



Cobralingus

Jeff Noon

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Cobralingus allows language to partake of a future liquid state of consciousness. It applies the techniques of electronic dance music to the production of words, dissolving language. In this mutated, liquid state, words are manipulated into new forms. The Cobralingus filtering device borrows text and samples it. The metamorphiction process remixes this inlet text, transforming it into something entirely different. The imaginary technologies utilized free the mind from all constrictive patterns, creating new and exciting poetry, songs, stories, jokes and even graphic texts. Please note: Cobralingus involves no computational algorithms except for the strangely twisted pathways inside Jeff Noon's head.

Cobralingus Details

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Author : Jeff Noon

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From Reader Review Cobralingus for online ebook

Marc Nash says

William Burroughs and Terry Southern's cut up techniques were a bit too oblique to me. Supposedly cutting up classic texts and resuturing them together like the two halves of a car chop shop, while certainly creating a new text, but was also supposed to maintain echoes of the original ghost texts working under the surface. the problem for me was that I didn't recognise any of the original texts, not being that well read classically, so that I didn't get any undertones.

Jeff Noon gives you the classical texts he cuts up here, so straight away the echoes are more readily resonating. He lists a set of functions by which these texts may be mutated, be it by the gentle 'Decay', the more violent detonation of 'Explode', adding the stimulants by 'Drug', or the evolution of 'Release Virus'. What Noon does here is brilliantly take you through from the original 'Inlet' text, through a series of word manipulations (and even breaking words down into just letter fragments) into a wholly different final 'Outlet' text, but he shows you the steps in between and thereby lies the essential brilliance of the book. You can follow the creative visions and linguistic processes of an author who explores the possibilities of language like no other contemporary writer. He breaks language down to the building blocks of its alphabetical DNA and then rebuilds a new creation.

So we get Shakespeare's "Taming Of The Shrew" filtered through a real life list of horses from a racecard, melded with a Zane Grey piece from 1912 to end in a meditation on language itself. In another, a list of the landmarks of our moon, (all the Seas, Bays and Lakes) is blended with a shipping forecast as broadcast on BBC Radio, the numbers replaced by key words, to arrive at a bee's honeycomb arrangement of phrases.

Some of the final products are graphically/typographic representations and arrangements of letters. Others are classical poem or prose narratives. The title derives from a lipo, a poem ultimately constructed only using the 11 letters in the word 'Cobralingus', a series of wondrous anagrams.

Any author/reader interested in how our language works should read this book. That's if you can get hold of it as it's been out of print and isn't Kindle friendly, though Twitter conversations with the author suggest he may try and release a tablet version of it.

Tor.com Publishing says

Jeff Noon at his Nooniest. I like this books so much: it's a perfect example of how fun big ideas, like Noon's distortion of a text according to his own weird rules, can result in finding diamonds via post-modern experimental writing. Hard to describe but very beautiful. --MK

Paul Grimsley says

this was one of those reads that you really had to work at -- i was not unprepared; having read burroughs extensively but sometimes you just want a straight forward piece of writing and being battered over the head with a writers cleverness can get tiresome -- this was unfortunately the case with this -- it was short but even

in the span of its pages the conceit wore a bit thin.

Andy Theyers says

If you love Jeff Noon you should already have read this book! If you don't know his work read this after Vurt, Pollen and Nymphomation.

Trey Lane says

not something you read, per se. but if you are interested in language or writing, you Need to check this out.

Lady Danita says

wonderful! wickedly inventive poetry

Initially NO says

Jeff Noon calls it metamorphiction, taking a piece of literature and putting it through the 'Cobralingus filtering device'. And what is that? Well there are instructions at the beginning of the book explaining the 'machine' processes. Start, inlet, control, decay, drug... Yep, you can drug the language.

I've used music programs where I edit and filter wave-forms and I think this was close to what Jeff Noon does with words on the page. There is a definite techno poem after using the drug-fecundamol. And there is a point where a monologue from the Taming of the Shrew, is decayed into horse names.

It's weird stuff. An exercise in the picture of language, the function of letters. The meaning? Well, if the words go through the explode filter, the picture of letters exploded on the page is what the Cobralingus does. Then I can see the sound like a crackling an amp does when the lead is malfunctioning.

If I had a voice sampling and got the voice to read a passage of literature, then put this through a sound filter and ghost edit, or randomise, or find story (very complex interesting filter this one), then in many ways this is a more acceptable way of working, it's done all the time to produce music. And, it's done all the time to produce visual art. The book does experiment with the visual art side as well as with passages of words. There is a medieval picture of the tree of knowledge scene, at the beginning of each chapter, that also gets put through the 'machine' and turned into a kind of collage. But Cobralingus is mainly used here to find poetry.

The understanding I gain from the book is this: play with the old and gain something new. Are you tempted to bite the fruit and see paradise changed? Why not? The picture of paradise is still there, just the Cobralingus machine has created versions of the original to the point of unrecognisable. What for? It's an interesting exercise. And reading a book that puts a design of words on each page, as a sample of how the exercism turned out, is something worth looking at.

Dem says

Noon establishes the framework of his process of fiction "remix" in his prefatory comments, provides you with a terminology and shorthand that enables him to chart the progression of each remix work as it is in process, and then displays each iteration process from source material to finished piece. The pieces themselves vary in ultimate quality, but many of them achieve what I would call brilliance, and even the less-successful experiments show a verve and enthusiasm for the process of writing itself by virtue of their gleeful step-by-step revelation of the methods at work in forming each work. Stylistically inventive, fun, and wonderfully original. Perhaps not the best starting point for the work of Jeff Noon (I'd nominate "Vurt" for that honor, or if you just want to dip your toes in, his "Pixel Juice" short story collection), but certainly not a bad one either, if it weren't for the book's possibly-prohibitive cost. Note that I am an unabashed fan of Noon's work, so this review may also be the result of an unconscious bias since he's one of my favorite authors writing today.
