

# FROM PAPERSPACE TO HYPERSPACE: AN EVALUATION OF E-ANTHOLOGIES IN INNOVATIVE AMERICAN POETRY\*

Manuel Brito  
Universidad de La Laguna

## ABSTRACT

Poets, critics, scholars, and readers have increasingly accepted Internet and the Web in the late 1990s and early 21st century as almost material objects, certainly a reality hard to ignore. This essay analyzes how today e-poetry texts are considered as a new practice to and from which words, paragraphs, and pages are moved, appended or cut. Such a formulation shows how electronic technology has built a new panorama for creative production and also implies ways in which the printed text might be replaced. In this sense, a new technology like digitization has provided a new mode of writing/reading able to substitute old values like linearity of the book in time and space, or the objectual presence of the text for digitized structures facilitating more individual and creative responses.

KEY WORDS: Hyperspace, paperspace, American innovative poetry, e-poetry, anthologies.

## RESUMEN

A finales de la década de los noventa del siglo XX y primeros años de este siglo XXI, poetas, críticos, profesores, y lectores en general, han terminado por aceptar que Internet y la Web casi se han convertido en objetos materiales, en una realidad que no se puede ignorar. Este ensayo analiza cómo los materiales poéticos digitales han pasado a ser considerados como textos más abiertos, donde mover, cortar y pegar es una práctica habitual. Esto ha propiciado un nuevo panorama para la producción y recepción creativa e implica la posible sustitución del texto impreso. En este sentido, la digitalización puede llegar a sustituir antiguos valores, como la linealidad del libro en el espacio y el tiempo o su presencia como objeto, por estructuras digitalizadas que facilitan respuestas más individuales y creativas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: hiperespacio, espacio de papel, poesía innovadora americana, poesía digital, antologías.

The Digital Age has wrought changes in the social and economic atlas of the world, providing us with new approaches in communication, literary creation and scholarly research. Literary resources in Internet have increased so much in recent years that developments within the domain of poetry are amazing, ranging

from meta-sites, collections of e-poetry, e-magazines, journals exploring e-poetry and its theory, articles, forums, workshops, blogs, and e-anthologies. The American Library Association site recognizes it is almost impossible to exhaustively catalog e-poetry resources, “or to judge them in any way.”<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the physical consistency of the printed book, applying Benjamin’s perspective that some may possess a metaphysical aura by virtue of their “authenticity” and “authority,”<sup>2</sup> digitized texts are “Freed from the linearity of the book and the traditional rituals of its consumption, they become available for a critical practice more fully attentive to the density and discontinuity of culture” (Latham 419).<sup>3</sup> This transformation in writing and reading values conveys different strategies that vary from the more or less accepted linearity of the book to constantly multiplying options and new tools as found in numerous new computer programs, playing with block markers, import and export commands, the mouse, and so on. Michael Joyce summarizes this new situation massively generated in the mid 1990s with the advent of the World Wide Web in a single statement, “Print stays itself; electronic text replaces itself” (232). Among the new characteristics Joyce sees, this new technology provides an illuminated- screen text, with different speeds, it is progressively more photographic than typographic; text becomes an image dissolved into a transitional device for the computer screen. There are less stratified changes in memory than the memory of print, and an electronic text is always determined by “the constantly replaced present tense, the interwovenness, the interstitial, which the dissolve, rather than signifying, enacts” (233).

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<sup>1</sup> Cynthia D. Shirkey points out that the “amount of e-poetry in its various forms, on the Web is astounding. A simple Google search on the word poetry returns over 9 million results.”

<sup>2</sup> For Walter Benjamin these two concepts are linked to the “unique existence of the work of art... [and its] presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happened to be” (220).

<sup>3</sup> Sean Latham argues that digitization, especially as regards with the scholarly archive, changes “the historical condition of both reproduction and consumption, the computer (like the camera before it) creates radically new techniques of reading no longer beholden to traditional interpretive authority” (417). To this he adds that “Digitized texts and the ability to create hyperlinked tables of search results allow us to manipulate the printed word with ease, uncovering discursive tensions and institutional practices elided by the linear nature of the printed text” (419-420).

Poetry has not been alien to this new panorama and to these new technological issues, slowly progressing from paperspace to hyperspace. Nevertheless, this adaptation to a new medium of production and distribution would run parallel to others experienced by this literary genre in past times. Loss Pequeño Glazier states some interesting ideas on this matter in *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-poetries*, where he speaks of an identifiable evolution:

Indeed, the rise of the little magazine and small presses, from hand presses of the fifties through the mimeo, Xerox, and offset production of the following decades, exemplifies not only poetry's engagement with making, its mode of production, but also its means of dissemination. What has existed is a union between poetry and its technologies of dissemination. Poetry's path through these technologies has been one of appropriating "discarded" technologies or subverting primary economic intentions of technologies (publishing *Cor* or *The World* with tossed mimeo machines, running off a poetry magazine on the photocopier at the law firm, or pirating a NATO-created military network to distribute writings on nomadology). As such the production and consequent distribution of poetry texts lagged behind publishing and distribution channels more current with production technologies. (2)

The inevitable use of the e-mode of production and distribution has been accompanied by problems arising with commercially circulated alternative poetry on the market. Only a few chains like Consortium or Small Press Distribution agree to distribute books published by small presses. Furthermore, large bookstores like Barnes & Noble, Borders, or the electronic site Amazon.com, have further complicated the situation by absorbing other smaller bookshops or eliminating them. In contrast, distribution of e-books is so much easier on the Web, it provides the cheapest, closest, and fastest method to reach larger audiences than before. Thus trustworthy exchange and, above all, the possibility of continually recovering texts by merely hitting a computer key have made this medium undeniably useful as a strategy of consumption. To this, I should add the existence of the "internet polylogue" (65), an expression coined by Michael Joyce to indicate the possibility of a more fluid exchange between author and reader, or between readers themselves, through Lists for example, where one may collaborate in, and comment on literary production, opening up a cluster of playful and creative perspectives in the poetic panorama.

Poets, critics, scholars, and readers have now increasingly accepted Internet and the Web in the late 1990s and early 21st century as almost material objects, certainly a reality hard to ignore. Their value is not based on the consideration of poetic texts as just placed on the library shelves, dusted, and sometimes checked out. Now e-poetry texts are considered as a practice to and from which words, paragraphs, and pages are appended, moved, or cut, even "expanded to include sonic and visual effects. The additional layer of computer coding allows multiple layers of textuality for the viewer/reader" (Funkhouser 132). American innovative poets appeared in this context as precursors, since they elaborated a discourse and wrote in a technique clearly analogous to hypertexts and hypermedia texts. This

connects up with what Barrett Watten describes as a basic link between innovative poets and digital poetry. He turns his attention to some ideological remarks so decisive for them regarding distribution, composition, and intrusion of power:

Beginning with the work of poet Larry Eigner in the 1950s, the occasions of poetry are linked in ways that extend beyond the paratactic equivalences of serial form. The composition of “language texts” themselves often involved disjunct and nonsequential assembly; compositional technique in these works anticipates forms of distributed authorship and opens the way for nonsequential reading practices.

Among the examples Alan Golding uses to back up this formulation are many poets associated with the Language tendency. Steve McCaffery, Bruce Andrews, Robert Grenier, and Charles Bernstein were interested in various ways of making the reader aware of the materiality of the word, precisely by paratactic deviations from it, and especially using the underdiscussed visual component in many of their works, that acts as a link between their printed texts and other online media poetic texts.

they raise questions about seeing and reading, the mark and the sign, circulation and distribution, and the meaning of “materiality” that seem crucial to thinking about new media poetics. Meanwhile, new media poetics fulfil certain impulses towards different forms of materiality in Language writing that were perhaps only nascent or at least partly unfulfilled in the earlier stages of that movement. (Golding)

Words, images, writings, and voices. The electronic landscape provides new meaning and vision for interaction and independent interpretations of the poetic creation. When Cary Nelson founded the Modern American Poetry Site (MAPS) in the year 2000, growing out of his experience in editing *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* for Oxford University Press, his initial intention was to provide a pedagogical means for teachers and students to develop syllabi and encounter the best poets. MAPS is undoubtedly a site with a general scope, including “analyses of texts, biographical information, relevant illustrations... manuscripts, drafts of poems, bibliographies, historical background, statements on poetics, interviews, mini-essays on important issues pertinent to the poet, book reviews, archival resources, and study questions.”<sup>4</sup> Nelson’s philosophy is revealed through his insistence that “Web sites are inherently never “finished,” because new things can always be added.” Therefore, this is not another mere site for consultation or institutional presenta-

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<sup>4</sup> This web site is logged at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, edited by Cary Nelson and conceived as “a comprehensive learning environment and scholarly forum for the study of modern American poetry.” Advisory members for this web site are well-known scholars from various universities, and as of March 3 it has been visited approximately 1,647,425 times since January 1, 2000.

tion of an anthology. As with most e-poetry sites, it has become a discursive nexus, full of multi-vocal additions by Nelson's co-contributors, who present materials using "imaginative" and "inventive" procedures.

Such a formulation shows how electronic technology has built a new panorama for creative production and also implies ways in which the printed text might be replaced. One sign of this new characterization is that computer screens allow access to digital formats, some, like Portable Document Format keeping the exact form of the original, though we are faced with a different standpoint, since reading, writing, and searching are encouraged by "the potential to uncover previously unglimped constellations of terms and ideas precisely because we can deliberately search for two or more terms, mapping out sites of conjunction that might otherwise go unnoticed" (Latham 419). Critical perception of poetry on this level becomes an alternative to customary reading habits. Poems, hypertexts, or hypermedia structures—as seen later—work together to involve us in a kind of experimental research and discovery process. New interpolations lead the reader forward to greater openness and intervention in the immense creative activity found on the Web.

How apparently chaotic is the house of e-poetry can be seen through these search result figures in Google for "electronic poetry": 142,000—or "e-poetry": 51,300 as of September 19, 2005. This in itself is evidence for the new *status quo*, in which the audience has become highly aware of this alternative of writing and consuming e-poetry in a standardized way. Once again, and particularly in poetry, western culture is renegotiating its boundaries and has found an appropriate forum in which almost anybody can participate. Poetry hyperspace has allowed this pioneering process to acquire some ideological issues, "Within this public space and by our actions we write ourselves upon our institutions in fractal contours" (125), leading Michael Joyce to suggestively connect with Language poet Charles Bernstein's fixation about the "situational dynamics of characterization."<sup>5</sup> From this perspective the signifying language always hypothesizes social issues for human beings by means of its inevitable exchanging function. Hyperspace has created an ideal territory to encourage continual alertness and a new consciousness in

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<sup>5</sup> It is helpful to notice that Bernstein's full quotation should be "[I] feel uncomfortable generalizing since what seems more compelling is to understand (be troubled by) the situational dynamics of categorization and characterization rather than accept them as intrinsically useful: to see how they can engender a fruitless competition, on the one hand, and a destructive historicism of style and trend on the other" (385). Bernstein opts for an ideological concern in the formation of the Language group, "I would choose the social project of writers committed to a transformation of society at a large-scale social level, of which writing can be an important arena in terms of its investigation of the nature of meaning, how objects are constituted by social values encoded in language, how reading and writing can partake of noninstrumental values and thus be utopian formations" (386). This political view is also incorporated in most American innovative poets like Ron Silliman, Barrett Watten, or Bruce Andrews.



the reader, through which “all work is present and available —and in this way, equal” (Latham 413).<sup>6</sup> It is this new interventional role given to the reader/viewer through digital texts that is significant in re-considering the historical role of the texts, appearing not only as instrumental but also implicated in a real performative act of knowledge.

This new reality affects the mode of reading itself by re-shaping our normally subconscious premises based not only on the typographic but also on the ideographic level of comprehension. What is more, the construction of hyperculture to replace paperculture requires the abandonment of the presumed authority of the printed text supported by its concrete tactile texture, objectual visibility, and almost obliged linear progression, in favour of a new structure determined by a new vision more observational and judgmental than ever before, re-evaluating even the concept of the self, allowing it to respond in all directions and at all times. Besides issues concerned with efficiency, precision, or discursive structures, Latham points out that by using hypertext and search engines, other elements like speed, discursive articulation, ritual of reading, and a new map of relationships demand “a critical practice that involves reading frenetically without losing sight of the depths such motion might otherwise obscure” (425). Fashioning the electronic text in its own autonomy, or inserted within analytical promises, enhancing political sensitivity is a task that will clarify the importance of this shift into virtuality as regards margins and centers, high and low culture, or the didactical approach to a historiography of literature. This view of the relationship between books and computers as articulating a new epistemology brings us to the question of who will perform this task? For Jerome McGann this task should be performed by scholars critically and editorially reconstituting our cultural heritage in digital forms, “we *scholars* need to learn because it is going to be done, if not by us, then by others. We are the natural heirs to this task because it is we who know most about books” (298). In fact however, at the same time, hypertext elicits private practices established from its own virtual autonomy, which will become textuality apprehended by the reader/viewer. From this standpoint, individuals are free to practice their constant criticism and this is a serious business that cannot be obliterated.

Cybernetic consciousness has entered American poetry in various forms. Embedded in the capitalist social system, which is full of internal private stories, vested interests and transference of capital, it has helped to reformulate social systems involved in a process of “self-constituted doubling,” following Niklas Luhmann’s terms, “through which social fields come into being. This doubling transforms the experience of the Other as Other into a social communication: a type of imaging or narrative, in other words, by which difference is established as more than simply

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<sup>6</sup> Sven Birkerts is quoted by Sean Latham and is taken as an example of the death throes defense of the printed book against the raise of digitized texts. Birkerts laments that sense of equality rather than recognizing digitization as facilitating accessibility and enormous potentialities.

irritation or “noise”” (Elliott 403).<sup>7</sup> Luhman’s view is now commonplace in cultural studies, which brings us back to hegemony in cyberspace as an ideological issue constantly present in some American innovative poets, for whom communication is grounded in objective facts, as seen through the daily messages published on the Poetics List of the Electronic Poetry Center at SUNY, Buffalo. Each member of this List gets from thirty to forty messages each day, and all messages in the last few years are archived for consultation, or discursive testaments of these poets on the Web. Numerous allusions to questioning political power, poetry events, technical issues, and the role of knowledge are constantly in debate. From a sociological perspective, this List shows how a poetic community has grown up during these years through strict communication and practices derived from it, and also tells us how cyberspace has eroded the insistence on the relation between culture and the state. Many members of this List do not belong to the official world of the university, the Academy of American Poets, or any other literary association. However, all react to any imposition of a cultural, political, or economic monopoly.

At this point I need to supply a brief and clear definition for some terms I will use further on. Programs, resources and tools have helped to contribute and present their works on the Web. Viewing this complex technological panorama, poetry can be generated by a Hypercard, we can build stories simply answering “yes” or “no” (Decide), to develop probabilistic operations (Deconstructor), to mangle texts (Textmangler), or to simulate Georg Trakl’s poetry (trakl’bigi). Since my focus is on e-anthologies of American innovative poetry, in which texts are published or arranged closer to printed publications, with the essential difference that they are more playful on many occasions, and subject to be appended, cut or moved by the reader/viewer, I prefer to clarify three key terms in this e-landscape of innovative poetry anthologies. These terms are hypertext, hypermedia, and multimedia, following Michael Joyce’s suggestions:

- The primary visual symbolic structure of hypertext is language printed to the screen.
- When hypertext content extends to digitized sound, animation, video, virtual reality, computer networks, databases, etc., it is referred to as *hypermedia*.
- Multimedia is often (confusingly) adopted as a marketing and technical term... to describe both hypermedia content and the hardware or software that embodies it. (21)

Beyond seeking other potential elite definitions, it becomes clear that the electronic landscape appears foregrounded on schema that radically change our

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<sup>7</sup> J.E. Elliott extends this formulation and holds that communication is the workable reality for social systems, “the history of systems formation would be the history of expansion through specification, its paradigmatic shifts marked by the superior communicative potential offered in certain system/environment reapplications” (403).



idea of writing/reading functions. On the basis of continuous transformation, these new technological processes make the route back to old habits of writing and reading hard to follow, since the new challenges cannot be performed by previously printed texts. This calls for a process of sophisticated interaction, undermining earlier modes in literature. Though a similar practice can be apprehended through the sense of being “active” in poetry, which can be traced back to William Carlos Williams’s consideration for the print poem, or Robert Creeley’s idea on the poem itself as an instrument of thought, “The poet thinks through the poem. Similarly, investigated here is not the idea of the digital work as an extension of the printed poem, but the idea of the digital poem as the process of thinking through this new medium, thinking through *making*. As the poet works, the work discovers” (Glazier 6). However and beyond this persuasive “activity,” the new practical strategy of interaction supplied by the electronic medium insists on a hypertext going back and forth through virtuality and the old textuality. This new mode acknowledges a new epistemological construction in which “Hypertext embodies information and communications, artistic and affective constructs, and conceptual abstractions alike into symbolic structures made visible on a computer-controlled display. These symbolic structures can then be combined and manipulated by anyone having access to them” (Joyce 19).

This spectrum would include such exploratory categories as change, recovery, creation, navigational capabilities, interactive skills, overlapping eyes, “Ideally an exploratory hypertext should enable its audience members to view and test alternative organizational structures of their own and perhaps compare their own structures of thought with hypertext and traditional ones” (Joyce 41-42). Despite some possible reservations, this new map of writing remains for most accounts of reading and thought a kind of discourse pushing forward a new way of seeing the reader, the author, and the work itself. One sign of the dynamics underlying this new situation are the productive Conferences, Forums, and Festivals related to innovative poetry, like “Digital Arts and Culture” (Bergen, Norway, 1998), “E-poetry: An International Festival of Digital Poetry” —biennially celebrated since 2001— “Digital/Media/Poetics” (SUNY, Buffalo, 2002), “Crossing [Digital] Boundaries: A Digital Media Symposium” (SUNY, Buffalo, 2002), “New Media Poetry: Aesthetics, Institutions and Audiences,” (University of Iowa, 2002), “Language & Encoding: A Symposium for Artists, Programmers, and Scholars” (Buffalo, 2002), “The New Forms Festival” (Vancouver, 2004), or “The Fifteenth International ACM Conference on Hypertext and Hypermedia” (Santa Cruz, 2004). Each of these meetings embodied reflexive discussions variously ranging from programming, to culture and software, post-media aesthetics, networking, varieties of hypertext, or encoding and intention. All these approaches identified e-writing as generally occupying the same privileged position of assuming writing experience itself as the primary root for any literary virtue. While this is a helpful emphasis for identifying a writer’s main preoccupation, it nonetheless relies on other assumptions like the proper usage of language, that is, issues derived from signifying and representational elements, denotation and connotation, the sign and its relationship to other signs, new possibilities expressing various levels of experience, even the economic and



political intentions of language on the Web, as Richard T. Gray makes clear when approaching Adam Müller's linguistic model, which "underwrites a system in which commodities do not possess any substantial value, but only acquire value when placed in relation to other commodities and to people's needs: only its relative position in the structural nexus of the entire economic system, composed as a series of reciprocal exchanges, can establish value" (305).

Digital poetics are clearly involved in a global economy system networking countries, people, and technological means that are "constantly being dissolved and reassembled for our consumption" (Latham 416). This new arena resituates the very nature of creation and reception of both writer and reader, and poetry being massively and cheaply produced erases "the authenticity of the object's auratic presence and putting it into circulation as a commodity comparable to any other" (Latham 416). Here we have a good opportunity for a revolutionary change in Benjaminian terms, "The history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form" (237). From this point of view a new technology like digitization has provided a new mode of writing/reading able to substitute old values like linearity of the book in time and space, or the objectual presence of the text for structures that "we have come to believe are more god-given than Gutenbergian" (Joyce 49). It might be productive at this stage to notice that this new position has been helped and enforced by the new condition and rules committed to the foundation of some specific sites like Ubuweb (founded in 1996), whose goal of global and "radical" distribution of out of print materials and hard-to-find books available for free from any point of the globe, frames new challenges for poetic communication, copyright issues, practices of reading, reception of works, re-energizing the poetry field beyond nationalities or boundaries of class. But aside from this methodological remark, e-poetry is not aligned with limits or margins, but with a sense of continuity in which public and private are left open to elucidate and give way to other forms of interaction or being "active."

One of the challenging aspects of e-anthologies of innovative poetry is the absence of general studies or monographs devoted to the construction, development, or characterization of their privileged status. This however would also be true as regards print poetry anthologies in general, since very few volumes have focused on their edition and history. The most recently published monograph on this subject is Jeffrey R. Di Leo's *On Anthologies* (2004), though no reference to e-anthologies can be found there. Furthermore, few scholars have deeply analyzed the phenomenon of anthologies in American avant-garde poetry.<sup>8</sup> This scarcity of

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<sup>8</sup> With the exception of some essays that schematize this field. I should mention among others: Alan C. Golding, "A History of American Poetry Anthologies," *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1994) 279-307; Ann Vickery, "Cabinets, Closets, and Consumption: Analyzing the Anthology," *Leaving Lines of Gender: A Feminist Genealogy of Language*

studies on this field is explained by Di Leo reinforcing the distrust of academics towards anthologies and the economic forces behind them:

Anthologies are most frequently the objects of scholarly comment either merely in passing or as a subspecies of a more fundamental topic (e.g., book publishing, college teaching, the canon wars, or the nature of discourse). ...Perhaps it is this perception that anthologies are second-class citizens in the book world that empowers their reviewers to vituperate. Alternatively, the disdain of anthologies may stem from their links to publishing corporations and commercial gains. Whatever the reason, anthology reviews tend to be tougher than reviews of other books. (7)

Institutionalization of anthologies through teaching at the universities has offered a crucial role in the formation of a literary canon. A critic like Cary Nelson, when remarking his task as editor of the *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* for Oxford University Press, reinforces the idea of the poet's growing public recognition if published in a significant anthology, "Critics can revive a poet's reputation, but the only sure way to keep a poem alive is to anthologize it. Much more, I suspect, than people realize, anthologies shape our memory of poetic history" (321). Thus headnotes, annotations, footnotes, method of selection, bibliographies serve to situate perceptive readers of anthologies in terms of the question, what to read?, and the answer is clearly outlined in anthologies.

American innovative poets were clearly disregarded by most editors of marketable anthologies.<sup>9</sup> However, I should mention that in late 20th and early 21st century an unusual proliferation of numerous anthologies, most published under

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*Writing* (Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 2000) 134-149; Christopher Beach, "Canons, Anthologies and the Poetic Avant-Garde," *Poetic Culture: Contemporary American Poetry Between Community and Institution* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1999) 82-98; Christopher M. Kuipers, "The Anthology/Corpus Dynamic: A Field Theory of the Canon," *College Literature* 30.2 (Spring 2003): 51-71; Marjorie Perloff, "Whose New American Poetry? Anthologizing in the Nineties," *Diacritics* 26.3-4 (Fall-Winter 1996): 104-123; Jerome Rothenberg, "On Anthologies," *Pre-faces & Other Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1981) 139-143; quite useful is Jed Rasula's section, "Anthologists' Ontologies," and his "Appendixes," *The American Poetry Wax Museum: Reality Effects, 1940-1990* (Urbana: National Council of Teacher of English, 1996) 444-469 and 485-508, respectively.

<sup>9</sup> Jed Rasula points out that "there are no Language poets to be found in the over 5,000 pages comprised by the following anthologies: *New American Poets of the 80s*, edited by Jack Myers and Roger Weingarten (1984); *Singular Voices*, edited by Stephen Berg (1985); *The Morrow Anthology of Younger American Poets*, edited by Dave Smith and David Bottoms (1985); *The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Verse*, edited by Helen Vendler (1985); *The Direction of Poetry*, edited by Robert Richman (1988); *The Longman Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by Stuart Freibert and David Young (1983; second edition, 1989); *Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by A. Poulin, Jr. (fourth edition, 1985; fifth edition, 1991); *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by J.D. McClatchy; and *New American Poets of the 90s*, edited by Jack Myers and Roger Weingarten (1991)" (261). For him, the reason for this situation is that the western view favors a poetry that "can be glossed without reference to ideology as such, because the ideological disposition of the canonizing institutions would otherwise stand revealed" (262-263).

the auspices of small presses, but also by some large printing house and university presses, has made innovative poets an essential feature of the American literary milieu.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, new opportunities were gained by these poets, though wider audience and discussion were obtained on the Web. The electronic landscape has guided creators and readers to a cheaper and more accessible mode of participation. Though funds for literary experimentalism are still slow in appearing to sustain and propagate this new e-landscape as a vital part in the ongoing transformation of the 21st century:

Where they are really needed is in radically different modes of reading, teaching, learning, responding, and discussion, and a revised sense of who the learners are—modes that break the rules of time and space that have long governed the medieval-agrarian “semester” or the postwar-American “quarter,” both byproducts of the I-Know/you don’t, I-have/you-want, I-give/you-receive, I-write/you-read structural technologies of the era of the book. (Filreis)

By the mid-1990s and early years of the 21st century many editors and poets became concerned with the significance of the Web to expand their works and discourses. This led them to create online publications as the easiest and richest means to stylize their particular projects. Among these publications, e-anthologies emerged on the screens through electronic bits, opening up a new space for new voices, growing out of new literary communities. On this occasion they were digitally assembled as the largest collection of poets available yet, since one of the new qualities found in these e-anthologies is that they are continually adding new authors on their web pages. A webography of cyberpoetry would be an immense account almost impossible to achieve if we remember the results for the e-poetry search through Google. This means that the Web has turned into a central contribution to the world presence of poetry open to a larger audience. Such legitimization can also be applied to e-anthologies, since browsing in Google we obtain 5,730 results for electronic poetry anthologies as of September 19, 2005, though as we see later Google lacks the scholarly taste for fine research when discriminating the scope in searching for innovative poetry e-anthologies.

With these observations I will begin to map the territory through which e-anthologies of innovative poetry have travelled in the last few years. The one most crucial thing for the recognition of this tendency is the emergence of the Electronic Poetry Center (EPC) sponsored by the *Poetics Program* and the *Department of Me-*

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<sup>10</sup> To name a few, I would highlight *In The American Tree*, edited by Ron Silliman, 1986; *“Language” Poetries*, edited by Douglas Messerli, 1987; *The Art of Practice: Forty-Five Contemporary Poets*, edited by Dennis Barone & Peter Ganick, 1994; *Primary Trouble: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by Leonard Schwartz, Joseph Donahue, & Edward Foster, 1996; *An Anthology of New (American) Poets*, edited by Lisa Jarnot, Leonard Schwartz, & Chris Stroffolino, 1998.

*dia Study* in collaboration with the *Department of English* and *College of Arts & Sciences*, at the University at Buffalo, and by the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing and the Department of English at the University of Pennsylvania. This e-site positively multiplied the presence of these innovative poets, where around 149 poets feature their own web pages presenting their work, literary criticism, and secondary sources on their writings. EPC assumes clearly an intentional insistence on openness associated with a digital panorama for poetry, “Our aim is simple: to make available a wide range of resources centered on digital and contemporary formally innovative poetries, new media writing, and literary programming” —<<http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc>>. Keeping this in mind, over these years EPC has decisively contributed to propagating this innovative poetry through the publication of an active e-site presenting new authors, e-poetry, other links associated with poetry, and including other features like PennSound, Radio Radio, or Shadowtime, in which sound adds a new dimension to the screen text: from hypertext to hypermedia. It is precisely this qualitative sense of distinctive center that has earned it favourable reviews in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *The Times Literary Supplement*, refuting the attempt of some to label EPC as an ephemeral phenomenon, or as just linked to some historical contribution of a private person:

the Electronic Poetry Center dramatizes the differences between the kinds of poems and poetics central to the web and print-based cultures. While scholarly citation marks academic respect, the number of hits a Web site receives suggests the electronic community’s view of whether or not that site is literally worth looking at. In April, 1997, the month Allen Ginsberg died and the Academy’s site opened its electronic doors, the Center’s root directory recorded 151,200 transactions. Including both the multiple hits of a single user roaming through the Center and the use of background graphic files, this imprecise figure of course can be analyzed in innumerable ways. Its import, however, is rather self-evident: to many, many poetry enthusiasts, the Center seems the place to be. No matter how you crunch them, 151,200 hits can’t be wrong. (Caplan)

It is therefore interesting to begin with the online anthologies published by EPC, which will offer a persuasive argument for the nature of this kind of anthologies. This link, <<http://epc.buffalo.edu/e-poetry/spring00>>, can be considered an anthology, or as they call it, “A list-in-progress of interesting work in digital media.” Here forty poets were gathered in the year 2000, ranging in diverse forms and interests. Some must be read according to the movements of the mouse, others play with sounds and images, and let’s confess that some hyperlinks don’t work for others and they continue appearing as unknown. Selection is based on the concept of “interesting work,” and apparently the Director of the Electronic Poetry Center, Loss Pequeño Glazier is responsible for it. The brave co-existence of poets who have published in print and those who haven’t, motivates the belief that a new state of the art is indeed the case. This EPC e-anthology is published in a public domain with no financial purpose, and poetry can be accompanied by interviews, critical essays that supplement each other, displacing the narrow boundaries of traditional anthologies in print. In fact, EPC has definitely expanded the concept of antholo-



gization: it publishes inclusive anthologies comprising poetry by diverse authors, features or special collections of poems with themes like *Poems for April* or *Valentine Files*, listing sites, e-mags, and tools for computerized texts. To be precise, *Valentine Files* was published in the year 2000 and is featured to present poems, as the editor David Knoebel points out, “written expressively for performance on a computer, is a collection of responses to that ancient and weirdly evolving celebration, Valentine’s Day” (<<http://epc.buffalo.edu/features/valentine>>). As almost always in this sort of e-anthologies, the reader/viewer must open files, play sound cards, or click plugins, which mediate between the intellectual and manual skills domain. This experiential field is extended through new values for poetic experience, since many of these texts, works, images, and sounds are usually called e-poems, cyberpoems, web art, net art, or simply new media. In any case, all these materials project and require changes in perception, as though we were accommodating ourselves to a new currency whose value must be negotiated to obtain what we are interested in. St. Valentine is an excuse for a development of new readerly schema, and especially the love for poetry in its continual formal renovation.

The same would happen in *Poems for April*, within the frame of the spring season as a banner for writing poetry. Loss Pequeño Glazier appears once again anthologizing pieces by eleven creators, aiming electronic poetry as a dialogic hermeneutics between writer and reader, which is not so graphically evident in printed texts. Glazier introduces this mini-anthology as containing e-poetry that “is not just a sonnet etherized with silicon or a Y2couplet. It is a high arc in a trajectory that has been long in the making” (<<http://epc.buffalo.edu/features/april>>). A new cognitive frame has allowed to see a transformation in the relationship between writer and the machine, since what seems to be legitimized is the chance he will benefit from promises generated by technology. *Poems for April* casts April as a month for re-emergence. On this particular occasion: the promise of a season for regenerating the discursive role of poetry, but also informing about the continuous dialogue of poetry in the constant redefinition of man. The correlation of these small additions in EPC, *Valentine Files* and *Poems for April*, guarantees new possibilities for the publication of anthologies and their constituent elements. In 1997 to Glazier’s questions, What will happen? Will it be milk and honey or virtual Balkans?, David Caplan responded in *Postmodern Culture* that the “electronic landscape is at least so far, neither essentially cooperative or competitive, but a little of both.” Today it has become clear that this is not a delimited space but rather a great opening in all directions.

It is thus important to note that technology has helped to publicize creators beyond Academy or university institutions, and the selection of authors for anthologies based on the merit criterion of prior acceptance by commercial or university presses has radically changed. And though EPC is sponsored by a state university, this site wouldn’t exist without the support of many outside official literary milieu. These people satisfy their literary needs generating daily conversations, anthologizing creative work, featuring extensive web pages for individual authors, books, mags, or Conferences. Though we should remember that openness is an essential principle and this implies, as Caplan suggests, that comprehensiveness



even for a narrow field like American innovative poetry is a quixotic claim, “hyperspace’s eternal delight is the energy of feuding poets, critics, flame wars, and scholarship gathered together, sometimes despite themselves, into a dream of what comprehensiveness might be.” It is only the skills of disseminating and collecting materials that are central to the success of EPC. The network culture provoked by this kind of sites reveals that e-resources “serve as an intellectual map of both the author’s encounter and the author’s proposed mentoring or conversational relationship” (Joyce 156). In this sense, the Poetics List, also associated with the EPC, is the best reference to trace relationships through the forty or fifty messages received daily by each member of this list. On a purely practical level, this allows us to understand how this poetry has progressively constructed a verifiable presence for a particular audience on a daily basis, fitting the new model of circulation and distribution through the Web.

A second e-anthology signalling this commitment of innovative poetry to digitization is the *DC Poetry Anthology*, which has been published annually from the year 2000 through 2004. Initially promoted in Washington, DC, where the literary scene has normally been diminished in some way by the business of politics, though organizations like the Washington Project for the Arts, the Museum of Temporary Arts, or the Writer’s Center have collaborated with artists and writers in developing experimentalism. On the Web, DC Poetry has published five anthologies since the year 2000 with a specific goal: “to promote the reading series in Washington, DC... [and] to document some of the history of alternative or non-mainstream poetry activity in D.C” (<<http://www.dcpoetry.com/about.htm>>). The 141 poets who have been anthologized since then qualify for this last emphasis on “alternative or non-mainstream” poetry. This is a large community of names ranging from the well-known Language poets, Charles Bernstein, Rae Armantrout, Kit Robinson, Bruce Andrews, Bob Perelman, or Ron Silliman, to somewhat less-known experimentalists like Mark Wallace, Rodrigo Toscano, Juliana Spahr, up to other newcomers like Renee Angle, Andy Toyle, Jamie Gaughran-Perez, or Jesse Seldess, to name a few of them. What makes these poets’ readings converted into poetry e-anthologies attractive is that “both documenting a community & making poetry more widely available... a terrific resource —not just for poets in DC, but anywhere at all” (Silliman). Most of this creative work would consist of a clearly presented hypertext, very few footnotes are added, and sometimes it is the author himself who explains or supplements the poem with some notes. It is particularly noticeable that *DC Poetry Anthology 2003* features some poems selected by Lyn Hejinian, as guest-editor, for *The Best American Poetry 2004*, a series whose general editor is David Lehman, and which tries to establish a definitive “who’s who” and “what’s happening” in American verse. This double presence on the Web —DC Poetry.com— and in print publication —supported by an important publisher like Simon & Schuster— speaks of the implications and progressive effects of the electronic medium in reconstructing strategies for the literary world. With the exception of *DC Poetry Anthology 2000*, gathered by Allison Cobb and Jennifer Coleman, no names of editors are given for the successive editions of this anthology. With this in mind, the proponents of these e-anthologies seem more concerned with just pre-



senting the DC series readings, strengthening the literary pulse of a city sometimes weakened by the sturdier presence of other arts, like performance, music, painting, or sculpture.

Some of the tangible consequences derived from this e-anthology is that a re-consideration of the pre-1980s canon has clearly been successful, among other reasons because of the potential power of the e-medium. Mathew Arnold defended in 1869 the need to publish “the best which has been thought and said in the world” (6). This becomes a canonical domain of elitist intentionality. However, new e-anthologies appear as an antidote to this kind of propositions or exclusive types, challenging routine inclusions of authors. Rather than merely lacking literary rules, these e-anthologies offer material for discussion and shed light for the implications of what authors are, both far reaching and far from being shown with no strings attached. For example, a third collection, *Light & Dust Anthology of Poetry* —<<http://www.thing.net/~grist/l&d/lighthom.htm>>— also celebrates the emergence of innovative forms in American poetry with the same emphasis as the other four mentioned anthologies. As usual it is alphabetically arranged and includes 111 authors, who belong to various tendencies as diverse as Objectivism —Carl Rakosi— Ethnopoetics —Jerome Rothenberg— Beat poets —Michael Mc’Clure— lyricists —Lorine Niedecker— Language poets —Robert Grenier— improvisatory poets —Jackson Mac Low— poets in collaboration —Janet Rodney and Nathaniel Tarn— and many foreign poets coming from Brazil, Paraguay (Susy Delgado presents her poems in Spanish, Guaraní, and in English translation), Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, New Zealand, Japan, Irak, Canada, Uruguay, and Argentina. Perhaps this e-anthology presents the most various poetic modes I have found, though visual poetry is especially collected. Other modes are voice performances, cyber and lexical poems, fluxus and events, pictographs, performance on a computer, moving screens of texts, and images that the viewer can deconstruct using a mouse, prose poems, and mail art.

Along with it, this intended comprehensive anthology of contemporary experimental forms in poetry is completed by the possibility of being continually updated, and fulfils the requirements of the traditional anthologizing method, since in many cases it includes author’s notes, introductory notes to the poets —mostly by Karl Young— hyperlinks to other web pages to cohere references or other data by the reader. It also offers fifteen complete books. This would be almost impossible in conventional anthologies, and makes the e-landscape more interesting for its cheaper protagonist accessibility and becomes a large representational scene of authors. Karl Young, editor of this site, operates on the basis that “Since the site is an anthology rather than a zine, special emphasis is placed on presenting writers as fully as possible, by whatever means available.” Though he also warns, “If you’re not in a hurry, hey, sit back with a good book.” Paradoxically, it seems he associates the Web with hurry and, conversely, the pleasure of reading with printed books. Here one can discern a dialectic between classical reading and the potential loss of input while controlling a computer screen. These two options are constantly raised among researchers into the e-phenomenon; though both are initially mimetic, my impression is we should contemplate the potentialities of the Web partaking of a





world that has shifted into being a postmodern episteme affecting our consciousness. Furthermore, *Light & Dust Anthology of Poetry* extends the scope of the site to including other sections like “Group Production” —selections taken from translations, magazines, or exchange between poets— “Kaldron” —a visual poetry magazine— web pages on/by poets like Karl Young, Rochelle Owens, Maureen Owen, or bp Nichol, “Free Grafz” —a meeting place for graffiti art and visual poetry— “Lettriste Page” —a collection of poetry, film, theatre, and other art forms— “First Light” —an anthology of Paraguayan women— “The Institute of Broken and Reduced Language” —pages dedicated to (meta) communication across borders— linguistic, cultural, artistic, and conceptual —starting with Fluxus, Minimalism, visual and found poetry— “workshops with Hungarian poets,” “US & Canadian Pages for Nucleo Post Arte,” “A Collective Effort of Australian Visual Poets,” a hyperlink to “International Shadows Project Retrospectives” —an ongoing grass roots condemnation of nuclear weapons and the use of nuclear energy through an alliance of arts, particularly mail art and performance— another anthology like “Whose Border? La Frontera ¿De Quién?” This is completed with the “Multiple Views” and “Reviews” sections, which hold debates about literature and its potentialities. And finally, the “Light & Dust Criticism” comprising secondary readings by some poets included in the *Light & Dust Anthology of Poetry*. Covering so many fields and aesthetic propositions within its poetic scope requires that we transform our perception of anthologies as exclusively oriented towards presenting what is considered “the best.” These e-anthologies emphasize what is alive by engineering the addition of experimental approaches, new tendencies, and openly inquiring into the status of the discipline with a broader vision especially of new forms. Along with this, extended topics like networks, transcultural issues, dissemination of forms, global participation, cosmopolitan orientation, participation, knowledge diffusion, enter into a cultural domain tied across social, economic, and literary boundaries.

Luigi-Bob Drake last updated his *The CybpherAnthology of Discontiguous Literature* in 2002. This is no obstacle to present a “Cumulative Author’s Index” of approximately 1,500 original texts from 450 or so authors. His statement on the anthology has a resounding ideological tone along with an experimental aesthetic goal, “*The CybpherAnthology of Discontiguous Literature* represents a flux of certain experimental tendencies in text and writing, aggregated into a momentary energy nexus” —<[http://www.burningpress.org/va/indexFrame\\_Main.html](http://www.burningpress.org/va/indexFrame_Main.html)>. Once again, the basic political position is unequivocally clear, “This collection is an experiment in collective literary editing via statistical anarcho-syndicalism.” Drake gathered poets from different participating publications with well-known editors either in e-zines, or conventional printed journals, like Jack Berry’s *The Experioddicist*, *Juxta Online* edited by Ken Harris and Jim Lefwich, Tom Taylor’s *Anabasis*, Peter Ganick’s *Potepoetzine* and *Potepoettext*, Loss Pequeño Glazier’s and Kenneth Sherwood’s *Rif/lt*, *Poethia* collectively edited by Peter Ganick, Annabelle Clippinger, James Finnegan, and Jim Lefwich, and Glossolalia, resurrected from the archives by editor J. Lehmus. Significantly, Drake’s last words in the presentation of this e-anthology are: “I’m looking forward to the project’s continued evolution.” The issue here is not only terminological but also identifiable with the main attribute of a typical e-anthol-

ogy, that is, largely open to absorb new voices, performing the function of active witnessing of any poetic innovation in this technological age.

Luigi-Bob Drake also edits Burning Press and besides this has founded another web site as a supplementary discussion list named “Wr-eye-tings Scratchpad” —established in February 1997— to house works currently under discussion. It is interesting to notice his statement for this site, “this is intended as a provisional & temporary space for visual poets and intermedia art in process... more like a laboratory than an exhibition” —<<http://www.burningpress.org/wreyeting/index.html>>. On this occasion we find a collection of thirty three poets arranged by order received. I should highlight Drake’s key terms for the construction of this site, “provisional & temporary space,” conveying discursive and ideological categories of anthologizing, against the idea of a representative collection of durable poems, which generation after generation would fertilize techniques, social processes, or concepts of knowledge that would homogenize culture. This shift of emphasis carries with it the new discursive practice of e-anthologies, implying sudden disappearance and its potential devaluing significance for academic knowledge. Or ironically maybe it can be rescued by scholars proclaiming an auratic dimension of uniqueness in recovering what was lost in the virtual world. This critical debate between transitivity and canonical permanence demonstrates how the Web has affected the rules of reference for literature,

Electronic media make us aware of just how complex a measurement of bistable decorum can be. Indeed, always has been. But the parameters of this matrix are now *user-definable*. We will be able not only to see them more clearly than heretofore but to manipulate them. By such manipulations and scaling changes, we will be able to glimpse patterns of order in a reality which seemed chaotic and upon which, consequently, we felt obliged to impose an arbitrary order, an individual “theory” of literature. The norms of electronic art will be so volatile that the volatility of a nonexclusive matrix will be the only norm. (Lanham 278)

In this context, the electronic text has come to merge inventiveness/playfulness and knowledge/research in a decisively heterogeneous global culture.

Another variation of e-anthology is the presentation of poets who have been gathered from a Conference. This happened in Iowa City, 2002, with the “New Media Poetry: Aesthetics, Institutions and Audiences Conference,” in which critics and authors focused on “poetry composed for digital environments, exploring cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural accounts of this work in the broader context of contemporary arts and culture” —<<http://www.uiowa.edu/%7Eiwp/newmedia/about.html>>. The Conference organizers’ aims were “1) to look at the possibilities for poetry offered by the electronic convergence of words, images and sound, 2) highlight the changing contexts in which literature is produced as a result of the electronic word, 3) examine emergent reading possibilities and strategies, and 4) consider some of the new forms of distribution and archiving made possible by the Web.” This propositional formulation was visibly exhibited through the e-anthology, *New Media Poetry*, presenting ten poets regularly focusing on hypermedia and each introducing his/her texts. The construction of poetry seen as creation



through experimentalism confirms how a university writing program, on this occasion the University of Iowa's International Writing Program, can be supportive of these new e-strategies. Hearing voices, music, playing with the mouse, always generates new poetic designs, along with the surprising empirical features of freshly spawned new contextual relationships with language itself. Most of the poems in this anthology clearly interrelate textual and contextual features, far from mimetic readings or overdetermined reflections from the Other. The only true test is the individual understanding of poetry.

Women writing innovative poetry cannot be disregarded in the e-landscape. Carly Guertin has compiled and curated *Assemblage: The Women's New Media Gallery*, with an international scope on women's works and focused on "new media art being created on and off the World Wide Web" —<<http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/traced/guertin/assemblage.htm>>. Women poets flooding from Canada, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, India, Japan, Sweden, Australia, The Netherlands, Brazil... and with the strongest presence of American women poets. This compilation presents universality and experimentalism as the most revolutionary communicative practices in poetry: the power and knowledge of women in all variations of cyberfeminism, bilingual collaborations, hypertexts, clashes of technologies, performance works, criticism, the interactive urban environment, a hyperessay about roses, digital challenges... For this project two conditions are interrelated: the lack of rules and the selection matches a wide accountability of research, exploration and discourses of a large community. Such a potent brew has great power as search for new discovery rather than the reproduction of old practices. Particularly, this e-anthology demonstrates the importance of understanding polyvocality and trespassing boundaries thanks to an assemblage, aimed at "a coming together of languages, skills and visions, a collection of art texts, and an exhibit showing the act of fitting disparate pieces together under the umbrella of gender." However, Guertin warns that these new voices are also selectable by readers themselves, beyond a fixed presence behind the virtual text on the computer screen, "Take your time in the rooms of this gallery. Read, or ignore, the signs. Meander. Retrace your steps. Manhandle the artworks. Stop. Stare. Play. Return again and again. Admission is free and all are welcome." Appropriately, Guertin quotes Derrida's definition of assemblage, which fits with this unification of pieces of art into a new gallery or e-anthology, "[it] has the structure of an interlacing, a weaving, or a web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again as well as being ready to bind others together." Guertin includes on this site a hyperlink to another e-anthology, *The Progressive Dinner Party*, as a shorter tour of English language selections from *Assemblage*. And she promises to update this page monthly! —an impossible task for printed anthologies— with a preference for work within the electronic medium.

My remark on minorities should deal with innovative Chicano poets, and more particularly with the so-called Taco Shop Poets. They have found a fascinating means for practical applications on the Web, aiming at vindicative social goals and participation as "Cultural Guerrillas." They are introduced as "cultural workers", characterized as poets and performers "who have converted taco shops into



temporary cultural centers. Our performance consists of music, poetry, prose, storytelling, and ritual” —<[http://multiple.insertions.com/mi\\_html/contrib/writing/iv08.htm](http://multiple.insertions.com/mi_html/contrib/writing/iv08.htm)>. Thirty one poets and prose writers have received private and state support from the Centro Cultural de la Raza in San Diego, the Foundation for Arts Resources, Self-Help Graphics, Plaza de la Raza, the University of Santa Clara, Chacho’s Restaurant in San Jose and Jorge Sánchez, the Steamed Bean in National City, and Pan Handler Production. All these poets are briefly bio-introduced and sometimes their works attempt bilingual polyvocalism with a strong emphasis on raza rights. Though they are interested in searching for new poetic forms, hip-hop influences, performance, “With feet on both sides of the border we declare that Cappuccino and poetry are no more! Long live salsa and the spoken word!” In fact, we are seeing a complete rebirth of Chicano poetry, sometimes paradoxical and discontinuous but expressing that change can take place. These poets’ political concerns with social integration, and other issues have revised their approach making them more radical as some views are harmonized in their community. For example, e-anthologized poets like Alurista or Jackie López keep up their struggle to inform us of the social and economic agents engaged in Chicano community affirmation in the United States. Deliberation on valorization and circulation of culture is constantly positioned in their poetical work.

Other smaller collections of a minor importance, like *Anabasis: Vision Project* (<<http://burningpress.org/va/anabaindex.html>>), have also helped to subvert the hegemony of print anthologies. Edited by Thomas Lowe Taylor, this selection of poets is a compilation from several back issues of the magazine, *Vision Project*, in which poems, pieces in progress, manifestos, reviews, e-mail exchanges, collaborations, and correspondence are simply presented in order to experience language as a signifying instrument outside the sphere of print. Once again Taylor, a visual poet, places special emphasis on hypermedia pointing to the pure inwardness of electronic potential power. This same line has been followed by the *Word Circuits Gallery*, founded in 1998, and defined by its editor Robert Kendall as a “show-place for the best in electronic poetry and fiction. Rather than adhering to a regular publishing schedule, we add new work to the Gallery as it becomes available” —<<http://www.wordcircuits.com/gallery/aboutgallery.htm>>. Accompanying this mini-anthology of nine authors, the Word Circuits site also includes an extensive directory, which catalogs authors, publishing sites, critical writings, and mailing lists. Other supplementary sections widen the scope of this site, like “Bulletin Board” —announcements of events— “Connection System” —advanced features to Web hypertexts— “Hypertext Writers Workshop”, and an “On-line Class in Hypertext.”

Other electronic resources collect or gather poetical materials and authors, though they are not so close to the concept of compilation and selection of contributors on a criterion of being representative. For example, virtual poetry slams appear on the Web with sample collaborative poems, reviews, exchanges, experimental hypertexts, discussions partly in verse, direct connections to other MOO sites, and so on. MOO (for Multi-user Dimension Object-Oriented) is a program allowing interaction among people in remote physical locations in real time. This was a novelty in 1995 and reinforced immediacy and spontaneity as a challenge for



writing. This new dimension opens up and anticipates the potentially overlapping structures in writing poetry. This experiment began at Penn State University in 1995 and its originator, Al Filreis, has not updated this site since then, leaving it as that, an experiment archived on the Web, contrasting with the vividness so characteristic of this medium. In any case, the non-hierarchical character of different contributions by poets, readers, and teachers finished off with various games of discovery and non-monolithic voices. In fact, samples include audience responses at conclusion of poems recited, or sample collaborative poems created by groups of seven to sixteen students and the teacher.

The aforementioned description is surpassed by Ubuweb, featuring poetic resources—some archived bi-weekly like the “365 Days Project”—in an enormous enterprise of assembling experimental poetry. The Ubuweb site provides some anthologies like the “365 Days Project”—produced in 2003 by Otis Fodder—“Anthology of Conceptual Writing”—edited by Craig Douglas Dworkin—“Ethno-poetics”—curated by Jerome Rothenberg—and “Contemporary,” “Historical,” “Sound: MP3 Archive,” “Outsiders,” apparently arranged by Ubuweb editors. Other sections like “Papers,” “Radio Radio,” and “Sound,” have grown to encompass all types of art. These vast resources are completed with “Recent Additions” and “New Additions” sections. The purpose of Ubuweb is to win an audience and to provide a freedom-proclaiming place for poetry:

Essentially a gift economy, poetry is the perfect space to practice utopian politics. Freed from profit-making constraints or cumbersome fabrication considerations, information can literally “be free”: on UbuWeb, we give it away and have been doing so since 1996. We publish in full color for pennies. We receive submissions Monday morning and publish them Monday afternoon. UbuWeb’s work never goes “out of print.” UbuWeb is a never-ending work in progress: many hands are continually building it on many platforms. UbuWeb has no need for money, funding or backers. Our web space is provided for a pittance by an ISP sympathetic to our vision. Donors with an excess of bandwidth contribute to our cause. All labour and editorial work is voluntary; no money changes hands. Totally independent from institutional support, UbuWeb is free from academic bureaucracy and its attendant infighting, which often results in compromised solutions; we have no one to please but ourselves. UbuWeb posts much of its content without permission; we rip full-length CDs into sound files; we scan as many books as we can get our hands on; we post essays as fast as we can OCR them. And not once have we been issued a cease and desist order. (<<http://www.ubu.com/resources>>)

This position is crucial to understanding the decisive difference between the old conventional market for literature and the new situation propitiated by e-publications. Insisting on limitlessness, Ubuweb editors put into practice their priority of attuning with technology into a new political play of communication and exchange. One of the most unforeseen consequences is to deal with full texts, performative work, music, sounds, providing a new point of view on the materials, but also as a recursive pattern through which we can re-build, modify, what has been created by others. Jerome McGann talks about this new critical act demanded by this situation:



The critical act therefore involves no more (and no less) than a certain perspective on the object, its acuity of perception being a function of its self-conscious understanding of its own powers and limitations. It stands in a dialectical relation to its object, which must always be a transcendental object so far as any act of critical perception is concerned. This transcendental condition is a necessity because the object perpetually shifts and mutates under the influence of its perceivers. The critical act is a kind of conversation being carried on in the midst of many like and impinging conversations, all of which might at any point be joined by or merge into any of the others. (287)

The series, *Readings in Contemporary Poetry*, has been posted since 1987, with the exception of the period from the 1988-89 to the 1993-84 sessions. Over 160 poets are included in this anthology, and who also participated in the readings organized by the Dia Art Foundation (<<http://www.diacenter.org/prg/poetry>>). Selected audio files from historic readings by multivarious poets, ranging from Harryette Mullen to Quincy Troupe, are made available, funded by several foundations. This anthological series continually presents experimental forms and it is this notion of selecting poets for reading in a specific way and archived for everybody on the Web that reveals a dialogic turn in these last few years. Without author-immanent limitations but embodying a prospective reception among different communities and individual readers all over the world. Here the editors have simply archived. Brief introductory bio-notes fulfil the requirement of presentation and the poems are selected to configure the representative voice of the author as in any other conventional anthology.

Also I would mention an e-anthology of interviews with 17 poets in *Poet Chat* (<<http://www.writenet.org/poetschat/poetschat.html>>), including a “Virtual Poetry Workshop,” “Writers on Teaching,” or the project “I Remember.” In bringing together conversations with workshops and teaching is to disregard the narrow-minded consideration of anthologies as merely circumscribed to creation as such. On this occasion, Daniel Kane and others see all these fields to be supplementary to creation. They are conceived as an integrative act of understanding—inevitably committed to creation—the hermeneutics of creation itself, leading us to think of these anthologized conversations as a transparent stimulus to unfold production and reception. Since sample poems and interviews appear as useful voices to link with a visible person, e-space promotes a dialogic transparency to apprehend performance and coherence.

Finally, Conferences like “E-poetry: An International Digital Poetry Festival” (Buffalo, 2001; Morgantown, Virginia, 2003; and London, 2005), “Crossing [Digital] Boundaries; A Digital Media Symposium” (SUNY, Buffalo, 2002), “Digital Media Poetics” (SUNY, Buffalo, 2002), and “Language and Encoding: A Symposium for Artists, Programmers, and Scholars” (Buffalo, 2002), have become forums for artists and thinkers addressing the current state of digital poetry and poetics, to refine potentialities on the complex Web. These Conferences have also served as a source for research on a new situation, shining a light on e-anthologies apparently never finished due to continual updating. Perhaps this is the point to admit that e-anthologies have forged a new space for reflections on procedures, forms, and aes-



thetic approaches, new signposts pointing towards alternatives to the old standardized anthologies. Conclusive resolutions for e-anthologies have articulated basic directions in recent years. Fundamentally, e-anthologies are propositional even when selected by editors. They represent constitutive poetics, performed and published in the cheapest way, more open to the public and conferring not an endorsing value but exhibiting the activated peculiarities of creative individuals. The role of canon-defending argument has been propagated, and on the level of literary discipline these e-anthologies contest the *status quo* and concede validity beyond the concept of authoritative work, since the reader is allowed to modify, introduce, or confer new formal and content levels not only in language, but also extended to music, sound, images, and so on. This means a distancing from the qualified contributions to standardized anthologies. Michael Joyce defends that today's teacher should partake of multidisciplinary approaches to construct and unveil actual culture:

For we have become not merely the chroniclers or custodians of, but collaborators in, a vast cultural shift... Thus learning management is colearning, a constructive action to preserve what is coming to be known. In such a process hierarchy truly is doomed because it is before anything else a search structure, a way to keep track of what you think you own, and not an arena for reciprocal power like a hypertext, a computer network, or a collaborative classroom. (121)

Therefore, the scholar's strategy becomes the search for the function of textuality, especially in hypertexts and hypermedia, that are progressively more affirmative on the Web. Experimental poets have understood the advantages of hyperspace over paperspace. Sometimes the implications of this shift lead to anxiety when facing a new vision in space and time. Though it is also clear that virtual poetry is presumed to retain some flavour of the old and to remain throughout its own history. Reception of this work is not characterized by empty references, but playing in our lives a decisive role. The fact that university and Academy have definably become involved in the development and support of this new paradigm is also a political issue. Public interest derives from the power of economic and intellectual potentialities in our world. In this context, new epic echoes of poetry have come from e-anthologies and the intention is that each of us becomes an emblemized hero in this new space.

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