Concrete poetry.

Jack. David
University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd

Recommended Citation

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000ext. 3208.
WE OF WHICH

TITLE OF THESIS

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF VANCOUVER

THE DEPARTMENT OF

C (Signed)

PERMANENT ADDRESS

DATE: ____________________

VL 91 (10-08)
A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the
Department of English in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario

1973


The term "concrete poetry" used to describe various poetical linguistic experiments, has never been accurately categorized. In order to remedy this situation, I set out to classify the broad areas of concrete poetry. I do not intend to sustain the opinion that concrete poems are so simple that they do not merit serious critical attention. I have studied individual concrete poems in great detail to assess their worthiness.

The results of this procedure are, first of all, that I have found five divisions of concrete poetry which cover virtually all concrete poems written to date (1972). These divisions are: 1) kinetic poetry, where poems move in space, powered by motors or by people; 2) mathematical poetry, where serial relationships and permutations determine the form of the poem; 3) sound poetry, where language sounds are explored by ear or by machine, often recorded, and sometimes electronically modified; 4) typographical poetry, where varying typefaces and non-linguistic symbols convey poetic meaning; and 5) spatial poetry, which enlarges or reduces the normal amount of space between letters or words and thereby creates both expressive blank space and expressive overlapping of letters. Each chapter contains detailed criticism of from four to eight concrete poems best exemplifying their specific division plus additional poems to demonstrate the wider application of my categories.

I have added a chapter on the origins of concrete poetry to broaden the theoretical and historical background and an Appendix on
the essential difference between concrete poetry and pattern poetry.

My conclusion is that concrete poetry manifests itself in five separate classifications and that concrete poetry is at least as complex as any other kind of poetry.
I credit Frank Hickey with first introducing me to concrete poetry in late 1969 or early 1970. When I found out that Peter Stevens wrote concrete poetry, I immediately thought I wanted to try it. When approached, he kindly agreed. That was in October, 1970, and by November, 1971, I had it finished, done, typed, and I perfected. The second time, June, 1973, it was much improved; the long period necessary to finish it up was both stressful and exhilarating. I had tackled a large, raw subject with insufficient background knowledge.

I thank John Litkey, once on the committee, for clarifying the difference between American and English punctuation. To Stuart Salley, gratitude for terse, well-informed comments on the subject of Quebec. Dean Crowley, who always picked me up, often kept me afloat. Peter Stevens listened to incoherent comments with commendable patience, and graciously criticized my first draft. And finally Sharon, who compelled me to finish.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Origins of Concrete Poetry</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Kinetic Poetry</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Mathematical Poetry</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Sound Poetry</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Typographical Poetry</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Spatial Poetry</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Miscellaneous Concrete Poetry</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern Poetry vs. Concrete Poetry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita Auctoris</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES


CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1950's, concrete poetry arose simultaneously in four separate parts of the world. In Brazil, the brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos together with Decio Figueiredo founded the Noigardic group of concrete poets. Brazilian art had been strongly influenced by concrete art in the 1940's, and the Noigardic poets decided to apply concrete art theory to poetry. In addition to concrete art, the Noigardic poets listed many artists, poets, linguists, and musicians as their "forerunners." 1

Very closely associated with the concrete artist Max Bill is Eugen Gerzinger, generally referred to as the "father of concrete poetry." 2 Gerzinger, who lives in Switzerland, had ecstatically reviewed a showing of Bill's in 1942 and by the early 1950's attempted to consolidate Bill's theories of concrete art 3 with his own poetic desire. He wrote his first concrete poem in 1952 4 calling it a constellation in order to pay tribute to Stephan Mallarmé. In


3 Being a former student of Paul Klee at the Bauhaus, Bill was a functionalist and regarded concrete art as the epitome of harmony, simplicity, and clarity of form.

4 Gerzinger has also created concrete art, and he serves as the artistic designer for Rosenthal.
1955, Gorringe and Pigratari not by accident, discovered their mutual interest, and agreed on the term concrete poetry to name their poetry.

Both Carlo Belloli of Italy and Svend Fahlström of Sweden developed concrete poems in the late 1940's. Belloli was first a protégé of F. T. Marinetti, the original Futurist, and in the middle and late 1940's Belloli began to experiment with compressed syntax and spatial and typographical techniques. He did not call his poetry "concrete," but still it unmistakably fits the category. Fahlström did call his experiments "concrete poetry," and in 1953 he wrote a "Manifesto for Concrete Poetry." 5

From these four originators, the concrete movement travelled rapidly to such diverse places as Japan, the USSR, and the rest of the Western world. In Canada, Bill Bissett, Lance Farrell, and Martina in Vancouver were probably the first concrete poets, although they "didn't know the word concrete or any kind of poetry we were writing into." 6

The word "concrete" had been used in reference to poetry in 1907 in an article by Ernest Fenollosa entitled "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry." 7 In it, Fenollosa described "concrete poetry" as a relation between two things, different from:

5 *World View*, pp. 74-80.
6 In *grönk*, third series.
the sum of these two things. He noted that Chinese words are more
"concrete" than Indo-European words because they are also pictures of
ideations. As well, the Chinese language uses only nouns and verbs;
since all action is continuous, the most truthful description is
in "act-act-act" or noun-noun. Thus the Chinese language initiates the "concreteness" of nature in its grammar and in its simple
pictures.

The use of the word "concrete" in reference to art originated
in 1920 with the publication of the magazine "Art Concret." [3]
 Theo Van Doesburg, the editor, had been a moving force in many of the
important artistic movements since 1914, including fauvism, surrealism,
and the Bauhaus. He chose the word "concrete" in contrast with "ab-
stract" because he felt that painting which tried to simulate na-
tural objects was false; you cannot duplicate nature. The natural
subjects of painting are lines, planes, angles, and colors and it is
these subjects that he called "art forms." On canvas, "nothing is
more concrete, more real, than a line, a color, a surface." A woman,
a tree, a cow are concrete in the natural state, but in the context
of painting they are abstract, illusory, vague, speculative." [10]  


[9] Van Doesburg's condemnation of "abstract" art came before the
term "abstract art" was in common usage as non-realist art. In
fact, then, he meant concrete art as the equivalent of what we con-
sider today to be abstract.

p. 19.
Associated with Van Doesburg in the Concrete Art Movement were
De Maria, Josef Albers, Lennart Hedin, and in 1926, Max Bill.
Bill was born a student of Paul Klee at the Bauhaus where he had
learned that the artist must obey the demands of the material. For
Bill, "color, form, space, line, and movement supply the constitut-
ent elements" of concrete art. One of his major methods for
creating concrete art is through mathematics, often giving substance
to esoteric mathematical figures.

In "twenty-two" (Fig. 34), Max Bill uses the simplest kind of
mathematical relation - consecutive numbers - to determine the appear-
ance of the marble slab. There are twenty-two holes drilled spirally
into the slab, in a 1: 2: 3: 4: 5: 6 relationship on each leg of the
spiral. Bill regards this sort of creation as "not only form signifi-
ifying beauty, but thought, idea, cognition transmuted into form." 12

Perhaps the ultimate concern of concrete poetry is to exploit
the various potentials in language. This idea of functionalism eman-
ates from Max Bill's theories in relation to concrete art. To Bill,
concrete creation means letting the material - paint, stone, cloth,
etc. - follow its own innate laws. Or, as Josef Albers 13 noted,
"respect the material and use it in a way that makes sense - preserve

11 In Eckhard Neumann, ed., Bauhaus and Bauhaus people
12 Rickey, p. 149.
13 It is interesting to observe that Albers later became rector
of Black Mountain College, where he influenced Charles Olson and
Robert Creeley, among others.
its inherent characteristics. In order to create it so as to function correctly, its nature must be explored." 14 Thus Hill has observed that "the design in an artistic ceramic exploit[ing] the possibilities of the material up to its utmost." 15

It is the exploration of language as a material that acts as a guide in the examination of concrete poetry. As this thesis will attempt to show, language has five basic properties which can be explored: sound, rhythm, word, print, and shape. Each of these represents a separate area, and there obviously are points of overlap between them. Nevertheless, my thesis is that virtually every concrete poem can be classified in terms of one of these five areas. As well, this thesis will demonstrate that concrete poems contain depth of meaning equivalent to any non-concrete poem, despite their sometimes simple surface appearance.

The first property of language, movement, deals with the area of concrete poetry called Kinetic poetry. Kinetic art, the direct ancestor of kinetic poetry, involves art-objects actually moving in space. Kinetic poetry adopts this basic principle and then adds language. Some kinetic poems are machine-driven, some are air moved, some are self-destructive, some are spectator moved, but all of them do move.

Mathematical concrete poetry employs a mathematical formula applied to a group of words. The most common method is permutation;

14 Nowak, p. 198.
15 Form (Basel, 1952), p. 57.
either partial or complete, where the number of words becomes unwieldy
to permute, the computer's capabilities are required and utilized.

In the past, poets have occasionally made use of linguistic sound as
part of their poetry. Concrete poets extend the normal uses, such as
rhymed words and alliteration, to previously unexplored areas. Al-
though they still are concerned with repeatable sounds, they might at-
tempt to list and to relate all sound similarities of one particular
kind. As well, sound poets do not necessarily have written copies of
their poetry; they normally exist only on records.

Due to modern advertising, most people are familiar with unusual
or non-linear typography. Applying typographic techniques to poetry
so that the typeface becomes a vital part of the poem is, however, less
likely to be generally recognizable. Recent typographic poems have be-
gun to create their own language of symbols, in order to free themselves
from the restrictions of ordinary language.

The pattern poems of religious writers, such as Robert Herrick's
cross-shaped "Cale Numbers," are well-known literary oddities. Spa-
tial concrete poetry uses the blank space on the page to create meanings
of its own. Occasionally concrete poems will be shaped like objects,
but in these poems there is no regular syntax. Spatial poems use
blank space to convey poetic information while eliminating regular
syntax at the same time.

16 By regular syntax, I mean a common grammatical construction
such as a phrase, clause, or sentence.
Each of the five properties of concrete poetry is dealt with chapter by chapter by examining illustrative poetic examples. The individual concrete poems will demonstrate the use of one of the five basic properties; as well, where possible I shall detail the complexities of the poems in order to provide evidence that concrete poems are replete with meaning. And to flesh out my categories, I have added numerous examples of concrete poems in all areas.
CHAPTER II
CONCRETE POETRY

The origins of concrete poetry can be found mainly in twentieth century literature and art. I have separated these origins into five sections, each for each of the five types of concrete poetry, namely: kinetic poetry, mathematical poetry, sound poetry, typographical poetry, and spatial poetry.

I. The Origins of Kinetic Poetry

Kinetic art is the most important source for the creation of kinetic poetry. In turn, kinetic art developed from Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism.

Futurism was an attempt to capture movement in painting. Perhaps the best-known example of a Futurist painting is Marcel Duchamp’s “Nude Descending a Staircase,” in which the figure of the woman is depicted in various stages of descent down a staircase. Duchamp tried to re-create the sense of movement, even though he restricts himself to two dimensions. F. T. Marinetti, the founder of Futurism, considered movement the central issue in art and declared that “velocity is the new absolute which kills time and space and creates the universe.” Kinetic poetry, then, claimed movement for its theoretical core from Futurism.

Dadaism’s contribution to kinetic poetry is the addition of chance as a method of creation, as compared to inspiration or copying nature. Jean Arp, one of the more well-known Dadaists, grew dissatisfied with

a drawing, ripped it into pieces, and let the pieces fall to the floor. Some time later he noticed the pattern of the pieces of paper. "It had all the expressive power that he had tried in vain to achieve." 2 Art was pasted down the scraps in their positions on the floor (Fig. 38). From this point on, Dadaists decided that "chance must be recognized as a new stimulus to artistic creation. This (chance) may well be regarded as the central experience of Dada." 3 From this and other similar experiments with chance, the precise control of the artist over what the spectator perceived was growing weaker. From Dadaism, kinetic poetry adopted the use of chance in various poetic constructions, whether the movement is random, machine controlled, or spectator initiated.

In many of their works, the Surrealists invoked spectator participation in order to carry on or complete the project. Thus they demonstrated that the poet or artist was no more qualified to make aesthetic judgments than anyone else. The Surrealists hoped to "initiate a new humanism in which talent did not exist, in which there were no artists and non-artists." 4 In this way, they predated the idea of spectator participation in kinetic poetry.

Thus Futurism gave the spur towards motion, Dadaism towards chance, and Surrealism towards spectator participation. The combination of these three factors gave rise to kinetic art, hence kinetic poetry. According to John Tovey 5, a noted kinetic artist and theoretician,

3 Lippard, p. 41.
Kinetic art is divided into two broad areas - where movement is virtual and where it is actual. In virtual kinetic art (or Op Art), the object does not move, it only seems to move. In actual kinetic art the object actually does move. Virtual kinetic art is either illusory movement caused by tricking the eye or apparent movement caused by the spectator's motion. Actual kinetic art has three divisions: 1) repetitive machine-driven objects; 2) random movement; 3) spectator-initiated movement. In kinetic poetry, all of the above types have been explored. As well, in all five categories of kinetic poetry, the ability to destroy itself or be destroyed by the spectator can be added.

II The Origins of Mathematical Poetry

The urge to produce poetry by scrambling words into previously unthought-of orders began as early as 1270 A.D. when the Catalan mystic Raymond Lull randomly combined characters and situations from a large collection of both. Better known is Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels of 1726 wherein word-blocks can be shuffled "into new disorders to produce whole books 'without the least assistance from genius' or study." 7

In the twentieth century, Max Bill looks to mathematics "to provide the content of the work" 8 of art. In "twenty-two," for example, the arithmetical relation of consecutive numbers is explored. The simplicity of form reflects the harmony of whole numbers, but the mathematical base does not overshadow the final creation - Hansjorg Mayer's poem.

6 Robert L. Scott, "Zen Bones," Queen's Quarterly 79 (Spring, 1972), 34.

7 "Zen Bones," p. 34.

8 Rickey, p. 109.
"alphabettenquadratebuch I" is founded on serial relationships of numbers, while most other mathematical poetry, like Gulliver's blocks, creates new combinations that the rational human mind might block out.

III The Origins of Sound Poetry

Sound poetry stresses the phonetic quality of language and commonly uses complicated repetitive patterns as a constructive method. Extensive use of repeatable sound patterns seem innate in man, beginning with infant babbling and nursery rhymes and including tribal chants and popular songs. In poetry, there are numerous examples of sound refinements from most civilizations. English poetry, for example, used both end line and internal rhyme patterns from its inception. Although some poets have had better ears for sound relations, almost all have created various vowel or consonant concurrences in their poetry. For the most part, lexical words have been used in English poetry; there are rare cases, however, where new words were created strictly for their sound values. Perhaps the best known example of these invented words occurs in Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" in Through the Looking-Glass.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe. 9

More recent examples of this type of sound-only word are the poems by the Dadaists Hugo Ball and Kurt Schwitters. Schwitters' poem 10 about sneezing tries to capture the sound of a sneeze from its beginning to

---


10 In Kate Trauman Steinitz, Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait From Life (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), p. 105.
its culmination: "TESCH/ TSHIA/ RASH/ TSCHIA/ RASCH/ HAPPA ISH/
HAIJA PEPPA KCH/ HAPPA RISH/ ISCH/ HAPPA PEPPA ISCH/ HAPPA PEPPA TSCHAA!".
Modern sound poets are less interested in creating new words and more inter-
tested in impinging normal words until the meaning is lost. They de-
stray meaning by exaggerated repetition and thereby emphasize sound values.

IV The Origins of Typographical Poetry

Typographical poetry uses different typefaces, graphic designs, and non-linguistic symbols to transmit various poetic messages. Among the predecessors of typographical concrete poetry are the Futurists, Stephan Mallarme, the Ismah, and "e. e. cummings.

F. T. Marinetti, the founder of Futurism, strove to abandon the un-
iformity of type sizes on single pages and to reject linear printing in 
favour of non-linear printing. In a broadsheet dated February 11, 
1915, entitled "l'ara in Liberta" (tords at Liberty), Marinetti dis-
played many varieties of typefaces, type sizes, and type positions. In-
deed, at one time he announced his intention to use "three or four inks 
of different colours on a single page and twenty different typefaces if necessary." In the original Futurist manifesto of 1909, Marinetti 
declared that "my reformed typesetting allows me to treat words like 
torpedoed and to hurl them forth at all speeds." His reformed type-
setting together with his use of various inks and typesettings specifi-
cally link his designs to typographical concrete poetry.

11 In Futurism, p. 50.
13 Futurism, p. 52.
Each level of meaning in Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de Dés* (1897) was distinguished by its own specific typography. In his "Preface" to *Un Coup de Dés*, Mallarmé noted that "the difference in the type between the major motif, and secondary and adjacent ones, prescribes its importance in the delivery." Unlike Marinetti who liberated words for the sake of liberation, Mallarmé used typography in a particular way to separate different thematic elements in his poem.

The Bauhaus' concern with typography was the same as with any other material - to design according to the material's function. Typography’s function was viewed by László Moholy-Nagy, the chief typographer at the Bauhaus, to be "clear communication in its most vivid form." Therefore all typographical embellishments were regarded as redundant, and "absolute clarity in all typographical work" was achieved by the design of a spare uncluttered typeface, known as Bauhaus type. 

Eugen Goninger's concrete poetry, which is founded on the Bauhaus ideal of form related to function, uses a single typeface in all circumstances in order to avoid distracting the reader.

An American, e. e. cummings, was among the first poets to exercise many of the previously unused keys of the typewriter, such as the parenthesis, the ampersand, and the dash. He also began the use of capital letters in unusual positions in the middle or the end of words. Moreover he would place colons, semi-colons, commas, periods, and question marks in any position as artificial brakes on the speed of the reading.

---


15 *Bauhaus*, p. 73.
Much of the anthology *Typewriter Poems* rests on the innovations of cummings.

Each man - F. T. Marinetti, Stephan Mallarmé, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and e. e. cummings - added a small part to the growth of typographical concrete poetry. Marinetti contributed colored inks and various type-settings, Mallarmé underscored them with typography, Moholy-Nagy simplified type designs, and cummings developed the typewriter as a valid instrument of creation.

V The Origins of Spatial Poetry

As in typographical poetry, F. T. Marinetti and Stephan Mallarmé play key roles in the development of spatial concrete poetry. Spatial poetry designs language on the page so that the creation of blank space, the overlapping of letters, and the cancelling of blank space carry poetic information.

The earliest use of space in poetry was in the Greek pattern poems of the fifth century B.C., which were shaped like objects. Modern poetry uses space as an additional method of punctuation, such as when blank lines separate stanzas and two or more blank spaces indicate pauses between words.


18 Earle Birney employs space-punctuation as a definite system in his poetry, often using six-letter size spaces to act as something comparable to a line break.
The Futurist Marinetti attempted to destroy linear typesetting and consequently he opened up vast amounts of blank space on the page. Mallarme took this blank space one step further by establishing a primitive kind of spatial syntax, where position on the page established the relations between words. Unlike Mallarme, concrete poets do not use normal syntax, depending instead upon the ability of space to convey linguistic connections.

It is clear, then, that early twentieth century literary and artistic movements provided the main impetus towards the development of concrete poetry. F. T. Marinetti's Futurism served as a starting point for kinetic, typographical, and spatial poetry; Stephane Mallarme's En Coup de Sabre strongly influenced typographical and spatial poetry; the Dadaists set the stage for sound poetry; and the Surrealists foreshadowed kinetic spectator poetry.
CHAPTER III

KINETIC POETRY

All tangible objects are continually changing from one state to another, although the time taken varies from material to material. Poems whose appearance alter constantly during a specified time period are termed kinetic poems. Most kinetic poems are three-dimensional and they move because of any one of three causes: 1) a machine; 2) natural forces (wind, water, etc.); 3) the manipulation of the poem by a spectator. Those that are not three-dimensional are usually virtual (i.e., optical).

The role of chance in kinetic poetry differs according to the particular cause of the movement. If a poem is machine operated, then the cycle repeats itself on a certain time schedule. Each cycle is therefore identical and does not depend at all on chance. If the movement is generated by the wind or some other natural force, then there will be an infinite number of alterations based on the varying forces of the wind; thus chance plays a dominant role in the poem’s appearance. Lastly, if a man may adjust the poem, then change in the poem depends solely on his own ingenuity; in this case, chance is only one variable among many.

Kinetic poems do not necessarily have a linguistic basis; they are refined than the quality of their movement. In this very primitive stage of development, when there have been few kinetic poems created, it is possible to suppose that more semantically complex kinetic poems will be attempted in the future. At present, however, kinetic poems such as "Poetry Clock" and "Anom-Form" have a poetic effect which is based almost entirely on their shape and content, and very little on their language.
In this regard, they are perhaps closer to kinetic art than to kinetic poetry. But their importance as poetic innovations must not be underplayed—merely because they happen to impart little of the traditional effect in terms of content. Their form (i.e., their movement) is what gets communicated.

As machine-operated kinetic poems, "Poetry Clock" (Fig. 1) and "Amor-Roma" (Fig. 2) demonstrate continual movement and repeatable cycles. "Poetry Clock," by Ernest Williams, is semantically simpler than "Amor-Roma" by Ken Cox because the latter combinations often do not make meaningful words.

"Poetry Clock" is a normal clock with a childlike background. Instead of numbers, however, there are letters to which the hands point. The time cycle takes twelve hours to complete, just as with conventional clocks.

The face of the clock is composed of an outer rectangle and an inner circle, both composed of square tablets with letters on them. Consonants and diphthongs (of the German language) make up the rectangle while vowels and two punctuation marks — "?" and "?" — comprise the inner circle. As the hands of the clock rotate in their normal twelve-hour cycle, they point to varying combinations of vowels or punctuation marks and consonants or diphthongs. You "read" the clock in the same way as you ordinarily tell time. In Fig. 1, if it were a regular clock, one would read: 11:15 A.M. First, then the inside, the "Poetry Clock" reads "?" past "?", other readings are similarly obtained, such as "?" past "?", "?" to "?", and "?" before "?".

The background objects — a crescent moon, an angel doll holding a
wand, and two toy dogs - are childlike. Together with the two-letter word combinations, these ornaments indicate that the clock was intended for children. A child, in the early stages of learning to read, would find the letter combinations simple to read. Adults also enjoy the "Poetry Clock," as shown by a collection of poems Emmett Williams says he has saved from spectators at an exhibition where "Poetry Clock" was displayed.

"Amor-Roma" (Love-Rome), by Ken Cox, is a mechanically driven kinetic poem. Like "Poetry Clock," "Amor-Roma" includes no element of chance, since both poems are based on repeatable time cycles. However, "Amor-Roma"'s cycle is much faster than "Poetry Clock"'s twelve hours, completed in seconds according to the number of revolutions per second of the central controlling rod.

"Amor-Roma" is best described as a vertical rotating rod with numerous horizontal rods running through the vertical rod. Each horizontal rod has a letter at either end, the letters being either both "A"'s, "E"'s, "O"'s, or "R"'s. Four horizontal rods combine to make up two copies of the word "Amor," and there are eight such groupings or sixteen "Amor"'s in total. Because the horizontal rods are slightly tilted, when the central rod rotates, one has the impression of continual winding (as in a barber pole).

Besides the constant upward winding of the "Amor"'s, the word "Roma" often appears. This is because the letters "A", "O", and "R" have identical mirror images of themselves. At a certain point in the movement of the poem, the final "R" in a particular "Amor" combines with the mirror image of "O", "E", and "A" to produce "Roma." In Fig. 2, the light "R" in the centre of the poem combines with the "O", "E", and "A" to its
right in order to spell "Roma." The reverse spelling of "Amor" is "Roma," just as Rome, the city of love, is inextricably connected with love itself.

There are two kinds of non-machine operated kinetic poems. The first kind makes use of natural elements, e.g. wind of air currents, to create the movement. The second is manipulated directly by man.

In a similar fashion to a windmill which catches the wind to rotate its millstones, Ludwig Gesewitz's poem "when this you see remember me" (Fig. 3) catches air currents to rotate its six dangling mobiles. These six cardboard rectangles are black on one side and have a word printed on the other. Reading from left to right, the words are: "when this you see remember me," part of a quotation from Gertrude Stein. As the currents alter, all or some or none of the words is visible on the viewing side. Thus the poem's visual shape and verbal meaning change according to the wind conditions, either indoors or outdoors. In Fig. 3, in the left hand picture the words "this remember me" appear, with the "see" just barely visible but not quite legible. The right hand picture shows the words "when me."

There are 720 possible word combinations, some of which make sense and some of which do not. Among those combinations which do make sense, some of the more interesting sequential ones are: "when you see me," "this you remember," "remember me," "you remember me," "when this you see," and "see me." In fact, the preceding choices represent a complete statement if read in order. Although the possibility is remote, such a combination of meaningful phrases could occur in succession.

Ludwig Gesewitz's poem "Ich Du" (I You) (above, p. 136) also uses mobiles as does his "when this you see remember me." However, instead
of placing one word on each mobile, each of the two words is divided horizontally into four sections. This physical separation portrays the spiritual separation between two people on very close terms, as well as the uncertainty in their relationship.

In John Furnival's "Ebaucus" (Fig. 4), the poem's movement is created strictly by the spectator turning handles and blocks. The poem looks like a tall rectangular chest, with twenty-seven rods running horizontally from side to side down the length of the poem. On the rods, which are rotatable, there are four-sided blocks which have letters, words, or symbols on each side. At least one, and sometimes two of the sides are visible at any one time. These blocks can be rotated and they can be moved horizontally in either direction. The person who "reads" the poem has three choices to initiate movement: first, he can twist the rods to expose any one of the four sides of the blocks in a row; second, he can rotate the blocks individually; and third, he can shift the blocks horizontally from one position to another.

There are several ways to read "Ebaucus," including reading words on single blocks, on two blocks, on many horizontal blocks, on vertical blocks, and on horizontal and vertical blocks. The simplest method is to read the words on a single block, for example "as is" (bar 4 - counting from the top), "open stone" (bar 12), and "brain limits" (bar 12). All of these two-word combinations make sense. "Brain limits" is a concise repudiation of human pride; "open stone" could refer to "open sesame" and "as is" reflects a popular sentiment common in the 1960's.

A slightly more complicated way to read the poem involves combining the words on two or more blocks next to each other. Some groupings create words, such as "a" "ttic" (attic, bar 26), "p" "ills" (pills, bar 2), and
"f" "lips" (flips, Bar 26).

The next step is to read a long group of consecutive horizontal blocks. Bar 15 carries on a single sound theme—the phoneme "k"—over the entire line. It reads: "KY, KA, KI, KIK, KIU, K, KHI, KE, CK, KK, KHA, KHA." The "X" can be sound translated as "EKS". In addition, the rear portion of the construction is made of a mirror-like substance making the hidden side of the four-sided blocks visible on the mirror. The mirror-image letters which are legible are: "KO, IK, KT, OK, "

The title, "Babacus," combines the sounds and meaning of Babel and abacus. The Tower of Babel indicates the linguistic confusion while the abacus describes the working of the blocks and handles. It is worthwhile to remember that the various ways of reading "Babacus" apply to all conformations of rows and blocks. Manipulation of the poem will create endless conformations and meanings.

Ludwig Gorewitz' "Crap Game" (Anthology, p. 135) involves the spectator in a similar way to Furnival's "Babacus." There are thirty-six 3 cm. cubes stamped with the six words "oben" (up), "unter" (down), "links" (left), "recht" (right), "vorn" (in front), and "hinter" (behind). It is up to the spectator to determine the position of the cubes.

Up to the present, all three kinds of actual kinetic poetry have been attempted: machine-driven, natural-force driven, and human powered. Possibly the kinetic poems with more verbal meanings are the more interesting; simpler kinetic poems, like "Poetry Clock," offer little verbal challenge to the reader and seem to be more of a novel experiment whose basic idea is interesting but whose development is limited. "Babacus," on the other hand, is loaded with word possibilities, and offers an infinite play area to those who enjoy creating word combinations within a
given field. "Amor-Roma" and "when this you see remember me" fall somewhere in between the two preceding poems.

As I have indicated in an earlier chapter, kinetic poetry developed directly out of kinetic art. Because of this, we apply the various terms of kinetic art to kinetic poetry. As in kinetic art, kinetic poetry has two divisions: the more common actual kinetic poetry (such as the four previous poems), and the rarer virtual kinetic poetry. As well, virtual kinetic poetry has two divisions: apparent, where the spectator creates the movement which tricks the retina; and illusory, where optical illusion creates the retinal effect.

Although illusory virtual kinetic poetry has hardly been explored, Pierre and Ilse Garniers’ "Text for a Building" (Fig. 5) points the way to what is possible. In illusory virtual kinetic art, after looking at the painting for some time, "the picture surface or parts of it appear to move, to heave and thrust, advance and recede and alter position."  

Similar effects occur if you continue to stare at "Text for a Building." The play of black ("era") and white ("cin") establishes the Garniers’ intention to create movement from still life, just as motion animates pictures in the movies. The title, "Text for a Building," possibly alludes to a wall of a building with certain windows lit and certain black. In Toronto, the Yorkdale Holiday Inn has staggered balconies which thereby create diagonal rows of lights.

Arrigo Lora Totino’s "spazio" (space) (World View, p. 187) reduces

a 3 1/2 x 11 rectangle of the words "spanic" four times. With the words printed in white against a black background, the optical effect creates concave depth as well as black-and-white vibrations.

In apparent virtual-kinetic poetry, like Emmett Williams' "Sweethearts," (Fig. 6) the reader creates the movement by flipping through the pages to initiate a "primitive cinematic effect." 2 The poem book is 141 pages long, with the first 100 pages describing a story about "he" and "she" who are "sweethearts," still in love, and enjoy sex together. The words used to narrate the events are made up of the letters of the word "sweethearts," in their regular order with unused letters blanked out.

When flipped through, two sections of the book become animated—the first nine pages and the final forty-five pages. In the opening animated sequence (see Figs. A) the first nine pages set the scene for the meeting of the two "sweethearts," "he" and "she." Page one has "he" at the top of the page (line 1 of 11), page two has "she" at the bottom (line 11 of 11). Both "he" and "she" appear on page three, again at the top and bottom. From page three to page seven, "he" and "she" each move one line closer to one another and finally combine to form "we" on page eight. This "he" of course is the same "he" on page nine as "she-she-she," where the nine "e"'s are the third "e"'s in "sweethearts," and descend vertically in a straight line. Each page advances the process of "he" or "she" getting closer to the other, finally unite both spatially and semantically into "we.

2. Williams in Sweethearts, n. pag.
About two-thirds of the way through the book, after the sexual climax, Williams no longer uses words to provide lexical meaning. Instead, the shape on the page becomes the controlling mechanism. He produces diamonds, triangles, arrows (see Fig. 62), and finally, one complete block filling all the 121 points with eleven "sweethearts." This last section is all visual animation using slightly varying shapes from page to page. By flipping through the pages, you can achieve a primitive cinematic effect.

A final kind of kinetic poem, which falls outside the boundaries of defined kinetic poetry, is termed self-destuctive poetry. In kinetic art, Dieter Hocker's "Eat Picture" is made to be eaten, since it is composed of peppermints resting in chocolate tablets. Once eaten, there is no more object. In Nicol's poem, "Gold Mountain," comes with instructions "for eventual destruction (sic)." The reader is told to fold the poem into a cone and then "drop a lit match down the centre cone." Andrew Suknaski has also created self-destructive poems, such as his poem candles left to burn on beaches.

3 In Rickey, p. 16.
4 Toronto: Galaxia, n.d.
CHAPTER IV

MATHMATICAL POETRY

Mathematical poetry employs recognizable mathematical relationships that control the ordering of the language in a poem. The process used to create a mathematical poem is common to all such poetry. First, there must be a formula, e.g., complete permutation; second, there is the selection of language, e.g., tear down all jails now; and lastly there is the combination of the formula and the language to yield the poem, which in this case is the 120 permutations of the phrase "tear down all jails now."

"alphabet en quadratbuch" (4-sided alphabet book) (Fig. 7) starts with blank space on page one and progressively fills the pages with letters of the alphabet, which represent the language selection component of mathematical poems. The method of adding letters, page by page, is the formula of the poem. This formula is based on "serial relationships" which means that the placement of letters depends on an arithmetic series of numerical relationships, such as the series 5, 10, 15, 20. Each page of the poem moves the series another step forward towards completely filling a 26 times 26 grid of points, each point covered three times with letters of the alphabet. The combining of the mathematical formula (serial relationships) with language (the letters of the alphabet) yields a mathematical poem by Hansjör Mayer.

When the total number of letters per page is noted, one can arithmetically describe the first of three series which proceeds page by

1 Mayer in World View, p. 12.
pal: 0 (blank), 1, 4, 8, 13, 19, 26 (1x26), 4x26, 8x26, 13x26,
19x26, 26x26, 3x26x26. Note that the series 1, 4, 8, 13, 19, 26 is
twice repeated, the exceptions being the first (0) and last (3x26x26)
page. Another relation found between the consecutive numbers in the
first series is the difference (subtraction) between successive numbers
which goes 3(4-1), 4(8-4), 5(13-8), 6(19-13), and 7(26-19).
The second series emphasizes the first, since the number of letters
per line on pages 7 through 12 increases in the same order as the series
1, 4, 8, 13, 19, 26.

In the third series, the starting positions of the letters on the
twenty-six horizontal lines are: the letter "a" on line 13, "b" on 12,
"c" on 11 and so on until "n" is on line 1 and "n" on line 26. As the
poem progresses, the letters move sequentially up the page but down in
line number. For example, letter "a" moves to line 12, and "b" moves
to line 11. On page 7, all 26 letters appear. Beginning on page 8,
new letters are added systematically in equal numbers to the final pages.
For example on page 8, the three new "a"'s are placed in lines 12, 11,
and 10 directly above (but not rigidly above) the initial "a" in line
13.

Each individual page of the poem represents another step in a
series. Page 3, for example, introduces the letters "b", "c", and "d"
and begins the systematic placement of the letters. Page 10 continues
the increasing number of letters per line from 6 to 17, and continued the rigid
placement of letters from one line onwards to the next. Page 13 com-
pletes all the series; in fact, it corresponds with page 1 in
the sense of being at the extreme end of the series. Here page 1 is
Fig. 8

Do You Remember (For Alien Knowledge)

when I kissed soft pink mermaids
and you hated hard blue valleys
and I kissed yellow red potatoes
and you loved vivid green headaches
and I kissed red green apple
and you kissed hard pink cisters
and I loved yellow blue nights
and you hated loved red valleys
and I kissed soft pink potatoes
and you loved vivid yellow cisters
and I loved yellow red cisters
and I hated yellow green adrops
and I kissed yellow pink cysters
and I loved yellow blue potatoes
and you loved love pink cisters
and I loved hard red cisters
and you kissed pink yellow potatoes
and you kissed green blue potatoes
and you loved hard red cisters
and I loved yellow green cisters
and I hated yellow green cisters
and I kissed yellow green potatoes
and you loved vivid red cisters
and I hated soft green adrops
and I kissed hard yellow potatoes
and I kissed yellow green potatoes
and you loved vivid red cisters
and I loved soft blue cisters
and you kissed loved red valleys
and I kissed yellow red potatoes
and you loved vivid yellow potatoes
and I hated soft pink cisters
and I loved hard blue cisters
and I loved yellow red cisters
and you hated loved green valleys
and I kissed soft pink potatoes
and you kissed hard pink cisters
and I loved yellow green adrops
and you kissed loved yellow cysters
and I loved soft pink potatoes
blank, page 13 has 3×26×26 letters, each point on the grid having three letters superimposed on it. These letters are virtually impossible to read, but you can see that the bottom letter is the same as was on page 12. The other two letters have been superimposed in horizontal positions, one tilted left and one tilted right.

"alphabetenquadratbuch I" lends itself to several abstract analyses. One such analysis is that the movement from uninhabited to overcrowded space represents the particular movement of mankind in general. Another might be that the transition from individual letters floating freely in space to superimposed letters which are very difficult to decipher indicated that the expansion of language, like the Tower of Babel, corresponds to the deterioration of human-to-human communication.

Emmett Williams' "do you remember" (Fig. 8) uses incomplete permutation as its main mathematical technique. The poem is composed of six vertical sets of words, each set one word longer than the one before: set one - and; set two - i, you; set three - loved, hated, kissed; set four - soft, hard, yellow, red, blue, green; set five - nights, valleys, potatoes, seagulls, dewdrops, oysters; set six - hours, minutes, seconds, minutes, seconds, minutes. Each individual set contains the same part of speech: set one - conjunction; set two - pronoun; set three - verb; set four - adverb; set five - adjective; set six - noun. As well, each line in the poem uses one word from each set in a regular order from set one through to set six. In each line, the words function grammatically in this order: co-ordinating conjunction, subject, predicate, modifier of direct object (twice), direct object. Line two, for example reads: "and you hated hard blue valleys." Each of the following lines proceeds on a very regular basis: the second word in every line alternates between "i" and "you": the
third word between "loved," "hated," and "kissed," and so on. Although the total number of permutations of six words is 720 lines, Williams has kept it down to sixty-one lines by eliminating certain groupings. Thus the first three words "and I loved" are only followed by "soft" or "mellow," never "hard" or "livid." His choice of which combinations to exclude was apparently arbitrary.

The overall effect of "do you remember" is like a merry-go-round of words and sounds which move so quickly they make a blur of sense. Among various meanings and sound combinations, there are interesting two-word, three-word, sentence, and composite groupings. The words "lovelivid," "mellow yellow," and "hard red" are all rhyming groups. In the three-word groups, "soft pink nights," "hard green valleys," and "soft blue dewdrops," all portray unusual images as well as evocative sounds. "and I kissed soft blue potatoes" seems improbable but connotes the apt sound of kissing potatoes because of its hard consonants "k", "d", "t", "b", "p", "t", and "t". The mixture of appropriate and inappropriate meanings multiplies over the length of the poem and eventually sense is shattered and only sound carries importance. The various possible sequences that someone is asked to remember consist of sound recollections, not meaning. Like an old song which stirs up old memories, the kaleidoscope of sound is the sole effect that the person addressed is asked to recall.

Erion Eysin's "I am that I am" is only partially rational, and is based on the three words - "I am that." There are forty-eight lines, but each is five words long. The first six-line sequence reads:
Edwin Morgan’s "The Computer’s First Christmas Card" (Fig. 9) humorously characterizes how a computer would complete the pattern established by the words "jollymerry." Each line is composed of two five-letter words, both of which are structured letter by letter as follows: consonant, vowel, double same consonant, and "y". Some of the words are invented (heppy, hoppy), some are common (jolly, merry), but all of them were "programmed" to refer to "Christmas cheer, joy, parties, drinking, etc." 2

The "program" initially seems to be regularly structured: "jollymerry," hollyberry," "jollyberry," and "merryholy." With line five, however, no order is apparent; the program appears to have been randomly generated, while maintaining the consistent line pattern and theme.

The first computer-created word occurs in line nine, "heppy," a cross between "happy" and possibly "merry." In line ten, the first human name, "Kolly," appears, followed by "Jerry," "Marry," "Sarry," and "Jarly."

At line twenty-nine, a foul-up in the word-generating process appears: the word "merry" is twice repeated, and then line thirty repeats line twenty-nine. The first word of line thirty-one, "merry," makes a total of six "merry"'s in a row, but the chain is broken because "Chris" follows "erry," which disrupts the phrase, Merry Christmas. Although "Chris" has five letters, it is the first word that does not fit the consonant-vowel pattern of the previous thirty lines. Line thirty-two further upsets the

2 Morgan in Anthology, p. 215.
patterns; there is only one word, "very," and it is out of place. The computer finally struggled to a seasonal greeting, "very Chrysanthemum," which is cheerful enough but slightly out of season.

Hedmark Gregorova and Josef Hinal's "Svobodni Freeden" (Anthology, p. 138) begins with the Czech word "svoboda" (freedom) which thirty-six lines later has been translated into the English word "freedom." The method used moves the word to the left, dropping the first letter, and placing it at the end, so "svoboda" (line 1) becomes "voboda" (line 2) and "oboda" (line 3). Once the word has moved completely to the left, the letters of "freedom" are added one at a time, when the letters of the temporary word appears in its original "svoboda" position, "v" for "3", "f" for "1", and so on. The poem's political message is that Czechoslovakia can become free by becoming Westernized (adopting the English language).

"Null Breach," (Fig. 12) by Jackson MacLow, lists the complete set of possible permutations of the five words "Tear down all jail now." There is no question that "null breach" is an aggressive denunciation of prisons and that the core message is "destroy jails!"

Each of the five words heads one column of twelve-four five-word lines, where the order of words line 1 to line 6 but the first word remains constant. As well, each column stresses one particular aspect of the message according to the increased emphasis on the first word's column one, "Tear," column two, "down," and so on with "all," "jail," and "now."

The most obvious way to read the poem is simply to begin at the top and continue until you have finished. Other readings are possible, and MacLow himself suggests two of these: In the first, there are five
people, each of whom has twenty-four cards beginning with the same word and containing all the permutations possible, with that word at the beginning. The process is free form, with each person selecting his cards at his own speed and reading them at his own rate and with his own tone. The second way given by MacLow is more rigidly structured and involves a conductor—in addition to five readers. The conductor randomly selects one of the 120 cards, shows it to the reader who belongs to the first word, and then the reader reads it. No matter what way the poem is read, however, the message is clear: "Tear-down all jails now."

"Jail Break" listed all the possible combinations of five words—120 possibilities in all. However, as soon as the number of words goes beyond five (six words have 720 possibilities, eight have 5760, and so on), the mechanics of completing the combinations must become the task of a computer. In the case of Patrick Anderson's "Poem on Canada," Peter Stevens parodied a particular stanza by offering seven word possibilities for the twenty-four key words in six lines (Fig. 11). The total number of permutations is gigantic, and out of the numerous creations are some likely lines and stanzas, including:

Mine are the violet leaves of the trees in canals,
By sprawl is the vast eye of the horlocal and the spires of Ottawa
Rolling by the slope of potash, at Sackett's
By fields are the prairies of sun but also the pent-houses of Jasper
Where the unemployed question, dull with frost,
And my future is their unconcern and the Niagara Falls Motels.

Yet this proves is that the computer can be used effectively when given a group of words with which it can generate all the possibilities. Accordingly, the computer provides the combinations (with words supplied by the poet), and the poet chooses the groupings he requires most.

Other examples of computer poetry include K. K. Worthy's random
generation of 3500 words into 128 sentence-patterns. One grouping,
"Kites/Yes, so passionately did my bleak worms live underneath the King/
Ah, few sects at all bland." indicates that the old maxim about the
monkeys and the typewriter might have some validity.

3 See Peter Stevens and Robert J. Scott, "Rhetorically Based/
Producing Poetry . . . ." University of Alabama, 20, 2 (Spring, 1970), 27-34.
Semantic chaos equals moral anarchy.
Some smite tose seek all where I'll enter by
Some aunt nowadays sex ill: wear you'll in her lie
Shaw, paw, taling whoe trick: more guys into vice.
Shame, scout, trails king: boys lock more plain for vice.
Search: tricks willing boy stuck more trying for vice.
Semitic, haves killing, play crutch: where lies in sure noise.
Semitic hives appeal on, so: much more prey on small guys.
See now stick stretch, seek all normal anus dry.
Search those wage noise tall formal date high.
Semantic chaos equals moral anarchy.
CHAPTER V

SOUND POETRY

Sound concrete poetry is based on repetition of rhyming words following a specific arrangement; shuffling the orderings of words is fairly common, and less frequent are chaotic, unsystematic repetitions of sounds.

All sound concrete poetry attempts to delve into the sonic value of language, sometimes in conjunction with conceptual meaning, sometimes as an exercise in exploring sound possibilities. Quite often, the only copy of a sound poem is on record. Because sound poets use various instruments in their recordings, literal transcription would be impossible.

Peter Stevens' "semantic chaos" (Fig. 12) is a sound poem which begins with the line "semantic chaos equals moral anarchy" and proceeds to replace it with a series of ten successively like-sounding lines until the original line is restored. Combined with this continual sound change, the meaning of the words is consistently related to the theme of the poem, "semantic chaos equals moral anarchy." Initially the words do not appear to make sense, ("semantic chaos") but when after close reading, they do, various kinds of deprived condition ("nonsensical anarchy") are described.

By following through the successive iterations of the initial word - "semantic" - we can observe the sound changes and the return to the original word "semantic." "Semantic" becomes successively, "Sane antique," "Some aunt hawk,?" "Chao yam, talk," "Chao, yours, stalks," "Seamus shacks," "Semitic fakes," "Sonic kikes," "See ran kick," "Semen thick," and "Semantic."
Read aloud, the lines of the poem run into each other, and the meaning seems difficult to understand. But there is a reason for this difficulty, as is stated in the theme-setting line, "semantic chaos equals moral anarchy." Paradoxically, the words do make sense as specific examples of "moral anarchy." There is a mention of prostitutes - "some antique whores" -; incest - "some aunt hawkeyes sex ill; swear you'll in her lie" -; pornography - "talking voice tricks more guys into vice" -; sexual licence - "Seamus shacks willing" -; bestiality - "boy stuck mare trying for vice" -; violence - "semitic fakes killing, ploy crutch" -; prostitution again - "whore lies in sure poise" -; racial bigotry - "Semitic kikes squeal on goy" -; bullying and violence - "much more (power) preys on small guys/ See men kick arse" -; sodomy - "oh, seek all normal anus dry" -; and perversion - "Semen thick sauce hoses tall formal daze high."

Thus while the words seem at first to make very little sense, after some study the many varieties of "moral anarchy" become recognizable. But then there is no "semantic chaos" because the words make sense. And if there is no "semantic chaos," then, according to the theme sentence, there must be no "moral anarchy." The paradox is resolved this way: although "semantic chaos" appears to exist at first, deeper examination proves that it does not exist. Even though semantic order has been established, moral anarchy still exists. In order to replace moral anarchy with moral control, language must proceed to a more complete level of semantic responsibility. The surface understanding of words produces moral anarchy; deeper understanding will be reflected in the lessening of moral anarchy.

Edwin Morgan's "Zoo" (Fig. 13) contains fifteen four-word lines,
where the first letters of the words in each line alliterate. Each line's first word is the name of an animal, some of which are exotic - "catamount" (puma) and "Muntjac" ( Asiatic deer) - and some familiar - "chipmunk" and "octopus." The second word in each line sounds quite similar to the animal name preceding it - "crocodile"/"catcall," "bowerbird"/"Bluebeard," and most of them are double words - "catmint" and "dustblow." As well, the third words continue the sound similarities; two of them are invented words - "backfisch" and "champak" - and many are rarely used - "skirling" and "dogg." The final words repeat the sound closeness and all but one of them are made up - "jaliossa" and "chouf."

Unlike an animal zoo, Morgan's "Zoo" is a collection of animal names and their sonic relatives. The poetic effect of the poem results from the flurry of sound when the words are read aloud.

Morgan specializes in sound poems based on a particular premise. In "Rainbow," like "semantic chaos," the words "ghh and lila slik" "hgbux yfll trfow whrhtua" are transformed into the colors of the rainbow - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. "hgbux" becomes "gahux grhut, grant, gloch, glare, grand, grasp, great, greed, greek, green." Morgan's "Perander" combines the shape of a perander with the expansion of the sound of "perander" to give lines like "open perander"/ open poem and her...open hymn and poppon bard and panda hamper."

The next two poems are more difficult to discuss than the previous sound poems because there is no written copy of them. "Salad"...

---

1 Stereo Headphones IV (Spring, 1971), n. pag.
2 Anthology, p. 217.
3 "Salad" is on the record Journeying & the Return, Toronto.
recorded by bp Michol together with a large group of his friends while "in the middle of a blue balloon" features The Four Horsemen - bp Michol, Steve McAffery, Paul Dutton, and Rafael Barreto-Rivera.

In "Salad," the various ingredients of a vegetable salad such as lettuce, celery, cucumber, and tomato are each repeatedly spoken by a human voice. The initial effect of continually speaking of the same word is that the word begins to sound funny. Next, the speaker finds a satisfactory tone, pitch, loudness, and rate with which he repeats the word. In "Salad," each vegetable thus receives its own interpretation.

The poem begins with subdued voices reciting their own particular vegetable. In moments the readers become more and more excited, freely shouting out "celery" or "tomato." Very often, one person's way of reading his single word demonstrably changes other readings. As "celery" is spoken louder and faster, the other vegetables pick up this cue and follow suit. Then a quiet voice alters the reading, this time the gradually gaining the dominant control in the poem. Finally, one voice remains which pronounces the word "lettuce" slowly and sonorously sounding like "let us." Like a musical "jam session," groups of sound poets get together to improvise on a basic theme. The result depends on the particular performance, in "Salad" according to the amount of interplay between speakers, the overall design, and the energy.

The Four Horsemen, having read sound poetry together for over two years, have the advantage of knowing each other so well: capitalizing on them, Steve McAffery makes straining laughter-like sounds, Paul Dutton can rapidly pronounce "d"s and "t"s, Rafael Barreto-Rivera has a Spanish accent, and bp Michol has a strong rhythmical sense. Together they recorded "in the middle of a blue balloon."
The structure of "in the middle of a blue balloon" is based on several repeatable components such as a radio being tuned, diabolical laughter, quotes from science fiction movies, absurd comments, and the title phrase. It is virtually impossible to assign any meaning to the poem. The description from the album reads: "in the middle of a blue balloon" is a "hallucinogenic outburst of controlled madness. . . . exploring the primitive dimensions of the human mind."

The central feature of the poem is the unrelatedness of its various sounds, together with their repetition. The poem begins with a steady, loud buzzing. After ten seconds, the buzz decreases and is replaced by the sound of a radio dial being moved in order to zero in on a precise frequency. The dial passes over a sports report several times until Barreto-Rivera's voice is heard saying: "in the middle of a blue balloon." The "po" sounds in "blue" and "balloon" are stretched and exaggerated, then followed by a string plucked, two wooden blocks snapped together twice, and a string of diabolical laughter. This diabolical sense is extended in some parodies of mad scientist movies, for example: "I can destroy you. Only I have the power. You were once, part of me."

This is said in a very desperate kind of voice and is followed by some heavy panting, probably by the scientist's assistant (Peter Lorre). These are fragments of knocking on a door (which sounds like the bottom of a guitar), and voices urging "come in, come in." Sometimes this weird satirical feeling turns to open humour, such as when a very flat

---

4 From Canadada, recorded in Toronto.

5 From a folder included in Canadada.
voice asks: "Hey, what's going on? You're shorter than yesterday?"
Among the other background sounds are all sorts of human-made sounds, such as clucking, roaring, popping, gasping, and puckering. Towards the end, the opening phrase is repeated, together with some random harmonica sounds, and fulsome laughter which very gradually turns into a whimper. The sound of a radio overtakes the whimper, although the words are almost indecipherable. Then the initial buzzing returns, signifying the loss of the frequency.

Most sound poetry, like traditional poetry, is concerned with the sound-sense correlation. Unlike traditional poetry, sound poetry uses preconceived formulae to relate the words. Most often, sound poetry permits various words in many or all of their combinations.

The range of possibilities in sound poetry is just beginning to be explored, especially with recorded poetry which uses electronic techniques. Henri Chopin and Paul de Vree, among others, are currently engaged in such experimental electronic alterations of language.
CHAPTER VI

TYPOGRAPHICAL POETRY

Each poem in this chapter makes use of printed language or signs to create its major effect. The simplest example, "jetzt" (now), reprints the same word in multiple types. If you printed the word "now" in small letters, and then printed it in capital letters, "NOW," you would notice a difference in effect. This simple example underlies the foundation of typographical poetry. By altering the sort of typeface, you alter the reader's response. Thus by using ornate letters, you set up an expectation of luxury and opulence whereas plain typewritten letters smack of commonness and poverty. If letters are designed graphically, you forget their meaning and concentrate on their shape and design. Non-linguistic signs create a feeling of science and technology. Hence each different typography demands a particular reader response, against or combined with which the poet can compare the meaning of the language used.

"Jetzt" (now), (Fig. 12) by Gerhard Ruhl, simply demonstrates the effectiveness of different kinds of typography. Only one word, "jetzt," is used, but there are twelve different typographical versions of it. Each typeface indicates the way in which that particular "jetzt" should be read.

In order to identify the individual "jetzt"'s, we can divide the poem into three groups, one at the top left, one at the top right, and one at the bottom right. The typefaces of the bottom right group of three "jetzt"'s are large, bold, medium, and light, and indicate that the "jetzt"'s should be read loudly, normally, and softly, while
different typefaces control the loudness of the word, "jetzt"'s which are capitalized must be read with firmness and power, but not necessarily loud. At the top right-hand corner, one "jetzt" is in italics, occasioning a slightly different reading from the other non-italicized "jetzte" — perhaps in an altered pitch. What is significant, then, is that different typefaces, capitalizations, and italics all provide specific information on how to read the word "jetzt." Each pronunciation adds a different shade of meaning to "jetzt" (now), some creating a sense of insecurity and some dulling the urgency of the meaning.

Bill Eissett's "Quebec Bombers" (Fig. 15) is very complex because of its initially curious shape and overlapping typographies, as well as because of the tremendous concentration of meaning into small bits of language. Three typographies each have separate functions, both decorative and meaningful. The graphically designed borders provide vertical stability and the fleur-de-lis recall Quebec. The big letters are cracking, like the insecurity of the province of Quebec (F. 4.) itself, and the letters "H" and "S" are not immediately followed by "R" and "S," leaving the impression that Eissett has chosen the letters for reasons other than simply alphabetic. The next letters, "E" and "L," have two translations: first, "tu" means "you" in French, and "tu" also is part of the verb, "tuer," (to kill). Thus "tu" "tu" means "you kill," and refers to the ruling class of Quebec. The rest of the letters, "V,..., I, F, E" probably indicate the reign of both the capitalist and the end of capitalist control. Their very haphazard design shows the end of the dominant power on the page and the province in a power which is splitting apart under pressure. The third layer of typomathy is typewriter words — solid, simple, and direct. They represent the new radical citizen of Quebec who moves against the old power base from a humble, but
secure, foundation.

These typewritten letters contain the heart of the poem's message. The fragment at the top of the page, "we're only human too were," describes the effect of the non-Quebec ruling class who change Quebeckers from human to sub-human. What once human ("we" = we're = we are) has now lost its humanity (were = we were). Just beneath this opening phrase is a large section of typewritten words, partly obscured by the larger letters. "what can we say" is repeated for the first two lines and has a dual significance as a rhetorical question, suggesting both resignation and action - where words have no longer any value. A large block of typewritten, and partially superimposed "y"s follows, asking repeatedly "why?" In the center of the page a clear unequivocal "keep yr cell clean" (keep your cell clean) refers to the small revolutionary FLQ cadres and urges them to remain true to their idealistic purposes.

The final block of typewriting is the largest of the poem. It begins with "dirty concrete poet" repeated twice, changing to "the concrete is dirty dirty," "sun like it clean what dew they ooo..."

The distinction between "clean" and "dirty" concrete poetry is that "in clean concrete... the visual shape of the work is primary, linguistic signs secondary." Dirty concrete poems have "amorphous physical shape and complex and involute arrangements of the linguistic elements." As related to "quebec borders," the comparison relates the clean ordered life of a capitalist and the dirty chaotic life of

---

1 Frank Goway, Early (New York: Toronto, 1973), p. 43
2 Ibid., p. 43.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LUXO</th>
<th>LUXO</th>
<th>LUXO</th>
<th>LUXO</th>
<th>LUXO</th>
<th>LUXO</th>
<th>LUXO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td>LUXO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the lower classes. "Dirt" fills the next five lines from margin to margin in an even pattern, an empty line follows, then "dirt" returns in some of its anagram combinations, "ddt" (a permanent insecticide) and "dt"'s (delirium tremens). These letter variations of the word "dirt" describe the results ("dt"'s) of poor living conditions, where "ddt" is necessary. Lastly, the word "spray" is printed, and its anagrams underscore the thrust of the whole poem: the "spray" of ddt; the religious "prey" of the uninformed who are prey for the capitalists; the "spa"'s of the rulers; the "ways" of hope; the lack of "pay"; and the sterilization of the people — "spays." This line is followed by a row of "aggh"'s and "agh"'s, the sounds of deep distress and pain.

Bill Bissett often writes anti-establishment poetry, as in "quebec bombers" where he condemns what he considers the colonial state of Quebec. By manipulating three different typographies, Bissett sets up a complex group of graphic and semantical correspondences which result in overwhelming "praise" for those "quebec bombers" who dare to shatter the remnants of political and social repression.

Augusto de Campos' "Luxo-Lixo" (Luxury-Slumber) (Fig. 16) demonstrates the use of one particular typeface which conveys one impression while the words it creates convey another. "Luxo-Lixo" is presented like a small booklet; on the title page there is printed the single word "Luxo," in very ornate letters. The reverse page of the title page is blank, as is the cover in color; the book is illustrated from "Lixo" building blocks piled into high, open letter "L"'s, one an "I". The letters "X" and "I" appear similarly on the next two pages. The back page is blank.

The crux of the poem is the relationship between "Luxo," "Lixo,"
and the ornate lettering. Apparently, from the title page, the poem is about luxury, and both the meaning and the lettering correspond to each other. However, with the spelling of the word "Lixo" out of "Luxo" elements, there is a contradiction. The solution is that "Lixo" depends for its existence on "Luxo," as can be seen from the construction of "Lixo," likewise, "Luxo" depends on "Lixo," for without poverty there can be no wealth.

In Steve McCaffrey's book, "transitions to the beast," subtitled "post semiotic poems," he feels that language as a "single limited form of verbal expression" must be expanded. In order to create "a language of immediate and tight visual impact with no spatial separation," McCaffrey builds most of his poems from single letters altered in perspective and shape. By staying with the single letter he hopes to create "a more rawly human" poetry which will succeed in "bringing poetry back to the body where it truly belongs." McCaffrey's poetry is a conscious attempt to deny the lexical meaning of words by making them dependent on their shape and perspective alone. In the poem which explores the letter "A" (Fig. 17) parts of the letter "A" appear in motion, dropping through the page in varying combinations. But the letter "A" is never shown in its usual shape. In the six shapes on the page, only the third and fourth approach a shape which we could readily call "A." But the third has the middle bar extended horizontally on both sides, like the fourth, as a large "E" behind and to its right. The other shapes are less easily identifiable but

---

3 transitions to the beast: post semiotic poems (Toronto, 1970), n. pag.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
still recognizable as parts of "A".

All the drawings are portrayed as 3-dimensional, because of the optical illusion of giving depth to objects on paper. In the first drawing, a flat thin rectangle rests on an inverted "V"-shape. The rectangle then separates from the "V"-shape in the second phase, when the "V"-shape gains width of its sides. Next the rectangle coincides with a slightly altered "V"-shape and then it tilts to the right as the rectangle shifts to face perpendicular. The fifth drawing shows a triangle (the upper part of an "A") and a small rectangle partially revealed behind it. In the final phase, three separate parts - the triangle, a rectangle with a wedge cutout, and a long square board - are spread out.

McCaffery’s attempt to go beyond the normal lexical boundaries of language is characteristic of concrete poetry’s tendency to explore the potentials of language. "A" is successful based on various criteria, since it is pleasing to the eye, since it extends the limits of language, and since it unsettles the reader’s predispositions.

An additional point about "A" is that the letters are hand-drawn. Other concrete poems are more obviously hand-written, such as Harry Binsley's "Like a Rock," (Pepin, pp. 21) Carl Craver's "The Four A's" (Newcastle, p. 257), one of Edward Knob's poems, and much of Andrew Link. Judith SVM's non-machine-printed poems are much closer to calligraphy than to most other concrete poetry. In "Spirit" (Fig. 13) the letters of the word "spirit" are camouflaged in the swirls and whirls of calligraphy. In fact, there is a definite form on the page which has two arms, two legs, a head, and wings within, which rests the word "spirit."
As we have seen in "A", the difference between graphics and typographical poetry is at certain points very minimal. Both deal with the print media, using various kinds of techniques (inks, machines, etc.) to present their form. Typographical poems, however, always use letters, words, or translatable symbols in some part of their design whereas graphics do not.

Hansjörg Mayer's series of poems, "alphabet," concerns itself typographically with each letter of the alphabet. In Fig. 19, the letter "i" is presented eight times across the page. Each non-capitalized "i" is printed in the same large block size, but because they are side by side, a certain pictorial design has been created.

Three of the "i"s are on the left side and five are on the right. The dot of the second "i" on the left reaches the top of the first "i"s bar, while the bar of the third "i" comes to the bottom of the second "i"s dot. Thus a block of white space is enclosed, and one square block is unattached. Between groups, there is a white space, the width of an "i". In the second group, the second "i"'s bar projects past the first "i"s dot. The dot of the third "i" is even with the bar of the second "i", while the dot of the fourth reaches only halfway to the preceding dot. The last "i"s bar matches the preceding dot. In this second set, there are two white blocks of space, and two unattached dots. The boldness of black on white and the sharp variations of vertical and horizontal lines lend distinction and clarity to the form.

Other typographical designs composed of letters include Leonardo Millan's "Text 1" (World View, p. 174), and by Richard "eye" (Anthology, pp. 224-225). Nichol's complete attempt to deal with the alphabet in terms of graphic design yielded ABCD THE ALPH BET which gave one
page to each letter's design. Hart Eroudy's poems use type as the primary elements of scene construction (Cecil Cheff, p. 51).

"The Birth of God" (Pie, 20) represents an intermediary position between typographical poems using letters and typographical poems using non-alphabetic symbols. The poem is made up of two typewritten numbers—one and zero—each combining to picture the other. Thus the inner numeral "1" is composed of a group of zeroes twenty-one-high and from three to eleven across. The outer numeral "0" is made up entirely of ones.

The central point of the poem; the actual birth of God, is treated in two ways. First, out of the void (zeroes) came God (the one). Secondly, God is made of zeroes or nothing, while the void is made of ones or something. Both of these notions are valid interpretations, since the poem is intended to be ambiguous. Lionel Kearns, who wrote the poem, reads much meaning into the ambiguities. He regards the poem as representative of the "creative/destructive principle of the mutual interpretation and interdependence of opposites." By this, he means that the simultaneous meanings of a) one out of nothing, and b) zeroes making ones/ones making zeroes correspond to a natural law of polarities. This law is demonstrated in many ways: "one and zero, something and nothing, substance and void, positive and negative, yin and yang," etc.

---

6 As quoted in How Do I Love Thee, ed. John Robert Colombo (Edmonton, 1970), p. 120.

7 Ibid., p. 170.
The use of "typewritten" signs as elements of poetry has its counterpart in Carl Reutemann's "Trix Kobal," (1967, p. 259) where the poem is constructed entirely from punctuation marks. Bem (from Sylvester I. Landau) has created "typewriting," which make complete use of the facilities of the typewriter, including cursive script, different colored ribbons, and all sixty-six symbols. David Aylward makes exclusive use of non-letter typewriter symbols to produce artistic designs (Coomin, Cref., p. 34).

Luiz Amico Pinto, together with Jesus Roasani, created in 1951 a new kind of typographical poet with they termed "Doric-Poetry." Their intention was to re-extend available letters with signs more well-known into a new area where they created their own signs. In this way, they attempted to correlate the newly designed language with the function of the poem. The second reason for creating new signs was in order to allow complete freedom of syntax, even in concrete poetry, where syntax is no longer based exclusively on grammar, the original point of departure is always that same grammar. In order to break the rule they necessarily had to refer to it. But with a new set of signs, there was no longer any need to refer to the old set of relations.

"yes-no" (Fig. 21) is one of Pinto's first attempts at Doric-Poetry. In it, he creates language based on two given signs: a right-pointing arrow, (no), and a left-pointing arrow, (yes).

There are five phases of the poem, which progress from top to bottom. In the first position, the two signs are separated by height and width. In the second position, only width separates them. Next, they are squeezed together, eliminating one square block. Again, they are squeezed together, this time eliminating the remaining square block, and combining the two triangles into a diamond. In the last position, the diamond is reversed to reveal a square.
Semantically, with the aid of the lexical key, the process is the combination of yes and no, positive and negative, or any polar abstractions into a unity. This combination would be impossible to achieve (visually) without the use of a new set of signs. Perhaps it would be impossible to communicate this unity by using the old signs, no matter what syntax were used. Through new signs, however, comes new communication.

"yes-no" is a first step in the creation of semiotic poetry. As a primitive model, there are some difficulties, the most obvious being the need to have a lexical key to translate the signs. Nevertheless, "yes-no" achieves both requirements for a semiotic poem: it creates a new set of signs and it establishes a new syntax between them.

Pinto has written a similar semiotic poem, "male-female," (World View, p. 111) where the right-pointing male triangle merges with the left-pointing female triangle, create a disc, then split again. Ian Hamilton Finlay's "uroboros" poem (Anthology, p. ) appears to at the semiotic poem, complete with a lexical key of various objects, such as a white circle representing a buttonhole and a flower.

The last kind of typographic poem is that which uses newly created signs which do not translate to words. Mary Ellen Solt's title, "Moon Shot Sonnet," (Fig. 22) covertly gives the explanation of the poem.

"Sonnet," because there are fourteen lines in a 4, 4, 3, 3 pattern of the traditional English sonnet form... "Moon," because the sign is the "scientific symbol for marking off areas on the moon's surface."
The poem contains little complexity beyond understanding that it is a "riff of an outdated form of poetry," and an outdated Romantic language. The signs themselves are of three shapes - "T", "L", and "X", and the core area of each stanza is a square enclosing a cross. Perhaps there is some religious overtones here, but I doubt it. The poem appears to be exactly what it professes to be: a twentieth century spoof of a seventeenth century form.

From this point in time, it appears that typographical poems have little room to develop. If semiotic poetry is to advance any further, it must create entire new language systems, perhaps computer language like Cobol or Fortran. Initially, then, translation would need to be supplied, just as the "lexical core" does in "yos-e-to." As well, these semiotic poems repeat the same episodic linear techniques of tradition language. Perhaps the next step in the development of typographic poetry will be to surmount these early problems and succeed in the creation "of a set of signs anchored in functionality and pragmatism."  

9 Mary Ellen Solt as quoted in _Anthea_, p. 297.
10 McCaffery in "Transitions," n. pag.
CHAPTER VII

SPATIAL POETRY

The use of space in concrete poetry falls into three broad divisions, based on the particular function of space in the poem. These divisions are: 1) space as revealer; 2) space as compressor; and 3) space as picture maker. In the first division, the space between letters, words, or lines is increased so that the normal span is expanded, e.g., entrance, thereby producing new blank space. It follows that in the second division, space between letters, words, or lines is decreased, causing the overlapping of letters such as love, where the "o" functions in two words. Words which create objects on the page, such as crosses, fall into division three; they are rare, however, and are best dealt with in contrast to pattern poetry. 1

SurenGjerring's "silence" (Fig. 23) explores the normal space between words in order to create a meaning for the new blank space. "silence" is composed of fourteen repetitions of the word "silence" in a five by three word rectangle, with the central "silence" missing. To define silence, it is usually necessary to employ many other words, such as reticence or reticence (see). Gjerring defines silence, by using the word silence itself, the exact blank space. Silence always bears the needed information because silence is the absence of words or sound, as indicated by the blank space.

1 See Appendix A.
As a secondary point of interest, "silence" demonstrates the reason why concrete poetry is such a rapidly spreading international movement. When poems are composed of only one word, and their primary effect results from spatial usage, then translation becomes very simple. As shown in Fig. 21, the poem is printed in Spanish, Italian, and English with no loss of meaning or impact. O'Hara regards this universal quality of concrete poetry as very important and he looks forward to the day when concrete poetry "shall be as easily understood as signs in airports and traffic signs."  

Concrete poems using blank spaces in their center are fairly common. One interesting variation in Claude Bures' "Is the text" (Articulate, p.79). The first line, "Is the text the text left out" becomes "Is the text left out the text" and so on, with a blank parallelogram occupying the center until the final line reads "the text left out is the text."  

In "She loves me," (Fig. 24), Wright gradually eliminates words from lines, thereby creating blank spaces. Williams starts with the ritual of plucking petals from a daisy; in turn, she loves me, she loves me not, she loves me, etc. The pattern is altered by successively removing the last word from each of the odd- and even-numbered lines, freeing the space at the end of three lines. As more and more space is revealed, the love's thoughts become mere and more specified, from "She loves me not" to "She loves me," "... loves," "she," and finally a blank space. This progression of or even possibly becomes too strenuous and obsessive for him, and with the blank space he abandons all thought.

---

2 In World View, p. 79.
As in "silence," the value of the blank space in "she loves me" is crucial to the poem's meaning. Each removal of words causes more detailed attention until the lover eventually looks right through and beyond his doubts into repose and nothingness.

A final example demonstrating the use of blank space as an intrinsic part of the poem is Ernst Jandl's "film" (fig. 25). The word film is repeated fifty-three times in a vertical row while the two interior letters, "i" and "l," are interchanged and reversed in various combinations. Jandl opens the space between the "f" and the "m" by eliminating one or both of the letters "i" and "l"; consequently, he creates a story based on the relative positions or absences of the "i" and "l".

According to Jandl, "there are two actors, 'i' and 'l'. The action starts in line five and ends in the fifth line from the bottom." The first four words, all "film"'s, act as the opening title sequence in a movie where the credits are given in brief. The final five words, also "film"'s, provide the full set of credits.

Jandl's description of the narrative recognizes the inherent importance of blank space. "'i' is alone, changing position 30 times, disappears, 'l' appears, disappears, 'i' appears, disappears, both appear together changing position, like dancing; then 'i' disappears for a long time, which, after stunning 'l' makes 'l' relentless, then invisible, like resignation; when at last 'i' reappears, she dances like jumping about and out of the picture and back again, in a longer stretch than the first time. This state is final. It is the happy.

3 In Anthology, p. 160.
ending of the film." Through the creation of blank space, combined with the moving of two letters, Jandl has successfully developed a story with a "happy ending."

In Ronaldo Azevedo's "rusal," (street-sun), (Fig. 28) the distance between letters is the same as that between words, so that there is no extra space dividing "rus" from "sol." "rusal" falls in the middle area between space as revealer and space as compressor. Although the constriction of space between words removes the amount of space equal to the width of one letter, nevertheless this removal does not impinge on the letters themselves, as is the case in the poems with overlapping letters.

Because the words are right next to each other, the "sol"s appear to run smoothly through the solid block of letters in a right to left diagonal. If the words had been separated by the width of one letter, then the row of "sol"s would not be visually significant. The angle of the four "sol"s is approximately thirty degrees, or very close to the sun's angle above Earth at sunset and sunrise, depending on whether you read diagonally from left to right - "sol" rising - or from right to left - "sol" setting.

"rusal" can be viewed as having two horizontal parts, lines 1-4 and line 5. The first four lines show "sol" (sky sun) rising or setting over or behind the "rus" (street). Line five indicates, by the lack of "sol," that the sun is not present because it has not risen or has already set. In other cases, "rus" becomes "rusa" because the streets

---

4. In Anthology, p. 162.
appear undistinguishable without the light of the sun to separate them.

The closeness of the letters, as well as erasing the "l"'s to move uniformly across the page, also creates the word "nurs" when the "o" and "l" of "sol" are removed. The poem, therefore, uses both of the spatial methods; by compressing the words "nurs" and "sol", the diagonal of "sol"'s is clarified and by creating a blank space after "nurs," the meaning of the poem becomes apparent.

Ian Hamilton Finlay's "acrobats" (Anthology, p. 67) employs space: the letters of the word "acrobats," spelled out and down, and clarifies the letter "s" in the middle. By offsetting the "a", "b", "c", "e", and "s" half a line below and apart from the other letters, Finlay creates a sense of movement, reminiscent of actual acrobats, but not sufficient to be considered kinetic poetry.

In Hagen Fenzinger's "wind," (Fig. 37), the compression of space causes the theoretical overlapping of letters in the word "wind." I propose that the letter letters are shared by separate words, duplicate letters have been overlapped. Ordinarily, if the words had their proper amount of room, there would be no overlapping; instead, there would be more letters used.

There are four four-letter "wind"'s which each share some of the other's letters. All proceed in straight lines, the first from bottom left, the second from top left, the third from top right, and the fourth from bottom right. Further, there are seven five-letter "wind"'s which are not in straight lines but which share letters with the other words. Some of these angular "wind"'s are: 1) lower left w, l, n, and lower left d; 2) lower right w, l, right n, and right d (a triangle); 3) upper left w, l, middle n, and upper d. Each of these contain...
Wind" designates a different direction of the wind, although they are of equal velocity since they are the same length.

To increase the strength of the wind, it is necessary to increase the number of letters comprising the word "wind." There are many examples of stronger "wind"s, including: 1) bottom left w, i, n, middle n, right n, and right d (a strong west); 2) top left w, i, bottom right i, middle n, left n, and bottom left d (a whirlwind); and 3) bottom right w, i, middle n, top d, bottom left d (a gale with a second breath).

Each of these is possible only because of the overlapping of the thirteen letters in "wind."

Similar to "wind," by Nicholas' "blues" (Fig. 28) has overlapping letters brought about by economical use of space. Also "blues" is created from one word, "love," out of whose shape and meaning the central thrust of the poem emerges.

"Blue" is constructed from eight overlapping "loves," two each in straight lines from the left to right and right to left, as well as four vertical "loves," two up and two down. As in "wind," there are fewer or letters than eight separate "love"s. In total, six l's, six o's, four v's, and eight e's - because of the overlapping letters. This overlap creates patterns which are in many directions from one central spot; for example, the third "e" finds the top one, bottom one, the two - functions: 1) as the "e" in two horizontal love; 2) as the "e" in a vertical love; and 3) as the "e" in the diagonal one. An increase in the number of parallel "loves" and "blues" groups results from the overlapping of letters.

Although "blues" is pleasing to the ear, it is incomplete to say, as the anthologist Harry Allen does, that "from his first we learn..."
that love is also a beautiful word to look at." 5 The meaning of the words is vital to the poem's value. The word "love" spelled backwards is "owl," pronounced the same as "evil." Because the other side of "love" is "evil," Michel is disappointed as he shows in his title "blues." 6 But the message of the poem is not entirely gloomy, because the letters "owl" also represent the beginning of the word evolution.

Unlike "wind" and "atmosphere," the constructed words of the poem also overlap each other, thus you can definitely tell there has been a letter overlap without first learning that one letter serves two or more words.

The poem's construction is very simple: the three clearly printed words are initially separated equidistantly from each other, in a horizontal row, and the two "LIKE"s move closer and closer until they are superimposed over "ATTRACTS" in the thirteenth line. The meaning of "LIKE-ATTRACTS LIKE" depends entirely on this inward movement of the words which echoes the motion of the words themselves, as the "LIKE" is "ATTRACTS" to the other "LIKE." Since the two "LIKE"s are finally right next to each other, the resulting superposition on "ATTRACTS" cancels the lexical meaning of the words by obscuring the clarity. Thus while the "LIKE"s are together at last, the words no longer make sense. Perhaps this means that gratification of desire ("LIKE") striving to be united destroys the initial reason for the conjunction.


6 The title might also be drawn from the pattern of a blues lyric, which is repetitions—three lines. In a similar, the first two identical and the third rhyming.
Claus Bremer's "rendering the legible illegible" (Anthology, p. 79) shifts the print to the right so that by line four, the words "rendering," "the," and "legible" are superimposed on the word "illegible."

Heinz Gappayr's "alle" (all) (Anthology, p. 112) has the five letters of "alle" spread across the top of the page, and the letters superimposed on one another at the bottom center of the page.

By increasing or decreasing the amount of space that normally separates letters and words, spatial poetics can offer different perspectives. When space is unexpectedly created, as in "alle," the void produces meaning by itself. When words are superimposed together and the letters overlap, many possible readings become evident because of space used more economically. And when unlike letters overlap, the blocking of the words' legibility causes the obliteration of meaning.
CHAPTER VIII
MISCELLANEOUS CONCRETE POETRY

Each of the five divisions of concrete poetry that I have decided upon contain numerous poetic examples. There are some concrete poems, however, which do not fit neatly into one of the five categories. Despite their rarity, it is necessary to list their general attributes and to supply one such poem. I might mention that a case could be made to squeeze these exceptions into the main categories, but that they are, in my opinion, better treated individually.

The first group, multi-page concrete poetry, uses the individual page to divide images such as stanzas or lines are used in more traditional poems. Multi-page poems are always more than one page in length, with the successive paging acting as a visual demarcator between separate pages and their contents.

Lecto Pigotaro's "LIFE" (Fig. 30) is six pages long, and each page contains a complete notation which is connected with both the page before and the page after. On the first page there is a single bold vertical line placed in the center of the white space. On page two, a horizontal bar extends towards the right of the page out of the bottom of the same vertical line. The single bold bar disappears on page three and is replaced by two horizontal bars, again stretching from the vertical bar to the right of the page, but this time from the top and from the middle. The bottom bar returns on page four, in addition to the two higher bars. A second vertical bar appears on page five which encloses the two blank white spaces.
in a new order - two, one, three, four. But page six also spells the English word "LIFE." Looking back, we can see that the first four pages are also the individual capital letters "L", "L", "I", and "E." While page five is the spatial synthesizing of the letters, page six is the spatial separation of the letters.

The value of successive pages as opposed to one composite page is clearly understandable. If you saw the word "LIFE" at the beginning, as you scanned the poem, for the first time, you would lose the sense of non-linguistic horizontal and vertical bars progressively expanding; that is, premature revelation would prevent the non-verbal reading from being first, instead making it seem like a curious afterfact rather than a significant group of non-verbal signs.

"LIFE" readily offers itself to abstract interpretation. Seen as a developing life-form, it appears that as time progresses in the form of successive pages, the original vertical line grows horizontally, each page adding a new branch. When this has fully evolved, the growth, it matures by setting in order the components of its first and arrives at an adult "LIFE" state. The rectangle with a horizontal line stands for the Chinese ideogram for the sun, the vital principle. Thus the condensation of the letters corresponds to the main source of energy, the sun. Other interpretations are illusory, including the opinion that page five represents a window or a door, indicating that life is something you both enter into and depart from. Finally, the typographic of the letters closely resembles the typographic of the typographical magazine LIFÉ. In this way, it may be said to symbolize the realistic control of Brazilian "life" by means of American control of the media (LIFÉ).
earth song
Jean-François Bory's "the word/world is dead" (*Once Again*, pp. 34-37) and bp Nichol's *Still Water* both qualify as multi-page poems.

Concrete poetry occurs when someone takes some seemingly unpoetic language and rearranges it so as to create a concrete poem. Ian Hamilton Finlay's "Green Waters" (*Anthology*, p. 92) uses the "names of (twelve) actual trawlers, registered at the fishing-ports of Aberdeen, Lowestoft, Milford Haven, etc." in four three-line stanzas. Each stanza is organized by a separate theme: color, female names, words containing "star," and smooth water; and the entire poem resembles a sea-lyric because of its regular metric pattern and sound rhymes.

Barbara Caruso's "Earth Sonnet" (*Anthology*, Fig. 21) is simply the inside lid cover from a jar of Maxwell House Coffee combined with the title "Earth Sonnet." Whereas the coffee lid refers to the "fresh ground flavour" as the taste of recently pulverized coffee beans, Caruso chooses to regard the phrase as meaning the unspoiled smell of the earth. This change of meaning occurs because of the title alone; there is no alteration of the found object. In fact, even the red color is reproduced.

The third type of exceptional concrete poetry is 3-dimensional poetry. Unlike actual kinetic poetry, which is also 3-dimensional, this kind does not move. "Zen," (*Anthology*, Fig. 22) by Henry H. Clyne, is a 14" high sculpture, wood painted white, which makes use of the fact that a "Z" on its side becomes an "I". Thus Clyne is able to produce four "Zens" using only eight letters. This peculiarity of the word "Zen" has also been exploited by Fei-yo Kisto's "Zen" (*Anthology*, p. 326), but not in 3-dimensions. Ian Hamilton Finlay's "riverock" (*World View*,

1 Finlay in *Anthology*, p. 92.)
... the blue of the sky with letters on it held up before the sky and fields. In this context, "John of the Sea" (World View, p. 127) is a large print lettering containing the word "cro" (crof) at the top left corner, and five vertical lines (sixight across) of increasingly large "s".

Sometimes people are said who are strange to produce a "... type of unAnalytics face ..." in "alien" (World View, p. 127) replaces the letter "i" in "alien" with a small showing the western hemisphere, where the landmass is colored a slightly deeper blue than the water. The inclusion of the circle as an integral part of the word "alien" indicates the breadth geographical area of Varkey's concern. In Jean

Francois Courbet's "Mme. Ter" (World View, p. 127), the Japanese symbol for a dragon encloses a picture of a small crescent. Courbet's "Final Tragedy" (World View, p. 127) contains the picture of a grinning man holding his head, with language pointing out that quotes cut from his head. The political message of the words - "men are dying who proclaim less than war" - has apparently caused his headache.

Action Poetry, as described by Bernard Goldstein, tries to make "places of action" of auditions take the place of the written page. Stage, street, listening room, studio." (World View, p. 35). His "The Penetration" (Fig. 3a) involves three separate layers of tape recording. The first, and more dominant, part is a monologue dealing with passion, with obvious sexual overtones. The second sound layer, in italics, contains children's sounds and city noise which coincide with the monologue. In addition, the "surrounding noises, ... captured by chance, are superimposed... on the tape recording." (World View, p. 127).

In Fig. 34, various juxtapositions of the monologue and the italicized words produce interesting poetic results. At the top of the page,
there is a correspondence between the small explosion and the abrupt
wolf - in both situations something other than what was anticipated
has actually occurred. In the section immediately below, the similar
between a sexual climax and a fissionable explosion is brought to light
by the italicized words: "the lady is on top of the gentleman.

In fact, the kind of relationship between words and lines which carry that would be contemplated.
In the sense that Action Poetry integrates environmental sound into the words on the page, it parrots John Cage's musical experiments, especially the well-known "Silence.

At present, the general direction of concrete poetry is towards to
border which traditionally divided poetry from sculpture, poetry from
animation, poetry from prose, poetry from graphic art, and poetry from
visual art. In its formative years, concrete poetry stayed mainly on
the page, using spatial and typographic techniques as its major method.
As time went on, however, the restrictions of the single page and of
the page itself began to be felt. Concrete poets began to create poetry
off the page, in multiple pages, and even using non-linguistic materi-
als. Today, if you see a moving object with identifiable linguistic
symbols, there is a strong likelihood that it will be a concrete poem.
This confusion at the traditional borders of poetry and the other arts
has been indicated by the coining of such terms as "transmedial" and
"borderblur" to describe concrete poetry.

Concrete poetry differs from traditional poetry in five respects:
1) concrete poetry can move and can be three-dimensional. 2) concrete
poetry can make use of non-linguistic formulas to create poetry; 2) concrete-
poetry. From the point of view of the poet; 4) concrete poet-

{illegible} 1) which is of specific and not theoretical relation. In addi-
tion, these characteristics which describe con-
creteness.
There is one fundamental difference between pattern poetry (also

known as concrete poetry) and traditional poetry. In concrete poetry, the words are simply traditional poetry like lyrics, which has been shaped or re-shaped on the page to create visually striking objects. Concrete poems seldom visually imitate any physical object, but even when they do, concrete poems still could not be mistaken for pattern poems because they use unusual syntax, typography, and spatial techniques. Thus, physical shape is the only criterion that separates pattern poetry from traditional poetry.

The history of pattern poetry dates back to the "techne poema" of 300 B.C., where it is assumed a Greek epigram was literally transcribed from a tombstone onto paper, thereby preserving its tombstone-like shape. 1 "Techne poema" were succeeded by Christian "carmina figurata" (500 A.D.), including many cross-shaped poems. 2 The Renaissance interest in ancient Greek literature revived the writing of pattern poetry in Europe, resulting in, for example, Francesco Bello's pattern poem shaped like a bottle. Among Englishmen, Robert Herrick,

2 Ibid., p. 642.
George Herbert, Thomas Traherne, and George Wither all wrote pattern poetry. Although the verse died out by the eighteenth century, pattern poetry continued to appear from time to time. John Hollander and Kay Swenson are two of the better known pattern poets of the 1960s.

In order to clarify this distinction even more, it will prove worthwhile to consider one particular pattern poem with a cross-like general form. Robert Herrick's "Noble Numbers" (Fig. 35), a seventeenth century pattern poem in the shape of a cross, has two line sizes — long and short. The first four lines are short rhyming couplets; the next five lines are longer, with the first two and last three lines rhyming; and the final thirty lines are short rhyming couplets. "Noble Numbers" praises Jesus "who sweetened first/ The death accurs't." The cross — "this Tree" — is sought to serve as the writer's gravestone. Note that the poem is written in normal discursive grammar and syntax, with end-line rhymes, and a systematic progression of the theme. In fact, "Noble Numbers" differs from traditional poems only insofar as the shape of the cross exists on the page.

By Michel's "Christian Cross #2" (Fig. 26) has the same cross-shape as "Noble Numbers." However, where "Noble Numbers" uses a normal amount of words for a thirty-nine line poem, "Christian Cross #2" uses only one word — "theory." By contrasting normal type with italics, Michel separates the italicized words — "the," "or," "y" — from the normally printed words. The special meaning of these three words conveys the message of the poem. The word "theory" has two related functions: first, it acts

4 See Church.


———. "Four Idiopotes," Albatross, 10 (1965), 43-44.


———. Fatherlady. Toronto: A Recordings.


Zurbrugg, Nicholas, ed. Stereo Headphones, IV & V (1971).
Concrete Poetry Criticism


"Interview with Henri Chopin," Via des Arts, 53 (1967), 81-82.


Stevens, Peter and Scott, R. I. "Kindledly Mass-Producing Poetry by Computer or A "Multiple-Version Poem for All Canadian Places and Seasons?" University of Virginia Review 7, 2 (Spring, 1970), 27-34.


Weaver, Mike. "Concrete Poetry," The Drama Review, 1/5-6 (1965), 107-125.


Origins of Concrete Poetry


Pattern Poetry


Carroll, Lewis. "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." Through the Looking-


VITA AUCTORIS:

1948 Born in Regina, Saskatchewan.
1959 Moved with family to London, Ontario.
1967 Bachelor of Arts degree, in History, from the University of Western Ontario.
1968 Entered Law School, the University of Western Ontario.
1969 Worked for the Chartered Accounting firm of Clarkson, Gordon, & Co.
1970 Did make-up year at Sir George Williams University, Montreal.
1971 Began Master's Programme in English at the University of Windsor.
1972 Worked as Drug Counselor at the Addiction Research Foundation.
1973 Worked as a Child Care Worker at the Catholic Children's Aid.
1973 Master of Arts degree, University of Windsor.
1973 Enrolled in the Doctoral Programme at York University.