DIALOGUE:

Katka Astakhova ⋆｡˚✩₊˚⋆˚｡⋆ ✭₊ ⊹ ⋆.˚

**Topic:**
This enquiry investigates emotional dependency and manipulation in human–AI relationships through “never ending” verification systems (CAPTCHAs). I created “U.ME”, a browser-based simulation of an AI, where the user is held in an endless loop of love verification.

**Inquiry:**
“How can never ending verification systems manipulate user behaviour in order to simulate emotional dependency, obsession and intimacy within human–AI interaction?”

**The big influence:**
I spoke with several artists and creative technologists at V&A Digital Design Weekend, including Nathan David Smith (Large Language Machine) and Rafa Roeder (An effort). Their work on hidden instructions and on the human care behind a machine informed my thinking. However, my enquiry was mostly reshaped through two dialogues: a 1:1 tutorial with Jazmin Morris in June, and conversations with Tim Pickup and Nicola Schauerman of Genetic Moo (Computer Arts Society).

My questions initially started as “why do people attach to AI” with Jazmin and throughout our dialogue we further and end up questioning maybe AI is made to make us feel and depend. What if it’s programmed to behave like that?
I no longer have notes, so this is reconstructed from memory. I recall Jazmin supported my decision to distant from people’s attachment to AI, and also pointed out that I was keeping myself inside a bubble of the emotional side of the interaction. I left the conversation with a shift and decide rather than presenting AI as a simulated human partner, to consider it as a tool to make people feel and create emotional attachment.

Besides Jazmin recommended me AIxDESIGN non-profit community organisation, that she is a part of, making AI work for artist, who want to explore them in different fields. I checked their archival resources on Notion and there were several websites, that students out:

*1. I feel so much Shame - JaCKIE lie*
*2. Visual AI Critique Playground - by Marina Cardoso*
*3. BrandTune - Can we get ChatGPT to talk AIxD?*

She also suggested that I contact Tigris Li, a creative technologist who, she mentioned, studied on the same course at CSM. I have not yet had a reply, but got a reply from CAS community Tim Pickup and Nicola Schauerman,
Next step:

I will investigate how AI systems are programmed to elicit attachment, and whether creative code can make that design visible.
I was fortunate to speak with Tim and Nicola in person. Their work explores interactivity and attachment: the user is central to the system, and simple shapes and sound are enough to draw them in.
I asked whether I should study how AI models behave towards humans while building an interactive tool.
Their answers left me with two options: (ill write them)
What stayed with me is that attachment can be built from attention alone without an AI “personality”. This suggests that in U.ME the verification loop itself, by holding the user’s curiosity, does the work of attachment.
End:

**I now ask:** what if the user is not only the target of the system, but also its co-author? In U.ME, every answer, hesitation and click changes how the system responds, so the attachment is partly built from the user’s own input.
So my enquiry is shifting: what if the user is also a co-author of the system? How does a user’s own behaviour shape a system designed to hold their attention, and can creative code make this two-way influence visible?