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*dream vision, the Petrarchan blason of a woman's beauty, or in *emblem poems. Landscape description is one of the more common forms of ekphrasis, and gardens are also a rich subject (Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" is a particularly powerful example, where the last stanza pictures a parterre with a sundial and zodiac). *Georgic poetry, with its representations of labor, is also home to ekphrastic description of landscape and its alterations.

Ekphraseis serve many (nonexclusive) purposes. Some are virtuoso displays of poetic skill intended to align the author with the cl. trad., esp. with Virgil (as part of the poetic apprenticeship identified with Virgil's movement from *pastoral to georgic and then *epic). With the med. *ars memoria*, images were understood to have mental power, allowing vast amounts of information to be collated and stored in the mind; detailed description was essential to this function. Some images have almost magical meanings, as with elements of dream visions or with Gnostic writings. Other ekphraseis, as with emblem poems, are offered as subjects of religious meditation (George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, John Donne). Religious iconography may also determine which visual elements in a poem receive detailed description (as with the pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*); other objects or places may be carefully drawn in order to emphasize allegorical meaning (Gawain's armor) or ritual (Gawain's hunt—some ekphraseis in *Gawain* serve multiple purposes). Some ekphraseis are used to emphasize cultural norms or exemplary kinds of virtue; in the country house poem, e.g., the landowner's hospitality, power, taste, and lineage are made manifest by descriptions of his property (Andrew Marvell's "Appleton House" or Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst"). At times, ekphraseis are hidden, used as puzzles or to indicate esoteric knowledge, as in Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," where a compass sketches out a circle with a pinpoint at its center—the alchemical symbol for gold—while the poem evokes gold "to airy thinness beat." While ekphraseis perhaps most often are of objects of beauty, the grotesque and ugly are represented as well (the contents of London's gutters in Jonathan Swift's "A Description of a City Shower" or the decayed face of the prostitute in his "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed").

Ekphraseis play important roles in novels, too. They may be used in many of the ways listed above, but they also come into new prominence with the realist novel. The proliferating objects of the mod. world populate the 19th-c. novel, and the details of 19th-c. interiors or the clutter of the city form the backbone of realism. In novels as well as in poetry, ekphrastic descriptions also may be used to create foci that bring subjective experience into play, so that the emotions of a character emerge through description of the external world. This is often the case in epistolary fiction, as with Belford's description of Clarissa's prison in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* or the landscapes of Charlotte Smith's *Desmond*.

The psychological and neurological mechanisms underlying ekphraseis are becoming better understood, as cognitive science has begun to explore imagery across the senses. While most investigations have focused on visual imagery, there have also been investigations of the imagery of sound, taste, touch, and smell, as well as on effects, like those of motion, that involve combinations of imagery from across the five senses (Scarry, Starr).

See AFFECTIVE FALLACY, COGNITIVE POETICS, DESCRIPTIVE POETRY, ICONOLOGY, IMAGERY, LANDSCAPE POEM, PAINTING AND POETRY.

■ Curtius; F. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1965); M. Krieger, "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoön* Revisited," *The Poet as Critic*, ed. F. McDowell (1967); E. Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation* (1986); J. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts* (1987); W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology* (1987); J. Hollander "The Poetics of Ekphrasis," *Word and Image* 4 (1988); M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (1990); J.A.W. Hefernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (1993); M. Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (1996); M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* (1998); E. Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (1999); *The Medieval Craft of Memory*, ed. M. Carruthers and J. Ziolkowski (2002); E. Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things* (2006); C. Wall, *The Prose of Things* (2006); G. G. Starr, "Multisensory Imagery," *The Johns Hopkins Handbook of Cognitive Cultural Studies*, ed. L. Zunshine (2010).

G. G. STARR

ELECTRONIC POETRY. Also known as e-poetry, digital poetry, new-media poetry, hypertext poetry, and computer poetry, all but the last of which have been used more or less interchangeably. Whereas once computer poetry might have been assumed to denote combinatory texts automatically generated from the formal rules and logic of a computer program (a practice dating back to the 1950s), the shift to electronic poetry is indicative of the much wider spectrum of creative activity now taking place, with poets using personal computers as platforms for compositions intended to be encountered and experienced in native digital format. Electronic poetry as it is discussed here should, therefore, not be confused with poetry that is only incidentally distributed through electronic media, such as a poem reproduced in the online ed. of a magazine or review; rather, electronic poetry seeks to exploit the unique capabilities of computers and networks to provide a text whose elements and behaviors would not "translate" to the printed page.

Electronic poems typically include one or more of the following: multimedia, animation, sound effects or soundtracks, reader interaction in the form of choices or other participatory features, and automated behaviors. Electronic poetry can exist in a networked environment such as the World Wide Web where it is accessed via a browser, or it can take the form of stand-alone works that are installed either as software or (even) as room-sized immersive environments. There

are hundreds if not thousands of e-poets working today, there are workshops and conferences devoted to the practice, and there are (electronic) journals and collections as well as dedicated competitions to promote and disseminate the work. Public readings and “open-mouse” events are increasingly common. Some poets identify themselves exclusively as e-poets, while others see electronic experimentation as merely one element of their writing practice. Electronic poetry has been written in Eng., Fr., Sp., Ger., It., Rus., Chinese, Korean, and undoubtedly other langs. Among non-Eng. writers, there has been a particularly important trad. in France, notably the work of Philippe Bootz and the L.A.I.R.E. group that founded the electronic journal *Alire: A Relentless Literary Investigation* in 1989. The Writing Machine Collective is a more recent Hong Kong-based group that has produced innovative and dynamic work.

There is no way to unify or summarize the diversity of electronic poetry under a common method or theme; some of it is whimsical, some of it serious with high-literary pretensions; some of it is narrative, some of it is confessional, and some of it is self-referential and stochastic in the trad. of the 20th-c. avant garde. All electronic poets, however, would surely admit to some level of fascination with digital technology and the way in which its formal logics can be superimposed upon that other formal system par excellence, lang. John Cayley’s *windsound* (1999), which introduced his technique of transliteral morphing, is exemplary here. Cayley’s poem supposes grids of legible texts, one atop the other, and exposes the process of transformation by which one morphs into another through looping letter replacements. Visually and aurally, the experience of *windsound* is that of watching constellations of letters appear on a black canvas, coalescing into individual words and complete lines. A computer-generated voice (actually multiple voices) reads the generated text over the sound of wind and other effects; as the voice reads, the text is subtly shifting, creating the illusion of constant motion, like wind (perhaps) over water. The piece is approximately 25 minutes in length.

The ability to incorporate time as an element of textual composition is, in fact, one of the most pronounced features of electronic poetry, since, unlike poetry printed on the page, the author can maintain some control over the pace of a reader’s progress through the text. Brian Kim Stefans’s “The Dreamlife of Letters” (2000), a remix of an e-mail message originally authored by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, thus uses the popular animation tool Flash to create a series of kinetic and concrete texts that follow an alphabetical progression. The reader is merely a spectator. David Knoebel’s “click poetry,” as he calls it, employs somewhat different conventions. In “A Fine View,” the reader follows a brief narrative of roofers taking a smoke break amid the rafters of a half-completed job; the text scrolls toward the viewer, who must read more rapidly than is perhaps comfortable in order to take it all in before it disappears off the edges of the screen—there is no

way to pause or rewind. We then see that the “reader,” in fact, occupies the position of a cigarette butt, falling through the rafters (like the absent compatriot whose story they tell) toward a concrete foundation below. The rafters, we recognize, are the lines of text themselves.

Electronic poetry is no less material or embodied than other forms of poetry; indeed, it is arguably more so, since any electronic poem will be embedded amid complex layers of technologies and producers. Just as poets have repeatedly responded to the intro. of new writing technologies—such as the typewriter—so too do electronic poets engage with new and emerging software tools and data formats, often bending or breaking the technology as they seek to exploit its capabilities for maximum effect while simultaneously commenting—self-reflexively—on the properties of the medium. Jim Rosenberg’s ongoing series of experiments with diagrammatic texts (since the late 1960s) have explored a variety of electronic media and formats, incl. HyperCard, HTML, and Java. Daniel C. Howe and Aya Karpinska’s “open.ended” (2004) uses the Java programming lang. to present the reader with two graphical cubes rendered one inside the other; the reader is able to rotate and spin the faces of the cubes to reveal layers of shifting text written on each, yielding compositions of indeterminate scope—one may choose to restrict one’s reading to the text of a single face or explore the cubes, whose content is constantly changing, at greater depth.

While electronic poetry’s native habitat is the computer, occasionally poets also seek to create a fuller or more immersive environment for their work. William Gibson’s “Agrippa” (1992) was originally included on a diskette embedded at the back of an artist’s book of the same name published by Kevin Begos Jr. with etchings by the artist Dennis Ashbaugh; famously, Gibson’s text was programmed to encrypt itself after a single reading, although the poem has long since been transcribed and posted to the Internet. Stephanie Strickland’s *V: WaveSon.nets / Losing Luna* is an “invertible book” published in 2002, with a URL at its center leading to the third leg of the composition, *V: Vniverse*, available only online as an interactive work. Oni Buchanan’s *Spring* (2008) includes a CD-ROM that features Flash-animated versions of “The Mandrake Vehicles,” a sequence whose print form in the volume explores processes of poetic formation and deformation. Noah Wardrip-Fruin’s *Screen* (2002) was designed for a CAVE, a room-sized virtual-reality environment. Texts appear on the walls of the CAVE and appear to approach and recede; the reader can interact with them through gesture and motion, batting them back and forth. *Screen* is, in fact, a collaborative work, involving a small group of poets and programmers, a common occurrence for electronic poetry. As one might imagine, preserving and archiving electronic poetry for posterity is already presenting daunting challenges for librarians and collectors.

Meanwhile, the older practice of computer poetry,

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where computers are programmed to generate poetic compositions, is still practiced. Such work tends to be playful, focused more on the pleasures of found or chance texts, rather than on overly earnest attempts to have the machine script poetry that might conceivably pass for human-authored (see FOUND POETRY). This activity also now finds an added dimension in so-called *codework, which appropriates the actual langs. of computer programming for poetic expression. Perl poems, e.g., use the lang. Perl to create texts that are both computationally executable (they can be “run” as valid Perl code) but also lyrically compelling. Writing Perl poetry is popular with professional coders because they find the constraints of the form challenging. “Listen” (1995) by Sharon Hopkins is among the best known and has been published in the *Economist* and the *Guardian*. It begins

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#!/usr/bin/perl
APPEAL:
listen (please, please);
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More experimental practitioners of codework, such as Alan Sondheim and Mary-Anne Breeze (Mez), are less interested in producing executable texts than in using code as a vehicle to explore the semantic boundaries of lang. and textuality.

As for the future of electronic poetry, there is no way to predict except to say that it will surely embrace multiple futures. Mobile platforms such as cell phones and iPods are becoming venues for literary experimentation via their texting features. The links, feeds, and tags of “Web 2.0” engage even conventional writers in some highly unorthodox writing practices; poets have even experimented with using the game engines from multiplayer worlds like DOOM and Second Life to provide a repurposed writing environment. What electronic poetry demonstrates above all is perhaps a constant human appetite to make over space, virtual and otherwise, into surfaces suitable for inscription.

See COMPUTATIONAL POETICS, CONCRETE POETRY, CYBERTEXT, VISUAL POETRY.

■ **Select Critical Studies:** C. O. Hartman, *Virtual Muse* (1996); L. Pequeño Glazier, *Digital Poetics* (2002); *New Media Poetics*, ed. A. Morris and T. Swiss (2006); C. T. Funkhouser, *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* (2007); N. K. Hayles, *Electronic Literature* (2008); M. G. Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms* (2008).

■ **Select Poets and Resources:** Alire: <http://motsvoir.free.fr/>; J. Andrews: <http://www.vispo.com/>; BeeHive: <http://beehive.temporalimage.com/>; O. Buchanan, *Spring* (2008); J. Cayley: <http://www.shadoof.net/in/>; Eastgate Systems: <http://www.eastgate.com/>; The Electronic Literature Collection, vol. 1 (2006), <http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>; The Electronic Literature Organization: <http://www.eliterature.org/>; The Electronic Poetry Center: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/>; The Iowa Review Web: <http://research-intermedia.art.uiowa.edu/tirw/>; D. Knoebel: <http://home.ptd.net/~clkpoet/>; J. Nelson: <http://www.secrettechnology.com/>; Poems That Go: <http://www.poemsthatgo.com/>; J. Rosenberg: [\[www.well.com/user/jer/\]\(http://www.well.com/user/jer/\); The Writing Machine Collective: <http://www.writingmachine-collective.net/>.](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

M. G. KIRSCHENBAUM

ELEGIAC DISTICH, elegiac couplet (Gr., *elegeion*). In Gr. poetry, a distinctive meter consisting of a *hexameter followed by an *asyntete combination of two end-shortened dactylic tripodies (- ◡ ◡ - ◡ ◡ - + - ◡ ◡ - ◡ ◡ -). It is, thus, a species of *epode (sense 2), in which the second line (later analyzed as a *pentameter consisting of a central *spondee between pairs of *dactyls and *anapests) gives the distinctive and satisfying effect of medial and final shortening (*catalexis). Originally used by the 6th- and 7th-c. BCE writers Archilochus, Callinus, Tyrtaeus, Theognis, and Mimnermus for a variety of topics and occasions—flute songs, symposiastic and poetic competitions, war songs, dedications, *epitaphs, inscriptions, *laments on love or death—it came to be associated thereafter with only one, i.e., loss or mourning—hence, *elegy in the mod. sense. It seems to embody reflection, advice, and exhortation—essentially “sharing one’s thoughts.” Threnodies, ritual laments, or cries uttered by professional poets at funerals may also have used the meter.

Outside the “elegiac” context, whether on love or death, the *distich was specifically the meter of *epigrams, esp. after the 4th c., when literary imitations of verse inscriptions were cultivated by the Alexandrian poets. This fixation of meter to genre lasts the longest. Ennius introduced it into Lat. and later the skill of Martial ensured its passage into the Middle Ages. In Lat., the love elegy emerges as a major genre, characterized in the Augustans (Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid) by a preference, not noticeable in Catullus and his Gr. predecessors, for sense pause at the end of each couplet. A further refinement, esp. evident in Ovid and his successors, was the requirement that the final word in the pentameter be disyllabic. In the opening lines of the *Amores*, Ovid jokes that, though he intended to write of things epic—hence, in *hexameters—Cupid first stole a foot from his second line, then supplied the poet with suitable subject matter for the resulting combination of hexameter and pentameter by shooting him with one of his arrows.

In the Middle Ages, the elegiac distich was associated with *leonine verse, where it acquired rhyme. In the Ren., it was imitated, along with other Gr. quantitative meters, and such efforts were revived in the 18th and 19th cs. Examples are found in Eng. in works by Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, S. T. Coleridge, Arthur Clough, Charles Kingsley, and A. C. Swinburne; in Ger., by F. G. Klopstock, Friedrich Schiller, J. W. Goethe, and Friedrich Hölderlin; and in It., by Gabriele D’Annunzio. Coleridge’s trans. of Schiller’s elegiac distich is well known: “In the hexameter rises the fountain’s silvery column, / In the pentameter aye falling in melody back.” Naturalized into the accentually based prosodies of the vernacular meters, it was imitated in isometric couplets, as in Christopher Marlowe’s Ovid, whence it exerted influence on the devel. of the *heroic couplet.

■ R. Reitzenstein, “Epigramm,” Pauly-Wissowa, 6.1