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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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FROM VISUAL TO VISION: VISUALS AS SYMBOLISM IN POETRY

By
JOEY CHIN LING MIN

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (Poetry)

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Very little visual poetry is interesting, but all poetry is interesting in its visuality.

—Johanna Drucker

From the subtle spacing between an end-stopped line to the next stanza or the evident pinion shape of George Herbert’s “Easter Wings”, technopaegnia, the pattern of poetry, is an inevitable anatomy of a poem’s body. For most parts, however, spaces render the contemplation of breath or to flourish the significance of words between breaths— they barely exceed their functions for information and formatting.

Organised in ways different from the spectrum of conventional written forms of poetry, visual poetry is mediated, far away from the mere function of caesuras and enjambments, with their own visually artistic grammar and sensibilities. For the purpose of this critical paper, visual poetry will be defined as poetry which engages the audience as both viewer and reader and perform[s] the work as a poem that can’t be translated into any other form (Drucker, 1998).

How does a visual poem with its compressed format of pictorial description encapsulate an expression deeper than its image? This essay seeks to discuss the numerous ways a visual inhabits a vision, the visual as a material body which houses the spirit — the greater meaning. This essay will embark on an analytical criticism of visual poems in an attempt to integrate visuals— typography, shape, patterns, repetition, punctuations and spaces— into the context of symbols as a literary device germane to its text and how they, as two separate entities and devices in a work that cannot work without the other. Paralleled with expressions of semiotics and communication, this paper considers the alliance between these theories to venture into the intricacies of a vision behind a visual. Consider “Il Pleut by” Apollinaire (1916):
words resembling fine dashes of rain are a visual accompaniment to the metaphor of rain as loss in the poem. To imagine that rain is a result of a separation from a cloud because of accumulated heft and pressure then further broken by gravity, replicates the heaviness weighing the speaker down, his sadness shedding as rain. The poem goes on to actualize the dripping of rain to that of crying; the French word for raining and weeping is an eye-rhyme: “pleut” and “pleurent”, the latter sharing the same sound in the first syllable for “pluet” — both expressions superimposed to model loss. That is not to say that all intent would have been lost if it were written in a conventional manner. It would be inaccurate to declare so but at the same time, that format does not enhance the ocular gratification of watching the net of drizzle falling to the ground. Imagine the layout on a page:
it is clearer to envision the last word as the last drop of rain broken by the ground, cut by the edge of paper, something that would be less convincing if the layout was ordinary:

Il pleut des voix de femmes comme si elles étaient mortes même dans le souvenir c’est vous aussi qu’il pleut, merveilleuses rencontres de ma vie. ô gouttelettes ! et ces nuages cabrés se prennent à hennir tout un univers de villes auriculaires écoute s’il pleut tandis que le regret et le dédain pleurent une ancienne musique écoute tomber les liens qui te retiennent en haut et en bas.

The above format does not document loss. If anything, the last line denies the reader the visual and thus, visceral sense of termination. As the last few words drift unaccountably into the white space which shares its territory on the same line, the poem loses its impact in its ending. The ending which provides a poem its last chance to seal its presence is now loosened, casually and easily when it was an actual observable scene in watching the
last word have the last say in Apollinaire’s arrangement. Technopaegnia serves a responsibility beyond expression and function— it allows the reader to take delight in bearing eyewitness, then presiding as judge to the dimensions of the narrative that was materialized physically for him.

It is especially more so because the last line “écoute tomber les liens qui te retiennent en haut et en bas” (Listen to the bonds fall off which hold you above and below) speak of the hammock of attachment and detachment, elastic and similar to the continuous movement of water on earth surfaces. The idea of loss, though saddening, is rejuvenated by that of renewal — unending like that of the water cycle. To be able to imagine vividly the last drop of rain broken on the tarmac, is also to be able to envisage another beginning.

The typographical form of “Il Pleut” is clearly organised, and perception of it is organic because the poem is still heavily steeped in text that matches its shape. However, the wanderings of design as a tool in visual poetry is a boundless labyrinth and can manifest in numerous facets: colour, weight, font type, density, the composition coming together to evoke synaesthesia; one can see sounds, hear tension, or feel colours. Still, the visual poem is not unlike reading a conventional one; the audience to a visual poem comprehends the mise-en-scene in accordance to the text and the reader unpacks the polysemic of text. Navigation and pleasure of encountering both types of poems are neither more nor less— only different.

At the same time, the poem with its graphic and textual composition becomes a sign: a highly complex model of how visuals, when yoked with poetry, verbose or silent, create meaning. By means of both, it translates the artist-writer’s imagination onto his oeuvre, the same sign that must affect its audience in order to come alive: it is only with interpretation that the sign lives. The fidelity to literary convention and its semantics has been extended or even shifted towards the scaffolding of design expression. Instead of the linearity the conventional poem provides, the visual poem allows sufficient detachment

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1 Translation by Roger Shattuck
by means of striking yet elusive visual nuances and the poise of abstract rhetoric for the reader to bridge himself closer to the work through his own production of the signifier. The reader will not be acquainted with the artist-writer’s emotions but his fingerprints; geometry of visual allocation, the topography of spaces, the inhabitation on a page. Paradoxically, it is in the reader’s ability to illustrate his own signifier that he is able to arrive at the emotional aspect of the creation—not why, but at how it was made; its unique existence of typographical material adapted for the semantic content. Typography is unremarkable as embellishment, but in the context of a visual poetry, it widens the significance of poetry when it is interpreted as a sign and its connotations framed for its audience.

In his poem, “acrobats” (1968), Scottish poet Ian Hamilton Finlay creates a work with the same word ‘acrobats’ arranged in different vectors, crafted to fit in a rectangle with a few letters truncated when they reach an invisible border.

```
a a a a a
 c c c c c
r r r r r c
 o o o o o
 b b b b b
 a a a a a
 t t t t t
 s s s s s
 t t t t t
 a a a a a
 b b b b b
 o o o o o
 r r r r r
 c c c c c
 a a a a a
```

In Finlay’s poem, the words, also as symbol, leap and swing, drop and rise from the heights and depth of a confined space, the rectangle representing a performing stage. The
poet provides a literary piece that engages the multiple experiences of acrobats as performers and as profession, and the reader as audience by means of typography: kerning, lower case lettering and the arrangement of words and its repetition. Through typography and the sparseness of text, “acrobats” devises simultaneously the binary opposites of occupation and space: through rumination of the design’s concrete occupation, an entry point opens a larger territory of imagination by uncovering how absence is defined by what is present. The visual elements of the poem can well function on its own, but the juxtaposition against its binary opposite; white space and occupied space, text and spacing, linearity and vector, synthesis and reduction, can be achieved only when one bounces off the other, reminiscent of Eugen Gomringer’s (1954) mention of “concrete language structures [as] partly unreflected, partly reflected information”.

The acrobatic craft is vastly different onstage and off; onstage, the platform for acrobats allows the exhibition of a wide range of permutations of aerial acts but most importantly, the liberty of flight and flexibility so far removed from the physical capabilities of the average human being. Paradoxically, the performance is a result of highly structured craft offstage– precise notation, exact sequencing and coordination through choreography. Finlay recognises how acrobats must systematically manage backstage what can then be purported in aerial as effortless and freeing in motion onstage for the gaze that scrutinises them.

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2 The term binary opposites is derived from Roland Barthes whose insight of words are not dependent on its definition and meaning created a priori, but the difference and relationship between a word and its opposite.
This augments what Erving Goffman (1959) mentions about impression management: the ‘front’ of the individual's performance function to define the situation for those who observe, and the ‘back’ as a more ‘truthful’ type of performance, contingent upon the absence of the responsibilities of presentation.

With typographical composition (cross/down/up/left/right) and symmetry, all which are highly organised and tightly mediated, Finlay reveals the workings of the backstage: acrobatic manipulation, transitional choreography and the very conditions involved to culminate in a performance. By also exposing the self-awareness and self-consciousness of acrobatic training, superimposing the backstage to the front, reflexivity is inevitable. The poem looks back upon itself and how it came to be via the process of construction and the process of consumption for the reader or audience.

With its visual rhythm to parallel the rhythm and timing of the orchestrated performance, the poem symbolically embodies the audiences’ sense of marvel and fear, underscoring Aristotle’s The Poetics (n.d.): how the spectacle presents an ability to overwhelm the senses of the spectator. With its unconventional layout, the poem seeks to fascinate the reader in the same vein acrobats seek to impress the audience. The reader may query with utmost sincerity at how the unconventional poem works, if it is possible at all to be
interpreted and be read, like the audience member wondering just how acrobats are capable of clinging and cutting the air at such great heights, if it is realistic at all to do so without the risk of major injury and death.

In many respects, the audience and the reader mirror each other in their marvel and curiosity in wanting to understand the limits and liberty of both, and their cognitive and visceral encounters— the interiority, brought about by the architecture of exteriority.

At the same time, the spaces between letters is more discernible on the diagonal plane, making the recognition of the words ‘acrobats’ quicker as compared to reading the words horizontally or vertically. Because spaces between letters are larger on these planes, the result is a stuttering acknowledgement of the word, identified only letter by letter in a jagged motion.
This once again echoes the ‘front’ of a performance which has been managed for the ease of spectatorship and perception. The key stakeholders for performers are its audience, and the dissemination of acrobatic craft is via the push-strategy: the act is depicted for the spectator whose role is that of an observer, completely non-interactive and detached from the workings that are being staged although present. The audience does not have to be engaged as part of the act which enables for the ease of perception.

The same ease however, becomes discombobulating when read on the zigzag grid; the word ‘acrobats’ splintered into individual letters, at once elevating the existential struggle of creation behind performance; the high stakes of the acrobats’ demanding environment that can be insulating and isolating offstage, one dominated by perfecting their art and pushing their corporeal boundaries and possibilities. It is recollective of writing — the inward interrogation of what is being risked or at stake when a poet decides to create a piece of work. For acrobats to depict an act, not unlike a poetry writing, require considerable scaffolding; making the right connections to make movements, the indisputable incongruity and tension of translating absolute images of the mind and body onto the stage and the page — the careful execution on both.

Drawing on the metaphorical aspects of Finlay’s typography is to register the elegiac tribute of the making process. Again, the referentiality of making is inevitable in the poem, the medium in the message allegorical to its craft and operation, presenting its process as part of it. The typographical medium carries with it the message\(^3\) of precise execution and accuracy which would have been reduced if hand-written or drawn. At the same time, the ability to replicate the poem by means of a word processor or typewriter means a loss of authenticity\(^4\). Its presence is no longer time and space specific or unique.

\(^3\) The idea is borrowed from the phrase “The medium is the message” by Marshall McLuhan (1964) who sees the medium which carries the message to contain a message on its own. McLuhan privileges that the medium contains its own message separate from content and independent of context.

\(^4\) The term is derived from Walter Benjamin’s (1936) essay, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. Continuous reproduction introduces impurity to art, removing the aura when it was first produced.
unto itself. This does not veer too far from acrobats who execute a certain routine or performance for a competition or as part of a circus act.

While the performance showcases the gift and liberty of flying and catching, crossing and cutting through the air and defying confines and the constraints of corporeal movements, it is dichotomised by what is not seen: what emerges outside and beyond the invisible borders of the poem; the backstage, what Goffman refers to a more truthful presentation.

The border as indicated in the above right diagram shows the invisible divide between audience and acrobats off-stage, masking what would be unseen onstage and front stage: hours of practice, rehearsing, conditioning exercises, years of gruelling physical training and demanding schedules. The work encapsulates Finlay’s inventiveness in granting the reader spaciousness and freedom to imagine the lives of acrobats behind the stage using the white spaces beyond the borders of the poem. He recognises how these spaces—the lack of textual representation is a silent corollary to the words inside the rectangle. “acrobats” gives rise to the occasion for rethinking and reinventing modes of poetic expression and interpretation, challenging and introducing different visions of what is
inside and outside, seen and unseen. The unseen, in spite of its nonexistence, is also an intellectual virtue and artistic purview to the piece that is of paramount contemplation; what does silence in a poem look like? how can it be read? how is silence scripted? The experience of blankness must be critically examined though unseen; the intimations of beginning and end may just be found between spaces.

Although the exterior of the poem appears to be small because of the repetition of the same words and its constriction within a regular shape that suggests brevity, the interiority for contemplation is any but; the words used throughout are ‘acrobats’ as opposed to the singular ‘acrobat’ which may well exist in a solo act. The precarious environment of performance is reminiscent of the rhetoric “strength in numbers”, the importance of synchrony between partners- flyers, catchers and jumpers. Yet, the number of acrobats does not appear to embolden or lessen the risk of performance. The lowercase font type accounts for the smallness, the fragility and short-lived gratification of performance, the exhilaration as perilous, and vulnerability as heroic. Lowercase letters exude quietness and hush, silence shaped from the audience holding their breaths, the acrobats catching theirs. The centrality of breath and breathing as literal or metaphorical expressions between life and death exude the delicate and critical nature of acrobatics. Paying attention to the lowercase letters used in the poem’s title and work, it is typography in this poem created to be complex and expansive, bigger in spite of its economy.

Another poem, Swiss poet’s Eugen Gomringer’s “Silencio” (1954), is similar to Finlay’s “acrobats” because of the visual operation at work. “acrobats” constitutes various aesthetics; multiple symmetrical patterns and directions of reading, while Gomringer enlists the word ‘silencio’ (silence) 14 times, all evenly distributed over a chunk of white space — the centerpiece of the work.
Where the perception of Finlay’s work is determined after acute observation, Gomringer’s is through deep contemplation. The experience is fecund at both levels pertaining to typography and linguistics.

The words ‘silencio’ are designed in lower-case and plain san serif font with tight tracking (letter-space between words) for a subtle and nondescript expression that draws little attention to itself, functioning only to relay the words and nothing else. The minimalism of typeface frees the focal point, the empty space in the middle, from competition and distraction. Leading (space between lines) is generous for maximum readability to create a spatiotemporal perception for the reader; the amount of white space creates a relaxed façade to reduce the speed of how the text is perceived, similar to how enjambments and end-stopped lines influence reading-speed and how the text is being considered and contemplated. Word spacing in “Silencio” also manages to transcend its purpose of visual perception. It serves as a breath for the reader, another manifestation of silence:

Because the acoustics of words and poetry-reading as performance inhabit the making of a poem, Gomringer reconciles both with spaces, like the breve of a musical score. The ultima of ‘silencio’, the last syllable “cio” falls gentle and low, extending the breath slightly. The placement of space smack in the middle has the implication that
proclamation of silence (all 14 words) eventually distills into the heart of genuine silence; the absence of sight, and consequently, sound. It can be seen as the core where everything else radiates from and buries itself into. As a symbol, the space means the absence of everything: words read to command silence, words spoken to dictate the same. Nothing is seen, nor heard. These are all factors that influence the experience of the work to invoke quiet grace and unhurried expansiveness, a logarithm of what one hopes to achieve with silence. Hence, imagine if it were written in another way with leading closer towards each other, emboldened and serif, with the first letter capitalized:

SilencioSilencioSilencio
SilencioSilencioSilencio
SilencioSilencioSilencio
SilencioSilencioSilencio
SilencioSilencioSilencio

its appearance becomes more pressing and energetic because of the claustrophobic design. The empty space is naturally shrunken, inducing a tight and controlled front. The visual experience is communique and commandeering, heavy and dense as opposed to the lightness of the original work.

If the blank space however is placed at the beginning or the end (as opposed to the middle), it can be argued that emptiness or the absence of sound starts or finishes in silence:
Without demarcation and definition, the space appears to be floating and merging into other non-relevant spaces. It is visually less meaningful than when the space is situated in the centre to signify origin and can also mean where silence can emerge and, also dissipate, expanding and shrinking into itself. Typographical aspects in visual poetry do not veer too far away from line break decisions in written poetry. They function to hurry, agitate or slow down, mediated upon the effect it wants to generate.

Because text makes up a huge portion of the work itself, there is no escaping the recognition of the word pertaining to silence or its association if the reader has knowledge of any Romance language, even if he is a non-Spanish reader. At the same time, however, translation can be diluted by inaccuracies from cultural differences and
word ‘silencio’ may lose some degrees in meaning. ‘Silencio’ could be an adjective (quiet, still) in its original language yet when translated, it could end up as a noun (silence, hush). The differences may exist but not severely, and the experience can still be allocated within the reader’s own world of the known word and appreciated similarly to a Spanish learner. Paradoxically, it is on non-Anglophone/Latin language learners that ‘silencio’ would be most silent to, because they can make no connection and association to silence. The non-idiomatic expression is therefore most effective. Consider ‘silencio’ in the following in the languages of Polish, Icelandic and Tamil respectively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 1</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Icelandic</th>
<th>Tamil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cisza cisza</td>
<td>þögn þögn þögn</td>
<td>þögn þögn þögn</td>
<td>வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cisza cisza</td>
<td>þögn þögn þögn</td>
<td>þögn þögn þögn</td>
<td>வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம்</td>
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<td>வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>þögn þögn þögn</td>
<td>வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம் வெள்ளாரம்</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then consider the set of words below translated from the randomly chosen word ‘ruido’ (noise), also in the same languages of Polish, Icelandic and Tamil:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 2</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Icelandic</th>
<th>Tamil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>halas halas</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>குடும்ப குடும்ப குடும்ப</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halas halas</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>குடும்ப குடும்ப குடும்ப</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halas halas</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>குடும்ப குடும்ப குடும்ப</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halas halas</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>hávaði hávaði hávaði</td>
<td>குடும்ப குடும்ப குடும்ப</td>
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<td>குடும்ப குடும்ப குடும்ப</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For anyone uninitiated to these languages, neither the words for silence nor noise would resonate with them. The space in the middle holds no meaning related to silence, does not connote emptiness or void and is merely a gap created by the space bar on the keyboard or typewriter. There is no artistic dictum or evocation of anything meaningful. Space remains, although a noun rather than an adjective. The space in the technopaegnia is taken as a physical entity, the only one comprehensible and becomes the work itself, while the words appear only as a border. The effect is hence one that is powerful although taking on a very different dimension if the reader had understood.

The complexity of comprehension of visual poetry, regardless of its language can be further advanced in e.e. cummings’ "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r". Although written in English, the poem is not immediately understood because of its organization.

The appearance of the poem is only palpable because of the immediate recognition of the words “who” in line 2 and “grasshopper” in the last line. It is based on the circumstance that those words are the only ones not invaded by punctuation marks or insertion of other words in between. It is possible then, for a person to be acquainted with the English language yet find it hard to make meaning of the discordance in "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r".

When unscrambled, it reads:

*Who as we look up now gathering into a T, he leaps arriving to rearrangingly become grasshopper*
The textual vision cummings’ has for this poem is more sophisticated than that of Finlay’s or Gomringer. The physique of the poem is not allegorical to the body of a grasshopper but mimetic of its movement. Though disorienting, it would be impossible to not take pleasure in comprehension in the process of putting together, taking apart, and conceiving the message in the poem because the typographical construction in cummings’ work is one that confronts the reader’s sense of recognition and orientation in unequal parts, baiting their sense of curiosity provoking the faculties interpreting visuals and text in a poem that is stubborn in its statement of relaying the movement of a grasshopper in no other way but through the employment of erratic line length, enthusiastic punctuations and distortions of spelling. Yet this poem would not be signature of cummings if it closely adhered to conventional forms of syntax. The first line has the order of the word “grasshopper” mixed up, echoing the jittery motions of a grasshopper. The usage of dashes appears to connect the letters together, deceptively appearing to be discerned if read in reverse but there are many steps to be taken before it is deciphered:

```
11 9 7 8 6 10 5 4 3 1 2
 r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r
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This is the encounter of the reader rearranging the letters the same way a person tracks a grasshopper leaping movement- uncertain and slow. cummings, with a hint of wit, seems to already realise that a reader is capable of making sense of a jumbled word if the first and last letter of the word remains. Therefore, he switches both their positions, starting with R and ending with G in second last place. Having expectations changed dramatically, processing that particular line becomes cautious, careful, and ultimately, slower— the consciousness of grasshopper observation.

Because of the amount of time taken to assemble the scrambled letters at the first line, the reader is set up for equally bewildering gestures in the following lines. Yet, the expectation is thwarted by the surprise in the next line- “who” spelt simply as it is;
cummings’ grasshopper suddenly still and at rest. The reader has now arrived at a point in
the poem where he was kept in suspense but now straddles familiarity and surprise. In the
lines that follow, one can barely keep up with the cluster of words conjoined with other
words and punctuations. The word “gathering” has been split into “gath” and “ering” on
separate lines, a highly inventive invite to the reader to ponder on the syntactical
ambiguity of verb or noun. The reader’s wonder is elevated because the definition of
gathering is an assembly or coming together, highly polar from how the word has been
designed by cummings, existing on two different lines with another scrambled word
between. This duality brings the reader to an active engagement at how the coming-and-
going of a poem can be changed significantly by the unconventional breaking of words.
The visual experience introduces a tension to the poem that is seemingly precise and
natural in the scene of grasshopper watching. It is further intensified in the word “leaps”
arranged to look like this:

```
:l
 eA
 !p:
 S
```
cummings understands there are limitations to description: what is seen may not always
be written into precision and immediacy, and even if writing does commensurate into
veracity, it may not be affirmative to the reader. It is in expanding the verb into its actual
visual action through typography that calls upon a presence that is the most satisfying and
reified through the manipulation of movement.

The élan here is in cummings’ decision to suspend the literal because of its limitations
and making the choice to augment the adjective visually. Through the incoherent image,
the reader takes himself through the stuttering jabs of leaping, the energetic quality
created by the exclamation mark — both which lend an actual physicality to the
grasshopper. The spaces between each letter mark the height and length of the
grasshopper’s vivacious spring. The austere economy of one word suddenly maps itself
into many ways of the grasshopper’s motion. By inhabiting the word into shape and
kinesis, it succeeds in projecting a similar image that may have eluded the reader if merely typed out linearly. The obscure and vague composition veils the poem’s clarity, or at least some mode of writing that will provoke the reader towards clarity, but its distance from the perspicuity via conventional means of reading contains the grasshopper’s existential and idiomatic self-consciousness, right down to the seemingly fickle and randomly speckled punctuation of parenthesis:

\[
S \quad (r \quad l \quad v \quad l \quad n \quad G \quad .gRrEaPsPhOs)
\]

The word “grasshopper” and the period mark are cased between brackets, exhibiting cumming’s supreme handling of imagery. The grasshopper is surreptitious with its Batesian mimicry, camouflaging itself into its surroundings, cutting its presence off from the viewer’s optical field. The period mark is placed within the brackets, another hallmark of resistance when it is usually placed outside. Finality as punctuation or as an informal way of signaling the end of discussion when used in a conversation is cumming’s (and also the grasshopper’s) stubborn declaration of its game; to play hide and seek in the virtue of splendid complexity. Finally, the poem finishes with a semicolon — ironically there is no end even at the end of the poem. The grasshopper makes its exit, albeit temporarily. By means of a semicolon, it represents a connection or a continuation to something else—but to what? It is worthwhile to imagine that the grasshopper doesn’t disappear, it merely retires into the white spaces that follow the punctuation mark; camouflaged in a fringe of grass, a cake of baked soil, or curved between the curl of a leaf.

How the semicolon opens to an open-ended inquiry of where the grasshopper goes thereafter is like light passing through a prism; what emerges on the other side is slightly distorted, colourful and quirky; a multitude of possibilities whilst staying true to the image it emerged and was reflected from; the visual is the medium that carries creativity, a metaphor or subtext to fruition.
The cliché of how a picture paints a thousand words is only part true—a picture has the ability to recreate an inner, synaesthetic world where words sound, sounds colour, colours speak and pictures morph into different pictures. Visuals do more than just present: they go on to nurture the elevation of meaning through subtle instruction and imagination. Words, regardless of its aesthetic and figurative language, are didactic to a certain degree. While it may not do to tell in poetry, words still evoke. Visuals on the other hand provide sufficient detachment to introduce distance—the lack of familiarity, a cacophony of confusion, a jarring surprise; a certain level of discomfort presents an opportunity to the reader to build their own bridge to the work.

Visuals are part of what make the poem an organic whole; but at the same time, symbolize a harder, smarter and macabre world beneath their pictorial presentations. It becomes a re-presentation, one that is articulated by the imagination, fueled by shape. It conjures alternative understandings of how words transpire outside of meanings. What is powerful in the poem is sequestered within the image. Typographical arrangements, length lines, physicality and art are not a by-product of coincidence or recklessness. It has been carefully mediated and planned to be a visual aphorism. Just as a poem is designed to incorporate the rhythm and music between lines and lyrics, how a tenor acquires its vehicle and latches on to it tightly, how subtext is stitched into a poem as a blind hem—unseen but needed to prevent unraveling—technopaegnia is by no means the result of an arbitrary accident.
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