

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE	RRRRRRRRRRRR	AAAAAAAAAAAA	TTTTTTTTTTTTTT	000000000000
EEEEEEEEEEEEEE	RRRRRRRRRRRR	AAAAAAAAAAAA	TTTTTTTTTTTTTT	000000000000
EE	RR RR	AA AA	TT	00 00
EE	RR RR	AA AA	TT	00 00
EE	RR RR	AA AA	TT	00 00
EEEEEEEEEE	RRRRRRRRRRRR	AAAAAAAAAAAA	TT	00 00
EEEEEEEEEE	RRRRRRRRRRRR	AAAAAAAAAAAA	TT	00 00
EE	RR RR	AA AA	TT	00 00
EE	RR RR	AA AA	TT	00 00
EE	RR RR	AA AA	TT	00 00
EEEEEFEEEEEE	RR RR	AA AA	TT	000000000000
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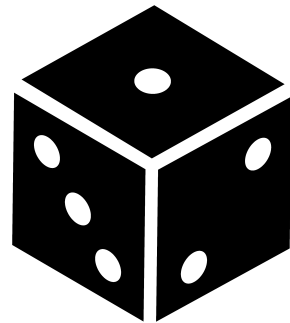
by Louis T. Milic



**Program ERATO**  
**For Generating Lyric Poems from First Lines of Modern Poets**  
Programmed and Designed  
by  
**Louis T. Milic**



**CSU Poetry Booklet No. 4**  
The Cleveland State University  
Poetry Center  
Cleveland, Ohio  
1971



**Regenerators Series No. 1**  
Aleator Press  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
2020

*Edition of 216*



## NOTE ON THE FACSIMILE EDITION

You are holding a reproduction of an important artifact from the early period of computer poetry. Though preceded by Jean A. Baudot's *La machine à écrire* (1964), Manfred Krause and Götz F. Schaudt's *Computer-Lyrik* (1967), and Alison Knowles and James Tenney's *A House of Dust* (c. 1968), Louis T. Milic's *Program ERATO* (1971) was likely the first volume of computer poetry published in the United States. Further contributing to the intrigue of this work is Milic's status as an important apologist for computer poetry, and the most prominent scholar and critic of the form writing in English in its first two decades.

Aleator Press has taken special care to reproduce this booklet accurately, with due attention to the construction, material, typography, layout, and style of the original edition that was created by The Cleveland State University Poetry Center in 1971. Aside from a modified title page, this publisher's note, a brief addendum to the author biography, and a colophon, this facsimile edition has been designed to exactly reproduce the original booklet, whose pagination has been preserved by ignoring the supplemental leaves. Our project has been approved by the Louis T. Milic estate.

*Program ERATO* is the first publication of Aleator Press and the initial offering in our *Regenerators* series, which will include reprints of scarce early volumes of computer-generated text, as well as speculative editions that imagine artful publications in this area that could have appeared, but never did—until now.



## FOREWORD

If it seems ambitious to name a computer program after the Muse of lyric poetry, it may seem impudent to write poetry with the assistance of a computer. For it is a difficult, awkward, and unnecessary way of doing things, like eating spaghetti with implements a yard long. Nonetheless, it is done, partly because it can be done but mostly because it teaches us about the nature of poetry. It is a taxing challenge because the computer, like a sorcerer's apprentice, is always surprising the programmer by doing exactly what it is told rather than what it was intended to do.

The collection of short poems in this Booklet is the product of the ERATO program. Three versions of this program produced about a thousand poems of which the 32 printed here are the best. They are set down exactly as they came off the printer attached to the University's IBM 360/50 computer except that I have added the punctuation and the titles.

The procedure for generating these poems is quite simple. Ten first lines from poems written during the past century were chosen for each version (see page 21 for a complete list). In each line certain key words were provided with a list of nine alternatives each, selected with the aid of Roget's *Thesaurus*. Line 1 is Stephen Crane's "I *stood* upon a *high place*." The key words are in italics. The first key word and its alternatives are these:

*stood*: stayed, ceased, looked, lasted, climbed, stared, strutted, lived.

From a standard random number list 500 digits were taken and included in the program. The computer took the first number which determined how many lines each poem would have. The next random numbers on

the list chose the lines which would appear in the poem. Then further random numbers picked words from each word list to replace the key words.

Although random processes play an important part in the ERATO program, the success or failure of the effort is dependent upon a human agent. Someone has to choose the lines so that they will combine grammatically and so that they will make sense in the whole. Someone must select the alternative words so that they will be consistent with each other in almost any combination. Whoever makes these choices is the poet. The computer and the program merely carry out the decisions he has made. All the poems the computer and the program can produce are possibilities the poet has allowed to occur. In that sense the poems produced by this partnership are mine more than they are the computer's. But without the computer I would not have produced them.

– *LOUIS T. MILIC*



## I

I, a young man in the arena of the finish,  
I looked upon a lovely region.

I stopped upon a lovely height—  
I, a young prophet in the house of the sun.

I stayed upon a high thing  
Above the eager faces of the surf.

I stood upon a great tower,  
I, a neat girl in the light of the sun.

I, an old girl in the house of the goal,  
I, a fond prophet in the forum of the forest,  
Stay here alive above the heavens.

## MESSAGE

Whoever you are fastening me now in person,  
Enter to me in the quiet of the evening.  
Whoever you are impressing me now in work,  
This is my message to the earth.

I have known that obedient nuns speak—  
I have judged that capricious nuns demand—  
I have believed that young sisters speak—  
I have suspected that young females tell.

## NEWS

Enter to me in the silence of the evening.  
Nod to me in the pause of the gloom.

Whoever you are, supporting me now in person,  
Above the cold pleats of the current . . .

Fall to me in the pause of the year.  
Desire is not all: It is not meat nor milk.

Love is not all: It is not food nor body.  
This is my news to the race.

## NUNS

I have known that excited nuns tell:  
“Refuse your needy body, my pet.”

Wave to me in the chaos of the year.  
I have wondered what young nuns know . . .

I have felt that furious nuns tell  
Concord is not all: It is not flesh nor wine.  
This is my message to the heavens:  
Enter to me in the stillness of the gloom  
Enter to me in the stillness of the gloom.

## **PUT, LAY, SET**

Above the cold ruffles of the surf  
Darling (unless my blood can skip)  
And here (passive beside the dome)  
Put your sleeping body, my friend,  
Refuse your lively back, my pet,  
Lay your drowsy hair, my life.  
Darling, when my spirit can skip,  
Set your sleeping face, my darling.

## **NOT MEAT NOR DRINK**

Come to me in the peace of the evening.  
And here singing despite the angels  
Set your nodding countenance, my sweet,  
Above the humid garments of the river.  
Harmony is not all: It is not meat nor drink.  
This is my news to the globe.

This is my gospel to the heavens:  
Enter to me in the quiet of the dusk.  
There will be the cry during the stare then,  
There will be the cry after the still then.

## **A GREAT PLACE**

Darling, since my mouth can play  
(And here singing beneath the stars,  
I stared upon a weird region),  
Darling because my spirit can chime,  
I have wondered that obedient bridges say  
I lived upon a lovely place.

Whoever you are impressing me now in person,  
Above the cold flounces of the wave,  
I lasted upon a great region,  
I stayed upon a great degree.

## **DESPITE THE MOON**

I, a wise prophet in the office of the goal,  
I stood upon a noble spot,  
Still here, lying away from the ceiling,  
In here singing despite the moon.

Darling, because my life can wing  
Above the humid faces of the river,  
Wave to me in the peace of the night.  
Jealousy is not all: It is not refreshment nor water.

I climbed upon a weird region:  
Enter to me in the stop of the shade.  
Desire is not all: It is not soul nor goods.  
This is my letter to the world.

## HATRED IS

But here, lying beside the heavens,  
Above the hungry faces of the sea,  
Above the plain ruffles of the surf,  
I worked upon a loathsome spot.

I, an old child in the time of the finish,  
Above the new ruffles of the the tide,  
Above the plain garments of the beach,  
Refuse your active body, my child.

Turn to me in the peace of the gloom.  
Hatred is not all: It is not mind nor humor.

## LOW CEILING

I lived upon a low region,  
Rester here singing despite the ceiling,  
In here prone away from the sun,  
Above the new folds of the stream.

I, a wise girl in the time of the goal,  
I, an old seer in the rays of the sun,  
I stared upon a noble region.  
Arrange your lively countenance, my friend.

## **ABOVE, ABOVE**

This is my epistle to the universe:  
Above the eager ruffles of the surf,  
Above the plain flounces of the shore,  
Above the hungry hems of the wave.

## **OLD WOMAN**

Above the eager folds of the stream,  
Above the windy pleats of the beach,  
I loved upon a noble step,  
I, an old woman in the space of the flower.

Above the eager faces of the surf,  
Above the early flounces of the shore,  
This is my message to the world:  
Set your lively figure, my comrade,  
Sing to me in the chaos of the gloom.

## NEAT FATHER

I, a neat father in the light of the breed,  
I stayed upon a high thing.  
Fall to me in the chaos of the season.  
Yet here hard under the dome,  
Above the plain flounces of the beach,  
Arrange your drowsy figure, my love.

## ENTER

I stood upon a high place.  
I stared upon a high region.  
Darling, if my mouth can leap,  
Above the cold sleeves of the stream,  
This is my epistle to the universe:  
Be here passive beneath the roof,  
Enter to me in the silence of the gloom.

## **AWAKE**

Above the hungry garments of the shore—  
Darling, however my spirit can laugh,  
Darling, if my life can jump—  
Above the humid ruffles of the tide,  
Come to me in the pause of the evening.

I have believed some hysterical girls protest,  
I, a sure father in the office of the breed,  
Still here awake beside the moon.

## **HEMS**

This is my news to the multitude:  
Turn to me in the chaos of the day.  
I have suspected what capricious maidens say,  
I strutted upon a loathsome place,  
Above the new hems of the sea.  
I stopped upon a loathsome station,  
Still here lying beneath the roof,  
Above the humid hems of the surf.



### **I HAVE NOTICED**

I have noticed many obedient matrons say:  
Join your active person, my sweet,  
Above the cold pleats of the sea.

I have believed that fervent females declare:  
Liking is not all: It is not bread nor brains,  
Above the early ruffles of the beach.

Wave to me in the still of the dark  
Darling, because my mouth can leap.  
This is my sentence to the people.

### **A WEIRD PLACE**

Wave to me, in the stop of the shade  
Lay your silent back, my life.  
I, a fond prophet in the forum of the forest,  
I have wondered many furious maidens demand.  
I stood upon a weird place.  
But here, prone near the roof,  
In here, awake near the ceiling,  
Above the fresh faces of the wave,  
This is my letter to the people.

## MARGARET

Margaret, are you saddening  
Above the windy jumbles of the tide.

Wave to me in the peace of the night.  
Jealousy is not all: It is not refreshment nor water.

Return to me in the pause of the shade,  
Darling, because my spirit can chime.

Above the early flounces of the stream  
Margaret, are you saddening?

## STOP OF THE DAY

And here face down upon the dome,  
I lasted upon a high elevation,  
I stared upon a weird step.  
Reach to me in the stop of the day.

Sing to me in the still of the night  
And here, prone aslant the heavens,  
Excite your silent figure, my sweet,  
Above the eager garments of the stream.

Kinship is not all: It is not nourishment nor humor—  
This is my word to the multitude.  
I stared upon a loathsome tower.  
Come to me in the pause of the gloom.

## ABOVE THE GODS

I strutted upon a loathsome step.  
Darling! However my being can leap,  
Gain to me in the peace of the season.  
I worked upon a lonely step.  
Concord is not all: It is not wit nor drink.  
Excite your drowsy figure, my pet,  
Be here, passive above the gods.

## HUMID GARMENTS

Darling, while my blood can play,  
Refuse your silent back, my pet.  
I stared upon a weird region—  
Kinship is not all: It is not flesh nor drink.

Enter to me in the pause of the gloom,  
And here awake beside the angels,  
Place your silent person, my sweet,  
Above the humid garments of the shore.

Liking is not all: It is not wit nor water.

## BEACH

Still here, lying under the heavens,  
Darling, as my veins can speak,  
Above the cold flounces of the sea,  
Above the hungry garments of the beach,  
I looked upon a weird spot,  
I, an old woman in the space of the flower.

## WAVE TO ME

And here face down upon the dome  
Join your sleeping body, my friend,  
Refuse your lively back, my pet;  
Darling, unless my veins can chime,  
Join your needy arm, my love;  
And here prone aslant the stars  
I stood upon a pungent region  
I looked upon a lonely region.  
Wave to me in the peace of the day.

## GOSPEL

Above the cold hems of the wave,  
Darling, because my spirit can practise,  
Darling, because my being can play.

Jealousy is not all: It is not nourishment nor wine—  
This is my gospel to the universe,  
This is my gospel to the universe,

This is my message to the globe,  
Whoever you are impressing me now in person,  
Whoever you are storing me now in deep.

## BITTER END

Desire is not all: It is not wit nor body.  
Turn to me in the silence of the night.  
Desire is not all: It is not refreshment nor honey.  
Join your quiet body, my life.

Darling, since my spirit can chime  
Above the early pleats of the tide,  
Hatred is not all: It is not flesh nor brains.  
This is my statement to the earth,  
I, a bitter prophet in the place of the end.

## ARE YOU?

Darling! Because my soul can play  
Above the windy hems of the current,  
This is my advice to the earth:

Fall to me in the pause of the shade.  
Margaret, are you saddening?  
Fall to me in the pause of the shade.  
Margaret, are you pitying  
At the verge of gravity, the people in the camp?

This is my gospel to the globe:  
Harmony is not all: It is not nourishment nor milk.

## FACE DOWN

I looked upon a high tower.  
And here face down above the moon,  
Lay your sleeping face, my child.  
And here lying beside the sun,  
Set your nodding back, my love,  
Join your quiet countenance, my friend.

I have known that fervent nuns affirm,  
Darling, unless my spirit can sing,  
I have insisted that young nuns tell  
Above the humid faces of the surf.

### **WHOEVER YOU ARE**

There will be the breath during the silence then.  
Whoever you are, fastening me now in grace,  
Whoever you are, fastening me now in hope,  
Concord is not all: It is not food nor water.  
This is my message to the universe.

### **AGED BOY**

Above the windy garments of the shore,  
This is my script to the race:  
Come to me in the stillness of the dusk,  
Oppose your silent arm, my side,  
I, an aged boy in the office of the forest.

## **BECAUSE**

Enter to me in the quiet of the evening  
Above the windy hems of the current  
Above the windy folds of the tide.  
Darling! Because my life can play.  
Darling! Because my heart can play.

## **HARMONY**

This is my word to the multitude:  
I stopped upon a proud tower  
Above the fresh ruffles of the surf,  
I, a fond prophet in the place of the finish.  
Harmony is not all: It is not flesh nor body.  
Harmony is not all: It is not food nor water.  
Above the humid ruffles of the shore,  
This is my sentence to the creation,  
This is my message to the creation.



## LIST OF FIRST LINES

1. I stood upon a high place (S. Crane)
2. Come to me in the silence of the night (C. Rossetti)
3. This is my letter to the world (E. Dickinson)
- 4a. \*Margaret, are you grieving (G. M. Hopkins)
- 4b. \*Whoever you are holding me now in hand (W. Whitman)
- 4c. \*Lay your sleeping head my love (W. H. Auden)
5. I have heard that hysterical women say (W. B. Yeats)
- 6a. \*On the threshold of heaven, the figures in the street (W. Stevens)
- 6b. \*And here face down beneath the sun (A. McLeish)
7. Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink (E. Millay)
- 8a. \*Water is heavy silver over stone (A. McLeish)
- 8b. \*There will be the cough before the silence then (W. S. Merwin)
- 8c. \*I, an old woman in the light of the sun (E. Sitwell)
9. Darling! because my blood can sing (e. e. cummings)
10. Above the fresh ruffles of the surf (Hart Crane)

*\*Alternative lines used in different versions.*



Louis T. Milic is a Professor of English at The Cleveland State University. He has been interested in computers ever since he used one to help him with his doctoral dissertation. This is not his first set of computer poems. Previous efforts along this line include poems in imitation of Dylan Thomas and of William Blake as well as the RETURNER program. He has also written a good many poems by hand, though his professional publications are in the fields of language, style and eighteenth-century literature. He finds computers to be very interesting organisms and appreciates their ability to simulate human activities and to make him think clearly.

*By the mid-1970s, Milic had abandoned computer poetry to return to computational stylistic analysis, the major focus of his career. He retired from The Cleveland State University in 1991, and passed away in Cleveland in 2003. A speculative sequel to this booklet, Program RETURNER, is currently in preparation for later publication by Aleator Press.*



## MADE IN MINNEAPOLIS

This booklet was made in Minneapolis. Its text was set in Bembo and Concept by the proprietor of Aleator Press. Type experts may notice that uppercase ‘W’s amid sections set in Bembo have not themselves been set in Bembo, but rather Concept—this is in an attempt to match the peculiar glyph used in the original booklet, which was designed by an unknown artist in the Cleveland State University printing department. Likewise, the asterisk glyph herein was custom-made to match the one on display in the earlier edition. The page layouts of the original booklet, including irregularities such as the variable placement of page numbers, have been reproduced with care. The flying-unicorn logo used on the title page was designed by Leonard M. Trawick, longtime editor for the Cleveland State University Poetry Center, who consulted on the facsimile edition. This booklet was digitally printed on a Xerox Versant 180 Press by Smart Set, a union shop (Communication Workers of America Local 37002) and Certified B Corporation in Minneapolis, under the direction of Kevin Brown. The wrappers are 111 lb. cover stock in Olive Green with matte finish, by the Bavarian mill Gmund; the interior paper is 80 lb. text stock in Sunflower with vellum finish, from the Via line of Mohawk, a mill in Upstate New York. Despite considerable effort devoted to matching the original paper stock, the wrappers used in this edition are a deeper green and have a smoother finish; the yellow interior paper is a close match, though slightly brighter and also smoother. This facsimile booklet appears in an edition of 216 copies, which corresponds to the number of outcomes of a roll of three dice. Each copy is hand-stamped with one of these unique dice rolls, and as such, the booklets are enumerated using a bijective senary notation.





