Duckies and Robots

Selected Poems

in the occasion of the 2016 International Conference on Robotics and Automation

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Joshua Vaughan, University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Duckie in the Lab

Your yellow color
is easy to track.
You yell
when my robot steps on you.
The shape of your body
is difficult to grasp.
Rubber duckie you are perfect
for research.

Paul Loschak, Harvard.

A poem on cardiac catheterization. And rubber duckies.

The scene is set. The lights are glaring.
Bodies robed in shades of blue.
Spic and span to not risk erring,
This treatment must be swift and true.

For years of training, practice, sweat,
The hours fierce and unforgiving.
If I now falter or forget
How am I to go on living?

The gurney's here; I scan the chart.
The patient's breath restful and mellow.
I make a furtive glance as blankets part,
And see rubbery skin, squeamishly yellow.

I shake my head and concentrate,
Now it is time to operate,
Give me the ICE catheter, nurse,
The condition is getting worse.

Wind trough the inferior vena cava
And go into the right atrium.
It's time to let the robot take ova'.
Set the gains and frequency to medium.

Motors spin, gears mesh,
Catheter rolls and images refresh.
As the robot converges to target,
I begin to identify the culprit.

At first a beak appears,
Then the wings and the tail.
As the 3D reconstruction clears,
I hear the patient inhale.

Squeak! –
In horror I jump into the air.
It seems that there is a leak,
We have no time to spare.

Under ultrasound guidance
I ablate the rubbery skin.
This procedure used to be a nuisance
But now I do it with a huge grin.

This lucky rubber duckie,
Shall squeak never more.
Poor duckie's aortic valve
Won't regurgitate any more.

Nakul Gopalan, Brown University.

robot diaper change
baby quacked a duckie
pick and place duckie

Matthew Doyle, University of Sheffield.

Duckie robot limerick

A robot in water immersed
The path to a target traversed
The robot so kind,
some ducks towed behind
A glorified tug at its worst

Rico Jonschkowski, Technische Universität Berlin.

Quack!

There was a robot new and shiny,
It watched the peaceful lake outside,
Duckies swimming in the water,
The sun's reflection oh so bright.

The robot dreams,
How would it be,
To be a duck,
so smart and free:

"The duckies can go where they want,
They are not programmed what to do,
They don't just work in simulation,
How do they function, we have no clue."

The robot gets a brush and paint,
And paints its body yellow,
Now it looks more like a duck,
But its AI's still shallow.

Let us ponder, talk, and write,
To make our robot truly bright,
To be just like a duck,
To swim in lakes and quack!

Donald Gilbert Dansereau, Queensland University of Technology.

a haiku on autonomous exploration

Exploring, I squeeze.
The yellow enigma speaks!
Robot's first ducky.

Matthias Mueller, KAUST

Human vs. Robot

This UAV is programmed to follow you,
so look up in the sky where it flies in the blue.
If you try to run away,
it will go faster and track you anyway.
If you try to catch it as it flies behind you,
watch out for those carbon props or they'll cut right through.
If you try to hide,
more UAVs will come to conquer and divide.
So just turn around, smile and wave,
remember who is the master and who is the slave.

Daniel Gonzalez, MIT

Oh what a pair we are:
You boop and beep, I quack and cheep.
And we will go so far
to keep the grad students from sleep!
To sit upon a bot is all I need
as error messages my charge must read.

Lorenzo Jamone, Instituto Superior Tecnico, Lisbon, Portugal.

Oh duck, oh duck, oh my dear little duck,
why do you think my robot got stuck?
Is it perhaps my terrible coding?
Or maybe the task was way too boring.

I wanted my robot to clean up my room,
because I can hardly handle the broom,
and now that I look at that dumb machine,
I see that is stuck at the TV screen.

Well, but if children are like their parents,
then maybe my coding is not to throw away.
Thanks for this duck debug session, my dear,
talking with you always makes my day.

Adrian Boeing, Atlas Copco

Autonomous blast hole drill,
All ducks in a row,
Accurate to fit the bill,
Poor duck got a blow!
Stay on target.

Jacopo Banfi, Politecnico di Milano.

The infinite bot

I've always loved this solitary duckie,
and this cane, that hides from me
so much of what my Kinect eyes can see.
For as I stay idle and gaze, recharging batteries,
the true beauty of a single squeak, that can't be heard
by my limited sensors, I conjure up my artificial neurons
until the charge is complete. And as the wind
I cannot hear rustling through these trees, I, that
infinite silence, to my belief of squeak
keep comparing: and I feel the eternal,
the dead research, the present,
and living one, and the sound of A*. So in this
immensity I drown my own RAM:
and short-circuiting in this lake is sweet to me.

Editor's note: please compare with *Giacomo Leopardi's L'infinito.*