

# Analyzing Electronic Poetry. Three Examples of Textualities in Digital Media

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*This paper aims to show the different textualities put forward by electronic poetry. In order to explain how poetic language can create different textualities due to the interaction of different media, three close-readings of electronic poems will be offered.*

Keywords: digital literature / new media / electronic poetry / textuality

Images and sounds, words in motion, temporality, and interaction are all fundamental elements of electronic poetry. The intrinsic nature of the electronic medium allows the author to create a new text that is instable, a text that can change its form and its content. Roberto Simanowski wonders “what we need to read, to interpret, when we read digital literature” (Simanowski 20). Jorge Luis Borges’s reflection on the nature of literary discourse, Roland Barthes’ pluri-signification, or his idea of text as a polyphony of voices, along with—among others—Mikhail Bakhtin’s polyphonic discourse and Umberto Eco’s *opera aperta*, offer the reader a text that is readable with different interpretations. And Wolfgang Iser’s and Roman Ingarden’s works have shown the larger role of the reader, a fundamental role as far as e-literature in general and e-poetry in particular are concerned.

However, as far as the digital text is concerned, Umberto Eco notes that “the infinity, or at least the indefinite abundance of interpretations, are due not to the initiative of the reader, but also to the physical mobility of the text itself”.

Alessandro Zinna underlines that any object of writing finds its origin in the contact between a discourse and its material support.<sup>1</sup> Writing is the contact point between an internal and intense memory of the subject and an objective and collective memory in the external and *extense* space of materials. He adds that, as such, writing exists only as a *thought* of its implementation on a support. This thought implies not only a code, but also a gesture and a technique of inscribing. Despite the fact that the sup-

port is also present in the spoken language, the existence of a *material* of the support is a specific property of the object of writing (Zinna 89); thus, as pointed out by Anne Mangen, “materiality matters” (Mangen 405).

Literature takes on different roles under the “new media”. Literature is moving beyond the printed page (as art has moved beyond the canvas). According to Lev Manovich, technology itself is art and the Web is the “greatest hypertext... more complex, unpredictable and dynamic than any novel that could have been written...” (Manovich 15). To him, the “true cultural innovators” are those who work with media in new ways, such as DJ’s or computer game designers rather than artists or painters (Manovich 16). Janet Murray states that traditional writers can also use their medium in “new” way. Mentioning writers such as William S. Burroughs and Jorge Luis Borges, she describes how they are “engaged in dicing the language and recombining it randomly” (Murray 5).

What happens to poetry when it moves to the screen, when it is created for the screen? The electronic medium makes the text’s dependence on the support deeper and easier. According to Zinna, being “movable” is one of the main characteristics of electronic writing.

Both Eco and Zinna talk about the *mobility* of the digital text, which is what makes the nature of the digital text instable. The digital medium can make the text be reactive and interactive. Electronic writing behaves—sometimes—as an interactive object. Some electronic texts are at the same time objects of signification and objects of action. The digital medium also makes it possible for the text to easily have another *texture*.<sup>2</sup> It allows the author to include images and sounds alongside the text, adding at the same time motion and creating new kinds of temporalities. What kind of new textualities are these elements bringing to poetry? How is the interaction of different semiotic systems producing new meaning? And how can we analyze and interpret these kinds of texts?

The aim of this paper is to show and analyze the different textualities put forward by electronic poetry. To illustrate the different textualities that poetic language can create within e-poems, close-readings will be offered of Tony Barnstone’s *Hospital Tent*, Jason Nelson’s *i made this. you play this. we are enemies*, and Rui Torres’ *Poemas no meio do caminho*. By analyzing the aforementioned e-poems, we will try to explain how poetry deals with the possibilities unearthed by the “new” digital medium.

## A Dialogue between Graphic Text, Image, and Sound

Tony Barnstone's *Hospital Tent* combines audio, graphics, and text.<sup>3</sup> The text scrolls from the bottom of the page in a window boxed by a frame much smaller than the entire text. The reader can see about two to three lines at most as the text scrolls by. The reader's attention is snared first of all by a number of background images, which take up almost all of the entire web page. The mélange of graphics and text begins when the title appears, superimposed on the background. A nurse's face then appears to the sound of troubled breathing. The iconic text is progressively drawn and with a final sharp inhalation all of the iconic text and the graphic text are revealed. The graphic text: *Hospital Tent* is the title of the piece as we would traditionally conceive it, but here we are viewing all of this animated sequence as the piece's title. The sound and the images come up first, then the title.

We propose to call this figure "animated hypotyposis"<sup>4</sup> according to the terminology that Alexandra Saemmer gives to texts which due to the hypotyposis, the meaning of the linguistic sign is highlighted by other associative and imitative stratagems (Saemmer 92), even if in this case the linguistic sign will appear just at the end of the sequence.

The sequence opens with a cough and two images: an arm (probably amputated) drawn in white and a thin young face in red. Red and white are the main colours of the pictures, which contrast with a black background. These colours are related to hospitals and nurses and to blood and war. Red is the colour of blood, which the third sequence articulates clearly, and white is the colour of death: "white like death",<sup>5</sup> and in an Asiatic context the white colour symbolizes death (and white is the colour of funerals and unhappiness). The image sequence we see tells a story: a man, presumably a soldier who has suffered an injury in a foreign country during a war, is in a hospital tent seriously hurt — a nurse takes care of him, but he will die. The poetic text in the traditional sense, as text-in-itself, is the story as seen through the nurse's eyes, and retold by the nurse.

Two-thirds of the text is written with an incisive and fast style while the last part is sweeter and calmer. This rhythm coincides with the rhythm in which the images are shown and with a different sound. From verse line 1 to verse line 12 there are 6 verbs declined (in the first person) all in the past tense except for one line, "I tell you". A list of objects, where even men could be considered to be objects, is iterated: "[...] the men, some dead, some twisting on the tables, smell of antiseptic, smell of blood, [...]". This marks the rhythm of the text in its first part. The repetition of the "smell of antiseptic, smell of blood" and four verse lines later "the smell

of copra” reinforces the rhythm of the text. The assonance of some words and the repetition of some phonemes like /s/ (i.e., “the scene, and saw/ the men, some”; “small steel instruments”) unifies the structural sound of the graphic text. This “fast” rhythm is also given by the contrast of the verse lines. The first detached and crude verse lines, “I looked around the scene, and saw the men, some dead, some twisting on the tables, smell of antiseptic, smell of blood, and then [...]”, are followed by the exotic description of the Philippines with “mangoes, houses on stilts, nipa huts, the smell of copra”, and then, in the same verse line, again the brutal reality: “gangrene and amputations, lice, the surgeon’s cuts”. This passage from war to the exotic landscape and back again to war is also shown by the image, by introducing—very quickly, just for an instant—into the images of the landscape the image of a dead soldier (see fig. 1). The arrival of the image with the dead soldier is also highlighted by the soundtrack: the images of the landscape have as a background birds singing, the image of the dead soldier is introduced by a sort of thunder or shot that brutally interrupts the harmony of the text.

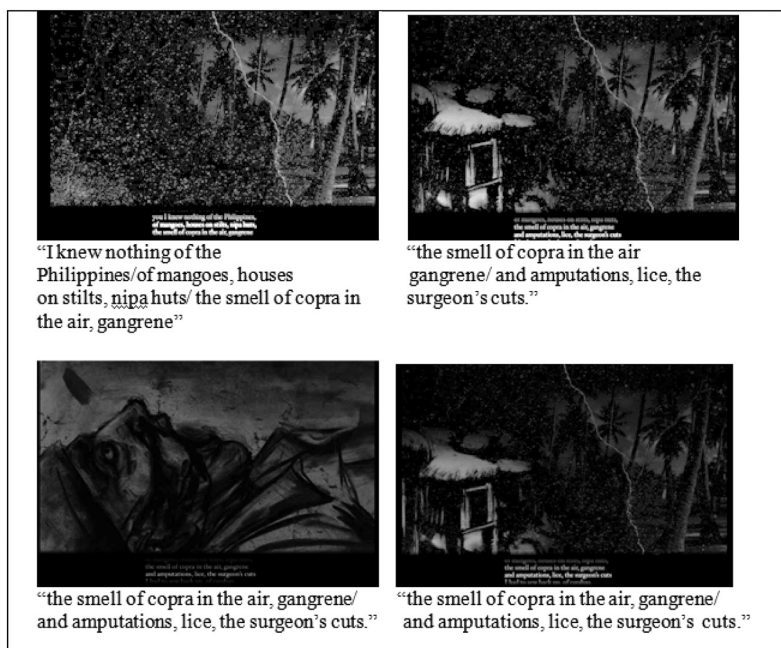


Figure 1: Tony Barnstone, *Hospital Tent* (stills at 00:20; 00:26; 00:27; 00:27)

The whole poem is an *apostrophe* to an imaginary reader: “I tell you I knew nothing [...]”. The iconic text narrates the story in an “objective”

way, while the graphic text tells the story from the nurse's point of view: the iconic one is a third person narration while the graphic one is a first person narration. But the audio also functions as a narrative: in this case it is the story of the injured soldier.

The audio background is composed of the sound of coughing, some kind of loud report, the chirping of birds, of silence, and of a whispered word. The silence actually is very important because it punctuates the events. The first piece of audio is of a person coughing, the second is probably a shot, then silence and the chirping of birds, and then a shot again, then silence, followed by the word "mercy", then silence again: the soldier is dead.

The audio is not simply unstructured background noise, the story is narrated from three points of view, this is one viewpoint. The deep level of narrativity in this text is evident if we analyze the three stories in a comparative fashion. The coughing coincides with the first four images—an amputated arm and a thin face, another face drawn once more in red that gets turned into a drop of blood which drips down—representing the first part of the text, that is to say what both the poet and the narrator of the sound text are seeing. The drops of blood are still present when the graphic text recites, "of antiseptic, smell of blood, and then". Next, there is the chirping of birds along with the images of a place with houses and palms: the Philippines as stated in the text: "I knew nothing of the Philippines, of mangoes, houses on stilts [...]". Finally, the key part of the text, where the poet and the soldier talk to each other while the last 5 verse lines of the graphical text are being displayed:

But still I never cried until this day, when (I did not see how)  
my hand was grabbed as I passed by, intent,  
by a young man, who gave me a half smile  
and held on as if for his life. Then died.

A word is whispered: "mercy". It is the soldier. In this way the graphical poem with its poet ("I never cried...") speaks with the sound poem, the voice of the "young man, who gave [...] a half smile" and whispered "mercy" before dying. There is a dialogue, a *real* dialogue between the graphical text and the audio-image.

The pictures and the silence announce and close this crucial moment of the text. Before the word "mercy" is whispered, the sound text does not emit any noise, and the iconic text shows just a black screen. The following sequence shows a drawing of a hand grabbing another one. This image is the only one that is repeated:<sup>6</sup> before and after the whispered word. Repeating the images highlights what is happening between the sound and

the graphic text: the dialogue between the nurse and the injured soldier. The text here reveals its meaning and also shows the possibilities allowed by the digital medium.

As we saw, stylistically, the text in this second part is more harmonic; as for the audio-image text, there is a prevalence of silence and a *whispered* word. Finally, the iconic text shows the only picture of a face that is neither scarred nor suffering, actually this one is almost smiling (he is the soldier dying in peace).

The interaction between the three texts and the temporality given to them by the digital medium allow this e-poetry to create multiple (simultaneous) layers from the viewpoint of narrative. As we have seen, this e-poetry is not only a poem, a visual and sound poem, but it also tells a story.

### **Generative Poem: Rui Torres' *Poemas no meio do caminho***

*Poemas no meio do caminho*<sup>7</sup> is a combinatory text that continues the tradition started by Lutz's *Stochastic Poems* (1959) and Nanni Balestrini's *Tape Mark* (1961) and which was carried forward in Portugal particularly by Pedro Barbosa.

*Poemas no meio do caminho* is a quote from Dante's *Inferno*:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra  
vita  
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura  
ché la diritta via era smarrita.<sup>8</sup>

but it can also be read as a metaphor “poemas no meio do caminho da leitura” (“poems midway upon the journey of reading”).

There are two versions of the text—two ways of reading it: horizontally and vertically. Both versions allow the reader to save her own textual production, and then to send that production to a weblog. Both versions are composed of eight texts. All eight parts of the vertical version will be briefly analyzed below (vertical version); then, the first text will be re-analyzed in its horizontal version.

### **Rui Torres' *Poemas no meio do caminho*—vertical version**

In the vertical version, eight texts appear on the page separately and a voice recites a ninth. The poems are written in free verse and they are composed of differing numbers of verse lines (from 5 to 7 lines each). At

the end of all the poems, a number indicates the possible texts that can be generated (see fig. 2).<sup>9</sup>

The syntactic structure of all the texts can partially be modified by the reader. In the first text the substantives (6), the adjectives (3), and the verb (only one: “abraçar”) can be altered by passing the cursor over each word; the invariable parts are the indefinite articles, the conjunction “e”, and the prepositions “do” and “para”. The first text the reader is presented with, the one the computer has selected for her, is a metaphoric text: “uma transcrição opaca do referente” (a reason/a transcript of the opaque referent) lets the reader imagine other possible reading paths that she can “abraçar” (“hold”).

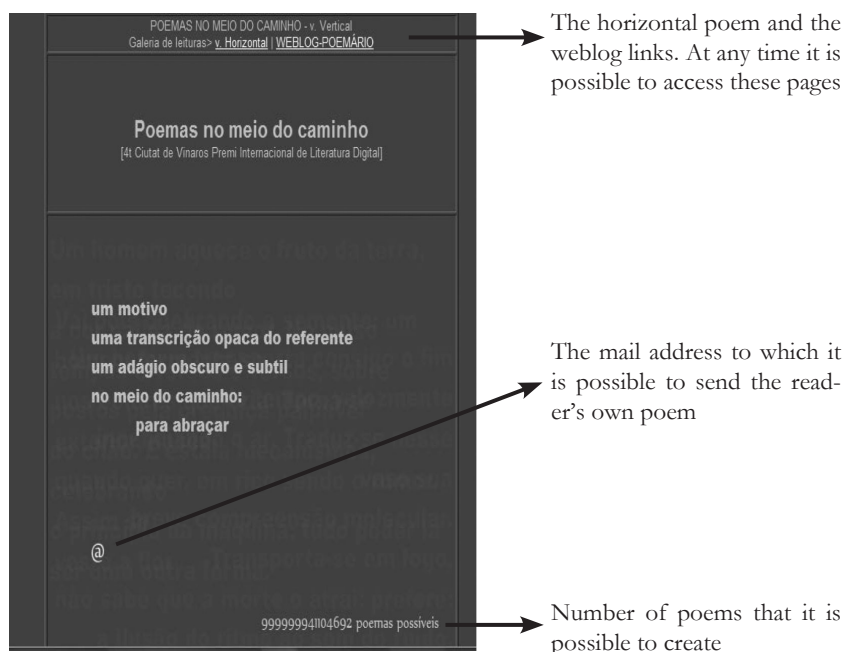


Figure 2: Rui Torres, *Poemas no meio do caminho*—first text

The reader can reconfigure the text along the paradigmatic axis of language: so the reader selects and the text morphs/recombines. However, there are some “obligatory” options: the substantives in the first three verse lines can be modified according to a vast number of choices, but the two last substantives have but only a few choices: “meio” gives rise to “lado” (“side”), “princípio” (“beginning”), “fim” (“end”). By selecting the alternatives on the paradigmatic axis, the syntagms are related one to another.

“Caminho” gives four choices, and once selected “caminho” no longer appears as an available word. The alternatives are “percurso” (“path”),



“texto” (“text”), “parágrafo” (“paragraph”), “programa” (“program”). Again the alternatives are in some way related to each other: for instance, “percurso” can be linked to “texto” m

etaphorically, and also to “paragraph” due to the mechanism of synecdoche. The verb “abraçar” hides 12 alternatives. The most interesting combination, thus, is revealed by the three first substantives. It is there that the reader can construct her text, and then she can improve it. However, due to the “rigid” alternatives given by the last substantive the main theme of the poem will always be the same: the text itself.

Also, the second text, like all the others, starts with no capital letter, as if it was a continuation of a single text. The form of the expression works in the same way: it is the content which is different. The first combination of the second poem has a person as the subject of the text, “homem” (man), but it can be substituted by “poeta” (poet), but also substituted by an object such as “verso” (verse line) and “texto” (text) and “poema” (poem). The syntagm “homem” will not appear again, so the initial text is impossible to recreate. The verb “aquece” (warms up) can be modified with 27 other verbs and “fruto” (fruit) hides 57 other syntagms. Already by the first line it is possible to say that the form is the same as the first text, but the result will be different. In the first text a “common” meaning between all the possible combinations can be retraced, but this second text shows the impossibility of exhaustive analyses that is exhibited by several e-poems.

Even though apparently less complicated than the previous (since it is shorter), the third text also allows the reader to recreate unpredictable texts, with totally new meanings compared to the initial one. In the fourth text it feels like there are almost infinitely many combinations, but the structure for combining is slightly different, since in this case an adjective “melhor” (the best) and two reflexive verbs “me procure” (I look for) and “querer-se” (to want to) are not changeable. “Me procure” somehow refers to the poet from the first part of the poem. In this case there is a fixed referent but again no fixed meaning. The fifth poem has an unchangeable last verse line, “do atrás para sempre” (from the past forever), so whatever the meaning will be it will be “do atrás para sempre”. The sixth text is the only one that does not allow the reader to change the subject of the poem: “um homem” (a man),<sup>10</sup> fixing at least the subject of the poem.

The author cannot foresee which kind of poem the reader will decide to create. The possibilities offered to her are numerous enough to be unpredictable. Moreover, she can decide at any second to modify her text; she needs just roll over the text to create a different poem. The possible combinations are offered by the machine, so the author has no control



over these exact e-poems which are created by the reader and the machine. The author creates the space of poetic possibilities.

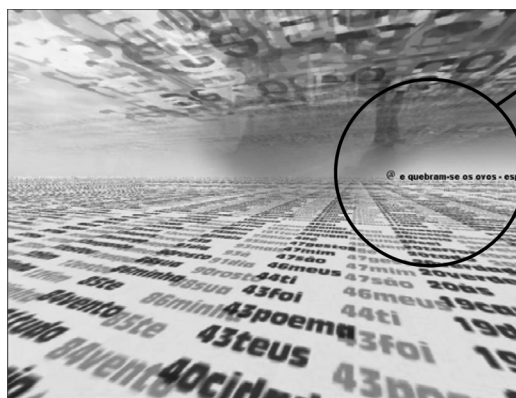
These poems live for a while, after a click they disappear and a new text takes form. A weblog, however, as said, can save the creations. *Poemas no meio do caminho* suggests an ephemeral poetic construction that appears and vanishes in a click. On the one hand, these poems destroy the sacredness of poetic language; on the other, they realize *poïesis* itself.<sup>11</sup>

### Rui Torres' *Poemas no meio do caminho*—horizontal version

The horizontal version is composed again of the same 8 poems, but here the reader is in a 3D space. Four different video-sequences contain two poems each. The 1<sup>st</sup> text is followed by the 5<sup>th</sup>, the 2nd by the 6th, and so on. The poems are not clearly structured in verse lines, but different lines move prosaically—from left to right. The reader can alter the motion of the text, but she cannot manipulate the linearity in which the text appears.

The entax suggests that the main text is the one written in bigger fonts, as this is the text the reader can change and combine; all the other lines are some possible combinations of that text, and they cannot be altered. Syntactically, the horizontal poems are like the vertical, but because of the background the result is more spectacular. The background is broken into four parts, differing in colour but not structure, nor in content.

On one side we have texts composed of only one word and one number, and on the other side are generative texts (of an almost infinite combination of words).



The video-hole that allows the reader to access the other text

Figure 3: Rui Torres, *Poemas no meio do caminho*—first sequence, horizontal version

*Poemas no meio do caminho* are poems melded into poems, with other poems that are constantly being created under the reader's eye and with the possibility that the reader can—at any moment—create her own poems. The horizontal version shows the inner structure of these generative poems. These poems foreground the dual meaning of the art of practice and the practice of art.

### **Jason Nelson's *i made this. you play this. we are enemies***

[I] *made this. you play this. we are enemies* is an e-poem constructed as if it were a video game. The reader is the author's declared enemy. The reading pact between them is subverted: they do not collaborate, they fight. The reader has to pass through 10 levels in order to finish the text. The subtitle, however, re-establishes the reading pact: the author addresses his reader inviting her to "play, play, play, and play again". The reiteration of the syntagm "play" seems to be both a promise and a hope that the reader will enjoy this new experience. The background of many of the levels reminds the reader of Tom Phillips' *A Humument* (first edition 1970).<sup>12</sup> Each level background design has a childish quality: Disney characters, flowers with faces, stylized drawings, and so on. But as the reader will soon see, Nelson uses those images parodically: there are images of Disney characters like Dalmatians that have angry eyes, or a Peter Pan who can kill the reader.

The opening page contains, along with the title and instructions, hints about how to read it. Nelson in fact provides his reader with the list of the websites from which his e-poem is constructed. Each level of the poem is designed from pieces of famous websites: from Google and Yahoo to Mininova to Disney, MetaFilter, and so on.

The "game" is a parody of side-on single screen non-scrolling platform games such as Donkey Kong. The first level is very easy. The reader's on-screen character is a misshapen wheel, which can jump and move left and right. Fragments of text can suddenly appear when strange objects are collected. The wheel has to navigate paths, discover the properties of odd symbols, use teleportation devices, jump on moving platforms, and finally go through a hole in the wall in order to pass on to the next level. The text thus adheres to the simple language of the platform video game.

The reading time is partially chosen by the reader, partially by the text, because she can decide to stop a while to read — without the risk of being killed as it can happen in other levels —, but some fragments of text appear according to an "inner clock", in this case the duration is imposed by

the text. While the reader is passing through the text in order to complete the level, the text changes: scraps of text can appear and then disappear, or they can appear and stay fixed on the page and the text in the background can be partially transformed.

The second level reminds us in structure and in function of the first level, and to die in the first two levels is impossible, even though the reader can have the feeling of not being able to finish the level. If she is not very fast in reaching the end of the text, a huge image will appear quickly expanding until it will cover the entire page, making the reader all but unable to see where she is (see fig. 4). “Grow! Damn you! Grow!” (a reference to *Alice in Wonderland*) in capital letters will also appear on the screen. The words simulate a screamed order (signified by the use of capital letters) from the author to the text: the text should go faster, catch the reader and kill her. But it is a “false” message since the reader can accomplish the level even if the wheel is caught by the image. It is interesting to notice how, in this case, Nelson subverts video game rules. *[I] made this. you play this. we are enemies* is a parody of video games.

In the following levels more huge images cover the screen making it impossible for the reader to read parts of the text and to see exactly where the wheel is going. In level 4, for instance, images of Dalmatians and red words cover the entire screen, announced by the phrase “here comes the death by Dalmatians” written again in capital letters, which immediately catches the reader’s attention.

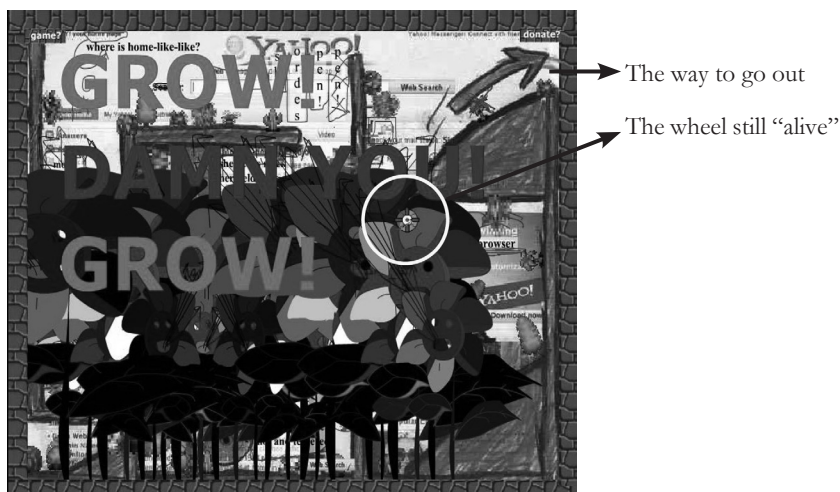


Figure 4: Jason Nelson, *i made this. you play this. we are enemies*—the second level

Another piece of advice is given to the reader to “pause to reconsider the joy and the pain of playing this game”. However, if the reader solves the level very quickly, she will not see the Dalmatians filling the page. So depending on the speed she reads and passes through the text, the text will appear different.

This level repeats the structure of the first two levels which differ from the third one where there are no teleportation links. Each level of the text indicates to the reader which path to follow in order to reach the next level: arrows, blinking scribbling, and so on, point out the right way. Nevertheless, the reader can try to explore the text; she can even go back if she wants, but the path to finish the text is obligatory: there is just one solution. In level four, for example, the reader can try to reach the end of the path quickly since there is a break in the border, but even if she is fast, she cannot pass the level throughout that space. There is only a way to complete it.

Level five is the last one of the first part; after solving it there is a break with an intermission video where the author appears. The author’s signature is not only in the beginning but also in the middle and at the end of the text, where another short video on him can be launched.

The more the reader advances, the more the texts become unreadable. Too many words and images make it illegible. Nelson puts forward what Engberg calls “the aesthetic of visual noise”. The sixth level reproduces the images of the previous levels. The text is repeated in form and content. *[I] made this. you play this. we are enemies* replicates our information society: the text contains loads of word, images, that change and then are repeated; it is impossible to follow and read even a small part of the text considering also that the reader has to control the small wheel. The reader questions, which parts of the text are more interesting? Which ones should I read? and this seems to correspond to our everyday life: what information is important, which news should we read and retained as knowledge?

Level 8 seems to be safe for the reader, it is impossible to die, but here again the reader cannot read all the information unfolding on the page.

Nelson’s game-poetry simulates the reading practice of the internet era. The reader reads in diagonal “un lecture en diagonale, basée sur un parcours rapide de l’information, une pratique ‘frénétique’ et une activité oculaire saccadée” (Saemmer 46). She zips along the surface of the text, she does not go deep. The apparently nonsensical construction of the text implies this kind of “web” reading practice.

In 2010 a study of online research habits conducted by scholars from the University College of London showed that we are probably changing our way of reading because of internet. In the study it is stated that:

it is clear that users are not reading online in the traditional sense; indeed there are signs that new forms of “reading” are emerging as users “power browse” horizontally through titles, contents pages and abstracts going for quick wins.<sup>13</sup>

By making the text unreadable, Nelson appears to realize the reading practice of the web environment. The end of the text is a metaphor of the addiction that video games (and partially the internet) can cause to their users. Once the last level is completed, the reader is not free. The small wheel is stuck in a part of the page. “A place named the end by you for now” highlights that the end of the game is temporary, soon she will probably play again.

## Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have tried to show the possibilities offered to poetry by the digital medium. *Hospital Tent* experiments with where the word can also tell something else, a story, feelings, memories. The three semiotic systems, the graphic text, the images and the sound can create a dialogue between them giving a meaning to the poem that it could not have if it was printed. This text seems to be a poem in a canonical way. For instance, it presents rhetorical figures, but it is also a visual narrative text. However, it differs from the other texts. *Poemas no meio do caminho* is also clearly identifiable as a poem but it kills the poet. Torre’s generative e-poem places on show the combinatory practice of language, and puts forward two axes of reading. It highlights the playfulness of language and it reconfigures the poet’s role. Nelson is interested in combining the playfulness of literature with the narratological aspects of games. He suggests the idea of e-poetry as a (video)game. He reconfigures the reading practice of poetry in the digital environment. These texts show the potentialities of the digital medium in making converge diverse creative practices in order to create a poem.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> He is referring to “discourse” in a more ample meaning compared to the meaning that semiotics gives it, that is to say the intention of giving meaning: they can be footmarks, hunting draws, ornamental motives, or evolved writings able to reproduce the different level of phonetic, syllabic and lexical, and/or narrative acts of natural languages, as alphabetic, syllabic, pictogrammatic and ideogrammatic writings do.

<sup>2</sup> Text derives from Latin *textus* that originally derived from “textura” (texture)

<sup>3</sup> *Hospital Tent* is a collaborative work written by Tony Barnstone, with animation and images by the artists Jonathan Minori and Fabrizio Aiello.

<sup>4</sup> The original term is “hypotypose animée”.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, this expression also exists in French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese alike

<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the black screen, in fact, the images do not repeat themselves, they are linked by resemblance, especially the suffering faces, as the assonance we saw in the poem. The black screens bookend the scene where the soldier is having surgery.

<sup>7</sup> Nuno F. Ferreira (programmer), Luís Aly (audio), Nuno M. Cardoso (voice), Luís Carlos Petry (images in the horizontal version).

<sup>8</sup> "MIDWAY upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / For the pathway straight ahead had been lost".

<sup>9</sup> "A reason /a transcript of the opaque referent / an obscure and subtle adage / mid-way upon the journey: / to hold".

<sup>10</sup> "The verb "prefer" (he prefers) is also unchangeable but this one does not points out a path in the construction of the meaning since one can prefer anything".

<sup>11</sup> *Poiesis* (our modern "poetry") derives from the ancient Greek verb *ποιέω*, which means "to make".

<sup>12</sup> *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* was revised on 1980, 1987, 1997, and 2005.

<sup>13</sup> "A Cyber briefing Paper", University College of London, January 2008 UCL, 22 June 2010. <<http://www.bl.uk/news/pdf/googlegen.pdf>>.

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## Analiziranje elektronske poezije. Trije primeri tekstualnosti v digitalnih medijih

Ključne besede: digitalna literatura / novi mediji / elektronska poezija / tekstualnost

Podobe in zvoki, gibljive besede, časovnost in interakcija so temeljne prvine elektronske poezije. Katere nove vrste besedilnosti te prvine prinašajo v poezijo? Kako interakcija različnih znakovnih sistemov ustvarja nove pomene? Kako lahko analiziramo in interpretiramo besedila, izdelana za ta medij – medij, s katerim lahko preprosto na novo opredelimo prostor pisanja in čas branja; medij, s katerim lahko v besedilo vključimo podobe in zvoke ter mu obenem dodamo gibanje, ki ustvarja novo vrsto časovnosti; in končno, medij, s katerim lahko oblikujemo odzivno in interaktivno besedilo?

Roberto Simanowski se sprašuje, »kaj potrebujemo za branje in interpretacijo digitalne literature.« Umberto Eco ugotavlja, da »neskončnost ali vsaj neskončno bogastvo interpretacij ni samo posledica bralčeve pobude, ampak tudi fizične mobilnosti samega besedila.« Ali je e-poezija res edinstven »žanr«, ali pa vse te prvine ustvarjajo zelo različna besedila?

Avtorica skuša prikazati in analizirati različne vrste besedilnosti, ki jih ustvarja elektronska poezija. Da bi razložila, kako lahko poetični jezik zaradi interakcije različnih medijev ustvarja različne vrste besedilnosti, podrobno analizira naslednje tri elektronske pesmi: *Hospital Tent Tonyja Barnstona*, *i made this. you play this. we are enemies* Jasona Nelsona in *Poemas no meio do caminho* Ruia Torresa. Z analizo teh e-pesmi skuša pojasniti, kako se poezija spopada z možnostmi, ki jih prinaša »novi« digitalni medij.

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