Sandy Baldwin and Gabriel Tremblay-Gaudette

Pwning Gamers, One Text at a Time

In leetspeak and gamer cultures, to "pwn" means to own or to conquer. Pwning is "for the win," but what would it mean to think of a performative pwning, even a textual pwning? The ludo-semiotics of "transwriting" considers how textual performance re-sets and re-cites codes and actions. In this essay, the authors describe *Poems You Should Know*, a transwriting performance with famous literary texts in an online multiplayer video game (*Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*). This performance pwns the game as a critical, artistic intervention. If pwning means owning, then the performance becomes a question of who owns what? Who owns the game? Who owns the texts? Who owns the right to play the game? Who determines winning the game and under what conditions? Injection of literary language in the game displaces or irritates gameplay, but also adds a layer of constraint to the horizon of action of gameplay. The text may vanish or it may inform the game and lead to new possibilities for performers and players alike.

1   Poems You Should Know

What can poems do and what can video games do? What can poems do to videogames and what can videogames do to poems? Can we sort out what takes place and the proper action? To play, to perform, to troll, to pwn?

In the performance *Poems You Should Know*, these questions collapse into each other, interrupt each other, but are not resolved. In *Poems You Should Know*, the users named "Poems you should know"[1] and "You should know poems"[2] wander through the game *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (*CS:GO*). These two play the game but do something else as well: they type and speak poetry. Violence is all around: the *CS:GO* players are engaged with disarming bombs, freeing hostages, but mainly killing each other. The other players have names like "Sergeant Slaughter" and "suckmybullets." It's a serious arms race out there: you need to up your guns over and over, you need to make sure you've got the most powerful weapon. Otherwise you're shot dead and your corpse will be littering the map, your gaze lingering over the action as a kind of departed spirit.

The two players, "Poems you should know" and "You should know poems," run, shoot, duck and reload, they engage in the game. While player "Poems you should know" pastes poems into the text chat channel, "You should

know poems" reads the poems aloud into the voice channel. Players can see these poems in their chat and hear them being read aloud. The poems go on and on, filling the time of the game, clogging the channels. The other players ignore the poems, treating them as noise unrelated to the game. They continue killing. Or they furiously reply and engage with the texts, they attack and take on the voices that bring poetry into the game. They treat the poems as weapons and as part of the world of *CS:GO*.
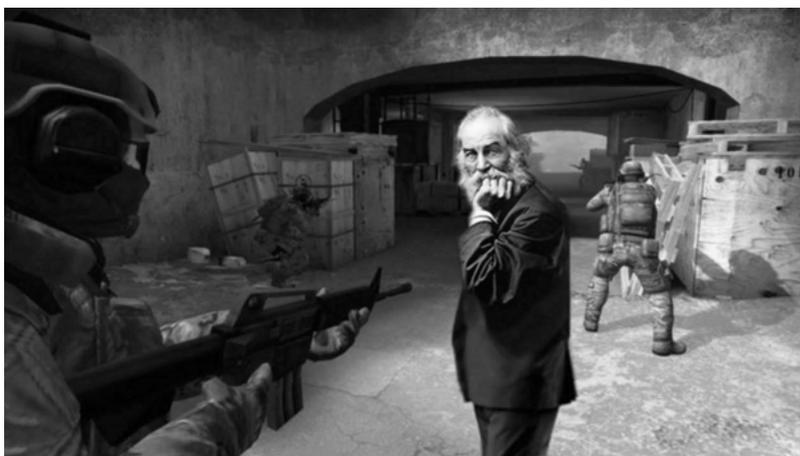

Fig. 1. Promotional material used to advertise an upcoming performance of *Poems You Should Know*. Picture credits: Ellie Stringer.

Of course, this is not how *CS:GO* should be played. But, actually, how *should* it be played? How do we understand the response to this performance? What is and is not a performance? Is the performance a *reading* of the poems by players "Poems you should know" and "You should know poems"? What is and is not a reading? Is the performance a transwriting practice? Or is the entire "performance" somewhere else, outside literary and textual practice, in the space of internet culture? Is this a form of trolling?

Poems You Should Know is difficult to place within literary practice in digital media. Is it "electronic literature" as defined and promulgated by groups such as the Electronic Literature Organization?[3] "Electronic literature" is clearly a field with a range of means of production, a canon of historical artists, and a set of criteria for inclusion. None of these apply to *Poems You Should Know*. The performative aspects of the work already make it difficult to characterize as electronic literature, a concept that may include generative text but always indicates a defined work and author. What can be considered as the work and author in this case?

Poems You Should Know may use language and poetry but rather than think of it in terms of electronic literature, we are inspired by and draw on performance art, on agitprop theater that occupies spaces through guerilla action, and on the Augusto Boal's "theater of the oppressed." In this work, Boal tores down the stage's "fourth wall" to foster critical thinking and turn the spectator into the "spect-actor," who both witnesses and acts as part of the play.[4]

One way to explore these questions is to ask what poems are involved, and in what way do they interrupt the game? Perhaps the poems' themes can be taken as commentary on *CS:GO*. John Donne's "Death, Be Not Proud" (1633) seems to resonate with the violence of the game. Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing," (1860) with its passionate invocation of the bodies and Americans and the caring intermingling of all the peoples of the country, seems to contrast to the stark roles and divided teams of *Counter-Strike*. There are no terrorists and violence in Whitman but, if there were, it seems he would sing of them as well. And then there's Edward Lear: "O pussy, my pussy" reads the "The Owl and the Pussycat" (1871). The coy, wink-wink-nudge-nudge of the children's poem is out of place in the military world of *CS:GO* but perhaps utterly appropriate in the space of the game. There are no "pussies" in the toxic-masculinity-soaked soldierly violence of *Counter-Strike*. The poems are oblique and at an angle to the game, trollish interruptions of the regular business of killing, and yet resonant to the proceedings.

William Wordsworth's "Daffodils" (1807)[5] is perhaps the best-known poem in the English language and elicits the most response from the other players. The famous refrain that "I wandered lonely as a cloud" itself floats and even condenses cloud-like on top of the game's combat and across its beautiful maps, the line floating up in the text chat, the words sounding across the chat channel. "Daffodils," a classic that invokes high school encounters with poetry and sets code of learning and culture against the space of leisure, is used within world of combat in the game. Perhaps Wordsworth's romantic poem can be itself considered as a passing cloud through the space of play. In short, not a utopic or atopic critique of the game, but a heterotopic occupation by another space.

Poems You Should Know is a performance of counter striking imperatives, of interfering demands on what matters in the world. The poems mobilized in the performance disrupt the game without being weapons themselves. While not instrumentalized for killing, the poems announce contemplation, introspection, and love. *You Should Know*: the title insists that *CS:GO* become about knowledge and not action. The interruption disturbs the players' assurance of the separation of playing from knowing, of killing from reading. Are the performers playing and the players performing? What is play or performance? Sure, there is a lot of critical discussion of play and performance, but does anyone know

for sure? In the visual space of the game, the performers are poor players, i-nept terrorists or counter-terrorists. It is in the chat, both voice and text, where the interferences manifests. Chat channels are both peripheral to the game and vital to the play. If the violence takes place in the visual space of the game, the text chat is where negotiation and confirmation occurs, where players interacts to reinforce and comment on the game play, where teams coordinate, and where poems are posted in the course of *Poems You Should Know*. Text chat intermingles player commentary with the textual detritus of the game, player comments intersperse with commands and data.

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive is perhaps the most popular first person shooter in the history of video games. It famously originates in a mod of the game *Half-Life* but does not take place in that world's Black Mesa of anomalous materials and mutant monsters. In *Counter-Strike* players join one of two teams: terrorists engaged in acts of violence, including planting bombs and taking hostages; or teams of counter-terrorists engaged in foiling and killing the terrorists. Each team of five race the clock to defuse the bomb or kill all of the other side. Anyone who has played remembers the final announcement that "Terrorists Win" or "Counter-Terrorists Win." *CS:GO* is a game world of perpetual violence. We write "world" carefully: this is a beautiful world of nature and culture, fields and buildings, light and sound, tiny details and vast maps. In all this, the only goal is death and survival. Kill the other team, remain alive. You may defuse the bomb or rescue the hostages, and you will slaughter your opponents along the way, and stand alive over their bodies. The dead linger in the game, watching the living continue to play. To live is to play, to die is to observe. The games are brief and intense. They repeat endlessly.

CS:GO is governed by an imperative: to be a terrorist, to be a counter-terrorist. It is a space of strict legal and moral directives. You must act as your team is directed. Your acts are firm and without any option. The consequences are clear and time is ticking away. No other actions exist. The space of the vast and beautiful map is channeled by and towards this imperative: I play and follow paths because they lead me to the terrorist or because they allow me to protect my hostages. This is a world given over to the imperative of being a terrorist or counter-terrorist and winning the challenge in the brief time offered. How do poems interfere with these directives?

Poetry also comes with imperatives. Arthur Sze, Chancellor of the American Academy of Poets, is quoted on the front page of the Academy's web site: "Poetry matters more than ever before, because we are more challenged than ever before."[6] Challenged how, you ask? The American Academy of Poets site offers poems for a time of war, of disaster, of political turmoil. Poetry matters for an era of Trump, climate change, and ISIS. Poetry is set against these challenges. To matter and materialize and face the challenge. But how? Sze conti-

nues: "Poetry is the essential language that, endlessly branching, enables us to live deeply and envision what matters most."[7] This more enigmatic: how does endless branching lead to a deeper life? In what way does poetry endlessly branch? How does branching lead to envisioning what matters most? Since it is put as a matter of what matters, and since the previous sentence asserted that poetry matters more than ever before, does poetry lead us to envision more poetry as what matters most?

The Academy of American Poets website includes a page of "Poems Everyone Should Know."[8] This is a very assertive title: not just good to know or worth reading but *everyone should know*. The website connects this imperative to only two poems: Dylan Thomas' "Do not go gentle into that good night" and Walt Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric." Only two poems! When poetry matters it seems unfortunate that there are so few that we should know but it makes these two all the more important. After all, the site is authoritative and deeply tied to the institution of American poetry. It is this site that represents the American poetry establishment with its poets laureate and grand MFA programs. But why these poems? Sure, Thomas and Whitman are great, but only these two? There is no explanation: why should we know them? The imperative is powerful: everyone should know them.

The imperative of "poems you should know" repeats an order, a sentence passed on everyone, passed from academic institutions that tie knowledge of poetry to citizenship, literacy, and ultimately to subjectivity. Why should you know these poems? The poetic logic runs the opposite way: you should know poetry and that's all there is to say. And this is the performative power—and, as we show later, pwning power—of poetry.

The *Times of London* goes much further, offering "30 great poems everyone should know."[9] In this case, we are at least told that the poems are great, which gives some justification for why we should know them. At the same time, it is a far greater task to know 30 poems. The list of 30 ranges widely, and includes works by Emily Dickinson and Maya Angelou, diversifying the authors from the Academy of American Poets' dead white guys.

You should: the imperative comes from within, from what drives us to read a poem or play a game of *CS:GO*. You should: the imperative comes from without, from the text of a poem that matters or from the ticking clock of a bomb in a game of *CS:GO*. You should: the imperative comes from the poem, perhaps it is the poem. Is it the same imperative that leads us to play and kill in the world of *CS:GO*?

You should read: the imperative is textual, performative in relation and through poems. Let us be perfectly clear: "Poems you should know" is a powerful individual claim, an interruption of subjectivity by an aggressive text, one that branches—perhaps in the player's minds?—and one that forces atten-

tion on itself. This is no small claim. And "poems everyone should know" goes beyond, raising the ante to a wider society: the burden is not simply on *me*, the player or gamer, not simply that I should know, not simply that I should stop and read these two poems—again, why these two?—but that *everyone* should. Such an imperative means that I should stop you and force some Whitman and Thomas on you. That "should" is an imperative to us all, and to me, an imperative to be an interpersonal force: I should (and I will) make you read "The Owl and the Pussycat" and all the other twenty-nine great poems.

The two performers "Poems you should know" and "You should know poems" act as they do because of poems that everyone should know. The two performers are killed and silenced by the other players. Or they are ignored and the poetry scrolls indifferently in the chat. Or they are cursed at, told to fuck off and shut up by other players, told to stop distracting from the game. They are dismissed as trolls. Or these trolls interrupt and occupy the game. What takes place in the performance? A suspension of imperatives: the imperative of a world, a textual world or the game world of *CS:GO*, is put to rest. The call of a world that situates and directs actions is dissolved or suspended in the trollish performance.

2 Transwriting

What are the textual and semiotic practices involved in *Poems You Should Know*? How far do these practices explain the performance? *Poems You Should Know* is a literary performance within a video game space. It is not a straightforward literary-work-to-videogame adaptation, as are Charlie Hoey and Pete Smith's *Great Gatsby* or Vector Belly's *Waiting for Godot* videogames; the dynamic, ephemeral, and real-time aspects of *Poems You Should Know* pose an additional set of constraints and opportunities.

In order to think through the conceptual, aesthetic and performative dimensions of our work, we can evoke the concept of "transécriture*,"* which can be translated to *transwriting*. It was introduced at a Cerisy Conference of 1990, titled *La transécriture: pour une théorie de l'adaptation*. Surprisingly, the conference proceedings of this event does not offer an explicit definition of this concept. We will thus provide our own: transwriting refers to the process by which the transposition of some original material in a new, foreign media, addresses the boundaries between the different media and aesthetic expressions in order to shed light on them rather than trying to conceal them.

The need for a neologism, "transwriting," in order to address the ingenious, surprising and disruptive aspects of certain media transposition found its origins in the impulse to turn away from considerations of fidelity in the adap-

tation to instead pay attention to the poetics and technicalities of the transfer operations (Gaudreault and Groensteen 5–6). Thus, transwriting exceeds the strict and conventional *adaptation*, in which the transposition process aims to minimize the friction between media and tends to focus its energies on making sure that the narrative material from the original work emerged as unscathed as possible in the adapted version. Rather, it problematizes the passage between media by foregrounding the aesthetic specificities and possibilities inherent to the media in the upstream and downstream positions of the adaptation process. Thinking about adaptation through the lens of transwriting allows us to address in turn the mobilization of semiotic codes, media properties, and the technical means of the "arrival" media.

2.1   Media and Technical Means

Take the case of *Poems You Should Know* from a transwriting perspective: there is little friction in terms of media transfer from the selected poems (texts) to the videogame environment. Most videogames can easily display text, and aside from gameplay information provided in the HUD of the player, the first-person-shooter genre has a history of integrating text into the action, or rather, between actions, as was the case for the numerous war-themed quotes displayed on the "kill screens" of many titles of the *Call of Duty* (*CoD*) franchise. In the case of *CS: GO*, several means of communication between players (allies and foes alike) are built in the game mechanics; indeed, communication is essential to teamwork and thus indispensable for any competitive-level play, and taunting your opponent is inherent to the gaming culture. Thus, not only does the presence of text is not entirely foreign to the game screen, a precedent was set by the practice of the reflexive quotes inserted between attempts in the *CoD* shooters.

If media transfer presented little transwriting issue, on the other hand, the transposition of textual units from its original state—poems written centuries and decades ago, available online—to the video game space involved some keyboard acrobatics. Indeed, in terms of technological means and constraints, inserting the text within the game proved to be a challenging exercise. Early attempts to rely on printed versions of the poems to manually type each line in the text chat box proved to be too cumbersome, and the back-and-forth between a Web browser and the video game wasn't fluid. In order to circumvent this problem, the selected poems were copy-pasted from the Web pages on which they were reproduced in a Notepad file for easier retrieval. Then, some poems had to be slightly edited to break down the lines in smaller chunks, since *CS: GO* only allows for chat messages of a maximum of 126 characters.

During the performances, player "Poems you should know" shifts quickly between each software, selecting and copying each line of the poems in Notepad by a click-and-drag selection and a CTRL+C command, before returning to *CS:GO*, type "T" to open the text chat window, and paste the poem line using the CTRL+V shortcut. When the line appears inside the game in the bottom left corner of the player's HUD, player "You should know poems" activates his microphone and recites the displayed line. The process is repeated over and over again; in our experience, a regular game of *CS:GO* lasting on average five minutes, if everything goes without a hitch, we manage to perform one poem per game. As such, the temporality of the game and the performed poem are roughly synchronized. The game *CS:GO* is the poem and the poem is the game.

The reading and performance of the poems rely on a complex technical and textual operation, where this complexity forms the operations of moving the poem into the world of *CS:GO*. The quick and precise manipulations required by the "Poems you should know" player adds a daunting degree of difficulty to the game experience; while he is switching back and forth between software and pasting the poem lines in the text chat, his avatar is immobilized in the game (in *CS:GO*, as in many first-person-shooter games, player movement is controlled via the familiar WASD axis). However, a certain level of movement and action within the normal parameters of *CS:GO* is required in order to avoid being votekicked out of the game. In addition to this, since the poem lines need to be displayed in the text chat in order for "You should know poems" to read them aloud, a certain cadence of action within and outside of the game is to be maintained in order to achieve a satisfactory public reading of the poems. As for the player "You should know poems," his in-game performance challenge consists of keeping his composure while declaim the poem in the middle of a virtual warzone, ignoring objections (humorous and vilifying alike) hurled at him by fellow teammates all the while doing his best to play the game in a conventional manner.

3   Engagement with the Audience(s)

The technical constraints were not limited to mere text insertion. In order to complete our performances, we had to insert and read in full the four selected poems; any partial rendering of the poems would have been considered unsatisfying at the very least. However, with this criteria in mind, we had to take into consideration that our immediate audience would not be passively facing the stage; on the contrary, members of the audience were in a sense fully armed and had the capacity to fire back and even to kick us out of the virtual theater.

In *Dead in Iraq* (2011), the artist Joseph DeLappe performed a similar artistic intervention in a multiplayer FPS game. DeLappe would log in a game by himself and stand still, refusing to engage in the perpetual videoludic slaughter. Instead, he would type the names of American soldiers killed in Iraq into the chat channel. The performance became a virtual memorial to the dead in Iraq, except for the fact that the other players could silence DeLappe by shooting down his avatar, forcing him to login and begin over and over again. The performance of *freedom* (2010) by the artists Franco and Eva Mattes also refuses to engage in the current death match between players, but rather than opting for a subversive message of remembrance and stakes-measuring, they opted for a more direct approach: they ask "please don't shoot me" and state "I'm an artist," "I'm making an art performance." Their immobilism coupled with direct addressing of the other players is transgressive and, in a sense confrontational; their in-game audience responds in kind by shooting the player repeatedly. The work is more confrontational and more self-consciously "art" for that reason.

What do *Dead in Iraq* (2011) and *freedom* (2010) achieve? From a strictly ludic perspective, they could be seen as flawed, even foul: however legitimate the questions raised by DeLappe and the Mattes' may be, the engagement with their immediate audience hinged on their refusal to play the game. Perhaps DeLappe is more transgressive in his passivity. His passive resistance amounted to more than mere immobilism; it also constituted a sabotage of the ludic activity, a bursting of the Magic Circle. His performance (and the Mattes'), was, from the start, aimed at an audience of subsequent viewers of the recorded play sessions; the unwilling participants of his play sessions became cannon fodder for his artistic goals.

We considered these questions of engagement while planning our own performance. As we discovered by in our previous performances of *Beckett Spams Counterstrike*, it is compulsory to engage with our audience by moving around and firing shots, for two intertwined reasons. First off, by committing to the game space we are investing with our literary performances; we are not simply invading it and imposing our own agenda, we are offering the players a rendering of a play or an *in-situ* poetry reading for their entertainment. Secondly, and rather importantly as well, we need to be active within the game in order to avoid being votekicked.[10] In short, an acquiescence to the requirements and imperatives of the game world.

If we were to make our fellow players "unwilling participants" in *our* performance, we thought that at the very least we should attempt to act as "willing participants" of *their* game. We soon realized that in practice, such an oppositional description of our roles and stances would blur: engagement pulls us into the practice of playing the game but it also emerges from the text itself. In

truth, similar performances such as *Dead in Iraq* involve playing as well: in every case, the text's performance meets playing the game.

4   Communication Breakdown and Common Tongues

While we managed to establish and maintain communication with the immediate audience of our performance in order to reach the end of our games—and poems, there was also the issue of how this communication would be received. We recognized that it could be perceived as a form of disruption, obstruction, and sabotage of the match, there was also the distinct possibility that the audience would be too busy shooting at each other to pay attention to us. In other terms, our artistic intervention could be perceived as "mere" trolling.

4.1   Trolling

Self-proclaimed trolls will explain their antisocial behavior by stating that they are doing it "for the lulz": an ever-shifting end, equal parts sardonic and nihilistic. Judith Donath "characterizes trolling as a malicious and deliberately destructive *lie* [which in turn] incite paranoia, and paranoia sours the communal spirit that yearns to express itself online" (Phillips 16).

Are we trolls in this way? We are nothing but forthright. Our avatar names state our intent; we do what we say and we say what we do. Are we trolls if we do and act so honestly? Has the trolling behavior so infected online communication and sociability that every free gesture towards strangers is to be met with suspicion and hostility?

On trolling, Whitney Phillips argues that the "troll's behaviors provide an implicit, and sometimes outright explicit, critique of existing media and cultural systems" (7). What if our usage of the text and voice chat functionalities of *CS: GO* was meant as a critique? If there's no reason why we can't mix a little pleasure with business, why can't we sprinkle some poetry in a multiplayer video game match? Yes, we are clogging the communication channels but so are many other trollish players vociferating their specific taunts after triumphs or grief after failure, or their general racism, sexism and/or homophobia—at least we are elevating the debate! Trolling is exclusionary, spoken from a position of power. Our gesture is inclusive: after all, we were told that everyone should know these poems. We are just passing them along.

The troll is noise in the channel. The troll lives under the bridge. What channel and what bridge? The bridge is the space of communication. The bridge is the channel famously seen in the Shannon-Weaver model where the

task of communication in the presence of noise is to encode and transport information across the bridge that hangs between communicative subjects. The troll is not exactly a parasite in Michel Serres' sense (2007). The parasite both shares and takes, attaches and destroys. By contrast, the troll is an intruder, lurking under the bridge, suddenly looming and horrible. The troll does not share or attach, but nor does the troll take and destroy. The parasite is with us, the troll is below us. The parasite inhabits the contracts and documents we operate with and through, its agenda becoming one with ours. The troll defaces the same texts that the parasite inhabits, all the while asserting an altogether different agenda. The imperative to act and follow enforced by game worlds and textual worlds is destroyed by the troll. What remains?

4.2   Pwning

Is *Poems You Should Know* trolling? The jury is still out. But there is another aspect to consider; how are we addressing the players on another level through the way we engage in the virtual gunfight? After all, we are not "just" playing, we are artificially creating a challenge through an additional set of constraints, which happens to take the form of poetry reading. Such a departure from the traditional gameplay has been described by Felan Parker as *expansive gameplay*, defined as "involv[ing] players dictating additional or alternative rules from completely within the confines of the existing game rules [that is, the affordances and constraints], using the game in a very different manner" (3). In our case, the surface of the game is extended to another software, as it involves gathering extraneous material, though this eventually came to be perceived as intrinsically part of the game.

Play a videogame long enough, and you start thinking of other player's avatars as terrorists or counter-terrorists forever entangled in an endless battle, or even as highly-detailed body-shaped pixels. They become mere targets, objectives in a game structure, not as much emptied of their meaning as narrowed down to their essential importance as no more than surfaces to aim at in the confines of the game paradigm. In *Poems You Should Know*, this process of de-semiotization, this erosion of the signs through a combination of familiarization and utilitarianism is eventually transferred to the poems themselves, which become weaponized as tools for pwning.

The player "Poems you should know" came to consider his selecting, dragging and copying of the poem lines as an additional gaming action; in fact, "using one's mouse to aim at objects and perform an operation on the target" describes adequately both the actions of retrieving the poem lines and of shooting at opponents in *CS: GO*. Reading, writing, targeting, shooting. Each

line of the text is inserted in sequence and within a reasonable delay from one to the next; reaching the end of the poem without having been kicked out of the game by allies or opponents becomes the all-encompassing objective of both the play and the performance.

Furthermore, if the textual component of the poems became an extension of the game, a quantity to be transferred in the chat window in order to achieve a specific goal of the game, then, in a sense, the poems did become a part of the game, as much as the maps of the space or the array of weapons and accessories one needs to buy before every round of *CS:GO* begins. The poem was part of the play, was played, while it was performed. When the last line of a poem is read aloud by "You should know poems," it doesn't matter who—between the terrorists and the counter-terrorists—is ultimately declared the winner. In the advanced version of the game we establish, "poetry wins." Literary pwning occurs. The performance overtakes the game. The expected "terrorists win" or "counter-terrorists" win is a sad echo after the lines of Wordsworth's "Daffodils."

The slang term "Pwning" has yet to achieve the official recognition bestowed by its inclusion in the prestigious pages of the OED or the Merriam-Webster. As it is, we can find a definition in the "urban dictionary" as: "A corruption of the word 'Owned.' This originated in an online game called *Warcraft*, where a map designer misspelled 'owned.' When the computer beat a player, it was supposed to say, so-and-so 'has been owned.' Instead, it said, so-and-so 'has been pwned.' It basically means 'to own' or to be dominated by an opponent or situation, especially by some god-like or computer-like force" (2017). Additionally, Wikipedia explains that "[i]n script kiddie jargon, *pwn* means to compromise or control" (2017). What constitutes a "pwning" is eminently subjective; it is up to the players to determine if and when pwning has occurred and by which standards. "Pwning" is a malleable signifier.

When we manage to "achieve" our goal (complete our performance?), we are satisfied. We have triumphed against the odds; facing skilled enemies, outgunned, burdened with the responsibility or transmitting poetry to fellow players, encumbered by this task to the point of being paralyzed by it most of the time, still, we succeed, the poems are read, the poems are now known. We pwned players. But that's not all: we also managed to engage some of the players and, instead of lambasting, we were greeted with polite questions, laughter, even enthusiasm, from times to times. During one performance, a player reciprocated by spontaneously reciting Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" from memory.

Still, that's not all; from time to time, one of the performers actually hit someone with a bullet. It was mostly blind luck, but nonetheless, how about that! During a performance on November 30, 2016, player "Poems you should

know" paused his shuffling between Notepad and *CS:GO* long enough to aim his weapon at an unsuspecting opponent and down him with a "headshot." This rare occurrence elicited an uproar from nearly every other player. Participants of the game were by this point well aware of our peculiar approach to the game and were both impressed that one of us could manage to contribute to the fight while busy copy-pasting lines from Whitman and delighted to taunt the slain player. This opponent who fell victim to "Poems you should know" had been completely pwned by poetry.

Back to the question: what *should* you do in *CS:GO*? To be a terrorist or counter-terrorist is no small matter in contemporary society. The idea that "poems matter more than ever" seems little consolation. Both *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* and *Poems You Should Know* carry out a sentence and seek to pwn the space of the game. They are counterstriking imperatives in *Counter-Strike*. "I pwn you" does not just mean I win but that I dominate entirely, utterly, without limit. I "own" you, yes. But it is more this, and the slippage from own to pwn, the typographical force, the phonetic shift, and the lingual transformation from owning to the pursed lips of pwning: all this invokes a dimension of ownership and domination that the words ownership and domination do not capture.

Poems You Should Know proposes that pwning is the imperative of poetry. The occupation of a game of *CS:GO* by Wordsworth's "Daffodils" is the ultimate pwnage.

Notes

1   Gabriel Tremblay-Gaudette was behind that moniker for the series of performances.

2   Sandy Baldwin was behind that moniker for the series of performances.

3   This definition can be found at <http://eliterature.org/what-is-e-lit/>.

4   Cf. Frasca, Gonzalo. "Videogames of the Oppressed: Critical Thinking, Education, Tolerance, and Other Trivial Issues," in *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, edited by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 85–94, p. 88.

5   We cite "Daffodils" from <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/daffodils>. This poem is in the public domain.

6   Cf. Academy of Poets web site <https://www.poets.org/>.

7   Cf. Academy of Poets web site <https://www.poets.org/>.

8   Cf. page <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/anthology/poems-everyone-should-know>.

9   Cf. article <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/30-great-poems-everyone-should-know-732g9fc5l>.

10   At any time during a match, a player on any team can initiate whenever she wishes a "votekick" which, as its name suggests, allows players to kick a target out of a room via voting. On *CS: GO's* Wiki page, the following official reasons are listed as motives for a votekick: "Illegal programs/ Cheating Racism/ Inappropriate words/ Player harassment AFK (away from keyboard) Bugs/ Poor sportsmanship/ Others." Initiating a votekick is extremely simple—one only needs to hit the Caps Lock key and select a player—and the decision is made by pressing a single key.

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