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## I. INTRODUCTION:

excerpted from [www.tylercoburn.com/angel.html](http://www.tylercoburn.com/angel.html) , Summer 2013

*I'm that angel*

2012/3

Book and performance

Edition of 500

*I'm that angel* is a cycle of writings and performances that explore the conditions of how we work on and against the computer, narrated from the perspective of a “content farmer”: an emergent type of online journalist contracted to generate articles based on words peaking in Google Trends.

The project addresses the master narratives of technological and socioeconomic progress that have naturalized Web 2.0's platforms, as well as the constituents of the digital public that figure into ongoing discussions about the relationship between sincerity and authenticity; realism and reality; the diaristic and the literary; and the author and the individual who takes on, and produces under, that title.

Nodding to the defamiliarization strategies of Russian formalists like Viktor Shklovskii, *I'm that angel* takes shape as a *stony stone*, a cut in the stream—a book. Its format shores up the paraliterary, confessional, and epistolary precedents for our virtual vernaculars. Designed by Eric Nylund, the text concretizes found quotes, trending language, anecdotes, notes and rants; call it *inattentionality* as method.

If the book sustains a material limit that belies the diffuse shape of the cloud, then its readings attempt similar concretions, where possible, by having reader and audience occupy the sites that compose the physical form of the Internet. On other occasions, readings pair with documentation shot on server floors, thus temporarily constructing the data center within the art institution. Each scenario discloses securitized spaces in which reader and audience already reside, for we encounter the material doubles of our virtual subjectivities as data stored in server form.

Rather than concede to the seeming intractability of cognitive capitalism, these readings seek to potentiate new critical operations through shared access, listening and discussion. Across its parts, *I'm that angel* argues for a renewed consideration of the immanent horizons of subjectivity, sociability and creativity.

The first performances occurred in April 2012 at Digital Realty in downtown Los Angeles. Actor Justin Sayre and the audience shared a glass conference room that looked out onto server racks. In February 2013, Sayre read at The Google Building, New York. This coming summer, Coburn will perform throughout Europe.

## II. PERFORMANCE REVIEW:

excerpted from [www.gradesaver.com](http://www.gradesaver.com)

### Bartleby The Scrivener by Herman Melville (1853)

#### Plot Summary:

The narrator, an elderly lawyer who does a comfortable business helping wealthy men deal with mortgages, title deeds, and bonds, relates the story of the strangest man he has ever known. Bartleby is a new addition to the narrator's staff. The narrator already employs two scribes, Nippers and Turkey. Nippers suffers from indigestion, and Turkey is a drunk, but the office survives because in the mornings Turkey is sober even though Nippers is irritable, and in the afternoon Nippers has calmed down even though Turkey is drunk. Ginger Nut, the office boy, gets his name from the little cakes he brings the men.

Bartleby comes in answer to an ad, and the narrator hires the forlorn looking young man in hopes that his calmness will soothe the temperaments of the other scribes.

One day, when Bartleby is asked to help proofread one of the documents he copied, he answers simply, "I would prefer not to." It is the first of many refusals. To the dismay of the narrator and the irritation of the other employees, Bartleby takes part in fewer and fewer duties around the office. The narrator makes several attempts to reason with Bartleby and learn about him, but Bartleby always responds the same way when asked to do a task or give out information about himself: "I would prefer not to." One weekend, when the narrator stops in at the office, he discovers that Bartleby is living at the office. The loneliness of Bartleby's life strikes the narrator: at night and on Sundays, Wall Street is as desolate as a ghost town. He alternates between pity and revulsion for Bartleby's bizarre behavior.

Bartleby continues to refuse duties, until finally he is doing no work at all. And yet the narrator cannot get him to leave. The scrivener has a strange power over his employer, and the narrator feels he cannot do anything to harm this forlorn man. But his business associates begin to wonder at Bartleby's presence at the office, since he does no work, and the threat of a ruined reputation forces the narrator to do something. His attempts to get Bartleby to go are fruitless. So the narrator moves his offices to a new location. But soon afterward, the new tenants of the narrator's old offices come to him asking for help: Bartleby will not leave. When they oust him from the offices, Bartleby haunts the hallways. The narrator goes to see Bartleby in one last attempt to reason with him, but Bartleby rejects him. For fear of being bothered by the anti-

Bartleby folks, the narrator stays away from work for a few days. When he returns, he learns that Bartleby has been put in prison.

At the prison, Bartleby seems even more glum than usual. The narrator's friendliness is rebuffed. The narrator bribes a turnkey to make sure Bartleby stays well fed. But when the narrator returns a few days later, Bartleby has died. He preferred not to eat.

Some time afterward, the narrator hears a rumor that Bartleby worked in a Dead Letter Office. The narrator reflects that the dead letters would have made anyone of Bartleby's temperament sink into an even darker gloom. The letters are emblems for our mortality and the failure of our best intentions. Through Bartleby, the narrator has glimpsed the world as the miserable scrivener must have seen it. The closing words of the story are the narrator's resigned and pained sigh: "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!"

Major Themes:

The world of work and business:

"Bartleby the Scrivener" is one of the first great stories of corporate discontent. The description of the office is incredibly bleak, and the landscape of Wall Street is completely unnatural. The work environment is sterile and cheerless. Yet most adapt to it, with varying degrees of success. Though the narrator is a successful man, he is a victim, in some ways, of progress. He has lost the post he occupied during the central events of the story, as the position was deemed redundant and eliminated. We learn later that Bartleby may have lost a job due to similar bureaucratic change. The modern economy includes constant and unfeeling change, which comes at a cost.

Melville often describes the world through concise and telling descriptions of the environment. The character of the world of work and business is most often evoked through physical description of the landscape. In the final prison scene Melville's description of environment extends the scope of the story from the business world to the general human condition. Bartleby cannot pretend to have enthusiasm for this bleak world, and so he disengages from it, in stages, until he dies.

Doubling:

Doubles make for an important thematic device. Through doubles, Melville suggests our connection to other human beings. Nippers and Turkey are like two faces of a coin, as are, finally, Bartleby and the narrator. With Bartleby, Melville is constantly evoking him as a kind of phantom double. The descriptions of him frequently cast him as either a ghost or a corpse. At the end of the story, Bartleby's significance expands, and he becomes not only a double for the narrator but also a kind of double for all of humanity.

Isolation and the failure to connect:

Bartleby is one of the most isolated characters in all of literature. Bartleby's environment cuts him off from nature and often, from other men. By day, Bartleby's window stares at a wall. Wall Street is a bleak and unnatural landscape, and Bartleby also stays there at night, when the bustling human population vanishes and the streets become desolately empty. The narrator

makes attempts to learn about Bartleby and help him, but all attempts meet with failure, and the narrator gives up.

### III. BOOK REVIEW (*Wherein the narrator hires a forlorn looking young man*):

A copy of the book portion of *I'm That Angel*, was submitted for review at [www.customwritings.com](http://www.customwritings.com), an on-demand writing agency marketed to students and professionals who need quick, inexpensive texts on topics of their choosing.

Of their book review process, the site writes:

*If you are in search of scholarly book reviews, history book reviews, business book reviews, sport book reviews, science fiction book reviews and politics book reviews, you can always trust CustomWritings.com which is an international company accepted for its book reviews as it has exceptional and excellent book review writers who are eligible to write all kinds of book reviews. Because of our quality and standardized book review writing, our customers believe us and remember us with their problems related to book review writing [sic]. Our book review writers follow standard rules and regulations for custom book review writing. For a book review, a skilled writer is required who have [sic] gained all the expertise to write book reviews or book review essays quite excellently and flawlessly. We have such book review writers who write a book review with excellence and by tracking [sic] a professional approach. Our writers are certified people from all fields of studies and are experienced for [sic] writing all kinds of academic book reviews. CustomWritings.com is contacted by nearly 8,000 customers on daily basis which are also its regular customers because they believe in our custom written book reviews which follow a standard book review format [sic]. In addition to following standard formats for writing book reviews, the book reviews by our writers are also of high quality and written in a good language. CustomWritings.com provides a book review that is exceptionally written and is checked for plagiarism and language errors. We care for our customers and their career, that's why our writers work so hard to make our customers satisfied with our performance.*

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Tyler Coburn in the book *I'm That Angel* laments on the manner in which computers have dominated the lives of people in the 21st century. Now more than ever, the world is hungry for new information, and this has changed lives for individuals in the recent years [sic]. The author regrets the use of social media by people to get information regarding other people for gossip. The book refers to computers as answer giving machines that, unfortunately, give answers to all problems in the world. In other words, people are turning to computers for information, which has led to complicated lifestyles [sic]. This essay will delve into the issue of social media, advertisements and appearance exhibited in the information age as depicted by Coburn.

The author starts by stating that his life is like a dream and that life in the world is like living in a cloud. However, with the emergence of computers and the Internet, the world has changed and much control has been given to computers. For instance, the author laments that nowadays, people utilize the Internet to figure out what people are thinking about. For example, NPR reports that markets, social scientists and pollsters are analyzing their figures to understand the thoughts of Americans. This is in addition to Twitter's findings on Lady Gaga's recent outfit. In the modern world, information spreads like a wild fire. Anyone would recall that when Twitter first started, it was a mere social site where people used to communicate their present activities. However, this has changed with Twitter now becoming home to millions of followers who communicate with each other and share their opinions on issues. In most cases, such information has been helpful, but in some cases, the information shared in such sites leaves little to be desired of them. In most cases, social sites like Twitter and Facebook have been used for spreading rumors and such information has been detrimental to the people involved. In other cases, people have used the social media sites to stir controversies rather than solve problems or address issues. However, with as much influence, Coburn states in his book that:

they can take my body but they can't take my brain they can engineer me but they can't imagineer me I can tell I know how to tell *I'm thinking my own thoughts I'm feeling my own feelings* and if I have a thought or a feeling while I'm working that's normal that's me that's just for me it's obvious I have to work and I can't not be myself I can't button-up my psyche if anything I dress it down I surf as I go my lifestyle is a mode of dissent I protest by consumer choice if I am not marketed to how could I be a demographic if I am not put to work then why would I *refuse to work*

This means that the influence from the media can influence people's behavior and attitudes but it cannot change who they are. As a writer, I feel there is a lot of pressure to change certain attitudes and behaviors on my part but is not enough to change who I am as writer [sic].

The author also expresses grief that computers are not useful as they only give one answers. In this part, the author refers to a South Park episode where a human centipede was used to illustrate his point. He regrets that people nowadays refer to the Internet for answers instead of seeking the traditional way of doing things. For example, if people wanted to find answers to certain problems or issues, they would refer to books or consult the relevant professionals for answers. However, things have changed, and the emergence of search engines like Google and Yahoo among others has changed all this traditions [sic]. This explains the

reason why the author decided to move out from New York because the [sic] he could have access to information at the click of a mouse. This meant that he was subjected to both relevant and irrelevant information available on the Internet. When referring to the computers and twitter, Coburn says:

Computers are finding that the twat's mood day-in-day-out is pretty standard: cinna-scented in the morning, shitty through the daytime and sweet sweet surrendering by the evening. What's weird is you'd think, yeah, of course during the week everyone is shitting out the 9-5; shitting in a chair or shitting on a crapper or shitting into a cup of Sumatran! Cold! Brew! Or doing all that and more because who really pays attention anymore? But no, NPR says the twat feels this way on the WEEKENDS TOO (!?!?) and iDunnowhat2thing [sic] ...*what does working mean for the person who works?*

I feel that the information being advertised by the media is pretty much the same especially when it comes to sexuality. Access to information has also infiltrated other areas such as advertising, which will later be discussed in the essay. This constant need to have information has consequently turned human beings into pleasure and happy seeking machines. People have been accustomed to new information even when it turns out that the information may not be helpful in most cases.

The author also regrets that there is too much advertisement out there and if there are no billboards then there are pop ups on the Internet [sic]. This explains why the author moved out of New York to stay out of this "madness". The author cites that advertisements have done away with the human side of things, and the most of them try to brainwash people into doing things contrary to what they wish. He depicts how this modern generation feels that they are the modern age. In this case, the author cites Madonna, a renowned American artist who seems not to age. She has a new face if the comments made on her new look in her new album are anything to go by. This shows that the modern generation does not allow mothernature [sic] to take her course; instead, everybody is trying to beat nature by staying youthful.

The author also suggests that people have lost their self-esteem and are rather seeking other people's opinion on their looks and personality. In other words, the author regrets that people nowadays care so much about what others say about them rather than what they think of themselves, which is not right. Coburn depicts this as "the blind leading the blind". I feel that so many people have lost trust in themselves [sic] and sometimes believe other people's opinion more than they believe in themselves. According to the author, people do not seem to trust themselves and know who they really are but are dependent on other people's opinion. There is so much information around, and this has destroyed the communication links among individuals. For instance, there is a lot of buzz on the issue of sexuality in the society. The author says that, nowadays, people are being told they are either gay or lesbians because of their behavior or whom they hang out with. This means that people make conclusions on other people's sexuality, which has significantly led to low self-esteem among individuals. Drawing from personal experiences, people seek the social media and the Internet for answers on how to dress or how to behave. This has eroded people's self-esteem and their ability to make their own decisions and judgment without being influenced.

In conclusion, the author laments on the use of social media, the Internet and computers in the modern world because computers have become the most utilized source of information for

individuals. The author cites negative consequences of using the computers in the modern world because of various reasons. For instance, computers have become the accepted mode of communication in the society despite their flaws [sic]. The information on the internet is based on people's opinion where people share their experiences. This has inadvertently led to low self-esteem among individuals because people do not seem to trust their own judgment and prefer relying on other people's opinion. As the author started in the essay, his life is a dream where he has little control of what he can achieve. Unfortunately, this has changed, and there is more control on people's behavior and habits as a result of computers. Overreliance on information from the Internet has equally changed people's lives in terms of problem solving. Apparently, all answers seem to be available on the Internet.