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Tribute to Peter de Voogd, outgoing president of IAWIS/ AIERTI, delivered by the incoming chairperson, David Scott, at the AGM of the Association at its 1999 conference at Scripps College, Claremont

My first duty and pleasure as incoming president of the International Association of Word & Image Studies / Association Internationale pour l'Étude des Rapports entre Texte et Image is to pay tribute to Peter de Voogd as outgoing chairperson.

Since this is a word & image association, what I propose here is not a speech but an ekphrasis. I take as my ekphrastic cue the ampersand – & – that links in a symbiotic clinch the two components of our field of studies: word & image. For it is certain that if the ampersand did not already exist, Peter de Voogd would have invented it. For he personifies it to perfection.

First, as a scholar: for Peter the ampersand has always been as important as the disciplines or study areas it links: thus his interest in literature envisages it – not just as text but also as book; – not just as writing but also as illustration; – not just as words but also as typography. As a result of this, Peter has always been drawn towards writers – Fielding, Sterne, Joyce – for whom the relationship between different areas of experience, registers of expression and media of representation, have been a central fascination.

Second, Peter was one of the first European scholars to espouse the linking possibilities of information technology, being computerliterate since the early 1980s; a little later, he was quick to grasp the scope of hypertext in teaching as well as in scholarly practice.

Third, Peter was also one of the first to teach an integrated course in word & image studies – one dating back to the mid 1980s, where it was launched at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU). It has since flourished there, with Ed Tan, who has contributed so valuably to this conference in Claremont, as current W&I Professor.

So it was natural that Peter, alias Professor Ampersand of Amsterdam (he took the Chair of English at Utrecht in 1989), should play a critical and founding role in the development of the new discipline of Word & Image Studies internationally. Over the last twelve years he has been: – founder member of

IAWIS/ AIERTI from 1987 in Amsterdam; – secretary of IAWIS/ AIERTI for six years (1987 to 1993); – President for six years (1993-1999); – he masterminded the Association's bulletin from 1988; – he joint-edited the Association's triennial conference proceedings in 1993 & 1996.

As chairperson of IAWIS/ AIERTI over the last six years, Peter has fulfilled his role as ampersand to perfection: he is the semi-invisible force that has kept apart the warring word/image factions within the Association while at the same time fulfilling the grammatical role of conjunction: it is he who has held the Association together, simultaneously connecting and separating.

Peter's style as president amply reflected this vital function: – he is a master of the laconic phrase – spoken, written or e-mail; – a chairman who keeps meetings mercilessly on message, on brief and on schedule; – a man who, by definition, never loses his sense of balance: the Dutchman's phlegm matches the Englishman's pragmatism; – a president of exceptional and galvanizing organisational skills; – a man who is always able to release the tensions of conjunction through humour.

As a vital linchpin, the personification of a crucial component of interdisciplinary grammar, Peter de Voogd will always remain an indispensable component of our Association. His transfer to the advisory board will not therefore signify a full stop to his relations with the Association, but merely a new style of conjunction.

Michael Webster: *Reading Visual Poetry after Futurism: Marinetti, Apollinaire, Schwitters, Cummings.* New York et al.: Peter Lang, 1995, 160 pp, 35 illustrations.

The (re-)discovery of word-image relatedness and the subsequent exploitation of visuality by the early twentieth century avant-garde constitutes one of the key features of Proto-Modernist and Modernist poetry. A proper understanding of the verbo-visual mechanisms involved in the production of meaning in these texts and an awareness of the aesthetic notions underlying them is indispensable for any serious reading.

Michael Webster's book discusses and contextualizes the work of four important poets of that time precisely with an eye on word/image interaction and aesthetic preconceptions. His selection of four radically different individualists not only allows him to cover a wide range of issues – it also demonstrates, literally ad oculos – how important it is to resist the temptation of a totalizing view. While Marinetti, Apollinaire, Schwitters and Cummings are doubtless representatives of a clearly distinct cultural phenomenon, it is crucial to read each of them in the light of his own semiotic and aesthetic set of norms. Refreshingly enough, Webster does not shrink back from raising controversial issues such as auctorial intention – which he convincingly claims to be indispensable for any critique of avant-garde art. Webster's discussion of the individual poets is not exhaustive – that is never his intention – but it touches upon seminal points. In the case of Marinetti, for instance, he carefully follows the traces of the poet's theoretical convictions in the actuality of his texts. A case in point is his examination of the pervasive orality in Marinetti's poetry. Marinetti's habit of composing his poetry by dictation, Webster argues, left an indelible mark on his language in the form of repetition and a paratactic sentence structure. Similarly, the strong theatrical component served the practical need for effective 'crowd-baiting' rather than narrative purposes. That such a penchant for orality seems surprising in the face of Marinetti's strong emphasis on typography does not escape Webster's attention and he offers a stimulating account of how Marinetti's polemics led in fact to the creation of a new kind of visual poetry.

Webster starts his discussion of E. E. Cummings in the light of his critical reception to establish the poet's position vis-à-vis the Futurist movement. Taking Blackmur's relentlessly narrow views as a starting point, he shows how important it is to see where the differences between Cummings and the

Futurists lie, if one does not want to misread the former.

Webster shows for instance that the visual component in Marinetti and Cummings serves different purposes. He does so, and I think this is ingenious, by analyzing the function of movement. Marinetti echoes explosive, chaotic, outward, large-scale movement likes war in his writings, while Cummings is more interested in working out the microtremors of personal experience. Webster also thinks about the acoustic dimension of language and finds that one of the important uses of visual signs in Marinetti is the presencing of orality. In Cummings, he rightfully claims, this is quite different. Here visuality often goes off on a tangent, severing all potential connections with the phonology of his language. That is, Webster argues, one of the main reasons why Cummings' poetry met with so much negative criticism even from sophisticated readers like R. P. Blackmur. Traditional notions tended to define poetry purely in terms of oral performance and any poetry diverting the emphasis away from the spoken word was thus considered inadequate.

Easily the most important observation Webster makes about Cummings' poetry is his claim that there is an 'authorless,' a non language-bound dimension to his verse. There we frequently find signs whose meaning arises not from their referring to something else but from their reference to themselves and their own processes of signification. Importantly enough, Webster draws a clear line between similar but differently motivated visual phenomena, e. g. in Dadaist texts, where the purpose is the disintegration of meaning rather than the creation of additional meaning or the harnessing of additional communicational channels.

Reading *Visual Poetry after Futurism* provides an interesting and stimulating overview over some of the cardinal issues related to word-image interaction in proto-modernist poetry.

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Hypermedia Seduction and the Art of Intersign Poetry

Philadelpo Menezes, Wilton Azevedo, Alessandra Valela: *Interpoesia* CD-Rom (São Paulo, 1998).

This CD-Rom production, the result of a collaboration between poets and literary theorists (Philadelpo Menezes and Wilton Azevedo) and computer graphics designers (Azevedo and Alessandra Valela), explores both the potential of interpoetry as an inter-semiotic medium, and the operations of hypertext and, especially, hypermedia – the medium which enables interpoetry to exist – as technologies of communication. Before commenting on the ten individual image/text/sounds that constitute this new collection, it is important first briefly to situate this project in the wider field of concrete and intersign poetry as it has existed to date, so that the new dimension interpoetry offers can be more clearly appreciated.

The concept of interpoetry is a development of two earlier exercises in intersign poetry developed by Menezes, the visual poems of the early nineties and the sound poems of later in the same decade. The concept of 'intersign poetry' has two implications: that of interactivity between text/image/sound and reader/viewer/listener and that of intersemiotic exchange within the 'text' itself. 'Intersign poetry' expresses the idea of a poetry created by the fusion of verbal and non-verbal signs, but one that sets out to distinguish itself from the tradition of experimental poetry up to the time of concretism, with its concern to make the visual element derive from the verbal element. In a sense, all visual poetry from ancient Greek figurative to concrete poetry one way or another exploits the graphic form of text, word or letter, that is, the visual forms taken by the verbal sign. The idea of intersign poetry, on the other hand, is

to use visual images (drawings, photos, numbers, or other graphic elements) as compositional components of the poem through formal interrelationship and semantic interpenetration with verbal signs. In this way, the activation of the intersign poem becomes the function of an intellectual exercise through the participation of the reader / receiver who decodes, interprets or deciphers in the light of the montage of visual and verbal signs presented. Intersign poetry thus emerges as a kind of visual poetry which exceeds previous forms of the genre.

The ten intersign texts, apart from their interest as poems in their own right, are more or less allegories of the way hypertext and hypermedia work; both share these latter's semiotic construction and the complicated intellectual and emotional responses they illicit from the reader / viewer / listener. The texts are divided into groups of four and six, each group reflecting the two components – INTER and POETRY – of the collection, the first four texts (by Menezes) concentrating on the dividing and analysing potential of hypertext (INTER), the second six (by Azevedo) exploring hypertext's scope as a medium of multiple superimposition (POETRY). Thus the game of chess (The Secret Throw), opening and closing (Rever), selective highlighting (The Enemy), and intermedial recalculation (Machine), are the central themes of the first four poems, while reversal and reconfiguration (Missa, Soma and Virus), superimposition (Labios, Atol), creation and destruction (Atol, Trigger) are leading motivations in the last six.

Being both analytical exercises and poems, intersign texts explore both intellectual / mathematical and sensual / sexual aspects of communication. Thus The Secret Move plays as much on the erotic strategies motivating Lewis Carroll's desire to teach young Alice Liddell chess and his composition for her of the books *Alice in Wonderland* and, more particularly, *Alice through the Looking Glass*, as on the mathematical interest of the game (as Charles Dodgson Carroll was also a Cambridge Maths don); similarly, for Marcel Duchamp, alias Rrose Sélavy, the tactics and strategies of chess are also charged with erotic overtones, a conjunction that is made flagrantly evident in his photos of himself playing chess with a naked woman. The model chess offers as a game of suspense and abrupt action, resistance and jouissance, is also applicable to hypertext as a medium, with its offer of multiple choices, often seductive, – and its abrupt termination if mastery of the medium is momentarily relinquished or technical problems arise (the terror of the Virus becomes the theme of the last poem in the collection, while the masochistic pleasure of wiping out is graphically explored in Atol).

Hypermedia's ability to combine text, image and sound is explored in Rever as much for its analytical as its synthesizing potential. Thus various icons (Chinese, Egyptian, etc.) for the words 'eye' and 'water' are 'opened up' through the splitting the word rever, a palindrome, in a scission that operates as a mirror image of the reflective relationship of the eye as it comes into contact with water. (A fascinating subtext opened up here is the tension between the eye and the gaze that is central to post-structuralist epistemology, as in Lacan and Derrida.) Meanwhile, the sound of flowing water and other bucolic noises, is presented as a seductive backdrop to the play of visual images. Analysis through selective highlighting, another strategy hypertext is able fully to explore, is applied to a translation of Baudelaire's sonnet 'L'Ennemi' from *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Here the conventional poem's arsenal of formal correspondences is reinterpreted in terms of hypertextual association, one that deliberately explores beyond the conventional bounds of formal literary analysis, as the voice explores readings only of the highlighted components of the text. Once again the element of play, fundamental to the Interpoetry project, is seen as central also to hypertext: thus the scope for jokes, bluffs or fictions is daringly explored in the deliberate misinformation offered by part of the Secret Throw text. But the collaboration of and interaction with the user is also an essential component of the project: inflection and transformation are a fundamental but often unacknowledged part of all communicational processes, from 'Chinese Whispers'

to structuralist analysis. What Interpoetry, like hypermedia does, is acknowledge from the start the crucial nature of this participation and more fully share the authority (in both senses of the word) of the text with the user.

Comments here on the 'Poetry' section of Interpoetry focus primarily on the poetic potential of hypermedia, particularly insofar as it exploits its inherent scope for layering of association. Labios is a good example with its progressive imposition over an initial image based on Gustave Klimt's painting *The Kiss*, of words and images relating to lips or other facial features, with an aural accompaniment in the form of readings of the brief proverbs that constitute the core of the text. At one stage, the viewer is presented with an overlapping array of moving images of the same object, which explores and exceeds both cubist and multiple polaroid photographic techniques of visual representation. The analytical/pedagogical potential of hypermedia is thus combined here with its synthetic/seductive scope. *Atol* and *Trigger*, on the other hand, explore the violently reactive potential of image juxtaposition. In *Atol*, a capitalised T becomes an icon of the mushroom cloud that signals an atomic explosion (the *atol*/atom parallel being implicitly suggested): the pressing of a control button, like that of a computer key, is enough instantaneously to erase all that went before, as an image of pre-1945 Hiroshima is substituted by one of post-atomic destruction. Meanwhile, in *Trigger*, the play on the words *trigger* and *tiger* is dramatised as an image of the former is substituted by the latter the moment the trigger is clicked, in a visual 'bang' that highlights both the dangers and the potentialities of hypermedia expression.

With reading strategies geared to prioritise suggestion over interpretation, Interpoetry, like hypermedia more generally, raises important questions about the nature and validity of truth. It highlights the necessarily mediated not so say mediatised nature of all knowledge, which is always to a greater or lesser extent a function of its support; – of the arts of rhetoric or persuasion mobilised in its expression; – of the interaction of its various constituent semiotic systems; and the role of unconscious desire in the reception of all messages. Interpoetry does all this in the form of a game or an art presented with extreme graphic elegance, as an exercise in exploitation and analysis of the new medium it uses. It thus constitutes an exemplary form of modern communication.

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