

Critical Approaches to Experimental Poetry

Laura López Fernández
lopez@waikato.ac.nz
University of Waikato
New Zealand

Introduction

There are many possible approaches that we can use to study current and historical experimental poetic practices.

Some relevant frameworks of study include different schools of thought such as structuralism and linguistic theories of the sign, verbal and visual semiotics, gestalt theories and visual thinking, media and materiality, intermedia and intermediality studies, typographic and visual cultures, and frame semantics and embodied cognition.

All these theories contribute in their particular way to the process of meaning even if sometimes their basic tenets conflict among each other.



Introduction

When reading or decoding an experimental poem we can use more than one approach but we also need to take into account that theoretical frameworks are not fixed and evolve through time and also some scholars can be part of different schools of thought such as Roland Barthes who worked on structuralism and also developed post-structuralist concepts.

Since these theories evolve and their basic tenets tend to be reinterpreted through time we have to select the more useful aspects of each school.

Structuralism has developed solid tools of analysis. Semiotics has been developed as well (verbal, visual). Media theorists and theorists of the technosphere are also contributing to an expanded notion of the media, text and the sign (ref. McLuhan, Kittler, Hayles, and others).



Introduction

Another relevant aspect that may be useful to include in an analysis of experimental poems is the artists' writings about (intermedia) art.

Many of them have advanced theoretical positions that are being considered systematically by scholars (ie., Charles Olson, Dick Higgins, Eduardo Kac) in the field of cognition, media studies, and embodiment.

Basic Decoding Process of Poetry

Conventional Poetry

Experimental Poetry

1. One exclusive Medium: Written language, (2 D page) based upon the double articulation of the language (Andre Martinet).
 2. It requires a pre-established order of reading marked by grammatical rules.
 3. Formal Homogeneity. Written language.
 4. Sequentiality. The poem requires to be read from beginning to end.
 5. Temporal and spatial relations are controlled by the medium: the written lge.
 6. Decodification of one written language.
- 1st Reading:** Denotative meaning: Grammatical. Linear and Sequential Decoding. Hierarchical chain of signifiers.
- 2nd Reading:** Connotative meaning can arise from mental association and deviations from the grammatical norm, etc. Limited degree of paragrammaticality.

1. Multiple Mediums: (3D) Images, written languages, mathematics, visual and kinetic languages, etc.
- ### Multimodal Poetry
2. It doesn't require a pre-established order of reading. There are multiple and simultaneous centers of meaning, patterns and readings.
 3. Formal Heterogeneity: several integrated languages such as photography, chromatics, sound, etc.
 4. Simultaneity. All the information is present at the same time in the surface of the poem.
 5. Temporal and spatial relations are discontinuous, non-controlled by the mediums used in the poem.
 6. Transcodification of integrated languages: graphic, photographic, montage, kinetics, sound elements,.
- 1st and posterior Readings:** It invites an analogical thought instead of analytic, logical or rational.
- Non sequential readings. Semantic Discontinuity. The minimal presence of phrases works in a relational mode with regards to iconic or sound meanings.
- Synesthetic Readings, Paragrammatical and Analogic.

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO EXP POETRY

Verbal Poetry

Experimental Poetry

Visual, Sound, Phonetic, Fractal, Biopoetry,...

Structuralism

Linguistic Theories of the sign.

Saussure, Jakobson, Martinet, Hjelmslev

Verbal Semiotics

Post-Structuralism

Deconstructionism

Feminist Criticism

- *Structuralism & Post-Structuralism*
- *Verbal & Visual Semiotics* R. Barthes, U. Eco, Kress and van Leeuwen
- *Gestalt Theory & Visual Thinking* R. Arnheim, D. A. Dondis
- *Media & Materiality. Reframing Art Discourses* M. McLuhan, F. Kittler, N. K. Hayles
- *Intermedia Poetry* Dick Higgins, J. Cage
- *Intermediality Non-Lyric Discourses in Cont Poetry.* B. Baltrusch, I. Lourido, TLLC Res. Group Lictec.
- *Technologies & Poetry in Vivo* Eduardo Kac
- *Typo-Graphic, Visual Cultures* J. Drucker
- *Pre-Embodied Cognition* W. Kandinsky, Ch. Olson
- *Frame Semantics & Cognitive Approaches*
- *Embodied Cognition* Lakoff, Johnson, Turner, Fillmore, Hiraga, Mike Borkent



▶ *Structuralism*

Linguistic Theories of the Sign

Structuralism was one of the most popular approaches in academic fields concerned with the analysis of language, culture, and society. The origins of structuralism connect with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure on linguistics, along with the linguistics of the Prague and Moscow schools.

A specific domain of culture may be understood by means of a structure—modelled on language.

There is no intrinsic reason why a specific sign is used to express a given signifier.

Signs are "arbitrary".

Signs gain their meaning from their relationships and contrasts with other signs.

In the 1970s, structuralism was criticised for its rigidity and ahistoricism.

➤ *Poststructuralism*

A post-structuralist approach to textual analysis replaces the author as the primary subject of inquiry. Critics use a variety of perspectives to create a **multifaceted** interpretation of a text.

They analyze how the **meanings** of a text shift in relation to certain variables. Meaning is "destabilizing" or "decentering".
Deconstruction, Feminist Criticism, Foucault, Barthes, (Post)-Lacan.

There is an unclear distance between structuralism and post-structuralism and scholars generally do not label themselves as post-structuralists. Also, some scholars associated with structuralism, such as Roland Barthes, became important in post-structuralism especially since 1967 *The Death of the Author.*

➤ *Structuralism: Linguistic Theories of the Sign*

Ferdinand de Saussure

Cours de linguistique générale (1916) Language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements. The Linguistic Sign = Signifiers + Signified. Signifiers = the "shape" of a word, its phonic component. Signified = a "mental concept"

Andre Martinet

A Functional View of Language (1961)/

Double Articulation –phonemes–monemes.

Roman Jakobson

(Phonology and the sound system)

Louis Hjelmslev

Form of content, Form of expression, Substance of content, and Substance of expression.

Michael Riffaterre

Semiotics of Poetry. Syntagmatic axis = horizontal

Charles Sanders Peirce

Anything is a sign — not absolutely as itself, but instead in some relation or other. Icon, index, symbol

▸ *Semiotics*

A modern notion of Semiotics is that is more than a mode of textual analysis.

A 'text' can exist in any medium and may be verbal, non-verbal, or both.

A text is an assemblage of signs (words, images, sounds and/or gestures) constructed and interpreted with reference to the conventions of a genre and in a medium.

▶ *Semiotics* (Roland Barthes, Kress and van Leeuwen)

The Death of the Author (1967), *Mythologies* (1957), *Rhetoric of the Image* (1964)

In *Rhetoric of the Image*, Barthes argues that images, and their symbolic meanings, are always contingent upon verbal text. In order to reach the shared meaning, verbal text must enforce the visual with evidence. While Barthes says that **the image or the text can come first, without the text, the visual alone is too ambiguous.**

Kress and van Leeuwen in *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006) believe that **visual images can accomplish the same message and meaning that text can**, but perhaps in a different way. oppose Barthes opinion of semiotics

Reversibility of the text = plurality of meanings.

<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Barthes-Rhetoric-of-the-Image.pdf>



▶ *Semiotics* (Roland Barthes)

Rhetoric of the Image (1964)

1. The Linguistic Message (text)
2. The Symbolic Message (connoted)
3. The Literal Message (denoted)

▶ *Semiotics* (Roland Barthes)

Barthes (1964) identifies **3 classes of messages within the image**: ‘Panzani’

1. *The Linguistic Message* = Text of the image

He sees 2 kinds of linguistic messages at work: a *denoted* message = caption and the labels on the produce, and a *connoted* message = the word ‘Panzani’ connotes Italianicity.

2. *The Symbolic Message* = Connoted Image

4 signs are identified from the non-linguistic part of the image:

The half-open bag signifies *return from market*

Tomatoes and peppers signify *Italianicity*

The collection of objects signifies a *total culinary service*

3. *The Literal Message* = Denoted Image

This is non-coded. The image of the tomato represents a tomato. The image of the pepper represents a pepper, and so on. He remarks that in this case we have a signifier and a signified which are essentially the same – this is a message without a code.

▸ *Semiotics* (Umberto Eco)

Umberto Eco *Opera Aperta* (1962), *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (1984).

Open Texts = Texts that are the most active between mind and society and life. Eco emphasizes that **words do not have meanings**. Words are simply lexical, and operate in the context of utterance.

An **open text** is a text that allows multiple or mediated interpretation by the readers. In contrast, a **closed text** leads the reader to one intended interpretation.

The notion of **Open Text** is also derivative of Roland Barthes's distinction between '**readerly**' (lisible) and '**writerly**' (scriptible) texts as set out in *The Death of the Author* (1967).

➤ *Post-Structuralism, Post-Lacan*

The realm of language =Symbolic is contrasted with the Semiotic which is associated with the masculine, the law, and structure.

Julia Kristeva departs from Lacan (Structuralism in psychoanalysis) in the idea that even after entering the symbolic, the subject continues to oscillate between the semiotic and the symbolic. Therefore, rather than arriving at a fixed identity, the subject is permanently "in process".

Julia Kristeva (Tel Quel group, the politics of the language.)

➤ *Deconstruction*

Jacques Derrida "Cogito et histoire de la folie" (1963)

[...] words and signs can never fully summon forth what they mean, but can only be defined through appeal to additional words, from which they differ. Thus, meaning is forever "deferred" or postponed through an endless chain of signifiers.

This [difference](#) engenders binary oppositions and hierarchies that underpin meaning itself.

Because the perceiver's mental state is constantly in a state of [flux](#) and differs from one [re-reading](#) to the next, a general theory describing this phenomenon is unachievable.

➤ Gestalt Theory to Art (Rudolph Arnheim)

Art and Visual Perception (1954/1974), *Visual Thinking* (1969), *Entropy and Art* (1971).

All thinking is Perceptual in nature.

Gestalt psychology was a reaction to the traditional sciences. It emphasizes common connections in human nature, and in nature in which **the whole is made up of an interrelationship of its parts and no sum of the parts equals the whole.**

The factual world is not simply understood through perception as a random collection of sensory data, but rather as **a structured whole. Perception itself is structured, is ordered.**

<http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/2/rudolfarnheim.php>

▶ *Media & Materiality (M. McLuhan, F. Kittler)*

McLuhan (1911–1980) In *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) –oral culture, print culture, cultural studies, and media ecology– McLuhan studies how **communication technology** (alphabetic writing, the printing press, and the electronic media) **affects cognitive organization**, which in turn affects social organization:

...[I]f a new technology extends one or more of our senses outside us into the social world, then new ratios among all of our senses will occur in that particular culture. It is comparable to what happens when a new note is added to a melody. And when the sense ratios alter in any culture then what had appeared lucid before may suddenly become opaque, and what had been vague or opaque will become translucent.

The medium is the message

▶ *Media & Materiality (M. McLuhan, F. Kittler)*

McLuhan: The form of a medium embeds itself in the message, creating a symbiotic relationship by which the medium influences how the message is perceived. McLuhan proposes that a **medium** itself, not the content it carries, should be the focus of study. The “content of any medium is always another medium (*Understanding Media*, p. 8.)

Friedrich Kittler (1943–2011) a literary scholar and a media theorist sees an autonomy in technology “**Media determine our situation**” and disagrees with McLuhan's reading of the media as “extensions of man” in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964).

(i.e. N Katherine Hayles “Interzones of technology, science, and literature.”

➤ *Media & Materiality: Intermedia Poetry* (1965)

Dick Higgins (1938–1998). Fluxus artist and critic. Intermedia Poetry includes areas between drawing and poetry, or between painting and theatre.

With repeated occurrences, these new genres between genres could develop their own names (e.g. visual poetry or performance art).

Intermedia. In *Something Else Newsletter*, 1966.

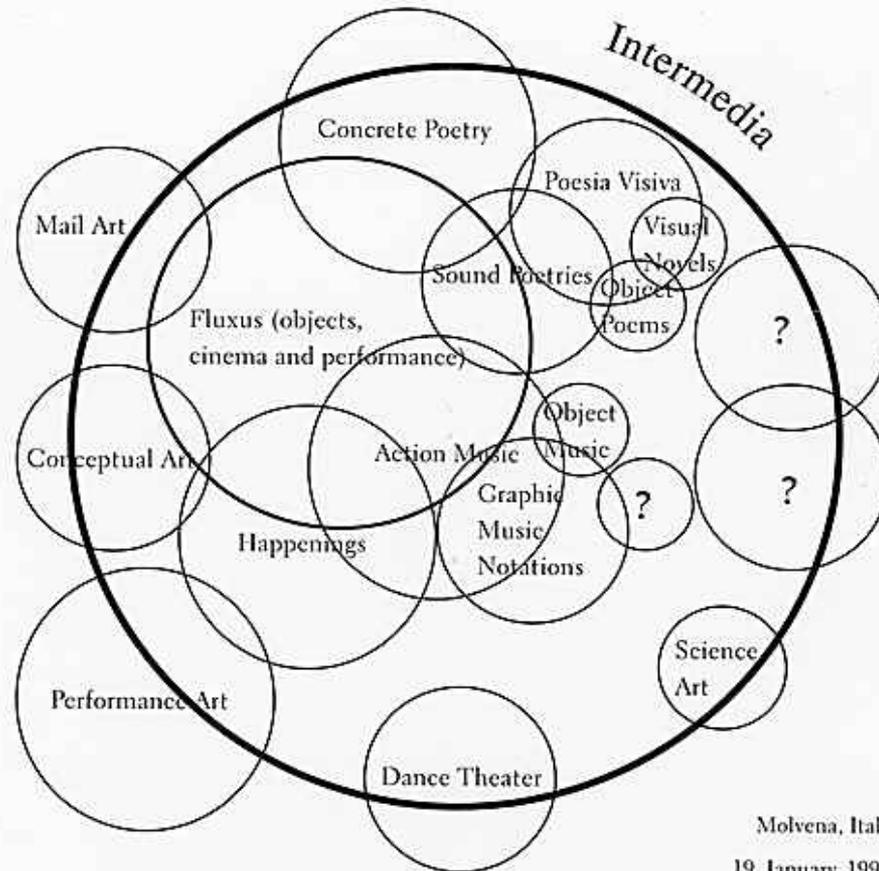
➤ *Media & Materiality: Intermedia Poetry* (1965)

Much of the best work being produced today seems to fall between media. This is no accident. **The concept of the separation between media arose in the Renaissance.** The idea that a painting is made of paint on canvas or that a sculpture should not be painted seems characteristic of the kind of social thought--categorizing and dividing society into nobility with its various subdivisions, ...--which we call the feudal conception of the Great Chain of Being. This essentially mechanistic approach continued to be relevant throughout the first two industrial revolutions, just concluded, and into the present era of automation, which constitutes, in fact, a third industrial revolution. However, the social problems that characterize our time, as opposed to the political ones, no longer allow a compartmentalized approach.

<https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/leonardo/v034/34.1higgins.html>

Intermedia Chart

Dick Higgins



<http://www.mechanicalbrides.com/concretepoetryfigureground.html>

▶ W. Kandinsky (1866-1944)

In *Point and Line to Plane...* (1926) Kandinsky shows how drawn lines and marks can be expressive without any association with a representational image.

Every phenomenon can be experienced in two ways. These two ways are not arbitrary... **Externally or Inwardly.** [...] Aside from its scientific value, which depends upon an exact examination of the individual art elements, the analysis of the art elements forms a bridge to the inner pulsation of a work of art. (1947: 17)

Abstract art shows that the qualities of **line and shape, proportion and colour convey meaning directly without the use of words or pictorial representation.**

Kandinsky Wassily, *Point and Line to Plane: Contribution to the Analysis of the Pictorial Elements*, 1947. <https://archive.org/details/pointlinetoplane00kand>

▶ W. Kandinsky (1866-1944)

Kandinsky analyzed the geometrical elements which make up every painting—the *point* and the *line*. He did not analyze them objectively, but from the point of view of their **inner effect on the observer**.

A point is a small bit of colour put by the artist on the canvas. It is neither a geometric point nor a mathematical abstraction; it is extension, form and colour. It can be isolated or resonate with other points or lines.

A line is the product of a force which has been applied in a given direction: the force exerted on the pencil or paintbrush by the artist. a straight line results from a unique force applied in a single direction; an angular line results from the alternation of two forces in different directions and a curved (or *wave-like*) line is produced by the effect of two forces acting simultaneously.

A plane may be obtained by condensation (from a line rotated around one of its ends).

▶ W. Kandinsky (1866–1944)

The subjective effect produced by a line depends on its orientation:

a *horizontal* line corresponds with the ground on which man rests and moves; it possesses a dark and cold affective tonality similar to black or blue. A *vertical* line corresponds with height, and offers no support; it possesses a luminous, warm tonality close to white and yellow.

A *diagonal* possesses a warm (or cold) tonality, according to its inclination toward the horizontal or the vertical.

A force which deploys itself, without obstacle, as the one which produces a straight line corresponds with *lyricism*; several forces which confront (or annoy) each other form a *drama*.

The *angle* also has an inner sonority which is warm and close to yellow for an acute angle (a triangle), cold and similar to blue for an obtuse angle (a circle), and similar to red for a right angle (a square).

The basic plane is a living being, which the artist "fertilizes" and feels "breathing".

▶ **D.A.Dondis**

Donis A. Dondis *Primer of Visual Literacy* (1973)

Some techniques of visual communication.

Understanding through seeing only seems to be an obviously intuitive process. Actually, developing the visual sense is something like learning a language, with its own special alphabet, lexicon, and syntax.

Contrast

Exaggeration

Spontaneity

Accent

Asimmetry

Inestability

Audacity

Transparency

Harmony

Reticence

Predictibility

Neutrality

Simmetry

Equilibrium

Subtle

Opaqueness

▶ *Visual Arts Discourses* (J. Drucker)

J. Drucker notes that recent scholarship of concrete and visual poetry makes evident that the terms of poetic tradition or linguistic analysis ... [are] inadequate to confront the synthetic sensibility of the present—work which poses profound questions ... about the processes of signification so essential to these projects as they are conceived in aesthetic terms. (1996: 134) But according to Borkent: Drucker indicates a critical lack of scholarly understanding of how these poems construct meaning from a synthesis of verbal and visual components (2010:5).

▶ *Visual Arts Discourses* (J. Drucker)

Visual poetry has a long, complicated, and contested history (Drucker 1998), possibly as long as written language itself (Balan 1999).

In *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (2014)

Drucker fuses digital humanities, media studies, and graphic design history to provide a descriptive critical language for the analysis of graphical knowledge and outline the principles by which visual formats organize meaningful content, particularly the graphical user interface.

➤ Digital Media. (N. Katherine Hayles)

Against erasure of embodiment

In the liberal humanist view, cognition takes precedence over the body, which is narrated as an object to possess and master. Meanwhile, popular conceptions of the cybernetic posthuman imagine the body as merely a container for information and code.

In *How We Became Posthuman*, Hayles studies the social and cultural processes that led to the conceptualization of information as separate from the material that instantiates it.

There is a cultural perception that **information and materiality** are conceptually distinct and that information is in some sense more essential, more important and more fundamental than materiality.

For Hayles **information/material must not be separated** "...put back into the picture the flesh that continues to be erased in contemporary discussions about cybernetic subjects."

How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics. 1999.

<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Hayles-Posthuman-excerpts.pdf>

➤ *NON-LYRIC DISCOURSES IN POETRY. INTERMEDIALITY*

Poetry is not only lyric.

New discursive and cultural practices in Contemporary Poetry.

The concepts of “intermediality” and «non-lyric» discourses in poetry refer to

- ▶ The functional instability of poetry as a genre
- ▶ The functional instability of lyric as a discursive category today.
- ▶ The constitution of new subjects and new subjectivities,
- ▶ The function of the poetic in public space,
- ▶ Enunciative hybridizations and the incorporation of intermediality.

Its main purposes are to question the conventional identification of poetry with lyric and to analyze the defining elements of the non-lyric.

Burghard Baltrusch, Isaac Lourido (Univ. of Vigo, Univ. of Santiago de Compostela)
the TLLC research group (Literary Theory and Comparative Literature) poesiagalega.org.

➤ *Frame Semantics*

A theory of **linguistic meaning** based on Charles J. Fillmore's studies (1982, 2003) and Alan Cienki (2007).

A "Frame" is "any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits. (1982:111)

A semantic frame is a coherent structure, which involves different types of gestalt. Fillmore's example of a frame: a **commercial transaction frame**. The concept frame is applied to verbs like buy to represent relationships between syntax and semantics.

J. Fillmore: "Frame Semantics" in *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*, Linguistic Society of Korea (ed.). Seoul: Hanshin. 1982: 111–137.

Alan Cienki: "Frames, Idealized Cognitive Models, and Domains": *The Oxford 28 Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Dirk Geeraerts & Hubert Cuyckens (eds.), 2007. New York: Oxford University Press, 170–187.

➤ *Cognitive Approaches* (Masako K. Hiraga)

Hiraga's *Metaphor and Iconicity. A Cognitive Approach to Analyzing Texts* (2004) explores **why a certain text has a specific form**, whether oral, structural, or visual, to convey certain meanings. The interplay of metaphor and iconicity goes from sound symbolism and parallelism in poetic discourse to word order, semantic change, writing systems and electronic communication.

The study argues **against** the dominant form of language as portrayed by **Saussure**, that sees **the linguistic sign as primarily non-iconic, or arbitrary**.

Metaphor and Iconicity focuses on the **relationship between form and meaning** in language in general, and in poetic language in particular.

The basic claims were developed by Lakoff, Johnson and Turner (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Lakoff and Turner 1989, Lakoff 1993).

➤ *Embodied cognition (Mike Borkent)*

The most relevant model to certain experimental poetic practices such as transgenic and performance poetry is Embodied Cognition.

All aspects of cognition are shaped by aspects of the body. Aspects of the body include **the motor system**, **the perceptual system**, **the body's interactions with the environment** and the ontological assumptions about the world that are built into the body and the brain.

The aspects of cognition include high level mental constructs such as concepts and categories, and human performance on various cognitive tasks such as reasoning or judgment.

➤ *Embodied Cognition in Visual Poetry* (Mike Borkent)

Visual poetry relies primarily on a materialist view of written (visible) language, in which the formal features of letters, words, the page, and even the book are important components of the poetic meaning. (2010:3)

Bodily engagements with the environment develop image schematic, imagistic, and other experiential components that are essential to the construction of meaning. (Borkent 2010)

Mike Borkent: "Illusions of simplicity: A cognitive approach to visual poetry" in *English Text Construction* 3.2 (2010): 145–64

➤ *Embodied Cognition in Visual Poetry (Mike Borkent)*

Through an embodied view of meaning which includes, but is not totalized and subsumed in language and symbols, the complexity of the materialist aesthetic found in visual poetry can be better articulated.

(2010:8)

➤ *Embodied Cognition in Visual Poetry* (Mike Borkent)

Many visual poems rely on verbal and visual prompts coalescing into a broader meaning. This poetry, however, clashes with a critical model that prioritizes verbal meaning and against which visibility is “a point of peculiar friction and discomfort” (Mitchell 1994: 13).

(Borkent 2010: 5)

➤ *Embodied Cognition in Visual Poetry*

This embodied process occurs within domains and across domains, and within and across communicative modes and tropes, making simulation essential to the interconnection and interpretation of both imagistic and linguistic cues in visual poetry.

A cognitive view articulates how the conceptual and perceptual, the verbal and the visual, synthesize into an elaborate whole.

(Borkent 2010: 24)

➤ *Embodied Cognition in Visual Poetry* (Charles Olson)

Charles Olson "Projective Verse"(1951) Open poetic form developed from embodied notions of:

- **BREATH**
- **KINETICS** the *kinetics* of the thing. A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it.
- **FIELD** (open) Composition by Field as opposed to inherited line, stanza, over-all form, what is the "old" base of the non-projective.

FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT. The right form, in any given poem, is the only and exclusively possible extension of content under hand. ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION

(compare with M. McLuhan's media=extension of man, media=message)

Charles Olson. "Projective Verse." In *Human Universe*, Grove Press, 1951, 1959, 1965,1967.

<http://www.poetspath.com/transmissions/messages/olson.html>

➤ *Eduardo Kac*

New directions for poetry in vivo

Since the 1980s poetry has moved away from the printed page and is witnessing the development of new poetic languages: Video, holography, programming and the web have further expanded the possibilities and the reach of this new poetry.

Now, in a world of clones, and transgenic creatures, it is time to consider **new directions for poetry in vivo**. The use of biotechnology and living organisms in poetry is a **new realm of verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal creation**.

▶ *Eduardo Kac*

Convergence of the Digital and the Biological.

1. **Microbot performance:**

Write and perform with a microrobot in the language of the bees, for a bee audience, in a semi-functional, semi-fictional dance.

2. **Atomic writing:**

Position atoms precisely and create molecules to spell words. Give these molecular words expression in plants and let them grow new words through mutation. Observe and smell the molecular grammar of the resulting flowers.

<http://www.ekac.org/>

➤ *Eduardo Kac's*

Convergence of Technology and Biogenetics

- 3) **Marine mammal dialogical interaction**: compose sound text by manipulating recorded parameters of pitch and frequency of dolphin communication, for a dolphin audience. Observe how a whale audience responds and vice-versa.
- 4) **Transgenic poetry**: synthesize DNA according to invented codes to write words and sentences using combinations of nucleotides. Incorporate these DNA words and sentences into the genome of living organisms, which then pass them on to their offspring, combining with words of other organisms. Through mutation, natural loss and exchange of DNA material, new words and sentences will emerge.

▶ *Eduardo Kac* (Transgenic Art)

New technologies culturally mutate our perception of the human body from a naturally self-regulated system to an artificially controlled and electronically transformed object. [...] Parallel developments in medical technologies, such as plastic surgery and neuroprosthesis, have ultimately allowed us to expand this immaterial plasticity to actual bodies.

The skin is no longer the immutable barrier that contains and defines the body in space. Instead, it becomes the site of continuous transmutation.

While we try to cope with the consequences of this ongoing process, it is equally urgent to address **the emergence of biotechnologies** that operate beneath the skin (or inside skinless bodies, such as bacteria) and therefore out of sight. More than make visible the invisible, **art needs to raise our awareness of what firmly remains beyond our visual reach but which, nonetheless, affects us directly.**

<http://www.ekac.org/transgenic.html>

▶ *Eduardo Kac* (Transgenic Art)

Kac's work *The Eighth Day* is a glass-enclosed environment where plant and animal species fitted with a GFP gene, which gives them a fluorescent property, co-exist with a robotic entity. This robot, which also contains transgenic materials, has miniature cameras that simulate how it sees the environment for an outside observer.

Two prominent technologies operating beyond vision are digital implants and genetic engineering, both poised to have profound consequences in art as well as in the social, medical, political, and economic life of the next century. Kac's work merges scientific research and ethical inquiry while dealing with the aesthetic dimension of art.

The Eighth Day: The Transgenic Art of Eduardo Kac (2003).

<http://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=387>

<http://www.ekac.org/transgenic.html>

Some conclusions

Where do we locate meaning and how do we process it in an experimental poem?

Not solely by decoding the words (linguistic signs) of the poem if any. Not solely in the kinetic qualities and sound. Not solely by using visual or spatial thinking models. Not solely externally but internally (embodied process).

Thinking in mental images is only one of a number of other recognized forms of non-verbal thought, such as musical and mathematical thinking.

Structuralism views **language as an arbitrary, and symbolic system of exchange**. Saussure asserts “[w]ithout language, thought is a **vague, uncharted nebula**. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language” (1966:112).

This model of language “tends to elide the mediating role of the human mind in its models of representation” (Hart 1995:7). In this sense perhaps embodied cognition models in conjunction with the neurosciences may help to gain a better understanding of the non-verbal thought triggered by experimental poetry such as **transgenic art**.

Some conclusions

Experimental poetry invites us to reconceptualize aesthetic meaning through a new and more inclusive notion of sign, text, styles and artistic languages, body, technologies, and meaning:

- ▶ A) Production of meaning

Textual signs. Meaning comes internally and externally; from linguistic + visual + spatial+ non-verbal=bodily signs, gestures, kinetics, etc.

Texts and Mediums. What is textual meaning and how do we study the several mediums at play and the materiality of the signs.

Traditional Frameworks of Analysis deal solely with the linguistic, or visual or sound components of the poem. Exp Poetic Practices are hybrid compositions which require multiple approaches being one of the most recent **the Role of (Bio)Technologies** in the production of meaning.

- ▶ B) Perception (A reader's problem?)

Some conclusions

- ▶ Structuralism as a scientific method for studying the signs and textual meaning has been a valid methodology (in its different schools) to verbal and some modes of experimental and visual poetry.
- ▶ Post-Structuralism is also valid when evidencing the constant flow of meaning.
- ▶ Scholars use both structuralism and post-structuralism in their readings.
- ▶ Poets' interpretations and definitions are relevant too. (Ref. manifestoes 60s-80s and theoretical books). Some influential theorists and artists are Kandinsky (abstract painter), Dick Higgins, Charles Olson and Eduardo Kac.

Kandinsky's writings on painting and Olson's 'projective verse' may serve as a bridge between old methods of analysis and new ones such as Embodied Cognition (= synthetic blending of the verbal and non-verbal: bodily and sensorial experiences).

Higgins' intermedia art serves also as a bridge between old and new epistemes about art expanding the concept of genre and medium.

Kac's writings on bio-forms of poetry expand the limits of the known realms of poetry in vivo.

<http://www.mechanicalbrides.com/concretepoetryfigureground.html>

Croft, William and D. Alan Cruse (2004). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1,105,7-15,33-39.

Lakoff, George (1987). *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 82-83, 70.

Mike Borkent: "Illusions of simplicity: A cognitive approach to visual poetry" in *English Text Construction* 3.2 (2010): 145-64

Johanna Drucker *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (2014)

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