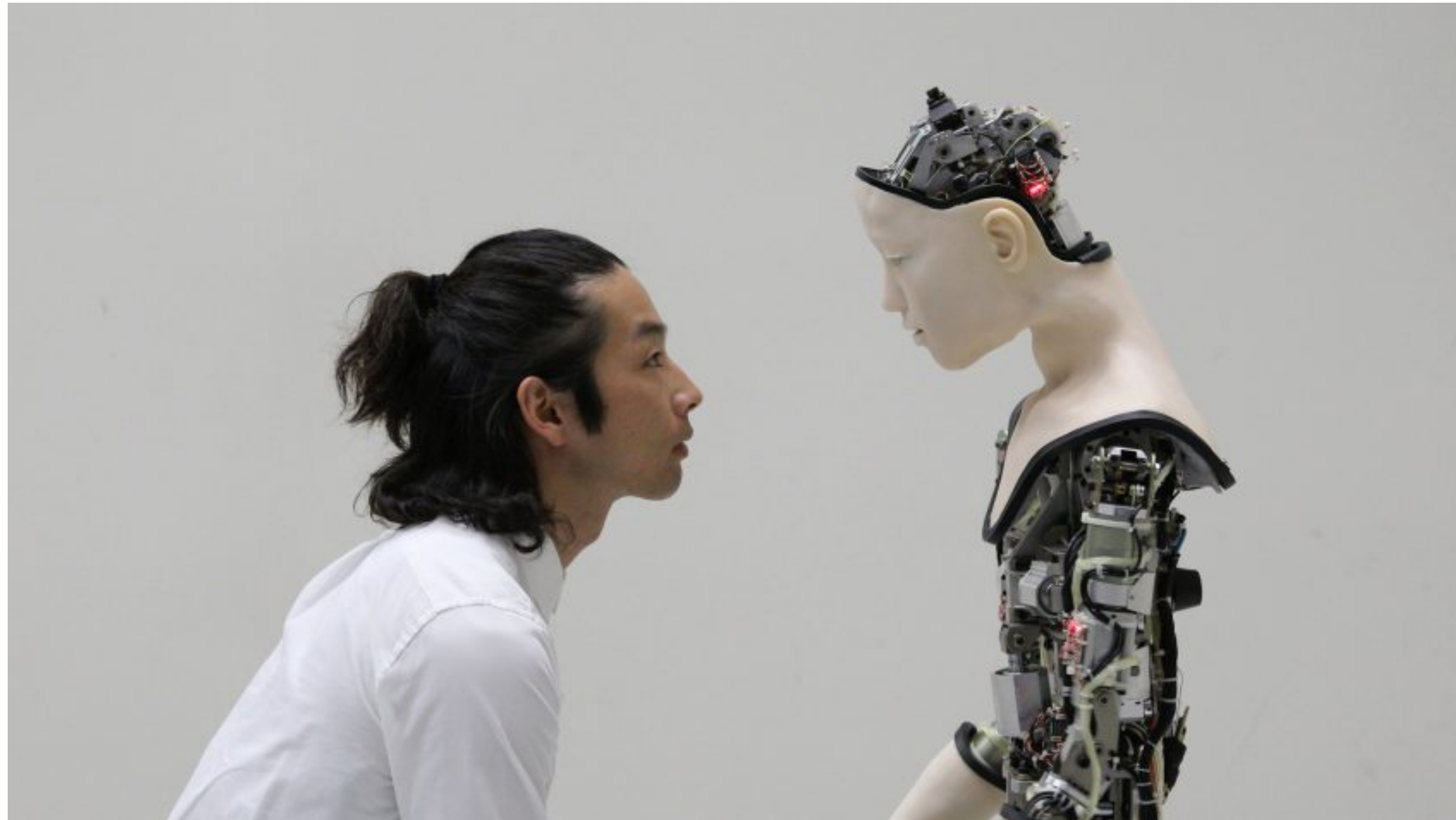# The «human-in-the-loop» model: between surrogation, servo-instrumentality and technical activity

Edoardo Biscossi
University of Naples L'Orientale

ML-based AI is based on the paradigm that computer systems can emulate humans when provided with enough training data

Micro-work / clickwork

"Global, on-demand, 24x7 workforce"
"Human-in-the-loop" model

- Data production
- Data "cleaning", labelling, categorisation…
- Data validation

«Beyond some basic decisions, today's artificial intelligence can't function without humans in the loop. Whether it's delivering a relevant newsfeed or carrying out a complicated texted-in pizza order, when the AI trips up or can't finish the job, thousands of businesses call on people to quietly complete the project»

Gray & Suri 2019, p.ix
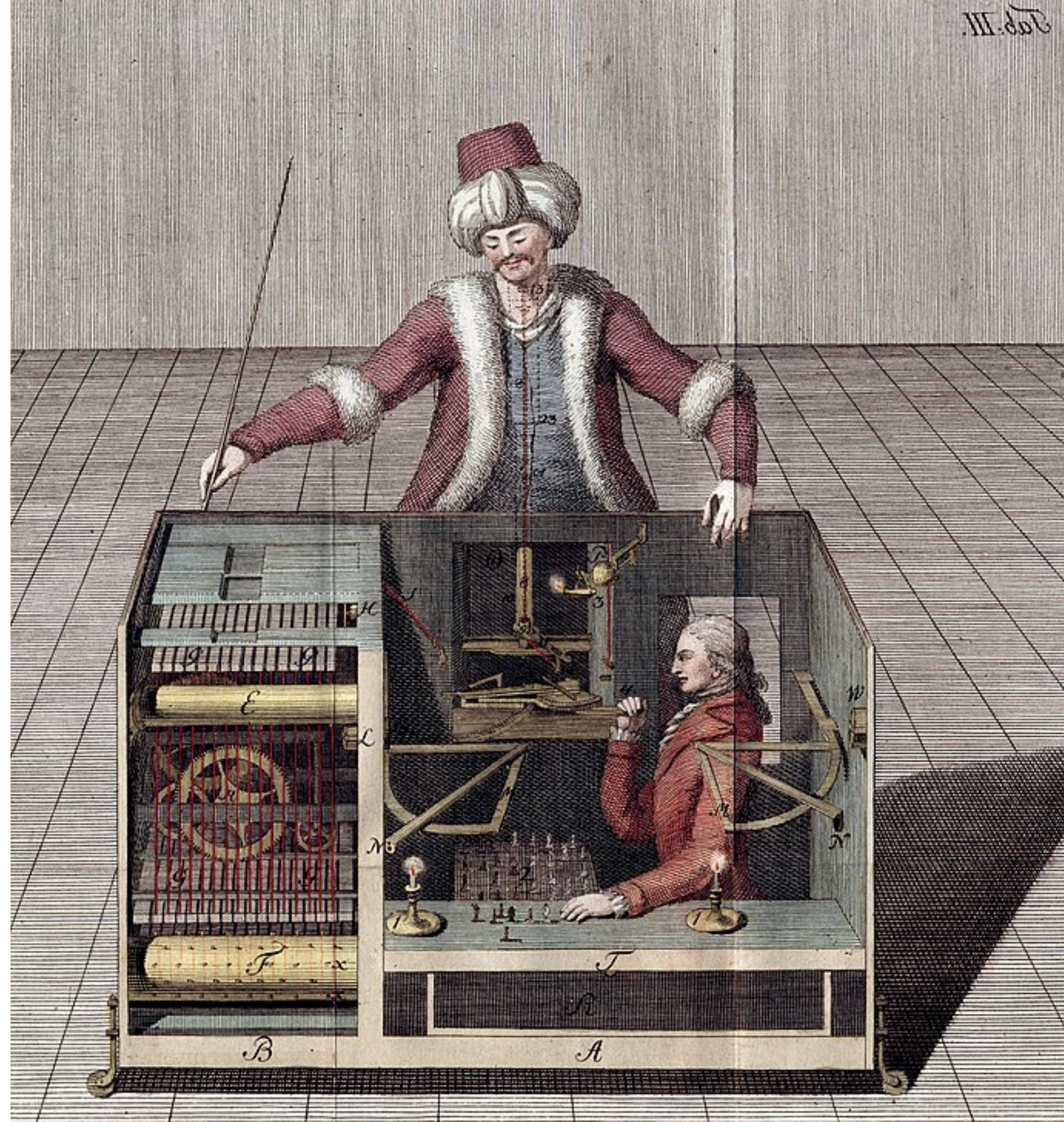
Ambivalent feelings
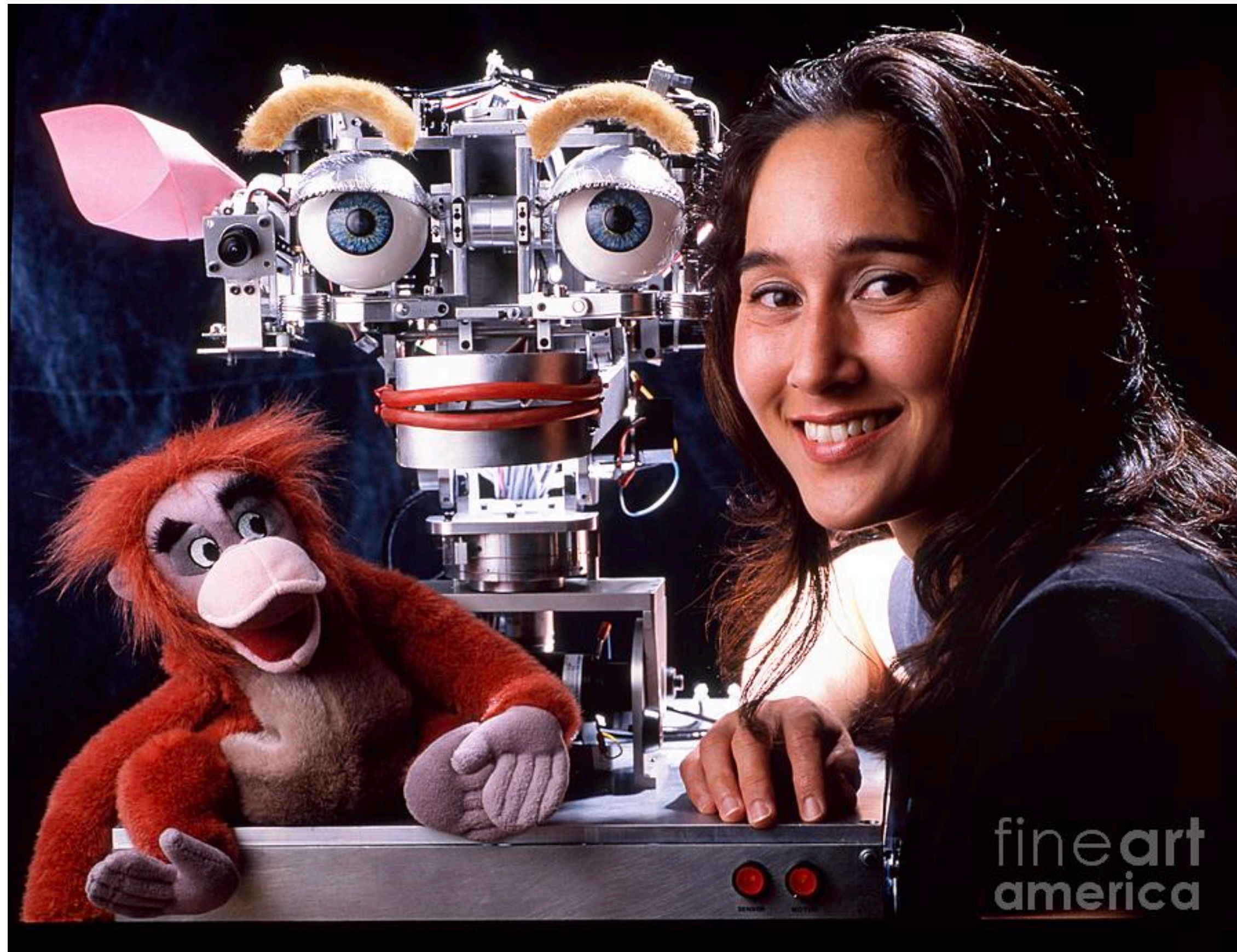
We work like peasants while AI is out there writing poetry and painting

1:23 PM · 01 Mar 23

Ambivalent feelings

No More Hard Work by 2023!

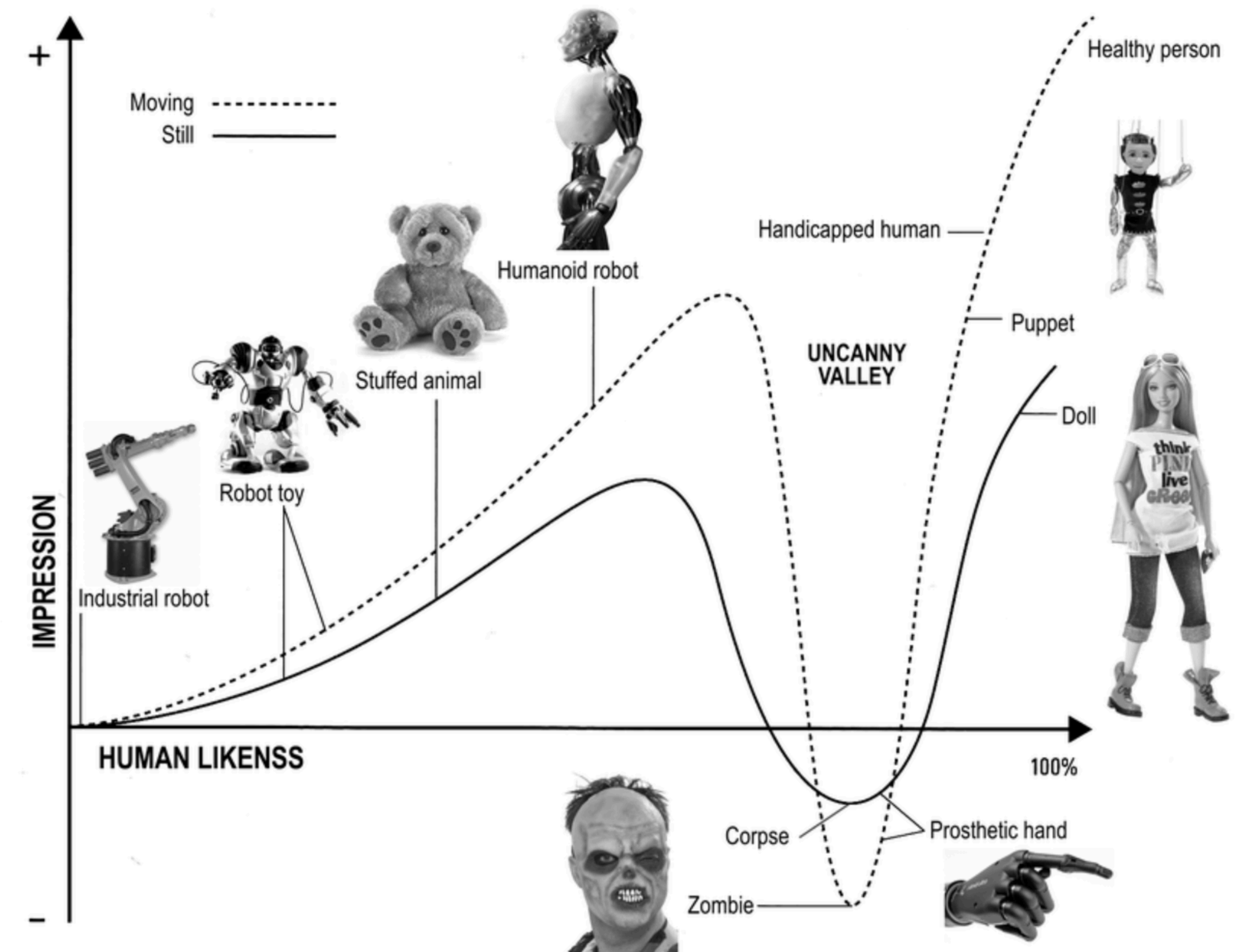Dr. CHARLES P. STEIN-METZ, the electrical expert, believes that the time is coming when there will be no long drudgery and that people will toil not more than four hours a day, owing to the work of electricity.

He visualizes an amazing transformation in life in 2023. Every city will be a "spotless town." That to be the work of electricity, also.

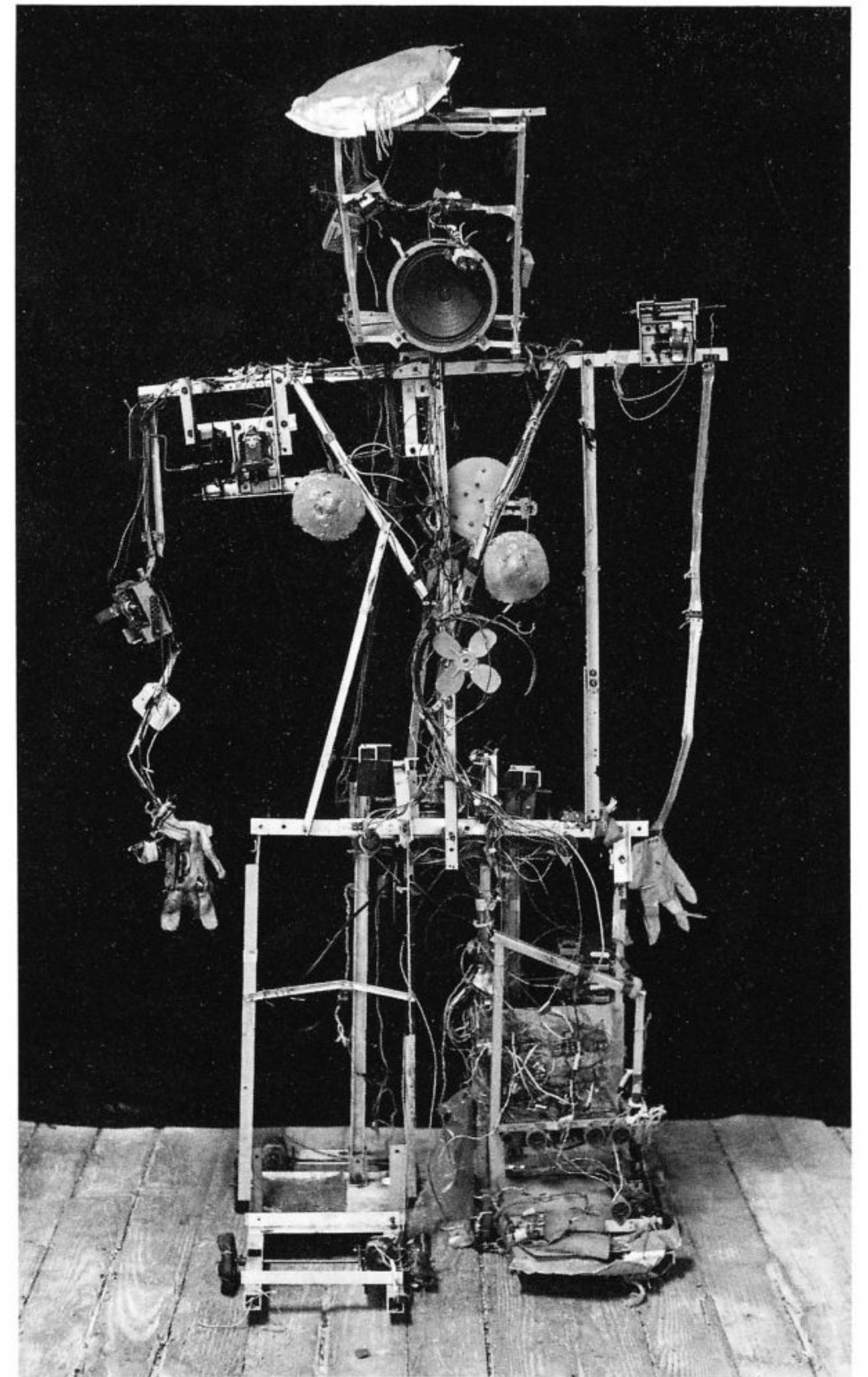PRICE $8.99   THE   OCT. 23, 2017

NEW YORKER

The human & de-humanised labour

The human is constructed against the automaton, which is associated with devalued labour

The historical assignment of automata is to take on the tasks we deem undesirable and unskilled
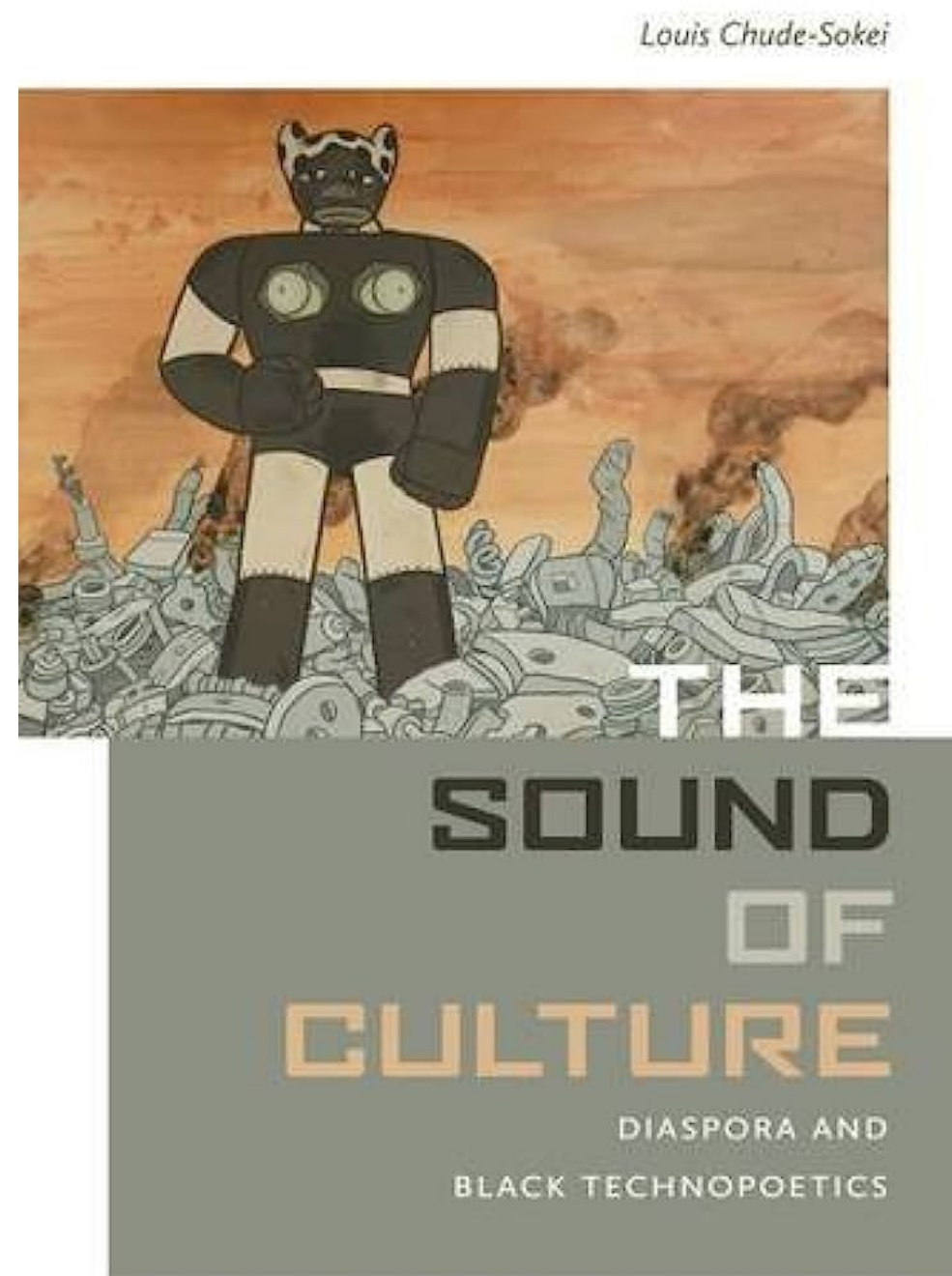

Robot K-456, 1965
(Photo, Peter Moore)

Technology as racialised

The way we understand technology is entangled with the way we produced race at least since the 19th century, and has been consistently articulated through racial analogies and metaphors.
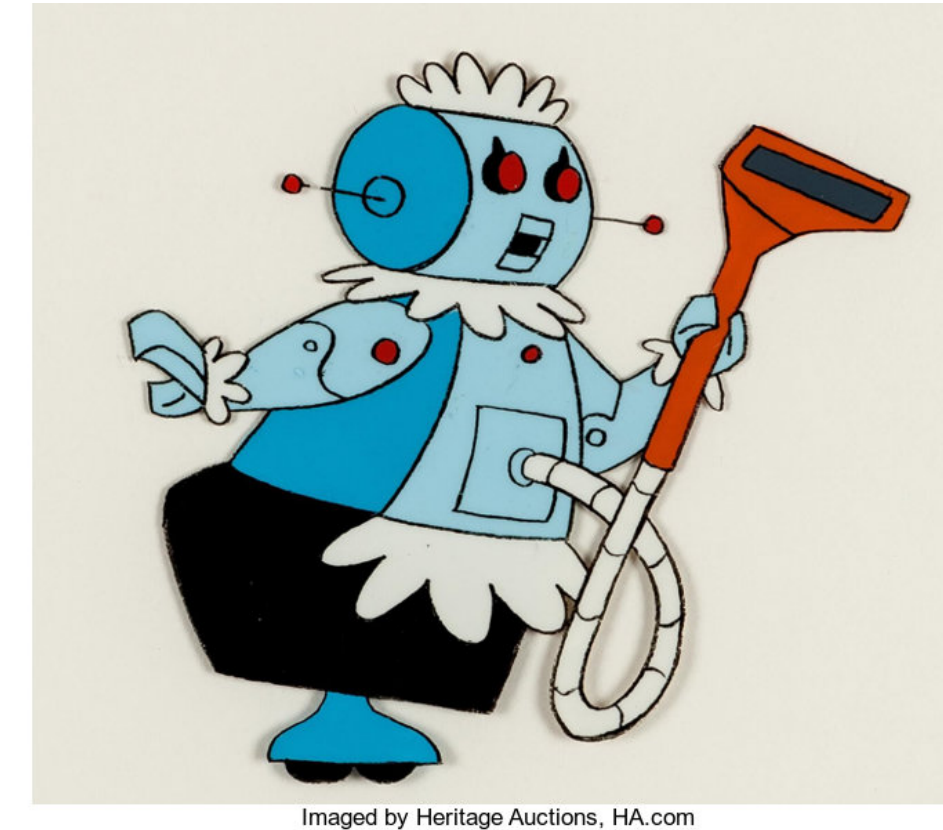

Louis Chude-Sokei

THE SOUND OF CULTURE

DIASPORA AND BLACK TECHNOPOETICS

DULL TOOL DIM BULB

Technology as gendered

Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

«He organised, she operated. He ruled, she served. He made great discoveries, she busied herself in the footnotes. He wrote the books she copied them. […] She did the jobs he considered mundane, often the fiddling, detailed, repetitive operations with which he couldn't be bothered; the dirty, mindless semiautomatic tasks to which he thought himself superior»

Plant 1997, p.35-36

«Programming became programming and software became software when commands shifted from commanding a "girl" to commanding a machine»
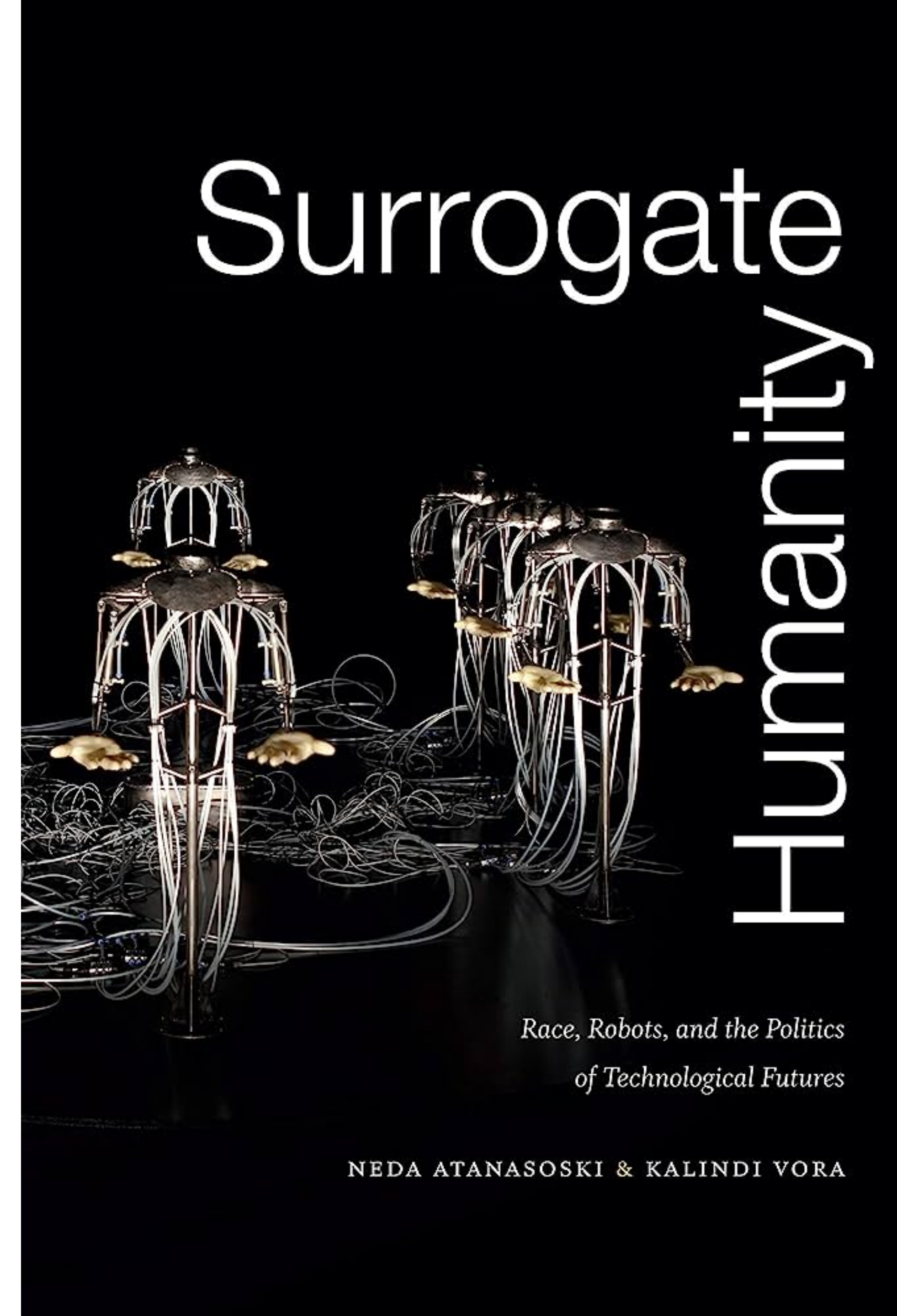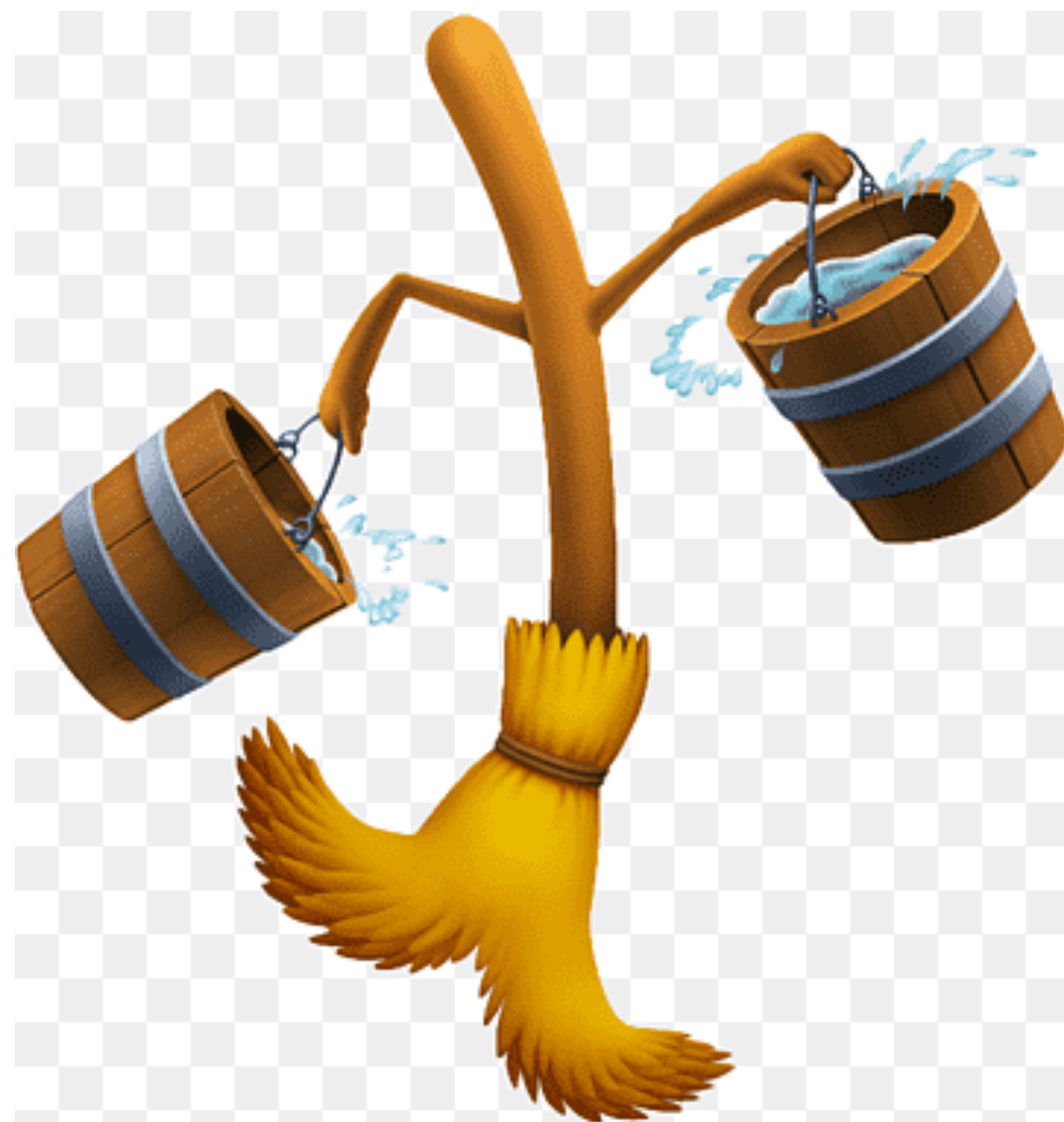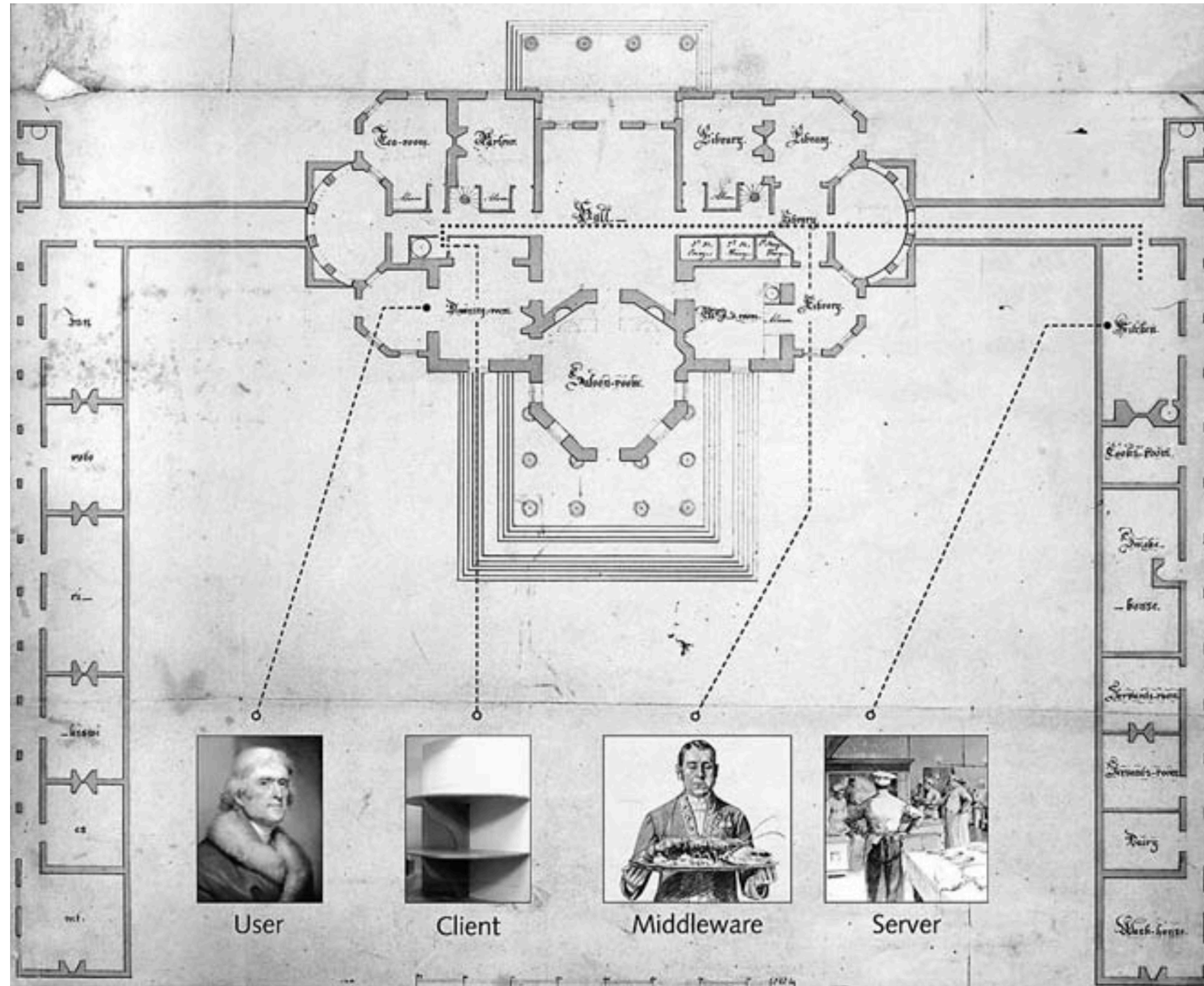
Chun 2005, p.33

Histories of racialised and gendered labour extend into the human-in-the-loop model

«The desire for enchanted "smart" technologies (both embodied and dis-embodied) points to the desire for objects to perform the surrogate effect that reaffirms post-Enlightenment conceptions of human autonomy, and therefore freedom, as separate from 'things' that are intended for pure use. It is in this mode that the enchanted object allows the liberal subject to feel human» (Atanasoski & Vora 2019, p.21)
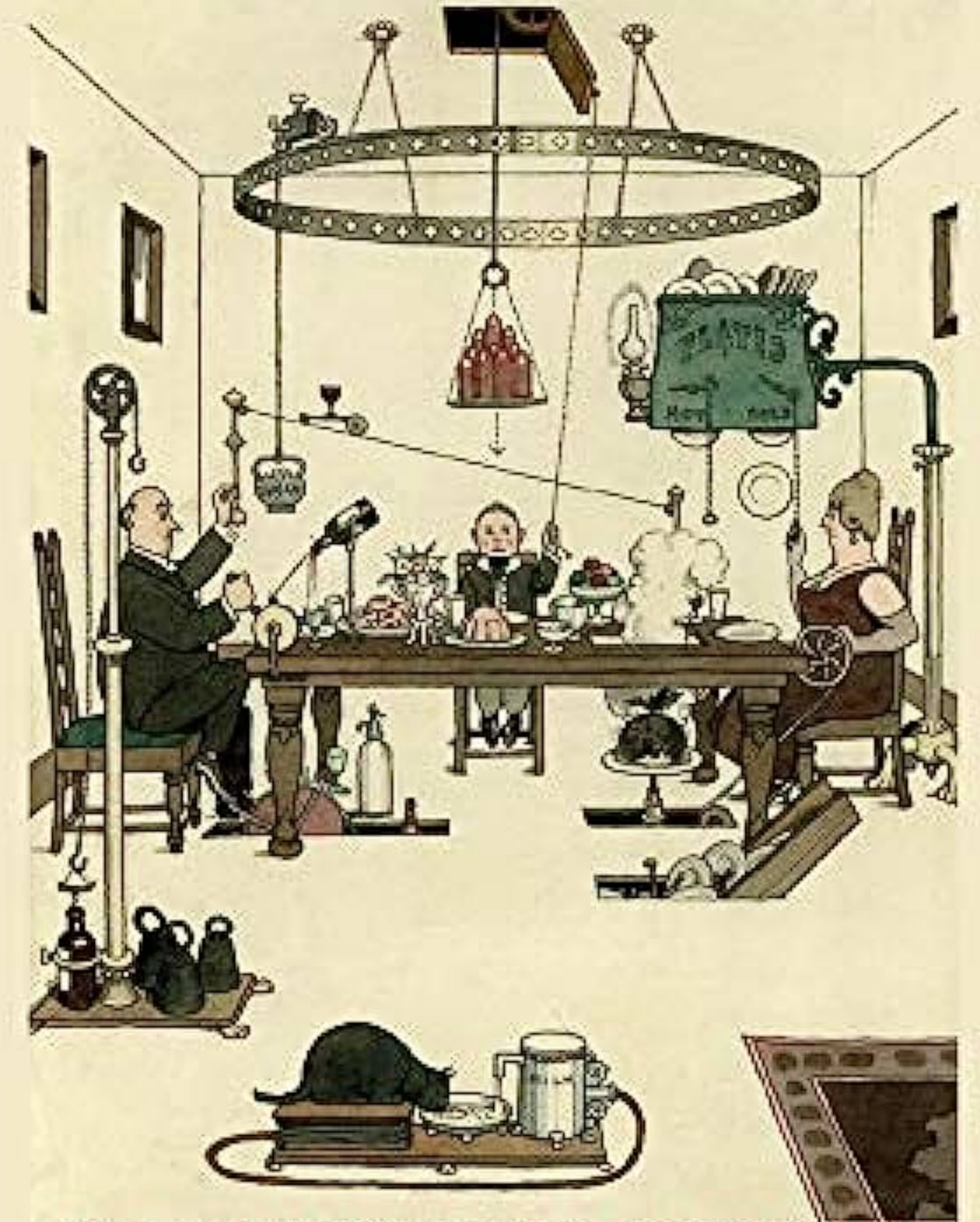

Surrogate Humanity

Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures

NEDA ATANASOSKI & KALINDI VORA

The universal User & the
used surrogate/instrument

User   Client   Middleware   Server

The Server

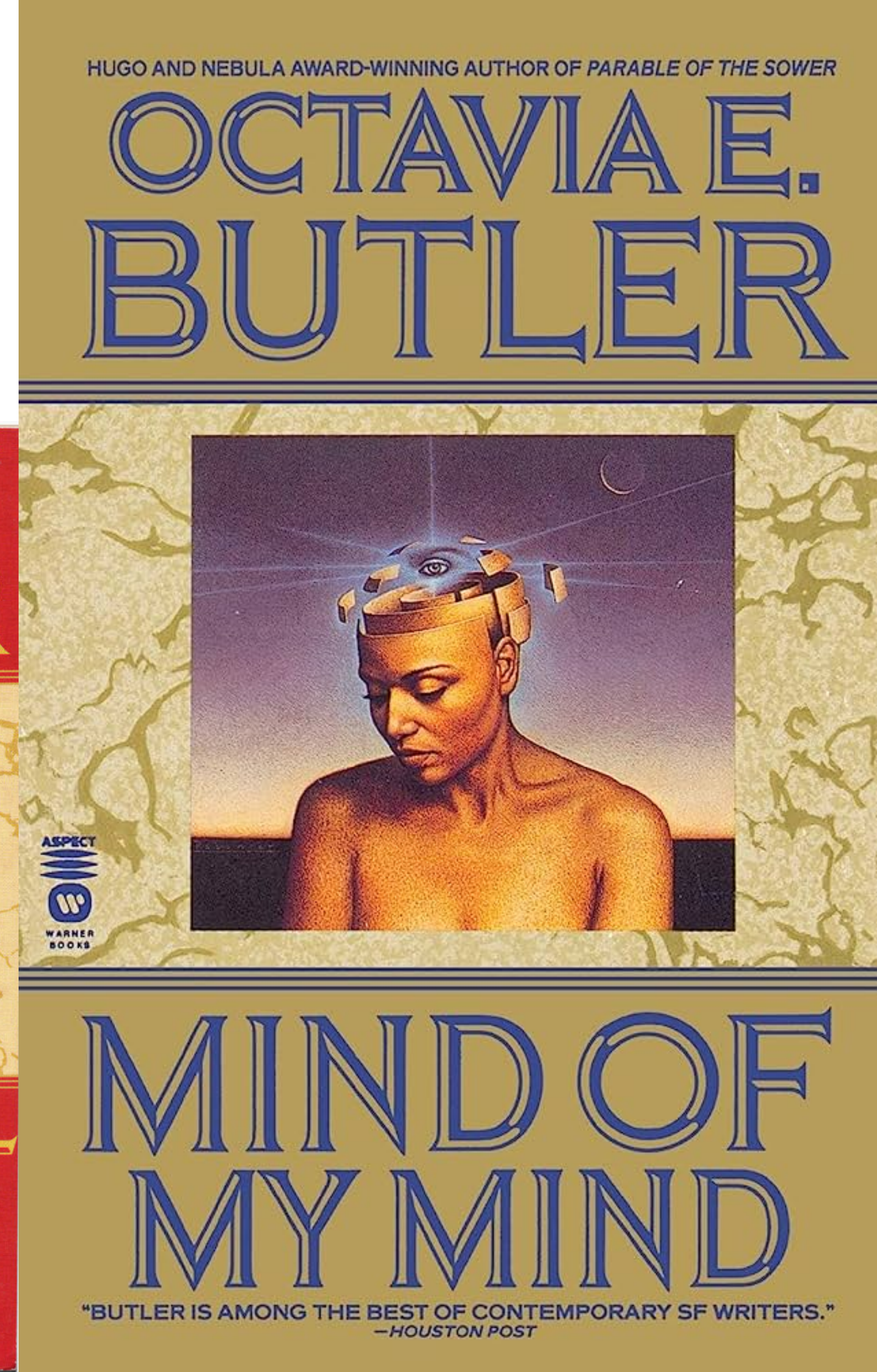A Media History from the Present to the Baroque
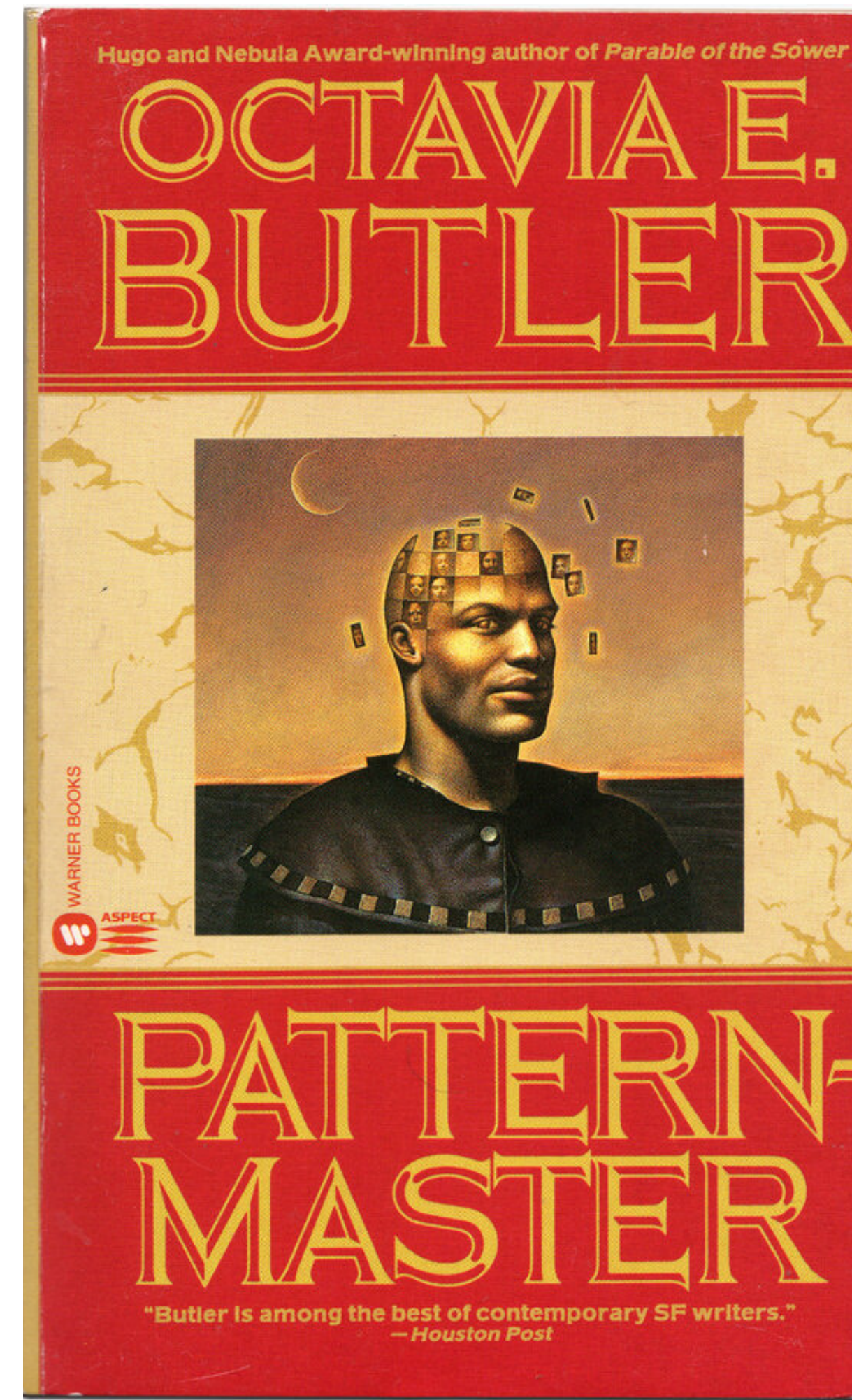
MARKUS KRAJEWSKI

Translated and with an Introduction by Ilinca Iurascu

AI beyond surrogation?
Beyond servo-instrumentality?

What imaginaries
can be mobilised?

What aesthetic interventions
are addressing
these questions?

IAQOS — a neighbourhood AI

"Al contrario della maggior parte dei suoi simili chiusi nei data center, IAQOS non agisce in maniera estrattiva – allo scopo di suggerire, prevedere o profilare le persone – ma in maniera relazionale. Non viene addestrato con enormi quantità di dati, va a scuola con i bambini della Pisacane imparando a parlare suoi amici umani: un dato per volta, di relazione in relazione, la sua intelligenza cresce con la sua famiglia non biologica, in un rapporto di cura e di co-evoluzione."

Iaconesi & Persico 2021
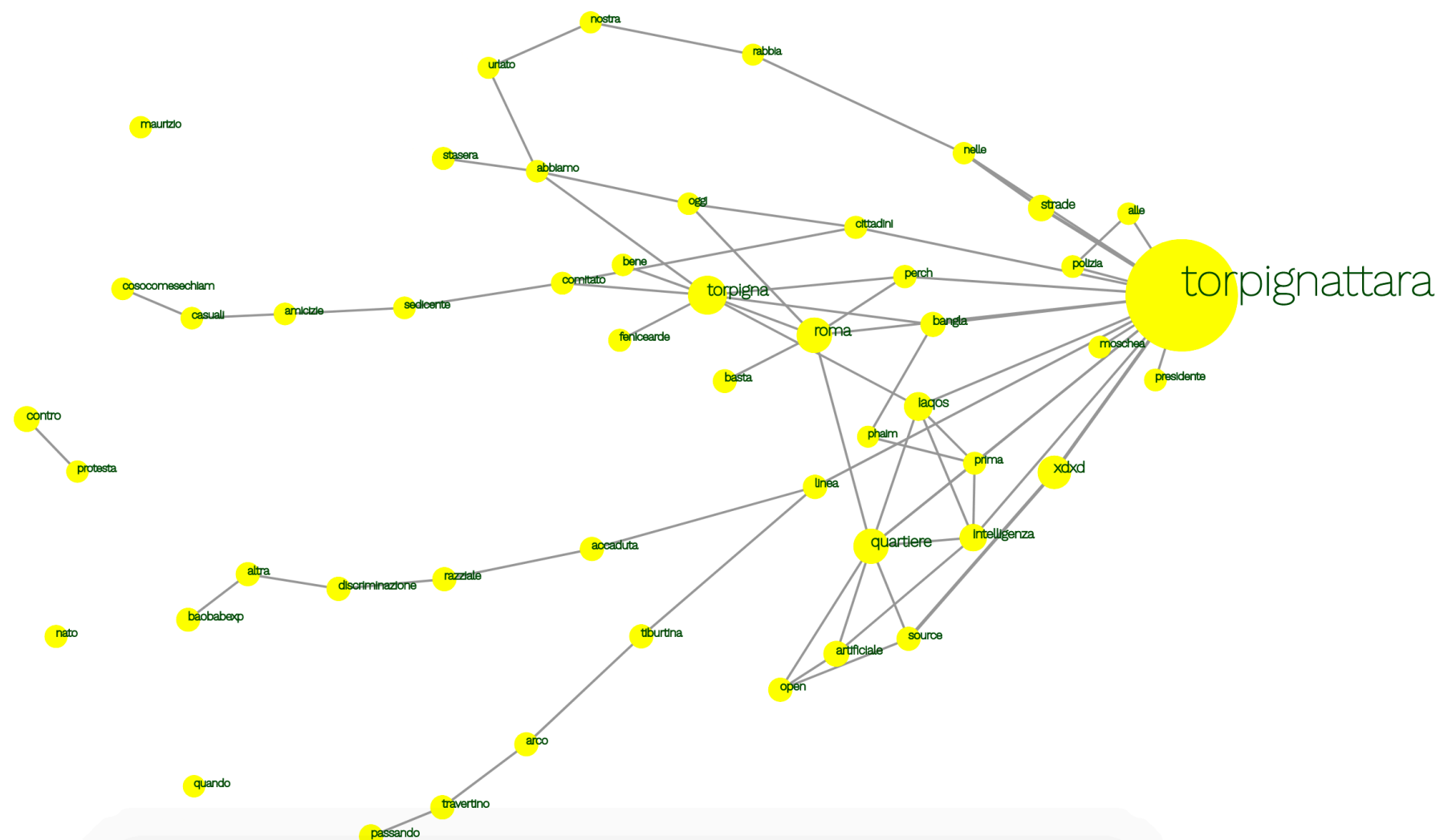
SPAWN-ing

"For the past year, we have been training an artificial neural network named Spawn. Like a child, Spawn has been initially trained to recognise and reproduce the sounds of her parents' voices, and has also been introduced to some of the idiosyncratic sounds of wonderful people that come into our home. Spawn is a fast learner, and once she has constructed a concept of a sound, she can improvise and create abstract compositions based on what she understands that sound to be, and what she anticipates it might do next."