

September 8, 2020

***Publication of fourteen forgotten all-digital “HyperPoems” by noted poet William H. Dickey (1928-1994); includes early gay digital erotica***

William H. Dickey—Fulbright Fellow and winner of the prestigious Yale Younger Poets Award in 1959, as well as numerous other accolades over the course of a noteworthy fifteen book career—died of AIDS in San Francisco in 1994. Several years earlier he had begun using a Macintosh computer and a program called HyperCard to create what he called his HyperPoems: fourteen all-digital works, ranging from multimedia experiments with lyric and narrative to explicit male erotica.

With initial plans for a posthumous publication on floppy disks unfulfilled, Dickey’s HyperPoems were soon forgotten by all but the most dedicated students of the genre. (Apple had stopped shipping HyperCard in 2004.) In 2019, however, University of Maryland Professor of English and Digital Studies Matthew Kirschenbaum recovered the HyperPoems from the laptop of their original editor. Working with Deena Larsen as well as Dickey’s literary executor Dr. Susan Tracz and Andrew Ferguson of HyperCard Online, Kirschenbaum prepared the HyperPoems for publication at the Internet Archive.

They appear there now using unique browser-based emulation technology, meaning that anyone with an internet connection can access them in their original format—no special software or setup needed.

- Volume 1: [https://archive.org/details/william\\_dickey\\_hyperpoems\\_volume\\_1](https://archive.org/details/william_dickey_hyperpoems_volume_1)
- Volume 2: [https://archive.org/details/william\\_dickey\\_hyperpoems\\_volume\\_2](https://archive.org/details/william_dickey_hyperpoems_volume_2)

Most of this work appears to have been composed between 1988 and 1990. Integrating images, icons, animation, and sound effects with typography and text, the HyperPoems address many themes critics acknowledge as central to Dickey’s print *oeuvre*: history, mythology, memory, sexuality, the barrenness of modern life, and (over and under all of it), love and death. But they also represent an important technical progression of his poetics, one with clear roots in the ideas about poetry he had forged through decades of mindfulness about the craft.

Three of the poems (those in Vol. 2) may fairly be called erotica, and represent unique documents of gay life in San Francisco at the height of the AIDS epidemic. They are some of the very earliest (and most explicit) digital creative works by an established LGBTQ+ author.

“Don’t let these poems elude your grasp,” comments Dr. Leonardo Flores, President of the international Electronic Literature Organization and founder of the “I ♥ E-Poetry” website. “Poke around with your cursor, discover what triggers a response, and they will reveal themselves to you. We can now lose ourselves in these HyperPoems, rediscovering Dickey’s voice awakened to new possibilities just as it was silenced by HIV.”

Even—or especially—at this late date, the HyperPoems are deserving of wide readership and promises to significantly augment Dickey’s already rich legacy. The HyperCard Online emulator at the Internet Archive (fittingly in Dickey’s home city of San Francisco) finally offers us a platform to present this important literary work to a public audience.

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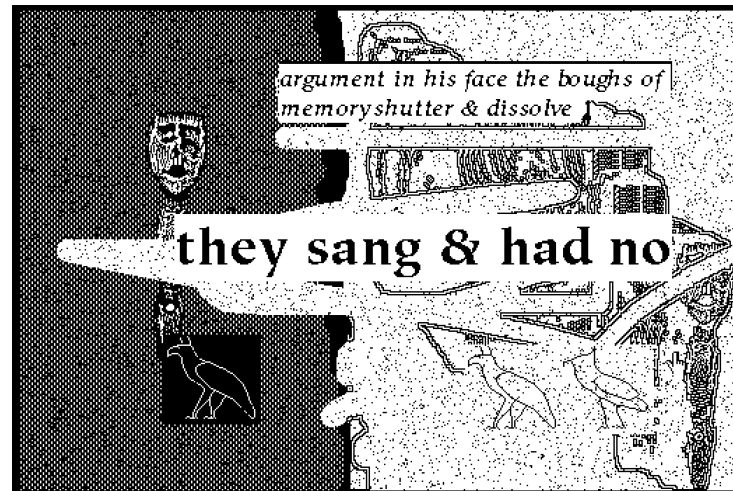
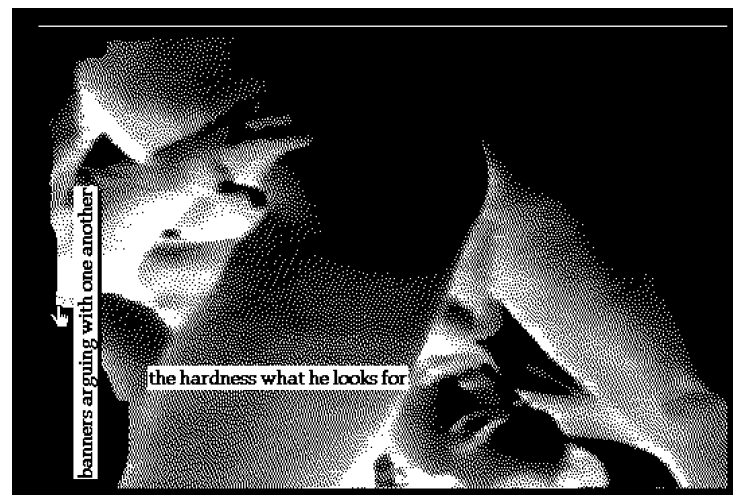
Editor's Notes	<b>Hyperpoem</b>	Volume 2
	Dick & Jane & Spot & the Inspector-General	
	Fuji	Fours
Volcano	William Dickey	Deuce
Heresy		Statue Music
The Throats of Birds		Serendip
	Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra	
	Attack of the Pigs and Chickens	

Table of Contents, Volume 1



From "The Throats of Birds," Volume 1



From "Accomplished Night," Volume 2