



---

Leonardo Electronic Almanac volume 10, number 8, August, 2002

---

ISSN #1071-4391

---

CONTENTS
----------

---

EDITORIAL

-----

< textuality, virtuality, technology >  
by Linda Carroli

FEATURES

-----

< day-night >  
by Teri Hoskin

< Liquid Texts >  
by Giselle Beiguelman

< Nine Eleven -or- The Convenient Convenience Store War >  
by John Smith

< Reading Technology: "Curling up with a good ..." >  
by Linda Carroli

LEONARDO DIGITAL REVIEWS

-----

< A History of Russian Music, reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen >

< The Internet and Everyone, reviewed by Chris Crickmay >

< Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero 2002 and Anarchives:  
Connection-Machines, reviewed by Michael Punt >

ISAST NEWS

-----

< Leonardo/ISAST Investigates Sustainable Art and Technology Research Lab >

< In Memoriam: Yury Pravdiuk >

---

EDITORIAL
-----------

---

< textuality, virtuality, technology >

by Linda Carroli

Continuing LEA's inquiry into textuality, virtuality and technology, this issue presents writing from Teri Hoskin, John Smith, Giselle Beiguelman and myself. Referencing the emerAgency, a virtual consultancy enacted by Gregory Ulmer and the Florida Research Ensemble, Teri Hoskin asks "how could one bring poetics, and non-communication as affect, to effect some sort of circuit breaker here, in Australia, specific to this context, today." EmerAgency applies the Internet, liberal arts and fine arts to public policy formation as an alternative to instrumentalist and positivist consultancies. Ulmer's methodology maps the shift from literate to digital societies - a move he calls "electracy." Hoskin interrogates possibilities for an electracy, rather than a literate response, to one of the more catastrophic sites in Australia, the central desert.

Discussing electronic writing as "liquid texts," Giselle Beiguelman asserts that cyberspace performs a new reading context since it is based upon parameters that redefine the links between memory, representation and writing. She says that digital culture provides a new writing condition because writing no longer inscribes, it only describes. This essay discusses digital reading conditions, reviewing not only artworks and technological features that allow us to talk about its specificities and new paradigms, but interrogating institutional and market limits that confine and hide its changes in the scope of the library mirage and the printed cultural symbolic universe.

John Smith charts how Hollywood and American politics are inextricably intertwined, spinning an impossibly implausible storyline. For Smith, politics and textuality enact a disturbing ideology that permeates American culture and foreign policy. After 11 September, when filmmakers and scriptwriters participated in scenario visioning and brainstorming with American intelligence and military experts, it was glaringly apparent (yet again) that the military-media-industrial complex is fuelled by ever-bloody violence. The objective of this liaison was to offer solutions to possible national security threats in the wake of events in New York and Washington. In this collaboration, a feedback loop of a different sort, "knowledge industry" professionals contribute their expertise in story and character, as well as visual effects and production know-how.

In my own essay, I address reading as an everyday practice of technology and textuality. In particular, I reference the much lauded practice "curling up with a good book" as a performance of habit and memory and explore what this might mean for electronic technology and textuality.

(c) Linda Carroli 2002

Linda Carroli has written non-fiction as a journalist, essayist and critical writer. She is the Australian editor of art and technology electronic magazine fineArt forum <<http://www.fineartforum.org>>. She has written several hypertexts, both independently and collaboratively. Her e-mail is <[lcarroli@pacific.net.au](mailto:lcarroli@pacific.net.au)>

< day-night >

by Teri Hoskin

### 1. hyper

This writing is a small part of many small parts that are making something much larger. It is a departure of sorts, to gather a few small things to see if it is possible that they can be something here, apart from the rest. First, two quotations which seem to call-up most of the things I am concerned with in my current research practice:

"Yes, there is a chance, there is room, but only very little. So, to describe this little ... The "to come" will come in the form of new technology, this has always been so, but is more so now. Technology has a "blind and cruel" set of powers. The struggle is not to reject technology and not to be buried by technology. How do we and how will we organize inscription in a hyper tech world?" [ 1] (Jacques Derrida)

"[Derrida] has long been fascinated by the 'experience of the impossible,' the possibility of this impossibility, by the absolute heterogeneity that the hyper introduces into the order of the same, interrupting the complacent regime of the possible." [ 2] (John D. Caputo)

### 2. excess

There has been a lot of talk and writing about hyper whatever in the last few years - an awful lot of writing and talk. Exhausted and incompletely there is hyperspace (in science), hypertext (in literary pursuits), hyperlink (Internet), hypersurfaces (in architecture), hypermedia (in visual arts and literature), and in arrangements of another order - hypersonic, hyperthermal, hyperactive, hypersensitive, hyperventilation.

Each of us must know how it feels to hyperventilate - breathe too fast, too hard, too quickly, where one's senses begin to reel, the ground is no-where at all. Hyper = excess. Excess without end, without a first form. Instrumental language is not very "fitting" anymore - if indeed it ever was. What I am curious about and what I love, are the excesses of language, of life, of being alive with death as an intimate everyday awareness rather than a trajectory that "I" hurtles towards. There is something about the hyper (above, beyond) that begs humility, its insistence is unknowing and unknown. It resists every order, every category arrangement the language of reason can offer. It exists and it doesn't exist.

### 3. tuning, t-u-n-i-n-g

Tune up (your vehicle), tuning up (your instruments), tune in (to radio waves, to a station). Tuning is what usually happens before the "real" performance, before the possibility of "getting it right." It is what one does to extract the best possible performance from an array of components that together may become something. It is not a new analogy for writing, for thinking, for making, yet it suits my purposes well for working out what the question is, or, as Bergson says, how to ask the question using the correct terms.

#### 4. being attenuated

For a long time I have been under the mis-understanding that to be "attenuated" was the act of paying close attention. I assumed this word meant that every part of one's body was located at the very precipice of awareness where things become critical - where things can be felt in a way that is prehensile and in-tune, both at the same time. I find instead that attenuate means "to make slender, thin or fine; rarify," and that the word is derived from the Latin: "made thin" [ 3]. Yet this is not so far away from the image that I have of this moment of attenuation. Perhaps the body (this "me" that "I" pinch) becomes surface and enters the stream of surfaces; paradoxically, unpinchable by "me" or "I" and even "you." So perhaps being attenuated is not "being" at all, but becoming, where the subjectivities I, me, you are radically suspended. Outside is inside, inside is out. It is this thin. If this is so, what are the points that remain (in the way of topology), that allow a return, a re-gathering or a thickening? Because one has to also be I and me with you.

#### 5. images 1 - order-words

"All seems to take place as if, in this aggregate of images which I call the universe, nothing really new could happen except through the medium of certain particular images, the type which is furnished me by my body." [ 4] The images "furnished me by my body" are those of memory, dream, hallucination. Images instigated by a certain sort of shock, catastrophe, crash, accident, or, withdrawal (this could be sleep, daydream, or suspension of addiction - in other words, to switch one mode of being-in-the-world for another). Images that are before rather than beyond a certain sort of cognition. In Henri Bergson's terms, this cognition or understanding is constituted by the order-words of language, where ready-made order-words transmit "the ready-made problems that society seeks to force us to solve." [ 5] And as resistance to the impasse, Deleuze reminds us that "[ c]reating has always been something different from communication. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control." [ 6]

#### 6. unoccupied working and reading contours

Writing is so tiring. So done with. The going over and over a certain sort of suffering that seems to be integral to our human condition. The "so done with" is never done, never finished, comple(a)ted. There is always something, a moment, just a second, an event, or non-event that draws one back again to writing, to writing out from, to thinking this force of writing with a "wounded language - the scar of the impossible [ 7]." "If the literature of electronic culture can be located in the works of Phillip K. Dick or William Gibson, in the imaginings of a cyberpunk projection, or a reserve of virtual reality, then it is probable that electronic culture shares a crucial project with drug culture. This project should be understood in Jean-Luc Nancy's and Blanchot's sense of *désœuvrement* - a project without end or program, an unworking that nevertheless occurs, and whose contours we can begin to read [ 8]." *Désœuvrement* is a sense of the unoccupied, the leisurely [ 9]. Rather than a writing in service of speech, idealist thought, program and project, this way of writing, thinking and making is devoted solely to itself as writing, "that remains without identity, and little by little [byte by byte] brings forth possibilities that are entirely other." [ 10] The possible impossible, invention. Waiting without wait/weight, or wishing without object. The literature of electronic culture is "located" in the writing of Phillip K. Dick and William Gibson in a way that relies on a certain shared

understanding of metaphor and order-words.

There is another sort of writing in and of electronic culture, and it is this sense of "no-trajectory," rather, a working out, in tiny increments, with a particular sort of care and attention to language that uses words as material for making thinking. See, for example, "Wishing" [11] and here (from there), Linda Marie Walker writes an e-mail reply to Gregory Ulmer; "When I wrote to you a day or so ago, to see if you were "home," I called this work, writing, that we are doing "The Wishing Way." I had translated "why" as "way." And this seems so, that why is a way. That wishing is a way, that wishing is an act, albeit secret, the secrecy being central to the act, upon longing. To dance, with someone, or alone, is to be somewhere, perhaps, one would like/prefer to be, or to be someone one is not, and yet "is" then, in that moment, for a moment. To be the dance."

#### 7. images 2

"The truth is that in philosophy and even elsewhere it is a question of finding the problem and consequently positing it, even more than of solving it ... but stating the problem is not simply uncovering, it is inventing. Discovery, or uncovering, has to do with what already exists, actually or virtually; it was therefore certain to happen sooner or later. Invention gives being to what did not exist; it might never have happened." [12] Or, it may never happen. We are familiar with this approach in art-making, and in poetics. A method, or logic of invention necessarily works in ways other to instrumentalist, positivist responses to trouble that seek to "fix" or "solve" a problem.

The second example I want to use in this all-too-brief text is Gregory Ulmer's keynote address [13] to incubation 2000 (an Internet writing conference organized by trAce Online Writing Centre, Nottingham, England). Ulmer's thinking/making is dedicated to the articulation of an Internet practice that is attentive to the design of category formation [14] (language). His methodology maps the shift from literate to digital societies - a move he calls electracy ("electracy is to the digital as literacy is to the book"). His performance here, as scholar and "expert," is that of the grammatological trickster willing to appear as fool to expose the complicity of each of us, and the inadequacy or incorrectness of our understanding of "problem." It is a performing of theory rather than the explication/critique of instrumentalist Aristotelian logic. This is a method that produces (initially) the laughter of recognition ("we" are not that); and then discomfort - confusion - complicity and perhaps even anger ("this is inappropriate, impolite"). It is non-communication, non-explication. It does not have to be practical or useful. It is a monstrous excess that operates in what Bataille categorizes as (and Ulmer outlines) the general economy rather than the restrictive economy of accumulation - the economy of building up and saving and getting more and acquiring.

#### 8. art hey?

Here Ulmer "performed" a method for arranging images thrown up by ATE, or feeling (e-motion). As analogy, Ulmer cites the important role the invention of tragedy in Greek theatre played in the shift from oral to literate cultures, "the shift that saw people no longer think of themselves as members of one of the 12 tribes [but as] citizens of a community called Athens." [15] From tragedy as theater, he takes the notion of ATH (pronounced art-ay, not art hey?) - which is an individual experience of foolishness or blindness. ATH, as a collective feeling, is a catastrophe. Ulmer asks "how is ATH experienced today?" He calls his method

"reasoneon," reasoning with neon, a compound of images via Lacan and Benjamin. "How to improve the world," as John Cage said, 'You will only make things worse.' We have a sort of fetish logic in the emergAgency about our consultancy. We know intellectually that we won't make things better, no longer believing in progress. On the other hand we have a desire and the cheek to think we can actually help." [16]

This performance has stayed with me for some time, stuck like "glue." How could one bring poetics, and non-communication as affect, to effect some sort of circuit breaker here, in Australia, specific to this context, today. "From where does our feeling of beauty come? From the idea that the work of art is not arbitrary, and from the fact that, although unpredictable, it appears to us to have been directed by some organizing center of large co-dimension, far from the structures of ordinary thought, but still in resonance with the main emotional or genetic structures underlying our conscious thought. In this way the work of art acts like the germ of a virtual catastrophe in the mind of the beholder." [17]

Perhaps the "germ" of Ulmer's performance may hold some clues, some ways to effect some sort of dis-orientation, and complicity, in each of us. Complicity. "I give you the torturer along with the rest of the texts. Learn to read them properly. They are sacred" (Duras, *The War* [1986], p. 115). Complication, complicated, complicity. The pli (from the old French pli comes bend, fold, source of English "apply," "pliable" and "plaint" and from the same route comes accomplice, comply, explicit, perplex, pleat, plight, reply, simple, supple and supplicate [18]) - in complicity.

#### 9. a v a c u o l e i s n o t a v o i d

The problems of how we welcome (or on this case, do not welcome) the stranger, the wholly other (asylum seekers). How we can break this impasse that confines people in the desert, that imagines it to be empty as though Aboriginal cultures are non-existent. Here are some word/images for/from the desert: disappearance, abandonment, modernist existentialism; hot|cold, extreme; waste dump, rocket range, gaol, incarceration, internment, detention, dingoes and babies; empty, void, abyss, desert within the desert, desere, barren; birthplace, belly, center, ancient; hope, timeless, (post)catastrophic, mirage, endless, vast, mystical, secret.

#### 10. light/dark: day/night

"The trouble(s) with writing is its infinite plurality, its instability, while it is, or seems to be, simultaneously, con-fined, con-formed: still. It's like and unlike everything else: object, room, street, desert" [19]. With this sense of desert in mind, I would like to take from Ulmer's address one image, that of the total eclipse of the sun. The word eclipse comes from the Greek for "abandonment." Quite literally, an eclipse was seen as the sun abandoning the earth. The next total eclipse of the sun takes place later this year, on 4 December, 2002. Its path overland [20] through Australia passes through the site of greatest trouble in recent times - beginning at Ceduna, a little to the east of Maralinga [21], site for nuclear testing by the British and botched clean-up jobs. Traditional owners of the land are the Maralinga Tjarutja aboriginal people, exiled, who await a return. The eclipse will pass through the salt lakes, Lake Gardiner and Lake Hart - the latter, the site of the disused Woomera Rocket range and in proximity to the Woomera Detention Centre for "illegal immigrants." People behind barbed wire, stateless. So perhaps this question of Ulmer's can be of use

here; how can we make use of our hate, our foolishness, this catastrophe, with an electrated rather than a literate response?

#### References and Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, "Themes from Recent Work." Public seminar at the Seymour Centre, University of Sydney, 13 August 1999, personal notes.
2. John D. Caputo, "The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida" (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997), p. 2.
3. "Macquarie Concise Dictionary," Third Edition (2000), p. 62.
4. Henri Bergson, "Matter and Memory," Trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1991), p. 18.
5. Dorothea Olkowski, "Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation," (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1999), p. 89
6. Gilles Deleuze and Toni Negri, "Control and Becoming," in "57 Negotiations: 1972-1990," Trans. Martin Joughin (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 169-76. cited by Felicity D. Scott, in "Architecture or Techno-Utopia," Grey Room 03, Spring 2001. pp. 112-126, 125-126.
7. Caputo, op.cit. pp. 1-2.
8. Avital Ronell, "Crack Wars, Literature, Addiction and Mania" (London: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 68.
9. "Spiers and Surene's French and English Pronouncing Dictionary" (New York: D. Appleton And Company, 1903), p. 190.
10. Maurice Blanchot, "The Infinite Conversation," Trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. xii.
11. L.M. Walker and Gregory L. Ulmer, "Wishing" (Alt-X, 1997), <<http://www.altx.com/au2/>>.
12. Bergson, cited by Deleuze in "Bergsonism," trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1991), p. 15.
13. Gregory L. Ulmer, "Invention," Incubation 2000 Conference. It is not my task here to "explicate" Ulmer's presentation, although that is certainly tempting! You can hear it streamed from this address: <<http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/incubation/archive/2000/audio/ulmer.mp3>>.
14. See Florida Research Ensemble, <<http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~gulmer/>>.
15. All citations in this paragraph are from "Invention," Ulmer's incubation presentation (see note 13).
16. *ibid.*
17. Rene Thoms, "Structural Stability and Morphogenesis." Trans. D.H. Fowler (Massachusetts, MA: W.A. Benjamin INC, 1975), p. 316.
18. John Ayto, "Dictionary of Word Origins" (London: Bloomsbury, 1990) p. 401.
19. Linda Marie Walker, "WRITING-DESIGN, OR, LOVE OF THE WORD (EPHEMERIS) (1)," unpublished paper, May 2000.
20. F. Espenak and J. Anderson, "Total Solar Eclipse of 2002 December 04," September 2001, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Maryland, p. 17. PDF documents are accessible from <<http://sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/TSE2002/TSE2002.html>>, 25 May, 2002.
21. "Maralinga - The Fallout Continues," Gregg Borschmann, producer, ABC National Radio Background Briefing, #11/2000, 16 April 2000 <<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/bbing/s120383.htm>>.

(c) Teri Hoskin 2002

Teri Hoskin is a writer and artist based in Adelaide, Australia. Curator of the electronic Writing Research ensemble website <<http://ensemble.va.com.au>>, she has produced several hypertexts including "meme\_shift" and "daily bread" (with Anne Walton). She has facilitated and participated in several projects for the small screen and gallery spaces, including: noon quilt; Ensemble Logic + Choragraphy; verve: the other writing; and lux: notes for

an electronic writing. She is currently a PhD candidate at the Louis Laybourn-Smith School of Architecture and Design in Adelaide, South Australia. Her thesis examines the appearance of interiority and digital connectivity.

---

< Liquid Texts >  
by Giselle Beiguelman

Cyberspace performs a new reading context because it is based upon parameters that redefine the links between memory, representation and writing as they were established by the cultural practices related to the dissemination of the printed book and the archive as a symbolic, political and administrative institution [ 1 ] .

As pointed out by Roger Chartier, "in printed culture, one tends to associate a type of discourse with a type of text and its intended use. The order of discourse is thus based on the material medium, be it letter, newspaper, journal, book or archive. This is not the case in the digital world where all texts, regardless of their nature, are read in the same medium (the computer screen) and in the same forms (generally those decided on by the reader)" [ 2 ] .

It is important to note that this phenomenon of hybridism in cyberspace concerns all media that are accessed by the web browser, questioning the usability of our former methods of classification.

Content melts into the interface [ 3 ] and no differences remain between the various textual genres and media formats. They are all similar in appearance and seem also to be equivalent in authority, crushing our ontological notions of subjectivity and cultural production.

From this point of view, digital culture makes us face the novelty of a cultural form in which writing no longer inscribes. In this sense, to talk about the loss of inscription is not a bet on collective amnesia but rather on new strategies of signification that questions contiguity/similarity relations that structure Western semiotics as a mnemonic system [ 4 ] and point to the polissemic instability of the Borgean Book of Sand.

Instability is becoming paradigmatic, with the proliferation of nomadic devices and the advances in the field of wireless technologies: defining a perceptive environment where images, texts, movies and sounds are made to be experienced on the move (in mobile phones, PDAs and electronic panels), in accordance with entropy and the logic of acceleration.

The inconsequent metaphor between page and screen masks this situation and the epistemological questions it embodies, suppressing the need for the discussion about cultural transformation and the specificities of our time and its codes.

Digital writing is not just writing made of a different substance that replaces ink. Despite the e-biz pressures towards the identification of digital writing as a convenient update of similar tools, it reconfigures processes of codification and transforms technologies of knowledge production.

WikiWiki [ 5 ] features provide a good point of departure for that discussion. Extremely simple to use, it not only gives any reader



the right to rewrite any text, incorporating immediately its modifications to the body of someone else's work, but creates versions of all the changes, designing a curious e-palimpsest of the post-author condition.

Among other resources that explore the specificities of digital writing without trying to resemble printed matter are programs for automatic text generation [ 6 ] such as Arthur Matuck's "Landscape" [ 7 ], which writes every typed word in a different way.

Processed and recombined, the typed texts derive new words, multiplying meanings, as it was possible to go back to the etymological nature of the text (derived from the Latin *texere* - to weave).

"Textension" [ 8 ], by Joshua Nimoy, maximizes this reflection on the computerized writing and exploration of new text-processing formats that refuse the transference of the printed culture to the digital sphere, not by simple opposition, but by recycling methods that reconfigure both. It is software that does not process text linearly. All typed words and phrases become bubbles, run in diagonal lines. They are projected transversally on the screen, straining and shrinking, defying the analogy of the keyboard with the typewriter, demanding ergodic [ 9 ] processes and alternative configurations of the media.

Beyond their surprising results, those programming solutions indicate representative and imaginary transformations in the hierarchy between program and author. These are stressed by codework projects as they devote a special attention to the reader experience.

"Berlioz" [ 10 ], by Ted Warnell, works in this direction, transforming the source code into fictional and poetic content. It prompts the reader into making two simultaneous readings, as it is possible to cross the screen and catch the poetics of language and data simultaneously. Algorithmic, it is a poem in 14 movements that generates 16,483 verses. When the reader accesses it, s/he sees a mosaic composed by green and gray tones. Moving the mouse over the green fragments, s/he discovers texts of Warnell's contributors that were sent by e-mail.

An impressive alphanumeric image results of this movement of mouse over and mouse down. However, the most interesting thing happens when the reader views "Berlioz" source. It is possible to read all the contributors' messages, in their raw format, in accordance with the grammar and syntactic norms we are accustomed to.

Almost as an epigraph of this process that inverts the relation with the display, Talan Memmott's initial message supports and justifies the procedure as a whole: "Any observation takes on attributes of writing, whether the text is rendered externally or internally. Even in the most passive reading of some text another text is generated."

Author of the celebrated "Lexia to Perplexia" [ 11 ], Memmott faces, as few artists do, the implosion of the limits between forms and content that are processed in the reading context of computerized interface. An implosion that results of and exposes "how the text engages the materiality of its medium, and how this materiality becomes so entwined with the content that the two cannot be adequately understood apart from the other" [ 12 ].

A frictional zone between the letter and the locution is restored by those works and indicates another radical attribute of digital writing: the corruption of the phonetic system and epistemology. This kind of corruption is central to the work of mez (Maryanne Breeze)[13], who assumes multiple on-line personalities and writes in a particular language, the "mezangelle."

Defined by the author as a "network language system," mezangelle creates textuality mixing mathematical symbols, codes and the iconography of the Web, through collaborative processes and multiplication of avatars. By doing so, the author not only deconstructs representational forms, but suggests the release of writing from its instrumental function of supplementing the spoken word.

"Entre (Between)" [14], a CD-ROM created by the Brazilian duo Femur (Rafael Lain and Angela Detanico), approaches those same questions in a different way. It is a project between music and drawing, between letters and digits. It allows us to play images and to draw with sounds, using the computer keyboard, and to install a series of fonts created by Rafael Lain.

In the first instance, the user works on images and when s/he types, the computer processes new forms and simultaneously composes a track, giving color to audio and sound to traces. This field between audio and vision intercepted by algorithms is not the only one that interests them.

The fonts also suffer a rigorous treatment in order to be placed in this universe of fluid borders. Of the 26 fonts available for download, 14 are non-phonetic and stress this exercise of recombination of languages and the new forms of writing that identifies digital culture with a new symbolic system of representation and signification.

"Utopia," a font based on the work of the modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer, is useful to clarify the authors' purposes. It uses miniatures of Niemeyer's masterpieces, like the Brasilia buildings and icons of the results of the urban planning disasters that prevail in Brazilian cities.

For the capital letters, Lain, who is the typographer, reserved the beautiful lines that made the architecture of Niemeyer internationally known. He designated boards to the small letters that recall never-ending traffic jams, gratings that close viaducts for homeless occupation, among other signs of our urban horror...

The small characters are intentionally wider than the capital letters and, therefore, when typed (following the basic rules of orthography), the small letters (the urban dejections) expand over the capital letters (the forms of modernist architecture).

A visual text emerges from these movements, introducing urban tensions to the phrases, without appealing to any vernacular resource. It makes readable a dirty social tissue, crossed by the impasse between the severity and beauty of modernist architecture and its fragility in the face of uncontrolled urban growth.

With diverse references, including Zuzana Licko (of the famous Californian studio Emigre) to the revolutionary tracing of El Lissitzky, Entre releases design from having any supplemental

function [ 15] .

Images are not used for saying what cannot be explained with words. Moreover, text does not operate as the mediation between nature and reason. The relations are not conventional. They make us think that the conjunction of technology, digital culture and human sciences lead to a deep subversion. Not only is writing conceived as a cultural action that goes beyond the mere transport of the spoken language, the letter is transformed, since it is definitively free of the word [ 16] .

The projects discussed here all outline cultural changes that stress the need to produce repertoires capable of not only exceeding the forms (and concepts) of books and pages as receptacles of ideas, but also its symbolic functions as supports of memory and representation.

Rebellious against conceptions of text and textuality related to the printed culture, they threaten the stability of our knowledge, performing new reading contexts which demand, more than ever, the closing of the book as condition of the opening of the text [ 17] .

#### References and Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, "Mal de Arquivo" (Mal d'Archive) (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Relume-Dumara, 2001).
2. Roger Chartier, "Readers and Readings in the Electronic Age," e-text, 2001.  
<[http://www.text-e.org/conf/index.cfm?fa=printable&ConfText\\_ID=5](http://www.text-e.org/conf/index.cfm?fa=printable&ConfText_ID=5)>.
3. Lev Manovich, "The Language of New Media" (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001) pp. 66-67.
4. Umberto Eco, "Un Art D' Oublier Est-il Concevable?," IN: *Traverse*, No. 40, April 1987, pp. 124-133.
5. Cunningham & Cunningham, Inc. <<http://www.c2.com/>>. See also Wikipedia - <<http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/>> and Desk.org <<http://www.desk.org>>.
6. Generative.net is one of the best resources for projects that work in this field <<http://www.generative.net/>>.
7. A. Matuck, "Landscape," 2002 <<http://www.teksto.com.br>>.
8. Joshua Nimoy, "Textension," 2001  
<<http://users.design.ucla.edu/~jtnimoy/textension/>>.
9. Espen J. Asperth, "Ergodic Literature" (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
10. Ted Warnell, "Berlioz" <<http://warnell.com/syntac/berlioz.htm>>.
11. Talan Memmot, 2000 <<http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/newmedia/lexia/index.htm>>.
12. Lisa Gitelman, "Materiality Has Always Been in Play" (interview with N. Katherine Hayles), *The Iowa Review Web*, 2002 <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~iareview/tirweb/feature/hayles/hayles.htm>>
13. For all mez' s works, see  
<<http://www.hotkey.net.au/~netwurker/resume2e.htm>>.
14. Angela Detanico and Rafael Lain, "Entre" (Sao Paulo: Femur, 2001). Some samples and fonts are available on-line at  
<<http://www.femur.com.br>>.
15. See Jacques Derrida, "Gramatologia" (De la Gramatologie), (Sao Paulo: Perspectiva, 1973) pp. 173-193.
16. See Roland Barthes, "O Obvio e o Obtuso - Ensaio Critico III" (Le Obvie et L'Obtuse - Essais Critiques III), (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1990) pp. 93-96.
17. Jacques Derrida, "A Escritura e a Diferença," (Sao Paulo: Perspectiva, 1971). p. 73.

(c) Giselle Beigueman 2002

Giselle Beiguelman is a multimedia essayist and web-artist who lives in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where she was born. She teaches digital culture in the Communication and Semiotics Graduate Program at the PUS-SP. Since 1998, she has run desvirtual.com <<http://www.desvirtual.com>>, an editorial studio. Her webwork includes "The Book after the Book," "Content = No Cache" and "Wop Art." She has been presenting her webworks in exhibits, festivals and scientific events devoted to new media art, including Net\_Condition (ZKM), Net#foras (MECAD) and the twenty-fifth SP Biennial. She was a featured speaker at the New Media Poetry Conference at the University of Iowa in 2002 and will be a featured artist at the 11th ISEA in Nagoya, Japan.

---

< Nine-Eleven -or- The Convenient Convenience Store War >  
by John Smith

There are many ways of interpreting the effects of Hollywood on U.S. foreign policy. When Lyndon Johnson opened the American Film Institute in the 1960s, his opening speech made reference to the power of the motion picture to take the "American way of life" to the four corners of the globe. When we now, some 35 years later, consider his words we can see that Hollywood has been considerably more successful than the military actions LBJ and his successors have pursued since.

Tony Wedgwood Benn, socialist and past minister of the British Government, has observed, "since 1945 ... the Americans have bombed China, Korea, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, The Congo, Peru, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Guatemala, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Panama, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia. How humanitarian can you get?" ("Letter to America," Rana Kabbani, 2001).

John Carpenter's early film "Dark Star" is arguably one of his best. Made on a low budget, the film tells the story of the disillusioned and dysfunctional crew of the deep spacecraft Dark Star. Its mission is to seek out planets that have the potential of evolving intelligent lifeforms, then obliterate them entirely by making their sun go nova before they have the opportunity to oppose U.S. expansion. Made during the Vietnam conflict, the film has often been interpreted as Carpenter's insightful criticism of U.S. foreign policy during the cold war period. (Later in his career and backed by Hollywood money, Carpenter dropped "message" movies. His later work, which includes his excellent homage to the Hong Kong martial arts genre, "Big Trouble in Little China," is well-crafted but ideologically middle-of-the-road, action-movie stuff.)

Projection is a well-known phenomenon in psychology and psychoanalysis. When we have some aspect of ourselves that we are unable to acknowledge, it often finds expression in our criticism of others. It is my belief that this occurs on a social as well as a personal level. When President Reagan accused the Soviet Union of being "The Evil Empire," he was in fact, albeit unwittingly, expressing his country's reservations about the kind of atrocities that have dominated their foreign policy during the past 50 years and to which Wedgwood Benn refers above.

It is interesting that Reagan took this title from Hollywood, from George Lucas' "Star Wars." This is a movie about a small band of terrorists (since we are not supposed to call them "freedom fighters" any more) who take on the might of the dominant bullies of the galactic schoolyard. They do not win, but as the series

progresses, they make significant dents in the body of the empire.

Reagan, of course, had been a Hollywood actor himself. As a right-wing union leader, he had helped McCarthy and his sidekick Richard Nixon rid Hollywood of socialist ideology under the auspices of the Un-American Activities Committee. As a fundamentalist Christian, he was rabidly anti-communist and almost bankrupted the U.S.A. when, as president, he later launched his crusade to eradicate socialism from global politics.

I was in England on what has become known as "Nine-Eleven." Procrastinating over some deadline or another, I switched on the radio to hear the 3:00pm news (then 11:00am US/EST). An airliner had just minutes before crashed into the World Trade building in New York. I listened as the second plane impacted and the twin towers fell. The BBC ran the news live until 8:00pm that evening. At some point, my son rang to ask me if I knew what was happening.

In the days that followed, there was only one topic of conversation. I was astonished to discover that people from all walks of life and from all political persuasions agreed: despite everyone's sympathy for the victims and their families, all echoed the sentiment: "the U.S.A. had it coming." The bully in the global schoolyard had been taught a lesson. A lesson that almost everyone outside of the U.S.A. believed was long overdue.

President Bush was hustled away into a safe retreat but not before he had expressed his intentions: "We're going to get the folks that did this". Not quite Hollywood, but then Bush isn't too hot as an actor either.

The U.S. military had languished under Clinton. With the end of the Cold War, the defense contractors had been encouraged and subsidized to diversify into civilian endeavors. Many affiliated with Hollywood in order to develop special effects technology and conflict-based computer games. Now the U.S. economy was failing. Successive interest cuts had failed to stem the recession. Bush was a new president with a low popularity rating. He needed to re-inflate the military economy. He urgently needed an excuse for war. Nine-Eleven came bang on cue.

Who wrote the script?

I listened to the live reportage on the radio. I spoke to people who had watched it on TV. They explained how, when they first switched on, they had assumed that they were watching a product of the military entertainment complex. And it was Hollywood that addressed Bush's rhetoric just as it had informed Reagan's 15 years before. Bush accused an "Axis of Evil" for supporting terrorism and declared an unflinching "War on Terror."

Here again, we see social projection. Since 1947, the U.S.A. has been the principal supporter of terrorism around the globe. Surprisingly, it is not just right-wing, anti-socialist terrorist groups that they have supported. Well into the Clinton era, the U.S.A. provided the main funding for the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a well left-of-center group whose military actions were targeted against the U.S.A.'s proclaimed "best friend and ally," the United Kingdom.

And, of course, the U.S.A. had funded and trained Osama bin Laden, the man accused of writing the script for Nine-Eleven, during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Bonnie Greer is an expatriate African-American and now British citizen. In her "Letter from America," she attempted to address the criticisms of the U.S.A. in Rana Kabbani's "Letter to America" and the post Nine-Eleven problems that the U.S. faces. In the program, she interviewed Warner Saunders, another African-American, who is one of Chicago's best-known news anchors:

Bonnie Greer: "People abroad are saying we need to change. Is that true?"

Warner Saunders: "Of course we need to change, and we are going to change if we're going to be able to survive. I'm only giving you my personal opinion on this one. The failure for us to deal adequately with the issue of race and the issue of diversity may be the very reason that we're in the trouble that we're in. And this country has never really truly dealt with the issue of race. I think that racism and sexism are the twin towers of infamy for this country. And unless we deal with it, we're going to have a serious problem."

Meanwhile, back in the corridors of power, Lynne Cheney, the vice-president's significant other, is a member of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). They recently published a report called "Defending Civilization: How Our Universities are Failing America and What Can Be Done about It" which the editor-in-chief of Harper's magazine, Lewis Lapham, described as "a guide to the preferred forms of free speech."

The report accuses universities of failing to respond to Nine-Eleven with the requisite "anger, patriotism and support for military intervention." It substantiates its position by quoting several "subversive" remarks including "we should build bridges and relationships, not simply bombs and walls" and "Intolerance breeds hate, hate breeds violence and violence breeds death, destruction and heartache." These kinds of attitudes are described as "moral equivocation" which, the report recommends, should be addressed by studies of history and "the great works of western civilization."

In other words, and as Hollywood taught us all: "Shoot first, ask questions later."

#### References

A transcript of "Letter to America" can be seen at:

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/correspondent/news-id\\_1698000/1698317.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/correspondent/news-id_1698000/1698317.stm)>.

A transcript of "Letter from America" can be seen at:

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/correspondent/news-id\\_1711000/1711151.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/correspondent/news-id_1711000/1711151.stm)>

(c) John Smith 2002

---

< Reading Technology: "Curling Up with a Good ..." >  
by Linda Carroli

My copy of "Scripts, Grooves and Writing Machines" split while I was reading it for the first time. Broken in two, a chunk of the book fell out, leaving an empty paper and card shell. Then, it continued to break. Each turn of the page caused a leaf to sever

from the sad, glued spine. George Landow takes the durability of paperbacks seriously, observing their flimsy construction as an indication that we are "beyond the book" [ 1]. He claims that books "embody ill-designed, fragile, short-lived objects." Consequently, "the experience of the book, as we recall - and occasionally idealize - it" has been lost [ 2]. For Landow, the book, as a technology, is in the throes of decline, awaiting supercession by information technologies.

This discussion of reading and technology hinges on notions of "everyday practice." Implicated in everyday practice are concepts of habit and memory, which I discuss in concert to develop a framework through which to consider technology and textuality. I am referring to Michel de Certeau's notion of everyday practice as "ways of operating or doing things" [ 3]: these are not merely the unseen background of social activity or of a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories and perspectives. With a focus on consumers - those users who are "dominated" in society - de Certeau undertakes a study of several "everyday" practices, including reading, in order to illuminate "models of action." Consumers do not only consume, they also "use," "make" or "do" with that which has been purchased or imposed. This making or doing gives rise to "tactics" that the user deploys and so "many everyday practices [ including reading] are tactical in character" [ 4]. Further, borrowing from Gitelman's account of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century technologies, and Hayles' ideas about virtuality, print and electronic reading, technologies are addressed as habit and disruption. Gitelman proposes the "successes" and "failures" of emergent writing technologies as sites of negotiation for meaning and subjectivity. She proffers that technology is both physically and discursively constructed and that technologies of inscription are materialized theories of language.

A regularly repeated refrain - "no one will ever curl up with a good e-book" - dismisses e-books. For many commentators and consumers, this is a compelling argument against e-books. With this statement, an exchange between the reader and the book is charted. The book is imbued with corporeal significance that the computer (or other reading device) cannot possibly displace. Clearly, "curl up," as a comfortable or pleasurable embodiment of reading a book, is exclusively reserved for the book and it is unimaginable that the body could or would "curl up" with a substitute book. A substitute book lacks authenticity. It is important to note that reading is a plural, fluid and variable practice, which individuals do for diverse reasons: there are likely to be books for which this "curled up" posture is not desirable or necessary but are read regardless. For the purposes of this essay, I am interested in the "curled up" posture because the presumed experience of reading from a different technology in this "curled up" posture is not as desirable or pleasurable as reading a book in the same posture. It is not the same experience and therefore not as apparently rewarding.

In his exposition of memory and habit, Paul Connerton addresses posture as an incorporating practice, stating that "where the characteristic posture of [ for example] men and women are almost identical, there may be very little teaching of posture and there may be very little conscious learning of posture ... Postural behaviour ... may be so automatic that it is not recognised as isolatable pieces of behaviour" [ 5]. Learning the posture of "curling up with a good book" emerges from sighted and practiced repetitions. This "curling up" position as a reading posture results in contingent incorporating and inscriptive practices,

or, as Connerton explains "no type of inscription is at all conceivable without ... an irreducible incorporating act" [ 6] . In the familiar context of reading, it is the body that "curls up" and flips the pages and these actions are performed in concert with a knowledge of technology, language and writing. Further, "patterns of body use become ingrained through our interactions with objects ... Postures and movements which are habit memories become sedimented into bodily conformation" [ 7] . De Certeau suggests that reading is a "silent production" in which a reader "insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he [ sic] poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralises himself [ sic] in it like the internal rumblings of one's body" [ 8] . Reading is an embodied and technologically contingent practice in a web of other practices and circulations, including pleasure and consumption.

"Curling up with a good book" has become both "naturalized" and "authentic." There is a perceived relationship, an exchange between body and book that another technology can neither account for nor accommodate. Building on Connerton's propositions, N. Katherine Hayles provides a framework through which to consider embodiment in an age of virtuality. This consists of two interacting polarities: body and embodiment, inscription and incorporation. She explains the interaction thus:

as the body is to embodiment, so inscription is to incorporation. Just as embodiment is in constant interplay with the body, so incorporating practices are in constant interplay with inscriptions that abstract the practices into signs. When the focus is on the body, the particularities of embodiment tend to fade from view; similarly, when the focus is on inscription, the particularities of incorporation tend to fade from view [ 9] .

Hayles contends that an "incorporating practice" is "an action that is encoded into bodily memory by repeated performances until it becomes habitual".[ 10] For Connerton, these practices "cannot be reduced to a sign which exists on a separate "level" outside the immediate sphere of the body's acts. Habit is a knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body; and in the cultivation of habit, it is our body that "understands' ".[ 11] As a habit of reading, "curling up" is a form of corporeal knowledge or embodied knowing. "Curling up with a good book" is performed repeatedly and, ultimately, habitually. For Hayles, "habits do not occupy conscious thought; they are habitual precisely because they are done more or less automatically, as if the knowledge of how to perform the actions resided in one's fingers or physical mobility rather than in one's mind" [ 12] . As a habitual movement, "curling up with a good book" is accepted as an unconscious action and is rendered invisible when the technology and the text have disappeared into the task of reading. Subsequently, "curling up with a good e-book" represents a threat or disruption to that habituated behaviour. This disruption is not straightforward due to reading's implication in other habitual practices and sensory experiences of literacy. In concert with reading and so much else of what we do, these practices are also everyday practices. For de Certeau:

to read is to wander through an imposed system (that of the text, analogous to the constructed order of a city or of a supermarket) ... [ The reader] invents in texts something different from what [ was] "intended." He [ sic] detaches them from their (lost of accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known



in the space organised by their capacity for allowing and indefinite plurality of meaning [ 13] .

"Curling up" becomes the posture that a reader adopts in order to undertake this "wandering through" and "reinvention" of the text. "Curling up" is how we image or imagine ourselves reading in the realm of habit-memory and how we see others reading. As de Certeau explains, reading transports the reader "elsewhere," to a "secret scene" where the reader arrives and departs at will, and so, "curling up" is the posture of this transportation. To proclaim that we are "beyond the book" disavows this everyday quality of reading, of curling up, of split spines and torn pages. It also disavows, as Connerton suggests, that habit and corporeality or inscription and embodiment are tied to memory. Connerton argues "every group will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories which they are most anxious to conserve. They will know how well the past can be kept in mind by a habitual memory sedimented in the body" [ 14] . If reading books or "curling up with a good book" is among those things that we seek to conserve and retain in habitual memory, then any attempt to replace the book meets with resistance. Hayles observes "[w]hen changes in incorporating practices take place, they are often linked with new technologies that affect how people use their bodies and experience space and time" [ 15] . The e-book reading device and the book, as technologies, are not the same, do not produce the same relationships with the body or embodiment, inscription or incorporation, and are not readily interchangeable.

Virtuality has bearing on the spatial arrangements of objects and bodies. Hayles defines virtuality as "the cultural perception that material objects are interpenetrated by information forms" [ 16] . She refers to proprioception, "the sense that tells us where the boundaries of our bodies are," to describe human relations with books and computers, or screen and print [ 17] . Accordingly, "proprioceptive coherence ... refers to how these boundaries are formed through a combination of physiological feedback loops and habitual usage" [ 18] . Hayles describes a difference in corporeal relations with different technologies and "although a reader can imaginatively project herself into a world represented within a print text, she is not likely to feel that she is becoming physically attached to the page itself" [ 19] . Hayles attributes this to tactile and kinaesthetic experience of print, which provides less feedback and less interaction. While the reader might feel that "she is moving through the page into another world," she is unlikely to experience the same sense of immersion and interactivity as with electronic interactive texts. The "curled up" position seems to reiterate this experience of reading as boundary between reader and technology. In curling up, one's body, while drawn into a relationship with the technology, one is distinct from it. The reader is wrapped around the book, cradling it with their body.

A question raised by Hayles' discussion of proprioception is how readers negotiate print forms replicated on screens and whether a search or dictionary function is sufficient to afford the material experience of the screen text. For Hayles, "the materiality of ... [our] interactions is one way in which our assumptions about virtual writing is being constituted as distinctively different from print. Even when its output is printed and bound into codex books, we know from the inside that it operates according to spatial principles and a topographical logic of its own" [ 20] . In addressing technology as plural, de-centered and indeterminate, Gitelman calls for technology to be

"the reciprocal product of textual practices, rather than just a causal agent of change" [21]. In this respect, "changes to writing and reading matter in large measure because they equal changes to writers and readers. New inscriptions [sign] new subjectivities" [22]. Hayles addresses technology in this way when she states that the integration of corporeal perceptions and movements with computer architectures and topologies has resulted in humans expressing cyborg subjectivity.

Readers, technologies (books, computers or reading devices) and texts are interdependent and consequently, our habits of reading, technologies and texts are also interdependent. In the technology of the book, a reader is habituated to that particular relation of text and technology. The introduction of e-book reading devices threatens to disrupt that relation, charting other reciprocal relations between technology and textuality, virtuality and subjectivity. In this essay I have focused on the much-repeated phrase "curling up with a good book" to establish reading and the technology of the book as habituated and pleasurable. In focusing on this expression as the locus for this exploration, I am concerned with how this framework can be applied to new reading technologies - such as e-books, personal organizers and e-book reading devices - in order to consider the ways in which these technologies might affect not only reading, but also subjectivities of reading as performances of the everyday.

#### Notes

1. George Landow, "Twenty Minutes into the Future: Or How Are We Moving Beyond the Book?," in "The Future of the Book," Ed. Geoffrey Nunberg (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996) 209ff.
2. *ibid*
3. Michel de Certeau, "The Practice of Everyday Life," Trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) p. xi.
4. *ibid*, p. xix.
5. Paul Connerton, "How Societies Remember" (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 73.
6. *ibid*. p. 76.
7. *ibid*. p. 94.
8. de Certeau, *op.cit.*, p. xxi.
9. N. Katherine Hayles, "How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cyberspace, Literature, and Informatics" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) p. 199.
10. Connerton, *op.cit.*, p. 90.
11. *ibid.*, p. 102.
12. Hayles, *op.cit.* (1999) p. 204.
13. de Certeau, *op.cit.*, p. 169.
14. Connerton, *op.cit.*, pp. 204-205.
15. Hayles, *op.cit.*, p. 205.
16. Hayles, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-14.
17. N. Katherine Hayles, "The Condition of Virtuality," ed. Peter Lunenfeld, "The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media" (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999) p. 88.
18. *ibid*.
19. *ibid*.
20. *ibid.*, p. 89.
21. Gitelman, *op.cit*, p. 2.
22. *ibid.*, p. 11.

(c) Linda Carroli 2002

Linda Carroli has written non-fiction as a journalist, essayist and critical writer. She is Australian editor of art, science and technology electronic magazine fineArt forum

<<http://www.fineartforum.org>>. She has written several  
hypertexts, both independently and collaboratively.  
<[lcarroli@pacific.net.au](mailto:lcarroli@pacific.net.au)>

---

LEONARDO DIGITAL REVIEWS 2002.08
-------------------------------------

---

This month, Leonardo Digital Reviews is fuller than ever and includes a number of review articles and reviews by new panelists. However, they are not on this occasion glossed in an editorial for a number of good reasons. First, the deadline for this copy coincides with two important conferences - The Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth and the Fourth Consciousness Reframed Conference, organized by Caiia-Star - and several other events, including two symposia featuring the interface between art and science. These will all no doubt be reviewed in Leonardo Digital Reviews, but necessitate early travel and a certain disruption to editorial routines. A far more important reason not to gloss this month's reviews is that we have been working over the past 6 months towards a special LEA/LDR edition and some of the reviews and articles have already arrived. It is not our policy to hold material back, so in the spirit of keeping this editor's powder dry, it is possibly better to discuss them in that issue. Nonetheless, there are twelve substantial new reviews posted this month and they are listed below. We do thank the panel for their efforts and I am sure that the reviews have some value to the LEA community.

The following new reviews are posted at: Leonardo Digital Reviews  
<<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/ldr.html>>.

Michael Punt  
Editor-in-Chief  
Leonardo Digital Reviews  
.....

In Leonardo Digital Reviews, August 2002:

A History of Russian Music, by Francis Maes  
Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen

Upheaval from the Abyss: Ocean Floor Mapping and the Earth  
Science Revolution, by David M. Lawrence  
Reviewed by Amy Ione

World Spectators, by Kaja Silverman  
Reviewed by Sean Cubitt

Iolini, by Roberto Iolini (CD)  
Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen

Surrealism: Desire Unbound, Jennifer Mundy (ed.)  
Reviewed by Robert Pepperell

The Internet and Everyone, by John Chris Jones  
Reviewed by Chris Crickmay

Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo's Ginevra de Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women, David Alan Brown, et al.  
Reviewed by Robert Pepperell

Where the Action Is: The Foundations of Embodied Interaction, by Paul Dourish  
Reviewed by Robert Pepperell

The Cambridge Complete World History of Food  
Reviewed by Harry Rand

The Metaphysics of Beauty, by Nick Zangwill  
Reviewed by Robert Pepperell

Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero Il Cinema Ritrovato 2002 (Event) and Anarchives: Connection-Machines (event)  
Reviewed by Michael Punt

.....

#### REVIEWS

< A History of Russian Music >  
by Francis Maes, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002.  
Trans. from the Dutch by Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans.  
441 pp., illus. Trade, \$45.00. ISBN 0-520-21815-9.

Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen, <stefaan.vanryssen@pandora.be>.

Francis Maes makes it very clear from the beginning of this book that he intends to rewrite the history of Russian music thoroughly and entirely. Instead of unthinkingly copying the nationalistic discourse of the early Russian music historian Vladimir Stasov, Maes builds on research of the past decades by many Russian and non-Russian musicologists to re-appraise the work of icons like Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich. There is no doubt that he succeeds in all respects and he does so in a book that reads like a novel, but still holds up against the criticism of musicologists and specialists.

Obviously, the first question when writing a history of any country's music is how to define one's subject. Is all music written in Russia Russian? Maes deals with this by discussing the alleged "nature" of Russian music as it was understood by its inventors. He shows that what some ideologists identified as genuine, original, native and pure was either absent or actually rejected, as exemplified by Glinka, the so-called father of Russian music, who thought Russian folklore utterly uninteresting as a source of musical material. From there, Maes tells a multi-faceted tale of conflicting ideologies: conservative and progressive nationalist, progressive classicistic, soviet, "formalist" and "cosmopolitan," each of these influencing and influenced by composers of different stature.

The book deals at length with all the great composers and compositions, from Glinka's "Kamarinskaya" to Shostakovich's "Babi Yar" (Thirteenth Symphony). The yarn is unsurprisingly spun around individuals and their work, but it includes threads on politics, social background, international development in music and power and performance practice. It is precisely here that Maes' strength lies. Without oversimplifying, he paints a history of Russia from the latter half of the nineteenth century up to the 1960s, always keeping an eye on his main subject and

simultaneously avoiding a myopic analysis of biographical anecdotes.

The most interesting part, and certainly the part by which most contemporary readers will judge the book, are of course the chapters on early Soviet music and the fate of Shostakovich, Prokofiev and their likes. Here again, the author shows how the black-and-white of earlier historiography should be replaced with a balanced analysis of intra-musical developments following a logic of their own, biographical accidents and the pressures of social and political life. Here Maes is at his best, showing insight and independent thinking, even if his appreciation of the Soviet regime is it times a bit blunt.

There are two serious comments to be made about the limits Maes imposes on his work - first, his treatment of Russian music after about 1930 is far too focused on a small number of well-known composers. It is as if no one else were composing anything of any value. This is, of course, a Western bias. Maes implicitly admits that interesting things have happened, be it in the maquis, leading to the works of Ustvolskaya, Gubaidulina and Schnittke, from the 1960s until today. Obviously it is true that the Soviet regime was not supportive of experiments, or even the thought of an avant-garde, but one must also admit that the musical atmosphere was not actually so stifling. In the conservatories of Moscow and Leningrad and in smaller cities, many composers had contacts with their Western (as well as Polish and Hungarian) colleagues, who were exploring new avenues, and they let themselves be profoundly influenced. Their work has never been promoted by the regime and has never attained cult status in the West.

Secondly, Maes includes a lengthy part on Stravinsky. He actually admits that Stravinsky is Russian only in his imagination, and that the Russian elements in his music are merely exotic or at best literary. So why give him more space than what is actually needed to discuss the fact that he is not part of the history of Russian music? One could similarly treat Nabokov as a Russian writer. Maes concludes by suggesting that we need more time to get a clear picture of the last few decades. I certainly look forward to any contributions, however sketchy, he might make.  
.....

< The Internet and Everyone >

by John Chris Jones, Batsford Books, London, UK, 2000. 529 pp., illus. Trade, £20. ISBN: 1-899858-20-2. (A short version of this book is available at: [www.softopia.demon.co.uk](http://www.softopia.demon.co.uk))

Reviewed by Chris Crickmay

"The Internet and Everyone" is about the so far unrealized implications of modern soft technologies - telephone, TV, computer, credit card and, of course, the Internet. Best known for his groundbreaking writings on design, John Chris Jones has always stood somewhat outside the design world, advocating a wider vision than designing as a professional activity generally achieves. In Jones' vision, designing is concerned not with style, nor even primarily with artifacts, but much more generally with initiating change at any level including society as a whole - something that clearly touches and potentially involves everyone. The implication is that we are all to some degree "designers" in the modern world.

Jones has spent much of his career envisaging what designing could be like if it were approached holistically rather than piecemeal, in the usual way. He was one of the early thinkers to realize, back in the 1950s, that contemporary large-scale problems required systematic solutions, but not ones imposed from above. As he says, "My method is simply to put myself at the receiving end."

Close study of what it feels like to use any product or system forms the basis of re-thinking the whole thing from scratch. A key part of re-thinking any of our large public systems, which seem today so dysfunctional and unwieldy, is to give each individual the means (the information) to use their own intelligence in order to operate successfully. Electric information technologies allow this in a way that mechanization never did. The Internet, the mobile phone, automation, etc., offer a profoundly radical possibility - one that anarchists have long advocated - that is, trusting us all to do the right thing, the principle of a self-organizing system. We do not need to be told what to do, provided we each have a picture of the whole, or enough of the whole to make intelligent choices. It is this "decentralized intelligence" that typifies much of the functioning of our own nervous systems. If projected onto human affairs, can this work? What if there are different and conflicting pictures of "the whole"? What about networks with agendas that are destructive to all or part of the rest (e.g. al-Qaeda)? Similar questions are raised in the book, which is a conversation around what could exist - deliberately not a blueprint, since any such prescription would be contrary to its participatory and improvisational approach to change.

In Jones' view, our problem is not machines, but our mechanistic ways of carrying on. Although the age of mechanization has passed, we still live as if it had not. Our schools, families, businesses, systems of government, services, patterns of work and leisure, our fragmented ways of thinking and perceiving, still owe more to the industrial age than to the post-industrial. Somewhere within our present way of life is the germ of the life we could be living, but it is hard to recognize because our very language, our way of naming and categorizing things, is rooted in older patterns of living. The Internet and other information technologies seem to favor loose and changing networks of people, rather than fixed and institutionalized hierarchies and they suggest more flexible, interactive, holistic and playful ways of living with machines. Jones' view is that somewhere here is the seed of a hopeful future, which is largely held back by our antiquated attitudes and perceptions. As Marshall McLuhan used to say, "We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future" The originality of this book is that it tries to embody rather than describe a vision. If the result seems unfamiliar and challenging, then so be it. In moving into the future we should expect things to appear that so far lack a name and can therefore be disconcerting. Yet the new must do more than disconcert if it is to draw us forward, and this book offers many rewards in its incredible diversity.

Dedicating his book to Walt Whitman, Jones is equally at home discussing Milton or Wordsworth as he is with the effects of new technology. In fact, he sees the two realms as strictly linked. From the "chance procedures" of John Cage to sung proposals for a radio station, to bizarre stories and plays, this is a wild and eccentric book, put together with humor, insight and imagination. Consequently it is full of asides and diversions and apparent irrelevancies, which later may come to seem relevant (or even

central) to the main thread. In addition to normal discursive text, some of it is written as imaginary letters while some reads like a diary or personal note. At times it is written in the words of imaginary people - voices that anarchically speak out with views of their own, which may even conflict with those of the author. The logic is this: if you believe in decentralizing control (as a social proposition, a way forward for the future), then the first thing to trust is your own spontaneity - we know more than we know we know. With various literary devices, Jones tries to avoid the didactic voice, the false authority of the author, which would cut across his claims for a more participatory world.

.....

< Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero - Il Cinema Ritrovato, 2002 >, Cineteca del Comune di Bologna and Nederlands Filmmuseum, 29 June 2002 - 6 July 2002.

and

< Anarchives: Connection-Machines >, a conference organized by v2\_Rotterdam <www.v2.nl>, 5 May 2002.

Reviewed by Michael Punt, <mpunt@easynet.co.uk>.

What could two events such as Bologna's Il Cinema Ritrovato and Rotterdam's Anarchives: Connections Machines possibly share, apart from a common continent? As it happens, quite a lot and possibly considerably more than one might imagine from the provenance of each event. The sixteenth festival of film to be staged in and by Bologna was comprised of the familiar format of eight full days screening of material from film archives throughout the world. This was attended by a committed audience prepared to begin each day's program at 9:00 am and eventually fall into their hotel beds well past midnight, having witnessed more or less continuous showings of mainly silent films. Besides the main program, public screenings in the city square after dark served to satisfy the historians and activists as well as the general enthusiasm of the crowd, which numbered in excess of 5,000. All the films were carefully projected, accompanied by piano (where appropriate) and translated into two languages.

It is a formidable piece of organization to identify themes in films, select the films to be shown, acquire projection rights, organize the technical side and get the delegates in the right cinema at the right time. Not surprisingly then, on paper the program looked rather incoherent - American "B" movies sat alongside esoteric French thriller serials from the 1920s and Film d'Arte Italiana from the 1910s. Artist's films included familiar titles from Joseph Cornell, Bruce Connor, Derek Jarman and Mark Rappaport, as well as work by contemporary film makers. Less familiar were the 3-D versions of famous movies, including "Miss Sadie Thompson," and Alfred Hitchcock's "Dial M For Murder." These screenings provided remarkable insights into why the "flat" versions that we all know had such peculiar art direction, as actors circulated in free space defined by co-ordinates of judiciously placed props. Despite the astonishing experience of virtuality that has yet to be matched this century, it also became clear, as one waited endlessly to exchange the special spectacles in return for one's passport, why 3-D did not catch on - human beings need so much time and space to do such simple things.

In the restored 3-D version of "Miss Sadie Thompson," Rita Hayworth was at her most "exotic other" as she danced in a bar crammed full of sex-starved American soldiers in a gloss on the realities of post-war American colonialism. Such erotic excess no doubt contributed to the failure of nerve that bowdlerized the original dialogue in deference to the Hayes Office. Now the fully restored dialogue, including the word "prostitute" has been recovered - although it would be difficult to argue that this was the more "real" version of the film. Perhaps the most remarkable film shown was "The Bigamist," directed by (and starring) Ida Lupino in 1949. It found a new space in the old triangular plot-line and showed an astonishing maturity and honesty in portraying the weakness of a man who was unable to reconcile himself with the social taboo of existing in parallel realities, and one can only hope that it does not simply sink back into the archive and gains a wider showing on television.

This anxiety points to the nostalgia of Il Cinema Ritrovato, which is not just in reference to the old films but to the fact that film viewing, once again, becomes an unrecoverable experience. Indeed, the recurring topic of conversation in the lobbies and cafés was the issue of access to the archive, and how to make the history of film available to a wider public at a time when film recovery and restoration and film exhibition is in competition for the same resources. Fortunately, some work is being done on this with DVD authoring and lab processes that involve digital imaging of the negatives. One can only hope for convergence here. The added complication (and urgency) that needs to be factored into these debates is that it now appears that modern films are in as much danger of deterioration as silent films. This means that first class events such as Il Cinema Ritrovato are not simply retrospective but assume a trans-historical significance as digital procedures are gradually solving some of the technical and institutional issues of history and film.

Faced with the Sysiphan task of the film archivist, it is perhaps worth asking, Why we should save old movies? or, Why save anything? The significance of the past has long been regarded as a coercive imposition and history's authority over the present has been progressively eroded. This was a question that maintained an occult presence in the mini-conference organized by v2\_ in Rotterdam, in which the assertions of a knowledge-based social organization have elevated the visibility and status of the archive as the source of reliable evidence. Not surprisingly given the pedigree of v2\_, "Anarchives: Connection-Machines" took an oblique view of the archive through the filter of some artists, some scientists and a few chameleons. Ben Schouten, who was a collaborator on this project with v2\_, including Alex Adriaansens and Anne Nigten (who also moderated), might exemplify the new trans-disciplinarity that a formalistic reaction to data excess has stimulated. For him and Marko Peljhan (who also presented his work), data structures were in some regard more significant than data-as-useful-information, a view shared to some extent by Arnold Smulders in his research at the University of Amsterdam into computing and vision. As an antidote to formalism, artists Thecla Schiphorst, Margarete Jahrmann and Max Moswitzer made presentations of their collaborative work in which both used data as a component of an artwork functioning independently of its structure and referent.

Between Bologna and Rotterdam, a quite paradoxical set of relationships appeared to be exposed in relation to the archive, too many to explore here, to be sure. Most pressing was that



whereas in Bologna it appeared that recovery and restoration of analog data of the movie strip might be finally be reconciled with the pressing issue of access through the digitization of the processes of recovery, in Rotterdam it increasingly seemed that the digitization of data and its ubiquity has imparted an analogical status to it that both artists and scientists are exploiting in their respective research. As such, both events reflect a significant move in the great debate of the last four centuries that has arguably shaped science and art - the disparity between experience and description. In both events, however, the heterogeneous collection of interests that archives attract - collectors, organizers, academics and enthusiasts - became homogenized through the agency of human interaction with a technology. What this seemed to illustrate was that old movies and the digital data dump raise fundamental issues about knowledge and technology, which are quite independent of what they store. The chief issue is that reality has always to be understood as a competing claim, not an absolute given, and the invitation that this slippage has offered the creative thinker has always been irresistible.

The topic of the archive is clearly timely as the constituency of film festivals at Bologna and Pordenone grows in strength. Similarly the event at v2\_ was sold out and public access was amplified by simultaneous webcast, cable television link to Amsterdam and, of course, through on-line chat projected in the auditorium. The "Anarchives: Connection-Machines" mini-conference was part of a series of events developed by v2\_ in preparation for the Dutch Electronic Arts Festival next year, and as a provocation into an intellectually underexposed debate about knowledge, technology and archives, it bodes well for what we might expect from them next year.

---

ISAST NEWS
------------

---

< Leonardo/ISAST Investigates Sustainable Art and Technology Research Lab >

Leonardo/ISAST announced that it has received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to study the feasibility of a hybrid art center and research lab structured to be financially sustainable.

The project, called "Arts Lab," is an attempt to build a bridge between the creative community exploring new technologies and the marketplace. Arts Lab would be structured as a not-for-profit corporation and managed with the discipline of a commercial enterprise. The goal is to be sustainable, with little compromise of artistic or research values.

"Artists working with science and new technologies are often required to innovate and invent," notes Leonardo/ISAST Executive Director Roger Malina. "Their choice is too often limited to the under-funded world of non-profit institutions or the for-profit world with its short-term and profit focus. Yet scientists have learned successfully how to couple their work in academia with involvement in the commercial world. We think there is a niche for artists also that straddles the non-profit/for-profit worlds. This will require innovative strategic alliances and hybrid

environments. This study hopes to learn from the recent experiments in art/technology labs to propose new models."

Arts Lab will be directed by veteran media artist and researcher Michael Naimark, says Malina. "Michael has had over two decades of experience seamlessly moving between the not-for-profit arts world and the corporate research world. He speaks both languages."

Naimark's specialty is what he calls "place representation and its consequences." His art projects, often involving unconventional field cinematography, interactivity, and immersive projection, have been exhibited internationally. Naimark was also on the original design team of the MIT Media Lab in 1980. Since then he was a founding member of the Atari Research Lab, the Apple Multimedia Lab, Lucasfilm Interactive (now Lucas Learning) and Interval Research Corporation.

Interval Research, which began in 1992 with \$100 million investment from billionaire Paul Allen, was a Silicon Valley research lab known for its long-term view, its well-funded projects and an emphasis on a diverse creative research community. At the close of Interval in 2000, over 140 patents had been filed, whose value, many believe, at least approximate his investment.

"It was the Interval Research experience that compelled me to 'go meta' and look at the bigger picture of how high tech art fits into the world at large," says Naimark.

"It's tempting to speculate," continues Naimark, "that many people in the creative community may embrace a connection to the marketplace if they knew the motivation was deeper than simply maximizing profit."

The Arts Lab project officially begins in September 2002 with the Rockefeller-supported feasibility study. The study will appear in Leonardo journal, a branch of Leonardo/ISAST published by MIT Press, in late 2003. The report will also study potential sites for the Arts Lab, including an evaluation of San Francisco's Presidio, the former U.S. Army base turned national park, which is under government charter to be financially self-sufficient by 2013. The Arts Lab itself is expected to open by 2004.

.....

< In Memoriam: Yury Pravdiuk >

Yury Pravdiuk, one of the oldest Russian light-music artists, died on 17 May, 2002. The author of 150 light-music compositions, including Scriabin's "Prometheus" (1969), he designed his first device for performing light-music in 1961.

I met Yury in Kharkov in 1965, when I was a student of the Technical University and experimenting with light-musical devices. I admired his performance at the student palace and subsequently joined his artistic group. Our aim was the creation of a light-music theater, which opened in Kharkov Park in 1969.

Yury was my teacher in light-music art and I recall the beautiful days when we worked together. He was a man of rare and sincere beauty, goodwill and validity. He put all of his life and talent into the development of light-music art.

The death of Yury Pravdiuk was unexpected for his colleagues and friends and his life ended at a time when his talent, energy and completeness of creative forces were at their peak. We deeply grieve over this loss.

S. Zorin, director of the Moscow Optic Theatre,  
<zorinserg@mtu-net.ru>.

---

CREDITS
---------

Nisar Keshvani: LEA Editor-in-Chief  
Michael Punt: LDR Editor-in-Chief  
Patrick Lambelet: LEA Managing Editor  
Beth Rainbow: Asst Editor  
Andre Ho: Web Concept & Design Consultant  
Roger Malina: Leonardo Executive Editor  
Stephen Wilson: Chair, Leonardo/ISAST Web Committee

Editorial Advisory Board:

Roy Ascott, Michael Naimark, Craig Harris, Paul Brown, Julianne Pierce, Seah Hock Soon

fAf-LEA corresponding editors; Ricardo Dal Farra, Young Hae-Chang, Fatima Lasay, Jose-Carlos Mariategui, Marcus Neusetter, Fion Ng and Marc Voge

---

LEA WORLD WIDE WEB ACCESS
---------------------------------

The LEA World Wide Web site contains the LEA archives, including all back issues, the LEA Gallery, the Profiles, Feature Articles, associated Leonardo Publications. It is accessible @:  
<<http://mitpress2.mit.edu/LEA>>

---

LEA PUBLISHING INFORMATION
----------------------------------

Editorial Address:

Leonardo  
P O Box 850  
Robinson Road  
Singapore 901650

E-mail: <[lea@mitpress.mit.edu](mailto:lea@mitpress.mit.edu)>

---

Copyright (2002), Leonardo, the International Society for the

Arts, Sciences and Technology

All Rights Reserved.

Leonardo Electronic Almanac is published by:

The MIT Press Journals Five Cambridge Center Cambridge, MA 02142 U.S.A.

Re-posting of the content of this journal is prohibited without permission of Leonardo/ISAST, except for the posting of news and events listings which have been independently received. Leonardo/ISAST and the MIT Press give institutions permission to offer access to LEA within the organization through such resources as restricted local gopher and mosaic services. Open access to other individuals and organizations is not permitted.

---

< Ordering Information >

<http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=4&tid=27&mode=p>

Leonardo Electronic Almanac is free to Leonardo/ISAST members and to subscribers to the journal Leonardo for the 2002 subscription year. The rate for Non-Leonardo individual subscribers is \$35.00, and for Non-Leonardo institutional subscribers the rate is \$75.00. All subscriptions are entered for the calendar year only.

All orders must be prepaid by cheque (must be drawn against U.S. bank in U.S. funds), money order, MasterCard, VISA, or American Express. Where student subscription rates are available, a verification of matriculant status is required.

Note: In order to place orders electronically, you must be using a browser that is SSL-compliant. If you are unable to open the ordering link listed above, then your browser does not support the security features necessary to use this interface. Please use the addresses below to submit your order. Address all orders and inquiries to:

Circulation Department  
MIT Press Journals  
Five Cambridge Center  
Cambridge, MA 02142-1407 USA  
TEL: (617) 253-2889 (M-F, 9-5)  
FAX: (617) 577-1545 (24 hours)

For questions contact:  
[journals-orders@mit.edu](mailto:journals-orders@mit.edu) (subscriptions)

---

ADVERTISING
-------------

Individuals and institutions interested in advertising in Leonardo Electronic Almanac, either in the distributed text version or on the World Wide Web site should contact <[journals-info@mit.edu](mailto:journals-info@mit.edu)> at MIT Press for details.

---

< End of Leonardo Electronic Almanac 10 (8) >