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7.2 Jim Andrews' *Nio* Jim Andrews *Nio*, 2001, in *Electronic Literature Collection, Volume I*, at: http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/andrews__nio/Nio5.htm

Nio is an interactive audio work. As Andrews defines it, it is a mix of music, sound poetry, and visual poetry that invites the player to create a little composition from the sixteen audio recordings in it. There are two "verses" of *Nio*. In verse one you play with layers of audio and visuals. In verse two, you play with synchronized layers and sequences of audio and visuals. Andrews focuses again on interaction, highlighting the possibilities of the digital medium in the integration of the acoustic into the poetry. "I'm trying to synthesize and transform image, sound, and text, not simply juxtapose them", says Andrews on his website, "my work is all about synthesis of arts and media". Andrews adds that *Nio* is "a kind of lettristic dance" an "alternative music video" and underlines a characteristic of this text: Most programming languages are set up so that the visual dominates and controls the audio. In *Nio*, when a new sound begins playing, it causes the animations to change, which is a case of the audio controlling the visual

By clicking in the icons, which are positioned in a circle, letters will appear in the center of the circle (figure 28). The letters will keep moving according to the music to disappear in a sort of vortex to reappear again. The reader can activate up to 6 icons, imposing different rhythms on the letters. The second verse is more interactive. The reader is invited to place the icons in a grid containing sixteen spaces, one for each icon. The reader can modulate the rhythm, the order of the icons, and so on.

This work stresses interaction - the text is no longer completely made by the author for it requires the reader's interaction - you arrange the text yourself according to options provided by the author. Thus each single performance of the text will theoretically be unique. *Nio* doesn't provide the reader with narrative logic as we normally consider it. *Nio* does not concern language; it is not like *Enigma n*, where the language game is immediately visible. *Nio* speaks to another sense: the geometrical shapes imposed by the icons (which, by the way, are made of letters beside each icon), their colours and their movements are visually pleasing. "The lettristic dance" is not related to the meaning, it is an example of the "aesthetics of the sensual" according to Andrew Darley²⁶ which is a tendency for the semantic and visual arts. *Nio* is a pure experimentation, emphasizing interaction and focusing on visual and sound possibilities, the semantic interpretation is useless. The activity of the reader is not reading

anymore, but playing, experimenting the text. She is not a reader, she is a player. The involvement of the player is what Andrews aims at:

One of the things about *Nio* is that it can deal with layers of rhythmic music. So you can take songs and chop them up into loops (even better if you have different recordings of the vocals, drums, etc) and then allow people to rearrange the music arbitrarily or with constraints. And you can associate one or more animations (which themselves may be interactive) with each of the pieces of the song, so that you end up with a very different sort of music video for the Web than we have seen so far and perhaps a different song than you started out with. Very interactive and engagingly compositional both sonically and visually, hopefully.²⁷

With *Nio* Andrews realizes what Giselle Beiguelman calls “dynamic fusion”²⁸ that points to new literacies. “Those process operate by a process of expanded lettering, prepared for the reading of simultaneously languages – cinematographically, videographically, textually, and sonorously”²⁹.

²⁶ Andrew Darley, *Visual Digital Culture*, USA: Taylor & Francis, 2000.

²⁷ Jim Andrews interview quoted in Roberto Simanowski *Fighting/Dancing Words Jim Andrews' Kinetic, Concrete Audiovisual Poetry*, op. cit..

²⁸ Giselle Beiguelman, “The reader, the Player, and the Executable Poetics”, in Jürgen Schäffer and Peter Gendolla (eds.), *Beyond the Screen: Transformations of Literary Structures, Interfaces and Genre*, Bielefeld: Verlag, 2010, pp.403-426, p. 403.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.