POETRY AND ADVERTISING: PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

by

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ABSTRACT

The many recent changes in the cultural and social functions of poetry rendered traditional theories of poetry obsolete. In the past, poetry criticism has been of two main types: on the one hand, descriptive accounts of poetic innovation following in the steps of traditional literary criticism, and, on the other, semiotic or stylistic works which use particular poetic trends to support general principles. The two types of works have never intersected successfully.

The present study aims to create a ground of coherence between the ontological and cognitive aspects of poeticity on the one hand, and the social and cultural functions from which they derive and which in turn they generate, on the other. It chooses, therefore, to discuss contemporary poetic forms and activities within a conceptual framework which brings together principles of relevance theory in communication and ethnographical-empirical research. Two genres which might otherwise be considered incompatible are brought into contact and are found to be complementary – poetry and advertising. Their complementarity can be demonstrated from the existence in language of two universals which form their respective generic basis: reflection and ostension.

In chapters one and two, this thesis is established through analyses of the works of Sperber and Wilson, Tanaka, Riffaterre, Lotman and Kristeva, and by discussion of examples of interaction between poetry and advertising. A group of corollary concepts are derived, such as poetic indirection in market metaphors specific to advertising communication (following Riffaterre's terminology), and retropoetic communication in advertising, i.e. communication which dissolves the poetic symbolic and replaces it with a semiotic in symbolic disguise (following Kristeva's terminology).

At the pragmatic level, the study investigates interactions between poetry and advertising through examination of schemes such as *Poetry Places* (which integrates poetry, poets and the public with institutions, industry and the market through programmes of poetic residencies), or *Poems on the Underground*, *Big Wide Words* and *Moving Poetry* (which circulate poems on public transport systems) (see chapter three). The social and ideological role of poetry is further investigated at semantic and stylistic levels in an overview of contemporary poetries and their media of circulation in chapter four. Poetry is observed in the process of becoming a narrative framework for sociality, an instrument for business and social development, as well as a critical aesthetic tool.

In chapter five, analyses of interviews with 300 people waiting at bus stops, with academics at Reading University and with a group of poets reveal three types of poetic reception: residual-elitist, pragmatic and synchronic. The interviews also reveal that the interaction between poetry and advertising and the generic hybridisation that results from it create a system with sociostatic properties, i.e. a mechanism of moderation and balance between idealistically egalitarian and exploitative, economics and literature, industry and art.

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This book is dedicated to my son Andre.

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