

The Pleasure of Memory

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It has been nearly one hundred and forty years since Baudelaire defined modernity as ephemeral, and described the artist who observed the transient images of his time as a *flâneur*. Even if we recognize our times as postmodern, the proposal of the author of *Les fleurs du mal* is still valid, especially given the variable nature of the World Wide Web, where pages or sites are as itinerant as Ulysses in pursuit of Ithaca. For the untiring *flâneur* of the Web, the pleasure of retracing fortuitous pages could transform into disappointment. It's like returning to your old school and finding it in ruins, or even worse, finding in its place a sumptuous shopping center that disfigures completely the mental image that our memory had steadfastly retained. Notwithstanding the constant transformations in the appearance of the Web, there are certain sites that seem eternal due both to their excellent quality and also to the continuous effort invested in upgrading them. That is the case of the sites *Jornal de poesia* and *Literatura Argentina contemporánea*.

Jornal de poesia

(<http://www.secrel.com.br/jpoesia/poesia.html>)

Jornal de poesia constitutes a veritable feast for the *flâneurs* within the wide reach of the Web, both for the generosity of its exhibits as for the quality, organization, and permanent improvement of the site, providing one of the most complete anthologies in the Portuguese language, the like of which is not known in the print world. The page contains samples of almost two thousand poets, mainly from Portugal and Brazil, but also including some from the Azores, Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Macau, Mozambique, San Tomé, Príncipe and Timor Oriental. This impressive initiative is the work of Francisco José Soares Feitosa, a Brazilian who started in his youth as a journalist, then worked as a traveling salesman, bank clerk and civil servant until, in 1993 at almost 50 years of age, he wrote his first poem and found himself submerged in the captivating world of literature. That is how he also found himself on the Web, following the trail of those he considered masters in the art of writing poetry. He found only disappointment when he verified that the great names of Camões, Gonçalves Dias and Augusto dos Anjos,

among others, were just great voids that he, in a vehement desire, decided to fill. Soares admits that this was a quixotic feat but not impossible, as any dream that is worth dreaming. What began in May 1996 as an ambitious project to include almost a thousand poets of Portuguese, has grown in just two years to almost two thousand, an effort that has extended into the more than twenty sections that comprise the page today: *Muito mais de 1000 poetas da Língua Portuguesa*, *Crítica Literária & Estudos*, *Poesia dos Jovens*, *Intercâmbio dos poetas*, *Canudos & Antônio Conselheiro*, *Correio do Leitor*, *Livrarias Virtuais*, *Notícias do Mundo Lusófono*, *Leitores á procura*, *Conheça o Poeta*, *Augusto dos Anjos*, *A Poesia de Língua Portuguesa para o Mundo*, *Jornal de Poesia*, *A Grande Poesia Universal*, *Poesia Popular & Cordel do Nordeste do Brasil*, *Links da Literatura Universal*, *Academia Cearense de Letras*, *Novidades da Semana*, *Novos Críticos*, *Novos Poetas*, *De Cara Nova y Atualização*.

The sections on criticism and new critics include essays concerning specific authors, Augusto dos Anjos for example, or about literary movements such as Brazilian *Concretismo* of the '40s. *Intercâmbio dos poetas* includes an alphabetical index of Brazilian publications dedicated to poetry, as well as a list of poets who collaborate with the page, providing their addresses for the benefit of Web users who may want to contact them directly. *Canudos & Antônio Conselheiro* offers studies about two fundamental works of Brazilian narrative: *Os sertões*, by Euclides da Cunha, and *Casa-Grande & Senzala*, by Gilberto Freyre. *A Poesia de Língua Portuguesa para o Mundo* presents Brazilian and Portuguese works translated into Dutch, English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Esperanto; and *A Grande Poesia Universal* offers a selection of poems by Bashó and Edgar Allan Poe, among others, translated into Portuguese by authors of worldwide renown such as Manuel Bandeira. One of the most attractive sections, due to its intended audience, is *Poesia dos Jovens*, divided into four sub-sections: one with poems written by adults for children; one that includes poems written by children up to twelve years old; the third dedicated to teenage authors; and the fourth with information about Dois Córregos. This last is a small city of about thirty thousand located to the northeast of São Paulo, and known as the "city of the poets" where there are 3,500 children who, as participants in a literary project directed by José Eduardo Mendes Camargo, have even disseminated their poems on the walls, spreading poetry like flowers in spring.

Literatura Argentina contemporánea

(<http://lenti.med.umn.edu/~ernesto/Literatura.html>)

Though the scope of the next page is not as vast as *Jornal de poesia*, the quality of *Literatura Argentina contemporánea* is outstanding. It was produced by Ernesto Resnik, Elena Achával and Eduardo Tabacman. It is also divided into sections: *Escritores*, *Novedades*, *Reportajes*, *Especiales*, and *Chat*, and its design is dynamic and impressive with an extensive use of photography and graphics. Nonetheless, this page truly shines for its excellent compilation of about fifty Argentinean narrators, essayists, and poets of different eras. This section not only includes the anticipated biographical/bibliographical information about each author, but also incorporates a wealth of links to material found throughout the Web, be it interviews, reports, parts of their works and even fragments of audio that allow us to listen to the voices of some of these writers. Another section, *Chat*, offers the *cronopios conversadores* with a *café-salón* where you can carry on an actual conversation with people from around the world. It is necessary to tune in with regard to international time schedules so as to be a happy *cronopio*, and not a frustrated one. If Cortázar were alive he would probably be a regular at this *café*. Even though he is not present there, at least we can find him in the *Especiales* section that includes his political writings. *Novedades* is, like the word “novelty” implies, a source of current information about recent publications, future ones, and on-line discussions with writers and poets. At the time of publication, it was featuring José Pablo Feinmann, essayist and scriptwriter, among whose works we can include the script for a 1977 movie about Eva Perón.

For the explorer of sites on the WWW, a permanent page, in fact, one that is growing constantly, is a precious find, as wonderful a surprise as finding that our old school is not in ruins after all, but intact and alive with the laughs and shouts of children playing. Often today, permanence can be one of the rare pleasures of memory. At least that's what *Jornal de poesia* and *Literatura Argentina contemporánea* illustrate: two spaces that, until now at least, have rejected the ephemeron. ✱