

“This is (not) a CAPTCHA Poem@”: On Language, Algorithm and Representation in the Time of Pandemic¹

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ABSTRACT

Mar y virus/Virus and the Sea is a multimodal e-lit project directly responding to the impact of COVID-19 on society and the environment, providing technological and aesthetic opportunities for connection and collaboration/sharing of the collective experience. This project addresses the precarity of human agency —and its exclusionist reference to (hu)Man,— from a post-humanism ignited by the devastating crisis caused by the Anthropocene. The installation and project “Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea” reconceptualizes multiple combinatory electronic options that address, among other levels, a crisis of representation in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The technotexts presented in this project, such as the Poem@ CAPTCHA, request recognition and proof, a test of what subtly makes us human, based on the principles of inclusion, connection, transfeminism and cyberpoetry, a test that potentially points to a new and necessary metanarrative of collaboration and technology-based connection/alliance: “Share your COVID story.”

KEYWORDS

COVID-19, transfeminism, technotext, cyberpoetry

RESUMO

Mar y virus/Virus and the Sea é um projeto multimodal e-lit que responde diretamente ao impacto da COVID-19 na sociedade e no ambiente, proporcionando oportunidades tecnológicas e estéticas de conexão e colaboração/partilha da experiência coletiva. Este projeto aborda a precariedade da agência humana — e a sua referência excludente ao (hu)man [homem] — a partir de um pós-humanismo inflamado pela crise devastadora provocada pelo Antropoceno. A instalação e projeto “Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea” reconceptualiza múltiplas opções combinatórias eletrônicas que abordam, entre outros assuntos, uma crise de representação em tempo de pandemia COVID-19. Os tecnotextos apresentados neste projeto, como é exemplo o Poem@ CAPTCHA, solicitam reconhecimento e prova, um teste do que sutilmente nos torna humanos, baseado nos princípios de inclusão, conexão, transfeminismo e ciberpoesia, um teste que potencialmente aponta para uma nova e necessária metanarrativa de colaboração e conexão/aliança baseada em tecnologia: “Share your COVID story”.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

COVID-19, transfeminismo, tecnotexto, ciberpoesia

1 An initial version of this paper was presented in Spanish at my induction as Full Member of ANLE (North American Academy of the Spanish Language) and Corresponding Member of RAE (Royal Academy of Spanish) (Academia 2022). See also Escaja 2023a. A shorter version in English was presented at the ELO 2023 Conference.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a profound crisis that reveals the fragility and arrogance of the human condition. This arrogance appears implicit in the Judeo-Christian creation metanarrative that links names to what they represent: “Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1.3). In the 20th century, this demiurgic link was dismantled during the literary experiments of the avant-garde, or their opposite: confidence in language was emphasized by the very fact of achieving its rupture. What remained after this crisis that split signified from signifier was the principle of analogy, activated by the literary “post-avant-garde” in a historical moment of deep anguish after two World Wars. “Hay un juego peligroso, hay un gran salto que no conseguiré realizar jamás” [There is a dangerous game, there is a great leap that I will never be able to make], wrote the Argentinian post-avant-garde poet Olga Orozco in her reflection about the impossibility of naming (1964: 7). In the new millennium, with the pandemic and the newest AI technologies, a new crisis of representation is evident, a crisis to which the multimedia project *Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea* appeals. Technology served, particularly in this time of crisis, as ally and intermediary, establishing the network of a collective, while reframing the human condition. Exploring the process of this project will allow us to elucidate new instances of onto-technological representation activated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

November 13, 2020: This was the designated date for the opening of a group exhibition, “Messages from the Anthropocene,” at the Flynnndog Gallery in Burlington, Vermont (USA). The exhibition confronted the devastating human impact on our environment. My section addressed the pandemic in a multimodal installation, *Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea*. This installation included four inter-connected segments:

- A five by one-meter banner, with the poem “Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea,” printed in the original Spanish language and its English translation by Kristin Dykstra. The poem appeared superimposed on a faded medieval image alluding to the plague, with a sea wave/beach advancing on this image. At the center of the poem-banner was a representation of the SARS-CoV-2, the virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the AR Blippar

Application, the visitor could access options of Augmented Reality (AR), options that included sounds of the sea, recitation of verses from the poem, and videos linked to the project, making the installation a technotext or paratext susceptible of interaction (Figure 1).

— Images and stickers of the virus, in different formats and sizes, overpopulated the assigned gallery space, eventually exceeding this section to cannibalize or “replicate” like the virus itself over the whole gallery, spreading over walls, floors, windows, chairs and tables. These images reversed the invisibility of the virus, presenting its opposite, an overflowing and inescapable presence. The stickers also triggered interaction using Blippar (Figure 2).

— Two filing cabinets covered with virus and QR Code stickers initially framed the installation, as if the cabinets were “analog” containers of human information (in a physical version of electronic files), integrating at the same time the QR Code that both filing cabinets displayed. One of the file cabinets contained artifacts linked to the pandemic and invited viewers to insert new ones: masks, gloves, warning signs, etc. In addition, this cabinet contained a projector for a video-poem projected on the gallery wall (Figure 3). The QR Code posted on this file cabinet allowed the visitor to “Share your COVID story.” The QR Code on the second filing cabinet triggered the video of a manifesto as an alternative (cyber)feminist epistemology challenging the Anthropocene: “Feminist Manifesto in Times of Coronavirus” (Escaja, 2020). The QR Code on the file cabinet referred to said manifesto while its drawers contained photographs of historical feminist leaders as well as artifacts linked to the absurdist performance group “Feminists Against Bullshit” (FABS). (Figure 11).

— The installation also offered other forms of distanced interaction in keeping with the demands of the pandemic for “not touching.” Sensors triggered the sound of waves when visitors approached the banner. QR Codes allowed visitors to interact with the random/generative poem “Mar y virus /Virus and the Sea,” or the Poem@ CAPTCHA.²

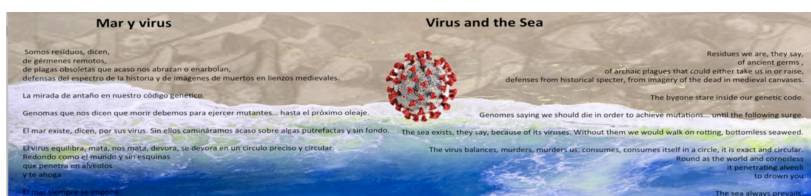


Fig. 1

2 See Escaja and Higgins (2021).



Fig. 2



Fig.3

Ironically, the day of the opening of the exhibition, November 13th, 2020, coincided with the day of the formal closing of all social events by the governor of Vermont.³ The incongruity of the opening of a group exhibition deactivated by the pandemic allowed me to exponentially expand my installation during the following months, adding multiple stickers of the viruses that eventually moved out of my segment and into the gallery as a whole. Stickers gradually replicated across floors, chairs, tables, and the ceiling, echoing the motion of the actual virus. On a broader scale, I did the same with the QR Codes inviting viewers to share COVID-19 stories, in both English and Spanish: “Cuenta tu historia COVID”; “Share your COVID story.” I posted QR Codes all over Burlington and sent the stickers to other countries to be posted on emblematic buildings and places, in an effort to create a global community in times of profound isolation (Figures 4 and 5).



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

QR Codes then acted as an interface during the pandemic. The expectation of “not touching” and the fear of contagion became instances of reference and subversion permeated by technology, which invited (and still invites) connection and collective reflection. These testimonials are collected on an interface created for this purpose. It was exhibited at the ELO 2023 conference, a conference that took place in Coimbra, Portugal, under the rubric, “Overcoming Divides: Electronic Literature and Social Change.” Along with this interface, I exhibited a VR-experience that allowed the visitors to virtually “enter” the QR Code, as a giant maze inside a human bloodstream, which functioned as an allegory and opportunity for

3 “For the time being, the Governor is requiring Vermonters to suspend all social gatherings that involve more than one household, or in other words, getting together with anyone outside of your household for socializing.” <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/covid-19/update-80> [10 September 2023]

“immersion” in our existential moment of collective trauma (Escaja, 2023b). A prototype of a hybrid book titled *Realidad mitigada* complemented these options at the ELO gallery, allowing AR interactions with poems addressing the pandemic and other themes from previous projects (Escaja, Marín, Romero, and Vega, with the book just published (see new comment on this for the bibliography), better say (2023, 2025) since both are pertinent.).⁴

The original installation at the Flynnndog gallery therefore transferred into a larger multimodal e-lit project directly responding to the impact of COVID-19 on society and the environment. This larger project provided technological and aesthetic opportunities for connection and collaboration/sharing of the collective experience. At the same time, this project addresses the precarity of human agency — and its exclusionist reference to (hu) Man,— from a post-humanist perspective ignited by the devastating crisis caused by the Anthropocene. Thinkers like Haraway and Braidotti postulate with their vision of posthumanism the imbrication with the non-human as a potential and intrinsic ally. These concepts reached new paradigms during the pandemic since the virus that causes COVID-19 sweeps through from its non-living condition. That is, in principle the virus “is not”: in the biological categories between living and dead, the virus does not belong to any of them, it has no entity. The references are essentially analogies: they are “infective particles,” “inanimate organic matter,” “incomplete entities,” etc. Analogies are sought to be able to name the virus, which has two possible sequences of three letters each one: DNA / RNA. Viruses, therefore, resemble bots in their presumed lack of sentience, and at the same time, they both exist and act, imposing an inextricable paradox. One of the main objectives of my project is to highlight this contradiction and conflict of representation.

1. “VIRUS AND THE SEA” (“OLEATORY” POEM): VIRAL SWELLS IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

As in the biblical paradigm, which I have subverted and questioned on multiple occasions, at the beginning of this project is the word, the poem, a literary event that precedes us, like a Big Bang from which new parameters emerge. This first poem and matrix of the project, “Mar y virus,”

4 *Realidad mitigada* (Mitigated Reality) is a collection of poems. For this reason, the title is intended to evoke an intimate, “attenuated,” and introspective experience as a counterpoint to the intensity of our postdigital “augmented” understanding of reality, an intensity primarily experienced through digital devices and applications. The title implies the intersection between both “realities”: introspection, the tactile and analogical (of the poetry and the physical book), and the technological (the AR options provided, “enhancing” the poetic experience). “Mitigated” reality also implies “healing” and “alleviation,” pointing to the need for connection and repair during times of emotional and environmental crises, as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic.

is inspired by the immediate effervescence of the pandemic classifications caused by the virus, and elaborates on the idea that viruses (in)form us as genetic residue of previous plagues, in a continuity in which the sea and its waves participate as original principle. The sea itself depends on viruses, in a symbiosis in which we partake, and of which we are also the cause by displacing habitats that relocate certain viruses, such as the one that causes COVID-19 (Laanto, 2022).

In fact, the poem printed on the banner-poem at the Flynndog is visually displayed in long horizontal lines that evoke the ups and downs of a wave, a wave extended to the multiplicity of interactive options within the installation, extrapolated to multiple spaces outside the gallery. The counterpoint to this poem is based on its random/generative version accessible online.

In its generative version, “Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea” appears as an “oleatory” poem — the word “oleatory” coming from the Spanish word “ola,” meaning “wave,” and the English word “aleatory,” since this is a generative/aleatory poem. Like waves of a primeval sea populated by viruses, the verses of this poem, key and matrix of the larger project, are composed and recomposed in a “random” and infinite way, mirroring the impact of ancient plagues in our DNA. Purposely hacked from Nick Montfort’s “Las aventuras de la Muerte” (una celosía/un enrejado, 2020-05-07) (The adventures of Death, a latticework / a grille, 2020-05-07), this poem acts as an allegory of the virus, inserting itself in Montfort’s poem and “altering” it (synonymous to “hacking”).

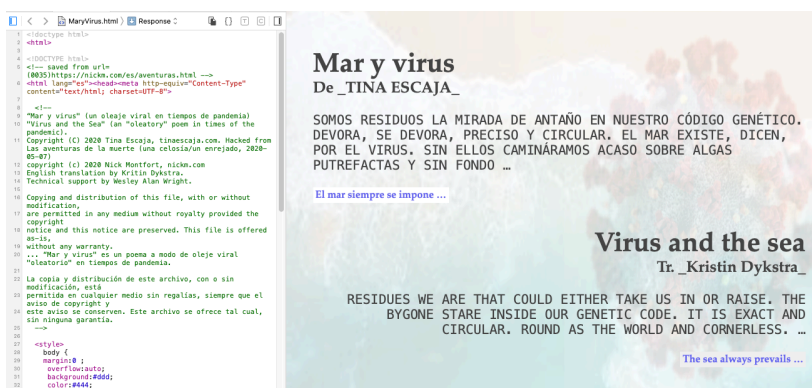


Fig. 6

The aleatory principle is textual as well as algorithmic. The source page, like the DNA of the poem, informs us of this hacking, just as a lab detects sequences of a virus that, like computer hacking, inserts itself into the stem cell and ends up replicating (Figure 6). Nick Montfort’s original poem is then replaced by another “adventure of death,” slipping through the

“latticework/grille” of the algorithmic genome. “Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea” appears as yet another viral sequence that simulates Nick Montfort’s text and replaces it in infinite sequences, in waves and fluctuations that also act as metaphors for the constant waves and mutations of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that caused COVID-19. Additionally, the random sequence in this “oleatory” poem follows its own course and algorithmic swell in both the original Spanish and the English translation. Only two instances are preserved and reiterated: the verb “to be” in the first-person plural (“we are”), which initiates each oleatory/aleatory sequence; and the final line that serves as a trigger for new generative options: “El mar siempre se impone/ The sea always prevails.” This reiteration emphasizes the existential base for humans in perpetual search of comfort and reference, of which the only thing that persists is the sea, trigger and primal agent whose fluidity also dissolves limits, hierarchies, and attempts at definition.

As such, COVID-19 appears in this project as an allegory of an implicitly reiterated and infinite process, as the mutations, hacks and catastrophes that devastate us seem infinite, and as the possibilities of the poem’s waves seem infinite. To articulate them, like the virus itself and its mutations, the project is diversified into multiple interactive variants: the more options we have, the closer we get perhaps to Truth, in capital letters, as an analogy of Unity by multiplication of signifiers.

2. “SHARE YOUR COVID STORY”: VIRAL PERSISTENCE THROUGH DISTANCED INTERACTION

As noted above, given the state of suspension in which the art installation remained for months—that is, in keeping with the requirement of confinement during the pandemic—I considered it consistent as well as necessary to elaborate on the principle of human connection by means of QR Code stickers that I distributed throughout the city during the months after the opening. Their codes invited viewers, in Spanish and English, to share testimonials: “Cuenta tu historia COVID”; “Share Your COVID Story” (Figures 4 and 5). In a way, this was also a “wave” that reached public and private spaces, that exceeded the limits of a gallery, a room, a city, a confined country, reaching people, spaces, and cities in other countries to which I also sent the codes. Technology was then put in service to the encounter, the coexistence of people who were invited to form a collective network. Technological and random principles were intertwined, and the installation was extrapolated to that of a globality inhabited by objects, performances and signs of the moment: masks and gloves thrown in the corners, prohibitions and instructions to keep distance or enter or not enter buildings, evening applause to health personnel, etc.

Other instances of interaction fostered by technology exhibited at the Flynndog gallery included videos and interactive Augmented Reality options that I mentioned previously. The images that served as a trigger were, and were not, exactly what all viewers perceived, since the images activated new experiences through an application, Blippar. As was the case with the QR Code stickers, between the signifieds and the signifiers there was literally an empty space, a physical distance and no longer a metaphysical one, as in post-avant-garde notions. Now is not the word, the poem, “un objeto más, el único rescate” [one more object, the only rescue], as the Argentinian poet Olga Orozco speculated about this anguishing distance in search of “la posible aproximación a lo indecible” [the possible approximation to the unutterable] (1964: 8). What “rescues” alleged representations is now a mobile device or smartphone that stands in the way of that intermediate point of emptiness or silence with which we reach new paradigms of Truth. The smartphone acts as a demiurgic simulacrum or interface, that is, a mediator or intermediary between concepts and dimensions, diversifying the referents and, in the case of these QR Codes, allowing contact with other humans through a network of testimonials and experiences of COVID in our lives. The smartphone, or more specifically, a human intelligence simulator (following the “Weak Artificial Intelligence” hypothesis — that is, that the machine seems to think but does not think), acts as the interface of the interface (the Blippar application) in an ontological moment and physical desire for Unity or encounter, under the added paradigm of “not touching.”

To the extent that the COVID-19’s virus continues its course and mutations, I continue to distribute and insert QR Codes in places and on objects in the countries that I visit, where I intervene with these stickers. In fact, this interactive concept became immersive in 2023 with the creation of the aforementioned Virtual Reality experience, through which the visitor/gamer enters the very interior of the QR Code, like a gigantic maze that houses all kinds of information, poetry and videos related to the pandemic (Figure 7). The search for the center invites reflection on the human condition and its impact on our lives and environment, an environment affected in turn by this project through a “Mitigated Reality” confronting the consequences of the Anthropocene.⁵ The maze/QR Code of the VR experience appears within a bloodstream populated by the COVID-19’s virus, once again linking humanity and technology through coding (algorithmic, genetic, etc.). As an ultimate allegory, at the center of the maze appears the

5 Here, “mitigated reality” addresses the aforementioned meaning of healing and repair in times of emotional and environmental turmoil (see footnote 4). The concept of “remediation” now focuses not just on hypermedia, as presented by this VR experience, but also takes on the meaning of stopping or reversing environmental damage.

digital construction of the virus, as a final questioning of the very concept of reality and representation (Figure 8).

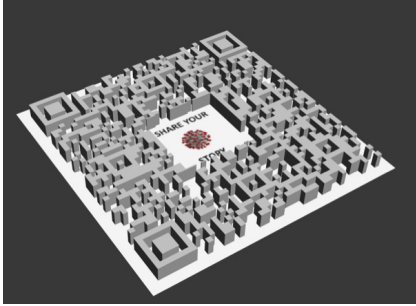


Fig. 7

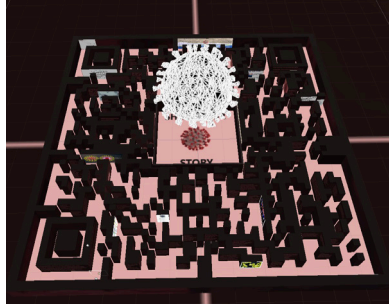


Fig. 8

3. THIS IS (NOT) A POEM@ CAPTCHA: CYBER ONTOLOGY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The extrapolated relations between machine and humanity, between creator and creature, between sign and representation, between reality and simulation, are all binary concepts thrown into question with the COVID-19 pandemic. Their existential ambivalence is concentrated within the “Poem@ CAPTCHA” of the *Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea* project (Escaja, 2021). The acronym CAPTCHA stands for “Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.” Wikipedia explains that it “is a type of challenge-response test used in computing to determine whether the user is human.” The goal of the automated program is to exclude imposter bots, which pretend to be people. Bots are judged by other bots, which distinguish the human from themselves by way of text or images that are not distinguishable by the machine. In other words, the automated bot recognizes what it cannot recognize, and this validates and nullifies it at the same time. If, on the other hand, as a human you make a mistake in the tests — that is, you do not recognize the bicycle, or the oblique word in the series proposed — you stop being a person for the duration of the alleged confusion. CAPTCHA establishes a direct existential relationship between the signified and signifier. As soon as you recognize the yellow taxis, traffic lights or motorcycles, you are in the quadrant of options that lead you, or not, to the ultimate goal you were looking for or simply to Be, in capital letters.

Based on the *Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea* project and the installation at the Flynndog gallery, I built a Poem@ CAPTCHA, that is, a poem that in principle is not a poem, and a CAPTCHA that in principle is not either. CAPTCHA attempts to distinguish between humans and machines in order to prevent SPAM — that is, bots created by humans to insert themselves into your email or preferences for advertisement or malicious purposes, as

if they were viruses. By contrast, my CAPTCHA Poem@ attempts something very different: to establish direct links between machine and humanity, facilitating interaction and connection through art and poetry, in order to reflect collectively on the historical moment of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is why I redefined the acronym as "Completely Automated Public Test to tie Computers and Humans as Allies" (Escaja, 2021). Given the harsh isolation and desolation particularly felt during the initial stages of the pandemic, technology served, and continues to serve to a great extent, as an ally, redefining our own relationship with it and with the rest of humanity. The CAPTCHA Poem@ seeks to serve as a bridge, showing disturbingly familiar options. To solve it, you need to identify the masks in the series of photographs. You need to recognize, in the fragmentary perplexity of options, images referring to such new realities: "Masks Required"; "Keep Your Distance"; "Be Safe" (Figure 9).

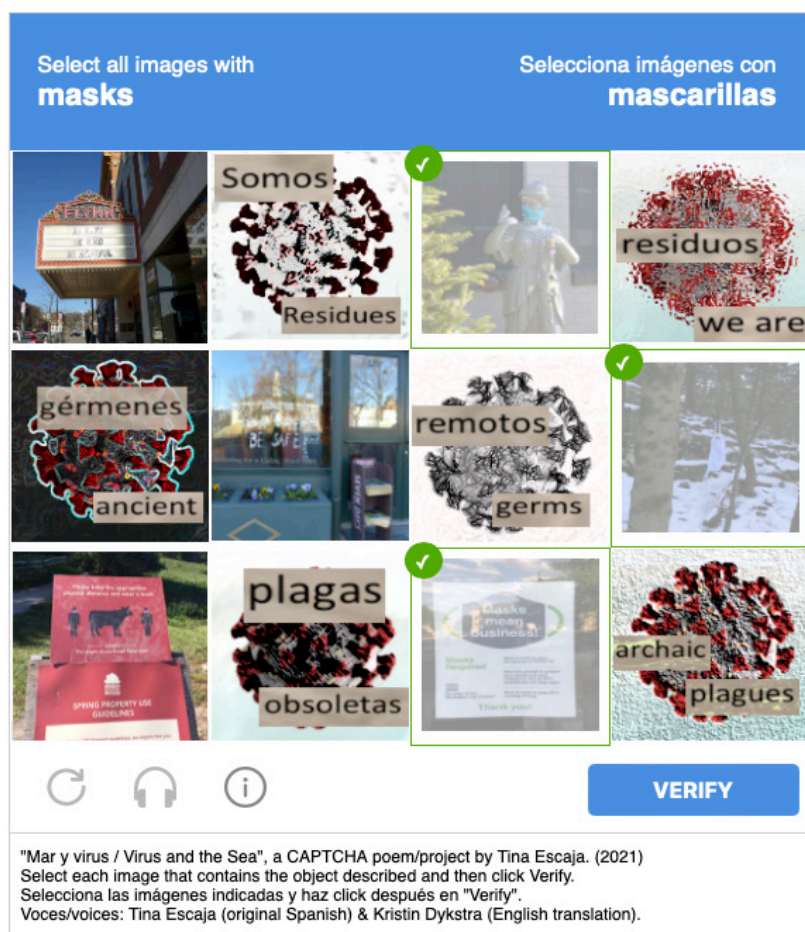


Fig. 9

The algorithmic series of combinatorial fragmentation in the CAPTCHA Poem@ proposes, however, a certain linearity by offering the option in each sequence of listening to the respective lines of the poem “Mar y virus” in my voice and in the voice of Kristin Dykstra. Words extracted from these lines also appear superimposed on the CAPTCHA images, as residues or *key-prints* of each poetic sequence with which the person browsing the interface can establish their own poetic link: “images / dead / canvases / medieval / genetic code.” These word-images are not random; they have been selected and “cut,” as if they were a fridge magnet poem, from the poem-banner at the Flynndog gallery. More specifically, these screenshots were taken from the representation (simulation by numerical matrix, that is, digital) of the physical banner. This is the goal of the problem /poem or game presented by this Poem@ CAPTCHA: to ultimately complete the poem by reaching the final scene representing the banner-poem that was the flagship at the Flynndog gallery, an exhibition presented under the rubric “Messages from the Anthropocene.” Thus, this banner-poem establishes itself as the final goal and re-combinational origin of the project, like the sea whose repeated and infinite waves can be heard as an audio option of this CAPTCHA Poem@. This final sound and sequence expand themselves, metaphorically, into the potential testimonials activated by the QR Code that stands at the end of the CAPTCHA.

Like the emblematic pipe depicted by Magritte, “Ceci n’est pa un pipe,” this Poem@ CAPTCHA or CAPTCHA poem@, as mentioned earlier, is not a poem nor is it a CAPTCHA, and at the same time it is both. It is and is not a poem that is presented in fragmentary and combinatory options, from a human CAPTCHA that tries to simulate an automated bot. Depending on the placing of the word, this CAPTCHA can also be a noun or an adjective, modifying or modified by the word Poem@. Likewise, these options are disqualified by the word itself, “Poem@,” since this is a word that does not exist. However, as in Magritte’s pictorial sequences, we recognize and at the same time misplace said recognition, de-familiarizing the signifiers and their assumed concepts/representations/associations, ultimately revealing an arbitrary or “random” reality and perception. Additionally, the “simulated” word “Poem@”, incorporates the English term “poem”, with its unavoidable reference to the context in which I built this artifact and the ultimate site of the electronic realm, anchored in the English language. All this exposes a cybernetic ontology, evident in the “at” sign that I present as a suffix. As such, a “Poem@,” with the “at” sign, denies the traditional reference to the very term/concept of a “poem,” relocating itself in another-context: a digital interface that simulates a CAPTCHA, not associable in itself to any poem. It is a new way of seeing, enunciating, and reflecting on the concept of thing, of CAPTCHA, of poem, of virus.

4. "FEMINIST MANIFESTO IN TIMES OF CORONAVIRUS": AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL AND TECHNOTEXT FROM ECO-CYBERFEMINISM

The group exhibition *Messages from the Anthropocene* in which I participated with my installation "Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea", was subtitled "Site-Specific Installations that Reflect on the Impact of Human Activity on the Environment." The show was included in a state-wide art project originally titled "2020 Vision: Seeing the World Through Technology" organized by the Vermont Curators Group prior to the pandemic. With the advent of the pandemic, this "Vision" was reframed as "Reflecting on a World Changing Year."⁶ My pre-pandemic take on the original theme was to elaborate on the Earth element and relaunch, from an eco-feminist perspective, my "sheep poem/project" titled "Negro en Ovejas, poema ovino" (Escaja, 2011), with new interacting materialities. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I found it inescapable to reflect on and reconceptualize the human (and posthuman) principles in their intersection with the virus, confronting the Anthropocene Epoch which has demonstrated its exclusionist and devastating voracity. At the Flynndog Gallery, I addressed this challenge to the Anthropocene more directly with the "Feminist Manifesto in Times of Coronavirus", a Manifesto transmuted into a QR Code/Filing cabinet. The QR Code on display takes to a video/performance that directly exposes this critique to the Anthropocene from a cyber/transfeminist resistance. The manifesto-performance/QR Code confronts and questions the geological persistence of the Anthropocene in its HuMan stance, since the etymology of the word "anthropo" (from Greek *anthrōpos*), as well as "human" (from Latin *humanus/homo*) refer to "man." This Feminist Manifesto proposes a new Epoch centered on the Gynocene/Gayacene "which will center all bodies that have been devalued", as a necessarily inclusive, trans-feminist and emancipatory alternative:

We declare the Anthropocene obsolete. It has demonstrated its failure, its voracity, that inevitably destroys humanity by the very Earth itself. The Anthropocene, violent patriarchal dominance, has destroyed the sacred, the Gaia, the identities that confront the violence of the *patriarcado* . . . (Escaja, 2020)

The performance was broadcast live in its first version on the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, an event organized by the University of Vermont's

6 https://www.timesargus.com/features/vermont_arts/2020-vision-vermont-arts-world-reflects-on-a-world-changing-year/article_41f02f15-10c8-5c02-b542-62a1d9584aed.html [10 September 2023]

EcoCultureLab in response to the COVID-19 crisis.⁷ In the performance, I appear with the costume associated with the absurdist group that I co-founded with Laurie Essig: FABS (Feminists Against Bullshit).⁸ In alliance with the vindication of the figure of the witch, and the implicit homage to W.I.T.C.H.,⁹ my performance also explores cyber-technologies by alluding in gestures to the “hacktivist” group Anonymous, and by using the NaturalReader program as transcriber and voice of the Manifesto. For this performance I also wore a mask, a symbol now associated with the pandemic. The mask displayed a feminist symbol. The sequence of ideo-ecological protest against climate devastation is then transferred into a cyberfeminist demand for anti-patriarchal resistance (Figure 10).

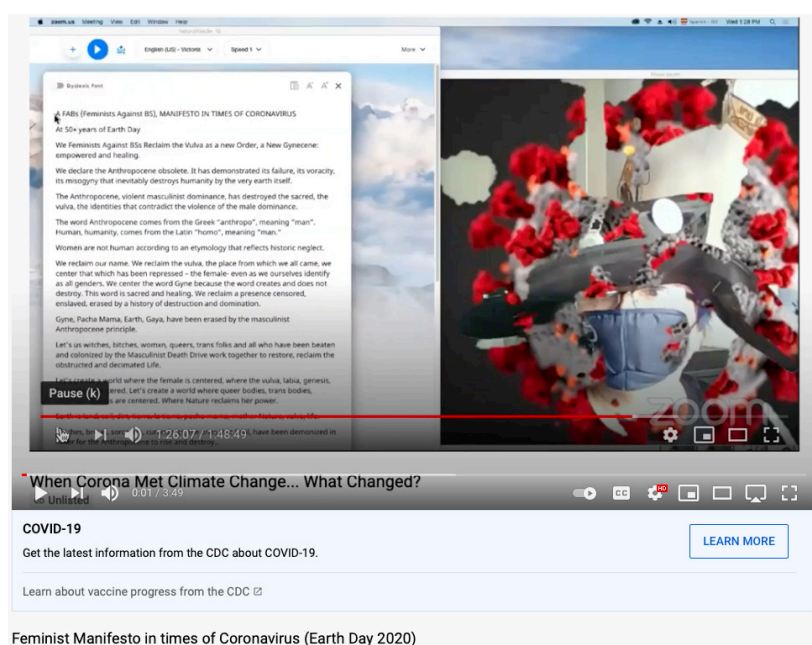


Fig. 10

The two drawers of this filing cabinet expanded and complemented the Manifesto. In one of the drawers, I inserted photographs of emblematic historical feminist figures: Clara Campoamor; Angela Davis; or Kamala

7 “When Corona Met Climate Change... What Changed?” <https://ecoculturelab.net/when-corona> [10 September 2023]. I also presented this performance at the ELO 2021 Conference and Festival: “Platform (Post?) Pandemic.” University of Bergen and Aarhus University, May 24th–28th, 2021. (online) <https://eliterature.org/elo2021/performances/>

8 See Escaja and Essig, 2025.

9 W.I.T.C.H., the Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell.

Harris, the newly appointed Vice President of the United States at the time of the exhibit. In the second drawer, I displayed artifacts related to one of FABS's performances that took place during the symposium “Feverish World: The Arts and Sciences of Collective Survival”, organized in 2018 by the EcoCultureLab at the University of Vermont.¹⁰ Our segment as performance group FABS consisted of a “womb-tent” or “Vulva Detox Tent” presented as “a site for refuge and detox from the current epidemic of white supremacy, xenophobia, transphobia, homophobia, greed and toxic masculinity.”¹¹ The artifacts exhibited in the filing cabinet referenced this performance and were susceptible of interaction explicitly indicated as “at your own risk”, given the potential “contagion” in terms of the virus, but also in reference to its ideological-transfeminist messages. The artifacts displayed included the luminous rods with hazmat suits that we used to “de-contaminate” visitors before inviting them to enter the womb-like tent, thus removing these visitors from a list of toxicities: DETOXIFY: Patriarchy, Toxic Masculinity, Rape Culture, Misogyny, Xenophobia, Racism, Classism, Homophobia, Transphobia, etc. (Figures 11 and 12). The filing cabinets covered by QR Code stickers, as if equating the cabinets and the QR Codes, therefore functioned as technotexts — as Álvaro Llosa points out following Hayles in his study of other transmedia installations —, in which I intersected technology and materialities (378), in this case from a cyber/transfeminist ontological lens.

FINAL REMARKS

The installation and project *Mar y virus / Virus and the Sea* reconceptualize multiple combinatory materialities and electronic options that address, among other things, a crisis of representation in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, among other levels, a crisis of representation in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The technotexts presented in this project, such as the Poem@ CAPTCHA, request recognition and proof, a test of what subtly makes us human, based on the principles of inclusion, connection, transfeminism and cyber-poetry, a test that potentially points to a new and necessary metanarrative of collaboration and technology-based connection/ally: “Share your COVID story.”

¹⁰ <https://ecoculturelab.net/tentcity> [10 September 2023]

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=746909975662732&set=pcb.746911722329224> [10 September 2023]



Fig. 11

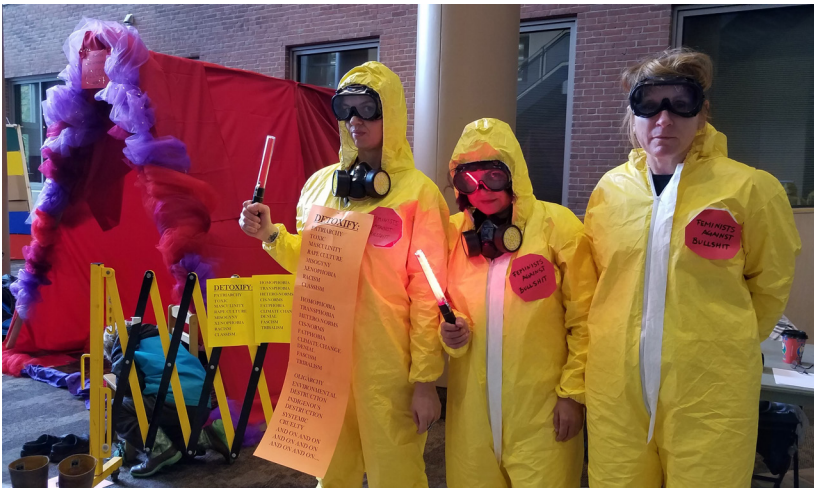


Fig. 12 In the picture, left to right: Lindsay London Baker, Tina Escaja, and Laurie Essig.

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