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Author(s) / Editor (s):	David Crow
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Left to Right is David Crow's second book. Just like the first (*Visible Signs : an introduction to semiotics*) it has been both written and designed by David Crow and produced by AVA publishing. It has not escaped the author's own attention that *Left to Right* enjoys the irony of having to describe in words its claim that pictures may have become a more dominant mode of communication. This said, both of Crow's books are very well designed and produced, including ample visuals to accompany the points made in text. *Left to Right* is around A4 size, with a soft cover and sewn sections. It feels good to pick up and flick through with lots to attract the casual browser and stimulate the budding designer. *Left to Right* also sets its stall out well, claiming from the outset that its narrative (about a shift from words to pictures) is "a chance to pause on this idea and discuss it more generally". And this is exactly what the book does — provide a valuable opportunity to stop and think about some general cultural influences on the relationship between word and image. In this sense the author offers "a series of doorways into different examples, and attempts to draw these together to form a useful discussion" — and useful it is.

The content is structured in three levels, each of which is visually coded. The introduction and summary first map the discussion and then draw together its key issues by way of conclusion. The main body of the text is set out in a different typeface being accompanied by illustrations and further explanatory notes at the foot of each page. There is then a third level of short writings on contextual issues that include: A Post-modern Sensibility; The Origins of Writing; The Rebus; The Politics of Writing; The Printing Press; Gender and the Alphabet; Saved by Television; Technology as Catalyst; Invading Languages; and Amplifying Reality. The core narrative itself unfolds through five sections: The Television Age; Language Without Boundaries; A New Typography; Safety, Speed and Commerce; and Converging Technologies.

One engaging aspect of David Crowe's narrative is a capacity to suspend judgment in favour of finding some intrinsic quality in all of the changes he observes. He concludes by saying that "whether change is for better or for worse it is undeniably exciting to watch" — just as the first watchers of TV must have been excited by what they saw. As if to make the point David Crow highlights some contemporary writers around the birth of TV who damned the impact that this new-fangled invention would have on family life. He then follows this with the quote "Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority. They show disrespect for elders and love chatter as well as exercise. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up their food and tyrannise their teachers" before revealing that it was written by Socrates in the 5th Century BC.

What then follows is some analysis of printed advertisements before and after the birth of TV seeking to illustrate how the ratio of word to image dramatically shifted in favour of the latter. There is also an argument that Jan Tschichold's superbly elegant typographic designs for Penguin books were overtaken by the new visual ethos, having to be shelved in favour of a new wave of visual alternatives more appropriate for the time. There are then separate examples of attempts to create pictorial languages. The three examples given are the Isotype project of Otto and Marie Neurath, the semantography of Blissymbolics, and the universal perception of Adrian Frutiger. The book concludes with a longish section on the impact of digital technologies upon the design and consumption of typefaces and images. It emphasises a number of thematic issues that include the nature of open language having no specific layers of meaning that can be decoded but offering more sensual and intuitive experiences of image and text.

Embedded within the book's core narrative are some perceptive and interesting insights that give the impression of being casually dropped in. For example, in describing the effects of mobile phone technology David Crow observes "There is a striking similarity between the phone camera and the Victorian locket, the carrying of miniature family portraits, concealed discretely against the body, along with a tactile element such as a lock of hair. A vibrating alert supplies a tactile experience as we send more images directly into the pockets of our loved ones".

The position of this book is squarely based on a model ascribing distinctive characteristics to the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Here *Left* is: Word, Male, Verbal, Analytical...; and *Right* is Image, Female, Non-verbal, Holistic.... This system of binary opposites provides a structure for the book and a platform for its key propositions. One of these (drawing heavily on Leonard Shlain's book *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*) suggests that the invention of the printed word saw a rise in left-brain activity that paralleled the systematic victimisation of women by men. The graphic example used to illustrate this misogyny is the

proliferation of European witch-hunts in the late 16th century — “Before 1454 (the year the printing press was introduced) witchcraft was virtually unheard of, yet in 1460 the madness was underway and twelve ‘sorceresses’ were burnt in the public square of Heidelberg, a few miles from Gutenberg’s first printing plant”. In contrast the implication is that a current shift from word to image, from left-brain to right-brain, has rebalanced our culture towards its more feminine aspects.

Overall, this book achieves what it sets out to do. By presenting a narrative concerning the shift from words to pictures it offers “a chance to pause on this idea and discuss it more generally”. It is not, and does not pretend to be, “a definitive text on ‘word and image’” but introduces a range of related ideas. In this respect the book makes a valuable contribution to the debate and should be on the reading list of all undergraduate graphic design, communication and media students both for the range of ideas it offers for debate as well for its design and wealth of visual material.

Though *Left to Right* is by its own admission ‘introductory’ it nevertheless contains some interesting insights and approaches worthy of future development. It is good to know that this may be just the second in what will turn out to be a series of publications from David Crow that will increasingly add to the body of knowledge about graphic design.