

Introduction: to fasten words again to visible – and invisible – things

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Word and image studies have advanced immeasurably over the last twenty years or so. As yet, however, the interpretive strategies generated have focused largely on European products and philosophical traditions. This volume represents the first sustained and collective effort to resituate the critical discourse within an intellectual framework more fully matched to the particular contexts and histories of Anglo-American visual-verbal relations in works of artistic experimentation, and to bring together the complex relationships in these works between the imagistic, the symbolic and the concrete. *Mixed Messages* assembles essays on modern and contemporary works that challenge the historic separation of visual and verbal, instead reading poetry, illustrated texts, artists' books, philosophy, conceptual art, architecture, painting, comic books, photography, digital media, installations and exhibitions as places where images and texts meet and are mutually enhanced. By returning to books and artworks as physical objects whose existence is relative to and interdependent with the viewing subject, the scholars in this volume, like the individuals whose work they discuss, move beyond semiotic trends in word and image studies to consider the materiality, and through this the sensuous and affective dimensions, of American experience. The American philosophical tradition – grounded in a phenomenology that is strongly pragmatic, a theory of cognition that is rooted in embodied experience, and an epistemology that is both bound up in the world of objects and that draws on transcendentalist and Romantic currents – can provide a new way to understand the messages of mixed media and the interarts generated by, within and about the United States.

In his rakish, daguerreotyped self-portrait, etched in lieu of an author signature in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Walt Whitman blended the rapidly developing techniques of photography with an innovative, vernacular poetry, using mechanical reproduction and the new technologies of the visible both metaphorically and physically to present himself, and his book, as a singular image of the multitude.¹ By combining image and text, Whitman was attempting to bring together, and indeed create, 'essentially the greatest poem': America. Whitman incited his readers by example to defy the stability of singularity, 'Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself ... I am large, I contain multitudes.'²

As Lauren Weingarden notes in her essay on Louis Sullivan's transcendentalist blending of urban and pastoral architecture after Whitman, his words echoed his country's central dilemma: the constant renegotiation of the concept of national unity with the reality of its internal diversity.

For Whitman, as for his contemporary, the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, key to the poetic ideal of capturing the American landscape as a true arena of cultural and ontological expression was to realign the visual and the verbal, to 'fasten words again to visible things'.³ However, in the study of the literary and the pictorial in conjunction, from Gotthold Lessing's *Laocoön* (1766) onwards, image and text, and imagery and the material, have been read largely as binaries and singularities, contradictory elements that collided and competed whenever they were brought together. This contrary relationship has been maintained by semiotic readings that seek to bring the methodology of literary studies to visual studies (and vice versa), by ekphrastic readings that look to create an equivalent or counterpart to the visual, and by thematic readings that bury the formal differences between representations in image and text in explorations of common content and concept. Scholarship continues to rely heavily on the application of critical theories that have their roots in the thinking of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, which, although initially useful, have now been repeated so often that the standard approach to mixed media work has become to dematerialise it into structural, systemic, metaphoric or thematic elements. Indeed, it is the contention of this book that the pervasive European methods of theoretical analysis in word and image studies have not made for significant advances in contemporary researches into American word and image relations. Criticism as dematerialisation cannot easily deal with the graphic surface of image and text works; nor can it easily work with notions of affect, or go further into how image and text might join formally and synaesthetically with sound, movement and touch. To make sense, for example, of Gertrude Stein's counsel that 'a writer should write with his eyes, and a painter paint with his ears', we would argue that it is necessary not only to understand the historic context of her engagement with modern European aesthetics, but to recognise and entertain correspondences between the aural, oral, visual and metaphoric in her prose-poetry, and see those correspondences as at least partly grounded in her work with the physician, psychologist and philosopher, William James.⁴ As the essays in this book demonstrate, drawing from the American philosophical tradition can open new pathways into the particular historical contexts and formal details of inter-artistic works.

That is not to say that transatlantic cross-currents do not exist in terms of method and style in modern word-image works. This collection, however, concentrates on the ways in which American artists, writers and practitioners have rejected, adapted or collaborated with European influences in an effort to 'make new'. Reclaiming the history of that transatlantic conversation, we maintain, is also tracing the history of its American interlocutors, without falling back on exceptionalist paradigms. Just as the relationships between these national influences can be ones of productive exchange and tension, of substitution, supplement or

juxtaposition, the correspondence of forms – particularly in mixed media and intermedial work – can constitute an intervention in an established hierarchy of verbal and visual value and meaning. The contemporary globalised works and concerns in evidence in the contributions to this volume of Sarah Garland, Katie L. Price and Julie Phillips Brown respond to some of the latest, most markedly cosmopolitan moments in an American tradition that has always been in dialogue with non-American traditions; globalisation makes that dialogue all the louder. Thus, while several of the essays in this book address works that signify the vernacular and the national, the volume's trajectory arcs towards a consideration of how understandings of globalised aesthetics and embodied experience might be combined with analyses of the formal aspects of artworks.

Both exploring and advocating cross-disciplinarity, the scholars whose work is presented chronologically on the following pages share a number of fundamental concerns and inquiries. Foremost among these is the way in which the verbal and the visual not only relate to each other across disciplines, but across other modes, and across historical moments and cultures. The scholars in this volume conceive of words as spoken, seen and heard as well as read, and images are understood not only in the sense of both mental images and flat plane images, but also in the context of three-, four- (and, in the case of the pataphysical works in Price's essay, and the Duchampian speculations in Garland's essay, sometimes more) dimensional models that can be experienced visually, aurally, haptically and even, in the context of Ann Hamilton's *myein*, olfactorily. Julie Brown's contention that *myein* elicits 'alternate reading practices which engage the entire sensorium at once', for example, connects with her understanding of the immersive artwork as demanding a somatic commitment from the visitor in which testimony and witness are bound up in a 'complicated and mutually transformative' relationship between the human body and the text. She draws on Johanna Drucker's formulation of 'marked' typography as one that 'aggressively situates the reader in relation to various levels of annunciation in the text – reader, speaker, subject, author – though with manipulative utilization of the strategies of graphic design'.⁵ Rachel Warriner's essay on Nancy Spero's manifestary use of the imagetext also utilises Drucker's work on marked and unmarked typography alongside an analysis of Spero's polemical use of historic quotation to draw out affective resonances of texts treated as and with images. Weingarden's essay on modernist architect Louis Sullivan's metaphysical borrowings from Whitman and Emerson, Katy Masuga's essay on Brian Dettmer's altered books, Catherine Gander's essay on the 'conversational' poem-paintings of Frank O'Hara and Norman Bluhm, and Garland's essay on Arakawa and Gins's installation practices, all consider the relationship between ideas as they are captured in books as sign systems and ideas as they are crystallised and lived, in buildings, books, action art and installations as physical, visual entities. The writers and artists who form the subjects of this collection, the authors of these essays argue, see mixture and multiplicity in form and in content as an opportunity for multi-sensory involvement, correspondence and creation.

The basis for such a pluralistic approach is lodged in a prevailing pragmatic attitude to American thought, taking shape in the prizing of a human, multi-sensorial 'experience' of the world, in evidence from Emerson through John Dewey and William James to Richard Rorty and Stanley Cavell. This collection explores such embodied gestures, taking its cue from Dewey's appraisal of 'art as experience' to offer multi-disciplinary approaches to understanding the everyday, practical importance of visual and verbal interrelations. The following essays demonstrate the ways in which such theory informs literary and artistic practice, aiming to challenge, if not overcome, the problems of critical expression in much contemporary word and image scholarship. The problem Dewey articulated in 1934 is still with us today: 'the trouble with existing theories is that they start from a ready-made compartmentalisation, or from a conception of art that "spiritualises" it out of connection with the objects of concrete experience'.⁶

That word 'experience' has particular Anglo-American resonance, although understandings of the term vary widely between American and European traditions. One reason for the 'compartmentalisation' bemoaned by Dewey was the enduring legacy in the West of an Enlightenment philosophy of dualism, especially in theories of meaning-making and aesthetics. As human engagement with elements of beauty and nature were increasingly separated from practical commitments to the workings of daily life, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy and psychology advocated the delineation of the 'mind' to distinct faculties such as reason, understanding, sensation, feeling and imagination, which in turn could be grouped into two camps: cognitive and corporeal. As several contemporary philosophers of mind (Mark Johnson chief among them) have pointed out, 'this differentiation of cognitive functions reinforced a pervasive mind/body dualism and generated a series of foundational dichotomies between the "higher" faculties and functions and the "lower" ones – understanding versus sensation, cognition versus feeling, reason versus emotion'.⁷ Even Immanuel Kant, whose *Critique of Judgment* (1790) suggested a composite of imagination, feeling and reasoning in the experience of meaning, was loath to abandon the mutual exclusivity of the perceived relationship between cognition and emotion. These reductive theories were, as Johnson attests, 'carried forward most fatefully into twentieth-century aesthetic theory',⁸ and, we argue, remain crystallised in the tacit critical opposition between word and image.

However, in the United States a resistance to classical dualism emerged. Ralph Waldo Emerson, generally now considered a proto-pragmatist in the American vein, was staunchly against the Lockean empiricist trust in sense data, equating it with Kant's Understanding, and advocated a reconciliation of man and nature that combined a transcendental synaesthesia (Emerson's infamous eradication of 'mean egotism' to become a 'transparent eyeball ... part or particle of God') with a hearty 'self-reliance'.⁹ Perhaps the first to fully voice a national need to split from European traditions of Reason and Aesthetics, Emerson, as Martin Jay has noted, was a friend of the family of William James, the 'father' of American pragmatism and a psychologist whose theories of embodiment

and mind-body integration appear to owe something to Emerson's essays on 'Nature' (1836), 'The American Scholar' (1837) and 'Experience' (1844). Emerson's drive to reunite the human with the divine through a profound connection to the natural environment relies heavily on correspondences between what he saw as the falsely dichotomised human 'higher' and 'lower' faculties. If through feeling and sensation one can come to a cognitive understanding of one's place in the world (and its attendant meanings), resulting in a closer correspondence with the 'Oversoul', then the way to this reconciliation is by return to a method of communication through which truth is channelled and received more directly than via the rhetorical rumblings of bookish learning. Real experience, for Emerson, required a 'poet' to see it and then translate it. This involved the profound understanding that original truth came to humanity as a 'picture language': 'Nature offers all her creatures to [man] as a picture language ... things admit of being used as symbols, because nature is a symbol, in the whole and in every part.'¹⁰ It is the poet's eye, according to Emerson, that can 'integrate the parts' of the fragmented American landscape, because he who wields words correctly understands that they are but one symbol system in a semiotic universe: 'we are symbols, and inhabit symbols'. Words have been dislocated from their original imagery, but Emerson's belief that 'wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things' carries with it an intrinsic commitment to a pragmatic notion of embodiment, whereby sensation, emotion and cognition conjoin in a fully processual experience of the world, and where words and images are part and parcel of a connective, integrated universe which is 'the externalisation of the soul'.¹¹

Emerson's advocacy of both a visceral and symbolic connection to lived experience can be traced forward to John Dewey's aesthetics, particularly, for the purposes of this book, his aesthetics of 'art as experience'. As Thomas Alexander has noted, Dewey's pluralistic notion of 'experience' has until quite recently been largely misunderstood, at least in philosophical circles. This is partly to do with Dewey's decision to 'reconstruct an existing language rather than fabricate a new one';¹² the European definitions of 'experience' that were pre-established during the Enlightenment tended to cloud understandings of Dewey's interpretation of the term, because, as Alexander notes, 'ever since Locke, the term had come to mean a subjective event, a constellation of "ideas" lodged inside a "mind" brought about by the operations of certain physical powers upon us'.¹³ For Dewey, however, experience is rooted in a more Emersonian naturalist embodiment, constituting an embodied process whereby a person's interactions with her or his environment are mediated by the symbolic systems that human social relationships inevitably entail.

In *Experience and Nature* (1925) and *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey explains that the crucial dimension of experience is the aesthetic realm, or art. For Dewey, aesthetics is at the core of human significance, providing as it does an intense, dynamic and highly integrated experience of meaning, while utilising everyday resources of meaning-making. All the faculties and senses are engaged in 'art as

experience' because there is always the impulsion for wholeness in order to make sense of the world. If the 'highest because most complete incorporation of natural forces and operations in experience is found in art', then art, for Dewey, is organically 'the culminating event of nature as well as the climax of experience'.¹⁴ Dewey's notion of embodiment, therefore, turns on the human's (or creature's) active engagement with and through his or her environment; the body becomes the event of meaning itself. 'In this connection the usual sharp separation made between art and science is criticised', asserts Dewey.¹⁵ Traditional arguments separating disciplines, faculties and social symbol systems are not given credence in Dewey's pragmatist philosophy of embodiment, because we are always already engaged with our environment, and there is no absolute division between the organism and its surroundings.

However, this holistic interpretation of experience and meaning-making was never fully understood or adequately applied to the spheres of 'art and science' until the late twentieth century. Alexander states that until Richard Rorty brought about its revitalisation with his 1979 book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Deweyan thought 'had suffered virtual total eclipse since his death at the age of ninety-three in 1952'.¹⁶ This is not entirely true; as Gander's essay demonstrates, Deweyan aesthetics pervaded the New York art scene at the very least during the 1950s and into the 1960s. Deweyan ideas about education were also inspiring and travelling outwards from the radical practices in evidence at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, in this period. In terms of aesthetics, however, Dewey's concepts both of embodiment and of art as the locus of a heightened, integrated experience of meaning were largely ignored and misunderstood. Perhaps the closest approaches to this pragmatist tradition were made in the field of visual psychology. Rudolph Arnheim's ground-breaking texts *Art and Visual Perception* (1954) and *Visual Thinking* (1969) appealed to Gestalt psychology to argue for a 'perceptual thinking' that refutes a Cartesian mind/body dualism and celebrates the embodiment of thought and meaning. 'Perception starts with the grasping of striking structural features', Arnheim wrote in 1954, anticipating advances in cognitive linguistics and neuroscience by thirty years.¹⁷ At roughly the same time, Nelson Goodman's analytic aesthetics formulated a turning point in Anglo-American philosophy: *Languages of Art* (1968) remains ground-breaking in its semiological dismantling of the divide between artistic and scientific practices in a general theory of mind. Goodman's thesis of symbolic cognitivism, whereby our experience of the world is represented to us in a series of separate semiotic systems, situates words and images as equally important in our creation and recording of experience. However, as the book's title would suggest, Goodman's stance was linguacentric; if analogy and reference are equivalent to symbolising in Goodman's view, then not only does language provide the template for comprehending verbal and visual symbol systems, but these systems remain both locked in and distinctive.

Since the 1980s pragmatist approaches stemming from Deweyan philosophies have infused several areas of artistic and scientific enquiry, laying the ground for

a more unified conception of multi-modal works. The now prevalent Embodied Mind Theory (EMT) assumes an essentially pragmatist point of view, in that it shares several of pragmatism's key evolutionary tenets of cognition: namely, that embodied cognition is situated within a dynamic, phenomenological relationship between organism and environment; that it 'operates relative to the needs, interests and values of organisms'; and that it is social and correspondent – 'carried out co-operatively by more than one individual organism'.¹⁸ What's more, EMT holds that cognition is an active process, not a mimetic response to external stimuli. The range and reach of theories of embodied cognition are too extensive to detail in this introduction, but suffice to say that enquiries into areas of narrative theory, aesthetics, linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, evolutionary biology and philosophy have all benefited from developments in this area.

Some of the most exciting implications for word and image studies derive from the notions that both image and text are derived from bodily experience. This too has the potential to radically undercut the traditional opposition set up between written texts as mind-bounded symbolic systems and pictorial images as sensory and affective structures. For example, researches by the likes of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson into cognitive poetics have uncovered the physiological connections between our use of metaphor and verbal imagery and our sensory interaction with our environment, going further to link these findings to a neurally embedded empathy with others.¹⁹ Johnson argues that 'since much of art makes meaning without words or linguistic symbols, art reminds us that meaning is not the exclusive purview of language. Indeed, linguistic meaning is parasitic on the primordial structures and processes of embodied interaction, quality and feeling.'²⁰ Philosopher of mind Shaun Gallagher leads the way in a renewed disciplinary interest in the intersubjective corporeality of embodied phenomenology (after Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty).²¹ Psychology philosophers such as Jesse Prinz and Antonio Damasio have extended William James's theories of embodied emotion (i.e., emotions are forms of perception of bodily interactions with the world) to examine the pathways linking perception and feeling in the cognitive neuroscience of emotions, including emotive reactions to artworks.²² This new path of investigation has led to the hybrid discipline of neuroaesthetics, in which scholars such as Margaret Livingstone, Semir Zeki, Barbara Stafford and G. Gabrielle Starr are making interesting steps in mapping the neural substructures of aesthetic experience in order to reconfigure our relationship with the arts.²³

These researches are profoundly pragmatic, acknowledging and extending Dewey's emphasis on embodied cognition and art as process whereby percept and concept interpenetrate in our experience of the world, and must be understood in correspondence, not in competition. Taken seriously by the humanities and beyond, they have the potential to overhaul our understanding of the role of indexicality in both image and text, and to connect words and pictures as they are conventionally understood to embodied arts like dance and

song, to the *gesamtkunstwerk*, and to those arts such as architecture, painting, sculpture and calligraphy that preserve the body's traces in the final work. In another context, this is perhaps one of the resonances of James Elkins's consideration of non-Western traditions of image-making in *On Pictures and the Words that Fail Them* (1998). Here, Elkins traces word and image as interdependent concepts in 'the Greek etymology of *graphein*, the Chinese text on the origins of painting, and the Persian history of painting and calligraphy' and in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* so that "'image-making" depends on painting, which comes from dancing, which relies on instrumental music, which derives from vocal music, which springs from language itself."²⁴ As Joanna Pawlik quotes Chicago Surrealist Franklin Rosemont observing, *Krazy Kat* 'owes much to its graphic interpretation of the primordial urge to dance' and in this sense reminds us that 'it is our *whole bodies* that read'. Importantly, dance is invoked in other essays in this collection. Gander notes that O'Hara was an avid follower of dance, and his collaborative *Poem-Paintings* with Bluhm have been interpreted as balletic gestures; Spero's *Notes in Time on Women* also alludes to dance in its corporeal expression of freedom in 'Appraisals, Dance and Active Histories'.

In this model the artist, the performer and the receiver's experience of meaning in the world includes – that is, is not set up in opposition to – the experience of making and apprehending artworks. This continuity between the experience of art and that of everyday life forms one branch of the kind of pragmatism found in Susanne Langer's and Brian Massumi's scholarship on participation and absorption. It is also found in the dedication to perceptual and intellectual change that runs through the Romantic works in this book, as well as the modernist, dissident, avant-gardist and postmodernist works that seek to transfer radically altered meaning or experience from the work to the world. These works assume that experiences of and through words and images are complex and entangled parts of a wider lived whole that involves intricate networks between emotion, perception and cognition. As Hans-Georg Gadamer writes: 'In the experience of art there is present a fullness of meaning which belongs not only to the particular content or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole of life.'²⁵

If aesthetics looks to be creating increasingly more connections and exchanges between physical and cognitive processes, advances have also been made in extended cognition studies, leading to a theory of cognitive integration that deconstructs another implicit split, this time between embodied mind and disembodied matter. Andy Clark and David Chalmers first formulated Extended Mind Theory in 1998, when they posed the simple question, 'where does the mind stop and the rest of the world begin?'²⁶ Clark and Chalmers's theory that material, external devices – including written language – constitute a 'supersizing' of the mind in that they extend cognitive function out into the world holds that this coupling system is a process by which the mind constantly influences, and is influenced by, the 'external' world. Richard Menary has taken this further, posit-

ing that ‘writing is thought in action’.²⁷ In a passage that bears strong resemblance to Dewey’s own thought, Menary writes:

It is through our bodies that we primarily engage with the world and through this engagement the body is constantly integrating with the environment. When body and environment co-ordinate, the environment becomes part of the resources the organism has for acting, thinking or communicating.²⁸

Garland’s essay in this volume adopts this integrated approach to investigate the meaning-making patterns of what she calls ‘spatialised imagination’ in Arakawa and Gins’s installation project *The Mechanism of Meaning* – a project whose name recalls William Carlos Williams’s famous maxim that a poem is a ‘machine made of words’.²⁹ Under this integrated approach, the artwork as machine and the reader are part of the same, moving, dynamic experience, and are recreated together in the moment of apprehension. As Gins puts it: ‘the artwork of interest beginning, middle, and always for us has been a PERSON’.³⁰ A shared experiential materiality, particularly as it is tied in with physicality, becomes a third term that disrupts the binary of subject and object, as well as that of image and text.

Not all of the following essays adopt a strongly pragmatist approach (nor should they, for that would be to advocate a reductionist perspective of the very type we wish to challenge). But they do, in some form or method, examine American correspondences in visual and verbal practices in terms that emphasise the conversational, combinative and embodied elements of making and reading meaning through the symbolic interactions of word and image. What is interesting for the editors and the contributors of this book is that the points of contact and overlap between these developments in literary, scientific and artistic disciplines remain largely untheorised. Investigations are vitally needed into how a combinative application of these approaches might help us assess the meaning of intermedial aesthetic experience. We are not assuming or arguing for a sameness in the cognitive processes of seeing images and in reading words; there have been enough researches into the workings of the human brain to tell us this would be foolhardy. We are, however, adopting the pragmatist stance that human experience is not (and should not have been) ontologically divided. The division of ‘verbal’ and ‘visual’ systems of meaning-making is erroneous, for as Johnson asserts, ‘the processes of embodied meaning in the arts are the very same ones that make linguistic meaning possible’.³¹ The so-called linguistic turn that dominated twentieth-century philosophy situated meaning as primarily linguistic form and propositional.³² However, as Martin Jay affirms, there is danger in the assumption that ‘nothing meaningful can appear outside the boundaries of linguistic mediation’, because in that event ‘no term can escape the gravitational pull of its semantic context’.³³ Price’s essay in this collection explores this position in relation to the conceptual artworks of Lawrence Weiner, whose apparently linguistic aestheticism she reveals as a deep-rooted materialism, the meaning of which is located in language’s structural relations. As such, Price argues, Weiner’s works ‘defy media specificity, temporal fixity and spatial stability’ in order to

‘continually negotiate between perceptive and cognitive modalities’. Johnson’s plea for ‘a Dewey for the twenty-first century’ is one that we share, not least in support of Dewey’s claim that meaning-making in art is in many ways ‘the exemplary or even paradigmatic case of all human meaning-making’.³⁴

What cases can be made, then, for artworks – be they paintings, poems, comics, photographs, installations, sculptures or buildings – in which (and between which) significant formal, symbolic and aesthetic correspondences are made between words and images? And how may we write about them? Many of the works examined in the essays that follow play upon the relationships between different speeds of apprehending image and text elements, different physical scales of image and text, different levels and types of ambiguity between modes, different relationships to the senses and to embodied perception, different relationships with symbology and mental imagery, the difference between the eye’s saccades as it runs over a phrase or a sentence and as it roams across an image, different emotional valences between word and image, and different logical and illogical propositions. Indeed, one challenge when writing about this blending of differences is present in the fact that there is still no viable word for a viewer who also reads, or a reader who also views. The viewer/reader, reader/viewer, or viewer-reader, or reader-viewer that the authors of these essays work with is a makeshift term, and it brackets out the connotations of the body in a way that may not be helpful. (Arakawa and Gins use ‘reader-perceiver’, which is one step closer, perhaps.)³⁵ If neuroscience seems to be proving W. J. T. Mitchell right in his suggestion that ‘all media are mixed media’, it is also true that – as he goes on to suggest – ‘they are not all mixed in the same way, with the same proportions of elements’.³⁶

These fine and shifting textures are, to borrow Whitman’s formula, multitudes contained within complex structures of perception and understanding, and it is for this reason that we are not proposing a single taxonomy of word and image relations. Mitchell, Elkins and others have lamented the fact that meaning in the visual arts is reduced to representation, is described in verbal terms that attempt to master or even ‘other’ the visual. In *On Pictures and the Words that Fail Them* Elkins reminds us of the common genesis of pictures, writing and notation in mark-making, arguing that the absolute distinction of image, text and notation dissolves when one searches for origin stories. The earliest examples of mark-making, he argues, writing about a Middle Paleolithic disc with a man-made cross through the centre, ‘might have been, in short, a picture, a sign, a token, a gesture, a sculpture, an image or a meaningless artifact’.³⁷ This ambivalence, he argues, is ‘at the root of all Western image-making’, and can only in practice be reduced by contextualising the object.³⁸ Still, ambiguities and ambivalences remain, particularly at the level of the individual mark which can shift between semiotic and sub-semiotic modes fairly easily in, for example, the case of handwritten and painted forms. Cy Twombly’s work might be a case in point here: in paintings such as those in the *Note* series (2005–07) or *Nini’s Painting* (1971) Twombly’s line and brushstroke reprises script without signifying as script, while in works such as *Quattro Stagioni (A Painting in Four Parts)* (1993–95) he uses legible

words alongside sub-semiotic marks to produce an energetic counterpointed play between inscription and coloured daubs and patches.

The essays in this collection occasionally employ the term 'imagetext' to refer to those cultural products in which the written word and the visual image are in some way contiguous. Coined by Mitchell in 1994, 'imagetext' is a word the compound nature of which attempts to do away with notions of conflict and binarism that the two words, if hyphenated or split by a forward slash, represent:

The slash designate[s] 'image/text' as a problematic gap, cleavage, or rupture in representation. The term 'imagetext' designates the composite, synthetic works (or concepts) that combine image and text. 'Image-text', with a hyphen, designates relations of the visual and verbal.³⁹

A pioneer in word and image studies, Mitchell's *Picture Theory* (1994) and earlier *Iconology* (1986) are seminal texts in the field, not only for bringing the importance of such studies to the surface of researches in art, literature and culture, but also for highlighting the dangers in traditionally comparative readings that rely too heavily on prevailing tropes of differentiation (temporal and spatial, conventional and natural, for example) between visual and verbal representation. Such interartistic comparison, as fellow pioneering scholar Wendy Steiner has stated, 'reveals the aesthetic norms of the period during which the question is asked', which in turn helps us define our own, contemporary aesthetics – an endeavour that discloses both 'value' and 'disappointment'.⁴⁰ However, Mitchell's claim that 'the best preventative to comparative methods is an insistence on literalness and materiality' is one with which the essays in this collection agree.⁴¹ Thus, contributions by Blinder, Brown, Gander, Garland, Masuga and Price especially support Mitchell's proposition that we approach language and visuality in intermedial works as a 'heterogeneous field of discursive modes requiring pragmatic, dialectical description rather than a univocally coded scheme',⁴² while simultaneously pushing beyond this formalist materialism to consider language and art as processes in correspondence and conversation. This collection, then, by helping to redefine the 'imagetext' and the 'image-text' to allow for understandings of materiality, embodied experience and cognition, serves Mitchell's call for 'a critical openness to the actual workings of representation and discourse, their internal dialectics of form understood as pragmatic strategies within the specific institutional history of a medium'.⁴³

It is no coincidence that three of the essays – by Blinder, Gander and Price – call upon the thought of a poet whose commitment to the vernacular of everyday American experience is expressed via a profound engagement with visual and verbal realms of creative expression. William Carlos Williams, whose training as a doctor of medicine allowed him a heightened understanding of the connections between human physiology, perception and cognition, advocated an 'embodiment of knowledge' that refuted the false 'opposition' between science and the arts (including philosophy), and argued for 'the integrity of the human organism – thought and feeling, sense and intellection, mind and body'.⁴⁴

Williams's poetics revolved throughout his life around two central themes: the processes of what he understood as 'imagination' – the creative force, capable of repeating evolution – and the application of that force in the interaction of the self with 'things' to reveal a profound, embodied knowledge of the world. For Williams, the path through both was visual; in several ways, he remains the twentieth-century incarnation of Emerson's figure of the poet, fastening words again to visible things in a manner that articulates and evokes their connected existence and pluralistic workings on the self's body and mind. In her discussion of Walker Evans's polaroids, Blinder invokes Williams's strikingly Deweyan conviction that it is the artist's job to apply his gift of seeing and expression to 'everything, every day, everywhere' in order to 'elucidate, to fortify and enlarge the life about him and make it eloquent'.⁴⁵ The observant snapshot images of Evans's later oeuvre correspond with the immediate particulars of Williams's poetry, to his keen attention to the 'stuff' of contemporary experience, often found by the roadside and otherwise overlooked. By helping to give things an eloquence, Williams as poet-artist is not ventriloquising the image but allowing it a verbal expression that enlarges it in the reader's mind. As Price comments in relation to Weiner's suggestive syntactical strokes, there is both an ambiguity and directionality of linguistic meaning in Williams's most famous poem 'The Red Wheelbarrow' that opens a space on the page and in the mind for the pluralistic potentiality of meaning. If, as Williams argued, there are 'no ideas but in things', there are also no things but in the ideas of them, and images and the words that evoke those images (be they mental or otherwise) are engaged in perpetual conversation. This is the setting for Gander's interpretations of Frank O'Hara and Norman Bluhm's *Poem-Paintings*, which, she argues, both conceptually and formally assume Williams's definition of the poem as 'a field of action' in which visual and verbal gestures inform and enlarge each other in an energetic back-and-forth.

Gander has written elsewhere about Williams's use of image schemas and formal visuality in his ekphrastic poetry, noting the ways in which recent advances in neuroaesthetics aid our understanding of the correspondences between perception and cognition – between the (written, spoken) word and (visual, mental) image – in Williams's verse.⁴⁶ Such cross-disciplinary approaches push the boundaries of word and image studies beyond comparative paradigms, aligning with Williams's own contention that

A new world
is only a new mind
and the mind and the poem
are all apiece.⁴⁷

Blinder's essay also connects this multi-perspectival approach to pragmatic aesthetics. Both authors explore elements of the gesture as aesthetic abstraction, examining the social spirit of art by suggesting new ways of looking at works in which abstracted images and verbal symbols work alongside and with each other to reconfigure relations of affect, memory and the everyday. Katy Masuga's

essay extends Williams's edict of 'no ideas but in things' to a penetrative discussion of Brian Dettmer and Doug Beube's book sculptures. Her appropriation of Mitchell's notion of 'double consciousness' to investigate the potentialities of meaning within three-dimensional imagetexts from which words have been carved connects to embodied cognition's functioning along the double, intertwining pathways of non-conscious and conscious processes. Pushing the dimensions and meanings of the 'imagetext' into a realm of semiotic materialism, Masuga utilises Wittgensteinian concepts of mental imagery to demonstrate relationships between aesthetic conception and linguistic preconception.

While Williams remains very much grounded in the visible world, many of the works in the pages that follow seek to use image and text together either to invoke the unseen or the supra-seen, or to rework perception to create it as a form of visionary newness. In this tradition words are both an entrapment in the quantified exchanges of the present, and a prompt to go beyond themselves. (Indeed, this paradox is manifest in the historic use of the term 'experience'; as Jay has written, despite being a 'term of everyday language', the word 'experience' 'has often been used to gesture towards precisely that which exceeds concepts and even language itself'.)⁴⁸ That this Romantic paradigm remains an influential one for this collection far beyond the end of the Romantic movement suggests that part of the correspondence between image and text is about loss, about death, and about evoking something – often in these essays, an ideal – beyond both the symbolic and the material. Jessie Morgan-Owens's essay on Sophia and Nathaniel Hawthorne's use of daguerreotypy as 'linguistic practice' draws on Emerson's invocation to fix natural facts to language and its attendant blending of veracity and romance. The practice's efficacy is tested when the Hawthornes record the eidetic image of the recovered corpse of a drowned girl in their note-books and novels, prompting Morgan-Owens to interrogate the relation between reality and reflection. For Hawthorne, she argues, 'photographs are metaphors, not evidence', which nevertheless work to stave off the loss of the visual object. In the opening essay, Weingarden manoeuvres the ancient metaphor *ut pictura poesis* (as in painting, so in poetry) to consider architect Louis Sullivan's work as *ut poesis architectura* – a project 'premised on architecture's emulation of both lyric poetry's intensely subjective expression and its sister art of naturalistic landscape painting'. Blinder's essay adds to this philosophical continuum, moving from early transcendentalist ideas about photography, aesthetics and the phenomenological world, through to late twentieth-century polaroids. Her analysis of Walker Evans's lesser-known works involves a renegotiation of Friedrich Schlegel's contribution to Romantic aesthetics in the notion of the fragment that connects the polaroids with what she sees as a defining American aesthetic: 'Emerson's romantic, pragmatic idea of the American project as a never-ending process of creation'. Emerson's rhetoric of correspondences in which 'natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts' persists as practitioners of the visual call on the image to intercede on behalf of the unsayable. Warriner's critique of Nancy Spero's imagetext installation as within the avant-garde tradition of the visual art

manifesto makes a claim for the artist's 'redesignation of fragments into a different signifying register'. In *Notes in Time on Women*, argues Warriner, image and text are 'set in tension with one another' in order to create a materiality that challenges entrenched patriarchal semiological norms. The historical reach of these ideas also begins to construct a narrative about the ways in which debates that constrict the visual as literature's 'other' have continually drawn on Romantic ideas about vision, seeing and understanding, as well as on an imagined split between intellectual and rational symbols and visceral, emotional images.

The unseeable and unsayable is present in this collection's later essays in a very different mode, too, where the image and text combinations are used to highlight the limits of language in nonsense, illogic, humour and dissonance. This play between image and symbol underscores Joanna Pawlik's reading of the ways in which the Chicago Surrealists' invocation of a comic-book 'hysterical hieroglyph' that encodes a revolutionary pleasure principle attempts to reconcile Marx's reading of the products of labour as social hieroglyphs with Freud's reading of dream images as 'priestly hieroglyphs'. The subversive and anarchic capacity of the image-text to construct moments beyond linguistic logic is also in evidence in essays by Price and Garland, who find moments of meaningful, politicised destruction in avant-garde works that have been called Surrealist, Dadaist and Conceptual, and in works that embody the constructive critical dialogue with European and Asian aesthetic traditions. Like Pawlik, Warriner looks at the political potential for radicalising meaning in mixed media texts, and, like Garland and Gander, she invokes the avant-garde manifesto as it is used to draw out questions about the ways in which mixed formal economies can take apart old habits of, and old oppositions between, looking, gazing and reading.

In this introduction and the essays that follow, we have not sought to present fixed methodologies and argue for specific approaches to such pluralistic problems as reside at the intersections of word and image. Rather, we offer new pathways into discussions on the relations between visual studies and textual practices. These pathways necessarily cross the fields of aesthetics, physiology, cognitive psychology, neuroscience, literary studies, philosophy and art history. We are deeply interested in moving beyond word and image studies that read verbal-visual relations in terms of arguments and metaphors⁴⁹ and for this reason we propose a set of methods that emphasise a more historically and culturally specific position, arguing for a more physical, embodied and processual approach that stresses the experience, production and ontology of the cross-currents between words and images. The following essays are themselves correspondences, and provide illuminating perspectives on the ways in which the mixed messages of word and image continue throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century to throw light on the formation and understanding of the modern American imagination.

Notes

- 1 Miles Orvell has written convincingly of the influence of the camera and the exhibition hall on Whitman's poetic vision and technique in *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).
- 2 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. Michael Moon (New York and London: Norton, 2002), p. 77.
- 3 Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Nature', in *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*, ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 37.
- 4 Robert Bartlett Haas (ed.), *A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Gertrude Stein* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1971), p. 31. For Stein and pragmatism, see Joan Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- 5 Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909–1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 97.
- 6 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: Penguin, 2005 [1934]), p. 10.
- 7 Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 210.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 211.
- 9 Emerson, 'Nature', p. 29; 'Self-Reliance', p. 120, in Porte and Morris (eds), *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*.
- 10 Emerson, 'The Poet', in Porte and Morris (eds), *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*, p. 187.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987), p. xiii.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958 [1925]), p. xvi.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory*, p. xi.
- 17 See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- 18 Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 119.
- 19 See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
- 20 Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 218.
- 21 See Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).
- 22 See Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Vintage, 2006).
- 23 See Margaret Livingstone, *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing* (New York: Abrams, 2002); Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Barbara Stafford, *A Field Guide to a New Meta-Field: Bridging the Humanities-Neurosciences Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); G. Gabrielle Starr, *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

- 24 James Elkins, *On Pictures and the Words that Fail Them* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 204.
- 25 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1960), p. 63.
- 26 Andy Clark and David Chalmers, 'The Extended Mind' (1998), in Richard Menary (ed.), *The Extended Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 27–42, p. 27.
- 27 Richard Menary, 'Writing as Thinking', *Language Sciences*, 5 (2007), 621–32, 630.
- 28 Richard Menary, *Cognitive Integration: Mind and Cognition Unbounded* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 77–8.
- 29 William Carlos Williams, 'Author's Introduction (The Wedge)', in *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1954), p. 256.
- 30 Martin E. Rosenberg, 'An Interview with Arakawa and Gins', January/February 2010, <https://independent.academia.edu/MartinERosenberg>.
- 31 Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 209.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 213.
- 33 Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), p. 6.
- 34 Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, pp. 212, 218.
- 35 Terminology relating to the skilful practice of reading word-image interventions is also lacking. James Heffernan's coinage 'picturacy' perhaps come closest. See James A. W. Heffernan, *Cultivating Picturacy: Visual Art and Verbal Interventions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006).
- 36 W. J. T. Mitchell in Oliver Grau (ed.), *MediaArtHistories* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 395–408, p. 399.
- 37 Elkins, *On Pictures and the Words that Fail Them*, p. 164.
- 38 In that chapter Elkins is also arguing that the 'triad of pictures, writing and numerical notation is richer by half than the commonplace duality of word and image' (*On Pictures and the Words that Fail Them*, p. 165). This volume begins to interrogate this; however, there is still much more work to be done on this question, particularly in the relationship between mathematical symbols, the body and mental imagery. See George Lakoff and Rafael E. Núñez, *Where Mathematics Comes From* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
- 39 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 89. Emphasis in original.
- 40 Wendy Steiner, *The Colors of Rhetoric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 18.
- 41 Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 90.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 Ron Loewinsohn, 'Introduction', in William Carlos Williams, *The Embodiment of Knowledge*, ed. R. Loewinsohn (New York: New Directions, 1974), p. xxiv.
- 45 Blinder's quotation in her essay in this volume, from William Carlos Williams, 'Sermon with a Camera', *New Republic* (October 1938), 282.
- 46 Catherine Gander, "'The Physiology of the Nervous System and the Processes of the Imagination': Ekphrasis and Artful Language in William Carlos Williams's *Spring and All*", paper delivered at IAWIS/AIERTI (International Association of Word and Image Studies) triennial conference at the University of Dundee, 11–15 August 2014; in production for publication at time of going to press.

- 47 William Carlos Williams, *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems: Collected Poems, 1950–1962* (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 76.
- 48 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, pp. 4, 5.
- 49 Liliane Louvel's valuable, if Eurocentric, *Poetics of the Iconotext* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) is a prime example of this approach.