**Last Words**

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**About**

Last Words is the cumulative product of three distinct efforts. The first of which is a text processing script that allows for any body of text to be processed, mutated, and stored as a series of cellular automotive cycles. Cellular automata, popularized as the Conway’s ‘Game of Life’, is a process ordinarily restrained to binary inputs on a defined grid. The text processing python script behind Last Words allows for bodies of text to be delineated into similarly processable cells, but on a natural, amorphous grid. Text will be added and deleted between generations through an algorithm that attempts to model the text as a living multi-cellular body. The rules that define these cycles will evaluate the text based on contextual and structural principles that closest resemble language’s relationship to the cellular concepts of overpopulation and underpopulation. The work’s secondary effort is a Unity program developed to employ these generated automata cycles in a three dimensional, navigable space. The engine will utilize custom scripts to display the cycles overtime in a branching tree structure, outward from the source material, in an explorable, generative environment. The final effort behind the work is a conscious, intentional choice of aesthetic and subject matter. While the aforementioned efforts serve as technical shells theoretically employable to a variety of works, Last Words as an individual piece represents the effort of employing this ‘life giving’ process on the last recorded words of inmates. The pieces auxiliary aesthetic and thematic choices are all made in light of this theme of life in death.

The piece is primarily important as a technical display of an intentional implementation of cellular laws onto text, and how natural lifecycles can affect a body of language. Past this, the piece explores when, how, and where an outsider, if ever, is justified in generative synthetic life from words outside of their own. The piece offers an attempt to show that running these lifecycles on a text is sympathetic rather than violent, influenced rather than stolen, and meaningful rather than inconsequential. By showing that the words closest to death may serve as the best words to bring to life, Last Words aims to demonstrate value in the algorithm it exalts.

**References**

John Conway’s *Game of Life*, 1970: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conway%27s\_Game\_of\_Life

Texas Department of Criminal Justice’s Last Word Database: https://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/death\_row/dr\_executed\_offenders.html