Editorial: Electronic Literature Communities, Part 2

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After the completion of the ELMCIP double-issue on "Electronic Literature Communities", the international e-lit community seems to us a kind of hypertext with many intertwined threads. If Electronic Literature were a building, it would be a mansion with many rooms, many architects, and many builders – different human and computer languages could be heard pouring forth from each wing, and diverse materials and styles represented in various parts of the building, but all would share a common room at the center. Without adhering to any specific shared agenda, the communities documented here are evolving in conversation with each other. The two issues together offer many beginnings, and many histories of electronic literature which each have their own histories and trajectories and together provide a holistic impression of a field in the process of becoming.

Without having been particularly asked to, many authors of this double-issue sought to draw the beginnings of "their" field in a way that identifies with a national identity or shared language, just as many historical literary communities have identified themselves. The two issues have included perspectives of literary community from France, Norway, Catalonia, Spain, UK, Netherlands, and the United States.

A more personal narrative of becoming part of a community of practice is represented in the second issue with the contribution of Norwegian poet Ottar Ormstad who shows how his artistic practice as a concrete poet moved digital and thereby points out the importance and role the e-lit community played in this process. His personal shift towards electronic literature is identified with the e-Poetry festival 2007 in Paris, which provide him with a gateway to the community.

In his contribution, Loss Pequeño Glazier describes the beginnings of the community that established that very important festival. Glazier tracks the foundation of the Electronic Poetry Center in 1994, along with the launch of the Poetics List (Charles Bernstein in 1993) and demonstrates the connections between e-Poetry and a longer tradition of experimental poetry. Historical notes from the listserv from that time feed his contribution.

Likewise, Laura Borras Castanyer connects the institutional work of Hermeneia and the creative production of electronic literature both in Catalan and in a Hispanic

context more generally. Her narrative offers connections between the complex situation of language and identity in historical and contemporary Catalonia, the history of avant-garde writing in that cultural contexts, and the contemporary work of electronic literature.

In search of origins, authors in this double-issue have provided us with landmarks to find our way through these histories, remembering events, journal launches, mailing lists, formal processes of institutionalization, publications of creative work, and other happenings that served as impetus for communities to take shape.

A completely different type of beginning is sketched out by Mark C. Marino and Rob Wittig who introduce us to a new genre: "netprov" and in a twitterlogue converse and contemplate over this genre's origins and potentialities. Andres Løvlie also presents a particular experimental writing practice he has developed to facilitate public contributions to a system for locative literature: texttopia. In discussing the conditions for creative community, his article also speaks to Rob Wittig's contribution on "Shyness, Cushions, and Food: Case Studies in American Creative Communities" in first installment of this double-issue.

Collaborative practices in electronic literature were of particular interest in four additional papers that address collaboration from differentangles.

In this respect, David Meurer positions born-networked writing practices within contemporary culture and emerging cultural production practices and discusses challenges to the authorship model common to print. (read here) Authorship and collaborative production also is addressed by Yra van Dijk who investigates into Dutch e-lit and explores aspects of collaborative practices represented in the paratexts of selected works.

A contribution written in through collaboration that blends two (seemingly) disparate fields of practice can be found in "Creative Practice and Experimental Method in Electronic Literature and Human Experimental Psychology" by Andrew Michael Roberts, Lisa Otty, Martin H. Fischer and Anna Katharina Schaffner. Here, the authors present close readings of works from a fresh view new to e-lit: psychology that takes into account the cognitive processes of reading as well as the tradition of concrete poetry and its relation to new digital experiments. In reference to works by Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries and other works of electronic literature as well as concrete poetry they explore how the locus of tension "shifts from meaning to process" and ask: "does the author / text / programme control our reading, or can we use our sense-processing and cognitive abilities to master that process?"

Finally, Jerome Fletcher and Lisa Somma situate plans for a new e-lit community in "Offshore of Writing: E-literature and the Island", regarding islands and the views of the mainland offered from their shores as metaphors for creative practices taking

place in digital media. These creative communities taking shape are operating at some distance from the "mainland" of mainstream culture, but taking advantage of the freedoms made available by this distance and divergence, and perhaps developing new models of social relations between creative collaborators, between artists and critics, and between forms of artistic practice.