Interacting with the Computer Screen: New-Media Poetry and Reader Interaction

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While Professor Chasar's research reveals that poetry has appeared on screen since nineteenth-century projections, the pervasiveness of computers in modern culture has broadened the potential for screen-based poetry reading and writing beyond all historical precedent. Poetry is now read as frequently through Web and online formats as it is in print. Online poetry journals, websites, e-books, social-networking sites, and blogs all offer new and oftentimes interactive poetry reading experiences. I believe these new media formats affect the reading and writing of poetry in many ways, yet these differences have yet to be fully examined. In the summer of 2013, then, I intend to research the effects of the computer screen and Web technologies on poetry and the poetry reading experience.

In particular, I am interested in the reader's interaction with digital poetry. Unlike most forms of projection, which are experienced in groups, readers typically engage with the computer screen in private. However, the Internet allows for regular interaction between solitary readers and writers who form communities. The ease and speed of this interaction parallels and even creates new types of group-reading and group-writing experiences. Some new-media poets, for example, have taken advantage of the computer's possibilities and have encouraged reader participation, so that readers become co-authors as well. Other reader interactions, such as comments left beneath poems, become part of a work's paratext. I plan, therefore, to study the various ways that readers alter, contribute to, and disseminate poetry throughout the Internet. I also hope to draw conclusions about how these interactions alter the reading experience and are facilitated via the computer screen. My research will culminate in a 15-25 page paper, which I will use to guide my LARC, SSRD, and off-campus presentations. I also aim to create an online interactive poetry piece that seeks to incorporate or test out the conclusions my paper eventually draws.

This research would shape the next two years of my academic experience at Willamette University. I am majoring in English and intend to study new-media poetry as an element of my senior thesis. Additionally, I am attempting to create an online version of the *Chrysalis*, Willamette's literary magazine. As Internet-based poetry is a relatively new phenomenon, no Willamette classes examine new-media poetry at length. This LARC would offer the experience to study material otherwise unavailable in my education. I am familiar with analyzing how media and other contexts affect the reading and interpretation of a poem. This semester, I am enrolled in "Modern Poetry & Poetics: Texts and Contexts," a course exploring how poems are altered by their surrounding contexts. We have studied the contextual impact of poetry in newspapers, anthologies, books, readings, and slams. LARC would extend this trajectory by allowing me to narrow my focus to computer-based poetry.

In the short term, my knowledge of new-media poetics would contribute to my ability to successfully publish my own work and develop an online version of the *Chrysalis*. In the

long-term, this research could contribute to my thesis, research in graduate school, and a possible career in academia. The interdisciplinary collaborative research experience that LARC offers—both in relation to Prof. Chasar and the other members of my learning community—would be indispensable.