# ON ANALOGIC EXTENSION OF DIGITAL POETRY *OR* THE SEMIOTIC NEGOTIATION BETWEEN CODES

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Abstract: This article intends to highlight the manner in which the work of the Brazilian scholar Jorge Luiz Antonio, Poesia digital. Negociações com os processos digitais. Teoria, história, antologias.*fails to reflect the current artistic activity worldwide in the area of digital poetry*

Keywords: Jorge Luiz Antonio, digital poetry, semiotic negotiation, codes, technopoetry .
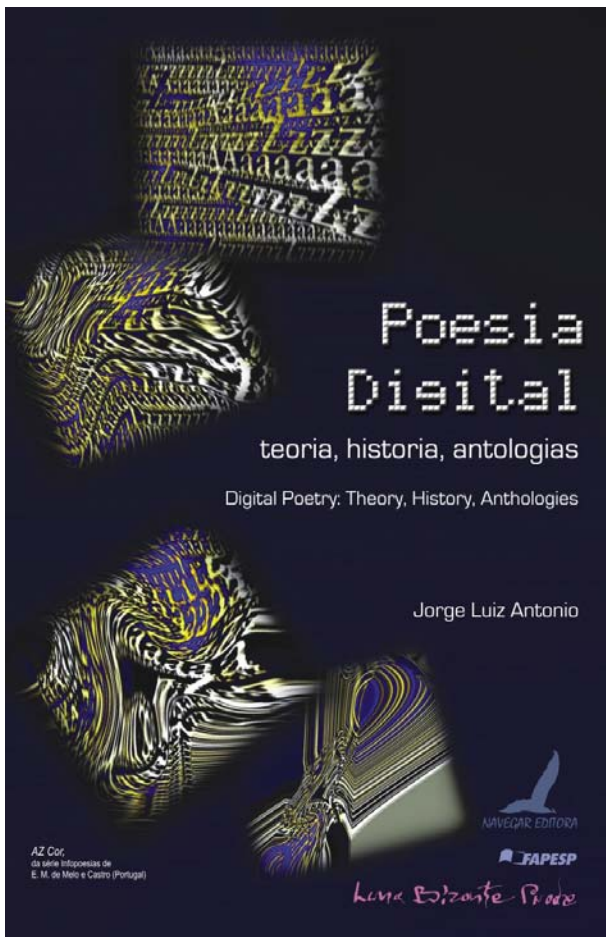
thirteen years, built based on a doctoral thesis and representing „an expansive organism" (*organismo en expansión*) as Ladislao Pablo Györi named it, is impressive not only in size, but in contemporaneously, accuracy and ability to negotiate within the field of performance. The work consists of a printed book (in Portuguese) – an introduction to the area of digital creation -, joined by a DVD, that contains extensions as tentacles in graphic, visual, acoustic and multimedia (including links to digital poetry and critical texts of Web pages). The book and the DVD are the products of editorial activity of Navigar Editora from São Paulo (Brazil), of Luna Bisonde Prods from Columbus, Ohio (U.S.A.), and of Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo - FAPESP (Brazil).
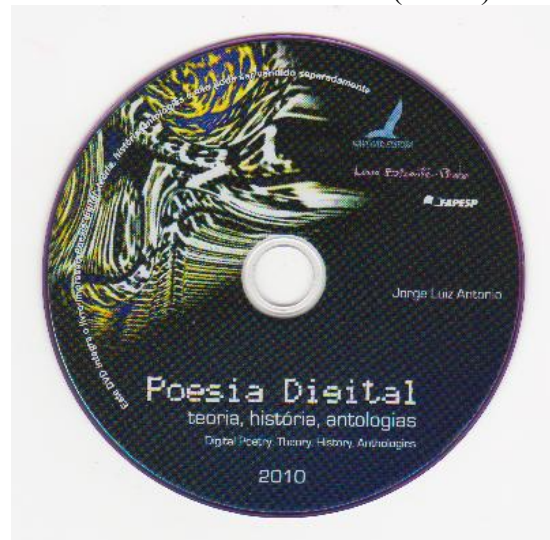
1. INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian scholar Jorge Luiz Antonio's work *Poesia digital. Negociações com os processos digitais. Teoria, história, antologias*, a result of research for more than

This 2010 version, the fourth in a series of editorial productions of J.L. Antonio regarding the generous theme of digital creation, offers for all the readers (including the hypostasis of cyber-reader) the possibility to come into contact with an artistic whole that addresses multiple senses, that invades a perceptive area untouchable by classical creation. Elaborating a critical work in the area of digital poetry needs means addressing through the agency of same media and codes used in the act of creation, as a metalinguistical reflection over an expanding production, the self production. Antonio is giving the reader acquainted with the interaction between the poetic code and the codes of computer programming languages a true multi-sensory performance, with critical nuances included.

First of all, the work should be regarded on the position where the negotiation between the author and the multi-sensory digital product is done. Unlike the simple reflection of the multi-sensory reality of the artistic creation at the level of the printed text, Antonio intends in-depth negotiation between the language of artistic production and the language of software. He understands that the author of visual poetry must dominate the technology, as Erthos Albino de Souza stated: „*The computer, for example, allows artist to try during his/her whole life. That is why poet must dominate* the *technology.*"[1]; therefore, Antonio does not avoid tackling about this aspect. Hence, we could count, on the one hand, on the huge effort of introspective action, of sedimentation of values relief, and of adequate relation with it. On the other hand, we could count on the huge effort of critical analysis of a enormous mass of poetical creations (from hybrid verbo-iconic construct to its multimedia applications), different languages and significations, studies, directions, cultural currents, groups, ideologies, and also of software and information technology, taken together with the labyrinth of signs poetically shaped. Understanding this need expressed by Souza and the exactly applying, Antonio

considers as a goal the need of structuring the (global expanded) conglomerate of multisensory cultural products and manages ~~to~~ bring together the digital poetry and its criticism on classes and orders, in a particular way of organization, proposed and not imposed, opening the possibility of reconfiguration, transformation, reorganization of contents based on new and complex norms. The claim of completeness is not explicit, but Antonio's work brings it, through the default, into the actuality of reading. The work is continuously self-creating, the Brazilian scholar being able to confer the character of *opera aperta.*

Apparently, the work requires the analysis of interpretative grid of technologic determinism. Starting with the McLuhan's famous phrase, „*The medium is the message*", we could interpret the critical construct and the actual artistic production, in line with the expansion of nervous terminations of the reader/cyber-reader at the level of the entire production area (with global coverage). The area of dissemination and exploitation of digital literary creation apparently dominates the communicative relationships with the reader. Digital poetry has developed as a result of: the conscious use of different technologic poetic ends; the use of different graphic resources in electronic environment; the development of poetic practices as a result of the collaborative experience through e-groups; the extension of new virtual reality of digital (sound, kinetic, combined etc.) poetry production/distribution; the enrichment of virtual poetic field with the poetry realized by exploiting the artistic dimension of man-machine relationships (Antonio, 2010a:21). Therefore, the enhancement of negotiation between production codes is more important than the highlighting of production and dissemination space. The focus is moved, within the canonical scheme of communication, from medium/channel to codes, reader (implying the negotiation between the reader and the multiple codes of signs organizing, and the negotiation between codes), and message, continuously creative, circumscribed to an autopoietic loop (Maturana, Varela, 1980). In relation to the

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[1] „*O computador, por exemplo, permite que o artista exprimente a vida inteira. É por isso que o poeta deve dominar a tecnologia*" in original

Jakobson's model of communication (*apud* Fiske, 2002:35-37), Antonio explains the act of digital poetic creation through the abandonment of referential function (regarding the scientific a technological dimensions) and through the predominance of poetic function. The author, the Brazilian scholar stresses, could intervene in the technological process and could create his own technology necessary for poetical signs production. This abandonment is enough in order to justify removing the claims of technological determinism extension, the claims of message subordination, and the referential hierarchy that characterizes the scientific-technological construct. Therefore, the intentionality of seeing the theoretical construct as a result of semiotic negotiations (with message and lecturer in foreground) becomes natural.

2. THEORY

Moreover, the work is divided into three main parts, announced in the subtitle: theory, history and anthologies. The first part, *Teoria*, opens with a multilevel analysis of above mentioned semiotic negotiations – the object of the actual critical analysis, between poetry (the code of poetry, or in the Romanian poet Nichita Stănescu's terms, 1990, *limba poezească*, poesese language) and computational technology - realized at the level of man-machine negotiation, at the level of verbal and nonverbal codes mediation, at the level of creator's intervention in computational technology with poetic purposes and aiming at the realization of intersystem transmutation (poetic-technologic). The man-machine mediation involves two training steps, two early stages in the act of digital act production: the conceptual technologic apparatus assimilation necessary for the production and the assimilation of machine code of intervention and transformation of its predominant function (pragmatic/referential/objective) into poetic function. The next stages are more complex and refer further on to the entire creative arsenal. For example, in terms of mediation between signs and codes, the possibility of a new poetic language birth is revealed. This

new language is structured on the verbal language, containing hybrid insertions, with enhancer indexical/iconic, sound, kinetic or mixed role: „*Thus, the word, essence of the poetry, negotiates with the image and the drawings of the letter and of the handwritten word or graphically manipulated one and it interferes in them for the production of the visual poetry; with the sound, to produce sound effects (sound poetry); with the animation, to produce movements of words, letters and images (animated poetry); with the physical space, for the three-dimensional poetry*"[2] (Antonio, 2010a:26). The result of these negotiations is not the simple addition, easily expressed by: ***poesia + tecnologia = tecnopoesia***. The result is dynamic, and the technopoetry, seen as „*poetização da tecnologia computational*", represents the result of a continuous and profound semiosis, involving a „linguistic body" in transformation, where semiosis could be understood only within the limits of its dynamic production: „*The semiosis is the result of this "meeting"* [n.t.: between the codes of poetry and informational technology]*, and the significances that poetry and computational technology produce are what we have denominated as technopoetry, with the objective of firming the idea that it is the poetry that produces meanings and not the computational technology itself, as one thinks when he/she is talking about the subject*"[3] (Antonio, 2010a:27). Therefore, the technopoetry is a reflective attitude and not a mechanical creation. The Jorge Luiz Antonio's interpretive mastery on technopoetic

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[2] „*Assim, a palavra, essência da poesia, negocia com a imagem e os grafismos da letra e da palavra manuscrita ou manipulada graficamente e interfere neles para a produção da poesia visual; com o som, para produzir efeitos sonoros (poesia sonora); com a animação, para produzir movimentos de palavras, letras e imagens (poesia animada); como o espaço físico, para a poesia tridimensional.*" in original.

[3] „*A semiose é o resultado desse „encontro" e as significações que poesia e tecnologia computational produzem é o que denominamos de tecnopoesia, com o objetivo de firmar a idéia de que é a poesia que produz significados e não a tecnologia computational em si mesm, como se costuma pensar quando se fala no assunto*" in original.

phenomenon is not related only to the ability of analyzing the natural relations of constituting the creator act, but also to the ability of constructing similarities with dominant literary theories or currents. The negotiation between poetic and technological codes raises the interpretation of repeated realistic intentions of analyzing a reality, simulated by the computational technology and artistically recreated. In relation to the romanticism, the digital poetry creation act could have macrocosmic sizes: „*The technopoet is put, as the romantic poet, as a technodemiurge*"[4] (Antonio, 2010a:28). Under these conditions, culture does not surrender to technology, but it tames as, not long time ago, it was intended taming nature. The difference consists in the fact that now, a new virtual reality gives rise to a parallel phenomenon, more precipitated and intense in combustion than the previous one.

Fragmented in the printed product (the book, with the role of initiation in the area of debates), the Antonio's theoretical discourse continues in .pdf format on the accompanying DVD. The DVD captures the multiple facets of experimental attitude manifestation of poets that proposes himself to negotiate with technology, that exceeds the critical stage regarding the amputation of the poetic act by the implant derived from the technological determinism (interpreted in the manner in which Baudrillard, 1997:12, replying to McLuhan's challenge, referred not to neurotic terminations' expansion of the TV viewer to a planetary scale, but to prosthectic organs added to the body of flesh, closed in the hyper-reality of the screen, cord connected to it). In this case, the author discovers new territories and new frontiers in pushing negotiations between codes, only by accepting the challenge of the technopoetic semiosis. Starting with the stage of insufficient technology knowledge, the poet, willing to push his own knowledge and creation beyond the imagined limits, reaches a stage of assimilation of programming codes and of conscientious change of technologic approach

by allocating a poetic finality. The machine becomes a simple tool, subordinated to poetic purposes, while the final product is derived by the (self-)creator process: „*the product of technology and/or of machine is converted/transmuted in poetic project/machine-poetry*"[5] (Antonio, 2010b:10, teoria.pdf). In other words, regarding the production code, we could find, in fact, in the depth of the act of creation, not only an authorial negotiation with the machine language, but, rather, a semiotic negotiation between poetic, artistic (taken into account the other arts insertions, that give rise to verbo-iconic, verbo-sound, verbo-kinetic or any other multiple and multidimensional combination aggregate, even smelling or touchable, if we refer, for example, to Carlo Belloli's *corpi di poesia*) and technologic language. In essence, the playful use of technologic language offers to the other two figured and polysemic types of languages that extend their rhizomes into other fields, more fertile, as in technology and cyberspace, the possibility of recreation the Saussure's dimensions of codes: paradigmatic and syntagmatic, respectively the possibility of their enrichment based on the interpretation of a code partially agreed with the readers. These two dimensions can be found in Antonio's work both in original meaning and in the interpretative perspective of Dubois, Pinto and Decio Pignatari. It is worth noted that the poetic, artistic and technologic language contain similar basic structures, like the human genome, genetic reducible to a formula, common to the entire geographical space of technopoetic production, however preserving the particular character: „*the technopoetry consists of a type of „international" poetry, but it remains particular, national, regional, personal*"[6] (Antonio, 2010b:20, teoria.pdf). The particular negotiation between poetic and artistic languages was the subject of numerous studies. I tried to elaborate a particular perspective of interpreting the natural verbo-

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[4] „*O tecnopoeta se coloca, qual o poeta romântico, como un tecnodemiurgo*" in original.

[5] „*o produto da tecnologia e/ou da máquina é subvertido/transmutado em projeto poético/poesia-máquina*" în original.

[6] „*a tecnopoesia se constitui numa espécie de poesia „internacional", mas que continua a ser particular, nacional, regional, pessoal*" in original.

iconic continuity in *Poezia vizuală* (Lesenciuc, 2006). But Antonio is not limited to this level of negotiation. He approaches the semiotic relationships between codes in terms of *forms design* constitution that, in line with the technologic code, becomes open to experimentalism, interactivity, semiotic interference (in reading). In the particular case of re-signifying the programming language, for example, the result of semiotic interaction is a particular type, named *code poetry*.

The result of multiple negotiation between poetic, artistic, and technologic codes is a new language, named technopoetic (or *tecno-artístico-poética*), characterized by a particular textuality (inter- or hyper-textual): „*the game of intertextual syntactic analogies, the intertextual multiple space, and hypertextual non-linear ways of electronic reading*"[7] (Antonio, 2010b:45, teoria.pdf). Drafted with the same intention, the critical Antonio's text *Poesia digital. Negociações com os processos digitais. Teoria, história, antologias* offers the option of an amplified and hyper-textual reading. The text is realized within the extended limits of technopoetic language by braches, links, multiple types of verbo-iconico-sound-kinetic construct. These features are highlighted through the rhizomatic structure of the other two parts of the work: *História* and *Antologias*.

3. HISTORY

The second part, *História*, is structured in four chapters: *Poesia, arte, ciência e tecnologia*, *Cronologia da poesia electrônica*, *Poesia digital* and *Poesia e computador(es)*. The first chapter implies the history of four stages: from antiquity to the nineteenth, twentieth century: 1900-1950, 1951-2000 and XXIst century (from 2001 to present), and the second one three stages: 1959-1990, 1991-2000, respectively from 2001 up to present. The historical journeys in stages are prefaced by initial considerations, determinant in

structuring the science/technology relationships with the arts. These relationships, understood through the agency of interference between the products of *homo sapiens/homo faber* and of *homo aestheticus* are not specific to the recent configured stages, but, rather, they characterize a continuous cultural negotiation: „*We can say that the poet always performs semiotic negotiations (mediations, interventions and transmutations) with any science and technology: he negotiates the word meaning in everyday use, social, cultural, or scientific, in order to establish a different comparative and metaphoric meaning*"[8] (Antonio, 2010a:33-34). We can understand, therefore, that the poet's cultural negotiation with the contemporary technology, that has, like culture, individual and social character, covers a rich set of interactions between texts, images, sounds, movements and space (two-or three-dimensional), realized through courses, exhibitions, conferences, meetings, festivals, printed or online publications, various storage media, but also through institutions, study groups, e-groups a.o.

The dawn of such cultural negotiations is situated in the Greek antiquity where, starting with Simis of Rhodes, Theocritus of Syracuse, or Dosiadas of Crete, we can find the first frames of verbo-iconic structures through wrapping texts in the shape of geometric objects. Illustrating the text with Simias' poem *The Egg*, original and translated in Portuguese by Jose Paulo Paes, Antonio reviews Antiquity and Middle Ages, and stops in the full modernity of the nineteenth century. Some standpoints of visual poetry are not missing, respectively of poetry in relationship with science, like: *Soneto figurato* of Giovanni Battista Palatino (1566), *Easter Wings* of George Herbert (1633), characteristic to Renaissance; Baroque combinatorial poems and/or shaped in different forms: Jean

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[7] „*o jogo de analogias sintáticas da intratextualidade, o espaço textual múltiplo da intertextualidade e os caminhos da leitura eletrônica não linear da hipertextualidade*" in original.

[8] „*Podemos afirmar que o poeta vem sempre fazendo negociações semióticas (mediações, intervenções e transmutações) com qualquer tipo de ciência e de tecnologia através dos tempos: ele negocia o sentido da palavra em seu uso cotidiano, social, cultural ou científico, para estabelecer um outro significado, comparativo, metafórico.*" in original.

Meschinot, Habramus Marus, Quirinus Kuhlman, José de Assunção; art – science/technology relationships, prefigured by Cláudio Manuel da Costa, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, Charles Baudelaire; figurative graphism of Lewis Carroll, specific to the beginning of industrial revolution and to its avalanche of artistic styles; Mallarmé's pioneering in *Le Coup de Dés* (1897) regarding structural elements, special syntax etc. The first half of the twentieth century, remarkable by qualitative changes brought in forefront by Marinetti, Apollinaire, Oswald de Andrade, V.V. Khliebnikov, Ezra Pound, Tristan Tzara, Raoul Hausmann, Bob Brown, e.e. cummings, James Joyce, determines the Brazilian scholar to consider the possibilities of digital poetry „development" if the recent information technologies would have been available at that time. The second half of the twentieth century, also marked by the Latin-American pregnancy (Brazilian, specifically), brings to the light of analysis the sound poetry of Philadelpho Menezes, the concrete poetry of Noigandres group (Décio Pignatari, Haroldo şi Augusto de Campos), the neoconcretism of Ferreira Gullar and Wlademir Dias-Pino, the tridimensional and kinetic poetry (E.M. de Melo e Castro, Regina Vater, Arnaldo Antunes, Pedro Geraldo Escosteguy), the mail art (Edgardo Antonio Vigo), the filmic poems (E. M. de Melo e Castro), the process-poem (Wlademir Dias-Pino, Álvaro de Sá, Neide Dias de Sá, Moacy Cirne) etc., in comparison with already silent European movement (French and Portuguese in particular), whose reference points were the potential literature workshop (Raymond Queneau, François Le Lionnais etc), the spatialism of Pierre and Ilse Garnier, the experimental Portugese poetry (Antonio Aragão, Herberto Helder etc.). In relationship to new media, we could mention *poesia eletroeletrônica*, due to the Brazilian Albertus Marques, produced in interaction with cinema, television etc., leading to the appearance of the holopoetry and brought into discussion by the semiotic negotiation between the poem textually reproduced and different supporting media. The dacontributions of Brazilians Augusto de Campos, Omar Khouri, Paulo Miranda, Arnaldo Antunes, Franklin

Valverde, Marcelo Frazão, Carlos Vogt, Italian Enzo Minarelli, Germans Friedrich W. Block and Gerd Aumeier, Argentianian Ana Maria Uribe, Portugeses Antonio Preto and João Souza Cardoso etc., are representative. The chronology of the electronic poetry intends to map from the period of the first algorithms (1948-1958), or, more precisely, from the first stochastic text, *Nach Franz Kafka*, produced in 1959 by Theo Lutz (whose, in fact, is dedicated the entire ensemble book-DVD) to 2010. This mapping, influencing the perception of text in Borgesian manner: „*O fato é que cada escritor cria os seus precursores. Seu trabalho modifica nosso conceito do passado, como há de modificar o futuro*" (Antonio, 2010a:32), allows us wide the limits in definition. For example, digital poetry – identified with denominants like *computer poetry*, technopoetry/poetechnics, numeric poetry, cyberpoetry, informational poetry, electronic poetry – could be defined only in these wide limits: „*Digital poetry, in its various phases, consists in a techno-artistico-poetic language, and under this angle it can be read and appreciated. Digital poetry is a kind of contemporary poetry – made up of words, images, graphisms, sounds, elements animated or not, in most cases interactive, hyper-textual or hyper-mediatic, forming an electronic text, a hyper-text or a hyper-mediated connection. It exists in the symbolic space of the computer (Internet and digital network), the electronic-digital media that links to these components that represent the poetic form of communication. Generally, digital poetry exists only in this medium and expresses by this medium in its completeness and dominance*"[9] (Antonio, 2010a:41).

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[9] „*A poesia digital, em suas diferentes fases, é composta por uma linguagem tecno-artística-poética, e é sob esse viés que ela pode ser lida e apreciada. A poesia digital é um tipo de poesia contemporânea - formada de palavras, formas gráficas, imagens, grafismos, sons, elementos esses animados ou não, na maior parte das vezes, interativos, hipertextuais e/ou hipermidiáticos, constituindo um texto eletrônico, um hipertexto e/ou uma hipermídia. Ela existe no espaço simbólico do computador (internet e rede digital), tendo como forma de comunicação poética os meios eletrônico-digitais que se vinculam a esses componentes. De um modo*

Positioned within the electronic space of the computer, digital poetry takes full advantage of transforming the Apollonian machines into Dionysisn machines (Lemos), offering the possibility of play and of situation close to the artistic act (Antonio, 2010a:44).

4. ANTHOLOGIES

The IIIrd part of the work, *Antologias*, intends, within the limits of already mentioned denominants in *História,* to highlight the typologies of digital poetry (using the specific denominants): hypermedia, hypercard, hypertext, network hypermedia, text generator software at Funkhouser; classical combinatorial poetry, visual poetry, dynamic visual poetry and dynamic poetry at Tibor Papp; hyper-textual fiction and poetry at Núria Vouillamoz; digitalized texts, new texts published in digital format, programmed digital texts (cybertexts), and web texts at Koskimaa etc. Antonio does not take a particular typology but, based on a profound knowledge of the digital poetry phenomenon, builds a particular typology of digital texts: program-poetry, infopoetry, computer-poetry, hyper-textual and hypermedia poetry, Internet-poetry, interactive, collaborative and performative poetry, poetry-code, migrant poetry and performative hybrid poetry. Such an organization has allowed the establishment of an anthology of visual poetry, with rhizomatic and fractal expansion. The Brazilian scholar includes authors from Angola, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, United Kingdom, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, United States of America, Uruguay that permanently marked this territory of mingling arts with science and technology. The anthology of theoretical texts is also remarkable, important references realized by authors from Angola, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, Statele United States of America, Uruguay, like Jim Andrews, Augusto de Campos, E. M. de Melo e Castro, Chris Funkhouser, Ladislao Pablo Györi, Philadelpho Menezes or Clemente Padin being included, major names of digital arts theorists.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The splendid theoretical multimedia work of Jorge Luiz Antonio, *Poesia digital. Negociações com os processos digitais. Teoria, história, antologias*, is, according to the Canadian Jim Andrews, the first study at this magnitude related to computer and Internet possibilities to provide a space of the adaptive creation for the poet. A fundamental work with a strong didactic character, carefully organized and extensible in its edges, always inclusive and never completed, mapping an area within its fractal perimeter, *Poesia digital* is circumscribed in the line of critical reference text in the history of literature. The work, dynamic not only due to pulsations at the edges of its area, but also due to the untiring zeal of the author in order to update a content impossible to coordinate, is prefaced and postfaced by relevant names in the theoretical field of artistic production in interference with high technologies: Clemente Padin, Paulo Franchetti, César Horacio Espinosa V., Ladislao Pablo Györi, Regina Pinto, John M. Bennett, Jim Andrews or Francisco Soares. This fact allows me to give the possibility, in the line of such a work reception, that the conclusive argument to be formulated by one of these important names: „Poesia digital. Negociações com os processos digitais *is an organism in expansion (remember his earlier work,* Poesia electrônica*), that serves as undeniable proof for the link between technologic devices and the long-term human need of poetizing the world*”[10] (Ladislao Pablo Györi, *apud* Antonio, 2010a:13).

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geral, ela só existe nesse meio e só se expressa, em sua plenitude e predominância, por meio dele.” in original.

[10] „Poesia digital. Negociações com os processos digitais *es un organismo en expansión (recordemos su anterior* Poesia electrônica*) que sirve para testimoniar el vínculo insoslayable entre los dispositivos tecnológicos y la imperecedera necesidad humana de poetizar el mundo*” în original.

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