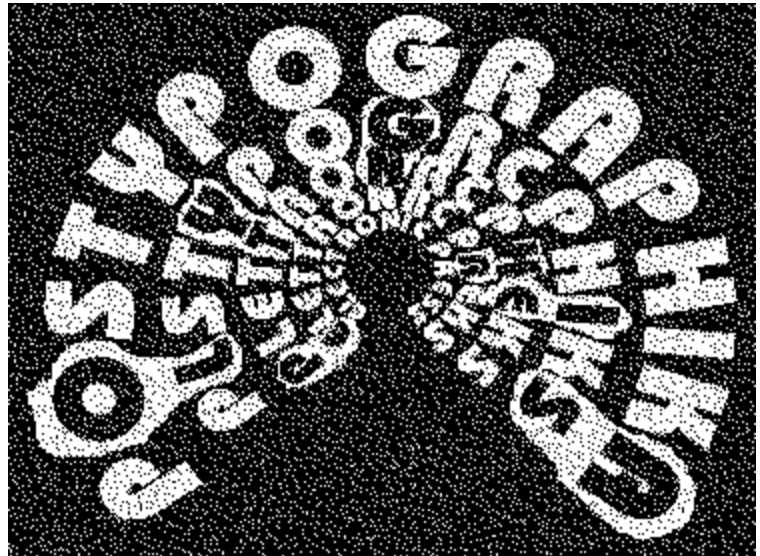


POSTYPOGRAPHIKA

by Clemente Padín

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POSTYPOGRAPHIKA, one of the most interesting Latin American websites, is the site of the PARALENGUA group from Argentina. It was one of the first websites in the world to include experimental poetry, focusing mainly on the realm of virtual poetry. Because it is bilingual it has become a bridge between the poetic production of the Spanish-speaking vanguard and the world.



One of the infallible methods of transgressing the codes of any language, that is to say, its mechanisms of emission, transmission and reception of messages (writing/support/reading) and, therefore, to generate a greater number of bits of information -- because of the unpredictability of the contents they involve -- is to use new supports or channels. Generally, the action of the new medium contributes immensely to the form of the expression, the genuine producer of the poetic as long as there are "readjustments of content" (Umberto Eco, 1977). On the contrary, the mere transposition of one language into another, without great changes or informational increases, occurs when the new medium takes place only in the form of content.

As we know, aesthetic information was and will be bound to the physical properties of the support, and the supports, in themselves, are (in)significant. However, something happens when a signified unites itself to a support. Something causes the original meaning of the sign to be transformed by that conjunction; thus their semantic expression would be impossible to obtain with any other media or channels.

It is also asserted that it is not the same "to write" poems that adapt the new medium to the forms already effective or foreseen by the official literary system in a mere transposition, to create new forms starting from the languages which characterize the new channels or supports. The same approach governs the new electronic media: it is not only necessary to make use of their communicational possibilities (those that will be discovered via experimentation, as modifiers or enrichers of the form of the expression), but also to make use of them as possible transmitters of concepts for which verbal language has been overcome, for instance, the concept of the "field" or the "infinite," among others.

At this point we are tempted to chronicle all the literary forerunners through whom this understanding of mediums has been reached: from Stéphane Mallarmé and Guillaume Apollinaire to Hugo Ball and Kurt Schwitters, from E.E.Cummings and James Joyce to the Concretists, from N.H.Werkmann and Raoul Hausmann to the Letrism by Isidore Isou, from the phonic poems by Henri Chopin and Arrigo Lora-Totino to the Hypertext by Theodor Nelson, but, limitations of space hinder us. New media, mainly electronic, bring forth the program, envisioned by Mallarmé, of synthetical forms of thought and expression, ideogrammatic and synchronous, causing, of course, new formulations and new facts and discoveries which, in their turn, generate other facts in an endless development, similar to semiosis (although this could be frozen, in any moment, for the option of any receiver).

WHY POSTTYPOGRAPHY?

Let's listen to Fabio Doctorovich, one of the promoters of the Argentinean movement "Paralengua" who, in his note "ENCAszTERS", says:

"According to Clemente Padín, experimental poetry makes possible the development of cultural knowledge, avoiding its stagnation thanks to conceptualization of the unknown, instead of the manipulation of established concepts. The concept of poetry as a means for the acquisition of knowledge and the term "experimental" intend to match poetry with science. There is currently a prevalent tendency in many authors and critics to incorporate scientific precepts in their literary searches, even more, base them completely in classical scientific methods. This is probably a partial vision: current science is based in a rational mode of thought while poetry must encompass other searches beyond the limitations imposed by reasoning. More than scientifizing art, science should be reexamined from the point of view of art in the way Beuys did, in search of a communion and at the same time a reform in both fields of knowledge.

That is why the term "posttypography" seems to be more adequate than "experimental" to describe those changes that are occurring in literature due to the invention of new media."



CONTENTS: EXPERIMENTAL POETRY

At this website you will find, mainly, very good examples of experimental poetry. In particular, virtual poetry. Unfortunately, there is no way to appreciate what a virtual poem is other than in a virtual space. The picture, or rather the "electronic image" registered with virtual cameras, is a pale reflection of the poem, excessively insufficient. Virtual poetry is possible due to two intrinsic characteristics of computing: 1) its ability engender three-dimensional signs inside a virtual space and 2) the possibility of programming the behaviors of those signs. That is to say, a design in three dimensions is needed in order to facilitate what we normally carry out with an object when we want to know it: to manipulate it in all directions and under all possible viewpoints. Therefore, it is called "(virtual) reality" since the "virtual object", likewise the "real object" will ever respond in the same way, because it itself carries all necessary information about itself. However, we are not discussing here the "real object" but a group of data loaded in a memory to which it is able to apply the "physics" that we want -- even algorithms of behavior that work in opposition to the classical physics of Newton or to the most versatile of Einstein. So, the virtual poem not only can move and transform itself according to precise programs, but can also respond to certain situations occasioned by the observer, who can even touch them and operate with them as if they were real objects. With the appropriate equipment it is possible to insert himself/herself into that virtual space and interact with texts and signs. In short: the three-dimensional representations simulated on a computer are able to create a sense of reality and to perform competently the sensations characteristic of the objects, applied to cause a correct although not real perception in the observer, aside from the possibility of its virtual manipulation due to previously developed programs.

Other readings

(at Posttypographika, up to 2007)

-Doctorovich, Fabio

Abyssmo (Asz, module H-An) (1997)

The Argentinean Poetic Scene: Paralengua (1996)

Paralengua: The Construction of a Logo (1996)

Fowler, John Ezra

Geborei (1996)

-Györi, Ladislao Pablo

Criteria for a Virtual Poetry and other works (1996)

Nari, Poem by

Culture Clutter (1996)

Lunar Eclipse (1997)

=Padín, Clemente

Paralengua, the "ohther" poetry. The ruptures in the Argentinean poetic tradition throughout the XX century (1996)

Signographics and Texts (1997)

Aspiration to Freedom: In Memory of Edgardo Antonio Vigo: 1927-1997 - At Light and Dust (1997)

-Polkinhorn, Harry

Notes on Typography (1996)

Visual Poetry in America Latina (1996)

-Selby, Spencer

Problem Pictures (Section #1) (1997)

-Young, Karl

Notation and the Art of Reading (1997)

CONCLUSION

In spite of everything (unbelief, postmodernism) creation is still going on in Latin America. It continues the research and experimentation not only of new materials and media (fax, Internet, etc.), but also of new modes of poetic expression, not simply by accompanying advances in electronic technology (computers, laser, etc.) but by impelling the media (as Walter Benjamin has pointed out) by highlighting, through artistic experimentation, their "productive" possibilities, be those possibilities aesthetic or scientific or technical.