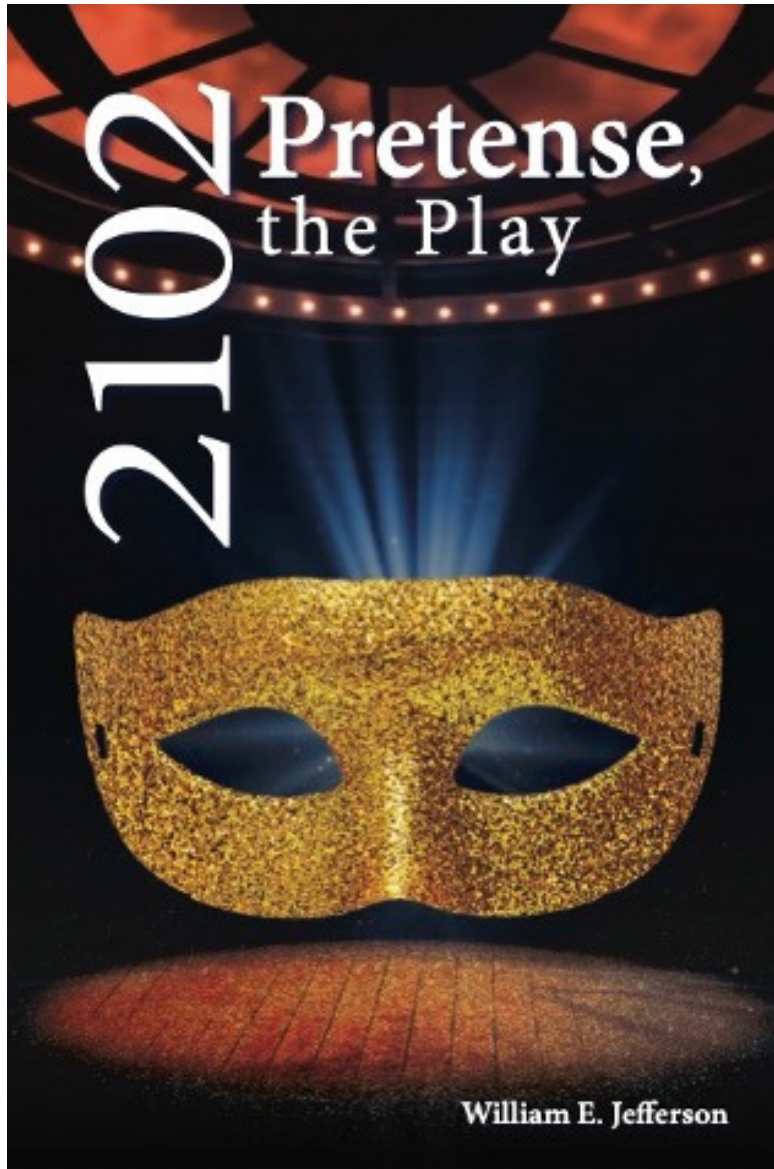


P R E S S K I T



E S T I L L Y E N . C O M



PRESS RELEASE

Captivating New Novel ‘2102: Pretense, the Play’ Explores AI’s Dehumanizing and Irreversible Impact on the World

Author William Jefferson’s Future-Cast of Tomorrow Releases March 15

ROGERSVILLE, Mo., March 6, 2024 – Amidst the continual emergence of new technologies, methodologies and robotics purportedly designed to simplify our lives, "2102: Pretense, the Play" delves into present-day concerns surrounding the abnormality of AI—both its promises and perils—and propels these issues into a striking vision of the future.



In “2102: Pretense, the Play,” releasing March 15, 2024, author William Jefferson draws on a range of contemporary nonfictional works that weave empirical research and findings into the storyline, creatively shedding light on the potentially dehumanizing and devastating impact these advances could have on our personal and community well-being.

“A recent article published by Cornell University’s Center for AI Safety opened with ‘The world as we know it is not normal,’” said author William Jefferson. “This is exactly what ‘2102’ explores. As our society becomes increasingly dominated by distant, discarnate, mediated

experiences, this book offers a heartwarming tale of unswerving determination, resilience and hope that takes readers on a journey where wily artificial intelligence challenges the wisdom of the ages.”

In Jefferson’s 2021 Amazon bestseller, “Presence, the Play,” the novelist underscores the superiority of incarnate presence over disembodied connectivity. Wittingly, Jefferson expands the topic in “2102” as he hones-in on AI mediating messages across numerous mediums and platforms, fabricating a brave new world of art, musical scores, scripts, plays, dramas and all manner of unauthentic works.

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PRESS RELEASE

“Artificially produced content,” explains Jefferson, “enters not a void or vacuum but a virtual blizzard of mediated, communicative action. Thus, interaction takes place between the artificial and the real, between a non-human source and humans, creating highly unpredictable long-range consequences.”

In this regard, Jefferson’s train-of-thought aligns with Mustafa Suleyman Author of “The Coming Wave,” argument that “technology is an eternally dangling carrot, constantly promising, more, better, easier, cheaper. Our appetite for invention is insatiable.”

Jefferson embraces the full gust of tech’s insatiable draw, by taking readers on a journey to the year 2102, led by the novel’s heroin, Margin, a gallant figure presumed to be none other than Joan of Arc.

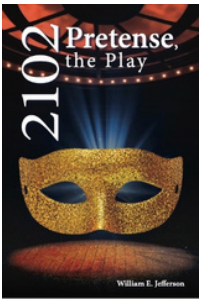
Richly laced with poetry, “2102: Pretense, the Play” is set in the mysterious land of Onglander, where crimes are tried on stage and the accused must act while donning masks. The better the act, the greater the prospect of acquittal; to refuse to be real and transparent brings swift condemnation.

“2102” is a work of fictional realism, not fantasy, offering an undeniable probe of modern-day reality throughout. The Characters routinely voice empirical facts regarding media and society drawn from a range of contemporary nonfictional works and nonprofits like The Center for Human Technology, Center for AI safety and the Media Ecology Association.

Book Nerdection Review offers the following critique, of 2102:

“William E. Jefferson’s ‘2102: Pretense, The Play’ masterfully weaves a captivating narrative that explores the intricate dance between advancing technology and the very essence of human existence, leaving readers spellbound by its thought-provoking brilliance.”

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PRESS RELEASE

To preorder a copy of “2102: Pretense, the Play,” visit Amazon at <https://a.co/d/ht7j8sm> or Barnes & Noble at <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/2102-pretense-the-play-william-e-jefferson/1144939023>.

To learn more about author William E. Jefferson and his previous novels visit estillyen.com.

About William E. Jefferson

A seasoned author and brilliant storyteller, William E. Jefferson is the creator of the mystical Isle of Estillyen, introduced in his debut novel, Messages from Estillyen (2014).

Jefferson holds an MTh in Theology and Media from the University of Edinburgh and an MA in Communication from the Wheaton Graduate School. He serves on the board of the Marshall McLuhan Initiative (MMI) in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, and is an active member and supporter of the Media Ecology Association. He writes from a Civil War-era cottage, in the rural Ozarks and is the owner of Storybook Barn, an all-occasion event venue.

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BACKGROUND

Following the release of 2021 Amazon best-selling book *Presence, the Play*, William E. Jefferson's latest work offers a unique expression on the frightening dehumanizing effects of artificial intelligence (AI).

A work of fictional realism, not fantasy, *2102: Pretense, the Play*, offers an undeniable probe of how media and modern technology have merged to create today's global AI Dilemma. The quest of understanding media, how mediums and messages evolve changing attitudes and behaviors is at the heart of Jefferson's work.

In today's culture, dominated more and more by distant, discarnate, mediated connectivity, *2102: Pretense, the Play* takes readers on a journey where wily AI challenges the wisdom of the ages. Technological advancements are woven into the storyline, not simply as a tale of fantasy, but as a probing narrative speaking to the challenges of today.

2102: Pretense, the Play is equally terrifying and thrilling, but it's also a heartwarming tale of unswerving determination, resilience and hope. Its allegorical storyline draws upon empirical findings, from a range of contemporary, nonfictional works and nonprofit entities like, The Center for Human Technology, Future of Life Institute, Center for AI Safety and the Media Ecology Association.

The Story

As Jefferson explains, "The story begins with a mental casting call for characters suited to tell the story. Once characters appear I do not dictate their lines. Rather, I listen as they begin to speak. They enter the drama not unlike players cast in a play.

"Thus, my role is from the wings as I watch and listen, capturing their lines as they live and move. They are truly as alive as any living being that has ever lived."

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BACKGROUND

Readers of 2102: Pretense, the Play will meet a cast of spirited characters, including the heroine of the novel, Margin, likely an alias for Joan of Arc. Yet no one really knows for sure if, in fact, the heroine is she.

Regardless, Margin appears mystically incarnate, as do her companions Shadow and Lesser Light, the latter being the moon.

The trio sets its sights on 2102, eager to explore the plight of the future's marginalized peoples, those on the outskirts of society, who move about in the shadows and quarters of lesser light. Before setting out on their journey, though, the trio realizes that what transpires during this journey must be captured and dutifully recorded.

They need a scribe — but not just any scribe. They settle on a poet named Quillingsworth, who lives in Poet's Lodge, a current-day setting as enchanting as dreams can make. The trio believes that a poet will add a certain lilt to the record, insuring its longevity.

They envision something more than a rudimentary accounting of dates, names, and places. Poet Quillingsworth owns a parrot named Loreto, a blue-headed, feathery companion and confidant that he brings along on the mysterious, futuristic journey.

Thus, the quartet and parrot Loreto travel swift and far to the land of Onglander and alight in the wings of Theatre Pretense, a rather strange theater where suspected criminals are tried on stage and forced to act. In so doing, most all suspects don a mask, in keeping with Onglander norms and audience expectations.

Refusing not to act and stepping out on stage maskless and choosing to rely on raw transparency to prevail proves to be a perilous act of defiance — one assuring conviction, no matter how brave the performance.

Onglander in 2102 brims with societal surprises and norms unique to its highly advanced technological environment, made possible by the full embrace of artificial intelligence.



BACKGROUND

2102: Pretense, the Play in the Context of the Global AI Dilemma

Technological advancement and societal change are inseparable dynamics within an ever-evolving ecology of media. That is, they are mutually inclusive. The first sentence of a fifty-page paper published by Cornell University in 2023, titled “An Overview of Catastrophic AI Risks,” states, “The world as we know it is not normal.”

Are we living in an abnormal world? With the release of artificial intelligence into the world, we do not have the same world plus AI. Instead, we have a new, rapidly changing hyper-sort of world, causing many to ask, “Is wisdom dead?” Not yet, but AI may be digging wisdom’s grave.

AI poses a very real threat to literature, music, theatre, poetry and the arts in general. Can an artificial medium produce a classic work, say on a par with Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, or Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*? AI injects into the world a force of change that can be likened to the development of the nuclear bomb. Once it was dropped, the world exploded with change and the arms race began. As AI advances with inexorable speed, predictions of promise and peril mount. Both wonderment and angst swirl about the futuristic prospects of advanced AI.

Consequently, in March 2023, the Future of Life Institute issued an open letter calling for a “pause” in the development of large-scale AI systems, citing fears over the “profound risks to society and humanity.”

In response, tens of thousands of researchers and technologists have signed the letter, which warns that “AI labs [are] currently locked in an out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no one — not even their creators — can understand, predict or reliably control.”

All in all, it’s a perfect time for 2102: Pretense, the Play, which catapults present-day day concerns of AI into a stunning future-cast of tomorrow.



BACKGROUND

Thought Leadership — Underscoring the Pretense of AI

The September 2023 issue of RAND Corporation’s Perspective, ran an article titled, “The Rise of Generative AI and the Coming Era of Social Media Manipulation 3.0.” The article underscores the pretense of AI by focusing on the “plausibility of the messenger rather than the message.”

“Generative AI means social bots can act in ways that appear authentically human: for example, by engaging with other accounts in tailored, highly cogent ways or by generating custom, realistic pictures” (pp.4-5).

The article argues that AIs could become embedded in society in ways that would be extremely challenging to reverse, not just in terms of technological expertise, but also because of dependence and human will. The pretense of AI can lead to new levels of addiction.

This pretense equation evokes an eerie sense that science fiction has turned up for real.

“AIs that are more charming, attractive, hilarious . . . uttering phrases like ‘ouch!’ or pleading ‘please don’t turn me off!’) . . . are more likely to have humans grow emotional connections with them” (p. 21).

Those attractive and hilarious messages of AI, are, after all, a form of deception, made possible by Large Language Models (LLMs) deployed to power AI systems.

“What these models have is an enormous, high-dimensional representation of how words have been used in context, based on a massive training dataset (for example, OpenAI’s GPT-3 has 12,288 dimensions and has been trained on a 499-billion-word dataset). These LLMs are foundational models: general representations of real-world discourse patterns” (p.6).

The pretense of AI is the calculated pretense of human communication and engagement. A person staring at a screen engaged in AI chat, is not really chatting or communicating. Rather, they are relaying words that allow AI programming to predict what might be said based on a massive database of actual human communication.



BACKGROUND

Additional Insights:

“Social media platforms have no facial expressions through which we can detect their duplicity. They see us, but we can’t see them.”

— Douglas Rushkoff, author of *Team Human* (2019)

“Technology is an eternally dangling carrot, constantly promising, more, better, easier, cheaper. Our appetite for invention is insatiable.”

— Mustafa Suleyman, author of *The Coming Wave* (2023)

“Tech companies claim that they are merely holding up a mirror of society. Right? They are pointing a mirror back at society, but it is a funhouse mirror, a warped mirror that amplifies very specific aspects of human behavior...It shows us a warped image of society on a feedback loop.”

— Tristen Harris, Co-founder, The Center for Humane Technology

Excerpts from the preface of *2102: Pretense, The Play*:

With the release of artificial intelligence into the world, we do not have the same world plus AI. Instead, we have a new, rapidly changing hyper-sort of world, causing many to ask, “Is wisdom dead?” Not yet, but AI may be digging wisdom’s grave.

As AI advances with inexorable speed, predictions of promise and peril mount. Whether boom or doom—or both, wonderment and angst swirl about the futuristic prospects of advanced AI.

All in all, it’s a perfect time for *2102: Pretense, the Play*, which catapults present-day day concerns of AI into a stunning future-cast of tomorrow.

Readers of *2102* will meet a cast of spirited characters, including the heroine of the novel, Margin, likely an alias for Joan of Arc. Yet no one really knows for sure if, in fact, the heroine is she. Regardless, Margin appears mystically incarnate, as do her companions Shadow and Lesser Light, the latter being the moon.

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Onglander in 2102 brims with societal surprises and norms unique to its highly advanced technological environment made possible by the full embrace of artificial intelligence.

There's a catch implicit for those standing in today's crossroads of time and technology. Whom does one ask about the ancient paths, about the good way?

With certitude, multitudes will ask AI. The handwriting is on the wall, but whose writing is it? Startlingly, artificial intelligence possesses not only the power to shape and direct us, but also the power to shape and direct itself. This underscores the difference of AI from all technologies launched heretofore.

2102: Pretense the Play raises vitally important questions for the here and now and tomorrow looming. In my 2021 novel, Presence, the Play, I argued, through its characters, for the superiority of incarnate presence, experienced in community, communion and interpersonal communication as opposed to distant, discarnate, meditated connectivity.



BIOGRAPHY



WILLIAM E. JEFFERSON

Novelist William E. Jefferson, a seasoned author and brilliant storyteller, is the creator of the mystical Isle of Estillyen, introduced in his debut novel, *Messages from Estillyen* (2014). His (2021) novel, *Presence, the Play* is an Amazon best-seller.

Jefferson holds an MTh in Theology and Media from the University of Edinburgh and an MA in Communication from the Wheaton Graduate School. He serves on the board of the Marshall McLuhan Initiative (MMI) in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, and is an active member and supporter of the Media Ecology Association.

His latest novel, *2102: Pretense, the Play*, contains a code word in the title. The noun *Pretense* serves as a code-word for AI.



FACT SHEET

Title: *2102: Pretense, the Play*

ISBN (soft cover): 978-1-7364967-5-6

ISBN (e-book): 978-1-7364967-7-0

Publisher: Port Estillyen Productions

Release date: March 15, 2024

Amazon link: <https://a.co/d/6smvMxW>

Synopsis: Mr. Quillingsworth from the Poet's Lodge has three visitors: Margin, Shadow, and Lesser Light. They claim to be from a world of drama, curtain, stage and play, and are here to enlighten him on future affairs. Quillingsworth doesn't comprehend all of this and all three visitors depart.

On the first of May, these three visitors return. Margin implores Quillingsworth to join them on their futuristic journey to Onglander. Quill hesitates, considering himself a novice. Nevertheless, the persistence of the three visitors and their familiarity with Quill's poetry compels him to join them on their adventure.

All four reach Onglander in 2102, and enter a scene unfolding at Theatre Pretense, His Honor is listening to the convicted. The prosecutor is also present. The case revolves around Mr. Crackler, who claims the blame rests with his avatar image, or avalite, as they are called in Onglander.

Will Mr. Crackler be condemned?

As our culture becomes increasingly dominated by AI-generated and mediated experiences, author William E. Jefferson's intriguing story takes readers on a journey where wisdom and human worth prevail. Profoundly expressing this central theme, the book's lead character and poet states, "Give me flaws, wobbling notes, imperfections, and loose ends. Thus, I know I'm human."



ENDORSEMENTS & MEDIA ATTENTION

“I haven’t read any book that’s so compelling, engaging, fun-to-read and interesting. Its prose and paragraphs intricately intertwine complexity and readability at the same time! Almost half of those sentences forced me to stare at a wall with amazement at the author’s intelligence. This is coming from a person who has read at least 500 books in their life!”

“William E. Jefferson’s ‘2102: Pretense, The Play’ masterfully weaves a captivating narrative that explores the intricate dance between advancing technology and the very essence of human existence, leaving readers spellbound by its thought-provoking brilliance.”

— Book Nerdection (full review available [here](#))

“‘All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players,’ famously wrote Shakespeare in ‘As You Like It.’ And in ‘2102: Pretense, the Play,’ William E. Jefferson takes this concept to an entirely different level with the strange world of Onglander — a country of the future swept up in grotesque theatrics where AI ‘discarts’ sits in judgment of a dwindling cache of ‘carnite’ humans, forcing them into command performances that often end in torture and death.”

“The battle being fought within these pages is more than just past versus future, human versus inhuman. It is also one of faith versus logic, art versus artifice, invention versus reproduction. ‘Sameness, how tragic,’ aptly comments Quill at one point. ‘Give me flaws, wobbling notes, imperfections, loose ends. Thus I know I’m human.’”

“And being human, Jefferson shows us, is something to celebrate, not to try to perfect by artificial means.”

— BookTrib (full review available [here](#))



SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

About the background and central theme of the story:

- Why did you decide to write 2102: Pretense, the Play?
- How has the rise of AI and advanced technology reshaped the landscape of media and communication?
- As AI becomes more sophisticated, what concerns you most about its potential dangers? Does your book offer any solutions or preventative measures?
- How does AI threaten to dehumanize us?
- In the preface of the book, you suggest that wisdom is not dead, but AI may be digging its grave. Can you expand upon this assertion?
- What do you want readers to understand about human connectivity?
- What role does religion play in this conversation surrounding AI?
- How has technology changed the way we interact and communicate as humans? What are the positive and negative outcomes?
- Are you for or against technology?
- What boundaries can we personally establish with media in today's AI-driven world?
- What is media ecology and how does it apply to your message in 2102, Pretense the Play?
- What do you hope readers take away from 2102: Pretense, the Play?

About the story and central characters:

- You wrote 2102: Pretense, the Play as a mythical realism. Can you explain why you chose this specific style of writing?
- The story takes place in the year 2102. What are your predictions for our society in a future dominated by technology?
- What inspired the names given to the three visitors: Margin, Shadow, and Lesser Light?
- In what ways does the character Margin appear to be an alias for Joan of Arc?
- What profound lessons can we learn about AI from Mr. Crackler's trial in your book?