Understand technology, or it wins...
Support Booklet
Year 10 English
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Unit Overview

‘Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be his world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.’

– Mary Shelley, Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus (1818)

‘When Prometheus was caught and brought to justice for his theft, the gods, well, you might say they overreacted a little. The poor man was tied to a rock as an eagle ripped through his belly and ate his liver over and over, day after day, ad infinitum. All because he gave us fire, our first true piece of technology. Fire.

‘Such a very long time ago. Which begs the question: What have we done with?

‘100,000, BC: Stone tools.
4,000, BC: The wheel.
800, BC: Sundial.
9th century, AD: Gunpowder. Bit of a game-changer, that one.
1441: The printing press -- only slightly less impactful.
19th century: Steam engine. Railway. Eureka! The light bulb!!
20th century: The automobile, television, nuclear weapons, spacecrafts, Internet.
21st century: Biotech, nanotech, fusion and fission, and M-theory -- and that was just the first decade.

‘We wield incredible power -- the power to transform, to destroy and to create again. The question, of course, before us is, “What the hell are we supposed to do with this power?” Or, more importantly, one should ask, “What are we allowed to do with this power?”

– Prometheus (2012), dir. Ridley Scott

In this unit, students extend their appreciation of the ways that different communication technologies shape the way we read, navigate and respond to digital and multimodal texts. They develop an understanding of the creative possibilities made available in the way we learn and communicate ideas through these rapidly evolving technologies. And in coming to a better understanding of the power of communication technology to reach a broad audience for a range of purposes, they see the importance of creating a responsible digital footprint for themselves.

Students demonstrate their learning in this unit through written close analyses on a series of persuasive texts about the topic, and apply this understanding of argument and persuasive language by composing their own persuasive text on the topic.
John McWhorter, ‘Texting is killing language. JK!!!’ (2013)

1. Outline the contention of McWhorter’s TED Talk. (Think carefully about your choice of verbs: supports, condemns, endorses, celebrates, challenges etc.)
2. Explain, in your own words, the evolution of ‘lol’ and ‘slash’ as linguistic constructions.
3. McWhorter describes a ‘whole battery of new [language] constructions that are developing’ and the expansion of our ‘linguistic repertoire’. Provide two examples of new constructions and describe their evolution (from their original denotation to their most recent connotations).
4. McWhorter cites statements made by educators from 1956, 1917, 1871, 1841 and 63 AD. How do these contribute to his argument? What is the intended effect?
5. Why is texting a ‘linguistic miracle’? Synthesise McWhorter’s closing argument here.

Transcript
We always hear that texting is a scourge. The idea is that texting spells the decline and fall of any kind of serious literacy, or at least writing ability, among young people in the United States and now the whole world today. The fact of the matter is that it just isn’t true, and it’s easy to think that it is true, but in order to see it in another way, in order to see that actually texting is a miraculous thing, not just energetic, but a miraculous thing, a kind of emergent complexity that we’re seeing happening right now, we have to pull the camera back for a bit and look at what language really is, in which case, one thing that we see is that texting is not writing at all. What do I mean by that?
Basically, if we think about language, language has existed for perhaps 150,000 years, at least 80,000 years, and what it arose as is speech. People talked. That's what we're probably genetically specified for. That's how we use language most. Writing is something that came along much later, and as we saw in the last talk, there's a little bit of controversy as to exactly when that happened, but according to traditional estimates, if humanity had existed for 24 hours, then writing only came along at about 11:07 p.m. That's how much of a latterly thing writing is. So first there's speech, and then writing comes along as a kind of artifice.

Now don't get me wrong, writing has certain advantages. When you write, because it's a conscious process, because you can look backwards, you can do things with language that are much less likely if you're just talking. For example, imagine a passage from Edward Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire:"

"The whole engagement lasted above twelve hours, till the graduate retreat of the Persians was changed into a disorderly flight, of which the shameful example was given by the principal leaders and the Surenas himself."

That's beautiful, but let's face it, nobody talks that way. Or at least, they shouldn't if they're interested in reproducing. That -- (Laughter) is not the way any human being speaks casually.

Casual speech is something quite different. Linguists have actually shown that when we're speaking casually in an unmonitored way, we tend to speak in word packets of maybe seven to 10 words. You'll notice this if you ever have occasion to record yourself or a group of people talking. That's what speech is like. Speech is much looser. It's much more telegraphic. It's much less reflective -- very different from writing. So we naturally tend to think, because we see language written so often, that that's what language is, but actually what language is, is speech. They are two things.

Now of course, as history has gone by, it's been natural for there to be a certain amount of bleed between speech and writing. So, for example, in a distant era now, it was common when one gave a speech to basically talk like writing. So I mean the kind of speech that you see someone giving in an old movie where they clear their throat, and they go, "Ahem, ladies and gentlemen," and then they speak in a certain way which has nothing to do with casual speech. It's formal. It uses long sentences like this Gibbon one. It's basically talking like you write, and so, for example, we're thinking so much these days about Lincoln because of the movie. The Gettysburg Address was not the main meal of that event. For two hours before that, Edward Everett spoke on a topic that, frankly, cannot engage us today and barely did then. The point of it was to listen to him speaking like writing. Ordinary people stood and listened to that for two hours. It was perfectly natural. That's what people did then, speaking like writing.

Well, if you can speak like writing, then logically it follows that you might want to also sometimes write like you speak. The problem was just that in the material, mechanical sense, that was harder back in the day for the simple reason that materials don't lend themselves to it. It's almost impossible to do that with your hand except in shorthand, and then communication is limited. On a manual typewriter it was very difficult, and even when we had electric typewriters, or then computer keyboards, the fact is that even if you can type easily enough to keep up with the pace of speech, more or less, you have to have somebody who can receive your message quickly.

Once you have things in your pocket that can receive that message, then you have the conditions that allow that we can write like we speak. And that's where texting comes in. And so, texting is very loose in its structure. No one thinks about capital letters or punctuation when one texts, but then again, do you think about those things when you talk? No, and so therefore why would you when you were texting?

What texting is, despite the fact that it involves the brute mechanics of something that we call writing, is fingered speech. That's what texting is. Now we can write the way we talk. And it's a very interesting thing, but nevertheless easy to think that still it represents some sort of decline. We see this general bagginess of the structure, the lack of concern with rules and the way that we're used to learning on the blackboard, and so we think that something has gone wrong. It's a very natural sense.

But the fact of the matter is that what is going on is a kind of emergent complexity. That's what we're seeing in this fingered speech. And in order to understand it, what we want to see is the way, in this new kind of language, there is new structure coming up.

And so, for example, there is in texting a convention, which is LOL. Now LOL, we generally think of as meaning "laughing out loud." And of course, theoretically, it does, and if you look at older texts, then people used it to
actually indicate laughing out loud. But if you text now, or if you are someone who is aware of the substrate of texting the way it's become, you'll notice that LOL does not mean laughing out loud anymore. It's evolved into something that is much subtler.

This is an actual text that was done by a non-male person of about 20 years old not too long ago.

"I love the font you're using, btw."

Julie: "lol thanks gmail is being slow right now"

Now if you think about it, that's not funny. No one's laughing. (Laughter) And yet, there it is, so you assume there's been some kind of hiccup.

Then Susan says "lol, I know," again more guffawing than we're used to when you're talking about these inconveniences.

So Julie says, "I just sent you an email."

Susan: "lol, I see it."

Very funny people, if that's what LOL means.

This Julie says, "So what's up?"

Susan: "lol, I have to write a 10 page paper."

She's not amused. Let's think about it. LOL is being used in a very particular way. It's a marker of empathy. It's a marker of accommodation. We linguists call things like that pragmatic particles. Any spoken language that's used by real people has them. If you happen to speak Japanese, think about that little word "ne" that you use at the end of a lot of sentences. If you listen to the way black youth today speak, think about the use of the word "yo." Whole dissertations could be written about it, and probably are being written about it. A pragmatic particle, that's what LOL has gradually become. It's a way of using the language between actual people.

Another example is "slash." Now, we can use slash in the way that we're used to, along the lines of, "We're going to have a party-slash-networking session." That's kind of like what we're at. Slash is used in a very different way in texting among young people today. It's used to change the scene.

So for example, this Sally person says, "So I need to find people to chill with" and Jake says, "Haha" -- you could write a dissertation about "Haha" too, but we don't have time for that — "Haha so you're going by yourself? Why?"

Sally: "For this summer program at NYU."

Jake: "Haha. Slash I'm watching this video with suns players trying to shoot with one eye."

The slash is interesting. I don't really even know what Jake is talking about after that, but you notice that he's changing the topic. Now that seems kind of mundane, but think about how in real life, if we're having a conversation and we want to change the topic, there are ways of doing it gracefully. You don't just zip right into it. You'll pat your thighs and look wistfully off into the distance, or you'll say something like, "Hmm, makes you think --" when it really didn't, but what you're really -- (Laughter) -- what you're really trying to do is change the topic. You can't do that while you're texting, and so ways are developing of doing it within this medium. All spoken languages have what a linguist calls a new information marker -- or two, or three. Texting has developed one from this slash.

So we have a whole battery of new constructions that are developing, and yet it's easy to think, well, something is still wrong. There's a lack of structure of some sort. It's not as sophisticated as the language of The Wall Street Journal. Well, the fact of the matter is, look at this person in 1956, and this is when texting doesn't exist, "I Love Lucy" is still on the air.

"Many do not know the alphabet or multiplication table, cannot write grammatically -- "
We've heard that sort of thing before, not just in 1956. 1917, Connecticut schoolteacher. 1917. This is the time when we all assume that everything somehow in terms of writing was perfect because the people on "Downton Abbey" are articulate, or something like that.

So, "From every college in the country goes up the cry, 'Our freshmen can't spell, can't punctuate.'"

And so on. You can go even further back than this. It's the President of Harvard. It's 1871. There's no electricity. People have three names.

"Bad spelling, incorrectness as well as inelegance of expression in writing."

And he's talking about people who are otherwise well prepared for college studies.

You can go even further back. 1841, some long-lost superintendent of schools is upset because of what he has for a long time "noted with regret the almost entire neglect of the original" blah blah blah blah blah.

Or you can go all the way back to 63 A.D. -- (Laughter) -- and there's this poor man who doesn't like the way people are speaking Latin. As it happens, he was writing about what had become French. And so, there are always — (Laughter) (Applause) — there are always people worrying about these things and the planet somehow seems to keep spinning.

And so, the way I'm thinking of texting these days is that what we're seeing is a whole new way of writing that young people are developing, which they're using alongside their ordinary writing skills, and that means that they're able to do two things. Increasing evidence is that being bilingual is cognitively beneficial. That's also true of being bidialectal. That's certainly true of being bidialectal in terms of your writing. And so texting actually is evidence of a balancing act that young people are using today, not consciously, of course, but it's an expansion of their linguistic repertoire. It's very simple. If somebody from 1973 looked at what was on a dormitory message board in 1993, the slang would have changed a little bit since the era of "Love Story," but they would understand what was on that message board. Take that person from 1993 -- not that long ago, this is "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure" -- those people. Take those people and they read a very typical text written by a 20-year-old today. Often they would have no idea what half of it meant because a whole new language has developed among our young people doing something as mundane as what it looks like to us when they're batting around on their little devices.

So in closing, if I could go into the future, if I could go into 2033, the first thing I would ask is whether David Simon had done a sequel to "The Wire." I would want to know. And — I really would ask that — and then I'd want to know actually what was going on on "Downton Abbey." That'd be the second thing. And then the third thing would be, please show me a sheaf of texts written by 16-year-old girls, because I would want to know where this language had developed since our times, and ideally I would then send them back to you and me now so we could examine this linguistic miracle happening right under our noses. Thank you very much.
Emojis can make us as happy as talking face to face. What's not to love?

Alex Hern

A well-placed icon also adds useful tone and clarity to text conversations. Unless, of course, you're cooking aubergine

"Seeing a happy face affects us on an emotional level, and it doesn’t seem to matter whether that face is on a person or a screen." Photograph: Apple

You might not want to admit it, but emojis are 😎. That is, they are very good. Far from being, as their detractors claim, representations of an infantile - or senile - lack of written language skills, the iconography born of Japanese text messages in the 1990s is increasingly crucial to clear communication online, as well as adding yet another rich vein to the inventive history of English prose.

Let’s start at the top. Emojis help convey tone in text conversations that sometimes sorely lack this. “Come here please 😜” is very different from “come here please 😣”. “I loved it 😊” conveys sincerity, while “I loved it 😏” implies a sarcastic affectation.

Regardless of the aesthetic considerations, using emojis to communicate tone is certainly preferable to previous attempts, such as the attempt in 2010 to copyright the “sarcmark”, a new punctuation mark to denote sarcasm (for the low price of $1.99). Fantastic idea 😐.

"Come over for some 🍳 is not a good thing to text someone if you're cooking aubergine parmigiana

The ability of emojis to communicate tone is more than just a matter of literacy with this new communication method. According to a new paper in the journal Behaviour and Information Technology, "the use of emoji faces in computer-mediated communication produces neural responses that are similar to those that are observed in face-to-face communication." Seeing a happy face while talking to someone affects us on an emotional level, and it doesn’t seem to matter a whole lot whether that face is on a person or on a screen. Fantastic! 😊
1. Why does Hern open the article with the phrase, ‘You might not want to admit it’?
2. What authoritative sources does Hern cite to support his argument?
3. Hern concedes the ‘ambiguity of emoji can cause more problems than simple embarrassment’. What is the intended effect of the ‘aubergine parmigiana’ joke? And, what, more broadly, is Hern’s purpose in the final five paragraphs? (Is this a digression, or something else?)
Why I hate emojis

Suzanne Moore

I have never knowingly used the vile little grinning dots and I don’t intend to start now.

Should I ever be kidnapped or held against my will - I am talking about a boring wedding rather than a Liam Neeson Taken-type scenario - it will be very easy for my nearest and dearest to know something is up. I will text them those vile little grinning dots called emojis and they will know my world is falling apart.

I have never knowingly used an emoji and I don’t intend to start now. Someone has to hold the line. Standards must be maintained. Recently I accidently gifed my phone had a sort of spasm in my bag - but I have since apologised. Gifs and memes are mostly lazy and formulaic, but occasionally marvellous. I can live with them – I am not an animal.

But emojis? Really? For grownups? Are we to reduce our complicated and interesting interior lives to nasty little smiley faces and emoticon vegetables? (Aubergines, if you are asking.) Is this actual communication? Take it to your mindfulness class. Sad face emoji.

Japan had emojis first and soon they were sold to every tech company. The Smiley Face is now the corporate logo par excellence. You work for the Man and at the end of your messages you send your partner the cuddly image that the Man has installed on your phone. Sometimes the man is grinning or winking or crying or there is a kitten. Your emotional range extends with each new batch of emojis. What fun, this almost talking, almost living.
Trace the development of Moore’s argument by crafting 3-4 topic sentences using these sentence-starters (or similar): ‘Moore opens her argument by…’, ‘Moore turns the focus to…’, ‘The audience’s attention is then drawn to…’, ‘Moore develops her argument through…’

Explain the shift in tone between the second paragraph (‘I can live with them – I am not an animal.’) and third paragraph (‘But emojis? Really? For grownups?’)
3. What is implied in these lines?
   a. ‘Take it to your mindfulness class.’
   b. ‘You work for the Man and at the end of your messages you send your partner the cuddly image that the Man has installed on your phone.’
   c. ‘What fun, this almost talking, almost living.’
   d. ‘Who demands nuance these days?’
4. Why does Moore trace the ‘long history’ of these ‘Yellow smiley faces’?
5. What is Moore’s gripe with ‘words on clothes’ and how does this digression add to her argument?
6. Comment on the irony of the way Moore closes many of her paragraphs (‘Sad face emoji.’ ‘Drooling face. Balloons.’ ‘Grinning squinty face.’) What's her intention here?
7. Below are some replies to Moore’s article. Compose your own (80-150 words).
A good dictionary is a fine thing - I yield to no man in my love for one. If I stretch out my right arm as I type, I can pluck from my shelves the two volumes of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

They are as close to my heart as they are to my desk because they are so much more than a useful tool.

Leafing through a good dictionary in search of a single word is a small voyage of discovery - infinitely more satisfying than looking something up on the internet.

It's partly the physical sensation - the feel and smell of good paper - and partly the minor triumph of finding the word you seek, but it's rare to open a dictionary without being diverted somewhere else.

The eye falls on a word you've never seen before or one whose meaning you have always wanted to check, and you close the dictionary just a little bit richer for the experience.

But my lifetime love affair with the OED is at risk. The sixth edition has just been published and – I feel a small shudder as I write these words – it has fallen victim to fashion.

It has removed the hyphen from no fewer than 16,000 words.

So in future we are required to spell pigeon-hole, for instance, as pigeonhole and leap-frog as leapfrog. In other cases, we have two words instead of one. Pot-belly shall henceforth be potbelly.

You may very well say: so what? Indeed, you may well have functioned perfectly well until now spelling leapfrog without a hyphen.

The spell-check (sorry: spellcheck) on my computer is happy with both. But that's not why I feel betrayed by my precious OED.

It's because of the reason for this change. It has happened because we are changing the way we communicate with each other, which means, says the OED editor Angus Stevenson, that we no longer have time to reach for the hyphen key.

Have you ever heard anything quite so daft? No time to make one tiny key-stroke (sorry: key stroke).

Has it really come to this? Are our lives really so pressured, every minute occupied in so many vital tasks, every second accounted for, that we cannot afford the millisecond (no hyphen) it takes to tap that key?

Obviously not. No, there's another reason - and it's far more sinister and deeply troubling.

It is the relentless onward march of the texters, the SMS (Short Message Service) vandals who are doing to our language what Genghis Khan did to his neighbours eight hundred years ago.

They are destroying it: pillaging our punctuation; savaging our sentences; raping our vocabulary. And they must be stopped.

TEXTING
Btween abbreviations,
intuiting the unbloomed word.
The unsung notes r sliding, rising.
A consonant unothering.

This poem, which was composed and sent out on my mobile phone, is one of the 300+ textpoems which I have shared with an expanding audience in the last three or four years. Enthusiastic responses from the recipients of the poems have inspired me to develop this new poetic form. Some of these responses are themselves poetic: both from established writers, and from those who have never written poetry before. Other comments are about how the poem arrived at the appropriate moment, or expressed an experience or emotion accurately:

“You’ve captured the feeling exactly”
“Thanks. What lovely images to take forward into the day”

The words “What an uplifting masterpiece of hope”, came in response to the following poem:

NOW
This sunfilled day that teems with lite,
Pulsing and darting btween the pathways
& the waters and the grasses,
The fins of the horizon held at bay by safety nets of haze,
Like arcs of birds quicksilvering,
the glistning of now. X

The audience’s reactions to the textpoems evoke the capacity of the poems to create a connection between sender and receiver. Although a common accusation against mobile phones is that they are “destroying the English language”, my experimentation with this form suggests otherwise. I propose that the immediacy and the intimate nature of texting lend themselves to profound moments of communication, and that the specialist language of texting, with its use of abbreviations and other conventions, is creating a community of users of a new linguistic form. This form plays on words, such as “consonant” in the poem “Texting”, and facilitates neologisms such as “unothering”, which I coined as a metaphor for making connections.

As I explain in my chapter on textpoems in the publication The Art of Poetic Inquiry (2012), my development of the textpoem form originated in the desire to connect with a friend who was at the bedside of her dying mother. When my stock of the usual expressions of consolation ran dry, I began to share observations of nature and of candlelight and flowers in the room in which I was writing; these evolved into poems about friendship, the experience of nature, the creative process itself, and of loss. The condensed textpoem form allows me to express momentary insights about difficult issues, such as the death of my father:

FATHER
Waking from a dream of you, half understood,
I am audience 2 the muted birds, the winter rain.
Listning 4 snowdrops, breathing soft,
their ancient journey now survived.x

As in haiku, the small spaces of texting offer opportunities for sharing insights and observations in the moment.
I compose my textpoems in the transitional spaces of walking and on train journeys; the images are born both from reflection and direct observation. The poems also come from my meditation practice of lighting a candle in a quiet room at sunrise or sunset. References to candles and different times of day are therefore common in the poems:

**MORNING RAIN**
Candle @ the window, flame leaning on its stem
The foreground daisies pendulum.
The clouds r breaking promises made 2 the listning sea.
A flickerlite of swifting birds.
Soft shadows on the headland bloom.
Blewewen 2 truths, a stilliness.x

Many of the poems are about the seasons, alluding both to the specific moment and to the broader theme of meaning-making.

**AUTUMN**
Autumn morning, spotlighting remnants of the season passing
The fern a fragment of a fish’s spine
Archaic script on paper leaves.
A chestnut is no more than punctuation.,
The blankness of the frosty grass
makes everything seem simple x

I use the term “textpoems” rather than “text poems” to emphasise the specific poetic form which I am developing. The website [http://www.textmefree.com/sms-poems.html](http://www.textmefree.com/sms-poems.html) explains a “text poem” as “Simply put: it is poetry that fits inside a text message; i.e. poetry that is less than 160 characters long.” My definition of the textpoem form transcends this generic one; my criteria are that the poem should have been composed directly on a mobile phone and also sent out to at least one recipient. The poem should also use the conventions of texting, such as abbreviations. For the sake of saving space on the phone, the poems may be displayed as continuous prose, separated by punctuation marks to indicate line breaks. My textpoems rarely rhyme, but the rhythms tend be more regular than that of my usual free verse. Most of the poems end on a stressed syllable, which adds an air of finality and encloses the moment.

**SKY**
Trees trailing fingers in a river poured thru smoke.
The hills like ducks upending.
The roofscales floating by.

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1. Explain (in 2-3 sentences) how Humphrys’ language choices characterise ‘texters’.
2. Why might the textpoem ‘NOW’ be ‘uplifting’ and hopeful? Support your response with reference to the language.
3. Outline the purpose of Humphrys’ and Shelley’s texts, and how they differ.
4. Humphreys’ and Crystal’s conflicting perspectives are delivered in very different ways. In two well-structured paragraphs, compare how they persuade their audiences.
Towards the end of the last decade, a distinctive minimalist style emerged among the users of the micro-blogging site Tumblr. Capital letters were largely dispensed with, save for emphasis; punctuation became notable by its absence: hashtags were used mostly for irony (#wild). It didn’t take long for the site’s users – who skewed young, female, and literate compared with the rest of the internet – to provide their own meta-commentary on what was happening. One post, from 2012, gained more than half a million likes:

*when did tumblr collectively decide not to use punctuation like when did this happen why is this a thing*

*it just looks so smooth I mean look at this sentence flow like a jungle river*

Or as other users put it:

*WHAT HAVE YOU DONE*

It has always seemed to me that any concerns about what the internet is doing to our collective mental health must be set against the poetry that it has simultaneously unleashed – the sheer range of textual innovation and expression that you can find on Tumblr or Twitter or even TikTok, the way three dots, or a question without a question mark, or “idk lol” can become loaded with meaning. It’s a point that the sociolinguist Gretchen McCulloch argues eloquently in her new book *Because Internet: Understanding How Language Is Changing* (Harvill Secker), which features, among other delights, a fascinating analysis of Tumblr punctuation. Far from being a crude mishmash of emojis and acronyms, she writes, “internet writing is a distinct genre with its own goals, and to accomplish those goals successfully requires subtly tuned awareness of the full spectrum of the language”.

In the past, McCulloch notes, it was only novelists, playwrights and screenwriters who had to worry about how to elicit emotional responses with their writing. For the generation who have come of age on the internet – the “full internet people” in her terminology – this is a fundamental skill. It’s something you have to learn if you want to have any kind of social life. Does
it follow, then, that the internet is producing an entire generation of would-be novelists, playwrights and screenwriters? Or are novels, plays and screenplays the wrong places to be looking anyway?

Here is a typical tweet from @miragonzo, an account run by the American writer Darcie Wilder: “I thought I wanted a community of like-minded artists, then I found media twitter, and now I only wish for death.”

If you’ve spent much time on Twitter you’ll be familiar with the sentiment. You’ll probably be familiar with the way she expressed it too, that cutely depressed, archly overwhelmed, kill-me-now mode that Wilder and her contemporaries have made something of a genre. The LA-based poet Mira Gonzalez (@miragonz) is a particular master of the form. She co-authored the book Selected Tweets with the “alt-lit” writer Tao Lin (@tao_lin) and has transported its dead-eyed style into her poetry: “I wonder how it is possible that there are billions of people in the world / yet I am the only person on the planet,” concludes the signature lyric from her collection I will never be beautiful enough to make us beautiful together (2013). Melissa Broder is another LA-based writer and tweeter. Her account @sosadtoday reaches 900,000 Twitter followers with such negative affirmations as “my shame is always looking for new ways to express itself” and “my persistent sense of impending doom says hey”.

In Wilder’s case, the username composed of numbers makes her appear to be a random bot in the void. The use of all lowercase gives the impression that this stuff comes unbidden from the id. But the emphatic full stops and hyphens suggest someone who takes great care over the way she expresses herself. This was confirmed by Wilder’s debut novel, Literally Show Me a Healthy Person (2017). One reviewer compared its fragmentary self-portrait to the Portuguese avant gardist Fernando Pessoa. Zadie Smith once described it as a “perfect expression of the disease” – the disease being that distracted, defensive, eternally archived personhood that the internet seems to be creating. It’s a disease from which writers of Smith’s generation are often at pains to inoculate themselves – blocking all social media, jamming up their internet ports with glue. In Smith’s new collection, Grand Union, there is a story with a subsection called “Moods on Tumblr” that parodies Tumblr speak: “DON’T ADD YOUR WEIRD COMMENTS ON PEOPLE’S ART. CHRIST.” But if it is a “disease”, it’s one that writers of Wilder’s generation (she’s 29) tend to contract young and can only learn to live with.

Literally Show Me a Healthy Person begins with a long punctuation-free sentence, all lower-case, in which the narrator describes how she once pretended not to be able to see colours to trick her mother into buying her glasses as a child: “… and now I have astigmatism and my mom is dead”. It ends with a keyboard splurge: “khdjsbfshfjgtstjsjts”.

In between, there are sardonic sales pitches: “condoms but for eye contact”. There are meta-commentaries on language: “when I use emoticons like <3 and :@ instead of emojis it means I mean it more”. And there is even a little Schopenhauer: “whenever I think of those non-linear theories of time where everythings always happening at the
same time I feel like fucking killing myself.

It’s a bit like scrolling through a Tumblr feed, only the broken pieces do eventually form a whole. We learn about the narrator’s mother’s death from cancer, her parents’ divorce, her father’s obliviousness, her own spiral into despair. And it is written with intent. Wilder explains that the sentences without end are an attempt to express “a brain that hadn’t healed yet”. The gaps between all the entries have a similar purpose: “Traumatised children often completely freeze. They can lose speech for a few seconds. That’s what I wanted to convey, that feeling of shock. I don’t think it would be so possible with regular punctuation.”

She recalls “corny” attempts to use txt spk and emoticons in the young adult books she read as a child. In her work, these aren’t cheap markers of youth but ways to express a distinctly internet mindset. “It’s the feeling I had when I was 23, when I was always online – the first thing I would see would be my phone, whatever job I had it was always in front of a computer, and then I would fall asleep with my phone in my hand. It’s a fragmented way to exist. It’s a bit like communicating with the world through a mirror.”

Sally Rooney attributes her own literary ‘voice’ to long email exchanges with friends

Crispin Best, a poet who often makes use of internet speak in his poetry and on Twitter (@crispinbest), welcomes this infusion of the language of the “low internet” into literary language. “there is something exciting about the new capacity,” he tells me over email, “and it feels more natural; better to be performatively un-starched than straight-jacketed in sure.” He feels there’s not a strict age divide, but that typing in this way does come more naturally to his generation. “idk – just look at [Kristen Roupenian’s short story] cat person; people were genuinely shocked that you could have texts in a short story. I do almost feel like there was a time before you were able to have real overt ‘text speak’ in a poem, and then sort of a time after you were ... which is the same as anything vogue, I guess.”

And it shouldn’t be so surprising that young women are among the most adept users of internet English. It’s a truism in sociolinguistics that young women are usually on the bleeding edge of changes to language – native speakers of the avant garde. McCulloch cites one study of letters written between 1447 and 1681 that shows it was female correspondents who were the first to adopt new words such as “does”, “has” and “makes” and phase out “doth”, “hath” and “maketh”. Likewise, apalalising – where every sentence sounds like a question – originated in subarctic California in the 1970s, and can now be heard among middle-aged English males. Still, fears that formal language is about to undergo some radical shift are misplaced. As McCulloch demonstrates, most of the innovations in internet English mimetic features that come naturally in informal speech – emoji represent gestures; upper and lower cases represent tones; punctuation represents emphasis. Full internet people are perfectly capable of writing in full sentences when the situation demands. Though Wilder does concede that she spent so long on instant messenger at 12 and 13, she needed to relearn how to speak in real life afterwards. The appeal of typing, she says, was the ability to look things up before you said them.

For the most part, writers have tended to incorporate the linguistic innovations of the Internet in subler ways. The appearance of an iPhone or a sext in a novel now is no more remarkable than the appearance of a horse in Jane Austen. In Elf Batuman’s The Idiot, email is crucial to the development of the central romance, as well as the medium through which her narrator Selin finds her voice. The novel opens with Selin arriving at Harvard in 1997 and receiving her first email account:
a glowing list of messages from all the people you knew, and from people you didn’t know, all in the same letters, like the universal handwriting of thought or of the world. Some messages were formally epistolary, with “Dear” and “Sincerely” ; others telegraphic, all in lowercase with missing punctuation, like they were being beamed straight from people’s brains. And each message contained the one that had come before, so your own words came back to you - all the words you threw out, they came back. It was like the story of your relations with others, the story of the interaction of your life with other lives, was constantly being recorded and updated, and you could check it at any time.

Batman has written spottily about the deleterious effects of creative writing classes on creating an “artisanal” literary style. Her own prose has a meticulousness that comes from easy access to delete, backspace, ctrl+s and ctrl+v, but also an infonnaltnr and intimacy that come from email.

Sally Rooney also attributes her own literary “voice” to long email exchanges with friends. “I mean, that is my voice, isn’t it?” she has explained. “I can tamper with it and I can change it, but the idea of switching register into some lyrical form of prose writing that bears no resemblance to how I communicate on a day-to-day basis, for me, didn’t work.” In her debut novel, Conversations With Friends, the existence of multiple registers of speech brings about misunderstanding. Instant messenger - which combines the spontaneity of speech with the scrutiny of email - facilitates the breakdown of communication between Frances and her older lover Nick. Frances, a native instant messenger, is alert to tone - Nick is oblivious. Frances can then review his lack of understanding at leisure.

The discrepancy between online and offline communication is also a central theme of Richard Yates (2010) by Tao Lin. It’s about a doomed romance between a 22-year-old male writer named Haley Joel Osment and an overweight 16-year-old schoolgirl from New Jersey named Dakota Fanning, the names borrowed from real-life friend child actors, much as chatroom users hide behind avatars. The lovers find blissful, bodiless connection when they communicate on Gmail chat, but the relationship descends to misery and abuse when they meet in real life. The mid-century American author Richard Yates has little to do with it, aside from the fact that one of the characters is reading his work at one point. Lin says he chose the title in the same way you might take a random word from the body of an email and use it in the subject line. And while the prose is studiedly 21st century, it ends up mining a similar line of disconnection to that found in Yates’s Revolutionary Road or The Easter Parade.

When Melissa Broder came to write her novel, The Pisces, she wasn’t tempted to try to replicate the all-lower-case style of her Twitter account. But she did “write” it on her iPhone - dictating it into the Simple Note app via Siri as she drove around LA - which gives it a similar stream-of-consciousness feel. At one point her narrator watches an Instagram couple flint on Abbot Kinney Boulevard, and is appalled at how ease they appear in their own skins. “Why were they even bothered to speak? Who had time for all this?” she wonders. Broder tells me she hadn’t realised her protagonist was so misanthropic until an early reader praised her for being “brave”.

“I was like: ‘Oh! I didn’t even realise she was depressed,’” she laughs. “It was only when I read it back that the suicidal gestures seemed so obvious. I didn’t even notice it because I was like: ‘Who wouldn’t see the world this way?’” While the novel takes place off the internet - that “petri dish for obsession” as Broder calls it - the desire to transcend the human body is a key theme. “Longing is a big part of my life,” Broder says. “You can call it a shortage of dopamine and serotonin, you can call it depression, you can call it an awareness of the void. Either way, it’s going to be all over my tweets and all over my novel.”

When I speak to Wilder, I am relieved that she sounds a little cheerier than she does online. She now has a job - she’s social media editor for the Vice astrology app - and is writing her next novel. In proper sentences. The person who composed that wounded digital scream now feels like another self, she says. “I wrote that and then I stopped drinking. It’s like a portrait of a very messy time so that’s also an aspect of it. I don’t know. I turned 28 and I made a decision to turn auto-capitalisation on. I feel like I need to grow out of it now.”
Today’s tech platforms are caught in a race to the bottom of the brain stem to extract human attention. It’s a race we’re all losing.

The result: addiction, social isolation, outrage, misinformation, and political polarization—all part of one interconnected system called human downgrading that poses an existential threat to humanity.

Our mission is to reverse human downgrading by realigning technology with our humanity.

Our world-class team of deeply concerned former tech insiders intimately understands the culture, incentives, design techniques, and org structures driving human downgrading.

As a nonprofit organization, we raise awareness for millions of people while advising and mobilizing tech companies, top executives, investors, technologists, and political leaders.
Tristan Harris, ‘Inconvenient Truth of Tech’

The extractive attention economy is tearing apart our shared social fabric.

The companies that created social media and mobile tech have benefited our lives enormously. But even with the best intentions, they are under intense pressure to compete for attention, creating invisible harms for society:

**Digital Addiction**
Digital slot machines occupy more and more space in our lives.

**Mental Health**
We constantly face a battle for our attention, social comparison, and bullying.

**Breakdown of Truth**
It’s become harder than ever to separate fact from fiction.

**Polarization**
Stronger ideological shifts make compromise and cooperation more difficult.

**Political Manipulation**
Creating discord through cyberwarfare is far more cost-effective than military action.

**Superficiality**
A social system built on likes and shares prioritizes shallowness over depth.
Every life includes significant landmarks: your first kiss, your first job, your first undetected murder. Maybe that's just me. Anyway, last week I experienced a more alarming first: my first unironic conversation with a machine.

I was using the new iPhone, the one with Siri, the built-in personal assistant you talk to. You hold down a button and mutter something like "Set the alarm for eight in the morning," or "Remind me to ring Gordon later," and Siri replies, "OK, I'll do that for you," using the voice of Jon Briggs, better known as the voice of The Weakest Link. And he sets everything up, just the way you wanted.

Siri is a creep – a servile arselick with zero self-respect – but he works annoyingly well. Which is why, last week, I experienced that watershed moment: for the first time, I spoke to a handheld device unironically. Not for a laugh, or an experiment, but because I wanted it to help me.

So that's that. I can now expect to be talking to machines for the rest of my life. Today it's Siri. Tomorrow it'll be a talking car. The day after that I'll be trading banter with a wisecracking smoothie carton. By the time I'm 70 I'll be holding heartbreaking conversations with synthesised imitations of people I once knew who have subsequently died. Maybe I'll hear their voices in my head. Maybe that's how it'll be.

The present day is no less crazy. We routinely do things that just five years ago would scarcely have made sense to us. We tweet along to reality shows; we share videos of strangers dropping cats in bins; we dance in front of Xboxes that can see us, and judge us, and find us sorely lacking. It's hard to think of a single human function that technology hasn't somehow altered, apart perhaps from burping. That's pretty much all we have left. Just yesterday I read a news story about a new video game installed above urinals to stop patrons getting bored: you control it by sloshing your urine stream left and right. Read that back to yourself and ask if you live in a sane society.
When I was making the series *How TV Ruined Your Life*, we went out and asked members of the public to comment on a new invention we were claiming was real: a mobile phone that allowed you to call through time, so you could speak to people in the past or future. Many people thought it was real: not so much a testament to gullibility, but an indicator of just how magical today’s technology has become. We take miracles for granted on a daily basis.

Nonetheless, I relish this stuff. I coo over gadgets, take delight in each new miracle app. Like an addict, I check my Twitter timeline the moment I wake up. And often I wonder: is all this really good for me? For us? None of these things have been foisted upon humankind – we've merrily embraced them. But where is it all leading? If technology is a drug – and it does feel like a drug – then what, precisely, are the side-effects?

This area – between delight and discomfort – is where *Black Mirror*, my new drama series, is set. The "black mirror" of the title is the one you'll find on every wall, on every desk, in the palm of every hand: the cold, shiny screen of a TV, a monitor, a smartphone. The series was inspired, indirectly, by *The Twilight Zone*, Rod Serling's hugely entertaining TV series of the late 50s and early 60s, sometimes incorrectly dismissed as a camp exercise in twist-in-the-tale sci-fi. It was far more than that. Serling, a brilliant writer, created *The Twilight Zone* because he was tired of having his provocative teleplays about contemporary issues routinely censored in order to appease corporate sponsors. If he wrote about racism in a southern town, he had to fight the network over every line. But if he wrote about racism in a metaphorical, quasi-fictional world – suddenly he could say everything he wanted.

*The Twilight Zone* was sometimes shockingly cruel, far crueler than most TV drama today would dare to be. In one famous episode, the main protagonist, a luckless bookworm, wanders through the rubble following a nuclear holocaust. Discovering he is the last man on Earth, he decides to commit suicide, only to spot the remains of a library nearby just as he lifts the gun to his temple. Suddenly lifted by the realisation that at last he can read all the books he wants, uninterrupted, he gleefully assembles a year's worth of reading. But as he reaches for the first book, his glasses fall off and smash on the floor. He ends the episode weeping and alone.

In Serling's day, the atom bomb, civil rights, *McCarthyism*, psychiatry and the space race were of primary concern. Today he'd be writing about terrorism, the economy, the media, privacy and our relationship with technology. Or trying to, because while present-day TV drama may be subject to less censorship, it also has fewer avenues for exploring ideas. The majority of dramas are long-running returning series or genre pieces – detective stories, period dramas and the like. It's as if there's a constant pressure to reassure a nervous viewer: to say look, it's episode 89, it's got the same faces as last week, in the same precinct, with the same woes. You know you'll like this – because you've already seen it.

For me the joy of shows like *The Twilight Zone*, such as *Tales of the Unexpected*, or *Hammer House of Horror*, or erstwhile "showcase slots" such as *Play for Today*, was precisely that you hadn't already seen it. Every week you were plunged into a slightly different world. There was a signature tone to the stories, the same dark chocolate coating – but the filling was always a surprise.

That's what we're aiming for with *Black Mirror*: each episode has a different cast, a different setting, even a different reality. But they're all about the way we live now – and the way we might be living in 10 minutes' time if we're clumsy. And if there's one thing we know about mankind, it's this: we're usually clumsy.

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1. *Black Mirror* belongs to a popular genre of dystopic fiction which extrapolates popular trends (in politics, in society, in economics, in technology etc.) to nightmarish conclusions. Look up 2-3 iconic examples of this genre (*The Twilight Zone, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Metropolis, Fahrenheit 451, A Clockwork Orange, Blade Runner, Brave New World*) and outline what warnings they offered society.
Nosedive
Pre-viewing Questions

How long do you think you could make it without social media?

How does it feel when something you post on social media gets a lot of likes?

How does it feel when something you post on social media gets very few or no likes?

Have you ever deleted and reposted something because it did not get enough likes?

Have you ever deliberately not liked something someone posted because you were mad at them?

Underline any words that describe how you feel using social media. Circle one word that most describes how you feel.

Happy Friendly Mad
Popular Tired Stressed
Relaxed Jealous Petty
Angry Bored Nothing
Overwhelmed Unpopular Fake
Authentic Listened to Ignored

Explain why you circled the word you did.
Viewing Questions

1. What is social media mainly used for in the world of the show?
   a. Ranking people and content on a scale of 1 to 5
   b. Sending messages and ordering food
   c. Finding new apartments and careers
   d. Liking and disliking content

2. Why is Lacie so nice to everyone she meets?
   a. She is honestly happy most of the time
   b. She is trying to get a promotion at work
   c. She is trying to raise her social media score
   d. She doesn’t have very many friends and wants new friends

3. Why does Lacie get anonymous low votes at work?
   a. She doesn’t like the free coffee a coworker gives her
   b. She gives 5 stars to someone her coworkers are mad at
   c. They don’t think she is genuine in the elevator
   d. She is thinking about quitting and they don’t want her to go

4. How does Lacie know Naomi?
   a. She found her on social media because they had similar interests
   b. They were college roommates
   c. They were best friends when they were children
   d. They used to work together at the mall

5. What happens to Lacie at the airport?
   a. She is not allowed to fly because she is on a “no fly” list
   b. Naomi calls her and asks her to get a car instead
   c. She misses her flight because her brother made her late
   d. She becomes disruptive after her flight is cancelled so security dings her a full point

6. What story does the truck driver share with Lacie?
   a. She tells the story of how her husband died of cancer and social media could not help
   b. She tells Lacie about how she first became a truck driver to get more 5 star ratings
   c. She tells Lacie about her best friend’s speech at her own wedding
   d. She tells the story of the time she got in a car crash

7. Why doesn’t Naomi want Lacie at her wedding anymore?
   a. Naomi doesn’t want to hear the speech about the eating disorder
   b. Naomi finds out that Lacie had an affair with Greg
   c. Naomi doesn’t want a person with such a low score at her wedding
   d. Naomi decides her best friend Kim is a better fit for the ceremony

8. Which of the following is the best explanation for why Lacie and her blockade mate cuss each other out?
   a. They know each other from high school and did not get along
   b. It is his fault that she got arrested at the wedding
   c. They have both lived so long being “fake nice” that they are relieved to finally express negative emotions
   d. Lacie doesn’t like anyone and is always yelling

9. Explain why the episode might be called “Nosedive.”

10. Personal Connection: How important is it that your social media posts get a lot of likes? Explain.
Scene Analysis Task

In groups of 3-4, analyse one of the following scenes:

- 5:20 - 8:25 – A day in the office
- 11:40 - 16:35 – Reputelligent
- 37:30 - 41:15 – Meeting Susan
- 50:15 - 57:15 – Wedding speech
- 57:15 - 1:01:30 – Incarceration

1. Construct an overview of the scene by selecting 12-16 frames and placing them together on the one page (see example below).
2. Briefly outline the key plot points and identify 2-3 key quotations.
3. Explain, with reference to 2-4 visual techniques, how Lacie is characterised in this scene.
4. Explain, with reference to 2-4 visual techniques, how the scene represents concerns about humanity’s relationship with technology.
Analysing Film – Important Techniques

When directors create a film they employ a variety of techniques to provide scenes with meaning and imbue them with emotion. When examining scenes from a film it is necessary to identify and analyse the effect of these techniques in order to discover the meaning the director intended for the particular scene and for the film as a whole.

Some of the most important techniques to examine are:

- **Camera shots** – has the director used long shots, medium shots or close-ups? How does this increase, or decrease the audience’s engagement with the scene and its characters?

- **Camera angles** – is the director using a low-angle or high-angle shot? What position of power are viewers placed in relative to the objects or characters of the scene?

- **Camera movement** – how is movement in the scene portrayed? Does this increase or decrease the drama or action of the scene?

- **Use of light** – does the scene use lots of light or is light used sparingly? How does this change the emotional tone/mood of the scene? How does it highlight certain characters?

- **Use of sound** – what effect does diegetic and non-diegetic sound have on viewers? How is sound used to establish the emotional tone/mood of the scene?

- **Editing techniques** – how does the director move viewers from one shot to another? What effect does this have on our understanding of the scene and the movie as a whole?

**CAMERA SHOTS**

1. **Extreme long shot:**

These can be taken from as much as a quarter of a mile away, and are generally used as a scene-setting, *establishing shot*. It normally shows an exterior (e.g. the outside of a building), or a landscape, and is often used to show scenes of thrilling action e.g. in a war film or disaster movie.

2. **Long Shot:**

The most difficult to precisely categorise, but generally one which shows the image as approximately ‘life’ size (i.e. corresponding to the real distance between the audience and the screen in a cinema – the figure of a man would appear as six feet tall). This category includes the *full shot* showing the entire human body, with the head near the top of the frame and the feet near the bottom. It is often used to introduce a character.

3. **Medium Shot:**

Contains a figure from the knees/waist up and is normally used for dialogue scenes, or to show some detail of action. Variations on this include the *two shot* (containing two figures from the waist up) and the *three shot* (contains 3 figures...). Any more than three figures and the shot tends to become a long shot. Another variation in this category is the *over the shoulder shot*, which positions the camera behind one figure, revealing the other figure, and part of the first figure’s back, head and shoulder.
4. **Close-Up:**

This shows very little background, and concentrates on either a face, or a detail of the scene. This shot magnifies the object and shows the importance of things, be it words written on paper, or the expression on someone’s face. The close-up takes us into the mind of a character and often lets us see their true emotion – a close up of a face is a very intimate shot. A film-maker may use this to make us feel comfortable or extremely uncomfortable about a character.

5. **Extreme Close-Up:**

As its name suggests, an extreme version of the close up, generally magnifying beyond what the human eye would experience in reality. An extreme close-up of a face, for instance, would show only the mouth or eyes. This is often used to draw attention to a *specific feature* of the character or object.

**CAMERA ANGLES**

The relationship between the camera and the object being photographed (i.e. the *angle*) gives emotional information to an audience, and guides their judgment about the character or object in shot. The more extreme the angle (the further away it is from eye level), the more symbolic and heavily-loaded the shot.

1. **The Bird’s-Eye view:**

This shows a scene from directly overhead, a very unnatural and strange angle. This shot puts the audience in a godlike position, looking down on the action. People can be made to look insignificant and ant-like.

2. **High Angle:**

This type of shot is often used to put the viewer in a position of power and privilege to the character on screen. We are forced to look down on a character, and thus their importance is diminished, or they are made to seem vulnerable.

3. **Low Angle:**

This has the opposite effect of the *high angle shot*. These shots put a character in a ‘higher’ position to the viewer and give the character a sense of power or importance – exaggerating their sense of importance. The shot increases the height of the character or object and this added height can inspire fear and insecurity in the viewer, who is psychologically dominated by the figure on the screen.

4. **Eye Level:**

The eye level shot is a fairly neutral shot – often used for documentaries. The camera is positioned at eye level so that characters heads or objects are on a level with the focus. The camera will be placed approximately five to six feet from the ground.

5. **Point of View (POV) Shot:**

The POV shot is one which is made as if it comes directly from the line of sight of a character who is watching the action of the scene. With this technique the camera becomes the eyes of one particular character and audiences are made to see what they see. It allows viewers to connect with a character by experiencing directly what the character is experiencing – by seeing what they see.
CAMERA MOVEMENT

Depending on the camera movement employed, a director can increase the sense of action or emotion in a particular scene.

1. Pans:

A pan is a movement which scans a scene horizontally. This technique allows viewers to follow a moving object which is kept in the middle of the shot. It provides viewers with an objective view of the character’s movements.

2. Tracking Shots:

In a tracking shot the camera is placed on a moving vehicle and moves alongside the action, generally following a moving figure or object. A tracking shot may be a good way of portraying movement, the journey of a character for instance, or for moving from a long shot to a close-up by gradually focusing the audience on a particular object or character.

3. Hand-held shots:

The hand-held camera gives a jerky, ragged effect, totally at odds with the organised smoothness of a tracking shot, and is favoured by filmmakers looking for a gritty realism, which involves the viewer very closely with a scene.

4. Zoom Lenses:

The zoom lens means that the camera need not be moved. The zoom lens can zip a camera in or out of a scene very quickly, though the zoom lens tends to be jerky. This technique is often used to make a scene appear more dramatic by making objects appear suddenly closer than they really are, or to distort an image quickly.

USE OF SOUND

1. Diegetic Sound:

Diegetic sound is that whose source is visible on the screen or whose source is implied to be present by the action of the film. It is sound which originates from the film’s world:

- voices of characters
- sounds made by objects in the story
- music represented as coming from instruments in the story space

Diegetic sound allows us to hear the ‘action’ of a particular scene and helps immerse viewers into the film’s world.

2. Non-Diegetic Sound:

Non-diegetic sound is that whose source is neither visible on the screen nor has been implied to be present in the action. It is sound which is separate, or in addition to the diegetic sound of the film:

- narrator’s commentary
- sound effects which are added for the dramatic effect
- background mood music

Non-diegetic sound can help provide additional information about a scene either through a narrator’s commentary, or through background music designed to evoke a particular emotion in viewers.
Background music can help establish a sense of pace to a scene and the emotional colouring of the music also reinforces the mood/tone of the scene.

3. Silence:

The juxtaposition of an image and silence can frustrate viewers’ expectations, provoke self-conscious responses, intensify viewers’ attention, make viewers apprehensive, or make viewers feel distanced from reality.

USE OF LIGHT:

1. Soft and harsh lighting:

Soft and harsh lighting can manipulate a viewer’s attitude/opinion towards a setting or a character. The way light is used can make objects, people and environments look beautiful or ugly, soft or harsh, artificial or real. Soft lighting often predisposes viewers to see a character as morally upright or perhaps innocent and pure; while harsh, garish light can make viewers see characters or objects as indulging in excess, or can make objects appear unnatural or unrealistic.

2. Backlighting:

A romantic heroine is often backlit to create a halo effect on her hair and enhance our opinions of their good moral worth. Villains are often presented with minimal backlighting to highlight the ‘dark’ nature of their morals.

EDITING TECHNIQUES

1. Cut:

A cut involves a sudden/abrupt change of shot from one viewpoint or location to another. Cutting may:

- change the scene;
- compress time;
- vary the point of view; or
- build up an image or idea.

There is always a reason for a cut (often to increase the drama of a scene), and you should ask yourself what the reason is. Less abrupt transitions are achieved with the fade, dissolve, and wipe.

2. Fade, dissolve (mix):

Both fades and dissolves are gradual transitions between shots. In a fade the picture gradually appears from (fades in) or disappears to (fades out) a blank or black screen. A slow fade-in is a quiet introduction to a scene; a slow fade-out is a peaceful ending. Time lapses are often suggested by a slow fade-out and fade-in. A dissolve (or mix) involves fading out one picture while fading up another on top of it. The impression is of an image merging into and then becoming another. A slow mix usually suggests differences in time and place. Defocus or ripple dissolves are sometimes used to indicate flashbacks in time.

3. Wipe:

A wipe is an optical effect marking a transition between two shots. It appears to supplant an image by wiping it off the screen (as a line or in some complex pattern, such as by appearing to turn a page). The wipe is a technique which draws attention to itself and acts as a clear marker of change (generally between scenes in a film).
Hated in the Nation

Pre-viewing: 4 Corners

Each corner of the room is labelled: Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree. Respond to each statement by moving to the appropriate corner of the room. Be prepared to justify your response.

1. When you are online, you are anonymous.
2. What you say in an online community has consequences.
3. Cyberbullying is less harmful than in-person bullying.
4. People idolize celebrities too much.
5. The present world is too connected through technological advances.
6. Someone can be guilty of a heinous crime (i.e. murder) even if they never actively participated in the crime itself.
7. The internet is a friendly place.
8. Social media outlets (like Twitter, Facebook, etc.) give people too much of a voice.
9. Science should dictate and manipulate mother nature.
10. Society should be willing to give up a few casualties in order to avoid even more casualties.

Surveillance Technology

“Big Brother is watching you.” We say it all the time, somewhat facetiously, but I think we as a society don’t really realize how Orwellian the modern world really is. We put tape over the webcam of our laptops — or at least, we know we should, especially after “Shut Up and Dance” — yet walk around with smartphones that have the potential to provide a lot more than live video to anybody with the technological know-how to do it.

Digital assistants and smart-home devices like Amazon Echo and Google Home — Apple’s HomePod is also on its way, too — take this to the next level. Do people realize that you can talk to these digital assistants because they’re speakers that are always listening to you? Yet, society doesn’t bat an eye, perhaps blinded by the “cool” factor. I’m not accusing Amazon and Google and Apple of spying on us, but the technology they introduce make it easier for somebody to do so.
Invention vs. Intention

Twitter gives everybody with internet access a voice that can reach all corners of the globe. It also allows a stranger to tell you to kill yourself. Technology is rarely used only and exactly in the way it was intended to be used. This is at the core of “Hated In The Nation” and the bee drones. A necessity was identified, an invention was introduced to fill that need, and it did its job perfectly, at first. Then, someone somewhere found a way to use it in a way it wasn’t intended to be used.

People often say “Nature finds a way”, but when it comes to these kind of situations with technology, it’s people that will find a way. Regardless of the intent behind the creation of a new technology, someone somewhere will find a way to use technology for nefarious activity. Computers that have much more security and protection can still be hacked. What makes you think digital assistants and smart home speakers can’t? It’s a matter of when, not if.
Technology: Tool or Weapon?

One of my favorite movies of the last few years is Arrival. There’s a scene in that movie where people try to translate an alien message, and the message they get mentions a “weapon.” People freak out, but then a linguist explains that the aliens may just mean “tool.” While it wasn’t the point, it does highlight the razor-thin line between “tool” and “weapon.” (This seems like a good time to inform you that bee drones already exist.)

To its creators, the bee drones were tools, made to restore an imbalance in nature. To another, they’re weapons. This is true for anything from Artificial Intelligence to hammers. You might say “If this is a danger that exists for everything, why bother avoiding certain technology?” Because this danger is more of a possibility for some technology than others. Some technology is just waiting to be used as a weapon. Some technology just appeals too much to the darkest corners of human nature, and that is the core of Black Mirror.