

Porto Script for PPT Screens-12.doc

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PPT SCREEN 1 THIS SCREEN UP AS PEOPLE ENTER THE ROOM

Forms of Translation: Experimental Texts Rewritten as Migrations to Digital Media

Marjorie C. Luesebrink and Stephanie Strickland

Axolotls and Perfume Bottles

Pt. 1 Pinto's Reading of Cortázar's *Axolotls*

Pt. 2 Coverley & Strickland's "To Be Here As Stone Is."

Donna Leishman

Cautionary Tale: Stories Made and Distributed through the Internet

remediation and retelling in Leishman's *Red Riding Hood*

Angélica J. Huízar

Poetic Transliteration, Metaphysical Transpositions in Brazilian Digital Poetries

poetry of Brazilian poet Álvaro Andrade Garcia, specifically
his *Grão y LivrE*, will be the focus of this analysis.

Welcome to Our Panel!

We're short on time, so I'm going to begin.

Texts are transformed when migrated from print to digital form. Beyond multimedia, interactivity, or possible insertions by a reader, the very structure of a digital work is itself a translation, an architectural design shaped by the technology of its era.

PPT SCREEN 2: MUSEO shows title, date, DOUBLE ENTRANCE, stills

A migrated work is also transformed by contextualization within an idiosyncratic website.

Regina Célia Pinto is a net artist who broke new ground with her *Museum of the Essential and Beyond That*, an elaborate virtual building including areas such as Cartographies and Globalization, as well as a game room and many galleries, some of them memorial. One enters via map or pinwheel, choosing from non-correlated, parallel collections of deeply nested rooms and galleries.

PPT SCREEN 3: COLLAGE of STILLs: PINK MUSEO, FIRST FLOOR PLAN, LIBRARY OF MARVELS

Deep diving through the Map entrance, choosing First Floor from the Floor Plan, and finally Library of Marvels, we arrive at Pinto's 2004 transformation of "Axolotl," a 1952 Cortázar story, which she considers together with Gustavo Bernardo's book on Vilem Flusser, published to much acclaim in Brazil in 2002.

Viewing Axolotls evokes technical capabilities that will dominate the 21st century. Surrounded by projections, immersed in data visualization, we transact with networked data bodies, enter augmented reality, think and calculate by means of simulation, and engage for play and profit with virtual reality—all of these allow and require us to wander far from our GPS location on the other side of a glass screen. The central transformation of Cortázar's story is a glass barrier that becomes a portal.

PPT SCREEN 4: TITLE SCREEN

Deep diving is pursued by the unemployed narrator who travels through Paris in Cortázar's story. Passing through aquarium glass re-writes him as a Mexican salamander, an axolotl as the Aztecs name it

in Nahuatl, a mesmerizing blank-eyed creature characterized by immobility, withdrawal from touch, and a larval stage of development never outgrown.

At Pinto's entrance, we find a bilingual title floated on the skylight of an old Parisian building and acknowledgment that this work is based on Cortázar, Flusser/Bernardo, Flash 6, and pop-up windows. Parallel bilingual translation (Portuguese and English) informs every screen of this piece.

PPT SCREEN 5: MAIN INTRODUCTORY SCREEN

Label 7 boxes 1-Story 2-Reflection 3-Reflection 4-Ax-Box 5-Game 6-Participate 7-Views
Point between Boxes and Titles

From the title we come to a box of eyes that pulse with the applied label, Axolotl, and an image of an axolotl floating on them.

PPT SCREEN 6: MAIN INTRODUCTORY SCREEN

Collage of various states of the pop-up

Clicking an eye yields a close-up captioned with a quote from late in Cortázar's story, after human-axolotl merger has been accomplished. Clicking the Right eye *in the pop-up* displays an early Cortázar paragraph in which the aimless bike-rider becomes an aquarium visitor who stares for hours.

The link-word panther takes us to Rilke's poem, "The Panther." Wearily pacing, this animal finds "no more world" on one side of his cage bars than on the other. By contrast, clicking on the indicated arrow, we find an animation.

PPT SCREEN 7 Long MOVIE WOMAN INTO AQUARIUM

A woman approaches the tank and passes through glass. She reappears as both exterior observer and avatar only to disappear wholly into the tank, acquiring the size, motility, and tail of the other axolotls.

After her last transition, a rewritten version of Cortázar's last paragraph appears at the top of the screen. The narrator's gender is now female, and Pinto suggests that "interested in new medias ... she will create a virtual reality with axolotls."

Clicking the Left eye on the original pop-up reveals a distinct apparatus, a box that oscillates between showing eyes and axolotl—the latter seeming to penetrate the screen barrier.

PPT SCREEN 8 STORY SCREEN

Returning to the first choice on the introductory screen, we find parallel Portuguese and English scrolling versions of Cortázar's Spanish story.

PPT SCREEN 9 DRAGON SCREEN movie

The second choice brings a digital dragon in his own "aquarium," a windowed box from a drawing program. He is a "A dragon tattooed in bytes," the screen tells us; that is, a chimera, a conflation of two orders of reality. If you drag the axolotl climbing over the dragon out of frame, as you are prompted to do, he seems unable to fully re-enter.

Questions cycle beneath him:

"Is virtual reality more attractive than reality itself?"

"Is every image a fraud, like a dragon sculpted in sand?"

"*Sensible* visual reality or *tangible* virtual reality"?

Pinto creates an amalgam of the imagined and the image-processed, analogizing it to "Escher's lizards [that] leave the paper and run onto the table. These lizards are realistic: their heads are real; their tails are simulacra. They are chimeras."

From 1999-2004 Pinto produced a single-minded series of web-books. "The starting point of my research is always SEEING," she writes, "whether we are looking at fog, looking on in horror, looking at madness, looking at culture, or viewing axolotls, which once again involves looking at fog...." These works show the influence of magical realism, but *Viewing Axolotls* is specifically influenced by Flusser

who stresses that new technical image-forms constitute an historical break. For him, the technical apparatus operates in ways not immediately known to its operator. New affordances prefigure and determine the experience of looking.

PPT SCREEN 10 SAND WOMAN SCREEN movie

In the third choice, a sand-woman consorts with the dragon-lizard. She can be overlaid with roving eyes, an active axolotl, and an aquarium-entering avatar.

Pinto asks,

How to enter the aquarium and explore without suffocating for lack of air?

How to leave the aquarium and explore without suffocating for lack of air?

questions that equalize, as with Rilke's panther, the plight on either side of the screen. That equalization modifies Cortázar's account, in which a high degree of devolution is suggested for life in the tank.

Axolotls exhibit neotenic regression and a womb-returning quality. Cortázar refers to a lost state of mind and a state of language-less-ness.

PPT SCREEN 11 AX-BOX movie

Our fourth choice takes us from axolotl *in* a box to AX-box, or X-Box, a kind of pun—as the screen says, “... a generic interface for virtual reality hardware. As a first demonstration of the ax-box, we have created a cube with some eyes (two for each axolotl). When the mouse moves over its eye, the axolotl's gaze will also shift on the screen.”

PPT SCREEN 12 Collage of DRAWING SCREEN with other Shots

Pinto has thus rewritten a man who leaves his bicycle against a railing and enters a tank (regressing his legs), to a chimera trapped on a 2-dimensional grid, to a sense organ equipped with 3-dimensional VR capability. Readers are invited to participate by creating their own animations and are prompted to send them for insertion in the piece.

But in the fifth choice from the main screen,

PPT SCREEN 13 GAME SCREEN long movie

the reader is asked to participate very differently by playing a game. Cortázar's "Axolotl" is part of a volume, *End of the Game*, presenting the reader, in its Spanish edition, with games increasingly difficult to understand. For Flusser, "[A] game in which every virtuality, even the least probable, will be realized of necessity if the game is played for a sufficiently long time," is what he means by "program."

On the game screen's parallel scrolling texts, Pinto quotes both Flusser and Bernardo on Flusser.

BERNARDO: "Consumers live scripted lives, while reality-creating machines predict all their movements. This phenomenon is so powerful that everyone actually has two bodies: one real and another fictitious (shaped by received data)."

FLUSSER: Humankind is divided into two types: people who like diffused light, and those who don't.... The first type tries to see through the fog and the second type tries to lift it."

Pinto's "Fog Game Reloaded," has 5 rules:

- 1- Roll the dice to get a high enough score to initiate play.
- 2- Navigate with keyboard arrows. Wait ... the avatar is slow to materialize...
- 3- The objective: make the avatar and the axolotls exchange glances. Make the Woman choose those axolotls that will access the words that should emerge. Their required order is: view / fog / understanding. If the words are in the opposite order, clear the screen, and restart.
- 4- Now make all three words appear simultaneously.
- 5- If you do complete all stages perfectly, this could be a sign that you are one of the next revolutionaries who can lift or see through fog...

The lonely, wistful tone of the Cortázar is here transformed to something wishful and Utopian. It suggests that by manipulating keys and glances, one can re-order knowledge correctly; that is, a *view* on *fog* should give way to *understanding*. If understanding gives way to fog to leave an indeterminate view, you have to restart the game—

Pinto suggests that new media narratives may help solve the problem of learning to see. She writes: “The pixels light up..The magic of a narrative is recreated... and immediately everyone takes on the appropriate stance...: the "view" of the spectator-subject (with all his/her blindness) and the gaze emitted from the electronic book-object (with all its slyness) clash in a duel of interpretation, simulation and interactivity....[T]he narrator can direct our gaze to the viewpoint of dreams, while simultaneously turning that gaze to the nightmare of entering an aquarium, an unknown watery world. This move could bring an end to the blindness inherent to all views, enabling them to distance themselves reflexively and see themselves while looking (or not)....”

For her the true magic seems to be simultaneity of double gaze—as a way to end cultural blindness; a view she consistently enacts in screen after screen, both graphically and linguistically. The two-way, bilateral, bi-focusing, bi-located, interchangeably-located gaze that lets one see oneself, while looking, *is* a mirror magic enhanced by computational possibility and incarnated by the aquarium transactions in Cortázar’s story.

PPT SCREEN 14 TO BE HERE AS STONE IS (still image title screen as it once was)

Five years earlier than Pinto’s work, Strickland and Luesebrink also translated a print work to a digital hypermedia form. The print poem, “To Be Here As Stone Is,” appears with the silhouette of a (Shalimar) perfume bottle in the print book *True North* and is a heavily linked node in *True North Hypertext*.

If *Viewing Axolotls* outlines a path to the interior humid space of aquarium tank or nightmare brain—always crossing over into contained space—*To Be Here as Stone Is* traces a path that breaks out from the interior of a perfume bottle to a cosmic location.

PPT SCREEN 15 To Be Here screens collage

Its stress falls on the fact that what all objects

are—all you see—is extinguished starlight:

Objects

are answers, unspoken collusions of humans with the earth

as it turns, as it culminates in night-skies on Neptune, Earth
as it sweeps by, or is swept—it depends where you are—
by schools of light, loose, adrift in the empty
aisles of the cosmos:

And yet it too recognizes the contemporary fate of light, chained inside glass:

.....No world—until us—in chains of glass, hostage
to signal: all clearness & purity, fidelity,
integrity, traits of the channel, its internal reflection

PPT SCREEN 16 To Be Here outbound forever Anfy applet

From experimental print poem, to experimental hypertext in Storyspace, to web-based html—in the end, digital texts face technical reworking to compensate for unwanted “translations” brought about by ever-changing browser configuration, planned obsolescence, and hardware evolution.

Our web poem features images, links, layers, MIDI sound, and Anfy Java applets. It was coded for three browsers, each of which used different programming sequences to produce layers. Since it used both layers and a complicated line-length spacing system, almost any change in browser software threatened the screen image of the poem.

It is possible to construct a Virtual Machine that reproduces the operating software from Windows 2000. In this way, the layers, the Anfy Java applets, the MIDI sounds, and other obsolete practices can be preserved. While this “translation” is not entirely the same as a public-access browser work, it does show both the limitation and the opportunity of VM emulation.