

# Signs of Intercourse: Material Poetry and Erotic Imperatives

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## Resumo

*No domínio do erotismo e da sexualidade ocorrem ricas implementações de alteridades expressivas em poesias brasileiras experimentais contemporâneas, incluindo poesia concreta, poema processo, criação intersemiótica ou intersignos, e o termo geral, poesia visual. A designação poesia material enfatiza as propriedades físicas da linguagem, evidentemente pertinentes, e alude a um título notável nos estudos culturais relacionados, The Material Queer, que usa o adjetivo num sentido baseado no materialismo dialético ou histórico mas também oferece possibilidades de conexões fascinantes com textos lírico-gráficos não-normativos com respeito à consciência de identidade. Uma outredade factícia incorporada no plano semiótico pode ser um parceiro apto para fazer retrato ou performance de práticas proscritas, não-conventionais, fora do comum: afeto público, prostituição, sexo grupal, união inter-étnica, sodomia, homoerotismo, bissexualidade, travestismo, fetichismo, ou outras. Na lírica brasileira de 1950 para cá, há momentos seletos que realizam tal confluência de interesses, ilustrando novidade na trajetória da poesia assim como diversidade ou tomada de posição em questões de sexualidade.*

Palavras chave: Poesia visual. Sexualidade. Imagens eróticas. Alteridade.

Humanistic studies of sexuality in Latin American domains have begun to grow in scope and quantity (BALDERSTON; GUY, 1998; FOSTER; REIS, 1996). In the Lusophone world, related scholarship constitutes a true emergent concern, most prominently in Brazil (LOPES, 2002; QUINLAN; ARENAS, 2002). There are considerable sources regarding gay themes and homoeroticism in Spanish American and Brazilian literatures (FOSTER, 1996; LOPES, 2002, p. 121-164). Analytical writings about sexuality and eroticism in literature, in any language, are dominated by inquiries into the representation of desires and acts in prose fiction and speech-based poetry, often narrative or lyric with a manifestly sexual lexicon within a discourse of intentionality. Conventional genres, also including drama, are most conducive to saying experience, many assume, in that they provide issue-oriented writers with the advantage of declarative expository language. In the realm of sexuality in imaginative literature, there are a few pertinent critical segments specifically dedicated to Brazilian lyrical voices and/or poets who lived and worked in Brazil: limited passages of Denilson Lopes within his account of *homotextualidade*, Jill Kunheim's article on the celebrated Néstor Perlongher, particularly reflective parts of the synthesis of recent lyric by Italo Moriconi (PEDROSA; MATOS; NASCIMENTO, 1998) as well as of his bio-critical study of Ana Cristina César (MORICONI, 1996, p. 100-115), and the section "Poesia, Eros e Gênero" (PEDROSA; MATOS; NASCIMENTO, 2000).

José Carlos Barcellos commences his contemplation of a trio of contemporary Brazilian poets by invoking the German essayist Wolfgang Popp and his theoretical postulate that makers of erotic literature confront a fundamental difficulty: having at their disposition only two apt linguistic registers, either low slang or aseptic clinical terminology. To be effective in the exploration of eroticism or sexuality, to overcome the dichotomy of the vulgar and the hygienic, creative writers must indeed create; and such fabrication, Barcellos (1998, p. 77) stresses, will necessarily be *poetic*. In literature turned toward these interests, the relative dominance of the poetic function of language, in Jakobsonian terms, still may not reduce the essential referentiality and discursivity associated with the saying of experience, as suggested above. Embracing varieties of poeticity—from emotive expression of subjectivity to more phatic or objectival assertions—will prove to be distinctively productive.

In a wide concept of lyric, an option to consummate aesthetic differentiation in sexual / erotic spheres—to achieve an othering, an outing, a diversification, an additionality in the tongue—is available in a "material" concept of text-making, one that incorporates the physicality of language, grapho-alphabetic manipulations, spatialization, chromaticism, visual objects, other codes, etc. Alternatives to functionality in utterance, pragmatic or artistic, offer their own kinds of efficacy. In Brazil, rich implementations of expressive alterities occur in contemporary experimental poetries,

including *poesia concreta*, *poema processo*, *criação intersemiótica* or *intersignos*, and the catch-all name, *poesia visual*. Choice of the designation *material poetry* as an umbrella term is predicated on three basic aims: foremost, to emphasize the clearly pertinent bodily qualities of language in this thematic province; secondly, to recall the illustrative and illustrious exhibition *Material Poetry in the Renaissance and Renaissance of Material Poetry* curated by Roland Greene (1992), who defines the "historical concrete" in a flexible way to bring together phenomena from early-modern pattern poetry to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century experiments, especially concrete poetry, also circumscribing precedents from spatio-typographical symbolism and avant-gardisms; and finally to allude to a noted related title, *The Material Queer: a LesBiGay Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Donald Morton (1996), who uses the modifier *material* in a wholly different sense grounded in historical or dialectical materialism yet also offers the prospect of intriguing connections to non-normative lyrico-graphic texts with respect to identity consciousness.

For Morton (1996, p. xv), "how culture itself is to be theorized" in the wake of postmodern thought is a struggle between what he generalizes as "textual studies" and "cultural studies." In broad terms, the former "relies on (post)-structuralist theory and its privileging of the concept of 'textuality' ... the mechanics of signification, the 'playful' relation of signifier to signified." He traces an arc from "the rupture of Saussurean linguistics" to Derridean questioning of "representational authority" and the Barthes of "The Pleasure of the Text" ("a queer theorist before the letter"), who does relate "textualism with the domain of the body." The most important points remain that in the "textualist view, the 'material' is the material part of the sign, that is the signifier," and that "culture is not really available for investigation in any reliable manner." In contrast, cultural studies "is primarily concerned with the reproduction and maintenance of subjectivities . . . in ideology and in the accompanying social / economic / cultural / political ... structures that produce social inequalities" (1996, p. xv-xvi, original ellipses and emphasis). And to set down the apposition, it is explained how "the 'material' means these structures as well as the supposedly 'abstract' ideas that support and legitimate them" (MORTON, 1996, p. xvi). Morton's account traverses centuries of Western thought impossible to revisit here but usefully outlines a presentation of textualism, with its inherent impediments of postmodern (in)communication, as more focused on itself and against an approach concerned with collectivities, resistance and real-world change.

There is no reason to doubt this fundamental polarity nor the ultimately preclusive epistemological consequences of deconstruction. Yet postmodern attention to form should not be summarily lumped with the infinite slippages of meaning and radical skepticism associated with deconstruction in order to imply lack of room for social or cultural statement in all the creative artifacts dear to textualism. Just as Morton

notes the split of cultural studies into "critical" and "experiential" modes, one may relativize and probe nuances of the two senses of *material* laid down above in order to approach multifaceted lyrical output more fruitfully. The counterpoising of sign-oriented, pleasure-principled, self-aware or metalinguistic text-making and sociocultural engagement should not hinder scrutinizing possible intersections. One can appreciate and emphasize situational and linguistic properties of words-in-action as well as have an identifiable semantic dimension in which to operate. Counterdiscourse, in short, may have plural targets and take different forms.

Moreover, texts may provoke, delight, and stimulate in ways not accounted for in theoretical constructs that accompany innovative writing. As proffered elsewhere to suggest a sort of contemporary variant of the intentional fallacy applied to a new mode of lyric that emphasized its own auto-justification and autonomy: "The achievement of concrete poetry—somewhat like that of any good poetry—can be thought to be best when there is a productive level of interplay between self-sustainment and invocations, however obtuse these may be, of extra-textual realms. Creative tension results when what might be termed 'discursive residues' interact with objectified language" (PERRONE, 1996, p. 44). Even if makers of word-based material poetry may claim to be structuring non-referential entities sufficient unto themselves, to abolish semantic unities or remnants is virtually unachievable in the presence of articulation. Happy mediums may in fact *mediate* intense semantemes and culturemes, such as erotic behavior. Examples presented here are intended to show how a highlighting of or reliance on textuality in different material manifestations can indeed cooperate with a directional *logos* to broach, run down, turn up, turn over, gloss, cross over, and even break down issues and ideas of carnal amorous comportment and modern sexuality.

An art of language founded upon its own materiality accentuates real or implied properties of sound (phonetic) production and, on the page or screen, forms, shapes, colors, dispositions and/or movements. Given this concern with sono-optical planes and the corporeal features of instruments of expression, it is no wonder that material poems could be vessels for affirmations linked to the body, vehicles for exploration of erotic encounter, from the commonplace to uncommon places. An embodied otherness of factitiousness on the semiotic plane may be an apt partner for portraying, or in essence performing, persecuted, proscribed, unconventional, or non-mainstream practices: strong public affection, prostitution, incest, group sex, inter-ethnic union, pregnant sensuality, sodomy, homoeroticism, bisexuality, cross-dressing, fetishes, or other. Since 1950 there have been numerous instigating instances in Brazilian lyric that achieve such a confluence of interest, illustrating novelty in the trajectory of the genre as well as

diversity or intentioned positioning in matters of sexuality, be it related primarily to a gender focus or to prospects of alternative conduct.

If on the instrumental level such empirical examples often aspire, to re-deploy the Joycean borrowing of the *poetas concretos*, to a synthetic verbi-voco-visual status, the semantics or thematic prisms per se of this repertory reflect a parallel plurality of prefixal options: mascul- and femin-, gyno- and phallo-, homo- and hetero-, uni- and bi-, extra- and inter-, as in the intercourse of the title of the present writing. Poetic semiosis itself, artistic construction of signification units, may be conceived and practiced as a crossing of signs and seeds. Sexuality is ultimately inseparable from the generation of the essential and the propagation of the vital, both in the basic sense of the reproduction of the species (semen-ovum-embryo-birth) and in the non-biological sense of identity-making self-realization, inter-personal bonding and plenitude of experience, which has different orientations. With varying degrees of articulated linear syntax, the material poet may expose bodies and aspects of the human condition: degraded, favored; free, bound; common, uncommon; male, female.

"O jogral e a prostituta negra: farsa trágica" (1949-50) by Décio Pignatari is not precisely a material poem, but the composition merits citation both for its recognition as "outro salto construtivo de vanguarda [com] uma série de recursos 'concretos' de composição" (CAMPOS, 1975, p. 34-35) and for its inauguration of a thread that spans decades and extends to the end of the present exposition. The topical relevance of Pignatari's two-page text is clear; from the nouns of the title there is a metapoetic interrelation of lyrical and sexual activity, a connection that remits—in a wide historical view—to the amorous *melopecia* of the troubadors/*trovadores* and some Romantic modes (CASTRO, 1993). Pignatari's faux dramatic poem includes a wholly late modernist enunciation of the venerable usage of portraying the art as a woman: "Onde eras a mulher deitada, depois / dos ofícios da penumbra, agora / és um poema". With Baudelairean verve, this verse dignifies the presumed *meretriz* as words of high art. In strophe three comes the key letteristic configuration: "A legião dos ofendidos demanda / tuas pernas em M." The "M" is a figurational and verbal item (*feMme*, *fêMea*, woMan) which is related to the antithetical conclusion: "compomos um epicédio A", the initial letter "A" in an air of funeral ode. The old ways of saying perish and offended parties and clients need, seek, ask, solicit, and demand a newness embodied in a carnal disposition.

The historic first fractured polychromatic work *Poetamenos* (1953) by Augusto de Campos, co-founder of concrete poetry, comprised a multi-voice series modeled on Anton Webern's *klangfarbenmelodie*. The original texts use two or more colors, and what "happens" in the poems depends on interactions. The black- and-white example seen here (figure 1) communicates only the words themselves; digitally-enabled readers can see the piece at vibrant web sites (see end of Works Cited).

An incisive analysis of the sequence concerned with colorful syntax appropriately hears gender and sexual tones, implicit and explicit alike:

A série se inicia com o poema “poetamenos” grafado nas cores complementares roxo/amarelo, denotando a oposição de timbres grave/ agudo, masculino/feminino: “**unis sono**”. Em “paraíso pudendo”, nos múltiplos planos ativados pelas cores, ocorre a vibrante relação metaforizada pela lenda do herói medieval Figueiredo, que liberta as donzelas do cativeiro, arrancando o tronco de uma figueira (“suspenso”) e com ele afugentando os inimigos. Casa-se com uma delas (“sus pênis”) e perpetua a família: o “paraíso pudendo.” A seguir, o constrangimento pós-coito: Lygia, a mulher amada, torna-se então “mãe”, **figlia** (filha) e “**sorella**” (irmã). [...] Em “eis os amantes”, grafado nas cores complementares azul/laranja, encena-se a tensão do duplo no um, “os corpos” (exterior) que se unem incestuosamente (“amantes parentes”) para fecundar— “**semen(t)emventre**” (interior)— e gerar um outro corpo-feto, potencializado na circularidade de “**inhumenoutro**”.

(Câmara 84, original bold to designate color contrast).

eis

os

**amantes**                      sem                      **parentes**

senão

os corpos

**Irmãum**                      **gemeoutrem**

**cimaeu**                      **baixaela**

**ecoraçambos**

**D u p l a m p l i n f a n t u n o ( s ) e m p r e**

**semen(t)emventre**

**estesse**                      **aquelele**

**inhumenoutro**

Figure 1 - Augusto de Campos/ eis os amantes

In the group of poems, “eis os amantes” is the most sexual visually as the upper center section of the text can be seen as phallic and the blank aperture-like space below as suggestive of vagina and/

or womb. In addition, the physical congress of *eu* and *ela* is realized in the literal fusion of words: "irmãum, cimaeu, baixela, etc." Thus, in the words of Haroldo de Campos, "a love ideogram" (quoted in Williams n/p.). In his own reading, Jon Tolman (1982, p. 158) rightly concludes that "what the poem manages to evoke/provoke in the receptive reader is a sensual response that goes far beyond the usual intellectual titillation essential to love poetry". In conjunction with the absolute newness of the art, one can also infer a transgressive element of "deviant" pleasure in the recourse to exhibitionism and incest. Finally, in the objective geometry of the poem, one will also observe the male-dominant (missionary) position within the text-event.

In the orthodox repertory of *poesia concreta* of 1958, Pignatari also places the masculine sign above the feminine in a manipulation of convenient Spanish paronomasia:

<b>hombre</b>	<b>hombre</b>	<b>hombre</b>
<b>hambre</b>		<b>hembra</b>
	<b>hambre</b>	
<b>hembra</b>	<b>hembra</b>	<b>hambre</b>

Spatial pairings and shufflings in this three-pronged material poem insinuate instinctual need, desire and attraction on each part (first two columns) and then a mutual resolution in union (third column), by which one may infer satisfaction of sexual appetite. The artist concerns himself anew with the relative position of woman, a professional by implication, in this other tripartite wordplay.

**abrir as portas**

**abrir as pernas**

**obrir os corpos**

In a syntagmatic reading, one could posit this unfolding: line 1- doors of a brothel opening, line 2- a sex worker readying herself, and line 3- a neologistic joy joining work, *obra*; aperture, *abrir*; and laughing pleasure, *rir*. Again, the body is incorporated verbally in the signifying juncture of arbitrary signs, and a notion of transformation is floated.

These types of concrete exercises are expanded upon in kinetic or cinematic poems where movement through frames generates universal insights. The most celebrated of these is the oft-cited "LIFE": one stroke I-, two strokes L-, three strokes F-, four strokes E-, all strokes combined LIFE; which mildly points toward reproduction, insemination, and sex. The most thematically-intense of the kinetic type is "organismo". The eight-frame sequence of the original is here captured in a single shot (figure 2) that loses the accumulative effect, but several on-line versions, flat and animated alike, are available (see end Works Cited). Linking the semiotic and the sensual, Haroldo de

Campos explains this exemplum as “a kind of erotic piece dealing with the transformation of a sign (the letter and Portuguese article) into a biological signal” (quoted in Williams n/p). In addition, one can perceive a Darwinian report of instinct and evolution, where sexual climax is letterized as two little “Os” which incarnate testicles and/or breasts and one truncated big “O,” which can suggest open legs, vagina, womb, fertility, perpetuation of life, or even, as one specialist notes “células que se remetem à temática da frase inicial ‘o organismo quer perdurar’” (MENEZES, 1991, p. 71). Further, visual materiality in this case does not simply advance what the words say, it *is* signification: “a visualidade, longe de ser um mero suporte para a composição verbal, carrega uma informação própria a partir da configuração da letra que acresce à semântica dos signos verbais. A visualidade no poema aparece motivada pela própria sintaxe cinética da imagem do significado verbal. O ‘design’ da letra exerce não só uma função comunicativa (comunicação de formas) mas também uma função significativa (comunicação também de conteúdos)” (MENEZES, 1991, p. 71). A considerable degree of the success of isomorphism in “organismo” may be attributed to the explosive sensuality of the design.


o organismo quer perdurar	o organismo quer repet	o organismo quer re	o organismo quer
o organism	orgasm	O	O
			

Figure 2 - Décio Pignatari / Organismo

In the canonical repertoire of concrete poetry, courting motifs—such as interlocking interlocutors, seduction, and graphic union of opposite sexes—are best illustrated in Pedro Xisto’s well-traveled “Epithalamium II” (S/he) (figure 3). This ultra-modern version of the genre of wedding poem alludes to Renaissance and classical models. Greene (1992) tackles the Brazilian poet’s output of “‘logogramas’, verbally spare compositions that prefer reflection and discussion over conventional reading, and often come with expository keys that unlock their dense allusive codes” (GREENE, 1992, p. 16). He specifies Xisto’s “finding the whole story of humankind’s fall in the common letters of *he* and *she*,” a textualization that culminates within a non-verbal (material) maneuver: “Its most visually active element, the S that gently wraps the other letters, represents the catalytic elements in both the love story and the etiology of evil” (GREENE, 1992, p. 17). The serpentine member (which also has a copulative connotation via



ampersand, &) and the trilingual word key offer a variation on the theme of Eve as seductress: in one reading she is the mythical temptress, enveloping man; in another both he and she are wrapped, so that the millenary culpability attributed to woman is relativized. The erotic is taken indeed into zones of density and reflective signing.

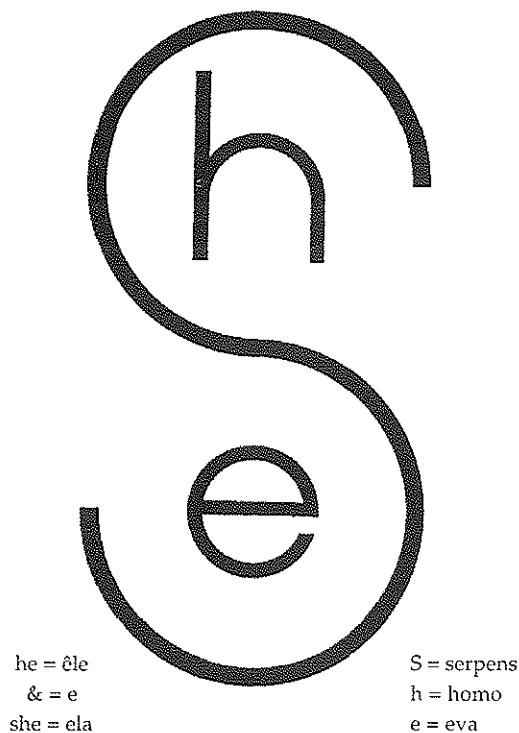


Figure 3 -Pedro Xisto, "Epithalamium II" (1967), *Concrete Poetry: A World View*, ed. Mary Ellen Solt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 114.

If this epithalamium of classical echoes depends on and exploits composition in English, like the "LIFE" of Décio Pignatari, elsewhere he utilizes French language towards different hypermodernist ends. In his "stèle pour vivre" series, number 4 (1968) is a combative homage to the seminal efforts of both Mallarmé and sign theory. A very manly organizing component begins in the title in the nature itself of *stèle*, a monument for a tomb that is most often erected in a relevant fashion. The part of Pignatari's piece shown here (figure 4) is but one of seven images, all phallic in one way or another, designed to accompany a montage of phrases from "Un coup de dés." This one, with the legend *sa petite raison virile*, is the most obvious inscribed icon in the sequence. A link to dramatic writing via a symbolism of plume, male fluid and shape resides in an interpretive space of textualization as masculine gesture of productivity. Such linguistic and hermeneutic figuring was most notably proposed in the Mallarmé criticism of Robert Greer Cohn. Key features that he perceives in "Un coup de dés" —base male-female duality, rhythmic thrust, gender-relevant letter patterns (i=the

masculine, o=the feminine), et al.— pertain to Pignatari's dense and variegated material poem. The intricacies of this intriguing and complicated creation, well beyond the scope of this paper, merit more attention not just from the perspective of intertextuality but from the vantage of intimacy as well.

sa petite raison virile

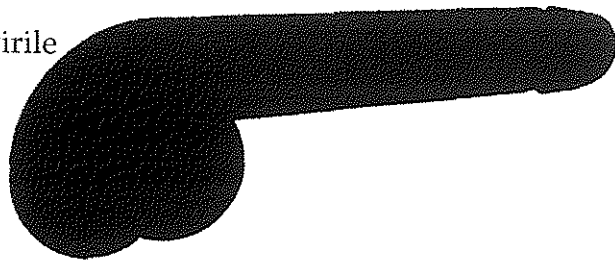


Figure 4 - Décio Pignatari from "stèle pour vivre #4"

A contemporaneous three-part "ideograma verbal" shows itself to be more ecumenical. In "homem-woman-man" (figure 5), which originally appeared on consecutive pages (see on-line animations cited below), Pignatari again takes advantage of coincidences in the strokes of letters plus the spellings of words to achieve veritable orthographic



Figure 5 - Décio Pignatari / "ideograma verbal"

copulations, with meaningful overtones. The joining of the sexes across language boundaries in frame one may suggest fantasy possession of a centric Anglophone *woman* by a peripheral Lusophone *homem*, as well as a basic masculist assumption (does the *homem* have to be first and on top?, cf. frame two). Yet the third option surpasses conventional squareness (*caretice*) as one can easily read a *ménage à trois* with one inverted male party. This verse-reverse can be regarded as a bare yet fecund stance for readings of post-colonial psycho-analytical subject positions.

In a subsequent mid-70s' effort, Pignatari boldly iconizes a cross-gender figure. (figure 6). The title here is cardinal, "Bibelô" with an interrogation mark "(?)" in parentheses. The bracketed questioning of being a breakable knickknack or trinket (plaything) carries an ironic charge since the gyno-mammo-phallic subject-object is so inextricably sexualized. The less frequent sense of "bibelô" as "*mulher sem préstimo que é só aparência*" (*Novo Michaelis*) also plays into the erotic semanticizing of the visual item, as insinuations include judgements

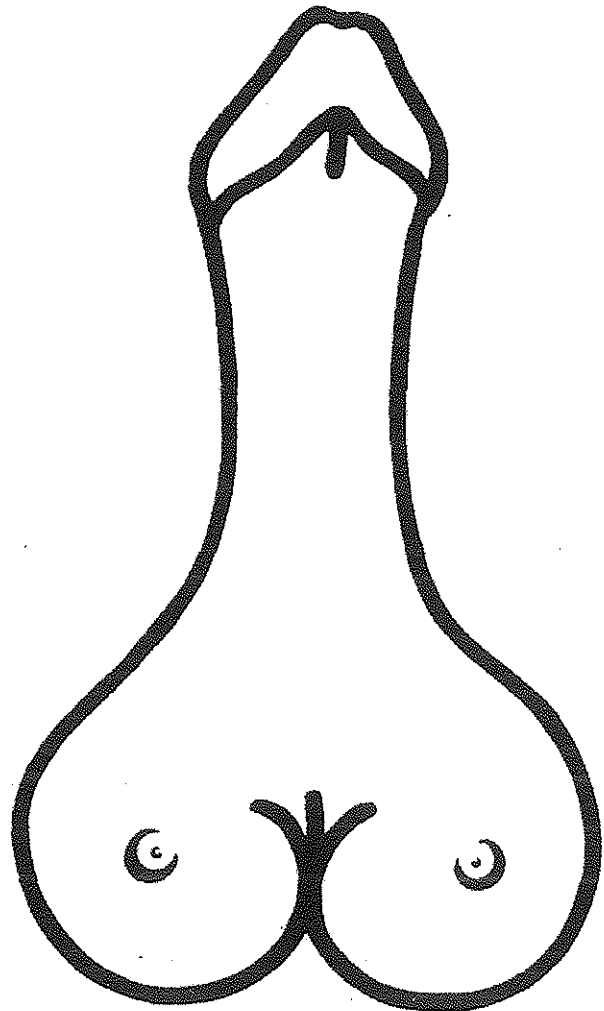


Figure 6 - Décio Pignatari/ Bibelô (?)

of transvestite display, or even she-male sexual commerce. Thus emerges a visual poem that both thematizes and embraces transgendering and bi-sexuality. Such responses ring truer as one breaks down the word *bibelô* and separates the doubling effect of "Bi," the literal linkage of "elo," and the aesthetic tone of "belo." Such following of horizontal word contacts and resonances was supported by the young Julia Kristeva as a principled method. For instance, in "Sémanalyse et production de sens," she extracted anagrams from the verb of the core phrase of "Un coup de dés" — *bol, lira, ira* and *lyra* from *abolirá*— to demonstrate expansive signification (CULLER, 1975, p. 250). This connection also extends to the previous "stèle" via master-author allusion, as "Mallarmé's texts assert that the bibelot too can become an image or metaphor of the body, of writing, or even of the book (ZACHMANN, 1999, p. 296; GORDON, 1992, ch. 6).

Assorted material poems in the final decades of the twentieth century demonstrate anxieties and influences on stylistic, compositional, and ideological levels. An unpretentious verticalization of three similar words raises through semantic means some of the topical possibilities of "Bibelô (?)" Numerous connotations arise when Duda Machado juxtaposes in large bold print in three lines spread down an entire page: "cachê / michê / clichê". Socio-linguistically, there is the historically powerful influence of French on Brazilian culture, including a practice of word adoption that suffers from overuse to the point of stereotypification, as well as the involvement of Francophone characters in sexual commerce. Is there room to infer an invitation to self-valuation and self-reflection regarding elite expressive culture and self-determination? To remain within the paradigm of prostitution, it is worthwhile to note the common meanings of *michê* as "trick" or the money a prostitute (assumed to be female) gains from a transaction. But the first acceptation in urban environs today is "male whore, hustler" (MATTOSO, 1990, p. 149). Staring and wondering, observers are induced to contemplate not only historical facts but also an imaging of sex workers based on over-repeated and not necessarily best-informed received wisdom.

Several other items illustrate the suggestiveness of Pignatari's elegantly simple meshings. A hardly dissimilar phallo-orthographic image is made in "Libido" (figure 7) by the best-known visual punster of late century, Sebastião Nunes, in the appropriately titled *Saciedade dos poetas vivos*, 1993. A man/woman variation (figure 8) by Max Martins (1983) paints the idea of coupling, copulating letters M and W with their forms suggestive of lower bodies. In the 2002 exhibition of Brazilian visual poetry in Austin curated by Regina Vater, works by Almandrade (figure 9) can't help but allude to known precedents; "homeMulher," in particular, draws a common space. Both "seXos" and "seLos" broach alternate possibilities by emboldening "SE OS", hinting at some hypothetical what "if the" (masculine plural). The

"seIos" item follows an earlier more celebrated visual poem of São Paulo seen below. These four by Almandrade, the whole show, and additional items by the artists can be seen at a permanent on-line exhibition.



Figure 7 - Sebastião Nunes

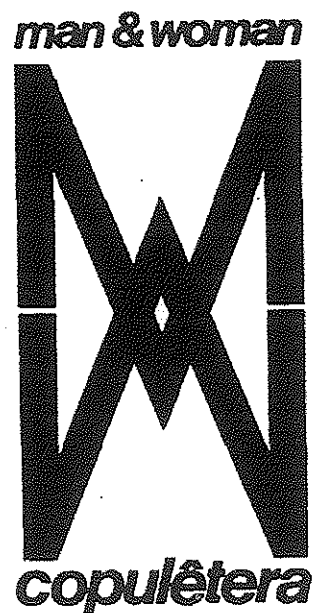


Figure 8 - Max Martins

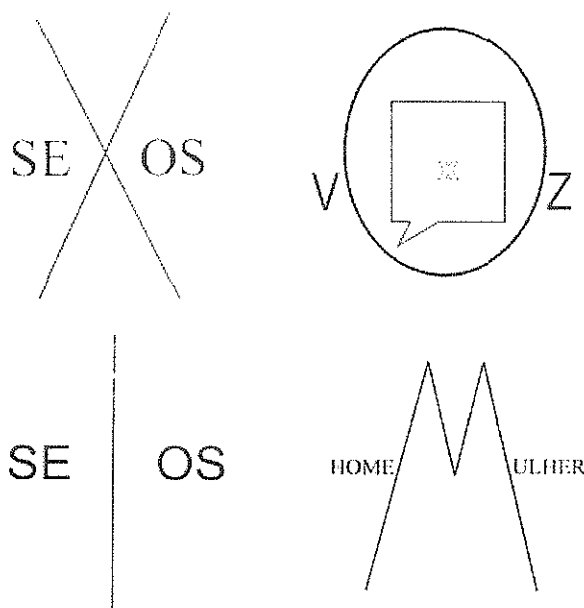


Figure 9 - Almandrade

To return to the principle of reproduction, behold the erection of "stèle pour vivre #5" (figure 10) (1975). Perception and interpretation of signs, and mingling of semiotic and sexual senses, all move toward an interactive contrast of similarity and alterity. Behind this semi-blinded sign-board we can decipher: *Somos como o outro, como somos/ Semeion Semen anthropon simil / [h?] omem [+o?] / Os signos esperam a hora d' e*. The two bottom lines are less obvious. In his unique reading of what he calls an "inscription," Alfred MacAdam (1977) rightly views the darkness both as a tomb that is violated, erotically, and as a womb where the seed of linguistic signs will grow. Yet he sees the one-word line as "o-m-e-n" with an "n," plus "un pequeño agregado" (MACADAM, 1977, p. 85). Something in fact does follow "h-o-m-e-m," and MacAdam does refer to an implied plural (which would be "homens"), but seeming to leave English *omen* as a possibility, as he does, is not justified by the evidence. The enigmatic end does indeed have some alternates, like *espiam* or, more to the point, *esperma*. Letters here may be covered on purpose but signs of male reproductive fluid and sexual projection are clear. Overall, there is a semi-blinding and truncating problematizing of sight itself, and by extension, of interpretation of phenomena given to consciousness via a primary sense. Extrapolating, there is almost a sketch of a theory of being and reproduction, naturally including the realm of sex.

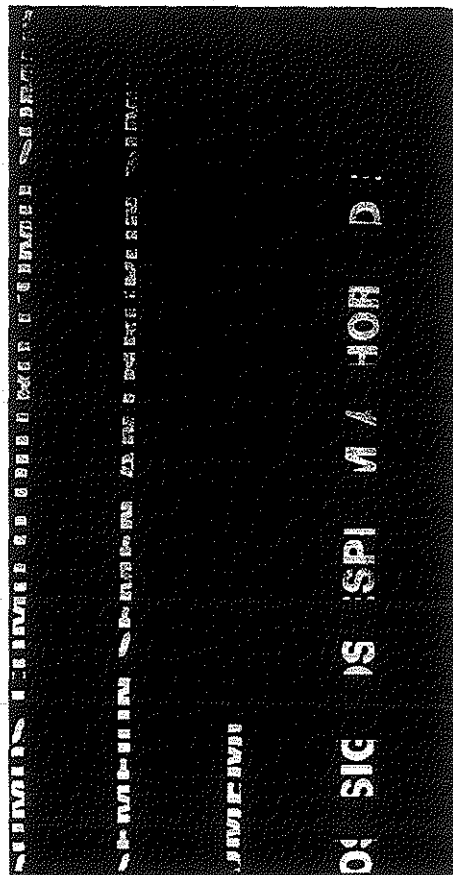


Figure 10 - Décio Pignatari/ "stèle pour vivre #5"

From a feminine point of view, a singular effort is “o que é a que é.” Since the text cannot be duplicated here, readers are referred to the general internet posting for this paper. Alice Ruiz presents a self-declared feminist manifesto via ironic and iconic disposition (a wide fan of lines emerging from a conch) of a collection of sayings that complete the folk riddle with stereotypes of women and other phrases based on ingrained notions about gender roles. The poem referred to here is a photo enhanced version of a spoked poem included in Perrone (1996, p. 140). This richer version is undergirded by a photograph of the poet naked and pregnant; it is utilized to stress the fact of maternity and the sensual overtones of the undertext. Also through black-and-white photography, with digital-age add-ons, Renato Ghiotto (1980) implies more on the feminine condition, look-ist expectations, and the male gaze of fixation on body parts. He places LCD digits 50135 over the chest of Marilyn Monroe in a classic pose, which when read inverted spell *seios* (image also posted on line). The hints of this exhibition of reversed breasts depend mostly on Hollywood-cultivated and internationalized male fantasies, but placement also suggests a woman prisoner of her marketed and sexualized image.

To return to written systems, in *Poética e visualidade*, Menezes (1991) underlines the combination of mathematical and linguistic elements in the visual poem “Koito” (figure 11) by Villari Hermann (c1970). The critic sees that “a letra K, assumindo uma fisionomia de pernas abertas, recebe o número 8, num poema-síntese da interpenetração de códigos” (MENEZES, 1991, p. 99). Yet there is much more here. The pun of *coito* only works in Portuguese, but the image itself suggests much. Rather than K receiving 8, the strokes of K can be seen to take on a certain agency, to fill the two apertures of the number, suggesting other combinations: in standard male-oriented pornography so-called double penetration, vaginal and anal, as well as homoerotic and bisexual variants. Thus, the duple configuration is a productive duplicity, a simple yet diversified coitus.

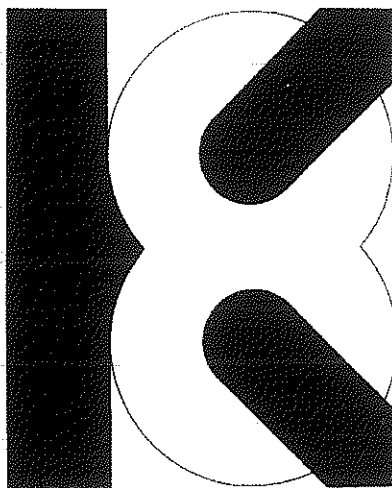


Figure 11 - Villari Herrmann / “Koito”

Alphabetical order, K to M, charts back to the opening theme. Pignatari again uses French in "Femme," shown here in a bare-bones black-and-white page version (figure 12) (1987). Woman, she opens herself, offers herself, suffers. An uncomplicated yet effective exercise in Francophone paronomasia hinging on a mobile M (invertible to W), which relives the same unit seen in "O jogral e a prostituta negra." The allusive metaphor of spread legs, with the all the meretricious reverberations, is empowered, finally, in a video version (1996), illuminated in a close comparative reading (ARAÚJO, 1999, p. 89-93), which reproduces one freeze frame only (ARAÚJO, 1999, p. 157), also web posted. The video makeover permits colorized displacements of the key letter(s), animation that helps enhance word play with gender-sensitive ideological punch.

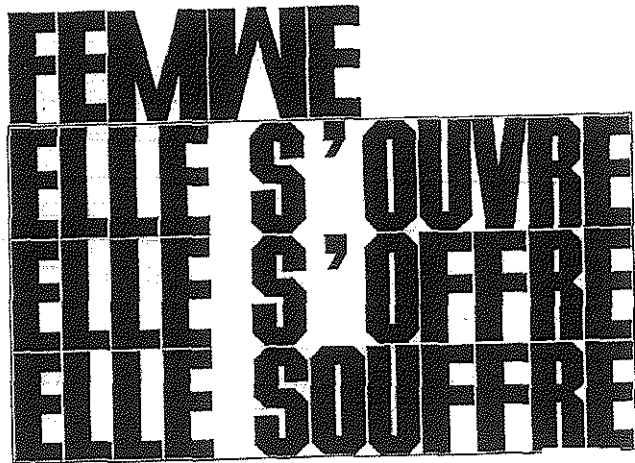


Figure 12 - Décio Pignatari/ "femme" (1984)

This series of examples shows how formally inventive interests and concern with the representation of sexuality can be mutually enlightening. Further grapho-lyrically aware attention is due to self-proclaimed early 80s' *poema pornô*, a brief manifestation comprising mostly semantic and syntactic affirmation of liberational and anti-authoritarian spirit via proscribed lexicon but with some visual incursions as well (Kac). One instance in particular reveals consciousness of concretist legacies: **TER PAR PRA TREPARE** by Cairo Trindade (figure 13). The accomplished couple Paulo Leminski and Alice Ruiz contributed complementary gender-favorite adolescent ditties presented in hand script under a rubric (figure 14). The dystic "*para curar um amor platônico / só uma trepada homérica*" is quoted in a manual of alternative youth poetries (Holanda and Pereira) without benefit of the visual concept of the original, text on a tee-shirt under the heading "Filosofia." Parts of the consistently transgressive repertory of Glauco Mattoso would also help show the wealth of the field during this period. Two examples with parodic stylistic intent (figures 15 and 16) concern sexually-defined hierarchies and life styles in relation to aesthetic (art) and ethical or behavioral (decorum) senses.



TER PAR  
PRA  
TRE PAR

Figure 13 - Cairo Assis Trindade

PORNOEMAS

Nisso eu sou príndrio  
Amor pra mim  
vem do caválho

p.l.

Nisso eu sou coeeta  
amor pra mim  
vem da bueta  
Alice

Figure 14 - Paulo Liminski, Alice Ruiz

A R T  
V E S  
I T

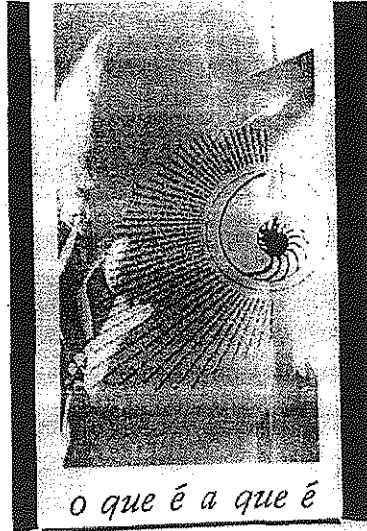
NON  
D COR  
DOU CU

Figures 15 e 16 - Glauco Mattoso / Travesti na passarela / Culistano

With respect to erotic imperatives, the primary message left engraved in the swath of Brazilian lyric from the 1950s to the 1990s is that moves to enhance humanistic culture, community, and benevolence may indeed be initiated by the varied provocations and invocations of broadly conceived material poetry. From the fragmented verse of pre- or proto-concrete poetry, through the high repertory, and subsequent experiments and throwbacks, whatever the codes employed, representations of sexuality transcend constructivist designs to explore the erotic, to expose feminine conditions of disadvantage (to use a non-controversial term), to assert non-conventional practices, to celebrate, in some situations, difference and delight.

The call for papers for this issue announced the theme: *Corpo, erotismo e sexualidade*, with sub-headings including: "Do visível ao inapreensível da corporeidade: mistérios, segredos e polissemia do corpo" e "Do corpo anatomizado às tecnologias corporais: o percurso da modernidade à pós-modernidade." In conclusion, it can be affirmed with confidence that one of the vectors traversed by that trajectory are

the angles of ultra- or hyper-modern poetics where multi-valencies of the flesh and blood of language in visual technologies are instrumental in concrete and abstract representations of sexuality. There too there are inapprehensible discourses and kinds of counterdiscourse, and secrets and mysteries that reveal the diversity of erotic expression in our inquisitive contemporary period.



Thumbnails of internet images

#### Abstract

*Rich implementations of expressive alterities within the domain of eroticism and sexuality occur in contemporary experimental poetics in Brazil, including poesia concreta, poema processo, criação intersemiótica or intersignos, and the catch-all name, poesia visual. The designation material poetry emphasizes the clearly pertinent physical qualities of language in this thematic domain and alludes to a noted title in related cultural studies, The Material Queer, which uses the modifier in a sense grounded in historical or dialectical materialism yet also offers the prospect of intriguing connections to non-normative lyrico-graphic texts with respect to identity consciousness. An embodied otherness of factitiousness on the semiotic plane may be an apt partner for portraying or performing proscribed, unconventional, or non-mainstream practices: public affection, prostitution,*

*group sex, inter-ethnic union, sodomy, homoeroticism, bisexuality, cross-dressing, fetishes, or other. In Brazilian lyric from 1950 to the present there are select moments that achieve such a confluence of interest, illustrating novelty in the trajectory of poetry as well as diversity or positioning in matters of sexuality.*

Keywords: *Visual Poetry. Sexuality. Erotic Images. Alterity.*

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**URLs for figures—All posted at: <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/cap/bvp/jpg/SignsIntercourse.html>**

<http://www.uol.com.br/augustodecampos/poemas.htm> "eis os amantes"

<http://www.casadasrosas.sp.gov.br/desexp/décio/index.htm>  
for animations of "orgasmo", "homem-woman-man"

<http://www.arteconcretapaulista.com.br/>:

"eis os amantes" and "orgasmo" animations under Noigandres

<http://www.ubu.com/historical/pignatari/pignatari4.html>  
"orgasmo"

[http://www.campusred.net/telos/anteriores/num\\_040/inves\\_experiencias0.html](http://www.campusred.net/telos/anteriores/num_040/inves_experiencias0.html)

"femme" text and thumbnail

<http://www.imediata.com/bvp> Almandrade et al.

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