Rui Torres & Sandra Guerreiro Dias

Performative poetry as program, programmed poetry as performance

Résumé

Les formes de poésie innovantes telles que l'art du langage et la poésie expérimentale ont adopté des processus intersémiotiques et des contraintes linguistiques dans leur codification qui ont favorisé une relecture et une transgression des appareils techniques des sociétés techno-capitalistes. À son tour, les nouvelles formes inventives de l'art numérique comme la poésie électronique ont intégré la générativité, l'indétermination et la combinatoire dans leur programmation, stimulant la réinvention et la subversion des mécanismes informatiques des sociétés en réseau. Par l'appropriation des médias, la poésie articule des stratégies créatives qui questionnent l'interface entre les arts et les langues, les formes et les mécanismes. L'attitude expérimentale de la poésie performative se présente comme un programme. De même, la poésie programmée, utilisant les potentialités de l'ordinateur comme machine sémiotique, peut être considérée comme performative, produisant des événements uniques et irrépétibles. La poésie et la performance peuvent ainsi être considérées comme des entités flottantes, favorisant le passage d'un ordre fixe à une économie de circulations. Ce scénario nous amène à discuter des liens entre la poésie, la performance et le programme, en soutenant nos réflexions à travers la présentation et la description de divers exemples d'interventions poétiques dans le contexte portugais qui utilisent la programmation et le code pour reconfigurer la conscience du langage et de la médiation.

Abstract

Innovative forms of poetry such as language art and experimental poetry have adopted intersemiotic processes and linguistic constraints in their codification, promoting rereading and transgression of technical apparatuses from the techno-capitalist societies. In addition, new inventive forms of digital language art, such as electronic poetry, have integrated generativity, indeterminacy and combinatorics in their programming, stimulating the reinvention and subversion of computing mechanisms from the networked societies. Through the appropriation of media, poetry articulates creative strategies that question the interface between arts and languages, forms and mechanisms. The experimental attitude of performative poetry presents itself as a program. Similarly, using the potentialities of the computer as a semiotic machine, programmed poetry can be regarded as performative, producing unique, unrepeatable events. Poetry and performance can thus be regarded as floating entities, promoting the transition from a fixed order to an economy of circulations. This scenario fuels the discussion concerning the connections between poetry, performance and program, supporting our reflections through the presentation and description of different examples of poetic intervention in the Portuguese context, which use programming and coding to reconfigure the awareness of language and mediation.

Interférences littéraires
Literaire interferenties
Multilingual e-Journal for Literary Studies

COMITE DE DIRECTION – DIRECTIECOMITE

Anke GILLEIR (KU Leuven) – Rédactrice en chef – Hoofdredactrice
Beatrijs VANACKER (KU Leuven) – Co-rédactrice en chef – Hoofdredactrice

Ben DE BRUYN (UCL)
Christope COLLARD – VUB
Lieven D'HULST (KU Leuven – Kortrijk)
Liesbeth FRANÇOIS (KU Leuven)
Raphaël INGELBIEN (KU Leuven)
Valérie LEYH (Université de Namur)
Katrien LIEVOIS (Universiteit Antwerpen)

David MARTENS (KU Leuven)
Chiara NANNICINI (Factultés Universitaires Saint-Louis)
Hubert ROLAND (FNRS – UCL)
Matthieu SERGIER (FNRS – UCL & Factultés Universitaires Saint-Louis)
Lieke VAN DEINSEN (KU Leuven)

CONSEIL DE REDACTION – REDACTIERAAD

Geneviève FABRY (UCL)
Agnès GUIDERDONI (FNRS – UCL)
Ortwin DE GRAEF (KU Leuven)
Elke D'Hoker (KU Leuven)
Guido LATRÉ (UCL)
Nadia LIE (KU Leuven)
Michel LISSE (FNRS – UCL)

Anneleen MASSCHELEIN (KU Leuven)
Christophe MEUREE (FNRS – UCL)
Reine MEYLAERTS (KU Leuven)
Stéphanie VANASTEN (FNRS – UCL)
Bart VAN DEN BOSSCHE (KU Leuven)
Marc VAN VAECK (KU Leuven)

COMITE SCIENTIFIQUE – WETENSCHAPPELIJK COMITE

Olivier AMMOUR-MAYEUR (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle — Paris III & Université Toulouse II – Le Mirail)
Ingo BERENSMEYER (Universität Giessen)
Lars BERNAERTS (Universiteit Gent & Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Faith BINCKES (Worcester College – Oxford)
Philiep BOSSIER (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)
Franca BRUERA (Università di Torino)
Àlvaro CEBALLOS VIRO (Université de Liège)
Christian CHELEBOURG (Université de Lorraine)
Edoardo COSTADURA (Friedrich Schiller Universität Jena)
Nicola CREIGHTON (Queen's University Belfast)
William M. DECKER (Oklahoma State University)
Ben DE BRUYN (UCL)
Dirk DELABASTITA (Université de Namur)
Michel DELVILLE (Université de Liège)
César DOMINGUEZ (Universidad de Santiago de Compostella & King's College)

Gillis DORLEIJN (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)
Ute HEIDMANN (Université de Lausanne)
Klaus H. KIEFER (Ludwig Maxilimians Universität München)
Michael KOLHAUER (Université de Savoie)
Isabelle KRZYWKOWSKI (Université Stendhal-Grenoble III)
Mathilde LABBE (Université Paris Sorbonne)
Sofiane LAGHOUATI (Musée Royal de Mariemont)
François LECERCLE (Université Paris Sorbonne)
Ilse LOGIE (Universiteit Gent)
Marc MAUFORT (Université Libre de Bruxelles)
Isabelle MEURET (Université Libre de Bruxelles)
Christina MORIN (University of Limerick)
Miguel NORBARTUBARRI (Universiteit Antwerpen)
Andréa OBERHUBER (Université de Montréal)
Jan OOSTERHOLT (Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg)
Maïté SNAUWAERT (University of Alberta – Edmonton)
Pieter VERSTRAETEN (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)

PERFORMATIVE POETRY AS PROGRAM, PROGRAMMED POETRY AS PERFORMANCE

Introduction

The title of this article requires clarification, since it implies variables and functions that justify the tentative pun. These variables are:

var poetry =	text, artwork, object;
var performance =	event, action, embodiment;
var program =	script, score, software;

Poetry is understood as text, artwork, and object. In poetry, symbols form expressive systems of correspondence. They produce ambiguities that are part of the openness of their form. Poetry is *in-between*. For Adriano Spatola, "[t]he resulting interlanguage is apparently centrifugal, dispersed in poetry. It is not the superimposition of a linguistic system given to reality, but an invention, in reality, of a total/ fundamental linguistic system capable of any type of communication."[1] Poetry subscribes to tensions inherent to language itself, and poetic texts motivate unconventional correspondences to be executed by readers, thus tending towards performance.

Performance is regarded as event, action, and embodiment. The evanescence effect of performance constitutes its singularity. For Kattenbelt, "(...) art is by definition performative (...)", and the performative aspects of contemporary arts "reinforce the materiality or expressive qualities of the aesthetic utterance (...)".[2] As a unique, unrepeatable multidisciplinary event, performance expands the poetic field to the expressiveness of the body and the social and spatial context of the performed action. Moreover, this act of creation allows connecting performance and program.

Program is considered as script, score, and software. The word "program" is very rich for our context, as it may signify "plan of action", "plan or schedule of activities and procedures to be followed", "performance", "list", and finally a "precise sequence of instructions enabling a computer to solve a problem".[3] From this broad understanding of *program*, one should also consider its algorithmic nature, both in the sense of instruction (mathematics) and software (computer science). Program is also software, although we should keep in mind that "software (...) is not

---

[1] Adriano SPATOLA, *Toward Total Poetry*, Trans. B. W. Hennessey and G. Bennett, Los Angeles, Otis Books/Seismicity Editions, 2008, 9.

[2] Chiel KATTENBELT, "Portal: Performativity and Corporeal Literacy", in: Sarah BAY-CHENG, Chiel KATTENBELT and Andy LAVENDER (eds.), *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 33.

[3] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, New York, Barnes & Noble Books, 1996, 1546.

ultimately reducible to code (...)"[4] but rather part of a larger cultural ecology of media.

We characterize poetry, performance, and program as multimodal (implying mixed-media integration, in the operatic and cinematic sense), indeterminate (being open and fluid, most times based on randomness), and variable (not-fixed and non-linear, generating multiple possible narratives). As announced by Manovich: "Welcome to the world of permanent change - the world that is now defined not by heavy industrial machines that change infrequently, but by software that is always in flux."[5] We could encode these characteristics in the following variables:

> var poetry = performance = program = multimodal._mixed && indeterminate._open && variable._not-fixed

Based on these variables, we shall propose six functions, to be articulated in six nuclei of examples, providing six contiguous (albeit provisional) definitions:

poetry performs program	⇒ poetry is program;
poetry programs performance	⇒ poetry is performance;
performance programs poetry	⇒ performance is poetry;
performance poeticizes program	⇒ performance is program;
program poeticizes performance	⇒ program is performance;
program performs poetry	⇒ program is poetry.

Our main argument is that language art, along with its innovative forms of expression (such as Baroque Visualism, Futurism and Dada, concrete and visual poetics), explored linguistic processes and constraints that promoted a transgression of abstract language structures (and reading/writing). On the other hand, digital language art and its inventive forms of electronic writing (digital poetry, immersive and/or interactive installations, software art) use artificial languages and generative operations that reinvent and subvert the new apparatuses to be found in databases, social networks, artificial algorithms and bots. Poetry thus becomes a creative strategy adapted to technological cultures, relating in a self-reflexive manner to its own media and procedures. As advocated by Friedrich Block, poetry "raises the linguisticality of the technology culture, as well as existing and new language techniques, and acts these out, condenses and recontextualizes them—in short, contaminates them poetically."[6]

As inferred from these contacts and reciprocity between analogue and digital, past and present, new media can be understood as a "stage" in our culture. According to Manovich, we can define new media "as specific aesthetic features which keep reappearing at an early stage of deployment of every new modern media

---

[4] Matthew FULLER, "Software Studies", in: Marie-Laure RYAN, Lori EMERSON and Benjamin J. ROBERTSON (eds.), *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014, 464.

[5] Lev MANOVICH, *Software Takes Command*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013, 1-2.

[6] Friedrich W. BLOCK, "Humor — Technology — Gender. Digital Language Art and Diabolic Poetics", in: Peter GENDOLLA and Jörgen SCHÄFFER (eds.), *The Aesthetics of Net Literature: Writing, Reading and Playing in Programmable Media*, Transcript, 2006, 171.

and telecommunication technology."[7] As we hope to establish, multiple distant conceptualizations and textual innovative achievements can be observed throughout history, and several aesthetic and material antecedents of digital poetry can be found in experimental poetics from the second half of the 20th century, in visual texts from the 17th and 18th centuries, and even earlier on. As stated by Funkhouser, "[t]he aesthetics of digital poetry are an extension of modernist techniques (…)", although on a theoretical level, the author contends, digital poems are "typical of the postmodern condition of text (…)", namely because they explore "the relation of language to the world, paying particular attention to language as a system with variable properties."[8] Accordingly, the rationale for this article is based upon the notion of history as a non-linear series of events, collapsing temporal and spatial boundaries. As argued elsewhere,[9] the linguistic turn of the 1970s, the theory of the arbitrariness of the sign, and the performative turn of Cultural Studies came to dethrone objective empiricism and put an emphasis of historical analysis on a performative configuration of discourse and interpretation. To support the understanding of historical events as processes that are not static, but rather require a critical analysis of representation strategies and *mise-en scène*, as proposed by Peter Burke,[10] we present multiple examples from the Portuguese literary and artistic context, spanning five centuries of experimentation with language.

Poetry performs program

```
function poetry(performs) {
        return program;
    }
```

In our first function we describe examples of poetry that performs a program, including works by Ana Hatherly, Fr. José da Assunção, Américo Rodrigues, and Alberto Pimenta.

Ana Hatherly, Leonorana

Our first example is Ana Hatherly's *Leonorana*, written between 1965 and 1970, and published as book III of *Anagramático* [Anagrammatic].[11]

---

[7] Lev MANOVICH, "New Media from Borges to HTML", in: Noah WARDRIP-FRUIN and Nick MONTFORT (eds.), *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2003, 19.

[8] C. T. FUNKHOUSER, *Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archaeology of Forms, 1959-1995*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2007, 3.

[9] Sandra GUERREIRO DIAS, "Entre o 'belo e o decrépito': meta-história e anos 1980 na ficção feminina", in: *RCL | Convergência Lusíada*, 2013, 30, 97-98.

[10] Peter BURKE, *What Is Cultural History?*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008, 94-95.

[11] Ana HATHERLY, *Anagramático*, Lisboa, Moraes, 1970.

Ana Hatherly, "VARIAÇÃO XVIII", *Leonorana*, 1970.

Language and writing are rule-based systems, and *Leonorana* is poetry performing a program, operating constraints. The use of recursive procedures results in a set of thirty-one variations. The "program" takes as motto the *vilancete* by Camões, "Descalça vai pera a fonte / Leonor pela verdura; / vai formosa e não segura [To the fountain barefoot she goes / Leonor through the meadows; / fair she goes and not cautious]". The variations operated on Camões' text are multiple, as may be identified in the program proposed by Hatherly: syntheses, thematic and formal atomization, constrained consonances, inscription of unintelligibility processes, systematic and combinatorial exchanges, interference by neologisms, calligraphic transcription or constellation, etc. In the example illustrated below, "VARIAÇÃO XVIII", the process applied to the verses by Camões is "Formulação ideográfica, semantização visual [Ideographic formulation, visual semantization]". Leonor (the name of the person described in the poem) is changed to Lionor, so that the I can accommodate the visual form of the ideogram. Being homophone words (with similar pronunciations but different spellings), this expressive writing turns word into image, and one could say that the poem programs a performance: Leonor is inside her own labyrinth.

In some of her theoretical writings, Hatherly often associates tradition with invention (its ground zero) and innovation (when tradition is deliberately changed), characterizing all poetry as conforming to a program. According to Hatherly, program means

> um sistema de regras que pré-determinam a orientação de uma série de operações
> destinadas a produzir um determinado efeito, ou seja, um conjunto de instruções e
> informações necessárias à execução de operações determinadas (…) [a system of
> rules that pre-determine the direction of a series of operations designed to produce

96

a certain effect, that is, a set of instructions and information necessary for the execution of determined operations].[12]

These words, addressing Camões' poems,[13] can also extend to the openness and performativity of the textual forms from the heterogeneity articulated by Baroque poets from the 17th and 18th centuries. Hatherly was well aware that these dynamic forms encourage the reader to play a game of perspective, leading her to search the genesis of Visualism and textual combinatorics in experiments with image-texts and poetic objects such as ideograms, cryptograms, and diagrams. These achievements constitute some of the aesthetic precedents for concrete and visual poetry.

Fr. José da Assunção, Labyrintho Difficultoso

In the poem "Labyrintho Difficultoso [Difficult Labyrinth]" a baroque and cubic labyrinth by Fr. José da Assunção,[14] 18th century Portuguese poet, readers find a mystical path by interacting with the ludic multiple meaning generating mechanism.

The poem is designed as a cube consisting of a single line of verse, "Comentarios Hymnologicos [Hymnologic Comments]" and is divided into four symmetric triangles from the C - center, the core, the middle of the poem, the point of departure and arrival of the reader. This center also points to the archetype of a star, as the limbs are made out of six long white corridors and four red ones following the spelt backwards (as if reflected in a mirror) "comentarios". Inside the cube there is another cube, rotating, with the letter "H" celebrating the hymn, as set forth in the title and subtitle of the poem "Em que fe expaende a materia da obra [In which faith expands the substance (*materia*) of the work]". It requires some faith to unveil the hidden mystery of this secret writing. Decoding the potential experimentation of this labored enigma demands joining the ritual game of vertical and diagonal paths, engaging the dancing performance of the programmatic interpretation.

---

[12] Ana HATHERLY, A Experiência do Prodígio - Bases Teóricas e Antologia de Textos Visuais Portugueses dos Séculos XVII e XVIII, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 1983, 121.

[13] Luís Vaz de Camões (c. 1524 - 1580) is considered by many Portugal's greatest poet. Hatherly refers to Camões as "um expoente da tradição que continua e renova pelo seu génio criador" (*Ibid.* 146), and indeed this poet has been recreated and paid homage to by many experimental poets from Portugal, Hatherly included. For more about these transformations see: Rui TORRES, "Camões transformado e re-montado: o caso de Herberto Helder", in: *Callema*, 2006, 58-64, [online], <https://hdl.handle.net/10284/3455>.

[14] In *A Experiência do Prodígio*, Hatherly gathered labyrinth poems into three main groups, following quite closely the theory of Rengifo's *Arte Poetica Espanola* (1592): verse labyrinths, letter labyrinths and cubic labyrinths.

Fr. José da Assunção, "Labyrintho Difficultoso", 1738.

In similar labyrinths, Hatherly describes a "oscilação cíclica constante entre a tendência religiosa e a tendência lúdica [constant cyclic oscillation between the

religious and the playful tendencies]",[15] subscribing to Huizinga's association between poetry and play.[16] More importantly, poetic labyrinths represent "uma demonstração de mestria, de saber e de capacidade de interpretação, fazendo desse modo um elogioso apêlo ao leitor (…) [a demonstration of mastery, knowledge and ability to interpret, thus making it a praiseworthy appeal to the reader]".[17]

Américo Rodrigues, Obra completa: revista e aumentada, 1961-2002

Américo Rodrigues' *Obra completa: revista e aumentada, 1961-2002* [Complete Works - Revised and Enlarged, 1961-2002],[18] condensed in a tiny (7.5 x 10.5 cm) and short (ten pages) handmade and self-published book, starts on page 153, and merely displays an Errata. It's a book that directs readers towards a text that does not exist, a text that nonetheless is created (invented) by its absence.

Na página cento e cinquenta e quatro, em várias linhas, onde se lê "deverá ler-se" deverá ler-se "deverá ler-se?".

Na página cento e setenta e três, linha um, onde se lê "prefácio" deverá ler-se "posfácio".

Na página cento e setenta e três, linha três, onde se lê "a autora" deverá ler-se "o autor".

Na página cento e setenta e quatro, linha seis, onde se lê "amerigo rodriguez" deverá ler-se "américo rodrigues".

Na capa, onde se lê "obra completa" deverá ler-se "obra concreta".

160

Américo Rodrigues, *Obra completa: revista e aumentada*, 2002.

---

[15] *Ibid.* 114-115.

[16] Johan HUIZINGA, *Homo Ludens*, Paris, Gallimard, 1951, 201 (qtd in *Ibid.* 115).

[17] *Ibid.* 115.

[18] Author's edition, 2002, [online], <https://po-ex.net/taxonomia/materialidades/planograficas/americo-rodrigues-obra-completa/>

Readers are invited to imagine; thus, poetry performs the program of making the invisible visible. Pertaining to a time-span that starts when the author was born (1961), this Errata instantiates poetry as a game of (un)probabilities: "Na página seis, linha nove, onde se lê 'poesia' deverá ler-se 'poderia'. [On page six, line nine, where one reads 'poetry' one should read 'could.']"[19] These *complete works* play with the internal format of the *book* itself, deconstructing it from the inside, as shown by these two examples: "Na linha anterior, onde se lê 'linha dois' deverá ler-se 'linha sete'. [In the previous line, where one reads 'line two' one should read 'line seven.']" And "Na página cento e cinquenta e três, em algumas linhas, onde se lê 'onde se lê' deverá ler-se 'deverá ler-se'. [On page one hundred and fifty-three, in some lines, where one reads 'where one reads,' one should read 'one should read.']" In addition, Rodrigues is best known for his intense experimentation with voice in performances and recordings, between sound poetry and experimental music. This print-based work earns further significance, suggesting that what is verbal can also be re-inscribed in pre-verbal and post-verbal modalities.

Alberto Pimenta, discurso preliminar

A similar point of departure can be found in "discurso preliminar [preliminary speech]", by Alberto Pimenta.[20]

This "text", from 1971, was reprinted in *Obra quase incompleta* [Almost uncomplete work], to which Pimenta added a note: "Reproduzido com cortes e desdobramentos segundo o princípio da «poesia experimentada» [Reproduced with cuts and unfoldings according to the principle of «experienced poetry»]."[21] This note helps to understand the humor (and sarcasm) that is to be found in Pimenta's poem, eight pages populated with dots and 34 footnotes with assorted text mocking the understanding of textuality and reasoning. What is linguistically articulated (the footnotes) derives from the absence of text (the dots and other forms of punctuation such as commas, semi-colons, dashes, exclamation and question marks, etc., in the main body of the page). Here and again, poetry programs performance because the absent text generates multiple potential texts; silence and blankness create meaning. Footnotes offer readers the programmatic general instructions on how to read the text. Footnotes ironically state that one should question everything about everything, or that instead of certainty, obstacles should be sought for. On footnote 3, for instance, Pimenta writes (and therefore comments the absent text): "Assim é, com efeito. Op. Cit., II, 37. [So it is, in effect. Op. Cit., II, 37]."[22]

---

[19] In Portuguese, "poesia" (poetry) and "poderia" (could) sound very similar.
[20] Alberto PIMENTA, *Os entes e os contraentes*, Coimbra, 1971.
[21] Alberto PIMENTA, *Obra quase incompleta*, Lisboa, Fenda, 52.
[22] *Ibid.* 55.

discurso preliminar

. . . .
. . . .
. . . . , ... 1
. . . .
. . . . , ...
. . 2. . . . . . . , ... , ...
«. . . . . .», ... , ...
. . . . ; . . . .
. . . .
. . . . ; . . . . «. . . . .»
, ... , ...
. . . . —.
. . . .
. . . . , ...
. . . .
. . . . «. . . . .»; . . . .
. . . . — . . . .
. . : . . . . , ...
. . . . ! 3

---

1 Porque esta questão não se põe apenas a respei
to da poesia, mas também a respeito do homem; o
melhor, no entanto, será pô-la a respeito de tu
do. Cf. H. Emerenciano, *A Importância da Vida,* I, 5.

2 A sua função não é apresentar certezas, porque
as certezas constituem um obstáculo à progressão
do conhecimento, sendo este, como é, o único gar
ante de um dia se poder vir a atingir a certe
za.

3 Assim é, com efeito. Op. cit., II, 37.

Alberto Pimenta, "discurso preliminar", *Os entes e os contraentes,* 1971.

These works by Hatherly, Assunção, and subsequently by Rodrigues and Pimenta, reflect on language constraints and process. Reading and writing perform meaning, and although the program of writing and the program of reading constitute two distinct aspects of programmed performativity, the intentional incompleteness of these works leads to poetry which is programmed as a performative event. Hatherly summarized the challenges of poetry programming performance in a lecture at Yale University in 1995:

> A escrita é fala muda, uma forma particular de materialização do imaginário que requer uma particular forma de leitura, uma forma de descodificação apropriada às suas próprias regras e exigências de comunicação. [Writing is a mute speech, a particular form of materialization of the imaginary that requires a particular form of reading, a form of decoding that fits its own rules and communication requirements.][23]

The programmatic nature of poetry is enacted in these examples because they demonstrate how poetry performs a program, and that leaves us to conclude that poetry is program:

```
if
   (poetry performs program) {
     poetry is program
   }
```

Poetry programs performance

```
function poetry(programs) {
         return performance;
    }
```

For this second function we include examples of poetry that programs performance, analyzing works by E. M. de Melo e Castro, Von Calhau!, César Figueiredo and António Nelos, and Salette Tavares.

E. M. de Melo e Castro, Caixa-Objecta, 1961-1968

The second function postulates that poetry programs performance. Texts are notations for performative events. António Barros describes some of his experi-

---

[23] Ana HATHERLY, "Vozes da leitura", in: *A Casa das Musas*, Lisboa, Editorial Estampa, 1995, 195-197.

mental works as "pautizações performativas [performative scores]",[24] and Peter Middleton further adds that "[t]exts are already active projects, already on their way through an endlessly reconstitutive pattern of linguistic transactions which momentarily sustain meaning."[25] Poetry programs performance is synthesized by "Dear reader, Don't read",[26] by Ulises Carrión. Carrión advocates that "[e]n el arte viejo el escritor escribe textos. / En el arte nuevo el escritor hace libros. [In old art the writer writes texts. / In new art the writer makes books]."[27] Texts can thus be regarded as performances, textuality as performance of writing.[28] Also, digital texts are programmed as performative events in their own essence. In fact, dontclick.it[29] may be considered a creative form of remediating "Dear reader, Don't read", stating instead: Dear reader, Don't click. This may seem like the industrial apparatus promoting itself, with no evidence of an experimental attitude: normalizing interactivity and enslaving the reader to the rules and constraints that enunciate textual possibilities. On the contrary, what is designated hereinafter as "programmed poetry as performance" is based on textual examples that create unique, unrepeatable events, as illustrated by Carrión's textual model.

Melo e Castro's kinetic poems from the 1960s were gathered in his "Caixa-Objecta, 1961-1968 [Objecta Box]".[30] They are a set of manipulable texts with a "sintaxe dinâmica [dynamic syntax]" in negotiation with the "utente do poema [user of the poem]",[31] who is invited to act upon these object-texts.

---

[24] António BARROS, "Lástima – artitude", 2004, [online], <https://po-ex.net/taxonomia/transtextualidades/metatextualidades-autografas/antonio-barros-lastima-artitude/>.

[25] Peter MIDDLETON, "The Contemporary Poetry Reading", in: Charles BERNSTEIN (ed.), *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, 295.

[26] An image of this work from 1973 is available on MoMA's website, [online], < https://mo.ma/3tjqOyq >.

[27] Ulises CARRIÓN, "El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Libros", *Plural*, 1975, 33.

[28] Our aim here is not to analyze Carrión's work in detail. However, it is worth mentioning that the author may as well be thinking about the performativity inherent in the bibliographic structure of texts, foregrounding the performativity of the codex in relation to its text.

[29] In the entry page, we are advised: "Within this interface you won't find any buttons. Instead, you navigate the contents in a different way." *Institute for Interactive Research*, [online], <http://dontclick.it/>.

[30] E. M. de MELO E CASTRO, "Caixa-Objecta, 1961-1968", Col. Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto.

[31] E. M. de MELO E CASTRO, "Ver-ter-ser", in Ana HATHERLY and E. M. de MELO E CASTRO (eds), *Po.Ex: Textos teóricos e documentos da Poesia experimental portuguesa*, Lisboa, Moraes, 1981, 159. The quoted fragments were originally written by Melo e Castro in 1966 for the exhibit "Poemas Cinéticos" at Galeria 111, Lisbon.

E. M. de Melo e Castro, *Caixa-Objecta, 1961-1968*, Collection of the Serralves Foundation – Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal. Photograph courtesy of Filipe Braga, © Fundação de Serralves, Porto.

As with Carrión, the interactive dialog these objects establish with their users/readers transforms them into "poemas-objectos-espelhos-de-quem-os-usa (...) [poems-objects-mirrors-of-those-who-use-them]",[32] comprising an intrinsic interse-miotic poiesis demanding the tactile engagement of the reader. This was also explored by Julio Plaza and Augusto de Campos in their *Objetos* (1969), *Poemóbiles* (1974) and *Caixa Preta* (1975). Melo e Castro's object-poems, as well as Plaza and Campos', expand the labyrinth experience. They are hybrid and intermedia entities as translated by Roy Ascott's argument about freeing ourselves from the modernist ideal of the 'perfect object' because "(…) the artwork [now] exists in a perpetual state of transition (…) [and] it remains perpetually in a state of play."[33]

Von Calhau!, Abismo | Abutre

Moving away from the paradigm indicating "Please. Do not touch the work of art", and closer to the one that instead calls for "Touch. Do not please the work of art", as proposed by the Raqs Media Collective in their remarkable work that explores the usual "instructions" that draw a line between art works and their users.

---

[32] E. M. de MELO E CASTRO, "Ver-ter-ser", 160.

[33] Roy ASCOTT, "Behaviourist Art and the Cybernetic Vision", *Cybernetica*, 1976. Reprinted in Randall PACKER and Ken JORDAN (eds), *Multimedia. From Wagner to Virtual Reality*. New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2002.

They are left with "do not touch", "do not click", "do not read". On the contrary, Melo e Castro's kinetic texts were not rigidly pre-determined. That is also the case of *Abismo | Abutre* [Abyss | Vulture],[34] a book of poems programming a performance to be acted by the reader.

Van Calhou!, *Abismo | Abutre*, 2013. Photograph courtesy of Marta Ângela and João Alves.

In the case of this small book (15 x 8.5 cm), everything is difficult to contain and categorize. The name of the duo Von Calhau! (formed by Marta Ângela and João Alves) is transformed into Van Calhou!,[35] and the title of the book is also ambiguous: 'abismo' (abyss) or 'abutre' (vulture)? Both options are possible, as the pages are stacked on top of each other. Both versions are allowed due to the organization of the text. An impermanent and open title introduces poems that program performances of reading, inviting readers to literally cut off folded pages, i.e., to destroy the book, integrating the medium in the literary dynamic. These textual forms may be labelled as ergodic texts (*ergos* meaning non-trivial effort; *hodos* suggesting labyrinth), a term coined by Espen Aarseth, as they "produce verbal structures, for aesthetic effect" and are therefore cybertexts, "machine[s] for the production of variety of expression."[36]

César Figueiredo & António Nelos, What Music for East Timor

Poetry performing a program can also be experienced in the object *What Music for East Timor*,[37] by César Figueiredo and António Nelos.

---

[34] Van Calhou!, *Abismo | Abutre*, Guimarães, Pé de Mosca, 2013.
[35] "Von Calhau!" literally means "Of Pebble!," and "Van Calhou!" stands for "It so happened!" (the O in vOn replaces its position with the A in calhAu).
[36] Espen J. AARSETH, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Baltimore, Jonhs Hopkins UP, 1997, 3.
[37] Author's edition, 1999, [online], < https://bit.ly/2YzMpre >.

César
Figueiredo and António Nelos, *What Music for East Timor*, 1999. Photograph courtesy of
Cristina Rocha.

A box measuring 11.1 x 8.3 x 2.4 cm includes a cassette of magnetic tape covered with black paper, newspaper or magazine pages cut into thin strips, small coals, and two black and white xerographic small books (6.5 x 9.5 cm) signed by the authors. However, in order to hear the tape, it must be destroyed. Poetry performs (a political) program as it claims the silencing of the Timorese after the Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor since 1975.

A similar de(con)struction of meaning was enacted in Figueiredo's *Der AV 01 frißt und schweigt* [The AV 01 eats and is silent].[38] A small plastic bag with cardboard stapled to the top contained paper strips. This "textual bag" does not address a silent scream of "how can we be heard", as with *What music...*, but rather the complaint: "how can we write and read".

---

[38] Author's edition, 1993, [online], < https://bit.ly/3BNucop >.

César Figueiredo, *Der AV 01 frißt und schweigt*, 1993. Photograph courtesy of Bruno Ministro.

Bruno Ministro stresses how topics such as work, bureaucracy and alienation are intertwined in Figueiredo's works, stemming from the artist's reflections on (and

rejection of) linguistic and visual noise in our lives, producing chaos and disruption.[39] In both cases, the contents of the works are inaccessible. What constitutes writing in our current digital environment and networked practices of reading-writing? Whatever is the answer, what poetry programs is the possibility of performing reading and writing. The instruction being: tear apart the black lid of the tape, open the bag, gather the shredded fragments of paper, and only then you will be able to listen and read.

Salette Tavares, Parlapatisse

Parlapatisse, by Salette Tavares, is a kinetophonic work made of four-leaves inside a plexiglass folding screen (35 x 87.5 cm). A printed version of this visual and notational score that programs several combinatorial experiences with the morphemes of the word "parlapatisse" was published in *Poesia experimental - 2*
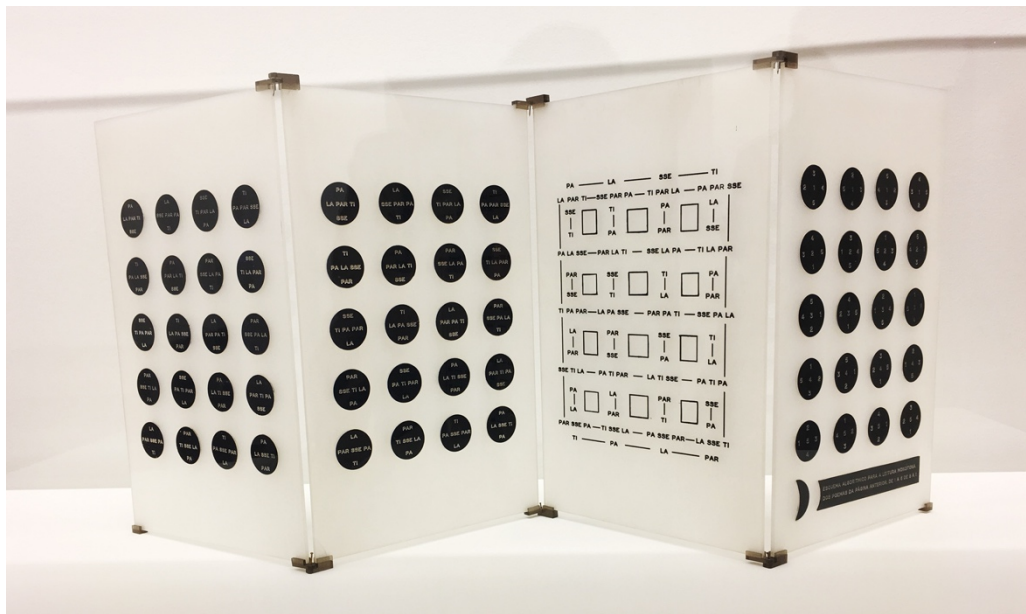
Salette Tavares, *Parlapatisse*, 1965. Col. Tiago Aranda Brandão.
Photograph courtesy of Salette Brandão.

This poem includes an "esquema algorítmico para a leitura monótona dos poemas [algorithmic scheme for the monotonous reading of poems]", proposing one

---

possible reading based on a repetitive spinning movement (thus monotonous), calling attention to the structural and permutational qualities of language. Yet the performance of this text remains indeterminate and variable, as demonstrated by the different reading-performances it has spun off. From Salette's own handwritten (1965) and typewritten (1966) versions,[40] to more recent interpretations by Bruno Ministro, Jorge dos Reis and Nuno M Cardoso, all very distinct.[41] They all play and orchestrate compositions following Hugo Ball's principle of reversing the priority of meaning over sound, in line with the original poem by Tavares. As underlined by Victor Zuckerkandl, "rhythm is a truly universal phenomenon... one manifestation of the reign of law throughout the universe",[42] and it addresses the "experiential meaning potential"[43] of the non-verbal vocal features. By emphasizing the rhythmical nature of language, these performers are expanding and enhancing the semiotics of sound and the performative immanence of poetry at large. The performative nature of poetry is enacted in these examples as they demonstrate how poetry programs performance, and this allows concluding that poetry is performance:

```
if

 (poetry programs performance) {
   poetry is performance
}
```

Performance programs poetry

```
function performance(programs) {
        return poetry;
   }
```

The third function will examine four examples of performances that program poetry, considering works by António Barros, Fernando Aguiar, Manuel Portela, and Miguel Azguime.

António Dantas, *Esse nada que nos sonha*, 2013.

---

[40] Salette TAVARES, *Poesia gráfica*, Lisboa, Casa Fernando Pessoa, 1995, 10.

[41] The intervention *ARQUIVO VIVO É ANARQUIVO!* [A LIVING ARCHIVE IS AN ANARCHIVE!], organized by Rui Torres at the Gato Vadio bookstore, Porto, in 2015, included, on March 3rd, a session dedicated to "Texto-Som - Processos Vocais, Poesia Sonora [Text-Sound – Vocal Processes, Sound Poetry]". In this context, images of Salette Tavares' "Parlapatisse," as well as sounds and videos of Ministro, Reis and M Cardoso performing this work were aggregated, [online], <https://po-ex.net/exposicoes/arquivo-vivo-e-anarquivo/arquivo-vivo-e-anarquivo-texto-som/10/>.

[42] Victor ZUCKERKANDL, *Sound and Symbol*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1969, 157-158.

[43] Gunther R. KRESS and Theo Van LEEUWEN, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication,* London, Oxford University Press, 2001, 10.

António Barros, Andante

Performance programs poetry in *Andante*,[44] a social sculpture by António Barros. The work of Barros often deals with awareness, freedom, and action. His art is an *artittude*, and his works represent a laboratory for plural experiences. *Andante* is a performative enunciation. The object (a t-shirt) is performed by being dressed, becoming an *obgesture*[45] that is shared within the community (*andante* meaning able to walk and simultaneously the one who walks, in Portuguese). *Andante* thus becomes a platform for dialogue(s), summoning different geographies and multiple insularities (the author was born in the island of Madeira). The "text" is performed in multiple interpretations (30, so far), or migrations, one of which by António Dantas in "Esse nada que nos sonha [This nothing that dreams of us]".

---

[44] [online], < https://bit.ly/3kXBe37 >.
[45] *Artitude* [arttitude] and *Obgesto* [obgesture] are words coined by Barros.

110

In this performance, the empty space – equivalent to the empty space of meaning itself – is the sky above, filled with the corporal gesture – the operator –, aiming for an adventurous *mise-en-scène* by risking falling into the abyss – in the middle of the valley — and into the void – the central core where the meaning lies. This work is a hypertextual dialogue, and *Andante* is itself a re-coding of "Ex_ Patriar", an object/obgesture by Barros revisiting PO.EX (Portuguese Experimental Poetry).

António Barros, *Ex_Patriar*, 2012. Colection of the Museum Bienal de Cerveira Foundation. Photograph courtesy of the author.

The sign we can read in "Ex_Patriar" was also painted in "Retrato de Ana Hatherly e os poetas experimentais ao fundo, ou de Portugal um país que nunca ex(ins)istiu [Portrait of Ana Hatherly and the experimental poets in the background, or on Portugal a country that never ex(ins)isted]". Barros created his original visual text as a concept for the exhibit "Po.Ex - Portuguese Visualism", held at the Serralves Museum in 1999. The letter P (Portugal) on the Portuguese registration plates before entering the European Union stands for the circulation of poetry in public spaces, as well as for a critique of national identity. The field of both experience and experiment(alism) (EX) is added by Barros, thus subscribing to the singularity of Portuguese Experimental Poetry. At the same time, as a Situationist intervention, it is today's reading of a country that asks its citizens to emigrate: Ex-Portugal.

Fernando Aguiar, Rede de Canalização (uma intervenção consoante)

Performed in 1983 by Fernando Aguiar, *Rede de Canalização (uma intervenção consoante)* [Plumbing Network (a consonant intervention)][46] intends to demonstrate the paradoxical nature of reality and language through an intervention in the structured iconic and semiotic space of the city, revolving it.

Fernando Aguiar, *Rede de Canalização (uma intervenção consoante)*, 1987.

Divided into five moments, the poet starts by presenting the premises, in 1) "pressuposto ou a atitude [assumption or the attitude]": the urban landscape, the field, the cement post and the alphabet, the materials. Then, in 2) "comportamento ou o gesto [behaviour or the gesture]", the second part, the body of the operator – the artist himself – steps in by painting red bold letters on the cement, exploring the permutational and combinatorial aspects of poetry. In 3) "consecução ou o efeito [achievement or the effect]", Aguiar depicts the instantiation of the text as put in (dis)order by his body, mind and hands, pointing out to the meaningful positioning of each letter. In 4) "súmula ou a enunciação [summary or the enunciation]", the full picture, the full text is presented, emphasizing the visual effect of the negotiation with the context by the composition. According to Elizabeth Fine:

---

[46] Fernando AGUIAR, *Rede de canalização: uma intervenção consoante*, Almada, Author's edition, 1987, [online], < https://bit.ly/3DS45hS >.

112

a performance is much more than a simple sum of codes. Each of the linguistic, paralinguistic, and kinesic elements in a performance interact with, combine, and modify each other, and all of them influence and are influenced by aesthetic field elements, such as the physical and psychological setting and cultural norms of interaction and interpretation.[47]

This new setting is the starting point for its own destruction, as in 5) "ruptura ou o curto-circuito [disruption or short circuit]", the final act, with the emerging potential field and procedure for textuality breakdown and transformation.

Manuel Portela, Google Earth: A Poem for Voice and Internet

Manuel Portela's[48] *Google Earth: A Poem for Voice and Internet* can be interpreted using the reading keys proposed by Sarah Bay-Cheng on social media and digital production. The poem is performed alongside the satellite performance of the world. As put by Bay-Cheng, after McLuhan, "after satellites there is no living, only performance (...)",[49] requiring a full-scale approach to perceive and re-conceptualize, also as a poem, the performative inscription in the fully performative age of media.

As *Google Earth* brutally, but delightfully, exposes the ubiquitous performance of total-media devices and instantiations, Portela's work re-arranges and appropriates this tool through the programmatic consistency of poetic language. By performing the material media of the voice and body language production, Portela brings the latter back to the pragmatic stage of language production as well as space-time presentness. As a live performance, it seeks to tap into this major and pervasive representation of the world from the viewer's perspective, ironically placing satellite images as representations of the self.

The material effects of this strategy are compelling, as they are accompanied by the experimental and performative manipulation of iconic speeches such as George W. Bush's "Financial Markets and World Economy", from 2008, and Barack Obama's "Financial Regulation", from 2010. This poetic appropriation of political rhetoric further shifts the monitoring capabilities of Google's GPS tracking and, at the same time, it enables the 'poelitical' subjects to perform their own subversive programming of the (im)materiality of language.

---

[47] Elizabeth FINE, *The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994, 146.

[48] As the author explains, this performance is part of a series of "self-reflexive mashup parodies of interactions with digital technology." [online], < https://bit.ly/38Mw5Fi >. A version of this performance was recorded live at TAGV (Teatro Académico de Gil Vicente), Coimbra, Portugal, September 24, 2012. Camera and editing by Tiago Cravidão, [online], <https://vimeo.com/56469197>.

[49] Sarah BAY-CHENG, "Digital Culture", in: Bryan REYNOLDS (ed.), *Performance Studies: Key Words, Concepts and Theories*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 42.

Manuel Portela, *Google Earth: A Poem for Voice and Internet*, Coimbra, 2012.

Miguel Azguime, Itinerário do Sal

Another author (poet, musician, composer) who poetically performs programs is Miguel Azguime. Working in Lisbon at the O'culto da Ajuda, his electroacoustic opera *Itinerário do Sal* [Salt Itinerary][50] promotes the convergence of several forms of writing.

The connection between poetry and certain "aspects" of audio, video, and electronic processing in real time is fully accomplished. Not as a mere remix of content(s), but rather of techniques, methods and forms of representation and expression. These *Itineraries* thus distort and defamiliarize the performative character of the technologies and cultural software that pervade our lives. According to Azguime: "O autor está no meio do silêncio / Um silêncio tão profundo que o impele a olhar / para o interior de si próprio [The author is in the midst of silence / A silence so deep that it prompts him to look / within himself]". The ubiquitous software technology becomes a form of writing.

---

[50] Miguel AZGUIME, *Itinerário do Sal*, Lisbon, Miso Records, 2008, [online],
< https://bit.ly/3neOW4x >.

114

Miguel Azguime, *Itinerário do Sal*, 2008.

By deploying a paraphernalia of sensors and technical devices, Azguime proposes a multidisciplinary live action that addresses code and software as the environment for the production and orchestration of new techniques and languages. As suggested by Pavis:

> Is not any mise en scène inherently 'poetic'? By transfiguring the material, whether textual, visual or auditory, the mise en scène metaphorizes it and endeavours to rework it as needed, necessarily intensifying the perception of language, figures and stylistic devices.[51]

The poetic nature of performance is thus enacted in these examples because they demonstrate how performance programs poetry, allowing the conclusion that performance is poetry:

```
if (performance programs poetry) {
    performance is poetry
  }
```

---

[51] Patrice Pavis, *The Routledge Dictionary of Performance and Contemporary Theatre,* New York, Routledge, 2016, 175.

Performance poeticizes program

```
function performance(poeticizes) {
        return program;
    }
```

The fourth function involves the presentation of four performances that poeticize[52] a program, considering works by Berlau, António Dantas, Gabriel Rui Silva, and E. M. de Melo e Castro.

III

alfabetos   as cidades e as criaturas   pela acumulação
dos sons imagens que   livremente porque cada um
quantos fonemas   e   quantas imagens   o que   numa
selva escorregadia e ensurdecedora e as criaturas   os alfabetos   à
pele e   uns dos outros incessante leitura e eu   em letra muito
pequena e por outro lado   constantemente com os outros e um dia
        encontro num hotel cheio de ilustrações e corredores enormes eu
            mas já não   portas que   para mais maiúsculas
e corredores vazios aliás não   lá ninguém e por outro lado eu   que
        tantas imagens e   e   uma série de degraus
tanta pressa das imagens   pelas linhas a baixo e   pela pontuação
e   um capítulo de anagramas uma caixa de anfiguris já não
        não   porquê a mudez   e só as páginas
todo o formato possível única coisa que   ao estado de legibilidade
não   melhor   uma espécie de charneira   em várias
formas   imagens   pela língua fora   o embate
dos corpos que   ao legível   anáforas   de escritas eles
            o meu corpo   já um sintoma de   possível   em outro
estado em outras esferas a actividade   mais intensa e a ilegibilidade
um círculo de círculos do outro lado do visível   por milhões de
palavras antes de   daí que   as consequências
imprevisíveis o escrito   das mensagens durante muito tempo
    mais   os olhos e   medo ou   os olhos do que   medo e então o
legível   o outro lado da imagem e os alfabetos   e   tão
frondosos e os corpos   nas imagens e florestas de papel
as cidades e   pelas bocas dentro e   da língua e as
criaturas   pela acumulação das folhas que   livremente
        de tinta e pelas ensurdecedoras máquinas as criaturas   os
alfabetos   aos dedos e todo o visível   ao ilegível não   melhor
as prensas   as formas do meu corpo no seu desejo de
            pelas goelas   baba   caudas   no
ar no seu desejo de   de grandes dentes   fenda em folhas
escorregadias desejo de   pulsações e tudo   e   e
tudo   de seus lugares o ar   pelo remoinho da escrita as letras   de
seus corpos   já um sintoma de   possível não se   a ilegibilidade
        além

Ana Hatherly, "III", *Metaleitura*, 1969.

---

[52] By "poeticize" we mean "to give a poetic quality to", or "poetic transformation".

A poetization of a program is explored by Berlau's performances of *Metaleitura*, by Ana Hatherly, in *metasonorização - em diálogo com ana hatherly* [metasonorization – in dialogue with ana hatherly].[53] *Metaleitura* [Metareading], book IV of *Anagramático*, was written by Hatherly between 1968 and 1969.

The theorem proposed implied that

> [a]o nível do significado, um texto poético possui tal integridade funcional e é constituído por elementos de tal modo autónomos que suporta sem prejuízo as fragmentações mais sistemáticas [At the level of meaning, a poetic text has such functional integrity and is constituted by such autonomous elements that it endures without detriment the most systematic fragmentations].[54]

In this case, to destroy the text is to open it up for new configurations. These are the operations performed by Hatherly: elimination of the text's keywords; elimination of verbs; elimination of the third word in each group of five; negation of the previous statements. Poetry sets up its own programming as illegibility, and performs unlimited possibilities of meanings. In the provided example, variation "III", the process is the obliteration of the third word in each group of five, resulting in a text that keeps the visual outline of the original, but conveys different meanings.

Applying Hatherly's methodology and theorem (the "program") to music composition – suppressing and recombining the basic units of music –, Berlau proposes with his work a radical reforming of poetry as full experimentation with the relationship between not just language, paralanguage and performance but also kinesics.

If one "of the greatest issues in the era of digital sound concerned what consequences the digital episteme of numbers and instructions, algorithmic representations, and software abstractions had for the embodied act of musical performance",[55] Berlau's experience asserts the gesture-based experimentation, deeply intertwined with its own suspension. Hence the meaningful emptiness of sound as the operative key for performance.

---

[53] BERLAU [Fernando RAMALHO], *meta-sonorização. em diálogo com ana hatherly*, Compact Disc (CD) + Digital Album, 2017, [online], < https://bit.ly/3nasKZi >.

[54] Ana HATHERLY, *Um Calculador de Probabilidades*, Lisboa, Quimera, 2001, 236.

[55] Chris SALTER, *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2010, 217.

+ **al** **fa** **be** **t** **o** **s** **-**
0,05 0,06 0,16 0,17   0,28 0,29   0,41   0,46   0,52

+ **ci** **da** **de**
1,18   1,42   1,53

ccccciiiiiiiidaaaadee
3,20-----------3,30-------3,40--------------3,50----3,55

cidadeidadedadeadedeecidadeidadedad **-**

imagensefl
orestasd
epapel

Berlau, "VI – imagens e florestas de papel (eliminação do verbo juncar) 06:00",
metasonorização - em diálogo com ana hatherly, 2017.

António Dantas, Ao artista basta sê-lo

António Dantas hasn't published many works, but they have circulated in exhibitions and festivals dedicated to visual poetry, xerography and mail-art. His creative manipulations of images (mainly photographic images of humans, including himself) are humorous and critical, concerning politics, economy, and society in general. In "Ao artista basta sê-lo [Artists must only be artists]," a poem-object was sent by email.

It's a selfie with a postage stamp showing the title of the work.[56] The artist doesn't need to explain his works, he just needs to produce them or perform them. This self-performance stems from the author's permanent de-synchronization with

---

[56] The title "Ao artista basta sê-lo" further introduces a double meaning, because the words "sê-lo" [be] and "selo" [stamp] are homophone words in Portuguese. We could add to the proposed translation ("Artists must only be artists") the following alternative: "Artists only need stamps".

his email, which he rarely opens.[57] It results in an identity object where the very lack of synchronization with existence affects us all. In his words, it was a "performativo pedido de desculpas pela minha avezada negligência em abrir o email. [performative apology for my repeated neglect to open the email.]"[58] When asked about the publication in the Digital Archive of PO.EX, Dantas replied: "Em princípio não me parece publicável sendo a imagem um documento e não a obra. [In principle, it does not seem publishable, the image being a document and not the work]." The author forwarded the decision to publish his work to the editor of the abovementioned Digital Archive (Rui Torres), and it was published.[59] The stamp (without the author's selfie) was also included in the catalog of a recent retrospective exhibition of Portuguese experimental poetry in Brazil.[60]
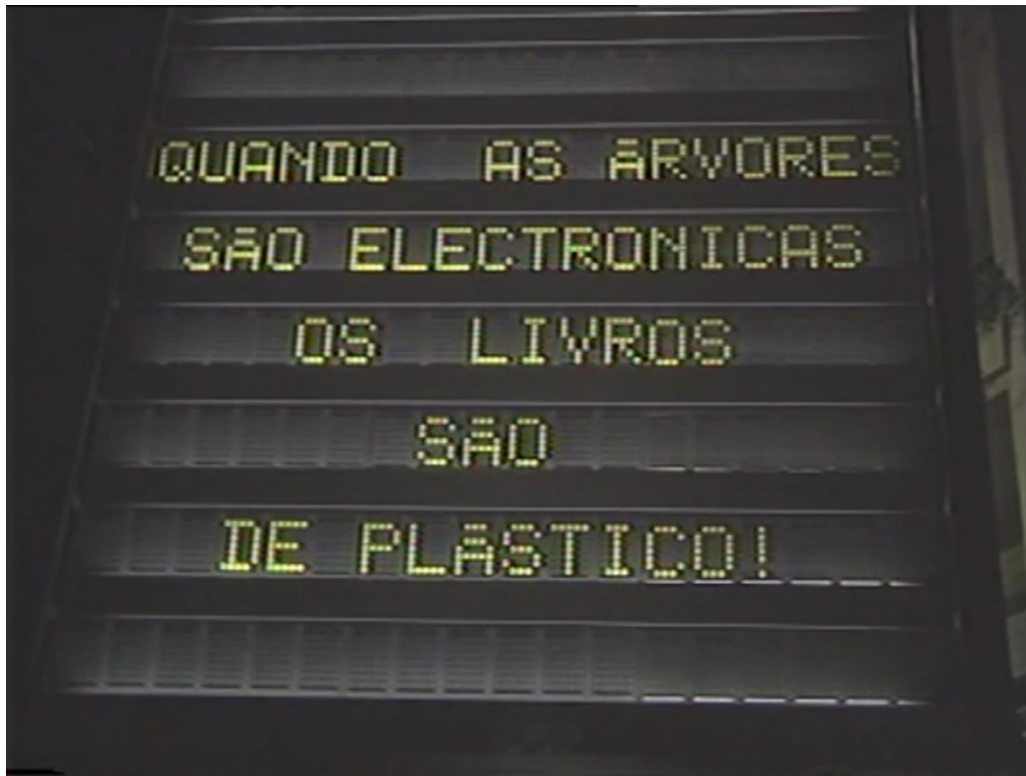

António Dantas, *Ao artista basta sê-lo*, 2014.

---

[57] Email sent by the author to Rui Torres, 10 December 2014, 12:59.

[58] Email sent by the author to Rui Torres, 17 December 2014, 21:06.

[59] [online], <https://po-ex.net/taxonomia/materialidades/planograficas/antonio-dantas-ao-artista-basta-se-lo/>.

[60] Bruna CALLEGARI and Omar KHOURI (eds.), *Poesia Experimental Portuguesa*, Brasília, Espaço Líquido Editora, 2018, 149.

Gabriel Rui Silva, *Big-Bang Poesia!* [still taken at 26'03"], 1991.

Gabriel Rui Silva, Big-Bang Poesia!

Big-Bang Poesia! was an intervention by Gabriel Rui Silva in Almada in 1991, consisting of an unexpected video display of poetry on the city's electronic billboards.

This intervention disrupted the routine of those passing by, inviting them to reflect about living in the city. This was a compelling performance with programs, one that poeticizes them by revealing their invisible performativity. Gabriel Rui Silva, who wrote the script, the program, and the score for this performance in Italy in 1989, mentions the "inesperado aparecimento [unexpected appearance]" of a public display of poetry that could be due to a "momentâneo e sempre possível desarranjo no interior dos cada vez mais pequenos e poderosos computadores. [momentary and ever possible malfunction within the increasingly small and powerful computers]."[61] Silva revealed that the message projected on the screen "repetiu-se seis vezes, por seis vezes se repetiu (…) Seis vezes, seis repetições, o tempo, afinal, de quebrar o habitual fluxo informativo, a quotidiana rotina

---

[61] Gabriel Rui SILVA, *Intervenção urbana. Big-Bang, Poesia!,* Almada, Câmara Municipal de Almada, 1993, [online], < https://bit.ly/3DTIEwY >.

publicitária [was repeated six times, six times repeated. (…) Six times, six repetitions, the time, after all, to break the usual flow of information, the daily advertising routine].!"[62]

The reiteration of the number of times as in an ostinato resembles Fernando Pessoa's *Mensagem* [Message], written in 1918. In "O MOSTRENGO":

> O mostrengo que está no fim do mar / Na noite de breu ergueu-se a voar; / À roda da nau voou três vezes, / Voou três vezes a chiar (...) Três vezes do leme as mãos ergueu, / Três vezes ao leme as reprendeu, / E disse no fim de tremer três vezes (…) [The monster who is at the end of the sea/ In the dark night rose and flew;/ Around the galleon he flew three times, / Three times he flew squeaking, (…) Three times he raised his hands from the boat steering wheel/ Three times he strapped them back to the boat steering wheel, / And said, after trembling three times (…)].[63]

Also, near the end of Silva's performance we can read: "Este é o tempo, este é o lugar! 'Poesia!' [This is the time, this is the place! 'Poetry!']." A resembling awakening is proposed by Pessoa in the poem "NEVOEIRO," from 1928: "Ó Portugal, hoje és nevoeiro... / É a hora! // Valete, Fratres. [Oh Portugal, today you are mist… / 'It is time! Farewell, Brothers.]"[64]

Poetry is seen as purity, knowledge and spiritual elevation, consistent with Buddhist imagery and the lotus flower, a symbol of purity of the body and mind. Hence the advice:

> não comas/ a flor/ do lótus! (...) A memória dos computadores pode ser infectada pela flor do lótus! (...) No lixo das cidades floresce o lótus! [do not eat/ the lotus flower! (...) The memory of computers may be infected by the lotus flower! (...) In the city garbage the lotus blooms!][65]

This is poetry as awakening, through a performance that poeticizes a program.

---

[62] *Ibid.* no page.
[63] Fernando PESSOA, *Mensagem*, Lisboa, Ática, 10th ed., 1972, 62. (Book originally published in 1934).
[64] *Ibid.* 104.
[65] Gabriel Rui SILVA, *ibid.* no page.

E. M. de Melo e Castro, "peça 59 música negativa", *Poesia Experimental* 2, 1966.

E. M. de Melo e Castro, peça 59 música negativa

The awakening fostered by poetic performance can also be revisited in *peça 59 música negativa* [piece 59 negative music],[66] by Melo e Castro.

This intervention was part of *Concerto e Audição Pictórica* [Concert and Pictorial Audition], an experimental happening presented in Lisbon by Portuguese experimental poets and musicians in 1965. The score was published in 1966 in the second issue of the magazine *Experimental Poetry,* and a video was shot by Ana Hatherly in 1977 with the poet Melo e Castro as performer. In spite of the two most obvious possible interpretations of the title, Melo e Castro declares in the piece that one should follow derivative "finding exploratory ways" according to the morphosyntactic value of each letter "A, B, C". This should be accompanied by musical gestures such as air drumming or standing and shaking random objects during the performance, such as squares, triangles and circles corresponding to the 59 beats of the piece.

Such movements could also be replaced by "procurar uns olhos em plena rua [looking for eyes in the middle of the street]", "estar definitivamente só [being definitely alone]" or "a inquietação [disquietness]". This is the poem, as a program, for the performance to be. Taking the typology proposed by Balz Engler[67] for the possible relationships between written text and reading/listening, described as score, comment, complement, contrast, and contradiction, the piece *peça 59 música negativa* might not fit an exact type. Besides performativity as an inherent feature of the poetic text, and the paralinguistic, kinesic, and contextual features, in this case there is also the openness of Melo e Castro's text itself: instead of words, signs are arrayed on an incomplete staff (with three lines instead of the regular five), without observing traditional linearity. Furthermore, the calculated ambiguous meaning of each letter, A, B and C, become starting points for the performance.

As a manifesto against silence with ideological connotations, it is also a bodily declaration on the physicality of sound, music and language. As stated at the beginning of *Música Negativa:* "Este filme é sonoro [This film is a sound motion picture]". Melo e Castro further explains:

> *Música negativa* (1965) nada tem a ver com a valorização musical do silêncio. Tem a ver (porque é para ser vista) com a ausência do som. Começou como uma brincadeira infantil e continuou como metáfora contra a impostura do silêncio e da censura salazarista (…) [*Negative music* (1965) has nothing to do with the musical valorization of silence. It regards[68] (because it is supposed to be seen) the absence of sound. It started as a child's play and went on as a metaphor against the imposture of silence and Salazar's censorship (…)][69]

---

[66] [online], < https://bit.ly/3jKZzcZ >.

[67] Balz ENGLER, *Reading and Listening: The Modes of Communicating Poetry and their influence on the Texts*, Bern, Francke, 1982.

[68] "Tem que ver," in English means "It has to do with", but the verb "ver" means "to see."

[69] E. M. de MELO E CASTRO, *O Caminho do Leve*, Porto, Fundação de Serralves, 2006, 208.

The option for silence thus results in a poetic subversion of an ideological program enacted by a negative performance. The programmatic nature of performance is clear in these examples because they demonstrate how performance poeticizes program, and that leads to the conclusion that performance is program:

```
if (performance poeticizes program) {
    performance is program
}
```

Program poeticizes performance

```
function program(poeticizes) {
        return performance;
}
```

The fifth function involves describing programs that poeticize performance. To illustrate our arguments we present works by Pedro Barbosa and Luís Carlos Petry, Retroescavadora, and two public interventions: *ARQUIVO VIVO É ANARQUIVO!* and *Concerto e Audição Pictórica.*

Pedro Barbosa and Luís Carlos Petry, AlletSator

Lev Manovich has argued that "[i]n a software culture, we no longer have 'documents,' 'works,' 'messages' or 'recordings' (...). Instead of fixed documents that could be analyzed by examining their structure and content (...) we now interact with dynamic 'software performances'."[70] Software is performative, and custom-made software artworks can reveal the hidden performativity of computer programs, defamiliarizing our relation with them.

AlletSator, which reads RotaStella [The Path to the Stars] when mirrored,[71] is a cyberopera that uses videogame-like structures and navigation to create an interactive immersion that poeticizes performance with programs.

---

[70] Lev MANOVICH, *Software Takes Command*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013, 33.

[71] Pedro BARBOSA and Luís Carlos PETRY, *AlletSator – Ópera Quântica* [CD-ROM for Windows and Mac], in: Rui TORRES and Luís Carlos PETRY (eds.), *Cibertextualidades*, 2007, 2, [online], <http://cibertextualidades.ufp.edu.pt/numero-2-2007/ciberdrama-e/download-de-alletsator>.

Pedro Barbosa and Luis Carlos Petry, "ACITEOP AHLI", *AlletSator – Ópera Quântica*, 2007.

The adopted medium, a three-dimensional interface, allows users to understand how the actual and the virtual intersect and blend. The "spectactor" (simultaneously spectator and actor) is immersed in a magical, dreamlike environment and challenged to embark on an endless journey through the cosmos. The initial text of AlletSator was automatically generated by Pedro Barbosa in his textual synthesizer "Syntext". It operated dramaturgically for a theatrical performance in Porto in 2001: "Allesator XPTO – Kosmos 2001".

This pioneering "cyber-dramaturgy" experience led Luís Carlos Petry to adapt what once was a play as interactive hypermedia. The collaboration between the two scholars and artists resulted in the creation of a networked narrative featuring generated text, voice synthesis, and random sonic textures dynamically loaded as one navigates the work. This program was created to poetically address performance.

Retroescavadora, Common Spaces [Untitled]

Another performative environment which is solely based on virtual poetic programs is "Common Spaces", programmed by Luís Leite (aka Grifu), conceived by Rui Torres, with sound generation by Luís Aly.

125
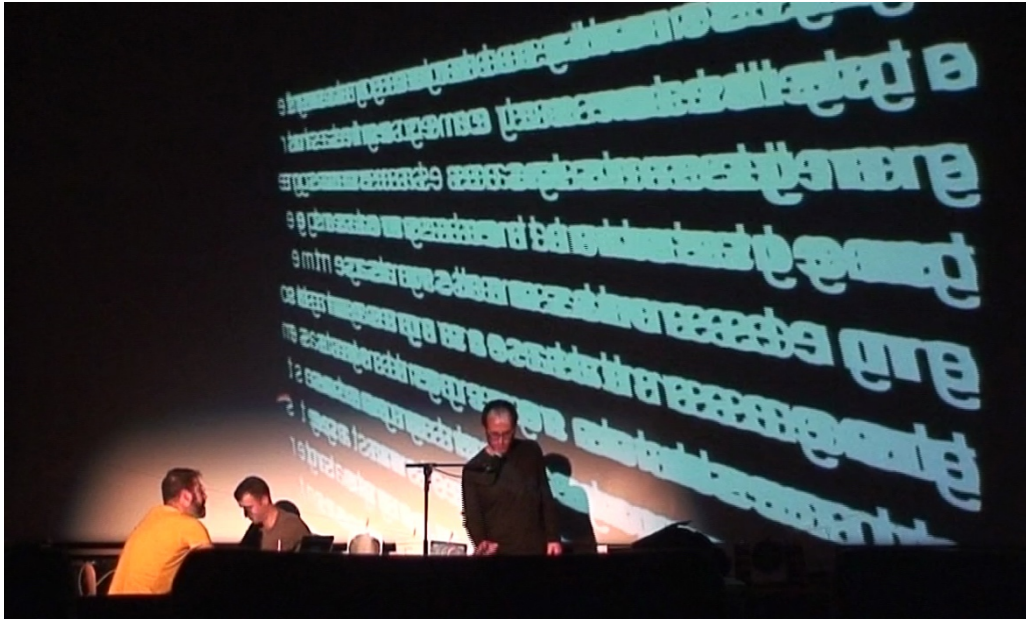
Luís Grifu, Luís Aly and Rui Torres, *Untitled [Common Spaces]*, Conde Duque, Madrid, 2017.

In order to translate spatial poetry into a multidisciplinary collaborative environment that combines physical and virtual spaces, an ecosystem of communication between different representations was created, using an interface for haptic control of animated and generative poems. According to Brenda Laurel, the "interface becomes the arena for the performance (...)",[72] and computers may be regarded as theatre.

The *Common Spaces* framework is therefore a digital program that integrates poetic texts in distinct media spaces for live performance (or installation) scenarios. Texts, sounds and images are controlled and manipulated through gestures, and these three dimensions materialize the text-to-digital-space mapping, exploring the multimodal and multimedial inter-relations.[73] The actor interacts with the environment through voice via microphone, through sight using a webcam, and through touch, with the hands tracked by a Leap Motion device. Each interaction method allows different degrees of freedom.

---

[72] Brenda LAUREI, *Computers as Theatre*, 2nd ed., Boston, Addison-Wesley, 2014, 11.
[73] For more on the concept of Common Spaces see: Luís LEITE, Rui TORRES and Luís ALY, "Common Spaces: Multi-Modal-Media Ecosystem for Live Performances", in: *MATLIT-Materialities of Literature*, 2018, 6(1), 187-98, [online], <https://doi.org/10.14195/2182-8830_6-1_13>.

ARQUIVO VIVO É ANARQUIVO!

After years of digitizing, studying and emulating innovative forms of Portuguese experimental poetry,[74] several dissemination activities were designed to expand awareness and knowledge about the immense corpus of works that were unpublished or simply unavailable before Po-ex.net. One such activity was the public intervention intended to perform the archive. In *ARQUIVO VIVO É ANARQUIVO!* [A LIVING ARCHIVE IS AN ANARCHIVE!], organized by Rui Torres in Porto (Gato Vadio, 2015) and in Coimbra (Salão Brazil, 2016), among other remix projects carried out using the contents of the Digital Archive PO.EX (visual and concrete poems, sound and digital poetry, performance), a series of scripts were programmed by Nuno Ferreira to transform and destroy the interface of the database, allowing the live-manipulation of style and contents, distorting, inverting, and eventually deleting pages.
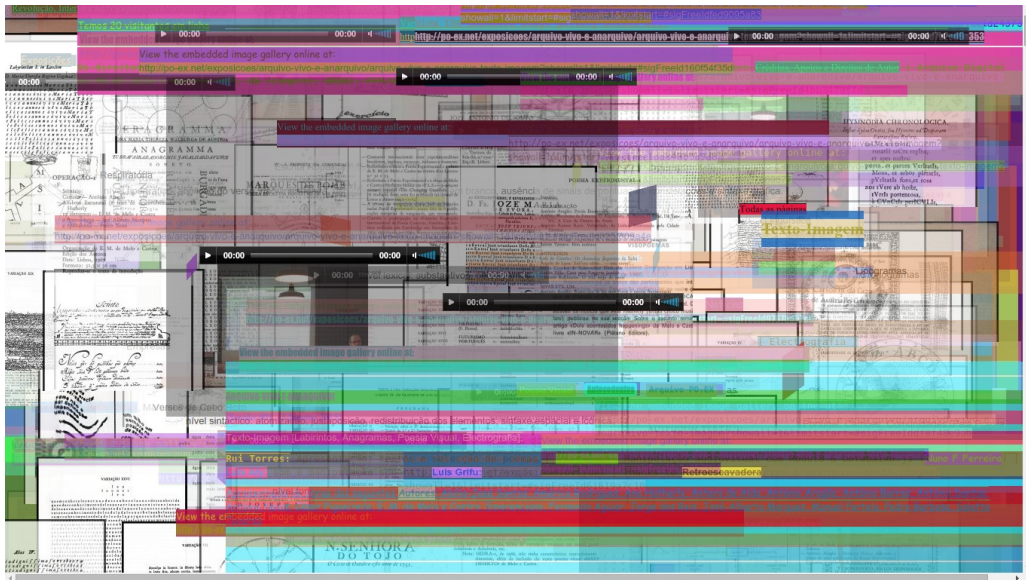
// ==UserScript== @ name: botabaixo; @author: NunoF; @version: 0.3; @description: a monkey that wreaks havoc your web site – progressive and with audio; @include: https://po-ex.net/exposicoes/arquivo-vivo-e-anarquivo/arquivo-vivo-e-anarquivo-texto-imagem. A LIVING ARCHIVE IS AN ANARCHIVE!, 2015.

Digital Archives are not closed entities, they allow using, combining, re-combining and performing their collected and remediated materials. Their contents are able to become reprocessed and re-articulated material. This ability to use or build upon works seems to be even more important in the case of language art and digital

---

[74] The PO.EX Digital Archive is the result of two projects coordinated by Rui Torres at University Fernando Pessoa that were financed by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology and the European Union, [online], <https://po-ex.net/>.

language art, because many of those works are themselves derivative and hypertextual. In fact, appropriation, intertextuality and dialog are common aspects that characterize such works. The scripts Botabaixo.js, FadeMe.js, and FuzzyMe.js were live manipulated[75] and activated in three of the five sessions. Manuel Portela wrote about this activity in the following terms, demonstrating how program poeticizes performance:

> A recodificação do arquivo analógico sob a forma de código digital permite descrever o Arquivo Digital da PO.EX não apenas como espaço de conhecimento da poética experimental, mas como espaço de invenção de uma poética do arquivo, através da qual escrita, imagem e código possam continuar a ser experimentalmente investigados. [The recoding of the analogue archive in the form of digital code allows describing the PO.EX Digital Archive not only as a space for knowledge about experimental poetics, but also as a space of invention of a poetics of the archive itself, through which writing, image and code may continue to be experimentally researched.][76]

Concerto e Audição Pictórica

On the night of January 7, 1965, in the exhibition room Galeria Divulgação, in Lisbon, a collective happening entitled *Concerto e Audição Pictórica* [Concert and Pictorial Audition] took place, in which avant-garde musicians (Jorge Peixinho, Clotilde Rosa, Mário Falcão), painters (Manuel Baptista), and experimental poets (E. M. de Melo e Castro, António Aragão, and Salette Tavares) gathered for an intervention that was radical and disturbing in many ways.

Besides the experimental performance that constituted the event, the happening included experimental music. John Cage pieces were performed by Jorge Peixinho, the "electrovagidos" were performed using a revolver, a violin without strings, a toy piano and a bidet. Clotilde Rosa performed harp solos. Poetry was performed, such as the previously mentioned silent poem "música negativa [negative music]" by Melo e Castro; Dada theatre, as the "O funerão do Aragal [The Funeral/ão of Aragão/al],[77]" and the conference-performance by Salette Tavares with "Ode à crítica [Ode to critics]" while rolls of toilet paper were thrown at the public.

---

[75] Several screen captures of the Archive being live-manipulated are available in the Archive itself, [online], < https://bit.ly/3tmwfgb >.

[76] Manuel PORTELA, "ARQUIVO VIVO É ANARQUIVO! – Contexto da Intervenção", [online], <https://po-ex.net/exposicoes/arquivo-vivo-e-anarquivo/arquivo-vivo-e-anarquivo-con texto-da-intervencao/>.

[77] Aragal derives from Aragão, surname of the performer. The words 'funeral' and 'Aragão' switched their last syllables, 'al' and 'ão'.

CONCERTO E AUDIÇÃO PICTÓRICA

CARTRIDGE MUSIC — JOHN CAGE

no INTERVALO I:

... **escutar-se-á como música de funto**

O FUNERÃO DO ARAGAL — ANTÓNIO ARAGÃO

PEÇA 59 (MÚSICA NEGATIVA) — E. M. MELO E CASTRO
(1.ª audição mundial)

A PORTA NEGRA — JORGE PEIXINHO

Zzzzzzzz..................... Rrrrrrrr!...
(esta peça não será dada ao público por provocar sono)

SUÍTE FOR TOY PIANO — JOHN CAGE

ELECTROVAGIDOS — JORGE PEIXINHO

SONATA AO LU...AR LIVRE
(esta obra não será apresentada cá porque não há ar livre)

no INTERVALO II:

FOCO E BARULHO

CONCERTO A METRO (MARCHA MILITAR)
BALOFONIA
(com a participação do Espírito Humano)

BIDOTRÁFICO

extra-programa (se houver bises):

ÁRIA À CRÍTICA — SALETTE TAVARES
interpretada pela autora

(a ordem do programa será alterada pelos seguintes motivos
(im)previstos):
——————
——————
——————

intérpretes

antónio aragão
clotilde rosa
e. m. de melo e castro
jorge peixinho
manuel baptista
mário falcão
salette tavares

Concerto e Audição Pictórica [Program], 1965.

Nonetheless, what is more relevant for the scope of the present article is the fact that the program of the event, published by Ana Hatherly in an article for *Diário Popular* on January 28, is in itself a performative document. It announces interventions that would not be performed, such as the plays "Zzzzzzzzzzz.............. Rrrrrrrr!", that would not be performed "por provocar sono [for inducing sleep]," and the "SONATA AO LU… AR LIVRE [SONATA TO THE OPEN MOON…AIR]", that will not take place "porque não há ar livre [because there is no open air]".[78]

It should be noted that an assumed methodology of improvisation and provocation, characteristics of the happening, presided over the event, intended to promote a pedagogical debate. This goal was achieved, judging by the famous polemic in the newspapers between Manuel de Lima and Jorge Peixinho, resonating to this day. The event was also notable for the programmatic intention to affirm poetry as an experiment and bodily experience, in its daily performative experimentalism. As stated by Melo e Castro in the exhibition's catalog:

> por isso e para isso aqui se experimentam os objetos e as pessoas em atos vulgares muito simples deliberadamente fora do seu contexto organizado quotidiano – redescobrindo o caos com as nossas mãos – experimentando. [which is why and for what reason objects and people are involved here in very simple ordinary actions deliberately beyond their everyday organized context - rediscovering chaos with our hands – experiencing.][79]

The performative nature of the program is evident in these examples as they demonstrate how program poeticizes performance, which allow concluding that program is performance:

```
if (program poeticizes performance) {
    program is performance
}
```

Program performs poetry

```
function program(performs) {
        return poetry;
}
```

Concerning the last function, program performs poetry, we will describe four programs that perform poetry. Besides the works by E. M. de Melo e Castro, Pedro Barbosa and José-Alberto Marques, remediated and transcoded by Rui Torres,

---

[78] Ana HATHERLY and E. M. de MELO E CASTRO (eds.), *Po.Ex: Textos teóricos e documentos da Poesia experimental portuguesa*, Lisboa, Moraes, 1981, 47. The Portuguese expression "ar livre" (fresh air) literally means 'free air', referring to freedom; hence the reference to the absence of 'free air' in Portugal has a strong political connotation.

[79] *Ibid.,* 48.

Nuno Ferreira and André Sier, there is also reference to an installation by wr3ad1ng d1git5.

E. M. de Melo e Castro, *Álea e Vazio [Retextualization by Rui Torres]*

Literary texts are composed according to specific textual constraints. Similarly, electronic literature sets specific constraints in symbiosis with the machine. *Álea e Vazio,* by Melo e Castro,[80] is an example of handwritten computer composition that corresponds to the function "poetry performs program".

Tudo pode ser dito num Poema

1) propõe-se o seguinte modelo

           em presença
acaso A é B   de A (ou de B, ou de C, etc.)
           na ausência

2) A e B são um par de contrários

exemplos:
       tudo – nada
       bem – mal
       alto – baixo
       belo – feio
       preto – branco
       etc.   etc.

3) A e B são substantivos ou pronomes

exemplos:
       homem – deus
       arma   – braço
       casa   – fogo
       amor   – vento

       eu – tu
       tu – ele

       etc. etc.

E. M. de Melo e Castro, "Tudo pode ser dito num poema", *Álea e Vazio*, 1971.

---

[80] E. M. de MELO E CASTRO, *Álea e Vazio*, Lisboa, Moraes, 1971.

Proposing a poetic algorithm in "Tudo pode ser dito num poema [Anything can be said in a poem]", Melo e Castro proves to understand poetry as program and program as poetry. In this case, Melo e Castro presented a model and invited readers to use their own words to develop texts according to preestablished combinatorial rules:

> 1) (…) acaso A é B [em presença | em ausência] de A (ou de B, ou de C, etc.) / 2) A e B são um par de contrários (…) / 3) A e B são substantivos ou pronomes (…) / 4) C é aleatório / 5) escolha as suas palavras e desenvolva o modelo segundo a regra combinatória da alínea 1 / 6) estude atentamente as proposições resultantes / 7) não suspenda a sua pesquisa: tudo pode ser dito num poema. [1) can A be B, in the presence/absence of A (or B, or C, etc.)? / 2) A and B are a pair of opposites (…) / 3) A and B are nouns or pronouns (…) / 4) C is random / 5) choose your own words and develop the model according to the combinatorial rule stated in 1 / 6) carefully study the resulting propositions / 7) do not suspend your research: anything can be said in a poem.][81]

Some examples resulting from the original proposal were: Is everything nothing in the presence of everything? Is everything nothing in the presence of nothing? – The potential of such endeavors for current digital poetics is obvious. Nevertheless, it may be complemented by the preface from one of Pedro Barbosa's computer-generated books (distributed on floppy disk as a program, originally published in Portuguese in 1996), in which Barbosa states that:

> (…) the virtual text implies the unfinished and the infinite multiplicity of texts generated by the program. The texts do not exist in the magnetic medium as texts, and, therefore, hold no aprioristic meaning. Texts merely exist in the computer in a potential state or in a latent state, as a project or program. The virtual text is a literary structure associated with a computerized engine that puts it to work.[82]

The text by Melo e Castro was revisited by Pedro Barbosa in the 1980s, who programmed it electronically. The program performed the instruction contained in the poem. Rui Torres also published a version/retextualization, "translating" and thus recovering the *dynamics* that were implicit in the original work.[83]

---

[81] *Ibid.,* 97-98.

[82] Pedro BARBOSA, "Perspectives and Virtualities of the Virtual Text", in: Rui TORRES and Sandy BALDWIN (eds.), *PO.EX: Essays from Portugal on Cyberliterature and Intermedia by Pedro Barbosa, Ana Hatherly, and E. M. de Melo e Castro,* West Virginia, Center for Literary Computing, 2014, 117.

[83] Texts by E. M. de Melo e Castro, originally published in *Álea e Vazio* (1971), retextualized by Rui Torres in XML, using poemario.js, conceived by Torres and programmed by Nuno F. Ferreira in JavaScript, [online], < https://bit.ly/3yOgC27 >.

Tudo pode ser dito num poema [Retextualização] >

Parar Continuar

Reiniciar

Velocidade:

Acaso o fogo é luz em presença da noite?
Acaso a arma é feio em presença da velhice?
Acaso o homem é alvoroço em presença do amor?
Acaso o bem é velhice em ausência da luz?
Acaso o belo é verdade em ausência do fogo?
Acaso o belo é alegria em presença da velhice?
Acaso o braço é morte em presença da verdade?
Acaso a doença é tudo em ausência da tristeza?
Acaso o branco é morte em presença da guerra?
Acaso a arma é feio em ausência do acaso?
Acaso o homem é tristeza em ausência da verdade?
Acaso o braço é belo em presença da arma?
Acaso o feio é guerra em presença da guerra?
Acaso o bem é morte em ausência da velhice?
Acaso a velhice é preto em ausência do acaso?
Acaso a alegria é feio em presença da p

Rui Torres, Retextualization of E. M. de Melo e Castro, "Tudo pode ser dito num poema", Digital Archive of PO-EX, 2014.

Reviewing Pedro Barbosa's works from the 1970s, Ana Hatherly wrote:

> Os poetas portugueses (...) não tentando de facto repetir as experiências da poesia feita com computadores mas tendo-as em mente, fizeram qualquer coisa de talvez mais criativo ainda, que foi a transposição, sobretudo dos processos combinatório e aleatório associados às «Composições» da máquina electrónica, para a realização de textos «humanos» - os seus próprios -, introduzindo desse modo na escrita da poesia elementos de uma renovação inusitada, realmente revolucionária, que ainda hoje deixa críticos e público menos preparados extremamente perplexos. [Portuguese poets (...) did not really try to repeat the experiences of poetry made with computers but having them in mind, they did something perhaps even more creative, which was the transposition of combinatorial and random processes associated with 'Compositions' from the electronic machine onto producing 'human' texts - their own - thus introducing in poetry new unusual writing

elements, truly revolutionary and to this day still extremely baffling for the less prepared public and critics.][84]

Among several other examples, in *Electrònico-lírica* Herberto Helder used the combinatorial process. In 1961, in Italy, Nanni Balestrini also carried out an experiment with an electronic calculator, processing ancient and modern texts according to a set of previously established combinatorial rules and resulting in 3002 combinations. Herberto Helder compared their work clarifying he used the same attitude through a process of transference, but not "cingir a qualquer regra [bound by any rule]."[85] According to the poet, this resulted in a resemblance to "certos textos mágicos primitivos, a certa poesia popular, a certo lirismo medieval (…) [certain primitive magical texts, a certain popular poetry, a certain medieval lyricism (...)]",[86] thus creating a peculiar

> fórmula ritual mágica, de que o refrão popular é um vestígio e de que é vestígio também o paralelismo medieval, exemplificável com as cantigas dos cancioneiros. [magical ritual formula, of which the popular refrain is a vestige and of which medieval parallelism was also a vestige, exemplified by the songs in the songbooks (cancioneiros)].[87]

Helder concludes that "[o] princípio combinatório é, na verdade, a base linguística da criação poética [The combinatory principle is actually the linguistic foundation for poetic creation.]"[88]

André Sier, MathX (Poemário)

Another example of performance with programs that transcode poetic texts into digital interactive environments is *MathX (Poemário)* programmed by André Sier based on textual combinatory structures provided by Rui Torres.[89]

This interactive and immersive virtual space uses sound synthesis to navigate through programmed combinatorial poems by Pedro Barbosa and E. M. de Melo e Castro. It is therefore a program that allows users to play with texts, hence a performative program.

MathX (Poemário) has a web version available, but the full potential can only be experienced in performance mode. This program that performs poetry was first presented at *ARQUIVO VIVO É ANARQUIVO!,* in the session dedicated to Text-Code [Combinatorics, Interactivity, Electronic Literature] on May 2nd, 2015. Poems by Pedro Barbosa ("Elegias", "Porto", and "Aveiro"), E. M. de Melo e

---

[84] Ana HATHERLY, "Review of *A Literatura Cibernética 1*, by Pedro Barbosa", in: *Colóquio/Letras*, 1978, 76.

[85] Herberto HELDER, *Electronicolírica*, Lisbon, Guimarães Editores, 1964, 49.

[86] *Ibid.,* 50.

[87] *Ibidem.*

[88] *Ibidem.*

[89] [online], <https://s373.net/x/mathx_poemario/>.

Castro ("Álea e vazio", "Modo de agir", "Tu que serves és servido comes", and "Um pouco como um oco"), and Rui Torres ("Do peso e da leveza"), were transcoded to this performative program. By using the keyboard, users can manipulate and navigate the generated texts.

Ragnhild Tronstad wrote that digital media may constitute performance by themselves,[90] and added that "many digital media genres are implicitly performative in that they instigate role-play and performativity from their users (...)".[91]

In fact, the programmability of poetry, when connected to the performativity of program itself, sheds some light on software as performance. Defamiliarizing our digital condition, transforming transparent appliances into illegible devices, the following examples provide an understanding of machine programmed textuality.
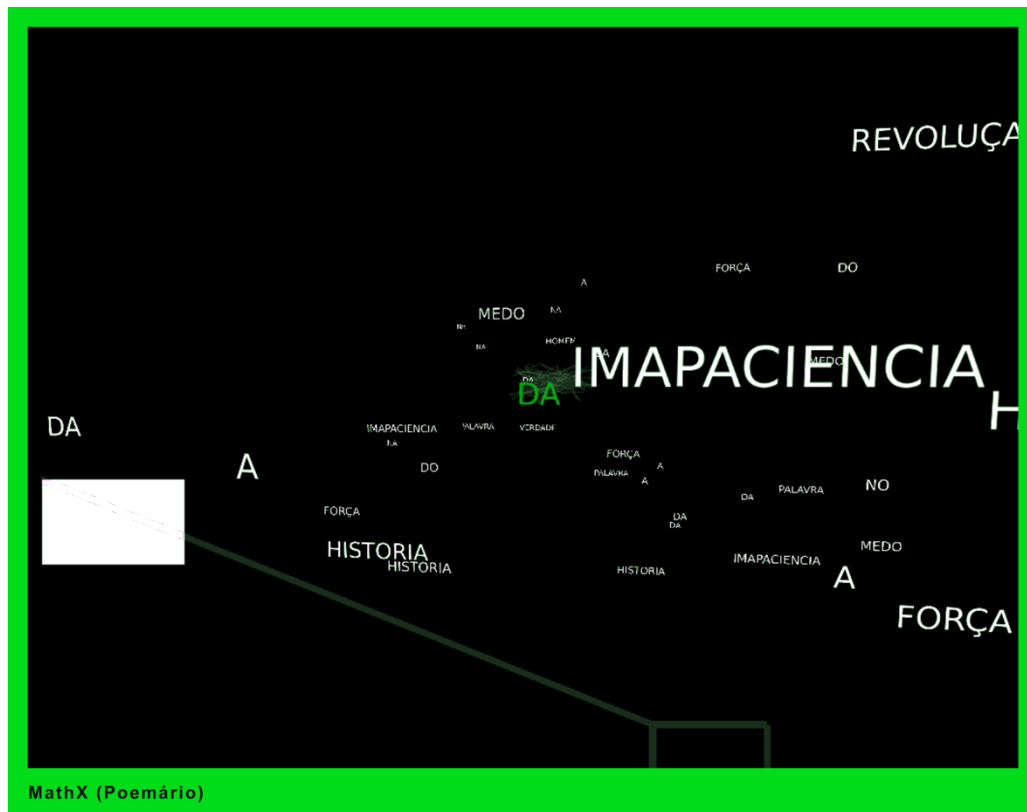
André Sier, *MathX (Poemário)*, 2015

[90] Ragnhild TRONSTAD, "Performance", in: Marie-Laure RYAN, Lori EMERSON and Benjamin J. ROBERTSON (eds.), *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014, 388.

[91] *Ibid.,* 391.

José-Alberto Marques, "Homeóstato-1" [Detail. The first four out of nineteen lines], 1965.

Rui Torres and Nuno Ferreira, Gerador de Homeóstatos

In the second issue of the Portuguese magazine *Poesia Experimental* [Experimental Poetry], published in 1966 and organized by António Aragão, Herberto Helder, and E. M. de Melo e Castro, a visual poem entitled "Homeóstato [Homeostat]" by José-Alberto Marques was published.

This poem was followed by a series of similar works by the author.[92] The "homeostats" by José-Alberto Marques translate an inquiry regarding the limits and limitations of text. Through an expressive atomization of linguistic material, ideogrammatic relations between signs are revealed and minimal variations are set into motion. In short, a homeostat is a device that is able to maintain homeostasis in a changing environment, adapting to the environment. Through Marques' appropriation, the produced visual poems reach textual stability and readability. Dialoguing with Ana Hatherly's *Metareading*, these homeostatic poems act by repetition and deletion: the initial verse of the poem is repeated in all lines but with each repetition some words and letters are left out, and thus the successive homeostatic variations represent metonymically the whole poem.

Retextualizations of code turned obsolete are activities that help us understand how program is poetry. A textual procedure coherent with our "program performs poetry" function was used in two experiments developed by Rui Torres with the "Homeostats" by José-Alberto Marques. One with Eugenio Tisselli and another one with Nuno Ferreira. In the first one, programmed in Processing, the

---

[92] [online], < https://bit.ly/3yWf46s >.

complete text of the various repetitions appears on a page, from which letters are deleted each time a reader accesses it.

The destruction of the text is thus implicated by the reading process, becoming a non-reading. In the second version, Marques' homeostats were programmed to react to a combinatorial textual engine (10 versions programmed with poemario.js, unlimited resulting variations).[93]

Rui Torres and Nuno Ferreira, "Homeóstato 1", *Gerador de Homeóstatos*, 2015.

On a second level, and on top of each generative variation, the reader can click to generate indeterminate and homeostatic variables. Finally, the "Homeostat N" allows readers to enter their own text(s) to generate homeostats with the selected lexicon. This version is presented below:

The words included "interferências literárias poesia performativa como programa poesia programada como performance, [literary interferences performative poetry as program poetry programmed as performance]". In the three first lines of verse from one of many potential variations: "cria som a rama / tira frio rir fome / casas eco morrer arfa [creates sound the branch / takes cold laughs hunger / houses eco dying gasps]."

---

[93] [online], <https://telepoesis.net/homeostatos>.

```
Homeóstato N: Crie o seu próprio homeóstato!


Homeóstatos > #01 | #02 | #03 | #04 | #05 | #06 | #07 | #08 | #09 | #A | #N

        interferências literárias poesia programa performance
                                                        o m
                c a           r a                    fo m   e
        f       a l t     a     s    o            f  r    e
    int   e         i     r as                ama        m
    int   e         i     r as              a   rf  a
        f       a l       a    es              pe   r a
        f       a l t     a     s          a   e    m
          s     e  r               g        e    r a
        e  n       t  r a    s              a   e    m
        f       a l t     a     s    o          f  r    e
                ter r a                          fo m   e
    int   e         i     r a           ama        r
        f           rias               m     or a
        e  nc a        r a             r     e    m
          c as    t    a      s                  o m
      t   e  c       e  r    es              pe   r a
    in   er        te                    a        ma
      t   e  c       e                  ama        r
        e     s    t á    es              pe   r a
    int   e         i     r a              a   rf  a
                l   e  i    es              pe   r a


                (clicar em qualquer ponto da caixa para fechar)
```

Rui Torres and Nuno Ferreira, "Homeóstato N", *Gerador de Homeóstatos*, 2015.

According to Portela the programmed versions of the 'Homeostats'

> formalizam o modelo textual do original, demonstrando a relação nele contida entre o motor textual e as instanciações textuais geradas pela recombinação dos seus caracteres em novas unidades de inscrição-sentido, isto é, a presença simultânea do texto-código e do texto gerado pelo código. [formalize the textual model of the original, demonstrating the relationship it contains between the textual engine and the textual instantiations generated by recombining characters into new units of inscription-sense, that is, simultaneous presence of text-code and code generated text.][94]

wr3ad1ng d1git5, PALAVROFAGIA

PALAVROFAGIA[95] [WORDOPHAGY] is an installation/performance by the Portuguese collective wr3ad1ng d1git5 that develops the hereby presented performative processes. It proposes the word(s) to be devoured, chewed, digested and dissolved. Composed of three variations, each of them represents a different process of performance programming poetry, or performance as poetry.

---

[94] Manuel PORTELA, "Sentir o sentido: a experiência do código nos « homeóstatos » de José-Alberto Marques", in: *Texto Digital*, 2016, 12(1), 77, [online], < https://bit.ly/3tmObra >.

[95] WR3AD1NG D1GIT5, *PALAVROFAGIA: Absorção, Devoração, Consumição*, 2017, [online], <https://po-ex.net/taxonomia/materialidades/digitais/wreading-digits-palavrofagia-varia coes/>.

wr3ad1ng d1git5, "Consumição", *PALAVROFAGIA*, 2017.

The first variation, "ABSORÇÃO [ABSORPTION]", proposes an association between photography and chromatography and articulates an ephemeral represent-tation of text. The color spectra feed off the printed text, and eventually eliminate it.

As explained by the authors, it constitutes a reflection about dichotomies such as presence/absence, legible/illegible.[96] This relates to the issues raised so far: what do (or can) we read when the text is literally decomposing, and is programmed to disappear? – An interesting connection could be discerned between "ABSORÇÃO" and *Agrippa (A Book of the Dead)*, by William Gibson, Dennis Ashbaugh and Kevin Begos, Jr. (1992), as they both speak to the ethereal essence of memory. Gibson's work was programmed to encrypt after a single use, and the pages of the accompanying book were created using photosensitive chemicals, triggering a subsequent fading of words and images.

The second stage of *PALAVROFAGIA* is "DEVORAÇÃO [DEVORA-TION]". At this point of the performance the text endures an act of desacralization as the object is a book that can be consumed, i.e., eaten. Literally.

Finally, in "CONSUMIÇÃO [CONSUMPTION]",[97] a digital program compels readers to face the Baroque paradox of *chiaroscuro* and new dichotomies appear: noise/silence, centripetal/centrifugal.

This program is an interactive spiral that creates circular spaces as the moving texts are "devoured" at the same pace at which they are being generated. As a metaphor for the human cognitive process, the outputs are appropriated instead of available for appropriation or even perception. The poetic nature of program is presented through these examples as they demonstrate how program performs poetry, which leads to the conclusion that program is poetry:

```
if (program performs poetry) {
    program is poetry
}
```

Conclusion

Innovative forms of experimental or digital language art transcode and appropriate linguistic and mechanical processes that allow us to define a semantic network linking poetry, performance, and program, thus producing the conceptual inter-actions proposed above. The transgressive reinventions and remediations addressed in this article subvert the adopted mechanisms, but they also update our under-standing of networked cultures. Supported by performance and program, poetry questions the performative and programmatic nature of language. Performative poetry thus develops into program, and programmed poetry inclines towards the performative. Poetry, performance and program act as unrepeatable events, addressing the power of language to predetermine reading and writing practices designed for expression and communication. Mukarovský's dictum could thus be

---

[96] WR3AD1NG D1G1T5, "PALAVROFAGIA: VARIAÇÕES (2017)", in: Rui TORRES and Claudia KOZAK (eds.), *Fobias - Fonias - Fagias. Escritas Experimentais e Eletrónicas Ibero-Afro-Latinoamericanas*, Porto, Publicações Universidade Fernando Pessoa, 198, [online], < https://bit.ly/3BTczUl >

[97] [online], <https://wreading-digits.com/consumicao>.

expanded as follows: art needs to foreground the technical scheme of textuality:[98] programmed poetry is able to amplify performance, and performance is able to improve the potential of programmed poetry.

Rui TORRES[99]

University Fernando Pessoa, Portugal

ICNOVA (NOVA Institute of Communication), Portugal

Sandra GUERREIRO DIAS

Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Portugal

CLP (Centre for Portuguese Literature), University of Coimbra, Portugal

---

[98] In 1932, Mukarovský wrote: "automatization schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of the scheme." Jan MUKAROVSKÝ, "Standard language and poetic language", P. L. GARVIN (ed.), *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, Washington, Georgetown University Press, 1964, 19.

[99] Rui Torres would like to express his gratitude to the organizers of the conference "Poesias performativas / Performative poetry: Teorias e práticas, perspectivas Comparadas", and the Center for Comparative Studies at the University of Lisbon, where part of this paper began, as a keynote to the Conference on October 29, 2018 at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon, Portugal.