

# Chapter 17

## AI Against 'I' Hiraeth Poiesis or Mimesis: A Critical Re/Account/Ability

**Mark Vicars**

*Victoria University, Australia*

**Janine Arantes**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0301-5780>

*Victoria University, Australia*

### **ABSTRACT**

*In this chapter the presence of AI technologies in shaping contemporary childhood experiences is critically considered utilizing the concepts of Hiraeth (a deep, nostalgic longing for something lost or unattainable), Poiesis (creative making) and Mimesis (imitation). This paper engages with AI in three key educational encounters: adaptive learning platforms, AI-powered voice assistants, and critical public engagement. An investigation of AI-driven adaptive learning platforms, analyse how they personalize education while subtly conditioning both teachers and students to accept AI's authority without question. Next, explorations of the interactions between children and AI voice assistants, reveal how these technologies shape children's identities and communication styles, positioning AI as a respondent to their queries. Finally, an examination of the growing public awareness of AI's societal impacts, highlighting how critical engagement can lead to a more nuanced understanding of AI's role in daily life.*

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## LONGING FOR LOST CHILDHOODS IN THE AGE OF AI

In this chapter our aim is to demystify how AI technologies function as cultural and communicative practices in educational domains and as a shaping presence in contemporary childhood experiences via three critical encounters. We propose that there is a productivity in using an altered syntax to articulate a re/account/ability about how AI can be read as a “contact zone” ...; “a material and metaphysical in-between space for the intersection of multiple and contested stories” (Somerville, 2010, p.338). Firstly, we consider the use of AI-driven adaptive learning platforms in classrooms. These platforms analyse students' interactions and performance data to tailor instructional content to individual needs revealing how technology can both personalize learning whilst also conditioning both teachers and students to accept the AI's recommendations without question. That is, AI-driven learning platforms can shape and adapt to users' habitual interactions, creating a dynamic interplay where the technology and the learner co-construct meaning through intentional and embodied behaviours.

Secondly, we narrate how in childhood AI increasingly constitutes a summoned self, constituted, and defined by its position as respondent. We consider the interaction between children and AI-powered voice assistants like Amazon's Alexa or Google Assistant to suggest how over time, the child begins to view the AI not just as a tool, but as an interactive entity that responds to their commands and queries. Children's interactions with such tools, often involve repetitive queries or commands like “Alexa, what's the weather?” or “Play my favourite song,” which can teach them that communication is transactional and goal-oriented (Lovato & Piper, 2015). Studies show that children may adopt exaggerated politeness or, conversely, abrupt and directive tones during these interactions, depending on whether they are encouraged to say “please” and “thank you” or view the assistant as a purely utilitarian tool (Druga et al., 2017). These patterns can impact their self-construction, as children may internalize the notion that relationships are about extracting information or controlling responses rather than engaging in reciprocal dialogue. This interaction creates a dynamic simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1983) where the child's understanding of communicative practices are shaped by their role as the initiator of requests, with the AI always positioned as the respondent.

Thirdly, we articulate an increased awareness of AI implications in how it can interpolate students to (un)critically engage with and respond to technology that influences their social environments and personal interactions. Embracing the partial and provisional nature of embodied experiences that inform and propel the experiencing, this chapter aims to bridge the knowledge gap between AI experts and the general public, fostering more informed discussions and opinions regarding AI's ethical and societal impacts. In these -onto-ethical- epistemological articulations,

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