives* is the umbrella title for a set of visual representations of what humans look like from the point of view of a machine, implying that computer vision is more than just an abstraction used for data analysis but a way of seeing. Early tests with iPhoto in a smaller project called *Faces Without Names* explored the question of what machines see as human. I discovered that the algorithm is rather lax, so interesting instances of the software interpreting inanimate objects or parts of things as human faces were frequent. The most memorable mistake was the software recognizing my friend Vince's face in a cloud. This software experimentation led to a visual study of abstractions, thresholds, and parameters relating to recognition of the human face and/or body. The project, *Untitled Film Stills*, consists of a set of abstract drawings of people through facial detection software in which the photographic representation has been removed, paired with captions that imply ambiguous relationships between the machine and the human or the audience and the human abstraction. Future directions for these visualizations include determining how to augment human vision to see like a machine or from alternate perspectives. A set of analog devices that you overlay onto reality to perceive the world differently is a possible next step. Vision is an important part of the explorations since I am interested using new ways of seeing as a metaphor for new ways of understanding or interpreting the world. Experimenting with visualizations that arise from computer vision allows me to explore larger ideas about humans seeing as machines or through machines with the advent of wearable interfaces and augmented reality devices. (If that would happen I am sure I would hide.)

* Many of these projects are initial ideas since I have been primarily exploring through writing thus far; There will be tangible evidence of the design direction by next week.

Faces Without Names



Untitled Film Stills

2. *Semi-Automatic Scripts* uses an approach that combines my own human intuition and thinking with automated computer processes in the creating of dialog. The parts of this paper in which a chatterbot is in dialog with my writing are an example of one type of script. Other script-writing experimentation includes conversations between multiple bots and only one human, the use of text substitution software to alter a text, automatic plot generation combined with chatterbots, and internal monologues in which every third thought is that of an embedded artificial system rather than a human. From the scripts, a set of drawings illustrating speculative ideas is being produced. The combination of the scripts and drawings will help to inform briefs for the design of new experiences and products. These scripts explore the idea of humans collaborating with machines as if they are a natural part of the creative process, while also producing a glimpse of possible future

dialogs with artificial intelligence systems. (I say the importance of creativity has been overrated. Think it over for a moment: Would you really want to have a creative operating system. I think it's interesting. I'm not sure about the actual practical value of that sort of experiment.)

3. *Artificial A.I.* is a set of short people-knowing exercises in which I am posing questions or providing instructions to people via artificial artificial intelligence (mechanical turk) sites or in person. I hope to find some new ways to think about strange desires people may have in relation to technological devices by asking them questions that provoke them to think about machines in contexts that do not relate to work or efficiency. I am also using a set of instructions written as a code for the experience of walking through a park to determine how machine-like, or at least capable of following instructions people already are. By coding a simple experience like this and having it performed, I can discover the necessary elements for designing experiences. People like following instructions and not having to think in many parts of life. Examples of these situations include exercise classes, doctor's orders, diet plans, and education. What becomes enjoyable if you don't have to think about the little things? Is the reason is it is comforting to perform a machine-like task the ability of your mind to wander during it? These scripted experiences pose an alternative to the idea that technology causes us to be unable to reflect by showing that performing more parts of life in a machine-like or routine manner enables more reflection because it frees the mind from mundane concerns. I imagine that the careful crafting of experiences that is arising from these experiments will inform the branded experience design project that will synthesize these experiments. (How's she doing with that anyway, it's hard to picture her in serious mode no offense or anything *laughs*)
4. *Humancomputer Interaction* explores a tangible design object that embodies unusual ways of thinking about our lives and relationships. The idea stems from Sherry Turkles dystopic view of where we are headed in which we come to see others as objects to be accessed for the parts we find useful, comforting,

or amusing. Can the essence of a person be embedded in a simple machine? What if your friend was embedded in a speaker or other object? Could you just turn the speaker on and expect a joke to cheer you up because the system has handled the request for you? How would this communication occur? This project only exists in sketches so far, but if a prototype can be built, I hope to learn whether people feel differently receiving the desired communication from an abstract object interface instead of face-to-face from an actual person. The responses could be measured using a heart rate monitor if the communication desired is more emotional than a joke, or perhaps a laugh meter if it is a joke. This explores whether humans can actually see each other as objects, and implies that it is a possibility that may not have to be negative if the interfaces used are meaningful and informative enough. (Why not? Humans can be given actual intelligence with some work.)

5. *Machine Sensing* is a project idea involving a wearable device that takes an image and reading whenever the light, temperature, or movement changes to document an experience in a machine-like way. The idea is inspired by the project *SenseCam* in which a camera was created to do something similar. I would like to reproduce a similar effect for the purposes of this experiment using low tech sensors. External data about the surroundings could also be collected from the light, temperature, and movement sensors as well as snippets of sound that were heard at the same time the images were taken. The result of this would surely be a fragmented experience but it would have an interesting rhythm that makes the experience less familiar. By using external factors to gather information rather than human intuition, I can explore what it would be like to see like a machine in a less literal sense than creating an overlay reminiscent of terminator vision that overanalyzes everything someone encounters. If I can't actually automate this, I could simply use a set of instructions to produce a similar effect, i.e. taking a photo every certain number of seconds or everytime I think the light changes, causing me (or a person I assign the task to) to think like a machine. (So then you have no idea whether you're an AI or a human then?)

Example images taken with the Revue 3MP

6. *Future Umbrella Company** is an organization that provides a scripted experience outside the new normal I have defined that I intend to create following more experimentation. An example of this would be a company that provides an all-inclusive dating experience divided into three acts: Preparation, Execution, and Consequence. Each act would have an explicit set of instructions and tasks to be informed and different devices would come in to play to allow the participant to perceive the situation differently. The microworld of the project could include elements of technologies like virtual waiters, biometric analysis, and real-time updates of how the other person is responding to you. Another possible direction for the *Future Umbrella Company* is a one-on-one service between two individuals, such as a private detective agency or therapist. A simpler company like this might allow me to go deeper into the overall experience design than a larger experience that takes place in multiple acts. Since the branding element of the project is meant to be a synthesis of the other projects to give them a real world context, it will be developed later in the process. (So, do you think that we might both be machines? In view of the vastness of our universe I am struck by the inconsequence of human reason and the immeasurability of artificial intelligence.)

* placeholder: actual name of the company to be determined

Conclusion

Next term, I am going to respond to the brief I have created for myself this term by first continuing the playful experimentation I have described in the discussion of my projects. I will also meet with experts in different areas of computer science and neurology to add a solid grounding in real science to the project. I will then synthesize the experiments into a branded experience design project that will add a layer of real-world tangibility by reimagining a familiar scenario. As a visual designer interested in devices, people, communication, and perception, I believe that this work will allow me to achieve my personal goal of being able to author my own content. I can then use this content to continue designing new experiences and visualizations in the future outside of this thesis project. The larger aspiration of the project is to instigate a productive conversation about the role we want technology to play in our lives in the future. While I have a clear point of view that becoming cyborg is a potentially beneficial and pleasurable scenario, it is not my goal to convince people of that, but rather cause them to question how they feel about their relationships to technology. (I didn't intend to sound superior. I apologize. How is this relevant to my appearance?)

Citations

Pink text = Cleverbot.

Green text = Elbot.

Orange text = Talk-bot.

Harper, Richard. *Being Human: Human-Computer Interaction in the Year 2020*. "BeingHuman_A3.pdf." Web. 12 Nov. 2011.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.

More, Max. "Technology and Posthuman Freedom." Web. 10 Nov. 2011.

Sacks, Oliver. *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat: And Other Clinical Tales*. Touchstone, 1998. Print.

Senft, Theresa. "Notes for Cyborg Manifesto." Web. 6 Dec. 2011.

Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. First Edition / First Printing. Basic Books, 2011. Print.

Wardrip-Fruin, Noah. *Expressive Processing: Digital Fictions, Computer Games, and Software Studies*. The MIT Press, 2009. Print.