

Editor's Preface

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Living in the twenty-first century, in a time labelled by some 'the Age of the Image' gradually realising Marshall McLuhan's prophecy of 'postliterate societies', we find ourselves in the position to re-assess the co-existence of words and images in literary discourse and the ways in which the paradigm of 'vision' informs our understanding of texts. This is the implied agenda behind the present collection of articles that address the complexity of what might be termed 'visual poetics'. This being our incentive, the essays making up this special issue discuss a variety of literary works, from Shakespeare to the present day, and persuasively demonstrate the irresolvable connection between seeing and reading.

The issue opens with two studies in early modern drama and theatre. **Svenn-Arve Myklebost** offers an overview of selected esoteric images in the Renaissance and through a focused reading of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* argues that esoteric visual tradition may be seen as a shadowy presence behind the composition of the playtext. **Anthony W. Johnson** explores the patterns of dramatic visualization in selected plays by Ben Jonson. In particular, Johnson shows how a play can evoke images of the city and thus take part in the discourse of the urban and the urbane.

Three essays in the collection provide insight into word and image crossovers in the long eighteenth century. **Peter de Voogd** analyses Laurence Sterne's visual experiments in *Tristram Shandy*. Arguing that the black page, the marbling, the squiggles and the flourish are all interconnected, he puts forward a new interpretation of the last one. **M-C. Newbould** examines the links between Gothic architecture and literary texts, from Walpole to Byron, in order to show how the Gothic aesthetic in the country house tradition problematized the tension between the old and the new. The Gothic also comes into focus in the following article. **Jakub Lipski** interprets the ambiguous representation of aesthetic pleasure in two novels by Ann Radcliffe. It is argued that aesthetic experience may pose a threat to the stability of selfhood.

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With the next essay, the collection enters the field of nineteenth-century studies. **Richard Leahy** studies visual metaphors in the selected works of one of the most inspiring representatives of Victorian poetry—G. M. Hopkins. In particular, the article emphasises the unique symbolic role of the candle and argues that Hopkins used the image to address the liminality of his faith.

Two essays that follow delve into the experimental realms of the modern and the postmodern. **Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes** outlines German artist Joseph Beuys' attempts at 'recreating' James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* through his art. Going beyond explicit references to Joyce in Beuys' works, this article argues that the Irish writer was for Beuys a crucial point of reference throughout his career. **Tymon Adamczewski** analyses the interrelationship of album covers and records in progressive rock. It is argued that the visual material complemented the music thus programming a multisensory and interactive experience of art.

The issue closes with two articles studying contemporary visual literature. **Magdalena Sikorska** re-reads *The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan and argues for new interpretative possibilities by analysing the entanglement of the past and the present in this picturebook. **Katarzyna Smyczyńska**, in turn, focuses on selected visual narratives of displacement. Her essay investigates the way in which the narratives rework cultural memory and convey their ethical message through the materiality of the book.

It is our hope that the wide spectrum of issues taken up in this issue, both in terms of breadth and depth, will make for relevant and inspiring reading for any student of the visual and the verbal.