

Loss Pequeño Glazier

## Editorial

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# Editorial

By Loss Pequeño Glazier

No. 29 – 2003

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Dichtung-Digital 3/2003!

In November 2002, an extraordinary event occurred in Buffalo. Key practitioners in new media arts, cultural theory, computer science, and poetics gathered to deliberate issues critical to the intertwined engagements of language, expression, and computer code in emergent media. Addressed were questions of the status of code as language, how programming languages modulate intention, and how programming mediates language. Further, the often contradictory interdependence of language and encoding, the duality of code as notation and instruction, the "otherness" of the executable work, the relevance of particular languages to specific tasks, and the machine/human language border were interrogated. Responding to these issues were artists, programmers, and scholars with wide-ranging interests from diverse fields.

The idea was not to think of code independent of its "genre" or "field". My own interest in organizing such a gathering was to think of code as a material and as a means to an end. The way writing is a material and a means to an end: the written object is not just writing -- but turns out a love letter, a poem, a legal document, an entry in a diary. The question then becomes what issues are dealt with through the writing process itself --independent of the stated aim. That is, what issues are present in the writing "as writing". The same question of writing as a means to an end is present when you think of writing as encoding and the ends as programming-based works: digital poetry, new media experiments, artificial intelligence, cultural interventions, installation art, or robotics. The idea is to break away from familiar patterns of thinking of coding as an activity that exists on its own or as a process that is detached from its produced object. Code as writing but also as writing that "works", the wiring that makes the digital object tick.

The issue of what is present in the writing of code differs according to the demands of a given project. Different ends reveal different strategies, different conceptualizations of how encoding works in realizing the object. What was consistent in the Symposium was how encoding was not just a necessary task but an active site of poesis, or "making".

The papers in this issue reveal a range of conceptions of code. The reading here is doubly satisfying, not only for the clear presentations of these engaging projects, but for the sense of code as undercurrent, the way encoding, language, and artistic expression are separate undertakings, but inescapably intertwined.

Writing, as a human activity produces texts that seek to tell about us -- histories, novels, documentary films -- works constituting the human record. But even more can be learned about us through looking at how we negotiate language in order to produce such documents. Our relation to language, its very strategies and resistances, tell us more about ourselves than any document that might be produced through the process. The papers here seek to present a similar way to contemplate writing as encoding, not as merely a way to produce objects, but as a window on artistic production, a means to think through the digital medium.

Language & Encoding was organized by Loss Pequeño Glazier and Mark Böhlen, Department of Media Study, State University of New York, Buffalo, November 8-9, 2002. The Language & Encoding panels included Beige Records, John Cayley, Alex Galloway, Lisa Jevbratt, Lev Manovich, Michael Mateas, Jonathan Minton, David Rokeby, Phoebe Sengers, Marc Böhlen, and Loss Pequeño Glazier. This issue of *Dichtung Digital* presents a written record of those panel presentations. Additionally, the Symposium featured performances by Judd Morrissey and Lori Talley, John Cayley, Loss Pequeño Glazier and Beige Records, not represented here. Archival information about the Symposium is available at the Symposium's web site (<http://epc.buffalo.edu/events/02/encoding>), with video documentation forthcoming..

With best wishes from the Niagara frontier, I present these evocative readings for your pleasure. Here's to further dialog on these crucial issues!

Buffalo, 4.08.2003

Loss Pequeño Glazier