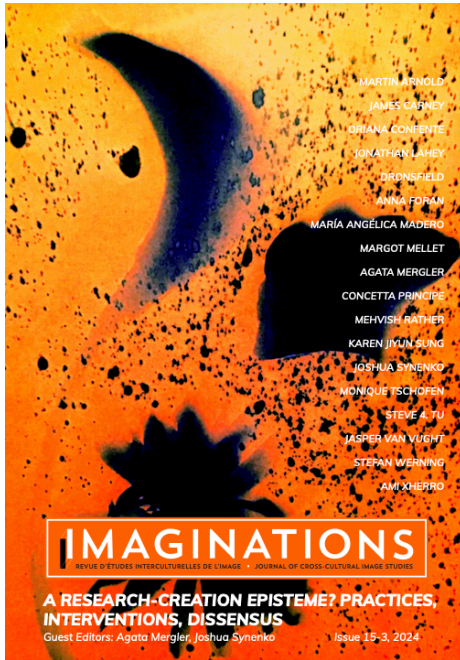


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WRITING BY NO LONGER WRITING

MARGOT MELLET

This article explores the concept of “de-writing,” which involves suspending writing, diverting it in order to better understand it in a research-creation approach. De-writing is then considered as a new regime of the act of writing, particularly in connection with digital media culture. The article analyzes the mediatic and ontological change of writing through the work of Friedrich Kittler. It examines how writing in collaboration with the machine calls into question the notions of originality and the primacy of the human in creativity. As an epistemological and performative model, the article introduces the idea of “misuse,” where a use of a tool, format, or medium deviating from the use initially intended, allows to explore new modes of writing.

Cet article explore le concept de « désécriture », qui consiste à suspendre l'écriture, la détourner afin de mieux la comprendre dans une approche de recherche-création. La désécriture est alors envisagée comme un nouveau régime de l'acte d'écriture, particulièrement en lien avec la culture médiatique numérique. L'article analyse le changement médiatique et ontologique de l'écriture à travers le travail de Friedrich Kittler. Il examine comment l'écriture en collaboration avec la machine remet en question les notions d'originalité et de primauté de l'humain dans la créativité. Comme modèle épistémologique et performatif, l'article introduit l'idée de « détournement » (misuse), où une utilisation d'un outil, d'un format ou d'un média dérogeant à l'utilisation initialement prévue, permet d'explorer de nouveaux modes d'écriture.

INTRODUCTION

In 1992-1993, Friedrich Kittler, a researcher and media specialist, began a short paper by saying rather casually:

“Wie wir alle wissen und nur nicht sagen, schreibt kein Mensch mehr.” (Kittler 1993)

“As one knows without saying, nobody writes anymore.” (my translation)

If this echoes today’s concerns about the presence of large language models such as ChatGPT on the publishing scene, particularly in terms of their ability to produce narratives, coming from a media specialist at the end of the 20th century, it may also imply something more than the fear of human obsolescence. As Kittler himself writes this sentence, his assertion is not to be taken literally, but epistemologically or symbolically: in the eyes of the media specialist, writing with new media occurs under a different regime of inscription. Writing itself has changed ontologically. If we ignore the existing characteristics of writing in new media, or if we deny that a radical shift has occurred, we are, by extension, ignoring the very process of writing itself: we are no longer writing insofar as we fail to grasp the concrete modalities of writing on an intellectual or sensible level. In the form of a provocation, Kittler’s sentence urges us to dig deeper into writing and the way modern writing devices operate, in order to understand the new writing regime. This tension of a writing that slips out of our grasp is what we propose here to call “dewriting.”

The present essay will explore the idea of dewriting, of no longer writing in order to grasp writing, through a research-creation approach. Dewriting considers research-creation in literature as a search for what writing in new media becomes: a search for how writing emerges beyond the model of the printed word, beyond an injunction to produce writing. The search for writing alone is a creative process. While media studies is largely involved in this research, the essay is mainly addressed to literary studies. De-writing, conceived as a new regime of the act of writing, recalls the technical

reality of writing that has been present at least throughout the modern era of literature. However, it seems to be more evident in digital media culture. The characteristics of this shift will first be analysed using Kittler's work on the modern mediatic period. Looking at writing in terms of a collaboration with the machine, acknowledged or not, leads to challenging the idea of originality and the primacy of the human being in creativity. This will lead to the introduction of a possible mode of research-creation (the *Misuse*) via the image of the puzzle. Misuse is defined as the misappropriation of a tool, format, or media: the writing no longer corresponds to what had been planned or anticipated in the media. It's diverted from its intended purpose, and new modes of creative writing emerge. This approach combines research and creation in literature inside the media, and establishes research-creation as a unique perspective of its own (rather than a single approach that simply links the two. In the form of a practical tutorial adopting a manifesto tone, the paper explores a diffracted perspective on literature and on research and creation in which we write by no longer writing.

NOBODY WRITES ANYMORE

Having studied the cultural implications of the media, and more specifically the reading, writing, and recording devices employed in the arts, Kittler argues that the transition between 1800 and 1900 represents a profound paradigm shift for Western society, insofar as it affects all the levels that constitute it: representations, imaginaries and systems. This shift began with an initial destabilisation that the new media continue to pursue, inheriting the momentum of a combined process of mechanisation and automation. At the dawn of a new century, Kittler's statement is in fact part of a larger and more ambitious enterprise of media research pursued by the ensemble of his work as a network of discourses (which is the title of one of his most widely known works, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*). His goal as a media theorist is to address the problem of models of thought within the human sciences, their biases, and the media-technical preconceptions about modern technologies for recording and transmitting knowledge that, like clouds over our

minds, stand in the way of understanding the writing devices that are concretely at play.

Given that an inscription cannot be isolated or extracted from the media and technological context in which it exists, the boundaries between human and non-human become more permeable, and the solid foundations of human intentionality begin to crumble. Among the case studies Kittler analyses to develop this idea, the literary imaginary of the machine plays a crucial role. The presence of the machine in the creative process of writing defines its very existence, and by changing the writing system, turns literature into a form of media research. How, then, does the literary medium now function in relation to creation?

Is it you, Master Goethe?

A major media vector of cultural change is embodied in the form of the gramophone. As the first element of his book *Gramophone, Film and Typewriter*, the gramophone constitutes this complete ability to listen within the world, that is, to listen to its noise, but also to what we humans cannot hear.

“Das Grammophon entleert die Wörter, indem es Ihr Imaginäres (Signifikate) auf Reales (Stimmphysiologie) hin unterläuft.” (Kittler 1985, p. 310)

“The gramophone empties the words of their meaning by diverting their imaginary (signified) to their reality (vocal physiology).” (Kittler 1990)

As a technology that radically changes the notion of listening and the real presence of sound, it is not surprising that the gramophone has been used as a figure in literature to make the absent, the beyond, or the out-of-this-world genius speak. In this sense, the gramophone is used by Kittler as one of the symbols that represents the modern shift in emerging inscription modalities: from now on, the inscription is detached from the human and the machine writes over the human's words. To illustrate this idea, Kittler refers to Salomo Friedländer's short story “Goethe speaks on the Phonograph” (1916), which is both

the story of a technological fantasy at the turn of the century and a romanticisation of the transition from one poetic age to another.

The story is structured around the desire of a woman, an ardent reader of Goethe's works, and the disappearance of the philosopher she deeply misses. To her long-suffering lover, the professor and engineer Abnossah Pschorr, Anna expresses her desire to hear Goethe again, as follows:

"Ach, Herr Professor, ich hätte wenigstens so gern Goethes Stimme noch gehört! Er soll ein so schönes Organ gehabt haben, und was er sagte, war so gehaltvoll. Ach, hätte er doch in einen Phonographen können! Oh! Oh!"

"Oh, Professor, I would have liked to hear Goethe's voice at least once more! They say he had such a beautiful organ and that what he said was so rich. Oh, if only he could have spoken on a phonograph! Alas! Alas!"

Using the classical codes of romance, the story follows Abnossah's efforts to win Anna's heart by resurrecting Goethe's voice from the dead and from words.

As a symbol of technical invention, Abnossah decides to make Goethe speak by designing a sound device connected to the reconstruction of the philosopher's airways: just as Anna had wished, to make Goethe speak on a phonograph. In this sense, the technical future of literature is presented in the narrative in terms of the decline of religious, sacred, and legal imperatives: Abnossah goes so far as to illegally exhume Goethe's body in order to create a replica of his vocal chords.

The sacred nature of the author, however, remains reincarnated in the inner mechanism of a machine that is only vaguely described: a mannequin associated with a phonograph, or a kind of anthropomorphised gramophone. According to Abnossah's theory, for this invention to be as inspired as the philosopher was, it must be located in the place where Goethe breathed his last: Goethe's office, a place of work and thinking, thus becomes the space that seems to imply that mod-

ern objects of literature depend on a precise context in order to operate. The voices of geniuses leave fragments in suspension, invisible and inaudible to even the most passionate human being, but recordable by the machine which, as a good mediator between worlds, allows them to be transmitted to people. Once this mystical state of connection with the world was established, Goethe began to speak *on* the phonograph, first producing a rattle and then, like a car starting up, moving into continuous words and sentences.

Designed to win Anna over, the Abnossah recreation of Goethe only drives the two individuals further apart: she demands to hear more and more, for longer and longer, just as the media system becomes a system that produces a need to be hypnotised by its voice, without ever fully regulating the desire that precedes the demand.

Abnossah finally understands this system and uses it to his advantage, first destroying the machine and then promising to rebuild it on condition that the marriage is consummated (“Après les noces, meine Taube!”, “After the nuptials, my dove!”). The technical romance, which uses and also the motif of the impossible love triangle—Abnossah loves Anna, who loves Goethe, who loves nobody—ends on a principle of blackmail, in which the machine of literature, the new discourse system, is the means/media for ingenious men to get what they want.

As fiction spills over into reality, and as a sign of the invention of media by literature, a number of contemporary research-creation projects have set out to restore voices from beyond the grave. These include the 2015 project by Flavia Montaggio, Patricia Montaggio, and Imp Kerr to restore Nietzsche’s voice using his genotype, a text-to-speech synthesiser, and a 3D printer to reconstruct his trachea and larynx; or the 2020 project by a team of researchers at the University of Tübingen to restore the voice of a 3,000-year-old Egyptian mummy by measuring the phonatory apparatus and reproducing it using an 3D printer. In both projects, the method is identical to that of Abnossah. The aim is to mould the organ of the deceased, to use a phonatory device, and to capture the traces of a cultural epoch so that the restoration makes sense to contemporaries.

The author now exists in the age of machines that make discourse a technical function of its media-technical environment (Kittler 1990), and even a white noise of a medium (Guez et Vargoz 2017), so much so that it merges with the technical and machinic nature of writing, now modern and detached from the human. The new discourse systems rely on remediation methods based on technical research-creation, working on a literary myth (Goethe, Nietzsche) in the non-human mode.

The delicate Nietzsche

In addition to the gramophone's imaginary, new writing systems also refer to another important moment in the age of modern technology: the typewriter, which represents a major cultural shift for literature. The introduction of the typewriter made it possible to examine the technical reality of writing. In 1882, Nietzsche, who was suffering from severe migraines caused by increasing short-sightedness and the efforts to decipher handwritten pages, decided to use a typewriter, the Hansen Ball, to continue his work.

"Unser Schreibwerkzeug schreibt mit an unseren Gedanken."
(Letter to Heinrich Köselitz, end of February 1882 (Montinari 1975))

"Our writing implements write with us on our thoughts." (my translation)

It is not surprising that this quote from Nietzsche has been borrowed by Kittler, as it reflects a perspective on literature that anticipates media studies as it no longer conceives writing as exclusively human (it never was, after all). The modern trajectory of Nietzsche's researches is an important case for Kittler's analysis, as it embodies the transition to a form of writing that sinks ever deeper into mechanisms that are no longer in the hands of the writer, what Heidegger calls a "growing devastation of the word" (Heidegger 2011, 141).

"Man himself 'acts' and 'manoeuvres' thanks to the hand; for the hand, together with the word, forms the essential characteristic of man. [...] Not only prayer and murder, greeting and

thanksgiving, oath and sign, but also the 'work' of the hand, the 'craft' and the instrument take place through the hand. The handshake seals a pact. The hand initiates a 'work' of destruction. The hand is only used as a hand where there is dismemberment and displacement. No animal has a hand, and a hand is never born from a paw, a claw or a nail. [It is only from speech and with speech that the hand is born. It is not man that 'has' hands, but the hand that carries the essence of man, for speech as the domain of the essence of the hand is the foundation of the essence of man." (Heidegger 2011, p. 132, quoted in Kittler 2018)

In fact, the hand writing on the typewriter *composes* the letter differently, activating a mechanism that, out of sight, with a shift of gaze, will write on it.

"When handwriting, the eye must constantly observe the written line, and only that line. It must monitor the execution of each of the written signs, measure, direct - in short, it must lead and guide the hand as it draws each line. The typewriter, on the other hand, produces a complete letter at the right place on the paper by a simple, brief pressure of the finger, a place which is not only not touched by the writer's hand but which, being far from it, is in a completely different place from where the hands are working." (Herbertz 1909, 556)

So the machine writes with/through/between our fingers. The context of writing shapes the author, and so the Nietzsche-with-the-machine is another Nietzsche. Nietzschean writing becomes the site of a meeting between delicate mechanisms and short-sighted eyes.

The writing ultimatum

The Kittlerian affirmation of de-writing, cited at the beginning of this article, refers specifically to computer programs. With the new media, writing is no longer posited according to the same modes and characteristics of existence: it is now "an electrical inscription engraved in the silicon of our computers, in other words an electrical differential" (Guez et Vargoz 2017). Kittler's precaution is therefore a

warning against the tendency to repeat principles of use and study that belong to the old mode (the mode of printed paper). Ontologically, writing is no longer the same, and the circumstances in which it is produced and relates to us are no longer the same. This is also noted by Guez and Vargoz, who have studied the approach of the mediologist, particularly with regard to the question of the figure of the author:

“Si nous n’écrivons plus, c’est parce que les médias techniques, à partir du XIX^e siècle, ont pu capter du réel des données qui échappent à la perception humaine : le gramophone enregistre des oscillations non perceptibles à l’oreille humaine, la machine à écrire, augmentant la vitesse d’écriture, permettait d’automatiser le geste d’écriture et d’extorquer à ce qui était devenue une machine humaine ce que la lente écriture manuscrite ne pouvait lui soutirer, les circuits intégrés de l’ordinateur traitent les données plus rapidement que n’importe lequel ou laquelle des calculateurs et calculatrices humains employés jusqu’à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale.” (Guez et Vargoz 2017)

“If we no longer write, it is because since the 19th century technical media have been able to capture data from reality that escapes human perception: The gramophone recorded vibrations inaudible to the human ear; the typewriter, by increasing the speed of writing, made it possible to automate the act of writing and to extract from what had become a human machine what slow handwriting could not extract from it; the computer’s integrated circuits process data faster than any of the human calculators and calculating machines used until the end of the Second World War.” (my translation)

There is, then, a form of withdrawal of writing from human understanding that is not peculiar to computing machines, but concerns modernity in general, in all its diversity of objects and technologies. The mediologist proposes a solution to this problem of loss of understanding, which he himself has helped to uncover:

"I can't imagine that students today would learn only to read and write using the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. They should at least know some arithmetic, the integral function, the sine function, everything about signs and functions. They should also know at least two software languages." (Griffin, Herrmann, and Kittler 1996)

This statement is rooted in the belief that the human sciences must teach computer languages, insofar as they ontologically determine modern writing, and even modern culture.

Culture as a "system of signs," to use Kittler's expression,¹ is a formula that reduces literature to a body, to the phonograph, to the typewriter, which is not only a technical device (like a computer) but, in the case of the digital environment, a compound of writing and computable epistemological models. The radicalism of this perspective on literature is commensurate with the resistance to it, and among the a priori denounced and targeted by Kittler, the a priori of abstraction, the one that limits literature and a large part of the human sciences to ideas (in the Platonic sense), is the most tenacious because it is the cement of a tradition and of certainties.

"Once I met a young professor of German literature, who addressed me during a lunch break at a conference. He told me, "Mr. Kittler, you are wrong. You always tell us that in order to understand the computer age one has to be able to program one's own computer. This is silly," he said, "Computers are like cars. You don't have to understand the internal mechanics of a car in order to drive it. Look at me," he said, "I am a professor of German literature without ever having written a poem." And I told him that if this was the case, he was no scholar of German literature." (Khayat and Kittler 2012, 14)

What shines through in this anecdote, which Kittler no doubt romanticizes somewhat, is the idea of a culturally delimited domain: one whose boundaries have no bearing on thought or theory. However, and this is the whole point of Kittler and media studies more generally, this idea is false, it is a «narcissistic narcosis," to use Mar-

shall McLuhan's phrase, so much so that it reinforces the fantasy that humans dominate their elements (that they are masters of the tools they design and market) and that their minds are physically detached from them. Like the Copernican, Darwinian, and Freudian revelations, the ultimatums of media studies are ontological destabilisations: humans are no longer, and never have been, at the centre of their culture, of their writing.

"Writing is frightening because it escapes the human, and this fear triggers resistance: moral resistance to the aberration of this power. The negative judgement against writing is precisely a moral judgement. The term inhuman contains this provocation." (Vitali-Rosati 2020)

Kittler switched off

Moving away from the ontological aim of the media approach is what Kittler pursued in the last years of his research and life. In other words, the media context is decisive not only in terms of epistemology, science, or culture, but also in terms of ontology, in terms of the very existence of things.

"Nur was schaltbar ist, ist überhaupt." (Kittler 1993, 182)

"Only that which can be switched is, fully is." (my translation)

What he had already announced in 1993 evokes both a transhumanist imaginary in which, as in Asimov's proposal, humans are the reproductive organs of machines, and a consideration of established ways of thinking. In the computable principle, everything that has been represented by a model can be implemented: modelling, like the moulding of Goethe's vocal chords, makes it possible to impose a form, to *inform* a principle, and to implement its technical body. In this way, love or death, Goethe or Kittler can be implemented.

If the eruption of the sacred or the untouchable leads us to focus on the capabilities of artificial intelligences, media studies, on the contrary, encourages us to think upstream: to question cultural models. And the question that Kittler answers here, certainly without hav-

ing posed it openly, is how existence is now established, in what ways and on what models. Being and writing are now implemented in the binary logic of on/off. In other words, there is no eternity, no constancy, no immovable, untouchable, unchangeable certainty. Or, in short, there is no unchanging essence, only a state that can be switched on or off. According to reports from the end of Kittler's life, this conception of existence would accompany him to his deathbed in Berlin, since his last words are said to have been "Alle Apparate ausschalten" (Cruz and Kittler 2017, 4), using the root *-schalten* to call for the shutdown of the machines that fed him.

THE PUZZLE : MEDIATED MISUSE AND CREATIVE DE-WRITING

Beyond the imperative to step up in terms of competence, what stays out of Kittler's ultimatum is precisely the invitation to explore the measures of a writing environment no longer according to the rules of the old mode, but according to the mode of this un-writing. Unwriting is focused on the notion of originality (as demonstrated by Goldsmith's explorations of re-edits and reprint of the same content), while dewatering focuses on the question of diverting the medium: unwriting refutes the notion of textual originality and shifts it to the medium (where a text is first and foremost a media arrangement); dewatering explores writing through research and creation on how writing is defined in the medium. Instead of fighting it, we should embrace the un-writing of writing in order to explore how we un-write our writing. In this second phase of reflection, to illustrate the process-oriented rather than product-oriented approach, the image of the jigsaw puzzle provides a means of exploring research-creation under the principle of deciphering and diverting.

"Wo es nichts zu verstehen und nichts zu deuten gibt, vor einer Menge von Abfällen ist es das Erste, Ordnung zu machen. [...] Was zählt, ist die Relevanz oder Pertinenz in einem Puzzlespiel, nicht die Bedeutung in einer Welt." (Kittler 1980, 10)

"Where there is nothing to understand and nothing to interpret, in the face of a mass of rubbish, the first task is to put

things in order. [What counts is relevance, relevance in a puzzle, not meaning in a world.]”

The puzzle represents a fragmentation principle that initiates a quest, a thought process between the pieces. Applied to writing, this image enables us to consider the act of writing as a search for articulation between technical instances.

The spirit of Kittler

In this sense, Kittler’s work does not condemn all possibilities of collaboration with the machine. The tool has a definite influence on its user but beyond the dystopian submission to software, there remain “mechanisms of power/knowledge that define our daily reality” (Kittler 1990, 82), which Kittler has rightly sought to expose. In embodying his assertions in his practices, Kittler is certainly one of the first humanists of his generation to embrace digital spaces for writing and programming from a perspective of the Humanities. Kittler’s concepts are not free of ideality or new a priori, despite an education that is not limited to the 26 letters of the alphabet, and a writing practice that delves into the technical and media foundations of writing systems.

“Kittler’s disciple Wolfgang Ernst has said, “Kittler wrote in a ‘polemic style’ of Assembly—You have to know what I’m saying already”. Kittler could not explain all of his code or “retrace his steps”: “it was irreconstructable”. For Kittler, “His assembly writing was so close to subconscious ... A kind of ‘automatic programming.’” He described the process: “Kittler always spoke about coding in assembly as a deep psychological and analytical process. He would enter a kind of trance. Afterward, he couldn’t really tell you how he came to write it that way. He would mostly work on it at night.” (Marino 2020)

What is referred to here as assembly language is the lowest level of machine language representation in human readable form. This language remains complex because of its non-intuitive syntax: the bit combinations of the original machine language were represented by

mnemonic symbols. Media and technical exploration has its limits, even for the writing of a mediologist.

Despite the grandiloquence of academic projects such as McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, there are limits or walls to practices and concepts. A certain part is left to mystery, and Kittler's writing process, as recounted by Wolfgang Ernst, who perhaps also romanticizes, seems to involve an element of trance. Kittler's research is part of the establishment of media archaeology. This archaeology also begins, for Kittler's case, with personal writing, with the exploration of recording environments that may always escape our understanding or documentation in the logical stages of their operation, although this does not mean that the writing produced at each stage does not emerge from precise technical and media conditions.

If Kittler explored the code and a commutable approach (implementation in a machine) to the world to the point of turning it into a personal philosophy, his perspectives on writing as a process and as a media movement that constitutes the object of excavation and analysis open up a different approach to research-creation in literature. Entering a new cultural mode, literature faces not only its images turned upside down by transhuman machines, but also its foundations: the literary phenomenon is set up according to different modalities that contradict or re-articulate the a priori assumptions of creativity, originality, and exclusivity.

Creative unwriting

Although the challenges to the institutional and poetic structures of literature did not emerge only with the arrival of the machine, the mechanisation of writing has certainly played an important role in the exploration of forms of expression that thwart the codes of an established culture: from the Surrealist pages (with typographic exploration to « play » with letter's shapes) to the Oulipian procedures and the various generations of poem generators, literature has transformed its creative models, seeking ever more exceptions and reversals.

"We call potential literature the research of new forms and structures that can be used by writers in any way they wish."
(Benabou 2000)

In the OuLiPo group, founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais, the principle of constraint already foreshadowed the modelling of a literary production process, a mathematical or calculable model for the experimentation of literature to be reproduced under the same conditions. The poetic group, which brought together writers and mathematicians, saw itself as a meeting between an art of expression and a technical logic. Having applied mathematical or computational principles to literary ends, understood (almost) as an exact science, the Oulipian literati played with code as a literary machine. Redefining the principle of textual production and, by extension, what literary writing actually means, the Oulipian text is a set of methods that define the boundaries of a dialogue, delimit a framework for randomness, document the process of creativity, and thus desacralise literary genius to replace it with the importance of the model.

"What some writers have done with talent (or even genius), but some have done only occasionally [...], the Oulipo intends to do systematically and scientifically, and if necessary, with the good offices of 'information processing machines.'" (Le Lionnais 1973, 17)

The common ground, and indeed the continuity, between the machinic explorations of literature can be seen in terms of automation and infinity. From Stratchey's first love letter generator [1952], to the paper hypertext of Queneau's *Cent Mille Milliard de poèmes* [1961], to Jean Baudot's first poem generator [1964], to more modern explorations such as Balpe's generators or his GPT version instantiated by the author Thierry Crouzet (called [ThierryGPT](#)), the thread running through the machine's literary compositions is as much the idea of defining the process of an art, of understanding the concrete conditions of its creation, as it is the shifting of literary art from product to process. Indeed, it is not so much a question of written works—*Cent mille milliard de poèmes* is literally unreadable, and the generators

are potentially inexhaustible in the possibilities of textual composition—as of writing devices or literary architecture. If we turn to the literary products they designate, it is indeed the articulation of the media pieces that crystallises the literary experience: the *Cent mille milliard de poèmes* are pieces of paper to be grouped together without one version prevailing over another. Composition becomes a quest to understand how a literary idea has been technically implemented.

If the sacredness of composition or the humanist a priori that might inform it are undermined in the experimental generation of literature, so too are questions of intentionality. With direct reference to Kenneth Goldsmith's approach and the thinking behind *uncreative writing* (2011), the proposition that emerges is one of questioning the very principle and use of intentionality: in other words, evacuating the question of whether the machine *thinks, writes, creates* by intending to do so (which we couldn't determine for a human either), and instead asking the question of how, by trying to understand how it works, I *think, write, create* by it.

The misuse

"It seems to me that the only necessary condition for an artist is to master all the tools that can have an impact on his art, to digest them and then to use them or not, depending on the circumstances." ('T'es pas techos, t'es pas artiste', Crouzet 2013 [<https://tcrouzet.com/2013/05/08/tes-pas-techos-tes-pas-artiste/>])

The mastery of the medium outlined by Kittler and Crouzet is not about expertise; it is not about turning literary scholars into computer scientists, but rather about exploring new conditions in literature and even in the media. As McLuhan puts it,

"Artists of various disciplines are always the first to discover how one medium can use or liberate the energy of another."
(McLuhan 1964, 75)

In other words, the approach to the literary applied to the digital, because it aims at other horizons, diverts, *de-familiarises* (Shklovksy

2015) systems of inscription from their original purpose. From this perspective, creative insolence is the order of the day, literary research in the digital media finds modes or spaces for diverting writing.

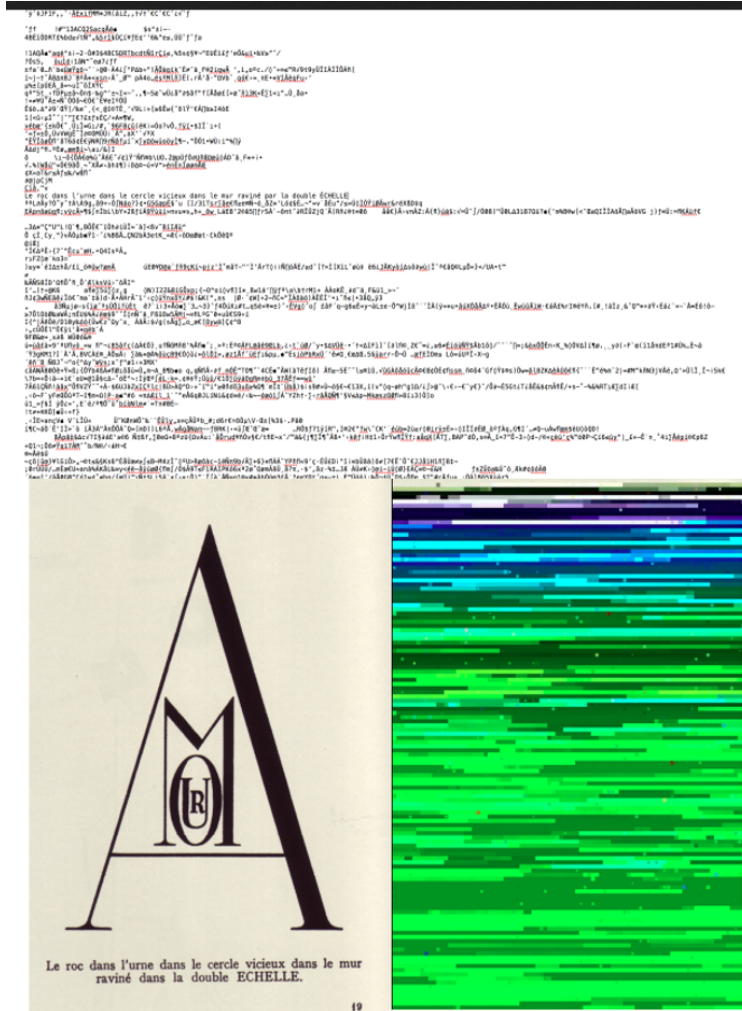


Figure 1

The image text encoding misuses shown above are based on Goldsmith's methods:

"Let's take a .jpg of the famous Droeshout engraving from the title page of the 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays and change the extension from .jpg to .txt. When we open it in a text editor, we'll see garbled code. Now let's insert his ninety-third sonnet into it, three times at somewhat equal intervals, and save the file and change the extension back to .jpg."
(Goldsmith 2011, 22)

What Goldsmith then shows is an image of Shakespeare (before and after the misuse of his signs). The writing game is a misuse of an image, a literary figure, where the intrusion into the code is an act of creative research into the new modalities of existence of writing. The misuse can also be found in the use of writing tools: the text editor is misused to corrupt an image, the image viewing tool is misused to display a corrupted image (and on some operating systems you have to force the display). In the case of Goldsmith's creation (and it's applicable to all his research-creation work), the writing process involves exploring the writing device and playing with the limits of inscription: as the conditions of writing's existence have changed on screen, new modes of writing become explorations that make inscription dysfunctional, or take it as an agent of dysfunction.

The puzzle itself can be turned upside down: it's no longer a question of solving, but of assembling the pieces in a different way, beyond the combinations initially envisaged, to reveal another image of the composition.

WRITING BY NO LONGER WRITING

The notion of de-writing, based on my reading of Kittler, leads to a highly paradoxical observation: today one writes by no longer writing. This paradox allows us to respect the concrete, mediated, and technical nature of writing, while at the same time allowing for the creative exploration of the literary phenomenon. De-writing in itself is not only ontological (the human is no

longer at the core of writing) or epistemological (writing is no longer within his grasp), but also practical: research-creation is a way to pause, interrupt, or postpone the productive process of writing in order to explore the modalities of its emergence. In other words, the deconstruction of a priori assumptions about writing, in theory and practice, encourages research-creation to explore how writing emerges from technical and mediatic conditions. This perspective expands literature, transforming what writing can mean and do (in terms of sign or performance) to challenge its limits and shape its misuses.

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IMAGE NOTES

Figure 1 : Encoding *Le roc dans l'urne dans le cercle vicieux dans le mur raviné par la double ÉCHELLE* in the page of *Le roc dans l'urne dans le cercle vicieux dans le mur raviné par la double ÉCHELLE* poem.

NOTES

1. Kittler's "system of signs" refers not only to the network of discourse (as translated in the English version of his book), but also to a system of inscription, note-taking, and recording of writing.↵