Cultural Daily

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Writing Prompt: Consider the Machine

Charity Hume · Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014

This week's writing prompt from Charity Hume:

Technology reflects our humanity, both in its potential to serve others and our potential to destroy. In *2001*, the Stanley Kubrick film, HAL, the spaceship's computer, begins to think beyond its initial programming, and starts to murder the astronauts onboard once it realizes they plan to disable him: "What are you doing Dave?" After witnessing the 1945 test in New Mexico that heralded the dangerous powers of the technological advantage held by the Americans, Robert Oppenheimer, one of the nuclear physicists credited with the development of the atomic bomb, famously quoted *The Bhagavad Gita*: "I am become Death, Destroyer of Worlds." Machines have the upper hand in *The Matrix, Fahrenheit 451* and other science fiction masterpieces, but there are a host of stories about the technological machines who become beloved allies: Tic Toc of Oz, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, the Tin Woodman, R2D2.

In this exercise, consider the machine. As you make up your technological masterpiece, think about the tone of the piece you wish to explore. Create a robot, or a machine, that personifies and perhaps exaggerates a human quality you wish to examine in your writing. Find expression in the detailed mechanistic metaphor that helps you illuminate this quality more fully. Let technology allow you to explore the range of human emotion as a point of contrast.

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