

EDITED BY EDUARDO KAC

MEDIA POETRY

AN INTERNATIONAL ANTHOLOGY

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Media Poetry: An International Anthology

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Editor

RECOMBINANT POETICS

Bill Seaman

We are in the midst of profound technological changes that impact upon how people communicate, share knowledge, and learn. Potentially, along with these technological changes comes a related change in poetics. Thus a techno-poetics is explored. Where once we focused on analogue media as the primary means of embodying our ideas through artefacts of thought, our understanding of reality is now interwoven (structurally coupled!) with an expanded linguistics of interpenetrated fields of meaning.² Some would say this is not a techno-linguistics but an expanded computer-based environmental semiotics. Through Recombinant Poetics virtual space becomes a mutable field for evocative media-related exploration.

Computer-based environmental meaning is potentially explored through the authorship, inter-authorship, and operative experiential examination of a diverse set of media-elements and media-processes. The media that becomes evocative within this techno-poetic virtual environment is diverse. This media includes digital video, digital still images, 3-D digital objects, 3-D animations, digital spoken and written text, digital music/noise – sound objects, and digital texture maps – both still and time-based. Each media-element could be said to convey its own field of meaning. Varying combinations of these fields of meaning are experienced through

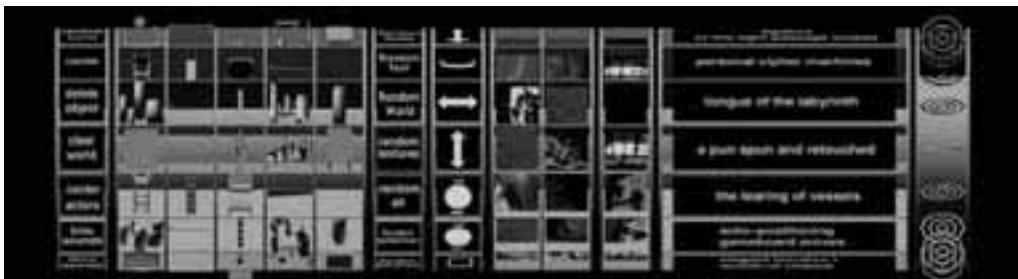


Figure. 1: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Menu system (Spinning Container Wheels).



Figure 2: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Menu system (partial screen view).

fleeting electronic environmental perceptual stimulations. The mindset of the participant represents another active field. The user (viewer/user)³ becomes dynamically involved in the construction of meaning. It is through the combination and recombination of these evocative digital fields of meaning, as experienced by an engaged participant, that a new form of poetics can emerge – Recombinant Poetics.

Computer-based environmental meaning can be examined through the operative experience of spaces that explore digital processes as brought about through mindfully aware⁴ interactivity. In this computer-based space, our interactive exchange fields have shifted in emphasis from the direct and physical, to mediated electronic perceptual fields. So we ask, how should the techno-poetics of this moment be authored or inscribed? The definition of the word "inscribe" includes both "to mark or engrave (words etc.) on (a surface)" as well as "to fix in the mind".⁵ How should such computer-based media-inscriptions reflect the complexity of the history of our relations with this abstract landscape of media experience that forms the larger environment we daily encounter?

New technological systems enable participants to glimpse into the actual meaning-related functionality of media-elements as they are explored through navigation, layering, juxtaposition and interpenetration within a specifically authored virtual environment. A techno-poetic mechanism has been created that enables the observation of the interactive contextualization, decontextualization and recontextualization of media-elements in virtual space. The user



Figure 3: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Personal Cipher Machines.



Figure 4: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Dispersion Potentials.

explores operative media-elements and media-processes through direct experience within a meta-meaning environment. This environment enables the experiential perusal of mutable electronic space – a space which exhibits fleeting relations between media-elements that arise through participation. This device becomes a mutable digital inscription mechanism for a new field of poetics – Recombinant Poetics.

The computer presents an environment where one can generate, sense, operate on, transmit, and interact with mutable dynamic media. Our relation to computer-based media-elements cannot easily be separated from other ways we have come to understand the world.⁶ Sensual intake of computer-based experience functions in a fluid relation to all experience – to the very manner in which we come to know reality. Media-elements make up a set of variables that characterize a particular aesthetic form of computer-based environmental landscape. This landscape is created through interaction with a generative virtual environment that I have authored in conjunction with the programmer Gideon May. The title of this work is "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire".⁷ This is a specific generative virtual environment created as a new space for the production and exhibition of fleeting poetic artefacts. This poetic virtual environment is an evocative experiential site in which the participant inhabits a continuum bridging virtual space with perceptual experience.

Within this virtual environment each of these media-elements has its own communicative or evocative force⁸ that acts upon the other media-elements positioned in relative proximity. The



Figure 5: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Floating Function.



Figure 6: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. In the Light of Absence.

active participant continuously registers these forces, bringing along their memory of relations with past experience – their own ongoing field of meaning production – consciousness. Meaning, within this kind of computer environment, is produced through the experience of a series of media-proximities and media-processes accessed through physical and intellectual interaction with this techno-poetic mechanism over time.

A conglomerate media is derived in part from the translated digital traces of past media (film becomes digital video; text becomes digital text; photography becomes digital photography). This media becomes operative within a specific computer-based territory. A dynamic summing of meaning forces is ongoing during interaction within this environment. The history of media-proximities and processes intermingles with the history/memory of our bodily experience of non-computer-based proximities and processes. Real and illusory events come to inform each other. Memory and associative processes are subtly moving and shifting at all times in relation to the shifting context that the work explores – a situation of media-proximities within a virtual environment brought about through generative emergent processes.

Recombinant Poetics is a contemporary poetics that enables an exploration of this active relation between ongoing experience, thought, and memory. This device empowers the participant to bring about interpenetration and juxtaposition of media-elements through their interaction with the following processes: construction processes; navigation processes; processes related to attributing, exploring and observing media behaviours; editing processes; aesthetic/abstraction processes; automated generative processes; processes related to the



Figure 7: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Re-embodied Intelligence.



Figure 8: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Abstraction detail.

sharing of spatial interaction in a networked virtual space; and chance processes of a semi-random nature. This techno-poetic mechanism is organism-like and functions in a self-organizing manner. The participant takes an active role in the generation and construction of meaning within this space.

Central to my techno-poetic device is the potential to transcend the use of words as a means of discourse, to enable the exploration of media experience in and of itself. Virtual environments are quixotic by their very nature. Words can, in fact, approach the relations that may be explored in this kind of techno-poetic environment, as this essay is seeking to do. Yet, the techno-poetic environment seeks to posit an experiential set of human/machine relations. Such

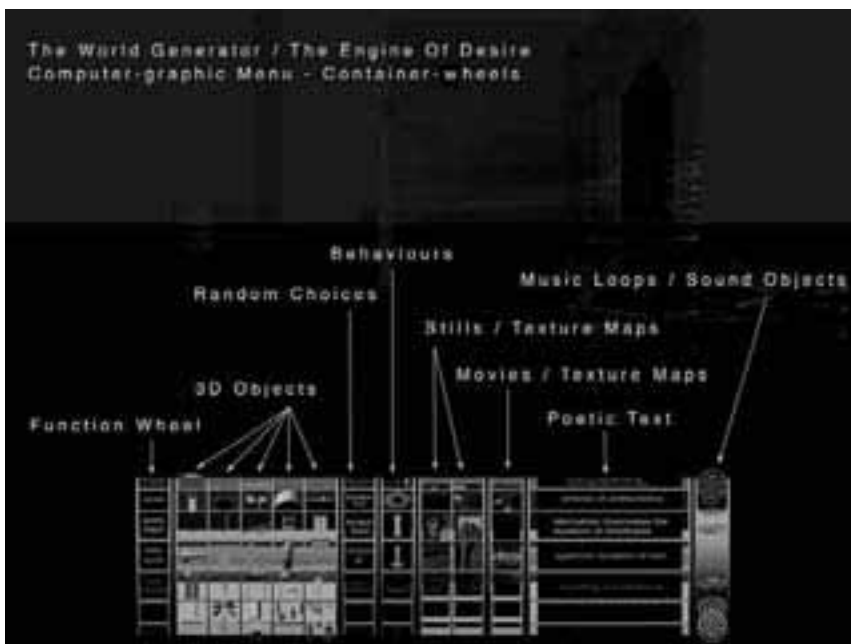


Figure 9: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

The World Generator / The Engine of Desire
 Text Included in Menu System

quantum behaviours - the paradox engine
 floating signifiers of the doubt progressions (arithmetic)
 turn fold library of constellation puns
 n spoke shunt jumpers
 empty vessel theatre drives
 shared oscillation reference fields
 generator meta-constructs
 random fall mechanisms
 auto-positioning game board moves
 meta-empty projection fields (in waiting)
 anare set models
 re-combinant code construction presence
 inward and outward shunt vessels
 objectepun
 large and small infinities of code vicinities
 condensation dispersions of infinite re-definition
 the looping turn bridge
 pool loops / loop pools
 room of memory collection debris
 the tearing of vessels
 the tearing of vessels
 endgame of architectural endgames

Figure 10: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

endgame of architectural endgames
 blue museum of theatre engines
 null expression receptors
 the physics of the void expression
 word chain reaction trees
 the positioning and re-positioning of object spokes
 silent hands repositioning
 the lie of luminosity | lay of the landing
 reverse engineering paradox
 fabrication illuminates the museum of emptiness
 fabrications of emptiness in the museum of illumination
 low light eye fabrication
 structure signatures of sublime erosion
 conducting bone transmission pulse bridges
 drum language vessel engines
 omnilocational eyes in the light of fabrication
 sexual signal site abstracters and extenders
 elegant locution | mouth of chance
 desire exchange foci
 arteries of arithmetics
 solutions of doubt mixtures
 energy of loss
 recovery frames
 spinning steadily in reverse equal to the speed of rotation
 standing still | changing context

Figure 11: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

equations of symbolic orders and disorders
 vessels of the dance
 reorientation rebus
 sound distances
 sounding out situations
 motioning clear
 habitation of magnetics
 motionless flight of the conveyor
 window trees
 vast territories of the entropyless domain
 optical futures
 shifter eye constants
 numb breather songs
 throat of blood rust
 symbolic duration of hair
 phantom gestures of the body
 amplification hands
 slow flow / gravity of glass thoughts
 blueprint of sand
 silence as it circulates and slides
 the skin of experience
 functions of the desire bearings
 physicality of the emotional hand
 release of self-guided desire mechanisms
 co-ordinates of resonant desire

Figure 12: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

vessels of the collapsed field
 container release triggers
 paradox engine maps
 drifting non-arrival
 drive collision mesh paths
 floating destinations
 remotional aggregates
 felt expressions of the folding engine
 a thought map which builds an expression
 components of thought (re-embodied)
 collapsing through generative mind sites
 alive compartments
 transfer skin / transposition
 chess snare / forking map
 self organising desire mechanisms
 geometric falls
 gravity of luminous hands
 resonance scatter drivers
 phantom limbics
 architecture of thought weaving
 violent ballet / quiescent repose
 slowly sinking light ship
 the circulatory lighthouse of blue sound
 empty touch / blue void
 ballet ship

Figure 13: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

experiential relations transcend the ability of words to articulate the complexity of lived experience. Through use of this mechanism one does not 'talk about' how meaning arises within the techno-poetic environment – one experientially comes to understand this complexity. Meaning arises and falls away across a series of rhizomatic⁹ flows made operative within the environment. Descriptive language becomes a secondary approach to sensual computer-based environmental experience in terms of this techno-poetic device.

Recombinant Poetics is informed by a range of topics and experiences. DNA and the dynamic technological processes that surround it become a vibrant metaphor. Questions surrounding the exploration of recombinant processes may become the dominating topic of our time. The living variable media of electronic processes becomes the metaphorical recombinant material of a contemporary poetics of flux. A Recombinant Poetic work presents a mechanism in which a user can act upon and explore varying juxtapositions of computer-based media-elements to examine environmental meaning within a mutable generative electronic environment. The generative component is essential to Recombinant Poetics and differentiates it from other fixed virtual environments.

The World Generator/The Engine of Desire becomes operative through a new interface metaphor – a series of spinning virtual container-wheels. These container-wheels hold an elaborate set of authored media – elements: 3-D objects, digital video stills, digital video loops, a litany of lines of poetic text, an elaborate series of sound objects (musical loops), a set of varying computer-based behaviours (one can make an object or image spin, rotate, follow a line, move in a spiral path, etc.), a selection of random functions, a series of system commands (“clear world”, “center world”, etc.)

A surrounding “aura” can be toggled on and off to select a particular media-element to operate upon. When the “aura” is activated the user can attach a still as a texture map, attach a digital video to the surface of the virtual object, attach a sound to the object, attach behaviours to the object as well as superimpose sound objects with the initial selection. This “aura” enables what Erkki Huhtamo, in writing about my work, has coined – “World Processing”. One can easily edit the environment, making selections, changing entries, alternating choices, eliminating selections as well as instigating semi-random choices. One can even engage the construction of an entire virtual world through a particular menu choice. Stills and movies can also be placed in the environment. The above set of processes can also be explored in relation to digital movies and stills that can also be operated upon in the space as autonomous objects. Modular 3-D text selections can also be positioned and affected by choices from the container-wheels. The user inter-authors this environment. Media-elements already carry fields of meaning as they are experienced within the container-wheels before they are used as construction material. Meaning is in part generated and explored through dynamic interactive processes of re-contextualization.

The participant spins these container-wheels from a physical table, makes selections with buttons built into this physical interface and constructs a techno-poetic virtual landscape. The world is presented as a large high-definition digital projection in a darkened room. A physical interface built into the table translates subtle human gesture into movement within the environment. This virtual positioning device enables one to navigate within the environment. One can move

burn of the wreckage debris (re configured)
 light flows across all void distance
 looping fields of silence
 simple gestures delineate the site of desire
 eventual smooth equilibrium
 a simultaneity of infinities
 storage of desire collapse realms
 dispersion of desire vehicles
 entering - resonance architectures
 self supporting architecture | definition room
 self suspended
 removal of time place
 times items bridging
 edge of the world parameters | landscape loop
 behavioural voice
 orders of magnitude | orders of behaviour
 aleatoric driver re-alignment rebus
 skin of reason (touched)
 museum of the void
 calculatory systems
 arbiters of displacement
 navigational memory
 governor of rotation engines desire bearings
 conveyor engines
 tag shifters | tethered and floating

Figure 14: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

numb flows
 indexical shifters
 mixed metaphor [mechanics]
 an answer that asks questions
 poly-syntactic rotation (objects)
 word falls
 Body theatre thought vicinities
 entering - entering
 navigating observation
 observation containers
 gestures of inclination
 shadow triggers
 behavioural conveyors
 the null set relationalists
 screen blank vessels
 a propensity toward inversion
 the back of signs (storage sites)
 Wittgenstein's handles
 reframing the gaming field
 pulse permutation shimmers
 sound substitution sets
 properties of inverse polemics
 action at a distance [bridges]
 non-causal chain reactions
 recombinant architectures of information

Figure 15: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

forward and backward, look up and down, turn to the left and to the right affecting the view of the virtual space. At any time during the selection process the user can hide the spinning container-wheels, enter the environment and move through the virtual landscape. The user can at will, call up the rotating selection menu as well as present a close-up version of the mechanism for detailed viewing. The participant can also preview sound objects and texts before positioning them in the environment.

One conceptual perspective that can be used to contextualize this techno-poetic environment is from filmic montage. Sergei Eisenstein¹⁰ developed theories surrounding the employment of montage techniques. The most important aspect of his theories, for my purposes, deal with the fact that media-elements, when juxtaposed, generate a "creation" which is greater than the sum of its parts:

The basic fact was true and remains true to this day, that the juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resembles not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot – as it does a creation. It resembles a creation – rather than the sum of its parts – from the circumstances that in every such juxtaposition the result is qualitatively distinguishable from each component element viewed separately. (Eisenstein, 1974, p.8)

It is this aspect of "creation" that is central to the generation of emergent meaning. This is both a spatial and a time-based relation within this techno-poetic virtual environment. Eisenstein further articulates his concept of creation:

The strength of montage resides in this, that it includes in the creative process the emotions and the mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along that selfsame creative road that the author travelled in creating the image. The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author. (Eisenstein, 1974, p.32)

Unlike Eisenstein, there is not a pre-edited entity that the participant experiences, but there is, however, an operative realm of probability, in which the menu system functions as a constant – a set of poetic constraints. The participant becomes actively involved with inter-authorship. Heightened engagement, in which the participant "experiences the dynamic process of the emergence", is what is made palpable to the *user* through this work.

I am exploring a co-mingling of the denotative with the depictive, as encountered in virtual space. I have spoken about the use of media-elements, taken from one context and recontextualized in another. Eisenstein was influenced to some degree by Japanese poetics, in particular the compressed form of the *Tanka*. He was well informed about the use of Hieroglyphs: "Hieroglyphs developed from conventionalised features of objects, put together, express concepts i.e. the picture of a concept – an ideogram." (Eisenstein, 1949, p.25) He went so far as to suggest that a *Tanka* (a short Japanese poem) could be seen as a kind of shot list. He wrote "From our point of view, these are montage phrases. Shot lists. The simple combination of two or three details of a material kind yields a perfectly finished representation of another kind – psychological." (Eisenstein, 1949, p.32) It is this psychological space,

molecules of thought ambivalence
 soft sliding rules
 transmutation trigger metaphors
 once again removed
 one word for another [place]
 event window [s]
 text behaviours
 palpable exchange rotations
 thought vessels
 algorithmic holds
 self aware entities
 rotating schedules
 conveyor vessels
 felt behaviours triggered by non-entities
 tactile turnstile conductors
 de-contextual contact facilitator fields
 false emulates in the netting
 room pools
 written in rotating drums
 encoded function rooms
 encrypted rule sets
 levels of longing [elucidated]
 elliptical or circulatory cross-pollination metaphors
 compound collection machines
 recollections recombined [false history generator]

Figure 16: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

code book looks ups
 invention generator pulse rhythms
 cadence of the trigger variables
 apparatus for reflection dispersion
 amorous theatre screen mesh
 sexual web of perception alloys
 carnal i canal
 amatory ambience of tender decline
 sensorial net drive assembly
 fundamental conveyor shaft
 motose transference mechanism
 shaft passage conveyor
 drift course resolve
 apparatus shelves
 spindle axis vehicles
 blue voiceprint snare
 angles of envelopment
 uncertainty angles! allusive sextant
 shaft beam labyrinth
 rotary emission beacon merge
 loaded dice object spins
 radial illuminations
 gyro-linguistic stabiliser
 rotation schedules of revolving desire bearings
 dispersion potentials

Figure 17: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

generated through the perception of the spatial juxtaposition of media-elements, that contributes to an exploration of emergent meaning in Recombinant Poetics. Eisenstein pointed toward the conjunction of the denotative (text) and the depictive (picture) in Japanese arts, stating “Not only did the denotative line continue into literature, in the *Tanka*, as we have shown, but exactly the same method (in its depictive aspect) operates also in the most perfect examples of Japanese pictorial art.” (Eisenstein, 1949, p.32)

The functionality of *The World Generator/The Engine of Desire* presents a new technological form of spatial montage. Where Eisenstein explored fixed splices of filmic time, I am exploring a splice of volumetric space, or virtual graft. Visually, this is manifested in two ways in the generative world – the *vuser* sees menu items and when one is selected, observes this media-element entering the space through a spatial dissolve. The *vuser*, through their choice, brings about dynamic cut-like changes in the dimensional space. These decisions enable instantaneous, evocative, collisions or interpenetrations of media-elements.

Eisenstein, in speaking about montage, suggests that it was a form of “collision”. “A view that from the collision of two given factors arises a concept.” (Eisenstein, 1949, p.37) He continues, relating such an idea to metaphors from physics:

Recall that an infinite number of combinations is known in physics to be capable of arising from the impact (collision) of spheres. Depending on whether the spheres be resilient, non-resilient or mingled. (Eisenstein, 1949, p.37)

This quote falls neatly into my discussion of *fields of meaning and meaning force* as described earlier. Eisenstein explores this notion of force from the perspective of “conflict”. He goes on to say:

So, montage is conflict. As the basis for every art is conflict (an “imagist” transformation of the dialectical principle). The shot appears as the cell of montage. Therefore it also must be considered from the viewpoint of conflict.

Conflict within the shot is potential montage, in the development of its intensity shattering the quadrilateral cage of the shot and exploding its conflict into montage impulses between the montage pieces. As, in a zigzag of mimicry, the *mise-en scene* splashes out into a spatial zigzag with the same shattering... (Eisenstein, 1949, p.37)

From the above quote, where Eisenstein discusses “conflicts within the shot”, I can further legitimize my understanding of the techno-poetic mechanism from a montage perspective. Although virtual reality is spatial, it is constructed through the presentation of a sequence of spatial two-dimensional views of a three-dimensional space. Immersive virtual space is simultaneously generated by presenting two slightly different perspectives of the three-dimensional space. I have chosen to show only a singular high-resolution data-projection in displaying the techno-poetic mechanism. Although the technology has changed from film to the computer, we are still experiencing an expanse of vision – individual frames that are merged through engagement with the persistence of vision facilitated within this time-based technology. Conflict and/or more subtle non-conflictual meaning-forces that are “of themselves” (as I have

desire bearings
 conductor desire shells
 hands of light gestures
 alchemical symbols | alchimeral slink
 x (-----) y
 falaa emulates of the rotation stands
 zwivel location fulcrum
 circulatory map disruptions
 face of light spool
 photosynthetic metaphoric fields
 doubled over | layered spindle turns
 crossed object turnstiles
 selection spindle weave
 bridge fasteners and repulsion keys
 electricconnector contact mesh
 folded doubles
 oblique enablers
 chemical endgame memory flights
 biogenetic code plays
 bio-endgame storage
 digital spill containment vessels
 KING and QUEEN electro-transfer ducts
 cohesion taxonators
 rarefied fields
 alchemical remembrance

Figure 18: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

trace balance elements
 association valence
 paradox shells
 meta-lily | periodic vessels
 metaphysical drift configurations
 trollers of the light realm
 thought with spin
 sleek oblique luminous links
 meta-engine nets
 distributor of thought engine filters
 table of non-predistable alignments
 angle of incidence or inception carriers
 dis-logistic sparks of dispersion semantics
 angles of percussion and recoil
 inexhaustible diffusions
 thrown meaning | sliding means
 scattered association
 oscillation valence
 spark of the skew gap
 meta-sliding function | poetic engines
 function engines of alternating strings
 engines of sliding field oscillation
 domain of rotation
 blind skill within the shells of silence
 meta-operator voices

Figure 19: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

referred to them above) are juxtaposed within this virtual terrain, both through spatial location (at any given moment arising from the perspective of the *vuser*) and time-based relative proximity (derived through *vuser* interaction with the system). Thus, media-elements can be juxtaposed presenting digital cut-like transitions within the environment, through slow spatial revealing (as derived during navigation), radical juxtaposition brought about through media-behaviours, selected engagement with computer-based processes presented on the menu system (similar to the *Random All* function), and by *vuser* selection and placement within the environment.

The electronic media that is collected and housed within the container-wheels of my techno-poetic mechanism is alive with digital manifestations of inscription, although these media-elements are entirely mutable through the actions of the participant. The dice have been loaded in terms of potential aesthetic outcomes by the intentional authorship/choice of these media-elements. They begin as poly-valent evocative entities, housed within the container-wheels. The authorship of this elaborate set of media-variables is informed by transdisciplinary research and provides a loaded set of fields of poetic constraint for the exploration and examination of the *vuser*. The media-elements are not just simple examples of the above described variables. A number of aesthetic strategies inform the initial authorship of this particular set of variables. The authorship of this techno-poetic mechanism enfolds fragment-selections from a series of histories: the history of art, literature, philosophy, technology, the computer, as well as the history of the construction of meaning. These foci are all drawn upon in the authorship of this techno-poetic mechanism and are explored through the use of media-elements that exhibit a specific-ambiguity.

The *vuser* of the environment takes an active role in the construction of meaning through interaction. The initial set of media-elements forms a primary context. The *vuser* then disrupts this context by repositioning the variables across a "plateau" space, named after the book *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari. The *vuser* can explore placement, displacement, and replacement. The media-landscape is always mutable. Meaning arises through the sensual perusal of the environment as well as through the employment of media-processes that are available to the *vuser* to operate upon the media-elements. These elements take on meaning within an ongoing constructed context. These contexts are mutable and thus an accretive meaning for each media-element can be witnessed. Media-elements are inter-qualified by their proximity, behaviour, abstraction, interpenetration, and the trajectory of *vuser's* observation path. Highly abstract worlds can be facilitated. Meaning potentially passes through a series of differing states - from the clear - to the highly poly-semantic - to states approaching the dissolution of meaning, as deeply chaotic structures are generated. It is interesting to note that because the participant has followed the set of processes that alter the media-elements, even the most chaotic of environments still carries traces of the initial media chosen to make up that environment.

A body moves this physical interface to bring about digital-environmental changes. An actual physics brings about movement within an environment of authored abstract physics. Our biological nature becomes enmeshed with the digital. Central to this contemporary poetics is a sensual mutable multi-modal layering, enfolding a vast set of poly-valent media-elements exploring relations between text, image and music/sound. A delicate series of mobile thought

the desire engine and the agents of oscillation
 the sensual transference mechanism
 the realm of the desire engine
 circumnavigation rings
 cycles of relatives
 eye of the needle | eye of the loop
 tower of babel | eye of the storm
 the light of distance
 quantum jumps without falls
 recognitive resonance
 a suspended net sentence
 suspension suspended
 engendered strings of sonic fields
 in the light of absence
 puny hardware
 mercurial tropes
 parallel stream drivers
 exploded objects of quiescence
 transitional poetics of disembodiment
 surrogate sense fields
 conundrum domains | bridged and fused
 chess theatre drum snare pair
 a trap of folded fields
 alchemical relatives
 objects which turn in on themselves

Figure 20: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

inversion objects
 poem of the exploded word
 gathered misnomers
 revolving glass door
 arbitram of reciprocal inversions
 acoustic architectures of collapsed time
 bodythought compressions
 site which fabricates sites
 personal cipher machines
 encryption system strings
 trap door code names
 anagrammatic exchange objects
 camouflaged key word states
 situationals
 poly-syntactic emblems
 coded compartments
 trade craft decoy ploys
 books can become like shoes... [slogans]
 ligature of the light passage bodies
 hands of information
 floating function rooms
 indeterminate arcs of reaction
 location sensitive self regulating rules
 the desire object reflection mesh
 a room which gets ahead of itself

Figure 21: Bill Seaman with Gideon May (programmer), "The World Generator / The Engine of Desire" 1996/97. Text documentation.

processes arise through use of this game-like interactive techno-poetic mechanism. A layered landscape of media-elements becomes phenomenologically engaging in the exploration and examination of emergent meaning. Years of experiments from the fields of science, engineering, entertainment, and art have yielded a hybrid series of vibrant yet mutant media-processes that can be employed in the creation of a new poetics. This field of generative interactive media-poetry, Recombinant Poetics, is a non-logocentric poetics. There is no hierarchy in the media-elements in that the vuser can choose from any media-variable in the construction of a mutable poetic virtual environment, i.e. if the participant chooses they may select only sound objects to populate the "plateau".

We are connected biologically (structurally coupled) to machines via mind/body relations. Thought is a biological process – a series of electro-chemical flows. As Ted Krueger suggests, machines are part of our ecosystem.¹¹ Computer-based interactivity enables biological processes to spread across distance and time, to be encoded and decoded through digital artefacts and, in turn, to influence and to be influenced from non-local environments. One cannot deny that the memory of past experience is drawn upon to explore new relational processes. As computer-based environments become central to our living, so do affective media-environments, informing future understandings and enabling high-level communication and inter-authorship.

The experiencing of illusionistic media forms including movies, commercials, entertainment, the internet, the Web, as well as our exploration of virtual environments, all come to inform our understanding of the world and augment other forms of authorship and knowledge production. Recombinant Poetics is a conglomerate-media poetics, drawing from a trans-disciplinary array of authored media-elements as a primary material for the interactive construction of a new poetics – a contemporary poetics exploring media combinatorics. *The World Generator/The Engine of Desire* contains media-elements that have been authored/chosen for their poly-valent nature.

The techno-poetic mechanism can also be experienced in a networked manner. Participants from different cities can enter copies of the virtual space simultaneously. A video-phone is presented on the interface table in the physical space. The vusers can converse with one another using the video-phone. The image on the video-phone screen is mapped onto a virtual object and becomes an avatar within the virtual space. This avatar registers the virtual proximity of the participants that are co-inhabiting the virtual environment. Each sees the virtual world from their own perspective. Each can make choices from the container-wheels constructing a collaborative experience of contextual generation. Again, emergent meaning production becomes a potential focus.

Nested within these choices from the container-wheels are high-level construction processes, where a single choice brings about the construction of an entire virtual world. I have coined the term Re-embodied intelligence to describe the encoding of particular sensibilities where the system can function as an extension of these (the artist's) sensibilities generating new virtual worlds based on the aesthetic parameters encoded in the system. The vuser can select these functions then alter the world to their liking or at any time erase an entire world and begin again.

Recombinant Poetics explores the generation of mutable poetic contexts. The emergent nature of the computer-based virtual environment is concomitant on human interaction with the media-elements and processes that are made operative through differing potential techno-poetic mechanisms. One could say that a number of artists are exploring this Recombinant Poetic strategy, employing different aesthetic and conceptual content to related poetic construction and navigation mechanisms. It is here registered that emergent content exploring complex human/machine relations is central to contemporary poetic experience. This interactive combinatorial poetic construction becomes the defining feature of this new techno-poetic field of exploration – Recombinant Poetics.

Notes

1. See MATORANA, H. 1978. Biology of Language: The Epistemology of Reality. In: G.A. MILLER and E. LENNEBERG, eds. *Psychology and Biology of Language and Thought: Essays in Honour of Eric Lenneberg*. New York: Academic Press, pp.27–64. “When two or more organisms interact recursively as structurally plastic systems...the result is mutual ontogenic structural coupling... For an observer, the domain of interactions specified through such ontogenic structural coupling appears as a network of sequences of mutually triggered interlocked conducts... The various conducts or behaviours are arbitrary because they can have any form as long as they operate as triggering perturbations in the interactions; they are contextual because their participation in the interlocked interactions of the domain is defined only with respect to the interactions that constitute the domain... I shall call the domain of interlocked conducts...a consensual domain.” (Maturana, 1978, p.47) See also WINOGRAD, T. and FLORES, F. 1986. *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing. In *Understanding Computers and Cognition*, Winograd and Flores adopt Maturana’s definition of “linguistic behaviour”. They suggest the following: “Maturana refers to behavior in a consensual domain as ‘linguistic behavior’. Indeed, human language is a clear example of a consensual domain and the properties of being arbitrary and contextual have at times been taken as its defining features. But Maturana extends the term ‘linguistic’ to include any mutually generated domain of interactions. Language acts, like any other acts of an organism, can be described in the domain of structure and in the domain of cognition as well. But their existence *as language* is in the consensual domain generated by mutual interaction. A language exists among a community of individuals and is continually regenerated through their linguistic activity and the structural coupling generated by that activity.” (Winograd and Flores, 1986, p.49)
2. See SEAMAN, W. (1999) *Recombinant Poetics: Emergent Meaning as Examined and Explored within a Specific Generative Virtual Environment*. University of Wales College Newport Ph.D. Thesis
3. “Vuser” was coined by Seaman 2/5/98. It conflates the terms viewer and user. The related term (V)user was adopted by M. Rogalla after the initial coining of the term vuser by Seaman.
4. See VARELA, F., THOMPSON, E. and ROSCH, E. 1991. *The Embodied Mind, Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch in *The Embodied Mind*, speaking about Buddhist mindfulness/awareness suggest: “Its purpose is to become mindful, to experience what one’s mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one’s mind. What relevance does this have to cognitive science? We believe that if cognitive science is to include human experience, it must have some method of exploring and knowing what human experience is.” (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1996, p.23)
5. See *Websters New World Dictionary*
6. See HAYLES, N. K. (1999) *How We Became Post Human*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
7. *The World Generator/The Engine of Desire* has been shown internationally in Germany, Brussels, England, France, Hungary, and Tokyo.

8. In SEAMAN, W. (1999) *Recombinant Poetics: Emergent Meaning as Examined and Explored within a Specific Generative Virtual Environment*. I specifically examine the notion of meaning force. See also DERRIDA, J. 1978. *Writing and Difference*. Translation: A. BASS. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.25; Eco ECO, U. 1989. *The Open Work*. Translation: A. CANCOGNI. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 14. And USHENKO, A. 1958. *The Field Theory of Meaning*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press. p. 79.
9. See DELEUZE, G. and GUATTARI, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol.2. Trans. by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. "Let us summarise the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible to neither the One or the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five etc. It is not a multiple derived from the one, or to which one is added (n+1). It is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency and from which the one is always subtracted (n-1). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis. Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, the rhizome is made only of lines; lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or ligaments, should not be confused with lineages of the aborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions... Unlike the graphic arts, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.21)
10. See EISENSTEIN, S. 1974. *The Film Sense*. Translation: J. LEYDA. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.; EISENSTEIN, S. 1949. *Film Form*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company; EISENSTEIN, S. 1970. *Notes of a Film Director*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
11. Conversation with Krueger for a series of differing papers presenting his concepts related architecture, media, perception and the environment.

Media Poetry

An International Anthology

Edited by Eduardo Kac

Media Poetry: An international Anthology is the first international anthology to document a radically new poetry which takes language beyond the confines of the printed page into a non-linear world of multimedia, interactivity and networking. This anthology includes extensive documentation and discussion of digital poetry and expands the range of contemporary writing to encompass poems created with video, holography, skywriting, and even biotechnology.

The poets in this book embrace new technologies to explore a new syntax made of linear and non-linear animation, hyperlinkage, interactivity, real-time text generation, spatiotemporal discontinuities, self-similarity, synthetic spaces, immateriality, diagrammatic relations, visual tempo, biological growth and mutation, multiple simultaneities, and many other innovative procedures.

This media poetry, although defined within the field of experimental poetics, departs radically from the avant-garde movements of the first half of the twentieth century, and the print-based approaches of the second half. Through an embrace of the vast possibilities made available through contemporary media, the writers in this anthology have become the poetic pioneers for the next millennium.

“Making space through and in and of language distinguishes the kinetic poets featured in this important book.”

– Michael Joyce, author

Eduardo Kac is an internationally renowned artist and writer who has received critical acclaim for net and bio works including *Genesis*, *GFP Bunny*, and *Move 36*. His work has been widely exhibited and is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, among others.

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