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Poetic publications authored with free software Managana

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Poetic Publications Authored with Free Software *Managana*

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ABSTRACT

In the Ciclope atelier, what moves us is the creation of new languages for the digital medium. In this text I present a synthesis of our research and experimentation work: a free digital publishing software called *Managana*; the first poetry eBook authored with it, *Grão* [Grain], launched along with the software in 2012; and our latest release, *Poemas de Brinquedo* [Toy Poems], launched in 2016. *Grain* and *Toy Poems* are good examples of publications that use *Managana*. Resulting from prolonged research in dictionaries and linguistics' texts, etymology and mythology, *Grain* proposes to recreate the world through the word. Its poems experiment the evolution of James Joyce's verbivocovisual to the possible interanimaverbivocovisual in a digital publication. The application-book-performance *Toy Poems* is a publication that addresses the possibilities and difficulties of today's transmedia *poiesis*.

KEYWORDS

authoring software; digital imagination; digital poetry; poetic cosmogony; app.

RESUMO

No ateliê Ciclope, o que nos move é a criação de novas linguagens para o meio digital. Apresento neste texto a síntese de nosso trabalho de pesquisa e experimentação: o software livre de publicação digital *Managana*; o primeiro livro eletrônico de poesia autorado nele, *Grão*, lançado junto com o software, em 2012; e a mais recente publicação, *Poemas de Brinquedo*, lançada em 2016. *Grão* e *Poemas de Brinquedo* são bons exemplos de publicações que utilizam o *Managana*. Resultado de uma longa pesquisa em dicionários e textos de linguística, etimologia e mitologia, *Grão* tem como proposta recriar o mundo através da palavra. Seus poemas experimentam a evolução do verbivocovisual de James Joyce para o possível interanimaverbivocovisual em uma publicação digital. O aplicativo-livro-performance *Poemas de Brinquedo* serve como exemplo para abordar as possibilidades e dificuldades da *poiesis* transmídia nos dias atuais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

software de autoria; imaginação digital; poesia digital; cosmogonia poética; app.

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In the Ciclope atelier, what moves us is the creation of new languages for the digital medium.[1] We explore in our works what we call digital imagination: art creations made from a new paradigm that transforms multimedia into something more intersensitive and intuitive, using the mental metaphor instead of stages or pages (Garcia 2010). The synthesis of our research and experimentation work is a free digital publishing software called *Managana*. Lucas Santos Junqueira, my colleague in this digital adventure, made the bone part of the software development: he wrote the code.

I. FUNDAMENTALS

How to write software that could be an open space for the publication of works which are also open? How to use the insights of many digital thinkers about the mind as a paradigm for authoring and displaying multimedia content? How can digital writing be? *Managana* is an exercise we have made to create a platform that contemplates these issues and shows us one possible way to publish content instead of using common software solutions that are poor in supporting new ideas of interface, navigation and interactivity.

With this in mind, we have created a publishing environment with organic characteristics: A collaborative mental extension created and maintained by communities, where interactive flows of images present themselves to the senses in a hyperdimensional space, where distances are traveled in links and not in meters.

II. MANAGANA

Managana is a cross-platform software for creating and maintaining communities that share interactive multimedia content on the Internet, tablets, smartphones, and installations. Each community posts and reads interactive streams composed of audiovisual clusters, graphics, text, and external feeds.

1 Álvaro Andrade Garcia runs the Ciclope atelier of digital art and publishing (http://www.ciclope.art.br), which was started in 1992. We have surfed almost every digital wave: we did videopoetry with computer graphics, multimedia systems; we have published CD-ROMs, DVDs, websites, apps and a free digital publishing software called Managana, that we use it to publish our own works.

Managana tracks and sequences playlists that can be created, displayed and animated in the software itself.[2]

The works authored in *Managana* are distributed on the web through browsers with Flash player, Android and Apple apps (search for *Managana* in their software stores) and in video installations in cultural spaces using a showtime module we developed. A remote control module was also created. *Managana R* allows, for example, cell phones to interact with a projection in a facade.

Publications are maintained online by a community of people who read and write interactive animated images, while updating the software itself, which displays these image streams on a variety of digital devices and platforms that also interact with one another.

Managana incorporates authoring functions used in the free software Wordpress.[3] Tools for user management, revision control and access statistics are present. In addition, *Managana* also connects to other environments. It receives and sends feeds to Wordpress and social networks. It has tools for animation (interpolation of keyframes, transformations in image properties) and interactive display of audiovisual elements (substitution and composition of elements, positioning in time, layers and alpha channel).

To guarantee remuneration for creative work, we adopted a philosophy of dividing what we are able to get for the works authored among the people that create the content, according to the accesses to each of the works, in a model similar to existing streaming platforms.

We have tried payment options for some content authored with *Managana*, but we were not successful in this, the problem being the same with the editors and the press. The publishing environment today is dominated by large corporations that offer free content in exchange for advertising and use of the information on the users. In fact, we stand by providing services using our platform to help magazines, publishers and institutions that desire more elaborate digital publications, especially with regards to interactive audiovisual contents.

When we set out for free software, we found a big obstacle that is also much debated: the frontier between free software and proprietary software. You are either on one side or on the other of the border. We decided to make *Managana* free but with possibility of presence in the proprietary world, to increase access to most people, and that is why our free license is LGPL, not GPL. We are the seafood between the rock and the sea.

It is increasingly difficult to have cross-platform software nowadays, because its circulation has been restricted year after year. We face fragmentation in the WWW and in the world of apps that was born divided. Platforms that were once compatible are now incompatible. Public or universal standards are ignored and sabotaged by large corporations that produce software and formats for publication on the Internet.

2 *Managana* is hosted at http://www.managana.org, where you can find its sources, installations for various devices, support and examples of use.
3 http://www.wordpress.org.

III.GRAIN

The first authored publication with *Managana* was the *Grain* eBook, launched along with the software in 2012. The poetry that had served as the basis for building the software libraries was now ready for embracing its support. *Grain* is a good example of publications that use *Managana*.[4]

Resulting from a prolonged research in dictionaries and texts of linguistics, etymology and mythology, *Grain* proposes to recreate the world through the word. Its poems experiment the evolution of James Joyce's verbivocovisual to the possible interanimaverbivocovisual in a digital publication.

Figure 1. *Grão* (2012).

Grain is made up of animations of Indo-European semes in its singular form in Portuguese, in dialogue with other languages of the same root as Sanskrit and English, mixed with visual images, speech, sounds and silences. Each stream of the poem is titled after an ideogram, so we can go through them back and forth by clicking on the ideograms arranged on the screen, or we can go to a summary poem connected to all of them.

4 *Grain* is hosted at http://www.sitio.art.br/grao/, and the page also contains references to the images used in it and bibliography of the research made by Álvaro Andrade Garcia (page in Portuguese). At http://www.ciclope.com.br/download-do-grao-em-video-full-hd/, videos of the launch of *Maganaga* and *Grão* in the Knowledge Space of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, in 2012, are available. We can see the work being exhibited on the facade of the building, in its internal circuit of TVs and on tablets and cell phones, which also control views on other screens. A video of the complete poem in HD is also available for download (page in Portuguese).

Grain is inspired by the letter Alef, the letter A of the Latin alphabet, which symbolizes the beginning of something. In the Hindu tradition, the universe was created by the syllable AOM. The A is the letter of the creation. The flows of poems go toward its direction.

Its cover is an animation composed of words and images of cave paintings of the Cueva de las Manos, in Argentina, while its epigraph poem is composed of an image of the interior of the Perur temple in Rajasthan, along with free translations of parts of the Sacred text *Visvasara Tantra*.

Then, another 9 streams follow. For six minutes and forty five seconds, words come out from the language of fire of a child, a waterfall enunciates water connected words, then comes the sun, the gametes, the fetus and the gem. Rays and thunders, chakras, vowels, clouds, silences and blows travel with the light from the earth to the Big Bang.

These are the poem flows:

Grain (cover)

Primordial (epigraph)
Word
Water

Fire
Thunderbolt
Empty Air

Ancestral
Light
Born

I

IV.TOY POEMS: CHALLENGES OF A TRANSMEDIA PUBLICATION

In this final section we present the latest work authored with our free software *Managana*, the application-book-performance *Toy Poems*. This audiovisual and interactive book is available for free in app format and also on paper. It brings all the artistic potentiality of poetic works that extend beyond the printed medium and overflow to other media, including performance and installation. Combining the written word with the spoken word, poetic images with cinematographic images, *Toy Poems* is a work that the poet and performer Ricardo Aleixo includes in what he calls “expanded poetry.”

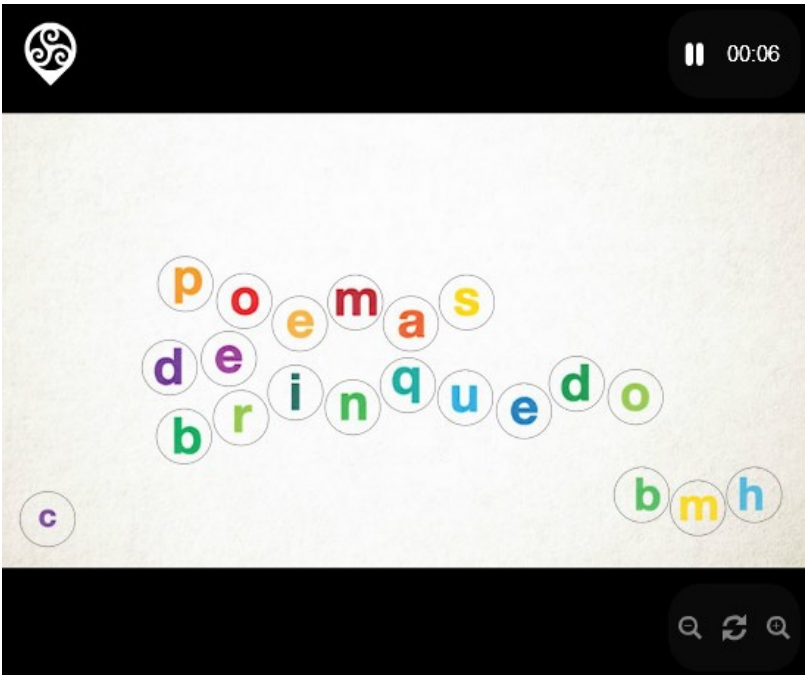

Figura 2. *Poemas de Brinquedo* (2016).

Toy Poems was released in June 2016.[5] It contains invented words, hidden words, tongue-twisters, poems in different pronunciations, and misspelled texts to correct. Funny and noisy stories, sounds to sing and also to tease and amuse. Words with edges and crazy drawings, waiting for the reader to make sense of them.

The word with playful meaning is a ritual, it happens as in Buddhist poems, koans, or as in *Alice in Wonderland*: it undoes known paths, reconfiguring the mind. To play gives us that infinite time in which everything is and never ends... Play has no rule, has no duration, it is pure speculation. It is poetry very close to its Big Bang.

The creation of *Toy Poems* involved much inter-semiotic translation. We have worked with poetic images in more than one vehicle. From the beginning, we have surpassed the dimension of the poetic text on the printed page. The editorial project began with the authoring of a mobile app. Poems to play on the screen, with the fingers, in cell phones. In that universe of games, shootings and dragons, we opened a window to poetry.

We imagined children coming and going, passing swiftly through those playful poems. From the title screen they can access all the poems of the app. We guaranteed that everything was very simple in terms of navigation. On the cell

5 At http://www.sitio.art.br/poemas-de-brinquedo/ we find the web version of the book and references to all other versions. Through the *Managana* app found in Google Play and Apple Store anyone can access this work on mobile phones and tablets.

phone, the book becomes a multimedia linguistic adventure. Blind people can hear the declamations. I have seen children, still illiterate, playing with the animated words and the sounds that came from the cell phone.

In the mobile version, the audio design by Ricardo Aleixo is fundamental. We gathered jokes with sounds and words which pass from father to son through oral culture. We gave a contemporary treatment to the tones: audio is made in such a way that a child not only reads the poem but is instigated to enunciate it, to open the mouth and to play with the sounds, to invent other poems. There are interactions: the child sometimes adds texts and sounds to the poems on display, or reveals unexpected unfoldings.

Then comes another creative layer, graphic design: all text that appears on the screen flows. We made animations that dialogue with the semantic sense, visuality and the sound rhythm of the poems. We privilege the words and their typography, leaving to them the main visual impact.

Toy Poems has the particularity of being one of the few books where the electronic version was conceived before the printed one, and from there came a great challenge: how to think of a printed version that is as interactive as the digital one?

The job was left to Márcio Koprowsky, the same graphic designer of the app. Renata Borges, the publisher of the printed book, who has also participated in the creative process, came up with the idea: a book without binding, in the form of cards, for rearrangements and groupings, for various uses, even to play. We also thought of the book as a guide to declamation, something that readers hold while speaking. An open book with many paths.

If making the book was already hard work, what about expanding the idea to the body? Ricardo Aleixo asked this. The scope was getting really wide. We did two performances for adults and children, with the recitation of the poems along with the participants. We were surprised by the degree of involvement. Later, I have received reports of experiences of interaction between children, parents and educators. The use of the book in performative readings stimulated in all of them the will to create with words, using their own voice. The book became important in the interaction among people, somehow overcoming the challenge that the app put on it.

The results of this publication came from the integration of diverse layers of knowledge of its teamwork. There is no need to stress the importance of creators' experience and negotiating skills for a successful outcome. Our team included author, editor, animator, graphic designer, sound designer and programmer, in a rich exchange of experiences and opinions. We have overcome the challenges of moving from one semiotic system to another. We could explore the poems in their interanimaverbivocovisuality: their interactive, sonic, visual and logical possibilities in multiple environments. We created a work that evolves in revisions and versions and also unfolds and transforms through different media.

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