**Do AI Products Want to Tell Stories?**

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This proposed presentation reports on how two AI products, one specifically designed to 'tell stories' (Squibler), another not specifically designed for that purpose (ChatGPT) elaborate longer text from short "kernel simple stories," "minimal stories," "simple stories," and non-narrative fragments from Gerald Prince's classic 1973 A Grammar of Stories. Obviously AI products do not 'want' anything, and to humanize them in this way is probably a disservice to society; the word is used here ironically.

Prince's early concept of a minimal story has three requirements: an original state, an event, and a secondary state. These three must appear in this temporal order, the secondary state must be a direct result of the event, and the original and secondary states must be different, yet still maintain some relation. To this basic definition, the presentation adds the requirement of Monika Fludernik's (1996) embodied experientiality, of a diegetic experiencing position. The presentation looks specifically at how the two AI products do – or don't – fill in these requirements when asked "to tell a story" about some of Prince's stories or fragments, with no prompting in any other manner.

Most of the prompts taken verbatim from 30 of Prince's 61 elements, kernel simple, minimal, or simple stories don't necessarily lend themselves to obvious narrative plot structures. Prince's first examples are, for instance, "The sun was shining and the birds were singing, then it rained," or "John ate an apple, then he went to bed because he was tired," or "John loved Mary and Mary loved Jim and Jim loved Joan." But even with such faint cues, the AI products spun tales, however truncated. The programs often even seemed to seek further direction from the human prompter, somewhat disguised in the form of free indirect discourse ("Was the apple, indeed, the source of John's overwhelming tiredness?"). Predominant in the AI products' responses to queries, the presentation explains, was the products' insistence on elaborating (un-cued) spaces in which the narratives took place, as well as their repeated elaborations of multiple positions of embodied experientiality, often through gendered stereotypes, and their efforts to align these positions through emotionalized, purple-prosed encounters.

Most unexpectedly, and in direct contrast with Angus Fletcher's work, the products often signaled and elaborated causality, even where none was suggested in the query. Even if, as Fletcher suggests, computers are "fundamentally incapable of grasping cause-and-effect" (2021: 3), and can only suggest causality by working backward to it from correlation (2022: 132), they now certainly seem aware that narratives require it, and even include it when not asked to. They also tend to offer characters "overarching psychological purpose" (Fletcher 18), even when not requested to do so.

Time allowing, the presentation will also discuss apparent geographic bias in the products. They seemingly relied on the IP addresses from which the queries were made (Austria, the

Netherlands) to make decisions in regards to setting, character, and other forms of elaboration.

**References**

Fletcher, Angus. “Why Computers Will Never Read (or Write) Literature: A Logical Proof and a Narrative.” Narrative 29:1 (1-28), 2021.
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Fludernik, Monika. Toward a Natural Narratology. NY: Routledge, 1996.
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