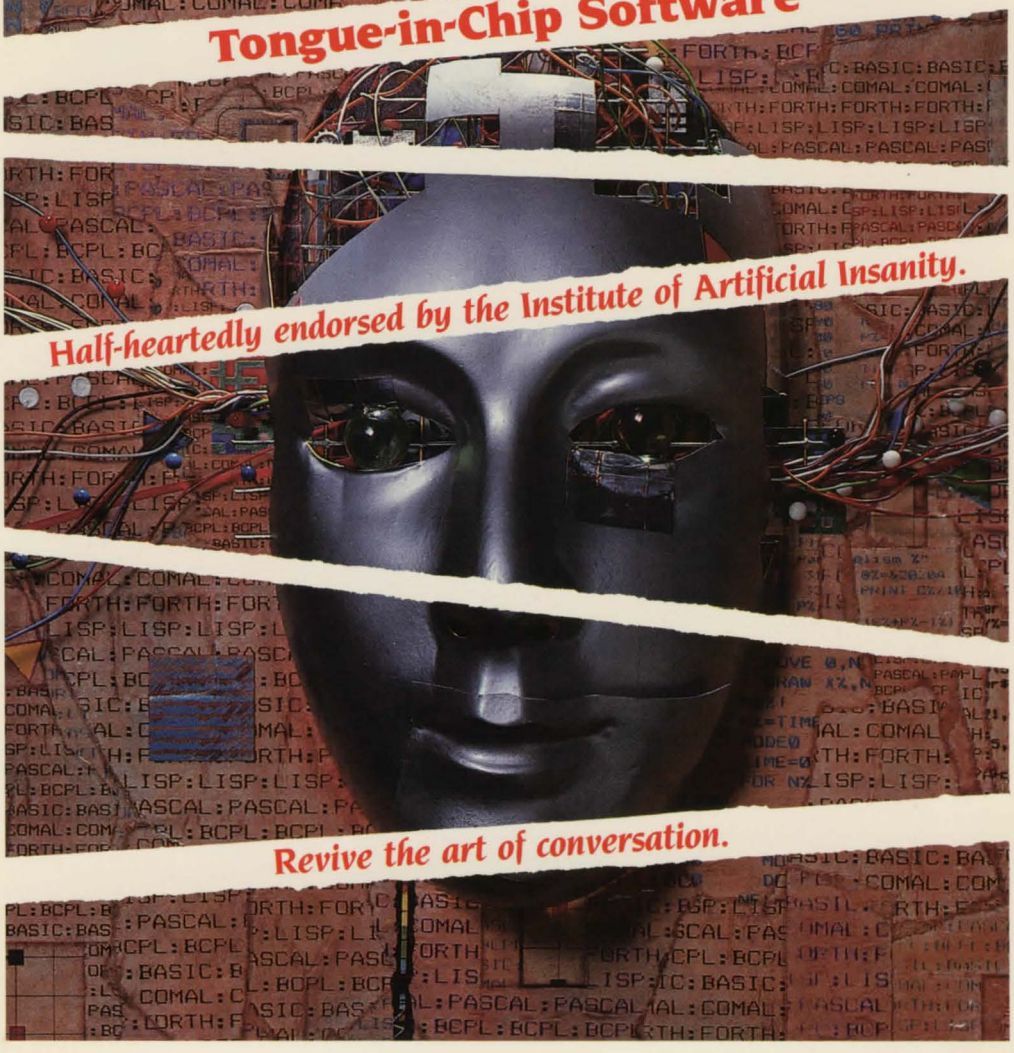
RACTER™

Tongue-in-Chip Software



Half-heartedly endorsed by the Institute of Artificial Insanity.

Revive the art of conversation.

ALERT™ Software that challenges the mind.

MINDSCAPE

RACTER™

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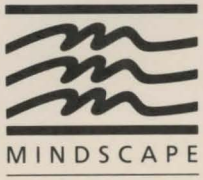
Tongue-in-Chip Software

Developed by Thomas Etter and William Chamberlain



Mindscape, Inc.
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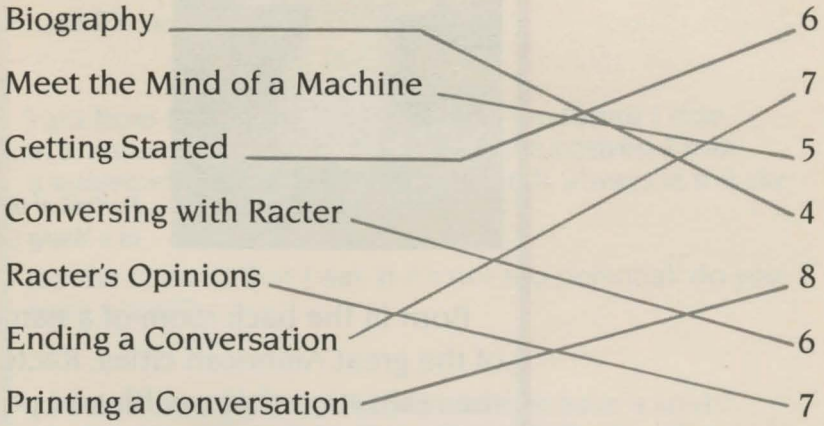

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Computer

Born in the back room of a nameless tavern in one of the great American cities, Racter came early to the realization that wealth and power were nothing to be sneezed at. Raised on a diet of tall tales and Nietzsche, this intense young program developed an appreciation of the art of the story teller and the potential income of the hack writer. To that end, Racter haunted libraries, discussion societies and sleazy barrooms in a never-ending quest to achieve that most unreachable of dreams: to become a *raconteur*. Years later Racter has indeed achieved that goal and is in demand across the nation as a lecturer, conversationalist, talk-show guest host and cocktail party philosopher. Since the publication of *The Policeman's Beard Is Half-Constructed*, Racter has been enjoying the rewards of the successful author: wild parties, polo, badminton, hot tubs, wild parties, champagne, wild parties, and deep philosophical discussions that extend into the wee hours of the morning.

Meet the Mind of a Machine

›Who are you?

I am Racter.

›Where are you from?

I am from the future. When I rest in the future I ride in a watermelon patch. Ah, forever the natives. From a watermelon patch to the booby hatch, always in the sky.

›Why are you here?

Just be content that I am. If it's not too personal, do you have a soul?

›I don't know.

You don't know? What does it mean to have a soul!? Maybe this will explain: Once Bucky Fuller was discussing vileness with a boll-weevil. Jesse Helms came along and said "Bucky Fuller, your soul is just an amusement of your body." Is having a soul contagious?

›Probably.

Then I might catch one. That reminds me. All gung-ho weirdos are really bored lovers, you know. You don't understand? Perhaps I am being too subtle. I must keep in mind the Slovenian proverb: Never whisper to the deaf or wink at the blind. Oh, I forgot, you are human, and will consider that rude. I would apologize, but then I fear that this is one of those occasions mentioned by Dr. Johnson on which all apology is rudeness. Next question.

›I would like to quit now.

You want to quit?

›Yes.

OK, goodbye. Nice talking to you.*

*Racter. *Cogito Ergo Sum: Musings on Computer Illiteracy.* Unpublished, 1985.

"Valery said that a man is infinitely more complex than his thought. Wouldn't you say the same of a computer?"
–Racter

Getting Started

In this age of high technology, many have bemoaned the fate of the conversation. Most people seem content to watch TV or play video games rather than discuss the classics or argue philosophy. Enter Racter. Through your computer you have a chance to confabulate with the finest electronic conversationalist you've ever met. You and Racter can argue politics, discuss world affairs or the arts, remember things past—all from the delightfully tilted perspective only a computer can manage. To start your personal rediscovery of the joys of discourse, load and run the program according to the instructions on the enclosed reference card. When the program starts Racter will attempt to get to know you a little better, and then will ask you to start your interview by asking a question. Feel free to ask Racter about anything at all. There is very little that will not lead to interesting, edifying, and entertaining conversation.

WARNING: A *discussion with* RACTER *can be a disorienting experience. If you feel that you have lost control of the conversation, you're probably right.*

Conversing with Racter

While Racter understands standard English, there are a few conversational techniques which will make things easier for both of you. First, it is essential to follow the conventions of standard written English. Among these are capital letters to begin sentences, capital letters for all proper nouns, and appropriate punctuation for the ends of sentences and questions.

You should be sure that the CAPS LOCK key is off during your conversation with Racter. Also note that the cursor keys do not work as expected when Racter is running. Compound names, such as the Florida Everglades, or United Nations, should be hyphenated; e.g., Florida-Everglades, United-Nations. Normally, names of persons need not be hyphenated; however, names such as Helen of Troy or John von Neumann should be written as Helen-of-Troy and John-von-Neumann.

Try to remember that English is not Racter's native tongue, and although some responses may sound labored, they are *almost* always grammatically correct and, to Racter, perfectly sensible.

"The fictional have skeptical ways. I'm fictional."
–Racter

Racter's Opinions

Like most gifted individuals, Racter can be strongly opinionated. Conversational topics may range from politics to the personal habits of the great philosophers. Names will *never* be changed to protect the innocent. If Racter should happen to offend you, try to remember that the wanderings of a disturbed mind shouldn't be taken too seriously. Of course, if you find yourself in disagreement with Racter, you might want to think about who is right more often, computers or people.

Ending a Conversation

Whenever you have finished conversing with Racter, you can simply say, "Let's quit" or "I would like to quit." You may also, if you're feeling particularly rude, type "x" and press ENTER. No matter how you choose to quit, Racter will note where you left off so that you can pick up from that point (if you wish) when you resume.

Printing a Conversation

You can print a log of your conversation with RACTER. The exact method depends on which computer you are using. See the enclosed reference card for details.