

*Build an engine with words. Let it make you speak.*  
—Steve Venright

*The quality of mind in the radio telescope is its will to select.*  
—Christopher Dewdney

## 1. Theory of an Emerging Genre

In his 'pataphysical essay 'Parasite Maintenance' (Alter Sublime, Coach House Press, Toronto, 1980: 73-92), Christopher Dewdney uses the metaphor of a radio telescope to model the relationship between the mind of the poet and the signals from 'outside' (in Spicer's sense) that the poet receives. In other words, Dewdney suggests, writers are data harvesters; the quality of the texts they produce depends on their individual abilities to sort and process the ambient signals that surround all of us (i.e. 'the will to select').

The Apostrophe project grew out of an interest in poems that use cataloguing and listing as their organizing metaphors. Some examples follow (these aren't necessarily canonical texts; they're just stuff we like):

- *Sunset Debris* (Ron Silliman)
- *Grid Erectile* (Christopher Dewdney)
- *White Pages* (Steve McCaffery)
- *Index* (Bruce Andrews)
- *No. 111 2.7.93-10.20.96* (Kenneth Goldsmith)
- *74 Fears* (Nancy Dembowski)
- *The Inkblot Recaf* (Dan Farrell)
- *The Jane Shaffer Writing Method* (as mulder)
- *Turnstile, Part II* (Maciej Wisniewski)  
<[www.stadiumweb.com/turnstile/turnstile\\_part2.html](http://www.stadiumweb.com/turnstile/turnstile_part2.html)>
- *Eunoia* (Christian Bök)
- *dicktée* (Judith Goldman)

One one level, these texts are all projects in data harvesting and selection. In each case, the poem consists of the output of a procedure or algorithm (followed to varying degrees of scrupulousness) for sorting through an identifiable, finite chunk of textual raw material. While the composition of some of these poems was computer-assisted, they are all paper-based except for Turnstile II.

Such texts could be arranged along a continuum of automation (though such an arrangement would have nothing to do with the quality of the writing). As the authors become more comfortable with the use of computer software, the process of harvesting the data becomes increas-

ingly more automated. In such a scheme, texts like ‘Sunset Debris’ and Eunoia would fall in the end of the spectrum closest to analog/manual procedures, and The Jane Shaffer Writing Method, Turnstile, Part II and the Apostrophe project itself would occupy spaces on the end of the spectrum closest to full automation.

While automating the collection of content is partly a matter of convenience (it could have shaved a few years off the writing of Christian Bök’s Eunoia, for example), the result of this action is a startling shift in the status of the text. As the collection process becomes increasingly automated, the collection program — rather than the output — becomes the poem.

This phenomenon is the actualization of the metaphor of book-as-machine as described by the Toronto Research Group (bpNichol and Steve McCaffery) in their various ‘Reports’:

By machine we mean the book’s capacity and method for storing information by arresting, in the relatively immune form of the printed word, the flow of speech conveying that information. The book’s mechanism is activated when the reader picks it up, opens the covers and starts reading it. (60. Nichol and McCaffery, *Rational Geomancy: Kids of the Book Machine* [Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1992])

The most interesting aspect of this definition is its metaphoricity. For Nichol and McCaffery, the book works like a meaning-generating machine that is ‘activated’ when the reader picks it up, opens the covers and begins to read.

In a milieu of information networks (the Internet and its various subsections, databases, LANs and WANs, etc.), the fact that a comparison is being made between two unlike things becomes increasingly obvious as the two metaphors grow farther apart and the metaphor becomes more forced.

Why should the book-machine metaphor privilege the book rather than the machine? Why should meaning be ‘arrested’ rather than proliferated? (This seems counter-intuitive because actual machine-book programs are becoming increasingly common. For Nichol and McCaffery at the time of the TRG reports, long before the time of widespread networked home computing, the ‘book-machine’ was simply a thought experiment.) If the book and the computer program are both informed by the same sort of ‘engineering diagram’ or ‘abstract machine’ (Manuel de Landa’s terms; see *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History* [Boston: Zone Books, 58-62]) then the kinds of texts we’ll be referring to in this paper are undoubtedly closer to that diagram than printed books. (Once again, this is a taxonomic observation, not an assessment of literary quality.)

Nichol and McCaffery cite German poet Ferdinand Kriwet’s claim

that ‘the age of the book has yet to come’, and that ‘genuine publication lies in macro-language employed as an environmental intervention’ (71). We have entered an era where the type of publication that Kriwet has in mind is possible (though we’ll bracket his use of the word ‘genuine’) — an era of machine-books rather than book-machines, where an algorithm (a literal macro-language) creates an intervention in the media environment of the Internet.

Back to the TRG for a moment: ‘There seems to exist at present a dichotomy in attitude between the book as a machine of reference and the book as a commodity to be acquired, consumed and discarded’ (62). As examples of the former, Nichol and McCaffery cite dictionaries, directories and other types of reference books which exemplify ‘an awareness of the page as a visual, tactile unit with its own very separate potential’ (62, 63); in the latter category they place popular fiction (the poet’s *bête noir*), with *Reader’s Digest* as its purest example — texts in which a hierarchical structure has been imposed onto the reading experience, ‘by means of which a superior “essence” is thought of as being abstracted from a “lesser” padding’ (63). Texts such as *Turnstile II* and the nascent *Apostrophe* confound both sides of the dichotomy by the simultaneous presentation of:

- a reference work/machine with a radically different sense of ‘page’ than Nichol and McCaffery discuss. Most search results pages are dynamically generated from databases, and in any event, relate hypertextually to each other rather than spatially.
- an output product of the original text which is neither essential to it nor lesser (being drawn dynamically from the current sum total of indexed online data, a corpus which is continually changing and growing), nor of any ‘use’ other than the poetic (which, as usual, means no use at all).

## 2. ‘Apostrophe’: Primitive Origins

you are a deftly turned phrase, an etymological landscape, a home by the sea ... you are a compilation of more than sixty samples overlaid on top of a digitally synthesized 70s funk groove ... you are the message on a cassette tape long after it has been recorded over ... you are, as such, the eraser head’s self-validating ideal of order ... you are a festering war wound incurred in a skirmish in the war between the U.S. and Canada over rights to a pig farm strategically located on what is now referred to as the world’s longest undefended border, making you a better meteorologist than any one of the “big three” networks, or the CBC for that matter, can

muster ... you are used & abused ... you are a distress property bought by Tom Vu & sold for an outrageous profit ... you are ossifying sweat on Robert Plant's performance towel, now in the possession of a man who is thinking about auctioning it off because he has decided he would rather listen to "new country" ... you are an onion ring with an identity crisis on the Korona Restaurant's "Transylvanian Meat Platter" ... you are an easy-riding h that just knew you would be stopped by police, cuffed, hauled in & strip searched while you were making your way through the mountains in Georgia ... you are everything your mother had hoped for, & more ... you are track-lighting gone bad, a one-time energy saver now driving a gas-guzzling '71 Impala ... you are considering touching that dial ... you are a pretense to universality ... you are the top quark ... you are one of a family of Dirt Devil™ carpet cleaners ... you are wondering at this moment whether you are merely a cleverly disguised rip-off ... you are a foreign agent who accidentally ruptured an emergency cyanide tooth cap just before your rendez-vous with a thin man in a lumber jacket standing by a garbage can on the patio of a McDonald's in Paris, who was to receive an attaché case containing vital information photoreduced on microfilm which, of course, you have no prior knowledge of ... you are a mispronounced word with eyes stuck in an awkward position just like your parents warned you they would, trying to get a date with one of the "cool chicks" in your high school & having a difficult time of it ... you are fibre ingested by a septuagenarian to promote regularity ... you are a face in the crowd ... you are secretly responsible for both the mysterious circles appearing overnight in British grain fields & getting the soft-flowing caramel into the Caramilk™ bars ... you are not using the Force, Luke. ... you are fucked up in your own special way ... you are toiling, neither do you spin ... you are your own secret twin preparing to make an appearance on Ricki! ... you are an immediately perceptible phenomenon elevated to the level of theological unity ... you are accurate to a depth of 30m ... you are pecs on your pecs ... you are thrown out for lack of evidence ... you are a nested loop ... you are getting sleepy ... you are an ode to the west wind ... you are made in your own image ... you are wanted & loved ... as if ... you are a case of halitosis, gingivitis, dandruff & split ends all rolled up into one ... you are a granny knot undone by an older & wiser scout leader ... you are a piece of performance art that deep down inside wants to be a bust of Beethoven sitting on a Steinway grand piano ... you are a primal scream trying to differentiate yourself from an existential scream ... you are a hockey stick broken over the spine of a 19th century hunchback you figured had no business playing street hockey in the first place ... you are a healthy Hi-Pro™ glow ... you are having paranoid delusions that a figure much like Henri Matisse's "Blue Nude" is following you around trying to get you to join the Jehovah's Witnesses ... you are the distance between the hyperbolic curve at the y-axis ... you are what you eat ... you are a reified universal transcendental signifier ... you are kind of pissed off that you were never given the choice of whether to be a sequitur or not ... you are, and if you aren't, who is? ... you are not enough to get over the threshold ... you are getting even sleepier ... you are a fine piece of work, you are ... you are a stupid English k(o)n-ig(g)ht ... you are currently in search & destroy mode ... you are a 60-cycle hum ... you are a refutation of the Special Theory of Relativity ... you are a parade of endless details ... you are the lusts of your father ... you are wondering at the audacity of some people who like to tell you just who they think you are ... you are synaptic information lost in the aphasic shuffle ... you are a means of production ... you are the line cut out of the final edit by some guy using a PowerBook in a cheesy local Laundromat, or if you aren't you wish you were ... you are being com-

pletely irrational ... you are the wrong answer on the multiple choice section of the LSAT ... you are feeling quite overwhelmed, you must say ... you are exactly what they've been looking for, and that should frighten you ... you are the significant answer in an inkblot test ... you are well on your way ... you are the space between the heavens and the corner of some foreign field ... you are rendered completely useless ... you are a B- grade on a C paper ... you are so beautiful, to me ... you are unconsciously acting upon your cultural biases ... you are a game of tic-tac-toe that, after dealing with an inferiority complex, beat up a game of "globalthermonuclearwar" and kicked the shit out of Pentagon computers ... you are on your way to the store to get a litre of milk, when this cow with the head and antlers of a moose sporting black eyepatch over his left eye comes up to you and says "you are on your way to the store to get a litre of milk, when this cow with the head and antlers of a moose sporting black eyepatch over his left eye comes up to you and says "you are... ... you are the weak argument in an elaborate doctoral thesis ... you are the miracle cure for halitosis, gingivitis, dandruff & split ends all rolled up into one, at least that's what your 19th century procurer, "Dr. Morgan", says as he travels from town to town trying to sell you ... you are not but let's say you are ... you are your favourite letter of the alphabet except h cuz that has already been taken ... you are an asshole (ee-o-ee-ole) ... you are a soliloquy on a barren heath in a play which inspired Shakespeare's "King Lear" but has been lost for many centuries, last documented in the Earl of Derby's private collection, 1723 ... you are billed as the "nicotine patch to the world" ... you are everything you want in a drugstore ... you are only as good as the next guy ... you are the eggman, you are the eggman, you are the walrus (kookookajooob) ... you are shoveling shit in a Roman stable ... you are dead now, so shut up! ... you are in the process of being palimpsested ... you are an incestuous mess ... you are available only through this limited TV offer ... you are the party of the first part ... you are a no-good, lazy son-of-a-bitch ... you are often replaced by an apostrophe ... you are a big waste of time, for the most part ... you are a poor player who struts and frets his hour upon the stage and is heard no more ... you are surely mistaken ... you are a detachable penis ... you are therefore you think ... you are the side effects of performance enhancing drugs ... you are a bad case of blue-balls ... you are boldly going where no man has gone before, but only as the disposable crew member who happens to be dumb enough to talk a lump of painted grey styrofoam & therefore, in my humble opinion, deserves to get it anyway ... you are translated into 20 different languages ... you are not smart, just hard working ... you are a painting bought solely for the frame ... you are the one really likes it, really ... you are not a machine, you are a human being ... you are corn, but we call it maize ... you are dumb enough to spend your time typing out endless statements that begin with "you are" just to make a point and try to get some laughs, neither of which, in retrospect, you believe you will succeed in ... you are the owner of the secret decoder ring, and as such have a right to be president of the club ... you are the interest accrued by overnight by some clever electronic banking maneuver ... you are, and if you aren't you should be ... you are misspelled in a grade six spelling bee by a kid who will eventually serve 8 years in jail for manslaughter ... you are better than bad, you're good ... you are a quote within a quote desperately trying to escape ... you are a most noble swain ... you are in absentia ... you are engaging in self-nullifying behaviour ... you are a vague sense of alienation masked by a friendly, conversational atmosphere ... you are a dentist, you take delight in causing great pain ... you are the kind of apathy that can only be generated by the "spoken-" vs. "written-" word debate ... you are a self-consum-

ing artifact ... you are an unimportant stanza in a unimportant Bob Southey epic ... you are the neurochemical dopamine bridging the gap between the tail of one synapse and the head of another during a bout of particularly raunchy sex with a not-quite-loved one ... you are an instance of pre-emptory teleology ... you are living in a post-theory, post-language writing, post-sound-poetry, post-literate age, so let's stop writing crap that pretends that you aren't ... you are a reference to the small font size of this poem ... you are going to sell out the first chance you get ... you are yawning — stop it! ... you are a persnickety line removed at the friendly request of an editor who thinks its potential offensiveness is enhanced by the mere fact of its referential obscurity ... you are all out to get me, damn you! ... you are mixing memory with desire ... you are sitting with a soggy ass at some reading in High Park really wishing you were somewhere else ... you are a portable Greek reader that is going to party like it's 1999 ... you are going on with your doggy life ... you are the interplay between the quotidian & the extraordinary ... you are a ravenous, meat eating carnivore who lusts after the feeling of animal blood tracing the crevasses of your chin, or if you aren't, you know one ... you are a Captain's log, supplemental ... you are a metonymic slide ... you are a pipefitter with a penchant for Cartesian ontology ... you are everyday people ... you are believing this crap they're feeding you ... you are convinced you looked better before the makeover ... you are a bird, no, wait, you are a plane, no, hell! you're superman! ... you are an uninterrupted series of dots that has come to terms with being a line yet ... you are an ill-used neural cluster removed to get at a deep-seated brain tumour ... you are fading away when you would rather be burning out ... you are a linguistic trap set to catch some good eatin' possum ... you are eleven benevolent elephants ... you are mucus currently stringing its way to the centrefold of a porn mag ... you are a registered trademark of the Coca-Cola corporation ... you are the supreme arbiter and lawgiver of music ... you are woman, hear you roar ... you are never going to amount to a hill of beans in the world ... you are bad advice foisted on some love-sick puppy ... you are an axiom proved false ... you are the cruelest month ... you are an error in grammar identified by the latest in word processing technology ... you are flown to your destination on Delta Airlines ... you are the book in the spirit machine ... you are a dadaist who needs to love & be loved ... you were pre-conceived by both Boethius and William the Conqueror yet still have no clue as to what surrealism is really on about ... you are hoping that you will never have to hear that fucker read his damn "you are" poem again but are resigned to that fact that you probably will ... you are in more closets than you wish to admit ... you are someone with the debilitating habit of cutting against the grain ... you are going, going, gone ... you are a likely consumer of rubber nipples ... you are a long-lost jazz score that no one would have played anyway ... you are a last will & testament ... you are an unceremonious exit

The preceding (analog) version of 'Apostrophe' was written by Bill Kennedy ca. 1994. Its structure consists of lines beginning with the phrase 'You are', which enacts the textbook definition of its eponymous trope: 'A figure of speech in which someone (usually, but not always absent), some abstract quality, or a nonexistent personage is addressed as though present ... Since apostrophe is chiefly associated with deep emotional expression, the form is readily adopted by humorists for purposes of parody and satire.' (C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook*

to Literature. Fifth Edition. New York: Macmillan, 1986. ) Conveniently, the apostrophe is also the mark of the ‘pataphysical — the minimal swerve from the expected trajectory of an argument, query or line of reasoning that makes art and other interesting things possible.

In terms of the texts that we listed at the beginning of this paper, the analog version of ‘Apostrophe’ occupies a position on the non-automated end of the spectrum. On paper, it’s a loosely structured list poem with morphological similarities to texts such as *Sunset Debris* or ‘Grid Erectile’, but its individual ‘lines’ draw from no subset other than the poet’s imagination.

### 3. The Apostrophe Project

The new Apostrophe project, currently functioning in beta stage on Bill’s G4 but still under construction will be housed eventually at [www.alienated.net](http://www.alienated.net). Apostrophe goes a step further along the automation continuum than texts in which the writer uses the computer as an aid in collecting data (such as Goldsmith’s *No. 111*) in that it dynamically searches the web and extends itself as the viewer interacts with it. The impetus for making an interactive online version of the poem was the realization that the trope of apostrophe is, like a Web URL (universal resource locator), a form of address.

The user interface for the Apostrophe project is the analog version of ‘Apostrophe’ cited above. Keywords and phrases in the original text (generally, the objects of each sentence e.g. ‘deftly turned phrase’, ‘etymological landscape’ and ‘home by the sea’ from the poem’s first line) are hyperlinks; clicking on them results in a dynamically generated page that temporarily extends the poem’s vocabulary. Following is a page created by clicking on the ‘deftly turned phrase’ hyperlink:

You are a regular man-eater, do you know that? You are an educator or school organization such as a PTA. You are a bard then, not a warrior? You are a brute. You are a Party Leader. You are a prophet — our fathers worshipped in this mountain. You are a mere computer. You are a mere computer. You are a bit battered at the moment. You are a true intellectual, I will have to give you a more comprehensive answer than most. You are a lover of Gold jewelery. You are a vegetarian so I suggest going to the EDEN Restaurant. You are an American coming to Greece for an extended period of time. You are a tourist with a fairly old tube map, or you last came to London over five years ago and you may be wondering what happened to Aldwych tube station. You are a fan of Dark Funeral, Marduk, and Setherial, but don’t like the Peter Tatgren studio sound. You are a rap artiste, emcee, like the late Richard Dawson, not to be confused with the periodic table of elements. You are a minor and/or offended by such things, go watch Public Television RIGHT NOW. You are a metaphor for God. You are a teacher who has begun to suspect that a child is being bullied at school. You are a Berkeleian idealist or a realist. You are a genuine talent, Mister. You are a lost woman who will betray everything for what little power you think you desire. You are a man, you have no guest right here. You

are a curious one. 'You are a reincarnated soul of many past lives,' Vivian was relaying with astonishment. You are a junior or senior in High School and this movie was made for you so run and check it out. You are a true romantic, you believe in the power of love and you are willing to take a leap of faith so this movie is for you. You are an insomniac and you like cool, dark places so go see this movie. You are a young person who has not seen many movies and you might (emphasis on might) enjoy yourself. You are a regular moviegoer so you have seen all this before. You are a Star Trek fan so I would not discourage you from going to see this movie (not that I would have success) and I guess you will enjoy it. You are a Mathew Perry fan (it's OK; you don't have to be ashamed; sir) — save your money because he basically plays the same character as in Friends (which you can watch for free on TV). You are a liberal Christian who has drifted away from many biblical teachings so your inclination to join social activist groups is understandable. You are encouraged to give SchoolNotes. You are a disgrace to every scientist, every inventor, every person who has ever tried to improve the status of mankind by demonstrating that which they allege. You are an artist, are you not, Mr Dedalus? said the dean, glancing up and blinking his pale eyes. You are a reactionary then? You are an Irishman but your pride is too powerful. You are a distressing pair, you and Cranly. You are a child of God. You are a foreigner, I'll swear, because you have such a fine contempt for us. You are a unique being, spiritual as well as physical, and in spite of the terrible enigma of unexplainable evil — part of an essentially harmonious universe. You are a monster. You are a genius. You are a friend, I cannot simply release you without hard proof of your innocence, not in dangerous times like this. you are a great Orientalist. You are an Esperantist. You are a restless sleeper. You are a guest here; and we — I — will respect your reticence about our customs. You are a Yorkshire girl too? You are a skilful pilot, Robert. You will weather the storm. You are a Jacobin. You are a peculiar personage: quiet as you look, there is both a force and a depth somewhere within, not easily reached or appreciated. You are a Whig or a Tory: pray which party has the honour of your alliance? YOU ARE A FLUKE OF THE UNIVERSE. YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE HERE; AND WHETHER YOU CAN HEAR IT OR NOT, THE UNIVERSE IS LAUGHING BEHIND YOUR BACK. You are a teacher, are you not, as well as a pupil? You are a scoundrel. You are a sort of Swiss sibyl, with high Tory and high Church principles! You are a more unpractical man than I am an unpractical woman, for you don't acknowledge what really exists. You are a fool, And that I am a worse fool yet.

The guts of the Apostrophe project is a Perl script written by Bill that parasitizes a commercial search engine for the purposes of poetry. Briefly, the script submits a given hyperlink (such as 'deftly turned phrase') to the engine, collects links to web pages containing that phrase, searches those pages for phrases containing the search string 'you+are+a', strips them out, and dynamically generates a web page such as the one quoted above (various subroutines sort out undesirable material along the way — the next version of this paper will contain more information about the script, which is still being rewritten regularly). To illustrate, a brief section of the program's search log (the first three pages of queries returned by Alta Vista) follows:

Incoming Query:  
q=%2Bhome+%2Bby+%2Bthe+%2Bsea+%2B%22you+are+a%22&kl=XX&pg=q&Translate=on

Page 1 Query:http://www.altavista.com/cgi-bin/query?q=%2Bhome+%2Bby+%2Bthe+%2Bsea+%2B%22you+are+a%22&kl=XX&pg=q&Translate=on

http://www.interplay.com/contact.html  
http://www.barbarapowell.com/home.html  
http://www.iuf.net/  
http://www.nswseakayaker.asn.au/  
http://www.seaed.com/BreaNDX.SHTML  
http://members.home.net/wmccabe/guestbook.html  
http://www.luf.org/bin/view/Main/FoundationStore  
http://www.hfradio.com/  
http://www.pond.net/~pcffa/  
http://www.hamptonu.edu/brick.htm

Page 2 Query:http://www.altavista.com/cgi-bin/query?q=%2Bhome+%2Bby+%2Bthe+%2Bsea+%2B%22you+are+a%22&kl=XX&pg=q&Translate=on&stq=10

http://www.oldmadison.com/  
http://www.artsci.villanova.edu/dsteelman/augustine/index.htm  
http://www.cadets.net/pacific/index1.htm  
http://www.maui-scuba.com/guestbook/guestbook.html  
http://www.global-law.net/maxpages/Top\_100  
http://www.emporia.edu/scimath/catalog/author.htm  
http://anexa.paralogic.com/eastmayonline  
http://www.cs.rmit.edu.au/~aym  
http://books.dreambook.com/selenabh/guestbook.html  
http://www.netstoreusa.com/books/index/bkixsri.shtml

Page 3 Query:http://www.altavista.com/cgi-bin/query?q=%2Bhome+%2Bby+%2Bthe+%2Bsea+%2B%22you+are+a%22&kl=XX&pg=q&Translate=on&stq=20

http://www.seaqmaui.com/Comments.html  
http://dogfeathers.com/sarah/index.html  
http://www.badc.rl.ac.uk/forms/  
http://www.usnst.org/  
http://www.1000traveltips.org/  
http://www.shipperfinder.com/  
http://www.webedit.freeseve.co.uk/index.htm  
http://www.cadets.bc.ca/index1.htm  
http://www.docksidereports.com/small\_boat\_safety\_at\_sea.htm  
http://www.counterpane.com/crypto-gram-9807.html

Getting Phrases:

Looking at URL: http://www.interplay.com/contact.html  
Looking at URL: http://www.barbarapowell.com/home.html  
Looking at URL: http://www.iuf.net/  
Looking at URL: http://www.nswseakayaker.asn.au/  
Looking at URL: http://www.seaed.com/BreaNDX.SHTML  
0.found phrase: you are a computer novice or an experienced engineer, SEA has a program that will not only give you an opportunity in the growing IT industry, but also assists you in getting the salaries which certified professionals earn.

Looking at URL: http://members.home.net/wmccabe/guestbook.html  
1.found phrase: you are a little crazy about your friend JAN.

Looking at URL: http://www.luf.org/bin/view/Main/FoundationStore  
2.found phrase: you are a helping with <BR>  
our plan to heal the Earth and inhabit the Galaxy, <BR>  
we have a variety of ways to help.

Looking at URL: http://www.hfradio.com/  
3.found phrase: you are a ham, and want 2 meter, or 2 meter  
70 centimeter radios,  
we recommend the <a HREF="http://www.

Looking at URL: <http://www.pond.net/~pcffa/>  
 4.found phrase: you are a commercial fishermen, PCFFA is about you.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.hamptonu.edu/brick.htm>  
 5.found phrase: you are a committed Pirate fan.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.oldmadison.com/>  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.artsci.villanova.edu/dsteelman/august-tine/index.html>  
 6.found phrase: You Are a Beggar of God</a></dd>  
 <dd>August 7: <a HREF="days/0807.&br/>
 7.found phrase: You Are a Work of God</a></dd>  
 <dd>September 17: <a HREF="days/0917.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.cadets.net/pacific/index1.htm>  
 8.found phrase: you are a member of the CCM in BC and require the password for the secured site, please click on the link to the left.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.maui-scuba.com/guestbook/guestbook.html>  
 9.found phrase: you are a credit to your profession—thanks again and </b><br>  
 <a href="http://?">George S Fedor</a> &lt;<a href="mailto:Ggfedor@aol.  
 10.found phrase: you are a novice diver, they have no problem giving you that little extra time and attention needed.  
 Looking at URL: [http://www.global-law.net/maxpages/Top\\_100](http://www.global-law.net/maxpages/Top_100)  
 11.found phrase: you are a lawyer.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.emporia.edu/scimath/catalog/author.htm>  
 12.found phrase: You Are a Hunter of Fossils; Earth Science; Kindergarten through Sixth Grade.  
 Looking at URL: <http://anexa.paralogic.com/eastmayoonline>  
 13.found phrase: you are a member, you may access member services by signing in using your account name and password.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.cs.rmit.edu.au/~aym>  
 Looking at URL: <http://books.dreambook.com/selenabh/guestbook.html>  
 14.found phrase: you are a S.  
 Looking at URL:  
<http://www.netstoreusa.com/books/index/bkixsri.shtml>  
 15.found phrase: You Are a Pro Baseball Player (Professional Sports Library)</A><BR><I>Leebrick, Kristal</I> School and library binding, hard cover book ISBN: 1577651979<BR><BR>  
 <A HREF="http://www.  
 16.found phrase: You Are a Pro Football Player (Professional Sports Library)</A><BR><I>Bach, Julie S.  
 17.found phrase: You Are a Pro Soccer Player (Professional Sports Library)</A><BR><I>Kelzenberg, Elly</I> School and library binding, hard cover book ISBN: 1577651987<BR><BR>  
 <A HREF="http://www.  
 18.found phrase: You Are a Whitewater Rafter (Action Sports Library)</A><BR><I>Nelson, Melinda/ Wallner, Rosemary</I> School and library binding, hard cover book ISBN: 1577652037<BR><BR>  
 <A HREF="http://www.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.seaquaui.com/Comments.html>  
 19.found phrase: you are a great chef! </b><br>  
 <i>Joe Szczubelek of Algonquin, IL.  
 Looking at URL: <http://dogfeathers.com/sarah/index.html>  
 20.found phrase: you are a tightwad, you may like these:</H4>  
 <ul>  
 <li><a href="http://users.  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.badc.rl.ac.uk/forms/>  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.usnst.org/>  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.1000traveltips.org/>  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.shipperfinder.com/>  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.webedit.freemove.co.uk/index.htm>  
 Looking at URL: <http://www.cadets.bc.ca/index1.htm>  
 Looking at URL:  
[http://www.docksidereports.com/small\\_boat\\_safety\\_at\\_sea.htm](http://www.docksidereports.com/small_boat_safety_at_sea.htm)

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21.found phrase: you are a highly experienced and skilled  
seaman.  
Looking at URL: http://www.counterpane.com/crypto-gram-9807.html
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Unlike Turnstile II (which extends itself automatically, but with no intervention on the part of its passive readers), ‘Apostrophe’ will have a finite (but very large) search horizon, because it’s bound by its original text/interface as well as a general criteria for search terms (‘you+are+a’). Eventually all of the objects in the dynamically generated pages will also be clickable, meaning that Apostrophe can be extended as long as the reader is willing to continue clicking (much like exploring the Mandelbrot set through a graphic viewer).

#### 4. Initial Conclusions

Until a stable version of Apostrophe is running on the Web itself, it’s difficult to say exactly what the full implications of the piece are. But here are a few observations:

- We wanted to create a semi-automated poem on the Web that wasn’t necessarily about the Web. As our friend Rick Walters has observed, much of the content on the Web is simply the Web talking about itself. While parts of the Apostrophe project have the usual dorky references to URLs, scripts, code, yadda yadda yadda, for the most part, the text succeeds in not being too focused on its own structure.
- Apostrophe asserts the importance of metonymy with a vengeance. Moving from one hyperlink to a series of pages where that link occurs, then looking on those pages for particular strings that are grammatically related to the source sentence (even though their content may be unrelated or only tangentially related) produces a metonymic slide where meanings rub against each other without necessarily being equated. This movement could also be described as the ‘pataphysical clinamen, a minimal swerve from the expected trajectory of the initial search.
- In conversation, Charles Bernstein has suggested that the function of Apostrophe may be related to Freud’s notion of the uncanny, a somnambulistic drift that appears aimless yet somehow always returns to the subject (‘you are’). In his essay on the subject, Freud states:

We have clearly not exhausted the possibilities of poetic license and the privileges enjoyed by story-writers in evoking or in excluding an uncanny feeling. In the main we adopt an unvarying passive attitude towards real experience and are subject to the influence of our physical environment. But the story-teller has a peculiarly directive power over us; by means of the moods he can put us into, he is able to guide the current of our emotions, to dam it up in one direction and make it flow in another, and he often obtains a great variety of effects from the same material. All this is nothing new, and has doubtless long since been fully taken into account by students of aesthetics. We have drifted into this field half involuntarily, through the temptation to explain certain instances which contradicted our theory of the causes of the uncanny. (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 24 vols. Hogarth Press: London, 251-52)  
<[www.modcult.brown.edu/students/segall/u-18.html](http://www.modcult.brown.edu/students/segall/u-18.html)>

- The structure of Apostrophe is neither stable nor unstable, which adds to the uncanniness of the text. Links will come and go, and the search engines that we choose to hijack may vary (an option to choose which engine the poem parasitizes may be included in a later version of the project), but the overall shape of the poem will remain (vaguely) familiar, like a trick of memory.
- As the program becomes the poem, the poet becomes the coder. This will, we hope, result in a further demystification of the process of writing. (Though computer geeks have occult mysteries of their own, they are secular mysteries, and are thus infinitely preferable to the unchecked romanticism that underpins the notion of 'inspiration'. Ideas are the easy part; everything else is hard work.