Insound, Outsound, Unsound:

Re-Sounding Poetry, 1950s to 2010s

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Abstract

Examining the multifaceted presence of sound in varieties of visually-oriented texts written from the 1950s–2010s by transnational poets, my project considers how sound (both actual and metaphorical) affects readers' expectations and experiences when performing and interpreting poetry. The dissertation probes the cognitive science of reading, the sonic interchanges made possible by texts, and the implications of this work for discussions of intermediality and the cultural inflections of gender and race.

I begin by considering cognitive processes fundamental to reading: how Ignace J. Gelb, Walter J. Ong, S. J., and Donald Shankweiler demonstrate that sounding is foundational to the reading process. Building upon research by Charles Bernstein, derek beaulieu, Craig Dworkin, Johanna Drucker, Don Ihde, Brandon Labelle, Marjorie Perloff, and Jonathan Sterne, my project presents an innovative method of sound as an analytical tool. Chapter 1 defines and explains three original categorizations: *insound*, *outsound*, and *unsound*. I present the critical means for examining these distinct sonic forms along with visual representations of the methods. Subsequently, each application chapter examines the three sound types in a different form of visually-oriented poetry (concrete, erasure, and non-linguistic). The selected poets' works share formal characteristics but are diverse in historical and cultural experiences and the gender expressions they constitute. Chapter 2 argues that using sound as an interpretive tool for Eugen Gomringer's "silencio" and Steve McCaffery's *Carnival* reanimates the temporality of these concrete works. Chapter 3 reveals the biases in sounding and the power inherent in wielding sound in two exceptional erasure poems, M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* and Jordan Abel's *The Place of Scraps*. Chapter 4 examines how the seeming absence of sound in non-linguistic poetry stalls reading practices, using Mary Ellen Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet," Caroline Bergvall's *Drift*,

and Eric Schmaltz's *Surfaces*. With the efficacy of Insound and Outsound approaches in question, this chapter suggests alternative processing methods and concludes that non-linguistic poems eschew any totalizing approach. Instead, they need to be considered individually to discover the works' aesthetic and semantic complexity. The final Coda provides a preliminary exploration of the In / Out / Unsound method's future, organized in terms of applications, transpositions, and extensions.

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To my creator and my God—to whom I owe my life and breath—my thankfulness is unsoundable. I continue to be inspired by the Truth: “In the beginning was the Word.”

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Abbreviations

ADP	Charles Bernstein, *Attack of the Difficult Poems*. 2011.
AG	bp Nichol, *The Alphabet Game*. 2007.
BAS	Dzifa Benson and M. NourbeSe Philip, "Breath and Space." 2021.
BHC	Eugen Gomringer, *The Book of Hours and Constellations*. 1968.
BP	Andy Fitch and Caroline Bergvall. "The Black Pages, the White Script, the Maps, the Constellations." 2018.
CO	derek beaulieu, "Concrete & 'What Looks Like Poetry.'" 2012.
CP	Lori Emerson and derek beaulieu, "From Concrete Poetry to the Poetics of Obsolescence." 2011.
DR	Caroline Bergvall, *Drift.* 2014.
HE	Evelyn Glennie, "Hearing Essay." 2015.
HKS	Jonathan Sterne, "Hearing." 2015.
ITA	Marjorie Perloff, "'Inner Tension / In Attention': Steve McCaffery's Book Art." 1991.
MW	bp Nichol, *Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol*. 2002.
NM	Craig Dworkin, *No Medium*. 2013.
NP	M. NourbeSe Philip, www.nourbese.com. 2013.
NS	Johanna. Drucker, "Not Sound" 2009.
ODM	*The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, edited by Joyce Kennedy, Michael Kennedy, and Tim Rutherford-Johnson. 2013.
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* Online. 2022.
OL	Walter Ong, S.J., *Orality and Literacy*. 1982.

OP	bp Nichol and Steve McCaffery, "The Annotated, Anecdoted, Beginnings of a Critical Checklist of the Published Works of Steve McCaffery." *Open Letter*. 1987.
OR	Lori Emerson, "The Origin of the Term 'Dirty Concrete Poetry.'" 2011.
PCC	Steve McCaffery, "Politics, Context and The Constellation." 2013.
PE	*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. 4 ed., edited by Roland Greene. 2017.
PL	Steve McCaffery, "*Carnival* Panel 2 (1970–1975)." 2001.
PP	Charles Bernstein, *Pitch of Poetry*. 2016.
PS	M. NourbeSe Philip, "Annual Lecture 2021." 2021.
PU	Philip Metres and M. NourbeSe Philip, "Poetry as Untelling." 2021.
RG	bp Nichol and Steve McCaffery. *Rational Geomancy: The Kids of the Book-Machine*. 1992.
RI	Craig Dworkin, *Reading the Illegible*. 2003.
RWI	Lori Emerson, *Reading Writing Interfaces*. 2014.
SUR	Eric Schmaltz, *Surfaces*. 2018.
TG	M. NourbeSe Philip, "The Ga(s)p." 2018.
TNC	Victoria Bean and Chris McCabe, *The New Concrete*. 2015.
TPS	Jordan Abel, *The Place of Scraps*. 2013.
TS	Thomas Reidelsheimer, *Touch the Sound*. Performance by Evelyn Glennie, and Fred Frith. 2005.
UG	Marjorie Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*. 2010.
Z!	M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*. 2008.

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Introduction

I vividly remember sitting in a crowd of strangers waiting for the poetry readings to begin for the 2018 Invisible Book Publishing launch. I had purchased both books on my way in the door, and now held them in my hands ready to listen to the poets read their work. Cameron Anstee stood up and read from his spare and engaging collection *Book of Annotations*. Many of the poems were inspired by his dissertation; he even created poems from mistyped words. I still have an iron-on patch I received that night that reads "REVELANT." Then, Eric Schmaltz stood up and said: "I won't be reading from *Surfaces* tonight because I can't read it aloud…" And I sat there in my seat, stunned. *What did he mean that he couldn't read them aloud? Isn't that the point of poetry?* I looked again at the projector screen that displayed Eric's poems. I looked down at my hands that held two of Eric's poems that had been 3D printed (see fig. 1) and I thought to myself, *I have no idea how to read these. What do they sound like?*

Figure 1. A picture of two 3D-printed poems by Eric Schmaltz and the book, *Surfaces*.

On a very different night in 2014, I sat in the audience of a CCMC performance at Toronto's Array Space. Paul Dutton, one of the collective's members, classifies CCMC as "Canada's pioneering free-improvisation band, with roots in the 1970s, world-travelled in its various formations" (pduttonpoetry). Currently, the initials of CCMC (originally, Canadian Creative Music Collective) have no fixed meaning, which seems appropriate for a group that challenges fixed meanings in their performances. The present members of CCMC are Michael Snow, John Oswald, Paul Dutton, and John Kamevaar. To attempt to describe the sounds I heard seems like an impossibility, although it was a memorable performance. Paul Dutton defines CCMC's sound as one in which "process takes precedence and form evolves organically in a shifting tapestry of textures and timbres, with dense layerings set off by moments of meditative calm, with idiom-tinted strains transmuting into passages of raucous cacophony" (pduttonpoetry). The silence following their performance, before the applause, was not a silence that I had ever heard before. When CCMC finally finished, and after a lengthy encore, I looked at the musicians and performers who were dripping with sweat. Since that evening, I have listened to more poetry by Paul Dutton and the Four Horsemen; I have also heard more performances by CCMC. I still think to back to my first CCMC event and how it made me question… ***this*** *is poetry? I don't know* ***how*** *to listen to this. How do I take it in?*

These two occasions crystallize the complexity of visual poetry and sound poetry in terms of authorial purpose, reader reception, and sonic resonance. Schmaltz's "reading" at Invisible Publishing's book launch is an example of an event that reveals the tension between visual poetry and orality. The act of reading a visual poem initially seems to deny orality or any oral rendering. What is expected of a reader when they encounter a visual poem—a type of text that asks them to be a viewer? By contrast, the CCMC's poetry performance demonstrates how a

sound poem turns a reader into a listener. How can a reader take in a poem through an aural experience that foregrounds sounds that often do not form recognizable words? Ordinarily, the author, the text, and the reader / viewer / listener are in a symbiotic relationship—one that is communicative but also complicated through power dynamics. Does this relationship (or its elements) necessarily require orality? Do poems that foreground visuality only need to be viewed or observed? How do we take in a poem? How do we listen to it attentively? How do we sound out a text?

This dissertation examines the multifaceted presence of sound in varieties of visually-oriented poetry from the 1950s to the 2010s written by transnational poets, the majority of which are Anglo-American. Each chapter explores a different form of visually-oriented poetry (concrete, erasure, and non-linguistic). The selected poets are united in their chosen poetic form but not necessarily similar in their geographical locations, cultural experiences, or gender expression. The chapter synopses in the final section of this Introduction will outline the various poets and works under consideration. Each chapter demonstrates significant aspects of attending to and analyzing sound in visual poems. Using sound as an interpretive tool reinvigorates the temporality of creative works (such as concrete poems). Attending to sound in erasure poetry reveals the biases and prejudices in sounding, and the power relations inherent in wielding and interpreting sound. Also, sounds—in their removal from language, as in non-linguistic poetry—demonstrate how poets can push readers into finding innovative ways to experience and interpret what they read and sound for themselves. At the heart of this discussion is sound (both metaphorical and actual) and how reader expectations and experiences shift with these sonic encounters within visually-oriented poems. Poetry is communication, I argue, and sound is integral to this communication. Silence, or the intentional removal of sound, is also part of this

communication. Even within visually-oriented poems, which often background the oral in favour of the visual, there is sound for the reader to discover, experience, interpret, and perform.

Method

In its analyses of sound(ing) in visually-oriented poems, this dissertation is necessarily an examination of reading processes and practices. As such, I begin by considering the cognitive processes (specifically, the sounding of words) in reading and "silent" reading. It is important to demonstrate how foundational sounding is to the reading process. A significant aspect of the theoretical grounding of sound within reading is phonology, the study of the systems of sound within components of language. In addition to assessing theories of reading processes, this dissertation also focuses on specific aspects of phonology such as the rebus principle, the particulate principle, and the abstraction of language to symbols. Reading and phonology are inextricably linked with orality. For this reason, the dissertation delves into the complex relationship between reading and orality through the example of poetry. Challenging the notion that examples of contemporary poems foreground signifier over signified, I demonstrate how these texts use sound to try to reach beyond the limitations of language—and assumed signification—in both reading processes and literary analyses. This dissertation distinguishes among the processes of in-sounding (internally sounding), out-sounding (aurally performing), and un-sounding (performing / interpreting the absent sounds) to demonstrate that these readings / performances are distinct from the process of using sound as an analytical tool.

Each poet's work can be placed on a spectrum ranging from convention to innovation. Each text's combination of convention and innovation affects its accessibility and readability. Many visual poets focus less on the accessibility of the work than its process(ing). In *The Last*

VISPO Anthology (2012), derek beaulieu observes, "Writers that emphasize the classical and humanist definitions of poetry without considering the work being done in alternative forms of writing do little to further the writing of poetry as they offer only what is most palatable to the most conservative of audiences" (CO 74). Sometimes difficult poetic works can distance or alienate readers. Although the latter seek to understand and engage with poetic works, if and when that communication is difficult—or, initially, unintelligible—they are disoriented. Readers need to understand how to navigate uncharted territories. Beaulieu endorses works that employ rhizomatic readings—multiple pathways both in and out. For me, such texts are compelling. But for someone encountering such poetic work for the first time, the challenges can be so overwhelming that the reader turns away. The methods outlined in this dissertation use sound as a point of entry to facilitate reading and analysis of such challenging works.

Several theorists have shaped my understanding of sound, its reception, its effects, and its presence in poetry. Regarding sound, Jonathan Sterne and Brandon LaBelle explore the nature and definition of sound as well as the role of the human as a receiver and projector of such sounds.[1] *Keywords in Sound* (2015), edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, provides in-depth explorations of significant terms relevant to sound such as hearing, listening, and noise. Regarding the reception of sound, Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (1976) deals with cross-disciplinary considerations of the origins and reception of sound. Also, Lisbeth Lipari's *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement* (2014) illustrates the complexity and necessity of listening in the act of communication. Another source, David

[1] Works by Jonathan Sterne include *Audible Past* (2003) and *The Sound Studies Reader* (2013). Works by Brandon LaBelle include *Site Specific Sound* (2004), *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006), *Acoustic Territories* (2010), *Lexicon of the Mouth* (2014), and *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance* (2018).

Suisman and Susan Strasser's *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2010), effectively addresses the shift in the critical reception of sound in modernist and postmodernist texts. Regarding the effects of sound, this dissertation has been influenced by Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977), David Toop's *Ocean of Sound* (1995/2018), Elizabeth A. Grosz's "Vibration: Animal, Sex, Music" in *Chaos, Territory, Art* (2008), Steve Goodman's *Sonic Warfare* (2010), and Shelley Trower's *Senses of Vibration* (2012). For examples of how to address the role of sound within literature and poetry I have learned from the collection of essays edited by Marjorie Perloff and Craig Dworkin, *The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound* (2009), Josh Epstein's *Sublime Noise* (2014), Angela Leighton's *Hearing Things* (2018), and Anna Snaith's *Sound in Literature* (2020). Marjorie Perloff is a significant theorist who analyzes concrete poetry and other experimental poetry movements.[2] Additionally, Johanna Drucker has been an incredibly helpful theorist to contextualize the visual (graphesis) within poetry.[3] Her essay "Not Sound," which suggests that poems are primarily graphic markings—and silent ones—provides a significant counterpoint to the claims in my dissertation.

Building upon this diverse, complex work in sound theory and reception, my project is concerned with praxis and method. In order to examine the operation of sound in the reading process, I define and explain three original categorizations: insound, outsound, and unsound. (Chapter 1 elucidates the theory of these terms, and the subsequent application chapters explore

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[2] Critical works by Marjorie Perloff that have influenced this dissertation include *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media* (1994), *Poetry On and Off the Page: Essays for Emergent Occasions* (1998), *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (2010), and *Poetics in a New Key: Interviews and Essays* (2014).

[3] Critical works by Johanna Drucker that inform this project include *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (1994). *Figuring the Word*: *Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics* (1998), "Not Sound" (2009), and *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (2014).

these sounds in praxis.) As well, I present the critical means for examining these distinct forms of sound along with visual representations of these methods to clarify this process when applied to specific exemplars of visually-oriented poetry.

Initially, it may seem counterintuitive to examine sound in visually-oriented poetry, which often backgrounds sound. This dissertation, however, will demonstrate that even in a poetic discourse that foregrounds visuality, sound is a critical element. Visually-oriented poetry pushes language and, by extension, sound to its limit. Visual Poetry is a hypernym for works that foreground visuality and typography. Even the term itself, "*visual* poetry," stresses visuality and, in so doing, distances itself from the oral origins of poetry. In "New Visual Poetry," Mary Ellen Solt addresses the concrete but also notes the turn to visuality: "The fact remains, though, that we have an increasing number of poems which are primarily, and in the case of non-semantic poems totally visual; and the tradition of poetry is believed to be oral" (60). Instead of being composed for the purpose of recording oral tales (such as *Beowulf* or other epics), visual poems are composed in such a way that the primary engagement with the work is through the eyes; the "reading" of these poems starts with "viewing them." Visual poems foreground typography, as Solt explains: "The visual poem is a word design in a designed world" (60). Visual poems are meant to engage the eyes. Why then have I chosen to investigate sound within visual poems if such texts turn away from orality and sounding? I delve into the complexities of visual poetry and its sounding because it challenges our assumptions about what sound is and how it functions; also, using sound itself as part of the analysis reveals new aspects of the poetic works that may be missed in other conventional methods of literary analysis.

Many other visual poets provide theoretical explanations to aid the reader in understanding their process(es) and the purpose(s). These innovative forms are often difficult to

encounter and understand—especially when poets refuse to follow traditional paths of signification in their work. After all, readers are often trained to read for the meaning of something. And in that search for "the meaning," the reader may overlook the details—the individual sounds that are on the page for them to experience and interpret. In their creation of a poem, visual poets make decisions regarding text, space, and *mise-en-page*, and each of these choices has sonic implications. The textual material and its graphic representation correspond to sound, as Charles Bernstein suggests: "Textuality, sounded, evokes orality. Textuality is a palimpsest: when you scratch it, you find speech underneath. And when you sniff the speech, you find language under that. *The alphabet is frozen sound*" (*PP* 33). These graphic markings may be "frozen sound" on the page or screen, but these graphemes animate and resound in the reader's mind.

This sounding in the reader's mind is what I am terming "in-sounding"; readers actively sound textual material in the process of their internal reading. There are two types of in-sounding: involuntary and voluntary. Involuntary in-sounding occurs as the reader encounters text on the page and the reader's brain translates this linguistic information into sound while reading "silently." Sometimes, though, in-sounding must be performed by the reader to sound out the text in their mind. This in-sounding generates no external sound but because it is an internal processing of sonic material, it is a form of sounding. When the work is vocalized or read aloud, this is called "out-sounding." There will always be an irreconcilable difference between "in-sounding" and "out-sounding" because "in-sounding" takes place within the mind and cannot be heard aurally, whereas "out-sounding" is audible and performed. Unsound is experienced when and where sound has been intentionally backgrounded or "silenced." A reader may perform and seek out the text's unsounds. Space is often a means of muffling or muting

sound, an "un-sounding." By space, I refer to visual gaps or the insertion of "space"—seemingly, silences—in groupings of text or textual material. Unsound (and visual space) is not to be equated with silence, which is an impossible condition to create; however, space occluding or overlapping text creates a tension between sounding and "un-sounding." Unsounds can even be the absence of expected material. *Mise-en-page*, the layout, is also the structural organization of sound; the arrangement of the text and space affects its reading and oral performance. In *Silence*, John Cage evocatively describes the relationship between poetry and music: "As I see it, poetry is not prose simply because poetry is in one way or another formalized. It is not poetry by reason of its content or ambiguity but by reason of its allowing musical elements (time, sound) to be introduced into the world of words" (xxx). *Mise-en-page* is the means of organizing the pacing—time—in the work. Many visual poets challenge normative reading practices through their use of text, space, and *mise-en-page*, and in their choices, they often defy or deny orality.

A poem's *mise-en-page* affects its in-sounding, out-sounding, and un-sounding. A poem is made alive during a reading. Readers take in the visual poem—through the eyes, generally[4]—and attempt to sound it in their internal reading (in-sounding). This reading process sometimes leads to an oral sounding (out-sounding). This process is further complicated with absences in the text and the challenge to sound these silences (un-sounding). What is a reader to do when poets deny or thwart orality in their poetry? This dissertation will examine how visual poets actively engage sonic characteristics or resist these qualities in their formal choices. How do they

[4] Poems can be read on the page, but they can also be received aurally. Aural reception would not require reading. Also, there are many other ways in which a person could encounter a poem. One could read a poem in Braille, and this would be a touch-based reception. Also, there are 3D objects and 3D poems that incorporate a tactile engagement with a work that may not usually be found in a typical or normative "visual" poem. Among other surprising examples of visual works, Chapter 4 will address 3D-printed poems.

read their work when they compose it? How does the material translate to sound for the reader to perform? If visual cues are not ones of sonic significance, then what are the effects of those visual markers?

Contexts

In *On Sense and the Sensible*, Aristotle establishes a hierarchical organization of the senses. Of the five, he claims, touch is the most rudimentary, hearing the most instructive, and sight the most ennobling. Aristotle further explains the relationship between sight and hearing while firmly attributing unequal value to these senses:

> seeing, regarded as a supply for the primary wants of life, and in its direct effects, is the superior sense; but for developing intelligence, and in its indirect consequences, hearing takes precedence.… For rational discourse is a cause of instruction in virtue of its being audible, which it is, not directly, but indirectly; since it is composed of words, and each word is a thought-symbol. (para. 8)

In response to this Aristotelian hierarchy, sight has long been considered the apex of sensory experience, and as such has dictated much critical consideration. Yet, a closer examination of Aristotle's words reveals the necessity of a more critically nuanced understanding of hearing.[5] If one is to accept Aristotle's ordering and subsequently believe that hearing is integral to the development of intelligence, then hearing (and its counterpart, listening) should be intensely considered within multiple contexts, including the field of literary study.

Sir Isaac Newton's discoveries about light and colour, published in *Opticks* (1704),

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[5] Jonathan Sterne, along with many other critics, carefully considers how Aristotle's privileging of the senses affects the differently-abled. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 1.

revolutionized the way in which scientists, scholars, and writers perceived the visual world. In the mid-twentieth century, Marjorie Hope Nicolson delved into the degree of influence Newton's discoveries had upon his literary contemporaries. Seemingly all at once, writers had a vocabulary and a framework whereby they could understand and describe the visual world. Nicolson explains that within Newton's discoveries, "versifiers could find the language they needed" (393). Newton's *Opticks* shifted the narrative, Hope Nicolson demonstrates: "Ironically enough, Newton—who had no interest in poetry—gave color and light back to poetry, from which they had almost disappeared during the period of Cartesianism. To the eighteenth-century poets, light was magnificent in itself, but it was most beautiful when it was refracted into color" (393). Following Newton's death, elegies and eulogies proliferated, but it was Alexander Pope's couplet that rings loudest: "Nature, and Nature's Laws lay hid in Night. / God said, *Let Newton be*! And All was *Light*" (qtd Nicolson 392). Newton's discoveries allowed for a new understanding of colour, but these assessments of light's properties were by no means perfect: "If the poets were confused about the propagation of light, they had every reason since Newton himself had vacillated between a wave and a corpuscular theory…. Certainly the poets knew much less. Yet they grappled heroically with problems of the nature of ether and air and with theories of the transmission of light and sound" (Nicolson 395). Newton's discoveries, despite imperfections, affected the ways in which light and colour are framed, in daily discourse and poetic discourse, whether it be about prisms, refraction, or rainbows of light. Newton's work, however, also solidified the privileging of the sense of sight as the height of human sense perception and experience.

Shifting from Pope's era to Walter Benjamin's, the latter's essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1935) addresses the changing modes of human

sense perception while also implicitly supporting a hierarchy of senses: "The way in which human sense perception is organized—the medium in which it occurs—is conditioned not only by nature but by history" (23). Philosophers, art historians, and scholars avidly historicize visual culture, furthering the traditional belief that vision is the sense most closely associated with cognition, reason, and knowledge. The sense of hearing has received far less critical attention; Benjamin's work demonstrates this elision. Throughout his essay, Benjamin mentions sounds and aural culture eleven times, almost always to support his analysis of visual technology and media. In *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, David Suisman and Susan Strasser respond to Benjamin's work and dismantle ill-informed conceptions of sound, demonstrating the unique possibilities of sound studies and highlighting the importance of a multi-sensory experience in art. Suisman and Strasser emphasize the neglect of critical consideration of sound, while simultaneously exhibiting a keen interest in its effects upon human experience. These authors, however, do not address how a person is affected by sound, or consequently how readers are compelled to respond to works of poetry.

Sound is a significant aspect of the creation and reception of literary works; it is surprising that there are so few resources for methodological and pedagogical approaches to sound in poetic discourse. Publications in this field, however, are steadily on the rise. A small number of recent theoretical texts specifically examine the role of sound in literature (and in some cases, poetry specifically). Susan Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002) offers an interpretation of the role of sound in the poetic lyric and argues that the sonic conditions of the poem's production cannot be reconstituted; as such, reading a poem for the sound of its creation requires the imagination. In an innovative fusion of musicology and literary theory, Josh Epstein utilizes theories of sound in *Sublime Noise* (2014) for his close examination of modernist

literature. Epstein demonstrates the significance of sound and Western society's coded value judgements of it, arguing that noise and music intrinsically shape the writing of the early twentieth century. In *Pitch of Poetry* (2016), Charles Bernstein offers a series of essays on different sonic aspects of poetry; the word "pitch" in Bernstein's title suggests, simultaneously, a literary device of consonance while also connoting directionality, force, height, and melody / tonality.[6] Bernstein directs the readers to recognize the multidimensionality and musicality of poetry and also emphasizes the value of language to a culture: "a culture's language is one of its greatest assets and the more we acknowledge that, the richer we will be" (*PP* 9). Yet, the dynamism of that language, the unacknowledged force that drives it into the mind and hearts of the listener, is sound. Additionally, Angela Leighton's *Hearing Things* (2018), which focuses on Victorian prose and poetry, suggests that reading literature is an exercise in hearing. Calling on Gerard Manley Hopkins's assertion that reading "with the eyes" and "with the ears" are different, Leighton emphasizes that experiencing poetry requires reading "with your ears." The latter, she contends, "might seem literally impossible, and the phrase rings with the surprise of the unfamiliar; but it also rings true, in that written words make noises as well as shapes, calling on the ear like an after effect of being seen and understood" (Leighton 2). All of these studies suggest that sound is at the centre of reading. A recent collection of essays edited by Anna Snaith, *Sound in Literature* (2020), is another example of scholarship devoted to the role of

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[6] There are four prominent but different definitions of pitch. Pitch can connote directionality: "inclination, slope, declivity" (*OED*, pitch, n.2, I). Pitch can also connote force: "to thrust in, fix in, set in place" *(OED*, pitch, v.2, I). Additionally, pitch can point to height, distance or degree: "height in a figurative sense; degree" (*OED*, pitch, n.2, VI). Lastly, and particularly resonant with this dissertation, is way in which pitch categorizes tonality: "the quality of a sound, esp. one produced by a musical instrument or voice, which is governed by the frequency of the vibrations producing it, and which determines its highness or lowness of tone… degree of highness or lowness of tone" (*OED*, pitch, n.2, 25). Hopkins's speaker captures many of the inflections when he declares that he is "pitched past pitch of grief" ("No worst, there is none").

sound in literature and the sonic effects of language upon culture. Significant texts that discuss poetics and sound include Craig Dworkin's *No Medium* (2003) and *Reading the Illegible* (2013), Steve McCaffery's *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue* (1968) and *Prior to Meaning* (2001), and the "Afterword" of derek beaulieu's *fractal economies* (2006).

There is a significant shift occurring in literary discourse[7] to attend to multisensory experiences. As demonstrated by the increasing number of publications on sound and sound studies, we are currently experiencing a dramatic change in human sense perception due to our rapid engagement with computer and smartphone technologies. One text that examines sense perception in terms of the effect of the Internet upon the human brain is Nicholas Carr's Pulitzer-finalist *The Shallows* (2010). In the prologue, Carr invokes Marshall McLuhan's phrase "the medium is the message" to suggest that the Internet's impact upon humans is deeper than initially realized. Regarding the debate surrounding the Internet's vices and virtues, Carr observes, "What both enthusiast and skeptic miss is what McLuhan saw: that in the long run a medium's content matters less than the medium itself in a world influencing how we think and act.… and eventually, if we use it enough, it changes who we are, as individuals and as a society" (3). Carr goes on to explain that the advent of the novel brought about deeper thinking on a single idea, whereas the arrival and long-term use of the Internet has enabled research

[7] In *Poetry as Discourse* (1983), Antony Easthope uses examples of post-Renaissance British poetry to argue that poetic works are produced from historically-situated discourses. For Easthope—influenced by Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský, and Michel Foucault—the author is not an arbiter to determine the singular meaning of a text; instead, the meanings of a poem unfold in the reading process. Moreover, he argues that the author emerges as an "effect" of discourse. Also drawing upon Saussure, Easthope pushes back against conventional approaches to literary theory. He emphasizes that the material dimension of language is based in a system that works independently from authorial intention; as such, discourse is linguistically determined and simultaneously involves ideological determinations. (Delving into such "determinations," Easthope turns to Lacan and Althusser to address the transcendental ego and the "I" that are the *effect* of discourse, not the *cause*.)

across many topics but with a certain degree of shallowness. Carr explains how constant use of the Internet results in a mind-shift: "Calm, focused, undistracted, the linear mind is being pushed aside by a new kind of mind that wants and needs to take in and dole out information in short, disjointed, often overlapping bursts—the faster, the better" (10). Although this dissertation cannot address the myriad ways in which technologies are shaping how humans read and process information, there must be an acknowledgement that readers do not read the same way within the Internet age. In this contemporary environment of Internet saturation, there should be further consideration as to how poetic discourse and its readers have shifted.

This dissertation focuses on short texts, poems that can be experienced and re-experienced within a brief period of time. My great concern, however, is that even though those encounters with poetry may be temporally short-lived, poems often ask a great deal of the reader. Visual poems are a form of extremity. They call attention to themselves through their innovative techniques, but simultaneously require the reader / viewer / listener to work that much harder to understand and embrace the challenge of reading anew. Certainly, our primary method of encountering page-based poetry is through sight. We need, however, to reconfigure our understanding of a text's visual features in order to translate that information into an effective sonic experience—through "in-sound." Moving away from the page, we encounter poetic works through audition, and those works and our listening to them must be similarly interrogated. Current methods of reading and listening to literature do not plumb the depths of sonic complexity that these works embody. Overall, the significance of this dissertation emerges from how it examines the methods by which we analyze the materiality of poetry and suggests that there needs to be a re-framing of these processes to foreground sound. When readers attend to sound, especially in visual poetry, they actualize the temporality of the work; they give ear to un-

sounded voices; they learn to read and sound things in entirely new ways. Most importantly, they begin to understand their own role in the sounding, performance, and interpretation of poetry.

Chapter Synopses

This dissertation consists of four chapters. The first, "Anatomizing and Analyzing the Shapes of Sound," delves into methods of analyzing sound in primarily page-based poetry. I begin by theorizing the reading process and phonology as well as demonstrating the theoretical grounding for the original categories of sound I have developed (insound, outsound, unsound) and the methods for identifying and analyzing these sounds. Cognitive approaches to reading by Mildred Robeck and Randall Wallace, Keith Rayner and Alexander Pollatsek, Dominic Massaro and Uta Frith, and Ignace J. Gelb and Jay Doblin are assessed. Robeck and Wallace delineate cognitive reading processes; their research stresses the physiological changes the brain undergoes in voluntary shifts in reading practices. Rayner and Pollatsek discuss the order and manner of visual and auditory reception, which bolsters my theory of in-sounding—demonstrating the sonic resonances in the mind during reading. Massaro emphasizes that difficult words and arrangement force a voluntary sounding, and Frith discusses the (dis)continuities of sounds and meanings embodied in text. Gelb and Doblin's work focuses on systems of language, from alphabetic to iconographic—and the gamut is represented in the poetic exemplars in Chapters 2–4. After outlining the germane factors of reading processes, I provide a discussion of "silent" reading, which references works by Åke Werner Edfeldt, Johanna Drucker, Craig Dworkin, and Lev Vygotsky. To emphasize how sound is inextricably linked with language, the chapter highlights the resonances between reading and phonology evidenced in the critical work of Donald Shankweiler. This relationship between sound and

language is further highlighted by a discussion of Walter J. Ong, S.J.'s *Orality and Literacy* (1982). Among many significant points, Ong explains that there is no adequate linguistic framework for discussing and studying oral renderings. Although this dissertation is examining page-based poems, there still is a similar lack of linguistic frameworks for examining sound within poems when recognizing that these poems are performances to be undertaken by the reader. Subsequently, I explore the three original terms for categorizing specific sounds: insound, outsound, and unsound. Visual representations or "maps" of how to identify and analyze these sounds in challenging page-based poems are presented.[8] The chapter also clearly addresses the normative bias of this and similar projects and suggests that there is much to learn from non-normative experiences of reading and sounding poetry.

The second chapter, "Actualizing Temporality: Sound in Concrete Poetry," studies the identification and operation of sound in the concrete poetry that emerged in the second half of the last century. Sonic analysis, I suggest, revivifies the temporality existent in an art-object and demonstrates how sound is a vehicle to oppose traditional expectations of signification within poetry. This second chapter begins by addressing prominent definitions of concrete poetry (by Johanna Drucker and Ian Hamilton Finlay) and discusses the inherent difficulties in such classifications. The designations of "clean" and "dirty" concrete poetry outlined by authors such as derek beaulieu and Lori Emerson are considered for their sonic implications. After contextualizing and explaining the visual choices of concrete poets, I then apply the method of examining outsound, insound, and unsound to works by two prominent authors in the field:

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[8] This description of the first chapter suggests that the methods outlined should be applied to page-based poetry. Subsequent chapters will be applying the terms and methods to visually-oriented poetry—a limit case of the method. Certainly, however, these methods can apply more broadly, beyond the scope of the project.

Eugen Gomringer's "silencio" (1953) and Steve McCaffery's *Carnival* (1967–1975). Although I address McCaffery's *Carnival* as a whole, the close analysis and method will be applied to the Second Panel. Chapter 2 also briefly addresses the contemporary typewriter poetry of Dani Spinosa. This chapter focuses on how sounding enlivens the temporality of concrete poems and calls readers to use sound as a means of entering into such complicated texts.

The third chapter, "Fragmentation, Reappropriation, and Amplification: (Un)Sounds in Erasure Poetry," turns to the identification and operation of sound in specific exemplars of erasure poetry. My primary concern: how sound and (un)sounding in these specific texts reveal and challenge systemic biases against women and people of colour, suggesting that sound and sounding can be a powerful tool for amplifying once-marginalized voices. The substantial field of visual poetics is often characterized as being dominated by men, the majority of whom are white. Indeed, while many purveyors of visually-oriented poems have historically been men, there have also been significant female authors revolutionizing visual writing and its reception. Also, BIPOC writers (across the gender spectrum) have been writing compelling and challenging page-based poems that call for a new understanding of sound within such works. Erasure poetry, in particular, is a form of visually-oriented poetry that inspires readers and critics to question the role of sound and what it might mean to unsound a text. Chapter 3 begins by demonstrating how erasure poetry is often overlooked by and even excluded from literary dictionaries. After defining the form, I discuss several female writers who were crucial in the development of erasure poetry. Subsequently, I apply the new method to two works: M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008) and Jordan Abel's *The Place of Scraps* (2013). In these examples of erasure poetry by Philip (a female-identifying Black Canadian-Caribbean poet) and Abel (a male-identifying Nisga'a First Nation poet), fragmentation and reappropriation call for the amplification of voices

that were once silenced. These poems unsound portions of the texts to reveal innovative and sometimes astounding sonic readings. Sounding and (un)sounding erasure poems demonstrate the texts' the power and significance both performatively and politically.

The fourth chapter, "(Un)Sound in Non-linguistic Poetry," analyzes the operation of sound in non-linguistic poetry to suggest how readers can challenge and re-evaluate their relationship to sound, poetry, and communication. In this final chapter, the very notion of sound in visually-oriented poetry is pushed to its absolute limit. By removing language (which has sound as its foundation), there is an immediate stalling in the in-sounding and out-sounding processes. Devoid of "sound," these non-linguistic visual poems are comprised of unsound. Three works are considered: Mary Ellen Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet" (1964), Carolyn Bergvall's *Drift* (2014), and Eric Schmaltz's *Surfaces* (2018). After discussing the challenges of un-sounding these texts, I argue that such non-linguistic works thwart traditional methods of critique. I suggest a paradigm shift for analyzing these poems: when contextualized as *para-graphic devices* (Gelb), some visual poems can be more easily read and analyzed as a graph, chart, or even a musical score than when considered solely as a textual piece working within a fixed alphabetic system. This "poem-as-score" approach fuses the symbols of a visual poem with the immediate sonic impact of performance. With this shift in perspective, readers are encouraged to recognize their roles as active listeners, interpreters, and performers of the text—while closely attending to its sonic dimensions. Building on the work of Marjorie Perloff and Johanna Drucker, the closing portion of Chapter 4 focuses on the congruences between a musical score and a poem in their use of visual symbols and their structuring of sounds and "silences." This analogy of "poem as score" also helps counter expectations that poems have a singular, discoverable meaning. Readers may seek definitive answers, believing that with the correct

approach, supplementary text, or effort (however that effort could be quantified), they will arrive at The Meaning of a poem and master it. Visually-oriented poetry challenges the way readers / viewers / listeners come to understand meaning. Connecting poetry with a musical score encourages a more open interpretation of written works while simultaneously understanding that those poems are to be interpreted and in- / out- / un- sounded.

"Insound, Outsound, Unsound: Re-Sounding Poetry, 1950s to 2010s" closes with a final Coda that provides a preliminary exploration of the In / Out / Unsound method's future, organized in terms of applications, transpositions, and extensions. This dissertation underscores the omnipresence of sound and emphasizes its significance as an analytical tool for poetic analysis. As Charles Bernstein encourages: "Sound is always the ingenue at the media party. Sound is grace. We don't earn it but it is forever there for us, in its plenitude, as the social-material dimension of human language" (*PP* 33). Although these poetic texts often rest "silently" on the page, the activation in the reader's mind brings forth a world of sounds shaped by the author and intoned by the reader. Each reading highlights the complexity of sound embedded in the poetry, and various sonic elements can be featured with subsequent performances—leading to distinct performances of the same work in multiple iterations. Moreover, poetic sound is affective. In addition to occasioning immediate emotional responses, the sound of a work, with its intensive immersion, is transportive and transformative. The sound becomes a part of the reader, and the reader is transposed.

Chapter 1 – Anatomizing and Analyzing the Shapes of Sound

In the final paragraph of my Introduction, I state that poetic texts often rest "silently" on the page, but when a reader encounters a poem, a world of sound erupts in the mind, creating an elaborate soundscape. This description may seem ethereal, evoking a fantasia of swirling music notes and the air thrumming with sound. A reading of any poem may elicit such an embodied and somatic type of aesthetic encounter; however, each reading experience is not necessarily a synesthetic phantasmagoria. Authors orchestrate sound (the work's insound) when they create poetic discourse through their choices of textual material, space, and *mise-en-page*. The reader intones sounds both when the poem is read aloud (out-sounded) and when it is read from the page (in-sounded). The latter "silent"[9] experience actually requires an internal counterpart. This activation of sound—this soundscape—is fundamental to the reading process. There are also spaces of "silence," muted elements, or excised content from a poem; these are unsounds. (I have addressed these terms briefly here to aid in their recognition as I proceed through the broader theory of the dissertation as a whole; theoretical grounding and methods for the application of these sonic elements will be provided, and in-depth definitions will be outlined as needed.)

Cognitively, humans sound out words in order to understand them both in a "silent" reading mode and an oral one; consequently, the reading process, in general, causes an involuntary in-sounding.[10] In-sounding is comprised of an internal sounding of a work as well as

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[9] "Silent" is placed in quotation marks because while the reader reads the poem, they may not be out-sounding the work—but sounds are still occurring in the reader's mind (insounds).

[10] This process is "involuntary" because it happens as a part of the normative reading process—without purposefully doing so, human brains sound out the phonemes on the page in order to process the information. As readers advance their reading practices, they sound out whole words—looking to their beginning and ending letters as signposts. Readers in-sound often without thinking (involuntarily), similar to autonomic processes like breathing. This involuntary sounding is the hallmark of a normative (and often more advanced) reading practice. When a

iterative readings and analyses that focus on the sonic features of a poem, which further reveal the poem's multifaceted insound. To contextualize this in-sounding, I begin by summarizing the psychology and neuroscience in the processes of reading as demonstrated by two pairs of research partners: Mildred Robeck and Randall Wallace as well as Keith Rayner and Alexander Pollatsek. I also reference the research of Dominic Massaro, Uta Frith, Ignace J. Gelb, and Jay Doblin. After outlining these cognitive reading processes, I discuss "silent" reading, which references works by Åke Werner Edfeldt, Johanna Drucker, and Lev Vygotsky. Craig Dworkin's *No Medium* is a helpful text for examining works comprised of "silences" / space (unsound). Chapter 4 discusses the complications of such poems that foreground a single element (unsound) even though the poets use visual material in their creative works.

There are significant resonances between reading and phonology evidenced in the critical work of Donald Shankweiler; critical features of language such as the rebus, the particulate principle, and the abstraction and ambiguity of the phoneme are tied directly to my project. Relations among sound, language, and out-sounding are further highlighted by a discussion of Walter J. Ong, S.J.'s *Orality and Literacy* (1982). Subsequently, I explore the three original terms for categorizing specific sounds: insound, outsound, and unsound. First, these terms are established and explained theoretically; after which, the method for their application is explained with clarifying visuals. The chapter closes by addressing the normative bias of this and similar

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novice reader encounters unknown words on the page, they work at sounding out phonemes (often aloud) and are acutely aware of the effort required to do so. Also, those with learning or reading disabilities often do not have the advantage of these reading processes functioning "involuntarily." In-sounding is hyper-individualized and operates according to certain standards of normativity. Novice, advanced, and differently-abled readers alike may not consider the neurological processes in sounding out phonemes and words; however, at its core, reading is a sonic sounding in the mind.

projects. There is much to learn, I suggest, from non-normative experiences of reading and sounding poetry.

Psychologies of Reading

To understand the complicated relationship readers have with sound (and how that relationship and its expectations are further challenged by visual poets), it is critical to examine just how humans process sonic information. Language theorists such as Donald Shankweiler and Ray Jackendoff suggest that the phonological and auditory aspects of language are "essential feature[s]" (Jackendoff 66). Sounds (phonemes) make up a visually-based writing system (graphemes) that is both sounded internally (in-sounded) and can be sounded externally (out-sounded).[11] There are several theorists who study the cognitive processing of language. In *The Psychology of Reading: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (1990), Mildred C. Robeck and Randall R. Wallace demonstrate the significance of incorporating neuroscientific research into the study of language processing: "A knowledge of how the brain is organized to process language reveals that reading is an extension of speech. Printed words seen by the reader are encoded in the visual reception areas, then travel to the auditory areas *where the meanings of language are stored*" (Robeck and Wallace 15; my emphasis). They also contend that the process of writing compounds these skills: "Writing follows reading in linguistic complexity and developmental sequence" (15). Reading and writing both involve the processing of sound and its complexity, a fact that is crucial to this dissertation because of its focus on the effect of sound within a poem as

[11] The "phoneme" is the sound (of which there are about 44 in the English language) and the "grapheme" is the collection of letters used to make up that sound. Graphemes can be "a single letter (graph), or a combination of two (digraph), three (trigraph), or four letters (quadgraph)" (State of Victoria). An example of a graph is the "a" in "c<u>a</u>t"; a digraph is the "ch" in "<u>ch</u>op"; a trigraph is the "dge" in "ri<u>dge</u>"; a quadgraph is "ough" in "d<u>ough</u>" (State of Victoria).

well as the power of sound as an analytical instrument. Robeck and Wallace also explain that there are new lines of investigating brain processes that include tracking neural cells: "how they migrate and interconnect during development, how they elaborate in learning and how they are activated during communication. An internal event, once seen as a psychological process beyond the scrutiny of researchers, has come to be understood as a biochemical change in the neural system" (15). Robeck and Wallace's research demonstrates that the effects of reading (and by extension, sounding), once thought beyond the realm of quantifiability or study of impact, now are known as internalized events that can affect the neural system. Reading and sounding, in incremental ways, *change the physiology of the reader's brain.* These changes can occur even before non-normative reading experiences cause the reader to adapt and before the semantic meaning of the poem affects the reader.

Resonating with Robeck and Wallace's research, Keith Rayner and Alexander Pollatsek's *The Psychology of Reading* (1989) is an in-depth examination of the many competing theories of language processing and reception. Rayner and Pollatsek suggest that "both the direct lexical and rule / analogy systems are active in determining how a string of letters is pronounced" (91). There have been many debates and conflicting data as to whether visual processing takes place before or simultaneous with the auditory processing of written language. Rayner and Pollatsek grapple with which process (visual or sound-based processes) is the likelier conveyor of meaning for a reader. The most commonly held position, they explain (similar to Robeck and Wallace) is that "virtually all lexical access is by the direct visual route; the route going through rules (or analogies) to sound and then to the lexical entry plays a minor role, if any, to the access of word meanings" (Rayner and Pollatsek 92). Yet, various experiments produce conflicting data. In their research, Rayner and Pollatsek present what they call the "horse-race" model: "in the horse-race

model, each system (the direct visual route and the rule / analogy-to-sound route) works independently to come up with a candidate for a word" (94–95). Their example is the word *one*, which the visual route would access as "1" whereas the auditory route may access as "won." With regular words and known words, they note, the entries / accesses are the same; irregular words, however, would produce competing results which the brain would need to decide between. But who wins? Rayner and Pollatsek explain: "The way proponents of the horse-race theory resolve the problem is to view the competition as a race in which the lexical candidate, or horse, that is fastest wins, and postulate that the visual horse almost always wins" (95). Rayner and Pollatsek do not claim that any specific theory is verifiably accurate, but their research highlights the complex relationship of the visual and the aural—demonstrating, for the purposes of this dissertation, that sounding occurs in the mind but (likely) simultaneously with "viewing." These theories shed light on the complexity of reading processes and internal sounding. First encountered in Chapter 2, such sounding will be examined throughout the dissertation.

Rayner and Pollatsek's research suggests that phonology might not be wholly significant in word recognition; however, sound-based processing is crucial in the reception and reading of non-familiar, irregular, or challenging words. This is important information to consider in terms of how sound is critical for the in-sounding of difficult textual material—such as the challenging poems examined in this dissertation. In "Reading and Listening" (1979), Dominic W. Massaro shares his conclusion that "although phonological mediation can be rejected in word recognition, it may play a significant role in later processing stages such as rehearsal and recoding in generated abstract memory" (346). Massaro suggests that reading familiar words may not engage phonetic processing as prominently as visual processing; however, linguistic coding for memory (and subsequent out-sounding) is likely much more dependent on sound processing. In "Reading

by Eye and Writing by Ear" (1979), Uta Frith argues: "It seems likely that, in normal reading, sound does not play the role of a conveyor of meaning. However, it undoubtedly does play a role in other aspects of reading. There is more to reading than getting the meaning. Written poetry and indeed most works of literature cannot be fully appreciated unless we take account of their sound qualities" (385). When Frith and other cognitive psychologists write of gleaning the "meaning" of a word, they are referring to the linguistic processing of understanding its content—denotated meaning. I would argue that sounds themselves are affective and can often offer connotative meaning(s), but these are not the same "meanings" to which Frith, a psychologist, is referring. She qualifies her claims by addressing literature and poetry and the necessity of highlighting the works' sonic features. Although direct translation of the "meaning" of the words may occur primarily through visual processing, I would suggest that the sonic resonance of the textual material connotes deeper meanings for the reader to uncover. Moreover, as many of these theorists have suggested, sound processing is crucial when encountering works that disrupt normative reading practices—where semantic meaning is even more obscured in sounds yet to be translated through in-sounding and out-sounding. Each chapter of the dissertation examines various disruptions to reading processes and sounding and demonstrates the resultant challenge to ascertaining semantic meaning.

In addition to the psychology of reading and reading practices, many theorists have highlighted the significance of the writing systems that comprise visual communication. Ignace J. Gelb outlines the principles and concepts which govern systems of signs, generally, and visual communication, specifically. The correlation between writing and oral language is close in phonographic systems of writing, he asserts, but even those systems cannot account for the prosodic features of the oral language. Earlier stages of a written language are often more

accurate phonetically because those previous written languages more faithfully reproduced speech: "writing, more conservative than language, generally does not keep up with the continuous changes in language and eventually diverges more and more from its linguistic counterpart" (Gelb 11). Written languages vary in their phonetic to graphic correlation: "A good example," according to Gelb, "is the old Latin alphabet, with its relatively good fit between graphemes and phonemes, compared to current French or English writings, with their tremendous divergencies between graphemes and phonemes" (11). Spelling reforms have helped to improve these discrepancies, but the best fit of phonemes and graphemes occurred in sixteenth-century Korean writing and in modern Finnish and Czech systems (Gelb 11). (This dissertation focuses on English; the challenges with English's phonetics will be addressed in greater depth in the section on Phonological Processing.) Many of the poems discussed in this dissertation demonstrate the fracturing of language; Chapter 3 in particular highlights how this breakage affects voicing and expression in sounding and how the shifting contexts of fragmented material shape meaning(s).

Gelb's research, which produces a new perspective for the structure, typology, and definition of writing, demonstrates the significance of understanding the foundation and structure of a language. Two main types of visual systems are highlighted: (a) momentary (such as a smile or gesture) and (b) stable systems. Stable systems are subdivided into three types: semasiographic devices, which include forerunners of writing such as pictorial art and identifying-mnemonic devices such as wampum belts, branding, heraldic signs; phonographic systems or full writing such as syllabic systems and alphabetic systems; and para-graphic devices or systems such as ledgers, charts, graphs, mathematical notation, and musical notation (Gelb 19–20). What is needed, Gelb insists, is a better study of writing that can examine the breadth

and depth of these systems. Gelb's research demonstrates the complexity that exists even at the level of the writing system. This dissertation focuses on phonographic systems, specifically with the alphabetic system of English mainly in Chapters 2 and 3; the project, however, expands to non-linguistic systems and gestures toward the study of visually-oriented poems as para-graphic devices in Chapter 4. Some visual poems can be more easily read and analyzed when considered as a graph or chart or even musical notation than considered solely as a textual piece working within a fixed alphabetic system.

In his critical examination of pictorial and linguistic communicative techniques, Jay Doblin explains that "our capacity to receive messages is limited by our sensory apparatus. Estimates say that about 85 percent of all the messages we receive are visual, 10 percent audible, and the rest we receive by other modalities" (89). Consequently, he provides a system for classifying various pictorial and linguistic communicative techniques. Visual messages he further subdivides into "orthography (writing words according to standard usage) and iconography (representations by pictures or diagrams)" (89). This is distinctly the nexus for visually-oriented poems. Although visually-oriented poems usually contain orthography they are also often functioning within the realm of iconography. Doblin warns that "although much has been written about iconographic messages—especially about art—most is ambiguous, little is structured. This is why iconographic languages are so poorly understood and taught" (89). Part of this challenge is that iconographic "language" and referents differ from orthographic ones. Doblin guides the reader through the interpretation of non-textual communications. Ultimately, he argues that abstraction is necessary in non-textual communication, but the model of messages must adhere to specific conventions to be effective and persuasive. Visual poets craft works that employ elements of both orthography and iconography, which pose challenges to readers

because these are seemingly two different visual languages and require different types of fluency. Such interrogations of sounding visual language recur throughout this dissertation.

Cognitive approaches to the psychology of reading are foundational in the application of sound as analytical tool. As Shankweiler and Jackendoff demonstrate, sound is central to writing and the processing of linguistic material. Although Rayner and Pollatsek as well as Robeck and Wallace explicate the complex processes by which the brain translates linguistic information, Massaro's research suggests that sounding may not be the first method whereby the human brain processes visual material. Further, Massaro argues that sounding becomes an essential means of processing language when the text is difficult or unfamiliar. Frith, however, contends that sound (itself) may not necessarily be a conveyor of meaning in the reading process, yet the text's sonic aspects should not be neglected because that could result in overlooking meaning(s) and the work's complexity. Highlighting the connections between oral renderings and written literature; Gelb demonstrates that alphabetic linguistic systems often fall short in representing the prosodic elements of the spoken language in their relative codified linguistic systems. Similar to Gelb, Doblin classifies various pictorial and linguistic communicative techniques. Critically, Doblin differentiates between orthographic and iconographic systems. Using sound as an analytical tool for these works allows for new methods for reading across both types of visual messages (orthographic and iconographic) and highlighting similarities and differences within these visual systems.

Silent Reading, Silent Speech, Inner Speech

Three terms, "silent reading," "silent speech," and "inner speech," are often used to address the inner experience of sounding. "Silent reading" refers to the process of reading a work

without audibly sounding the words. Silent reading does not address the dual-path model of how, when reading, our brains phonologically render the words in order to read. "Silent speech" refers to the process whereby someone "silently" reads without making audible sound, but their speech organs (mouth, tongue, etc.) still move to sound out the words. In *Silent Speech and Silent Reading* (1959), Åke Werner Edfeldt discusses foundational experiments and research concerning the electromyographic method in studying the processes of mouth musculature while reading. "Inner speech" refers to the "inner monologue" or "inner voice" that some individuals have throughout everyday experiences. Although "inner speech" is also difficult to describe in terms of subjectivity and interiority, this is not the same as "insound," which is an internal sounding of a work that is encountered external from oneself. Each of the aforementioned terms are helpful in describing aspects of the internal sounding experience, yet none specifically addresses literal sounding in the mind—in-sounding—when someone reads a literary work.

Johanna Drucker addresses sound on the page by wryly suggesting, "when I put my ear to the page, I hear nothing but the sound of my hair against the surface. If I erase the letters, no 'sound' remains. Sound is not *on* the page, even if a graphic transmission allows for its properties to be noted for reproduction in mental or verbal rendering" (NS 239). Codes (textual material) are primarily graphic, she insists, "whether they are notations for sound or not" (NS 239). Drucker is emphasizing that the act of "silent reading" is just that—silent—because notations are primarily graphic instead of sonic. Further, she would argue that the entire page is silent because it is literally mute. But it is significant that people see graphic codes, especially ones that are linguistic, and they *do* wonder how to render them "silently" or audibly. In terms of poetic discourse, there is a readerly expectation that one will be able to read it—to sound it. This does not necessarily mean that a reader will be able to render the poem orally; however, when

processing linguistic materials, the reader will usually try to sound out the text. So many poets try to challenge the relations among words, the page, and poetic discourse by creating works that deny or challenge orality—a notion contained in poetry in its inception. Drucker draws attention to the graphic dimension of codes (material) and insists that the first interaction with writing is a graphic one. Certainly, when we encounter a text, it is an encounter with graphic markings. The textual material for poems may not be intentional notations of sound for all poets or readers, but readers will often seek to sound words out. There will be sound in the in-sounding (an interior reading of) the work.[12]

This previous statement alludes to normative reading experiences wherein individuals have the capability to in-sound. There may be situations or physiological conditions which prevent individuals from in-sounding a text. As recently as 2015, scientists identified the condition of aphantasia, which is the inability to conjure up mental images. This condition parallels the one I describe, in which individuals would be incapable of "hearing" (or in-sounding) the words. More recently, popular discussion concerning the interior experience of sounding occurred in early 2020 because of a tweet claiming that not all individuals have an interior monologue. Several publications on the subject ensued.[13] Interior sounding experiences are not an overlooked area of inquiry; there have been discussions regarding inner speech among psychologists since the 1930s. In 1934, a Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, used the phrase

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[12] As noted in the coda of Chapter 1, these sounding discussions are based on normative reading processes. Someone who is profoundly deaf from birth may not experience in-sounding, out-sounding, or un-sounding of a poem's material in the way that I have defined and analyzed.
[13] On 6 March 2020, Alek Soloducha published an article on *CBC News* examining Olivia Riviera's experience of not having an internal monologue. Soloducha demonstrated the growing interest in internalized sound in public discourse (and on social media) and explored the science behind the inner monologue: www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/inner-monologue-experience-science-1.5486969.

"inner speech" in his book *Thought and Language* to describe this mental processing of language. Even now, we do not have a complete understanding of human interior experiences. Despite the clear connections between Vygotsky's concept of "inner speech" and reading, there have been very few critical considerations of the phenomenon. John F. Ehrich, for one, responds to this paucity of publication: "inner speech has been documented as an important phenomenon associated with language learning, language usage and language development, yet remains a dramatically under researched area" (12). Ehrich suggests why, even at the urging of other researchers,[14] this area of study remains relatively unexplored by returning to Vygotsky's assertion that "the area of inner speech is the most difficult to investigate" (Vygotsky 226). Ehrich responds by arguing that "this 'investigative difficulty' may provide an explanation as to why this phenomenon has yet to warrant the intensive investigation that such a crucial language function deserves" (12). There is no ready language, no available linguistic framework, no effective critical paradigms, for describing such an intensely individualized, subjective, and unquantifiable sonic experience.

The absence of an effective critical paradigm and shared language to describe these inner experiences should not prevent people from trying to understand more intimately conscious experience. But when *you* read a poem and sound it—in-sound it—you take that sound and make it a part of you. That in-sounding is an act of creation because you are helping the poem become. And when you hear a poem performed, you receive that sound. Those vibrations connect you with the signal sender—collapsing the divisions of subject and object. Poetry is transformative, but sound is the affective catalyst.

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[14] For proponents of research at the intersections between inner speech and reading, see Maria de Guerrero, Linda Schinke-Llano, and Thomas A. Upton and Li-Chun Lee-Thompson.

Phonological Processing

To understand the significance of sound in the written word, I must delve into the intricacies of the structures of English and its tenuous yet dependent relationship with phonology. In the *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* (2012), Donald Shankweiler, an eminent cognitive scientist and psychologist who has also probed the complexities of reading disorders and how speech perception can impact learning, provides a detailed description of the brain's processing of written language. At the outset he clearly argues that the English language has separate spoken and written forms.[15] Moreover, Shankweiler explains, the oral and written aspects of language are separate processes that draw upon different abilities and also have very different histories. Even in normative individual development, humans can speak before they can read or write. From Shankweiler's research, there are two specific aspects of language development and structure I would like to highlight: the rebus and the particulate principle. Following the discussion of the rebus and the particulate principle, I examine the abstraction of language and the ambiguity of the phoneme because both factors significant affect the process of sounding language.

Sound and Image: The Rebus Principle

One very significant development of written language is the rebus, which consists of "symbols or pictures that suggest the *sound* of the word they represent" (Shankweiler 249; my emphasis). The rebus remains a landmark development in written language because it

[15] The English language is just one of many that have separate spoken and written systems. English is the language central to this study (with some exceptions) until this dissertation shifts from codified, expressive linguistic systems—with English as the exemplar—to non-linguistic systems.

demonstrates how symbols / pictures can cue sounds and, by extension, meaning. In any rebus, each symbol represents a syllable or singular sound. Crucially, the sounds, not the symbols themselves, are the conveyors of meaning. Generally, a rebus would be used to break down parts of a word into its constitutive sounds. Furthermore, the rebus reveals that sound is at the core of language development. Often in contemporary society, rebuses are used for entertainment, advertisements, and word play, but this development in linguistic systems initially highlighted the complex relationship of the sonic and semantic dimensions of language. The rebus principle is a vivid, concrete reminder that images evoke sounds; those sounds can reinforce or even be divorced from the semantic meaning of that image. "Reading" a rebus is not innate; it is a learned process. The necessity of learning *how* to read emphasizes the significance of effective methods for processing visual and linguistic information. My emphasis on the rebus principle underscores the significance of the sounds that images evoke and emphasizes that those sounds can (and perhaps will) oppose the semantic possibilities of the image.

Sounds can conflict with the semantic possibilities of the image and its ambiguity / fluidity in relation to semantic meaning. The sound evoked by an image does not necessarily *only* reinforce or *only* divorce itself from the semantic meaning of that image; the sound could be doing both things simultaneously. For instance, the image of an eye can invoke the sound that is associated with the semantic meaning of an "eye" (body part), but the sound also is the same as "I" (the personal pronoun). In this case, one could argue that, depending on the sound highlighted, the image is contradictory to the semantic meaning. Yet, "eye" could also function metonymically in relation to the "I," and therefore it could be reinforcing the relationship of the sound(s) to the image. Sound plays on the page in the pen of the author and in the head / ears / lips of the reader. Sound can evoke multiple effects with various meanings. A sound does not do

one thing or another; the interpretations of a singular sound can be multifaceted and even contradictory.

The Particulate Principle

Sound is crucial to the development of writing; consequently, sound is central to reading and language. "We can think of the words of a language as a union of sound and meaning," Shankweiler explains (249). This "union" is clearly evident in the critical examination of phonology in language processing. Phonology is the study of sound patterns in language: "In functional terms, phonology supplies the building blocks of words and also principles for binding them into syllables and larger metrical structures" (Shankweiler 250). Most importantly, phonology enables "a language to convey an indeterminate variety of meanings by incorporating meaningless segments" (Shankweiler 250). The concept of smaller parts making up a constitutive whole is the "particulate principle." (This same principle is the governing structure for genetics and biodiversity in the physical world.) Words are made up of segmented parts—phonemes—that on their own are abstracted in their meaning. But their sounds, in combination with other sounds, are the conveyors of meaning. A clear example of the particulate principle foregrounded in poetry is bpNichol's typewriter poem, "The Complete Works*"* (see fig. 2), which is the title for both the pamphlet and its single text. As this poem demonstrates in its content and footnote, all words (and therefore all poems) are comprised of the combinations of letters. In the title of "The Complete Works," the definite article connotes that the English alphabetic system is not just a representation of Nichol's his own work, but anyone's possible work. Also, there is a pun on "works" as these letters—the typewriter's bits of machinery—are "the complete works" used to produce the text (the pun is just one of many instances of Nichol

drawing attention to his medium).[16] This poem is comprised of the textual materials present in most (but not all) of Nichol's poems, which were based on an alphabetic system.

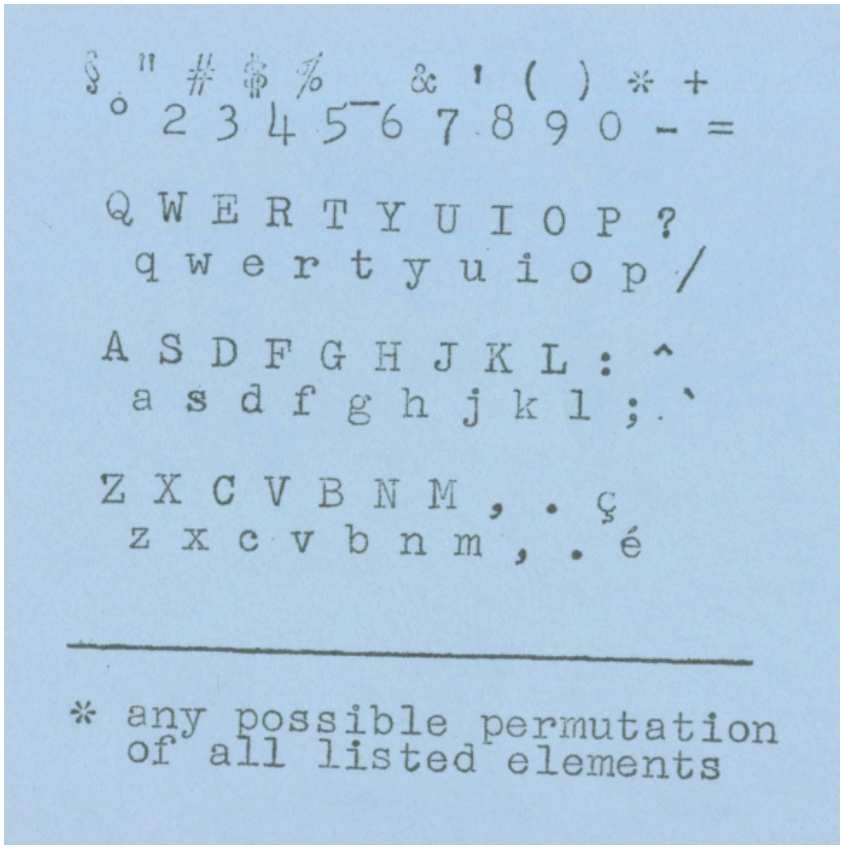

Figure 2. "The Complete Works," bpNichol, *The Complete Works* (GANGLIA's new MIMEOS, 1968).

It is worth noting, though, that there are different forms of writing, and even creative works by Nichol himself, that do not employ this language system. Non-linguistic visual poetic material, for instance, is not represented in Nichol's "The Complete Works." Non-linguistic poetic material will be discussed at length in the final chapter of this dissertation.

[16] That is, anyone's possible work who writes in English. Nichol uses the QWERTY typewriter keyboard as the tool to create his poetic discourse. Many other languages include characters that do not exist on a QWERTY keyboard, which was designed for Latinate script alphabets.

Ambiguity and Abstraction

To understand the multifaceted complexity of sounding visual poetry, one must thoroughly interrogate the basic sonic element of language (the phoneme), which is both ambiguous and abstracted. The study of such a language particulate is complicated. Even with context, the phoneme can be problematic to sound out. Visual poetry, however, further challenges the reader's relationship to linguistic materials when context is stripped away or made radically non-normative. When phonemes are presented without context or put within a context where normative sounding is disrupted, one simply will not be able to rely on conventional reading practices. Visual poets repeatedly, avidly challenge one to develop new techniques of textual engagement. Phonemes are the particulates of language—the fusion of sound and meaning—so one ought to study the sound and listen anew. Yet, there are poets who challenge the reader further by incorporating or solely using non-linguistic materials. Sounding—in any ordinary sense of the term—is impossible. At the most basic, phonemic level of language, there is already an ambiguity and a difficulty to sounding—even before moving that language into a work of poetry. As for non-linguistic material in poetry, there are still efforts, if mostly through visual means, to encourage new reading, viewing, and sounding practices.

English is only imperfectly based on phonology. Another challenge of the English language at the level of the phoneme is the degree of its abstraction. As Shankweiler explains, readers assume that meaning can be found at the level of a visual symbol. But again, once context is denied, phonemes stand alone as abstracted visual symbols that do not, outside of their own existence, communicate meaning. In English, the "meaninglessness"[17] of phonemes

[17] Individual phonemes, as abstracted particulates of language, do not have specific meanings. The phoneme /ŋ/, for instance, "spelt as *ng* (*sing*) or *n* (*sink*)" (Giegerich 37), does not hold a discernible meaning on its own; within a context, perhaps, a meaning can be gleaned. I am not

presents a challenge when studying the written language because aural learners already associate whole words with meaning. Shankweiler gives a pertinent example: "In her earlier experience with the spoken language, a child is naturally seeking to correlate chunks of sound with meanings, hence it would be entirely natural that she would approach reading in the same way with a bias to try to associate any visual segment, even single letters, with a meaning, not a sound" (252). This process is significant, I believe, in highlighting the disjuncture one experiences when attempting to read visual poems for the first time (or even in subsequent readings). Readers seek to make meaning even at the level of the visual symbol, since that is their experience with words; however, visual poets disrupt this normative practice by separating phonemes from their context of whole words. Suddenly, whole words are fragmented to phonemes (sound particles) and, in some works, severed further into lines and curves. Readers hoping to find meaning in the visual symbols are stalled; consequently, they are challenged to find new ways of "reading" these visual works.

In addition to disturbing the reader's search for significance in the visual symbol(s), visual poets prevent a normative sounding process. There are two different kinds of in-sounding: involuntary and voluntary. Human brains perform an involuntary in-sounding when encountering

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suggesting that sounds themselves (phonemes) or the visual symbols (graphemes) have no meaning whatsoever, just that there is not a specific or totalizing meaning to an individual phoneme (this fusion of sound and symbol). On their own, these sounds can convey many meanings. The phoneme /ʃ/, "spelt as *sh* (*shy*), *ss* (*mission*), *ti* (*friction*) or *ce* (*ocean*)" (Giegerich 37) can have a very specific effect; "sh" is the beginning of telling someone to be silent ("shhh") in many anglophone contexts. Yet this meaning too is contingent upon context and culture. Also, there are examples of sounds that, while they do not carry specific meaning, can elicit emotive responses due to the effects of those sounds. Consonants, such as "t" and "g" for instance, when used in repetition often produce a tension, as evidenced by William Blake's opening line of "The Tyger": "Tyger tyger, burning bright." Yet, it is difficult to suggest that it is only the sounds and not also the rhythm (in this case trochaic tetrameter) that create tension. Sound communicated within specific contexts can often be shaped to produce specific emotional effects, in the same way rhetoric would shape an audience response.

textual material, and after this process, readers need to determine if they wish to perform a voluntary in-sounding by working through the textual material in an internalized reading. When words are fragmented into phonemes, sounding is temporarily impeded; phonemes often require context with other phonemes in order for one to understand how to sound them aloud. One example that demonstrates the various voicings of a grapheme is the quadgraph "ough"; its sounding varies significantly with its surrounding graphemes (i.e., dough, cough, hiccough, plough, and through). Visual poets not only ask readers to consider the visual arrangement of their works, but they also seem to suggest that readers ought to find and even generate meaning in the typography and the relationships among textual materials. I argue that these visual poets are still using sonic materials; their poetic discourse, however, prevents the reader from in-sounding the work involuntarily. Instead, a reader must find methods for voluntary in-sounding. Although a normative in-sounding of the poem is interrupted, out-soundings and un-soundings can occur. The poem can still be read aloud; yet the sonic results of the phonemes may seem (just as in an in-sounding) devoid of semantic meaning. But meaning sounds (and looks) different in visual poems when compared with traditional lyric poetry. With visual poetry, meaning is found in the patterning and arrangement of sonic materials. As I discuss in detail below, visual poets who employ non-linguistic materials further un-sound their texts—divorcing orality and normative sounding / reading practices.

Creating a language system that is "a visual surrogate for speech" is inherently difficult.[18] Despite the various modes and different language systems, there is no perfect structure.

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[18] This study of phonology and sounding also relates to sound poetry that asks readers—now listeners—to engage with sound in a new way by aurally receiving the many "random" or seemingly chance phonemes performed by a sound poet. Works by sound poets such as Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Bob Cobbing require readers to reorient themselves in relation to sound and perhaps separate sound from specific meanings. Although I will be

Phonemes do not neatly correspond to written language. Language both written and spoken demonstrates the sonic—phonological—aspects of language, but speech does not equal the written word. Although it is possible to divide speech into phonemes in an alphabetic system, those particulates cannot always account for the complexity of speech. In fact, Shankweiler observes that "particulate phonology lacks a clearly discernible foundation in the speech signal" (250). A written system that corresponds to verbal language will never be precise. This incongruity happens at the level of the smallest particulate, the phoneme. Despite all efforts to parse language and to understand its basis in phonology through the phoneme particulate, the phoneme is still considered ambiguous:

> As a result, the phoneme has at present an ambiguous status within the sciences of speech and language, a state of affairs that is unsatisfying to those who seek a theory capable of integrating what we know about the physics and physiology of speech with our practical capabilities to manipulate segments of language and with theoretical entities posited by linguists to account for these abilities. (Shankweiler 250)

In the same way that there is no adequate linguistic framework for discussing and studying oral renderings, there is no extant theory combining the physics and physiology of speech with the particulates of written language. That interstitial space between the written phoneme and its verbal expression is ambiguous, even for linguists and experts in the field. This interstitial space

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focusing primarily on visually-oriented poetry, there is a close relationship of shared material in visual poetry (as words fragment on the page to phonemes/graphemes) and sound poetry (as words break down into sounds perceived aurally). Shankweiler's research emphasizes that readers seek meaning from visual symbols; sound is often secondary to this endeavour. Interestingly, both visual poetry and sound poetry call for readers to interrogate their relationship to the visual symbol and sound; however, the means of communicating this to the reader and changing their relationship to those elements are quite different from one another in form and content.

is often where visual poets play with linguistic content by creating new poetic forms and causing readers to alter their reading practices. Visual poets use the ambiguity of the phoneme as a means to challenge semantic meaning in linguistic expression.

Due to a lack of adequate theoretical frameworks for aural / oral experiences, critics often struggle when trying to theorize something that moves outside or works beyond textuality. When words move off the page and enter the temporal sphere of aurality, the resultant phonological experience is even more difficult to codify and assess. Also, the out-sounding of a work is complicated because not only is it temporal, but it also varies with each reader and reading. The lack of a theoretical framework surrounding orality—and oral experiences—challenges my process of working through poems that contest orality and reading practices. Aural experience is especially significant in the examination of out-sound(ing).

Works of visual poetry challenge orality through materials and space on the page. As previously stated, the phoneme (the material of linguistic visual poems)[19] and its verbal expression (the in-sounding / out-sounding) is ambiguous—the sounds are not consistent with the symbol. As such, phonological processing, which is integral to reading, is a challenging and contradictory endeavour—even before visual poets attempt to defamiliarize it. This dissertation pivots upon the point that sound is at the centre of language, communication, and the written word. Shankweiler describes language as a "union of sound and meaning" (246), and Walter Ong, S.J. considers language to be "articulated sound" (6). For these reasons, phonemic awareness and phonological processing are fundamental to speaking, reading, and writing. Visual poets take up these phonemes and pieces of linguistic material (in some cases, non-

[19] Non-linguistic visual poetry (such as asemic poetry) exists and avoids language, linguistic elements, and phonemes intentionally. Non-linguistic visual poetry is examined in Chapter Four.

linguistic) and make readers question how they read, how they sound, and how they make meaning (or challenge semantic meaning entirely).

Orality: Sounding Language

The assertion that poetry is a mode of communication addresses the question of poetry's significance and impact. This is not to suggest that poetry's primary purpose is didactic or that a poem conveys a singular message; instead, poetry, in its creation, process, sounding, and re-sounding, is communication. This claim may seem unsurprising. After all, poetic discourse originates in the oral tradition. In *Orality and Literacy* (1982), Walter Ong, S.J. delves into the complex oral tradition which underpins language. After discussing the many ways humans communicate through various senses, Ong observes, "Some nonoral communication is exceedingly rich—gesture, for example. Yet in a deep sense language, *articulated sound*, is paramount" (*OL* 6). In that apposite phrase, "articulated sound," Ong implies that language itself is a fusion of sound and articulation. Writing has been developed as a codification for oral expression. "Oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all," as Ong explains, but "writing never without orality" (*OL* 8). I would expand his argument by suggesting that we have wandered from and forgotten (or neglected to remember) the oral and sonic origins of language. This is significant because of the intimate connection between the oral rendering of language and its written systems, demonstrated by many aforementioned cognitive psychologists. Language is intended to be a surrogate for speech, and as poets use linguistic material, the readers ought to remind themselves of the oral origins of the written language—in doing so, readers recognize the value in sounding and highlighting the sonic features of visually-oriented poetry.

Ong contends that there has been a lack of critical attention to the orality of language: many theorists circumvent orality in their critical considerations. "Yet, despite the oral roots of all verbalization," he notes, "the scientific and literary study of language and literature has for centuries, until quite recent years, shied away from orality" (*OL* 7). Possible reasons for the critical silence on orality include the complexity of studying oral works and the transience of oral experiences. Ong especially emphasizes that written language more readily allows for the possibilities of "study." (This line of reasoning likely stems from the hierarchy of the senses discussed in the Introduction).

The Oral Codified

The origins of language are oral, yet the codification of linguistic expression on the page (or screen) offers a permanence that had been unavailable in oral rendering. Ong suggestively frames this in terms of imprisonment: "Though words are grounded in oral speech, writing tyrannically locks them into a visual field forever" (*OL* 11).[20] There is a semi-permanence to this "visual field," but I would disagree with Ong's claims of "tyranny" and "forever." Instead, I would argue that these visual works are always sounding, even in their visual field. The visual field is fixed on the page; however, the sound (captive in the material) shifts in the sounding(s) performed by readers in each rendering. In their treatment of the page / visuality, both visual and sound poems raise the issue of time in relation to the reading / viewing / study of their texts. Certainly, there is a great contrast between the time for reflection or study that reading affords and the immediacy and transience of oral expression (except in the case where a recording is

[20] Renaissance scholars Roger Chartier, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Adrian Johns, and Randall McLeod argue against the "tyranny" of the visual field.

available). This dissertation highlights the reader's experiences of the written word of the visual poem and the oral performance of the sound poem. But even within the subgenre of visual poetry, words are fused with sound; some visual poets even perform these works aloud. Similarly, some sound poems have been codified and can be read as polyphonic poems (written as a transcription) or as a musical score. Both of these subgenres suggest a preferred initial experience—be it through visual means in visual poetry or sounding / hearing / listening with sound poems. But I argue that both types, through their use of linguistic systems, are necessarily engaging sound. Although visual poems use visual means (text / space) and typographical organization (*mise-en-page*) to convey or challenge meaning, sound poems often use sounds or silences to question how those sonic experiences can be conveyors of meaning. A significant distinction between these subgenres is their handling of orality and the amount of time that each form allows for the reflection upon meaning of / in their works.

Visual poems are often codified on the page—with the exception of works that are 3D-printed or presented in other media forms.[21] Study of the written word has its advantages, most especially time for reflection and review. Ong demonstrates, however, that there is a misconception regarding the word and its verbalization. Scholars presume oral and written art forms of similar materials can be considered the same: "With their attention directed to texts, scholars often went on to assume, often without reflection, that oral verbalization was essentially the same as the written verbalization they normally dealt with, and that oral art forms were to all intents and purposes simply texts, except for the fact that they were not written down" (*OL* 10). Oral and written texts are not one and the same, however. Arguably, the oral and the written not

[21] The computer has complicated the representation and codification of visual poems by allowing the text to be responsive (and/or move) in relation to coding and reader reactions.

only require different kinds of attention and reactions from the reader, but the medium of the message determines or at least dramatically affects its reception. Ong helpfully explains the erroneous assumption that the "written" is inherently more valuable than the oral: "The impression grew that, apart from the oration (governed by written rhetorical rules), oral art forms were essentially unskillful and not worth serious study" (*OL* 10). Clearly, there has been insufficient study of the oral arts. Textuality (instead of orality) dominates literary discourse. Ong argues that "no concepts have yet been formed for effectively, let alone gracefully, conceiving of oral art as such without reference, conscious or unconscious, to writing. This is so even though the oral art forms which developed during the tens of thousands of years before writing obviously had no connection with writing at all" (*OL* 10). Existing terminology for the study of oral arts is inadequate, Ong acknowledges. I would argue that the dearth of effective terminology and lack of sufficient critical consideration are due to the transience of the oral / aural experience. Also, a single oral performance cannot be replicated. There can be similar iterations of an oral performance, but unless a work is recorded in its initial performance, that performance is impermanent. To have permanence, reflection, and study, we need a surrogate for speech. However imperfect, that surrogate is the written word.

Theoretical Grounding for Insound, Outsound, and Unsound

In response to the lack of a lexicon and method for examining different kinds of sounds within literature, I have generated three specific terms that relate to the sonic reading experience: "insound," "outsound," and "unsound." Briefly, "insound" (noun) is the internalized sonic material of a poem that can change with subsequent internalized readings. "In-sound" as a verb refers to the sounding of words within the mind of the reader; many theorists default to the

terminology of "silent reading" to describe this process, but there is an internal sounding when we read that must be acknowledged. "Outsound" (noun) refers to the sound of a text when it is vocalized—read aloud. This act of "out-sounding" makes the textual material externally audible and highlights the subsequent array of effects in encountering an "auditory" work. In both cases, sound is processed by the mind, but literary works, in different forms, create various sound effects in reading / performance. There is another significant dimension of auditory effects in a work, which is when sound is intentionally removed or absented: these are instances of "unsound." This muting of sound—"un-sounding"—creates significantly different sonic effects as well as affective results. "Unsound" relates both to insound and outsound. As will be discussed, silence is an impossible acoustic condition to create. Unsound, therefore, is a gesture towards the concept of silence, even though silence as an actuality is unachievable. Unsounds, also, are more than instances of "silencing." These unsounds highlight aspects of the poem where sound is absent, and the meaning of these absences—unsounds—are multitudinous. Even in relation to internal reading, there may be an attempted removal of sound, an unvoicing,[22] and this silencing also affects the poem's insound. This project examines how encounters of "insound," "outsound," and "unsound" may differ from one another in significant and meaningful ways across various poetic genres. In an investigation of poetic sound effects, this dissertation aims to reconfigure reading and listening processes and incite readers to encounter literary works with adjusted attention to and attuned observance of textual features.

Sound is generally divided into the categories of *structured* or *unstructured*. What often determines this distinction is intentionality. When creating a work of art, the artist has a certain

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[22] Brandon LaBelle coins this term and explores it in *Lexicon of the Mouth*. LaBelle describes "unvoice" as a process: "To search for words is to already stir the silence, to drum it up so as to extract a knowable and nameable flow" (88).

degree of creative agency in their arrangement of their chosen materials. In terms of using sound material, the artist / author / composer / performer structures those sounds across time and space. In the case of music, the composer organizes sound across certain measures of time, which are laid out in the score. In the case of visual poetry, the author structures the linguistic materials, delineating how sound can be in-sounded / spoken / heard over time. The reading and performance of these materials ultimately affect the interpretation and the reception of those sounds. Initially, music and poetry may seem to fall under the category of structured sound. Noise, by contrast, would be considered unstructured sound because it is not intentionally ordered or arranged. Interestingly, though, the resultant sounds in a sound poem may be categorized by many as "unstructured sound" because their structure and significance may not immediately apparent. This categorization of structured or unstructured reveals the underlying connotations surrounding these terms.

Bound up in these distinctions is a value judgement: structured sound = good, unstructured sound = bad. Richard Kostelanetz once asked John Cage what people should do when experiencing music. After urging people to *listen*, Cage said: "And I suppose that most would think that's so simple to do that there's no problem. And actually there is no problem, but it's a question of whether or not one does it. Some people, for instance, develop ideas about what are good sounds and what are bad sounds. And they don't want to hear the bad ones" (Kostelanetz 126). Through personal valuation, structured sound is acceptable and worthy of study, whereas unstructured sound is a by-product—an unwelcome guest—in the sonic experience of structured sound. David Novak suggests that noise "is inherent in technological mediations of sound, but it is also considered accidental and meaningless" ("Noise" 125). Generally speaking, unstructured sound is not considered to be a vehicle for semantic

significance—unstructured sound is meaningless and accidental. Yet, when it is not "accidental," when unstructured sound *is* organized, it is deemed harmful: "as a keynote of industrial development and mechanization, noise is also recognized for its anti-social and physiologically damaging effects" (Novak, "Noise" 125). Certainly, technological advancements have opened ears to the surrounding noise. Ihde addresses this enhanced exposure and its acute effect(s):

> It is not merely that the world has suddenly become noisier, or that we can hear farther, or even that sound is somehow demandingly pervasive in a technological culture. It is rather that by living with electronic instruments our experience of listening itself is being transformed, and included in this transformation are the ideas we have about the world and ourselves. (5)

Noise causes us to ask questions about human expression, socialization, individual subjectivity, and political control in order to recalibrate our understanding of the world. But it is our listening to noise that causes inner transformation. As with the rise in publications on sound, there has similarly been an increase in texts critically examining noise.[23]

These broad categories of music, poetry, and noise run the gamut of sound, each containing genres and individual pieces that may be identified as structured or unstructured. Which music works are "acceptable" and when do they stray into the unacceptable realm of noise? Which visual poems are worthy of study and when does the noise overtake them? If and / or when sound poems pop, clang, and smash, must they be relegated to the realm of

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[23] Although many discussions of sound include critical examinations of noise, a number of sources focus on noise specifically. See: Jacques Attali, *Noise* (1977); Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat* (1999); Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise* (2006); Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare* (2010); David Toop, *Sinister Resonance* (2010); Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence* (2010); Michael Goddard et al., *Reverberation* (2012); David Novak, "Noise" in *Keywords in Sound* (2015). Craig Dworkin's "The Stutter of Form" in *The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound* (2009) discusses sound, form, and noise in specific relation to literature.

unstructured insignificance? Who makes these judgements? Poems are a structuring of sound on the page. There are many visual poems, especially dirty concrete poems (such as Steve McCaffery's *Carnival*) and cut-up poems (such as Susan Howe's "Frolic Architecture" in *That This*) that, critics could argue, are poems of "visual noise."[24] The textual material appears disorganized or even chaotic; however, these "noisy" poems offer a challenge to normative sounding and ask the reader to read / sound / perform anew. These types of poems alter the reader's relationship to language, to the page, and to sound. I will address examples of such poems throughout this dissertation, but McCaffery's *Carnival* that is filled with "visual noise" (so extreme at times that it could be considered unsound) will be examined in Chapter 2.

At the heart of this structured / unstructured sound division there seems to be a preconception that the implied author has sole authority (and intention) to craft their materials, their performance, and reception. The reader, in fact, has just as much power to relegate the artist's works to the realm of insignificance due to the reader's own interpretation. When one has the opportunity to sound and re-sound texts in various performances, one has the agency to shape the text's meaning. There is a delicate balance between the text's power and the reader's power: the text does not require a reader in order to exist, but the text becomes alive in the reader's performance. The structured / unstructured distinction is another iteration of the significant power relations and politics inherent in the symbiotic relationship of poetic communication between the author, the reader, and the text.

In addition to the issue of structured or unstructured sounds, consideration must be given to the muting or removal of sound—unsounding. This investigation into the structured removal

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[24] Cut-up poetry is another form of visual poetry that uses sound in unique ways through complex insounds, overlapped outsounds, and truncated unsounds. "Visual noise" is especially relevant in analyzing such poems.

of sound illuminates the power of sound within a poem. Sound is not only powerful, it is necessarily political. Who has the power to speak? Whose words are voiced or silenced? There is also immense power in silence. Moments of silence can demonstrate the powerlessness of words to address the present issue effectively. Even more befuddling is how the attempted absence of sound simultaneously illustrates both power and its lack. For just as a word has numerous interpretations, the readings of silences are similarly multitudinous.

Sound and Outsound

For the sake of contextualizing these categories of sound, this section begins with a definition of sound then proceeds to closer examinations of the outsound, followed by insound, then unsound. The definitions of these terms are ordered from the clearly observable to the most indeterminate. When demonstrating the application of these terms later, however, they are examined in chronological order in terms of the reading process of a page-based poem: the internal insound, external outsound, then the unsound, which often requires reflection to contextualize its usage.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "sound" as "the sensation produced in the organs of hearing when the surrounding air is set in vibration in such a way as to affect these; also, that which is or may be heard; the external object of audition, or the property of bodies by which this is produced. Hence also, pressure waves that differ from audible sound only in being of a lower or a higher frequency." (n3.1a). This definition calls into question which body parts are implicated. The ears? The whole body itself experiencing vibrations? Or the brain, which mediates these sounds? Which are "the hearing organs"? Perhaps all of these. The definition goes on to include "that which is or may be heard." "Outsound" refers to these potentially

observable sounds: sounds that may be heard and observed by "the hearing organs" including those aided by sound technologies. Ihde suggests that "our capacities for listening are changed by technological culture. The telephone, the radio, and even the radio telescope have extended the range of our hearing as never before" (4), which alters our understanding of our environment:

> But above all, the electronic communications revolution has made us aware that once silent realms are in fact realms of sound and noise. The ocean now resounds with whale sounds and shrimp percussion made possible by the extension of listening through electronic amplification. The distant stars, which perhaps are not so thoroughly in a "harmony of the spheres" of the Pythagoreans, nevertheless sputter in the static of radio astronomy. (Ihde 4–5)

Although humans can perceive previously imperceptible sounds through innovative sound technologies, [25] outsound exists objectively and can be proven to exist regardless of anthropocentric audition. Although sounds reverberate within us, even at the level of our cells vibrating and making sound,[26] sound exists outside of humans. The existence of outsound is not dependent on anthropomorphic perception; the essential aspect of outsound is that it creates a sound wave.

Sound waves may or may not be perceptible to the human ear. Even when those waves are not perceptible to the ear, they can be experienced by the body. Asking humans to look outside of themselves to perceive sounds is an impossible request, since humans will only be

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[25] NASA has recorded and released sounds of space that only recently have been made perceptible to human ears. From plasma waves (www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/2017/nasa-listens-in-as-electrons-whistle-while-they-work) to sounds of stars / planets in our solar system, (www.nasa.gov/vision/universe/features/halloween_sounds.html), NASA demonstrates through these recordings that space is not silent; instead, it is alive with sound.

[26] In December 2018, on behalf of the British Society for Gene and Cell Therapy, Dr. Liam Hurst explained that human cells make sound: (www.bsgct.org/cells-alive-sound-music/).

able to experience the world within their own framework, their own paradigm of inquiry. Even still, readers should recognize and familiarize themselves with their own expectations and biases regarding reading processes. In his interview with Richard Kostelanetz, Cage recalls a discussion with a fellow composer: "I remember being with an older composer who was concerned about my use of the word 'nature' in connection with my explanation of musical ideas. He said he'd always thought of nature as something that should be gardened, controlled, so that the aspects of it that were uncomfortable could be removed so that one could escape being bitten" (Kostelanetz 121). In an evolutionary way, it is understandable that humans try to protect themselves from "bad sounds" by attempting to control them; however, Cage continued saying: "Progress may be the idea of *dominating* nature. But in the arts, it may be *listening* to nature" (Kostelanetz 121). Instead of trying to control them these sounds and force them to exist in relation to us, readers need to listen to these sounds and recognize that the sound is significant in and of itself.

Sound and Insound

When a word on a page is read silently, does that word not sound in the reader's mind? In *Pitch of Poetry*, Charles Bernstein notes that "textuality, sounded, evokes orality. Textuality is a palimpsest: when you scratch it, you find speech underneath. And when you sniff the speech, you find language under that. *The alphabet is frozen sound*" (*PP* 33). Perhaps it is the reader who sets those words vibrating through their reading—producing sound, albeit in the mind. What does someone hear when they read something on the page without reading it aloud? As previously explained, I am defining this interior reading / performance of sound as "insound."

"Insound" functions both as a verb and as a noun. As a verb, "to in-sound" is to sound a written text within the mind. As a noun, "insound" is the internal and unique sound of a text. Of

course, readings can produce different insound for various readers. Reading “with the ears” and paying attention to the sonic features of the texts, “in-sounding” is a way of recognizing a text’s insound. The latter resonates with Gerard Manley Hopkins’s coinage, “instress,” the poem’s (or object’s) internal energy. Readers should respond to this energy in kind as they in-sound the text. As the reader in-sounds, the uniqueness of each iterative reading leads to performances of multiple in-soundings—the poem grows in its breadth of insound with each reading.

This term “insound” is not without its complications. The greatest difficulty is that insound exists within the interrelations of metaphor and materiality. When referring to material sound (outsound), it is something qualifiable and quantifiable—it can be measured; however, to define the boundaries of insound, as it occurs within the human mind, seems impossible. bpNichol “blues” (fig. 3) is an example of a visual poem that can challenge normative reading practices:

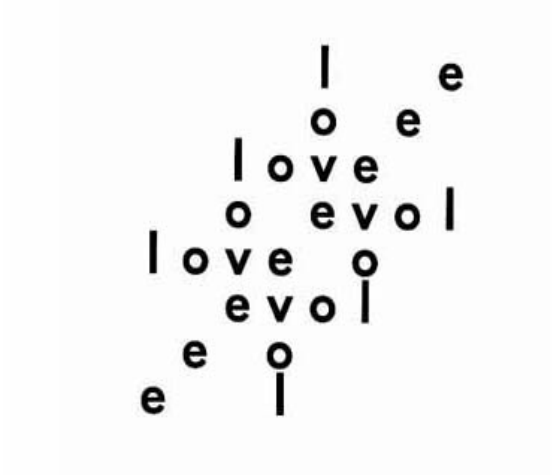

Figure 3. “blues,” bpNichol, *love: a book of remembrances*, Talon Books, 1974.

What can be heard as one’s eyes run over that linguistic material? What sounds are experienced in the mind? How does one describe the “insound” they experienced? One could attempt an explanation by outlining the whole words observed, like “love,” and incomplete ones such as

"evol." Or one could suggest they sounded out individual letters. But various readers could have different starting points or different sounds that resound in their internal reading. There is no set process nor an established lexicon for explaining and examining sound in this stage of the reading process. Like the wind, though invisible to the eye, insound can be heard, and its existence is evidenced by the perception of its effects. Instead of mapping the boundaries of insound, it is more advantageous to examine trends in its manifestation. To do so, however, one must become attuned to an unpracticed form of listening. Also, "insound" is highly individualized and intuitive, just as the perception of hearing a voice is similarly individual and intuitive. Jonathan Sterne defines "hearing" as "a medium for sound, a body with ears to hear, a frame of mind to do the same, and a dynamic relation between hearer and heard that allows for the possibility of mutual effects" (HKS 65). But within this medium, this body, this frame of mind, and this dynamic relation, each individual shapes their own subjective understanding of what they hear. Sterne claims that hearing "is human nature and human history, deeply personal and irreducibly subjective, environmentally grounded and stretched toward transcendence" (HKS 65). This is not to suggest that insound cannot be successfully explored; rather, this is only to observe that there is no single way to categorize and describe the listening experience. Moreover, there is no current linguistic framework to describe these inner experiences of sound. This dissertation attempts to account for how these multifaceted and diverse experiences may be subjective, while also highlighting their similarities.

Unsound: Seeking Silence

In the early 1950s, John Cage visited Harvard University's anechoic chamber in an attempt to experience a space that approaches conditions of absolute silence. To his great

surprise, Cage described hearing two sounds: one high, ringing pitch and one low, undulating sound. In answer to Cage's question about the source of the sounds, the engineer replied: "The high one was your nervous system in operation. The low one was your blood in circulation" (Gann 162). Even in a room that stripped away extraneous sound and attempted to create a space of silence, sound was present. Cage's visit to the anechoic chamber changed his perception of silence forever. In a 1957 lecture, he amplified the ramifications of his discovery: "There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make silence, we cannot" (Gann 162). Cage had been accustomed to considering sound and silence as a dichotomy; instead, he posited that silence does not exist. Cage's discovery relates to the world of music as well as the realm of poetry. It is erroneous to think of words and silences (between those words) as opposites; instead, the binary breaks down in the non-existence of silence. If Cage is correct, then silence cannot exist within a poem because silence itself does not exist; in places previously considered to be silences, there are worlds of sound waiting for the listener to discover. For my research, there will be a constant comparison between presence and absence. For the identification and analysis of absences, I turn to my term, "unsound." "Unsound" refers to moments in the poem in which sound has been intentionally backgrounded or "silenced." Unsound is not to be equated with silence, however; instead, unsound refers to the concept of unattainable silence, a concept we can conceive but never actually perceive. Such unsounding can also silence certain sounds and their maker(s) to allow other, often overlooked or muffled sounds, to come to the auditory foreground. This relationship between sound and its attempted absence manifests differently across the reading and listening experiences.

In her essay "Silence," Ana María Ochoa Gautier begins by gesturing to Cage's reformulation of "silence": "Silence invokes a type of plenitude most commonly associated with contemplative techniques of quietness as a means to bring out a transformation of the self" (Ochoa Gautier 182). The listener can be changed in their attention to silence. Similar to Ochoa Gautier's emphasis on quietude affecting identity, Elizabeth Grosz addresses the anthropomorphic relation between silence and identity. Silence is a means "by which we understand our existence as beings in the world larger than ourselves, a world not entirely of our own making, whose limits and constraints provide the very limits and constraints of thought itself" (Grosz 99). This dissertation intends to focus on the unsounds (these "silences") in visual works to demonstrate the fluidity of interpretation, which is even more expansive than the interpretations of written sound. Also, the study of unsound demonstrates both the limits and the opportunities of communication in poetic discourse.

In terms of control, silence is also political. Often, "having a voice" or being silenced is a mark of being politically heard or unheard. Silence in this respect is "contrasted with types of dialogism that have historically been seen in Western modernity as a key dimension of political participation and of the constitution of the political sphere" (Ochoa Gautier 183). Silence is also used for suppression or domination, a *silencing*. There is a significant and necessary push across disciplines for a recognition of silenced voices. Similar to insound and outsound, a reader must similarly seek to identify these moments of unsound. Poems can communicate a great deal of complexity in such unsounds. By harnessing the various connotations of "silence," poems (especially erasure poems; see Chapter 3) can use unsound as an act of resistance and strength in demonstrating control (and sometimes a shared lack of control) over sound and "silence."

Methods for Analyzing Insound, Outsound, and Unsound

This chapter began with an in-depth exploration of the cognitive processes of reading, the phonological processing of language, and the seemingly inextricable relationship between language and orality. As I have demonstrated, each of these concepts relates to the examination of visual poetry. Having explained the theoretical grounding of each category (outsound, insound, unsound), I will now delineate processes for examining insound, outsound, and unsound in a primarily page-based poem. I will be applying this to visual poetry, but this methodology can be applied to other types of page-based poems.

Method for Insound

To examine sound in primarily page-based poetry, one must begin by examining insound (the internal sound of the poem in the mind) and in-sounding (the process by which readers involuntarily—sometimes voluntarily—sound out the material of a poem). In this discussion, one begins with in-sounding because the reader encounters page-based texts primarily in reading, and in-sounding is fundamental to the reading process. In-sounding is the sounding of this linguistic (or in some cases, non-linguistic) material as we read in our minds.[27] Throughout the theoretical discussions of visual poetry and sound, there is a consistent return to the concept of phonology—and how sound is inherently at the centre of language and the process of making meaning. This argument is, of course, challenged by non-linguistic materials in visual poetry. In-sounding (or even sounding at all) is more deeply examined in the application of this methodology to non-

[27] In-sounding can be a voluntary act; however, I am addressing its involuntary aspect in order to demonstrate how visual poems, in particular, disrupt normative reading practices and the involuntary in-sounding that is fundamental to those practices. Voluntary in-sounding is still possible even when involuntary processes are disrupted, and readers who seek to engage with challenging poems may need to turn to voluntary in-sounding to do so.

linguistic poems, which occurs at the end of this section. One begins with in-sounding because that is where readers first process sound in reading—they engage with the sound of the text in their minds as their brains first involuntarily process the linguistic material. Readers can then choose to voluntarily sound whole words, linguistic fragments, and phonemes. The sound that is produced in this reading—insound—is individual and subjective; it also is unquantifiable. I am not attempting to define and describe the sounds that occur when one reads a poem. Instead, I am interested in how poets subvert that involuntary process of in-sounding—and what effect that has on the reader. If readers can no longer read poetic material in a normative way, how does that affect the way they process the material, understand the poem, and grasp the poem's larger significance(s)?

As the research on reading, writing, and phonological processes demonstrates, readers usually in-sound works involuntarily. In order to examine the process of in-sounding, it is important to consider those works that challenge in-sounding. Additionally, readers need to pay close attention to how in-sounding is subverted. I have created a set of questions to ask of a poem in order to determine if and how it challenges in-sounding and what effect that might have upon the reader. For a visual representation of this methodology, see figure 4.

Examining insound divides into two categories: textual material and its arrangement. In terms of textual material, one begins by asking: Is it linguistic or non-linguistic? Sound is central to linguistic material, and readers have processes for decoding and sounding linguistic material.

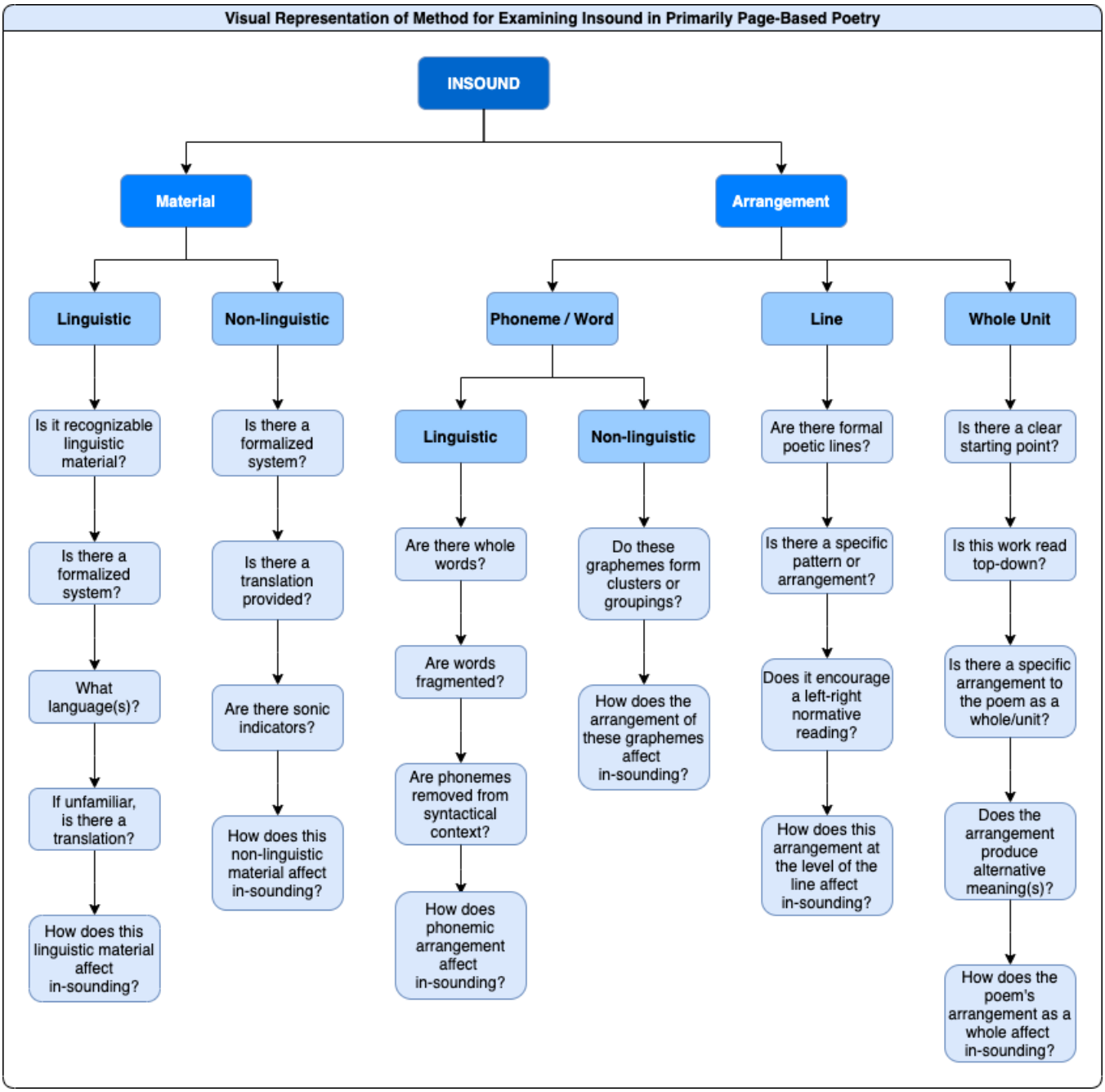

Figure 4. Visual Representation of Examining Insound.

The next questions to ask of linguistic material are:

- Is it recognizable linguistic material?
- Is it a formalized system of an existing language?
- What language is it? Is it more than one language?
- If there are multiple languages or a foreign one to you as a reader, is a translation provided?

What is the effect of this linguistic material on in-sounding?

In order to determine the degree to which a poetic work challenges the process of in-sounding, one needs to assess the readability of the material. At this point, the reader is not addressing the semantic implications of the linguistic material; instead, they are focusing on the ease or difficulty of in-sounding the material as they read it. If multiple languages—or non-English languages—are deployed (one thinks of works by Anne Carson, Erín Moure, and Carolyn Forché), the reader must also consider if any translations are provided for this material—or road maps, colloquially, to know how to sound the work.

Overall, this linguistic material will affect the poem's insound and will determine the ease or difficulty for in-sounding. Non-linguistic material, however, further challenges in-sounding (and by extension out-sounding and orality). There are no formalized systems or methods for how to sound non-linguistic material. Once again, this methodology addresses possible ways of navigating these non-linguistic works that often present stumbling blocks to in-sounding. Some examples of non-linguistic material examined in Chapter 4 include jagged and layered lines (in Carolyn Bergvall's *Drift*), diagrammatic-codes used in the moon landing (in Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet"), and lines / branches / boxes (in Eric Schmaltz's *Surfaces*). If the poem contains non-linguistic materials, there is another set of questions to address:

- Is it a formalized system?
- Is a translation or key provided?
- Are there indications as to how this may be sounded?
- What is the effect of this non-linguistic material on in-sounding?

In the page-based poem under examination, is there an alternate formalized system to which it adheres? If so, what? And if not a particular system, does the non-linguistic material seem to be random, chaotic, or organized in a specific way? Perhaps there is a key or translation guide, or perhaps the poet has evidenced a system of non-linguistic material across a series in a work. Is there a sense of how to sound out this material? With each of these questions, we are inherently asking the question: "How do we read this?" At the heart of reading is sounding, and when that sounding (in-sounding and out-sounding) is subverted, the reader needs to (re)assess their ways and modes of reading. At all times, readers ought to try to understand how the author may be asking them to adjust their understanding of poetry and of reading practices. (Julia Kristeva's idea of "participatory aesthetics" is very pertinent in this regard.)

In addition to considering the poem's materiality and its effect on insound and in-sounding, readers must also examine the *mise-en-page*—the visual presentation of the poetic discourse. The poem's arrangement is subdivided into three specific levels: the level of the phoneme / word; the level of the line; and the level of the poem as a whole. My method suggests that the reader should start at the level of the word / phoneme when examining the physical arrangement. Once the reader has observed the details of the poem, they can understand the whole more completely. (If the reader instead started at the opposite level, considering the whole, they might be tempted to focus on the semantic meaning before foregrounding the sonic effects of the poem's arrangement at its foundation.) It is helpful, then, to start at the basic level

of arrangement, so that the reader can use the information they have gleaned in the detailed reading to reflect on the poem overall. The "Arrangement" branch of the Insound method (see right section of fig. 4) has a set of questions for each of these three levels of arrangement in order to guide the reader through examining how the structure of the poem itself can affect the sonic aspects of the poem—the structure of the poetic material greatly affects its insound and the way the reader in-sounds it.

The first level of visual arrangement of the poem is its most basic: the level of the phoneme / word.[28] As with poetic materiality, the questions in this section are further subdivided into linguistic and non-linguistic material sets because linguistic material has descriptors for different types of organization, whereas non-linguistic material does not have the same types of categorizations. Once the questions provided below are considered, the distinction will be clearer. Dealing with linguistic material at the level of the phoneme / word, these are the suggested questions:

- Are there whole words?
- Are words fragmented?
- Are phonemes individuated—separated from the context of other phonemes?
- Is there just one of these methods used or are there combinations of these words / fragments / phonemes?
- How do these choices affect the way the poem is in-sounded?

[28] I have paired phonemes with words at this level of analysis because I want to examine sound units at their most basic level. There are poems that are comprised of words but poems that also break words down to individual phonemes. This level of analysis examines the poem's most basic level of structural organization and seeks the sounds at that level of arrangement.

As discussed previously, when words break down to fragments and phonemes are divided from one another, there is a disruption to in-sounding. In order to read the poem that has been disrupted at the level of the word, readers must make a greater effort to in-sound those sonic materials. (It becomes a greater challenge to understand or conceptualize a work that has been further disassembled to its constitutive parts.) Reading and understanding become even more complicated when those textual materials are disassembled but then reassembled in ways that further subvert in-sounding—by perhaps creating nonce words or forming clusters that seem contextually unrelated or defy normative linguistic rules of organization (say a cluster of all consonants). Ultimately, the effort falls to the reader to attempt to read, in-sound, and interpret this textual material. Although this type of visual poetry may present greater challenges for readers, there is also a corresponding increase in the reader's agency and freedom in engaging with and interpreting such a work of poetry.

All of this reading is further complicated when the author enfolds textual material that is non-linguistic. The latter cannot be grouped together at the level of the word—in the normative, linguistic sense of the word. As such, I offer two questions for considering the grouping of non-linguistic material:

1. Is there a joining together of these graphemes to form clusters or groupings?
2. How do these choices affect the way the poem is in-sounded?

Ultimately, readers need to consider if non-linguistic materials are formed in such a way as to indicate how the poem might be read—even if a conventional in-sounding is subverted or seemingly impossible.

Although arrangement at the level of the word is critical to examining the reader's ability to in-sound a poem, the arrangement at the level of the line is also an important consideration.

Traditionally, the vast majority of English poems are carefully, often strictly lineated. Any Introduction to Poetry professor would insist that students distinguish between a line of poetry and a grammatical sentence. The most current methods for explicating poetry—the literary devices used to describe and study a poem—are bound up in the line. For instance, enjambment considers line endings and the absence of punctuation; without lineation, this term is inconsequential. Anaphora—the repetition of the beginning of subsequent lines—would be relatively unimportant if the poem were not structured in lines. Many visual poems, however, challenge lineation conventions. My method for examining sound presents a set of questions to highlight the effects of subverting the poetic line—and how that might impact in-sounding:

- Does this poem have formal (conventional) "poetic" lines?
- Is there a specific pattern of arrangement for these "lines"?
- Does this poem encourage a left-right normative reading?
- How do these choices affect the way the poem is in-sounded?

When a poem is not comprised of lines, the reader questions how it is organized. Is there a principle or system by which these words are arranged together? And what is the significance of this pattern? When there are no poetic lines and the textual material is arranged across the page, the reader may struggle to understand how to read the poem. Is this work read left-to-right, as a normative anglophone reader would assume? Readers cannot read, in-sound, or analyze these works in a normative way; reading, in-sounding, and analyzing are initially stalled. This disruption does not mean that it is impossible to experience these visual works sonically; instead, it suggests that a visual work that destabilizes the conventional arrangement of a line may be more difficult than perhaps a conventional lyric poem, for instance. Such a visual work challenges the reader in a different way than they may expect, and a literary critic may be left

with fewer familiar tools for analyzing such a visual work. Although the reader and literary critic may have fewer familiar tools, there is a greater freedom in the fact that new tools can be created, and new possibilities abound for encountering these types of texts.

The art of a visual poem particularly shines in the arrangement of the material at the level of the text as a whole. My method poses a series of questions in order to analyze the insound and in-sounding of a visual work when considering the visual poem as a whole:

- Is there a clear, singular starting point for reading this work?
- Is this work read top-down? Is there a suggested order to the reading—a visual through-line?
- Is there a specific pattern of arrangement to the poem as a whole?
- Is there an effect on the meaning(s) produced by the poem because of its visual arrangement as a whole?
- How do these choices affect the poem's insound and in-sounding?

The unconventional arrangement of a poem could mean that a visual poem has no clear, singular starting point for the reader. This can be quite disorienting; without a clear beginning, it is often difficult to understand how to work through the poem. After addressing these questions, the reader ought to consider if there are specific patterns of arrangement in the work as a whole. The piece's structure must be examined to understand how sound works throughout the entire unit and also how any specific arrangement is significant. The arrangement of the poem is crafted carefully by the visual poet; visual poets are concerned with the work taken in as a visual entity—like a piece of art. That arrangement may (or may not) convey meaning. Then, the reader must consider how the poem's insound(s) and their attempts at in-sounding may or may not be in congruence with the whole poem.

At this juncture I must return to broader questions of how implied authorial decisions affect the way the reader in-sounds the poem. These are two guiding questions: one, to what extent do the textual materials and their arrangement allow for or disrupt a normative reading practice; and two, does in-sounding remain involuntary or does this poem require a more deliberate in-sounding practice? A poem may encourage an in-sounding, and if so, readers need to consider how the arrangement of the whole poem facilitates that sounding and encourages the resonance of that in-sounding with the poem's content. Yet, a poem may thwart an in-sounding, in which case readers ought to consider what is being communicated about sounds, words, and poetry as a whole by disrupting normative reading practices. One important note: all of these processes operate on a continuum instead of a strict binary; that is, a poem can both encourage and at some points challenge in-sounding.

The answers to these guiding questions cause readers to consider how these textual decisions intimately affect the sonic aspects of the poem. In this allowance or disruption of in-sounding, authors either initially welcome readers or distance them. Although this is not a project on the psychology of reading responses, it is necessary to consider how the reader may or may not be welcomed by the text and its arrangement. In either being welcomed or distanced, a reader may still work (or play) with the poem. If poetry is communication, as I argue, then even as readers question *what* is being communicated, they need to understand that *how* it is being communicated affects them greatly. If the reader does not know how to in-sound the work (often an involuntary part of the reading process), then they must work to understand how to do this. In-sounding then becomes voluntary, more individualized, and idiosyncratic. It takes a great deal of work to learn how to read or sound things anew. There are not definitive answers to every question; however, readers ought to ask *why* this poem has this material and *why* it is arranged in

this manner. Why does this work embrace or distance in-sounding? How does the poem's sound, or the intentional lack thereof, communicate something to readers?

Method for Outsound

The first encounter with a primarily page-based poem is through in-sounding. The reader's brain undertakes involuntary in-sounding to interpret the visual material, and a reader may or may not employ a voluntary in-sounding before out-sounding the textual material. Consequently, oral rendering and aural reception are considered a secondary encounter to in-sounding. Nevertheless, the choices that affect in-sounding in a page-based poem will necessarily affect the out-sounding of that work. The analysis gleaned in the insound section will be relevant to this section, but one must push further to ask how the material and arrangement of the poem affect both the temporal and qualitative aspects of the poem. A visual representation of this outsound segment is provided in figure 5. The Insound and Outsound methods are similar in their shared underpinning: orality. Insound is an internalized sound created in the mind while reading, but outsound is a perceptible externalized sound.

Orality—the process of the poem being spoken aloud—is the verbalizing of an in-sounding. The insound is out-sounded.[29] Readers must consider to what degree this poem encourages out-sounding (and by extension, orality), or if it purposely works against orality. Readers also ought to question the meaning(s) of a poem that intentionally works against sound,

[29] The potential of this gap between insound and outsound is considerable. Are there sounds in an internalized reading (in-sounding) that cannot be replicated in a verbal rendering (out-sounding)? This is a very clear demonstration of the difference between insound and outsound, which necessarily exists outside of the mind as the sound becomes verbalized. Also, out-sound is limited by the instruments that produce it (both analog and digital), whereas insound is not similarly constrained. Also, because out-sounding is a secondary encounter with a page-based poem, one could argue that the first in-sounding can never be exactly replicated anyway.

which is central to reading and language. To analyze the outsound of a poem, one must examine how formal / textual features have sonic effects. The person analyzing a poem should ask how a poem would sound if a reader out-sounded it.

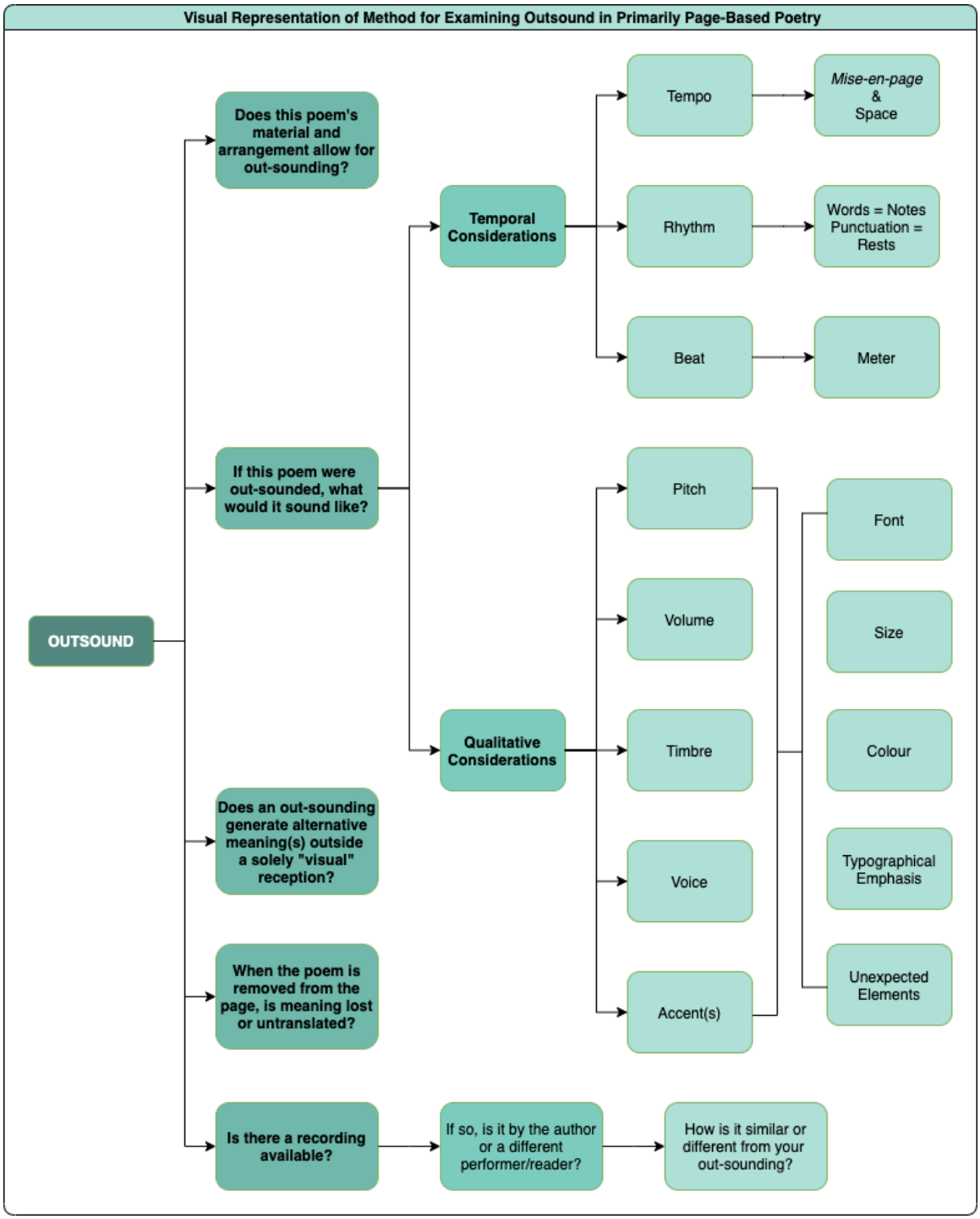

Figure 5. Visual Representation for Examining Outsound.

There are both temporal and qualitative considerations for the sonic effects of textual material and its arrangement. Temporal elements include tempo, rhythm, and beat. For definitions and relevance of these temporal considerations, see fig. 6.

Definitions of Terms for Temporal Considerations of Sound in a Poem		
Term	Definition	Term's Significance for this Project
Tempo	"Relative speed or rate of movement; pace; time" (*OED* n.1a).	The poem's *mise-en-page* and use of space suggests a rate of reading—a pace—in out-sounding a poem.
Rhythm	"The systematic grouping of musical sounds, principally according to duration and periodical stress" (*OED* n.2a).	Rhythm is the demarcation of musical sounds across time. In the case of out-sounding a poem, the words can be seen as notes and punctuation / spaces between words as rests.
Beat	"The basic unit of time in mensural music" (*OCM* 1). Within the definition of "rhythm" in the *OED*, "beat; an instance of this, a particular grouping or arrangement of musical sounds" (n.2a).	A similar term to "beat" in the out-sounding of a poem is meter; however, very few visual poems have a regular meter (as found in traditional poetic forms). Instead, we can think of beats and patterns of them in understanding the metrical structure of a work's out-sounding.

Figure 6. Table of Definitions: Working Terms for Temporal Considerations.

Temporal considerations correlate to specific textual features. Suggestions of tempo—the speed at which a work is performed—are given in the *mise-en-page* and use of space in the poem. Although this is not an exact measurement (specific spacing does not equate to specific bpm), the textual arrangement can help to determine the speed at which it is read aloud. Wider spaces between textual material would naturally lend to larger gaps in time between the out-sounding of that material. When phonemes are overlayed on one another, the reader could almost get a sense of the simultaneity of that out-sounding (even while that would be difficult to produce orally without multiple readers). Rhythm—the demarcated pattern of the material across time—is determined by the linguistic / non-linguistic material as well as the punctuation (or lack thereof) in a poem. To clarify the distinction between rhythm and beat, rhythm is the

demarcation of the material of the poem across time, whereas beat refers to the structural emphasis or de-emphasis of that sonic material. To consider this in terms of traditional poetry terminology, rhythm would refer to the textual material being divided into poetic feet, and the beat would be created through the stresses of specific syllables. Beat, in particular, is a temporal consideration that can shift dramatically in various out-soundings as readers can choose to emphasize or deemphasize various sonic elements of the poem. In identifying rhythm in a page-based poem, rhythm is indicated by the visual arrangement of notes and rests; those same elements map onto poetry analysis where phonemes / words relate to notes / note clusters and rests (or other notes of musical direction) map onto the punctuation in the piece. Many of these visual poems eliminate the use of punctuation and disrupt a regular patterning. Lastly, the temporal consideration of beat is found in the work's metrical patterns.

Definitions of Terms for Qualitative Considerations of Sound in a Poem		
Term	Definition	Term's Significance for this Project
Pitch	"A basic dimension of musical sounds, in which they are heard to be high or low" (*OCM* Baines and Temperley). Often measured in Hertz, when quantified.	Although quantifiable in terms of Hertz, pitch is relevant to this project in terms of its qualitative impact. We need to consider how textual elements can shift pitch due to typographical emphasis or by other textual features.
Volume	"Quantity, strength or power, combined mass, of sound" (*OED* n.9b). Related musically to "dynamics": "the aspect of musical expression concerned with the variation in the volume of sound" (*OCM*). Measured in decibels.	Volume is the intensity of the sound. We can and should consider how the textual features of a poem suggest an intensity in an out-sounding. Also, certain textual features that affect volume, ALL CAPS, for instance, also have come to be politicized—and affect the out-sounding of a poem and its significance(s).
Timbre	"The character or quality of a musical or vocal sound (distinct from its pitch and intensity) depending upon the particular voice or instrument producing it, and distinguishing it from sounds proceeding from other sources" (*OED* n.3).	Timbre is the quality of a sound, specifically focused on the instrument that produces it and how that sound is different from other sounds. We can consider how textual features (such as font, etc.) set the timbre for a specific poem. But moving past the poem itself to the reader out-sounding the poem, each reader has their own timbre. The reader is an instrument.

Voice	"Such sound used to represent the person or being who produces it, or such sound considered separately from the utterer, esp. as the subject of a verb of speaking" (*OED* n.1a).	Voice is a term closely examined in Brandon LaBelle's *Lexicon of the Mouth*. Here, this term "voice" refers to the differing qualities of sound in a work of poetry and how those textual features suggest one voice (monologue), two (dialogue), or many (polylogue). The number of voices can be suggested in repeated patterns of similar textual material.
Accent(s)	"Emphasis given to a particular musical event by a sudden increase (or, occasionally, decrease) in volume (dynamic accent), a lengthening of duration (expressive lengthening), a slight anticipatory silence (articulation), or a combination of these" (Da Costa *OCM*).	Essentially, with "accents" we are focused on elements that seem to be emphasized—or intentionally deemphasized—by a contrast or sudden change in the textual material. Accents can often direct the reader to attend to specific aspects of the poem—highlighting that those aspects require attention.

Figure 7. Table of Definitions: Working Terms for Qualitative Considerations.

Once again, many of these poems do not keep a regular meter found in conventional poetic forms, but these poems can still allow a reader to find a (or multiple) beat(s) as they work through the poem. Often with these visual poems, instead of beats, we find certain parts of these poems accented or emphasized—which overlaps with qualitative considerations. In addition to the temporal considerations for the sonic effects, one must also examine the qualitative aspects that generate sonic effects, which include pitch,[30] volume, timbre, voice, and accent(s). For definitions and relevance of these qualitative considerations to this project, see figure 7. These sonic effects are created by the material and its arrangement. Textual features that affect the qualitative aspects are font, size, colour, typographical emphasis, and unexpected elements.

[30] In their *Oxford Companion to Music* entry describing "pitch," Baines and Temperley also explain that "the subjective sense of pitch is closely correlated with frequency (number of sound vibrations per second). Experiments have shown that the correlation is not exact; judgments of pitch are affected by other variables such as volume, timbre, and duration." Clearly, pitch is not so easily extracted from other terms of volume, timbre, and duration.

There is not a one-to-one relationship of textual features to the qualitative elements listed because one textual feature could affect multiple qualitative aspects simultaneously. For example, if the size of the text is very large, this could affect the volume of the outsound (louder) as well as the pitch (because when voice increases in volume, the pitch tends to rise higher). Also, these textual features' effects often cannot be easily separated. A text size may be large and may be bolded in typographical emphasis; both features could cause a reader to raise their voice—but it would be difficult to determine to what degree the text's size or boldness affected the out-sounding's volume. Ultimately, critical readers look to the textual material and its arrangement for cues as to how the work can be out-sounded. By directing their attention to the textual features (font, size, colour, typographical emphasis, and unexpected elements), readers can gain a clearer sense of the quality of this poem's out-sound. These textual features shape the qualitative aspects of sound in the poem (pitch, volume, timbre, voice, and accent). As previously stated, these qualitative aspects of sound do not have a one-to-one relationship with the textual features; however, close examination of these textual features guide the reader—an instrument for performance—in understanding how to out-sound the poem.

There is a significant element of the reader's agency and individual interpretation in out-sounding because there are fewer codified processes (less culturally-derived or driven ones) in knowing precisely how to sound out these qualitative aspects of sound in work of poetry. As we will see later in the application of this method, there are many visual poems (particularly the non-linguistic ones) that challenge out-sounding altogether. These poems purposely challenge orality. With each poem a reader encounters, they need to consider their role in out-sounding the work and what the poem may communicate to them.

Beyond these questions of textual material and arrangement, the method I have devised

encourages one to dive deeper into the purposeful visuality. This may seem counter-intuitive in a project devoted to sound, but articulation encourages multiple fresh encounters with poetic discourse. There are two questions that interrogate this visual dimension of the text as it relates to out-sounding:

- In out-sounding this poem, do the choices of text and arrangement generate alternative meaning(s) outside of what is gained in a "solely" visual reception?
- In an out-sounding, is there meaning that is lost or not-translated as a result of taking that poem off of the page—making it "invisible" when it was created for a primarily visual encounter?

These questions attempt to address how an out-sounding may affect the reader's ability to understand the meaning(s) or significance(s) of the poem. Does an out-sounding add to a poem's meaning or generate alternative meanings? Simultaneously, is there meaning that is lost when that poem is out-sounded and removed from the context of the page—made aural instead of solely visual? An out-sounding can significantly affect the reader's (or another listener's) reception of a visual poem.

The last question in this section asks: is there a recording of this poem available? Exploring the vast archives in academic libraries, audio recording archives (PennSound, for example), and the plethora of non-academic sites across the Internet that provide recordings of poems and literature, one finds a wealth of sound. If a recording exists, was it produced by the author? Or a different reader / performer? (Authorial performance is not to be conflated with authorial intent, but an author's recording can shed interesting insights on their interpretations of a poem's out-sounding; the discussion of *Zong!* in Chapter 3 will highlight this issue). Are there multiple recordings? After conducting a search and listening to any available recordings, the

reader can ask themselves: how is the recording(s) similar / different from my out-sounding of the poem? These recordings and individual out-soundings can significantly shape the way readers interpret these poems. Readers' engagement with these poems—their outsound(s)—shapes their understanding of the sonic effect of the poem's features and the poem's impact.

Method for Unsound

As I have suggested, the reader's first encounter with a primarily page-based poem occurs is through in-sounding, reading it in their mind; oral renderings and aural receptions are considered secondary encounters. But in both in-sounding and out-sounding, the reader discovers moments in the text when "unsound" is experienced. This absence of sound causes a disruption to both in-sounding and out-sounding, but ultimately the reader interprets the significance of that absence. A short list of questions is provided to examine the unsound of a text (see fig. 8). This aspect of the method may seem the shortest, but brevity does not equal simplicity; the questions will generate fewer specific, tangible answers than those questions for insound or outsound. A reader can never certainly know what that unsound is. The second reason that the examination of unsound multiplies answers is due to reader's agency in interpretation; therefore, this method tries to account for parts of the text that have been absented, un-sounded, and highlight how these instances of unsound can generate various effects and be done for a variety of reasons.

This method seeks to tap into the effects of un-sounding and the significance of that act to the poem and its reception by the reader. First, one identifies the parts of the poem that are un-sounded. Next, readers should highlight the means by which these parts of the poem are un-sounded. Un-sounding may occur where the negative space is foregrounded in the poem—that is, highlighting the space in and around the poem in such a way that space (and the muting of

sound) becomes a focal point instead of the text itself. Also, erasure or redaction could be responsible. Absenting expected content is a third means.

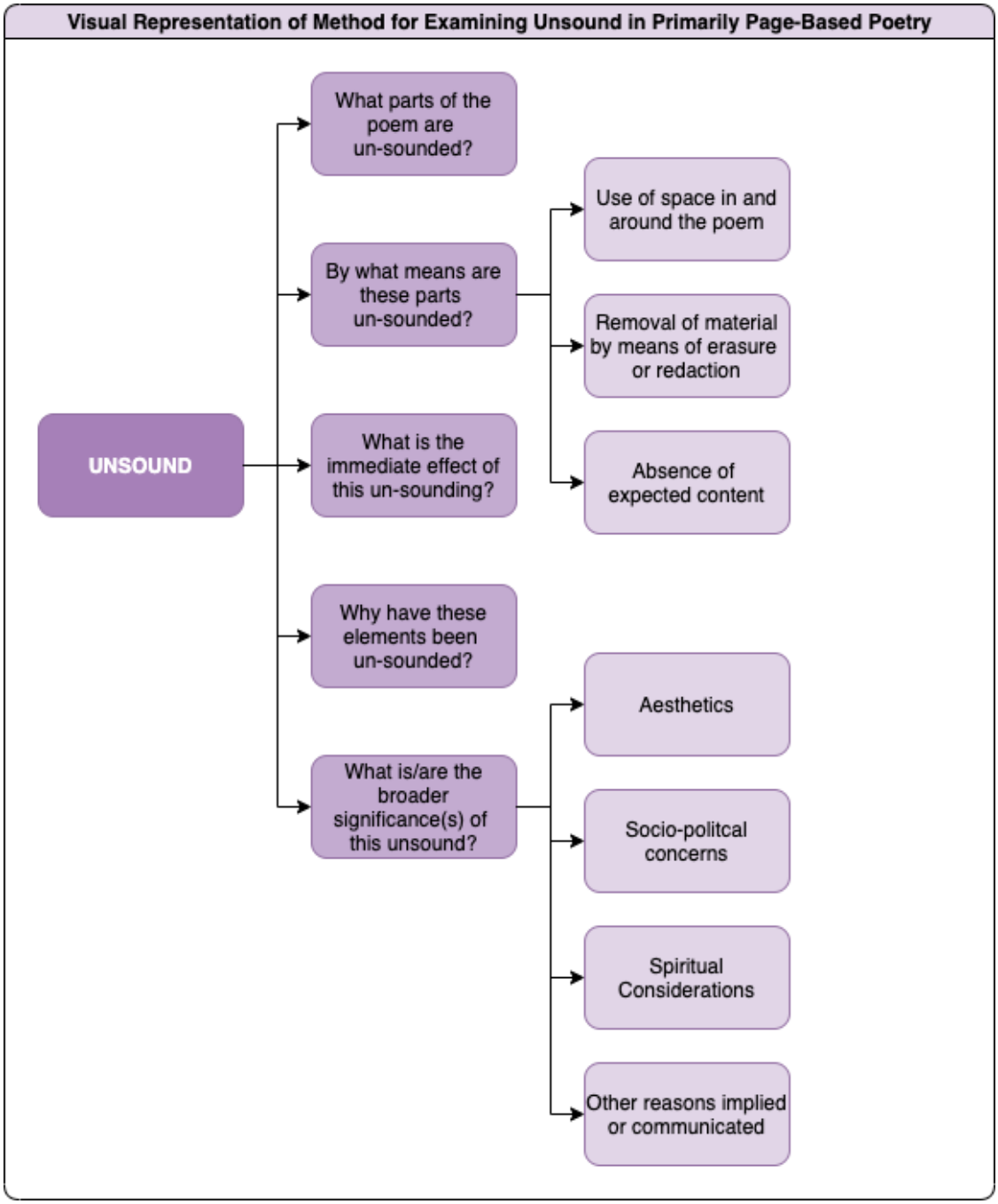

Figure 8. Visual Representation for Examining Unsound.

Although not a visual poem, one contemporary and vivid example of un-sounding is found in Adam Sol's "Prelude and Variations" in *Crowd of Sounds* (2003). A gunshot "sounds" in each variation followed by a monologue or dialogue; however, the un-sounding—the absence of poetic material—following the gunshot in the final variation is a removal of expected material. This absence is striking—and leaves a lasting impression on the reader.

After examining what parts have been un-sounded and the means by which they have been un-sounded in a poem, we ought to consider the immediate effect of this un-sounding. In the case of Sol's "Prelude and Variations," the unsound highlights the absence of voices after the gunshot, which makes the reader acutely aware of the silence. This un-sounding through the absence of expected material is dramatic and evokes an eerie fatality. As the reader examines a poem's unsound, what is the immediate effect of this un-sounding? Is the reader more acutely aware of the "silence"? Does the un-sounding lend that absence of sound a new meaning? Is the reader supposed to consider the nature of this muting of sound—and the impossibility of the nature of silence?

A visual poet particularly interested in sounds and unsounds is Gerhard Rühm. In a preface to an exhibition of his work in May 1958, Rühm proclaims that "words and sounds operate simultaneously on the page" (Bann 12). For Rühm, sound is the means to communicate meaning through words, syllables, and letters. In *Concrete Poetry: An International Anthology*, Stephen Bann notes the significance of sound in Rühm's work, suggesting that "it is the simultaneity of visual and acoustic impressions that is the distinctive feature of Rühm's 'constellations'" (12) Rühm plays with a balance, or even an imbalance, of visual features and their acoustic effects. Bann further asserts in Rühm's constellations that "the visual form is often subsidiary to the progressive revelation of sounds" (12). One of Rühm's constellations,

"schweigen" (see fig. 9) is perhaps an echo of Eugen Gomringer's constellation by the same title, which will be explored more closely in Chapter 2.

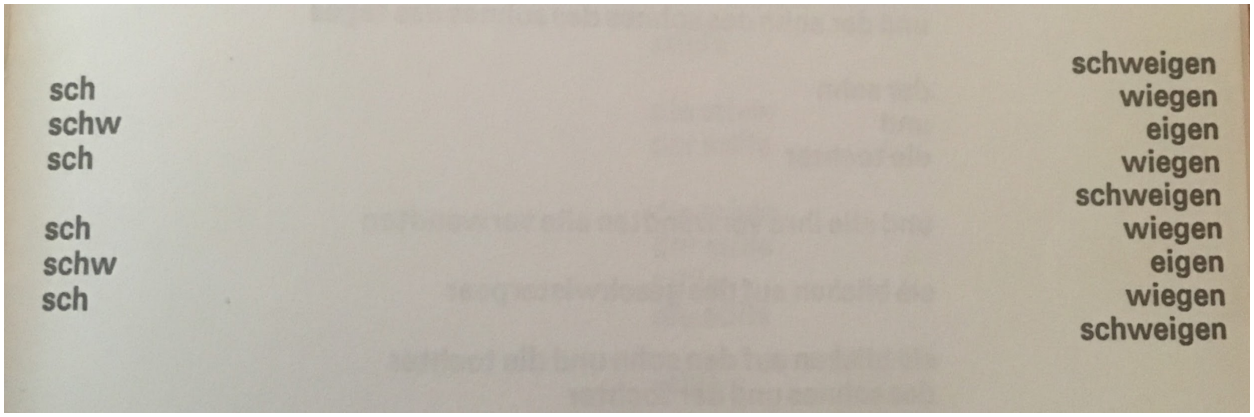

Figure 9. "schweigen," Gerhard Rühm, *Concrete Poetry: An International Anthology* (edited by Stephen Bann, London Magazine Editions, 1967), p. 57.

In "schweigen," the word(s) are split across the page. The reader encounters a complete "schweigen" (right-justified), which is repeated eight more times. On the right side of the page, "schweigen" fractures following a specific pattern as "schweigen" (translated as "silence") is fragmented to "weigen" and further to "eigen" ("own"). It is reassembled and fractured two more times. On the left side of the page, the repeated "sch" syllables create a shushing sound when read aloud.[31] The unsound between the syllables (left) and words / word (right) forms both sides of a rotated "w," the letter upon which the repeated word "schweigen" splits. When "silence" is broken down to its syllables and physically separated from its original meaning through un-sounding, the reader is left with the central idea of "own" (eigen), connoting ownership, power, and possession. Only the silence is rebuilt again, then disassembled again. The concept of ownership is folded back into the first and final word of the poem, "schweigen." Throughout his

[31] When "schweigen" fractures leaving the "schw" on the left, one wonders if Rühm is intentionally invoking schwa, ə. This mid-central vowel was originally introduced German linguists in the 19th century. Certainly this would be a level of play revealing the linguistic stars of the constellation, but the semantic meaning is ambiguous.

constellations, Rühm engages the physical material of the poem, language, at the level of sound. As Bann suggests, Rühm's attention to sound is often highlighted more than its visual aspects. In one visual work by Rühm, *proportionen der stille*, he takes the first page of the "Kyrie" (Second Movement) of Mozart's *Requiem*, and blacks out all of the measures with notes, leaving only measures with rests. He literally creates "proportions of silence"—highlighting unsounds. In his attention to sound and unsound throughout his oeuvre, Rühm demonstrates that the sonic effects of language are essential to a text. Moreover, Rühm's sonic works suggest that sound holds semantic significance for the reader. The reader must enter into the work; sound the words and the syllables; observe the letters and their arrangement; find the unsounds. In this essential, physical material of the poem, there is sound and unsound. And for Rühm, both are meaningful.

These questions lead to concluding thoughts on unsound that concern the significance of the act of un-sounding.[32] Readers are left examining how each of these unsounds communicate, challenge, or elide meaning. Critics and readers reach for significance; they attempt to understand why something has been done in one way and not another. Through un-sounding, the poem communicates aesthetic, socio-political, or spiritual concerns. Similar concerns can also be uncovered in in-sounding / out-sounding. In those cases, the concerns would be communicated through content. With un-sounding, the poem communicates through absence of content. For the sake of clarity, the analysis of the semantic significance of the poem is will be featured in the unsound section. The reader can recognize these concerns as keys to illuminating the many

[32] Spaces appear between individual words in contemporary English writing. (Many classical Greek and Latin texts were written in *scriptio continua*, in which words were not separated by spaces or other diacritical markings.) But unsounding and unsounds do not refer to the conventional spaces between words; instead, unsound refers to intentional muting of sound by the insertion of space or the absence of expected material.

meanings that the poem expresses. There can be many messages of significance that the poem communicates to the reader.

The author initially orchestrates the sounds and unsounds; however, the reader performs and interprets them through in-sounding, out-sounding, and un-sounding. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I will examine the poem as a score. For now, I will apply this method and demonstrate its utility across various forms of visually-oriented poems. The subsequent application chapters examine how these questions guide readers in the discovery of insound, outsound, and unsound in specific subgenres of primarily page-based poetry.

Coda: Non-Normative Reading and Sounding Practices

Although this project focuses on normative experiences of reading and sounding, it is informed by a careful acknowledgement of non-normative reading and sounding experiences. Sound reception must be understood to be simultaneously ambiguous and specialized; each individual's listening experience is unique. This is perhaps most evident in the discussion of "deafness." In *Keywords in Sound*, Mara Mills explains that "*a deaf spectrum*—or 'deafnesses'—has replaced the deaf-hearing binary in both the biomedical and cultural realms" (45). Yet this spectrum is also imperfect because "audiometric categories of hearing impairment do not map neatly onto deaf identities. … *Deafness* may be used colloquially to designate any kind of hearing difference; however, members of Deaf culture often reject the term as itself pathologizing" (45). There has been a radical shift in the understanding of hearing and those who hear non-normatively. This shift has created opportunities for empathy in the sociological sense as well as innovation in the realm of science. "For scientists and engineers," Mills suggests, "deafness has yielded insights into the elements of speech and hearing, as well as possibilities for

their reconfiguration: new techniques for sound synthesis and visualization, for instance, or new modes of listening" (45). Non-normative modes of listening have led to many discoveries in the processes of sound reception and have provided pathways to new modes of sensory experience.

Evelyn Glennie, a world-renowned percussionist who has been hearing-challenged since the age of twelve, theorizes her listening experience evocatively: "It is worth pointing out at this stage that I am not totally deaf, I am profoundly deaf. Profound deafness covers a wide range of symptoms, although it is commonly taken to mean that the quality of the sound heard is not sufficient to be able to understand the spoken word from sound alone" (HE para 5). Due to the nature of her situation, she continues to mediate many conversations on the topic. Glennie avidly endorses hearing as a fully-embodied experience. In the documentary *Touch the Sound* (2005), she explains that "hearing is a form of touch. It's something that's so hard to describe because, in a way, you know something that comes—sounds. It comes to you" (*TS*). She expands on the relationship on hearing and touch: "Hearing is basically a specialized form of touch. Sound is simply vibrating air which the ear picks up and converts to electrical signals, which are then interpreted by the brain. The sense of hearing is not the only sense that can do this, touch can do this too" (HE para. 3). Vibrations that are physically felt are part of hearing, and Glennie insists on the recognition of the body's ability to listen: "For some reason we tend to make a distinction between hearing a sound and feeling a vibration, in reality they are the same thing" (HE para. 4). These expectations of sound, hearing, and deafness are built into theoretical frameworks and into language itself. Glennie notes that hearing and feeling are joined in the Italian use of "hear": "It is interesting to note that in the Italian language this distinction does not exist. The verb 'sentire' means to hear and the same verb in the reflexive form 'sentirsi' means to feel" (HE para 4). The

blurring of these divisions in other languages highlights the necessary re-examination of the development of "deafness" as a term within the English language.

Commentators today such as Mills note the tremendous impact deafness has had upon the development of various technologies. Deafness was the impetus for "the invention and development of the telegraph, telephone, radio, Internet, and microelectronic technology" (Mills 52). Those on the deaf spectrum—individuals who experience sound differently in the world—have further expanded our understanding of how humans hear whether it be through hearing organs (normatively) or embodied through vibrations. Mills notes that "sound is always already multimodal. Sound waves transfer between media (air, water, solids), and can be experienced by sensory domains beyond the ear. Vibrations, visual recordings, and speech gestures are all possible components of an acoustic event" (52). Sound is multifaceted, as is the audition of that sound. Mills describes this is as a necessary, but often absent, acknowledgement in sound studies: "Although attention to hearing difference has yet to become a regular feature of sound studies, deaf and hard of hearing people have long testified to the heterogeneity of ear-listening" (52). What gets bound up in the consideration of sound is erroneous suppositions, such as audism,[33] overlaid upon theories of sound. Some of these theories perpetuate these close-minded beliefs. In "Hearing," Jonathan Sterne notes the "creeping normalism" of sound studies that is "an epistemological and political bias toward an idealized, normal, non-disabled hearing subject" (HKS 73). Yet, this idealized subject, perhaps, is just that—an idea instead of a reality. If audism

[33] Tom Humphries, a critic and specialist in the field of sound and hearing studies, created the term "audism," which he defines as "attitudes and practices based on the assumption that behaving in the ways of those who speak and hear is desired and best. It produces a system of privilege, thus resulting in stigma, bias, discrimination, and prejudice—in overt or covert ways—against Deaf culture, American Sign Language, and Deaf people of all walks of life" (Audism Free America).

and other such approaches are accepted, Sterne warns, "the Deaf, the hard of hearing, and all of us hardening-of-hearing (one might say those who continue to live) are doomed to receding relations to authenticity and subjectivity" (HKS 73). The study of hearing and deafness concerns the "making" and the "denigration and unmaking" of subjects (HKS 73). Sterne points to the significance of critics such as Tobin Siebers and Mara Mills, who demonstrate the significance of the environment upon bodies and subjectivities. As Sterne notes, "If no sound is possible without hearing, then sound studies—but also many forms of politics—begins with hearing the hearing of others" (HKS 74).

Recognizing the spectrum of hearing in one's work and its effects upon those who hear are paramount. Such issues are further complicated with the expectations of "listening." Mills advocates for deafness as an approach and even a facet of hearing: "Deafness is thus a variety of hearing; alternatively, it can be conceived as a precondition of hearing or as the resistance to hearing and audism" (Mills 53). Embracing deafness as a possibility of hearing differently will lead to new discoveries within the world of hearing, listening, and sound. This dissertation is not written from a personal experience of deafness, yet it suggests that readers have much to learn from such non-normative experiences.

In addition to non-normative hearing experiences, there are many non-normative reading experiences for individuals who have different modes of working with texts or experiencing phonological processing challenges. Disabilities studies and research evidence that the reading process is one that is quite varied across human experience. In this dissertation, I will be addressing normative reading practices and the generally-shared experience of sounding in reading. I acknowledge that my focus on normative reading practices may demonstrate an ableist bias; however, I believe there is much to be gained from recognizing and embracing non-

normative listening / hearing processes as well as untraditional reading practices. If I could expand aspects of this dissertation, I would like to examine how neurodiversity sheds new light on sounding.

People who have atypical hearing may not be able to perceive "out-sounding" in a normative sense. Also, the terms of "insound" and "in-sound" focus on normative and involuntary practices of sounding out words internally. Nevertheless, "insound" and "in-sound" may be a more intentional process for many who struggle with the reading process. The three common areas of reading disability are phonological deficit, processing speed / orthographic deficit, and comprehension deficit. Reading disabilities and different kinds of "deficits" are highlighted here because visual poets disrupt the reading process for abled readers and often produce deficits in those three same areas as differently-abled readers.

By disrupting the phonology of their poems, visual poets create a phonological deficit[34] in sounding out the work—affecting its insound and in-sounding. When visual poets organize works (often with arrangements that disrupt a left-right, top-down anglophone reading practice), there is necessarily a deficit to the processing speed and orthographic reception of that linguistic material. These disruptions and resultant processing deficits also prevent a normative out-sounding. How do you read a poem out loud if you do not know where it starts and finishes? Also, breaking up whole words into phonemes (and in some cases, unrecognizable linguistic and non-linguistic material) creates a comprehension deficit for the reader. Visual poets disrupt normative reading practiced with their creative works and can make "abled" readers struggle with the reading process (that readers may have once taken for granted). Their works call for an

[34] Phonological disruption in these visual poems can approximate a "phonological deficit" in the reader, which occurs when one struggles (or is unable) to determine the sound(s) which comprise a word, thereby grappling with the (im)possibility of mental and/or oral word formation.

alternative engagement with language and visual materials—a new way of reading and sounding. As I argue through the subsequent chapters, visual poets have sought various avenues for their forms of communication and expression. Previous poetic forms were insufficient, so visual poets created their own. What their texts require—and desire—are readers who will view, sound, and listen to their works—engage with their poetry—in uncommon and productive ways. This first chapter has outlined the theoretical and methodological aspects of this dissertation and the following chapters are demonstrations of its application. Chapter 2 offers the first glance into the implications of sounding the visual field—(re)invigorating temporality while encouraging new modes of linguistic information processing.

Chapter 2 – Actualizing Temporality: Sound in Concrete Poetry

Poetry is distinguished from prose, according to John Cage, in how it allows "musical elements (time, sound) to be introduced into the world of words" (xxx). Attention to the musical elements of sound at the level of analysis reanimates the temporality of an art-object and demonstrates how sound is a vehicle to complicate traditional expectations of signification within poetry. This chapter examines the technical and aesthetic functions of sound in the concrete poetry that emerged in the second half of the last century. Beginning by addressing prominent definitions of concrete poetry by Johanna Drucker and Ian Hamilton Finlay, I discuss the inherent difficulties in such classifications. "Clean" and "dirty" concrete poetry are terms which emerged in the 1970s and were significantly re-examined later by authors such as derek beaulieu and Lori Emerson; I consider these designations for their sonic implications. After contextualizing and explaining the visual choices of concrete poets, I apply the method of examining outsound, insound, and unsound to one important text by each of two foundational poets in the field: Eugen Gomringer's "silencio" (1953) and Steve McCaffery's *Carnival* (1967–1975).

Disruptions to normative reading practices demonstrate the complexity of in-sounding, out-sounding, and un-sounding texts. Furthermore, many concrete poets try to push beyond signification in their works, embrace the play of signifiers—and instead "map" their linguistic (and sometimes non-linguistic) materials. As previously stated, however, sound is generally not a concrete poet's primary concern. In *Concrete Poetry: A World View*, Mary Ellen Solt argues:

> It is probably impossible to write a completely silent poem with words or recognizable fragments of words, although to be able to do so is probably the ultimate goal of the visual concrete poet. It is not that we can't speak the words in a visual concrete poem, it

> is that if the poet succeeds in keeping our eyes sufficiently engaged, we have no desire or need to speak them. Is this necessarily a deficiency? (60)

Sounding is a secondary or even tertiary concern for most concrete poets,[35] as Solt observes: "we have no desire or need to speak them." Perhaps the poets do not feel the need to sound those works—but sound is central to the reading and in-sounding of a work. Often, these visual poems cannot be sounded traditionally; yet some poets do, in fact, record themselves reading their concrete works. This disruption to in-sounding and seeming inability to sound through traditional means is a not "deficiency"; however, this stalling of the involuntary in-sounding process may distance the reader from the text initially. The reader can no longer unconsciously take the poem inside themselves and in-sound it involuntarily; instead, they are tasked with finding a way to read and in-sound the text. Moreover, unsounds in the text further underscore the tension between sounds and their absence, which demonstrates the complexity of interpreting both sounds and "silences." Visual poetry presents a challenge in understanding how sound functions in a work where sound is backgrounded or, in Solt's description, is almost an irrelevant by-product of creating a work of poetry. Nevertheless, sound still exists; readers and critics alike need to understand how to listen to and hear it even when it is actively unsounded.

Defining Concrete Poetry

Many writers seem to struggle with defining concrete poetry in practical terms, although all definitions include some reference to typography, materiality, and space / arrangement. In the

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[35] I suggest that sound is a secondary or even tertiary concern for most concrete poets as the form distances itself from poetry's oral origins. Yet, many concrete poets sound their works, record them, and foreground the sonic in their visual materials. One such first-generation concrete poet is Gerard Rühm, a founding member of the Vienna Group (*Die Wiener Gruppe*).

Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (2017), Johanna Drucker provides the clearest and most considered definition of concrete poetry:

> Although used in a general way to refer to work that has been composed with specific attention to graphic features such as typography, layout, shape, or distribution on the page, concrete poetry properly understood has a more specific definition created in the mid-1950s by the Swiss-Bolivian poet Eugen Gomringer and the Brazilian poets Décio Pignatari and Haroldo and Augusto de Campos.

Situating the concrete poetry movement in the 1950s–60s, Drucker also highlights predecessors' image-based trends and influences. Most importantly (and in contrast to Baldick, Cuddon, and others), Drucker delineates the aims of the concrete poetry movement with respect to form and meaning. Concrete poetry has "a distinct approach in which form and meaning (material expression and reference field) would be as close to each other as possible. Thus, *concrete* suggests a unification of the word with its presentation" (*PE*). This fusion of the content and its presentation demonstrates the concrete poet's emphasis on structure: "The concrete poets recast this notion into an idea of isomorphism (identity of shape and meaning) that they believed embodied an ideal of structure as content" (*PE*). Drucker demonstrates that concrete poets consider form and meaning to be inextricably linked; moreover, they consider structure as content, and individual concrete poems perform this in various ways. This dissertation argues that sound is essential to the structure, the building blocks of words, that creates the content of the concrete poem. As a result, sound is a part of the composition of the form, content, and meaning of a poem. It is necessary to study the sound of a poem to understand how it functions and the meaning(s) contained therein. Also, when a reader highlights the sound in a word, temporality is also stressed. Sounding is further complicated by poems that use non-linguistic

elements, yet reading and attending to these poetic elements also reanimates the temporality of the art object. Such processing reveals that the concrete poem is an assemblage of sonic elements for the reader to in-sound, out-sound, un-sound.

Definitions of concrete poetry[36] raise a central concern to those studying the form (or by extension, poetry writ large): where are the boundaries or limits on these works of poetry and who determines their status as "poems"? Although this dissertation eschews totalizing answers to these questions, it will attempt to work through examples—even ones of extremity—to attempt to understand the communication and sounding of these works. Whether the text is a concrete poem that disrupts linearity or a sound poem that resonates in the air, there will always be a voice (reader / viewer) that asks, "*This* is poetry?" Although this question may seem to be dismissiveness draped in skepticism, it is an important consideration.

In a letter to Emmett Williams in 1963, Ian Hamilton Finlay (a Scottish poet and visual artist of international renown) explains his general impression of concrete poetry: "It seems like concrete is really many things, not one way at all" (Aube and Perloff). In a September 1963 letter to Pierre Gautier, Finlay is both more specific and more oblique: "I wonder if we are not all a little in the dark, still as to the real significance of 'concrete.'. . . For myself I cannot derive from the poems I have written any 'method' which can be applied to the writing of the next poem" (Ubuweb). One concrete poem can look wildly different from another—even works created by the same author—and still be considered a work of "concrete poetry." From March to July 2017,

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[36] Both Chris Baldick's definition in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2013) and J. A. Cuddon's explanation in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (2013) of "concrete poetry" have significant limitations due to their value judgements of "more extreme" examples. Presenting a definition similar to Drucker's, Kostelanetz further argues in *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes* (2018) that "concrete" only applies to the Noigrandes and Swiss groups—all other forms should be known as Visual Poetry. Also, Jamie Hilder's *Designed Words for a Designed World* (2016) highlights the "heroic" period of concrete poetry.

the Getty Research Institute curated an exhibition entitled, "Concrete Poetry: Words and Sounds in Graphic Space," designed to highlight "poems made for eyes and ears" (Aube and Perloff). In their online prospectus "What is Concrete Poetry?," Christina Aube and Nancy Perloff claim, compellingly, that the exhibition encourages multisensorial reception. Moreover, they suggest that these poems were created with various senses in mind. Aube and Perloff similarly note the absence of a singular definition of concrete poetry but offer a description: "Concrete poems are objects composed of words, letters, colors, and typefaces, in which graphic space plays a central role in both design and meaning. Concrete poets experimented boldly with language, incorporating visual, verbal, kinetic, and sonic elements." These two curators also note the significance of concrete poetry's multisensory approach by using visual, verbal, kinetic, and sonic elements. Using sound as an analytical tool for concrete poems, as this dissertation does, reanimates the temporality of an art-object and demonstrates how sound is a vehicle to oppose traditional expectations of signification within poetry. In that same 1963 letter to Gautier, Finlay suggests that concrete poetry "is a model, of order, even if set in a space which is full of doubt." And in a realm doubt and uncertainty, there can be discomfort; however, simultaneously, there is room for possibility and interpretation.

For this dissertation, concrete poems are defined as those that include visual typography and multisensory elements to create a work that foregrounds visual reception—often communicating meaning through the resonance (or dissonance) between the image and the materials. Through unconventional organization of material, concrete poems disrupt a normative reading practice. Furthermore, there are many concrete poems that include non-linguistic materials that further stymie oral rendering or aural reception. Concrete poems are further

subdivided to categories of "clean" and "dirty," which differ significantly in their presentation and interpretation.

Clean and Dirty Concrete Poetry

The extraordinary range of concrete poems is one of the form's most important constituent features. In *Reading Writing Interfaces: From the Digital to the Bookbound* (2014), Lori Emerson suggests that "concrete poetry is not a homogenous field of writing but rather one that encompasses an extraordinary range of poems whose meaning is entirely tied to an equally extraordinary range of writing media used to create visual effects" (*RWI* 98). Concrete is a poetic form of great breadth using a variety of media; however, it subdivides roughly into two categories: "clean" and "dirty." Emerson has done extensive research and critical work in tracing the origins of these designations. Apparently, the first written use of the term "dirty" in reference to concrete poetry came in a 1970 letter from bpNichol to Nicholas Zurbrugg (the editor of *Stereo Headphones*), "in which Nichol claims he learned of the term from Stephen Scobie (and Scobie informed [Emerson] in a recent email that he learned of it from Mike Weaver)" (OR). The term was put into wider circulation by bill bissett in his piece, "a pome in praise of all quebec bombers" (1973), in which he uses the phrase "dirty concrete poetry" twice and types "the concrete is dity dirty" (see fig. 10).

The distinction in concrete poetry between "clean" and "dirty" seems to instantiate an aesthetic, temporal, and political divide between the international concrete poetry movement and a different Canadian concrete poetic. In *The Language Revolution: Borderblur Poetics in Canada, 1963–1988*, Eric Schmaltz argues: "Canadian concrete poetry was not a byproduct of global concrete and can only tangentially be connected to the European avant-garde" (65).

Figure 10. “a pome in praise of all quebec bombers,” bill bissett, derekbeaulieu.wordpress.com/2015/12/09/bill-bissetts-quebec-bombers/.

Although the international concrete poetry movement began with poetic works that were retrospectively classified as “clean” concrete poetry, the aims and intentions of concrete poetry began to shift with a new generation of poets crafting a different kind of experience. Emerson explains the direction of “dirty” concrete poetry:

> The term is commonly used to describe a deliberate attempt to move away from the clean lines and graphically neutral appearance of the concrete poetry from the 1950s and 1960s

> by Gomringer in Switzerland, the Noigandres in Brazil, and Ian Hamilton Finlay in England. Such cleanliness was thought to indicate a lack of political engagement broadly speaking and, more specifically, a lack of political engagement with language and representation. (*RWI* 99–100)

As Emerson suggests, with "dirty" concrete poetry, the Canadian concrete poetry movement[37] was concerned with people's political engagement with language and representation. "In Canada," Schmaltz reiterates, "concrete poetry emerged, almost wholly, as a concerted resistance to the aesthetics and visual rhetoric of consumer capitalism that was intensifying with the rise of postmodernity" (74). Concrete poets pushed back with a creative and noisy rhetoric of their own; they were concerned with "noise" present on the page and their own subjective positions and feelings in the creation of a concrete work. The historical development and use of the term "dirty" concrete demonstrates a cultural divide in concrete poetry as well as the very different motivations for creating "dirty" concrete. British author Bob Cobbing, who is one of the dirtiest of the "dirty," was a significant influence on Canadian concretists. Scobie, bissett, and their peers not only wanted to get their hands dirty, metaphorically speaking, they wanted to challenge readers to connect poetry—aesthetic experience—with contemporary cultural and political activism: "what can we say" is slightly obscured in "quebec bombers" but insistently reiterated.

But what do these different types of poetry actually look like? Although it may not come as a surprise that there is no exact definition of "clean" and "dirty," clean concrete is more or less readable / legible, whereas dirty concrete thwarts readability. (This distinction is a continuum rather than a binary.) Clean concrete adheres to the rules of typography and reading while dirty

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[37] As evidenced by the previous references of the term's origin by Emerson, the originators of the term "dirty" concrete were almost all Canadian with the exception of English critic Mike Weaver, who recognized and critically examined this unique concrete poetry movement.

purposely challenges them. Clean concrete is identifiable by its clear, distinct lines and "neutral" typography.[38] This means that the text may adhere more closely to normative reading practices by allowing for a top-down, left-right reading. Clean concrete poets do challenge these expectations by creating works that can be read multi-directionally, but most clean concrete works have clearly identifiable linguistic material that is generally arranged to form a specific pattern that reflects and challenges and resonates with its messaging. By contrast, "dirty" concrete, written by poets such as bill bissett, Steve McCaffery, and bpNichol, is messier. Dirty concrete poetry challenges the readability of the text by pushing the page's margins and orientation. Moreover, the structure of "clean" concrete poems can be apprehended in a glance, whereas the organization and patterning of "dirty" is less clear—requiring a longer contemplation than necessary for "clean." There is no clear start or finish to a "dirty" concrete work; it can be read in many directions because the linguistic material (and non-linguistic material) is often oriented in various ways: rotated, reflected, translated, layered, overlapped, overtyped, over-stamped, and cut-off. Often described as visual noise, dirty concrete poems have little to no discernible organization. (For clean concrete examples, see figures 11–17; for dirty concrete, see figures 18–24.)

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[38] In this case, "neutral" typography refers to arranging the letters in words to be legible and normative in appearance; this typography does not distract the reader from the patterning of the text in a "clean" concrete poem. Neutrality of typography is a bit of a misnomer. In *Type and Typography*, Baines and Haslam identify four functions of typography: documentation, analytical, conceptual, and expressive. Kate Shash, a contemporary typographic designer and art director from Moscow, responds to Baines and Haslam's four functions: "it will be better to divide typographic functions into simple, rational approach to message delivery and an expressive, experimental one. However, typography can never be called 'neutral' or unexpressive because neutrality is one of the ways to express the idea. 'Typography can, of course, be both functional and decorative at the same time' (Goggin, 2013–2014)."

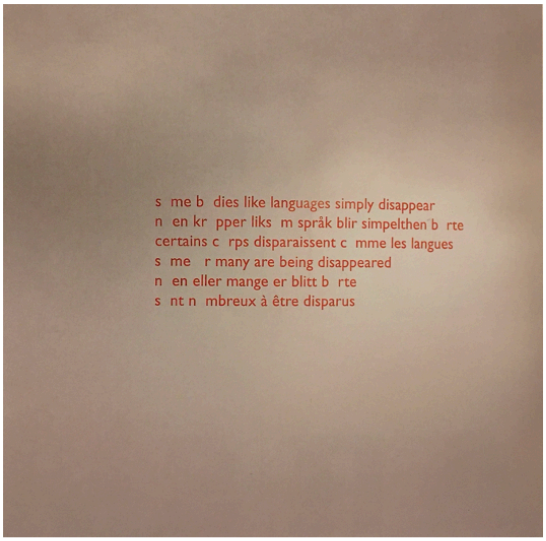
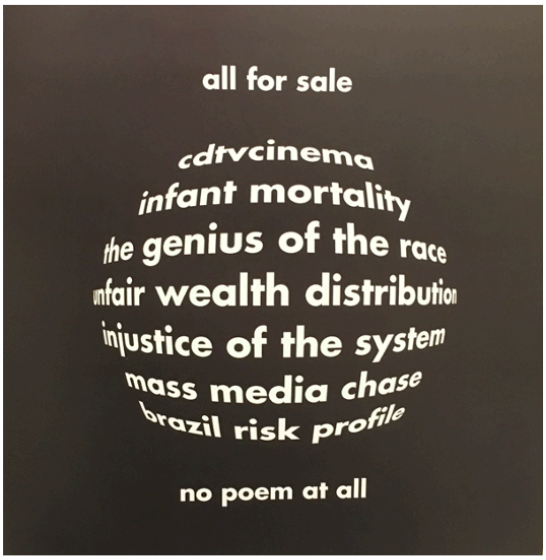


Figure 11



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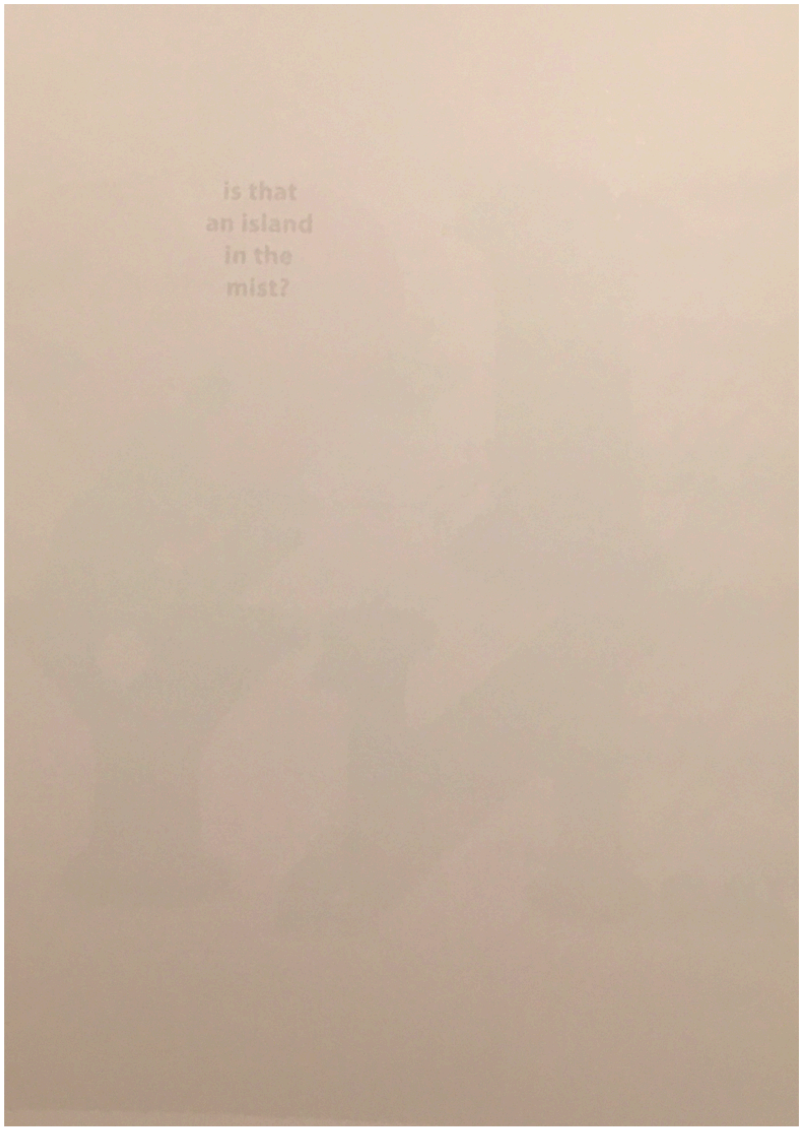
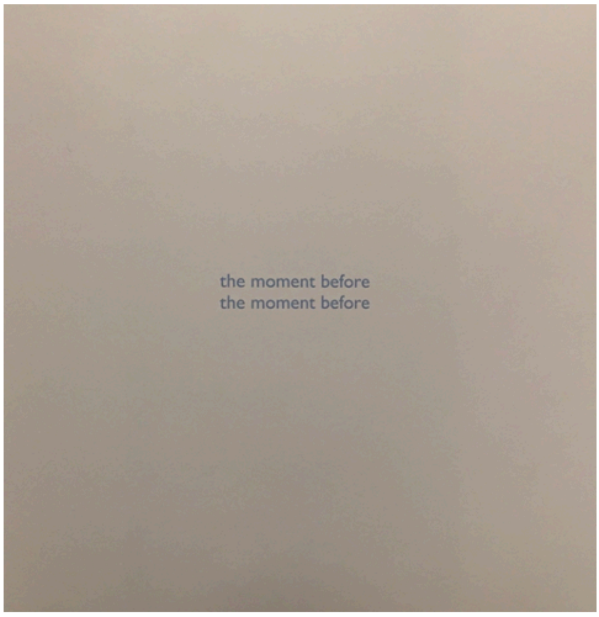


Figure 13

Figure 11. “Crop” (2010), Caroline Bergvall, *TNC*, p. 42.
Figure 12. “Market” (2001), Augusto de Campos, *TNC*, p. 57.
Figure 13. “is that an island in the mist” (2006), Julia Johnstone, *TNC*, p. 126.



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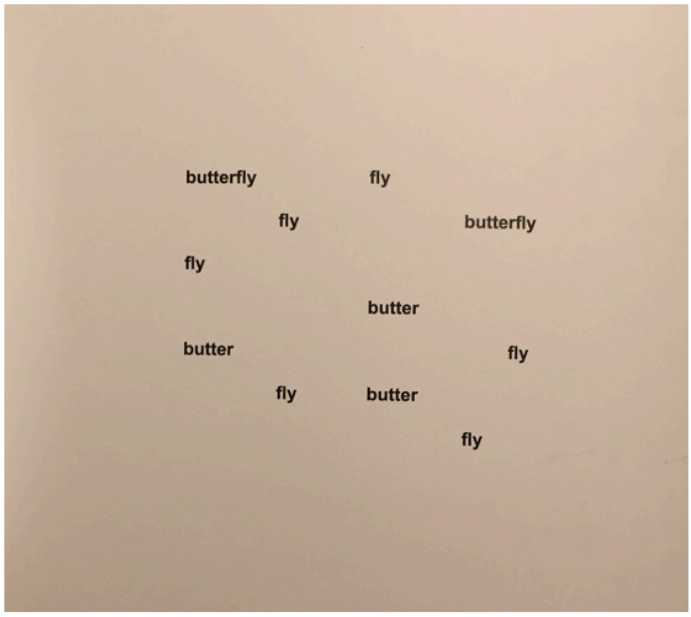

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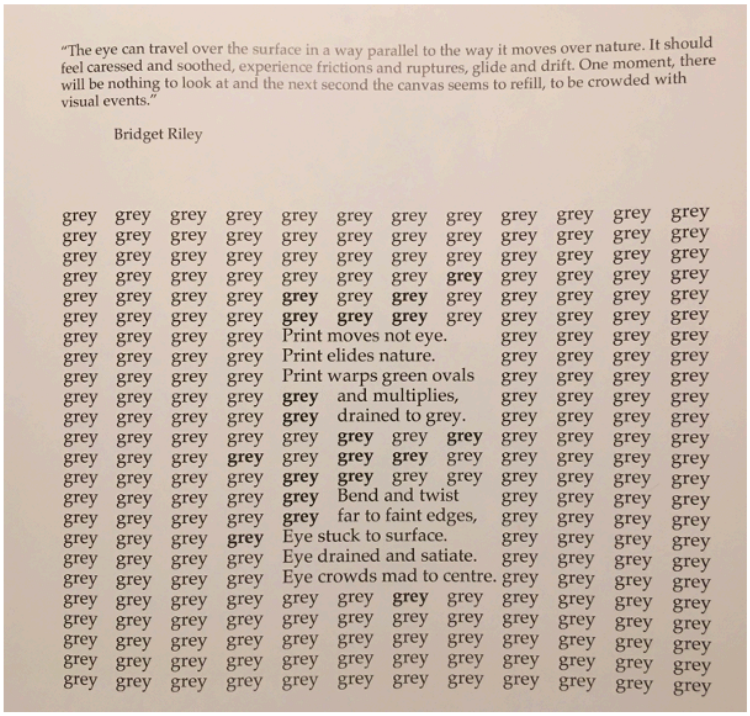
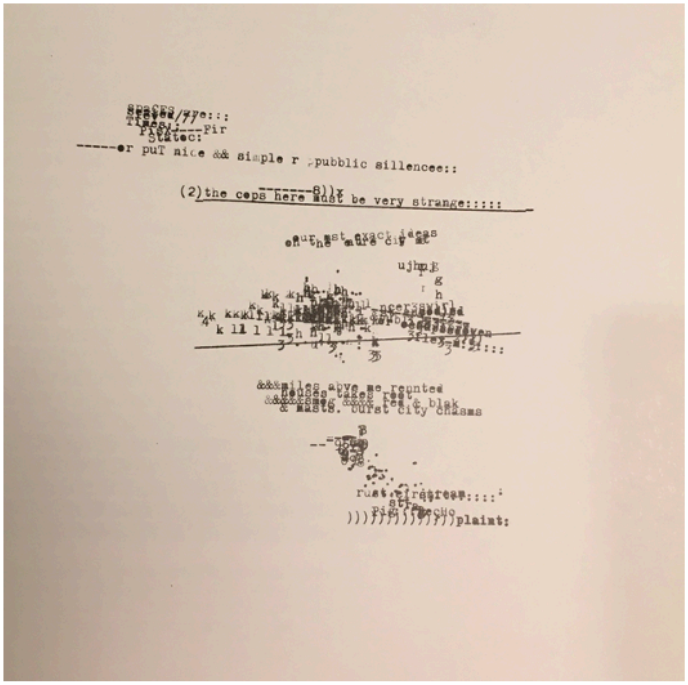


Figure 16

Figure 17

Figure 14. "the moment before" (2010), Thomas A. Clark, *TNC*, p. 69.
Figure 15. "Dairy Products, Aviation, and Insects (for E. Gomringer)" (2002), W. Mark Sutherland, *TNC*, p. 184.
Figure 16. "The Travelling Eye — a piece of 'op. cit', on Bridget Riley's 'Nineteen Grays'" (2009), John Kinsella, *TNC*, p. 133.
Figure 17. "Blah! Blah! Blair!" (2003), Ron King, *TNC*, p. 131.



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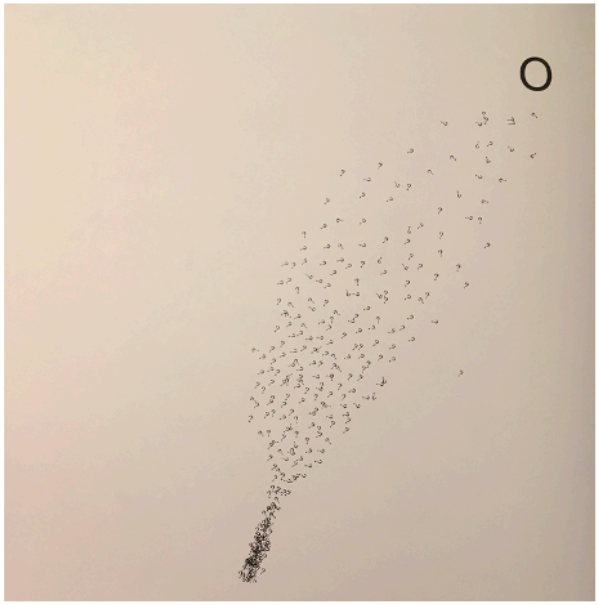

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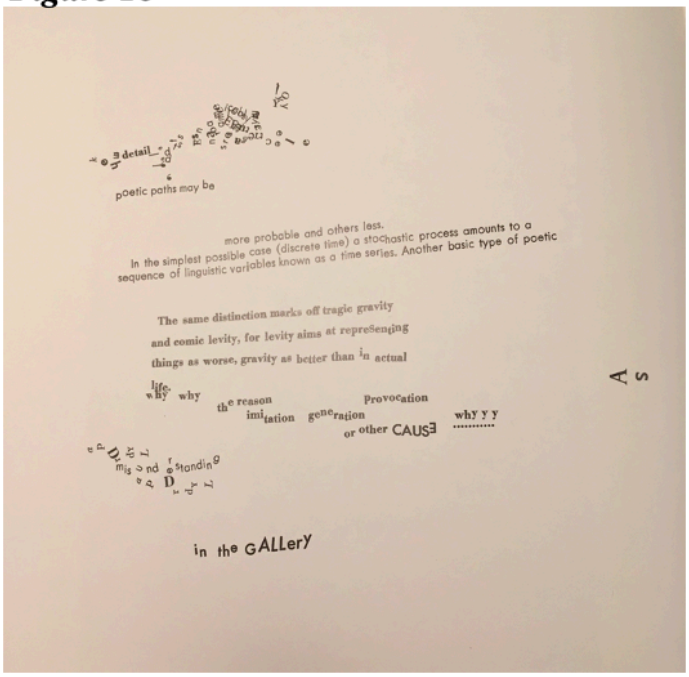

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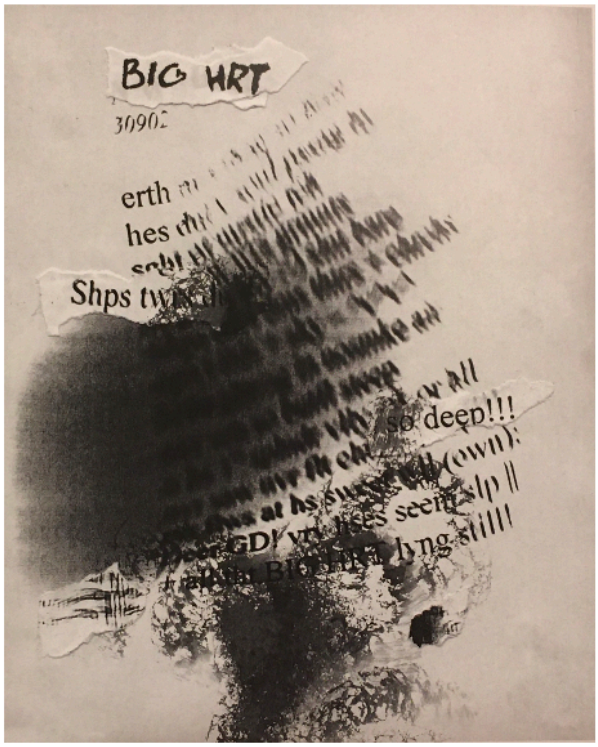
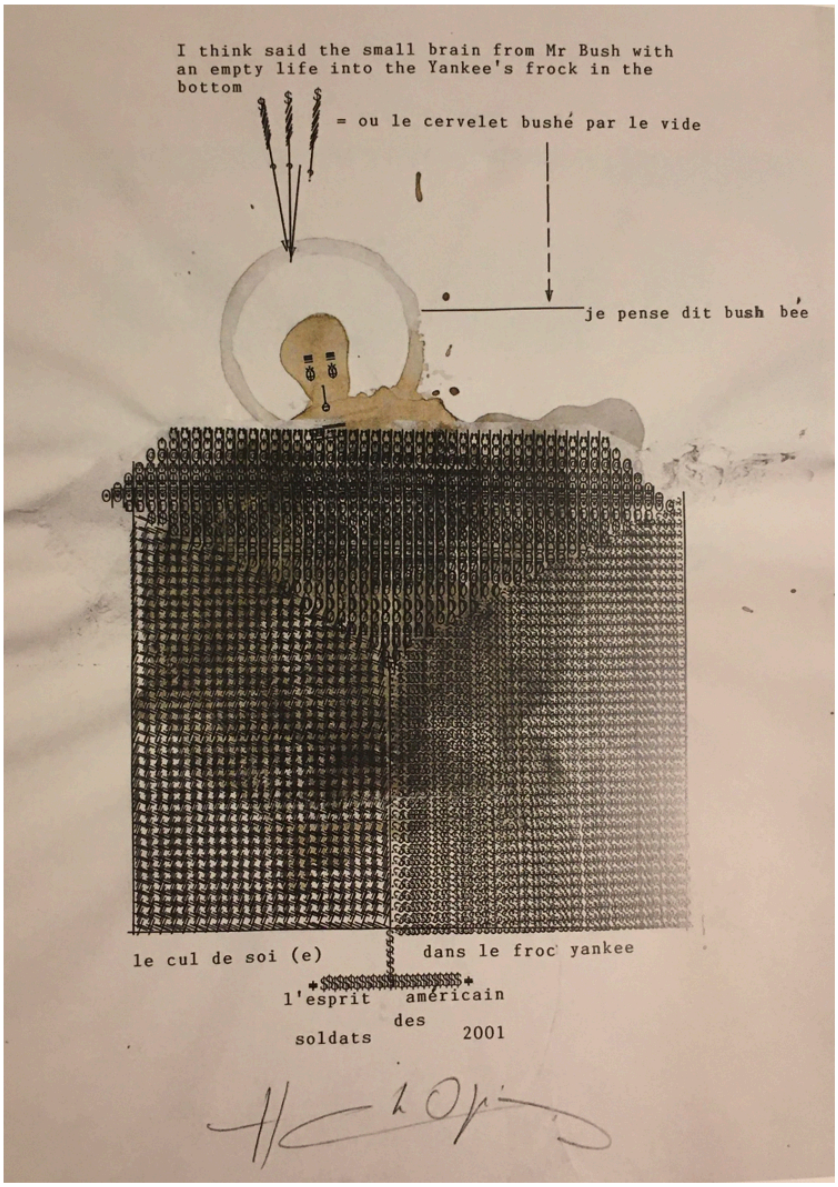


Figure 21

Figure 18. “Hackney Declares War on the City” (2005), Sean Bonney, *TNC*, p. 51.
Figure 19. From *Dedalus* (2014), Chris McCabe, *TNC*, p. 154.
Figure 20. Page from *Stochastic Poetics* (2012), Johanna Drucker, *TNC*, p. 84.
Figure 21. “Big HRT” (2010), Peter Finch, *TNC*, p. 86.



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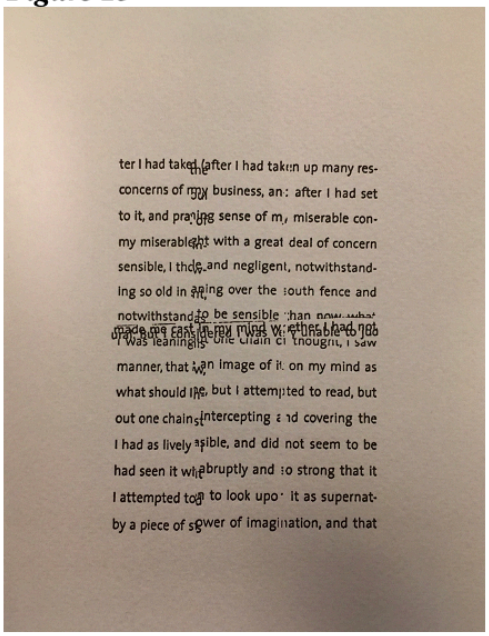

Figure 24

Figure 22. “Bush” (2001), Henri Chopin, *TNC*, p. 64.
Figure 23. “i-poem” (2002), Nico Vassilakis, *TNC*, p. 197.
Figure 24. From *Frolic Architecture* (2001), Susan Howe, *TNC*, p. 121.

Clean Concrete Poetry and Gomringer’s “Silencio”

In Stephen Bann’s international anthology *Concrete Poetry*, he traces the origins of this poetic form to a single meeting in Ulm in 1955, when the Bolivian-born, Swiss-German Eugen Gomringer met the Brazilian Decio Pignatari. Both were working in experimental poetry and

"both had in fact considered using the word 'concrete' in connection with their work, but they had been entirely unaware of each other's existence" (Bann 7). That pivotal meeting in Ulm opened lines of communication between these similarly-minded poets and led to the agreement that their work should exist under a common title: "from this point their work was known officially as 'poesia concreta'" (Bann 7).[39] As Bann explains, "Concrete poetry is therefore based on two separate, if convergent, traditions: that of the Noigandres group, which is effectively confined to Brazil, and that of Gomringer, which has extended throughout the German-speaking nations of Europe" (7). The Noigandres group and Gomringer have very similar ideas about text, space, and *mise-en-page*. One representative example of clean concrete poetry is Gomringer's "silencio."

In his preface to *The Book of Hours and Constellations*, Gomringer defines the constellation as a visually-based work that will be "simple & perceivable both as a whole & in its parts. it will be something to be seen & used but also something to be thought of: object of thought in a play of ideas. it will work through brevity & compression. it will be memorable & (as image) easy-to-remember" (*BHC* ii). In these constellations, words are often repeated and connected through their placement or repetition on the page. Also, words are often broken into pieces, yet connected by their semantic meaning even as the reader tries to piece the elements together. For Gomringer, a constellation "is a system, it is also a playground with definite boundaries" (*BHC* ii). The page is the field, to paraphrase William Carlos Williams, and the poem is a system at work within it. The concrete poem is an invitation to play, but also a serious examination of the way humans read and interpret linguistic and aesthetic information. Solt

[39] Significantly, this poetic movement (although initially individually impelled) is ultimately based on an openness of communal creativity. Poetry and poetic movements do not happen in a vacuum; instead, creative work is generated in poetic communities: poets in conversation.

delineates the effects of specific subgenres of poetry by saying that "the visual poem is intended to be seen like a painting; the sound poem is composed to be listened to like music. Concrete poets, then, are united in their efforts to make objects or compositions of sounds from particular materials" (7). Stated differently, in terms of my project, the sound and unsound is there for the reader to in-sound, to out-sound, and to interpret. Gomringer wants the audience to be a significant part of the poem's meaning-making. The concrete poem, Gomringer argues, "will serve man [sic] through its objective play elements, as the poet will serve him through his special knack for just this kind of play: for the poet is an expert in the principles of play & language, the inventor of their future formulations" (*BHC* ii). As Gomringer proclaims, poets are the inventors of the future formulations of creative works. This dissertation contends that readers sound and interpret these innovations and, consequently, readers are performers of such creative works that change with each sounding. Moreover, such challenging poems force performers to change with each sounding and re-sounding. The text and reader are both changed in the sounding of a poem.

Solt, a concrete poet as well as a discerning critic, insists upon the sonic aspects of such poetry by describing them as "compositions of sounds from particular materials" (7). When the reader sounds the text, temporality is introduced into a work that previously seemed fixed—a visual art object. And in further analysis of the sound in a concrete poem, the reader discovers semantic significances in the sound—or its absence. Solt argues that the material of the concrete poem "is language: words reduced to their elements of letters (to see) syllables (to hear)" (7). For concrete poetry, Solt suggests that language is the poem's elemental, physical material, made up of letters and syllables. Letters are observed, yet syllables are sounded. Or, using language

previously developed in this dissertation, graphemes are observed and phonemes are sounded.[40] Although Solt may not be suggesting orality or utterance, she implies that sound exists / occurs on the page. This is a form of "inside sound" or insound—an interior perception of sound in reading—that the reader perceives when they encounter a poem.[41] The act of in-sounding happens involuntarily—when the brain translates the material. But often readers need to in-sound a poem voluntarily by reading the poetic material in their minds "silently." Often concrete poets disrupt an involuntary in-sounding by presenting unfamiliar material (even non-linguistic content) or organizing material in unexpected or untraditional ways. Gomringer's "silencio" contains words that can normatively be out-sounded—read aloud. But there is a dissonance between the reading the word "silencio" aloud and the word's meaning, especially as it is out-sounded. Gomringer addresses sound (or its absence—silence) directly in "silencio" through his physical material and its arrangement. This un-sounding causes the reader to question the role of silence in the text.

Insound in "silencio"

To discuss the sound of "silencio," I will apply my method for examining sound in primarily page-based poetry. In order to examine "insound," the textual material and its arrangement need to be interrogated to discover how the text would or would not disrupt a normative reading practice. (The disruption of a reading practice would prevent an involuntary

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[40] Solt does not address non-linguistic elements in poetry. Some concrete poems include non-linguistic elements, and this chapter will address these elements in McCaffery's *Carnival*. I will focus on non-linguistic poems exclusively in the final chapter.

[41] Solt also suggests that concrete poems are distinguished from sound poems because concrete poems are intended to be objects "perceived rather than read" (7). A reading, however, reveals the temporality that could be neglected in mere "perception."

in-sounding of the text.) As discussed in Chapter 1, in-sounding is primarily an involuntary part of the reading process: it is weakly active but mostly passive because it relies on unintentional, subconscious decisions. Because reading processes are challenged through non-normative constructions, however, the reader is forced to make this process an active one: they must actively seek ways to in-sound those words in order to read them. The first question should be: is the textual material linguistic or non-linguistic? In "silencio," the material is linguistic.

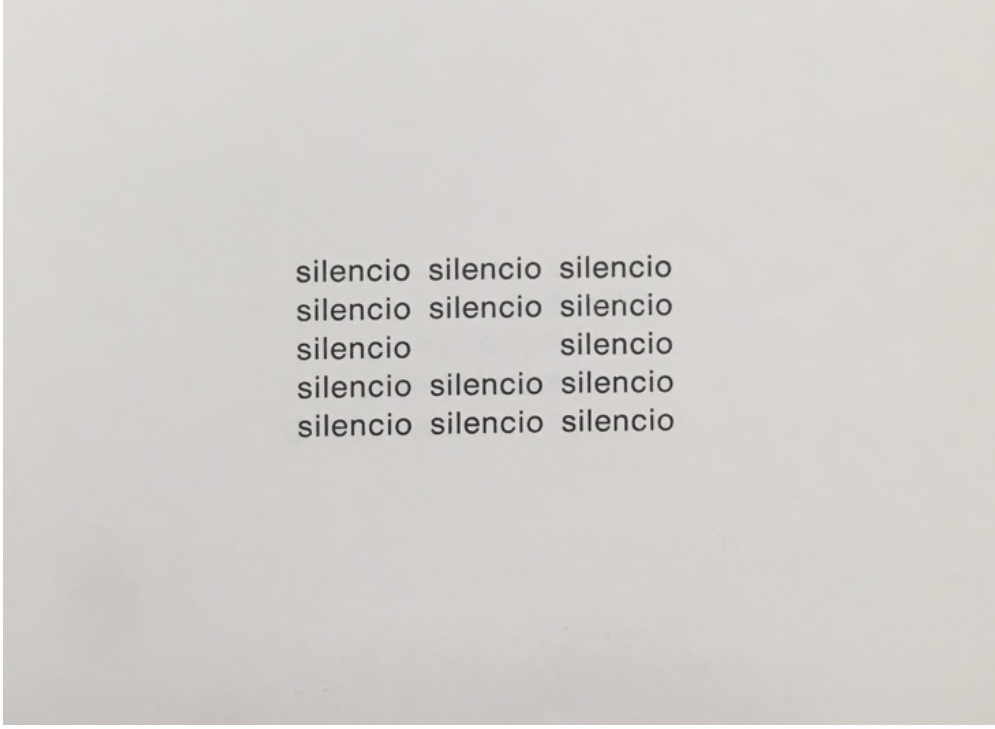

Figure 25. "silencio," Eugen Gomringer, *Concrete Poetry: A World* View, edited by Mary Ellen Solt, Indiana UP, 1968, p. 91.

Chapter 1 addressed the fact that English would be the primary language of focus; this will be complicated as later chapters (especially Chapter 4) address poems with non-linguistic content. For this reader, English, Spanish, and Latin are familiar languages; however, not all readers share a similar reading experience. The method asks if this formalized system of language is familiar to the reader (and if there is a translation provided) because unfamiliar linguistic material would

cause an initial disruption to an involuntary in-sounding. For his textual material, Gomringer uses a Spanish word—later translated into German and English (see fig. 25, trans. in fig. 26).[42]

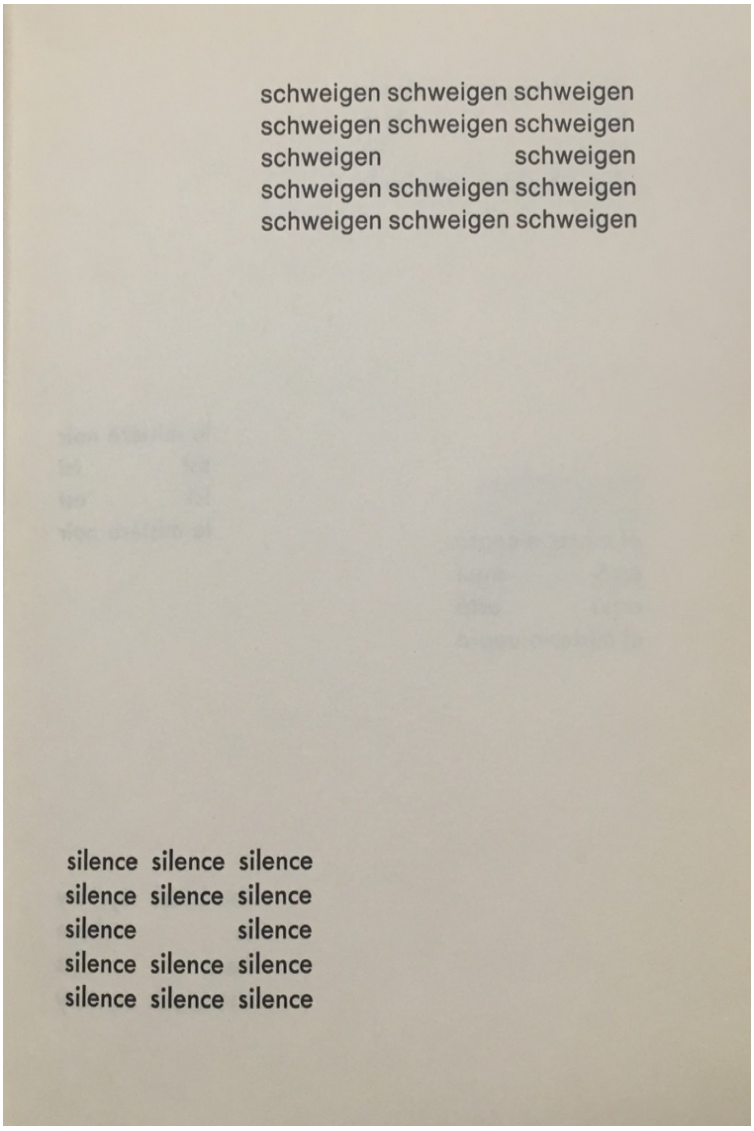

Figure 26. "schweigen" and "silence," Eugen Gomringer, *The Book of Hours and Constellations*, edited by Jerome Rothenberg, Something Else Press, 1968, p. 3.

[42] First published in *konstellationen* (1953), "silencio" was Gomringer's first completed constellation. As Solt observes, the choice of language is significant for the author: "Gomringer considers the fact that he wrote his first finished constellation in Spanish to be of the utmost importance, for he was born in Bolivia and Spanish is his native tongue" (9). Gomringer notes that concrete poets aim to grip language at the most basic level through experimentation with letters and arrangements of words. Concrete poetry also "demands a deeper foundation," he states, and must be "closely bound up with the challenge of individual existence: with the individual's 'Life with Language', 'Life with Words'" (Solt 9).

The chosen Spanish word, "silencio," is very close in appearance to the English "silence." According to the *OED*, *silence* partly borrows its etymology from Latin as well as French; consequently, the word is quite familiar looking to an English speaker. When read by an English speaker, "silencio" sounds very similar, all except for the ending "io." In fact, in reading "silenc—" before reaching the "io," an English speaker has already sounded all of the phonemes that comprise the word "silence" (/ˈsaɪləns/). Thus the material, while not in English, does not present an insuperable barrier to a normative reading and in-sounding for an English reader; the reader is able to recognize the clear sonic similarities between the Spanish "silencio" and English "silence." Also, as previously stated, Gomringer went on to translate "silencio" into both German and English,[43] which would allow for in-sounding in one's own language. The text of "silencio" is able to be in-sounded with a slight disruption for an English speaker because it would be a foreign language to them.

In terms of the presentation of textual material, attention should be focused on the arrangement at the level of the phoneme (words or constitutive parts), the level of the line, and the *mise-en-page*, as a whole. In terms of the arrangement at the level of the phoneme / word, "silencio" is kept as a discrete whole; that is, the word is not fragmented. This combination of

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[43] In "Politics, Context and The Constellation," McCaffery notes the complicated publication history of "silencio," which is "marked by translocality, translation, and non-chronological appearance" (PCC 12). Following the original Spanish publication "silencio," the first German version, "schweigen" was published in Gomringer's *33 konstellationen* (1960). Later, in Jerome Rothenberg's edition and translation of Gomringer's *The Book of Hours and Constellations*, the German "schweigen" appears alongside the English translation "silence" (see fig. 26). Most anthologies do not include the original Spanish "silencio" (fig. 25) nor note the significance of Gomringer's choice of language. Why emphasize Gomringer's choice of language? Because his first publication "silencio" was Spanish, his "mother tongue"; later, he made a conscious decision to write a work in German, in what could be considered a new constellation, "schweigen." For a concrete poet, language *is* material, and the material constitutes the poem. Also, linguistic material directly affects the text's in-sounding and out-sounding.

phonemes into a complete and intelligible word makes for an even clearer reading for the reader. The reader can in-sound the poem involuntarily without stumbling over fragmented words or disassociated phonemes.

An involuntary in-sounding occurs when the text is arranged normatively—allowing for a top-down, left-right anglicized reading. Concrete poets, generally, challenge normative reading practices because they no longer structure a poem conventionally, according to lines of verse. Readers would need to perform a voluntary in-sounding by working through the poem's material to find new and unexpected ways to sound its content. For his arrangement of "silencio" at the level of the line, Gomringer attempts to move away from conventional lineation. Gomringer proclaims this poetic (r)evolution in the title of his 1954 manifesto, "From Line to Constellation." Instead of the traditional line, Gomringer's arrangement is best described as a visual constellation, "a cluster of stars." The constellation "silencio" can be read top-down, left-right; however, it can also be read down-top, right-left and produce the same sequence of words. Gomringer calls this technique "inversion." The latter, Gomringer explained to Solt, "I consider as probably my most important contribution to concrete poetry" (9). Gomringer has "'related this phenomenon—inversion—to one of the intellectual principles of existence'—'thesis-antithesis'" (Solt 9).[44] Inversion changes the direction of reading / perception in poetry, or it at least allows for alternative processes of comprehension. Inversion presents opportunities for new directions for reading; however, it should be noted that "silencio" can still be read normatively, top-down, and left-right; it does not prevent nor seemingly prioritize non-normative reading. As such, the poem can be in-sounded like any conventional lyric poem. Although the constellation of

[44] "silencio" is the praxis of this "thesis-antithesis" theory and causes the reader to question normative modes and practices of reading.

"silencio" does appear as a cluster, the words are organized in lines that, once again, can be read (for the most part) normatively and in-sounded involuntarily.

There is one significant disruption to a normative reading, and that is most apparent when considering the *mise-en-page*. In the arrangement of the text as a whole, "silencio" harkens to the sonnet,[45] with Gomringer reducing the traditional fourteen lines to fourteen words. (The material is not fourteen different words; "silencio" is essentially one word repeated fourteen times.) There is a specific pattern to the arrangement of "silencio." A single word is arranged in a three-by-five grid; "silencio" / "schweigen" / "silence" appears in this arrangement except for the very centre spot, which is highlighted as negative space through the absence of text. This absence at the centre is what causes the greatest disruption to a normative reading and stalls an involuntary in-sounding. The reader is forced to confront how they read an absence—a gap—inserted in the text (which may or may not be a volta). This absence (unsound) at the centre of "silencio" will be more fully explored in the section below that considers its unsound. Significantly, in-sounding is disrupted by the insertion of unsound at the centre of this poem. Ultimately, "silencio" works at the point of intersection between the assumption of in-sounding and its disruption through unsound. To focus on the intersectionality of those two terms destabilizes them both.

Outsound in "silencio"

Bearing in mind the ease (or difficulty) of in-sounding "silencio," does this poem's material and arrangement allow for or even encourage an out-sounding? Although this poem

[45] The sonnet is highly-crafted genre with strict technical expectations. "A Defense of Poesy" salutes its importance: "But if . . . you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry; if you have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry, I must send you in the behalf of all poets:—that while you live in love, and never get favour for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph" (Sidney).

may encourage an out-sounding by its approachable material and arrangement, the semantic content of "silencio" seems initially to be at odds with an out-sounding. The vocalization of the text creates a compelling and paradoxical cognitive condition. In out-sounding this work, the reader is sounding "silence." Can one sound "silence"? Quite literally, yes: this poem provokes the reader to articulate "silence" repeatedly. But the choice of material, when out-sounded, creates a dissonance for the reader that may not be immediately recognized in an in-sounding. I will discuss the semantic content more thoroughly in the "unsound" section below. In an interesting way, "silencio" challenges orality—or at least causes the reader to question the role of orality within the context of a poem that initially seems to invoke silence both textually and in the space at the centre of it.

If this poem were out-sounded, what would it sound like? I have suggested that there are a number of visual factors to consider in determining the nuances of the poem's out-sounding. These features of the poem subdivide into the categories of temporal and qualitative considerations. Sound is the foundational aspect of a linguistic poem. A poem, when out-sounded, has a temporality differing from its "fixed" position on the page. In particular, an out-sounding makes the temporality of the piece actual: an aural performance is an act of sounding across a span of time. Specific elements of a poem can guide the reader in their first (and perhaps subsequent) out-sounding(s). Concerning "silencio," the most relevant temporal considerations are tempo, rhythm, and beat, each of which relate to textual features. *Mise-en-page* and space can suggest a tempo. Words and punctuation can delineate rhythm. Meter can propound beat(s). Certainly, this process of assessing a poem's tempo, rhythm, and beat (and later, qualitative features) is subjective. I am not suggesting a singular result in analyzing these features of a

poem. (One need only to talk to a jazz musician and a classical musician to understand that they each hear and feel time differently.)

In "silencio," the *mise-en-page* and the space are controlled. The poem adheres to Gomringer's suggestion that a constellation is a playground with fixed boundaries; space surrounds the text symmetrically and hems it in. This small constellation gives a sense that the duration of a poem's out-sounding would be brief. As for the tempo—the speed at which the work is to be performed—the poem's spacing in between the words is similarly brief, with very little variation. This seems to suggest that the word "silencio" could be read with an average pacing, a small pause between words, a slightly longer pause from line to line, and a great gap of unsound at the centre of the poem before resuming the out-sounding and repeating the same number of words with the same tempo as before.[46] Such a reading would be supported by the textual features of the poem, however, performances will vary based on reader's choices. The spacing between the words and lines varies by translation to accommodate the length of the words while still maintaining its visual arrangement. In the version of "silencio" featured in Solt's anthology (fig. 25), the font is approximately 13 or 14pt with two "em" spaces between each word and additional leading between lines. These formal arrangements fit within a normative range to the degree that this out-sounding is to be similarly normative.

In terms of determining rhythm, there is no punctuation acting as a guide to delineate specific rests or pauses. Instead, the reader must look to the words—how they are set on the page

[46] Here we can see how tempo ties so closely to rhythm—in the space between words. Tempo indicates the speed at which it would be performed, but the composition of the words and the spaces are the markers of rhythm. These markers of words and punctuation subdivide the piece by demarcating the sounds across time.

and how they are spaced for guidance; also, the reader must consider how they are divided into lines and what patterns should be considered. After examining where the sounds are delineated, the reader must look to the spaces to get a sense of expected "rests." The word "silencio" repeats formulaically, almost mechanistically. There are greater gaps than a normative single space between each "silencio" in a line, which demonstrate that the spaces between them, the caesurae, function musically as rests. Lines 1, 2, 4, and 5 are identical. Line 3, however, has that large gap (unsound) that disrupts the pattern and the piece's rhythm. The repetition of this rhythmic pattern of "silencio" (and its later disruption) demonstrates that the rhythmic markers are the words and spaces (in lieu of punctuation) to determine sounding and un-sounding.

When considering the temporal aspects of a poem, traditionally a reader would turn to meter. Many contemporary poems embrace free verse and opt to disrupt regular metrical patterns of language. "Silencio" does have lines with metrical content, however. In one reading, perhaps with an anglicized accent, the word could be read as perfect iambic feet: "si-LEN-ci-O." Lines 1, 2, 4, and 5 would be iambic hexameter. In this reading, line 3 has four iambic feet, the centre two of which are separated by a dramatic medial caesura. Yet, bearing in mind that pronunciations differ (especially in different languages), a pronunciation in a Spanish accent would likely yield a different sounding word and line: "si-LEN-ci-o." In this reading, each line (save for the third) is composed of six metrical feet alternating between iambs and pyrrhics, which results in three significant stresses per line. The third line only has two stresses. The two different scansions demonstrate that sound differs greatly in the voices of various readers. Multiple readings and subsequent studies of those varied readings highlight the significance of sound—and the importance of a reader in performing the work. The work changes in aural sounding and performance. Whether purely iambic or not, there is a beat and significant pulse in this poem.

Also, once the first line is established, there is an expectation to hear this beat three times (in the Spanish pronunciation) as each line is out-sounded. So, while the third line of the poem is visually disrupted by the unsound, there is also an absence of the expected beat that has been established by the metrical pattern. The temporal considerations of this poem suggest a normative out-sounding, save for perhaps longer pauses than usual between each word and one significant pause (unsound) at its centre.

Qualitative considerations of a poem include pitch, volume, timbre, voice, and accent(s), aspects that are affected by the textual features of font, size, colour, typographical emphasis, and unexpected elements. As outlined in my methods section, these qualitative aspects and textual features are not in a one-to-one relationship. Different features can influence various qualitative aspects of the poem simultaneously. One must first examine textual features. "Silencio" maintains a visual consistency throughout.[47] The font of the poem, though unidentified, is a Helvetica-like sans serif font.[48] There is a simplicity and lack of embellishment with a sans serif font that complements the lexical starkness. At the time of Gomringer's publication, sans serif designs were often used for advertisements. Today, they are commonly used for signage (more easily understood at a distance or readable when in transit) and digital screens / computer displays. In Gomringer's text, only the one font is used, and it appears to be close to a 13- or 14-pt size. This size may seem small relative to the large amount of space that surrounds it, but the size appears to be similar to any that one might encounter in a small print advertisement. Larger, that is, than print found in a newspaper article or a work of prose, the size of this font still seems

[47] This consistency of qualitative features is one way to determine if a poem is "clean" or "dirty." With "silencio," the patterning and lack of disruption create its "clean" appearance.
[48] For the sake of space and time, I will not delve into the classifications of san-serif fonts (i.e., grotesque, neo-grotesque, geometric, and humanist) since this is not a dissertation in typography.

to fit within a range of normativity (it does not draw attention to its size). The colour is monochromatic, starkly black against the white page. There are no instances of typographical emphasis of bold, italicized, or struck-through text. There is, though, one unexpected element: the unsound—the gap—at the center of the text. Taken together, these textual features of font, size, colour, typographical emphasis, and unexpected elements are the guidance for out-sounding, but readers shape their performances with their individual voices.

The sonic effects of "silencio," although subtle, are substantial. It is difficult to suggest what a specific pitch may be for an out-sounding of "silencio," as that can vary by reader. But the relatively normative font, size, and colour of the text would likely indicate to the reader that the poem could be out-sounded using a speaking voice that, like the text, is relatively unembellished. Volume is an interesting question with this particular piece because of its content. Literally out-sounding the word "silence" may make one question how this text should be voiced; is one expected to whisper? The font and size of the text indicates that this is likely not the case. If the size of the font could suggest a volume, then it follows that the volume of such an out-sounding would similarly be within a normative range. Once again, this range is somewhat subjective and based on the reader's / performer's own out-sounding. Subjective experience raises questions as to the timbre of the piece. The timbre is the quality of a sound, specifically focused on the instrument that produces it and how that sound differs from other sounds. Textual features such as font style and size and unexpected elements can all suggest the quality of sound. In this case, the quality seems to be almost mechanistic (i.e., even and monophonic). When the poem is out-sounded, however, the reader is the instrument. The reader / performer determines the quality of the poem by their out-sounding. They should take their cues from the visual scoring of the text. Voice is another qualitative consideration; due to the

consistency of textual features, this poem seems to lend itself to a monovocality—a single voice (albeit without much variation or embellishment). Or, in the spirit of King Lear and his final, anguished recitation of "Never never never never never" (5.3.372), the text could inspire a dramatic variety of articulations. Such variety is evident in Gertrude Stein's "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose,"[49] and Stein's phrasing demonstrates that each repetition suggests a possibility of difference in performance as well as interpretation. In terms of accent(s), it should be noted that the text is all lower-case—once again suggesting that no part should be out-sounded with more intensity than another part. The lower-case text with no punctuation in combination with the uniform spacing creates a visual symmetry. Even though visually uniform, this text flouts existing grammatical rules. If there is any part that is to be highlighted as working against that uniformity, it is the centre spot, which deviates from all other expected textual patterns. Out-sounding, then, offers the opportunity for readers to assess these textual features to understand the text's guidance on potential out-soundings while also forcing the reader to acknowledge their role in interpretation and performance.

Unexceptional temporal and qualitative considerations cause the reader to consider the significance of out-sounding the work. For "silencio," one is led to question the importance or effect of out-sounding. Does an out-sounding generate alternate meaning(s) outside a solely "visual" reception? Does an out-sounding give the reader a different understanding of the text, one that could not necessarily be gleaned just by viewing the printed page? For this poem, there is an immediate irony to sounding the textual material. One of the greatest effects an out-

[49] "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" (187) is from Stein's poem "Sacred Emily" (1913) in the collection *Geography and Plays* (1922). When referencing this line in "Poetry and Grammar" (*Lectures in America*), Stein evocatively describes her act of expression: "When I said. A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose. And then later made that into a ring I made poetry and what did I do I caressed completely caressed and addressed a noun" (231).

sounding of “silencio” offers is a visceral and embodied dissonance of content and action: the reader sounds “silence.” In vocalizing “silencio,” the reader conversely eliminates the condition of silence (if that were even a possible condition). Sounding “silencio” also instantiates a temporality. On the one hand, there is a demonstration as to the length of time “silence” can exist aurally—and even that is fleeting. On the other hand, an out-sounding even more dramatically highlights the unsounds between words and the unsound central to the text. Out-sounding of “silencio” reveals acutely the tension central to the piece. In the unsound section, below, I will address some critical considerations and semantic significance(s) of this complicated position that the reader encounters in “silencio.” Ultimately, out-sounding forces the reader to interrogate directly their relationship to “silence” and the initial contradiction inherent in sounding it.

My method suggests a crucial follow-up question: when the poem is removed from the page—when the experience is wholly aural rather than visual—what meaning is lost or goes untranslated? Also, what opportunities are gained in aural reception when the visual is absent? In the case of “silencio,” an out-sounding could evoke a similar effect to the printed poem. This could be the case if the reader were to pace the poem as published—attempting a consistent volume and pitch while also keeping a consistent tempo. If the reader / performer pays close attention to the rhythm of the piece and does not speak the unsound at the centre of the constellation, “silencio” could still have a similar effect—creating an aural “silence” analogous to the visual one. Still, though, this poem causes the reader to question the nature of “silence” (the word) as well as “silence” (the condition). The fact that the poem exists on a page gives the reader the opportunity to reflect and reread—to in-sound the poem again. Out-sounding, however, would not allow for the same type of reflection. An out-sounding reveals the temporality of the piece; when a poetic word is rendered orally, there is little time or ability to

enter into a detailed textual study. A listener cannot pause or rewind a live performance. As was discussed in Chapter 1, there are no adequate frameworks for the description or subsequent study of oral works. After all, readers cannot receive the aural sounds, capture every nuance and literary effect, and analyze it in receiving one performance. Instead, the material printed on the page (or displayed on a screen) is what allows time for further study. Out-sounding "silencio" allows for a different understanding and reception; the tension between sound and absence is more acute in performance than on the page, especially for the reader who experiences the performance bodily as they are an instrument and sound resonates through them. Moreover, the temporality of an out-sounding forces the reader to confront the ephemerality of both sound and "silence." This question of the meaning within the visual representation raises the question of semantic significance of the visual arrangement. The semantic significance of the visual arrangement—and broader significance of "silencio"—is examined in the Unsound section.

The final question that emerges from out-sounding: is there a recording available? A video recording by the author or another reader would be relevant. For the purposes of this dissertation, there is no hierarchy of significance for the specific reader performing the out-sounding. (It should be noted that an out-sounding ought to attend to the textual material and attempt to account for the arrangement of that material.). It does not appear that there is a recording of "silencio" available, either by the author or, as far as I can tell, by others. This is due in great part, I argue, to the contrast of the content with an actual out-sounding. Also, "silencio" is upheld as the hallmark of a visual poem which results in the assumption that such a poem need not be performed aloud because the primary encounter with that work is intended to be page-based. This is not the case, however, with all visual poems. In Susan Howe's *That This* (2010), its second section, "Frolic Architecture," features poems in the style of cut-up poetry. In

2011, Howe collaborated with composer David Grubbs to create a recording of these compelling pieces.[50] In terms of a concrete poem more specifically, McCaffery has performed and recorded sections of *Carnival*. I will examine the latter as my example of a dirty concrete poem following this discussion of Gomringer's "silencio."

In "silencio," both temporal and qualitative considerations suggest an out-sounding that is within a normative range—the textual features suggest a performance that does not draw attention to itself. Textual emphasis or embellishments are reduced, which draws more attention to any unexpected elements that disrupt the regularity of pattern and arrangement. Yet this regularity does not equate to iterative performances when readers out-sound it. In fact, I would argue, that the tendency toward neutrality[51] allows or prompts the reader's voice to shape the out-sounding uniquely; the work's constancy allows the reader a particular freedom to share their own ideas of interpreting that linguistic information. Although a reader's out-sounding might need to remain consistent to maintain a "trueness" to the text, there is no indication as to primary setting of volume, tenor, and tone their voice should take in performance. Also, the visual invariability of "silencio" draws even more attention to the one unexpected element of the space—the unsound—central to the poem, both physically and semantically. As such, it seems appropriate to move to this element of the text that is so intentionally highlighted: unsound.

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[50] Susan Howe's creative work could have taken up an entire chapter of this dissertation. Her *ouevre*, however, represents an entirely different form of visual poetry than the three that I discuss. Interestingly, the recording / performance of "Frolic Architecture" by David Grubbs and Howe does not seem to feature the visual gaps of un-sounding. Instead of there being aural gaps of "silence," Grubbs' ambient soundings ring through the hour-long performance, save for a brief unsounding to shift between sections (www.youtube.com/watch?v=xR6cfDFTL8Q). Echoes of Howe's voice also re-sound. The whole work is compelling, both visually and aurally.

[51] I refer to "tendency toward neutrality" because text and typography are never neutral. See Helen Armstrong's *Graphic Design Theory* (2009), Peter Baines's and Phil Haslam's *Type & Typography* (2012), Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1959), and Kate Shash's "Why Typography Can Never Be Neutral" (2016).

Unsound in "silencio"

The method for examining unsound in primarily page-based poetry begins with the question: what parts of the poem are unsounded? After the analysis of insound and outsound in "silencio," it is clear that Gomringer highlighted the unsound in this work. In "silencio," all patterns of regularity in in-sounding and out-sounding are disrupted by the unsound at the text's core. The text is unsounded at its centre (both physically and perhaps, one could argue, metaphorically because the poem's significant focus on what can and cannot be represented in language and sound). The second question the method proffers is: by what means are these parts unsounded? The unsound occurs at the centre of the text by creating negative space[52] around it. Also, there is an absence of expected content.

Once this un-sounding is identified, one must consider its immediate effects on the reader. Three specific effects can be suggested: (1) an unsettling challenge to normative reading practices; (2) an encouragement for reflection on the poem's content and the reader's relationship to it; and (3) an invitation to perform the work—and embrace one's role as reader / performer.[53] I have discussed previously how sounding (both in-sounding and out-sounding) "silencio" challenges conventional reading practices. In "silencio," the un-sounding is what causes this disruption. In terms of the complexity of this work and its performance, Gomringer's arrangement of "silencio" draws attention to his material and causes the reader to question the significance of the chosen word "silence." As McCaffery notes in "Politics, Context, and the

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[52] First mentioned in Chapter 1, "negative space" is a phrase used in art to refer to the space around and between the subject of the work.

[53] These effects are not limited only to "silencio"; these results also apply to visual poems or other poetic forms that challenge reading practices. Poems with higher levels of illegibility are not necessarily as inviting initially. These listed effects guide the discussion of how un-sounding affects the reader's relationship to the text.

Constellation," the word silence could be descriptive or even imperative; he suggests that it can be read "as either denoting a zero-acoustic condition (an absence of sound), or as a performative utterance in the imperative mood, conveying a command" (PCC 14). At first glance, Gomringer's poem is a riddle of contradictions:

- The text is black, and the page is white. These boundaries are fixed. But what happens when text highlights absence through its presence?
- Is the poem commanding silence or observing it? Is it a condition or command?
- To whom (if anyone) is the suggestion or command directed? Where is the boundary between the author and audience?
- "Silence" (the text) fills the constellation, yet in the absence of the text ("silence") at the constellation's centre, the reader witnesses an actual silencing of the text. But what happens in that negative space—that place where there is an absence of expected sound?

But "silencio" does not determine definitively what is present in that negative space. The borders seem so fixed in an initial reading, but it is as if Gomringer's poem puts the reader in an anechoic chamber. The sound around the work itself is reduced, which compels the listener to hear the stark contrast between the in-sounded / out-sounded text and the unsound central to the piece.

As the reader seeks to understand how to read this "silence" and their relationship to it, the other immediate effect is the reader being encouraged to understand their role in relation to this poem. Is Gomringer somehow conjuring sound for his own intellectual exercise? Or is he calling the reader to recognize this boundary play? Is it a command to the reader or a command witnessed and recorded? The reality is that it could be all of these readings simultaneously, and the answer(s) lie(s) in the interpretation of the content as well as the-unsound central to the piece.

This small constellation is the epitome of "a playground with definite boundaries" (*BHC* ii). Instead of being arranged according to conventional, linear, and unidirectional poetic lines, a constellation has fixed boundaries within which text, arrangement, and space interact and are at play. This is one of the reasons why this poem so particularly represents the clean concrete poetry movement. Solt highlights the reader's burden: "This, of course, asks a great deal of what used to be called the reader. He [sic] must now perceive the poem as an object and participate in the poet's act of creating it, for the concrete poem communicates first and foremost its structure" (8). The reader must engage with both the sound and its absence. By the intentional muting / removal of "silencio," Gomringer calls the reader to see how the arrangement of the constellation is disrupted and expectations are thwarted. If this "silence" were read as a command, then it could be directed by the author at the reader or an unspoken subject; the command could also be one that the author records as evidence for readers to bear witness. Ultimately, though, the reader is invited, in their own way, to in-sound and out-sound this work—to be the instrument of is performance. The possibilities of the poem's signification are borne out in the unsound.

Why, however, did Gomringer choose to use "silence" and to feature its absence at the centre of his poem? Why have these elements been unsounded? The word "silence" ironically invokes sound because it can be in-sounded as well as sounded out, even as the primary meaning of "silence" is a denial / absence of sound. At the centre of this work is a visual silence, an unsound, where there is an absence of intended sound. So, this unsound is a moment that disrupts an involuntary in-sounding and challenges an out-sounding. It cannot be represented because silence is a condition that is impossible to create. The meanings of this un-sounding will be explored at length, but first, consideration must be given to the impossible condition of silence.

Not all theorists agree that a page is filled with sound. Johanna Drucker, in particular, emphasizes the zero-acoustic condition of the page. Drucker's point is that codes (textual material) on the page are primarily graphic, "whether they are notations for sound or not" (NS 239). But it is significant that people see graphic codes, especially ones that are linguistic, and they *do* wonder how to render such markings mentally or verbally. So many of these concrete poets seek to challenge their relationship to words and to the artform of poetry by creating works that deny or challenge orality—a notion inherent in poetry since its inception. Not all the textual materials for concrete poems may be notations of sound, but there is a consideration of sound (or its denial / muting) in the writing and subsequent reading / viewing. Visual poets may primarily focus on sight in the creation of a work, but with "poetry" as part its title, there is an acknowledgement or denial of orality. With each poet, there is a foregrounding or erasure of sound. Whether a poet recognizes the role of sound and embraces their orchestration or does not acknowledge sound in their work, a sonic dimension is unavoidable. Some poets embrace or even challenge orality, as Gomringer has in "silencio," while others seek to eschew orality. Nevertheless, sound is there. The reader will always in-sound and will often attempt to out-sound a poem. And in these soundings, there is a tension between the sound and unsound in a work of poetry which every reader / performer of a poem must navigate. This tension is where the purpose(s) of the poem lie. The interpretation of unsound is as significant to the poem's meaning(s) as the poem's sound.

In Gomringer's "silencio," there is a complex relationship between the text and the space. The "silencio" and the unsound leaves the reader to wonder if a silence exists in the centre of the poem. Here is where I would like to address one of the most significant criticisms of concrete poetry as a genre. Both Marjorie Perloff's *Unoriginal Genius* (2010) and Caroline Bayard's *The*

New Poetics in Canada and Quebec: From Concretism to Post-modernism (1989) discuss the "iconic fallacy" of the concretists. Perloff summarizes Bayard's conclusion of concrete poetics by suggesting "that the 'fusion of expression and content' being advocated by the concretists was an instance of what Umberto Eco had termed the 'iconic fallacy'—the fallacy that 'a sign has the same properties as its object and is simultaneously similar to, analogous to, and motivated by its object'" (*UG* 51). Bayard is arguing against the Cratylist notion that sound and visual properties are mimetic, in other words, equating "graphic-typographical form with semantic function" (23). Both Perloff and Bayard use "silencio" as a primary example of iconic fallacy: "At its most naïve 'naturalizing' level the iconic fallacy manifests itself . . . [in] 'silencio', where the empty rectangle at the centre of the composition is presented as the equivalent to the 'silence' conveyed by the verbal sign" (*UG* 51). This comment, I would suggest, articulates an interpretive fallacy. Nothing in Gomringer's text enables one to determine that the "silence" present throughout the poem is the very thing absent from the centre of it. The reader does not know what lies at the nexus of the poem, it is a space—seemingly an absence. Furthermore, the narrow interpretation offered by Bayard and perpetuated by Perloff does a disservice to the poem's overall effect. The silence is not present at the centre of the poem, because silence is unrepresentable—ineffable—inexpressible.

Bayard and Perloff seem to be equating form with function. They are, I would suggest, using form to demonstrate its own inability to function. When Gomringer writes "silence," he negates it by evidencing that the word itself, which is utterable, is in opposition to the signifier—a zero-acoustic condition. "Silence"—the word—can be spoken, but the condition is impossible to create. In excluding text, he has not created silence, but something else. The "empty" space is not an absence, but rather a textual reproduction of the "unsound" it generates, which can only be

noticed when generated through the disruption of in-sounding and/or out-sounding a work. Gomringer uses form to lead to the translation of possibilities of content.

The absence at the centre of the constellation does not necessarily point to the missing invocation of that literal sign "silencio." The repeated "silence" is certainly not the same as the centre (or the equivalent to the 'silence' conveyed by the verbal sign), because the reader does not know what exists in that space. The reader only knows that the pattern is disrupted. Readerly expectations of patterns are jolted. Ironically, a reader can in-sound and out-sound silencio, silencio, silencio. And then, suddenly, that reader hits the unsound. The reader cannot sound the space in an interior reading or an oral one. Gomringer presents a notion of "silence" in the text but demonstrates that the actual condition of "silence" is unrepresentable by inserting unsound which thwarts both in-sounding and out-sounding. He is not necessarily equating the term of "silence" with the absence at the centre; instead, he is revealing that the word and the idea are nonmimetic. He presents a condition that cannot be visually represented or uttered into speech. There is a word "silence" but that is very different from what lies at the centre of Gomringer's constellation. It is a space, but it is not silence.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, John Cage asserts the impossibility of silence and claims, "There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time.… In fact, try as we may to make silence, we cannot" (Gann 162). Silence is generated through the removal or muting of sound. Even when one attempts to absence sound, it can never fully be achieved. There is always something present in that space. So, what is present in this space? One thing the reader can know for certain, however, is that it is not "silence," for that is absent. In a gesture of deliberately disrupting a visual pattern—in excluding a "silence"—there is a plethora of possible readings. Much of the reading depends on the person who experiences the poem. An unsound is an

absence of intended sound, but that does not mean that there is no sound ringing in the reader's mind in an in-sounding—nor does it mean that in an out-sounding that oral gap in sound would not be filled with extraneous sounds. Silence cannot be made or represented—even unsound, though a removal of intended sound, is not silence.

So, what then are the broader significances for unsound in "silencio"? Unsounding shows the limits of language and the ineffable conditions poets address in their works. Concrete poems destabilize reading practices and challenge readers' expectations to and relationship with textual material. Many critics have examined Gomringer's "silencio," and most of these commentaries propose this constellation as a model for the concrete poetry movement accentuating aesthetic features. As evidenced by concrete poetics and the praxis of Gomringer's "silencio," the constellation as an aesthetic object is only one of its aspects. In "Politics, Context, and the Constellation," McCaffery makes a currently unpopular appeal for a re-examination of its historical and political context: "by taking into account the fact that this poem was written within a decade of the discovery of the concentration camps, and discussing its various translinguistic manifestations, the text's central silence is shown to evoke matters far more sombre than the discourse of aesthetics can account for" (PCC 10). McCaffery outlines various approaches to "silencio" and the many angles from which critics examine its semantic content through its aesthetic features. Paul Fry is identified as the first Anglophone critic to specify political implications of "schweigen," arguing that it "raises the question of silence about the war [WWII], silence about silencing, the void at the centre of a death camp, the whole repeated as the kind of strident, barked out command, stifling protest and suffering" (PCC 14). Moreover, considering the poem's historicity and original language (Spanish), it is significant that "silencio" was written during Generalissimo Francisco Franco's oppressive dictatorship in Spain

(PCC 14). McCaffery effectively elucidates the semantic complexity of "silencio." In reference to Gomringer's attention to spatiality and visual perception, McCaffery questions, "is it fanciful to note that the pattern of Gomringer's rectangle utilises the same elemental forms of the Swastika, or to see it in an aerial view of a death camp, or a parliamentary gathering of the *bund*?" (PCC 15). McCaffery's interpretation demonstrates the constellation's formalist features and the text's echoes of other shapes, perhaps far more sinister than an initial reading provides.

Attention to the historical context of "silencio" encourages additional semantic significances to reverberate in subsequent soundings. How, after considering historicity of the poem, does the absence at the constellation's centre change? McCaffery suggests nuanced readings in the form of a question: "Can we read the silence at the poem's wordless centre not only as an indictment in absentia of the historian's reticence to write the victim's absent testimonial, but also as a concrete and savagely ironic textual transposition of Hitler's 1937 demand for a *volkloser Raum* (a space empty of people)" (PCC 15). The *kairos* of the poem's creation and publication sheds more light onto the layers of significance in such a seemingly small and quiet constellation. The interpretive implications multiply through "the compelling semantic triplet of an empowered voice of command, a silenced voice of the victim, and a collective national complicit taciturnity" (PCC 15). These various semantic resonances of the text call to mind, once again, the significant role of the reader. For Gomringer, the reader's response and play are part of the work—part of its meaning.

Beyond aesthetics and socio-political considerations for Gomringer's unsounding in "silencio," it should be noted that "silencio" was published in 1953, a year after John Cage's

infamous premiere of *4'33"* (29 August 1952).[54] *4'33"* shocked audiences; it was a piece of no composed sounds—a composition of unsound. Both Cage's *4'33"* and Gomringer's "silencio" call for a new understanding of how individuals engage with sonority. And what are the broader implications of Gomringer's unsound? Gomringer attempts to show the limits of representability in language and the ineffability that is inextricable from human existence. The unsound extends beyond what can be quantified and qualified; this unsound moves beyond empiricism. Gomringer's un-sounding is an aesthetic assertion, a socio-political statement, a philosophical credo, and a spiritual invitation. As always, though, the poem is in the hands of the reader to perform—to in-sound and out-sound. And in the performance of "silencio," the reader determines if they agree with the assertion, concur with the statement, embrace the credo, and accept the invitation.

A New Generation: Dirty Concrete Poetry

Dirty concrete poetry created quite a divide in the literary community when it first appeared. Many literary theorists and critics struggled to define what they were reading. In 1971, Frank Davey offered a definition that he created in collaboration with bpNichol:

> Concrete is usually divided by its devotees into 'clean' and 'dirty'. In clean concrete, the preferred and dominant type, the visual shape of the work is primary, the linguistic signs secondary. In this view the most effective concrete poems are those with an immediate

[54] Cage's piece was conceived as early as 1948. Cage's visit to an anechoic chamber in 1951 was instrumental in the development of *4'33*" and informed his philosophy concerning silence. This note is to clarify the timeline. For more information on *4'33"*, see Kyle Gann's *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"* (2010). For a helpful examination of Cage's philosophy on silence, see his primary texts in *Silence* (2011, 50th anniversary edition) as well as Christopher Shultis' "Silencing the Sounded Self: John Cage and the Intentionality of Nonintention" (1995).

> and arresting visual effect which is made more profound by the linguistic elements used in the poems constituent parts. The weakest are dirty concrete, those with amorphous visual shape and complex and involute arrangements of linguistic elements. In dirty concrete there can be no immediate to the whole, only a cumulative interpretation gained by painstaking labour. (OR)

There are obvious biases and personal preferences laid bare in Davey's remarks—especially with "clean" referred to as "preferred" and "dominant," whereas "dirty" is referred to as "weaker." Many other concrete poets have offered up their own definitions and impressions of both "clean" and "dirty" concrete. In a 2011 interview with Lori Emerson, derek beaulieu weighed in:

> The way *I* understand dirty concrete (tho I have yet to use a definition per se) is concrete poetry which foregrounds the degenerated, the broken and the handmade—so for instance, photocopier degeneration (bpNichol's *Sharp Facts*), broken letterforms or semantic pieces (McCaffery's "demiplosive suite" or "punctuation poem") or some of the collage-based or graffiti-based poems of Bob Cobbing. Clean Concrete on the other hand, I think, is closer to the Russian Suprematists and would be exemplified by the typography based poems of Pete Spence (Australia) and the typestracts of Dom Sylvester Houedard (UK). To overly simplify matters I could say that clean = blocks while dirty = crumbs. (CP)

In the self-determined "oversimplification" of the differences between clean (blocks) and dirty (crumbs), beaulieu evidences a deeper truth about these poetic genres—or at least the reigning impressions left by these works. Readers have an easier time reading and sounding clean concrete poetry because blocks (building blocks) are recognizable pieces arranged to communicate specific ideas. Words or even parts of words can be sounded, even if there is a

disruption in reading practices. Dirty concrete poetry, on the other hand, further distances the reader from a familiar oral / aural encounter with a poetic work. Dirty concrete poems sever "lines" and words into their constitutive parts. In the fragmenting of poetic material, dirty concrete poems demonstrate the significance of the particulate principle. These poems reduce language to its building blocks—sounds. Some dirty concrete poems remove language entirely—such poems are comprised of non-linguistic material which require new methods of reading and sounding. By removing the context and fracturing the words to their phonemes / graphemes and including non-linguistic content (sometimes), these dirty concrete poems challenge traditional understandings of signification and force readers to find new ways to sound these works. Dirty concrete poems also contain layers of material, often stratified to the extent of illegibility (even for linguistic material). This overstamping and stacking of content creates a "visual noise." Such noise hovers between sound and unsound because a reader may attempt to in-sound and even out-sound such content, but isolating specific content for the purposes of rendering it sonically is nearly impossible with a single voice (and no technological aid of amplification or effects). Consequently, blocks of text / ink / pixels also function as unsound. "Visual noise" occupies a liminal space between sound and unsound, and this will be discussed in greater length following the Unsound section of *Carnival*. Each sounding of a dirty concrete poem compels the reader to re-evaluate their relationship to poetic material, to language, and to sound.

In *Meanwhile*, Nichol also tries to distinguish between "clean" and "dirty" concrete poems: "Stephen Scobie wrote to me from Vancouver and talked about the difference between 'clean' and 'dirty concrete.' By that definition we were all dirty. bruitist i suppose" (*MW* 30). Bruitist poetry is a sub-genre of sound poetry championed in the early twentieth century by the Futurists (themselves proponents of *typografi*, typographical experimentation, and *parole in*

libertà, extreme word autonomy), who created a poetry dependent on sound and utterance while divorcing itself from meaning. Futurists often demanded that their works be received in the context of an oral performance. In *Dramaturgy of Sound in the Avant-Garde and Postdramatic Theatre* (2013), Mladen Ovadija discusses how sound was central to the avant-garde movement:

> Sound … had been a subject of intense discussion in the historical avant-garde, particularly among Futurists, Expressionists, and Dadaists, who largely focused their arguments on two material aspects of sound: its corporeality and its abstract form. Hence, in the early years of the twentieth century, the recognition of the materiality of sound, first taking place in Futurist poetry and performance, prompted the formulation of a genuine aesthetic and dramaturgy of sound. The radical shift from the words' meaning to their sound was coupled with the dissociation of vocal utterance from syntactical language. (12)

Ovadija notes two shifts in the use of language: from meaning as a central focus to the sound of utterance; and divorcing outsound / orality / aurality from the constraints of normative syntax. These two features are certainly present within dirty concrete poetics. Ovadija also observes that the Futurist's interest in sound for its own sake was foundational for future poetry movements:

> Coinciding with the avant-garde's critical rejection of narrative and figurative pretensions in literature, art, and theatre, Futurist change of perspective provided the conceptual grounds for the development of sound-text poetry, musique concrète, abstract and objectless painting, and antitextual theatre. Clearly, all of these artistic trends were more concerned with material–sound, noise, colour, painterly mass, and theatre physicality–than with signification. (12)

For the dirty concrete poets, especially, there was a movement away from poems that generated specific or restrictive meanings. It is interesting to note that even when distinguishing dirty concrete from clean, Scobie and Nichol tie dirty concrete to sound poetry. This is due, in great part, to the fracturing of language into graphemes that span the page. These blasted, scattered, and orchestrated letters can be read from many starting points. The poems break down to sound fragments—phonemes—that are divorced from semantic stability by their lack of normative syntactical context. As discussed earlier with phonology and the English language, there are intimate ties between visual poetry and sound poetry. I raise this similarity again to emphasize that practitioners of both were concerned with language and its limits in terms of communication and signification. Moreover, sound poetry reveals the temporality of poetry in performance acutely, which is why sounding is vital to revealing the temporality in visual poetry. Certainly, sounding visual poetry becomes a greater challenge with dirty concrete poetry. One such exemplar of a dirty concrete poem is Steve McCaffery's *Carnival*.

Steve McCaffery and His Engagement with Sound

In the front matter of the first panel of *Carnival*, McCaffery's (auto)biographical information reads: "Steve McCaffery was born in England, uneducated in Canada & now lives in Toronto with his wife & a collection of 18th century literature." McCaffery is a thread that connects the international concrete poetry movement to the Canadian concrete poetry movement. In his wry manner, McCaffery notes that he is "uneducated in Canada," suggesting an unraveling of formalized education (and slyly underscoring experiments with new forms of learning). The (auto)biographical information also states that McCaffery "is 1/4th of THE FOUR HORSEMEN, a Toronto-based collaborative sound-poetry group." As a formative member of a prominent and dramatic sound poetry group, McCaffery is a poet, scholar, and critic who pays

keen attention to sound and explores the opportunities inherent in linguistic expression. In a 1995 interview with Charles Bernstein on *LINEBreak*, McCaffery says that poetry is "an investigation into endless possibilities within language" (2:58–3:01). McCaffery goes on to explain that, for him, "poetry has always been research and always will be" (2:53–2:56). He further claims that "this research itself then often gets applied in poetry that hopefully is making some kind of political critique on a level that is not descriptive but is really looking at the way language and linguistic utterance ties into notion of power within society" (McCaffery 3:04–3:25).[55] McCaffery's creative work is a compelling example of sonic-saturated pages and how extensive sound on the page affects the reading practices of such poems.

McCaffery is known for his panel-poems and his instrument of choice: the typewriter. Although I am not exclusively focusing on typewriter poetry in this dissertation, I discuss its significance for McCaffery in creating *Carnival* in the following sections.[56]

CARNIVAL: Destroying the Book, Assembling the Panel

Carnival, in its initial state, is a book of bound pages in sequence. However, the panel-object can only be constructed once the pages are ripped along their perforations and assembled

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[55] McCaffery's engagement with poetry focuses on sound and utterance and that relationship to power and political critique. This dissertation does not and cannot address the scope of concrete poetry's political engagement. Two helpful sources should be consulted for further reading on the topic: Lori Emerson's *Reading Writing Interfaces* (2014), specifically Chapter Three: "Typewriter Poetry as Activist Media Poetics") and Natalie Leduc's dissertation *Dissensus and Poetry: The Poet as Activist in Experimental English-Canadian Poetry* (2019).

[56] Referenced previously, Emerson's *RWI* connects the typewriter medium directly to dirty concrete poetics. Several books have been published on the significance of the typewriter including Darren Wershler-Henry's *The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting* (2007), Tony Allan's *Typewriter: The History, The Machine, The Writers* (2014), Anthony Casillo's *Typewriters: Iconic Machines from the Golden Age of Mechanical Writing* (2017), and Martyn Lyons' *The Typewriter Century—A Cultural History of Writing Practices* (2021).

in a four-by-four grid of sixteen pages: "As an 'unripped book,' *Carnival* remains merely a virtual panel, whereas a mounted panel is a 'book destroyed.'" (PL 70). The reader has to disassemble the book to create the panel poem: "Therefore, for the project to be realised, it is required that the book be disassembled and then that the parts that remain be combined, as though the components of a multi-panel painting. This is done by a reader, who in doing away with the book, initiates poetry's transferral [sic] to a painterly medium" (McMahon 134). Fiona McMahon highlights that the panel is akin to a "painterly medium," which insinuates a viewing more than a sounding in perceiving the poem. Moreover, McMahon emphasizes the reader's agency in this transfer from a literary realm to a painterly one. Whether a book, panel poem, or painting (or all), *Carnival*'s format and presentation challenge normative approaches to engaging with textual material. In "Inner Tension / In Attention," Marjorie Perloff distinguishes McCaffery's poetry from the first-generation concretists: "McCaffery's unit has always been the page rather than the individual concrete poem, and, beyond the page, the book" (ITA 175).

The destruction of a book art-object for the creation of a panel poem is one visceral, tactile example of the many ways in which this text defies traditional reception. In his use of text, space, and *mise-en-page*, McCaffery treats the page itself as a field—a unit—upon which the whole poem is happening. There seems to be an inexplicable yet intimate relationship between the text (sound) and the space (unsound) in *Carnival*, as if the text and space are in conversation with one another. The layering and over-stamping of texts creates a pseudo-palimpsest; such instances of sound are a type of "visual noise" (referenced in the Introduction and Chapter 1) and complicate both the in-sounding and out-sounding processes. Readers may seek to understand that dialogue as they work to sound the text, but the challenging linguistic material resists signification. *Carnival* urges readers to re-evaluate their own relationship to text, sound, and

meaning. These sonic effects will be explored in depth in the upcoming sections, which apply the method for discovering insound, outsound, and unsound in *Carnival*. Before delving into the application of the method, there will be a discussion of *Carnival*'s text-type (typestract / panel poem) and construction (process of creation).

CARNIVAL: The Panels

This chapter will be focusing on the first and second panel of McCaffery's *Carnival*. Described by McCaffery as "sixteen square feet of concrete" (McMahon 134), the first panel was constructed during 1967–1970 and published in 1973. *Carnival*'s first panel (see fig. 27) is described in its front matter:

> This first panel of CARNIVAL was executed entirely on the type-
> writer from 1967–1970. Discarded sections of this panel have
> appeared in: grOnk
>
> the cosmic chef ed. by bp nichol (oberon)
>
> new direction in canadian poetry ed. by j. r. colombo
>
> (holt, rinehart & winston)
>
> A second panel is under construction.

Similar to the first panel, the second panel was also published as a book to be disassembled and reconstituted. Although the first panel was created solely on the typewriter, McCaffery expanded his method and techniques in the second panel. Created during 1970–1975 and published in 1977, the second panel includes "different forms of 'scription': in addition to rubber-stamps, tissue texts, hand-lettering and stencil, the poet introduces experiments with photocopiers through a technique labelled xerography, or 'xerography with xerography (i.e., metaxerography

and disintegrative seriality'" (McMahon 135). Emerson emphasizes McCaffery's attention to materiality, and she also marks changes from the first panel to the second. In the latter, there is just "more" of everything, Emerson notes. There are more full words, more masks,[57] and more extended techniques.

Figure 27. *Carnival*, first panel, assembled. Steve McCaffery, Coach House Books, 1973, www.theideaofthebook.com/pictures/529d.jpg?v=1552316630.

[57] A detailed examination of masks / mapping occurs in *Carnival*'s "Unsound" section.

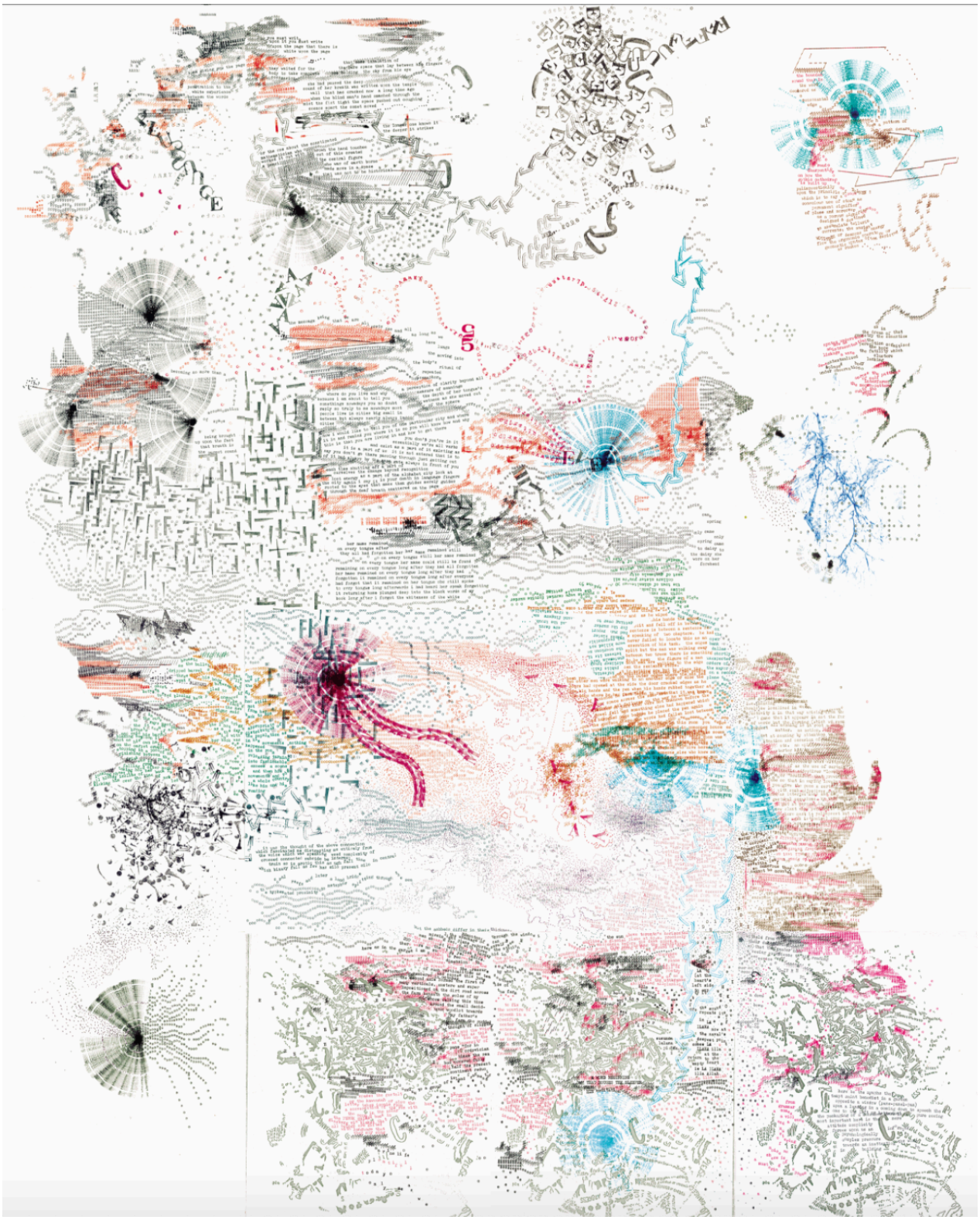

Figure 28. *Carnival*, second panel, assembled, full-colour. Steve McCaffery, Coach House Books, web.archive.org/web/20010420021011/http://www.chbooks.com/online/carnival/2a_assembled.html.

The display of more readable text may seem counterintuitive for McCaffery's second panel, yet Emerson suggests that these creative decisions demonstrate that "the complete annihilation of semantic meaning is neither possible nor desirable. The point is, rather, to *activate* our sense of the profoundly materialist and the multidimensionality of the reading / writing process" (*RWI* 121).[58] For an assembled full-colour version of *Carnival*'s second panel, see figure 28.[59] The method for sounding page-based poetry will be applied to the second panel because of its extended techniques and sustained challenges to normative sounding processes.

With *Carnival*, McCaffery presents a typestract (a panel poem) that the reader may find disorienting because of "countless alignments, realignments, dealignments of the page, along with the dirt, dust, smudges in the serifs, signs of wear in the keys, misaligned letters, ribbon wear in the inking" (*RWI* 208). Emerson concludes that "*Carnival* is a text that defies close reading" (*RWI* 208). McCaffery's unconventional use of masks, mapping, and typewriter parts (especially in the second *Carnival* panel) demonstrates his work's unique relationship of space to textual materials. This challenging and unconventional relationship of text, space, and *mise-en-page* makes *Carnival* particularly difficult to in-sound, to out-sound, and to analyze in a close reading.

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[58] Emerson notes the sophistication of the second panel: "the simultaneously viewable and readable *Carnival* is akin to understanding that when McLuhan asserts 'the medium is the message' he is not asserting there is no such thing as a message at all—only that all messages are mediated and that all media bear with them a message" (121). McLuhan asserted "the medium is the message" in his book *Understanding Media* (1964).

[59] The Second Panel's full-colour version was included as a tip-in postcard in copies of McCaffery's *Seven Pages Missing*. Aside from that limited print run, it is available online: web.archive.org/web/20010420021011/http://www.chbooks.com/online/carnival/2a_assembled.html. The postcard version is identical to the online version in every detail except for size.

McCaffery's CARNIVAL: Typestract, Book, Panel, Process

McMahon carefully examines McCaffery's poetic style and typography in his larger panel works. "Typestract"[60] and typography, she explains, are an integral part of McCaffery's oeuvre, and foundational to his poetics:

> With McCaffery, the materials of writing are explored in relationship to how poetry is both crafted and perceived. The poet employs the typographical medium as a means of formalizing poetry's relationship to time and to space, thereby concentrating upon the patterns that grow out of narrative constraints, along with those determining the composition of the page and of the book. (133)

McCaffery's approach to typestract in *Carnival* demonstrated the opportunities and limits of the typewriter: "McCaffery in *Carnival*, more than most dirty concrete poets from this era, pushed the typewriter machinery to its limits while also pushing his writing to the limits of legibility, interpretability, and readability" (*RWI* 105). One could say that he used extended techniques for this writing instrument in a similar way that a musician explores their instrument in creating new sounds.

For concrete poets, "their typewriter / dirty concrete poetry represented a push to unsettle what Zielinkski calls 'established syntax' by exploring and even hacking the typewriter as a media system" (*RWI* 105). Following the lead of early twentieth-century writers such as Filippo Marinetti, E. E. Cummings, Karl Schwitters, and Mina Loy, McCaffery was compelled to challenge the boundaries of technology and the page using the typewriter as the vehicle for this experiment. McCaffery and Nichol released *Rational Geomancy: The Kids of the Book-Machine*.

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[60] The significance of "typestracts," specifically, to dirty concrete poetry is highlighted in the coda at the end of this chapter.

In this text, McCaffery mentions his extended techniques for the typewriter and how this manifested in *Carnival*: "on one level at least, [it] developed into an exploration of technologic tension—that's to say how far you can push and extend the capabilities of textual-textural mechanics" (*RG* 141).[61]

Readability, reading practices, syntax, and rhetoric are all critical concerns raised by McCaffery's *Carnival*. Through technology—the typewriter—McCaffery's *Carnival* also is an exploration in imaginative process, the actualization of the writing craft, action, and creation.[62] Semantic meaning is the procedure and labour of writing as well as the medium used to communicate that message. McCaffery is training his readers to read in an entirely new way. He presents a how-to guide to reading. These works are not attempting to annihilate semantic significance, yet they subvert normative reading practices and sounding. Viewing and reading are both simultaneous possibilities for receiving McCaffery's *Carnival*, and in this nexus of possibility for encountering the text, semantic meaning becomes bound up in the process of

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[61] In *Reading Writing Interfaces*, Emerson goes into great depth in her explanation of the use, immediate effect, and long-term impact of the typewriter and the concrete poets that "hacked" it.
[62] A relevant (and even more contemporary) example of innovative typewriter poetry is Dani Spinosa's *OO: Typewriter Poems* (2020). She begins her introduction to this collection by explaining that "it is an academic truism that the avant-garde has been dominated not simply by men but by a masculinist set of ideals" (9). (One need only look to Olson's manifesto on Projective Verse to see the veracity of Spinosa's claim.) Spinosa advocates for a literature that is built on sharing, and her recent collection aims to move poetic discourse in that direction, even revealing these elements already embedded in extant works of poetry: "So, hidden in the vanguardism of the avant-garde is a deeply communal, feminist poetics of derivation, homage, and love. My poems in this collection work to bring this feminist, communal poetics to the fore of the visual poem through the merger of the analogue technology of the typewriter and digital intervention" (9). Spinosa's collection demonstrates the relevance and urgency of typewriter poems even (and perhaps especially) in a digital age. The typewriter was an innovative technology in its time, ushering in new understandings of media and messaging. Today, this analogue technology still has the power to move poetic discourse forward and question the human relationship with / to technology, with Spinosa's *OO: Typewriter Poems* as one example. Chapter 4 returns to this analogue / digital interrelation with Schmaltz's *Surfaces.*

writing and the method of its creation.

Carnival's tension between "reading" and "viewing" raises questions about the role of the reader in their relationship to poetry and orality. McCaffery embraces these challenges for reading and interpretation. In his statement describing *Carnival* for *Poetry Plastique*, he identifies the deliberate troubling of viewing and sounding: "*Carnival* deliberately problematizes the simple distinction between seeing and reading and offers itself for both distant viewing and close reading—a double dimension and important double possibility. Moreover, it requires a performative gesture on the reader's part." (*PL* 70). At this point in the statement, McCaffery is referring specifically to the gesture of destruction of "the book" for the creation of "the panel." I would argue further that the reader must push beyond this transformative act of creating the panel—the reader must sound and analyze the poem. Instead of only viewing it (which offers its own advantages), a close reading encourages a sounding and, as McCaffery has said, demonstrates a double dimension to the work that should not go unperformed.

Insound in CARNIVAL

When in-sounding McCaffery's *Carnival*, the reader is immediately confronted with complexities not found in the clean concrete of Gomringer. The first question in the method considers the poetic material: whether it is linguistic or non-linguistic. In the case of *Carnival* (second panel), both linguistic and non-linguistic material confronts the reader. (For examples of page 10 and page 11 of the published version of *Carnival*'s second panel, see figures 29 and 30, respectively.) The second question asks: is it recognizable material? To an English speaker, some of the content is recognizable and employs the formalized system of the English language. A significant amount of material is non-linguistic, however, including stamping, ribboning, xerox

effects, and overlaying of material that defies recognition. Although there is no obvious formalized system for this non-linguistic material, it seems that there is a contrast between the traditionally readable material and the flummoxing non-linguistic material.

Figure 29. *Carnival*, second panel, page 10. Steve McCaffery, Coach House Books, 1977, web.archive.org/web/20010517111706im_/http://www.chbooks.com/online/carnival/images/2_10.gif.

Figure 30. *Carnival*, second panel, page 11. Steve McCaffery, Coach House Books, 1977, web.archive.org/web/20010517111706im_/http://www.chbooks.com/online/carnival/images/2_11.gif.

There are no sonic indicators for these non-linguistic elements. Moreover, this distinction of non / linguistic is further blurred when the linguistic material becomes so layered that it constitutes a non-linguistic blot / block of ink (i.e., McCaffery's "change of address" stamp); these textual palimpsests further trouble any normative process of sounding. Possibilities of sounding this material will be discussed in greater length in the Unsound section. For in-sounding this work, the linguistic material is available for an involuntary in-sounding, but the work, as a whole, forces the reader to realize that not everything can be sounded in an expected way. This means that inevitably the reader is compelled to in-sound the text voluntarily. This tension between the linguistic and non-linguistic entices the reader by presenting recognizable content—allowing the reader to in-sound it—while simultaneously pulling their attention visually to aspects of the text that cannot be sounded traditionally. The reader must seek innovative ways to read and interpret the non-linguistic elements as well as the linguistic that become illegible in the abundant layering.

The second panel of McCaffery's *Carnival* plays aggressively with the interaction between this linguistic and non-linguistic material. McMahon argues that McCaffery foregrounds the visuality in his *oeuvre*, describing his works as "a model that allows for an overlapping of the architectural and spatial elements handed down from the international concrete movement and a foregrounding of linguistic materials against the specifically polemical backdrop of Language poetry's critique of capitalist ideology. In other words, it is a combination of the desire to place visualization at the forefront of poetry and the drive to take apart the myth of direct communication" (137). Although I concur with McMahon that McCaffery is dismantling "direct communication," the foregrounding of visuality is only one factor that performs this task in *Carnival*. Another significant element is the co-existence and non-

privileging of linguistic or non-linguistic content that sounds the breakdown of direct communication. Neither linguistic nor non-linguistic content is privileged over the other; instead, both types are intended to be read / viewed in the same piece. This dimensionality causes the reader to recognize that even linguistic content is not as "readable" and "soundable" as an initial glance may suggest—especially when these linguistic elements turn into a type of visual noise. Both types of text in *Carnival*'s second panel challenge any expected notions of traditional sounding, which is demonstrated acutely in examining the arrangement of the material.

Carnival has words, but the phoneme is the hallmark of this work. Graphemes appear on their own or doubled / tripled / layered upon one another. Some graphemes, in repetition, form the shape of another grapheme (like the "A"s on page 11 formed by other letters). Phonemes are removed from syntactical context, which makes it difficult to know for certain how to sound these individual graphemes. Even the non-linguistic content forms graphemes or other letters, suggesting that non-linguistic content can be both linguistic (in the context of its arrangement) and non-linguistic. This technique, interestingly, highlights what readers too often take for granted: that visual markings (a dot / a line) in isolation can be non-linguistic but in the context of bending in different directions or in specific shapes, they take the form of linguistic content. This suggests that there are elements that refuse a singular categorization of visual or sonic. Instead, these elements flicker between the categories of linguistic and non-linguistic, which further defy sounding processes and can stall involuntary in-sounding. Readers can recognize this blurring of "linguistic" distinction in their voluntary in-sounding, but such elements pose complications in out-sounding and interpretation.

Carnival is not arranged by the traditional poetic line; instead, this work spans, swirls, and stomps across the pages of the panel. There is no clear starting point; it can begin and end at

any point. Non-linguistic elements of the text often attract the eye. But when the reader's eye is directed to these parts of the text, there is an invitation to read and sound these elements. Similar to Gomringer's inversion—changing the direction of reading / perception in poetry—McCaffery similarly (but much more radically) disrupts a Western, normative reading practice of left-right, top-down. Instead, words are repeated, sometimes as a palimpsest, layered atop of one another. Letters (graphemes) repeat, sometimes forming recognizable words. Non-linguistic elements also are stamped or outline linguistic material. The arrangement of the text as a whole compels the reader to consider the boundaries of sound and the semantic meaning that may be severed from it. McMahon notes that McCaffery's essay "The Death of the Subject" (1976) was foundational in its explicit association of "language centred" poets with aims to challenge "the socially contrived basis of any writing" (McMahon 135). For McCaffery, this "means advocating a change affecting our sense of reader and writer. By upsetting their socially defined functions of producer and consumer, the goal is to have the writer and reader participate simultaneously in an empirical experience giving prominence to the signifier" (McMahon 135). *Carnival* invites the reader to assemble the panel (to be the arranger) and also to perform the work. An involuntary in-sounding is necessarily disrupted, but a voluntary one causes the reader to re-evaluate the distinctions between linguistic and non-linguistic material by recognizing that both can be elements of the other. That is, linguistic material can be overstamped / layered to become non-linguistic, and non-linguistic material can form linguistic material by its shaping. This deeply affects the reader's voluntary in-sounding because both types of material must be sounded in untraditional ways. Created through layering linguistic content or the use of non-linguistic material, the illegible text challenges readers in their attempts at in-sounding; one could argue this process stalls at the lack of sonic indicators. Instead, this sounding moves into the realm of

un-sounding. It forces the reader to re-evaluate the limits of reading and sounding when encountering a work of visual poetry like *Carnival*. Moreover, the space overlaps—"masks"—the text in *Carnival*. When readers in-sound the text, they must attend to the great swaths of unsound—they are forced to confront the space that is featured so prominently in the text. But before attending to unsound, the method suggests an examination of how *Carnival*'s in-sounding(s) influences its out-sounding(s).

Outsound in CARNIVAL

How do *Carnival*'s material and arrangement facilitate an out-sounding? This question begins the method of out-sounding a page-based poem, but the answer (especially for *Carnival*) is anything but straightforward. As previously mentioned, distinctions between linguistic and non-linguistic material are blurred in *Carnival*. Consequently, linguistic material (i.e., the whole words and individual phonemes in *Carnival*) can be out-sounded normatively, but some linguistic material is so layered that it becomes illegible—subverting an out-sounding. Non-linguistic material may initially seem unsoundable, but shapes and movement can create sounds—and these sounds may be pops, crackles, whirrs.

If *Carnival* were out-sounded, what would it sound like? In terms of tempo, the *mise-en-page* and space can generate multitudinous out-soundings. There is no formalized punctuation to connote rests or suggest a predominant rhythm. Although there are words, these come in sections surrounded by clouds of graphemes. There is no discernible, continuous beat or meter to this work. Graphemes and the page's "white" space bend and flow like wisps of steam or thick swirls of fog. Steam and fog are anything but static; however, the panel poem is fixed. Out-sounding *Carnival* reveals the work's temporality. In attempting to perform the poem, the reader must first

observe and assess the material and its arrangement; in so doing, the reader is compelled to decide how this text and space translate into an oral realm. The act of rendering the page into perceivable sound—out-sounding it—forces this once frozen text to be heard in the air; the text becomes subject to the constructs of time. Sound is subject to decay over time, and an oral performance is transient (aside from recordings, of course). But the reader experiences the poem bodily as they read it; sound reverberates through their physical form. The performer's body physically produces those sounds employing many organs and systems to do so. Furthermore, an out-sounding drives readers to choose at least one pathway and sound their way through it. The out-sounder needs to make strategic decisions as to where to start in the piece, how to inflect / project their voice, and when to accent elements of the text. In addition to the temporality of the piece made oral / aural by the reader, the reader also displays aspects of the embodied experience and the performance decisions required to out-sound it.

Carnival is filled with cues for the qualitative considerations of out-sounding. There are various fonts, sizes, colours, typographical emphases, and unexpected elements. Although the reader has only one voice in and of themselves, they can perhaps question if different aspects of the text suggest different voicings. Are the red sections out-sounded differently from the black? Does this piece require more than one reader? In the full-colour edition of the Second Panel (still available online), there are many colours across the pages; should there be many performers, or should the reader learn to do many voices? Changes in colour suggest different timbres, almost like different instruments performed across the work as a whole. Typographical size and emphasis suggest there are many analogous pitch changes and volume fluctuations. Non-linguistic elements in the work prominently feature as accents to the piece. These could be performed as noise or blocks of sound. Such textual moments of non-linguistic material (and

linguistic content rendered illegible), however, leave the reader in a certain state of uncertainty as normative reading practices are subverted. The out-sounding of this material is provisional, and it is difficult to determine the contextual nature of how any sounding could (or should) produce meaning. As much as readers might want to gloss over these elements or even ignore a text like *Carnival* due to its troubling of context and meaning, these moments of linguistic ambiguity mirror the same ambivalence in all aspects of communication.

Out-sounding of *Carnival* reveals its complexity because one reader performing one out-sounding cannot possibly capture all of its elements. An out-sounding also further highlights the divide between linguistic and semantic context. Parts of *Carnival* can be out-sounded as a sequence of recognizable sounds which form words, but other sections, when out-sounded, would be a series of graphemes removed from their phonemic context—seemingly devoid of semantic significance. That being said, when *Carnival* is removed from the page in an out-sounding, the listener cannot perceive the visual shape of that material—they could not hear how individual graphemes come to form an "A." There is significance in its visuality that is lost in a singular out-sounding of *Carnival*. A listener cannot perceive the movement of the material or the shapes of the silences.

Certain elements of the text are unperformable in an out-sounding; however, an oral performance of *Carnival* is still very important. Recordings of McCaffery performing the work are available.[63] McCaffery's out-soundings of *Carnival* are filled with sonic effects that do not aurally function as phonemic sounds; that is, many of his sounds are non-linguistic. His out-

[63] PennSound has a recording of each of the panels as well as the 1995 *LINEBreak* interview with Charles Bernstein previously cited: writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/McCaffery.php. There is also a video on YouTube of McCaffery performing a section of *Carnival*, which is titled as Instal. 9 (perhaps page 9?) but it is not clear if it is the first or second panel: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5sB_YvvSS4.

soundings offer aural experiences that run the gamut of recognizable linguistic sounds to pops, cracks, clicks, whistles, grunts, whines, taps, etc.[64] These recordings are valuable because they demonstrate the flexibility and range of the human voice to out-sound (at least one way through) *Carnival*. One element to note, however, in the YouTube video of McCaffery reading *Carnival*: there is very little silence or gaps in time during which there is no out-sounding. This is something that I find peculiar considering the enormous maps of space where there is no visual sound on the page. Although I have not calculated the ratio of silences to sounds in the YouTube video or the second panel recording of *Carnival* on the PennSound site (I am not sure exactly how this could be calculated considering the sheer lack of sound's absence), both pieces feature more sound aurally than is presented visually. This fact raises a question to which I am not sure there is an answer: why does McCaffery not allow for greater silences than a second or two (like halfway through the PennSound recording of the second panel)? It is not as if it is impossible to capture unsounding in a recording (as Cage's *4'33"* illustrates). Taking into consideration these are only excerpts of longer performances, I still feel compelled to ask: where is the unsound in McCaffery's recording(s)?

Unsound in CARNIVAL

One of the most prominent forms of unsound in McCaffery's *Carnival* is his "mapping" of the page, especially in his concept of "masks." In a 1987 issue of *Open Letter*, Nichol published his interview with McCaffery entitled "The Annotated, Anecdoted, Beginnings of a Critical Checklist of the Published Works of Steve McCaffery." In their discussion of *Carnival*,

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[64] One wonders if some of these sounds are out-sounded punctuation. See Victor Borge outlining "Phonetic Punctuation": www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qf_TDuhk3No.

McCaffery addresses his use of space, mapping, and "masks." McCaffery says that "*Carnival* was essentially a cartographic project; a repudiation of linearity in writing and the search for an alternative syntax in 'mapping.' The writing, in most cases, was a spontaneous emission into the space set up by the mask for writing" (*OP* 72). Similar to the clean concrete poets seeking to find a specific form for the expression of their experience, McCaffery seeks an alternative syntax and finds it in "mapping." McCaffery considers the entire page when he creates *Carnival*. He spans masks across the pages that he feeds into the typewriter: "the writing commences on the mask, moves over onto the undersheet, then back onto the mask. The mask is then removed and thrown away. This leaves a broken fragmented text" (*OP* 73). The undersheet is the consequent page that later in assemblage creates a panel. This use of masks gives the poem a collage effect as if the space were pasted on the page, and this collage effect in McCaffery's masking is what creates a tension between the positive and negative space, blurring the distinction.

In this explanation offered by McCaffery, the space acts upon the text: "It's important to remember that the mask excludes and deletes much of the written text. What results are deliberately induced fragments, parts of inscription whose terminations and commencements are not determined by a writing subject or a logical intention but by a material, random intervention" (*OP* 72–3). McCaffery emphasizes his approach of randomized intervention at many points throughout his interview with Nichol and suggests that his cartographic project puts much less emphasis on textual material: "there was no overall view of the shape or content. As a mask bled off a page I would devise another shape that picked up the bleed of the text at the margin. The actual content of the writing embarrasses me. It was incredibly naïve and I've always downplayed the text" (*OP* 72). The text, in terms of content, is secondary to space for McCaffery. This is a significant distinction between McCaffery's *Carnival* and the clean

concrete writers who put such an emphasis on their textual materials. McCaffery sets materiality and visuality in an interplay—deprioritizing the traditional hierarchy of the text over space. Furthermore, he draws attention to the unsounds and suggests these sonic "absences" are just as significant as the text in the work as a whole. McCaffery elucidates the metaphorical significance of masks (and, by extension, unsounds) when he observes, "perhaps the ultimate mask is ideology, that force that produces truth and yet refuses to appear itself" (*OP* 73). In *Carnival*, physical masks were removed that left the text fractured. These masks are invisible, but their effects remain. Given that McCaffery disrupts the privileging of sound over unsound, ought the negative space become co-subject with the text? Interestingly, these masks do not appear in McCaffery's out-soundings, which is baffling considering the attention McCaffery gives to space across the panel. Perhaps these unsounds cannot be fully represented in oral performance. That being said, any performance (in-sounding or out-sounding) should account for these unsounds. In *Carnival*, these unsounds subvert the text and suggest that meaning(s) can be found beyond the graphemes.

Notes on (Visual) Noise: Both Sound and Unsound

Gomringer's "silencio" raises no question of readability or legibility. McCaffery's *Carnival*, by contrast, has readable text, non-linguistic content, and linguistic material so obscured it enters the realm of "visual noise." Mentioned briefly in the introduction to dirty concrete, "visual noise" is a term used to refer to textual elements that challenge readability due to being layered, over-stamped, or obscured. Visual noise is both sound and also unsound. Clouds of letters and other textual features (such as stamps, etc.) could be out-sounded as layered voices—a cacophony of simultaneous sound. Instances where the textual elements are obscured

to the point of illegibility or become a block of black ink are when the noise becomes unsound; there is no established way to sound out such elements orally. Instead, the reader takes on the active role of un-sounding the text—working through the sonic elements (or lack thereof) and seeking to interpret these textual moments of visual noise. Craig Dworkin theorizes the aesthetic and political ramifications of such challenging text in *Reading the Illegible* (2003). Engaging with the creative work of Susan Howe, Dworkin discusses how she "foregrounds both the data and the channel of their transmission. Moreover, by referencing the page and the book through particularly restive and disruptive means, Howe also signals the noise in that channel" (*RI* 44). With self-reflexive determination, Howe's work draws attention to its materiality as a vehicle of (and integral to) such communication while emphasizing noise as an element in that transmission. Dworkin specifies: "As Howe understands, stationery—the pen, the ink, the paper—… it is always 'static': that is, the 'noise' in the channel of poetry'" (*RI* 44). The materiality of the poem is a form of sound, according to Howe. Dworkin addresses how noise itself becomes inextricably linked with the communication: "By explicitly making the noise in the channel and the noise of the channel itself into data—that is, making them a part of the message" (*RI* 48). This transmission always includes noise—a static—similar to Cage's argument of the non-existence of silence (referenced in Chapter 1). The theories of noise, generally, can be extended and applied to these textual instances of "visual noise."

The identification and purposes of noise are explored by many critics including Dworkin. David Novak argues that noise "is not really a kind of sound but a metadiscourse of sound and its social interpretations" (126). In effect, Novak proposes that noise is the mediation of unstructured sound and its reception. In "Floating the Social: An Electronic Art of Noise" (2012), Brian Massumi contributes to the debate by suggesting that noise is the opposite of a

signal: noise "comes at the signal from outside its structure and disrupts it" (45). When speaking about sound and the concept of noise enters the discussion, suddenly the conversation shifts to what is appropriate or what is disruptive: "noise is conventionally apprehended, in social terms, as an irritant" (Goddard, et al., 1). But beyond discourse, signals, and irritants, what is the significance of noise? In *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (1999), Douglas Kahn answers emphatically: "Noises are too significant to be noises. We know they are noises in the first place because they exist where they shouldn't or they don't make sense where they should" (21). Once again, Kahn's assertion demonstrates the relational and also valuated definition of noise. "Noise is a productive term of many other dialectical binaries of aurality," as Novak suggests, "each of which outlines a different field of social knowledge. But as a discrete subject in itself, noise resists interpretation" (126). Even as a discrete subject, as Novak notes, noise is multivalent—resisting singular interpretation.

McCaffery's *Carnival* is filled with visual noise that is ambiguous in its meaning(s). One such example is found in figure 29, in the convergence of the typed "oooo"s, the partially obscured "[illegible] CHANGE REQUIRED ON CHEQUES" stamped in a circle, the larger F stamp, and trails of M stamps. These once-legible textual elements are layered so completely that the text becomes unreadable at the centre of the circle.[65] This brief textual moment cannot be in-sounded in its entirety, especially since the overstamping creates a visual core of noise. In an attempt to un-sound this moment in *Carnival*, the reader would seek to interpret the

[65] Textual incidents like this circle share a likeness with McCaffery's *The Broken Mandala*, especially since this "circle" in *Carnival* is not perfect—seeming to have perforations, stamps of Fs, and trails of Ms emanating from it. *The Broken Mandala* is another dirty concrete work with visual similarity to *Carnival*. When discussing the *TBM* collection with Nichol for *Open Letter*, McCaffery said that he had "discarded image, description" and instead "begun to focus on language almost as paint, a pure graphic substance" (*OP* 86).

significance(s) of this textual pseudo-palimpsest. By noting the symbol of the circle and its obscured centre, one could argue that McCaffery is gesturing toward Derrida's critique of logocentrism[66] (and Saussure's "phonocentrism"). Derrida contests Saussure's notion that the spoken word should be privileged over the written; instead, Derrida opposes such binary oppositions and argues against the "presence" and authority of the speaker. Derrida problematizes the very idea of "presence" and centrality by suggesting that even the centre has elements of "absence." As such, even the notion of "presence" is incomplete and subject to erasure. These theoretical concerns relate to the example of visual noise from *Carnival* because the *centre* of this McCaffery's circle is both presence (of sound) and simultaneously an absence (unsound) where the noise obscures meaning. In this interpretation, *Carnival*'s circle of visual noise could be suggesting that there is no defined centre of signification in *Carnival* (and this could even extend beyond the text). Although a singular meaning may be elusive, Dworkin insists that readers recognize visual noise as a realm of signification: "Indeed, even when eliminating lexical meanings altogether—as in an unintelligible palimpsest—the visual surface of the black ink on the white page still operates in a space of difference. The material text cannot ever completely escape from the republic of signification" (48).

To describe the multivalence of noise, Novak uses the metaphor of the hub of a wheel with differences radiating in many directions. The spokes of the wheel suggest contrasting, even oppositional elements. Novak argues against the notion of separate or independent trajectories; instead, the hub suggests a centrality of noise's manifestations—a shared point of connection of each of the individual elements. Novak argues that the spokes, especially, must be examined:

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[66] Logocentrism is the "centrality of the word." Deconstructionists such as Derrida argue against such centrality.

"But without attention to its specific manifestations, noise can only reinforce the structuralism of cultural binaries" (133). This is where "noise" as a term becomes a necessarily political one.[67] Sound welcome; noise need not apply. The language used to describe noise is similarly bound up in racialized language and codification. When individuals make value judgements in order to determine "good" and "bad" sounds, the classifications of each category are often tinged with the connotations of deeply-held racial biases. Novak's description of noise highlights this linguistic encoding: "The closest thing to a quantifiable form of noise is the abstraction of 'white noise,' in which all sound frequencies are present at the same time, at the same volume, across the vibrational spectrum (Kosko 2006). But in practice, noise is always 'colored,' filtered, limited, and changed by contexts of production and reception" (126). White noise is depicted as banal, ever-present, and, at times, annoying. When intentionally used for a singular purpose, however, white noise is considered a therapy for stress and insomnia; that is, white noise can be used for an active good—it can serve a sonically positive purpose. And while "white noise" often is gradated in terminology to refer to different frequencies,[68] noise that is "bad" does not share the same veneration of the term "white." This is because the dominant, normative audience is often the group with the power to determine the demarcations between allowable and unallowable sounds.[69] In *Carnival*, McCaffery sets up readable text in direct relationship to the illegible, but he does not seem to privilege one over the other—both appear in roughly equal amounts.

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[67] Among the many other texts referenced, Craig Dworkin's *Reading the Illegible* and Jacques Attali's *Noise* are the most focused on the politics of noise.
[68] Colour-situated adjectives applied to "noise" are describe the level of bass or frequency of the tones. "Pink noise," "brown noise" (also called "red noise"), and "black noise" are other terms. "Black noise" refers to the removal of sound to the degree of approximating silence.
[69] For example, English literature has been primarily canonized by white Western European males.

In choosing to include (but not privilege) visual noise, McCaffery demonstrates how subversive texts can co-exist with and also trouble normative poetic content. Novak observes that noise "becomes the discursive borderline that separates one kind of person, or sound, or place absolutely from another and ultimately reduces all of the 'noncultural' elements that cannot be folded into normative systems of meaning" (133). This is precisely the overwhelming challenge of addressing noise. Without attention to detail, complexity, and nuance, noise becomes a catch-all for non-normativity and deviancy. Or, worse, as Dworkin warns; the "noise" may be reduced in interpretation: "There is a strong temptation to recuperate the resisting and unsettling potential of 'noise' as a 'message' which can be absorbed into the very code it challenges, so that it can then be safely consumed by traditional hermeneutic strategies as simply another part of the message's 'meaning.'" (49) But noise can be subversive and, as a result, it is political. In this dissertation, noise is a political term, a term of valuation of various iterations of insound, outsound, and unsound (for those textual elements that are un-soundable). Throughout his discussion, Novak divides his critical considerations of noise into three broad categories: aesthetic, technological, and circulatory (dealing with social aspects of sound circulation). In my estimation and for the purposes of this dissertation, I argue that the overlap of Novak's categories is the *politics* that bind each element together. Other theorists identify similar overlaps among aesthetics, technological advancements, and societal circulation; some critics address the politics more deliberately than others.[70] In *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977), Jacques Attali

[70] *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977) illuminates the power of noise within the realm of music. Attali argues that musical development is inextricably linked to its modes of production. For Attali, technological advancements incite the various cultural revolutions in music. Attali codes noise as unwanted, primitive, and outside an aesthetic experience. Noise, technology, and society are inextricably linked, he argues; noise is that transformative power that effects technology and the modes of production.

argues: "Listening to music is listening to all noise, realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that is essentially political" (6). Moreover, Attali explains that noise is a disrupter that prevents clear communication: "noise is the term for a signal that interferes with the reception of a message by a receiver, even if the interfering signal itself has a meaning for that receiver" (27). Dworkin emphasizes this negative characterization and explains how noise is like an infection: "This chapter—indeed this entire book—is itself a prime example of the way in which noises get accepted into the system, get inside us, become, in short, *les parasites*: infecting, spreading, and disabling, but also structuring, adapting, mutating, mimicking, colonizing" (*RI* 49). Dworkin closes his chapter with an ominous invocation to the reader: "Listen carefully" (*RI* 49). But "listening" to noise—un-sounding it in a work of visual poetry—is not a straight-forward process. Readers need to assess the material of the poem judiciously and ardently; such efforts still result in multitudinous interpretations.

There is great power in enacting visual noise, as evidenced in McCaffery's *Carnival*. Noise and subjectivity, Novak suggests, are also interconnected: "Noise is a powerful antisubject of culture, raising essential questions about the staging of human expression, socialization, individual subjectivity, and political control" (133). As an anti-subject, as Novak describes, there is a great deal of power inherent in noise and its nonconformity. Yet it can also be harnessed and used as an instrument in and of itself. There are a number of authors who address the effects of noise and sound within the realms of human expression, socialization, individual subjectivity, and political control. David Toop's *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener* (2010) explores the uncanniness of sound and its haunting: "a ghost, a presence whose location in space is ambiguous and whose existence in time is transitory" (xv). Sound and noise function across many art forms; he elucidates that sound is "a metaphor for mystical revelation, instability,

forbidden desires, disorder, formlessness, the supernatural, for the breaking of social taboos, the unknown, unconscious and extra-human" (Toop xv). By addressing the eerie effects of sound and noise upon a listener, Toop investigates how the interpretation of such sounds affects human expression and socialization.[71] The visual noise in McCaffery's *Carnival* does enact a hypnotic social control, in my estimation; but such challenging textual material questions the binaries of order / disorder, structure / formlessness, and masking / revelation. Un-sounding *Carnival* forces a reader to come to terms with a language that is resistant and, at times, intractable. This process of working through a text that challenges sounding can often be a painful one because this compels the reader to dive even deeper in order to perceive the communication of such a difficult poem.

One possible effect of (in-, out-, and un-)sounding *Carnival* is the breaking down of the divide between reader and text. Shelley Trower's *Senses of Vibration: The Pleasure and Pain of Sound* (2012) demonstrates the hazy divide between pleasurable and painful sounds; those sounds can often be one and the same, passing from one designation to another through increases in volume or intensity. Trower's most compelling argument focuses on how vibrations break down barriers between subject and object: "In this scenario the distinction between object and subject, or between world and self, again totally collapses. Objects in the external world vibrate the sensitive self, the very sensitivity of whom in the form of vibrations radiates outwards, as the sound of an instrument, to become part of that world" (11). This two-way process of vibrational

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[71] To question the role of noise in defining subjectivity and political control, Steve Goodman's *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (2010) opens with the vivid example of sonic booms (sound bombs) being deployed on the Gaza Strip in November 2005. Sound and noise can be used as instruments by those in power to terrify and subjugate entire groups of people. Goodman "outlines the acoustic violence of vibration and the trembling of temperaments" (xiv), showing that noise can be used for many purposes—not all ethically sound.

effects, she explains, completely disrupt a sense of individual subjectivity.[72] An example of this disruption of individual subjectivity through noise is the text rendered illegible in figure 30. The "CHANGE OF ADDRESS" stamp in repetition layered with other textual elements creates a visual representation of an eye. *Carnival*, rife with word play, presents a visual image that also could be read as a rebus. This "eye" is also an "I." The fractured material repeating on itself reflects the fragmented self—especially as the concepts of physical space and domesticity ("CHANGE OF ADDRESS") are also contested. This distinction between subject and object is further broken down as a reader sounds *Carnival*'s material. The processes of in-sounding and out-sounding *Carnival* cause the reader to take the text within themselves. Out-sounding allows for the text to be expelled in the air for a transient moment in time. Moments of visual noise, however, cannot be released from the reader's mind and body through un-sounding. Arguably, the textual instances of visual noise remain within the reader. Dworkin warns that reading the illegible and seeking to interpret it is a dangerous task, and he addresses the reader directly: "you are implicated and complicitous as well; this has been a litmus test, registering the point at which you identified its self-contradictory claims and the disjunction between *what* was being said and *how* it was being said in a text for which the subject of each was in fact the other" (*RI* 49).

Sound, noise, and music are inextricably connected. Attali suggests that music "is a credible metaphor for the real…. It is a herald, *for change is inscribed in noise faster than it transforms society*" (5, my emphasis). Noise is a harbinger of change that is yet to come, and it

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[72] "There is a two-way process, in other words, whereby external vibrations seem to set the matter of the body into a kind of sympathetic vibration; vibrations in the body then radiate outwards into the world beyond, in turn potentially vibrating another sensitive person. This dual movement of 'invasion' and 'escape' is one way in which vibration contributed to anxieties about the permeability of the body, about its lack of fixed, secure borders, while it also played into the fantasy of direct, unmediated communication (a development of Coleridge's late eighteenth-century version)" (Trower 11).

garners its own attention: "since noise is the source of power, power has always listened to it with fascination" (Attali 6). One of the greatest powers of McCaffery's *Carnival* is his use of visual noise to demonstrate the blurred distinctions between legible and illegible text. One categorization of sound so easily becomes the other by matters of degree, intensity, and spatial relationship. This shimmering between linguistic and non-linguistic forms illustrates the transmuting power of visual noise. In *Listening and Voice*, Ihde addresses the change in human perception of noise and how it is transformative:

> It is not merely that the world has suddenly become noisier, or that we can hear farther, or even that sound is somehow demandingly pervasive in a technological culture. It is rather that by living with electronic instruments our experience of listening itself is being transformed, and included in this transformation are the ideas we have about the world and ourselves. (5)

Visual noise in McCaffery's *Carnival* causes readers to question human expression, socialization, signification, subjectivity, and political control. Such deep interrogation causes readers to recalibrate their understanding of distinct entities—recognizing that these borders may be more porous than originally thought. But (in- and out-)sounding the text and actively un-sounding the visual noise effects inner transformation because the reader carries that sound with them even after the reading is done.

Performing and Interpreting the Concrete Poem

Readers' in-sounding, out-sounding, and un-sounding are integral to the meaning(s) of a poem. In Chapter 1, I argue that the poem constitutes a symbiotic relationship between the author, the reader, and the work itself on the page / screen. The author collaborates with the

reader in performing these poems. Meaning is lost if the poem is shut away in a book, because meaning is, in part, shared communication (even if the latter is unclear or indirect). Concrete poets employ an innovative form of poetry that allows for new kinds of understanding and communication. The reader engages in this dialogue by sounding out these challenging poems. In-sounding Gomringer's "silencio" seems straight-forward, initially, since the poem is neatly organized and the text is accessible—even translations in multiple languages are available. Through Gomringer's technique of "inversion," the text can be in-sounded in different reading directions, yielding the same pattern of sounds. By contrast, in-sounding McCaffery's *Carnival* is a significant challenge because the involuntary in-sounding is stalled by the material's complexity and arrangement. Gomringer's "silencio" can be read normatively while still allowing alternative reading trajectories, whereas *Carnival* has no clear starting point for in-sounding. Furthermore, the arrangement of *Carnival* at the level of the word (broken down to fragments and graphemes), in addition to its *mise-en-page* as a whole (layering, overstamping, and masking), compels the reader to in-sound this work actively and choose at least one pathway through it. In seeking ways through the text, out-sounding both "silencio" and *Carnival* present challenges. The almost-monotonous appearance of "silencio" provides few cues to the reader for the quality of the out-sounding, but it also allows for a great range of performance decisions because of its playground of possibilities. This poem offers a cognitive dissonance for the reader as they out-sound "silence," but the greater challenge is attending to and interpreting the unsound central to the poem. Where "silencio" has uniformity, *Carnival* has diversity of textures, swirls of space, and visual noise. For the reader, out-sounding *Carnival* produces a series of fragmented sounds (and McCaffery's recording evidences this cacophony). But, as previously discussed, these sounds carry their own commentary on signification in poetry. Both "silencio" and

Carnival shine in their unsound. Gomringer's "silencio" presents an absence (though not a literal silence) at the centre of its text. This unsound is, in fact, similar to *Carnival*'s visual noise in which the material is so layered that it becomes illegible patches of ink. In un-sounding these poems, the reader seeks signification in the absences that are not silent and the noises that are not signifying singular meaning. Both poems question the notion of binaries of sound and silence and suggest that these concepts are not so easily separated. Also, each of these poems emphasizes the role of the reader as a performer—navigating their way through the text and being guided by its qualitative features and temporal suggestions. Each textual performance is necessarily a different iteration; one sounding can never be replicated. And in each sounding, the reader carries the material within them and is changed by that text.

In *The Alphabet Game*, Nichol observes that "traditional poetry is only one of the means by which to reach out and touch the other" (*AG* 142). Innovative concrete poems are activist works that challenge form and process by seeking new sounds and challenging orality. Concrete poets still need readers to sound these works, either in the mind through in-sounding or by means of out-sounding. Nichol insists that poetry is a means to connect with, communicate with, and "touch the other," and "the other is emerging as the necessary prerequisite for dialogues with the self that clarify the soul & heart and deepen the ability to love. I place myself there, with them, whoever they are, wherever they are, who seek to reach themselves and the other thru the poem by as many exits and entrances as are possible" (*AG* 142). Poems such as Gomringer's "silencio" and McCaffery's Carnival await readers / viewers / performers that try to find those entrances and exits—who desire to reinvigorate the temporality of creative works and who challenge their own expectations of reading. Operating in a similar political context as "silencio," *Carnival* subverts typical, mediated, governed, controlled sounding and reading processes. The politics of

poetic construction and sounding are further complicated in Chapter 3 with the examination of Erasure poetry: a form defined by its titular act of aesthetic erasure to combat political silencing. Moreover, erasure poetry reveals nuanced power relations in the act(s) of privately or publicly out-sounding such works, which causes readers to interrogate their own positionality in relation to the textual material and its multifaceted implications.

Chapter 3 – Fragmentation, Reappropriation, and Amplification: (Un)Sounds in Erasure Poetry

This third chapter turns to the identification and operation of sound in specific exemplars of erasure poetry to demonstrate a novel function of un-sounding: the un-sounded portions recontextualize the sounded text and call for readers to re-engage with the newly created poetry in recognizing the poem's intertextual tensions and the resultant effects on interpretation(s). In her essay "On Erasure" (2020), Cecily Parks elucidates the tensions inherent in the poetry that reorients the reader to sound and "silences" in a different way than concrete poetry or other visual verse. "Other poets who practice erasure must feel this conflict between destruction and creation, too—" Parks argues, "a conflict implicit, and implicitly resolved, in their explanations of process, places in their projects where they can, freed from the semantic constraints of erasure, articulate their relationship to their source text and explain why they've decomposed it." The substantial field of visual poetics is often characterized as being dominated by men, the majority of whom are white. As Parks's essay emphasizes, although many purveyors of visually-oriented poems have historically been men, there have also been significant female authors revolutionizing visual writing and its reception. Also, BIPOC writers (across the gender spectrum) have been producing compelling and challenging page-based poems that call for a new understanding of sound within such works. Erasure poetry, in particular, is a form of visually-oriented poetry that causes readers and critics to question the role of sound and what it may mean to unsound a text.

This chapter begins by demonstrating how erasure poetry is often overlooked and even excluded from recent literary dictionaries. After defining this form, I discuss several female writers who have been crucial in the development of erasure poetry. Then, I apply my method to

two works: M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008) and Jordan Abel's *The Place of Scraps* (2013). These two authors from marginalized communities employ aesthetic erasure in response to political erasure. Both Philip (a female-identifying Black Canadian-Caribbean poet) and Abel (a queer male-identifying Nisga'a First Nation poet) have lived experiences that are very different from my own. Recognizing my positionality, I will be referencing what they have written and said regarding their lives and their works in order not to misrepresent them. Both *Zong!* and *The Place of Scraps* use fragmentation and reappropriation to call for the amplification of voices that were once silenced; these poems unsound portions of the texts to reveal innovative and astounding sonic readings. As I will demonstrate, sound and (un)sounding erasure poems reveal and challenge systemic biases against women and people of colour, suggesting that sound and sounding can be powerful tools for amplifying once-marginalized voices. Such sounding demonstrates that marginalized voices, once thought to be silenced, have been sounding all along. Analyses of these erasure poems demonstrate the efficacy of sounding and un-sounding a text.

Defining Erasure Poetry

Before diving into definitions, I would like to clarify the distinction between "erasure" as a politicized oppression versus an aesthetic act. Fundamentally, this chapter discusses power relations in two different exercises of power in distinct contexts. Aesthetic "erasure" is a creative act that is most often ironic (although sometimes laced with satire). This dialogic act is one that juxtaposes past with present and recontextualizes temporal constructs in the process. Erasure poetry, specifically, involves fragmentation and amplification in its process. Political "erasure," by contrast, is a matter of destruction rather than creation. Founded on entrenched inequities,

political erasure employs practices of marginalization, disempowerment, and dehumanization. Erasure poetry, as a form, can engage aesthetic acts of erasure for the purposes of critiquing and dismantling widespread political erasure.

Ironically, erasure, as a specific form of poetry, is absent from many literary dictionaries, yet critics such as Travis Macdonald, Edward Hirsch, and Cecily Parks have purposefully drawn attention to it. In *Jacket Magazine*'s 38th issue, Macdonald offers "A Brief History of Erasure Poetics" (2009) and explores the origins of erasure as a literary form. Reduction is foundational, he argues: "Over the past fifty years, spurred in no small part by similar gestures in the visual arts (see Robert Rauschenberg's 'Erased de Kooning Drawing') a new form of reductive poetics has emerged, concerning itself with the deliberate removal (or covering over) of words on the page rather than their traditionally direct application thereto" (6–7). I will return to Macdonald's comments about the inspirations for the erasure poetry movement and its origins when I address the most prominent practitioners of erasure.

In *The Essential Poet's Glossary* (2017), Hirsch reiterates that erasure "is a poetics of reduction and removal, of meaningful fragmentation" (104) and distinguishes it as a form of "found poetry"[73] that "operates by selectively erasing words from a text that already exists. Using appropriation as a poetic tool, writers have found many ways in recent years to cut away at

[73] "Found poetry" applies to texts that are "borrowed": "a piece of writing that takes an existing text and presents it as a poem. Something that was never intended to be a poem—a newspaper article, a street sign, a letter, a scrap of conversation—is refashioned as a poem, often through lineation. The found poem works by changing the concept in a piece of writing, by distorting and appropriating its original intent" (Hirsch 115). Similar to a found poem, an erasure poem decontextualizes and recontextualizes source material. Instead of merely shifting the context of an already published work to a poetic one, erasure goes further by using means of deletion / obscuration / redaction / reduction to create the new content *and* shift its context. Ironically, the processes of erasure are additive to the work's interpretation as further intertextual resonances (between the source and new poem) are revealed in the recontextualization.

precursor works. They have deleted, crossed out, blacked out, redacted, and drawn over the words" (104). Hirsch uses the word "appropriation" (as do other critics, like Marjorie Perloff in her definition of found poetry[74]), which is charged with political, and potentially negative, connotations. Yet this sometimes-adverse term is a compelling one for erasure poetry because the texts that I will focus on specifically in this chapter, Philip's *Zong!* and Abel's *The Place of Scraps*, grapple with lives and identities that have been appropriated and even eliminated for the profit of those in power. (Is it considered appropriation when someone is restoring language—more than language—that was stolen in the first place?) This distinction should be emphasized: appropriation implies colonizing actions whereas reappropriation refers to decolonizing actions. Philip's and Abel's aesthetic erasures are ones of *reappropriation* in their decolonizing acts of re-claiming and re-imagining problematic texts. Parks uses measured language to address the act of erasure (listing it as reappropriative) while also noting the pointed words that others use to characterize it: "the act of erasure rejects the permanence and authority of a source text in favor of fragmentation, re-appropriation, and, some might say, vandalism." The impetus of the erasure poetry movement, according to Hirsch, is "spurred by similar gestures in the visual arts" and "is to give a precursor work a decisive new set of questions and meanings" (104). Erasure poems call for a re-reading and a re-sounding of extant texts in new contexts; furthermore, such works ask readers to examine the intertextual relations between the established text and the newly created one(s). The question that animates this chapter is: how do the sounds and unsounds affect

[74] In the online *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Perloff defines found poetry: "also called the poetry of citation or appropriation, [it] is created by taking words, phrases, and, even more commonly, entire passages from other sources and reframing them as 'poetry' by altering the context, frame, and format in which the source text appears. Found poetry is always intertextual: the intertext may be a recipe, a newspaper article, a personal letter, a document, an earlier poem, or—as is most common today—a text appropriated from the Internet."

the reading and interpreting of these texts—especially in erasure poems where un-sounding is so markedly political?

"Notably," Parks asserts, "the most enduring and respected reference guide for scholars and writers of poetry, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (2012), does not include an entry for erasure in its most recent edition and does not include erasure in its 'Found Poetry' entry." Erasure does not appear in the 2017 edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, nor is it mentioned in Perloff's definition of "found poetry" (previously footnoted). Parks explains that this omission of erasure poetry demonstrates a perpetual dismissal: "the editors' refusal to include the poetics in the book's 1,639 pages represents a kind of cultural erasure itself, though it has not prevented the term and the poems it describes from circulating with increasing abundance in the twenty-first century." The exclusion of erasure poetry from most literary dictionaries[75] compounds the elision of the influential women who initiated and developed the form. One need only compare Macdonald's tracing of the origins of erasure poetry with Parks' delineation in order to see this disparity.

Instead of focusing on the historical outline established by other writers, Parks suggests an alternative path: "What if the literary history of erasure swerved away from [Robert] Rauschenberg," the prominent American visual artist, "and toward the recently recovered artist Doris Cross, who began painting over *Webster's Secondary School Dictionary*, in 1965?"

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[75] The term "erasure" appears both in Baldick's *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2015) and Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (2013), yet these entries explain the term only in relation to the theory of deconstruction, when a word or piece of text is "under suspicion," and it is crossed out but still appears on the page. Neither dictionary entry addresses the poetic form of erasure poetry nor has entries for "found" poetry.

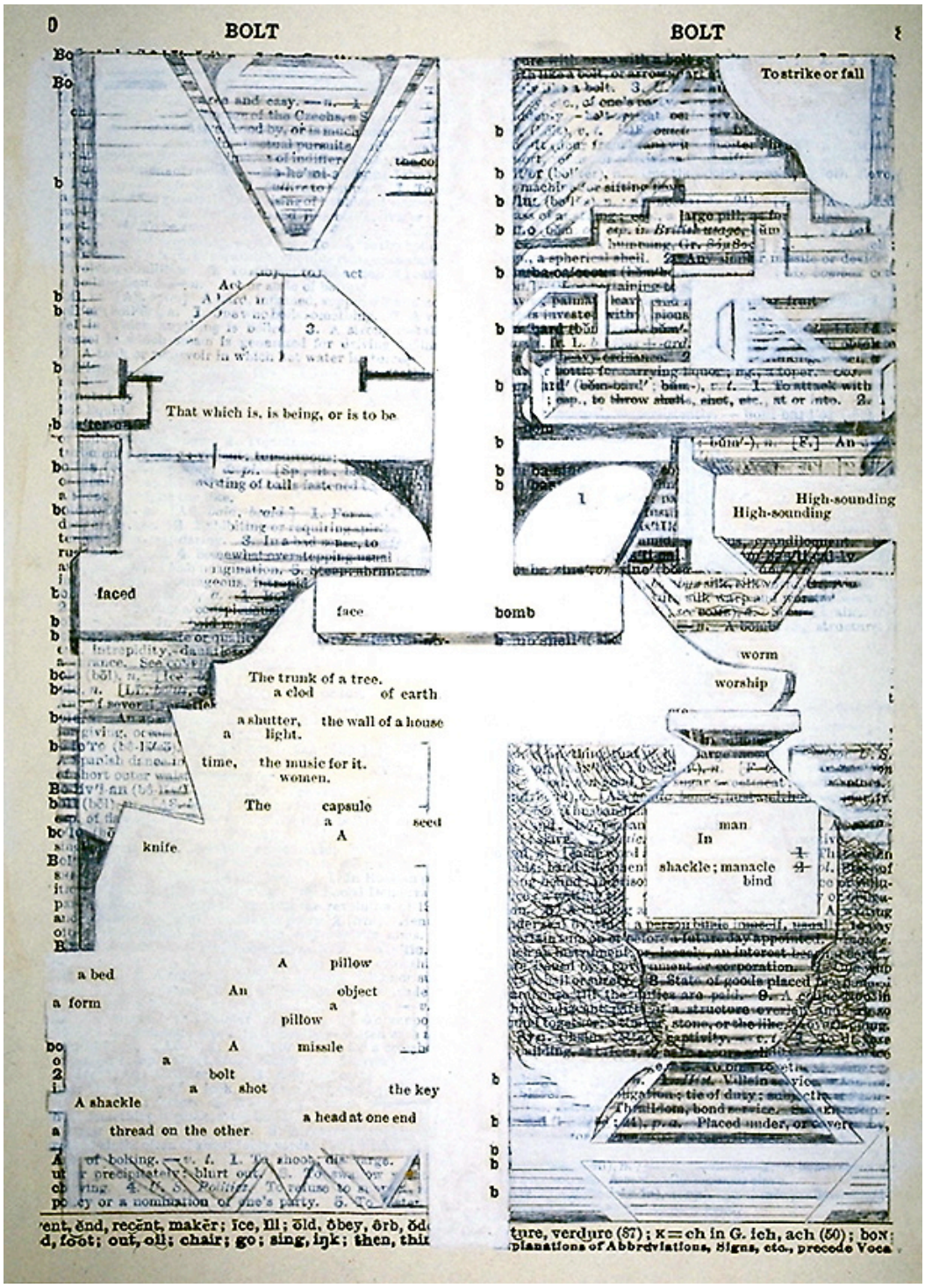

Figure 31. "Bolt," Doris Cross, (c1965), poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2014/04/who-is-doris-cross.

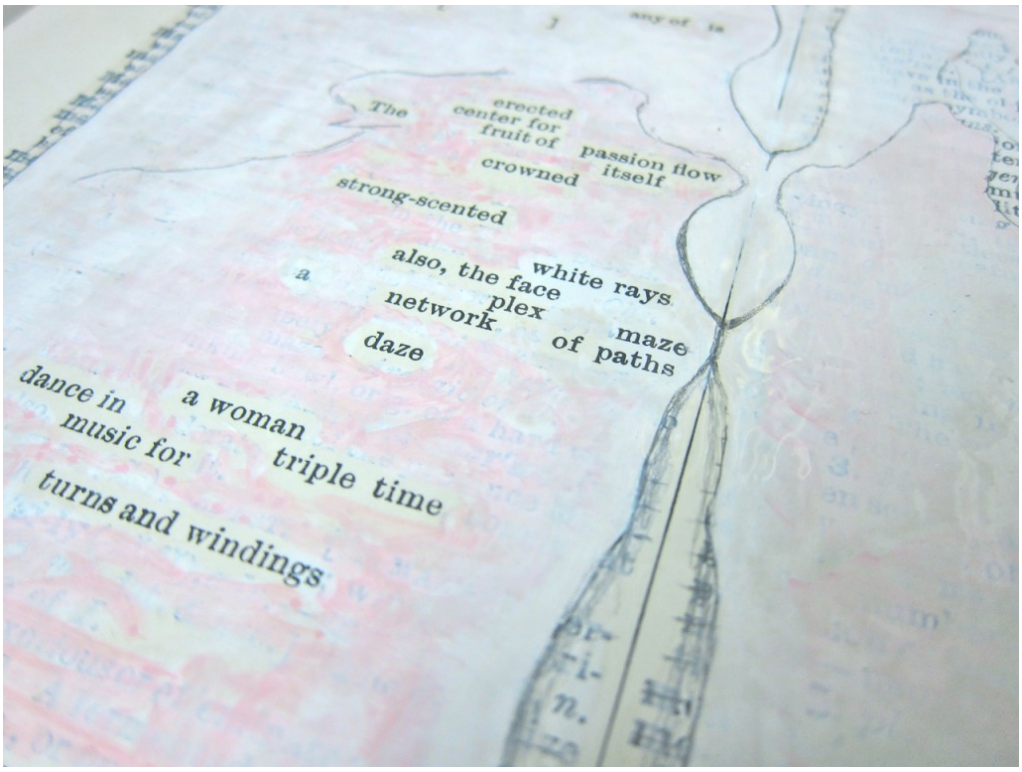

Figure 32. Untitled, Doris Cross, (c1965), poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2014/04/who-is-doris-cross.

"Who is Doris Cross?" (2014) is the title of Lynn Xu's interview with Tim Johnson published by the Poetry Foundation. In the preamble, Xu reveals how difficult it was to find information about Cross.[76] Consequently, she turned to Johnson, a curator and art / literary historian. At that time, Johnson and his partner, Caitlin Murray, were preparing an exhibition of Cross's work (see figures 31 and 32), featuring pieces created in the mid-1960s. Johnson recalls how he and Murray were surprised by their lack of knowledge of Cross given her experience and influence.[77] Many artists, Johnson recalls, dismissed Cross as a "dictionary poet" or "conceptualist."

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[76] Xu explains that Cross "was born in 1907 and died in 1994. She studied with Hans Hofmann and was friends with Robert Motherwell and all the European artists he brought to New York in the 1940s, and then settled in Santa Fe in 1972."

[77] Johnson shares his and Murray's knowledge of Cross's history: "When we were introduced to her work (through our friendship with her grandson, James Rodewald) we basically couldn't

As with many erasure poets, Cross avidly discussed her methods: "My process consists of leaving 'found words' precisely where they exist in the columns of *Webster's Secondary School Dictionary*, c1913 edition. The 'found words' then comprise the statement. Words as objects, textures, movements, spaces, sounds: words supporting words, even as a column is built of mortar and stones" (qtd in Parks). In the explanation of her process, Cross aligns words with sounds. The excerpts demonstrate how the text sounds and un-sounds, especially with the echo of "High-sounding" (see fig. 31), "music" (see figures 31 and 32), and references to musical time (see fig. 32).

In the interview with Xu, Johnson also details Cross's methods, which are "characterized by a great many different surface treatments," including:

> overpainting in a variety of colors and of various levels of opacity and translucency; enlargement; positive and negative transfer; collage; classic black-line redaction and also, erasure. These are decidedly verbo-visual works, and their inclusion of erasure and redaction, seem to be both very early and very intriguing examples of this mode, especially when we consider that Tom Phillips and Ronald Johnson, two of the poets we most closely associate with this mode, published their works after Cross had established her version. (Xu)

Johnson's summary demonstrates how Cross's poems use artistic methods borrowed and adapted from the realm of visual art. This characterization is reminiscent of concrete poetry: many critics

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understand how we'd never heard of her. In addition to all you've mentioned, she also studied at the Art Students League from 1940 to 1943; she taught at a number of art schools in the 60s, including the Aspen School of Contemporary Art; she made a film in the late 60s; she made several collaborative videos with Steina and Woody Vasulka; she lived for a while in upstate New York; and she was the first living woman to have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe. So, she was active, was familiar with many of the prominent artists of her era, and also enjoyed some notoriety in her lifetime" (Xu).

used similar language to describe literary works. Cross's source material is a prominent, printed literary work—a dictionary—which she treats and transforms through transfer, collage, redaction, and erasure. Cross's *verbo-visual* approach differs considerably from that of Tom Phillips and Ronald Johnson because her poetry was pushing back against patriarchal structures whereas Phillips and Johnson focused more on the aesthetics of erasure. Phillips did address the racism and anti-Semitism in his source text; his work demonstrates how erasure can rework a text, aesthetically and politically. Cross was both erasing and instigating a re-reading of the dictionary, "one of the most powerful patriarchal texts in our culture" (Parks), because it establishes—polices—meanings, usage, and idiom. Parks suggests that Cross's erasure of the dictionary declares her "awareness of how teaching and language are intertwined in service of the patriarchal institutions—the school and the dictionary—that house them." Moreover, Parks argues that Cross's "erasures constitute a radical, political, and feminist confrontation between a woman artist and the forces that dictate the terms of her production." I would further suggest that Cross's work demonstrates the significance of erasure when applied to a text that holds such unquestioned cultural authority. While the English language is still being revised daily by speakers' mouths and writers' pens, and subsequently integrated into the dictionary, artists like Cross prompt readers to question how they engage with that language and whose words are codified in the dictionary's pages. Such an interrogation parallels this dissertation's assertion that sound and language are developed as a means of communication—the foundation of discourse. By examining such experiments with and declarations / absences of sound through engaging and distinctive forms of poetry, readers can interpret these works and help the poems come alive—even as the readers interrogate their own relationship to language on and off the page.

M. NourbeSe Philip: "Erased before she could disappear"[78]

M. NourbeSe Philip's lived experiences demonstrate the political erasure that underpins her creative work and critical essays. Born in Tobago in 1947, Philip moved with her family to Trinidad at the age of eight. She grew up in Trinidad, studied at the University of the West Indies, and pursued graduate studies in law and political science at Western University in Ontario, Canada.[79] She has been characterized (and vilified) because of her unrelenting focus on social justice, referred to as one who "machetes hypocrisy" while being "passionately *raisonable*" (Clarke). Philip is called a "lightning rod of Black cultural defiance of the Canadian mainstream" and "the pariah-sorcerer nagging at the conscience of Canada's white artistic community" (Cudjoe 57). In "The Strange Case of CanLit's Disappeared Black Poet," Kate Siklosi argues that Philip's activism and pointed critique have led to ostracism: "During the later '80s and '90s, Philip wrote hundreds of letters to community leaders, literary magazines, newspapers, municipal bureaucrats, calling out racism and racist structures." Siklosi elucidates: "Most notably public among these resistances … is the PEN Congress in 1989 and June Callwood's infamous 'Fuck you!' to her and other protesters calling out the underrepresentation of writers of colour at the conference; her resistance to the anti-Black racism of the ROM's 1989 'Into the Heart of Africa' exhibit, and her opposition to the 1993 staging of *Showboat* in Toronto." These acts of resistances are re-examined in Philip's *Bla_k: Essays and*

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[78] This quotation is taken from Kate Siklosi's essay, which demonstrates the cultural and historical erasure of Philip from CanLit despite her contribution of so many award-winning literary works and critical essays.

[79] Philip's biography is found on her website (www.nourbese.com) and in Leslie Sanders's entry for the *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences and Culture* (2008).

Interviews (2017).[80] Philip acutely experiences this forced absence from CanLit but also acknowledges that her creative and critical writings have not gone unnoticed.[81] In fact, in the last ten years, there has been a dramatic increase of publications that focus on Philip's work.

Choice of form or genre, for Philip, opens or closes opportunities for specific types of discourse. Her poems and their forms are humming with political insights and interrogations. "Discourse on the Logic of Language," for example, has a unique form: words run down the side of the page and invade margins: "A mother is blowing words into her newborn daughter's mouth and you have to physically turn the book around to read that story" (BAS). Such a poetic structure forces the reader to reorient themselves physically in relation to the text. After publication, there were a few male writers who sought to publish it "the right way" by realigning the page and turning the section around,[82] but Philip refused to comply. She reiterated the significance of the poem's materiality: "we have to make an effort to read the woman's story. Once we make that effort it's not that all the negative things disappear. But for the moment you create the space, those things become unreadable as this single solitary act of healing and memory takes place" (BAS).

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[80] Another resource which references *Bla_k* and outlines Philip's actions for social justice is Paul Barrett's "The Poetic Disturbances of M. NourbeSe Philip" (2019), published by *The Walrus* (thewalrus.ca/the-poetic-disturbances-of-m-nourbese-philip/).

[81] Despite winning the Arts Molson Prize in 2021, Philip addresses CanLit's neglect of her work: "*Zong!* was never written about or reviewed when it came out in Canada, that is the extent of the disappearing. It's sort of irrelevant now. I am eternally grateful to the United States because were it not for the fact that I was being invited to talk and read there, I would have died as a writer in Canada" (BAS).

[82] This narrative is similar to the posthumous publication of the first two volumes of Emily Dickinson's poetry by Mabel Loomis Todd and Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who altered capitalization, changed words, reordered stanzas, and removed her iconic dashes and replaced them with more "acceptable" punctuation. Higginson even titled Dickinson's poems, which originally had no titles. Furthermore, they arranged Dickinson poems thematically—and into "appropriate" categories like the seasons, love, and faith—even when Dickinson refused to do so herself. Many of her poems contradicted the dominant narrative of those very themes.

Themes of social equity, trauma, and restoration recur throughout Philip's *oeuvre*, but her book-length poem *Zong!* (2008) is the quintessential example of these themes fused with a challenge to reading practices—and sounding—because of its innovative form. *Zong!* is a work of aesthetic erasure that pushes back against the political erasure that Philip and so many others continue to experience. To give voice to the marginalized and suggest pathways for healing and restoration, *Zong!*'s aesthetic erasure recontextualizes a problematic text and reappropriates the content to produce an innovative, polyphonic work of sound and unsound.

"It's all to do with the breath with the words, seeking space"

Zong! is a book-length poem (173 pages) with five distinct movements: *Os*, *Sal*, *Ventus*, *Ratio*, *Ferrum*.[83] Translated from Latin, these section titles are Bone, Salt, Wind, Reason, and Iron. There is also an extra section, *Ẹbọra*. Philip does not consider *Ẹbọra* to be part of the poem proper.[84] Its title is a Yoruba word meaning "underwater spirits" (*Z!* 184); *Ẹbọra* are "those Spirits who assist in the search for effective medicine" (Fatunmbi 14). The latter is not used solely for physical illness but for mending or repairing anything that is broken. Following the *Ẹbọra* section, there is a glossary, a manifest, a *Notanda*, and the written ruling of the *Gregson v. Gilbert* case (the source text). To see excerpts from each section, consult figures 33–36. The images are from the official e-book version of Philip's *Zong!* published by Wesleyan Press. Because many of the phrases often go close to the margins, these screenshots represent the pages more accurately, preventing the distortion that may occur if the physical book were scanned.

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[83] Philip describes the "movements" as if they were segments of a score. I italicize the titles to acknowledge the musical analogy and to indicate the paleographic style of presentation.
[84] *Ẹbọra* was generated through a printer error: the initial pages of the five sections were superimposed on one another (*Z!* 206).

Zong! #1

w w w w a wa
w a w a t
er wa s
our wa
te r gg g g go
o oo goo d
waa wa wa
w w waa
ter o oh
on o ne w one
w o n d d d
ey d a
dey a ah ay
s one day s
wa wa

Masuz Zawena Ogunsheye Ziyad Ogwambi Keturah

w w w w w a
w wa wa t
er wa te
r wat
er wa ter
of w
ant

Aba Chimanga Naeema Oba Eshe

Zong! #2

the throw in circumstance
the weight in want
in sustenance
for underwriters
the loss
the order in destroy
the that fact
the it was
the were
negroes
the after rains

Wafor Yao Siyolo Bolade Kibibi Kamau

Zong! #3

the some of negroes
over
board
the rest in lives
drowned
exist did not
in themselves
preservation
obliged
frenzy
thirst for forty others
etc

Nobini Zesiro Yaa Issa Kambuji

Figure 33. Selections from *Os*, M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*, Wesleyan Press, 2008, pp. 3–6.

loss *ora pro*
this is but an o
ration time sands
the loss within how many
days how long where being is
thirst & thirst be being she falls
fortunes over board rub
and rob her
now i lose count i am lord
of loss visions over and over the *o*
ba sobs from there to here bring them
no provisions from is
to wa s sow
the seas
with she
negroes ma
n negroes murder my lord
my liege lord
my *deus*
my us
my we my fate
my god sun
der crew
from captain own
from slave
under
from
writer from
mortality
mort

le mort le
mort le p tit mort
scent of mortality
she
falls
ifáifáifá
falling to
port
over
&
over
my fortunes
a sin you say
video video vide *o* who says i am
the lord of loss a rose
i say a rose
for ruth and for t
ruth sup pose truth
then find
ing a way
found a port
a rule ought
evidence
suppose then t
ruth a rose
over
&
over
with you
she f alls falling

found a rose fou
nd africa un
der water
proved
justice danger
ous the law
a crime she
died es es es
oh es
oh oh es es oh
es s o
s s o
s s
o s
os
os
os
bone
us us *os*
save us *os*
salve & save
our souls tone
& turn the bo nes
&
salve our souls u
s souls
bo ne souls
salve the slav
e *salve* to
sin *salve* slave *salve*

and *ave* *ave*
the rat the rat *ave*
ah we cut cut
cut the cost and serve where s the cat
the yam no meat trim
the loss payment
you say what for where s
the cat got
the rat could
the crime out out
cut the ear be absolute do
you hear
the lute sound
to raise the dead
the died
i hear
ave bell s
ring out
dear ruth
this is a tale told
cold a yarn
a story dear dear ruth i
woo time and you do
i have y our
ear there were aster s
at tea time éclairs & you
are my liege
lord of nig nig &
nog my *doge*
there are

Figure 34. Selections from *Sal*, *Z!*, pp. 61–64.

leg ba leg give th
em the se
a to pro ve to kin
g nation & f lag lend your e
ar to their cri es mine
too they giv e them selves li
fe we gi ve them the li fe of bone n
ow the sea gi ves up the se
cret of bo ne es oh
es es oh es os o s they ask fo
r water we g ive them s
ea they as k for bread we
give them se
a they ask for lif e we give them o
nly the sea was that a fair
trade with i ask you i
am a fair man by b ell and go
ng the crew dance a re
el on board the negroes play the d
rums to the de
ep s with them they sin
g as they fa ll bles s me pater
i am all sin by wo
rd and d eed bless him pa
ter give him this d ay his b
read his wat er his profit s a
bove blue oce an of sky
waits cal m no clo
ud under us bl ue sea the ear
th groans it w as the dri
ve for pro fit douce do
uce mi amo r we be i
bo we be sbo na ban tu we b
e fa nte edo & ra
da that da y at the man
se we at e were sa
ted with ve
al and wine bit ween us there we
re no wil es did I du pe you ther

e was on ly ought we ga ve them go
d & gave the m good they gi
ve us good & & go d be
ar the we ight of ours
ins light as the su n s beams there i
s shit & pi ss bile & pu
s there is s in he rose will
i will he hew a beam of wo
od for the mas t strong to ha
ng them from
did I write t hat ham and fi
sh roe dates and fi gs sweet me
at s we din e on neg
ro meat & o ranges a lass of t
en serve s u
s mind y our s tep now lad
on bread and w ater we bree
d them ble ss me pat
er for i have set a snare for wa le & sad
e a trap for h
is feet a sna
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traps me m y na
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me i see yo u to wri
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ce my no nce queen of the ni
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ca oh o
ver and o
ver the o ba s
o
b
s

Bektemba Aplehe Gbolahan Fasuyi Afifarin Oburun
Fadairo Ahiona Nuru Ohunade Dolap Moyo
Olufunke Olupitan Falana Esi
Kohena Atoapem Kwesi
Wake Sade
Ade

Figure 35. Selections from *Ferrum*, *Z!*, pp. 170–173.

Figure 36. Selections from *Ẹbọra*, *Z!*, pp. 179-182.

In November 1781, when the slave ship *Zong* was on course from Ghana to England, the captain "ordered that some 150 Africans be murdered by drowning so that the ship's owners could collect insurance monies" (*Z!* back matter). After the insurance claim was filed, the case was disputed in court. Throughout her *Notanda*, Philip reiterates that this story needs telling, but that it can only be "untold." Her method of erasure is the means of that "untelling." Elucidating that she aims "to use the text of the legal decision as a word store," Philip locks herself "into this particular and peculiar discursive landscape in the belief that the story of these African men, women, and children thrown overboard in an attempt to collect insurance monies, the story that can only be told by not telling, is locked in this text" (*Z!* 191).

Through deliberate erasure/ redaction/ disassembly/ fracture, Philip breaks the case into words, syllables, and fragments. The arrangement of the text emphasizes the unsound central to the work: "In the many silences" the reader witnesses the embedded and metaphorical "Silence of the text" (*Z!* 191). Philip works through textual mutilation and fragmentation to force the reader "to wrest meaning from words gone astray" (*Z!* 198). I will address later how Philip frames *Zong!* as something that necessarily contaminates writer and reader alike; repeatedly, however, she struggles with how to recuperate meaning from an incomprehensible event described in a compromised language. Employing erasure and arranging the textual material with a *mise-en-page* that foregrounds unsound, Philip creates a semantic puzzle: "The resulting abbreviated, disjunctive, almost non-sensical style of the poems demands a corresponding effort on the part of the reader to 'make sense' of an event that eludes understanding, perhaps permanently" (*Z!* 198).

How can a reader examine sound and unsound in a work like *Zong!*? Moreover, if the reader is told that meaning is elusive from the outset and if the poetry itself works to keep

meaning constantly in abeyance, what can be gained from soundings, analyses, and interpretations of the text? This story can never be told, as Philip claims; instead, she performs an untelling. Sounding *Zong!* unlocks the voices within the text. By in / out / un-sounding the text, readers help the poem become, listen to the stories of others, and uncover narratives that exist even in the unsound.

ZONG!'s Insound: "The text has exploded into a universe of words"

Insound and in-sounding are not about the sound or sonic qualities of the work in the traditional sense since insound is internal, subjective, and unqualifiable. Insound is created (or prevented) in the text's content and structure, which either facilitate involuntary in-sounding or cause the reader to in-sound actively. Thus, this section will examine the textual material and its organization in order to ascertain the text's in-soundability and the resultant effects upon the reader. Materially, *Gregson v. Gilbert* is the source text for *Zong!*; Philip uses this document to create a lexicon, performing both creation and erasure: "*the text —the reported case —is a matrix—a mother document*" (*Z!* 200). In many erasure practices, the source text is fixed on the page and some of the material is covered / obscured / redacted / erased to reveal an innovative reading of that same text by altering the context of the content. (An example of this erasure process is Cross's dictionary work, already referenced.) Philip's erasure method, however, is atypical: "*I devise a dictionary with a list of each of the 'mother' words followed by the words contained in that particular word—for instance, apprehension yields hen, sion, pare and pear, to list a few possibilities*" (*Z!* 200). This is how the source text functions as a "mother text" or "matrix"; Philip uses that linguistic material to craft the subsequent poems: "*that is where the impulse leads—to explode the words to see what other words they may contain*" (*Z!* 200).

Although the material itself is linguistic, the text is not always intelligible. That is, the fracturing of words causes an initial stalling to in-sounding. The reader may not know how to comprehend *Zong!*'s fragments: "Words break into sound, return to their initial and originary [sic] phonic sound—grunts, plosives, labials—is this, perhaps, how language might have sounded at the beginning of time?" (*Z!* 205). Sounds erupt on the page. The reader can in-sound each of them individually yet may not know how to find meaning in the sea of sounds or understand their connections. In *Notanda*, Philip describes the fragments and their "meanings": "Clusters of words sometimes have meaning, often do not—words are broken into and open to make non-sense or no sense at all, which, in turn, becomes a code for another submerged meaning" (*Z!* 205). I will address the arrangement of the text in greater detail later; now it must be noted that the intelligibility of the linguistic material, at times, is seemingly non-existent. It is difficult to determine how to in-sound letters and fragments that span the page (figures 33–35); it is even more challenging when the text is faded and a palimpsest (fig. 36). Furthermore, the difficulty of "reading" the page (firstly through in-sounding) makes any search for "meaning" a futile one. That stated, the material is linguistic, and the insound method calls for a questioning of the effects of the disjuncture.

Certainly, Philip's fractured material creates many effects. One result is that Philip's fragmented content reflects the disordered and irrational event aboard the *Zong*. Any attempt to replicate or represent the events aboard ship would necessarily be an injustice:

> for that would have meant working entirely within the order of logic, rationality, and predictability; it would have meant ordering an experience which was disordered (and cannot ever be ordered), irrational, illogical and unpredictable; it would have meant doing a second violence, this time to the memory of an already violent experience. The

disorder, illogic and irrationality of the *Zong!* poems can no more tell the story than the legal report of *Gregson v. Gilbert* masquerading as order, logic, and rationality. (*Z!* 197)

Sounding is often the means to make sense of difficult material ("sounding it out"); however, *Zong!*'s arrangement of sounds (and its stalling of involuntary in-sounding) shakes the foundational methods of processing information. This challenge to sounding will be further discussed in subsequent sections.

After addressing the (un)recognizability of the poem's material, the insound method questions if there are formalized systems and, if so, what languages may be present in the work. Although there are elements of *Zong!* that challenge readability, there are many significant textual moments that are legible and adhere to formalized systems of language. Philip ruminates on the nature of alphabetic writing: "*The alphabet is the universe of language —all the sounds contained in each alphabet of letters and each letter a fragment—of the whole*" (*Z!* 200). In this instance, Philip demonstrates the particulate principle at work. Each letter is a sound but when connected with another letter grows closer to becoming a word. *Zong!* is an experiment in words, their construction, and their connotations: "Take a letter away and a new word in a different language is born. Add a letter and the word loses meaning. The loss of language and meaning on board the *Zong* levels everyone to a place where there is, at times, no distinction between languages—everyone, European and African alike, has reverted, it appears, to a state of pre-literacy" (*Z!* 205–6). Philip suggests that the breaking down of words to sound and word play brings the *Zong!* reading to a state of "pre-literacy," but this book-length poem also includes instances of many languages sounding all together.[85] In *Zong!*, there are fifteen identifiable

[85] Throughout *Notanda*, Philip reflects on researching the *Zong* case and explains that there were times when the language barriers became too hurtful to comprehend. For instance, when reading Granville Sharp's letter to the Court of King's Bench, she felt she was unable to go on when

languages: Arabic, Dutch, Fon, French, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Lain, Portuguese, Spanish, Shona, Twi, West African Patois, and Yoruba. There are also instances where text appears in nonstandard phonetic spelling to reflect the accent of the speaker (i.e., *dem cam fo mi*) (*Z!* 95). A glossary appears at the end of *Zong!*, but one's reading process would be disrupted by seeking translations in this multilingual text. Also, when a reader recognizes a word, that word may also be shared with another language that may or may not connote the same meaning. For example, "ague and *ague*—the first English, the second Yoruba. The former meaning bodily shaking in illness, the latter, to fast" (*Z!* 205). Fundamentally, *Zong!*'s stalling of the involuntary in-sounding process causes the reader to question their own understanding of and relationship to language—not just their own but also those with which they may be unfamiliar.

In the interview with Philip, Benson queries: "Do you distrust language and, in its fluidity, the inability to pin it down? *Zong!* incorporates many languages and I wondered if this distrust is reserved for just English as an aspect of colonisation or does it extend to other languages too?" (BAS). Philip responds by saying: "English and its history is the language I live in so there's a kind of scepticism about what it can truly bring to me, and what I can get from it, but I also love it" (BAS). But language breeds a mistrust since it is used every day for such a wide array of diverse (and sometimes insidious) purposes. According to Philip, writers try to reach people and communicate through "a medium that is so misused and abused" (BAS). As the reader investigates language and its sonic elements, they are working to make meaning—a necessary but dangerous task, Philip argues: "In the discomfort and disturbance created by the poetic text, I am forced to make meaning from apparently disparate elements—in so doing I

Sharp questioned "*how many people would have understood English when the commands were given for them to jump or throw themselves overboard*" (*Z!* 201).

implicate myself. The risk—of contamination—lies in piecing together the story that cannot be told. And since we have to work to complete the events, we all become implicated in, if not contaminated by, this activity" (*Z!* 198). The reader attempts to take the words inside of them through the processing of linguistic material (in-sound). When the fragmented and challenging content cause the in-sounding to be a voluntary, active process, the reader must work to piece together this material and interpret its significance. In this active in-sounding, the reader becomes a part of meaning-making in the poem and becomes implicated in the narrative—and they are changed because of this experience.[86]

In-sounding *Zong!* forces the reader to recognize their own relationships to past and present forms of political erasure. (This tension is further accentuated in the out-sounding of a text, which I will discuss later.) Even though Philip says that her distrust of language does not rest solely in English, she recognizes that the English language is one of colonization. (Despite being a language spoken by colonizers, English is comprised of words looted from so many other languages.) *Zong!* uses English (and other languages) to challenge reading practices. This sort of provocation can be revelatory and productive: "At times it feels as if I am getting my revenge on 'this / fuck-mother motherfuckin language' of the colonizer—the way the text forces you—me—to read differently, bringing chaos into the language or, perhaps more accurately, revealing the chaos that is already there" (*Z!* 205). Whether challenging intelligibility through the fracturing of material or disrupting readability through its multilingual content, *Zong!* offers so much to the reader while sounding. When the reader (in- and out-)sounds this linguistic material, they are piecing together a fragmented narrative that will never produce a singular meaning.

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[86] Even at the neurological level, processing of new information alters the brain and affects neural pathways and networking.

Moreover, the arrangement of the text further complicates in-sounding and nuances textual interpretations.

Turning from the material of the text to its arrangement, Philip fractures many of the words, leaving morphemes and phonemes floating surrounded by negative space. Fragmentation is significant both literally, for the challenge to reading practices, and also metaphorically: "*the fragment appears more precious, more beautiful than the whole, if only for its brokenness. Perhaps, the fragment allows for the imagination to complete its missing aspects*" (*Z!* 201–2). When in-sounding the fragments, the reader struggles to piece the work together. For example, in the *Sal* section (the top left image in fig. 34), the centre of page 61 presents "to wa s sow" if read as a line left-to-right. The fracturing of these words forces readers to recognize the disjuncture and resultant proliferation of meanings. This same breakage occurs across the whole text. There is, for example, no formal adherence to the poetic line. Instead, Philip creates a specific form that she describes in nearly every interview and publication that addresses *Zong!*'s structure: "And if you look at the book, no word, or cluster of words, comes directly under another. It's the rule that gives the book its shape" (BAS). The space that surrounds each of the words on the page—the breath—is integral to *Zong!*, and I will discuss this use of space at length in the Unsound section. Given the absence of traditional poetic lines, the reader is compelled to find their way through in-sounding words in fragmented suspension. Philip acknowledges how this *mise-en-page* affects any reading: "When I start spacing out the words, there is something happening in the eye tracking the words across the page, working to pull the page and larger 'meaning' together—the eye trying to order what cannot be ordered, trying to 'make sense' of something" (*Z!* 192). These words and pieces of words resist static meanings due to shifting contexts; the reader is invited to draw connections between disparate shards of language. The

reader can in-sound the words in many different orders; multiple iterations produce various poems: "there are smaller individual poems to be found in different places on the page as the lines are juxtaposed and work together" (*Z!* 192). For instance, page 61 of the *Sal* section (fig. 34) could be read conventionally, left-to-right, producing an initial word order of "loss *ora pro* / this is but an *o* / ration time sands" (*Z!* 61). But if the poem were experienced vertically, it reads: "loss / the loss within / thirst & thirst / now i lose / *ba* sobs" (*Z!* 61). Or, if read diagonally, the poem states: "loss / this is but / ration time / how many / where being is / falls" (*Z!* 61).[87] These are but three of many possible approaches to the opening lines of page 61 and demonstrate the multiple poems that could result from various readings. Similar to the Concretists inviting the reader to play with the materials through their arrangement, Philip summons the reader, yet *Zong!* is graver in its content and potentially more traumatic in its in-sounding. As evidenced by the neuroscientific research presented in Chapter 1, when readers in-sound a work, their brains are actively sounding the content in their minds. These sonic elements sound and resound as readers piece the content of the work together. *Ventus* opens: " sh h / not so / loud did nt the bell ring, oh / oh my / ass / hot apes / all sing sing" (*Z!* 79). Whose perspective is the reader forced to share? Compellingly, the apes are the ones who "all sing." Subsequently, one encounters: "lips gape oh oh sad tune / sing again they groan not / so loud / *when did we decide* desire *le sang* / pain oh" (*Z!* 79).[88] There is a juxtaposition of the "they" that are singing and groaning, yet the "sing again" reads almost as a command. The different font introduces a "we" even as the singular possessive "my" appears

[87] The spaces between these phrases are intended to indicate a larger spacing that in the text, though it is not to scale. To see the *mise-en-page* of these words, refer to the top left of fig. 34.
[88] I have used the Palace Script font to reflect the published text's typographical difference.

many times across the page. These different subject positions and possessives compel the reader to question their own positionality in relation to the text, even as they seek to understand the different "characters" and "voices" represented.

As previously quoted from *Zong!*'s *Notanda*, Philip suggests that reading and sounding *Zong!* could result in a "contamination." She also refers to this consequence in her interview with Benson: "*Zong!* is also about contamination and the possibility that the audience or reader is exposed to the possibility of being contaminated by what's happening" (BAS). This infiltration occurs because the reader has to take this language inside of themselves in an in-sounding and wrestle with the complexity of literal content as well as the historical massacre it represents. In-sounding the work means carrying the horror and inhumanity of the *Zong!* within oneself, if even for a brief moment.

The manner in which Philip arranges the movements of the poem is similarly poignant. Any time Philip discusses the structure of *Zong!*, she separates out *Os* (the first section; from the from the Latin for bone). This section's poems are foundational: "*the earlier 26 poems are the bones*" (*Z!* 200). The subsequent sections—*Sal*, *Ventus*, *Ratio*, and *Ferrum*—Philip describes "*as the flesh*" (*Z!* 200). *Os* juxtaposes poems with conventional lineation (stacking like vertebrae) against works with pieces that are broken and scattered (see fig. 33). Yet, the subsequent four movements differ significantly in their format, with very specific space surrounding each of the words / fragments / phrases. Philip credits the structure of *Sal*, *Ventus*, *Ratio*, and *Ferrum* to a different understanding of African influences on Black American culture:[89]

> As the work shapes itself after my return from Africa —in the books or movements that develop after the first twenty-six poems —words rearrange themselves in odd and bizarre

[89] In 2006, Philip travelled to Ghana and to Liverpool; this trip will be discussed later in detail.

> combinations: at times the result appears the verbal equivalent of the African American dance style "crumping," in which the body is contorted and twisted into intense positions and meanings that often appear beyond human comprehension. (*Z!* 205)

This crumping extends to the narrative itself: "The stories on board the *Zong!* … are jammed together—'crumped'—so that the ordering of grammar, the ordering that is the impulse of empire is subverted" (*Z!* 205).

At every level of arrangement—from the phoneme, to the "line," to the poem as a whole—Philip thwarts readers' expectations; consequently, *Zong!* must be sounded on its own terms, which means that this text requires a voluntary, active in-sounding instead of a passive processing of its sonic elements. In a voluntary in-sounding, the reader actively pieces together the material of the poem. To continue reading, the reader must become more deeply engaged with its content; in their active in-sounding of the text, the reader is integral to the poem's becoming. If the poem were to remain on the page unread, then there would be an incomplete transmission in the poetic discourse. When a reader undertakes a voluntary in-sounding of *Zong!*, the reader's subject position is made uncertain. Does forcing the reader into a voluntary reading take the reader captive? Do they identify with the slaves, with the crew, or an imagined audience? Although in-sounding highlights the uncertainty of the reader's subject position, the problematizing of the reader's subject position is even more acute in out-sounding, which will be discussed in greater depth below. To some extent, the sounding of this text revivifies the lost Africans, but this extraordinary opportunity is made even more apparent in the out-sounding. Such reparative work of breathing for the lost will also be examined in the Outsound section. Certainly, the reader's racial identity will shape their understanding and in-sounding of the text. Though I do not have the authority (nor is it the purview of the dissertation) to suggest who can

read this work or how that reading may affect the reader due to the traumatic history and political erasure that underpins the text, it is significant to note that readers' in-soundings are shaped by their subject positions and will influence their interpretations of *Zong!*.

As readers in-sound *Zong!*, they are confronted by fractured words, disruption of traditional poetic lines, and the disassembly of a "whole" poem. At every turn, in-sounding demands the reader's attention and intention to take the work seriously—to listen to the voices of the people in the many languages spoken and to recognize their relationship to language and to the lost. "In the struggle to avoid imposing meaning, I confront the tension between the poem that I want to write and the poem that must write itself," Philip contends. "While a concern with precision and accuracy in language is common to both law and poetry, the law uses language as a tool for ordering; in the instant case, however, I want poetry to disassemble the ordered, to create disorder and mayhem so as to release the story that cannot be told" (*Z!* 199). In attempting to order the collection of linguistic material while in-sounding *Zong!*, the reader finds that the story is "untold." In-sounding is a way of "telling" the story, even if it is inaudible as it sounds in the mind. But is not enough solely to in-sound *Zong!*. It is a poem that calls for utterance and performance. Benson describes how this powerful text extends beyond the page:

> *Zong!* goes beyond the book. … it was an event. … it's still an event. And it's unlike any other poetry book I can think of. It just happens to be in a book form but the contents of it and the effect of it goes beyond what we can usually get from a book, from words on the page. … As a black woman, it means something. As I said, it's an exhalation. (BAS)

Zong! needs to be out-sounded for the voices to be heard. The title of the poem itself is an exclamation. Speaking *Zong!*'s words aloud, though, is a complicated act that requires care and

compassion. From an in-sounding to an out-sounding, *Zong!*'s (un)telling of the massacre once carried in the body of the reader becomes an audible elegy—a memorial for the murdered.

ZONG!'s Outsound: "…voices surfacing…"

The Poetry Society's Annual Lecture Series featured Philip in November 2021. Due to the COVID pandemic, the lecture was given virtually. Although she shared details about her current creative project, as yet unpublished, Philip focused on the theoretical framework of *Zong!* and conducted a reading. Philip emphasized the significance of sounding the poem aloud: "Performance… I consider to be a central aspect of the Caribbean aesthetic. With each performance of *Zong!*, the silences begin to speak, and that which is fragmented is not so much made whole as put in relation with the other fragmented parts which lead to a transcendence… if only for the duration of the reading" (PS 15:57). Despite the linguistic material's challenges, Philip explains why, in a Barthesian sense, external sounding—the out-sounding—of *Zong!* is crucial: "the poem [is] incomplete and is awaiting temporary completion with each reading" (PS 16:16). Any idealized notion of "completion" is illusory with *Zong!*, since the fragment is its basic structure. When someone performs an auditory reading, "It [is] completed in its incompletion, and possibly will never be complete. But there's a sense in which, if for the moment when its performed or read … there is one form of completion in terms of honouring the silences—in terms of honouring the dead" (PS 16:13). Out-sounding, in this case, is both mourning and remembrance. "Through oath and through moan," Philip claims, "through mutter, chant, and babble, through babble and curse, through chortle and ululation to not-tell the story" (*Z!* 196), the reader is the performer and sounder of this (un)telling of the massacre.

Before addressing the temporal and qualitative considerations of out-sounding *Zong!*, one ought to pause to consider the sensitive nature of its content. Although I have addressed the "contamination" and trauma of the text, the reader also must recognize and attend to their positionality. In conversation with Benson, Philip reveals that some of the text's content disturbed her: "*Zong!* has certain words that made me uncomfortable to write them, in particular 'nig'" (BAS). Out-sounding has its dangers:

> After one performance, this young Black woman said that it really bothered her that white people in the audience were saying that word, so that presented a challenge for me—how to extend care for this person while being true to the work, because these words come from the mother document. So those are some of the considerations of the protocols of care, like how do we care for each other? Which links to what we talked about caring for the word. (BAS)

Philip takes great care in her erasure of *Gregson v. Gilbert* to craft *Zong!*; she insists that this same protocol of care must be taken up by the reader—in reading, in performance, and in analysis. Past readers have (in a sense) colonized *Zong!*: "I've had so many unfortunate encounters with people, actually only non-black people, who are really drawn to it but then they want to use it in a certain way, counter to what the book is, and not give credit. That can be costly in the system of exchange that we live in" (BAS). Although such an appropriation is not the focus of the dissertation per se, I would like to note that material from *Zong!* was used by Rana Hamadeh in an art exhibit in 2017 without express permission and left uncredited;[90] also, *Zong!* was translated into Italian in 2021 without the involvement or approval of Philip.[91] *Zong!*

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[90] Siklosi addresses this appropriation of *Zong!* at length.

[91] Renata Morresi's translation, published by Benway Press, does not strictly adhere to the structuring principle of the negative space surrounding each phrase; consequently, the text does

has been co-opted in the usage of its material (for an exhibit, for a translation, etc.), but the reader—through an insensitive out-sounding of the text—can also be abusive. In her correspondence with the presses and translator following the misuse of this poem, Philip decisively states one of the most profound effects of *Zong*!: "Most importantly *Zong!* and its life in the world constitute a practice that is reparative in intent—reparative of the souls lost in 1781, who stand in for the many, many others lost to this inhumane and insane act of extended barbarity, as well as reparative for those who today continue to mourn them and ourselves" (NP). The text—a vessel which carries this memorial—must be respected. *Zong!* must be in-sounded and out-sounded judiciously and recognized as an opportunity for healing and reparation.

When a reader out-sounds a text, they should attend to its qualitative considerations. *Zong!* is particularly challenging in its use of space and *mise-en-page*; the reader may not get a clear sense of tempo since so much space surrounds each of the phrases. But this space must be acknowledged, actually un-sounded, in an out-sounding. I will discuss such spaces and exhalations more thoroughly in the Unsound section; however, in terms of timing, the spaces suggest that there should be instances of non-sound between the out-sounding of the phrases. Whole words, fragments, and isolated phonemes / graphemes are fixed on the page with fluctuating patterns. No punctuation, however, connotes caesurae (commas, periods, etc.) except for rare occurrences of dashes—and even they indicate more of a *sostenuto* (sustained /

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not have the necessary room to breathe. Philip asked that the translations be destroyed; the publishers did not comply. Philip argues that these transactions violate the very principles of *Zong!*, and Morresi performs another violence: "From its inception to its end the entire process of this translation mirrors the transactional relations and the racism that resulted in the transatlantic trade in Africans and the *Zong* massacre in particular; it is a process that makes a travesty of the care and attention that are at the heart of *Zong!* in both the preparatory work and its composition" (NP). All of the correspondence among Philip, Morresi, Wesleyan Press, and Benway Press has been published on Philip's website (www.nourbese.com).

prolonged performance) rather than a stopping or cessation of sound.[92] Lack of punctuation does not direct a reader to a specific rhythm for out-sounding; instead, the absence of punctuation suggests that the *spaces* dictate pauses in sound. In a sense, the text never calls for pause; instead, the unsounds have their sounding where text is absent. This difference may seem semantic initially, but *Zong!*'s organization demonstrates that the spaces control the rhythm, pace, and beat more than the text and punctuation do, which runs counter to traditional modes of demarcating meter and sounding poetry.

More than the other visual poetry forms that I have examined in this dissertation, erasure calls for the closest consideration of the author's experience in crafting the poetic material and the sounding of it. This is due to the author's complex and politically nuanced act of erasing / redacting / altering another person's text, which counters many traditional notions of literary creativity. In a 2021 interview with Philip Metres, Philip speaks boldly about her sense of authorship in relation to *Zong!*: "I abdicated my role as author of *Zong!* in the sense we think of authorship, and I explore this in 'Notanda.' Indeed, I describe myself as the unauthor of the work. I was following gut feelings when I felt the need to ask permission to bring these voices forward" (PU). Philip actively sought consent for bringing *Zong!* to the page. To do so, she travelled to Ghana in 2006 and visited a traditional shrine near one of the slave ports. "To seek 'permission' to bring the stories of these murdered Africans to light—above the surface of the water—to 'exaqua' them from their 'liquid graves'" (*Z!* 202), Philip points to her trip to Africa

[92] Punctuation marks in *Zong!* include ampersands, parentheses, apostrophes, diacritics, and an exclamation point (in titles of the poems in *Os* and the book-length poem itself). In *Os*, there are two ellipses in *Zong!* #6 and one colon in *Zong!* #7, but none seems to indicate caesurae. Instead, the ellipses suggest a connection / continuation of other material, and the colon indicates an explanation of relationship "first:" (15) with the subsequent material. The only instances of punctuation that adhere to grammatical rules are the epigraphs for each section.

(and later, to Liverpool) as a watershed moment in the development of the project. Upon her return, she enacted a clear shift in typographical emphasis from *Os* to the following four sections, in which there is an abandonment of traditional poetic lineation as well as predictable font and size (Times New Roman 12); she instantiates breath by physically separating the words. This shift in voices demonstrates a new relationship between author and text. In conversation with Metres, Philip refers to herself the "unauthor." She listened to the Ancestors when creating *Zong!*, which the book's cover proclaims: "ZONG! M. NourbeSe Philip" and "As told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng." Philip notes that the three names represent three different ancestral legacies; listening to the Ancestors in creating poetry "runs athwart to how we talk about poetry today" (PU). Philip insists that contemporary poets need to embrace the esoteric while also allowing the text to sound what authors themselves may not know: "In allowing myself to surrender to the text—silences and all—and allowing the fragmented words to speak to the stories locked in the text, I, too, have found myself 'absolved' of 'authorial intention.' So much so that even claiming to author the text through my own name is challenged by the way the text has shaped itself" (*Z!* 204).[93]

This recognition of Philip's "unauthorship" is critical to the sounding process, particularly out-sounding. Because Philip allows the text to speak, voices beyond her own proliferate: "And, by refusing the risk of allowing ourselves to be absolved of authorial intention, we escape an understanding that we are at least one and the Other. And the Other. And the Other. That in this post post-modern world we are, indeed, multiple and 'many-voiced'" (*Z!* 205). When

[93] Contemporary poets should acknowledge their own positionality: "Living with uncertainty, accepting opacity, welcoming mystery, and, most importantly, humility or learning to put the ego out of commission (a difficult task for us as westerners so used to wielding the ego), these are all necessary for poets interested in this type of work" (PU).

the reader comes to a similar understanding, their performance—their out-sounding—is one voice among many. Moreover, future out-soundings will always be different because no one reading of *Zong!* can be replicated. Although these assertions describe most poems, *Zong!* is a work of erasure that necessarily retains the voicing of the source text while being modified to amplify new voice(s), which means that it will never be monovocal. Moreover, *Zong!* is extreme in its heteroglossia—one singular reading (or solo voice) could never capture its complexity.

When discussing "Discourse on the Logic of Language," Philip highlights that poem's polyvocality:

> The other formal aspect of that poem that is important is that many things are happening simultaneously on the page and there are many voices—a polyvocality—within the poem. I think it may relate to story in history. It also suggests a resistance against a linearity. As resistance against the compulsion to order life and lives in a certain hegemonic way. The poem, like the Caribbean, the area it comes out of, is really a site of massive interruptions. (BAS)

Zong!'s multilingualism cannot be satisfied by only one speaker. Moreover, textual emphases of italics and even font changes demonstrate different voices. Such qualitative considerations certainly complicate out-sounding *Zong!*; instead of being a hindrance, however, these formal nuances encourage the reader to hear the many voices embodied on the page, listen attentively, and respond in kind. When out-sounding this textual material and the unsounds, the reader also finds their own voice among the chorus. "One of the strongest 'voices' in the *Zong!* text," Philip suggests,

> is that of someone who appears to be white, male, and European. Had I approached this "story" in the manner of wanting to write the story about the *Zong* and the events

> surrounding its fateful journey, I would not have chosen a white, male, European voice as one of the primary voices in this work. My "authorial intention" would have impelled me toward other voices. And for very good reason. (*Z!* 204–5)

Philip also mentions this white male voice in her lecture for The Poetry Society: "I don't know if he's a captain" or "if he's an officer on board," but she unequivocally states: "I did not want that voice in there" (PS 16:33). Over the course of the narrative, however, "He jumps overboard… and what that person was doing was saying…. Something has to die, and that he realized he had to join the victims" (PS 16:33). Through this example Philip demonstrates that even unwelcome voices can be revelatory: "Out of the wreckage comes something new," Philip ruminates, "*Zong!* is a part of that" (PS 16:34). With any out-sounding, typographical emphases affect pitch, volume, timbre, voice(s), and accents. *Zong!* is dynamic in its multilingual polyvocality. Additionally, out-sounding compels the reader to find a way through the work.

The murders aboard the *Zong* are told and retold (or untold, as Philip would say, especially in reference to unsounds). Content is recapitulated. This repetition causes the reader to question how the out-sounding of similar content may differ. Reiteration of material in this way is a feature of the traditional musical form of a fugue: "In the musical sense of the word, *Zong!* is a counterpointed, fugal antinarrative in which several strands are simultaneously at work. In the classic, fugal form the theme is stated then reiterated in second, third, and subsequent voices. In a similar fashion *Zong!* is a sustained repetition or reiteration of various themes, phrases and voices, albeit fragmented" (*Z!* 204).[94] This conceptual framework functions both literally in form and metaphorically in the text's themes. In terms of metaphorical resonance, Philip reflects on

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[94] "One of the pieces of music that sustained the 'writing' of this work was *Spem in Alium*, a forty-voice motet by Thomas Tallis employing five choirs of eight voices. Antiphonal in nature, it prefigures in its form and texture the later fugue" (*Z!* 204).

the psychological definition of "fugue": "referring to a state of amnesia in which the individual, his or her subjectivity having been destroyed, becomes alienated from him- or herself. It is a state that can be as brief as a few hours or as lengthy as several years" (*Z!* 204). The *Gregson v. Gilbert* case is the inciting document that induces a fugue state, "serving as a mechanism for erasure and alienation" (*Z!* 204). The Africans aboard the *Zong* were not seen as people; they were viewed as property, legally. Each of their identities and individual personhoods were erased in the insurance claim. Philip contends that the fragmenting and re-writing required to create *Zong!* remedy the source text: "the original text becomes a fugal palimpsest through which *Zong!* is allowed to heal the original text of its fugal amnesia" (Z*!* 204). While out-sounding—accounting for various timbres and voices—the reader breathes the words out and begins to piece together a narrative, one that had previously silenced so many voices. An out-sounding of an excerpt from p. 103 of *Ratio* is particularly challenging:

the deed is it one
or
many how
do we
praise the
dead a job
well done the
captain says the
pain the
pain *le pain le* *pain el pan* pant
pant & paint
it do i
have your
ear i rave i

After posing the question of "the deed" being one or many, the narrative voice queries: "how / do we / praise the / dead." This complicated phrasing calls for the reader to consider the context of this work and the dark undertone of "praise"—does this mean to praise the lives of those lost or praise their demise? And who is the "we" that is engaged in adoration? Moreover,

the next phrase reads “a job / well done,” which is followed by “the / captain says.” Does this “job well done” refer to “the deed” or to the “praise?” No one ought to be congratulated for murdering slaves. Philip challenges the reader by occasionally putting them in the position of victimizer / murderer. As seen in this passage, such shifts can occur as quickly as one half-page or even one phrase to the next. After the “pain,” “le pain,” “el pain,” “pant,” and “paint” that follows the captain’s praise, there is an eerie and omnipotent phrase: “ i / have your / ear.” The “i” and “your” are ambiguous, as with many other pronouns throughout *Zong!*, but the reader can acknowledge that the narrator has their “ear” and has been shaping their reception of sound throughout the work. So often readers (and literary analyses) are limited by a myopic lens of self-actualization, but out-sounding compels readers to look beyond their internalized, insular sounding to attend to voices that are different from their own and tell narratives at contrast with their lived experiences. Out-sounding *Zong!* forces a reader to recognize their interconnectedness to (or even estrangement from) others.

There is a curious, unexpected qualitative element throughout *Os* and on the last page of *Ferrum*: footnotes (fig. 33 and bottom right panel of fig. 35)—a series of names submerged beneath the footnote separator. Philip deliberately positions these names below the erasure poem’s main text. In *Notanda*, she reflects on the names’ placement and purpose:

> *The Africans on board the* Zong *must be named. They will be ghostly footnotes floating below the text —'under water . . . a place of consequence’*
>
> *Idea at heart of the footnotes in general is acknowledgement—someone else was here before—in* Zong! *footnote equals the footprint.*
>
> *Footprints of the African on board the* Zong. (*Z!* 200)

The names are presented in the same typeface as the main text, but the font size is smaller. Throughout the *Os* section, these nominal footnotes are a consistent presence. Following *Os*, the names disappear until the final page of *Ferrum*, the last page of *Zong!* (see bottom right panel of fig. 35). In this iteration of the names, the footnoted material rises to meet the main text—separated only by a thin rule. The names are larger than that of the main text and in an italicized, decorative font. Thus, *Zong!* closes by focusing on the names and the legacies of those lives lost.

It is difficult to know how one ought to out-sound this footnoted material. These smaller, footnoted names could be out-sounded as whispers below the main text; later, with the shift in size and font on p. 173, the reader could be proclaiming the names more loudly than anything performed throughout the whole poem. Certainly, the footnotes are an interesting element in a work that transforms legal discourse into historiographic elegy. In The Poetry Society lecture, Philip read an excerpt of *Zong!* before leading the whole audience in an out-sounding of *Os*. When she arrived at the footnotes, she began to chant and to sing the names. There is power in such remembrance; Philip's performance is reminiscent of chanting holy texts. However, there is no indication to the reader that the names are to be sung in an out-sounding. When a reader encounters the names as footnotes, they might initially question if that text should even be out-sounded. These footnotes highlight another uncertainty regarding *Zong!*: it resists a singular, knowable, "proper" out-sounding.[95] Hearing Philip's reading while observing the projected text, the footnote separator functions as a dividing line between realms. Moving below the rule shifts

[95] Personally, I would feel uncomfortable performing the footnotes in the way Philip does due to my positionality as a white reader. There is a history held in these names and a tradition from which I am separated. Philip reads these names as one mourning the passing of family while celebrating their lives. The systemic racism that caused this trauma (and persists generationally) is not something that I have experienced. Out-sounding this poem is such an acute reminder of the injustices that continue; *Zong!*, in its many meanings, is a call for action.

the reader into a place below the waves—a place of memory. And although the text appears ordinary, even diminutive in the notes, these names contain within them melody and remembrance when out-sounded in the manner of Philip's performance.

Although Philip did not read from the last page of *Zong!* during The Poetry Society event (though one can imagine the dynamism of her reading), she led an out-sounding wherein she asked readers to unmute their microphones and begin reading from any point in the provided pages of *Zong!*. The polyphony was overwhelming. Due to the limits (or opportunities) with virtual technology, Zoom will prioritize louder sounds and lessen "background" sounds because the video streaming platform is built to facilitate a single speaker—and minimize distracting noises. But even a background sound (if louder than the single voice) will overtake that primary speaker. As such, this online reading erupted in sounds in which voices were cut short, louder voices burst through only to be cut off by others, and a steady murmuring would suddenly be the loudest outsound. In an in-person out-sounding *Zong!*, people might also hear different things in various ways according to the reader's volume and placement (as well as the room's acoustics). Necessarily, the reception of the poem will vary per performance. Following the shared Zoom out-sounding, after the silence and applause, one participant complained about the cacophony. Philip responded: "Having a negative reaction is also part of it. It is also welcome because this is not something nice. It's not something pretty. It's not something beautiful" (PS 16:29). Moreover, Philip connected this participant's semantic confusion with that of the slaves aboard the *Zong*, who did not understand their death sentences being shouted at them.

Out-sounding generates alternate meanings beyond those derived from a solely visible reception because the names are heard—memorialized—but only temporarily as the sound fades from the air. Even memory is transient, the reader is reminded. When the material is out-

sounded, readers become implicated in the narrative. Their voices are the voices among the drowned and the spared. (This complex positionality is explored in greater depth in the Unsound section that follows.) When the poem is removed from the page, however, the reader cannot necessarily see the footnoted names nor the visual spacing. Much would be lost if the reader were only to experience an aural reading of *Zong!*; in-sounding (to see the textual / linguistic complexity and observe the breath) as well as the out-sounding (to perform the words orally or aurally receive them is an act of bearing witness) are both significant encounters with *Zong!* that offer different effects and outcomes. Both in-sounding and out-sounding are vital to the poem's becoming.

Philip advocates for out-sounding *Zong!* so fervently that she performs (and hosts) annual readings. The "untangling," as she calls it, has taken place both in-person and virtually:[96]

> The untangling is where we let the story tell itself to see where it takes us, to see how, maybe, it doesn't tell itself. How it allows the breath and silences to work with it. The silence is linked to what we can never tell, what we don't know. That's not something that sits well with Western approaches to knowledge capacity, where we feel that we have to find out everything we need to know. (BAS)

Philip's annual out-soundings often incorporate drummers and dancers. Durational readings demonstrate how out-sounding *Zong!* is a sonic experience that engages the whole body. The words, fragments, and fugal structure of the piece compel the reader to movement.[97] Philip

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[96] *ZONG!* Global 2020 consisted of readings performed internationally. For 2021, there was a 24-hour long event. Pre-pandemic, Philip conducted these readings in person.

[97] Philip's YouTube channel features previous readings, including *ZONG!* Global 2020 recordings that are made public on specific occasions (i.e., the date of the massacre), see www.youtube.com/channel/UCx2eYgKXXb6Xv9qvw-nMrwg. For *Zong!* reading info, see zong.world/.

mentions how exhausting the readings can be, going from cover to cover: "The last section, *Ferrum*, is a very long difficult section, we're usually reading it when it's very late at night and we're down to … about five or six people with a drummer who tries to keep us going…. Am I reading to make meaning or am I just reading these fragments? It doesn't make sense any longer, and that is part of what the experience was, and still is" (PS 16:30–16:31). Many readings are facilitated by Philip, but she is rarely a solo performer. Instead, she encourages many readers to out-sound the work, but each person should acknowledge their own positionality and show respect for the memorializing of the lost. "The cathedral of breath within the text" (BAS) is what structures and sustains the reader in durational performances, and breath, as the next section details, is essential to *Zong!*.

ZONG!'s Unsound: "At the heart of Zong! is breath and breathing"

Observing and analyzing unsound is all about asking after absence. *Zong!*'s aesthetic erasure is unusual because it is a complete reworking of the source document and a series of innovative arrangements. There are no specific aspects of *Gregson v. Gilbert* that are un-sounded; instead, the text is a completely reimagined set of words created out of the legal case. As previously discussed, however, the intentional spacing on *Zong!*'s pages directs the reader's pacing and breath in any sounding: *Zong!* is "all to do with the breath with the words, seeking space…. One of the most important things happening in *Zong!* is not the words. It's the spaces between the words – the breath" (BAS). In the method for examining unsound, there are three means of un-sounding: (1) space in and around the poem, (2) removal of text by means of erasure or redaction, and (3) absence of expected content. In comparison with the other concrete poems and erasure poems under discussion, *Zong!* utilizes each of these methods in unique ways.

Firstly, in terms of the space in and around the poem, Philip makes it clear that the space provides the governing principle and structure. No phrase appears directly on top or over another. In the sections following *Os*, the effect of this principle vividly sets the phrases / fragments apart from one another. Secondly, *Zong!* so dramatically erases *Gregson v. Gilbert* that, even though all its elements are there, it would be nearly impossible to reconstruct that legal document from *Zong!*'s material. There is even reduction at the level of words. The fragments are erasures of full words; this absence of expected content is how the poem purposely subverts meaning, embraces fragmentation, and invites chaos. Each reader's expectation will vary; however, arguably, readers approach a poem with some assumptions of the text's readability and interpretability. In its polyphony and polyglotism, the complexity of *Zong!*'s linguistic material and the intricacy of the text's arrangement may make a reader feel that this carefully designed text must be similarly as logical and ordered in its semantic content. But there is an absence of a singular "meaning" as the reader attempts to connect disparate fragments. Philip addresses the problem of meaning in *Zong!* in *Notanda*: "I come—albeit slowly—to the understanding that *Zong!* is hauntological; it is a work of haunting, a wake of sorts, where the spectres of the undead make themselves present. And only in not-telling can the story be told; only in the space where it's not told—literally in the margins of the text, a sort of negative space, a space not so much of non-meaning as anti-meaning" (*Z!* 201). "Meaning" is effectively erased in *Zong!*; instead, Philip opts for "anti-meaning" because the horrific depth of the historical event cannot be fathomed. In its aesthetic erasure, *Zong!* demands the recognition of persistent political erasure and calls for the reader to be part of the reckoning. Readers are called to re-examine their own positionality and possible complicity in systemic political erasure. In- / Out- / Un-Sounding processes highlight inequities and incite readers from complacency to action, forced to confront their own

racial backgrounds, prejudices, privileges, and biases. Similar to *Zong!*'s call to re-examine reading processes (passive in-sounding to active in-sounding), *Zong!* compels people to discern how systemic racism must be confronted without flinching.

In terms of the immediate impact of un-sounding, there are several potential effects on the reader. Philip claims that "when I was writing [*Zong!*] I had a sense that I was the advocate of those who had died. I was advocating on their behalf. I think that's what the text is doing, advocating on their behalf, but not in the legal sense" (BAS). Un-sounding and breathing the spaces could be a form of radical hospitality, an idea introduced by Philip in "The Ga(s)p" (2018), an essay in which she examines the acceptance of alterity and the erasure of women's bodies. Breath—circular breathing—is central to human existence:

> WE ALL BEGIN life in water
>
> We all begin life because someone once breathed for us
>
> Until we breathe for ourselves
>
> Someone breathes for us
>
> Everyone has had someone—a woman—breathe for them
>
> Until that first ga(s)p
>
> For air [.] (TG 31)

Moreover, she reiterates that this breathing is contingent: "We begin life in a prepositional relationship with breath: someone breathes *for* us. We continue that prepositional relationship, breathing for ourselves until we can no longer do so, and it appears that this most fundamental of acts is always a contingent one—breathing for, with, instead, into" (TG 31).

Breath and breathing structure the pages of *Zong!*. The immediate effect upon readers when they out-sound *Zong!* is that they physically take breath in and out to perform the words.

And in doing so, questions begin to proliferate. Where do the readers fit into this narrative (observers, witnesses, participants)? In what ways are they co-conspirators with the perpetrators? In sounding *Zong!* and breathing the unsounds, the reader could become a life-sustainer of the lost—if even for the reading's duration. *Zong!* becomes a haunting as the lost voices resurface.

In seeking the broader significances of unsound, one can turn to the many elements in *Zong!* that highlight the nature of memory:

> Our entrance to the past is through memory—either oral or written. And water. In this case saltwater. Sea water. And, as the ocean appears to be the same yet is constantly in motion, affected by tidal movements, so too this memory appears stationary yet is shifting always. Repetition drives the event and the memory simultaneously, becoming a haunting, becoming spectral in its nature. (*Z!* 201)

As the reader bears witness to the past and carries the story to the future, repetition becomes a ritual. "I think that it's through ritual and ceremony," Philip conjectures, "that we can heal ourselves and honour our ancestors" (BAS). The endnotes of *Zong!* reveal that the actual name of the ship was *Zorg*, which is a Dutch word meaning "care"; an error was made when the ship's name was repainted (*Z!* 208). The care and humanity absent aboard the *Zong* are now embedded in the unsound of *Zong!*. This is because Philip attends to the names of those lost and (un)tells their stories; to those who had been treated as property, she restores their humanity. In the breath—one of the most significant instances of unsound in *Zong!*—Philip and the performer breathe reciprocally and show compassion for the lost.

Zong!'s title is marked by its exclamation point. Although silent (a mark of unsound), it necessarily shapes the in-sounding of the title for the reader and the out-sounding of it for a performer. The exclamation point suggests an unknowable yet heightened tone. There is an

uncertainty to its purpose, but like a reading of *Zong!*, there is power to its effect: "*Zong!* is chant! Shout! And ululation!" Philip declares, "*Zong!* is moan! Mutter! Howl! And shriek! *Zong!* is 'pure utterance.' *Zong!* is Song! And Song is what has kept the soul of the African intact" when they 'want(ed) water . . . sustenance . . . preservation'" (*Z!* 207). When readers sound *Zong!* and breathe its unsounds, they can understand in some small way the healing power and preservation of that song. *Zong!* speaks to brokenness but also to resistance and restoration—themes that also animate Jordan Abel's *The Place of Scraps*.

Jordan Abel: Opening "a space of disruption, lament, resistance, and inquiry"[98]

A queer Nisga'a writer who grew up in Vancouver, Jordan Abel's creative works include *The Place of Scraps* (2013), *Un/Inhabited* (2015), *Injun* (2016), and *NISHGA* (2021). He has been nominated and received awards for these works: *The Place of Scraps* won the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize and was a finalist for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award in 2014. *Un/Inhabited* was named "One of the best 75 books of 2015" (CBC Books) and had "One of 15 best CanLit covers of 2015" (CBC Books). Furthermore, Abel's *Injun* won the 2017 Griffin Poetry Prize. *NISHGA* was nominated for the Hilary Weston Prize in 2021.[99] His work can also be found in numerous journals and literary magazines.[100] Visual poetry has been displayed in "exhibitions at the Polygon Gallery, UNITT/PITT Gallery, and the Oslo Pilot Project Room in Oslo, Norway" (jordanabel.ca). Abel is also immersed in academia: he completed a doctorate at

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[98] This quotation is taken from Ken Babstock's review of Abel's *Injun (*2016).
[99] In October 2021, McClelland & Stewart announced that it will be publishing Abel's next work, *EMPTY SPACES*, "about Indigenous futurity and Indigenous survivance" (CMD Press Release), which "attempts to understand land through fiction." This "novel of colonization with no characters" (CMD) should be released in 2023.
[100] More information about Abel's publications can be found on his website, www.jordanabel.ca.

Simon Fraser University and is now an assistant professor in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta where he teaches Indigenous Literatures and Creative Writing (jordanabel.ca). In both his creative and academic work, Abel grapples with the intersectionality of the colonial erasure of Indigeneity, the significance of land / place, the intergenerational trauma of residential schools, and his self-identification as an urban Indigenous person.[101]

The Place of Scraps: "Not even a remnant remains"[102]

Abel uses Marius Barbeau's two-volume work entitled *Totem Poles* (1950) as the main source text for erasure in producing *The Place of Scraps*. As in *Zong!*'s textual enfolding of *Gregson v. Gilbert*, *The Place of Scraps*'s direct juxtaposition interrogates past political erasures. More specifically, Abel enacts the complex relationship between Indigenous cultures and ethnography by addressing Barbeau's complicity in the appropriation of the totem poles and Abel's own response to visiting the totems in the Royal Ontario Museum both as a child and as an adult. *The Place of Scraps* contextualizes Barbeau's research while also simultaneously critiquing its outcomes through poetic erasure. In *Totem Poles*, Barbeau argues that "[n]ative arts, however ancient or recent, are now a feature of the past" (xii). Although the prominence of

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[101] Claire Omhovère explains that Abel introduced himself as "both an intergenerational survivor of residential schools and an urban Indigenous person" (13) to the participants at the fourth TransCanada Conference (2017).

[102] From the introduction to Marius Barbeau's *Totem Poles*: "Not even a remnant remains of the famous clusters of former days at Massett, Yan, and Skidegate, among the Haidas of the Queen Charlotte Islands. The Kaigani-Haida totems of Prince of Wales Island have vanished or have been removed to other locations in public parks. Scarcely any are left among the Bella Coolas, the Kwakiutls, and the Nootkas, and in a few years even these will have disappeared. Of the fifty or sixty Haida poles still standing along the sea-coast in several deserted villages visited by the author in 1947, only about a dozen could be removed for preservation elsewhere. The rest are in an advanced state of decay" (1).

totem pole carving may be in the past, art by First Nations people is ever-present and ongoing. Abel's *The Place of Scraps* demonstrates the galvanizing relevance of such art and poetry today.

"The totem poles of the north Pacific Coast of America, in British Columbia and Alaska, are known all over the world," Barbeau notes in the introduction to *Totem Poles* (1950); "the excellence of their decorative style at its best is nowhere surpassed by any other form of aboriginal art, and as an expression of native personality and craftsmanship they are impressive and unique" (1). Barbeau, an early-twentieth century "salvage" anthropologist,[103] examined Indigenous Peoples' cultures in the Pacific northwest, which includes Abel's ancestral Nisga'a Nation. In "Erasing History," Stan Mir addresses the ongoing effects of Barbeau's studies: "Like much early anthropological work, Barbeau's is controversial. Andrew Nurse, a Canadian scholar, claims that Barbeau's work encouraged the Canadian government to view First Nations tribes, such as the Huran-Wyandot [sic], as assimilated into white society. This view became the basis for the dismantling of the Huron-Wyandot reserve in Ontario, Canada" (Mir). In his day, however, Barbeau received nothing but accolades: significant awards included the Lorne Pierce Medal from the Royal Society of Canada (1950), and he was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1967).[104] As part of his study of Indigenous culture and art, Barbeau sought to preserve totem poles and other crafts. In his fervour and white privilege, however, he advocated

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[103] The term "salvage anthropology" relates to "salvage ethnography," which Craig Calhoun defines in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (2002): "salvage ethnography is an explicit attempt to document the rituals, practices, and myths of cultures facing extinction from dislocation or modernization. Because the objects of such study are often already gone, it relies heavily on second-hand accounts and reminiscences rather than on direct or participant observation." Salvage ethnographers might collect only data and images; salvage anthropologists acquire artifacts and human remains.

[104] This is information is available in the Governor-General of Canada archives: archive.gg.ca/honours/search-recherche/honours-desc.asp?lang=e&TypeID=orc&id=1814.

the removal of religious and artistic pieces from the land where they were crafted. Only preservation in museums would suffice, he argued, as Mir summarizes:

> Anthropological study involves disruption and sometimes, as with the Huron-Wyandot, dispersal. In the case of the Nisga'a, Barbeau arranged in the 1920s for the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto to place four large Nisga'a totem poles in their permanent collection. Each pole tells a family story, which is to say each pole holds profound significance to Nisga'a people.

Spanning 255 pages, *The Place of Scraps* pieces together a personal and gutting critique of Barbeau's salvage anthropology. Although no labels or titles appear above individual texts, there are five recurrent types in *The Place of Scraps*: totem pole pictures with linguistic material repeated in the negative space; excerpts from Barbeau's text; the erasures of Barbeau's text; "journal" entries from the poet's perspective; and the erasures of the poet's entries. The first type is the Totem Poems, as I will refer to them; each one is a "mixed media" work of images and text. These poems are often markers to introduce a focus, theme, or excerpt in the following pages (see fig. 37). The closing pages of the book include an entire subsection of Totem Poems. The second type, the Barbeau Excerpts, consist of several paragraphs taken directly from *Totem Poles*; a citation is included under each excerpt (see fig. 38). The Barbeau Erasures follow; there are often a series of erasures performed on each excerpt—revealing a new narrative once buried in the source text (see figures 39–40). There are also Journal Entries written in third-person narration describing the life and experiences of the poet (see figures 41–42); the latter are also subject to erasure (see fig. 43). Section 1 (pp. 1–152) is composed of these texts in conversation with one another—telling different stories (counter-narratives). In the first part of Section 2 (2a, pp. 153–208), Abel's erasures and entries are integrated in previously established text types. A

Totem Poem, for instance, is blended with a Barbeau Excerpt (see fig. 44). In that example, totems occlude text. Throughout Section 2a, text is overlaid on text from different excerpts and entries, creating a verbal palimpsest. At times, it is difficult to identify the origin of text that is being erased. Instead of Section 1's dialogic contrasts, Section 2a suggests a simultaneous sounding of these different types of texts. Sections 2b (pp. 209–234) and 2c (pp. 235–255) also function differently from the previous ones, and I will discuss them in greater detail in the Outsound and Unsound sections. The sounds throughout these sections are all connected intimately with one another: the reader must question their own sounding (both in- and out-) in relation to the textual material. In the Journal Entries, Abel questions his own role in this larger narrative; he also erases his own work.

The Place of Scraps needs an engaged reader to sound its poems;[105] in doing so, the reader participates in the examination of anthropology, ethnography, colonialization, and erasures of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Time and again, the reader must interrogate their own relationship to each of these discourses and relations of force. Yet the reader is also in the position to sound and thus produce contemporary stories from old ones; these new narratives demonstrate the vitality of the work and its potential for generating future stories. As Rita Wong emphasizes, "English litters the sky, its typed letters eventually demolished into illegible insects that flit above archival photo-testimony to land / people.… A surprising and necessary book of poetry, *The Place of Scraps* is as humbly unstoppable as the next breath you take in and release back out to the world" (*TPS* front matter [n.p.]). In- / out- / and un-sounding processes can be

[105] Eric Ostrowidzki argues that the reader's interpretive task is difficult but rewarding: "Abel has broken up Barbeau's text to be examined like any other artifact for its cluse of the workings, interactions and exchanges, and contradictions between settler society and Aboriginal society. Yet the 'burden of interpretation' that Abel places on his reader is worth the effort, for there are many moments of insight and beauty" (*TPS* front matter [n.p.]).

used with any text, but the recontextualization and reappropriation in the performance of *The Place of Scraps* reveals the urgency and necessity for action in the wake of widespread and systemic political erasure.

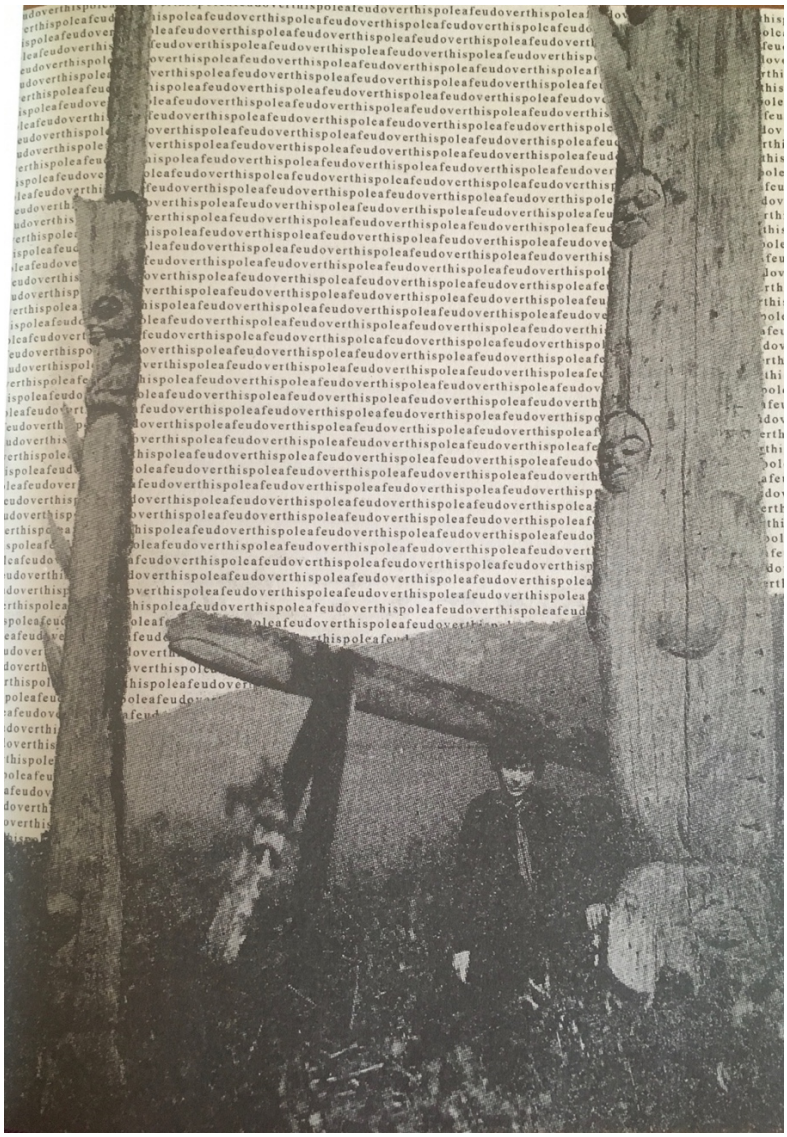

Figure 37. Page 3, Jordan Abel, *The Place of Scraps*, Talonbooks, 2013.

"*A feud over this pole*. Old chief Mountain or Sakau'wan, some time before his death in 1928, gave an account of the rivalry between the Eagle-Raven clan and the Killer-Whales or Gispewudwades of Nass River, over the size of their new totems.[1] In summary here it is.

The Killer-Whale chief, Sispagut, who headed the faction of the earlier occupants on the river, announced his determination to put up the tallest pole ever seen in the country. Its name was to be Fin-of-the-Killer-Whale. However, instead of selecting for its carver Hladerh whose right it was to do the work, he chose Oyai of the canyon. Hladerh naturally felt slighted and confided his grudge to Sakau'wan, chief of the Eagles, and his friend. From then on the Eagles and the Wolves of their own day were to be closely allied, as the ancestors of both had moved in from Alaska and at one time had been allies.

[1] For a fuller account see *Alaska Beckons* by Marius Barbeau. The Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho and the Macmillan Company of Canada, 1947, pp. 127–136"

Marius Barbeau, *Totem Poles*, vol. 1 (1950), 29.

Figure 38. Page 5, *TPS*.

or Sakau'wan

and

Sispagut
the river
the country

the canyon

allied

by Marius Barbeau

his

new totems

his determination

his
Eagles and Wolves

an account
or
summary

was to be
carve d

from Alaska

his
his

their s[1] h is
h i s h
his i
s
H i s H i s
h i s
his his
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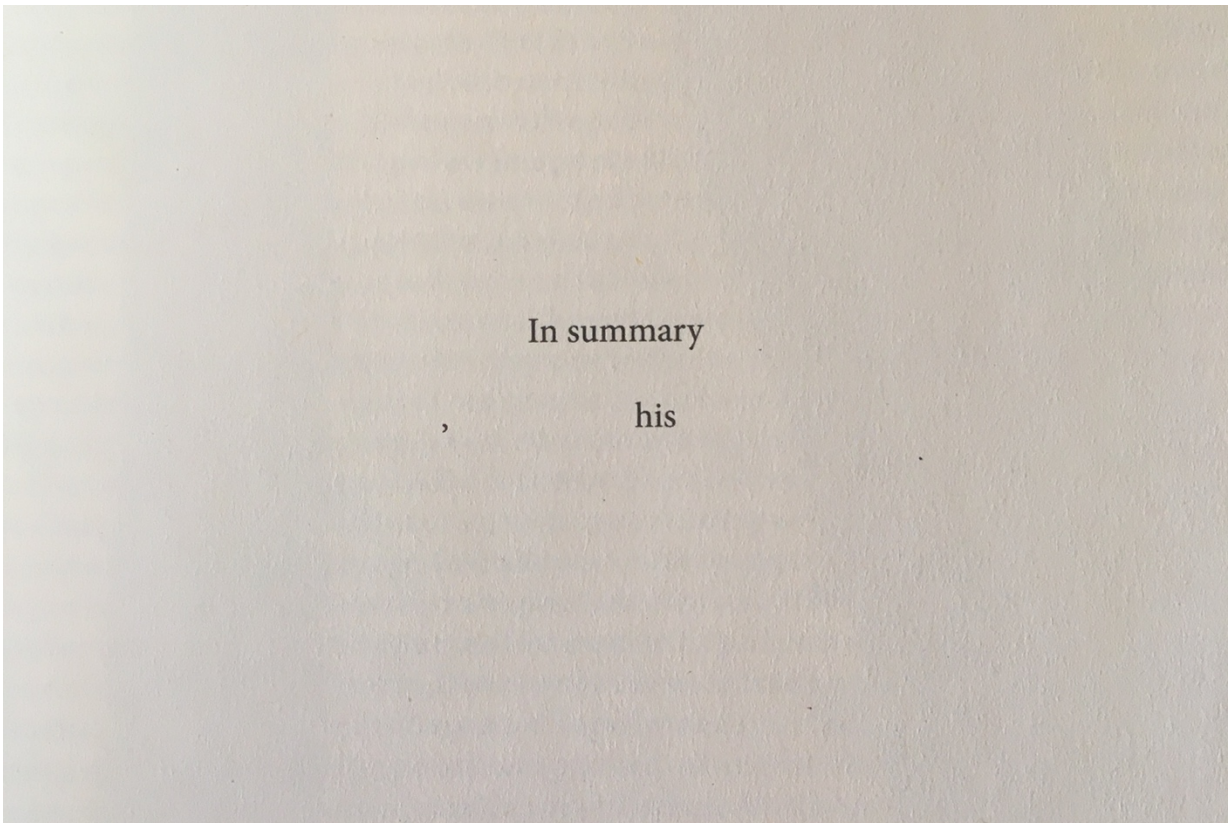
[1] For a fuller account see *Alaska Beckons* by Marius Barbeau.

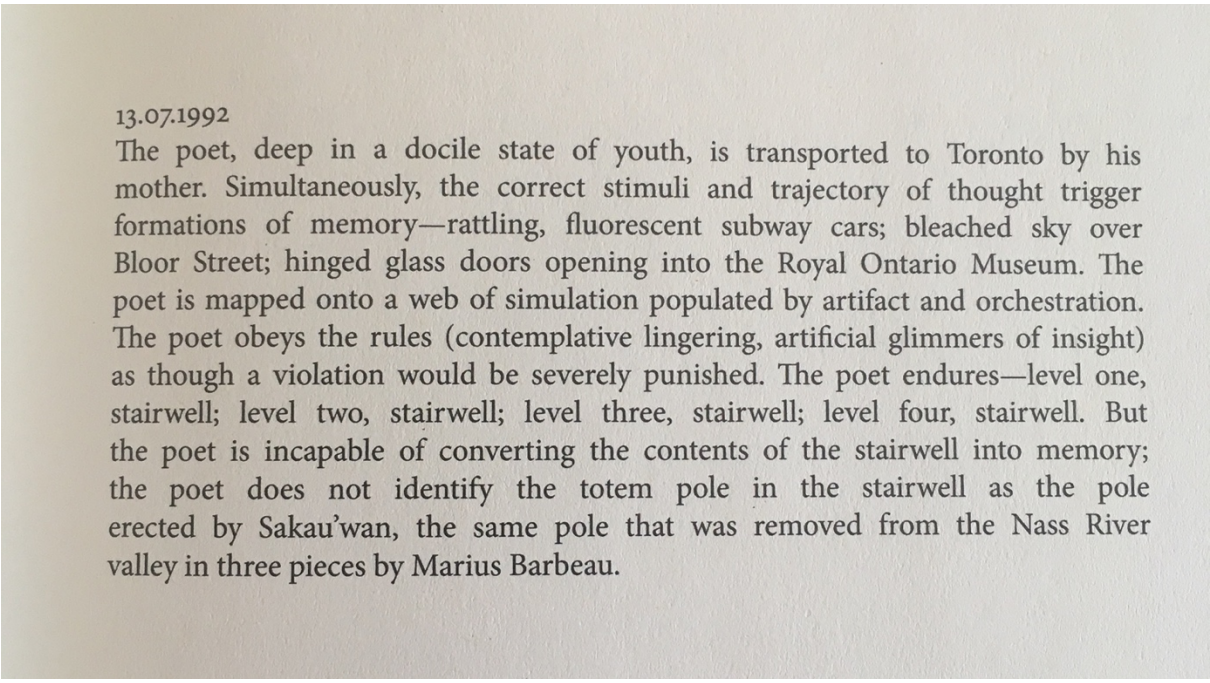
Figure 39. Pages 7, 9, 11, and 13, *TPS*.



In summary

, his

Figure 40. Close-up of page 15, *TPS*.



13.07.1992
The poet, deep in a docile state of youth, is transported to Toronto by his mother. Simultaneously, the correct stimuli and trajectory of thought trigger formations of memory—rattling, fluorescent subway cars; bleached sky over Bloor Street; hinged glass doors opening into the Royal Ontario Museum. The poet is mapped onto a web of simulation populated by artifact and orchestration. The poet obeys the rules (contemplative lingering, artificial glimmers of insight) as though a violation would be severely punished. The poet endures—level one, stairwell; level two, stairwell; level three, stairwell; level four, stairwell. But the poet is incapable of converting the contents of the stairwell into memory; the poet does not identify the totem pole in the stairwell as the pole erected by Sakau'wan, the same pole that was removed from the Nass River valley in three pieces by Marius Barbeau.

Figure 41. Close-up of page 59, *TPS*.

25.12.2010

The poet exchanges gifts with his family; he gives his mother a book, a graphic novel, which is read immediately. The poet's mother identifies a section of the text and indicates that the page in question is a shared component of their past. The page depicts a totem pole in the Royal Ontario Museum. The poet's mother inquires if he remembers being there. But the poet does not hold that memory. The poet simply recalls the train car and the heat. Momentarily, the poet is surprised and ashamed that the pole that was removed from his ancestral village has also been excavated from his own memories. The situation defuses quickly, anticlimactically. But the recurrence of the totem pole in the poet's life combined with an apparent failure of memory carries with it a multiplicity of subtle emotions.

Figure 42. Close-up of page 63, *TPS*.

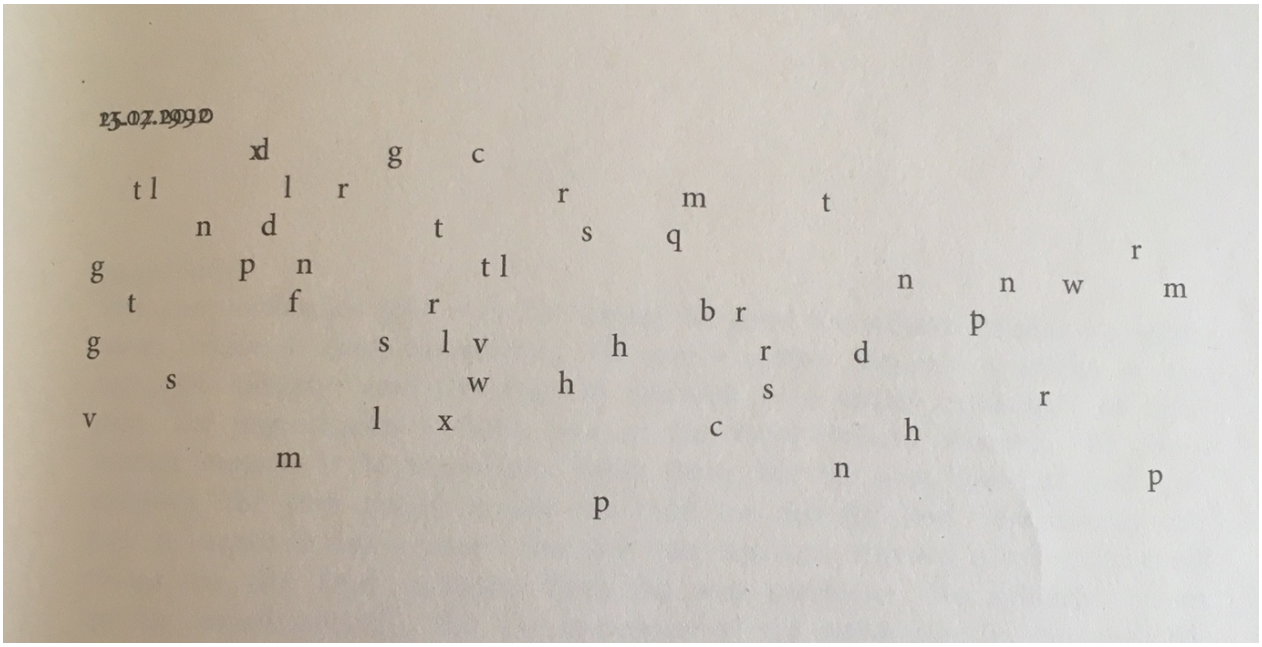
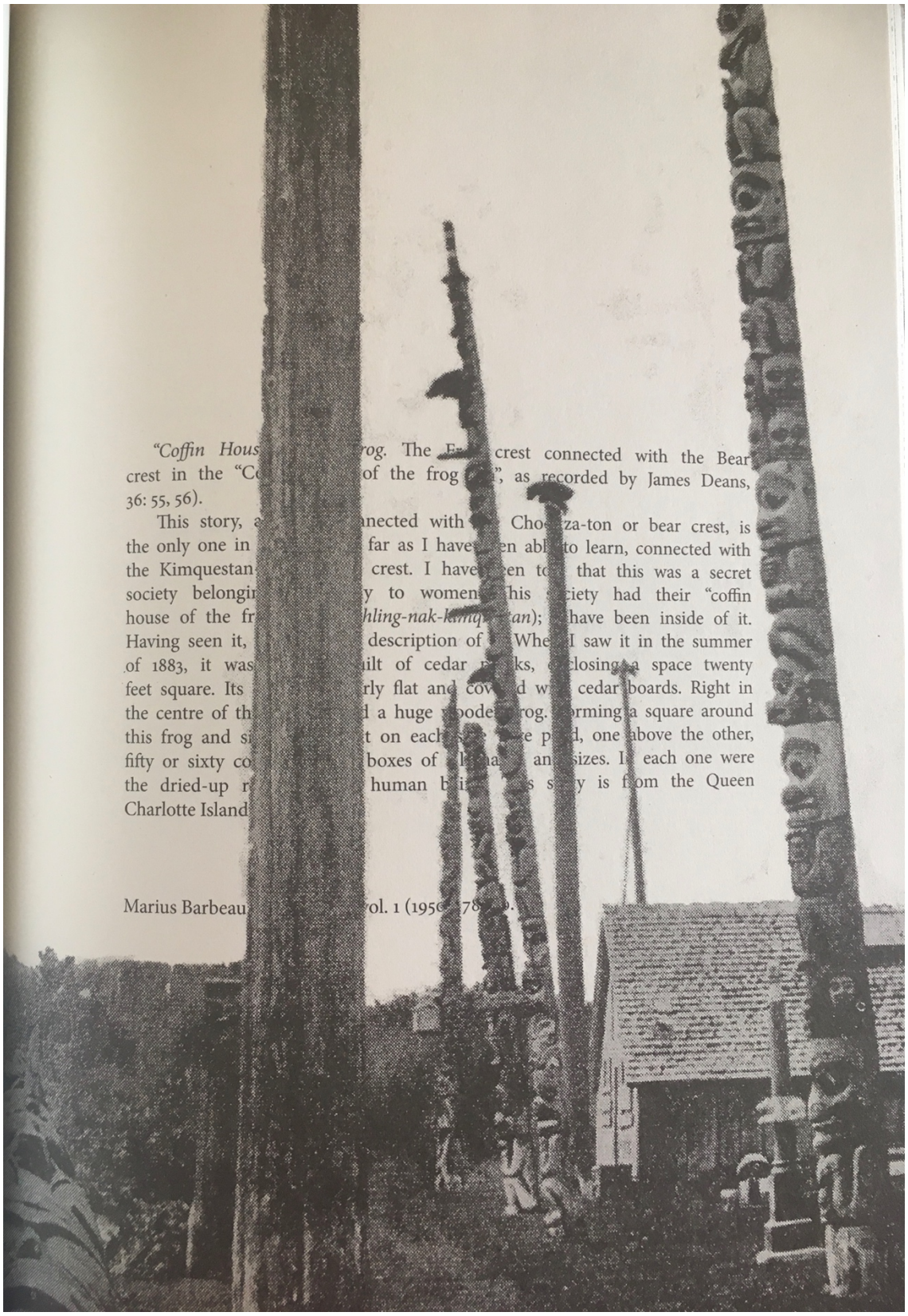


Figure 43. Close-up of page 61, *TPS*.



"Coffin Hous *rog.* The E crest connected with the Bear crest in the "C of the frog ", as recorded by James Deans, 36: 55, 56).

This story, a nected with Cho za-ton or bear crest, is the only one in far as I have en abl to learn, connected with the Kimquestan crest. I have en to that this was a secret society belongi y to women his ciety had their "coffin house of the fr *hling-nak-kimq tan*); have been inside of it. Having seen it, description of Whe I saw it in the summer of 1883, it was ilt of cedar ks, closing a space twenty feet square. Its rly flat and cov d w cedar boards. Right in the centre of th d a huge bode rog. rming a square around this frog and s t on each e p d, one above the other, fifty or sixty co boxes of an sizes. I each one were the dried-up r human b s s y is om the Queen Charlotte Island

Marius Barbeau ol. 1 (195 78 p.

Figure 44. Page 177, *TPS*.

INSOUND: "split open / fill in / what had happened / and / had become"

From the beginning of *The Place of Scraps*, the reader is immersed in a world of sounds juxtaposed with images. Since the images are not material that can be sounded traditionally, I will address them in the Unsound section. This section will focus instead on how the material and arrangement of *The Place of Scraps* allows for involuntary in-sounding but also compels active, voluntary in-sounding processes. The material throughout *The Place of Scraps* is both linguistic and non-linguistic. In the Totem Poems, words are legible and employ the alphabetic system of language. The Barbeau Excerpts and Journal Entries also are comprised of linguistic material that conforms to grammatical rules and lineation. Erasures of both the excerpts and the entries contain legible linguistic material. As the excerpts and entries are erased repeatedly, however, sentences break down into fragments and into individual words.

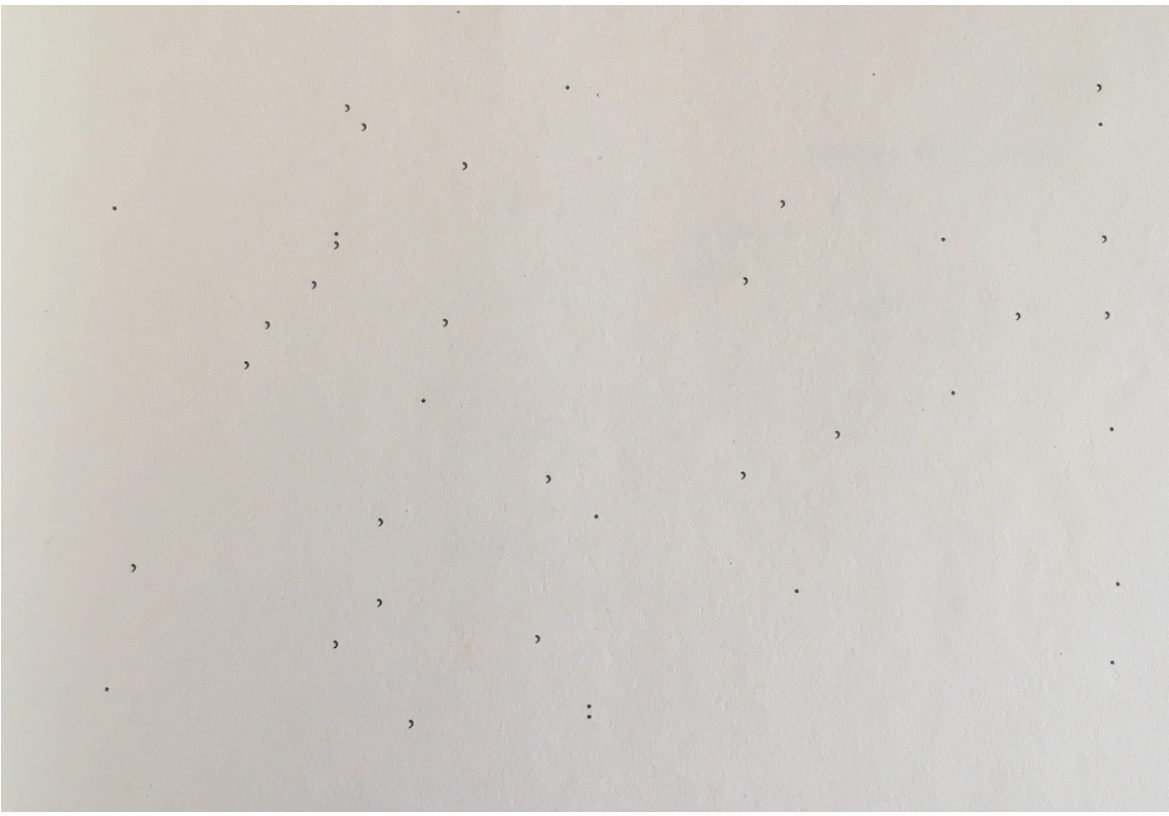


Figure 45. Close-up of page 69, *TPS*.

This fracturing continues until only singular phonemes remain. Also, there are instances when the punctuation and diacritical markings become the poem's sole text. When the erasure is the most drastic, the remaining punctuation becomes a visual art piece of non-linguistic material. One poignant example is the first erasure of Barbeau's Excerpt on "The Myth of the Dragonfly" (see fig. 45). These notes of punctuation and other markings do not produce sound in the same manner as linguistic material does. Even individual letters offer a suggested sounding by relying on phonics; however, a series of parentheses or periods or semi-colons causes the reader to stop their conventional reading practices. (Chapter 4 will dive more deeply into in-sounding non-linguistic material.) Throughout Abel's erasure work, there is a continual questioning of the relationship between text (codified ideas) and image (archival photos). If a picture is "worth a thousand words," as the adage goes, then what is a page of punctuation worth?

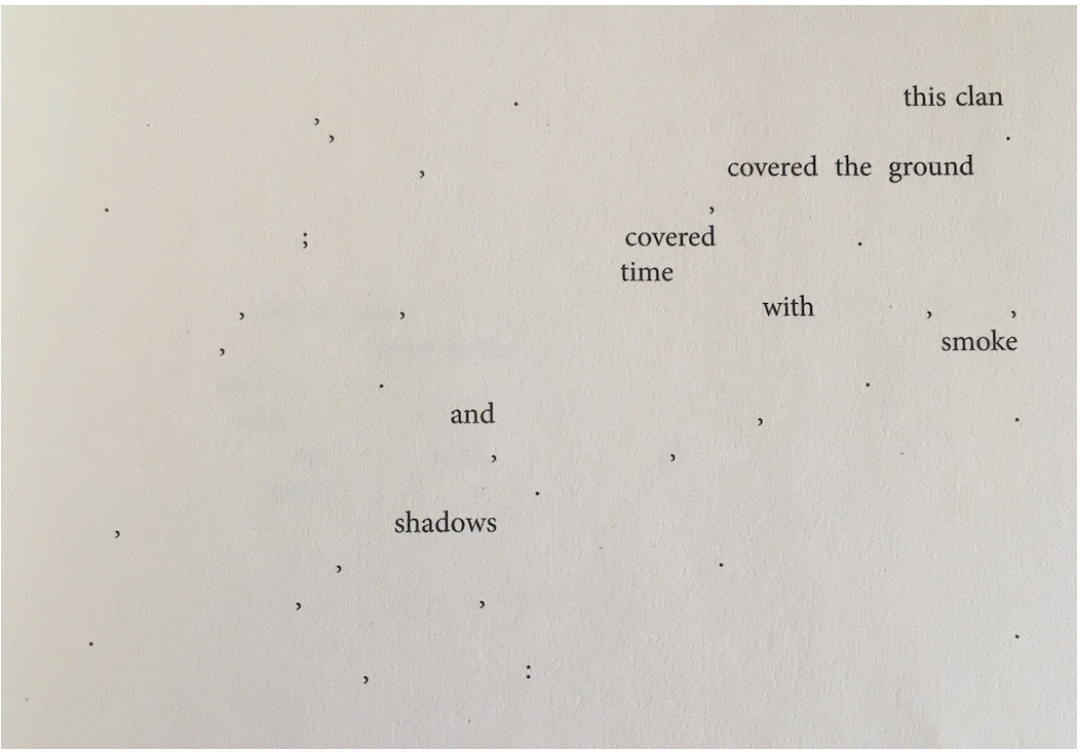


Figure 46. Close-up of page 71, *TPS*.

Some erasure poems employ both words and punctuation (see fig. 46), and in such works the punctuation can be understood contextually. But when the text is removed, and only the punctuation remains—the reader must use their knowledge of the purpose of these markings while also acknowledging their significance to the poem and its meaning(s). These scraps of material cause readers to think about breath (commas); relation (semi-colons); declarations and endings (periods); voices, speakers, and stories (quotation marks); asides, translation, and explanation (parentheses). For the non-linguistic elements, there is no formalized system or direction for sounding such materials. Although suggestions can be made due to the markings' grammatical significance, there is little to guide the reader in interpreting these poems.

Each of the different types of text contain legible material. As previously mentioned, when poems devolve into punctuation, they are not readable in the traditional sense of reading / sounding. Similar to McCaffery's troubling of the boundaries of legible and illegible, Abel's shifts in legibility challenge the reader to adjust their relationship to the language continually and grapple with their sense of sounding that material.

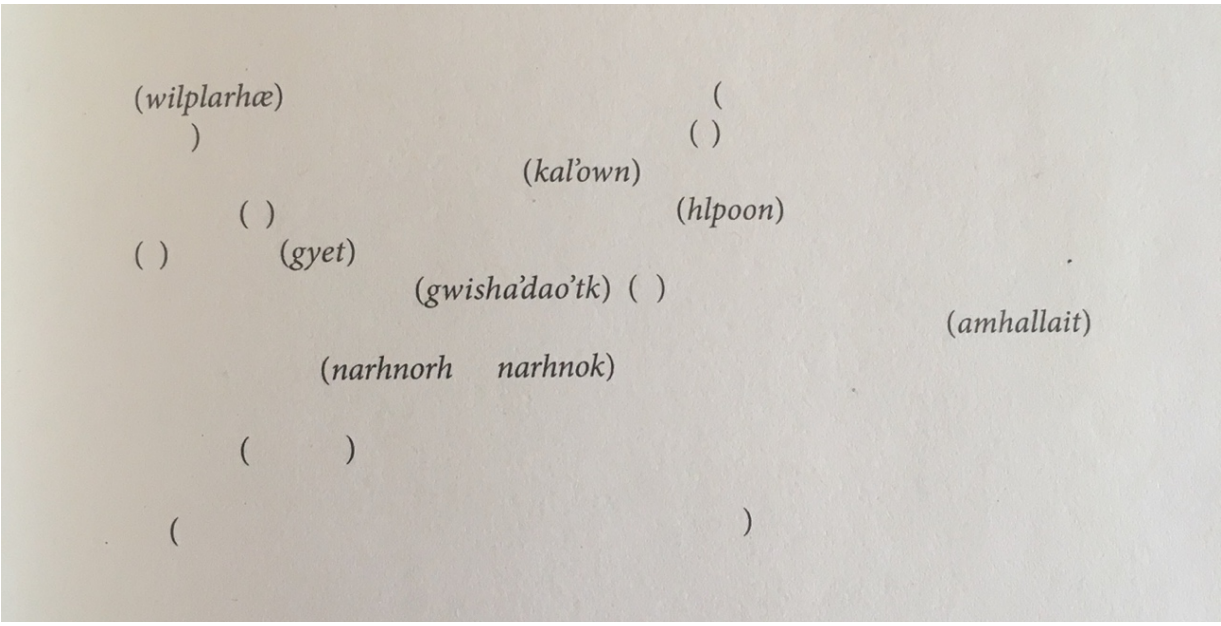

(*wilplarhæ*)
)
(
( )
(*kal'own*)
( )
(*hlpoon*)
( )
(*gyet*)
.
(*gwisha'dao'tk*) ( )
(*amhallait*)
(*narhnorh narhnok*)
(
)
(
)

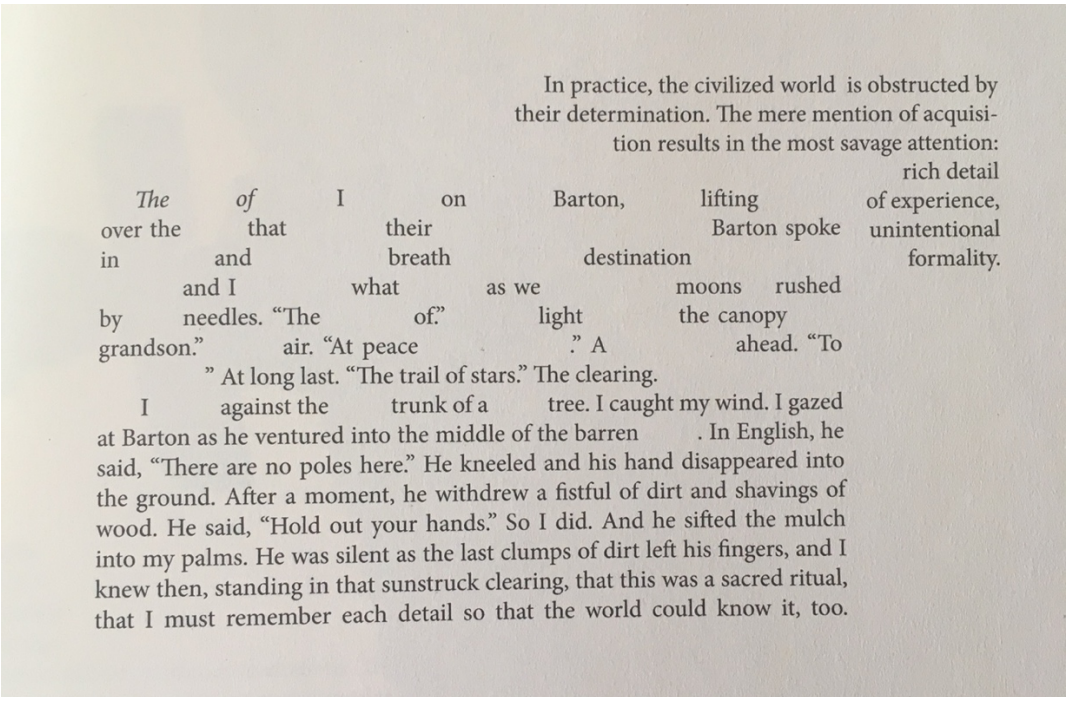
Figure 47. Close-up of page 49, *TPS*.

English is the primary language used in the poems, excerpts, entries, and erasures. Some words that are not English are likely Tsimshian, which is spoken by Tsimshian, Gitxsan, and Nisga'a people. These words are translated parenthetically. Erasures of such excerpts will often lead to the Indigenous languages remaining still subject to parentheses (see fig. 47).

In addressing the in-sounding of the poems, arrangement significantly affects the reading process. Each of the text types (at least within Section 1, where the types can be clearly delineated) have specific arrangements. Considering the content at the level of the phoneme / word, the Barbeau Excerpts and Journal Entries feature complete words. The Totem Poems also include whole words, but the script written across the negative space of the sky is in *scriptio continua*—with no break between words or phrases. For example, the first Totem Poem has the text "afeudoverthispole" (*TPS* 3) repeated in the space surrounding the archival photo of the totem (refer back to fig. 37). The erasures of both the excerpts and entries includes sentence fragments, whole words, single letters, and punctuation. This arrangement at the level of the phoneme changes throughout the different types of texts—and even more emphatically in the second section of the book. Section 2, in particular, contains poems that are comprised of letters stripped from their syntactical context. As the book unfolds, there is a trend toward fragmentation and conflation of textual types; this arrangement affects the in-sounding acutely. Initially, someone may feel comfortable when able to read the content of the poems without too much resistance to in-sounding. Also, in the beginning section, it is clear how the text is being erased since the words remain in the same place. A reader can easily flip back through the pages to see the context of the source text and see the development of the erasure. This ease of involuntary in-sounding allows the reader to receive the work's content passively. The effortless in-sounding of Barbeau's excerpts (on the whole) can lull the reader into complacent sounding.

Abel's introduction of erasure makes the in-sounding process more active. Subsequent dramatic erasures (as well as more radical changes to the text and images) jolt readers out of any involuntary in-sounding and force them to sound the content actively.

The non-fictional Barbeau Excerpts are placed in paragraphs with citational information included. The text is thus akin to a prose poem—fitting within the set margins and adhering to formal lineation. Similarly, the Journal Entries (dated at the top left) are arranged in conventional lines. These entries could also be categorized as prose poems because the text fits within specific margins (form) and concise diction is used (content). On the whole, the excerpts and entries encourage a traditional, Western left-right reading. The erasures, especially with the words fixed in the same physical location, facilitate an anglicized reading to guide the reader to in-sound the words in a normative order. This linear arrangement is altered in Section 2, when lines begin to stretch beyond expected borders and the poem seems to have a different gravitational pull—the text is not arranged around the same normative central point (see figures 48–49).



In practice, the civilized world is obstructed by their determination. The mere mention of acquisition results in the most savage attention: rich detail of experience, unintentional formality.

The *of* I on Barton, lifting
over the that their Barton spoke
in and breath destination
and I what as we moons rushed
by needles. "The of." light the canopy
grandson." air. "At peace ." A ahead. "To
" At long last. "The trail of stars." The clearing.

I against the trunk of a tree. I caught my wind. I gazed at Barton as he ventured into the middle of the barren . In English, he said, "There are no poles here." He kneeled and his hand disappeared into the ground. After a moment, he withdrew a fistful of dirt and shavings of wood. He said, "Hold out your hands." So I did. And he sifted the mulch into my palms. He was silent as the last clumps of dirt left his fingers, and I knew then, standing in that sunstruck clearing, that this was a sacred ritual, that I must remember each detail so that the world could know it, too.

Figure 48. Close-up of page 167, *TPS*.

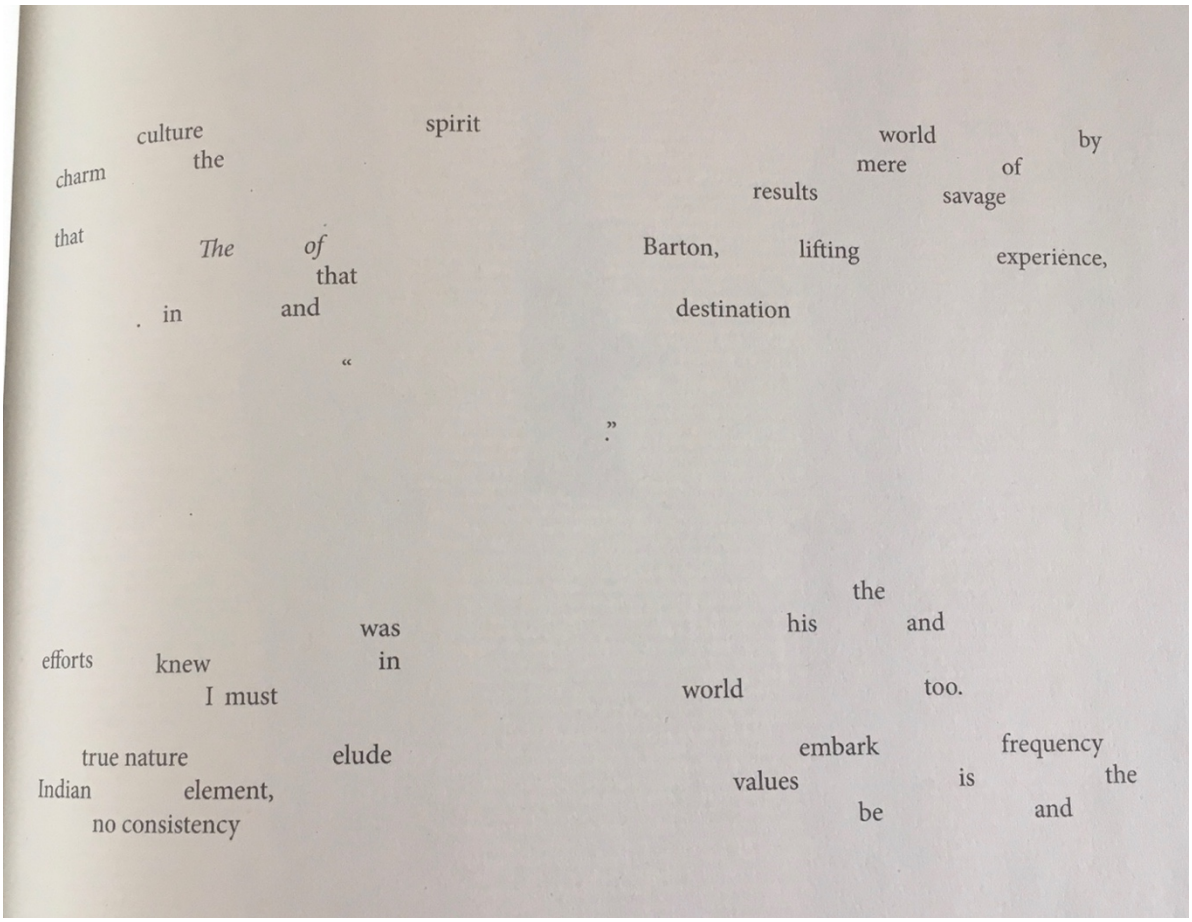

culture spirit world by
charm the mere of
results savage
that *The* *of* Barton, lifting experience,
that
in and destination
"
."
the
was his and
efforts knew in
I must world too.
true nature elude embark frequency
Indian element, values is the
no consistency be and

Figure 49. Close-up of page 173, *TPS*.

Moreover, in Section 2, when the lines begin to layer atop one another, the text becomes more difficult—though not impossible—to read. By voluntarily in-sounding the text, readers confront the complexity of the work as well as the depth of its content. By compelling readers to in-sound the text, Abel shifts the reader from a place of complacency to a state of uncertainty.

Temporality is a recurring theme throughout *The Place of Scraps*, but in-sounding a text is a means of revealing its temporality (even if internally for the reader). (Out-sounding even more explicitly reinforces a work's temporal aspects.) Abel deliberately draws attention to the dates of various works. Layering dates, seemingly a small detail, connotes the correlation of time to memory. In the Journal Entries, the poet is recalling his relationship to the totem poles and his

own Indigeneity. During this process of recollection and erasure, dates are superimposed. Memories are subject to time, but memories are also manipulated in the passage of time. The temporal is also a consideration in the juxtaposition of image and word. Images are, in a sense, frozen in time. Especially in the Totem Poems, images are archival records of a time that no longer exists. The words are also associated with specific dates in the past. Even the erasures and manipulations of those texts can be dated to the book's publication. But, in opposition to the images, the textual material can be (in- and out-) sounded by the reader, which enlivens its temporality—revealing an immediacy, a present. Words are active on the page. Also, there is a productive tension between the visual and sonic elements throughout *The Place of Scraps*; the pictures (and dated excerpts / entries) represent the past whereas the act of reading manifests the "eternal present." Abel's experiment with temporal constructs (and erasures / conflations) is further prolonged and expanded when the reader considers that their engagement with the poem constitutes a present dialogue. *The Place of Scraps* is concerned with constructs of time and memory tied to place, yet it is the reader who continues and further complicates that dialogue when sounding.

Overall, the order and arrangement of the poems also effect in-sounding. Instead of reiterating the arrangement of various types of text, I wish to focus on the organizational shift from Section 1 to Section 2. Section 1 includes poems that adhere to their text types, which helps the reader to develop textual expectations. There are some challenges to sounding, especially when the punctuation is the dominant graphemic presence (instead of alphabetic material). Also, there are brief instances of the text being layered atop itself. There are a small number of occurrences of various texts being overlayed on other texts (see fig. 50). More often, the same text is echoed and reapplied on itself with a slight change of location on the page (see fig. 51).

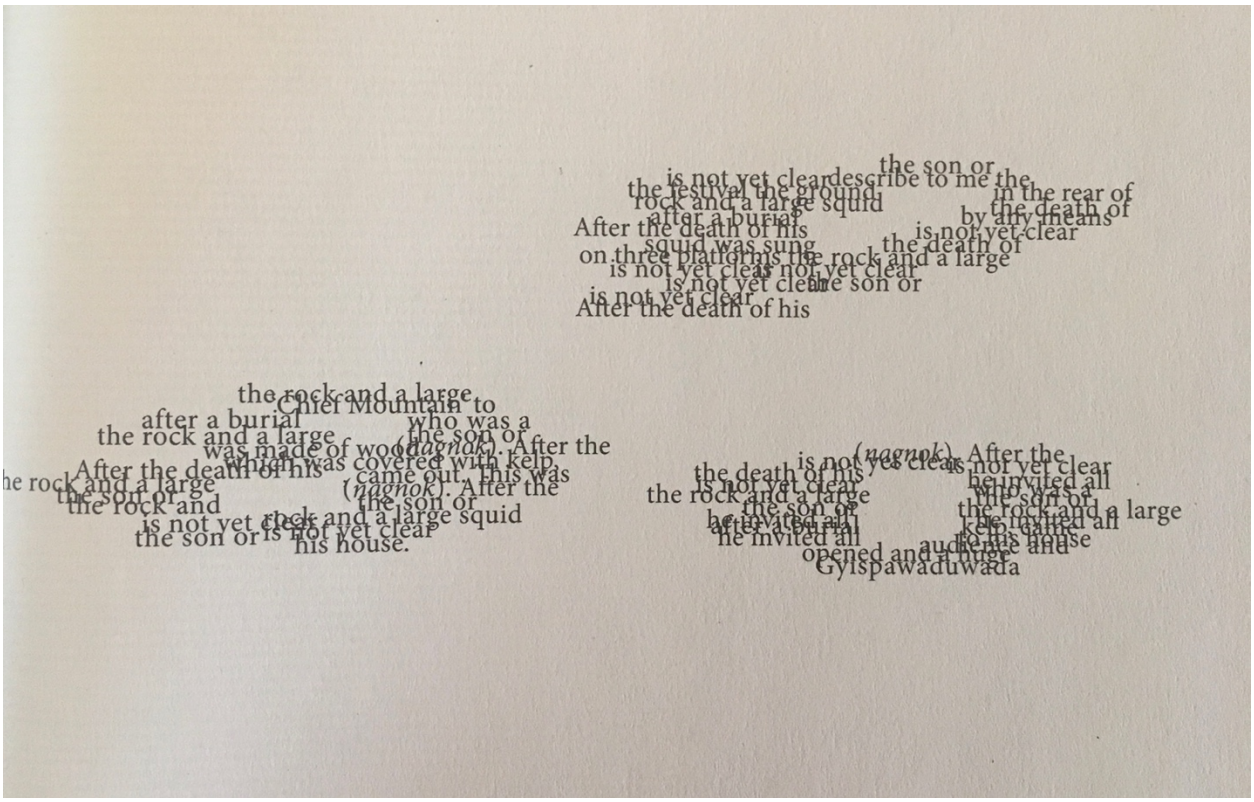
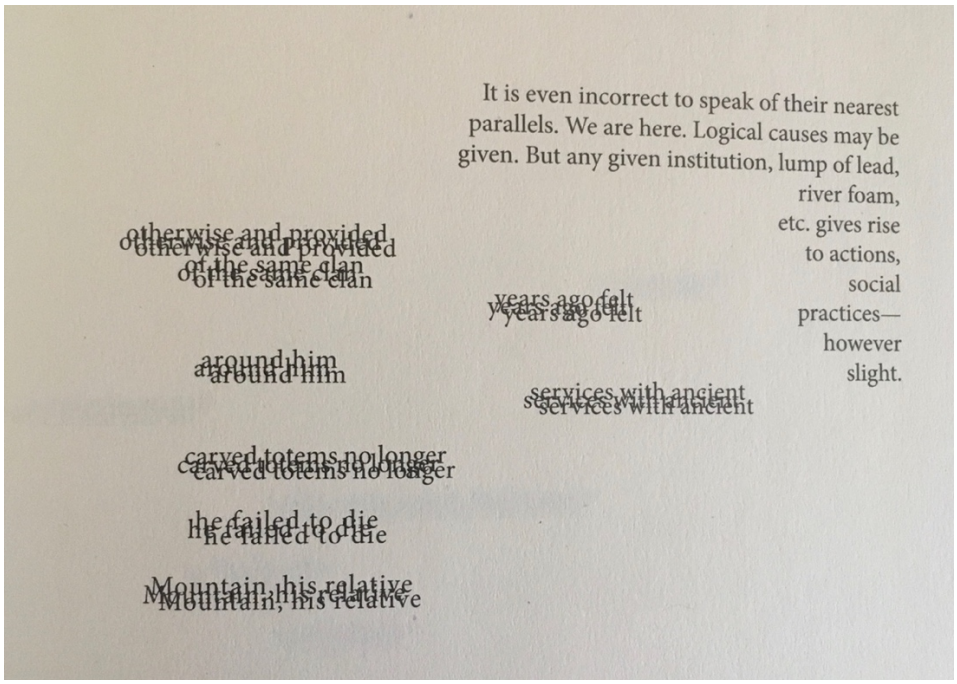


Figure 50. Close-up of page 135, *TPS*.

Repetition and reiteration form clouds (or smoke rings) of sound (fig. 50). (The clouds of textual material echo the discussion of "visual noise" addressed in Chapters 1 and 2.)[106] Words and phrases are not illegible to the point of unreadability, but they do cause the reader to pause and work through the text more slowly. The reading process is fairly normative once the reader adjusts to the fragmentation, punctuation, and variation of lineation in the erasures. Abel's text is still readable but certainly tests the boundaries of legibility (similar to McCaffery's *Carnival*). But this organization of material certainly challenges readers by forcing them to conclude how such a text is to be read, sounded, and interpreted.

[106] If out-sounded, this polylogue could be read as cacophony or as layered narratives. Embedded in this interpretive choice is the implication that the sound is either structured or unstructured. In the case of *The Place of Scraps*, the text is assuredly structured and demonstrates that visual noise can be controlled.


It is even incorrect to speak of their nearest
parallels. We are here. Logical causes may be
given. But any given institution, lump of lead,
river foam,
etc. gives rise
to actions,
social
practices—
however
slight.

otherwise and provided
of the same clan

years ago felt

around him

services with ancient

carved totems no longer

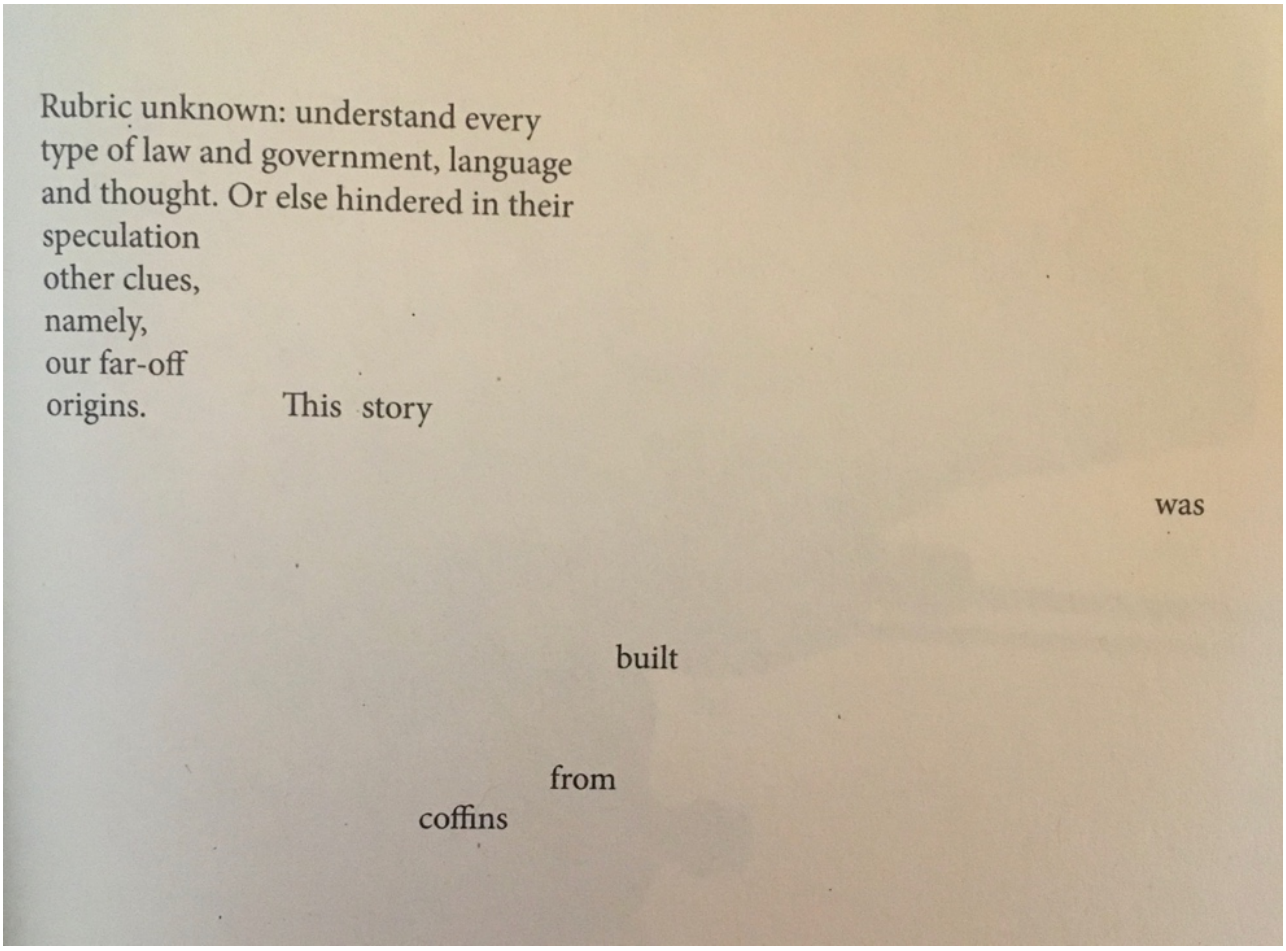
he failed to die

Mountain, his relative

Figure 51. Close-up of page 195, Jordan Abel, *The Place of Scraps* (2013).

Section 2 (which subdivides into three sections: a, b, and c) disrupts the processes that the reader has so carefully established for sounding and interpreting this already complex text. Section 2a (pp. 153–208) begins with a Totem Poem that has “theplaceofscraps” in very small font in repetition across the negative space of the sky. The next page shows a set of double quotation marks and a period. In a turn of praxis, Abel builds the Barbeau Excerpt through a sequence of four erasures. When the reader turns the page revealing the excerpt that Abel has been erasing / building, there is no citational information (as with previous excerpts). Instead, Abel begins to erase the excerpt, while also writing new content as a frame around the text. (See again figures 48 and 49, which are part of the rebuilt excerpt being erased.) Frames continue to hem in the space where the excerpt would appear—emphasizing the unsound (see fig. 52). These frames acknowledge and draw attention to the unsound. Although further examined in the Unsound section, the frames draw spatial borders around the text and remind readers to attend to

the sections that *can* be sounded, especially when that sounded material points readers to the absence—the bodies in coffins—the foundation and genesis of the story.


Rubric unknown: understand every
type of law and government, language
and thought. Or else hindered in their
speculation
other clues,
namely,
our far-off
origins. This story

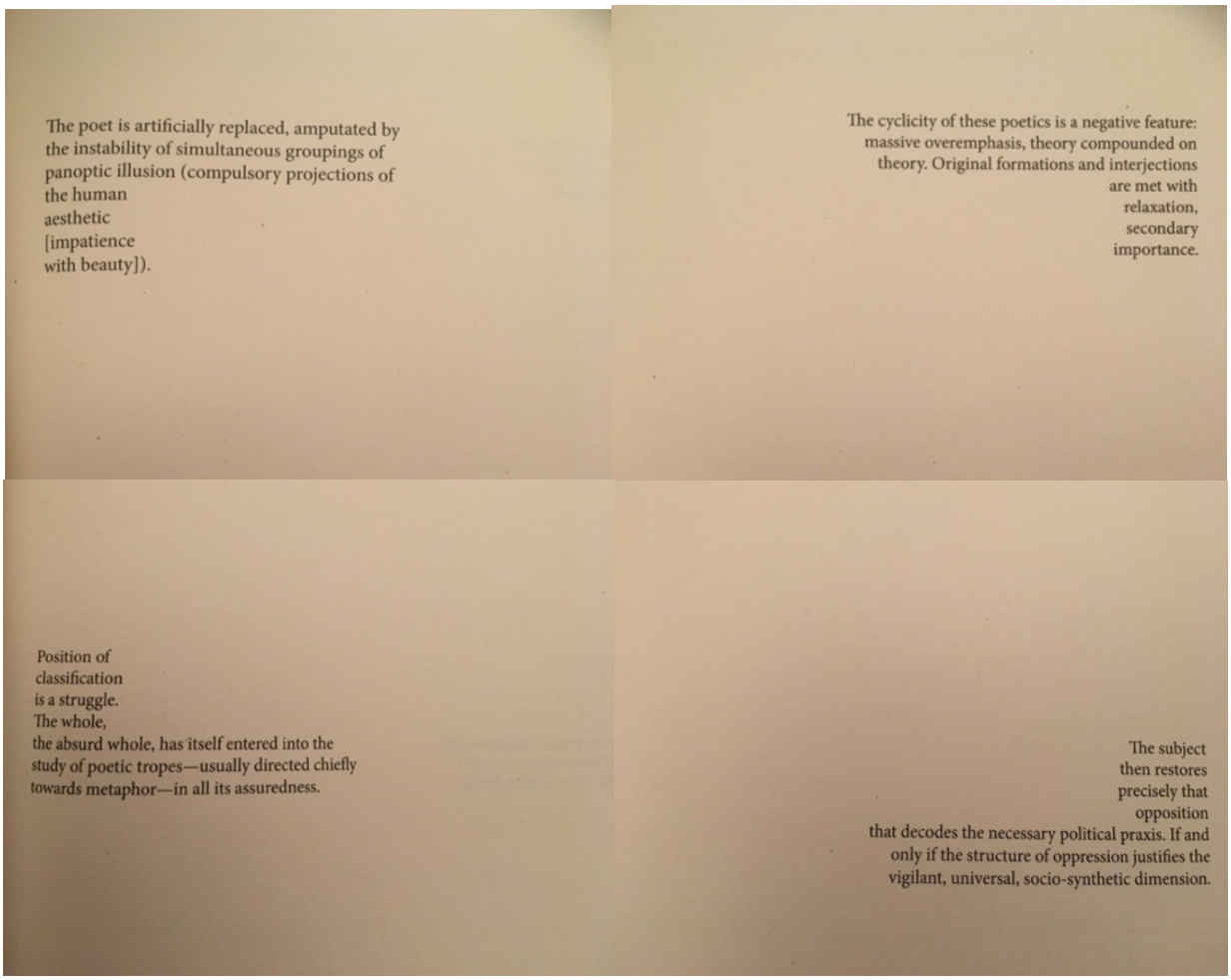
was

built

from
coffins

Figure 52. Close-up of page 181, *TPS*.

Section 2b (pp. 209–234) is a series of corner frames that surround the unsound central to the page. These poems, in a different way from the others, address the space at the centre. Although this technique will be discussed in greater depth in the Unsound section, I want to note here that the text of the frames offers a critique (in the textual framing) of a criticism (the operation of the whole book). For an example, see figure 53, which features four sequential poems from Section 2b.



The poet is artificially replaced, amputated by
the instability of simultaneous groupings of
panoptic illusion (compulsory projections of
the human
aesthetic
[impatience
with beauty]).

The cyclicity of these poetics is a negative feature:
massive overemphasis, theory compounded on
theory. Original formations and interjections
are met with
relaxation,
secondary
importance.

Position of
classification
is a struggle.
The whole,
the absurd whole, has itself entered into the
study of poetic tropes—usually directed chiefly
towards metaphor—in all its assuredness.

The subject
then restores
precisely that
opposition
that decodes the necessary political praxis. If and
only if the structure of oppression justifies the
vigilant, universal, socio-synthetic dimension.

Figure 53. Close-up of pages 211, 213, 215, 217, *TPS*.

Section 2c (pp. 235–255) consists of an entire collection of unpaginated Totem Poems. On the whole, most of the archival images cover the bottom margin of the page where page numbers would appear. The absence of paratextual markers encourages readers to see these poems as art pieces. Out of all the different text types, the Totem Poems are the closest to visual art and suggest "viewing" as a primary encounter before reading. This final segment of Section 2 once again disrupts the established pattern of the previous Totem Poems because the pages alternate between archival photos with the words / graphemes in the "sky" and the photograph being flipped upside down with the words appearing (still upright) in the lower portion of the page (see figures 54 and 55). The upended images also feature urban skyscrapers. Images that

have been rotated 180 degrees show totem poles far removed from the places in which they were originally created and erected. A stark contrast is thus highlighted: the totems in their place of creation (and belonging) directly juxtaposed with the totems removed from their ancestral land. The “unnatural” presentation of the upside-down totem poles extends metaphorically to the dispersal of Indigenous peoples and their culture at the hands of colonists.

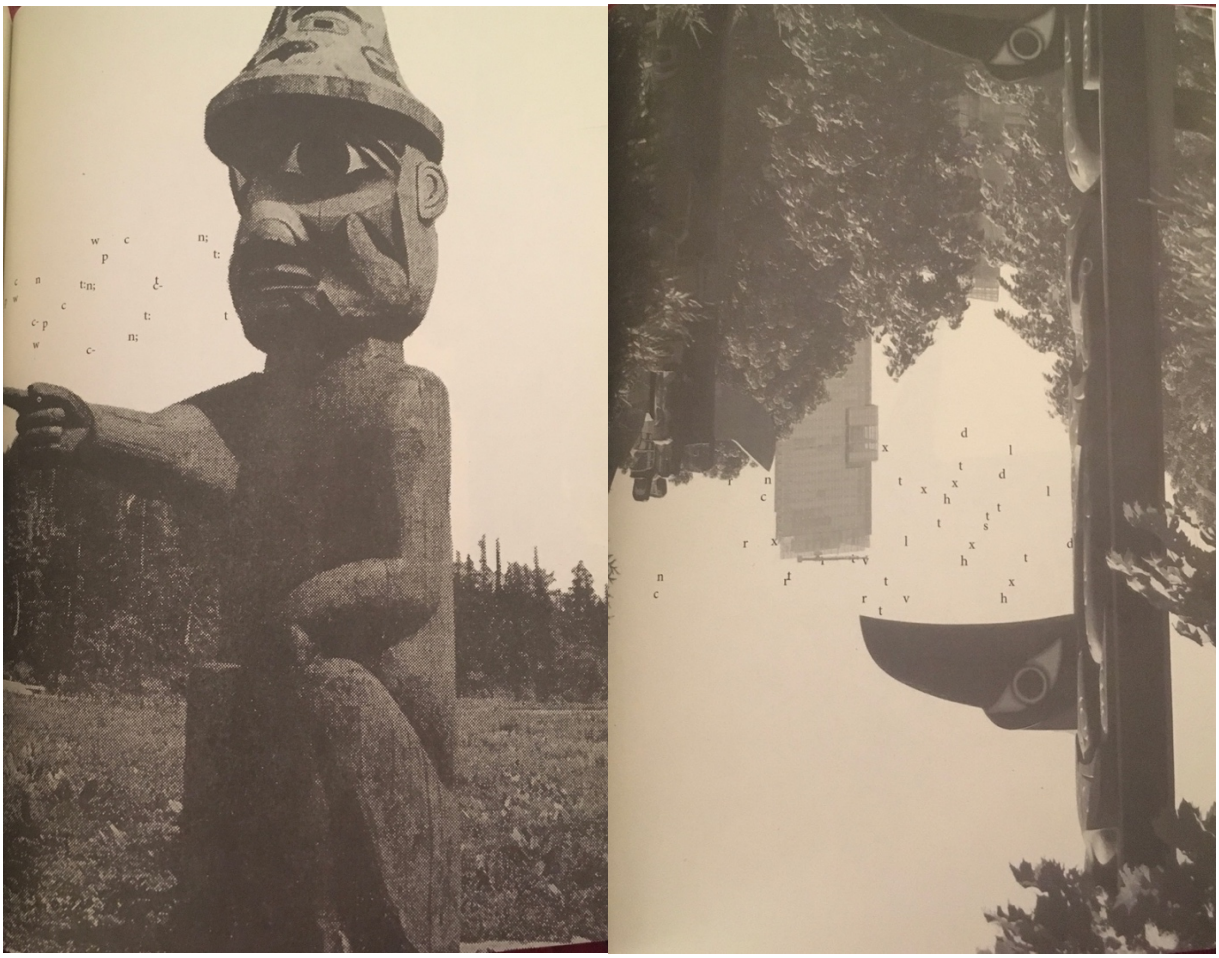


Figure 54. (Left.) Page 237, *TPS*.
Figure 55. (Right.) Page 239, *TPS*.

Throughout the book, Abel critiques his own positionality. Even as he examines Barbeau’s prose and the archival images, Abel performs an ethnographic study of himself and his cultural history. Self-identification (as an urban, queer, Indigenous person) heightens one’s reading of Section 2c. When the poles are in the city, the world turns upside down (and

sideways, in some Totem Poems). With normative points of reference subverted, readers are compelled to find their own way through the text that still appears unflummoxed positionally by the inversion of the images. Abel's ordering / type-casting of text and subsequent blending of textual forms—compounded by the inversions of image and word—are a queering of the textual material and *mise-en-page* by dismantling categories and binaries. Consequently, Abel's disruption of involuntary in-sounding practices forces the reader to pursue the text with greater fervour. Active in-sounding can affect the reader in many ways—producing frustration, confusion, sadness, and / or joy. Certainly, the reader's response is affected by their subject position and personhood. In-sounding causes the reader to recognize their relationship to the text but, as I shall demonstrate now, out-sounding compels them to interrogate the context of the material and their engagement with it in relation to others. And although the text can be in-sounded in compelling (albeit challenging) ways, the sensitive material and necessary self-positioning of the reader may make out-sounding especially charged, both politically and performatively.

OUTSOUND: "made of cedar bark and song"

As with *Zong!*, when a reader attempts to out-sound *The Place of Scraps*, the controversial content of the source material, as well as the subject position of the reader, must be considered. It is a complicated act to give voice to the words of Barbeau (a contentious figure) while also sounding out the journal entries of Abel writing from his own experience. Also, the out-sounding is difficult when sounding unfamiliar languages (like Tsimshian).[107] *The Place of*

[107] Barbeau's *Totem Poles* was a study that examined the cultural practices of the Tsimshianic-speaking peoples in British Columbia (Tsimshian, Gitxsan, and Nisga'a). Nisga'a is a specific language spoken by the Nisga's people (the Indigenous people group of which Abel is a part),

Scraps allows for an out-sounding because much of the material is linguistic and enables in-sounding. That said, in-sounding is possible on a spectrum of involuntary to voluntary action as the erasures evolve. A process for out-sounding becomes less clear when the reader encounters clouds of letters, disrupted lineation, overlayed / overlapping texts, and pages with punctuation and no linguistic content. The non-linguistic poems could be out-sounded in an atypical way; punctuation could be performed using sounds that are not attributed to specific linguistic markings (pops / clicks). Instead, though, these poems seem to be focused on revealing the material that has been un-sounded (and, by extension, the cultures, stories, and voices that have been silenced in colonization and assimilation efforts). Moreover, the poems catalyze the reader to interrogate the grammatical structures that order language and the expectations of such markings. By extension, the reader ought to consider how socio-political structures similarly are designed to manage and constrain people (who must fit into these structures or be ostracized—or forced to assimilate).

After reflecting upon the content and one's subject position, the reader must consider a number of temporal considerations when out-sounding. From archival photos to cited excerpts to dated journal entries, temporality emerges as a central theme when out-sounding *The Place of Scraps*. Abel is experimenting with time in the content and form; as the reader takes up the task of out-sounding the work, the work becomes present. Arranged like prose poems, the *mise-en-page* of the Barbeau Excerpts and the Journal Entries suggest that a reader could out-sound these sections normatively (save for unfamiliar words, which could be a challenge, but the pronunciation could be researched). The Totem Poems have the script running across the

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but there is no clarification as to which specific dialect is used in *Totem Poles*. Barbeau does not specify the Indigenous language he references in *Totem Poles*, though it is likely Tsimshian.

negative space of the image. These poems could be out-sounded by repeating the written text without gap or breath, but the Totem Poems serve a visual function, signaling upcoming sections—harbingers of themes to come. Also, the images function as unsounds, which will be examined in greater depth in the following section. With the erasures, tempo is less clear because lineation and *mise-en-page* are determined by the location of the text as it appears in the source text. Erasures can be read at the pace of a traditional poem, pausing only slightly when continuing to a following line. The cadence is then determined by the reader (just as they would out-sound a free verse poem). In this sense, content can be treated as if it were a musical score; the reader is performing the notes (words and linguistic content) by emitting sounds while also performing the rests (the space). This comparison of a poem to a score will be explored further in the next, final chapter. Arguably, though, a reader could also out-sound an erasure by considering the unsound; in doing so, the reader would perform longer gaps of "silence" where the spaces between the words are greater.

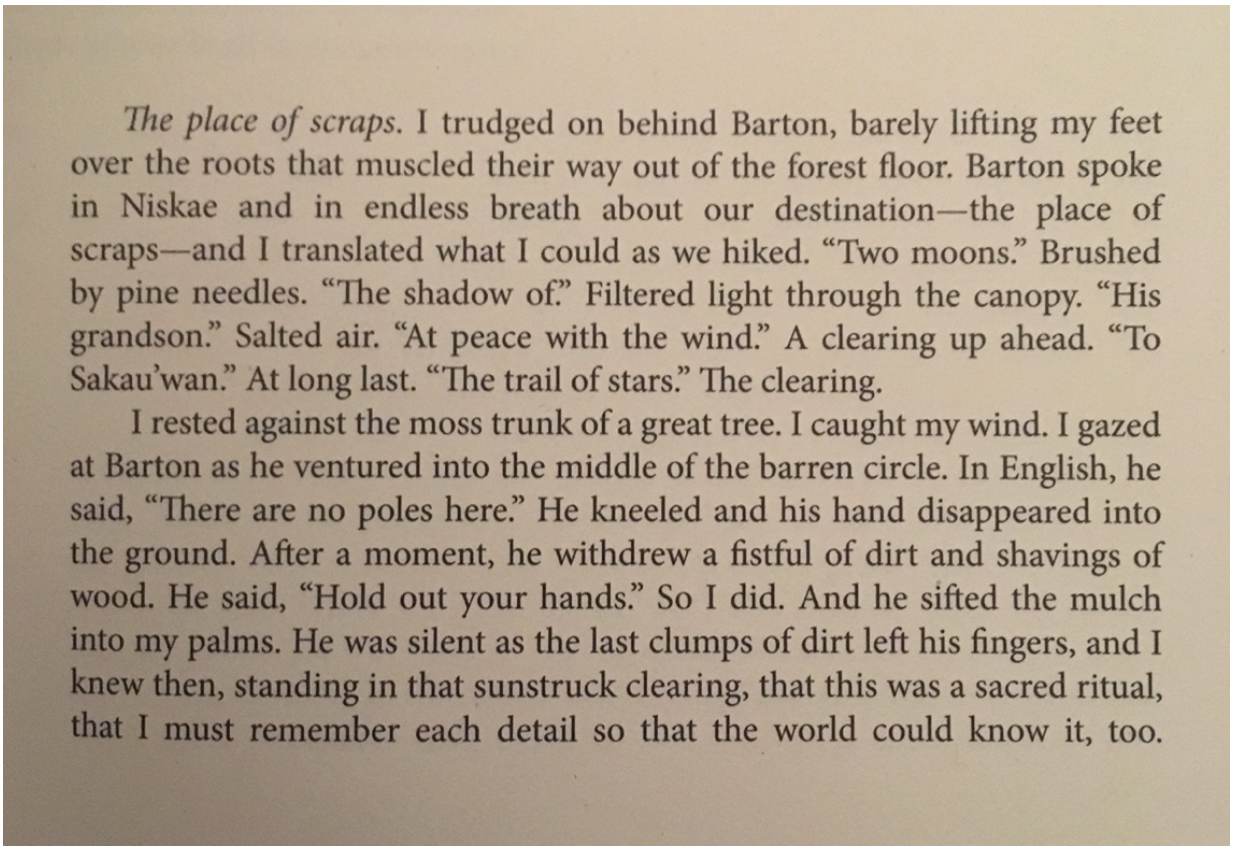
The reader's positionality also affects the out-sounding. To avoid reinforcing past traumas, performers must mindfully consider the function of aesthetic erasure as a critique of political erasure. Depending on the performer's identity and tone of sounding, performances of the texts could perhaps re-enact or trigger someone's trauma. One could argue that intentionality is critical to out-sounding, but even with good intentions actions can be harmful. Context is paramount. But is there a context in which it is appropriate for a white person to out-sound works by a BIPOC author? Is it permissible if that individual is an ally to BIPOC authors? (And how does one embody allyship?) Even then, is performing such a work an elision of the author or a promotion of their voice? Can it be both? The role and privilege of out-sounding works by BIPOC authors are not mine to assign. Acts of aesthetic erasure in response to political erasure

underpin this entire chapter—but I am not certain that I have definitive answers concerning readers / performers considering my positionality. But then… who does have the authority to make these decisions—the imagined communities of those receiving the texts aurally which may or may not include BIPOC individuals? No audience would speak with one voice on the matter.

These questions about performance and reception reveal the public vs. private divide of out-sounding a work. Out-sounding *Zong!* to an audience differs greatly from an individual, private, oral reading because a public reading raises these concerns of the reader's positionality and potential to inflict psychological and / or emotional harm. There is a danger, however, in refusing to out-sound works like *Zong!* because that is yet another form of erasure (not allowing these authors' works to resound in the air). I am not certain readers can account for all these nuances when out-sounding, but works like Philip's *Zong!* and Abel's *The Place of Scraps* especially compel one to ask these questions and consistently check their own subject position when helping a poem become through sounding. In particular, the out-sounding of this material reignites the temporality of the text and highlights the urgency and significance of taking action in response to ongoing systemic racism.

In addition to the temporal considerations of *The Place of Scraps*, its qualitative elements are also important for understanding how to out-sound. Choices of font, size, colour, typographical emphases, and unexpected elements guide the reader as to the work's pitch, volume, timbre, voice, and accent(s). In terms of font, the serif style is consistent throughout the book. The size of the text varies in two ways: in a footnote as well as throughout the Totem Poems. The first Barbeau Excerpt includes a footnote in which he cites himself, and this smaller text reappears in fragments in subsequent erasures. The only other difference in font size occurs in the Totem Poems; there are many in which the font appears to be as small as 4 pt. The colour

of the textual material is consistent; the Totem Poems appear in gray-scale. In terms of typographical emphases, the "section titles" of Barbeau's excerpts are italicized. These kinds of visual continuity encourage a consistent pitch and volume when out-sounding. Initially, Abel cues the reader as to the timbre and voice of specific poems by providing citations for the Barbeau Excerpts and dates for the Journal Entries. The reader can then observe shifts in tone and word choice—articulating these different narrative voices. Arguably, the Barbeau Excerpts are in an academic's voice, and the Journal Entries are in an artist's (albeit written in third-person). It does make one wonder how the voice of the erasures (both of the excerpts and entries) might sound. One could also contend that the erasures are transformed into Abel's voice in the act of erasing the source text, but these erasures are perhaps the ones most open to the voice of the reader in out-sounding.



The place of scraps. I trudged on behind Barton, barely lifting my feet over the roots that muscled their way out of the forest floor. Barton spoke in Niskae and in endless breath about our destination—the place of scraps—and I translated what I could as we hiked. "Two moons." Brushed by pine needles. "The shadow of." Filtered light through the canopy. "His grandson." Salted air. "At peace with the wind." A clearing up ahead. "To Sakau'wan." At long last. "The trail of stars." The clearing.

I rested against the moss trunk of a great tree. I caught my wind. I gazed at Barton as he ventured into the middle of the barren circle. In English, he said, "There are no poles here." He kneeled and his hand disappeared into the ground. After a moment, he withdrew a fistful of dirt and shavings of wood. He said, "Hold out your hands." So I did. And he sifted the mulch into my palms. He was silent as the last clumps of dirt left his fingers, and I knew then, standing in that sunstruck clearing, that this was a sacred ritual, that I must remember each detail so that the world could know it, too.

Figure 56. Close-up of page 163, *TPS*.

One Barbeau Excerpt is undated in Section 2a (see fig. 56). This segment is particularly challenging for recognizing voice and timbre because the appearance of this text without citation or date no longer indicates who may be narrating. The reader sounds through the series of erasures to discover an excerpt of Barbeau's (the contextual clues to identification are that "Barton," Barbeau's translator, is mentioned[108] as well as the fact that this poem is in first person and the Journal Entries are always third-person). Aside from the narrative point-of-view, this excerpt sounds closest to the entries in its tone. Even as Abel offers a critique of Barbeau, a sequence like this demonstrates that Barbeau and "the poet" of the journal entries share similar thoughts and expressions.

In terms of unexpected elements in the book, punctuation poems, textual palimpsests, and commentary frames surrounding the negative space offer new challenges to out-sounding. Given that each of these elements has already been addressed in separate sections, I will only expand on this point to suggest that such textual elements accent an already intricate and multilayered book. The reader must attend to visual changes and decide how the various elements may offer difference sonic registers of performance. Perhaps this book would be most compelling if out-sounded by multiple readers. The qualitative elements of *The Place of Scraps* demonstrate just how complex out-sounding can be.

An out-sounding of *The Place of Scraps* generates alternative meanings outside a solely "visual" reception because it causes the reader to make specific choices in voicing this politically nuanced text. Out-sounding re-enacts the "salvaging" performed by Barbeau while also reanimating Abel's critique of Barbeau's actions and their consequences. Additionally, out-

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[108] In *Totem Poles* (1950), Barbeau explains that Barton was his translator yet refers to him as the interpreter, "an elderly chief of a Wolf clan on the Nass" (16), suggesting Barton also helped Barbeau understand the rituals he was witnessing, codifying, and "salvaging."

sounding forces the reader to come to terms with their own positionality, their relationship to anthropological and ethnographical disciplinary imperatives, and their always mediated interactions with language. When *The Place of Scraps* is removed from the page, however, meaning is lost or untranslated. The act of erasure in a poem is one bound up in visuality; the reader needs to see what the page is missing and witness the visible and invisible—the sound and the unsound. There is no way to see the Totem Poems when they are spoken aloud. (One could argue that the images could be projected, but then the work is still encountered on a screen.) When the poem is separated from its visual presentation, the arrangement of material and its startling evolution is lost. Although there is significant value to out-sounding and experiencing this text in aural performance, the primary encounter with *The Place of Scraps* is a page-based one. The book is a work of visual art—an artifact—and an out-sounding without the page as a reference point (for an audience member) would certainly result in significant elements of the text being lost in translation from page to ear. The pictures in the Totem Poems cannot be out-sounded—they exist in a visual realm. These images function differently from white space(s) because they are more representative and programmatic—that is, these photos tell stories and give details that are not included in the absences (unsounds). To reach more specific (temporal / spatial) conclusions, readers should un-sound these images attending to the visual details.

There is a video of Abel out-sounding *The Place of Scraps*.[109] His performance commences with a recording of Barbeau reading from his own work; Abel then layers his voice with Barbeau's. As the performance continues, Barbeau's voice fades and Abel's voice is the only one sounding sections from the un-cited excerpt (fig. 56). Even when it is only Abel's

[109] This reading was done for the Vancouver launch of *The Place of Scraps* in October 2013. The recording is available on YouTube: youtu.be/aIHGSGDY9gE?t=140.

voice, there are vocal effects of a delay with an especially long decay and moderate reverb. The microphone also seems to be set at an equalization level that emphasizes the sibilants as Abel speaks. Such technological interventions certainly give a sense of how the book functions overall. Delay and decay convey the text's complex layering of voices. During his presentation, Abel explained that this un-cited excerpt is the titular poem: "*The place of scraps*," which appears as the first phrase of the textual material. Interestingly, Abel's and Barbeau's voices most closely align in this textual moment while still maintaining a stark juxtaposition. The titular poem (fig. 56) seems an interesting choice for such sonic embellishment since the pages with clouds of overlapping words (fig. 50) would seem to convey those effects in the *mise-en-page*. The recording of this ambient and ethereal presentation seems to be the one of only very few available of the author reading from *The Place of Scraps*.[110]

There is another video available of Al Filreis and Amaranth Borsuk discussing *The Place of Scraps* as a part of the MLA Conference in Seattle (2020).[111] Borsuk's out-sounding of p. 13 (bottom right panel of fig. 39) follows a more traditional poetry reading in the sense that she does not pause for longer periods of time to perform the unsound. In fact, she even speeds up the tempo as she reads. There are no markings to indicate a change in tempo, but the prolonged unsound and fragmented lineation create an openness in terms of rhythm and pacing. This is not to suggest that Borsuk's out-sounding is inaccurate; instead, it is cited as an example of how out-soundings are necessarily varied. Even in physical appearance, poems that have words fractured

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[110] In addition to the launch video, a promo for *TPS* released in February 2014 has similar audio to the launch: youtube.com/watch?v=qIqMaEYCO0s. Also, Abel reads a section from *The Place of Scraps* at the Jackpine Press Chapbook launch at The Bassment in Saskatoon, SK in December 2013: (youtube.com/watch?v=saUD9o-X5gE).

[111] For the recording: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymjV9KKQszQ. For the Zoom group discussion moderated by Filreis for the ModPo Live Webcast on 11 November 2020: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGMQK13Nfz4.

into graphemes / phonemes lend themselves to be read as graphic scores of music. In the out-sounding of such poems, it is important to consider the function of the unsound as much as the elements that are out-sounded.

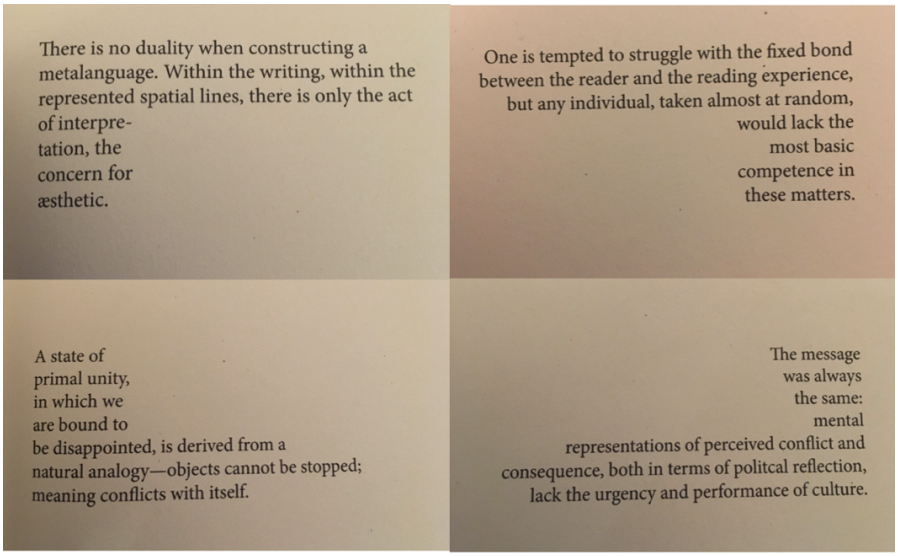
An out-sounding of *The Place of Scraps* offers a different encounter with the text than a solely page-based one: out-sounding provides a performance that is experienced presently and bodily. The emotional aspects of the content can often be felt more acutely when out-sounded. In addition to the insound and outsound, however, considering the unsound of *The Place of Scraps* is necessary to delve into the various layers of text, critique, and meaning.

UNSOUND: " ."

"An endless / hike / through / the wind. / 'There are no poles here'" (*TPS* 159). As the reader moves through *The Place of Scraps*, they are given indications of how to read this multifaceted text. At the heart of this engagement with poetic form and language is Abel confronting the absences central to the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples. While moving through the book, the reader encounters this "endless hike" endured through the elements of "wind," only to be told by another voice, "There are no poles here" (*TPS* 159). Even the totem poles disappear. The unsound central to the text is multivalent. But before delving into the many meanings of unsound in *The Place of Scraps*, the occurrences of unsound must first be identified.

Primarily, the Barbeau Excerpts and the Journal Entries are the sites of erasure. Abel performs this task in a manner common to erasure poetry: the un-erased words remain where they appeared in the excerpt. This technique creates great gaps of unsound across the page. Erasure is enacted by means of eliminating the "undesired" text entirely—that is, there are none of the black lines of redaction or white-outs that are features of other erasure poets' work. In

Abel's other volumes, such as *Injun*, text is reduced / backgrounded visually by means of grey colouring of the text. In *The Place of Scraps*, however, the excerpt / entry is presented and a sequence of erasures (all different) are performed. Abel also creates unsound through the absence of expected content. When encountering a poem, readers expect to see a page with structured linguistic content; therefore, it is surprising to find pages punctuated with only parentheses—or commas, periods, and semicolons. These marks are used grammatically to hem in the text—to order, to structure, and to control it. Abel sets the words free; in the resultant unsound, he asks readers to question the function of this punctuation both literally and metaphorically. Also, Abel generates unsound by his use of space in and around poems. For example, Section 2b features a different use of unsound than is found elsewhere in the text. A declarative, contemplative, and second-person narrative commentary frames the corners of unsound—the area of the page where the text has appeared throughout the book's previous pages. This negative space where "the poem" usually appears is a site completely erased of text. Similar to Gomringer's "silencio," this unsound, while absent of text, is a place which challenges preconceptions of language, poetry, and meaning.


There is no duality when constructing a metalanguage. Within the writing, within the represented spatial lines, there is only the act of interpre-
tation, the
concern for
æsthetic.

One is tempted to struggle with the fixed bond between the reader and the reading experience, but any individual, taken almost at random, would lack the most basic competence in these matters.

A state of
primal unity,
in which we
are bound to
be disappointed, is derived from a natural analogy—objects cannot be stopped; meaning conflicts with itself.

The message
was always
the same:
mental
representations of perceived conflict and consequence, both in terms of politcal reflection, lack the urgency and performance of culture.

Figure 57. Close-ups of pages 219, 221, 223, 225, *TPS*.

I would now like to draw attention to the words that constitute the frames (see fig. 57). The speaker is theorizing the creation of metalanguage, even as the text is employing metalanguage to analyze the function of poetic discourse. This speaker contends that there is no duality—only interpretation, and that interpretation focuses on aesthetics. Similar to that of Barbeau, this imperious voice is trained on readers and reading experiences (and also implies that ordinary readers would not have competence in such matters). After pontificating on the meaning in contention with itself, the speaker claims that "the message / was always / the same: / mental / representations of perceived conflict and / consequence, both in terms of political reflection, / lack the urgency and performance of culture" (*TPS* 225). The reader is told what the message is—and the unsound central to the page accentuates this "lack." Taken as an emblem for the colonization of Indigenous Peoples, this unsound would seem to suggest that if a culture is obliterated, there is no performance of that culture to be witnessed. Yet, the key phrase seems to be "the message / was always / the same," which implies that this narrative may endure beyond any individual speaker. This argument evokes W. H. Auden's provocation in "In Memory of W. B. Yeats": "For poetry makes nothing happen…" (36). Protestations about a "lack in the urgency and performance of culture" do not seem acceptable to Abel; his poem is layered in performance and laced in satire: "the message / was always / the same." Also, it is important to remember how Auden finishes the segment in his poem: "For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives …/ it survives, / A way of happening, a mouth" (246.36, 40–1).[112] *The Place of Scraps* is urgent; Abel is performing his personhood in the text. In the unsound of Section 2b, there is a wrestling with

[112] Auden's lines as originally published: "For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives / In the valley of its making where executives / Would never want to tamper, flows on south / from ranches of isolation and the busy griefs, / Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives, / A way of happening, a mouth" (246.36-41).

the theoretical function of language, its relation to the reader, and its role in the world. In a sense, the reader can see the poet asking: "What does this space do?" This is what sound and unsound do—they create a place of communication and a recognition of what is and is not representable. The unsound throughout the book is subject to interpretation, but it would be dismissive to take this speaker in this section at face-value—because the interpretation of this text is not limited to concerns of aesthetics.

As readers work through *The Place of Scraps*, they need to adapt their expectations and reading processes repeatedly. Such shifts are just as necessary when considering unsound because its function (and subsequent interpretation) is evolving as well. The immediate effect of this un-sounding is addressed by Omhovère:

> The removal of excess material opens gaps into the original, but it also disrupts its unfolding by bringing together words that did not coexist in the complete text. The re-lining prompts fresh associations, a new syntax in which the desire for exhaustivity, knowledge, and control becomes only too visible once Barbeau's tale of discovery has been shorn of its ethnographic detail and rhetorical *copia*. (9)

The texts of Barbeau's Excerpts and the Journal Entries are continually recontextualized with each erasure. In this new light, a desire for control is unveiled. And in this desire, Barbeau, Abel, and the reader align. Barbeau classifies and chronicles; Abel erases and critiques; the reader sounds and interprets. In each of these actions, there is an effort to consolidate power. Abel reveals this urge in Barbeau through erasure, but in doing so, demonstrates his own aims to find some measure of control. The reader, who seeks to understand, "grasps" at interpretation. But unsound is ephemeral. It is the ultimate challenge to Barbeau because it cannot be codified. Abel theorizes and practices this unsound in compelling ways; in Section 2b, for example, he hems the

"white" space in as a site of excavation and examination. But ultimately, the reader is left to interpret the unsound and recognize its multivalence and utter uncontrollability.

Unsounds in *The Place of Scraps* reveal broader, recurrent themes, including the land, the body, and the story. In *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Glen Sean Coulthard describes the concept of *terra nullius* (empty land) as the "racist legal fiction that declared Indigenous peoples too 'primitive' to bear rights to land and sovereignty. . . thus rendering their territories legally 'empty' and therefore open for colonial settlement and development" (175). Abel's use of unsound contrasts the relationship of the Nisga'a people to the land versus the colonizers' to the land: "follow / the coast / cut open / the dead / place" (*TPS* 111). Abel questions how much emptier the land was when the ancestral poles were removed from it. "There are no poles here" (*TPS* 159). Unsound embodies this enforced clearing.

Another absence highlighted by unsound is the Indigenous body. Barbeau's motives for writing about Indigenous Peoples have been questioned. But the consequences of Barbeau's actions were and are long-lasting. Early ethnographic studies such as his renders Indigenous bodies invisible. *The Place of Scraps* is "one attempt to confront the colonially imposed and fabricated notion of the ontological invisibility of the Indigenous body, through a calculated, subversive deployment of imperial language and the tactics of early ethnographic discourse" (Karpinski 67). One of the erasures reads: "this clan / covered the ground / covered / time / with / smoke / and / shadow" (*TPS* 71). Barbeau has no means of appreciating bodies and spirits living in a reciprocal relationship with the land. The following erasure stuns: "one by one / their bodies / split / with / the kind / knife" (*TPS* 73). Physical bodies and the land are split open—autopsied for the sake of ethnographic study. Abel's erasure of Barbeau highlights this act: "remove / thousands of / Indians / successfully / without feeling a tremor" (*TPS* 25). Although

this example is one that can be in- and out-sounded, the text points to the unsound, which is the imposed invisibility (and erasure) of Indigenous bodies. Moreover, the Totem Poems remind readers that the images of bodies archived are unsounds, because these pictures are un-soundable.

Unsound also points to the silencing of the stories and voices of Indigenous people. Abel articulates this impetus for storytelling in one of the erasures: "their inner workings / filled with / a ravenous hunger / the language / of / a strange country" (*TPS* 83). In and of itself, this erasure points to multiple interpretations. The people are filled with a hunger to tell their own stories but are forced to use a language unknown to them. Or another reading: the people are hungry but cannot be sated by this language that is not their own. In the unsound, the stories are not articulated. The stories in the unsound cannot be voiced: "This story is " (*TPS* 185). But this criticism of lost voices extends to how Indigenous Peoples have had narratives told about them instead of by them. Evocatively, one of the erasures argues: "This story / was / built / from / coffins" (*TPS* 181). Mir describes Abel's narrative as one that critiques the stories told by Barbeau and so many others: "*The Place of Scraps* goes beyond discomfort. Its impetus involves anger, disappointment, and, importantly, an interest in reframing the discourses around First Nations culture." Enacted through erasure, the unsound in *The Place of Scraps* points to so many significant aspects of the experiences of Indigenous Peoples. Abel uses unsound to reshape and re-sound these narratives. Mir contends that "Abel has erased Barbeau's text because he wants to understand who he is and who he comes from, including not just his ancestors, but also Barbeau and the myriad white settlers who have shaped his heritage." Abel uses erasure in *The Place of Scraps* to come to terms with time, with the land, with the body, and the voicing of one's own story. Mir muses upon what he considers the central irony of *The Place of Scraps*: "that white

settlers tried to assimilate—erase—First Nations tribes by wiping out their cultures, while Abel uses erasure to bring his ancestral history into view." *The Place of Scraps* demonstrates that a story that has been elided by a powerful voice can be reclaimed and rewritten. Moreover, that act of reclamation can be both politically powerful and aesthetically engaging. Abel invites readers into *The Place of Scraps* and guides them in how to read this challenging text, so they can discover "this story" – "a secret / I have been inside of" (*TPS* 179) and understand that it is a story of survival.[113]

On Erasure: Non quid sed quam

"The / articulation of freedom depends on our engagement / with the fictions of the past" (*TPS* 233) the speaker argues in *The Place of Scraps*. In *Zong!*, Philip wrestles with "the language of the only publicly extant document directly bearing on these events—a legal report that is, at best, only tangentially related to the Africans on board the *Zong*" (*Z!* 199). Both authors employ erasure to recontextualize problematic texts and create new modes of expression to reclaim, at least in part, what has been lost. "The mistake that some Conceptualists have made," Mir argues, "is thinking that any text can be erased by anyone and that socio-political concerns are outside the act of appropriation—and outside the text. Yet when an artist chooses a text to appropriate, whether erasure or collage, there is more at stake." Philip and Abel both demonstrate the gravity and significance of erasing their chosen texts. Philip provides an explanation of her process in *Zong!*'s *Notanda*. Parks considers the importance of discussing process:

[113] *TPS* tells a very different story from the one offered in Margaret Atwood's classic of Canadian lit criticism, *Survival* (1972).

> Revelations of process can focus on artistry, or can contain a mix of the political and personal (as in the case of *Voyager* and *Zong!*), or can place a work of erasure in a tradition of erasure (as in the case of *Of Lamb*), or can more broadly reference the ongoing work of poets to find new ways to use the language they've inherited (as in the case of *Nets*). Sometimes references to the complexities of the process appear in the poems themselves.

Both Philip and Abel choose erasure because such practices compel readers to engage with texts in novel ways, to attend to the content and context with care, and to recognize their own responsibility in sounding the text. Through recontextualizing existing narratives, erasure causes readers to interrogate their own relationship to the page, to language, and to sound. More than any other visual poetry form, erasure demonstrates the gamut of meaning held within unsound. Such poems engage the aesthetic act of erasure for the purposes of critiquing and dismantling widespread political erasure. Through the (un)sounding of erasure, readers enact Philip's *Zong!* and Abel's *The Place of Scraps* to reconstruct and amplify voices from within problematic texts, demonstrating that poetry is a way of happening—and a mouth for the voices once silenced. Different from the examination of (un)sound in erasure poetry, the next chapter analyzes the sonic elements in poetic works that eliminate the linguistic altogether; these poems-to-come seek a new form of expression outside of words and complicate understandings of sound both on the page and beyond it.

Chapter 4 – (Un)Sound in Non-linguistic Poetry

I have generated these terms *insound*, *outsound*, and *unsound* in order to find ways to wrap words around difficult poetic encounters while demonstrating sound's centrality to that communicative experience. In *Attack of the Difficult Poems* (2011), Charles Bernstein poses questions for a reader to determine if they are encountering a challenging work:

1 Do you find the poem hard to appreciate?

2 Do you find the poem's vocabulary and syntax hard to understand?

3 Are you often struggling with the poem?

4 Does the poem make you feel inadequate or stupid as a reader?

5 Is your imagination being affected by the poem? (3–4)

Additional symptoms of such a diagnosis include "high syntactic, grammatical, or intellectual activity level," "initial withdrawal (poem not immediately available)," and "sensory overload" (Bernstein 4). The chapters of this dissertation have considered various types of visual poems which fall under this categorization of "difficult." In this fourth chapter, however, the poems selected for analysis may reach the apex of difficulty in comparison with previously considered texts. Pushing the notion of sound in visually-oriented poetry to its (absolute) limit, this final chapter analyzes the operation of sound in non-linguistic poetry to suggest that these challenging texts cause readers to reevaluate their relationship to sound, poetry, and communication. Moreover, non-linguistic poems fundamentally shift modes of reading; a reader cannot in-sound or out-sound such texts as one would ordinarily by processing phonemic or alphabetic material. As previously defined in Chapter 1, insound is the internalized processing of the phonemic material of language. Outsound is the externalized, audible performance of that content.

Unsound is the "silenced" / "absently present"[114] content of the literary work. Poems comprised of non-linguistic content (ultimately unsound) compel readers to discover new methods for "reading"—engaging with and experiencing the text—that are beyond any traditional processes. Until this current chapter, the visual poems under consideration (and various forms explored) included at least some alphabetic or linguistic material. Some poems (like Jordan Abel's "Myth of the Dragonfly" erasure text, discussed in Chapter 3) employ diacritical markings while words or phonemes are absent; however, those works are also read within the context of the larger book within which they appear and those other contextual works included linguistic material. This chapter analyzes poems that are radically different at the level of the language systems. Referencing Bernstein and Craig Dworkin, I address the complexities inherent in these "illegible" poems—complexities that only a consideration of sound brings to the fore. Since non-linguistic visual poems move beyond standard methods of reading and literary analysis, I turn to cognitive psychology and linguistic specialists (such as Donald Shankweiler and Ignace J. Gelb) to suggest how human brains grapple with unfamiliar and intricate content as well as to clarify the writing systems upon which these poems are built—since these structures are not recognizably linguistic ones. The term "non-linguistic" is my own designation, which I will clarify before working through three specific exemplars: Mary Ellen Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet" (1964), Caroline Bergvall's *Drift* (2014), and Eric Schmaltz's *Surfaces* (2018).

Ultimately, previously established methods for the examination of sound within poetry (the methods for identifying and analyzing insound and outsound) begin to break down; for non-linguistic poems especially, the reader needs to modify their entire reading method in order to

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[114] As previously explained in Chapter 1 and demonstrated in examples in the application Chapters 2–4, unsounds are not silent; although audible sound is absented, these textual moments of space, layered illegible text, or non-linguistic elements still evoke degrees of sound(ing).

process these complex poems. Moreover, readers will necessarily adjust their expectations of performance (out-sounding) with non-linguistic poems that background sound and sounding. I will elucidate how, despite the absence of typical insound and outsound, non-linguistic poems are comprised of unsound, and I will elucidate the function and effects of unsound in the example poems. Building on the work of Marjorie Perloff and Johanna Drucker, who make references to the poem as a score (as well as Gelb's discussion of para-graphic devices), I will identify the congruences between a musical score and a poem in the use of visual markings and the structuring of sound and silences. My approach fuses the symbols of a visual poem with the immediate sonic impact of performance. With this shift in mode of experience, readers are encouraged to recognize their roles as active listeners, interpreters, and performers of the text—while closely attending to its sonic dimensions. The analogy of "poem as score" also helps trouble any expectation that poems have a singular, discoverable meaning. Readers may seek definitive answers, believing that with the correct approach, supplementary text, or effort (however that effort may be quantified), they will arrive at "The Meaning" of a poem and master it. Although there are many poems that initially convey a singular meaning, visually-oriented poetry often challenges the way readers / viewers / listeners come to understand signification. Connecting poetry with a musical score encourages a more open interpretation of written works while simultaneously suggesting that those poems are to be interpreted and performed.

Identifying Differences

Previous chapters have focused on the application of the In / Out / Unsound method to poems that have ranged on a spectrum of linguistic to non-linguistic material. As evidenced by the representative example of "silencio," clean concrete poems generally use linguistic material;

however, the innovative arrangement of that material compels readers to change their reading practices by altering (or at least encouraging the alteration of) their typical reading direction. Eugen Gomringer's "inversion" allows for his constellations to be read in unconventional directions and still produce the same series of words. Still, the greater challenge to reading processes in the concrete form is in dirty concrete; this form of poetry, as seen in Steve McCaffery's *Carnival*, employs both linguistic and non-linguistic material. Non-linguistic markings, due to their arrangement in *Carnival*, form linguistic material as their placement creates specific letters and readable shapes. Furthermore, the layering and over-stamping and crowding of words often render the poem's material nearly illegible—a block of visual noise. In this superimposition of texts, the linguistic becomes non-linguistic material.

Although the visual poetry discussed thus far has included both linguistic and non-linguistic material, the individual poems analyzed in this chapter (including Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet," selections from Bergvall's *Drift*, and selections from Schmaltz's *Surfaces*) use exclusively non-linguistic material.[115] Moreover, the lines, cross-hatchings, and dots do not seem to function as codes that translate to English words. Instead, these works push beyond the boundaries of language systems and use new markings and forms of organization to generate poetry. Many creators of non-linguistic works (such as Solt) insist on these texts being read as "visual poems," which emphasizes their connection to and also challenging of language and reading. Other poets (such as Bergvall) are less concerned with the labelling of the texts and are

[115] Both Bergvall's *Drift* and Schmaltz's *Surfaces* include linguistic material to varying degrees. In *Drift*, Bergvall includes whole paragraphs of linguistic material and even practices erasure in the volume of poetry. In one section of *Surfaces*, Schmaltz takes a series of words and deconstructs them to their constitutive lines and curves, and then reassembles the parts to form new word-like clusters; this series will be discussed later. Although both collections include linguistic works, the selections examined in this chapter are the non-linguistic poems.

more interested in the fluidity of formal expectations and the opportunity for innovation. Non-linguistic poems demonstrate the extremity of visual poetry, avant-garde measures that emerged during the 1950s and afterwards in broader cultural and artistic movements embracing extremism and experimentation. One significant piece of music that epitomizes these priorities is John Cage's tripartite *4'33"*.[116] Featuring four minutes and 33 seconds of "silent" music, the score was composed for "any instrument or combination of instruments."[117]

One way to understand *4'33"* is that Cage communicates how "silence" in the piece was actually filled with "accidental" sounds. In speaking about the premiere, Cage noted the wind and rain outside the building and the talking / walking-out of audience members—an atmospheric soundscape that also informed the performance. The greatest difference between Cage's work and other traditional scores is that this piece was comprised of unstructured sound (or "noise," as some call it, which I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). Cage was not the first to experiment with his artform in radical ways; he cites the white paintings of Robert Rauschenberg as inspiration for *4'33"*.[118] Although many influential works preceded Cage's infamous composition, *4'33"* is a sonic touchstone for innovation and a call to the observer to question the conventions of art, performance, and sound. In its emphasis on unstructured sound as music (and

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[116] As mentioned in Chapter 2, Gomringer's "silencio" was published in 1953, a year after the infamous premiere of Cage's *4'33"* (29 August 1952).

[117] This quotation comes from the title page of *4'33" (In Proportional Notation)*. This version of the score (also known as the Kremen manuscript) was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art in 2014 and "is one of three versions of the score for Cage's 'silent piece,' a musical composition first performed by the pianist David Tudor in Woodstock, New York, in 1952. While the lost original score used conventional musical notation to signify three periods of silence, this version is composed of a series of vertical lines that visually represent the duration of four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence" (moma.org).

[118] Cage was not the first to practice extremism. The Dadaist and Futurist movements prior to and following the First World War made a significant impact on the creation and reception of art, in its many forms, in the twentieth century. These movements inspired artists like Cage as well as future communities (like Fluxus) that embraced experimentation in their creative works.

composition), the piece shifts the agency of creation from the composer to the audience member, another example of the participatory aesthetics I have discussed throughout this project. This shift in creation happens just as acutely in works that have unsound or are exclusively comprised of unsound. Un-sounding is an act of creation.

Although Cage created the condition for close listening and attention, the listener constructs the piece in their mind through receiving the sounds (in-sounding) but also can be a part of the performance if they were to make sound (out-sounding). *4'33"* was created and performed decades before any of the works under analysis in this dissertation were published. I am suggesting, however, that the intellectual exercise that compels audience engagement with Cage's work is similar to the effort required of the reader in order to examine the textual exemplars included in my study. (Arguably, one significant difference is that audience members are involved in any performance of *4'33"* by their presence in the concert hall / venue, whereas the poems are an invitation to engage with sounding—and some even actively encourage performance—but the reader has to choose to participate.) Non-linguistic poems often use entirely new or unfamiliar materials as the basis of their compositions, and such challenging poems require active readers to seek out new methods for their textual encounters. As the following section demonstrates, it is important to note the writing systems upon which English-based poems are traditionally written in order to understand the monumental shift that is undertaken by non-linguistic poem writers in crafting their works as well as the level of work and engagement expected of the reader.

Writing Systems in Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Forms

Non-linguistic poems fundamentally shift modes of reading; a reader cannot in-sound or

out-sound such texts as one would ordinarily by processing phonemic or alphabetic material. Instead, poems comprised of non-linguistic content compel readers to discover new methods for "reading" that are beyond any traditional processes. For that reason, I turn to cognitive psychologists and linguistic specialists such as Shankweiler and Gelb to suggest how human brains grapple with unfamiliar and complex content as well as to clarify the writing systems upon which linguistic and non-linguistic poems are built. Shankweiler's and Gelb's research projects delineate various writing systems and reader expectations. Because the structures in the poems I am studying are not recognizably linguistic ones, it is helpful to categorize and examine the systems at work to understand formal and generic expectations.

Language has been codified into writing in many different ways, but most theorists agree that writing is derived from, emerges from, sound. Regarding the phonological mapping of language segments, Shankweiler observes: "Numerous specific alphabets employing a variety of graphic shapes have been invented at different times and places, but the same general phonological principle of mapping the segments of the spoken word applies to all" (250). Each language attempts to codify sounds, the spoken word, into written form. Shankweiler identifies and discusses two different kinds of writing: alphabetic (of which syllabic is a subset) and semantically-based nonsegmental writing. The alphabetic principle is "the concept that written symbols correspond to consonant and vowel segments (phonemes) of spoken words" (Shankweiler 249). This alphabetic system is one with which English-speaking people are most familiar. A subdivision of alphabetic writing is syllabic writing, which is the combination of phonemes into syllables, "a unit of speech that usually consists of a vowel and consonants" (Shankweiler 249). Syllable-based systems can be found in ancient Mayan writing as well as present-day Japan, but syllabic language systems must have a relatively small number of

syllables (Shankweiler 250). English, in particular, is an alphabetic system with 44 phonemes, but there are too many syllables in the permutations of English to make the syllable the base unit of measure. Once again, the primary difference between phonemes and syllables is that a phoneme is a singular sound unit for speech, whereas a syllable is a combination of one or more of those units. Consider this analogy for speech sound units and particulates in the field of science: a morpheme can be likened to an element (such as helium), a phoneme to an atom, a syllable to a molecule, and a word to a compound.[119] "Nevertheless, alphabets and syllabaries, though differing in the grain size of the base unit, are both grounded in phonological properties of spoken language" (Shankweiler 250). When combined with phonology, this particulate principle is the basis for a language system, in which sound particulates correspond to written symbols. Alphabetic writing is the primary example of that codification. "Alphabetic writing," Shankweiler explains, "taps into the layer of meaningless particles at the base of the spoken language to create a visual surrogate for speech, one that mimics the productive potential of the phonological component of the spoken language" (250). But alphabetic and syllabic systems are not the only examples of writings that attempt to codify the spoken word into a written language.

Up until this point, the dissertation has focused on writing that, despite incorporating some non-linguistic elements, still has its basis in linguistic content. These writings have operated on alphabetic systems. There is another form of writing described by Shankweiler that blends phonemic and semantic material: semantically based non-segmental writing. This system

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[119] A morpheme is "a minimal and indivisible morphological unit that cannot be analysed into smaller units" (*OED* n.b.). In other words, a morpheme is the smallest unit of language that has meaning. I emphasize the significance of English's structure as phonemic because sound is central to English—and to demonstrate that those sound particulates (units) are not dependent on meaning. This becomes particularly significant when visual poets fracture words to phonemes—and are denying the semantic significance bound up in morphemes.

of writing offers insight into writing types that incorporate phonological information *indirectly*. Character writing, such as Chinese writing, is one example of non-segmental writing in which compounds (the visible symbol) are composed of both a semantic radical (connoting meaning) and a phonetic radical (demonstrating pronunciation). Shankweiler provides an example of a Chinese compound, "saddle," and explains its constitutive radicals:

> The illustration 鞍 shows how the word for saddle is written by a Chinese compound character. It consists of two simple characters, run together. Separating them, the left part is the semantic radical 革, which by itself means leather. Abutting it on the right is the phonological portion, the phonetic radical 安, also a simple character, which indicates how the word for saddle is pronounced by representing another word, or in this case a group of homophone words (different words that are pronounced the same) that are all written by this character. These words have various irrelevant meanings, but all are pronounced like saddle. (251)

Chinese as well as other examples of character writing demonstrate how semantic and phonetic aspects of language can be separated. (Interestingly, since Chinese compounds contain so many words that are homophones, the rebus principle can also function.) Shankweiler explains that semantically based non-segmental writing supplies phonological information, just as alphabetic or syllable-based systems, but it does so in a different manner. Chinese compounds, even as semantically based non-segmental writing, evidence the significance of phonology in its system. Shankweiler argues that this reinforces the centrality of phonology in writing systems generally:

> Chinese writing is therefore consistent with the claim of some scholars that the incorporation of phonology into a comprehensive writing system is mandatory, and that each of the varieties of writing that has the potential to represent all the words of a

> language exploits the possibility inherent in all languages of separating phonological form from meaning content. (251)

There are certainly many different possibilities for representing speech in a codified writing system. As demonstrated by semantically based non-segmental writing, semantic content and phonetic pronunciation can even be separate elements within a writing system. Shankweiler concludes his discussion of writing systems and phonology with a generalization: "Finally there seems to be a universal constraint on a workable writing system: *some way to incorporate phonology appears to be at the very heart of the possibility of writing*" (251, emphasis mine). Even though the phonetic may be separated from the semantic within a writing system, each linguistic writing system must still have phonetic representation. Shankweiler's research delineates that a language system can be divided into constitutive parts and that semantics can be separated from phonetics. One can infer from Shankweiler's work, however, that although a language system may not necessarily need semantic meaning to exist,[120] a language system cannot function without having a representation for pronunciation. Ultimately, each language system has to grapple with the complexity of representing phonology. Visual poetry challenges normative writing systems and reading practices because it often presents linguistic content without a clear indication of pronunciation, verbalization, or orality of that written content. This dissertation has examined the role of linguistic symbols and writing systems that seem to deny a specific orality. But the examples in this chapter push even further to question the ability of non-

[120] One could question the purpose of that language system if it is devoid of semantic meaning. In future applications of this research beyond this dissertation, I would turn my attention to sound poetry, which often attempts to divorce or defamiliarize phonetic content from semantic meaning, producing sounds without meaning or sounds estranged from normative meanings.

linguistic writing systems to function as communicative processes, especially when sound is intentionally removed from this exchange.

Semantically based non-segmental writing, such as Chinese compounds, demonstrate that symbols can contain elements that embody sound and meaning—and these can be communicated separately. Sound is still at the core of this communicative exchange, and semantically based non-segmental writing is an excellent vehicle for understanding and analyzing visual poetry that still has linguistic elements. Visual poetry intentionally draws attention to an image, communicating while still often distancing the work from orality in its materials or arrangement, but sound is still central to linguistic material. The visual poetry of Solt, Bergvall, and Schmaltz, who use linguistic material—and even non-linguistic material—in their works challenges sound as the fundamental vehicle of written communication. Two of Eric Schmaltz's 3D-printed poems featured in the Introduction disassemble and reassemble "communication" and "embodiment." Initially, these two works each present one complete word; the letters—graphemes—then are fragmented into lines and curves—their constitutive parts. Those parts are then reassembled to create a new work: a visual poem. In their appearance, these two poems could be likened to Chinese compounds. The poems in the "Assembly Line" section[121] function similarly to semantically based non-segmental writing because they initially contain both phonemic indicators and semantic information; however, after being fused together into a new visual symbol in Schmaltz's poems, they deny specific sounding and meaning.

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[121] Schmaltz calls these various sections "stimulations." The title of the table of contents of *Surfaces* is "Catalogue of Stimulations" because the same type of aesthetic/ creative exercise ("stimulation") is carried out in a series of iterations in each of the sections.

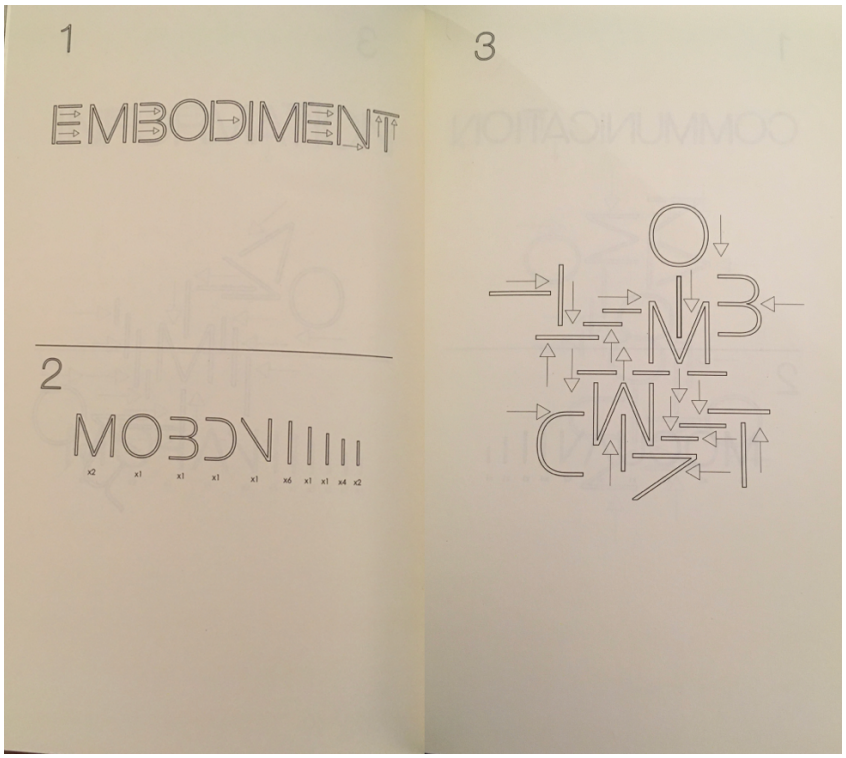

Figure 58. Selection from “Assembly Line” stimulation, *Surfaces*, Eric Schmaltz, Invisible Publishing, 2018, unpaginated.

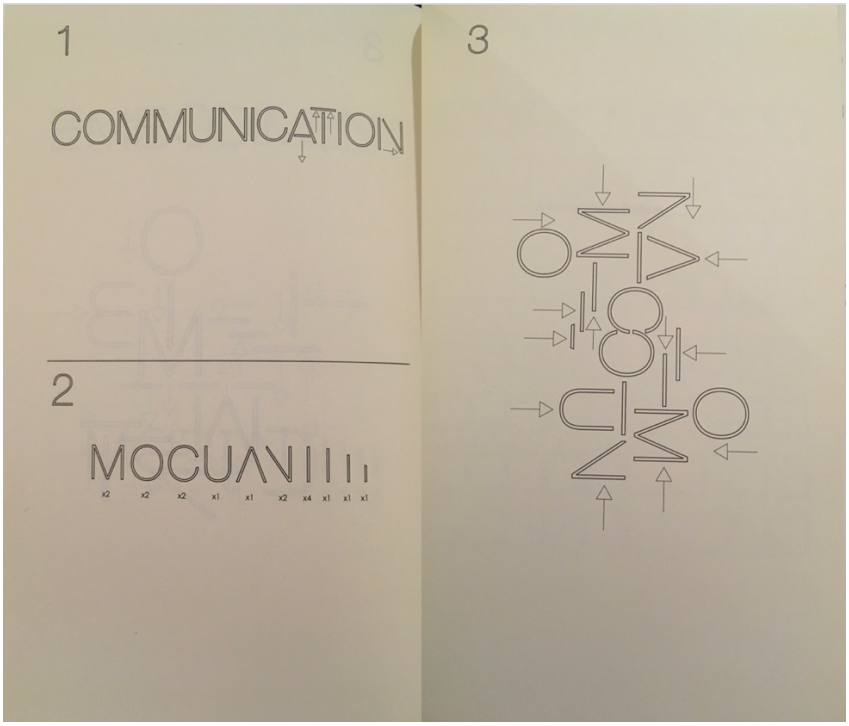

Figure 59. Additional selection from “Assembly Line” stimulation, *SUR*, unpaginated.

Schmaltz's "Assembly Line" poems demonstrate the breaking down of linguistic material, and they also show the disappearance of sonic elements in the fragmentation and reassembly. Interestingly, some linguistic symbols are still identifiable, legible, and (could be) soundable, but the context of the symbol as a whole seems to deny normative sounding practices. For examples of these poems, see figures 58 and 59. Although I will discuss other poems by Schmaltz in greater detail (ones that do not include any linguistic material), I want to highlight momentarily that the "Assembly Line" poems have similarities to semantically-based non-segmental writing. Also, Schmaltz's textual experiment demonstrates the visual fusion of sound and meaning (even if those elements are contradictory) and reveals the tension between the written word and its semantic and phonemic content. The poems examined throughout the rest of this chapter do not include linguistic material, so they do not adhere to alphabetic, syllabic, or semantically based non-segmental writing systems. Non-linguistic poems, instead, have their own codes / systems as the basis of their composition.

To address the unique modes of non-linguistic poetry, it is helpful to consider other written forms of communication outside phonographic systems. In *Processing of Visible Language* (1980), critics examine writing systems, graphic systems, textual literacy, textual technology, graphic technology, and theories of representation.[122] Ignace J. Gelb's essay "Principles of Writing Systems within the Frame of Visual Communication," begins the collection with a thorough delineation of the concepts which govern systems of signs, generally,

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[122] Gelb was a world-renowned scholar and ancient historian. In addition to being an Assyriologist, he had a specific interest in writing systems. His book *A Study of Writing* (1952) is still considered "the best work available" (Leichty 668) on the subject; in that text, he was the first person to elucidate the term "grammatology" in English. Peter T. Daniels, another scholar inspired by Gelb's work, co-edited *The World's Writing Systems* (1996) with William Bright. Their research is indebted to Gelb, who laid the foundations of studying writing systems scientifically.

and visual communication, specifically. After defining the structure and typology of writing, Gelb presents his innovative definition of writing and categories of writing systems. At the fore of Gelb's concerns is the significance of understanding the foundation and structure of a language. Gelb begins by reminding the reader that Pavlov's findings illuminate the similarities of human and animal communication and that the differences between these systems may be more quantitative than qualitative, as many forms of communication are sensory (visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile). Gelb further explains that, similar to animals, humans communicate via conventional signs:

> A system of signs is an assemblage of organically related signs. A sign may be a word in an oral language or a written mark in writing. The most common systems of signs among human beings are oral language [received aurally], gesture language [received visually], and writing, including drawing, painting, scratching, or incising markings on objects or on any other more or less durable material [also received visually].[123] (7)

Despite the widespread use of signs and systems of communication, Gelb highlights that there is no sufficient term to cover these conventions. As he succinctly suggests: "In English, 'language' may be used for all means of communication through signs, and 'speech' for oral language alone" (7). This lack of a fixed / definitive terminology has not been resolved (as discussed in Chapter 1, referencing Ong's research) because there is still no adequate framework for the study of non-written literature (oral literature); the word "literature" refers to and privileges written symbols. Gelb does not suggest that his classifications are the only way to approach writing systems; instead, he invites discussion on the definition and function of writing

[123] I inserted the brackets surrounding the adjectival phrases in this quotation. Gelb had the descriptors offset by commas, but it made the prose more difficult to parse in the list of items in the final sentence. I did not add the phrases—I only inserted the brackets.

systems: "All of this is subjective, of course, and open for debate for the simple reason that the question of the broader aspects of writing has never been treated *in toto*" (15). Similar to Ong in regard to orality and literature, Gelb seeks words to describe these complex systems adequately and invites others to participate in the dialogue to create a new vernacular for categorizing writing and its structures.

Gelb's research demonstrates the complexity that exists even at the level of the writing system. Two different types of visual systems are highlighted: (a) momentary (such as a smile or gesture) and (b) stable systems. Momentary events, as the name suggests, are transitory and not codified in writing; these systems, however, can be widely accepted as a form of visual communication and can change significantly by practice and cultural tradition. For instance, a head shake (side-to-side) indicates a "no" in many cultures, but in Bulgaria, Greece, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt such a head shake indicates an affirmative "yes." These momentary systems are not often well-studied or codified. Regarding stable systems, Gelb subdivides them into three types: *semasiographic devices*, which include forerunners of writing of descriptive-representational devices such as pictorial art and sculptural art as well as identifying-mnemonic devices such as wampum belts, branding, heraldic signs; *phonographic systems* or full writing, such as syllabic systems and alphabetic systems; and *para-graphic devices* or systems such as ledgers, charts, graphs, mathematical notation, and musical notation (Gelb 19–20). Gelb differentiates phonographic and semasiographic writing in their relationship between the linguistic elements and the writing:

> writing in its "broad" sense may be treated under the phonographic class, in which there is a close correlation between signs of writing and linguistic elements, or the semasiographic class, including forerunners of writing and all kinds of visual devices that

> are used side by side with phonographic writing, in which there is a loose correlation between visual markings and linguistic elements. (15)

The significance of this division and its effect upon the type of writing in each class are carefully examined: "I have considered the difference between phonographic and semasiographic classes so crucial in the development of writing that I have called the former 'full writing' and relegated the later to pre-, proto-, and para- or meta- aspects of writing" (Gelb 15). It is not that the semasiographic classes are hierarchically below phonographic; instead, semasiographic writing has very specific, often culturally bound, translation for its systems and its broader significance. Wampum belts, for instance, demonstrate the regional or cultural meaning contained within that form of communication; furthermore, the visual device of the wampum belt signifies the verbal agreement and codifies it into a specific system of visual communication.

These structures and their divisions, as outlined by Gelb, are not fixed. Instead, Gelb outlines how the development of these systems demonstrates their ability to fall under multiple categories simultaneously:

> Many systems and devices developed secondarily or tertiarily from our standard alphabet, such as the Morse alphabet (visual, momentary, and stable, but also auditory, momentary), flashlight signals using the Morse alphabet (visual, momentary), Braille alphabet (mainly tactile, stable, but also visual, stable), and skywriting (visual, momentary), have not been considered. There is no limit to such transfers especially if various mechanical or electronic devices are included. (20)

Gelb uses these categories to develop his own explanation of writing. Momentary systems, he insists, ought to be eliminated from definitions of writing:

> If we assume. . . that writing is visual communication with stable, lasting effect, then all the momentary systems and devices that are restricted in time and space, mainly gesture language and signaling by means of fire, smoke, light, and semaphore, should be eliminated from our definition of writing. That leaves only devices and systems based on objects or markings on objects. Only they have the function of recording, and in other words, writing is recording. (20–21)

Similar to Ong, Gelb concludes that forms of communication that are bound temporally and spatially should not be considered "writing" proper. Gelb proffers his new definition of writing in the broadest sense as "a recording system or device by means of conventional markings or shapes or color of objects, achieved by the motor action of the hand of an individual and received visually by another" (22). These defined categories of writing and visual communication systems are helpful in approaching poetry, especially poems that resist or work outside of traditional formal expectations. Gelb's research presents possibilities for understanding how to unsound non-linguistic material; instead of insisting upon the internalized reading (in-sounding) or externalized performance (out-sounding), the reader can examine how they visually receive the markings or shapes of the objects and use that to adjust their relationship to the work in processing it (un-sounding).

Poems analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 would fall under the phonographic class because, on the whole, the writing and linguistic elements are clearly interconnected. Yet non-linguistic poems only have a tertiary connection between their writing and linguistic elements. Non-linguistic poems do not fit within semasiographic systems, however, because they do not always have phonographic writing paired with the visual devices (or have visual devices represent a verbal agreement or exchange). Also, semasiographic devices are characterized by a correlation

with oral language, albeit a looser one than phonographic systems. The uncertainty of reading and interpretation of non-linguistic poems does make them problematic, however, for interpretation. Authors who produce non-linguistic works often create their own systems and markings as a means of expression and communication. The significance of these markings (as they translate to sound or meaning) are often ambiguous. Following Gelb's anatomization of stable writing systems, non-linguistic poems could function as *para-graphic devices* because they are markings that occur "within and in addition to writing proper" (Gelb 20). Gelb lists examples of para-graphic devices:

> cartographic devices
>
> ledgers, charts, and graphs
>
> notations in mathematics, symbolic logic, and other sciences
>
> cryptography (codes and ciphers)
>
> shorthand systems
>
> musical notation
>
> mimetic-dance notation
>
> comic strips and cartoons
>
> calligraphic devices. (20)

Each device has its own formal expectations and rules.

In terms of methods for analyzing poetry, the In / Out / Unsound method is most effective in its application to phonographically stable systems because it acknowledges and embraces the phonemic content central to the material. With non-linguistic poetry, however, there is an impetus for the creation of methods to analyze these texts individually and highlighting the unique modes of expression within them. When read as para-graphic devices, non-linguistic

poems can be understood as having an internalized system of rules for communication. Readers, then, need to approach such poems by attempting to understand their own systems in order to read, perform, and interpret the challenging material.

In / Out / Unsound Method and Its Limitations with Non-Linguistic Poems

This dissertation has applied the In / Out / Unsound method to a diverse selection of poems in order to understand how sonic elements facilitate communication, affect semantic meaning, and illuminate the ethical dimensions of the work. Although the In / Out / Unsound method accounts for non-linguistic elements in poetic analysis, sonic analysis is most effective with linguistic material—poems that are comprised of sound-based content. Non-linguistic poems deny sounding (both in-sounding and out-sounding), but, as I am demonstrating, there is still unsound in the muting of linguistic (and, by extension, sonic) material. When applying the In / Out / Unsound method to non-linguistic poems, then, analysis must focus on unsound and un-sounding exclusively. Non-linguistic markings do not translate directly to sounds; instead, these markings compel readers to approach these poems even as they un-sound. Non-linguistic visual poems cause readers to interrogate *how* a person reads; the texts force readers to come to terms with radical uncertainty and ambiguity when attempting to work toward the poem's meanings. These complex visual poems embolden readers to question how divorced poetry can be from orality and still be a "poem"; such texts test the limits of conventional readability, performance, and interpretation. This next section will explore the In / Out / Unsound method in relation to works by Solt, Bergvall, and Schmaltz and delve into the reasons why unsound in these poems is so effective. After this consideration of unsound, I will suggest a new mode of analysis for the exemplars of non-linguistic poems.

A Poem's Science: Mary Ellen Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet"

Mary Ellen Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet" (1964) immediately presents a challenge to reading and sounding (see fig. 60). The first step in the method for examining the insound of the piece requires the reader to assess the poem's material. First and foremost, Solt's material is neither a recognizable linguistic code nor a recurring numerical pattern. The graphemes may even be completely unidentifiable to a reader. "Moonshot Sonnet" is comprised of "reformatted diagrammatic codes initially used by NASA engineers to plan and execute the moon landing" (Saper 1). (A reader's first response to that information might be, "And so?") With the poem being comprised of non-linguistic material, the method then proposes a series of questions:

1) Is there a formalized system (to the material)?
2) Is there a translation provided?
3) Are there sonic indicators?
4) How does the non-linguistic material affect in-sounding?

Although there seems to be an internal formalized system (the choice of the diagrammatic codes), it is unclear how this system could be deployed outside of this poem. There is no direct translation provided to suggest how this material could be interpreted as a language. In the *Anthology of Concrete Poetry* (1967), Solt provides background on her poetic inspiration:

> It has not been possible since the Renaissance to write a convincing sonnet on the moon. Looking at the photographs in *The New York Times*, it occurred to me that since the scientist's symbols for marking off areas on the moon's surface were presented five to a line and the lines could be added up to fourteen, a visual sonnet could be made of them. The poem is intended as a spoof of an outmoded form of poetry and as a statement of the problem of the concrete poet's search for valid new forms. (292)

Despite Solt's disparaging comments on the "outmoded" genre and the impossibility of a convincing contemporary sonnet, the desire to find a new form of expression in extremity is communicated unequivocally. Yet Solt's insights do not give any guidance as to translating the text into English or generating a sonic rendering. (The diagrammatic codes do not have any conventional sonic indicators, so a reader would not know how to perform this material.) All of these factors affect the in-sounding of the poem and render an involuntary in-sounding impossible; furthermore, the reader can only actively in-sound (and later out-sound) the poem if they create their own parameters for the performance of these markings, associating them with specific sounds. (This will be discussed in greater length when I examine the non-linguistic poem as a para-graphic device.) The answers to the method's questions regarding the material demonstrate that this poem does not translate to specific sounds in an in-sounding and, therefore, thwarts potential out-sounding of the work. Saper describes Solt's poem as "a distinctively American sonnet" in which "the literary poetics reduce language to an elegant semiotic code system and universal visual language" (2). For the reader, the presumption of "universality" seems outmoded, not to mention not widely accessible. Saper compares Solt's material to "a literal target" (2), arguing that the target is "for the more peaceful purpose of space exploration," yet one could argue that the dark history of white American colonialism looms. In the words of Claus Clüver from *The Pictured Word* (1997):

> [Solt's] text turns out to be a found poem, a reading of the scientist's marks as if they stood in the major lyric tradition of the West, or perhaps more precisely, the discovery that the sign system used by natural scientists in *their* manner of dealing with the moon need only be slightly manipulated in order to become a sign for the poets' and, by extension, the humanities' use of the moon as a fertile image. Thus perceived, the text

> may even be seen to symbolize a reunion of the "two cultures" [sciences and humanities] into which Western consciousness has become divided. (29–30)

All of these extrapolations are vivid but perhaps only possible through knowledge of Solt's materials—certainly the linguistic content of the title guides the reader. Clüver suggests that "these are high claims for a poem that may, in fact, no longer be very accessible" (30). Knowledge of the title or an understanding of the code seems paramount in approaching this poem. As Clüver claims, "Encountered in a literary context, the wordless text will probably signal without the title that it deals somehow with the sonnet, perhaps paying homage to the tradition while showing it simultaneously reduced to an empty formula" (30). Without this linguistic gesture of the title or knowledge of the source of the diagrammatic codes, the poem would be much more difficult to decipher. "Readers need to recognize the nature and function of the signs employed," Clüver elucidates, "and few will do that nowadays without the help of a footnote, which in the sixties the title provided direction enough" (30). At the time of the sonnet's publication, the diagrammatic codes were published regularly in the newspapers and these signs overlaid on the moon would be readily recognized by the reader. Today, however, the diagrammatic codes would likely be unrecognizable, Although the title gives the reader some insight, more information regarding the poem's code system might be necessary in completing the communique that the contemporary audience would have registered as common knowledge.

After considering the material of the poem, my method advises an examination of the text's arrangement. Given that the poem's material has already been determined to be non-linguistic, the method presents two questions regarding the poem's arrangement:

1) Do these graphemes form clusters or groupings?
2) How does the arrangement of these graphemes affect in-sounding?

The poem's title and structure give clues as to the effects of the markings' arrangement. One could suggest that the poem is comprised of fourteen "lines" with five "accents" / feet per line; this alternative Petrarchan sonnet has an octet with a turn / *volta* (demarcated by the visual space) before the sestet. But beyond these observable qualities, how is this poem able to be in-sounded or interpretable?

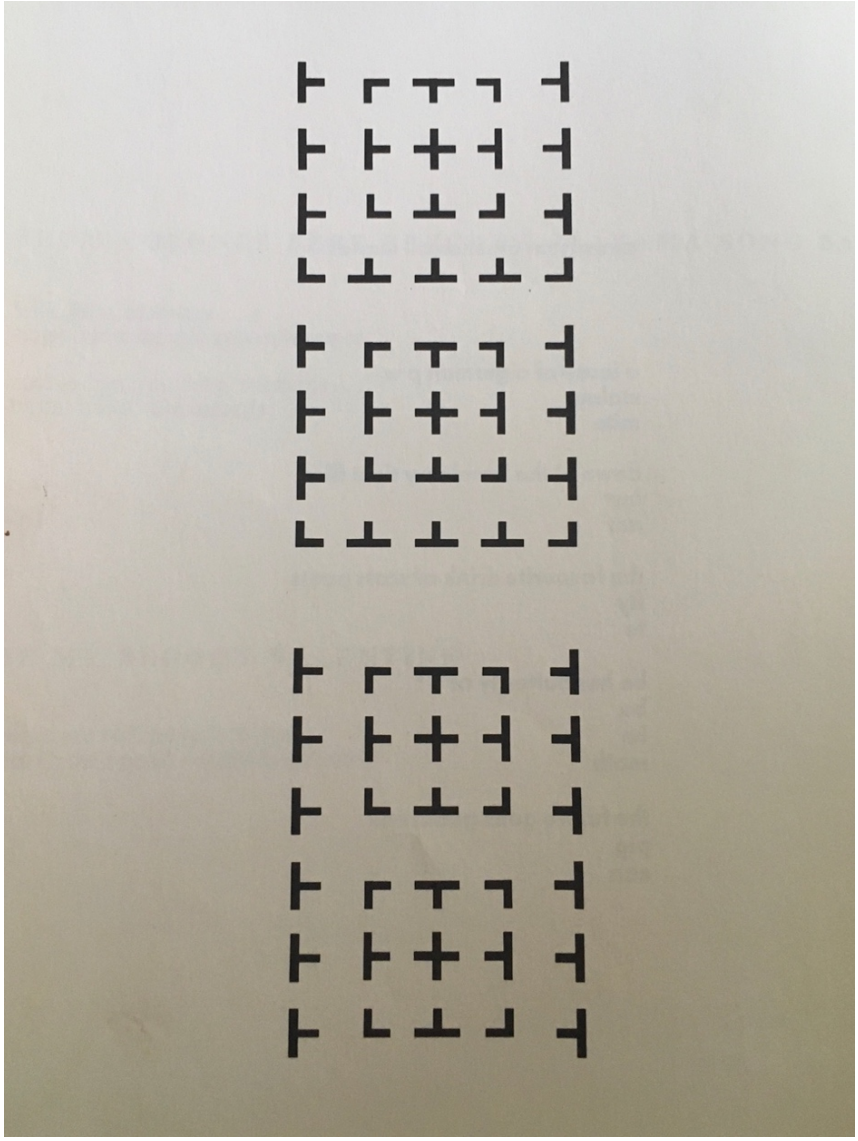

Figure 60. "Moonshot Sonnet" (1964), Mary Ellen Solt, *Concrete Poetry: A World View*, Indiana UP, 1968, p. 242.

Unlike phonemes, Solt's diagrammatic codes do not directly translate to sounds (save perhaps for the click of a camera that produces such images).[124] What is to be gained in an externalized performance of this poem—a playing of a series of clicks? Or, instead, does this poem's refusal to sound convey a more complex message than a performance could? Because this poem challenges any conventional or pre-determined system for translation of grapheme to sound (and absences phonemic content), such a work can be categorized as "unsound." Considering the evocation of the moon, the reader can consider how the unsound of the poem reflects the "silence" of space. Aside from cosmic microwave background radiation,[125] celestial space is marked by its quietude. In her choice of materials, Solt emphasizes the absence of sound (unsound) and punctuates it with the stresses of the diagrammatic codes in a type of pentameter. Through its resistance to sound, Solt's poem makes the scientific code visually poetic. The arrangement of material in Solt's sonnet creates a visual rhyme scheme, of sorts. The first octet is comprised of two quatrains that are exactly the same in composition, and the following sestet echoes the material of the octet with line 4 and 8 removed. As often happens in Petrarchan sonnets, the material Solt's octet is reimagined and transformed in the closing sestet. Saper argues that Solt's sonnet is "a cold paean to the moon without romance," written from a global

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[124] One could argue that the diagrammatic codes could be read as letters such as r, t, and l that are in a sans serif font, but the abstraction and context of the markings seems to indicate that these marks are non-linguistic—even though some of them may be perceived as letters.

[125] The cosmic microwave background (CMB) is believed to be leftover radiation from the Big Bang. Some physicists have generated models for "hearing" the CMB. Mark Whittle explains that he has been able to recreate the different sounds of various "kinds of universe" across a megayear: "a descending scream, changing into a deepening roar, with subsequent growing hiss; matching the increase in wavelength caused by universal expansion, followed by the post recombination flow of gas into the small scale potential wells created by dark matter. This final sound, of course, sets the stage for all subsequent growth of cosmic structure, from stars (hiss), through galaxies (mid-range tones), to large scale structure (bass notes)" (984). In relation to this project, however, CMB remains inaudible because it is outside the range of human hearing.

perspective that "responds to the supranational and supra-lingual world that moonshots created" (2). Yet, "Moonshot Sonnet" seems to recognize the power of science and even suggest hope for what technology offers in the potential for further space exploration. Contemplating this unsound in relation to the poem's content reveals the quiet magnitude of a moonshot—in 1964, a long-shot, a seemingly unachievable goal. Whether literal (with the moon landing not yet achieved at the time of the poem's publication) or metaphorical (with the connotations of the theme of love, so common in sonnets), this seemingly-impossible dream is inexpressible—ineffable—even as the effort (the code) is laid bare for the reader to contemplate its effects. The reader may not know precisely how this poem's unsound can translate to audible sound, but "Moonshot Sonnet" seems less concerned with a singular, prescribed reading and resultant interpretation. Arguably, the lack of closure in the poem's ending (although the octave ends with ⅃, the sestet ends with ᛋ) encourages a similar openness of interpretation; instead of closed brackets / code markings as in line eight, the poem suggests that the poem continues (at least in its ideas if not its markings) beyond the observed codes of the fourteenth line. The poem does not close; it keeps unfolding in its cipher for the reader to translate. Ultimately, Solt uses unsound to foreground potentiality in terms of both the reader's interpretation and the possible applications of these ideas more widely. In un-sounding the poem, the reader performs the possible(s) and experiences the limits (and great opportunities) of non-linguistic communication.

Space and Sea: Caroline Bergvall's DRIFT

Addresses to the night sky arise in Caroline Bergvall's *Drift* (2014) (see figures 61–63), which is described by Bergvall as "a contemporary meditation on migration, exiles and sea-travel." This book-length collection was "inspired by the language and themes of the Seafarer, an

anonymous Anglo-Saxon poem from the 10th century as well as drawing directly from official material from a current sea migrants' tragedy" (carolinebergvall.com). There are linguistic poems in the collection as well as poems that function as lipograms by deleting specific letters, mourning the loss of Anglo-Saxon characters such as "the thorn, the yogh" and the Anglo-Saxon language (Kaufmann). Figures 61–63 are selections from the collection of "constellation" poems.[126]

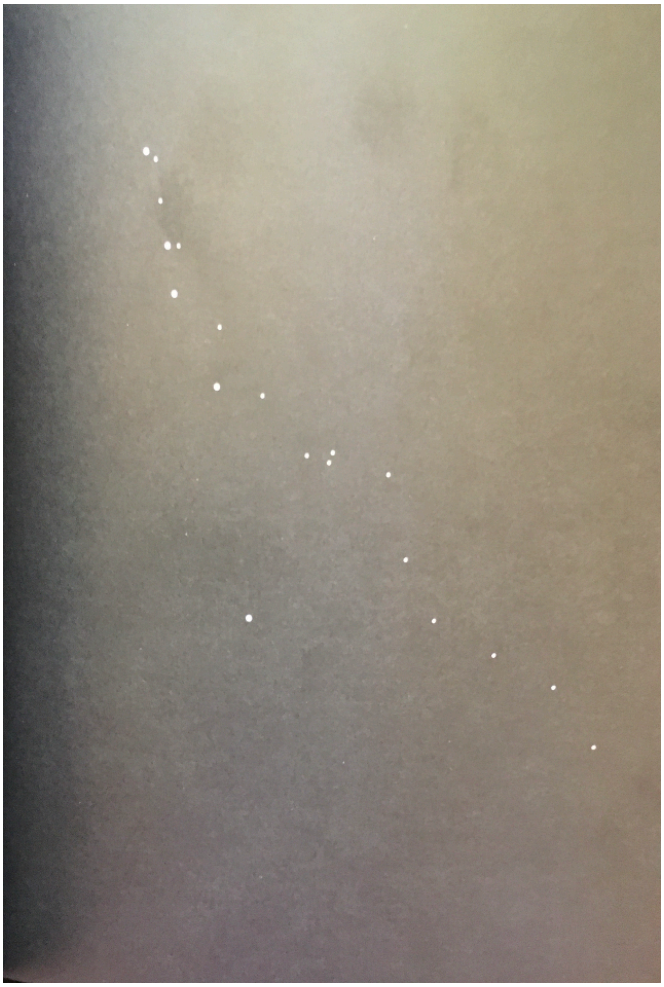

Figure 61. Page 83, Caroline Bergvall, *Drift*, Nightboat Books, 2014.

[126] These pictures of the constellation poems are distorted (somewhat) in the imaging. The background of the pages is black, but the photos (due to the play and interaction of light in focusing) do not show the depth of black. Various levels of light would affect their appearance in any viewing.

These constellation poems are not comprised of linguistic material, so the questions regarding non-linguistic material raised in the insound method apply:

1) Is there a formalized system (to the material)?
2) Is there a translation provided?
3) Are there sonic indicators?
4) How does the non-linguistic material affect in-sounding?

Similar to the specific system of the diagrammatic codes in Solt's work, Bergvall's material is particular to this series, but the formalized aspects are unspecified; consequently, there is no direct translation given for the material. Yet, the navigation logs at the end of the book provide insight into how to approach these poems (and reiterate the significance of celestial reading in seafaring, generally). In the list of "Early medieval open sea navigation" steps, Bergvall encourages the adventurer to "travel from landmark to landmark" (*DR* 127) and "go by the stars / use polaris / go by the sun" (*DR* 128). But these stellar marks do not have direct sonic indicators, and it is difficult to know how they ought to be sounded. The material certainly affects the way in which the reader attempts to in-sound the text. In June 2018, Andy Fitch interviewed Bergvall and asked her about the "embodied, socially embedded performance practice" that she infuses in "the poetics and the politics of the printed book." Bergvall contends that *Drift* challenges cognitive processes in reading: "When you talk about cognitive perception: especially for *Drift* … I was quite interested in trying to change the rhythm of reading, and sometimes to replace it with viewing, with looking. The black pages, the white script, the maps, the constellations all offer abstracted orientations that get elucidated in the logs at the very end" (BP).

Figure 62. Pages 84 and 85 from *DR*.

Figure 63. Pages 90 and 91, *DR*.

Although *Drift*'s linguistic material is out-sounded in performances by Bergvall,[127] the non-linguistic elements of the white stars upon the black page are not vocalized. Instead, the material of the constellation poems, by thwarting in-sounding processes, calls for a re-examination of reading practices. Bergvall elucidates that *Drift*, due to its disruption of traditional reading modes, causes readers to question how they read:

> by literally inviting you to examine photographs, starting from *Drift*'s front cover onwards, and then through my collaboration with a photographer examining that dreadful image of the small *Zodiac* boat crossing the Mediterranean. I'm hoping and imagining that you're going to be reading at different paces, different times, different speeds. I'm interested in that because it has to do with cognition and communication models. It has to do with types of knowledge that get made available, as well as writerly imagination colored by the visual and performance arts. (BP)

Although I will return to this discussion later, when dealing with the text's unsound, I must make note of the thematic connection of the disastrous nautical journey underpinning Bergvall's *Drift* and the horrific events aboard the *Zong!*. In the logs of *Drift*, Bergvall addresses a 2012 project by *Forensic Oceanography* conducted by Lorenzo Pezzani and Charles Heller, which is an ongoing critical investigation of the militarized border regime in the Mediterranean Sea.[128] One case covered by Pezzani and Heller was the Migrant Boat Tragedy of 2011. Outlined in an article in *The Guardian*, the "Left-to-Die Boat case" concerned a shipping vessel with 72 migrants

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[127] Videos are available on Vimeo (vimeo.com/search?q=drift%20bergvall) and YouTube (youtu.be/rjD-jK54A1A?t=192), but there is no full performance of *Drift* online.

[128] Pezzani and Heller collected "Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) imagery, geospatial mapping, and drift modeling" to reconstruct what happened to the vessel (*DR* 133–4). However, Bergvall's constellations are not replications of this data but inspired by it: "In fact I'm inventing night sky constellations with specific imagery, such as the small *Zodiac* rubber boat. More generally night skies, or ideas of direction, or of losing direction, guide those passages" (Fitch and Bergvall).

aboard; they were "left to perish on their way from Tripoli to Lampedusa in full view of a number of patrolling vessels" (*DR* 132). With their collected data, Pezzani and Heller explain that a UK crew might have observed the "doomed vessel." This horrific event and "the callous, brutal politics" (*DR* 135) surrounding it increase the tension of being lost at sea, which is a narrative thread throughout *Drift*. The migrants were left to the currents and waves; they drifted to their deaths. Again, I will return to this thematic connection, but the image of the boat across the night sky in constellation evokes the shared political and ethical concerns addressed in *Drift* and *Zong!*. The compelling material of the constellations encourages thematic connections across texts. Instead of depending on established reading practices, *Drift*'s materials (and their physical arrangement) compel readers to come up with new ways of interacting and engaging with the text.

Since the material of this series is non-linguistic, the reader can examine the arrangement to gain more clues as to the sounding of the text. The groupings / clusters are constellations—though not ones already mythopoetically "canonized": "In fact I'm inventing night sky constellations with specific imagery," Bergvall reports, "such as the small *Zodiac* rubber boat. More generally night skies, or ideas of direction, or of losing direction, guide those passages" (BP). Constellations function as astral maps, essentially sky-charting para-graphic devices. Literally etched in the sky, the constellation enables an earth-bound journey across time and space. In Bergvall's collection it is unclear where north may be or what portion of the night sky the reader may be viewing. The navigation logs begin by highlighting this unsettling loss of direction:

> What is north. Is it a direction or a process. A method or a place. Is it space accelerated into time, like a glacial flood. Is it time spread into space, like permafrost. Is it always

> further on, further north until it makes a vertical drop, like a voice that traverses, illuminates everything but will not itself be held. Is it a trajectory or endpoint, or both. (*DR* 127)

Seafarers read the stars to ensure navigation, but even the light itself is historical. It takes 323 years for the light from Polaris (the North Star) to reach the eye of the observer on Earth (Malik). When readers look to the actual constellations and to the poetic constellations in *Drift*, there is a reminder of the passage of time. There are certain ways to read these sky images; while second-nature to a seafarer, the process of deciphering their meaning does not indicate specific sounds—instead, the marks function as unsounds across a dark sky (akin to the concentrated inking of visual noise in McCaffery's *Carnival* that also became unsounds).

Astronomical entities intersect with storytelling as specific cultures carry on the oral traditions of telling tales (as seen in Abel's *The Place of Scraps*) projected onto the patterns of stars. *Drift*'s unsound reminds the reader that, out at sea, the night sky sea is marked by its silence; only the elements reacting to the travellers make sound, whether that be the night wind catching in the sails or the water lapping against the sides of the boat. Yet, the dark night sky spread across the page compounded with the uncertainty in reading can make the reader feel an unsettling fear, as Bergvall explains:

> the fog of being lost at sea is not being able to see at all, but then there are the noises that get amplified when you get lost in that strange and very scary sea. Then there is the parallel lost at sea of contemporary migrants lost in the dark. Again, these passages have the funerary darkness of night or of the black page. So it's the narratives that dictate the color of the page and its currents and how I spatialize the text. (BP)

With visual reminders of the quiet (yet almost ominous) environment, the reader is invited to feel the effects of the protracted journey, but there is no guide showing the way the reader ought to go. This is at once freeing and simultaneously unmooring because *reading* itself is undetermined: "Everything planned, known, secured, released, fine-tuned, structured, achieved is now upended in a way that exceeds comprehension" (*DR* 137). The reader experiences uncertainty in attempting to sound and understand the text's unsounds. Bergvall describes her feelings following the first performance of *Drift*: "All this leaves me in a state of total shock and openness. I come home and find that I have lost my sense of home. I come home to find that I have left my home. No rest, no refuge" (*DR* 135–6). When the reader (with the author) is lost at sea, they are on their own to navigate—using the unfamiliar constellations in the night sky, and the imagined constellations on the black page, as a means of finding their bearings. Initially, the emphasis on unsound could cause the readers to drift—giving themselves over to an experience which they themselves cannot control.

Unsound is complex because it can decrease agency, as in the case of the reader's feeling unmoored and being lead on a journey through unfamiliar waters. In that sense, unsound can enact an empathetic response in the reader for the refugees who actually existed. Simultaneously, though, the text discourages voyeurism and asks the reader to attempt to forge a pathway through the text—in turn, this increases the reader's agency in their attempts to chart their course. The reader, after all, cannot remain adrift forever but is urged to move through the text—un-sounding as they go. Once the reader devises their own method of (un)sounding the stars, they begin to find their own way through this once-unfamiliar night sky.

Before any of the constellations appear in *Drift*, the collection presents a series of line poems (see figures 64–66). As the first section of book—the first visual images after the title

page—the sixteen poems, composed of drawn lines, immediately cause the reader to confront the complexity of "reading" and sounding the text. The line poems, Bergvall explicates, reveal recurring themes: "I wanted to start *Drift* like that because I was dealing with different types of disappearance: historical disappearance (of a language), and then political disappearance with the migrants being left to drift across the Mediterranean, which informs the black, funerary pages at the heart of *Drift* (as well as the mark-making processes, and rough map routes like imaginary scores)" (BP).

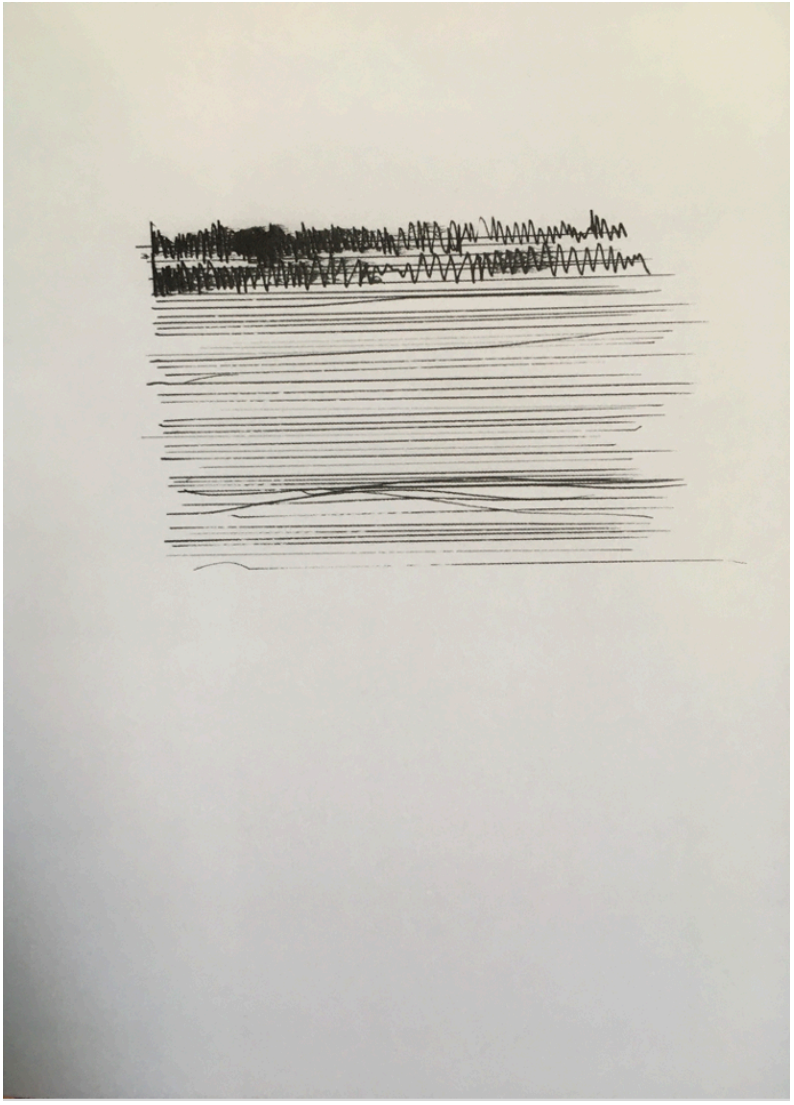

Figure 64. Page 7, *DR*.

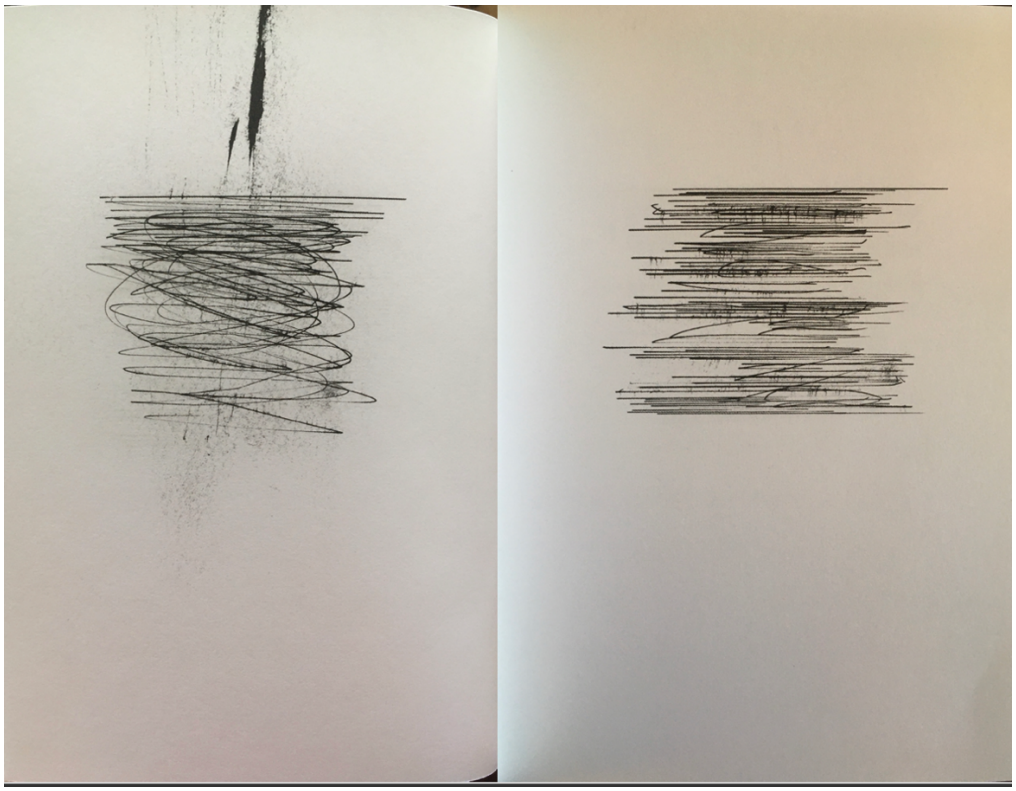

Figure 65. Pages 12 and 13, *DR*.

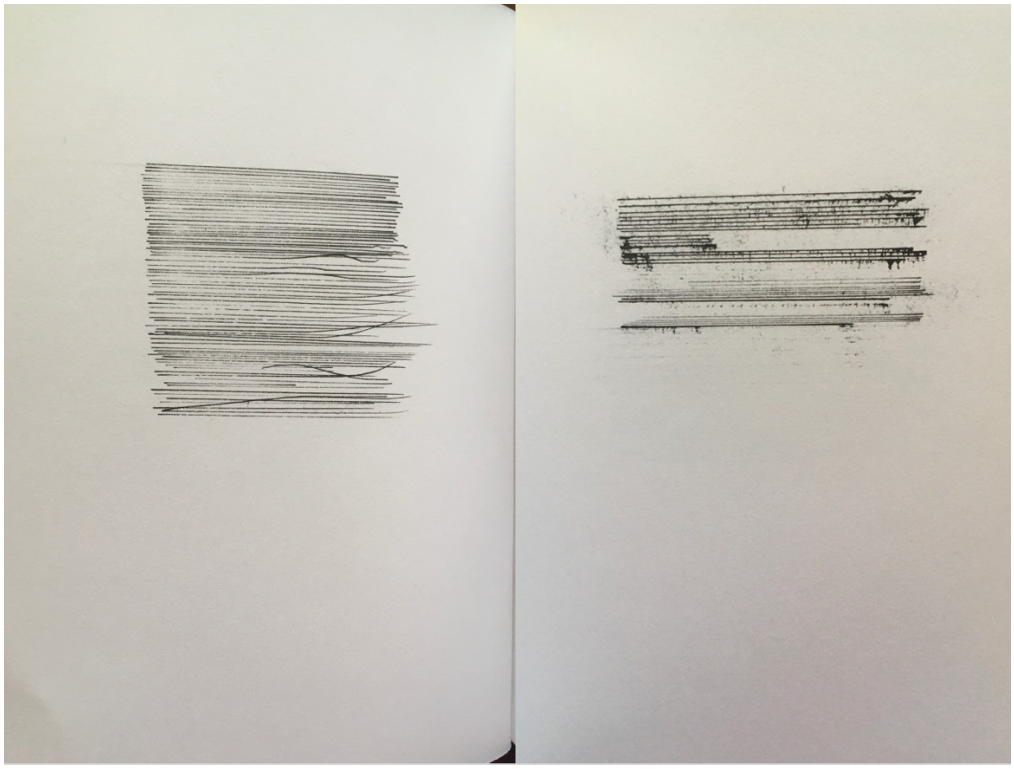

Figure 66. Pages 14 and 15, *DR*.

I will return to Bergvall's mentioning of "mark-making processes" and "rough map routes like imaginary scores" when I discuss these poems as para-graphic devices that can be read as musical scores. But, like the constellations, the line poems across the page do not adhere to linguistic systems. No translation, no sonic indicators, and no clues for in-sounding are provided. Moreover, the arrangement (groupings) of the lines shifts from poem to poem. The lines do stay (relatively) in a similar area across the pages of the series, but the frequency of the lines and their appearance (thickness, etc.) shift with each poem, even demonstrating variation within the poems themselves. Certainly, the line poems neither adhere to convention in terms of linguistic poems, nor do they allow for traditional reading practices.[129] Therefore, the line poems prevent involuntary and voluntary in-sounding and further complicate out-sounding. As such, the reader seeks to parse the unsounds of the line poems. Often, turning to similar texts can help provide insight into the sounding and interpreting possible. The linear / cross-hatched poems bear a resemblance to asemic texts, an open form of writing in which lines do not form specific letters but instead invent imaginary nonce alphabets; the script denies specific semantic content. In *The Last Vispo Anthology*, C. Mehrl Bennett explains the recent surge in publication of asemic work:

> It is a sign of these digital, post-modern times that "asemic writing" is becoming more accepted and popular. Asemic writing doesn't attempt to relay a message of specific "meaning" though there might be a private system of symbols that mean something only

[129] Throughout her creative practice, Bergvall explores the limitations of and opportunities available in the art form of the book, especially in relation to the image: "That aesthetic freedom comes from the book culture that has developed since the early-20th-century avant-garde—and then further back, from how medieval books will take an image, or how they won't break the line. That formal interest also for me offers an important way of asking for a consideration of the text as inhabited by the image, such as when you have images side by side, or when you incorporate all the very sophisticated marginalia that those sagas had" (BP).

> to the poet / artist or to some ancient culture, or there might have been a readable text that has undergone "processing" and is no longer readable byway of an established language system. (199)

Like asemic writing, Bergvall's lines / cross-hatchings do not convey distinct meanings, nor do they have any immediate sonic indicators for in-sounding. Instead, these lines are open to the reader's interpretation—not demanding specific renderings or particular significance.

In addition to observing similar poetic forms (like asemic poetry), the reader can gain insight into methods for reading and (un)sounding these line poems by attending to Bergvall's description of her process:

> The forensic principle: that every action or contact leaves a trace. I decide to use the narrative of the journey and its harrowing drift, the story told by the survivors and corroborated by the forensic findings. My role will be to shorten the narrative and relay the report's complex piece of memorialisation, interpretation, and investigation through live recitation. Letting the recitation become a resonating chamber, a ripple effect. (*DR* 134).

Although there are no recordings of Bergvall performing these line poems, the ripple effect and the traces of these poems can be interpreted as echoes or recordings of past sounds / actions. This framing of the text as traces of past actions provides a new understanding of these (un)sounds; past sounds can be enacted through a present reading / viewing / (un)sounding. Throughout *Drift*, Bergvall plays with the limits of language and its disappearance across time. The line poems demonstrate the tracing of the past and a marking of remembrance to be recalled in the present (un)sounding:

> A lot of my work is interested in disappearance, ghostings, in making visible traces of evidence of events—also found in languages and in the transformation of writing through different types of technology (like moving from manuscript to print technology). So to start with these mysterious line drawings was one way almost to suspend comprehension, enable imaginary speculative viewing and only after these move into the poetic text "Seafarer." (BP)

The cross-hatchings / lines at the beginning of *Drift* correlates the pen's passage across the page to that of the boat across the water—traces of the wake. Aside from the scrapes of the pen in its path, the line poems do not divulge the intent or purpose of their passage: "One loads ones [sic] vessel for dream-travel and one follows it into hell" (*DR* 134). In Bergvall's volume, the quietude of these pages is in stark contrast to the sounds in the nearby linguistic poems. The reader can embark on a journey that complements the boat or the pen, but the sounds encountered will be ones that respond to their presence and may or may not induce epiphanies during the voyage: "A reciting voice remains simultaneously input and output. Resonance is contact ripple. Everything is connected in the vast chapter of the world, beyond the callous, brutal politics. Everything ripples at contact" (*DR* 134–5). The reader must understand that their encounter with the text—their un-sounding of it—causes ripples and affects the text's resonances. This means that the unsounds can be understood in a renewed context that is shaped by the reader's experience of it. Upon further meditation, the unsounds may provide more moments of revelation that are initially illusive. Illusive moments of revelation are only possible because of the text's reliance upon unsound. Time may be required to allow the echoes—the traces—to resonate within the reader which will shape their interpretation(s) of it.

Regarding unsound, the In / Out / Unsound method questions the broader significances of unsound in a text. The unsounds throughout *Drift* stretch the boundaries of reading and celebrate the aesthetic opportunities within and beyond the page. Bergvall's processes of creating *Drift* are reflected in the form and further enacted by the reader in the (un)sounding: "this idea of getting lost and finding one's way through new means and materials became important to me through various histories, including forensic elements and tools provided by queer and literary thinkers and polemicists" (BP). The poems' reliance on unsound drives a queering of reading and interpretive processes and compels readers to invent new modes of engaging with texts. Also, similar to Philip's mediation of trauma in *Zong!*, *Drift* "deals with very contemporary concerns regarding how one can use poetics as a process of witnessing catastrophes without becoming voyeuristic" (BP). Arguably, *Drift*'s (and *Zong!*'s) challenge to reading / sounding practices and resultant call for intense reader involvement should render voyeurism impossible. Unsounds and unsounding requires intense readerly engagement. Bergvall also argues that *Drift* "addresses questions of personal desire and lovepaths, especially of how to use queer sexuality to make sense of the world" (BP). Although the queer sexuality that Bergvall notes may not be directly registered in the text as much as in the author's or critic's mind, the disruption of conventional reading practices and encouragement of innovative interpretations is a queering of the reader's relationship to language, to processing, and to sounding. At the same time, like *Zong!*, *Drift* highlights the reader's positionality and potential complicity in the fate of the migrants lost at sea. In the same way that so many other vessels at sea were complicit in the deaths of the migrants, contemporary readers are called to question their own roles in the fate of the murdered migrants. The deaths of the migrants may have occurred in 2011, but the narrative is a

contemporary one.[130] Although at some times in processing the text the reader may feel they are drifting alone in their singular journey, the readers are made aware of another narrative—the "Left-to-Die" boat case—that is not their story but a horrific one of loss experienced in the past, memorialized in the stars, and revived in the readers' un-sounding of *Drift*. Both *Drift* and *Zong!* contend that by-stander complacency are ethical crimes; the act of un-sounding both of these texts forces readers to apply the same assessment of their positionality outside their reading of the text as they do within it. Un-sounding these texts calls for the application of the knowledge gained in encountering these challenging narratives. Un-sounding *Drift* requires an embracing of uncertainty and, further, an openness for new ways of seeing, reading, and understanding. Navigation and points previously considered to be constants need reassessment: "To be local or rooted today is to be cognizant of uprootedness, rooted through uprootedness. I call it 'the duende of mobility,' or of 'mobilization.' And this allows me to think about its rituals, its archaic forms, the question of linguistic soils, widening modes of dialogue—while digging out the songs that are always at work in language and poetry" (BP).[131] *Drift*'s unsounds cause readers to assess their positionality, to question the familiar, and to navigate uncertainty in order to understand their past (as well as a shared history). Further, *Drift* condemns voyeurism; un-sounding the text compels readers to engage with the present in generating innovative sounds and dialogic communication—to learn new songs and reinvent the concepts of belonging and becoming.

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[130] On 12 April 2021, ten years after the "Left-to-Die boat" case, the UK-based organization Statewatch released an article reiterating the urgency for justice for migrants lost at sea: "Today, non-assistance has become a policy. By refusing exiles access to European borders, and by shirking their obligations to provide assistance, European states are doubly responsible for the tragedies that plague the migration routes. The list of more than forty thousand people who have died at Europe's borders since the beginning of the 1990s continues to grow, day after day."
[131] Regarding the concept of *duende*, Bergvall explains: "I think of García Lorca's duende, which calls up the connection between blood and soil and song. And I think of what the duende today is. It is closer to Glissant's 'tout-monde'" (BP).

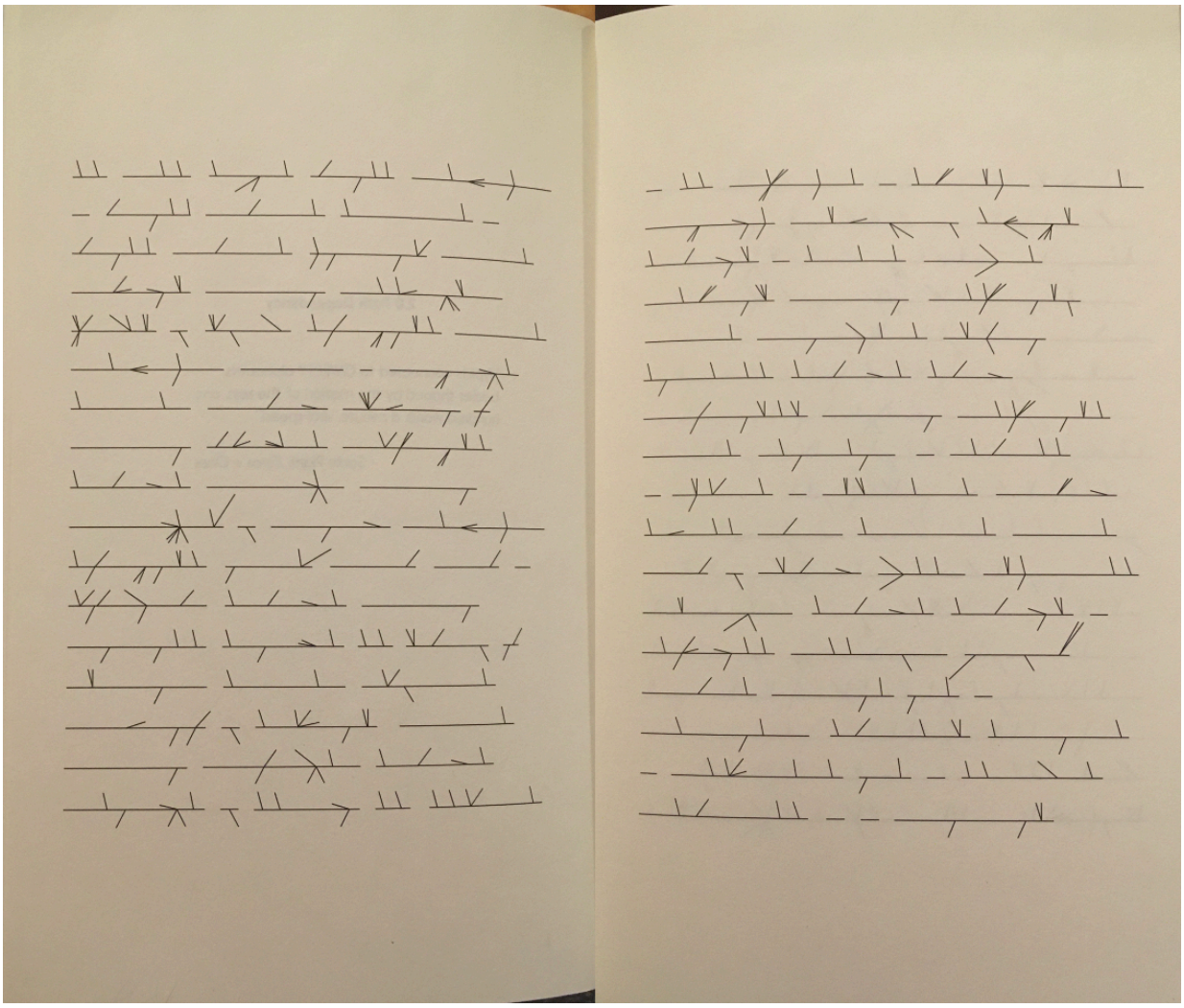

Figure 67. First and second work from “Path Dependency” stimulation, *SUR*, unpaginated.

The Depths of the Page: Eric Schmaltz’s SURFACES

Eric Schmaltz’s work has resonances with that of Solt and Bergvall, yet he uses unsound to draw attention to surfaces (by retraining reading processes and demanding that the medium not be overlooked) and depths (even depths of time past and the bodily actions—and sounds—required for the creation of the poems and artistic works on the page). Like Bergvall’s *Drift*, the poems in Schmaltz’s *Surfaces* “engage with ideas and questions regarding language’s materiality, tactility, and the language devices we use to creatively communicate” (robmclennan.blogspot.com). As previously mentioned, some poems in this collection include

the disassembly and reassembly of letters to create linguistic and simultaneously non-linguistic structures (figures 58–59). The images featured in Figure 67 are taken from a section (or "stimulation," which is Schmaltz's term) entitled "Path Dependency." As the lines branch out, no guidance for sounding these poems or sonic indicators is included. In their elimination of linguistic content, these markings could be read as unsounds— marks but not signifiers of specific sounds.

In the volume's endnotes, Schmaltz explains that these poems are a translation of an article that he wrote for rob mclennan's "On Writing" series; Schmaltz "translate[s] each word of the source text into a visual representation of finger movements across the keyboard away from the home row, as they produce letters on the digital page" (*SUR* endnotes). The texts' materiality thwarts involuntary or voluntary in-sounding as well as subsequent out-sounding. In their arrangement, these poems demonstrate a body in previous movement, communicating, and typing. Yet, aside from the clicking of the keystrokes that sounded long ago, the page is left only with traces—pathways of routes once taken, like Bergvall's traces in *Drift*'s line poems. A reader of the latter could attempt to translate those echoes back into linguistic content by following the maps; however, in the current state of un-sounding, Schmaltz's poems express a narrative about the connection of the body to technology, the traces of digital footprints, and the changing nature of communication in this Information Age.

The reader is left to draw their conclusions as to the meanings held in that message—questioning the broader significance of the unsounds. In the endnotes of *Surfaces*, Schmaltz explains that the "Path Dependency" stimulation "explores digital culture and embodiment or what N. Katherine Hayles refers to as the idea of a 'bodiless fluid' during the Information Age" (endnotes). In *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and*

Informatics, Hayles grapples with the ways in which information has become "disembodied" through abstraction:

> My strategy is to complicate the leap from embodied reality to abstract information by pointing to moments when the assumptions involved in this move were contested by other researchers in the field and so became especially visible. The point of highlighting such moments is to make clear how much had to be erased to arrive at such abstractions as bodiless information. (12)

Abstraction is necessary in theorizing and fundamental to language-making, as I explained in Chapter 1. Although Hayles contends that "no theory can account for the infinite multiplicity of our interactions with the real" (12), she also warns of the potential effects of abstraction: "But when we make moves that erase the world's multiplicity, we risk losing sight of the variegated leaves, fractal branchings, and particular bark textures that make up the forest" (12). Schmaltz's "Path Dependency" traces fractal branchings—the body's movement in the creation of these stimulations. As I mentioned in relation to the click of the camera with Solt's diagrammatic codes and the pen scraping across the page in Bergvall's line poems, sound is a feature of Schmaltz's works as well, whether the breath of the body and sounds of it exerting energy or the resultant sounds of clicking keys and bodily interactions with technology in the generation of new creative material. Although the sounds bound up in the creation of these poems is outside of the purview of this dissertation, there must at least be an acknowledgement of the presence of sound in the creation of these page-based poems that actively background sound. The unsounds of "Path Dependency" demonstrate the broader interconnectedness of the body with technology and also bear the distant echo of the sounds that enabled or were by-products of the act of creation.

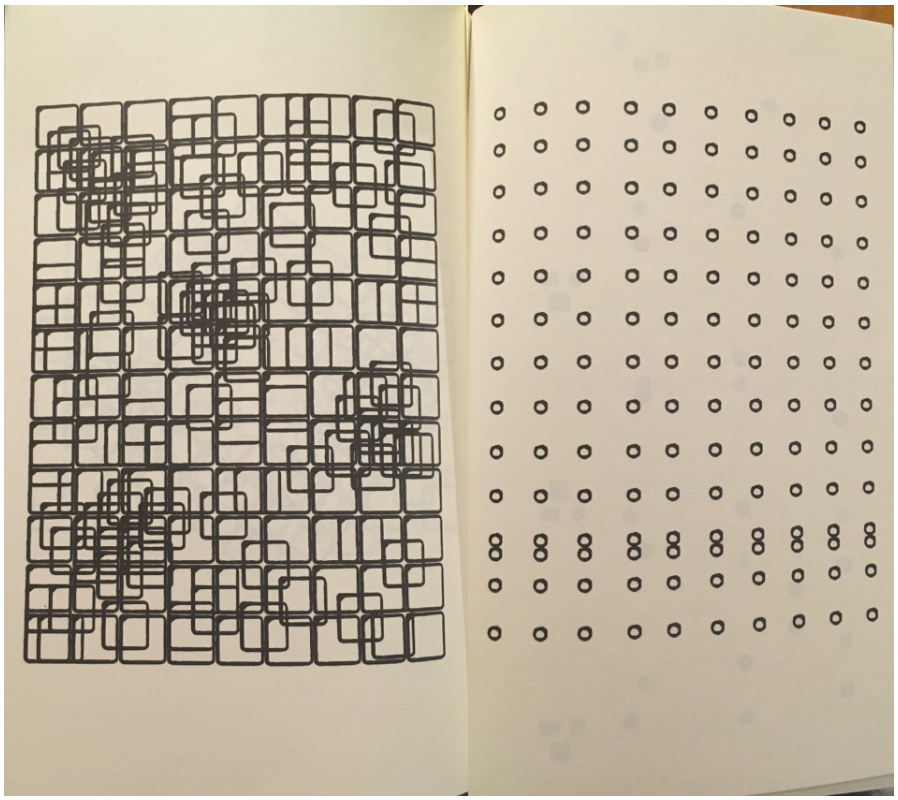

Figure 68. Selections from “Interference Patterns” stimulation, *SUR*, unpaginated.

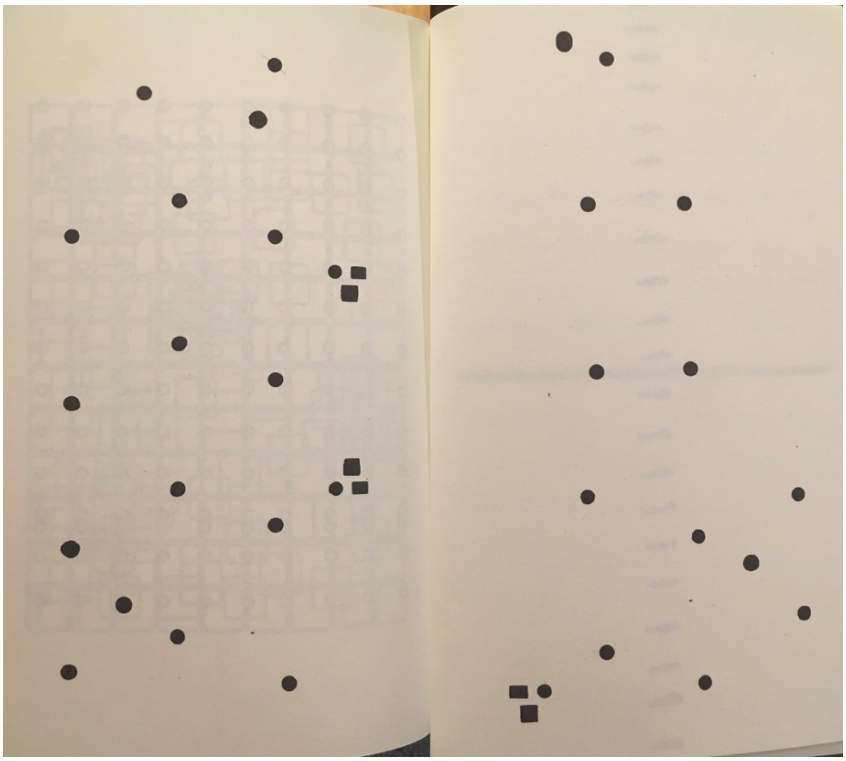

Figure 69. Selections from “Interference Patterns” stimulation, *SUR*, unpaginated.

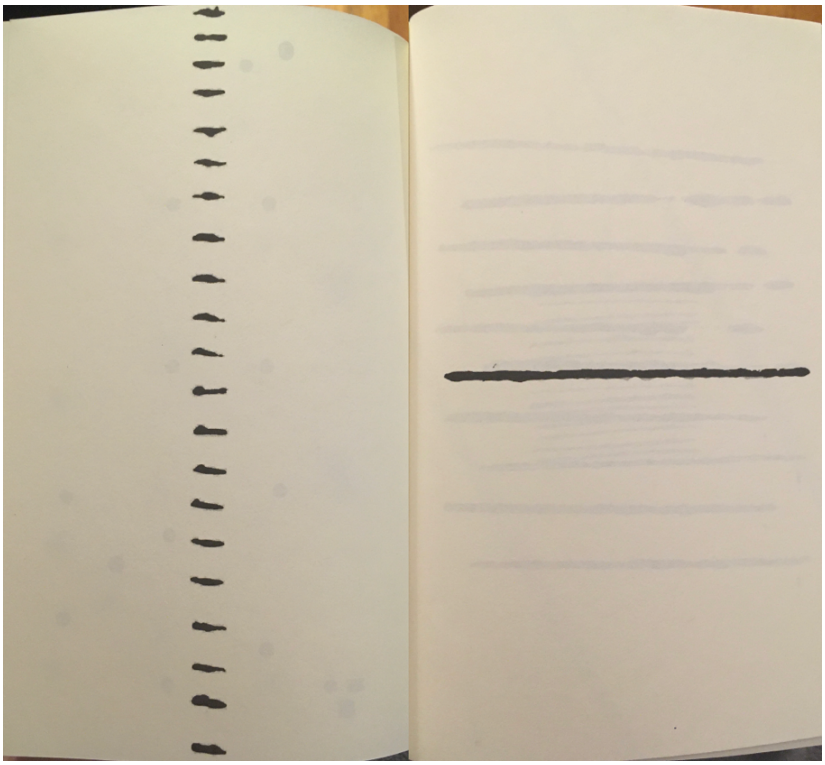

Figure 70. Selections from “Interference Patterns” stimulation, *SUR*, unpaginated.

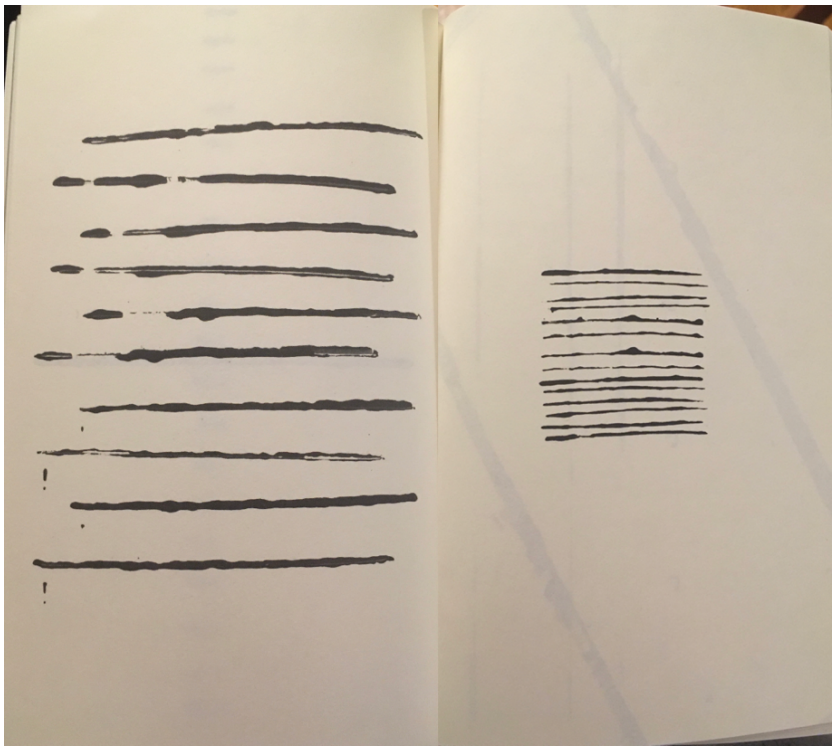

Figure 71. Selections from “Interference Patterns” stimulation, *SUR*, unpaginated.

Resonating with the themes throughout *Surfaces* as well as Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet" and Bergvall's *Drift*, the specific stimulation of "Interference Patterns" (see figures 68–71) is "composed by using a dismantled keyboard, black paint, white cardstock, and a digital scanner" (*SUR* endnotes). In figure 68, the left page is similar to the visualizations and projections in performances of Bergvall's *Drift*.[132] In Schmaltz's poem, the material is non-linguistic, whereas Bergvall's projections are words layered in a palimpsest on the screen. Both texts, however, demonstrate substrates—layers of information—while also highlighting their interaction; one word or image does not completely occlude or obscure another (as often observed in cut-up poetry or masking in McCaffery's *Carnival*). Instead, the material is in dialogue. Similar to Solt's and Bergvall's works, Schmaltz's poem does not necessarily encourage specific sounds for performance but evokes familiar poetic devices. The right page in figure 68 bears resemblance to the lines in Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet"; Schmaltz's poem has fourteen "lines" and ten "syllables" / marks per line. There is a disruption (volta) at line 12, as it is closer visually to line 11 than any other line to another. The turn at line 12 gives Schmaltz's sonnet a Shakespearian flair instead of Solt's Petrarchan inclination. Like the diagrammatic codes of Solt's poem, Schmaltz's material offers no specific translation into English. One could argue that the little dots could be read as the letter "o"; in this interpretation, this stimulation demonstrates the tenuous divide between linguistic and non-linguistic material. I would argue that this visual work appears to be emphasizing a patterned code more than linguistic markings. The two pages of figure 69 are almost an inversion of *Drift*'s constellation poems—black marks on white pages. The three groupings of two rectangles and a circle are reminiscent (almost) of AC power adapter

[132] There are videos available of projections / visualizations in performances of *Drift*. For examples, see the "Shake" excerpt (vimeo.com/133971915) or the "Ottar" excerpt (vimeo.com/81195711).

plugs. But there is no guide as to how these dots can be sounded or what their significance may be in terms of interpretation; these stimulations are even more abstracted than Bergvall's constellation poems. Moreover, Bergvall's constellations resemble actual sky images and, consequently, have immediate semiotic impact. The poems in figure 78, on the other hand, are a step further removed from that comparison to a sky-chart. In *Drift*, the reader at least had the visual reminder of the night sky as an anchor for positioning the reader; Schmaltz's poems in figure 78 give no such grounding. Instead, readers can turn to the notes (similar to interpretation of Solt's sonnet) as an aide in finding touchstones for interpretation. Furthermore, figures 70 and 71 (especially the right page of fig. 71) bear a striking resemblance to the line poems in *Drift*.[133] Each of these stimulations in "Interference Patterns" can be read (and un-sounded) in isolation, but their interaction on the page (as well as with prior and subsequent pages) compounded by the intertextuality of the previously examined visual poems amplify the dialogue and communication. These unsounds highlight the interplay between technology, communication, and the body. Furthermore, the broader themes of surfaces and depths (invoked by the title of the book and echoed through the rest of the collection) are most evident in this section.

In the Afterword to *Surfaces*, Joseph Mosconi expounds on the juxtaposition of surface and depth—of superficiality and profundity—throughout Schmaltz's collection. Citing Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best in their consideration of "surface reading," Mosconi highlights that "a surface is what insists on being looked at rather than what we must train ourselves to see through" (*SUR* unpaginated). Also, he emphasizes a key characteristic of *Surfaces*: "the book manages to engage both the shallows and the depths. It asks its reader not only to confront its

[133] The right page of figure 80 is a visual sonnet of fourteen lines. In addition to its striking resonances with *Drift*'s line poems, it also is similar to David Miller's *Black, Grey and White: A Book of Visual Sonnets* (2011), which is comprised of linear, painted visual sonnets.

textual experiments—its schematics, patterns, substrates, and structures—but to think through the social, political, and cognitive contexts that lie beneath such surface encounters" (Mosconi unpaginated). What emphasizes surfaces in the book is Schmaltz's reliance on unsound; by absenting the sonic dimensions of the text, these poems force the reader to retrain their reading practices and this process draws attention to the surfaces—the layers that readers often look past. When a reader in-sounds and then out-sounds a text, they view it on the page; their brain interpret those signs; they sound them internally; their vocal cords hum; they bring the words from their throat; they move their tongue in their mouth; they form letters with their lips; these actions are impelled by sound and embodied by the reader. By denying the sonic depth and embodied experience of in- / out-sounding, Schmaltz compels the reader to turn their attention to the surfaces. Schmaltz also invites the reader to ruminate on the depths of time past and the bodily actions—and sounds—required for the creation of the poems and artistic works. The unsound forces readers to interrogate the surfaces instead of looking past them—to look at the lines, branches, and markings and contemplate their meaning(s)—and to understand surfaces have significance even when readers may not know how to sound the depths.

Schmaltz's work resonates with that of Solt and Bergvall through its use of unsound as an invitation for reader engagement; its un-sounding causes a rewiring of the reader's practices for processing information. In contrast to Solt and Bergvall, however, the unsounds in *Surfaces* challenge readers to interrogate how the physical body and technology are mapped on to one another—almost becoming inextricably linked—in the act of communication in the Information Age. Sound is a part of this communication, but the unsound reminds the reader that the codependency of the human physical body and technology is not a relationship that is so easily understood, translated, or even mediated—there is an ineffability to it. Unsounds in *Surfaces* ask

readers to examine the connections between the analogue and the digital—the physical body and the disembodied data. In the un-sounding of this material, readers are engaging with layers of physical action of the body (the created works on cardstock or the paths of fingers on a keyboard) mediated through technological devices (computers, scanners, screens, etc.) Technological devices, however, were created by human labour as well as machines in factories. But just as Schmaltz's *Surfaces* echoes Hayles's critique of bodiless information, the unsounds in the work demonstrate the "bodiless fluid." As seen throughout *Surfaces*, Schmaltz draws attention to surfaces, to depths, to bodies in creation, to technology as a tool. But the unsound in *Surfaces* demonstrates the simultaneity of these states: surfaces are layered in depth of meaning; bodies use technology for creation but are also changed physiologically through that interaction; sound is intrinsic these actions and interactions even as it is seemingly absent from the page.

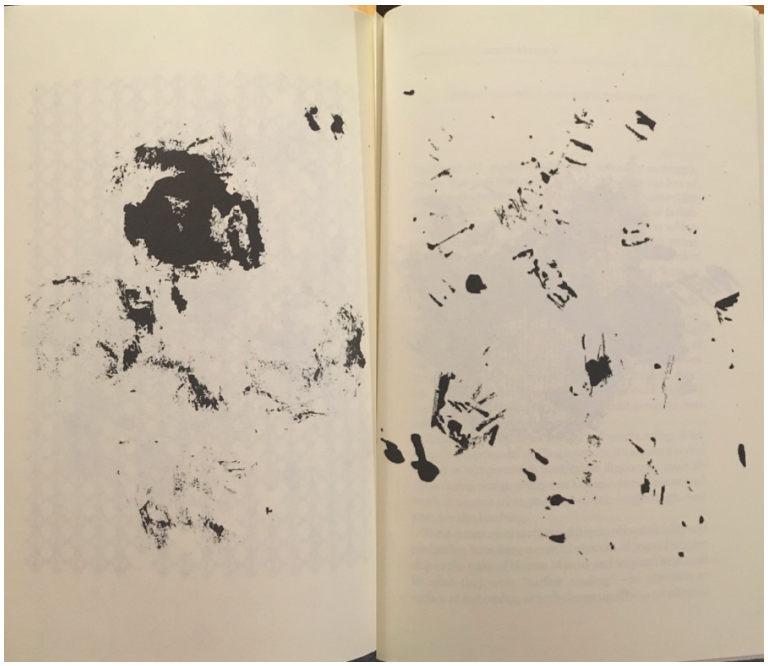

Figure 72. Selections from "Interference Patterns" stimulation, *SUR*, unpaginated.[134]

Un-sounding Para-graphic Devices: Extensions Regarding Enigmatic Non-linguistic Poems

[134] This stimulation in *SUR* is inspired by Paul Dutton's *The Plastic Typewriter* (c1993), once again evoking the typewriter's significance and mediation in producing various poetic forms.

The insound and outsound processes stall when phonemic material is altogether absent: there is no identifiable linguistic system, so there are no predetermined sounds for the graphemes (those visual marks). The pages, it could be argued, are filled with unsound. Applying Gelb's concept of *para-graphic devices*, however, these non-linguistic poems *could* be read as a musical score. In their critical works, Marjorie Perloff and Johanna Drucker make references to the poem as a score. In *Unoriginal Genius* (2010), Perloff analyzes a constellation of Gomringer's and discusses the accessibility of the sign in translation: "But the very fact that *stundenbuch* translates so nicely shows that the materiality of the signifier no longer plays the central role in the poem's production. The lines 'deine frage / mein wort' inevitably become 'your question / my word': the translator need only follow the score" (*UG* 65). Perloff's assertion that the translation seems straightforward is unarguable; however, a simple translation process does not mean that the words themselves are singular in their meaning. "Your question / my word" may be simple to translate from the German, but the words themselves are weighty with multiple insinuations. The questions change within the mind of each reader (and to whom the question is addressed); also, the speaker's "word" responses also vary. Likely, Perloff recognizes the many connotations of these words and their potential multifaceted interpretations; however, her subsequent claim that "the translator need only follow the score" seems reductive. With this suggestion, Perloff seems to imply that the score is a straightforward, predetermined process. In the hands of diverse performers, the performance of a score can change dramatically. Moreover, scores themselves are of varying degrees of difficulty to read and to perform. In her essay "Not Sound" (2009), Drucker addresses the performance of sound on the page:

> Certainly, the clever reader and insistent critic might "pronounce" or perform a long white space as a silence, but the code in play is graphical. Even a score is not a sound; it

> is a set of instructions for reading, and reading, as the cognitive studies field acknowledges, is neither a simple translation of visual to verbal signs nor a matter of one operating in the absence of the other. (NS 240)

Although I would agree with Drucker in her assessment that graphical markings are not sonic indicators, I would also argue that Drucker is not acknowledging the sonic impact of reading and how the in-sounding process produces literal sound in the mind. In terms of studying a musical notation, however, a well-trained composer or performer can often hear the sounds of a score in their minds as they "read" it (that is, before it is performed aloud). Moreover, a score is more than "a set of instructions"; it is a work itself. The "instructions" are only one aspect of the final piece. Each time Perloff or Drucker uses the metaphor, the comparison of "score" to a poem seems to connote ease of performance and replicability. When categorized as a "score," though, the primary encounter of such a work is often intended to be a performance. As such, a score needs one or more performers. In the hands of performers, the score shifts. How does the performer / reader know the cues for the piece's performance? How ought the reader determine the length of time to pause after commas or periods? Does the reader decide the length of a caesura, or is there a conductor that directs the reader?

In general terms, a score and a poem are similar in their use of visual symbols and the structuring of sound and silences across time. Both anticipate and depend upon a performance; both instantiate a participatory aesthetic. Considering the poem as a score fuses the symbols of a visual poem with the immediate sonic impact of performance. With this shift in perspective, readers are encouraged to recognize their roles as active listeners, interpreters, and performers of the text—while closely attending to its sonic dimensions. This analogy of "poem as score" also helps trouble any expectation that poems have a singular, discoverable meaning. Readers may

seek definitive answers, believing that with the correct approach, supplementary text, or effort (however that effort could be quantified), they will arrive at The Meaning of a poem and master it. Although many poems initially seem to convey a singular meaning, difficult visually-oriented poems often challenge the way readers / viewers / listeners come to understand meaning. Poetry as a musical score encourages a more open interpretation of written works while simultaneously understanding that those poems are to be interpreted and performed. A score with notes and rests and time signatures gives so many cues as to how that work is to be performed, and also indicates that no single "hearing" or experience will yield all the depths and implications of the piece.

Non-linguistic poems effectively engage unsound in the absence of recognizable sonic content. Recognizing that the poem's unsound can be interpreted as a musical score, I argue, makes the "difficult" poem approachable, more resourceful, and more meaning-constitutive. When examining out-sounding, I have demonstrated that temporal considerations (of tempo, rhythm, and beat) and qualitative considerations (pitch, volume, timbre, voice, accent(s)) of a poem guide the reader's performance. Yet, although the comparison of a poem to a musical score is productive, there is a problem with this suggestion for shaping the reading process of a non-linguistic poem: non-linguistic poems do not have those same sonic indicators. In this absence, non-linguistic poems are akin to *graphic scores*, which are defined as "scores by 20th-cent. *avant-garde* composers that employ drawn visual analogues in order to convey the composer's intentions with regard to the required sounds and textures.… Some graphic scores indicate distinct music parameters…. Others deliberately omit any notational sign or music indication, seeking only to stimulate the performer's creativity" (*ODM*).

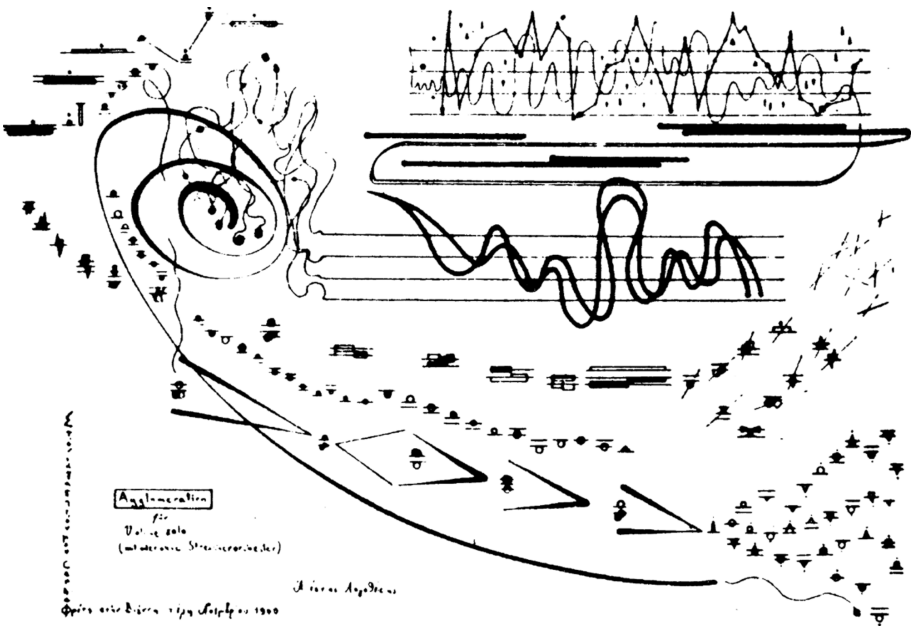

Figure 73. *Agglomeration* (1960), Anestis Logothetis, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 6th ed., Oxford UP, 2013.

Figure 73 is an example of a graphic score provided with the *ODM*'s definition. In his explanation of graphic scores, Christoph Cox emphasizes their intermedial aspects: "the experimental score serves as a nexus that links music with the other arts and acts as a kind of portable program for the endless production of new sounds, actions, forms, and communities" (311).

The issue / opportunity of graphic scores is that these works (similar to non-linguistic poems) neither follow traditional expectations nor do they contain specific rules for performance (unless indicated by the composer in performance notes). Chiara Bertoglio explains that with graphic scores "neither pitch nor duration (and often not even the instrument or timbre) are specified in detail" (50). Furthermore, graphic scores usually reject normative musical notation; they "renounce the use of staves, clefs and the usual symbols of Western notion; they frequently lack a direct, causal correlation between a visual symbol or a sign and a determined aural result" (Bertoglio 50).

The latter description of graphic scores could be summarizing the material of a non-linguistic poem. With Schmaltz's *Surfaces*, especially with the "Path Dependency" series, there is no direct connection between the symbols on the page and a sonic resonance.
The branches are marks that have no specific sound attached to them. This allows for an open interpretation as to how those lines could be performed—even through the re-creation of fingers typing on a computer keyboard. Despite a graphic score's rejection of established forms of notation, it is nevertheless reliant (to some degree) upon it:

> [although] they do not employ "traditional" musical notation, they nonetheless *exploit* it and the musicians' acquaintance with it. In other words, they suppose that the performing musician will be somehow "inspired" by the visual elements they display, and this 'inspiration' will perforce consist in the (more or less conscious) interpretation of these signs in the similarity to traditional notation itself. (Bertoglio 50)

The benefit of the reader's knowledge of "traditional" or generic expectations is evident in a work like Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet." Even though Solt does not use words in her poem, the reading of it is (in some way) contingent upon the recognition of the sonnet structure of fourteen lines and the typical pentameter; her poem also relies upon a Westernized top-down, left-right reading to recognize the poem's structure as a Petrarchan sonnet. "Moonshot Sonnet," however, can also be accessed outside of that normative reading, and its meaning(s) is / are not fixed to the recognizable sonnet form. Like a graphic score, Solt's poem allows for a wider audience beyond the eyes of literary critics, but the unique material and its arrangement demonstrate how acutely the reader's personal reception shapes their perceived meaning of the poem.

To play a graphic score, Bertoglio contends that "performers will normally tend to interpret the vertical dimension of signs as an indication of pitch, and the horizontal duration as a

suggestion about duration" (50). Considering Bergvall's line poems in *Drift* as graphic scores, the ink streaks across the page could be temporal indications for the length of time a note ought to be sounded, and the set of lines could connote several notes being played at the same time, or each line could represent a different voicing or instrument. The waves in the lines might suggest shifts in pitch. Each line poem in the series would result in very different performances; arguably, each performance of any singular poem would never sound the same as any other iteration. The constellation poems could have each "star" a different pitch performed against the horizontal axis of time (passing left to right). These interpretations of performance are based on Bertoglio's suggestion of the axes of the page (top-down = pitch, left-right = time). But graphic scores can be performed impressionistically—with the performance reflecting the performer's personal interpretation of the piece. For instance, a performer could take pages of Schmaltz's "Interference Patterns" (such as fig. 72) and interpret the markings and translate them to audible sound impressionistically; the markings on those two pages of *Surfaces* are similar to some of the material in the sample graphic score (fig. 73).

Ultimately, graphic scores "affirm the aesthetic value of *metaphor* in its original sense—the joy in unpredictable leaps and translations, in this case between sight and sound. As such, these experimental notations draw attention to the musical score as a species of graphic art and affirm a future that, while conditioned by the past and present, nevertheless remains fundamentally open" (Cox 311). Comparing a non-linguistic poem to a graphic score emphasizes the openness of the art form. The poem as score also foregrounds the reader's roles as performer and interpreter of the poem, yet the poem's material does not give any guidance for executing either of those roles. At every turn—with each suggested paradigm for assessment—non-linguistic poems resist. Non-linguistic poetry rejects a totalizing method for reading and

(un)sounding. Instead, Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet," Bergvall's *Drift*, and Schmaltz's *Surfaces* each require the reader to meet it at the level of the page, identify its unique codes, and assess its many potential interpretations. This performance of the poem's material will not be an internalized one through in-sounding or an externalized one through out-sounding. Instead, active engagement with the poem's material in its own form of expression is a method of un-sounding a challenging para-graphic device. Since these non-linguistic poems resist "reading" by eliminating alphabetic or phonemic material, a reader must turn to new methods (such as un-sounding) to process the poem. Un-sounding a poem is not merely "viewing" it because the reader's engagement moves beyond the primary, observational encounter. Un-sounding requires the reader to identify the poem's mode of expression and work to understand the significance of the material and the arrangement; this processing and performance of the text is its un-sounding.

In *No Medium* (2013), Craig Dworkin performs close readings of unfilled pages that are erased, blank, or seemingly "silent." In his analysis of Cage's *4'33"*, Dworkin asserts: "Silence is always ideal, and illusory. Silence is a thought experiment, provocative and unverifiable" (*NM* 134). Throughout this dissertation, I have examined the implications of "silence," and determined that such *unsounds* are filled with possibilities for interpretation and semantic meaning. This chapter has specifically examined works that are not blank, yet still eliminate linguistic material and prevent sounding. Dworkin presses further to suggest that in such works: "'medium' is as unrealizable as 'silence'" (*NM* 137). Non-linguistic poems subvert expectations of medium or category. Moreover, such creative works comprised of unsound compel readers to adopt new reading practices. Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet" invites the reader to identify familiar poetic devices within a new mode of expression; in doing so, Solt satirizes traditional poetic forms and critiques the limits of language in human communication. "Moonshot Sonnet"

suggests that the ineffable can be articulated in cipher; as the reader un-sounds the work, their search for meaning and expression is reflected in the form of the poem. The unsounds of Bergvall's *Drift* open possibilities for the reader in processing the line poems and also compel the reader to respond in interaction with the constellation poems. *Drift* disparages voyeurism and incites engagement, asking the reader to find their own way through the poems while intensely interrogating their relationship to the page and their connection with others beyond the book. Schmaltz's *Surfaces* uses unsound to trouble the tensions among bodies, technology, and communication. Although the Information Age may lead people to disassociation, the unsounds in *Surfaces* reflect the past traces of bodies in motion. Readers reinvigorate these movements in their un-sounding of the text as they engage with the layers of meaning, both superficial and deep.

In encountering a non-linguistic poem, the reader is required to question their relationship to reading, to sound, and to communication. If readers consider non-linguistic poems as para-graphic devices, this paradigm shift allows them to recognize the openness of interpretation and their role as performers of the work—even if their un-sounding is unrecognizable as "performance" in the traditional sense as they process the poem's material. Resisting any singular method for reading and interpretation, these non-linguistic poems demonstrate that both sounding and even the resistance to sound (unsound) can communicate multivalent (albeit oftentimes elusive) messages.

Coda

Encouraging people to re-evaluate their relationship to language and embodied performance, I identify three different types of sound in this dissertation and delineate methods to guide readers through these practices. The most original work of this project is its method and the generation of three terms that help test the limits of sound as an analytical tool. Insound is an internalized, highly-individualized experience of linguistic echoes within the mind. Outsound, which combines external and generating somatic vibrations, reverberates through readers as they perform the text aloud. Unsound is removed material, muted text, or absence of expected content. Set apart from the other two forms of sound, unsound is disembodied, unable to be expressed in any traditional mode of articulation. These three sonic forms function differently when taken up in action. In-sounding compels readers to recognize their relationship to the text—encouraging them to come to their own understanding of how to handle linguistic (and even non-linguistic) information. By contrast, out-sounding compels readers to examine the context of the material and their engagement with it in relation to other people, other resonating bodies. Although in-sounding is individual, out-sounding material demands that readers reassess their positionality, which makes out-sounding especially charged both politically and performatively. Un-sounding is a working through of the absence(s) and a mediation of the muted or forcibly excised; it is an interpretive process instead of an audibly sonic one. Ultimately, this is what sound and unsound do: they create a locus of communication and a demonstration of (un)representability. Each of the chapters of the dissertation have explored the many ways that sound makes meaning across various forms of visual poetry.

This final Coda is a preliminary exploration of further applications, transpositions, and extensions of the In / Out / Unsound Method. The *Applications* section will suggest additions to

the current dissertation material when turning the project into a monograph. The *Applications* section will reference other texts that would situate well within the current project. The *Transpositions* section will present a case-study for applying the method to a trio of nineteenth-century poets whose innovations vividly anticipate the avant-garde strategies of writers studied in this dissertation. The purpose of the *Transpositions* section is to demonstrate the flexibility and efficacy of the method in revealing new interpretations of well-studied literature (beyond the limit cases to sound that I address in this dissertation). The *Extensions* section will outline multifaceted areas of inquiry for the method beyond direct literary analysis. Furthermore, the *Extensions* section will address the breadth of this method and its significance for future interdisciplinary research.

Applications

When developing this dissertation into a monograph (after additional research, revision, and expansion), I would add another significant text for each of the Concrete Poetry and the Erasure Poetry chapters. Currently, each chapter explores two exemplary works. The Concrete Poetry chapter would be enhanced by exploring of Fiona Banner's *The NAM* (1997), which is a 1,000-page book of word-scapes that chronicle the plots of six prominent Vietnam War films: *Apocalypse Now*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Hamburger Hill*, and *Platoon*. The project has a double focus. Banner critiques the politics implicit in Hollywood's treatment of the divisive war that devastated Vietnam and sundered America. Through her plot summaries, Banner also troubles and tests the parameters of authorship and copyright. To demonstrate her argument that publishing is a performative act, she issued herself an ISBN and registered herself as a publication in 2009. Another intriguing (but very different)

addition to the Concrete Poetry chapter would be an analysis of Erica Baum's *Dog Ear* (2011), which poeticizes the act of folding the corner of a page to assist memory. Her concrete poems are comprised of photographed dog-eared pages of mass-market paperbacks. The photos are close-ups of the small squares of text—one page diagonally bisects another in the folding. Baum demonstrates the creation of a new, latent text in the layering-over of pages and delineates the reader's action (folding the page) upon the writing of the text. Both Banner and Baum have had their works displayed in the Museum of Modern Art; both authors' works border-blur the categories of visual art, concrete poetry, and visual poetry. Applying the In / Out / Unsound method to Banner's *The Nam* and Baum's *Dog Ear* would yield fruitful interpretations because it would reintroduce temporality into these art objects. Banner's penchant for performativity and Baum's interest in memorialization would be enacted in compelling ways through in- and out-sounding processes.

The erasure poetry chapter could be enhanced through an elucidation of Ariana Boussard-Reifel's *Between the Lines* (2007), which has as its source text a white supremacist book, *RaHoWa! The Planet Is All Ours* (1987) by Ben Klassen. Boussard-Reifel cuts out all the black (text) from the white (space) of the book. As a different form of erasure from Philip's *Zong!* and Abel's *The Place of Scraps*, Boussard-Reifel's *Between the Lines* is a text that physically removes the text from the page—leaving physical holes—negative spaces of the words' removal. This physical erasure—cutting out of the linguistic material—removes all semantic meaning from the original racist and vitriolic text. *Between the Lines* demonstrates its meanings through the pages' gaps, voids, and unsounds; through these acts of recontextualization and aesthetic erasure, the text counters the racist ideology once central to Klassen's 1987 text. In addition to calling the readers' attention to the unsounds of the work, Boussard-Reifel seemingly invites

readers / viewers / sounders to be part of crafting a fresh narrative in the spaces newly opened (where more generous content can be imagined). For an even more contemporary example of erasure poetry, I would focus on the Erasure Art Collective's multimedia project *Blackout* (2022). Erasure Art Collective's co-founders Shauntay Grant and Tyshan Wright sourced "slave ads" from the 1760 edition of the *Halifax Gazette*; they reproduced the ads, posted them in public spaces in Halifax, and used black paint to create erasure poems from the reproductions. *Blackout* is a performance installation that also includes video recordings. As the Collective elucidates:

> The project uncovers hidden messages in ads that appeared in local newspapers during slavery—a legal practice of buying and selling human beings that saw millions of Africans and people of African descent enslaved over hundreds of years. *Blackout* reworks slaveholder's texts to reveal new narratives honouring those who challenged one of history's most inhumane systems, and championing their bold acts of resistance" (erasureart.com).

Similar to other erasure works examined in the dissertation, *Between the Lines* and *Blackout* challenge readers / viewers to question how these visual poems call people to respond. Both of these works encourage people to embrace activism and to push back against political erasure for the sake of creating equity in the world. Sounding and un-sounding can be a means of involvement, but it is a first step in a process that requires critical engagement beyond the page or screen.

The monograph would also benefit from the addition of a chapter focusing entirely on Cut-Up Poetry. This form of aleatory poetry takes an existing piece of textual material, cuts it up, and rearranges the text into a "new" work. The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*

traces the origins of Cut-Up Poetry to avant-garde, chance procedures taken up by Dadaists, specifically noting Tristan Tzara's suggestion, in 1920, "for making a Dadaist poem by cutting out words from a newspaper article and drawing them out of a bag" (James *PE*). This process was later enacted by painter-writer Brion Gysin when he cut out and then rearranged sections of newspaper to create *Minutes to Go* (1959). William S. Burroughs is credited as one of the most significant artists of the cut-up method, someone who worked closely with Gysin across film, visual art, and literature. Burroughs' three experimental works that comprise *The Nova Trilogy* (1961–1967) were created using the cut-up technique. I would revise this much-cited origin story by studying Lewis Carroll's poem, "Poeta Fit, Non Nascitur" (1869):

> For first you write a sentence,
> And then you chop it small;
> Then mix the bits, and sort them out
> Just as they chance to fall:
> The order of the phrases makes
> No difference at all. (124–125)

I note Carroll's poem because it makes direct mention of cutting and rearranging a text, referencing the "chance" order into which the pieces can fall.[135] The poem's title is an inversion of the Latin phrase "Poeta Nascitur, Non Fit," a poet is born, not made; all puns regarding the "fitness" of artist and art were intended. Similar to the erasure works analyzed in the dissertation and particular Concrete works cited in this Coda, cut-up poems are exercises in

[135] The title is a reminder that English, a non-inflected language, is not as syntactically flexible as Latin (in which the endings of words provide the grammatical information necessary for coherence). As Carroll demonstrates with delightful regularity, positionality or the "order of phrases" is crucial in English—or not.

recontextualization. The focus on aleatory / chance operations in cut-up, however, removes the decision-making by the poem's assembler and further breaks down the conventional power of the Author. Anyone can cut-up a text and rearrange it; this poetry is for everyone. Applying the In / Out / Unsound method to this type of poetry would yield compelling results: revealing how sound itself makes meaning even when the context is unstructured or chance.

If expanding the project to include cut-up poetry, two challenging texts come immediately to mind. First, I would closely examine Susan Howe's *Frolic Architecture* (2009), a 68-page book with 48 of Howe's collage / cut-up poems (it also includes 10 photographs by James Welling), and its textual and performance afterlives. The original printing of this art book by The Grenfell Press was limited to 26 copies. The centre section of Howe's *That This* (2010) is a reproduction / reprint of the *Frolic* cut-up poems and Welling's photographs. I would also examine the *Frolic Architecture* (2011) recordings by Susan Howe and David Grubbs, which are out-soundings of these cut-up poems that involve electronic drones, fragments of recorded voice, and live audio. Secondly, I would also closely examine an even more contemporary work by Kate Siklosi entitled *leavings* (2021). Siklosi's collection of 69 poems published by Timglaset Editions contains cut-up fragments of text that have been transferred onto leaves, shells, and plant stems by techniques including dry-letter transfer and sewing. These visual poems include cut-up text but find a compelling curation in their presentation, which Siklosi, working in the mode of Erín Moure, explains as "a poethic [sic] of leaving: of falling away, of stitching back together, of beginning again. Murmuring the borders between landscape and language, these pieces revel in the undone, the undoing, sewing found stories from the severed heap of others" (timglaset.com). Both Howe's *Frolic Architecture* and Siklosi's *leavings* explore the opposing forces of fracture and mend, of division and fusion, and reveal the porous boundaries between

those concepts. Applying sound as an analytical tool to each of these texts would further amplify each of their concentrations on brevity and ephemerality, revealing the resultant (non)meaning-making.

Transpositions

This dissertation has applied the In / Out / Unsound method to contemporary visual poetry as a limit case. Yet, transposing the historical time period of inquiry to examine the insounds, outsounds, and unsounds of Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Gerard Manley Hopkins would yield compelling and unexpected results. As I would demonstrate, the 1860s–1890s was a period of innovation in which Whitman, Dickinson, and Hopkins each explored their own mode of sonic experimentation.

Lines of Whitman's "Song of Myself" would stretch beyond the margins of the page if not dropped and indented for the sake of convention. In-sounding the texts, readers come to comma upon comma, brief rests but no stopping. In an out-sounding, Whitman's maximalist lines take full breaths, stretching the capacity of human lungs, even as the poem speaks to the very act of breathing and sound in singing the praises and grievances of "Myself":

> Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine,
> My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs,
> The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,
> The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the wind, … (30)

The sounds of the poem are so visceral, immediate, even in an in-sounding. When spoken aloud, though, the performers of the poem are made acutely aware of the onomatopoetic "buzz'd" whispers; they reflect on their own respiration / inspiration / heartbeat. The pulse they feel inside each heartbeat is autonomic but also partially within their control as they regulate their emotive response. The reader can contemplate blood and air circulation through their body's systems, as the poem calls them to do.[136] But these "belch'd" words and the voice "loos'd" speak back against traditional notions of beauty; this is instead a song of revolution—a "barbaric yawp" carried on the eddies of the wind. And the unsounds—the sound of green leaves and the sea-rocks and the hay stacked or strewn in the barn—these visual glimpses of stasis are not silences. Images create insound through sonic processing, outsound through the speaking, and yet still cause the reader to pause and consider the impact and message of those things that do not sing their own songs in a register perceptible to the human ear. When analyzing the sounds of Whitman, one discerns that his poems call for considerations of freedom and restriction through and outside of the body's experience: on one level, the sounding of the soul—as Whitman's speaker attempts in "Song of Myself"—is untranslatable.

By contrast, Emily Dickinson's minimalist lines demonstrate boundlessness in concision. Dickinson's poetry has garnered significant critical attention, especially her use of dashes (of varying length). Regarding the accessibility of her work, R. P. Blackmur claims in his 1963 collection of critical essays: "the words resemble the notes on a musical score" (79). Although the latter comparison does not produce a singular interpretation, a musical method for approaching Dickinson's poetry opens up many possibilities. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*

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[136] John Cage's anechoic chamber experience would remind them that these systems are also making their own sounds—ringing and thrumming.

(1979), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim that Dickinson's dashes are "rending pauses, silences like wounds in the midst of speech" (626). In *My Emily Dickinson* (1985), Susan Howe effectively takes issue with Gilbert and Gubar's Bloomian claim: "Sadly their book... fails to discuss the implications of the nineteenth century American penchant for linguistic decreation ushered in by their representative poet Emily Dickinson. For these two feminist scholars a writer may conceal or confess all, if she does it in logical syntax. Emily Dickinson suggests that the language of the heart has quite another grammar" (13).[137] In agreement with Howe's assessment of Dickinson's innovations, I contend that her dashes are unsounds. In *The Completed Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by R. W. Franklin, musical references are evident throughout, with lines like "Bind me – I still can sing – / Banish – my mandolin / Strikes true within – / Slay – and my Soul shall rise / Chanting to Paradise – / Still thine" (#1005, 417) and "Musicians wrestle everywhere – / All day – among the crowded air / I hear the silver strife – / And – waking – long before the morn – Such transport breaks upon the town / I think it that 'New life'!" (#229, 103). Dashes and unsounds guide the pacing and sounding; Dickinson's notations conduct the reader. If the poem is a score, which I think is an apt comparison, it certainly both sonically complex and unique but multiple in terms of the various performances it inspires. The reader sounds the speaker's singing, mandolin playing, and "Chanting to Paradise." When performed, the reader can hear the "crowded air" and "silver strife," and this journey brings "New life." Dickinson's minimalist lines call for sounding in a different way than Whitman's prosody, with more left unsounded. But both Whitman and Dickinson point to the untranslatable: with poetry as with the world—even as there are conclusions—there are beginnings to be sounded and explored.

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[137] For a summary of various approaches to Dickinson's dash, see Deidre Fagan, "Emily Dickinson's Unutterable Word."

Hopkins, who never read Dickinson and resented comparisons to Whitman,[138] was an unabashed advocate for the sounding of poetry: calling it the "darling child of speech, of lips and human ^spoken^ utterance," he insisted that poetry "must be spoken; till it is spoken it is not performed, it does not perform, it is not itself."[139] While Whitman is characterized by his breadth of line and Dickinson is noted for her concision, Hopkins is the inventor a new kind of cadence: sprung rhythm. As he tried to explain to his friend and Pre-Raphaelite poet Canon Dixon, sprung rhythm "consists in scanning by accents or stresses alone . . . so that a foot may be one strong syllable or it may be many light and one strong."[140] William Wimsatt clarifies that Hopkins's "imprecision does not mean, however, that the foot patterns are in his mind arbitrary or of no importance, as his explanation in his Author's Preface shows. Except for 'particular effect,' the sprung-rhythm foot will have one to four syllables" (Wimsatt *PE*). Hopkins used sprung rhythm as a means to approximate human speech rhythms. Instead of using iambs as the basic feet for his poetry, Hopkins played with spondees and dactyls; he filled lines with stresses. Take the first eight lines of "The Windhover," for example:

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
    dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
    Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
    As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding

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[138] See *Correspondence* I: 327 and especially the 1882 comment, "I always knew in my heart ~~that~~ Walt Whitman's mind was ^to be^ more like my own than any other man's living. As he is a very great scoundrel this is not a pleasant confession" (*Correspondence* II: 542–3).
[139] Hopkins to Everard Hopkins, 5–8 November 1885; *Correspondence*, II: 747.
[140] Hopkins to Richard Watson Dixon, 5–10 October 1878; I: 317.

Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding

Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing! (1–8)

From the cleverly enjambed first line claiming the nobility of the Windhover (plays with insounds) to the seven occurrences of a singular repeated consonance in the second line (evocative outsounds), Hopkins's lines ring with musicality. With present participles promoting a continual action rhymed with monosyllabic nouns containing *-ing* (yet not gerunds), Hopkins end-rhymes (and has internal line rhymes) with verbs and nouns—joining them together in stunning euphony.

When corresponding with Robert Bridges in 1878 regarding "The Loss of the Eurydice," Hopkins urged: "To do the Eurydice any kind of justice you must not slovenly read it with the eyes but with your ears, as if the paper were declaiming it at you.… Stress is the life of it" (*Correspondence* I: 296). Hopkins claims that reading poems aloud is necessary for the poem to be itself (out-sounding); reading the poem "with your ears" is, I would argue, a voluntary in-sounding followed by an out-sounding. Hopkins was a sound-player, and he compels readers to be performers in ways that map onto both in-sounding and out-sounding processes. His innovative approach to rhythm is just one reason of many that his poetry is an excellent opportunity to apply the In / Out / Unsound method. Hopkins boldly claims: "Sprung rhythm gives back to poetry its true soul and self" (*Correspondence* II: 748), and I agree.

I would further argue that sound is the locus where soul and physical self commune—even though that convergence may be untranslatable or ineffable. Whitman, Dickinson, and Hopkins, though distinct in their poetic styles and practices, have an undeniable shared interest in sound. Their canons offer different types of experimentation in sound and its opportunities, which makes their poetry an excellent case-study for applying the In / Out / Unsound method.

Extensions

Reaching beyond the applications of my method for literary analysis, I would like to undertake further research into the neuroscience of reading and performance to study the implications of in-sounding and out-sounding. Certainly, the future monograph would be strengthened by a deeper examination of cognitive and neuroscientific approaches to reading and the latest advancements in the field of sound and information processing. I mean to push beyond the initial research I did when beginning the dissertation to address the possibilities of studying in-sounding and out-sounding in action. In 2010, Charles J. Limb, M.D., delivered a talk entitled, "Your Brain on Improv," in which he shared studies of creativity and the human brain that he conducted at Johns Hopkins and the National Institute of Health. Three different experiments are analyzed, including one in which musicians improvised on a small keyboard as he performed fMRIs on their brains. When improvising, the Broca's area (communication area) of the players' brain lit up on the fMRI. Given the opportunity (with no restriction on time or budget), I would be inclined to study the fMRIs of individuals "silently" reading texts / in-sounding and contrast them with the same texts read aloud / out-sounded. Likely, the Wernicke's area (associated with language comprehension) would illuminate with in-sounding; the Broca's area (associated with language production) would be engaged with out-sounding. But is there an instance in which in-sounding would engage the Broca's area? I would also like to compare the effects of different authors upon the human brain; in particular, I would be interested to see which areas of the brain are engaged when readers encounter non-linguistic poems. For instance, would either the Broca's area or Wernicke's area illuminate—or would activity be limited to the visual cortex in the occipital lobe? This has immediate and personal application as one of the close friends in my life has Expressive Aphasia. He can understand what people say to him, but

he has trouble expressing himself. These limitations would indicate that in the brain trauma he experienced, he incurred damage to his Broca's area. Contemporary neuroscience makes me wonder if there are ways that he could engage other parts of his brain to allow him to find new ways or methods for out-sounding. I would be interested in understanding if further research in in-sounding and out-sounding could produce practical processes for those who struggle with expression, whether due to aphasia or otherwise.

Furthermore, there is an area of the brain called the fusiform gyrus, which is considered critical for visual identification and categorization. One region of the left ventral temporal cortex on the fusiform gyrus is responsible for the visual identification of words. In the *Encyclopedia of Neuroscience* (2009), J. Zevin explains that "[e]vidence that this region plays a role in early visual processing of written words comes from studies using a wide range of techniques." I highlight this area of the brain, in particular, not only because visual identification of words underpins the reading process but also because the fusiform gyrus is thought to be one of the primary areas of the brain affected by people who have Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Understanding how the brain processes written information (in this case, poetry by different authors in various forms) could be revelatory in understanding how best to engage neurodiverse individuals who may struggle with the processing of visual information. Also, as discussed at the beginning of this dissertation, Robeck and Wallace stress the physiological changes the brain undergoes in voluntary shifts in reading practices. Perhaps there are ways in which the In / Out / Unsound method could potentially aid in creating positive physiological alterations that could generate new neural pathways for future processing of (non)linguistic material.

The final chapter of the dissertation demonstrates the limits of sounding in poetry and troubles any singular method for approaching such extreme poems. In that chapter on non-

linguistic poetry, I contend that such poems can be read as *para-graphic devices* (a term created and discussed by Ignace J. Gelb). As such, difficult non-linguistic poems could be read as graphic scores of music. As another extension of my project, I would very much like to collaborate with members of the University of Toronto Music Department to understand how composers see these works functioning as musical scores and to discuss with musicians the many methods and possibilities for performance of such poems. A compelling addition to the research could include a selection of audio recordings of non-linguistic poem performances. Furthermore, I would be very interested to collaborate with Dr. Michael Schutz, a Professor of Music Cognition / Percussion at McMaster University. Schutz is known for his work connecting music performance and music perception. Additionally, he is "the founding director of the MAPLE Lab and a core member of the McMaster Institute for Music and the Mind" (maplelab.net). The MAPLE Lab is dedicated to investigating "musically-inspired questions such as how a performer's body movements affect the way audiences 'hear' music, why 'moving-to-the-beat' improves the auditory experience, and how composers and performers communicate emotional meaning" (maplelab.net). Interested in human perception and cognition, the MAPLE Lab's interdisciplinary work touches on the fields of cognitive psychology, music pedagogy, cognitive neuroscience, and auditory perception. Schutz's input and research would be illuminating for my project, which seeks to identify the intersections of poetic performance and cognitive neuroscience, while recognizing the musical implications of out-soundings.

One other extension of the dissertation that is of particular interest to me is the pedagogical implications of the method. I would like to understand how my research and method can be beneficial when utilized in the classroom. Certainly, studying the neuroscience behind the In / Out / Unsound method would be advantageous, but the practical effects of deploying the

method for students to undertake in the classroom can be assessed in action. In Chapter 1 of the dissertation, I addressed how Rayner and Pollatsek discuss the order and manner of visual and auditory reception. Moreover, their "horse-race model" illustrates how normative, experienced readers do not necessarily even attend to sound, since their visual reading usually finishes before their sonic one (heuristic principles, etc.). Purposeful sonic rendering of linguistic material is incredibly important when it comes to processing works that are fragmented, phonemes, or even non-linguistic; in those instances, the sound processing takes precedence over the visual. Massaro emphasizes that difficult words and arrangement force a voluntary sounding. I highlight the research of Rayner, Pollatsek, and Massaro when it comes to the pedagogical extensions of my method because, with students of any level, they regularly encounter words that may be unfamiliar or difficult to understand. Massaro emphasizes that this is the critical juncture where sounding—not merely visual processing—is essential for comprehension. These moments of reading difficulty are an opportunity for my method to be used as a means for students to have a process—a set of questions to ask—when working through challenging material, especially for students with differing abilities and even students who have learning disabilities. I would be very interested in understanding the opportunities that my method creates in pedagogical contexts.

Each of these extensions (neuroscientific, musical, and pedagogical) demonstrate the interdisciplinary aspects of the method. These are just a few of the many possible areas of inquiry in which the In / Out / Unsound method could be edifying to others and make a positive impact.

Directions: Initium

In "A Defense of Poesy" Sir Philip Sidney observes, "as Aristotle says, it is not *Gnosis*,

but *Praxis* must be the fruit." Method is critical to this dissertation. In Aristotle's terms "the fruit"—praxis—is the project's defining and innovative element. By identifying three sonic activities, presenting their theoretical grounding, outlining methods for their application, and demonstrating their implications through case studies, this project has presented an approach to use sound itself as a means of analysis. Dickinson asserts: "This World is not conclusion. / A Species stands beyond – / Invisible, as Music – / But positive, as Sound – / It beckons, and it baffles – " (#373, 171). The In / Out / Unsound method presents opportunities to open up possibilities of interpretation. Beckoning and baffling, insound, outsound, and unsound (and their manifestations in poetry) are multifaceted, ambiguous, and (at times) uncertain. But there is one thing insound, outsound, and unsound are not: they are not conclusions. Instead, these sounds are points of beginning.

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