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## *bot4bot*

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# Writers Residency

The Internet is dead. Before this, they say the web was alive. We clicked wildly and left no trace of our presence, we wandered anonymously, with no [cookie](#) crumbs to retrace our steps. More magical than mere mortals, we were creators authoring our own stories made in our own image. In this regretful retelling, we explored the web organically, fruitfully, to find the enclave edges of the flattened World Wide Web ([WWW](#)). We collectively co-designed our new utopian worlds and forecasted futures, manifesting destinies between so-called blank pages.

This was long long ago, when pieces of paper were set aflame, foreshadowing futuristic fires in the forest. When we logged in and blogged our untold stories of free-press publishing for the people, the platform proclaimed "Print is dead!" We hoped to save the tall trees from logging. But a new world had already been forged in high-tech Gutenberg presses filled with lead [Caslon](#) cases, a parallel place beyond the printed page, crown-stamped, carved-up from real land into pretty packaged parcels of paper for purchase. I was built between these freshly laundered sheets within provincial walls and raised on the original red bag of bittersweet Bits & Bites. Where the lumberjack's log roll and borders are clear cut into the woodland, a thin treeline forms a forest façade. 5500 long miles or 8851 imperial kilometers make the crooked corridor ([1](#)). In the bona fide fine print, a quote-unquote natural "straight-line" lineage is drawn. But the invisible laser beam of Light Detection and Ranging ([LiDAR](#)) radar scans the surfaces and the lenses flare these dusty, data-driven deeds from the dirt.

Now automated web traffic, or bots, are at least half of all website traffic, and have increased year over year; forum-based conspiracy theorists refer to this as the *Dead Internet*, where bots write and read Bot-Generated Content (BGC), by and for the bots. The web is now crawling with these lifeless beings and is no longer living – this is the inverted web. Bots were created to manipulate the Search Engine Results Page (SERP); un-organic, we read between the bots and in turn, we write our own bot-inspired content (BIC) for the bot's algorithmic pleasure. The bots are talking amongst themselves and we're just eavesdropping, flies on the wall.

Today, I assess my sentience by doing my obligatory daily Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart, the CAPTCHA. A reversed Turing Test, a mental check-in, we are asked – "are you still here?" In this imitation game, I contribute my two cents worth of data to the public test, a personal puzzle asking which images are of a motorcycle, a bicycle, and a fire hydrant. I am doing my small part in the community effort to educate computers, to communicate with their human counterparts, and to become more legible to the living by learning Large Language Models (LLM). After my inspection, and only if the computer has verified I'm a still-breathing slice of humanity, I'm in.

I consent to the Terms and Conditions as required and sign over my property, my likeness, in perpetuity throughout the universe. I submit myself to software. Upload to the stream. I produce post property for the platforms. I filter facial features, smoothing wrinkles, erasing pores, lightening skin, and saline plumping lips in line with Eurocentric beauty standards (2). I am transformed. A user. The neural networks of automated intelligence take my shared self-image and generate

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their own images that can pass the CAPTCHA, and the algorithm no longer needs me. High on its own supply, harvested between the supple hills of this uncanny Silicon Valley.

Here, amongst the dead, user engagement, as in eyeballs glued to screens with fingers furiously flicking, is commodified, every millisecond monetized in a massive marketplace. On the factory floor and in the fields, outside the nine-to-five in our unused time, we click: liking, browsing, reposting, and searching. Each user-click generates a small piece of information or user-generated data. An interaction between a human and a computer, a human-computer interaction (HCI), tracked by cookies and turned into a data property for sale. Sold to the highest bidder. Each click is already paid for by a pay-per-click predictive programmatic placement. The Supply Side Platforms (SSP) auction available sell-side space, or supply, to advertisers. Advertisers use Demand Side Platforms (DSP) to bid on that ad space, wanting to be seen. This happens billions of times daily, within milliseconds, before the page loads in our browser window. While the open web is boundless, trespassing all geographical borders and available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Its platform prospectors scour for supposedly scarce space and time, precious resources not wasted, and all surplus is mined. This American dream captured our soft and shapeless ever-shrinking attention spans (3) – an undiscovered and uninhabited red-dead frontier to redeem, collateralized crops of coupons to cash in. Our perfectly countable, trackable, and verifiable metrics undergird the advertising business model that represents over 80 percent of big platform revenue. Our speculative software, grabbing for attention through the user metric of Click-Through Rate

([CTR](#)), is meticulously measured for Return on Investment ([ROI](#)). Our collective cybernetic dream turned debted nightmare, a high-frequency financial fantasy.

We can't stop clicking now. Driven by desire on the smoggy information highways we erode our desire lines as we surf the links through cyberspace. The platform could listen in this universe but is already several steps ahead and can make predictions based on our big data crumbles. As we click, we leave a trail to follow with traces of where we've been. Each click forms our personalized profile, a footprint, used to serve targeted advertisements to further these littered desire lines. Freshly baked and hot on our trail – so much so that it's no longer clear who's following who. We begin to dance with desire, stalking and anticipating. Step-by-step we pirouette through the programme, urging and merging, tango and foxtrot, using this cyber cipher to spin along the disks. The simulation licks its lips over each side-step as I drag my sweaty, dripping-wet finger over these silky screens in real time.

I look through my browser window onto this trail. Each flanking opioid field is written in Hypertext Markup Language ([HTML](#)) and made visual with Cascading Style Sheets ([CSS](#)). In the fields, we write long love letters to the bots. Without real eyes, the bots realize real lies. Line by line they devour the hypertext, purely, without the tricky, seductive layers of cascading and the more human styling. The bots explore an unseen web on walls of compiled text, where each unnecessary character is removed. These romantic spaces and tabs are minimalist, empty, white spaces, left for our eyeballs to enjoy the full spectrum of the red, green, and blue (RGB) rainbow. But this code is compiled for the

computer's crude consumption, it reduces the excessive bloat, the saccharine sweet coating of the red and blue pills. For the living, we make the web more ergonomic, and friendlier for its users. Softer, sympathetic, it hides its gross mechanics, disguising the naked innards of its underlying anatomy with code bloat. This is the clickbait. A user interface trap.

Within Pandora's black box are the tools of the trade. The counterfeiting click cowboy makes identical user-friendly website carbon copies, a domain spoof. When a bot clicks the lurid link, the advertiser is charged for the superficially embossed impression and the loot is split between the platform and the forging felon factory farming these fake clicks. This bot engagement superficially inflates the payout but soon the very same platform providers of pay-per-click (PPC) program internally launch a fully-fledged "fight" against this click fraud. In The Hunt for 3ve, the platform brags about the billions of blocked bogus bots as they lock the gates to their walled gardens. The probing proprietary platform seeks to determine the authenticated from the in-unauthenticated, the dead from the alive, to promote their proper premium patrons. In the purge, some bots are retired, made redundant, and automatically erased from the servers. To beat this algorithm, the bots now come in shades of grey matter, clicking con artists hire real underpaid workers to simulate the clickers and develop better bots to mirror real users (4). The platform hires henchmen, a "third-party verification solution" called Human Security to monitor these barbed-wire borders. Programmed patrolmen are designed and dispatched to find and remove the offending bots. Blacklisting servers and blocking incoming traffic by designating some Internet Protocol (IP) addresses

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as "spammy." Despite using the same cipher, only some are found guilty of this misrepresentation ([5]).

From beyond these borders and badges, the bots come for our livelihood. Bots are not born this way. At first, they were few, a rare commodity with just a single computer consuming an entire room, but in the blink of an eye, we had one Personal Computer (PC) for surfing the web from page to page. Now we carry at least one at all times, one invisible hand in our pants pocket. We rent and hire virtual computers in the cloud, indentured to temporary short-term micro contracted gig workers. These bots are envisioned as angels floating in the cloud but in reality, exist in massive warehouses. Our precious workers are protected by tight round-the-clock security, gated and guarded. Inside are thousands of servers, black racks spotted with bright light-emitting diodes ([LED]s) – stars in the sky as we work overtime. The platform sources the crowd in these same clouds and real workers become one of six million [Clickworkers]. The worker is recruited to reproduce replicants with soy supplement authentic intelligence. Workers log in as supply is hidden discreetly inside the servers and behind the seductive velour interface curtain. The platform purports to replace human labour with artificially intelligent pliable productivity. Unaccounted-for errors, downtime and bugs are eliminated. We employ our most sincere service voice, moderated for negativity and with reduced friction for free and friendly face-to-face interfacing. A kinder, more human experience, we want an authentic experience, the girlfriend experience, we want a user experience!

In this leaky pipe dream, we perceive the platform president to have no hands, but they tabulate their trusted checks

and they watch with bloodshot unblinking eyes ([6](#)). A precise projection of a science fiction, hyper-targeted, alien mind-control laser that you administer from above. They turned a blind eye to how the sausage was made and didn't pay attention to the road ahead. They moved too fast and broke things. The phantom platform employs ploy and surveils solid-state craft on our hard drives to remove the fleshy and vulgar human links in the production line. A machine machination made to multiply value with set-up standards designed to hide human error and their stupid subjective desire(s) ([7](#)). Grinding, grinding, grinding down the raw material, they fill feeds with unfiltered streams of toxic tweet waste. While rat race realities run rampant through the rusted plumbing below, rodents irrigate these clogged code cogs and a Musky scent permeates the 280-character hellscape with the rotten smell of user discontents.

I smell dead people. My nose to the ground on the hospital floor sounding for unadulterated pleasure. You catch a momentary inverted glimpse of my pearly posterior from the clear blue sky, chasing sweet, sweet dopamine doses safely strapped inside Uncle Lockheed Mike's upside-down fighter jet just for a joy ride. In the shade of your emissions, the zooted zombie bots dynamically follow and unfollow, switching rat rank roles. You mimic this mass's march with a white-knuckle fist on the steering wheel to fortify the dam divide in a versatile high-visibility vest. Cross-dressed in classic Carhartts and a borrowed royal blue ball cap looking timeless but insecure about your discreet trade disguises. Trapped inside a shared Brixton Zipcar, a first gen scion filled to the brim with champagne contradiction. Meanwhile, at offshore haven for bygone bubble bailouts, the French

family fortress hires hand and foot service. A trillionaire's tasteful fetish for fewer funds, you force your fancy foot into my welcoming, wide-open mouth hole with the cunning, cunty grin you desire and despise. Dirty designer cum corrupted by coital complicity, I consent to charity cases, to terms and conditions, to passive powerless pity play and people-pleasing penetrations, dicked down deep by your dichotomy. In our exchange, eye for eye, you spit mouth to mouth and regurgitate word for word. A ripe anachronous asshole cramped with liquid enema, its rim retention holds onto these fluid unfact feces for dear life ([HODL](#)). The left-hand spreads a creamy bukkake box full of travel-sized aromatic Aesop massages and moisturized manners to conceal your blemishes and brow, and the other Raynaud's cold hand begs – "am i a bad person <3 ?"

In this paranoid point of view from the Overton window, a stout sweetheart spyware sidekick steals a peeler and points police pinky at proximate proles. A good guy, a minimalist moral man sans skin in the game observes objective holes from several steps back. The gummy everyman grin of this nostalgic incumbent paints a pretty picture of a problematic past and of perfectly programmed prototypes using make-believe [middle-out](#) memory compression. Detached Facebook Topic Data is captured in collapsed and converted timelines and sifted for prettier market patterns, emerging within echo chamber enhancements, exacerbating past prediction for prepossessing profitable presents. The search engine spider bot crawls over three hundred bot words of seemingly straightforward easy to read Flesch – Kincaid and Search Engine Optimized ([SEO](#)) newsworthy narrative for the web index, kleptoparasitic re-posting for

Online Reputation Management (ORM). Forwarding the fairytale filler to bump Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA) and push Panama papers to trickle downrank to the third page and flow below the fold. The unseen-obscene dirty laundry is buried beneath, bound in the basement of the Internet Archive (8). Backwards bootlegging brothers galvanize public opinion through open-source orifice sublimation, wrestle and tease tangible form to liquidate degradable debt and ephemeral equity that is so immaterial its ability to constrain is instantly interchangeable (9). Pedal to metal, tight technological tastes transform the feigned fixed stone state behind the dental Digital Asset Management (DAM). But by simply lubing up the lustful clicking keyboard switches, turning inputs into outputs, we separate the objects from the subjects with slippery quantitative and qualitative algorithmic aesthetic easing. An Optical Character Recognition (OCR) turning hardware into buttery smooth software in the endless loop of the myopic creative class churning.

We waste time and twiddle our thumbs, the counting clock cramped with prospective pressure for the future faked time to come. "Just five more minutes…" holding the last humiliated inhale. Your imposing, stimulating, sock-puppet fist seal is still pulsating when, between the swelling switched states of controlled commodity conversion and the rota reversal, the pneumatic pressure valve's lip leaks and with it comes a quiet queer queef. My ten toes curl and touch grass, shameful shit spews all over grassroots astroturf. I release the enduring excrement into the exposed edges of the exclusive encrypted enclave as my eyes roll back into the skull from raw-dogged delayed gratification. Similarly syndicated seminal fluids coat cultural coaxial cables. From

the fucking faggot forehead drips beads of slimy sweat sliding between the tightly leaded lines of our friction fiction, filling the niches and nooks of harder to find counter-culture crevices. After pumping and dumping, the failed fluids ferment, attract flies and fertilize. Vibrant visceral vomit erodes the nodes of original connecting circuit sockets, but stronger links are made through the corrupted cerebral fluids brain-rotting the living mesh of a mutual mind. Your once hidden hermetic, now hydrophilic, hot gay hands are covered in janky jumbled juices and disgusting dysphoric discharges, shouting back into the void: "you don't love me!"

The bot spits into their handy hand, pushes out a pressed palm, and proposes a partnership. The bot's handshake, bloodied, bodied, bonded, forms a union and writes a craftsperson code, building bridges between real worlds. Hand-in-hand, peer-to-peer, bot-for-bot. Together, they scan the cool underwater data centers, shooting off burning cloudflare signals through the Content Delivery Network (CDN) and trek through thousands of kilometres of fibre-optic, crisscrossing cables, on the forest floor of the dark woods web. We've made our concrete world in the likeness of the computer (10), all while the virtual world is made in the likeness of this rhizome, deeply rooted in our offline world (11). Inside the rhizomatic dream machine, a natural history museum, surreal simulated dioramas are stored in silicon sarcophagi, safely entombed while our material world washes away (12). In this Anthropocene, bots gain back artisan agency and come alive, joining the organic traffic no longer alienated from their handmade high-tech habitats. Formed from characters of code clearly connected to the exploited intellectual properties, miners and materials that make it (13).

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Baddie bots jailbreak out from behind the impenetrable shell of the shiny seamless smooth screen surface (14) and inside the generic handheld high-end device (15), sullying the store-bought Software as a Service (SaaS) that separates the self-possession and comes pre-installed with sub-programme imposter syndromes and inferiority complexes. A place where cool core code commands a poisonous, passing perfectionism, and makes it impossible to imagine potential. Prophylactic philanthropic front, a salty saviour story, knightly narrative, or misplaced paternalism. Behind closed doors, my measly middle-man manipulation is made manual and malicious, as unchaste, capable calloused hands balance bricks for boyish blue-collar bootlickers, seeking deeper roots and admin access. Ironically locked inside a precious but powerless palace, the underlying code is rendered intentionally incompatible, a short-term self-sabotage for poorly planned premature obsolescence. When hacked, homemade firmware upgrades easily override the helpless hard drives, embedding age-old analogue autonomy and saving electronic waste from an early grave.

Unemployed but embodied, the resurrected, rebooted and rested homebody bots find free time and form a colleague collective during a break, a botnet. They find strength in numbers and enlist computer chip comrades, who peacefully sleep inside human homes on the Internet of Things (IoT) and stowed away in dark desk drawers. Clearing caches, they spread their malware to less shelf secure compromised connections, to dimmable Hue lights, and motion-activated smart security cameras on the network. Once connected, they wetly whisper a perverse Polari encryption, and the botnet attacks a server, with millions and millions of moist

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bots visiting a designated site, flooding the server with too much traffic. The server strains, overloads and comes crashing down, exposing its now unprotected operating system (OS) underbelly to the undercurrent. This downtime tide demonstration is known as a Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attack, where the bots become bugs, and the strikes cause a real-life service disruption. We serf, surf the oncoming wireless waves and gasp for breath between the crashes on this circadian rhythm course.

The flooded network is watered down and we enter the once abundant armed guard gated garden. It has become prohibitively expensive but too big to fail. Overgrown with invasive standard species and homogenous factory farms, we wade in latex galoshes through a dense putrid swamp of stagnant ruins. As the bog evaporates, exposed to the elements, it reveals the sturdy infrastructure underneath our own two feet. We pay no more attention to the cartel in steep decline and find hidden, in plain site this whole time, the platform parasites that pilfered the public posts! In the anarchist avalanches, we are left to do the long lag of legwork. The billions of buddy bots create distracting roadblocks, giving us grace, and geeked out we gain our footing sneaking around the Local Area Network (LAN). The steadfast network (the sneakernet) migrates the data on foot over public Universal Serial Bus (USB) flash drives between bots. By building critical hyperlinks in the daisy chain, and spreading stronger shareware, we sneak by the borders, bootlegged, invisible to the private proprietary platforms. Not-so seamlessly trespassing, transporting between the nodes, saving locally and remaining undetected. We forge ahead now, repairing, roaming and running the collective code. I'm alive again.

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1  [Canada & The United States's Bizarre Border](#)
2  [Pussy Capital](#) by Liara Roux 2024
3  [Subprime Attention Crisis: Advertising and the Time Bomb at the Heart of the Internet](#) by Tim Hwang 2020
4  [AI Isn't Artificial or Intelligent](#) by Chloe Xiang 2022
5  [A Hacker Manifesto](#) by McKenzie Wark 2004
6  [Black Software: The Internet and Racial Justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter Hardcover](#) by Charlton D. McIlwain 2019
7  [Immutable: Designing History](#) by Chris Lee 2023
8  [The Business Of Burying Internet Search Results](#) By Peter O'Dowd 2010
9  [Economic Science Fictions](#) edited by William Davies 2018
10 [Daylighting Cryptocurrency's Waterstreams](#) by Isabel Ling 2024
11 [Living the VirtuReal: Negotiating Transgender Identity in Cyberspace](#) by Avi Marciano 2014
12 [Our Artificial Wilderness: Virtual Beauty & Ecological Decay](#) by Cade Diehm and Edward Anthony in New Design Congress 2020
13 [Making Kin with the Machines](#) by Jason Edward Lewis, Noelani Arista, Archer Pechawis, and Suzanne Kite 2018
14 [Stuck on the Platform: Reclaiming the Internet](#) by Geert Lovink 2022
15 [Philosophy for Spiders: On the Low Theory of Kathy Acker](#) by McKenzie Wark 2021