1973

Concrete poetry.

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NL 91 (16-08)
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 poetic linguistic experiments has never been accurately categorized. In order to remedy this situation, I set out to classify the broad areas of concrete poetry. All attempts to refute or to sustain the opinion that concrete poems are so simple that they do not merit serious critical attention, I examined individual concrete poems in great detail to assess their meaning.

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 (1974). 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 two or more voices, often recorded, and sometimes electronically modified; 4) typographical poetry, where varying typefaces and non-linguistic symbols over-paint the meaning; and 5) spatial poetry, which enlarges or reduces the normal amount of space between letters or words and thereby changes 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 Avery with first introducing me to concrete poetry in late 1968 or early 1970. When I found out that Peter Stevens wrote concrete poetry, I immediately thought in terms of a thesis. When approached, he kindly agreed. That was in October, 1970, and by November, 1971, I had it finished, done, typed, and perfect. 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 Littledyke, 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

ABSTRACT .......................... 11

PREFACE ............................. iv

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ...................... 1

II. ORIGINS OF CONCRETE POETRY .......... 8

III. KINETIC POETRY .................... 16

IV. MATHEMATICAL POETRY .............. 25

V. SOUND POETRY ...................... 33

VI. TYPOGRAPHICAL POETRY ............. 37

VII. SPATIAL POETRY ................... 50

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS CONCRETE POETRY ...... 58

APPENDIX A. PATTERN POETRY VS. CONCRETE POETRY ......... 64

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................... 67

VITA AUCToris ........................... 75
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure


3. "When this you see remember me," Ludwig Gerson, Anthology, p. 19.


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 Fignateri formed the Noigardres group of concrete poets. Brazilian art had been strongly influenced by concrete art in the 1940's, and the Noigardres poets decided to apply concrete art theory to poetry. In addition to concrete art, the Noigardres poets listed many artists, poets, linguists, and musicians as their "forerunners." ¹

Very closely associated with the concrete artist Max Bill is Eugen Gomringer, generally referred to as the "father of concrete poetry." ² Gomringer, 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 desires. He wrote his first concrete poem in 1952 ⁴ calling it a constellation in order to pay tribute to Stephan Mallarmé. In

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

Both Carlo Belloli of Italy and Lyndal Fahlstrom 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. Fahlstrom did call his experiments "concrete poetry," and in 1953 he wrote a "Manifesto for Concrete Poetry." 5

From these four originators, the concrete move out travelled rapidly to such diverse places as Japan, the USSR, and the rest of the Western world. In Canada, Bill Bissett, Lance Farrell, and Martin 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 entitiled "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.
7 In Instigations of Ezra Pound (Freeport, 1920), pp. 357-368.
the sum of those two things. He noted that Chinese words are more
"concrete" than Indo-European words because they are also pictures of
ideas. As well, the Chinese language uses only nouns and verbs;
and since all action is continuous, the most truthful description is
"act-act-act" or noun-noun-noun. Thus the Chinese language initi-
ates 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." 8

 Theo Van Doesburg, the editor, had been a moving force in many of the
important artistic movements since 1915, including dadaism, surrealism,
and the Bauhaus. He chose the word "concrete" in contrast with "ab-
stract" 9 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

8 George Hickey. Constructivism: Origins and Evolution (New

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

10 In Aldo Libegrin. New Tendencies in Art (New York, 1966),
p. 19.
Associated with Van Doesburg in the Concrete Art Movement were Jean, Ives, and Max Bill. Bill was an assistant of Van Doesburg at the Bauhaus where he had been taught how to obey the demands of the material. For Bill, "color, form, space, line, and movement supply the constituent elements" of concrete art. One of his major methods for creating concrete art is through mathematics, often giving substance to esoteric mathematical formulae.

In "twenty-two" (Fig. 37), Max Bill uses the simplest kind of mathematical relation - consecutive numbers - to determine the appearance 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 signifying 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 emanates 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

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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 "in design in an artistic manner exploiting "the possibilities of the material up to the utmost." 15

It is this exploitation 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. These are movement, repetition, sound, print, and idea. 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.

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14 Nowlan, p. 198.

15 Form (Basel, 1952), p. 57.
either partial or complete, when the number of words becomes unsteady to penetrate, the spectator's possibilities are required and utilized.

In the past, poets have made wide use of linguistic sound as part of their poetry. Concrete poems extend the normal uses, such as rhyming words and alliteration, to previously unexplored areas. Although they still are concerned with repeatable sounds, they might attempt to list and to relate all sound similarities of one particular kind. As well, sound poems 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 begun 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 Kevin Herrick's cross-shaped "Table Numbers," are well-known literary oddities. Spatial 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 these 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 po-
etry, and spatial poetry.

I. The Origins of Kinetic Poetry

Kinetic art is the most important source for the creation of kin-
etic 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 tries to re-
create the sense of movement, even though he restricts himself to two
dimensions. F. T. Marinetti, the founder of Futurism, considered move-
ment the central issue in art and declared that "velocity is the new ab-
solute which kills time and space and creates the universe." 1 Kinetic
poetry, then, claims 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

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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." Arp 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." 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." 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, a noted kinetic artist and theoretician,

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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) repeatable machine-driven objects; 2) random movement; 3) spectator-initiated movement. In kinetic poetry, all of these 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 1725 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 I. Scott, "Zen Bones," Queen's Quarterly 79 (Spring, 1972), 34.

7 "Zen Bones," p. 34.
8 Rickey, p. 109.
"alphabetensequadratebuch 1" 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 mumfiz mated with the socalled mormolian. 9

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

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its culmination: "Tsch/ Tschia/ Tsch/ Tschia/ Tsch/ Tsch/ Haffa Ish/
Haffa Fepa Ish/ Haffa Fepa Ish/ Haffa Fepa Ish/ Haffa Fepa TschAA!

Modern sound poets are less interested in creating new words and more interested in repeating familiar words until the meaning is lost. They destroy 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, Stéphane Mallarmé, the Iamhuas, and "e. e. cummings.

F. T. Marinetti, the founder of Futurism, strove to abandon the uniformity 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 "Iaerole in Liberta" (Birds at Liberty), Marinetti displayed many varieties of typefaces, type sizes, and type positions. Indeed, at one time he announced his intention to use "three or four inks of different colors on a single page and twenty different typefaces if necessary." 12 In the original Futurist manifesto of 1909, Marinetti declared that "my reformed typesetting allows me to treat words like torpedoes and to hurl them forth at all speeds." 13 His reformed typesetting together with his use of various inks and typesettings specifically link his designs to typographical concrete poetry.

11 In Futurism, p. 50.
13 Futurism, p. 52.
Each level of meaning in Stephan Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Des* (1897) was distinguished by its own specific typography. In his "Preface" to *Un Coup de Des*, 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." 14 Therefore all typographical embellishments were regarded as redundant, and "absolute clarity in all typographical work" 15 was achieved by the design of a spare uncluttered typeface, known as Bauhaus type. Eugen Gonring'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.

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14 In Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius, and Ise Gropius, eds., *Bauhaus* (Boston, 1959), p. 78.
15 *Bauhaus*, p. 78.
Much of the anthology *Typewriter Poems* rests on the innovations of cummings.

Each man - F. T. Marinetti, Stephan Mallarme, 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, Mallarme 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 Mallarme 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.

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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.

Nallarmix 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 Nallarmix, 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; Stephan Mallarmix's En Coup de Log 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 an aesthetic quality as refined as the quality of their movement. In this very primitive stage of development, when there have been few kinetic poems created, it is possible to surmise that more sequentially complex kinetic poems will be attempted in the future. At present, however, kinetic poems such as "Poetry Clock" and "Anor-Rozer" have a poetic effect which is based almost entirely on their shape and motion, 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 Errett Williams, is semantically simpler than "Amor-Roma" by Ken Cox because the letter 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, punctuation marks, and consonants or diphthongs. You "read" the clock in the same way as you ordinarily tell time. If it were a regular clock, one would ... In the 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, "R"'s, "O"'s, or "A"'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 "A" have identical mirror images of themselves. At a certain point in the movement of the poem, the final "A" in a particular "Amor" combines with the mirror images of "O", "R", and "A" to produce "Roma." In Fig. 3, the light "R" in the centre of the poem combines with the "O", "R", and "A" to its
right in order to spell "Roma." The reverse spelling of "Azor" is "Roma," just as Rome, the city of love, is inextricably connected with love itself.

There are two kinds of non-machine operated kienetic 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 Gosewitz'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 Gosewitz's poem "Ich Du" (I You) (mentioned, 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 "Ebaecus" (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 "Ebaecus," 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 science;" 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, X, 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 Gosewitz' "Cräp 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), "unten" (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." ¹ 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\times11 rectangle of the words "spacious" four times. With the words printed in white against a black background, the optical effect creates concave depth as well as black-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 160 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 Fig. 6A) 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 then combine to form "we" on page eight. This "we" is given to them to write on page nine as "one-e-e-e-e-e-e," where the nine "e"'s are the third "e"'s in "sweethearts," and descend vertically in a straight line. Each page around the page of "he" or "she," getting closer, "finally unite both spatially and semantically" into "we."
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. 12), 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-destructive 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. Michel's poem, "Cold 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.

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3 In Hickey, p. 16.

4 Toronto: Gargantia, n.d.
CHAPTER IV

MATHMATIONAL 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."

"alphabetenquadratbuch 1" (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" ¹ 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 Hansjoerg Mayer.

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

¹ Mayer in World View, p. 12.
pale: 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 \(3(4-1), 4(8-4), 5(13-8), 2(19-13), \) 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 "z" 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 order of the letter, and the number of letters per line from 8 to 17, and continues the rigid placement of letters from one line upward to the next. Page 13 completes all the series; in fact, it corresponds with page 7 in the sense of being at the extreme end of the series. Where page 1 is
when I loved soft pink hearts -
and you hated hard blue valleys
and I kissed yellow red potatoes
and you loved vivid green onions
and I hated hard pink cacti
and you kissed hard pink cacti
and I loved yellow blue nights
and you hated loved red valleys
and I kissed hard yellow cacti
and you kissed hard yellow cacti
and I hated yellow potatos.
and you kissed red yellow cacti
and I loved hard pink valleys
and I kissed yellow green potatoes
and you loved loved pink potatoes
and I hated hard red onions
and you kissed hard red onions
and I loved hard yellow cacti
and I hated yellow red cacti
and you kissed hard white cacti
and I loved hard red cacti
and you hated hard pink valleys
and I kissed yellow blue potatoes
and you loved loved red mushrooms
and I hated soft green droppers
and you kissed loved green cacti
and I loved yellow green onions
and you hated loved blue valleys
and I kissed soft red potatoes
and you loved hard green onions
and I hated yellow yellow onions
and you kissed living pink cacti
and I loved soft blue cacti
and you hated hard red valleys
and I kissed yellow green potatoes
and you loved loved yellow cacti
and I hated soft pink cacti.
and you kissed hard blue cacti
and I loved yellow red onions
and you hated loved yellow cactii
and I kissed soft pink valleys
and you loved hard red onions
and I hated yellow green droppers
and you kissed lived red cacti
and I loved soft pink nights
and you hated hard yellow valleys
and I kissed yellow pink potatoes
and you loved lived blue cacti.
and I hated soft red droppers
and you kissed hard green cacti
and I loved yellow yellow nights
and you hated lived pink valleys
and I kissed soft blue potatoes
and you loved hard red cacti
and I hated yellow green droppers
and you kissed lived yellow cacti
and I loved soft pink nights.
blank, page 13 has 3X26X26 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.

"alphabetenquadrbuch 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.

Emett 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, livid; set five - pink, blue, red, green, yellow; set six - nights, valleys, potatoes, seagulls, dewdrops, oysters. 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 1 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 "loved vivid," "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 1 kissed soft blue potatoes" seems improbable but connotes the apt sound of kissing potatoes because of its hard consonants "p," "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 Yoein's "I am that I am" is only partially functional, 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 "merryholly." 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 "Jarry."

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 "merry," which completes 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, "merry," and it is out of place. The computer finally.struggles to a seasonal greeting, "Merry Chrysantherum," which is cheerful enough but slightly out of season.

Bohumila Gregorova and Josef Kral's "Sviebo-breden" (Anthology, p. 158) 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 "obodasv" (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, "3" for "G", "S" for "T", and so on. The poem's political message is that Czechoslovakia can become free by becoming Westernized (adopting the English language).

"Neil Break," (Fig. 12) by Jackson Maclow, lists the complete set of possible permutations of the five words "Fear says all jail now." There is no question that "Neil Break" is an aggressive denunciation of prisons and that the core message is "destroy jails.

Each of the five words heads one column of twenty-four five-word lines, where the order of the line shifts but the first word remains constant. As well, each column stresses a particular aspect of the message according to the increased emphasis on the first word: column one, "Fear;" column two, "All;" and so on with "Fools," "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 Patric 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 leaved trees in canals,
By sprawl is the vast, vast of the horizons, and the spires of Ottawa rolling by the series of ports, at Saskatoon.
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.

All this proves is that a computer can be most effectively used if 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. X. Morthy'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 smell bland." indicates that the old maxim about the
monkeys and the typewriter might have some validity.

3 See Peter Stevens and Robert T. Scott, "Semiologically Based
Producing Poetry . . ." University of Adelaide, A. S. (Spring,
1970), 27-34.
Semantic chance equals moral anarchy.

Some antique wolves seek all wear I'll enter by
Some mint حاجات sex illness you'll in her lie
Sham pain, talking who's tricks more guys into vice
Shame, sorts, states king; boys lock more plant for vice
Search tricks willing: boy stuck stare trying for vice
Semantic taxes killing, play crutch; where lies in sure poise
Semantic kicks appeal on, much more prey on small guys.
Seek not such crunch, seek all normal anus dry
Search these sadness noses tall formal dare high
Semantic chance 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 semantic meaning, sometimes as an exercise in exploring sound patterns. 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 even after close reading they do, various kinds of depraved content ("messy anarchy") are described.

By following through the transcription 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-," "Cham yam, talk-," "Chains, yours, stalks," "Seamus shacks," "Senitic fakes," "Some kicks," "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 cracks willing" - bestiality - "boy stuck rare 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 hoes 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 "Huntjac" (Asian deer) - and some familiar - "chipunk" 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 "dustbowl." 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 "doggo." The final words repeat the sound closeness and all but one of them are made up - "jalossa" 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," ¹ like "semantic chaos," the words "ghh and illa slikkeh/gbux yfll Imfow whrwhs" are transformed into the colors of the rainbow - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. "Gbux" becomes "ganux gnht, grant, gloc, glare, grand, grasp, great, greed, greek, green." Morgan's "Porander" ² combines the shape of a porander with the expansion of the sound of "porander" to give lines like "open porander"/open poem and her...open hymn and porper bard and panka hamper."

The next two poems are not difficult to discuss than the previous sound poems because there is no written copy of them. "Salad" ³

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 McCaffery, 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 satis-
factory 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 read-
ing 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 very 
gradually gaining the dominant control in the poem. Finally, one voice 
remains which pronounces the word "lettuce" slowly and sonorously sound-
ing 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's strengths; capital-
izing on them, Steve McCaffery makes startling 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 "go" 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

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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. 14) by Gerhard Ruhm, 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, 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 "jetzts"—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 immediacy and some dulling the urgency of the meaning.

Bill Eisbett'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. 1.) itself, and the letters "n" and "e" are not immediately followed by "r" and "s," leaving the impression that Eisbett has chosen the letters for reasons other than simply alphabetic. The next letters, "e," "t," and "k," have two translations: first, "tu" means "you" in French; the "tu" also is part of the verb, "tu es" (to kill). Thus "tu" "tu" "tu" means "you'll kill," and refers to the ruling class of Quebec. The rest of the letters, "A, E, Z" probably indicate the role of both the legislators and the role of capitalist control. Their very irregularity denotes the as, the dominant power on the page (and the province) at a point which is splitting apart under pressure. The third layer of typography is typewritten 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, "wer only human too were," describes the effect of the non-Quebec ruling class who change Quebecers from human to sub-human. What was once human ("wer" = 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 goo . . ."

The distinction between "clean" and "dirty" concrete poetry is that "in clean concrete . . . the visual shape of the work is primary, linguistic signs secondary." 2 Dirty concrete poems have "amorphous physical shape and complex and involute arrangements of the linguistic elements." 2 As related to "clean order" this comparison relates the clean ordered life of a capitalist system . . . "dirty chaos" life of

1 Frank Lowy, Early FLQ (Toronto, 1972), p. 92
2 Ibid., p. 93.
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 "agh"'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 remains of political and social repression.

Augusto de Campos' "Lixo-Lixo" (Luxo-Lixo) (Fig. 14) demonstrates the use of one particular typeface which conveys one impression while the words it creates convey another. "Lixo-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 next in "Lixo-Lixo." The letters of "luxo" are constructed from "ixo" building blocks piled one high. One letter is an "L", 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, in a large pump. Behind and to its right. The other shapes are less easily identifiable but

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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 Earle Birney's "Like a Rock," (n.d. in loc. p. 21) Carl坚韧's "The Form A," (anthology, p. 257), "C", of E. D. Hart's poems, and much of Andrew Jungst's. Judith (aithen'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" can be found in the swirls and whorls 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.

Hansjorg 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 noncapitalized "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 reaches the previous 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 line lend distinction and beauty to the page.

Other typographical designs composed of letters include Fernando Millan's "Text 1" (World View, p. 174) and by Michi's "eyes" (Anthology, pp. 224-225). Michi's complete attempt to deal with the alphabet in terms of graphic design yielded ABC The Alph Bet which gave one
THE BIRTH OF GOD
page to each letter's design. Hart Bready's poems use type as the primary elements of scene construction (Caccic Chef, p. 51).

"The Birth of God" (Pic, 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 Kears, 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." 6 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 Schonerer's "Frixtorial" (J. 252) where the poem is constructed entirely from punctuation marks. JBC (Ben Sylvester Ionardi) has created "typeeript," which make complete use of the facilities of the typewriter, including escortripts, different ribrins, and all eighty-six symbols. David Ayler makes exclusive use of non-letter typewriter symbols to produce artistic design (Cosmic Crest, p. 34).

Luiz Ania Pinto, together with Octavio Paz, created in it a new kind of typographical poem which they termed "Ventricle Poetry." Their intention was to re-bore available weapons with signs now 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 ventrice 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 move from step to step. 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 abstrac-
tions into a unity. This combination would be impossible to achieve (vis-
ually) without the use of a new set of signs. Perhaps it would be impos-
sible to communicate this unity by using the old signs, no matter what syn-
tax were used. Through new signs, however, comes new communi-
cation.

"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 key; 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. 171) where the right-pointing male triangle merges with the left-
pointing female triangle, create a diamond, then split again. Ian
Hamilton Finlay's "Leatherman" poem (Anthology, p. 199) is not far off 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. Uta Birken's title, "Moon
Shot Sonnet," (Fig. 22) correctly gives the explanation of the poem.
"Sonnet," because there are fourteen lines in a 4, 4, 3, 3 pattern of
the traditional 28 line format, and "moon shot" because of the eleventh line. "Moon Shot," because the signs are the "scientific symbols for
marking off areas on the moon's surface." 8

8 Mary Ellen Solt as quoted in Anthology, p. 203.
The poem contains little complexity beyond understanding that it is a "riff of an outmoded form of poetry," and an outmoded Romantic language. The signs themselves are of three shapes - "T", "L", and cross, 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 semantic poetry is to advance any further, it must create entirely new language systems, perhaps computer language like Cobol or Fortran. Initially, then, translations would need to be supplied, just as the "lexical core" does in "yes-no." As well, these semantic poems repeat the same episodic linear techniques of traditional language. Perhaps the next step in the development of typographic poetry will be to surround 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 [Author], p. 297.
10 McCafferty 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

Eugen Gerwing's "silence" (Fig. 23) replaces 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 muteness or reticence (GTD). Gerwing's silence silence by using the word silence itself, the exact blank space, to always 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'Connor regards this universal quality of concrete poetry as very important and he looks forward to the day when concrete poetry "should 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 is Claude Grover's "is the text" (Ante-lope, p. 53). The first line, "is the text the text left out" becomes "is the text he text left out" 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. 22), Bright William gradually eliminates words from lines, thereby creating blank spaces. William starts with the ritual of plucking petals from a daisy, reciting, 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 those lines. As more and more space is revealed, the lover's thoughts become more and more specified, from "she loves me not" to "she loves me," "she loves me," "she," and finally a blank space. This progression of ever-ting more becomes too strenuous and obsessive for him, and with the blank space he abandons all thought.

2 In World View, p. 73,
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 "i" and the "l" 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." 3 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 3 times, disappears; 'l' appears, disappears, 'i' appears, disappears, then appear together changing position, like dancing; then 'l' disappears for a long time, which, after stunning 'i' makes 'l' restless, then invisible, like resignation; when at last 'i' reappears, he descends jumping about and out of the picture and back again for 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. 29) 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" (the 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 "rua" because the streets

appear indiscernible without the light of the sun to separate them.

The closeness of the letters, as well as criss-crossing the "l"s to move uniformly across the page, also creates the word "ruins" when the "o" and "1" of "sol" are removed. The poet, therefore, uses both of the spatial methods; by compressing the words "ra" and "sol", the diagonal of "sol"'s is clarified, and by creating a blank space after "ruins," the meaning of the poem becomes apparent.

Ian Hamilton Finlay's "acrobats" (Anthology, p. 67) uses space; the letters of the word "acrobats," spelled up and down, and clarifies the letter "a" in the middle. By offsetting the "r", "o", "a", 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 Hugo Semlinger's "wind" (p. 77), the compression of space causes the theoretical overlapping of letters in the word "wind," I propose that the upper 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 present 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 four-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, i, n and lower left d; 2) lower right w, i, right n, and right d (a triangle); 3) upper left w, i, middle n, and upper d. Each of these binding
"wind" designate 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 gust with a second breath).

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

Similar to "wind," by Nichol's "blues" (Fig. 20) 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 theme of the poem emerging.

"Blues" is constructed from eight entangling "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 letters than exist separate. "Love"'s total: six l's, six o's, four v's, and eight e's - because of the overlapping letters. This overlap creates patterns which flow in many directions from one center, spot; for example, the third "e" finds the top center bottom, three symbols: 1) as the "e" in a horizontal love; 2) as the "e" in a vertical love; and 3) another "e" in the diagonal e's. A number in the number of possible combinations of "e" groups results from the overlapping of letters.

Although "blues" is pleasing to the eye, it is incomplete to say, as the anthologist Harry Allen does, that "from his "e" we learn"
Like attracts like
Like attracts like
Like attracts like
Like attracts like
Like attracts like
Like attracts like
Like attracts like
Figure 1. The
Figure 2. The
Figure 3. The
Figure 4. The
Figure 5. The
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 "eolv," 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 "eolv" also represent the beginning of the word evolution.

Unlike "wind" and "blues," Burnett Williams "LIKE ATTRACTS LIKE"
(Fig. 37) superimposes different letters on each other. Thus you can
definitely tell there has been a letter overlap without first learn-
ing 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 hori-
Zontal row, and the two "LIKE"'s grow 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 each "LIKE"
is "ATTRACTS" to the other "LIKE." When the two "LIKE" are finally
right next to each other, the resulting superimposition 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" striv-
ing to be unified) destroys the initial reason for the conjunction.

5 Ibid. Ibid., Fig. 37.

6 The title might also be drawn from the pattern of a blues
lyric which is repetitions - three lines in a stanza, the first two
identical and the third rhyming.
Claus Brenner'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 Gappnyr's "alle" (all) (Anthology, p.112) has the five letters of "alles" 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 poesy can offer different perspectives. When space is unexpectedly created, as in "all me," the void produces meaning by itself. When words are crammed 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 snugly 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 much 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.

Lecio Pires' "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. Page six repeats pages 1-4.
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 "I", "L", "F", and "E," while page five is the spatial synthesizing of the letters, page six is the spatial separating 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 at time period in the form of successive pages, the original vertical line grows outward, each page adding a new branch. When the line has fully evolved, the growth, it matures by setting in order the components of its past and arrives at an adult "LIFE" state. The rectangle with a horizontal bar in the middle also stands for the Chinese ideogram for the sun, or the vital principle. Thus the condensation of the letters corresponds to the major source of energy, the sun. Other interpretations not limited to this opinion that page five represents a window or a door, indicating that life is something you both enter into and depart from. Finally, the typology of the letters closely resembles the typography of the pre-defined magazine "LIFE." In this way, "LIFE" mirrors the rivalistic control of Brazilian "LIFE" by the various American control of the media ("LIFE").
earth song
Jean Francois Bory's "the word/world is dead" (Once Again, pp. 34-37) and bp Nichol's Still Water both qualify as multi-page poems.

Found 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." ¹ 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 sealyric because of its regular metric pattern and sound rhymes.

Curtis Caruso's "Earth Song" (Fig. 31) is simply the inside lid cover from a jar of Maxwell House Coffee combined with the title "Earth Song." 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 sound 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," (Fig. 32) 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 "Zen"s using only eight letters. This popularity of the word "Zen" has also been exploited by Athena Xisto's "Zen" (Anthology, p. 326), but not in 3-dimensions. Ian Hamilton Finlay's "Riverrock" (World View,

¹ Finlay in Anthology, p. 92.
p. 287) the blue to the sky. with letters on it held up before the sky and field. nothing less than "a John of the air" (World View, p. 172) is a large and less eustion containing the word "cro" (cro) at the top left and nothing more. (six left across) of increasingly large "cro".

Sometimes placed in a fixed horizontal area to produce a formal type of pictures. John has letter "cro". "cro" in "Scul" replaces the letter "j" in "cro" with a "cro" showing the western hemisphere, where the letter was replaced a slightly deeper blue than the water. The inclusion of the picture as an integral part of the word "cro" indicates the broad geopolitical area of Vernet's concern. In Jean Francoise Vernet's "croo" (World View, p. 172), the Japanese symbol for a "man" encloses a picture of a child's breast. Courbet's "Final Tragedy" (World View, p. 287) contains the picture of a grimacing man holding his head, with language pointing to war spoke out from his head. The political message of the words - "men are dying who proclaim less than war" - has apparently caused him headaches.

Action Poetry, as described by Bernard Holstle, tries to make "places of actions" or of actions. take the place of the written page: stage, street, listening room, studio." (World View, p. 35). His "The Frenzy (Fig. 34) involves three separate layers of tape recording. The first, and more dominant, part is a monologue dealing with vision, 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. 172).

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 absent wolf — in both situations something other than what was anticipated has actually occurred. In the section immediately below, the similarity between a sexual climax and a fissile nuclear explosion is brought to light by the Italian words: "the lady is on top of the gentleman."

In a jet flow over, jumps the relation between leeks and jet which carry them would be contemplated. In the sense that Action Poetry integrates environmental sound into the words on the page, it bears John Cage's musical experiments, especially the well-known "Silence."

At present, the general direction of concrete poetry is towards a border which traditionally divided poetry from sculpture, poetry from animation, poetry from prose, poetry from graphic art, and poetry from visual art. In its formal years, concrete poetry stayed mainly on the page, using spatial and typographic techniques as its major methods. 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 materials. 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 coinage 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 be three-dimensional; 2) concrete poetry can make use of mathematical formula to create poetry; 3) concrete
poetry. Since the total order of the parts 4) compute post-
4. pok-um of the parts, and 6) be-
tial relations. In addi-
tion, the complexi-
ity of great complexity in spite of very
minimal features.
It can also be characterized what describes con-
crete laws.
ALJENX A

PATTERN POETRY VERSUS CONCRETE POETRY

There is one fundamental difference between pattern poetry (also

known as 'African poetry') and concrete poetry. In pattern poetry, the

poems are simply traditional poetry. In contrast, concrete poetry is

a form of poetry that uses visual elements to create an image. The

poems are often designed to look like an object, such as a bottle or

a crystal. Concrete poetry is not necessarily tied to any particular

physical object, but it often does so.

The history of pattern poetry dates back to the ancient Greeks. In

the 5th century BC, the Greeks created pattern poems that were
designed to look like other objects. The most famous example is the

'Technopoeia' of 300 BC, where it is assumed that a poem was
transcribed onto a tombstone, thereby preserving its tombstone-
like shape. These poems were succeeded by Christian 'carmine
figurate' poems (5th-6th centuries AD), including many cross-shaped poems.

The Renaissance interest in ancient Greek literature revived the
writing of pattern poetry in Europe, resulting in, for example, François Rabelais' pattern poem shaped like a bottle. Among Englishmen, Robert Herrick,

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1 Margaret Church, "The First English Pattern Poems," ENS, LXI (1940), 642.

2 Ibid., p. 642.

Although the verses 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 1960's.

In order to clarify this distinction even more, it will prove worthwhile to give a few examples of pattern poems. 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 are longer, with the first two and last three lines rhyming; and the final thirty lines are short rhyming couplets. "Noble Numbers" praises Jesus "the sweet'st first, the blest ascents". 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 92" (Fig. 36) 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 92" 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.


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Origins of Concrete Poetry


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Handwritten notes on a page with text content.


Related Letters


The Viking Press, 1927, pp. 241-274.
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