

## THE HUGO BALL

Combinatoric Web media

ONLINE AT: <http://goo.gl/6sVRO7>

*The Hugo Ball* is a poetry generator that uses the 74 unique words of Hugo Ball's Dadaist poem *Gadji Beri Bimba* as its source text.



### **On the work**

Talan Memmott's "The Hugo Ball" is an invocation of the poet of the same name, an electronic interpretation of Ball's poem "Gadji Beri Bimba," and Memmott's own proclamation on language in the age of new media. The piece, presented in Flash, greets the viewer with the image of a crystal ball, within which appears the faint form of a human face, against a haunting sonic backdrop. As the viewer moves the mouse over the ball, the face begins to move, reciting the words of Ball's infamous poem in random order, accompanied by the images of the words themselves as they are spoken.

Reader's familiar with Ball's contributions to Dada will undoubtedly recognize "Gadji Beri Bimba" for its sonorous play at ritual language totally bereft of

*meaning. Memmott's piece obliterates the order of "Gadji Beri Bimba" (which contains 74 distinct words), breaking the text down into hypothetical syntactic elements, pairing these elements with visemes (animations that match the phonemes), and recombines these pieces according to a hypothetical grammar (an algorithm). This nonrandom approach to nonsense preserves the sound of the original, while posing deep theoretical questions about the form of spoken language. The atmosphere of Memmott's piece works through the incantational pretension of Ball's nonsense language, but with the layering of the words matched to the uncanny expression through which they are uttered, the piece supplies a supernatural feel appropriate for Memmott's channeling of the departed provocateur.*

*For those looking to find comprehensible meaning to the words supplied, look no further than the piece itself—the playful title, the absurd supernatural aura of the language, the incomprehensibility of the words, the surreal (inter)face that speaks from beyond, and the sparseness of contextual cues which might aid in understanding—there is precious little to understand as we gaze into *The Hugo Ball*.*

Davin Heckman  
Electronic Literature Directory