University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

5-2014

Working Memory

Sonya Badigian
sonya.badigian@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

Sonya Badigian

Working Memory Abstract

Much of the last four years of my life have been spent learning about the way machines act in response to human commands. Most of these machines have something we call "memory," which is the ability to locate and output information that has been previously given to the machine as input.

Many people would argue that the underlying goal of computer science is not simply to create a faster or smarter machine, but, in fact, has been, since the beginning, to create some semblance of a thinking, feeling, *being.* In the field of artificial intelligence, we say that a machine is teaching itself; is *learning.* When our computers run out of battery, they don't just shut down — they die.

Our desire to anthropomorphize our computers is, I think, very telling. Perhaps it is not a stretch to say that we see a reflection of ourselves in all of this seemingly nonsensical beeping and whirring; the way our lives sometimes, when examined closely, appear as a sea of arbitrary happenings that coalesce into meaning when given time and distance.

My desire with this collection of short-form prose is to study the concept of human memory using the vocabulary of computer science--to treat the abstraction of our recollections as a concrete (but simultaneously fragile) machine. Challenging the tendency to anthropomorphize a computer, I instead would like to "technomorphize" the human brain. I use the art of literary non-fiction to explore the act of bringing computers into places they may or may not belong; namely, our minds.