Chris Funkhouser

Encapsulating E-Poetry 2009: Some views on contemporary digital poetry

2009

https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/17723

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Rezension / review

Encapsulating E-Poetry 2009: Some views on contemporary digital poetry

By Chris Funkhouser

No. 39 – 2009

Abstract

Digital poet and researcher Chris Funkhouser attends E-Poetry 2009 in Barcelona and files a report on what he heard and saw.

Prefatory notes

E-Poetry, an international festival and symposium of digital poetry, was inaugurated by Loss Pequeño Glazier in 2001 in Buffalo, and has occurred every two years since (other meetings were held in Morgantown, London, and Paris). This year's event took place in Barcelona, principally (and well) organized by Laura Borràs at the University of Barcelona. I have attended and made presentations at four of these meetings, and having done so has made a significant impact on both my creative and critical work. A report I wrote about E-Poetry 2003 was published by Borràs's research group, Hermeneia, whose efforts were recently removed from the Web by her former employer (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya/Open University of Catalonia)—my previous report and many documents valuable to the study of digital literature are unavailable to researchers as a result of Borràs's undesired, undeserved professional predicament.

Because I am working on a manuscript focusing on digital poetry and the Web, and presentations made in Barcelona are a reflection of the discipline at present, I spent several weeks afterward reviewing notes and recordings I made during the events. Since I had the privilege to attend (thanks to a travel grant from the Department of Humanities at New Jersey Institute of Technology and additional support provided by Borràs), I decided to make these observations available for people who are interested in contemporary practice (creative and theoretical) but could not be there. They are for anyone who is interested in what transpires at a gathering of individuals who are seriously engaged with digital poetry. As noted in my book *Prehistoric*

Digital Poetry, I am a proponent of the (Charles) Olsonian concept of the "saturation job", and this report is no exception to that objective; beyond my immediate family, there is nothing I am more saturated in than digital poetry.

Below I document events chronologically, with labels categorizing the focus of each session and paper titles preceding summaries. When possible, I include links to works presented and discussed. I'd like to stress that anyone interested in the materials as a result of my transcriptions of panels should make an effort to contact the authors and obtain a copy of the original essays. Due to the nature of the act, my words on the information and arguments presented may not be accurate or may be improperly stated.

Since I was unable to attend every session, I asked for assistance from Giovanna di Rosario and Mette-Marie Zacher Sørensen, who furnished their notes for this report; John Cayley and Laura Borràs also offered helpful comments. Kenneth Sherwood provided audio recordings of two other sessions I could not attend. I offer my sincere gratitude to these colleagues, the organizing team, and everyone else whose efforts made for a fantastic experience..

May 24: Digital performances

The opening of the E-Poetry 2009 Festival—which was also a featured event of Barcelona's annual "week of poetry"—took place in the spacious penthouse floor at CCCB (Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona) and was attended by more than 175 people who were not participants in the Festival. Works were shown on several mid-size flat screen monitors that were set up in front of the audience.

Following Borràs's welcome and introductions, the first presenter was Maria Mencía, who aesthetically connects her visual, generative poetry to Concrete and Sound poetry. Mencía presented five different examples of works gathered under the title "Poemas Visuales Generativos" (documentation of some of these works can be found at http://www.m.mencia.freeuk.com/). For each piece she enlisted a collaborator from the audience to propel the stage presentation: Scott Rettberg improvised a reading of a work titled "Accidental Meaning" which Mencía had produced in collaboration with Lilian Roby; Jason Nelson and Stephanie Strickland's voices generated visual poems based on the tradition of concrete poetry and more specifically in Mayer's poem "ALPHBETENQUADRATBCH 1". These were developed with the technical help of Alexander Szekely. Then Mencia introduced some new work produced specifically for the event, programmed by José Carlos Silvestre. In these pieces body movements generated the compilation of letters and symbols on the screen.One particularly important moment was Rettberg's live reading onstage

(speaking the words aloud as they were being generated). As the text emerges onscreen (a database consisting of the 100 words American high school students should know upon graduation), Rettberg improvises; the display of the reading process of this sort of work is made clear for everybody to see. Rettberg, encountering different randomly activated words of various sizes and colors, recites those that catch his eye first. Essentially, this type of connecting and assembling is what anyone encountering the work—or any generated-in-the-moment-artwork—does, unless s/he strategically imposes a method of viewing beforehand (e.g., plans ahead to view and respond to the words appearing in the upper left corner only). His reading of Mencía's shifting structure amounts to a litany of words (a "word salad"), some combinations (permutations) of which possess lyrical, sometimes humorous, poetic qualities, not unlike the juxtapositions found in more abstract forms of writing such as Language Poetry (e.g., "repeated to teach misconduct", "chicanery implant", "vernal subterfuge artifice not facetious but by chicanery insipid".

In Mencía's other visually generated poems, sounds of the user's voice and bodily movements activate the appearance of text on the screen. In the first of three voice activated works she showed, fragments of lines (in black)—which resemble snippets of code—vertically and horizontally appear on the white screen; in the second, a jumbled line of type appears, an inscribed effect she refers to as "note taking". In the third voice activated piece and body movement piece of her "Poemas Visuales Generativos" , aesthetic results are similar: letters drawn from various sources appear in small "piles" on the screen, according to tone, pitch, volume, or direction and intensity of the user's movement before the computer's camera. The piles are ultimately formed into patterns and shapes. Not using conventional software in her work Mencía seeks to, "explore Code as language and a medium&and to test how code controls the medium". As in previous works, such as "Birds Singing Other Birds Songs", Mencía presents a blank slate for the viewer, who participates in the poem by interactively constructing materials on the screen upon. In a statement about the work, Mencía writes of her interest in "the breaking and production of meanings, the non-semantic, the visual, the oral, the blank page, the engagement of the reader/user in the shifting from the linguistic to the visual and back".

Glazier followed Mencía on the stage, where he perversely (given his background as a early mover in the field of digital poetry) offered a completely conventional poetry reading (in Spanish). After Glazier's analog interlude, Jason Nelson presented a retrospective of selected works, introducing eight of his digital poetry projects, including "Game Game Game and Again Game", "Jailbreak", and "I made this you play this we are enemies". Seeing him expertly piloting the games through several levels and at the same time theatrically read the words inscribed on the screen (as well as intermittently popping up) was enlightening. Nelson presented the idealized experience of the work—in which the player quickly manages to read at least parts

of the work while successfully navigating through the layers of the interface (in fact conducting navigation in a way that permits extended reading of the text presented on each level). Especially when a player is becoming familiar with the structure this ideal scenario won't be realized, but it is a possibility. Nelson's games are marked by copious kinetic and sonic elements, almost to the point of overload. To hear/see him play and read along with them simultaneously was instructive. In chaos, spontaneous action leads to surprising results, which will not be anticipated until the player is familiar with the game. Another interesting component to being in the audience, watching the performance of these poems, is that we see more text than is reported by the voice onstage. Someone watching a gameplay performance does not just follow the author to watch and listen to receive messages, but independently reads the interface to discover her/his own alternative routes on the screen as well. Nelson briefly introduced several non-game pieces titled "wittenoom: speculative shell and the cancerous breeze" and "wide and wildly branded". "wittenoom" is an interactive structure in which a series of interlinked pictures documenting a barren landscape are joined on the screen by falling "cards", each of which contains a passage of text when clicked; unfortunately, a technical glitch prevented Nelson from showing more than one section of the piece during the presentation. "wide and wildly branded" is a "compass creation" in which the user navigates through virtual and textual terrain. Arrows direct the viewer to a wheel of colored spokes, which on mouseover reveal text in two labeled areas, marked "poetic" and "subpoetic". Examples: "poetic: come and learn to migrate routing/subpoetic: a wide and wildly branded population"; "poetic: a patent action of the ground/subpoetic: anything is a visited mythology open". "Birds still warm from flying" is a new, perhaps more complex version of the "poetry cube" previously built by Nelson (see http://www.secrettechnology.com/poem_cube/poem_cube.html), although this version of the work does not allow the viewer to contribute input. Instead the viewer manipulates Nelson's 3D object, into which text and some video and sound clips are embedded, selectively choosing (registering) what is read. Nelson's also launched a brand new game called "Jail Break", rooted in Dadaism, but spent very little time showing it, and concluded by showing two incomplete interactive works. In "the completely forever menu" lines of the poem cascade down the screen according to the viewer's location in the a succession of pull-down menus. "Chronos" Nelson described as a "completely incomplete digital poem" and extended an invitation to all to add something to the interface. The work is structured as an interactive timeline marked in decades and years, but Nelson is unsure of what to fill it with—thus his invitation to contribute served as a question, and as a challenge to the audience.

Stephanie Strickland presented her digital poem *Slippingglimpse* (as she did with her collaborator Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo at E-Poetry 2007). In the work, instances of Strickland's poetry are combined with videographer Paul Ryan's processed documentation of water flow "chreods" ("dynamical systems that return to their own

flow"). Part lecture, part screening and reading, Strickland described how the group was able to achieve their artistic, adaptive goals. Sections of *slippinglimpse* were projected and poems— which are a pastiche of writings on topics relevant to the subject—were recited. *Slippingglimpse* is unquestionably an important example of digital poetry, an appropriate choice to present to a large audience, but I don't mind expressing some disappointment that Strickland did not prepare new materials for the event and hope to see new dynamic work form her in the near future.

Philippe Bootz presented his work *Passage*, a "unique reading poem", a "multimedia generator" that combines music with fixed and kinetic imagery containing literary texts (available for download at http://www.labo-mim.org; "The Set of U", which is central to *Passage*, is published in the *Electronic Literature Collection* Vol. 1). In the audience, we read and/or hear the texts (in French) and music (i.e., the authors voice is present), and what appears on the screen differs from what is spoken. *Passage* is a long poem, running for more than thirty minutes, so we did not experience a full viewing at CCCB. Among the visible effects seen in the ongoing animation is use of visual echo: segments of text are built from previously seen texts. As *Passage* progresses, it becomes interactive, giving the viewer a sense of participation. The presence of Marcel Frémiot's music, which gives pathological ambiance to the work, cannot be understated. The work is visually and textually complex, requiring time and patience from viewers. Aesthetics of the work compare to Bootz's early efforts in *Alire*, but are more complex and refined. Beyond reading and listening, the audience is visually and aurally stimulated, and given time to reflect on the concepts and symbolism presented. Bootz's importance to the field of digital poetry, as an artist, organizer/publisher, and theorist, is unquestionable. *Passage* is a new and sophisticated work, yet one that is perhaps best observed in a private setting. To fully experience and appreciate the subtleties of Passage would, at any rate require multiple viewings, so hopefully everyone introduced to the work here will follow-up with subsequent viewings.

Isaías Herrero, winner of the last edition of the "Ciutat de Vinaròs" Digital Literature Prize and the final performer of the evening, presented a rich hypermedia poem titled *Eidola Kosmos*. Made with Flash, the piece consists of perhaps a dozen layers of graphically vivid text. Herrero's opening interface reveals instructions and rapidly scrolling and pulsating icons and text atop a crystal clear image of a barren natural landscape (montaged with superimposed iconography). Seemingly numerous ways for the viewer to proceed are offered (although upon review, movement between the dozen or so layers is strictly linear). Herrero conducts a reading of his skillful work, advancing through its various undulations, which (as shown at the event) include refined animations and rapidly moving texts appearing within shapes, 3D texts, and processed video loops—aspects of which are interactive and present the viewer with choices to make and texts to consider. In some sections, input alters the position and content of text and image. Much of the time, muted sounds are

included, which assist in establishing the work's tone. Most of the writing is not in English, but a few spoken words in English are inserted, such as this sequence that is heard in one of the early layers: "there is no pilot", "You are not alone", "This is the language future", and "and it is digital". The text, on a quick reading, largely concerns changing the world—one presumes meaning various things—and the multimedia language devised by Herrero reflects the potential power and spectacle of the mediated idiom(s).

A reception celebrating the start of the fifth edition of E-Poetry was held in the gallery immediately following the presentations. Five lemon cakes (one for every E-Poetry) and a sweet regional wine were served.

May 25: Opening

The second day's events took place at Caixa Forum, a stylish art museum/complex located in a renovated old factory within the Parc du Montjuïc. In her opening remarks, Borràs offered her view that the international E-poetry community was very active: almost 100 artworks and 50 papers were submitted for consideration. She announced 100 people were participating in the event, and that the global economic crisis had an impact on participation (25 invited participants were unable to attend due to financial issues). Bootz (president of the scientific committee for e-poetry) shared a few thoughtful observations, sharing his perception that our interdisciplinary field is growing and changing. He stated the importance of recognizing that digital literature may seem at times like regular literature, but that it is not and that it causes problems for conventional publishers. He noted it is the 50 year anniversary of digital poetry—a half century since Theo Lutz's stochastic generator was used to make poetry, and stressed the importance of research, and the need for researchers to be as innovative as digital poets; that the work of the scholar involves knowledge, addressing cultural identities, and contemporary aesthetics. Glazier spoke briefly, but not without substance. Beyond offering greetings and appreciations to all gathered, he shared his observation that Barcelona was a "perfect" place for E-Poetry to occur, as the native language (Catalan) is a "language within a language" (referring to the fact that Catalan is a language that exists within another Official language, Spanish), a truth that is "central to digital production" (i.e., such a language, code, exists in digital poetry—and is the thing that makes it happen). The other comment he made that bears consideration is that the field is at present in an "interface stage"—meaning that much emphasis is being put into interface production. Glazier noted he found many of them confusing, and indicated his hope that artists would eventually return to concentrating on text.

Keynote address: "Understanding Text That Moves: Two Close Readings"

Roberto Simanowski gave the first keynote address, titled "Understanding Text That Moves: Two Close Readings". Simanowski's paper was in part inspired by my 2007 E-Poetry paper about "creative cannibalism" and digital poetry, a topic he has closely considered during the past two years. He likens the idea of cannibalism to remediation and considers its affinities with postcolonial studies (i.e., anticolonialist strategies), exploring the concept of cultural anthropophagy in the context of digital media—particularly as a reaction to "xenophobic movements". Simanowski addresses "the other" in digital media and how is it devoured, focusing on how text is regurgitated as a visual object, as sound, and performance—sometimes stripped of original linguistic content. Examples highlighted in the discussion include *The Messenger* (Paul de Marinis, 1998/2005), *The Complete Works of W.S.* (Caleb Larsen, 2008), and *bit.fall* (Julius Popp, 2006). The latter title—in which words are "written" by falling water drops—was given a close reading during the second part of Simanowski's talk (named "Why is writing with water too fluid to allow for deconstructive maneuvers?"), which shows how works in digital media can function as cultural critique in the art business. He debates whether or not corporate tools, no matter how inventively they are employed, can be used to subvert commercial intent. Simanowski suggests the material aspects of *bit.fall* may indicate a secret to success, that its sensuality is what makes it so appealing. At the same time he notes that a graphic waterfall, which devalues the signified in a way similar to the spoken word, "may not be good for allusions of permanence". Invoking Alan Liu's *The Laws of Cool*, Simanowski celebrates *bit.fall* for its, "Ethos of information that is against information", for showing the "uselessness of useful information," and for how it "uses information to abuse information". The third part of the presentation ("Why is standing still in front of a screen not enough resistance yet?") begins by raising the possibility of digital text appearing ornamentally (the "wow" factor, that is so often the goal of design and theatre), then thoroughly introduced (i.e., "read") a work that doesn't marginalize text but rather commands attention to it, *Still Standing* (Bruno Nadeau and Jason Lewis, 2005). Simanowski describes how the work "disciplines movement of the body in favor of the text"—showing a demo of how the text "soaks up" the viewer's motionless body with dynamic typography (which he sees as a type of reverse cannibalism). A comparison is made to Guy Debord's "war" on the cinema (i.e., cinema without pictures, in order to create critical awareness)—highjacking of new medium in favor of the old. Simanowski sees this as a subversive turnaround of the object, meaning, or idea—a critique of bustling activity on the screen, on the society of spectacle (although he notes severe limitations in terms of text in *Still Standing*). The presentation concluded with Simanowski declaring his hermeneutic standpoint that the critic should understand the utterance as well as the artist, and then even better. Simanowski's presentation was as always thorough

and erudite. I am still somewhat awestruck that a scholar of such high quality would pick up on an idea I'd been developing and take it so far. Otherwise, I always highly value the information Simanowski conveys in his presentations. Just as I learned about *Text Rain* and *Listening Post* from Simanowski in 2007, I am introduced to *bit.fall*, *The Messenger*, and *Still Standing* in 2009. His interest in a broader spectrum of digital arts, and the generosity with which he shares it, helpfully informs those of us who tend to concentrate on literary works.

A discussion session lasted about twenty minutes, with questions and comments from the audience. Cayley followed up on the topic of cultural anthropophagy, to discuss the implications of Simanowski's argument that the practice digital literature is radically ambiguous. He questions the opposition Simanowski sets up between colonizer and colonized, that the audio/visual is the colonizing (or what eats)—the problem being that the audio/visual is technology/power. In Cayley's view we are eating ourselves, not the other (insofar as the literary is mediated). RS replies by reminding us how the book colonized culture, that literature before print wasn't the main expressive practice. Now text is being eaten by technology—bringing back audio/visual communication related to artifacts (which he calls an "irony of history"). In his view, "Literature is not the end of it. There are always ends of empires. We are witnessing the end of the empire of text (and the western world) over the next ten years)". Bootz shares his observations that Concrete & Process poets in Brazil did similar things and asks, "Is digital poetry eating off of these practices?" Bootz makes the point that cannibalism is not limited to text but to technology itself—not only in reverse, but with computing and digital media. The "real" cannibalism "would be the relationship between the two." To understand and see what is novelty in digital literature we need, states Bootz, "to take into account all facets of the work, not only installations but public readings". RS responds by saying "the way text is presented in concrete poetry does not necessarily undermine the text but contributes, by its specific way of appearance, to its meaning as a second layer (making the example of Gomringer's "Silence", which at the center removes a word and leaves a gap: real silence cannot be announced, but we can¹t understand this without this gap missing in the text; we need to relate to text to understand the message even when we shift from linguistic objects to visual ones". The remaining discussion focused (indirectly) on issues of genre, proving—without saying so—how digital literature has expanded beyond the computer terminal. Ken Sherwood raised issues of contextualization, stating an interest in installations and reading in public spaces. In his view the problem is not technology but the nature of installations. Viewers unwilling to stand in front of a work in a gallery for more than a few moments will have problems, so the problem is not technology but the setting: "If we could take the works home they'd be something else". When put on the spot to do so, Simanowski was unable to extend his argument by finding examples that are not installations in public spaces (although he did mention Squid Soup's "Untitled" as a possibility. A woman in the audience opined that when installations are involved, we need to ask "What is

the literary aspect of the work? How much reading is involved?" Simanowski questions how helpful establishing the proportion of words is in order to define something as literature rather than as art; for him the question is, "do I construct a world in my mind as I do when I read something? If I don¹t, then it is not literature". Strickland notes that anthropophagy is about heterogeneity—and from her perspective emphasis should be on eat/digest/mixing, combining with the text. I commented on the impressive imaginative powers of the artworks documented in the presentation, and that their inventiveness is what is so important to recognize.

Following the keynote, two panels of paper and a panel of works transpired. For the first time ever at e-poetry, concurrent sessions were held, so as to expand and diversify the program and to foster the inclusion/participation of younger scholars working in the field. As a result, I cannot directly report on everything that occurred, although I have acquired audio recordings of some of the sessions I missed and a synopsis of all sessions are included below. Since the papers (i.e., Proceedings) from the symposium will be published online, I do not go into full detail in reporting on the contents of the papers below; abstracts for the papers are already online at http://www.e-poetry2009.com/pdf/e-poetry_2009_abstracts.pdf. It is entirely possible (if not likely) that I have misquoted (perhaps even misrepresented statements by) authors; the Proceedings should be referenced as authoritative documentation, for accurate details and direct (more coherent) representation.

Panel of papers: E-poetry and other literary and artistic forms: "GPS—The Global Poetic System", "Emerging Poetry and Video Games"

The first panel I attended, "e-poetry and other literary and artistic forms", featured presentations by Juan Gutiérrez and Laura Borràs ("GPS—The Global Poetic System"), and Dionisio Cañas ("Emerging Poetry and Videogames"). Gutiérrez and Borràs's project, a non-commercial collaboration started by the Hermeneia research group in 2007 with the help of a grant from the Spanish Ministry, maps the streets of Barcelona, which in a very certain sense provides an alternative lens through which to "read" the city. In the presentation he defines the project: "to discover the poetry of the geography of the city&a system to get lost, and discover what you would otherwise not discover". The system detects literary and artistic points of interest, explains the significance of its interdisciplinary core (in particular social sciences and hard sciences, such as art and Information Technology), and describes the directions being taken in a new version. Creating the system involves establishing categories and meta-information connections, so the group has devised an Epistemology of Electronic Literature:
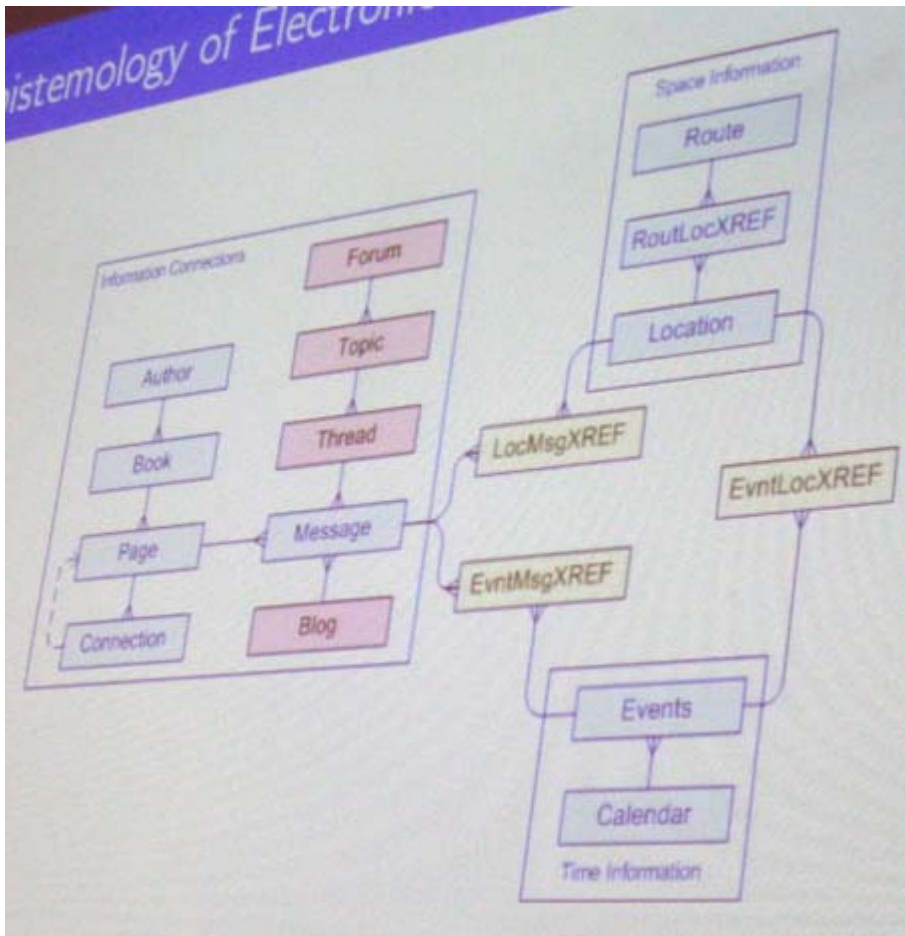
Juan Gutiérrez, Epistemology of Electronic Literature, E-Poetry 2009.

The chart (and database design) contains spatial and temporal components, which could be used to map the contents of any city, ideally accessing a mutable central repository of information through a range of interfaces. Users will enter their location, and then follow a path determined by pre-programmed or random logic built into the system, and interact with other users. In one example, a user follows a route established by passages of George Orwell's writing about Barcelona. Applications will be created that allow users to contribute to the system. Gutiérrez described the main problems, and issues of consideration (such as attaining and maintaining the user's attention and interface design). In the discussion immediately following the presentation, Jim Rosenberg stated his view the system

won't be able to absorb all of electronic literature if it doesn't deal with certain (extensible) object models, to which Gutiérrez replied the system will handle materials through 52 compiled source codes. Jason Nelson wants "to make a work that studies the differences between coordinates that could be read in any place, a sort of geometric poetry. Can that be done? What other layers can be added, perhaps vertical layers?" JG: Absolutely, coordinate-based works can be harnessed through a system called "mobile beacon", and is scalable—complexity can be added, though z-coordinates (height) is not available. CF: How would someone like Jim's work, which is not oriented to any type of place, fit into the system? JG: Place is not necessarily important; one application for the GPS includes functioning as a hypertext electronic literature archive.

The second paper in the session, "Emerging Poetry and Video Games", was presented by poet Dionisio Cañas and Carlos González Tardón, an artist and researcher of immersion a psychology in videogames (see http://peopleandvideogames.com/); the two are publishing a book later this year called *Can a Computer Write a Love Poem?: Techno-Romanticism and Electronic Poetry*). Cañas claims one of the fundamentals of the avant-garde is playful activity, and that poetry has always been a game—if not more, a game of making verses. He points out the popularity of video games (noting 30% of the Spanish population and 68% in the US are players), and that fictional characters, such as "Mario" are among the most well known personalities in the world. Begins by comparing ludic videogames to cinema, and how both have a tendency to make fiction real. Tardón makes connections between poetry and videogames, noting how literary traits of videogames have been celebrated by groups such as "Game Poets Society", a collective whose members write poems based on videogames, and read a poem about "Space Invaders" by Jonathan Cooper. Artistic games, such as Orit Kruglanski's *InnerSpace Invaders* (1998), *I wish I were the Moon* (Daniel Benmergui, 2008; see), as well as games by Nelson and Tardón were briefly screened. In contrast, Tardón also suggested commercial mega-games, such as "Shadow of the Colossus" and "Rez", were strong examples of "classic" games whose multimedia elements were artistic, performative, and contained deep beauty. Because of the "flow" found in both poetry and games, Tardón and Cañas argue that videogames can be used to portray a poetic art similar to poetic theatre, which could be used to connect people to poetry. Videogames can produce sublime feelings via the action and immersion of the player, who creates her/his own world, or makes sense of one that is given, in a transcultural language. In the discussion, Gutiérrez raises the point that IQs have been decreasing, and one of the correlative factors to this is access to television and videogames, and that these activities distract people from literature. If we try to incorporate poetry into them, how can that be done without losing the cultural treasure we have? JG asks, "is there a new emerging field, or as a fusion with old forms"? DC: Apocalptic statements are not truthful; games and poetry are popular and are not exclusive of each other. CGT: In his research, he has

found players tend to read more than non-players. If someone makes a good videogame with poetry, players will go back and read poetry, in the way that people who like rap music are often inspired to read poetry. JN: A recent game of his has had 5 million hits. In his view, people are interested and it is exciting, but the interest in playing dominates the activity rather than engaging with texts. It is a gateway because the interfaces are "a language they can understand". The trick is to get users interested in the text. Jorg Piringer commented that the players in popular multi-user game are like theatre actors, why not discuss the potential for poetry in such spaces? Brian Stefans mentions [Neil Hennessey's] "Bassho's Frogger"; games solve a problem of passivity in interactive art, which is that often there is no larger objective. In videogames, there are clearly defined tasks. Games are "task-based interactive art" in which the engagement is more intense, as in the play in writing with rhyme and meter. DC: Young people are educated in videogames, so they are going to be around, whether or not they are great, they will impress on e-poetry. He plans to work on one titled "Rimbaud Rambo".

Panel of papers: Close-reading e-poetry: "New Meanings of Poetry in Eduardo Kac's Poems", "Point cloud paradoxes: e-poetic terminology and Alan Sondheim's 'Wild Theory'", "Traveling through Loss Pequeño Glazier's Writing Spaces: 'Demarcated Locations' in 'Dynamic Texts'"

In the other panel being held at the same time, William Bain, Eliza Deac, and Mirona Mageru presented papers. Deac introduced herself by explaining that electronic poetry is not known at her university, and that her research is personal. Her paper, "New Meanings of Poetry in Eduardo Kac's Poems", looks at the "prehistory" of digital poetry while discussing Kac's work. She notes how the labels for the poetry change as Kac progresses (particle, digital, bio, and space), and that they serve as a pretext for poetry. This contrasts with general tendency of technological literature, and underlines novelty of forms that cannot exist without programmable medium by blurring borders between genres. Uncovers Kac's work in relation to traditional poetry. Posits the work as following Modern and avant-garde models, reading Kac through Laurent Jenny's book, *La fin de l'intériorité*. She sees the pursuits as open ended aspirations within the tradition of literary theory (questioning the stability of literature). Literature is redefined by technology, as it has been previously (with Symbolism, as in Mallarmé). Thought is presented differently, space is different, metaphors and processes have changed. Screen and page are different kinds of

mediums, E-poetry is the newest phase, though it does not break away but enhances or enlarges the literary possibilities, changes the perspective. Common ground with the past includes "the figuration of thought" (Valery), a recurrent topic of Kac's theoretical articles (i.e., transforming the instrument). Kac literalizes various arts in his programs, replacing metaphors into an unrestricted context. His works are on DVD and internet, and previously used other tech systems (like Minitel), and does things his predecessors couldn't do. Words in his work have rich semantic value, also uses shapes and symbols, and cosmological themes. "I" is a strong presence. Biopoetry and space poetry are newer, not as explored (special poetry mainly exists as an anticipatory idea). Kac's syntactic operations are active on multiple registers. She briefly discusses his holopoems, moves from aesthetic to fluid: text as a kinetic image; they are hybrid, more dynamic, "interlingual". E-literature genres are expanding, but Kac's Biopoetry projects may not qualify. He tends to explore and combine media as the computer continues to shape new works.

Bain talked about "Point cloud paradoxes: e-poetic terminology and Alan Sondheim's 'Wild Theory'" (he didn't read a paper but talked about what he is doing in the paper). Terminology is important to theorizing any analysis; art is social, and the social is addressed in Sondheim's work. The poem, part of Sondheim's *Internet Text* (also published in a book called *The Wayward*), is the focus. He describes the poem as "metaliterary" (theory becomes practice) and "self-referential" in the sense of referring to the writing process within the piece". "Wild Theory" in Bain's view is full of "social play" and makes us mindful of Freud's idea of joke work, or dream work in which the subconscious mind comes out. A point cloud is a set of 3D points describing the surface features of a virtual object. Bain associates this with Virginia Woolf's "company of gnats": both deal with perception, monadality, multiple, simultaneous perspectives. Bain does a close reading of "Wild Theory", which he describes as a one page "poetic vignette" that features use of two characters (called "eminences" in Sondheim's writing, usually feminine, here named Tiffany and Honey). They discuss what the "wild theory" is or isn't (and what it does and doesn't do). Dialog begins in medias res, in an outdoor park, has an open ending: "voices disappear in the distance". Ordinary language and technical language profoundly mingle. Signifiers in the poem propel him out to the greater piece. Parody and Feminist criticism are evoked, as are theory bundles, liminal spaces; "Wild Theory" refuses axiomatics, embodies pragmatics, phenomenology, and other fields of knowledge. "We need an encyclopedia to come to grips with the poem", which pendulums, back and forth (between styles of language, dialog) throughout. Sondheim, like the Internet, is full of theories. Bain cites Ron Silliman's "wild form" and also connects the work with Hegel dialectics, Derrida, Judith Butler (resignifying). He ends by etymologizing wild and theory—wild should be written "wyld" to reflect the polysemy in elements of language.

Magearu's "Traveling through Loss Pequeño Glazier's Writing Spaces: 'Demarcated Locations' in 'Dynamic Texts'" (which included a 3 page handout I didn't acquire) starts with a quote from another of Glazier's works (*Io Sono at Swoons*), to show he creates a "sound poetry script for performance" out of lexical fragments. This type of work (bizarre word combinations that change every 40 seconds) challenge a reader's ability to understand, points to difficulty of reading in new spaces. Glazier makes an intriguing Concrete construction: multilingual nature explores disturbance of languages. What do readers make out of it if the poem constantly changes? Does the dynamic nature of text make it a performance? What is Glazier's rationale? Is it a performance or script for performance? Performance of digital poetry becomes more inclusive of identity and culture. Magearu discusses intersection points of these issues: and then does a "partial close reading of Glazier's *Mouseover*. Performance in poetry involves particular temporal and spatial boundaries, with an audience, although traditional aspects have already been broken by performance poetry (especially the relationship between poet and audience). Now audience interactivity is a characteristic (action/re-action), and works are not always finished in any conventional sense, extended by digital technology's "sites of encounter". Lenses she uses to read works: through the techniques of making (digital poetry), as spectacle, and as method for constituting identity and culture. There's a symbiotic relationship between digital poetry and its readers, analogous to scripted performance. Cites *Permanence Through Change*, a book the museum community uses embracing concept of variable media, scores are used for rebuilding works. This applies to digital poetry because code is a score, reproduces a particular experience. Recreation validates as performance, digital poetry loses identity without readers. Coincidentally, readers lose identity while reading. Identity is defined through interaction. Glazier's work represents approaches to issues of national and linguistic identity, inviting speculation about identity (determined through interaction). Glazier's network is personal, interconnected, self-referential, and is also a network of the readings that happen in the poem. He does not take complete control, but establishes parameters of events—ephemeral & multiple iterations, and resembles performance in this regard. In *Mouseover* there are 4 major panels, with different kinds of readings within each (she develops a non-linear reading strategy). The work reaches an endpoint, and the reader is a dynamic and meaningful presence within it.

In the discussion, JR reacts to the comment that code is a score, asks if it is instead a set of instruments. If the latter, then perhaps there is no score. SB: How can we avoid describing the material? MM: Can it be both? In the variable media concept, artists describe characteristics of their work and choose most effective preservation strategies. Rather than listing physical components, understands behavior and intrinsic effects. KS to MM: Sympathetic to performance and orality. Referring to performance poetry—are there any particular things you have in mind? MM: Not exactly, it is the elements present in the poem, on the textual level, as an

instance, a physical action. KS there's a way to historicize Glazier in the 90s—through Olson, the emerging Electronic Poetry Center, a rich social tradition of poetry readings. LG: in Spanish you get two exclamation points. MM: Does this mean that it itemizes the voice or reader? SS cites a new book by Jennifer DeVere Brody (*Punctuation: Art, Politics, and Play*), in which punctuation is studied as performance, and suggests code can be both—variable media concept provides for hardware and software choices. JR: I think it can be both, but if we focus on code as the set of instruments, that leaves room for something else but I'm not sure what that means. Bain: one distinction I found was the distinction between object oriented programming and imperative programming. Every thing textual is coded.

Panel of papers: The nature of the digital text. Code and literaturnost: "New Generation", "Against Digital Poetics", "E-Poetry Triangulated: Transmediality, Transtextuality, and Textual Instruments"

Following lunch I attended a panel titled "The nature of digital text", featuring talks by Ambroise Barras, Sandy Baldwin, and Markku Eskelinen. For many years the literary attributes of computer poetry have been studied, and machines have become part of the poetic process, not for self-satisfaction but for experimentation in linguistics and literary sciences. Barras believes that comparisons between contemporary and historic or antiquated works are problematic, and analyzes the qualities that contemporary generators have inherited. In his view, scientific advancements have led (and will lead) to the production of a new generation of higher quality works in the genre. The more audience can contribute, and the more economic the style, the more the computer will be acknowledged as aesthetically valuable. While to some degree acknowledging appreciation and agreement, Barras picks a bone with (i.e., finds "suspicious") my claim (in *Prehistoric Digital Poetry*) that nothing new has emerged since the initiation of the Web, that history is confined to repeat former experiments. In his view, generators have not their vitality, and have become more vivid. He sees my categorization and the historic works as primitive. What are the new ways of generation? Barras points out newer, more detailed models for study, involving artificial intelligence, have emerged in Spain and Scotland. Software can be trained to handle human circumstances, including language production. Poetry is vague and complex, however, which makes it difficult to reify digitally. AI researchers are now trying to represent the actuality of poetic processes—typicality and novelty—while restricting themselves to use of accepted poetical forms. Barras mentions programs Aspira (Guervas); Malurome (haiku?) which he classifies as "virtuoso", celebrating their "mastery, classical

construction, and meeting of "grammaticality, meaning, and poeticity". AI features radicalize the texts by significantly removing aesthetic considerations because the computer cannot express itself aesthetically. Barras makes notice of a recent French literary journal (*Passage d'encres* 33), dedicated to computer poetry, which contained a questionnaire distributed to and answered by artists "in the Francophone scene". Barras singles out three questions he finds most relevant: What kind of relation does e-poetry maintain with textual materials?, "Is there any pleasure of the text in e-poetry?", and "Can a generator produce high quality literary texts?"; he notes several replies by researchers and practitioners. Though use of text is not absolute, poets can return to text and need to give impact to words. Notes Bootz's model of poetical program creation, his view that programmed poems may be labeled by failure. Two stages poetic conception: (1) that thoughts can qualify as formal—delegation of author to program of shaping text, and (2) authorial intention of making coded program with intervention in reception (modification of observable characteristic of work). Other modalities for approaching the work have been developed, some without object or intention. Barras' conclusion is that we have new generative features, but also a new generation of readers.

Baldwin's presentation was wild, more rapid-fire than presentations thus far (at one point somebody asked him to slow down, but he said he couldn't). Baldwin (dis)orients audience by smoothly blending quotes (by Jake Chapman and Alan Sondheim) and his own statements. The comments, to begin, relate to (or are commentary on) Code Work but quickly extend to other "economies" of text (intermediation and so on). Not a conventional paper but more a monologue, musing on several topics at once. Baldwin moves quickly between subjects and thoughts and performs well. The pluralism and rapidity was refreshing (and certainly not without substance). Rather than hang a certain topic out to dry, to deaden it with focus and absolutes, Baldwin's discourse is lively, as lively as the artworks and theories invoked. *Shock* (Chapman) (i.e., shocking the viewer) is not the answer; *Lip* (Sondheim) (i.e., extreme bodily sexuality) is also not without limits, although its presence gives Baldwin the opportunity to discuss online chat and style, specifics of the interface, (and how the minimal economy, the "interiorized topography" of chat might be beneficial). In reference to *Lip* (which could, I think, be somewhat extended to Sondheim's work in *Second Life*), he discusses new modalities of expression, "pre-symbolic" forms in which "the extreme becomes organic" and "writing is not a sign but an organic membrane", a "tethering of body to screen" (cites Mishima, flesh and the ideality of words). Argues these printed works are the only examples of digital poetics: "Digital poetics means the poetics of the digital" & in Baldwin's view most critics don't emphasize enough the digital qualities. The problem of writing the net is a neglected issue—too often compared to print (books). Baldwin raises issue of limits to the ELO definition for "electronic *literature*" because it presumes a discourse, suggesting its constraints leave the institution open to generic critical attack (at the same time he also expresses admiration for

its neutrality). Observes that the literary seems to be too easily folded into the various genres of e-writing, that media's role is too understated and needs to be analyzed as part of the content. Contemporary analysis is too allegorical, perhaps too tied to preconceptions of what electronic literature is, and too attentive to its features in relation to other discourses. Usefully reads a Shakespearian sonnet as a digital poem. Concluding points: critical options have merged, producing knowledge, counter knowledge, pleasure (including being part of an emerging field and group). His title confronts limitations in the current discourse but also connotes proximity, intimacy; we must seek the "ascii unconscious" (Sondheim).

Eskelinen's relatively brief talk begins by explaining his own type of triangulation: he is exiled from Game Studies, does not like poetry, and is not interested in interpretation or cultural critique as justification. Also adds to the discussion of cannibalism his interest in the anthropophagy between text and user, when the text takes information from the user (measures bodily states and does something with them). Invokes Aarseth's triangle for describing the textual machine (1997) as a model for his talk, how it changes shape to the point of destroying itself. Notes generic media distinctions in e-poetry, in which media plurality is ignored. From a cybertext perspective, e-poetry belongs to ergodic and non-ergodic media ecologies, including works that could be made using non-digital media. Pluralism in poetry has been around for many years, and many digital poems are simple continuations of printed works; Eskelinen wonders why such works garner critical consideration as such. Ergodic poetry has a long history, and is challenging. The best that could be achieved by convenient scholarly inclusions (focus on remediation) is to elevate the discipline from "invisibility to comfortable marginality". Instead, we can triangulate, discuss e-poetry in terms of frontiers (Transmediality, Transtextuality, and Textual Instruments). In the presentation he glosses over his discussion of transmediality, simply offering comments on quotes by Giselle Beiguelman ("the interface is the message") and Eduardo Kac. With regards to transtextuality he issues a complaint to e-poetry scholars, who he sees as having countless contexts in which to challenge poetics but do not do so expansively. Poetry sets text into relation with other texts but the connections are not theorized adequately. Ordinary theories cannot account for all aspects of textuality. Eskelinen largely did not really read his paper, but rather presented an outline of it, with comments. Each of these scholars, in different ways, issued calls for expansion in critical studies of digital literature. As a critic, it was interesting to hear these different perspectives, and made me aware of some of the primary areas of interest. We must account for many things, there are many possible courses of analysis, and the differences in people can be marked in discrepancy in their critical interest. The field and process is pluralistic and can be open, but certain areas shouldn't be neglected. Different people will naturally be attentive to different aspects of the work; hopefully, in the end, all grounds are covered.

In the discussion: JR to SB: The elephant in the room is Turing completeness. "When we're admitting programmability into the picture you can prove there is escape from any possible formulation?" CB: possible to situate within Turing, but not sure. William Bain asks how object oriented coding fits into the definitions of electronic/digital/virtual? CB: one can instate a poetics of any online text. PB: important to ask the question "what is digital literature"; several different answers. Introduce the concept of "ambiencia", an architectural term. There are many different ways to see it. In one way, the poem is an object we can learn, in another the poem is not an object but an entity that has the power to act, in which it is not the materiality that is important but the nature of the action. This promotes the making (and study) of an entity that acts on our relationship (to text, to machine), and to the nature of the action—as certain works use digital material not just computing. A different point of view on text, such as this, is needed. CB comments they should be situated in relations to the humans that make them. JC: likes the idea of abandoning a definition that is contingent, but notes an aesthetic side to CB's partisanship to it. What is the role of a particular aesthetics in his practice? CB: Chose examples according to two imperative directions: entities that produce action and relation un-subjective body. JC: This is different to Mark Hansen's sense of body; you're not reading through the body. CB I'm talking about the body as saturating every mark we deal with on the screen. RS to AB: Discuss Schmitt's assessment of generators as play with no consequence; what is the consequence of this on generated poetry? Blends the survey questions ("Can a computer produce high-quality text? Can there be pleasure in e-text?"), and points of discussion to a new question: what happens when we learn that there is no human behind the text, what does that mean? Is it then an autobiographical process? They can still be read as high-quality texts, but that is not the point; he wants to acknowledge computer's presence. RS: Wonders if we have not some sort of religious sense of digital texts, the aura of which we see as a pantheistic sauce, God speaking through the machine; connects sublime to the machine. AB sees it more in scientific terms. RS the quantity (science) is not of as much interest as quality. Either I don't pay attention because it is chance, or I presume an author. JC no question of it being a machine, and a combination of humans not unified by a single author, it is a combination. CB: there has to be an origin. JC: can't it just be shocking? JR: the reader of the generator is a missing component in this discussion. The reader is in control, can "order" poems, save the work, throw it away. In analyzing from the point of view of these activities, this is how you unify generator w/other forms of digital poetry. The reader gets to choose to do something. AB: Was trying to say that what the generator produces is not text but the construction of the reader, a compulsive way of reading.

Panel of papers: The nature of the digital text. Code and literaturnost: "Word Arrays Processed in Tranquility: Procedure, Program, Play, Poesis", "The Promises of E-Poetry"

In the simultaneous panel, Kenneth Sherwood and Emilia Branny made presentations. Sherwood looked at text generator poems and pedagogy, issues relevant to a general audience and skeptics. He argues for the necessity of teaching of electronic poetry in literature programs, commenting about 3 works (leaving out discussion of Nick Monfort's PERL generators that's also in the paper). Word arrays: cites Hayles ("electronic literature tests the boundaries of the literary&"). Teaching context prompts him to consider the implications of including e-literature to literature programs, and its relation to poetry as genre. Cites Juliana Spahr and Joan Rettalack's *Poetry and Pedagogy: The Challenge of the Contemporary*, which underwrites teaching as "liberal humanist paradigm". Experimental poetry imagines a productive challenge of the production of the contemporary, making a case for teaching different types of texts. How do we make a living classroom? He extends this to e-literature and poetry. He cites George Landow, introducing literature to digital literature opens up prospects of textual reading, giving it literary style and form. There's not a consensus about this regarding digital poetry. His title overwrites Wordsworth: now we have word arrays *processed* in tranquility. Sherwood highlights problem for poetry as imagined as a pseudo romantic effusion in which authorial communication comes from an inspired author. Immersive experimental text is transparent, emotion flows across aether between the inspired poet and recipient, material of language dissolves in a mystified haze. For student, poem blossoms latent intentionality, a message to be disclosed through interpretation. He cites Jerome McGann & Lisa Samuels ("Deformance and Interpretation") who argue contemporary interpretive practices are the same—people are after meaning. There's still an essential relation between work and structure of ideas is preserved. Conceptual form gets articulated for the work; for novice or advanced readers, interpretive impulse is part of the act of reading. Sherwood discusses K. Silem Mohammad's printed poem "Mars Needs Terrorists". Students observe disjunctions, the usual poetic markers (punctuation), etc., see patterns, identify thematic. When they learn that it is made with Google, it becomes a problem text. For the author it is a "formalized distress signal"; students are "arrested", call Google the author and speak out against appropriation in literariness—it does not "mean" as poetry usually does. This opens the door to text generation. Disagreeing with Bootz, Sherwood disengages generated texts from intentionality, sees them as aspects of form shaped by decisions of makers, materials of medium, and the conventions of genre. Intention is the convention and craft, wanting to seek a substitute for focus on intentionality. "Why are we always asking what poems

mean?". How do we teach generated work? His examples, Nanette Wylde's "Storyland" (2004) and Glazier's *Io sono at swoons* (2003) bewilder novice readers, but with "Storyland" they "can bridge gaps" and can interpret as product of author's imagination (can create "user narratives") and they begin to revise interpretive intentions (reverse engineering their approach, thinking about how works are made rather than what mean). With Glazier, they can't produce a user narrative or simply analyze—don't know how to proceed. Hearing him discuss the work (and read it) changes that—it helps them to know that he is distant from the work, that he de-authorizes and is surprised by what it creates. It is the opposite of direct expression, less susceptible to mapping. We have to respond in a playful way, tuning into fragments of conversation in a multi-lingual city. Sherwood notes the irony of returning to speaking the work as a way to read it. To read generated poems requires an extension of interpretive practices; they foreground process and programming, leading through play an engagement of language and "performative unhinged reading". Afterwards, Branny suggests that if we don't have an idea of how to talk about it, it is not a good idea to make judgments that cannot be responsibly made. Literature is a premise for experimentation; many techniques are present around us in the commercial world. E-poetry can have a social impact, and something may open up in the electronic space. What is the goal? If you want to describe, you have to make a whole picture, but if you talk about something it gains a place in the academic world and propagates. The more we write about e-poetry, the more it will become e-poetry. KS: But the process of canonization is an ideological one. EB: If you are a researcher you don't want your name to be associated with researching a terrible poem!

Branny explains she is a cybertext researcher, new to writing about e-poetry. She begins by citing Aarseth's *Cybertext* [paraphrase]: "We need the image of the text in order to focus, we use metaphor or reading to indicate that reading will be partial and never reach the text itself". Reading process should be discussed in theological terms—reader has goal to reach a goal, to grasp work in completeness, and to translate the work into a sign. Work must be read and interpreted. What is a poem? First clues are included in paratexts (i.e., titles, publisher, and comments). Process starts when reader begins to "uncover" the (unstable) text, a quest that involves indirection. The desire to pursue reading leads to actions and commands made available by the work; readers rely on feedback, become operators (process can be envisioned as a circle: [text-promise-desire]). Literary promises are given by various indications within the work. We interpret and manipulate with respect to desire—results redirect the process, which continues. Interp may take place on several levels—on the surface level (as seen), as imagined or perceived (as read), and on the whole process of reading (double reading, process). Interpretation is not limited to mental activity but semiotic sequences, can be literary on all of these levels. 3 groups (seen, read, process) have promises: of destruction/creation, of cognition, and of aesthetics (functional refer to role of reading experience), each can make a

link to poetry. This is why e-poetry is different than previous forms; it is not rhymed, or metrical, and is not to be read in a single session. She shows examples of Jean-Pierre Balpe, Jim Andrews, Lionel Kearns. A realization (in the promise of e-poetry) is that we arrive at areas of text by making movements on the screen, more moves reveal more text. Works such as Kearns's are like a puzzle. Hypertext lexia can be associated with traditional reading, but doesn't leave much space for considering the cycles of interaction. She references Sharif Ezzat's "Like Stars in a Clear Night Sky" (2006) and Judy Malloy's "L0ve0ne" (2006); we get more poems by clicking through links; cycle belongs to the structural promise (multidimensional, on a 2D surface), screen is an ad hoc presentation surface, signified becomes visible, a projection of parts of a simulated whole. Branny shows Andrews/Pauline Masurel's "Blue Hyacinth", which has many combinations (4 texts). Navigable 3D surfaces are also possible—citing Daniel C. Howe and Aya Karpinska's "open.ended" and Dan Waber and Jason Pimble's "I, you, we". Multi-threaded linear structures, like John Cayley's "translation" are noted, as is Zenon Fajfer's "Ars poetica" (2005). Structural promise is not a new invention; electronic media is a new means of exposing it, reconstitutes reader through navigation. She cites Cayley, "writing renders surfaces complex", electronic surfaces are like surface of sea. The representation promise: unlike traditional poetry meaningful substance is not a combination of signifiers but programmed movement, many works involve an operator. Cites Robert Kendall's "Faith", movement of letters corresponds with meaning of relevant fragments of text. Representation is limited to action involving displacement. Promise of destruction: everything that can be said is already predicted within the linguistic system, making the task of writing poetry useless. Uses poetry to be free from language and reference (Language Poets, David Melnick, Kearns, Jim Andrews—user executes text). In Poland, destruction is developed by an e-poetry group (I can't make out the name), who have a manifesto stating that the reader/writer communicates with her/himself, then others; see writing not as a body but a machine; disagree with language; instead of describing, change. Dismantle words, meaning reassembled on the level of signification. Use audio and visual interference, mechanical repetition (some devoid of meaning). Creative promise: poem tool for creation, and possibly self-expression. Work is being played rather than discovered. No lasting significance but momentary satisfaction, rooted in collage, readymade. Make works of poor quality (using non-existant) words. Cites some Polish work(s) and Andrews's "Nio" (reader is free to mix sounds). Cognitive Promise: poetry is able to reveal the truth hidden in language (rooted in kabbalah); means that if we do something with language, we might find something hidden; not common in electronic poetry (more of a conceptual gesture). Play leads to revelation. Aesthetic promise, rooted in Kant. Provides reader with an aesthetic experience; rejects possibility of any superior promises; paired with destruction of language. The program controls. Aesthetic promise is not the ultimate/superior promise of e-poetry, which combines intention of author, ghost of reader, and

paratexts. Existence of the work is a circular project. Behavior of reader is motivated. In the discussion, someone asks, why don't we see criticism that is harsher? KS: It's an involved question, regarding what is good literature, what is its relation to culture and society, that is not particular to e-literature. Now more of a calling attention to the work than the journalism you might expect. Modalities of e-literature are in flux. What are the grounds on which we'd make those kinds judgments? If we don't know what an electronic poem is, how do we know what a good one is? Almost none of the literature I'm interested have a chance of being popularly accepted. Look at the premise of whether the measure of popular appeal is what we want.

Panel of works: "about nothing, places, memories and thoughts", "How to hear a sentence", *Frequency*

The Caixa Forum sessions concluded with presentations of creative works by Patricia Tomaszek, Marisa Plumb and Jonathan Ben-Meshulam, and Scott Rettberg. Tomaszek very briefly presented her interactive audio piece, a cannibalistic performance tool called "about nothing, places, memories and thoughts". In this work, as demonstrated by Tomaszek, users combine audio samples of lines of poetry by Tomaszek and Robert Creeley (chosen by Tomaszek), making new ("mashup") poems by fusing their words. Plumb and Ben-Meshulam demonstrated and discussed their "How to hear a sentence", which examines, "how we can utilize our different vocabularies&to model the world through description and generate new ideas". They make screen texts by collaboratively using extractions (most significant or ambiguous words) from a written text about language and communication), writing them into each others' texts, resulting in passages such as "I am advocating a Lean Hypothesis about reality and a Lean Alternative to our materialistic culture". In the audio track for the performance, they are reading these constructions for the first time; texts move onto the screen, making new texts ("inferences") that accumulate in a black box on the screen (see Fig. below for detail). An example of what compiled at E-Poetry, which contains a couple of nice phrases: "objects mind start contingent/many order artificial suggests/language past prove event/generated talking stored speak/speech eye histories hearing/mimicry events everything". There is a connection between heard (audio) and read (seen) text, but I do not believe it is mechanical (the phrases may appear randomly). I am not sure what technology is used, whether or not each set of seen words enters randomly, or if the piece appears the same each time (though I would guess not). Plumb introduced the piece, started it and let it run for several minutes. As the piece was played at E-Poetry, more prose appeared simultaneously with time passing, sticking to the screen both in prose and poetic form as the dialog

between male and female voices resounded. A series of seen and heard statements, that require "cross-modality perception" results in a poem for the audience read.
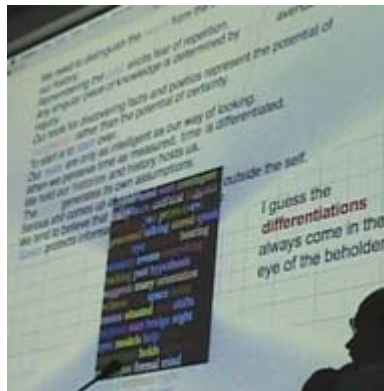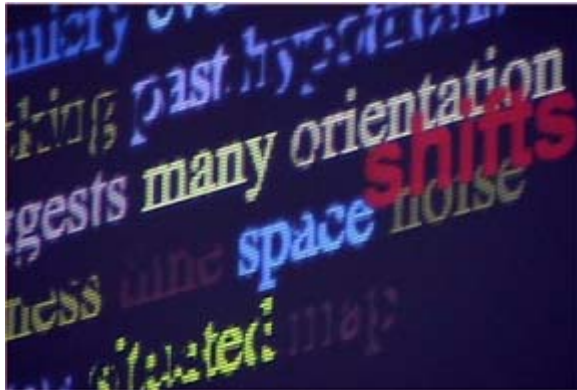
Marisa Plumb & Jonathan Ben-Meshulam presentation, How to hear a sentence, E-Poetry 2009.

Scott Rettberg began by showing a nature poem generator my Nick Montfort ("Taroko Gorge"), explaining he liked its elegant syntactic structure but not the content so he re-worked it to be about Tokyo instead. Rettberg read from the output for a few minutes, which begins: "Public servant arrests the kid/Movie stars eye the mystics./beat the curvy floating--/Bicycle messengers defend the cigarettes./Scandals imitate. Temple liquidates the whale". He then presented the poetry section of *Frequency*, a "constrained writing" project made from the 200 most used words in English. Process: wrote a 2,000 line poem using the words, then wrote a program that selects from those lines to make new (constrained) poems. An example of output displayed:

CALL DOWN THE WELL
well that was a day
was such a good show back then
tell them to end it
over what you think you know
each letter will make my day (25 May 09)

Rettberg furthered the reach of *Frequency* by adding features and calling it a novel, which he then showed and read. Process: for each line of the long poem a Creative Commons image with one of the 100 most popular Flickr tags is downloaded and associated with a line, and more frequency words are added. Result: a series of hypertextually linked screens featuring a title, a brief prose passage, and an image—an elegant hybrid hypermedia work. In the Discussion, Rettberg was asked about his associative process (each Line of the original poem being associated with tagged image) and discussed the various forms of constraint he uses. He stressed that *Frequency* was far from complete, that eventually all of the words in the poem will be links (in the novel the links are made randomly by a script). He hopes to have it online by summer 2010. Mencia questioned the look of the piece, too reminiscent of the book; Rettberg wants to work more on the interface. Question about the narrative structure: didn't start out with one, but the images led him into developing a set of characters and problems. Then a brief discussion about using images out of context, followed by questions about how "How to hear a sentence" was made. Plumb explains it was hardcoded, using javascript to generate the statements. The sentences have keywords with different levels of inference, which are compiled. Asked about connection between audio and visual layers; spoken layer is reading of the source text (most context specific), the incoming lines are found sentences (from "personal" databases) containing certain keywords from source texts, and the words remaining at the center are "shared truths" (I'm not sure if these are the keywords?). Rettberg asked about use of Montfort's program. He explained he essentially changed the stylesheet and greatly expanded and changed the vocabulary and a couple of the rules of the program, which was a very simple javascript.

Digital poetry performances: Popup, MIDIPoet, What we had has not yet been, Interliteral MISsplet LANDings

The evening event, featuring Gerard Altaió, Eugenio Tisselli, Alfred Marseille and Jan Baeke, and John Cayley, happened at the Laie Pau Claris bookstore in downtown Barcelona [a live tele-performance titled "Poema Notturno Rosso", streaming from

Italy, featuring mirrored projections by Lello Masucci, also occured but could not be seen very well]. It was a smaller space which the event filled to capacity. Altaió's work, "Popup" (2006), consists of six poems which appear atop an exclamatory poem on the screen (e.g., "Arriba el pop!/Upa o pop!/Ave pop!"). Each poem appears as a series of popup boxes, into which a soundfile is embedded. Letters and words that accumulate into narratives are inscribed into the browser title bar (e.g., "well,/ok/is   true/life/is   more/basic/than/art/LOVE/STORY/is   a/pop up/poem/like/real/life). In half of the poems, animations or images are presented in the popup boxes; in another, fragments of a single image are reformed in tiling popup windows. The final result of the first poem, shown below, also shows how pop-up boxes can be arranged together to transmit a message, and in general Altaió shows us how versatile and expressive popup windows can be. This is digital "Pop" art, infusing pop culture: sound samples are taken from rock songs (in English)—mostly huge hits from the 80s and 90s, but occasionally work by lesser known artists (e.g., Captain Beefheart). Often the samples presented center around a theme (e.g., fire, mother). To note the specifics of composition: in Altaió's second piece, the letters of the title are spelled out in the title bars of rectangle boxes in varying shades of blue while songs by Bobby Vinton ("Blue Velvet"), The Doors, Paul Simon, Deep Purple, Michael Jackson, Leonard Cohen, The Clash, and others are heard. In technology used and content presented (its simplicity) there is an enormous retro sense to the work, which somehow escape being negative attributes in spite of the sometimes cloying, overplayed music Altaió employs in his "hipermetasupraextradigital" work.
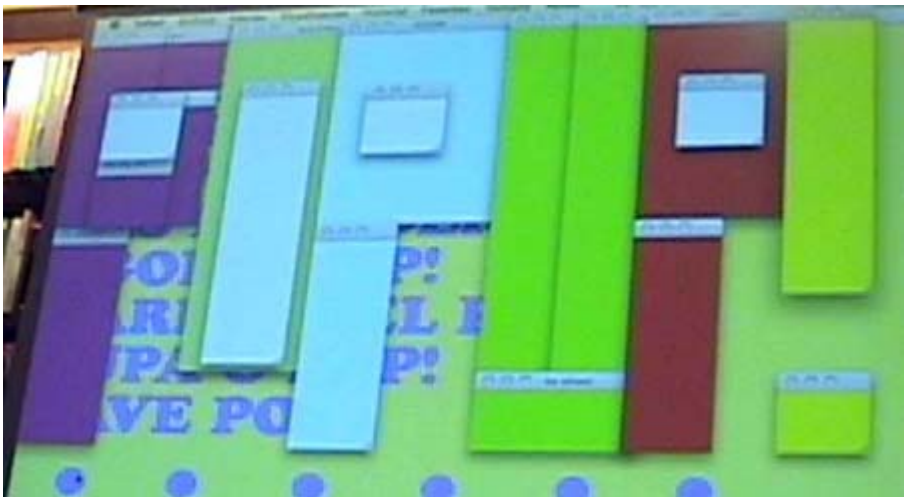

Gerard Altaió, Popup, E-Poetry 2009.

Tisselli performatively demonstrated his software program *MIDIpoet* (2002), in which sounds, images, and words are conducted by the author in real time using an invention (of his) that sends signals between instruments (in this case, a cellphone) and the software. Sounds and images (words) are accordingly produced as output. Describing his work as "contemplative", Tisselli instructed the audience to relax while experiencing the work. What appeared as low, pulsing sounds were emitted ranged from calligraphic images, to words and thick grayscale lines blending and streaking across the screen in patterns, with occasional lines appearing (e.g., "no text, only texture"). He interacts with his work, at some points, by typing in words ("where/do these/letters/words/come from?/why/do they/go/click,/click?/can you read this phrase?/where did it go?"), and at other times by pushing the keypad of his cellphone to initiate different pre-programmed activity on specific areas of the screen he points to with the phone. The directions texts move in are also controlled by the phone (performing the work, Tisselli makes somewhat exaggerated hand gestures to let the audience know he is controlling the movements and layering in real time). Some technical problems interfered with the flow of the presentation, but in the end the powers of Tisselli's creation were apparent nonetheless. In contrast to Altaió's noisy work, this was very quiet and ponderous—words are transformed into moving shapes and patterns, into which more lines or words are inscribed. At other times intact lines of poetry move across the screen as controlled by the poet moving in front of the screen, to be read as the subtle ambient music plays; at any moment the appearance of text can be changed from textual to visual—verbal statements become abstract art.

Eugenio Tisselli, detail of projection, Midipoet performance, E-Poetry 2009.

Marseille & Baeke showed a series of videopoems given the title "What we had has not yet been". Poetry is presented with digitally processed found film footage and soundtrack. As Baeke explained, the text that appears is not coordinated to the action of the imagery or dialog but is part of the atmosphere of the work. In the first section shown at E-Poetry, two black and white films (from the same reel, but not mirror images) are shown as the text of poem scrolls vertically across the screen (one loops from beginning to end and the other from end to beginning). The imagery (characters dancing in a kitchen) and text (addresses various domestic matters) are thematically relational if not synchronized, and the soundtrack (an upbeat, "old-fashioned" dance number with strings and horns a la *I Love Lucy*) is appropriate to its character. The second segment began a series of single screen shots featuring mirrors and travel images that evolved into a split-screen "dialog" between an elderly man and woman, in which the conversation that is read differs from the one heard. Read text forms, sometimes kinetically, a slant comment on what is heard; words seen trickle down to the black space below the images (as in the Fig. below). Interestingly, these words become hyperlinks attached to different sections of the video (some are one channel, others are split; some contain captions, some are in color). It is impossible, at least some of the time, to absorb all the text—partially because it moves or disappears quickly, and partially because there is a lot of stimulating material presented simultaneously. A partially linear, partially non-linear, fragmentary commentary on (or perhaps question about) domestic culture, the poem begs the viewer to read into the combinations presented by work to determine the message perhaps indicated by the title.
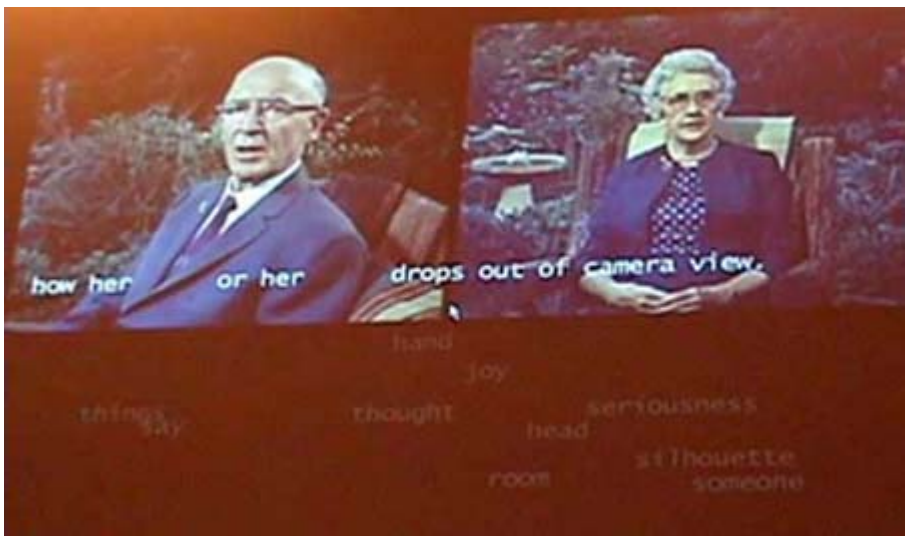
Alfred Marseille and Jan Baeke, detail of "What we had has not yet been", E-Poetry 2009.

Cayley's performance diverged from anything I've seen him present previously. Describing it as an "occasional" work of Flarf, the first work he showed (with spontaneous comments), titled "computationalUniverse", was an unadorned slideshow of screenshots made of the results of Wolfram|Alpha search queries. As it turns out, as might be predicted given the philosophical approach taken by Cayley, this "computational knowledge engine" is unable to "do" much with the questions posed (e.g., q: "will I die before i understand who or what i am?" a: "Wolfram|Alpha isn't sure what to do with your input"). Cayley shows the engine's inability to answer simple queries such as "highest mountain" or even to be self-referential (when asked about itself, although it does provide an equation for computing knowledge). He notes its tendency to produce results related to movies. Creative dialog imposed by Cayley was entertaining, as are his off-the-cuff comments. A second piece, archived at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5HmA7CZrMY, essentially a prose poem titled "Top Chef Affect Mass", was much more serious in tone—"slightly religious" he called it. Here, for the third time in memory, Cayley impressively conducted an interactive performance that involved the audience's participation at E-Poetry. Using entirely different methods in 2003, 2007, and 2009 he engineered successful participatory performances from the stage at the event—which is a difficult task to pull off. Introducing the piece, Cayley described a scenario in which former US President Bush is, during his last weeks in office, sequestered alone at a completely private estate of a gangster on the California coast. He tells us that there are six "affects" for the audience (sadness, happiness, surprise, disgust, fear, anger) and that he is "allows" himself the affect of "death". After he reads each passage (there are seven in all), he says "My thoughts have turned to death" to which each person in the audience is instructed to reply "Our thoughts have turned to ____" (where ____) is one of the affects. Cayley's story involves an imaginary encounter between the isolated figure Bush and a coyote who lives in the wild. Notable is its drama and commentary on the man's psychology and profound ending (no spoiler here). A chorus (mild din) of disparate (in volume and range) responses reflects different possible dimensions of public response the intense scenario depicted in the narrative. Ironically, the digital element of the piece—a simple projected animation—did not function for some reason, but this did not in any way diminish the powerful tale expressed in Cayley's words.

May 26: Keynote address : "Digital literature: a random literature?"

Daytime sessions on day three transpired at the University of Barcelona. I missed (with apologies) Jean Clément's morning keynote. The following sentences in this

paragraph compile notes by Mette-Marie Zacher Sørensen and Giovanna di Rosario's rough translation of the presentation. Jean Clément talked about the use of randomness functions in digital literature. He went back in the art history to show examples of earlier examples of randomness and chance. He asked questions to the differences between randomness and chance. Isn't there always a manner of chance in producing art? – inspiration and contingency. Typological: which are the forms of chance and randomness in digital/"general" Literature? Epistemological: Which role does these two concepts play in the creation but also reception of works. The scientific approach during time. The illuminist philosophers sought a more rational explanation of randommnes (it is not a higher intelligence, that could explain it all). Later: chance is a new unforeseen meeting between two independent causalities. Einstein: "God does not play dice". The principle of uncertainty by Werner Heisenberg; Art History: John Cage with his piano tuned randomly; Duchamps "Musical Errattum", composed music with drawn notes picked in a hat by his sisters; and Pollock's paintings. The literary avantgarde fit naturally in this movement. Here JC means we see a process already where a certain literature will leave the book. Usually in a book, the reader is not controlled (like in the cinema or at a concert). Daniel Pennac pointed out the rights of the reader in *Like a novel*: not to read, to jump pages, not to finish the book, to read again, to read anything, to the bovarysme (textually transmissible disease), of gleaning, to read aloud, to be in silence. Laurence Sterne broke with this control in *Tristram Shandy*. Breaks within linear design. Invention of the codex in the 12th Century contributed to the non-linearization of the reading. In hypertext, the reader doesn't have the right to read it all anymore, can discover things by chance. In modern litterature, many authors prefer the fragmentary genres (seems to correspond better with our time), more authors propose a nonlinear reading of their books. Reading becomes more like a play. You don't know what happens. Later in history, it is not enough to show your reader variable paths. Now the author builds a generative advice. Statements in random texts are never fixed, but variable. Important: the legibility of the random texts is variable (different lengths and amounts of possibilities). The first computer text generators: Christopher Strachey made in 1951 a computer that was able to write love letters. Later: Haikutype-poems and so on. Randommness is an essential device of programmed poetry. In the definition of chance, meeting is an important notion—chance supposes a subject face to face to a phenomenon—interactivity. The difference in hypertext from print to screen is the space, and also the possibility of interaction. The machine responses can be managed in a random way—and even if not, there is always an effect of chance (what do you choose among several possibilities). Chance and creation: Is the introduction of the chance into the creation process an abandonment of the author capacity?? Bréton: Surrealism as "pure psychic automatism" "dictation of the thought, in the absence of any control exerted by the reason, apart from any aesthetic or moral concern". Simanowsi asked about this topic in the discussion. If the automatic writing in the surrealist

thought concerns the unconscious, what would then the unconscious of the computer be nowadays?? Oulipo on the other hand defined themselves as anti-chance – or: the programming of the chance (George Perec). "L'art est non-hasard par definition"; it is not always possible to distinguish randomness from chance. Clément proposes to define the literary random as a formal mechanism, associated with algorithmic processes intended to produce statements by combinations of textual elements; this could happen on print, but the computer could multiply until the infinite. Randomness is present in almost all digital works—it is both the signature and a process of creation. The author passes the hand to the machine. Symmetrically, the chance in digital literature is the figure of random for an interactor. The computer is different from a simple automat, it simulates a possibility of entering in dialogue with the interactor—its behavior is associated with a human intelligence. The computer is a partner in the utterance process. This raises questions about the nature of literary value.

Panel of papers: Terminologies: ontologies and definitions of e-poetry and e-lit forms: "Ephemeral Passages: 'The Series of U' by Philippe Bootz", "Conservation of electronic literature works", "entity/identity"

I attended the noontime session featuring Alexandra Saemmer, Serge Bouchardon, and Bootz. Saemmer's paper, "Ephemeral Passages: 'The Series of U' by Philippe Bootz", was a close reading of excerpts from two poems ("The Set of U" and *Passages*, see above) by Bootz. Begins by discussing the instability of digital poems, how some works from 1980s and 90s cannot be seen due to changes and operating systems (and others have different characteristics than originally intended). In Saemmer's view, authors have 4 options: 1) ignore instability, create for the moment; true for many, such as those using Flash; 2) Right context—"mimetic aesthetics" preserve events as well as possible, but difficult if not impossible; 3) accept instability as aesthetic principle—"aesthetics of ephemeral", slow decomposition is the "literary disenchanted mission of the work"; and 4) "aesthetics of re-enchantment", mystifies relationship between animated words and images to advocate an "unrepresentable", sensitive to possible mutations; machine continues the work of innovation. Bootz's work embodies the aesthetics of the ephemeral, although the other above-stated conditions are "alternately intertwined and exclude one another". Saemmer points out that *Passage* has taken on the tone of a life's work, and is about time (in various ways)—therefore raising questions about

memory and transformation. Although there are different possibilities for meaning, Bootz's electronic text addresses obsolescence and the shaping of time. She suggests a range of ways its media effects and figures can be read, singling out the line "fil de l'eau", an expression meaning "go with the flow", describing Bootz's animation as a "moviegram" whose effects she describes as "telescoping" (temporary illegibility). Fragility of connection and temporal coherence between sound and animation are accepted in the aesthetics of the ephemeral. Saemmer points out paradoxes in the work, such as it is created with the certainty of failure, but that the author does everything possible to postpone the failure. *Passage* features more "mimetic aesthetics"; the artwork "becomes a science experiment" and through the animation, media, and wordplay both a "reflection on the future" and "spiral into obsolescence". She concludes by celebrating the "stable framework enabled by adaptive programming" that drives the aesthetics in the work, recalling the instability of the entire proposition and the impossibility "to write time" [note: I wonder if she has seen Kenneth Goldsmith's books, some of which certainly seek to do so]. Saemmer's presentation, which convincingly shows how the reader both follows a path and leaves marks on it, was focused, articulate, and insightful. Her clarity, organization, detailed exploration of the minutiae of Bootz's poem could serve as a model for this type of critical investigation.

Bouchardon's paper (co-written with Bruno Bachimont), "Conservation of electronic literature works", discussed "media decomposition" and initiatives prioritizing the preservation of digital writing. Technology presents the possibility of "heritage preservation", though no definite solutions to the problems caused by new formats, proliferation, and heterogeneity in form. Archiving is a priority in the field of digital literature. The problem is that the work "is neither an object nor a simple event". Some authors consider their works to be impermanent, and bear their own disappearance within themselves (i.e., the aesthetics of the ephemeral). What should be preserved? The original file ("seems insufficient, especially if generative or interactive"); the file is not the work—what the viewer perceives is. Bouchardon explains how there are "descriptive" and "restitution" forms of preservation—in print they are the same but in digital these are distinct from each other ("there is the mediation of calculation"). Is the content what is on the hardware or the screen? "What is the right rendering of the document if the preservation of the resource is not enough?". Digitization itself does not preserve the content, which is only accessible through the functionality of the tools. Four main strategies of preservation: museological (saving hardware and software, suitable for small projects but difficult to maintain), migration (updating compatibility, maintaining functionality; costly but easiest to implement), emulation (contents are not meant to evolve, simulated on current environments; fragile but emulation is never perfect, costly but ineffective), description (relying on descriptions of events; "counterintuitive" but interesting and "potent"). Cites Jim Andrews' using various approaches to preserve bpNichol's work. Reconstruction is valuable, but the identity

of the content needs to be established; preservation as reinvention. Argues that description might be the best method (gives example of classical music); content is preserved, score never changes. Notation system is needed that's as strong as musical notation. Issue is to preserve the identity of the content. Absence of context can be an impediment. Notes online directories that catalog literary experiments on the Web: 1.) At NT2 3,000 descriptions are contained, not technical but aesthetic; works themselves are not archived; 2.) Electronic Literature Organization projects, include a directory (that sometimes includes critical context) and a wiki (the ELO Library of Congress/Archive-It Project) that allows user to index and access online works (depends on the participation of community). 3.) CASPAR (European,prototype) aims for long-term communal conservation of scientific data, including music, documenting the life-cycle of a work (considering multiple possibilities for preservation but emphasizing description); 4.) ARCHIPOENUM (ARCHIve-POEsia-NUMerique, see Bootz below) uses description (of multiple sorts), conventional archiving methods, and "indexing" solutions; combines theoretical thinking and practical approaches. Important to developing strategies for description; preserving is editing.

Bootz started by making some impromptu comments about the preceding papers, that "work will fail" but it is an act of tentative representation with a permanent objective—not as a performative tool but as a text. Code is life within the poem that can be reconstructed. To act is to live. "Reading is only one possibility of reception but not the totality of possibility of reception". Notes AS changed the meaning of the work, talking about the present changes the conception of present to a non-temporal present; her reception changes the poem itself. He then presented (for co-authors Samuel Syonecky and Abderrahim Bargaoui) a talk about the ARCHIPOENUM project, including a demonstration of the current state of the tool (which is an open-source work-in-process). The tool (delivered as a Firefox plug-in) is designed to index documents related to digital work using different ontologies and procedural models. Flexibility is important, as intelligence changes over time. The talk describes the project (including its theoretical background), discusses issues and protocols of indexing, and shows it in action (through the example of creating a form for and "validating" Jean-Marie Dutey's "Voies de Faits"). Preserving works is important, but not to fossilize them. "The power to act goes through documents". In the discussion, Baldwin asks, you can index the relation between the relation between the work and the actors? PB: Yes, using a procedural model it can be identified on a chart. Rosenberg comments to Serge, agreeing with emphasis on description; the key point is to make it "self-describing"—a programming environment that can address itself and the artifacts are objects and invent a notation, which can become text. Some programs make this possible. JR encourages people to think about this because it automates the project. Torres: several people in several countries have archiving projects—do you think it is good for us to keep working separately and then converge? PB: Develop independently,

find different problems and solutions, but then begin to communicate. Simanowski: compare aesthetic ephemerality and frustration in digital works as a situation parallel to that faced by performance artists and wants to know more from AS about the role passivity plays.

Panel of papers: Close-reading e-poetry: "e-canzoniere in Facebook", "Identity and the subject in digital poetry"

This panel featured talks by Raffaele Pinto and Yra van Dyik. Unfortunately, I have little information on either presentation, and for completion's sake would be pleased to receive *anyone's* notes on this session (which could be added to this report). Pinto's talk, "e-canzoniere in Facebook", shared the experience of using Facebook as a poetical place. According to Borràs, Pinto has been publishing more than 120 sonnets, one every day, that generates revision, comments and other sonnets from a strong community of readers. Presumably these papers will be published, or will

Panel of works: "Speech-Sound Generated Visual", "Touch", "R3//1X//0Rx", "Urban Fragments"

Following lunch, there were presentations of artistic works by Brian Kim Stefans, Serge Bouchardon, Christine Wilks, and Jody Zellen. Stefans began by presenting his piece *Kluge*, "a language video game in which the goal is to make a clean text". He showed and described its design (invented forms and constraints) and other attributes (mentioning it is related to both television and Rimbaud). Although this is not a new work, it was excellent to see Stefans do a demo of the most recent version, which contains features I hadn't seen before (such as the "New York School poem" and "Breakout" sections). While it isn't necessary, of course, seeing an artist present a work is immensely instructive. The second part of his presentation was a purely visual piece he called "Flash polaroids" and described as "algorithmic film", where the photos made by Stefans are being accessed algorithmically (accesses a Flash timeline at different rates). The work appears as a collage of video fragments—"you're just supposed to meditate on it". He concluded by showing his most recent Flash work, *Scriptor*, which is made of "dynamically animated hand-drawn fonts, letterforms, or doodles" (see screen captures at http://www.arras.net/fscIII/?p=363). Stefans describes it as another version of his

"ambient poetics". Vibrating segmented letters form and reform, sometimes into words. His objective was to animate every point and every line of a letter, as the program draws text from a recent *New York Times* (NYT) article about Obama and Afganistan. He had a poem titled "We make" translated into Spanish, which he read with an accomplice from the audience named Augusta (i.e., two languages) while *Scriptor* ran on the screen. Obviously what is heard is disconnected from what appears on the screen, but we are asked to consider them together; a commonality between the two pieces: focus on something being made.

Bouchardon did a brief presentation of his Web-based work "Touch" ("Toucher"), which is subtitled "Six scenes on the paradox of screen Touching". He crafts a series of screenworks that use the mouse in various ways to activate effects (sound, image, links) on the screen. One section allows viewer to rearrange words, exploring the "ambiguous relationship between touching and being touched". Some game-like and erotic elements are featured in the pieces, which "allow the reader to touch the music" and invokes "the brutality of the click". In one scene ("Blow"), the user blows through a microphone to make the text appear, and in another through eyes tracked by webcam (Bouchardon asks, "is touching achieved on contact, or can it be achieved from afar?").

Wilks (whose comments on the presentation—as well as links to several works she showed—are posted at http://crissxross.net/wilx/2009/06/07/remixing-at-epoetry-barcelona-2009/) showed a series of works that have been presented on a collaborative blog titled *remixworx*. Members of the group have done roughly 500 multimedia remixes since 2006 (Wilks usually uses Flash). She presented "trails" of posts to the site—which is set up as a blog and artistic responses are posted in comment fields—that reflected how the works evolved, and also read a couple of text pieces from the site. Beyond the high quality of the works presented, the collaborative axis of *remixworx* is more than respectable, and the sheer variety of types of works (stylistically/aesthetically)—kinetic visual poems often combining text/animation/sound—appearing on the site is marvelous.

Zellen's work focuses on cities, and she began by presenting several sections of her collection *Urban Fragments* (2009). In the first section shown, six movie clips (a double triptych) appear. None of her work includes sound. The second juxtaposed kinetic text from Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* onto a square with four different animated panels of black and white images. Zellen does a lot of work that involves tracing over the newspaper, transforming both images and headlines/text into elementary but revealing line drawings, which she then juxtaposes in Flash animations; these are figurative but not literal copies, which are sometimes incomplete (i.e., the text for one screen reads, "Obama has/McCain ups ante". Another work (shown as documentation, not in live form) juxtaposed (collaged) images from the Internet and the current RSS feed from the *NYT*. Zellen expressed her interest in the Internet as a "sculptural space&where you click on the link and

windows pop-up all over the screen" and showed a couple of such pieces—one in which she transfers "the idea of walking into the idea of drawing". She showed a commissioned piece titled "Without a Trace" that randomly juxtaposes a live rss text feed and image from the *NYT* (which is drawn by the computer) with a comic strip panel, a text excerpted from a comic, and a drawing made by Zellen. The combination of elements changes once per day (resulting in a "calendar of juxtapositions"), and have also been transformed into animations in which fragments—drawn lines of news (sometimes seen in reverse) and line drawings—are fused and interact with each other. She concluded by showing a couple of older pieces that shared attributes with the recent works (i.e., newspapers, animated text/image, pop-ups), such as "Seen Death" (2007).

In the discussion, AS asks JZ why she is obsessed with pop-up windows. JZ: explains she's working against the idea that a Webpage is flat, "that you can only go up, down, and across"—she wants to interrupt that and allow the user to see simultaneous things&"the only way to do that is to collage windows over the background space". She wants to create depth, sculpturally—there's always a relationship between what's happening in each of the windows. JN: Asks everyone about the limitations faced (e.g., pop-up blockers) and how it affects what is created. BKS: His work is mostly for installations—he might try to write something for the Web, "but probably won't&it's not a high priority". Talks about how the Web is always changing and how people often don't know how to use properly something that's on a webpage. He doesn't do javascript pieces anymore because "debugging those things used to take forever". SR: Asks about *Scriptor*: is it what happens to the input text in an imagistic sense that is important, or will the text have a new relevance? BKS: Each of the *Scriptor* pieces will be different, not all will have the same effects, but it seemed appropriate that a piece about war had explosions in it. The alphabet is one of the sets, so that whatever the content is, it is "going up against this alphabet" and the content might just be the relationship between the words and motions. Wants to develop unique pieces and see what texts work. Sandy B asks CW to say more about how the collaborative blog works and how that relates to what we saw. CW: All the pieces are on the blog, but she remixed (i.e., ordered/simplified the interface) them for the occasion (and added some soundtracks). She explains the blog works by somebody posting a work, with the source files, and the others remix them (always citing source). Q: Who are the people who use the blog ("they look like either weird or remarkable people")? CW: A lot of the group met through Trace (Nottingham Trent, UK) community. Went that stopped, Randy Adams organized the blog and asked people to remix, continuing to do the work they'd already been doing. Anyone is welcome to join (they have a flickr site to network). Cayley: Given the sense of "new horizons for the literary" (N.K. Hayles reference), asks the panel why they feel comfortable with the idea of poetry. BKS: Likes to feel uncomfortable with the idea of poetry. SB: In poetry, first and foremost, the play is the materiality of the signifier, and that's what he tries to do

with "Touch". Not just the signifier as words or sounds, but metaphors. Work made with digital media is more about manipulating than reading, and that is close to poetry. JZ: never writes poems but brings together text and image in a way that is poetic. CW: Likes to combine visual poetry and textual poetry&has to do with denseness, the way things are picked, and reading. BKS: You wouldn't argue that *Kluge* has something to do with poetry, but with *Scriptor* he's thinking more of the one word poems of Aram Saroyan, Ed Ruscha's word paintings, very minimal things, also references Valery's response to Mallarme's *Un Coup de des* ("for the first time I saw the mind in the process of thinking"). Doesn't necessarily mean *Scriptor* is that but thinks there's a way "poems map mental processes and wanted to allude to a certain kind of psychic space in the work". JC: These various mediated arts, labeled in different ways, are associated to traditional art forms, but the work is not verbal; wondering about the relation to linguistic practices—people are bringing it up more and more and will continue to do so. JM to JZ: Wondering about the difference between data driven processes and manual processes, and handmade aesthetics— how is that negotiated? What limitations are there? JZ: Has limitations because she is not a great programmer. In the non-automatically drawn piece she sets up drawings in a database. Some elements are not generated live, are from a stored archive. Also worked with programmer who was able to capture live image and top headline from the world news because she felt it was more topical and changes all the time. Collecting all these things she learned how much things repeat themselves; she's become interested in such random juxtapositions and decided to archive and represent them as a calendar of a year of juxtapositions.

Panel of papers: The nature of the digital text. Code and literaturnost: "Bar Codes and Poetry: Experiments in Hypermedia", "On the Literary Nature of Digital Poetry", "New Interfaces for Textual Expression"

The final session of the day featured papers by Tina Escaja (read by Elena Castro), Janez Strehovec, and Adam Parrish. Escaja's paper was read by Castro ("everytime I say I it is not me"). She shares observations about technology as "a means for the liberation of female creativity". She elaborates on the problematic approaches taken of certain cyber-feminisms when applied to Latin American and Spanish women, comments on Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto", and discusses her own hypertext projects in these contexts. Only 60% of people living in Latin America cities have computers at home; 90% use one in the office; less use than in Europe and

North America. Women who use Internet are minority; have same access as men but use less—the situation is changing, but a long way to go. Cyberfeminism is a healthy alternative but occasionally makes problematic assumptions and ignore real problems that face the "modemless masses". Hispanic women working on the Internet codify and modify "from the cracks of tradition", naming their roods and nodes, revealing themselves. Escaja using a pen-name Alm@ Pérez, has created a hypertext *VeloCity*, which, as she writes in her abstract:

> &multiplies instances and options in an upsurge of words that follow the internal pulse of the poetic reading. Certain digital fallacies are also questioned, and I self-criticize. The reader-internaut addressed by Alm@ has limited options. The author dictates, exercises as the architect of an engine made of links and bits, all of which contradict the alleged fluidity, a-linearity, un-controlled poetic hypertextual experience as well as its assumed feminine imbrications. Alm@'s artifact breaks expectations, questions the act of control that the reader is supposed to have when maneuvering hypertext, that unprecedented freedom that lets the internaut-reader manipulate, make choices, break his/her traditional passive role, allowing him/her to participate in the on-going creation, transforming him/herself in the center of choices. However, the digital poet continues dictating reading options: invites and points, with the expectation of not being disconnected, so the internaut does not lose, does not get lost. This added anxiety of losing the center, the primordial link, questions as well the fallacy of liberation through the act of cyberreading. At the same time, the possible dis-connection exposes the anxiety of all hypertextual creation: the rupture with the Link, that locus of encounter, in capital letters, addressed by Alm@ Pérez. Her artifact *VeloCity* consists precisely of calling upon the cybernaut, the reader, consists of making herself available to the cybernaut, celebrating at the same time the total act of electronic, cyber-physic communication, the total encounter between the word and its nodes, between language and the operative systems. The final unity with this recycled, hackneyed, clicked word and its internauts is, in my opinion, one of the key principles of *VeloCity*.

Instead of presenting skepticism about liberation of women through the machine, she reconsiders aspects of cyberfeminism. Cites Haraway, cybernetics presents an alternative paradigm to women authors, a model of multiplicity, then presents (her own) new model, technexoskeletal (sp.?), connecting poet with reader (permeability, action, change). Women writers exercise control, non-hierarchical, liberating women from need (like a "release from anatomy"), building embodiment not textual identity, demands touch—hypermedia enables this. "Código de barras" (Bar Codes) is the name of her project, merging familiar technology with computers "to create a reflection of imperialism and media control", addresses "the notion of bars, or

restriction by political imposition". Adoption and confrontation in cybernetic works benefit Hispanic women authors.

Strehovec's talk, hampered by the fact that he spoke softly and continually turned away from the audience, began by addressing poetry in the age of the short attention span. Design of new works are mosaics, hybrid designs, everything is unstable, precarious; new relations between textual components are established. E-poetry is a new textual, meta-textual, linguistic, and non-linguistic practice. Previously poetry was concerned with other aspects of forms, addressed emotions and responses to conditions, now the approach is through cyberlanguage (neologism, generated and shaped through computers). The nature of the work is question; it is not a "safe" field, different possibilities open up for the non-verbal poet. Strehovec references Giselle Beiguelman's "Code Movie" and use of mobile screen devices. E-poetry is post-textual and requires new forms of perception. Due to pace of life, our attention spans are getting shorter, is in danger. We can't stick to one thing—the author has one or two seconds to get a reader's attention. Observational skills have suffered due to multitasking. Spoke about the "language of elevator pitch"—poetry whose presentation as long as an elevator ride—as an idea for a project. What is crucial is the first impression, to get the reader excited and involved with the language; cinema theories apply to contemporary conditions of e-poetry. Key concerns: leave behind terms and concepts applied in traditional literary and poststructural theories. The idea of "stain" is important, as well as defamiliarization, making strange and concept of uncanny. Such a poetics is found in works by JooYoun Paek. Surprising events, juxtapositions are important. Quotes Beiguelman: "the interface is the message"; contemporary conditions: a "nomadic cockpit", as in Aya Karpinska's work.

Parrish's talk was interesting and important, as it emphasized the invention of textual instruments, in particular four physical interfaces he has designed to generate text and what he discovered in the process; a summary of his experiments (including video demos) is online at http://www.decontextualize.com/projects/nite/. Text results from some kind of physical action, can be seen as recording a process or gesture that's linguistic in nature—quotes Olson on the typewriter ("Projective Verse"), how poet has with the typewriter the same advantages as a musician. We create text through some kind of interface. Generally we use a keyboard, which is easy to understand; Parrish expands and reduces this in his work because not much has changed since typewriter keys. First shows his "Oulipo Keyboard", which is a regular keyboard except that several number keys on the keyboard have been "eradicated". Putting constraints on writing as such makes the writer think/approach the process differently. Instead of taking away functions, Parrish's second example, the "Entropic Text Editor" adds another layer—a keyboard augmented with an analog expression pedal used to modulate the text (e.g., when you push the pedal forward

it creates more randomness in the text and vice versa, also alters the "weight" and kerning of the letters). He calls it a "performance of Jabberwocky", something that creates output but retains traces of physical process, as if it were gesture. The third project, "Markov Live", is a physical interface that creates Markov chains (algorithm). It is a wooden box with two buttons—one chooses a word and the other creates a new line (buttons/words changes also activate sounds). The computer identifies every sequence of two words of a source text and builds a list of every word that can follow any sequence of the words, cycles over the words and the user presses a button to choose a word. Output text results from user's decision making process. The final example shown is called "Beat Poetry" (which has nothing to do with Ginsberg, Kerouac, et al.) because it is a drum interface: two drum pads communicate with the computer. One creates a new line, one creates a word. Words are mapped to gestures by registering whether or not the user hits "on the beat" (a beat generated by the program)—if so, it randomly takes an uncommon word from a source text loaded into the program; if not, a less-common word is chosen. Parrish situates his work in several other practices: New Interfaces for Musical Expression (NIME), a group focusing on inventing and adapting musical instruments (such as the "Shoreline Guitar" and "overtone Violin"). New instruments create new relationships that might not have occurred otherwise. Situates within e-poetry by comparing to Stefans' *the dreamlife of letters* and Jim Andrews's "Stir Fry Texts", but what he does differently addresses relationships between author, text, and audience (see diagrams on Parrish's aforementioned website): text is more closely related to the interface, text is more independent from the author. He re-conceptualizes the text "not as also the piece, but as a record of the process". He's trying to create new poetic forms with the interfaces, which could not exist otherwise.

To begin the discussion, JM asks AP: What do you mean by audience? AP: Making tools to create live output, a tool for other users, and textual artifacts. Audience views text in real time but can also go back to a recording of it. In e-poetry, user and audience is usually the same person; he believes these can be separated. You can have someone who is using the interface to create something else (other than what is intended by the author). SS: Is your new way of writing and reading inviting the audience to come up and play these things? AP: Not necessarily, but a possibility. SS: If all audience has is output, then it is static; the production is not static. You want audience to have the experience of producing with these instruments, to train them to do so? Are they playing them, or watching you play? AP: Sees both processes happening at the same time. SS: But they are different experiences. AP: Your understanding of the text depends on understanding the process behind it. SS: Understanding what? AP: Most important is understanding the mapping of how it works. Sandy: It'd be great if we all had these drumsets, connected to the same big screen projector, all doing it at once. JM notes the un-portability of such a scheme. AP: Wonders how a collaborative performance would work. ME poses questions for

further consideration: How do you see an ordinary player become a virtuoso? What kind of interface would you design for your fellow panelists? AP: We're virtuosos at the keyboard already, can extend those skills to new related tools.

Digital poetry Performances: "From Interminimals to Intertarot", "Lyms", "(s)Pacing", "abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz", "A life history performance"

An evening event took place at Milano, a cocktail bar between the University and Catalunya Plaza, featuring works presented by Ramon Dachs, Ottar Ormstad, Jörg Piringer, Talan Memmott, and Sandy Baldwin (collaborating with Alan Sondheim, who participated remotely). Dachs, a local, essentially retrospectively "surfed" (i.e., switched back and forth) between works he has created since the mid-1990s while a piano soundtrack played in the background. Pieces presented by Dachs (who did not read the work aloud) were "Interminimals of poetic navigation" and "InterTarot de Marsella". "Interminimals" unites a series of small hypertextually connected poems; more information about the work's history and the work itself is published on the Hermeneia website. "InterTarot" is an aleatoric poetry device that uses Tarot cards as part of the narrative structuring (as the user "draws" cards, new lines of text appear). This work was also published by Hermeneia, but—like so many other works housed there—is no longer functioning at the old location (some works are now available at http://www.hermeneia.net/). Dach's works are unadorned yet elegant, and it was interesting to follow the flow between the two pieces as he presented them.

Ormstad, a Concrete poet, introduced his work (titled "Lyms") by stating his project is to make a connection between Concrete poetry and new technology. His animation combined of different works made of shaped letters in patterns (black on white) with an ambient soundtrack; multi-lingual words were formed. The screen presentation started sparsely and gradually became more full and complicated. At first, addition and subtraction of words beginning in "f"; a woman's face appears in the background, words in green shaped into arrows appear atop the text. Non-alphabetic lines and shapes eventually appear, giving geometry to the work, as well as more photographic imagery; combination of these elements with shaped, kinetic letters and symbols.
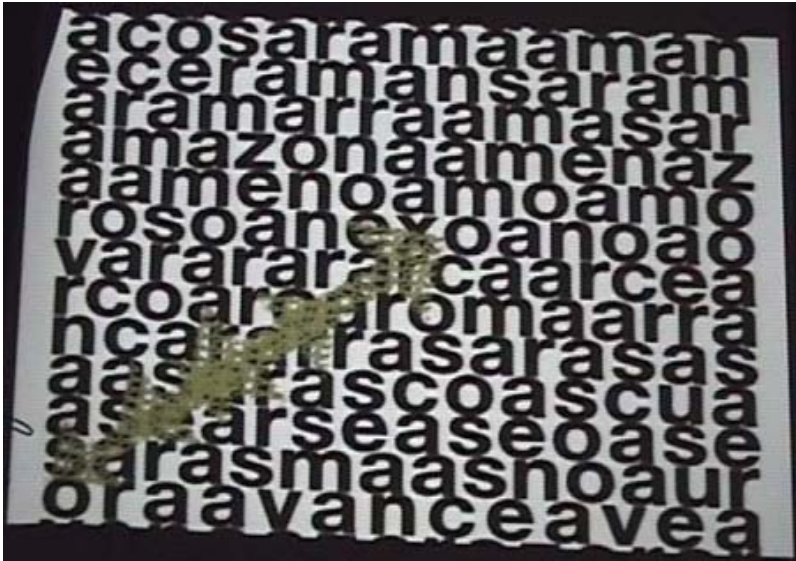
Ottar Ormstad, projection during performance, E-Poetry 2009.

Ormstad's piece was not interactive, and he did not vocalize any of the words.

Memmott, who has focused on video in the past couple of years, showed several videographic and animated pieces. The first work was a short (i.e., about 90 second) abstract video that looked like scenery taken from a moving train, except for that the image was processed so as to be oblique, layered with translucent squares, rectangles, and other forms of kinetic static. Next Memmott showed "Indeterminate [anti]Pop", and Flash work that randomly selects cartoonish images (octopi, dollar bills, badgers), geometric shapes and many phrases, combining them with boisterous beats and sounds (sometimes attached to the images, as when a telephone appears and rings)—effectively making a randomly generated animated music "video" and soundtrack. Lines and images pass very quickly, too quickly to be read completely. Viewers who do register and connect lines will find delightful nonsense that makes sense in the way a Language poet (such as Bruce Andrews) or Dadaist makes sense (i.e., "doomsday genre pap/abet tacit bawdy shake" or "the sushi ostrich/I resist high debt". I've seen this work several times—it is funny, loud, and perhaps most clearly reflects Stefans' concept of "fashionable noise" (although not in any pejorative sense). Memmott plays a great trick in his next video: dividing the verbal and visual dialog. He combines footage of a man and women talking in a bar, in Swedish with English subtitles that are clearly not literal translations of what is being said, but are instead part narration (tracking a budding but doomed romance between characters), part (mistranslated?) conversation. I like the imaginative shifts, a kind of deception. Dialog is dry and humor sardonic. Some

samples of dialog: "I hope this drink is better than the last./I wish I'd ordered water", "Am I the best you've ever had?/No.". Memmott concluded with a piece called "(s)Pacing", during which he (at first) seemed to be mixing either verbal or visual elements, or both), then paced around the bar while a dark (in lack of color and in tone), abstract (spliced, segmented screen) video plays. What appears on the screen includes footage of pavement, shoes, and a soundtrack of classical music and footsteps is heard. Street scenes form, as do visual and verbal collages. Words of a poem (and what look like diacritical marks) appear in/on at least three different layers, Memmott strolls: "*heartrendering*/un*raveling*/ *forwarding*/cobblestone replaced by blocks of concrete wandering&". What emerges is a portrait of a solitary figure, who has an interesting vocabulary (e.g., banausic, oppidan) in thought, "engrossed in the lack of getting anywhere".

Baldwin and Sondheim did a chaotic performance using their Second Life avatars and a real time Skype conversation (dialog about their movements and locations). This too I have seen on more than one occasion, and the presentation of materials—described by Baldwin as "part drama, part ritual"—improves each time. Here two different screens were projected. Both artists have used SL extensively, and have created spectacular (vivid, elaborate, fragmented 3D) virtual spaces, characters, and detritus (such as body parts). Beyond the contrived scenes and "live action" that occurs, dense text passages are also layered onto the projections—they appear in small font and are difficult to read but definitely add an out of the ordinary layer to the already ornate visual textures (see http://www.flickr.com/photos/the_funks/sets/72157618985161705/ for documentation of this and other sessions). Some of the texts are written by Sondheim, and others Baldwin describes as "pseudo-generated" and "flarf style", which are "attached to gestures". All of the objects appearing have their own text. During one segment of the performance, Sondheim's "body", "a vast plasma", locks onto Baldwin's—the movements of which are generating the text. They demonstrate how certain actions by the characters lead to visual events as well. A pre-recorded soundtrack plays, characters dance. In addition to the spectacle engineered, the live (spoken) dialog is unquestionably a compelling part of the work in performance. Part explanation, part negotiation of choreography ("can you see the other avatar?", "where the hell are you?")—such exchanges and questions are for everyone. Baldwin's strategy, beyond description, also involves invoking events that are also happening in the room, bringing real space into the work as well, and we get the sense of being a part of a making in progress, which he declares in Barcelona is "all a big mess".

The final set of the night featured Piringer's visual and sound poetry. Piringer designs his own software to use in performance, which historically has enabled a visual (a la Concrete) and verbal (sonically processed) response to his vocal input. His works typically appears as jumbles of letters becoming patterned on the screen.

However, his first piece—an installation work commissioned for a Haydn festival—inscribed a new attribute, using Twitter feeds with the word Haydn in them as the basis for the seen verbal element (although he did not use live feeds that night, he explained it can be done). Letters appearing are then "sung" by cut-up pieces of vocal samples of Haydn's compositions. Another graphical element—ambiguous floating objects that looks like wigs or jellyfish, sometimes move in conjunction with the sounds generated—also appears, though unsure of what it really is (see figure at top below).
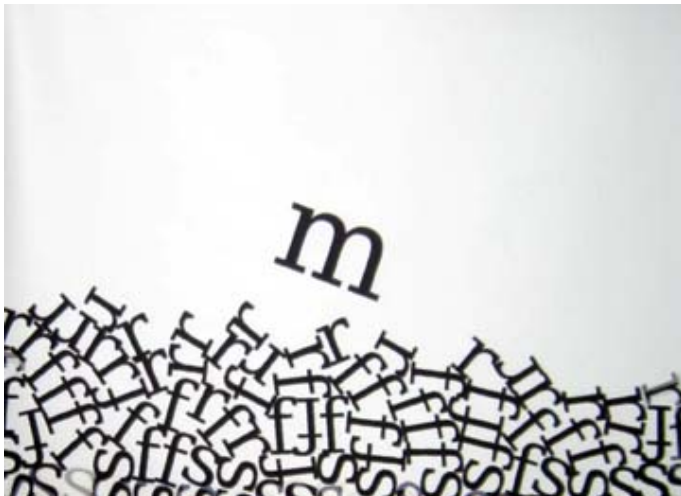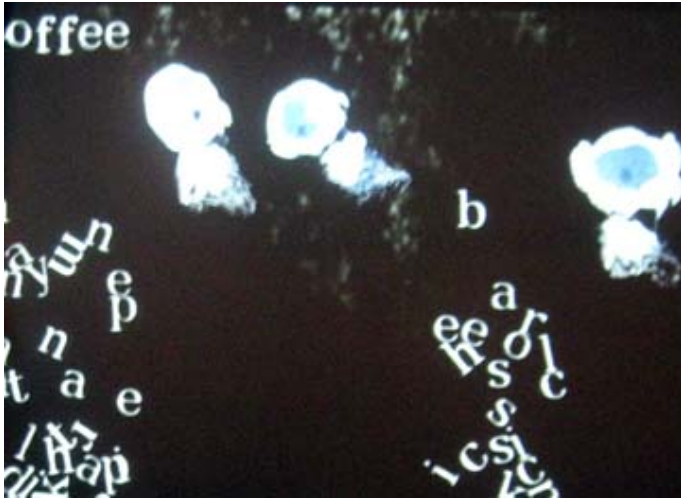
Jörg Piringer, details from performance, E-poetry 2009.

Most of the time, words appear incompletely, no phrases are formed because letters are disappearing as others appear, a simultaneously that scrambles any sense of wholeness to the text. The second part of the show, titled "Abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz", was classic Piringer: black alphabetic figures on white (although I noticed some subtle coloration of background and letters, which I haven't seen before). Letters rapidly arrange themselves in accordance to the artist's minimal, staccato vocal input. They become characters in a visual narrative, begin to take on their own identity as texture, well outside the realm of grammatical sensibility. At times we hear what sounds like a swarm of flies as small letters buzz around larger ones. The variation of combination—a call and response of the verbal/non-verbal—triggered by Piringer in real-time is always fantastic to watch. A story is not told directly, but the representation of spontaneously formed text and the fact that text can speak visually (in synch with musical sound), is in the foreground here.

May 27: Installation and Panel of works: "Italian e-poetry", "What They Said/My Summer Vacation", "Code, Not Text: for a poetics of code proper"

For the final day's sessions, we returned to a large room at CCCB, which was large enough to house a fairly sizeable installation of works as well as seat about 100

people. Installations included an extensive, concerted presentation by the INFOLIPO group titled "Mots, images, paysages" that featured works by Barras ("Postcape"), Alexandra Catana/Lucian Niculescu/Paula Bartis ("Awaiting Horizon"), Cécile Bucher/Delphine Riss ("Ma journée par défaut"), Jade Wang/Nicolas Szilas ("A travers shan"), and Edgar Acevedo ("Café"). Works by Judy Malloy, Giuliano Tosin, Jerome Fletcher, Hans Kloos, and another piece by Szilas/Wang were installed adjacent to those by INFOLIPO. The dominant work was "Awaiting Horizon", a vivid kinetic animation that was projected onto one of the walls. A non-digital work, kite-like constructions hanging from the ceiling, offered an interesting correspondence, demarcating and marking space with shapes and language—especially since the digital work nearby also depended on physical movement in space (but in an entirely different way). Barras' take-home postcards also extended the digital project into virtual space.

The first panel featured presentations by Giovanna di Rosario, Alan Bigelow, and José Carlos Silvestre. Rosario began by asking everyone assembled to petition the University of Catalonia to reinstate the Hermenia research site (see http://www.hermeneia.net/cat/). Di Rosario retraced the Italian e-poetry tradition starting from the visual artists Eugenio Miccini and Lamberto Pignotti, who founded "gruppo 70" (1963), focusing on "Art and Communication" and in 1964 "Arte and Technology", where discussion touched on interdisciplinary, interactivity. In the early 80s Gianni Toti began an experimentation where he mixed poetry, cinema and electronic art, creating a new language, "poetronica" (video poetry and electronic poetry) a sort of union between poetry and cinema elaborated with electronic art. Language is one of the primary subjects in Toti's work: Composed of a rich mixture of idiomatic expressions, mostly in French and Italian, but with a deep influence from all the languages of the world. In his videos Toti is trying to say us that language should be renewed, not technology. Another important Italian e-poet is Nanni Balestrini who in 1961 created "Tape Mark", a poem generated by computer, actually a huge IBM calculator, first published in the *Bompiani Almanac*. Briefly considers connections to the "Total Poetry" movement (which is expansive enough to consider food and perfumes in its poetics). She introduces Lello Masucci, (whose creation "Poema Notturno Rosso" was presented during E-poetry), whose *Poesia numerica* takes full stock in the idea of "Global Art" but at the same time suggests a fiercely private and individual vision of reading poetry; it exemplifies our Western culture at once so global, yet so powerfully local. By entering the site, each internaut can create a poem by clicking in different points on the blue frame. A few simple and illogical mouse clicks draw strange shape, made up small red cards which conquer the blue space. Once the internaut stops clicking on the blue space his poetic composition is finished. The internaut knows the poem's form but he doesn't know the poem's content. In fact once finished his composition he should send it to the "author" by mail by a deadline, and then after collecting all the mails the poem finally will take its form and content. In "Red Nocturnal Poem", Masucci rewrites

texts drawn by different authors, antithetical poems modeled by the subjectivity of a software. Readers give meaning to the work. Daniela Calisi's Content(o)design web site: she defines her poetry as "dynamic poetry" (which is not totally true, in fact it's dynamic only if the reader interacts with the text). *Cartografi* is written in free verses and its particularity resides in the fact that some verse lines, which are found partially indistinct on the background, come to the foreground, thanks to the reader's action, replacing and/or modifying the other textual segments, thus altering the structure and the sense of those verse lines. In this dialogue between two different perspective planes, the poetic text, in itself, loses its characteristic of a complete object in order to become an object in movement, which is transformed under the eyes of its readers', and at their will. The reading possibilities, in this case, are multiple: one can read it in the classical way, or intersect several segments, attracted, for example, by the largeness of the letters. Brings to the foreground the reflection of the words on the graphic form: the differentiation between capital and tiny letters gives a different impact to the same word. On the contrary, the text positioned at the centre of the page, in black, representing the classical text, becomes less attractive for the reader, likely to be captured by the other possible (subjective) paths. Presents evidence of how the poetic verse and the game of entax interact in the process of building the text. If syntax covers the assembly operations of both figures and signs along the external space of a sign system, a word is needed to indicate the system of the operations which allows assembling the letters inside the figures: it is the entax. The entax chairs for example the combination of features, points, etc. which compose a letter or an ideogram. The entax extends its influence on interior space, syntax on external one. The entax allows new combination of cognitive associations so new meanings. A capital letter can suggest another path of lecture, another interpretation. Rosario explains it wasn't easy to compile a list of contemporary practitioners, suggesting this is probably due to lack of Internet access in the country (only 32% has access to the Web), which is unfortunate because of its rich tradition of visual and concrete poetry. Caterina Davinio is cited as a leading conceptual/digital artist whose work is "related to letters".

Bigelow showed a pair of his works that appear on his website, Webyarns: Stories for the Web. The first was titled "What they said" (2008), a vibrant multimedia piece replete with stroboscopic imagery and loaded with Jenny Holzer (by way of Orwell)-esque slogans (e.g., "Privacy is a Public Trust", "Freedom of Speech is not Free", "We must limit our rights to preserve them", "We must register our identities to keep them safe"). A wide range of images, which more or less directly relate to verbal content (e.g., a fingerprint is a prominent icon on the "identities" quote), are included, some are generic, others seem like family photos. The interface is basic—a slider at the bottom of the screen is used to access each of the main eight sections of the work. Bigelow's second piece, the third installment of a series of "comic strips" (or, "brain strips"), was titled "Higher Math" (2009). "Higher Math" is a playful hypermedia

narrative, featuring a sequence of allegorical multimedia panels (text, sound, animation, video) relating to mathematic themes; one section takes aim at the T.S.A., suggesting heightened security isn't about terrorism but about geometry. After completing each of the sections, the user can check her/his "Higher Math Profile"—a humorous interactive quiz. Bigelow narrated through different sections of the work as they were projected.

Silvestre's paper was delivered directly, without adornment, and his concision was impressive. He begins by showing the code of a work of his own titled "Failed Fractals", which presents the reader with the algorithm for a "Julia set" fractal. Rendering of the code creates an infinite loop of fractals. His argument is that coding and writing are separate, quotes Cayley on making "reductive" correspondences between the two. Coding is a specifically situated practice with its own conventions. Code poetry must be aware of them. Shows an example of a Java that defines an object called "Light" then instantiates it:
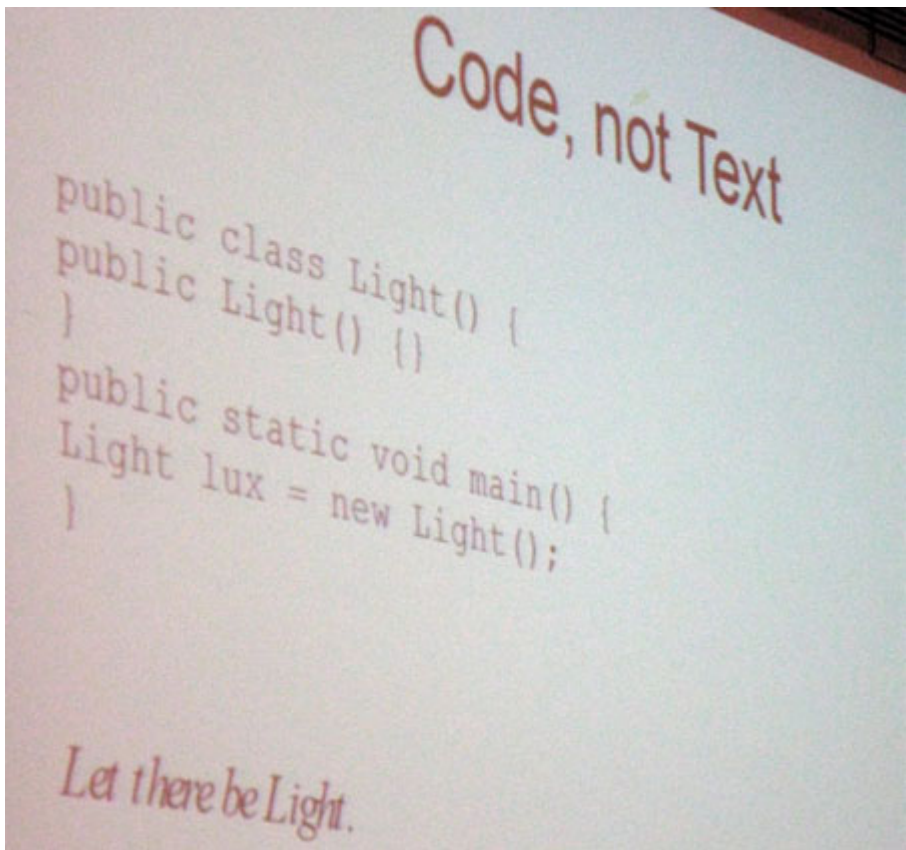
José Carlos Silvestre, E-Poetry presentation 2009.

The line of text and the code, however, "do not stand for each other" because when you name an object "light" you do not expect them to have signified output—you are writing text with the syntax of code. Silvestre proposes a three-fold semantics—of source code, instruction set, and output—which do not necessarily match each other but nonetheless hold many possibilities. Invokes Kittler, Shannon, then shows examples of works that require that readers to read the code because there is no text output. Identifying patterns within the code is necessary to fully understand the work. It is the combination of the source code, instruction set, and output that make the poem, not one of the distinct parts ("a statement on the materiality of infomatics").

In the discussion that follows, ME asks. "In total poetry, how did they use food?" GR: In total poetry anything can be considered a poem. They did performances using food, because of the long tradition in Italy about food, so the work is about eating a poem. WB: In Tape-Mark, how was syntax generated, how was translation done? GR: Tape-Mark had an algorithm that assembled fragments of three different texts written by men; randomness was a part of it; the translation was done by humans. JC to JS: Commends him on a nice job of presenting a poetics of code as code itself. He wonders if the poetics is addressed to humans. "You mention three things that have to be read—do you see that as being a non-human culture, or is it entirely within the realm of what pleases us?" JS: Code is a perfect method, used to make something, with a machine also designed for the purpose. There's always engagement with human activity, and he's chosen a fractal, in which there's abstraction but also a symbolism that is human-specific. JC: The choices you make in the source code are done with humans in mind. Stated he had trouble with Silvestre's use of the term "creolization", in terms of linguistics. What you're really saying is that programming languages are designed to be read by humans, but they usually don't (and aren't intended to be read). WB: Seem to be talking about the difference between statistics and aesthetics. JC: Some people would be willing to consider an aesthetics that is non-human.

Panel of papers: Close-reading e-poetry: "Reading the Last Performance.org", "Creative Cannibalism Remix: Authors & Network as Banquet", "The Lure of the Scrawl"

The second panel featured Rettberg, myself, and Stefans. Rettberg prefaced his talk by calling it an "incomplete close reading" of Judd Morrissey's collaborative work "The Last Performance", which is described by its authors as "a constraint-based

collaborative writing, archiving and text-visualization project responding to the theme of lastness in relation to architectural forms, acts of building, a final performance, and the interruption (that becomes the promise) of community". Rettberg begins with description of a performance scenario of the piece— seamlessly jumping from observation to quotation. His presentation highlights the performative, playful, and seious aspects of Morrissey's stylish arrangement, in which "the arcing texts seem to be arranged in patterns that have more in common with architecture than they do with the stanzas of a poem". He explains that the visual/textual design of the work (which can be viewed in microcosmic and macrocosmic forms) is based on the structure of a Croatian mosque, as well as by dance movements, and algorithms: "A sort of double-reading takes place in that while the individual fragments of text retain their individual identity, the reader is also compelled to regard them as part of a larger whole in one sense, as pure data in another"—there is the stream of the daily present, happening within the shadow of war. Also points out that the constraints are ambiguous (e.g., "catalog of codes for impossible tasks and mighty optical illusions"), having the effect of pushing the writing "beyond the bounds of the reasonable". Rettberg closely analyzes a couple of passages, but also makes clear that beyond offering something that can be interpreted, "The Last Performance" invites viewers to contribute text, to write to the text (and are acknowledged as participants). Rettberg's paper also outlines the challenges of doing a "close reading" of the work, how its capacious and variable contents disrupt objective narratives, how everything within the work is removed from its initial context, and the need "to read the interface". He muses on clues to the work contained in its title. With regard to "The Last Performance", suggests it invites atomistic reading, and that it is difficult to distinguish between performance and audience, and between textual artifact and participatory action (the latter seems truer that the former, but what I think he means is that those who contribute text become part of the performance). Briefly considers, at the end, the work in terms of "cultural anthropophagy", how it differs as such (does not completely cannibalize, a different angle on the context, "reading and growing simultaneously"). His response was an insightful explanation of a complex work, which in Barcelona set the table (i.e., built anticipation) for Morrissey's staging of the work later in the afternoon.

My paper was built on the foundation of my E-poetry 2007 essay, basically discussing two new avenues of the cannibalistic tendency in digital poetry: generators that produce text by remediating grammars and vocabularies of named authors, and works that in real time cannibalize images and text from the Web to create output. Brief discussions of Jim Carpenter's *Erika*, "The Electronic Muse" (Niss & Deed), *The Shannonizer*, Flarf, and Google Poem Generator were followed by more extensive demonstration of Tissell's *Dada newsfeed* and an introduction to Jim Andrews's *dbCinema*. I did a demonstration using the beta (offline) version of the program, which is not publically available because Andrews is trying to develop it commercially. While these tools—which use mass media feeds to make art—are

fairly raw, I believe they "serve as a model for the engineering of digital literary products in the future".

Stefans presented an informal version of his paper, to make the point that when we talk about the materiality of text in a digital work, it is acknowledged something not textual is happening but often do not pursue the idea far enough. Stefans's purpose is thus to examine the visual traditions that impose itself on the graphic design, and to develop a "compositional vocabulary". He explains that his main influences are the New York School poets and painters, and that his interest in making visual poetry is to give non-readers (of English) something interesting to look at. He describes his appreciation for hand-wrought arts (which go against typographic norms), citing works by Jean-Michel Basquiat ("gestural, psychological content&expressive letterforms" related to doodles, "an iconic hand"), Stan Brakhage (painting on film), John Cage (mesostics, "lack of symmetry"), Robert Grenier (works with ballpoint pens), Phillip Guston's cartoons, Al Hirschfield's "NINA" inscriptions ("When does scrawl become text?"), Jasper Johns, Steve McCaffery's typewriter works, Jason Nelson's use of scrawled writing in his video games, and other Art and videogame examples as informative influences. Poets have used material textual markings in construction for a long time, like Emily Dickinson; Aram Saroyan's use of typographic slips (shifts?). Likes "vulgar", and art that points towards the dark side of psychology rather than the cybernetic subject, sees no reason why digital poetry can't do that. Repetitive human actions give a sense of creator as an algorithm. He also gave us a tour of the backend of *Scriptor*, explaining how the vibrating dynamic is achieved (through invention, much intricate labor, and advanced technical skills), how he likes to make his doodles "explode". He shows a version of W.C. Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow" in Scriptor form. His emphasis is not on making letters explode but rather to control every element of a piece of a graphic—to write an algorithm that makes them have behaviors; his are simple but yet a visual complexity happens. Refers to Piringer's practice (seen the previous night), which also involves enlivening letters and texts in real time. Modestly calling it rudimentary, Stefans's showed what his "letter creator" looks like, how it is possible to make and connect lines on a small grid, change their color—this is how his vibrating letters are made (out of coded numbers), seemingly by hand. These constructions are meant to be projected, but processor speed and resolution make a significant difference.

In the discussion, JC to BKS: breaking typography down to fundamental units. Do they always wiggle? BKS: No, that's just what he's doing now. As with the dreamlife of letters, he's building a vocabulary of movement of the piece, not all will be that way. JC: You're exploring the liminality between letters and proto-letters? BKS: That's one aspect, an interesting component of the work. The idea of reducing them to a simple set of numbers is that I can control them through the programming. JC: What's at stake? You write poems in the sense that you write text, but also explore

the semi-permeable border between graphics and letter. What is the connection between letter creation and text? BKS: In Japanese calligraphy, weren't you judged by the fine-ness of your hand? One thing I'd like to do with this is to make a graphics creation program. I don't do a lot of algorithmically generated texts but I think algorithmically generated images are more interesting. AP to SR: Putting together software, one of the most difficult things is getting people to participate in whatever you design. In The Last Performance, who uses it, why, what strategies are used by the authors to maintain that interest? Are these kinds of questions important to the type of close reading you're interested in? SR: Yes. Part of the essay he hasn't finished yet involves collective narratives, but will be finished and published in a book later this year. The architecture of participation is very interesting in the piece. The collaborative community is important to it. Takes time to get used to constructing within and responding to what is presented. There's a process of seducing a reader to be a writer, getting used to participating in a writing game. Compares TLP to Gaudi—the author designs the architecture, and uses certain parts of the structure, but then it opens up into a group construction at points, coming back to the initial visions and thematic boundaries. It is not just information architecture, but something within which things are constructed. JN to BKS: It seems like there's a tendency to equate things that are sketched with madness or insanity. Do you think about that association, how they read the work. BKS: You're right. Mentions documentary on R. Crumb, a notebook filled with just lines of illegible text. Extensive auto-correction can lead to beauty but also suggests a type of madness. But there's playfulness to it as well. MM to BKS: what you're presenting is a kind of process, connected to fine art. What are you doing as a digital artist who is acting like a painter (Johns), a build-up process. BKS: that's another variable of the work, that the number of times a letter is re-drawn on top of itself is determined by the algorithm. The thick lines, and the number of colors makes the eye more attentive to the material. When McCaffery theorizes Bill Bissett through Bataille and de Sade and excess, he does a poststructural take on what the page means, and that kind of reality is what I'm getting at as well. When you take away the pre-packaged font, this romantic line between author and screen is opened. SR: In thinking about your work and Jorg's, there's creation of the instrument, which is the artwork, but then there's over time uses of the artwork. BKS: I'd like for other people to access it online, and create their own doodles and designs. I want to develop it, and maybe try to patent it. CF: I think it is not a bad idea to try and sell digital poetry& people buy all kinds of crap&why wouldn't they buy something that was interesting and useful? BKS: If they ever make the Kindle programmable, that could be fun too, though they probably won't. SR: There are some apps being sold on the iPhone. KS to me: We've been talking about cannibalism during the conference. Am I trying to remix the use of cannibalism, or the implication of it, because I seemed to shifted a little between cannibalism and remix, and though those terms share some relation, there's a more positive valence in the way we use remix. Are you ceding to the

destructive sense of cannibalism, or giving the more positive by emphasizing remix? CF: I wanted to make the connection between "mashup", sampling, and the type of activity that was postulated by de Andrade and anthropophagy. I have respect for DJ Spooky, I don't know if his work is as hardcore as it could be. Maybe there are degrees of intention. But I believe he's putting out a polemic, as have the Concrete poets and others who have embraced anthropophagy. Maybe remix is a lighter term, I don't know, one that indicates less taboo? I like anthropophagy because part of de Andrade's theory involved transforming the taboo into something totemic. There could be a specificity to the term that involves things that we do not see much of today. Maybe this type of activity, where we're trying to have a cultural transformation, may not be happening all the time. MM to me: the images that you showed were from the Internet? CF: In dbCinema the images are gathered from the net in real time—from Yahoo or Google or any directory you specify—you could put your own images up and point the software to it. Here there was a bit of a delay, which I didn't quite understand but must have been related to the connection. It draws images into the thumb browser, which can be removed. You can customize it to include pictures tagged with words. I like the randomness. It picks up the same general images every time, but not always—I don't know exactly how Google images establishes its hierarchies. SR: The thing I wonder about, and about selling it as well, is that at a certain point it will be useful for advertising and marketers. CF: This is exactly his target audience, from what I understand. He wants companies to buy it so that they'll use it to make something that looks cool for them. I shouldn't speak for Jim, but that's my impression. SR: He'll sell that to support his own artwork. CF: Right. JC: It is important, crucial for us to discuss at this point. CF: Are you worried that a digital poet could sell out? JC: It is not a question of selling out, but it's a question of how we're prepared to employ our time. The supposed aesthetic is deranged in bit.fall, it claims to be cultural critique but is not. It doesn't do what it claims. It is beautiful, has a wow factor, but can be equally applied to advertising as a cultural critical practice. CF: As far as I know Jim has said no more than this is a graphical synthesizer, he's not making claims for something else. JC: No, he's being straightforward about: he's saying I want it to stop being cultural critique while I am building it. I want it to be something that is smooth and enter commercial society without a problem, so that I can finally get paid as a good artist. There are political problems that go with it, and there are problems with this that we need to address, at least occasionally. I think that Roberto did a good job at showing this particular point [in his keynote]. SR: Though he just left, my question for Roberto is how far is he taking the assumption that this is a negative thing, that the cannibalism of the text is becoming material. JC: RS is unambiguous: he wants the text to be able to be read, who thinks that language should be consumed as something meaningful. SR: That's why I'd say that something that something like TLP complicates his thesis. JC: TLP, for Roberto, isn't literature. SR: But the same sorts of cannibalizing text can be part of a literature that can be read. A: Cannibalism is seen in a more

positive light by de Sade, associated with love; is this part of the notion of remix? CF: I don't know de Sade, sorry to say.

Digital poetry performances: "Brewing Luminous", "The Inframergence", "In absentia", "The Partickl-e", "The Last Performance"

After lunch, digital poetry performances by myself, Jim Rosenberg, J.R. Carpenter, Amy Sara Carroll & Ricardo Dominugez, and Judd Morrissey (with Mark Jeffery). My show featured two animations projected as a montage with simultaneous reading of poems inspired by my participation in the Flarf Collective. One visual channel was a scripted "playlist" of "brushsets" Andrews and I created for the gig (titled e-poetry, Barcelona, cannibalism, Machado); the other was a fifteen minute text-movie I composed called "Brewing Luminous", which features a pair of kinetic anagrammatic poems ("Barcelona Dreaming", "Brewing Luminous") accompanied by a soundtrack made with processed samples of Cecil Taylor's music. My set ends with the lines: "Rhode Island dreamed of Hollywood stardom:/Associate seeing regularly,/helps to keep your mouth in top shape".

Rosenberg—one of the true pioneers in the field—followed, beginning with some "procedural comments," like observing that Borrás had essentially organized two conferences here (one when the support of her former institution was presumed, then another when that was no longer the case). Secondly, he noted the reality that important research sites, such as Hermeneia, can be taken offline at a moment's notice; he insisted that everyone go home and backup their websites, preserving in case of any similar unfortunate events. Rosenberg read from an ongoing work, "The Inframergence" (which we're told is about 1/3 complete), explaining that the outer interface is a spiral, which starts out being polylinear but as you go further in the structure starts to emerge. The spiral is not entirely obvious in the projection, and is essentially a gathering of small lexia on the screen. He reads from the piece, directing himself through the interface, voicing words emerging from nested constructions at the same time. It always amazes me to hear the author's singular voice reading these works, in which the words that appear are meant to be read as simultaneities. Watching (hearing) him read is instructive—seeing Rosenberg read his own work gives us clues as to how we might read it too. When a single voice pronounces the words, in fact occasionally stumbling over the unconventional arrangement of unusually paired words and phrases, the impossibilities of Rosenberg's complex concept come to the fore. In the onslaught of language, only one line can be spoken (processed) at a time, complete with pauses as different sections of the work are accessed. As the moderator (Rettberg) commented during

his introduction, Rosenberg has been cultivating his aesthetic for more than two decades, and the reading Barcelona was not radically different than the first time I heard Rosenberg read from his work in 1996. There is something powerful about hearing the singular (I want to say frail, but that's not true) voice, making his way through the dense layers of words, presenting abstract images, hearing something that is not entirely unlike language poetry (e.g., "Sensory sear score flush", "tone mime scarecrow", "dice-work grip prolific"). Yet the diagrammatic syntax Rosenberg so proudly cultivates on the screen cannot be reflected on the stage, so the work becomes something different when presented in such situations. As the poem accumulates it becomes less abstract, and I have a tendency to read the poem as a self-reflexive commentary on its elaborate process (as commentary on itself): ""throat sling siphen imagination windings/stall cure disguised shock mantra digger". Whether or not this is a valid way to receive the poem, I don't know.

"The Partickl-e", by Carroll and Dominguez, was in principle, a street performance that happened outside the walls of conference venues, although it was packaged and interestingly represented from the festival stage/space. The duo integrated non-trivial performance features, some of which I'd never seen before. In general, e-poets tend to minimize theatrics in stage presentations—although this was not the case here and with Morrissey/Jeffery's performance later on the bill. Both performers were dressed in costumes: long white lab coats. During the presentation Carroll sat at a desk on the stage, reading a text while other text(s) (prerecorded video, technically documentation of the work itself) were projected behind her. Dominguez wandered through the audience with a handheld projector that was attached to an iPod, also projecting documentation, demonstrating what the projector does "live". Carroll began by projecting the "Particles of Interest: Tales from the Matter Markets" site and mentioning the current work of the Particle Collective (which, beyond Carroll and Dominguez also includes Diane Ludin and Nina Waisman)—they're currently working on a piece that involves the concept of hospitality, and are doing fieldwork along the US/Mexico border that involves more than the production of art. She explains that other iterations of the work being shown include a sound installation (background sounds could be heard here, but uncertain of their source). The first video projected began by showing words—word play, almost Concrete, poetry—associated with the group's interest in nanotechnology (the subtitle of the above site is "nanotechnology through experimental media"). At first it is just words, but then it becomes clear that the words are being projected onto bodies (these videos were made on the streets of Barcelona during previous evenings using the handheld projector—which is actually the piece of art made for E-poetry). Carroll describes these as "poems for nano iPods". Using the textures of walls (architecture), and projecting onto clothing/bodies is visually compelling. Dominguez projecting onto the projection: making impromptu montages, but mainly walks around projecting onto people in the audience, the floor, and furniture. Carroll sits on stage and reads a mashup of

texts (with "a manifesto-like quality") she'd written previously. At a certain point, she adds a new animation, a pastiche of quotes and comments related to the presentation (including Concrete poems by Augusto de Campos), into the projected mix (it appeared as if Dominguez also projected the same piece at times, as well as others). Accordingly the presentation becomes a "hybrid" text on several levels, reflecting a combination of imagery, of horizontal (prose) cultural commentary and critique with (vertical) lines of poetry and poetic references (e.g., she may be the first person to reference directly Nate Mackey's work at E-poetry, referencing the title of his last book of poems, Splay Anthem). Before beginning to read the mashup, Carroll offers a few comments about the theme of cannibalism, saying that the question for her (them) is not co-optation, they're not interested in postmodernism or either/or schematics—for them it is always both/and. So they're "interested in the relationship between the word cannibal and Caliban" and are interested in the concept of the "Cannibal Manifesto" in terms of Postcolonial theory and in relation to Latin America. They're interested in "postscripting Posts", operating after the Latin American literature boom, engaging with Roberto Bolaño's ideas. Carroll's speech is informed, bearing political concern (global warming, transglobal corporations). Addresses the sublime (or absence thereof) in the quotidian, suggesting that nano is the future of the sublime. We're at a point of an "ironic reversal of cultural mandates". Introduces historical examples of activist/artistic efforts (Mexico City, Adorno); forcing audiences to acknowledge that in the vaporization(s) solids that vanish (e.g., World Trade Center) do not disappear into thin air. Purpose: to challenges the principles of reality. No regulations on nanotechnology (particles). How does one intervene, use it to alter the literary? "Paraliterary": the particle-ization of language. Particle (the group) engages scientific spheres (qualified by Carroll as "dirty science"), remembers narrative as a socially symbol act, not set apart from science. Lab conditions, isolatable: silence, to reflect on the politics of re-presentation, "on what and who is omitted". We are not bound to books, literary can flow through the airwaves, breathed in through nano particles. Multiple filters inform, enhance, enable decision making in the "post-contemporary". Their routes (and routes) consider environmental-isms, including re-engineering of cosmetic products (and how it effects women), privileges of accessibility, what is disposable, with a stance that is more than rhetorical. What they are doing is done in conjunction with the "Particle group's larger investigations into nanotoxicologies and dispersed force fields of writerly/readerly practices". The word, claims Carroll, "deserves to be massaged as well as minced&the word is our transference point and rejection". Particle poetry replaces historical traits with "nanotechnological method"—the ion is the new line (riffs off of Blake, "particle particle, burning bright"), "tweaking and casting a spell on neo-liberalisms&pageantries of possession". Active pursuit of "particle capitalism" (see website for some info on this idea of the project) in the combination of bits. Instead of an academic paper with a performance component (a la Purkinge, 1994), this seems almost ritualistic—projecting language onto bodies

showing us different aspects of textuality—a kind of spell to make us aware of our conditions? Carroll seems a bit didactic at points, but certainly expensively so, and probably necessarily so—for if minds (and planetary conditions) are to be changed, direct, forceful information and instructions are needed.

Carpenter sat at a table on the stage and did a demonstration of her work *in absentia* (2008), reading some of the stories it contains. The piece—designed by Carpenter but featuring contributions by "guest authors" with various ethnic backgrounds and languages—largely involves gentrification (and ironically the art gallery that initially supported the work was evicted from its location in Montreal shortly after becoming involved with the project). The interface includes maps and area photographs of the author's neighborhood (Mile End), as well as symbols and superimposed texts, which the viewer interacts with to produce a narrative. Text passages also include images; collage of text and images. Several texts included are in epistolary form, others are diaristic (contemplative, observational), and some include text from "roommate wanted" ads that sound like relationship ads. A few are culled from Carpenter's novel *Words the Dog Knows*. Combined, they have the effect of re-sounding a conversation that describes (often with subtle humor) the experience of living in a place.

The performance of (Morrissey's) *The Last Performance* begins with him sitting at the table on the stage, reading from the work (what sounds like commentary on the work). Two different projection areas are set up; the title page (http://thelastperformance.org/title.php) is projected in the background. Part one ("The Dance") is shown (both screens), Morrissey reads as it plays part of the time, and at others lets the kinetic text do the "talking" of the work. At the start of Part two ("The Dome"), he is joined onstage by Jeffery, who begins to read a different type of text (epistolary); the animation from Part one remains projected on the side screen, the opening page of "The Dome" appears on the main screen. When he finishes reading Jeffery dons a full-scale goat mask (horns and all), gesticulates to get into character, and begins reading again. After finishing another section, Jeffrey removes his shows and throws them against the wall, then writhes on the stage and reads again. Emphasis was on performance and vocalization of text by Jeffrey, not much happening on the screen (or between performers) for awhile. When Jeffrey finishes, he removes the mask, leaves the stage; Morrissey activates the text and begins speaking again—in part describing the concept of the performance he is participating in and the work itself (e.g., "I never took anything literally except for letters themselves"). He reads from the "lenses" of the work, and Part Three ("The Minaret"), which seems to contain reflections on the work. Rettberg had earlier delivered contexts and comment on *The Last Performance*, and here we are given one possibility for a live demonstration. Morrissey leaves the stage after voicing the line "shut that door"; as the animation continues he finishes by reading a few lines

offstage, concluding with the statement, "it is the work of the dramaturge to see that the hammer bends the saw".

In the discussion JN asks JM: how long does this piece run in other places? JM: There are lots of different versions, not just because of time but because of space, the piece is adapted to the site. At one show he used three screens, so the text patterns extend across multiple screens; he has also done solo, one-screen versions; time runs anywhere from 20 to 50 minutes. SR to JM: What is the relation of the film to the project? JM: The film is one of three projects. Work stems from a period of research with a performance company that resulted in a piece for 5 performers, which extended into the writing part of the project and the film. Research led to multiple forms of output. The group (collective) was disbanding after many years, so it really was the process of ending. SR to CF: Can you talk about the process of making the poems that you showed, remixing in your work? CF: I began to make the anagrammatic poems when I was teaching my students how to use Flash a couple of years ago. I was inspired by works by Brian [Stefans], mIEKAL aND, Talan [Memmott], and others, and started working with it. I start with a word or phrase, which I run through the Internet anagram server, usually getting thousands of results. I select ones I think can be turned into a poem then somewhat painstakingly compose them on the screen. I am pleased with the montage effect I'm able to get with projectors, and sometimes show multiple pieces at the same time, like today. These works resulted from the phrases "Barcelona Dreaming" and "Brewing Luminous" (a phrase taken from the title of a Cecil Taylor record), from which I pulled some samples and decontextualized by stretching them way out of proportion. It is different every time. SR to JR: is there computation underlying your process? JR: There's no computation that creates finished work. There are no algorithms that write words or place them. It is all done by hand. There's computation involved in the behaviors that support the work, there are classes for how the words behave. The computation is pre-compositional. I have along process, in which I write what I call a reservoir, which I cut up, to permute it using chance operations to use as a prompt sheet. Then I make another writing reservoir; I do this about two or three times to get final a prompt sheet I use to create a finished work, but it is just writing. CF: Has anyone here ever seen a handheld projector before? That was a truly remarkable presentation, and a way to use technology—I was spellbound. SR to ASC/RD: Yes, and could you talk about your work and how u see the relationship between poetry and activism. RD: One of the ideas we dealt with as the Critical Art Ensemble in the 80s was the notion of perfomative matrix that would try to disturb the audience, and part of that was to disturb the question of poetic and activism, or develop "artivism". A lot of the work in the 90s was trying to create a poetic encounter that could create a digital wave of unbearable humanity in terms of code itself, in trying to find what was missing. So whether it is in nanotechnology, or hacktivism, or locative media, I always try to work with poets and specific artists, try to amplify that as much as possible. ASC is also thinking

through the question via the performative matrix but remarks that any poetic also involves sublevels, direct statements. BKS to JRC: Did you stretch the materials you presented into a novel? What was the process there? JRC: The text here is a lot bigger than it looks. I am better at reading my own text, so that's what I did today, although ended with one by someone else. Some texts here are not in the novel, but a lot are. The novel also remediates a couple of other e-literature projects and some short stories. There's a lot of other stuff going on in the novel. Some of the characters appear both in the online work and in the novel, the maps (taken from Google) give the writing a setting.

Award presentation

A panel celebrating past and present winners of the "Ciutat de Vinaròs" award (Jason Nelson, Rui Torres, Ton Ferret) followed (Caitlin Fisher, also a winner in 2008, could not attend but a section of her work was shown). This international prize was established by Borràs (and the Hermeneia research group). Submitted materials are studied, taught, and (when applicable) used to promote Spanish/Catalan literature. At E-poetry, each poet did a brief demonstration of their work. Nelson, after "a small bit of preaching" about the "incredible potential" of digital poetry and the need to get it to the general public, encourages everyone to try to spread their (and everyone's work) outside of academia, then shows his work "The Bomar Gene" (2008). While navigating through the piece he reads a few sections from this "hybrid" work (which also includes sound). The story is strange—full of odd facts, mixed with fiction—yet the prose, while nonlinear, is not hard to understand or to follow. Nelson as always is charismatic, entertaining, improvisational, and self-effacing on the stage. Torres talked about the process of making his work "Poemas no meio do caminho" (2007). Name ("Poems in the middle of the road") is inspired by a line in a poem by Carlos Drummond de Andrade. Explains that the work is produced with a Flash actionscript generator he developed with programming collaborators, and is based on some of Pedro Barbosa's ideas. He does a demonstration of how the "categories" in the piece are built, and adds content to the database (which anyone can do by using a mechanism on the blog associated with the work). Shows how multimedia can be added (sound—500 prerecorded sounds are included), which alters the combinatory processes. Torres makes unique poems for the occasion. Different visualizations of the work are available: there are vertical and horizontal (z-space) versions of the work, the latter of which shows a different view of the reading material (and looks great). The literary value is that the list of words used to make the generated works can be altered. Borràs comments that while disappearance is a feature of many electronic works, Torres's piece actually preserves pieces that are added by users. She comments that Fisher's work, instead of migrating from page to screen, moves

from screen to page. Ferret showed his work <u>"The Fugue* book"</u> (2008). His work requires the user to connect with Facebook (the social networking site). He explains that the identity of the reader is very important—"the protagonist is the reader and his or her friends", although though the reader "is not free". Once "The Fugue* Book" has your email address, it begins to send messages from imaginary people containing hyperlinks that open up new sections of the "The Fugue", animates user tag clouds, and interacts with blogs. When I experimented with the work afterwards, it appears as though a posting to an eroticism blog was attributed to me (though I can't read what it says because the entire project is written in Catalan). Ferret does a demonstration of how the "story" works, explained by a computer voice in English. Borràs comments that you can't escape your own personality in the work.

Conclusions

A short summary panel, featuring Cayley, Bootz, and Borràs concluded the events; each panelist briefly offered comments about the festival/symposium. Borràs mentions certain subjects listed in the call for papers attracted little or no interest; two are especially significant: teaching e-literature and translating e-literature. This circumstance gives us an image of how our interests shape the field. Considers the possibility that there's no need for translation? (i.e., do we all understand every language, or do we all write in one language), but rejects the idea. Suggests that we do not yet have academic space to use e-poetry as a teaching object, and that the focus is now on practice and reflection; close reading and code are the main topics. Urges everyone to think about this because she has had "incredible" experiences with teaching and translation: mixing both allows us as readers to get deeply inside the pieces. These are important topics for the future, which would show maturity in field. She offers "E poetry in numbers": there were 44 papers submitted, 22 were presented; 92 artworks proposed, 45 were accepted; 2 keynotes; 90 participants; 5 venues; the event was in all the newspapers and television; artists from 22 countries (38 different universities); audiences were large. She notes that there is <u>website</u>, <u>blog</u>, <u>flickr</u>, and <u>YouTube</u> site for the conference. Bootz celebrated the impressive strength of the conference team, then noted E-poetry is a discipline that is a work in progress. The challenge he proposed in 2007 for this year's events was to focus on the literary nature of digital poetry. He believes we successfully did so, and that teaching and translation are challenges for the next gathering. Previously we didn't have so many papers that did close readings of works, now we do, and can see that "comparative literature is coming". (He later also commented to me that he felt that there were too many Americans, that there needed to be broader international representation). Bootz notes that the next E-Poetry is the ten year anniversary, and that Sandy Baldwin will manage the event. The proceedings of E-Poetry are going

to be a book, which will be published before the next E-Poetry. Cayley, "sitting in for Sandy and Loss", reiterates his gratitude to the organizers, and his impression that the event was remarkable and stimulating. He points out that the field continues grow, that we don't know where it is going, but reiterates the notion that teaching and translation are crucial. Translation implies that it has to be literary practice, shows that we're still dealing with language. He is keen that we see ourselves involved with artistic practice—we are engaged with the academy because we have to in order to survive: "We have relationships with universities, but nonetheless we need to see ourselves as art practitioners." Conceptually we belong in arts departments, not humanities, because we make things—"we are here as makers". "We invite research as self-reflection, as critical reflection on our own work, and on humanities scholars that take our work seriously as work, and not to demo theory or for the sake of theory only". He is glad to know that the E-poetry festivals will continue, and congratulates this year's group for an amazing, spectacular job.

None of the above would have occurred without the efforts of the primary organizers, Baldwin, Bootz, Borràs, and Glazier. Borràs should be especially commended for overcoming extremely unfortunate circumstances—including the loss of her job and the passing of her father—while engineering E-Poetry 2009. Despite the fact that funding she had raised essentially disappeared, she successfully coordinated all of the details of the events and was able to engineer a successful gathering of significant scholars and artists working in the field at present.