

## *LEAD: New Media Poetics and Poetry with John Cayley*

*The "Leonardo Electronic Almanac Discussion" (LEAD) accompanies selected LEA Special Issues. LEAD has two components a live chat session with LEA authors and artists and a moderated discussion list for readers to engage with the special issue authors.*

The following is the transcript from the chat with John Cayley on October 9 2006. As I noted earlier, this chat was interrupted by technical issues. We did have the start of some wonderful discussion, and John generously tried to work with/around the glitches, but we finally decided to cut the chat short. I attach it with all its noise and missed communication. <Sandy Baldwin>

<begin transcript>

[12:16 PM]<sandybaldwin> We will chat with John Cayley at 2pm

[1:06 PM] mmiss has entered the room.

[1:06 PM]<sandybaldwin> Hello. Starting at 2pm.

[1:15 PM] shadoof has entered the room.

[1:17 PM]<shadoof> hi sandy et al. i'm, as i hope you see, logged in and present but having a break until 2 pm your time

[1:29 PM] dayre has entered the room.

[1:30 PM] dayre has left the room.

[1:31 PM] dayre has entered the room.

[1:37 PM]<newmedia> Hello all, this is Tim. See you at 2 when Sandy starts the discussion.

[1:39 PM]<newmedia> PS who are dayre and mmiss?

[1:40 PM]<shadoof> to be clear shadoof = me, John Cayley

[1:40 PM]<shadoof> perhaps that should be ~= John Cayley

[1:42 PM]<newmedia> vaguely onomatopoeic, like a browser window opening -- shadoof!

[1:46 PM]<shadoof> a shadoof is a well sweep: counter-weighted lever used to get water from a well for irrigation (used Very Early On in Asia)

[1:47 PM]<sandybaldwin> sandybaldwin is waltwhitman's elbow

[1:47 PM]<sandybaldwin> Hello, just back now.

[1:47 PM]<sandybaldwin> We can start on time, 12 minutes?

[1:48 PM] mrowley has entered the room.

[1:48 PM]<shadoof> 12 mins fine by me ...

[1:57 PM]<shadoof> am i still here?

[1:57 PM]<sandybaldwin> Where is here?

[1:58 PM]<shadoof> that answers that

[1:58 PM]<sandybaldwin> Everyone in the room, I'll start moderating in another minute or two. Make yourselves comfy, grab a drink, pull up an ottoman...

[1:58 PM]<newmedia> does this have anything to do with the Derridean orientalist synaesthesia

[1:59 PM]<sandybaldwin> Is that the DOS?

[1:59 PM]<newmedia> who are dayre and mmiss and mrowley

[1:59 PM]<mrowley> Hello all, this is Mari-Lou, real coffee in cup. ready to chat.

[2:00 PM]<mmiss> Hello, Millie Niss here

[2:00 PM]<sandybaldwin> Well, it's just about 2pm. My name is Sandy Baldwin, and I'm organizing this chat but - as in the nature of chat - all are welcome to join in.all are welcome to join in.

[2:01 PM]<sandybaldwin> I welcome everyone else to introduce themselves as well?

[2:01 PM]<sandybaldwin> Hi millie.

[2:01 PM]<sandybaldwin> Hi Mari-Lou.

[2:01 PM]<sandybaldwin> Welcome everyone to the Leonardo Electronic Almanac Discussion.

[2:01 PM]<sandybaldwin> I know a few others are going to join in progress...

[2:02 PM]<sandybaldwin> This is the first of several chats scheduled with authors in the LEA special issue on New Media Poetics.

[2:02 PM]<sandybaldwin> Today we're happy to welcome John Cayley.

[2:03 PM]<sandybaldwin> - e-poet extraordinaire, and author of a "Lens: The Practice of Writing in Immersive VR" in the special issue.

[2:03 PM]<shadoof> Thanks Sandy (for it is he ... still musing on DOS)

[2:03 PM]<sandybaldwin> Thanks John. I thought to ask a few questions (a question to get things going)

[2:03 PM]<sandybaldwin> and to give John something to respond to...

[2:04 PM]<sandybaldwin> but I also hope to let the chat find its own form...

[2:04 PM]<sandybaldwin> or rather, its own phenomenology of text in space...

[2:04 PM]<shadoof> [the shadoof waits for a gentle shove ...]

[2:04 PM]<sandybaldwin> - brace yourself -

[2:05 PM] goshenrd has entered the room.

[2:05 PM]<newmedia> welcome gohenrd

[2:05 PM]<sandybaldwin> so that's where I'll start: your essay is about the phenomenology of text in space. How far is this shaped by the topology of the space it occurs in? <I think that's a question>

[2:05 PM]<shadoof> [ ... i bet he's cutting and pasting ... ]

[2:05 PM]<sandybaldwin> no, typing... but I do have crib notes

[2:05 PM] glazier has entered the room.

[2:06 PM]<newmedia> Hi Loss

[2:06 PM]<glazier> Hello

[2:06 PM]<newmedia> Tim

[2:06 PM]<sandybaldwin> - ok, Loss.

[2:06 PM]<newmedia> you were saying Sandy

[2:06 PM]<shadoof> i was trying to write about the phenomenolgy of space such as we experience it, day to day, as a part of our ...

[2:06 PM]<shadoof> habit(us) ...

[2:07 PM]<shadoof> and the place of writing in that space; those spaces

[2:07 PM]<sandybaldwin> - nice, like that habit(us)

[2:07 PM]<newmedia> Is this like a selected sub-set of the phenomenology of the viewer's body, or does it involve the actual anthropomorphism of text?

[2:08 PM]<shadoof> unusual topologies (perhaps those that could be created by writing or inscribed (in the DOS sense)) were not my initial concern in this essay

[2:09 PM]<shadoof> i was just thinking about how writing dwells in the space we inhabit ...

[2:09 PM]<sandybaldwin> unusual vs. what? you mean you were concerned with a very general take on writing in space?

[2:09 PM]<mrowley> having experienced a few caves, i was very interested in the comparison/difference of 3-D virtual topologies and the planar surfaces of most written language..

[2:10 PM]<shadoof> and how the spaces where writing dwells are phenomenologically constrained

[2:10 PM]<mrowley> yes, indeed

[2:10 PM]<shadoof> yes ...

[2:10 PM]<sandybaldwin> - Tim/nmp, what did you mean by anthropomorphism of text?

[2:10 PM]<shadoof> we carry our spatial habits and experience into the Cave

[2:11 PM]<newmedia> I mean "what does language want" for example

Reconnected.

[2:21 PM] ERROR: Your message to the room bounced.

[2:21 PM]<newmedia> hello

[2:22 PM]<newmedia> got bounced out, but it looks like we're having technical difficulties?

[2:22 PM] shadoof has entered the room.

[2:22 PM] sandybaldwin has entered the room.

[2:22 PM] You are currently a moderator of this room.

[2:22 PM]<sandybaldwin> hi. burb in the network

[2:22 PM]<sandybaldwin> Burp in the network.

[2:22 PM]<dayre> took a while to get back in...

[2:22 PM]<goshenrd> test post

[2:22 PM]<mrowley> got glitched also, back again

[2:22 PM]<sandybaldwin> I'm sorry that we were cut off. Tim was asking about what language wants.

[2:23 PM]<newmedia> did we lose the previous text from the conversation

[2:23 PM]<sandybaldwin> no, I saved it all.

[2:23 PM]<shadoof> after hi-speed car chase thru putney i'm also back

[2:23 PM]<sandybaldwin> Cool.

[2:23 PM]<shadoof> in an entirely different 'space'

[2:24 PM]<sandybaldwin> mrowley, you were talking about comparison/difference of 3-D virtual topologies and the planar surfaces of most written language..

[2:24 PM]<sandybaldwin> ??

[2:24 PM]<shadoof> i was not referring, in the essay, to any anthropo. demand of language ...

[2:25 PM] shadoof has left the room.

[2:25 PM]<mrowley> yes, and the challenge this presents to virtual textuality taking it beyond concrete poetry (i have a print of bp nichol's "curved H and Z" in front of me

[2:25 PM]<newmedia> Mostly I was just interested by how Cayley's notion of a phenomenology of text in space seems to blend the experience of the viewer and the language. Husserl's version of phenomenology has to do

with narrating the experience of one's own body, for example. At first I tried reading the term as "one's general experience with language in space" but I think that bodily experience is a big part of the argument too

[2:25 PM]<sandybaldwin> John gone?

[2:25 PM]<sandybaldwin> I wonder, for John/shadoof how the body factors in?

[2:26 PM]<sandybaldwin> certainly, to speak of carrying our spatial habits into the cave...?

[2:26 PM]<newmedia> waiting for John

[2:27 PM]<sandybaldwin> I think he's finishing the car chase? weird about this - where is it?

[2:28 PM]<newmedia> I hope he's ok  
[2:29 PM]<newmedia> we lost loss too  
[2:30 PM] goshenrd has entered the room.  
[2:30 PM]<sandybaldwin> Yes. Miekal emailed just now to say he's on the way.  
[2:31 PM] mniss has entered the room.  
[2:31 PM]<sandybaldwin> welcome back millie, sorry about the blip.  
[2:31 PM]<mrowley> tim i'm also interested in how immersive VR is a completely different type of "embodiment" with technology (in Idhe's sense). in that it attempts to override our experience of the real world with virtual images and perceptions.

[2:32 PM]<sandybaldwin> mari-lou: this would be the beyond concrete poetry that you refer to, yes?  
[2:32 PM]<mrowley> yes  
[2:32 PM]<newmedia> that's fascinating mrowley. do you personally find code to be an evocative metaphor in this enterprise, or are you thinking in an entirely different paradigm  
[2:32 PM] shadoof has entered the room.  
[2:33 PM]<sandybaldwin> Mari-lou, did your cave work/experience follow the same type of direction as John  
[2:33 PM]<sandybaldwin> hi shadoof. welcome back  
[2:33 PM]<shadoof> am i back now?  
[2:33 PM]<sandybaldwin> yes, we saw you leave and saw you return  
[2:33 PM]<sandybaldwin> we missed you  
[2:33 PM]<shadoof> but no text ?

[2:34 PM]<mrowley> yes, and physical/mathematical topology.. a whole new way of looking at language  
[2:34 PM]<sandybaldwin> <phenomenology of absence>  
[2:34 PM]<shadoof> 19:24:26 shad...@jabber.org: i was not referring, in the essay, to any anthorpo. demand of language ...  
19:24:51 shad...@jabber.org: i was trying to respond to the question of how language has presented itself in our habitus  
19:25:23 shad...@jabber.org: and how the affordance of immersive 3D are Very Different  
19:26:11 shad...@jabber.org: leading us to ask: can we make writing work or work differently in these new spaces ...  
19:26:26 shad...@jabber.org: in ways that are appropriate to those spaces  
19:26:49 shad...@jabber.org: while answering our own desire for affect and significance ...  
19:26:59 shad...@jabber.org: or even aesthetic response 19:28:44 shad...@jabber.org: er ...  
19:28:52 shad...@jabber.org: anyone 'there'? [2:34 PM]

<sandybaldwin> Oh, thanks for the cut and paste!  
[2:35 PM] shadoof has left the room.  
[2:35 PM]<mrowley> this is an example of what virtual textuality in a non-static topology can do no?  
[2:35 PM]<sandybaldwin> John, would Tim's question of what language wants, or general questions of anthropomorphism of language factor in at all?  
[2:35 PM]<newmedia> argh

[2:35 PM]<sandybaldwin> woah?  
[2:35 PM]<newmedia> no, John has disappeared again  
[2:36 PM]<sandybaldwin> well, this is a bit crazy.  
[2:37 PM]<newmedia> I was going to ask John what he thinks some of the applications of these ideas may be outside the VR space, or whether that kind of discussion is merely an analogy

[2:37 PM]<sandybaldwin> - but mrowley, yes this is a non-static topology here.  
[2:37 PM]<sandybaldwin> I see Tim, or whether it's specific to the cave??  
[2:38 PM] shadoof has entered the room.  
[2:38 PM]<newmedia> hooray, he's bak  
[2:38 PM]<shadoof> i never left ...  
[2:38 PM]<sandybaldwin> John, you keep entering and leaving. What's happening at your end?  
[2:38 PM]<shadoof> not consciously  
[2:38 PM]<sandybaldwin> OK, we see you enter and leave, so:  
[2:34 PM]<sandybaldwin> Oh, thanks for the cut and paste!  
[2:35 PM] shadoof has left the room.  
[2:38 PM]<shadoof> are you seeing these responses??  
[2:38 PM]<mrowley> sandy this is important,, and john touches on teh socio-political questions in his essay...  
[2:39 PM]<newmedia> yes he does...I was just wondering where your thoughts have led since the essay was written, John

[2:39 PM]<sandybaldwin> yes, this is important, and the rest of us remain - only the author leaves? - and then you return (John) at  
[2:38 PM] shadoof has entered the room.  
[2:39 PM]<shadoof> can you read me  
[2:39 PM]<sandybaldwin> yes, now. missing 4 minutes.  
[2:40 PM]<sandybaldwin> - marilou or shadoof : remind me of the socio-political in the essay?  
[2:40 PM] shadoof has left the room.  
[2:40 PM]<newmedia> %\$#^%#\$%^#  
[2:41 PM]<sandybaldwin> ack. not sure that this is working. I see the rest of you?  
[2:41 PM]<mrowley> the big question is who gets to see this work...  
here is cut and past for john  
[2:41 PM]<mniss> I'm here --at least for the moment  
[2:41 PM]<mrowley> [12:24 PM]<sandybaldwin> mrowley, you were talking about comparison/difference of 3-D virtual topologies and the planar surfaces of most written language..

[12:24 PM]<sandybaldwin> ??  
[12:24 PM]<shadoof> i was not referring, in the essay, to any anthorpo. demand of language ...  
[12:25 PM] shadoof has left the room.  
[12:25 PM]<mrowley> yes, and the challenge this presents to virtual textuality taking it beyond concrete poetry (i have a print of bp nichol's "curved H and Z" in front of me

[12:25 PM]<newmedia> Mostly I was just interested by how Cayley's notion of a phenomenology of text in space seems to blend the experience of the viewer and the language. Husserl's version of phenomenology has to do with narrating the experience of one's own body, for example. At first I tried reading the term as "one's general experience with language in space" but I think that bodily experience is a big part of the argument too

[12:25 PM]<sandybaldwin> John gone?  
[12:25 PM]<sandybaldwin> I wonder, for John/shadoof how the body factors in?  
[12:26 PM]<sandybaldwin> certainly, to speak of carrying our spatial habits into the cave...?  
[12:27 PM]<newmedia> waiting for John  
[12:27 PM]<sandybaldwin> I think he's finishing the car chase? weird about this - where is it?  
[12:28 PM]<newmedia> I hope he's ok  
[12:29 PM]<newmedia> we lost loss too

[12:30 PM]<sandybaldwin> Yes. Miekal emailed just now to say he's on the way.  
[12:31 PM] mmiss has entered the room.  
[12:31 PM]<sandybaldwin> welcome back millie, sorry about the blip.  
[12:31 PM]<mrowley> tim i'm also interested in how immersive VR is a completely different type of "embodiment" with technology (in Idhe's sense). in that it attempts to override our experience of the real world with virtual images and perceptions.  
  
[12:32 PM]<sandybaldwin> mari-lou: this would be the beyond concrete poetry that you refer to, yes?  
[12:32 PM]<mrowley> yes  
[12:32 PM]<newmedia> that's fascinating mrowley. do you personally find code to be an evocative metaphor in this enterprise, or are you thinking in an entirely different paradigm  
[12:32 PM] shadoof has entered the room.  
[12:33 PM]<sandybaldwin> Mari-lou, did your cave work/experience follow the same type of direction as John  
[12:33 PM]<sandybaldwin> hi shadoof. welcome back  
  
[2:41 PM]<newmedia> testing  
[2:41 PM] dayre has entered the room.  
[2:41 PM]<newmedia> hello  
[2:42 PM]<sandybaldwin> - excellent. I just instant messaged john.  
[2:42 PM]<sandybaldwin> [2:41 PM]<shadoof> sandy this is crazy  
[2:41 PM]<shadoof> i have no idea what is going on  
  
[2:42 PM]<sandybaldwin> yes, I think I need to call it off. The rest of us are there but you keep flickering in and out.  
[2:42 PM]<sandybaldwin> I'm sending you this now out of the room, as it were.  
[2:42 PM]<sandybaldwin> More instant messaging:  
[2:42 PM]<shadoof> i will try to log on with the other account and see if that works ...  
[2:42 PM]<sandybaldwin> ok. sorry.  
  
[2:43 PM]<mrowley> hi tim/everyone what were we talking about again..  
this fractured topology is tough on the memory  
[2:43 PM] shadoof has entered the room.  
[2:43 PM] shadoof has left the room.  
[2:43 PM]<sandybaldwin> Hello goodbye.  
[2:44 PM]<sandybaldwin> Tough on the memory: you mean the flickering here in this "space"?  
[2:44 PM]<newmedia> The flickering space of the author in digital poetry  
[2:44 PM]<mrowley> yes, to both..  
[2:45 PM]<sandybaldwin> Given the problems here, do we want to convene for later?  
[2:45 PM]<newmedia> what time and when  
[2:45 PM]<mrowley> i think that might be a good idea..  
  
[2:45 PM]<sandybaldwin> yeah, this is sort of working but only sort of. If I flicker in and out it's ok, but we want John Cayley here...?  
[2:46 PM] shadoof has entered the room.  
[2:46 PM]<shadoof> hello hello  
[2:46 PM]<newmedia> Hello.  
[2:46 PM]<sandybaldwin> John: you are back now. I was just posing whether this would continue or need to be delayed?  
[2:46 PM]<sandybaldwin> Are you on a different account?

[2:47 PM]<mrowley> Hi John interesting how shadoof is similar to "shadow"

[2:47 PM] shadoof has left the room.

[2:47 PM]<mrowley> oops spoke to soon

[2:47 PM]<newmedia> you're right Sandy, let's fix the bugs and reconvene

[2:47 PM]<sandybaldwin> OK. Sorry. I did save everything so far. Best to all and we'll work it out.

[2:48 PM]<dayre> thanks for the effort !

[2:48 PM] mniss has left the room.

[2:48 PM]<mrowley> thanks sandy. do you have my contact info to reschedule?

[2:49 PM]<sandybaldwin> send me email with it marilou, charles.bald...@mail.wvu.edu

[2:50 PM]<mrowley> OK

[2:50 PM]<sandybaldwin> <abject apologies>

<end transcript>

*“... the highbrow hot spot of cyberspace ... a digital bible for the lowdown on the [hi-tech] art scene.” –Wired*

## Leonardo Electronic Almanac (ISSN: 1071 4391)

---

### Nisar Keshvani, Editor-in-Chief

Established in 1993, Leonardo Electronic Almanac is, jointly produced by Leonardo, the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology (ISAST), and published by MIT Press, is an electronic journal dedicated to providing a forum for those who are interested in the realm where art, science and technology converge. For over a decade, LEA has thrived as an *international peer reviewed electronic journal* and web archive covering the interaction of the arts, sciences, and technology. LEA emphasizes rapid publication of recent work and critical discussion on topics of current excitement with a slant on shorter, less academic texts. Many contributors are younger scholars, artists, scientists, educators and developers of new technological resources in the media arts.

### Wild Nature and the Digital Life

Guest edited by **Dene Grigar and Sue Thomas**

#### **Generative and Emergent**

- :: Artificial Ecologies: Second Nature Emergent Phenomena in Constructed Digital - Natural Assemblages - *Peter Hasdell*
- :: Butterfly Effects: Synthesis, Emergence, and Transduction - *Tara Rodgers*
- :: Digital Behaviors and Generative Music - *Dave Burraston and Andrew Martin*
- :: Bodies in Biotechnology: Embodied Models for Understanding Biotechnology in Contemporary Art - *Jennifer Willet*

#### **Locative and Performative**

- :: Kudzu Running: Pastoral Pleasures, Wilderness Terrors, and Wrist-Mounted Technologies in Small-Town Mississippi - *Adam Gussow*
- :: Mapping the Disaster: Global Prediction and the Medium of 'Digital Earth' - *Dr. Kathryn Yusoff*
- :: Views From Above: Locative Narrative and the Landscape - *Jeremy Hight*
- :: Paradigmatic Performance: Data Flow and Practice in the Wild - *Brett Stalbaum*

### Wild Nature and the Digital Life Gallery

Curated by **Dene Grigar and Sue Thomas**

- :: Future Nature - *Karl Grimes*
- :: The Affective Geography of Silence - Towards a Museum of Natural Quiet - *Elisa Giaccardi, Hal Eden and Gianluca Sabena*

LEA is a free supplement for Leonardo and Leonardo Music Journal subscribers.  
Subscribe at: <http://leoalmanac.org/search/newuser.asp>

#### **MIT Press Journals**

238 Main St., suite 500, Cambridge, MA 02142

phone: 617-253-2889 / fax: 617-577-1545 / [journals-orders@mit.edu](mailto:journals-orders@mit.edu)

art / science / technology

<http://leoalmanac.org> [lea@mitpress.mit.edu](mailto:lea@mitpress.mit.edu)