Driverless Ed-Tech:
The History of the Future of
Automation in Education

Audrey Watters
The University of Edinburgh — March 2017
this is not a self-driving car
learning as an engineering problem
MOOCs and learners’ “driving” data
Engineered, not autonomous
What if I told you the technology actually sucks?
People who drive luxury cars replace workers with robots.
Computers are cheaper for whom?
Precarious labor and “the sharing economy”
Robots “make great university professors” — R.U.R. (1920)
“Uber for Education”
“I hope you don’t have friends who recommend Ayn Rand to you”
— Flannery O’Connor (1960)
Individualism and (American) car culture
The car as “personalization”
Other directions for this talk…
The driverless school
“Roaming autodidacts” — Tressie McMillan Cottom
“The Wal-Mart of higher education”
A century of teaching machines
Driverlessness — more algorithms, fewer roads, less freedom