

Concrete poetry and Conceptual art: connections,
communication and interrelationships in text-image movements
from 1953-1980

by
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Abstract

Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are often presented as separate or opposing movements. Although the pairing of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art has been disputed, this thesis argues that Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are connected and demonstrates how these international movements, which overlapped in the 1960s, are analogous by examining previously overlooked points of convergence. The historical framework of the research is 1953 to 1980 – from the earliest use of the term ‘Concrete poetry’ through to a widespread return to painting and figurative art in 1980. The research study focuses on predominantly British concrete poets, conceptual artists, figures associated with either or both movements, and those that denied the title of concrete poet or conceptual artist but produced work with similar qualities to the work associated with these movements. A selection of American practitioners has also been included due to American art and literary influences on British practitioners at the time. These practitioners were part of a countercultural shift in the 1960s and the social, political, cultural (and economic) contexts within which these practitioners were working is taken into consideration when analysing their work and activities. This thesis presents the dematerialisation of the art object using language (in Conceptual art) and the materialisation of language (in Concrete poetry) as complementary. In the last twenty years, there has been an increase in the number of scholars from literary and/or artistic disciplines comparing Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and arguing for or against a connection between them. This research contributes to existing knowledge via an examination of the infrastructure of the art and literary worlds in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (in particular, the cross-disciplinary spaces available to practitioners experimenting with Concrete poetry and Conceptual art), analyses of interactions between poets and artists which demonstrate that they were aware of each other and each other’s work, ideologies and theories, and an investigation into the role of poet-artists, intermedia or cross-disciplinary practitioners/figures, engaged with either or both movements, who blurred the boundaries between the visual arts and poetry. Overall, connections between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art manifest as visual similarities, use of and an enthusiasm for the possibilities of language, interpersonal relationships and shared theoretical approaches, intermedia and interdisciplinary practices, poet/artist-run and institutional spaces, shared sources of funding, curation, collection and dissemination, and a reliance on the viewer/reader to interpret or ‘create’ the work.

Declaration

This is to confirm that the work contained within this thesis is entirely my own.

No part of this thesis has been submitted wholly or in part for any other academic award, degree or qualification.

Signed: K.A. Prestidge

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<https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/tom-phillips-a-humument> (Accessed: 24 June 2023).

Figure. 81: Paula Claire (1978) 'I Say Open Water' [Visual score]. Available at:
https://www.paulaclaire.com/pdf/see_poetry/i_say_open_water.pdf (Accessed: 24 June 2023).

Figure. 82: Houédard, D.S. (1967) *I possibly am again* [Offset fragment, PVC laminate, 16.5 x 10cm] in Simpson, N. (ed.) *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard*. London: Occasional Papers, p.86.

Figure. 83: Paula Claire (n.d. [1980]) 'JETAKEOFF' and 'TOTEM' [Typewriting on paper]. Available at: <https://jacket2.org/commentary/sean-mccann-and-charlie-morrow-eds> (Accessed: 24 June 2023).

Figure. 84: Pritchard, N.H. (1968-1970) 'L'OEIL' in Pritchard, N.H. *The Matrix Poems 1960-1970*. New York: Primary Information and Ugly Duckling Presse, pp.156-157.

Figure. 85: Pignatari, D. (1958) 'LIFE'. Available at:
<https://jacket2.org/commentary/d%C3%A9cio-pignatari-1927-2012> (Accessed: 24 June 2023).

Figure. 86: Pritchard, N.H. (1968-1970) 'Aurora' in Pritchard, N.H. *The Matrix Poems 1960-1970*. New York: Primary Information and Ugly Duckling Presse, pp.102-103.

Figure. 87: Pritchard, N.H. (1968-1970) 'Aurora' in Pritchard, N.H. *The Matrix Poems 1960-1970*. New York: Primary Information and Ugly Duckling Presse, pp.90-93.

Figure. 88: Pritchard, N.H. (1971) 'VIA' in Pritchard, N.H. *EECCHHOOEESS*. New York: New York University Press, p.49. Available at:
<http://eclipsearchive.org/projects/ECHOES/html/contents.html> (Accessed: 23 September 2023).

Figure. 89: Pritchard, N.H. (1971) 'VIA' in Pritchard, N.H. *EECCHHOOEESS*. New York: New York University Press, pp.56-57. Available at:
<http://eclipsearchive.org/projects/ECHOES/html/contents.html> (Accessed: 23 September 2023).

Chapter One: Introduction

'we are unable to comprehend the world in all its plurality, so we create artificial ordering systems for it [...]. These ordering systems take a number of forms [...] and perhaps the ultimate ordering system is language itself. The trouble is [...] we tend to forget that these systems are simply an approximate, often arbitrary, means to understand the chaotic 'real' world lying underneath: we find ourselves thinking that they have some kind of intrinsic connection to reality, or indeed are reality' (Beasley, 2007b, p.12).

This thesis examines various connections between the Concrete poetry and Conceptual art movements which overlapped in the 1960s. It focuses closely on the role of infrastructure in 'bringing people together' (Curtis, 2020, p.41), interactions between practitioners and how their interpersonal relationships shaped their practices and the impact of intermedia practitioners (poet-artists) on the defined parameters of the movements to revise how the interrelationship between the two movements is currently portrayed in existing literature. The interdisciplinary focus of and rationale for this thesis is informed by existing literature on Concrete poetry, Conceptual art and comparisons between the two movements, discussions around the blurring of boundaries between disciplines, the British countercultural scene in the 1960s and 1970s and the idea of 'artificial ordering systems' which British academic Rebecca Beasley addresses in her publication *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound*. In short, I argue that Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are linked by more than just a coincidental shared interest in the use of language or visual similarities and that the 'ordering systems' used by critics and scholars to distinguish between the movements are permeable.

The idea of 'artificial ordering systems' helps clarify the relationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art by demonstrating that the two movements, as well as concurrent experiments in literature, art and music, were not isolated phenomena. According to Beasley, in the early twentieth century, Hulme abandoned '[reducing] the world to a single theory' in favour of a 'cinder theory' which involved viewing reality as 'a mass of disordered elements' (Beasley, 2007b, p.13) that systems of understanding, for example, language, were applied to. It can be argued

that the terms 'Concrete poetry' and 'Conceptual art' are systems used to explain and understand work produced in the 'chaotic' reality (Beasley, 2007b, p.13) and multiplicity of the 1960s counterculture and underground, and in cross-disciplinary spaces and artist/poet-run infrastructure. Hulme's theory is one example of modernist literary thought that is perceptible in the ideas and experiments of poets and artists in the 1960s. Similar ideas were shared by Ezra Pound and James Joyce who expressed the need for a 'trans-medial-language' (Sabatini, 2008, p.98). In 'Canto 86', American poet and critic Pound states that our understanding of reality 'can't be all done in one language' (Pound, 1955, p.15). In *Finnegan's Wake*, published in 1939, Irish novelist, poet and literary critic Joyce coined the term 'verbivocovisual' and emphasised simultaneity and the need to consider the relationship between sound, image and language to 'recreate reality' (Sabatini, 2008, p.98). The interdisciplinarity examined by Hulme, Pound and Joyce reappears in the late 1950s and 1960s as a concern for the relationship between visual and verbal (and auditory) representation in Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and the blurring of boundaries between disciplines. Their influence is demonstrated by the Noigandres poets' use of Joyce's term 'verbivocovisual' in their 'Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry' (1958) which identifies Pound and Joyce, among other figures, 'as [progenitors] of concrete' (Ferris, 2022, p.63). Furthermore, Beasley discusses Pound's embrace of Dada's critique of art, circa 1920, and the concept of an 'art in general, or art at large – that was no longer absorbed in traditional disciplines' (Beasley, 2007a, p.172) and presents the terms 'art in general' and 'conceptual art' as interchangeable. Consequently, it can be said that she highlights a relationship between Conceptual art in the 1960s, the outcomes of one of Conceptual art's precursors, Dadaism, and Pound's embrace of Dada's interdisciplinarity and the 'continuities [...] drawn between an extremely wide range of artworks' (Beasley, 2007a, p.172).

This thesis is primarily focused on poets and artists (and their associated networks, infrastructure and activities) based in the United Kingdom but figures, works, infrastructure and activities of interest from the United States have been included where relevant due to the influence of the US art and literary scene on the UK. For the purpose of this research, the term 'American' refers to individuals from the United States but it does not include the entirety of North America or Latin America.

Moreover, I have not divided work produced in the UK nationally but the social, political, national, cultural and stylistic contexts in which the practitioners examined in this thesis were working, have been considered. Although Greg Thomas proposes that “Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland’ [could be seen] as some kind of distinct aesthetic and cultural phenomenon’ in *Border Blurs: Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland*, he also suggests that it can be argued that ‘concrete poetry in England and Scotland developed coextensively with the situation internationally in a way that precluded distinct regional characteristics’ (Thomas, 2019, p.251). This is also true of Conceptual art which developed globally/internationally. For example, in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990*, published in 1991, Joseph Kosuth, a theorist of Conceptual art, does not establish or highlight significant national differences in Conceptual art. Rather, he discusses the end of ‘American dominance in art’, young artists in Europe dismissing their traditions and states that ‘nationalism is as out of place in art as it is in any other field’ (Kosuth, 1991, p.29). In particular he references Seth Siegelaub’s ability to organise exhibitions that ‘existed no *place* (other than in the catalogue)’ (Kosuth, 1991, pp.29-30) and believes that ‘All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually’ (Kosuth, 1991, p.18). Furthermore, for the *Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965-75* exhibition catalogue, Clive Philpot and Andrea Tarsia argue that ‘The notion of organising exhibitions by geographic boundaries has been justly criticised, subscribing as it does to facile or bogus nationalisms and regrettable exclusions’ (Philpot *et al.*, 2000, p.6).

Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are not independent from the social and cultural context of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s but the movements and the counterculture were not wholly reliant on each other. The counterculture in the UK was characterised by anti-war sentiment, social and political activism, drug use and spirituality, alternative or bohemian lifestyles, a rejection of mainstream culture, traditions and societal norms, the New Left and anti-establishment views. Although a criticism of Conceptual art, which we can argue is also true of Concrete poetry, is that it is ‘another example of sixties counter-cultural indulgence’ (Roberts, 1997, p.8), this perspective demonstrates that the movements are seen as being part of, impacted by or having an impact on the 1960s counterculture. Many art historians have recognised that ‘an artist’s style has roots both in previous art traditions and in

the artist's own culture' (D'Alleva, 2010, p.156). The same can be said for literary figures. Although what influences artists and poets can be more nuanced, for instance, artists may borrow from literary traditions and vice versa, or be interested in other cultures, this proposition is applicable to Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. Both movements developed from previous movements in the arts and literature, and the new (interdisciplinary) approaches to producing and disseminating work implemented by concrete poets and conceptual artists, reflect the widespread break with convention and questioning of/assault on traditions, establishment and institutions that was associated with the counterculture.

An important link between the Concrete poetry movement and the counterculture is the creation of alternative publishing networks which allowed poets (and artists) to quickly disseminate and publish their work which was less likely to be deemed eligible for distribution by mainstream publishers. In addition, events such as the Albert Hall poetry reading (International Poetry Incarnation) or the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) redefined poetry as a performance or event by including poetry that broke free from the printed page and according to critic, historian and curator Andrew Wilson, 'The International Poetry Incarnation rendered all too visible a hunger for poetry as part of a wider countercultural movement that had already been laying siege to the establishment since the late fifties' (Wilson, 2004, p.94). British writer, curator and librarian Clive Philpot describes Conceptual art and its associated manifestations as 'an expression of the cultural ferment of the 60s' and 'a rupture in the practice of art' (Philpot, 2000, pp.9-10). An important aspect of the movement was Institutional Critique. The relationship between art/artists and galleries, museums, collectors and/or society changed in the mid- to late 1960s and 'the radical attitude on the part of artists was initially directed primarily towards the institutions of art, its traditions and accepted ways of working' (Archer, 2000, p.26). Conceptual artists criticised the art world and the commodification of art by dematerialising the art object. These artists turned towards language, processes of destruction and produced work comprised of ideas, events, ephemeral objects and immaterial elements. Some practitioners critiqued social and political issues as well as institutions, an example of this is Hans Haacke's *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, but most poets and artists did not address social and political systems through their work. Furthermore,

practitioners associated with Conceptual art explored concepts such as presenting an exhibition in the form of a book rather than in a formal gallery setting. The network of/relationship between conceptual artists and galleries, private/public art dealers and/or collectors is examined in more detail by Sophie Richard in *Unconcealed: The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967-77 Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collections* who considers how Conceptual art 'on one hand challenged the traditional frameworks of the art world, but on the other hand was dependent on marketing and advertising' which subsequently led to 'its commercial assimilation in the late 1970s' (Richard, 2009, p.37).

In *Art & The 60s: This Was Tomorrow*, published in 2004, Andrew Wilson states that the Albert Hall poetry reading and the Destruction in Art Symposium (the latter is discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis) 'Although very different, [...] define the emerging counterculture of the mid sixties formed by the dissolution of barriers between disciplines and the attempt to forge a new grammar and language alongside new ways of living life' (Wilson, 2004, p.93). The manifestation of the underground scene in the UK was prompted by the Albert Hall poetry reading on 11th June 1965, 'Poets of the World/Poets of Our Time' – also known as the 'International Poetry Incarnation' or *Wholly Communion* after Peter Whitehead's documentary film of the event, of the same name. This was a key event in the creation of the British underground (Miles, 2010, p.144) that was organised by the Poets' Co-operative who were anticipating the arrival of Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Beat poet Gregory Corso in England after American Beat poet and writer Allen Ginsberg gave an unplanned reading at Better Books in May 1965 (Miles, 2010, p.145-146). Barry Miles, an English author and manager of the paperback section of Better Books at the time, helped organise the reading and described it as a catalyst for the creation of '*International Times (IT)*, the UFO Club, the psychedelic posters of Osiris Visions, the 14-Hour Technicolor Dream, BIT, the Roundhouse as a venue, and by extension the British underground papers that followed: *Oz*, *Ink*, *Friends*, *Frendz* and *Gandalf's Garden*' (Miles, 2010, p.151). The Albert Hall poetry reading is contextualised by the influence of the Beats, who set the scene for an emerging counterculture, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marches which connected a network of people who would later be involved in the countercultural scene of the 1960s (Donnelly, 2011, p.130) and/or art and literary circles. These events represent shifts in the

artistic, literary and cultural climate of the time and contributed to the creation of an underground/alternative community and scene in the UK; '[the Albert Hall poetry reading] was when we first saw each other. You walked in, saw 6,000 people just like you and thought, '[expletive], are there that many of us?' It was a turning point and gave us a lot of confidence' (Miles, 2010, p.151).

In addition, transatlantic links between poets (and artists) and the development of the counterculture in the UK (and the US) were facilitated by the small press publishing scene. In *Avant-Folk: Small Press Poetry Networks from 1950 to the Present*, Ross Hair identifies Scottish concrete poet Ian Hamilton Finlay and Scottish author Jessie Sheeler's (formerly McGuffie) Wild Hawthorn Press and magazine *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse. (P.O.T.H)* as part of a transatlantic poetry network in the 1960s. Although Finlay did not directly engage with the British counterculture, by publishing a selection of British and American poets and artists, he circumvented insular national literary traditions in Scotland and influenced poets and artists internationally (Hair, 2016, p.15). Hair also recognises that the 'eastward drift of American poetry publications to Britain between about 1962 and 1973' (Hair, 2016, p.2) 'was reciprocated by a westward drift of British poetry to North America' (Hair, 2016, p.16). Transatlantic exchange between small press publishers contributed to the British countercultural and underground scenes, for example a dialogue was formed between Barry Miles (Indica Books & Gallery in London), Lawrence Ferlinghetti (City Lights Bookseller & Publishers in San Francisco) and Mandarin Books Ltd (in London) leading to a wider distribution of works by poets and artists. This is discussed further in Chapter Two of this thesis. Andrew Wilson connects Conceptual art – which is generally recognised as emerging in the late 1960s in New York – to 'growing countercultural currents' in the UK (Wilson, 2016, p. 9) in *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979*. In particular, he places Conceptual art in opposition to 'the singularity of [formalist] modernism' (Wilson, 2016, p.10) and in relation to political and social issues (for example, the Vietnam War and Feminism) and other developments in the 1960s and 1970s including 'happenings, fluxus, kineticism and bio-kineticism, concrete and visual poetry, neo-concretism, auto-destructive and auto-creative art' (Wilson, 2016, p.9). Artists, in particular those producing conceptual work or work that questioned the nature of art and its commodification, also

benefitted from the small presses which they used to disseminate their work, ideas and theories in order to circumvent traditional modes of critiquing and displaying art.

Interest in Concrete poetry and Conceptual art has been sporadic during the last fifteen years. Generally, since the 1950s, publications and conferences on and exhibitions of Concrete poetry have tended to appear every twenty years. However, since the decade from 2010 to 2019, they have become more frequent, and interest has increased due to commemorative exhibitions and talks being organised, anniversaries of activity being celebrated, debut publications being reprinted and a move towards reworking existing literature to account for the contributions of women and minority figures to the movement. Concrete poetry publications written by critics and scholars of the movement started to emerge in the early to mid-1960s after collections and anthologies of concrete and visual poems, compiled by the poets themselves, were being published in journals and magazines in the late 1950s. The development of the movement coincided with the era of the artist's book so mimeographed poems and publications, printed anthologies and manifestos became the most popular forms of dissemination together with physical archives, and more recently, online archives and websites with digitised versions of concrete poems. Examples of exhibitions include *Graphic Constellations: Visual Poetry and the Properties of Space* at the Ruskin Gallery in 2015, *Concrete Poetry: Words and Sounds in Graphic Space* at the Getty Research Institute in 2017, and *Klang Farben Text* at the Lyrik Kabinett in Munich, in March 2020 and at the National Poetry Library, London in April 2020. More recent events and conferences featuring Concrete poetry include the Edwin Morgan Trust's Centenary celebration from April 2020-April 2021, *Poetic Explor+Actions II – Concrete Poetry* at The Rose Hill, Brighton in September 2022 and the *Reproduction! Networks of Distribution in Archives and Collections of Publishing* conference for the Association for Art History at the University of Bristol, in April 2024.

There has also been growing interest and a steady increase in publications on Conceptual art since the turn of the twenty-first century. Interest has appeared in the form of periodic publications and exhibitions from the late 1960s onwards. In addition, there has been a reclamation of conceptualism by contemporary artists in the twenty-first century which has led to more interest and a revision of the existing

literature. A significant exhibition of Conceptual art was *Materialising 'Six Years': Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art* at the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Centre for Feminist Art in 2012-2013. The exhibition and its catalogue demonstrate the impact of Lucy Lippard's record of and commentary on the movement and its theorists in *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, published in 1973. A recent Conceptual art exhibition, which placed contemporary examples of conceptual works of art in relation to early Conceptual art and Fluxus ideologies, was *Another Idea: an actual conceptual art exhibition*. This was a virtual exhibition, from June-July 2020 presented on the University of Chicago's Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry website. More recent exhibitions featuring Conceptual art include *Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind* from February – September 2024 and *Artist Rooms: Art and Text* from February 2023 - December 2024, both at the Tate Modern, London.

The geographical and historical parameters of the study

The historical framework of this research is 1953 to 1980 – from the earliest use of the term 'Concrete poetry' through to the dissolution of the Conceptual art movement by the end of the 1970s and a widespread return to painting and figurative art starting in 1980 (Guggenheim Bilbao, 2000), by which time any attempt to precisely identify how the movements continued to develop as a cohesive whole becomes convoluted. Moreover, the change to the socio-political environment in the more conservative climates of the US and UK in the 1980s, contrasts the countercultural era in which Concrete poetry and Conceptual art flourished. Accordingly, I do not exceed this periodisation because (in a similar way to other critics and historians, for example Belgian artist and writer Marc Goethals) I am proposing that the counter cultural period and its 'melting pot' mentality (Curtis, 2020, p.24) are significant factors in identifying how crossovers between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art occur.

With regard to the UK and US, this timeframe encompasses a period of increased prosperity and the emergence of the 1960s counterculture driven by the liberalisation of social laws relating to gender, sexuality, race, class and censorship, the growing power of the mass media as a medium to share news and inform or shape public

opinion, and the expansion of civil and women's rights. The end of the post-war economic boom in 1973 saw an increase in racial tension, stagflation – slow economic growth, high unemployment, and high inflation rates – and a turbulent socio-political environment of economic decline into the late 1970s. A turning point in US and UK history was the election of the Conservative politician Margaret Thatcher and the 1979 energy crisis which affected the Western world and prompted President James Carter to address the nation on July 15th about a 'crisis of confidence' (PBS, n.d.). By the early to mid-1970s Concrete poetry, characteristic of early definitions/materialisations, had declined or in some cases, developed into something else, for example, advertising, off-the-page poems, sound works and scores for performance which resulted in a broadening of definitions to encompass wider experimentation (Poetry Beyond Text, n.d.). The intellectual nature and idea based outcomes of Conceptual art, which aimed to undermine the value of the art object/art world, were no longer suited to the difficult social, political, and economic conditions of the 1980s. In addition, the terms 'conceptualism' and 'contemporary' continued to be applied to a variety of work over the following decades, and the term 'post-conceptualism' was introduced into theoretical discourse and critical debates (Osborne, 2002, p.176).

Although social and political issues were not addressed by the majority of concrete poets and conceptual artists through their work, they need to be taken into consideration because the general response by the countercultural generation to accepted societal norms contributed to the shaping of art and literary movements, and attitudes at the time provide a context for the publications and anthologies that came out of the movements and have determined who has become canonical. A critique of art institutions, traditional poetic conventions and a response to social, political and cultural issues is visible in a handful of works, for example, John Baldessari's *Tips for Artists Who Want to Sell* (fig.1), produced in 1966-68, and Anna Oberto's *Manifesto femminista anaculturale (Anacultural Feminist Manifesto)* (fig.2), produced in 1971. This criticism of social issues continues into the twenty-first century in concrete poems and conceptual artworks such as Renée Green's *Space Poem #7 (Color Without Objects: Intra-Active May-Words)* (fig.3), produced in 2020 and Hank Willis Thomas's *I Am A Man* (fig.4), produced in 2016.

An effort has been made to include the contributions of female, marginalised, overlooked and noncanonical practitioners creating concrete poems and conceptual artworks in this thesis because the timeframe of this research includes the women's movement and civil rights movement. However, a reformation of the balance between the amount of information available on male poets and artists in comparison to female poets and artists is an exercise which has been (and continues to be) achieved by several critics and historians, for example, Alex Balgiu and Monica de la Torre in *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979* (2020), Amanda Earl in *Judith: Women Making Visual Poetry* (2021) and Jayne Wark in *Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson* (2001). In addition, postcolonial literary criticism rewrites history by emphasising separatism and undermining universal claims (Hatt and Klouk, 2006, p.223) to establish a space for an underacknowledged 'complex history of intercultural exchange' (Hatt and Klouk, 2006, p.225) between nations and cultures. Some examples, which take this approach and include Concrete poetry and/or Conceptual art, are Aldo Lynn Nielsen's publication *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism*, published in 1997 and the exhibition *Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970*, displayed at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in 2005.

Definitions

To understand the aim of this thesis, definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are needed but it should be noted that both Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are terms that are complicated by their internationalism, competing definitions by critics, scholars and practitioners and the countercultural context in which the two movements took place. As a result, Concrete poetry has been used as an umbrella term for a wide range of experimental poetic work produced during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s that expanded the boundaries of language and formal syntax characteristic of traditional poetry (Sharkey, 1971, p.12) and Conceptual art has been used to describe anything produced in unconventional media (art as idea) or opposed to aesthetic formalism in modern art (Osborne, 2002, p.18). For example, a tendency for poets and critics to blur the boundaries between Visual poetry, scores for Sound poetry and Concrete poetry is evident in multiple publications such as Bob Cobbing and Peter Mayer's *Concerning Concrete Poetry*, published in 1978 and *The*

New Concrete: Visual Poetry in the 21st Century, edited by poets Victoria Bean and Chris McCabe and published in 2015. In addition, the use of Conceptual art, rather than 'conceptualism', as a blanket term is likely due to Joseph Kosuth's influential and foundational theory (frequently referenced by art critics and historians such as Tony Godfrey in his publication *Conceptual Art*, published in 1998) that all art is conceptual and that "Conceptual Art' is often considered as a *tendency* [...] because the 'definition' of 'Conceptual Art' is very close to the meanings of art itself' (Kosuth, 1991, pp.25-26).

With regard to the interdisciplinary scope of this thesis, I will, at first, provide a review of the two movements, starting with Concrete poetry due to the chronology of events and because the direction of influence between concrete poets and conceptual artists is predominantly from poet to artist. Concrete poetry emerged in the 1950s as a widespread, international literary movement. This is best demonstrated by American poet, essayist, editor and translator Mary Ellen Solt's anthology *Concrete Poetry: A World View*, published in 1968 which organises the movement by nation and makes connections between well-known and less well-known centres of activity. In providing a comprehensive, panoramic view of the international movement (including examinations of manifestos, texts and examples of concrete poems) Solt condenses the range of experimental work that comes under the heading of 'Concrete poetry' into two key principles: that these poets experimenting with the arrangement of text in graphic space shared the view 'that the old grammatical-syntactical structures [were] no longer adequate to [advance] processes of thought and communication in our time' (Solt, 1970, p.7) and that principally, 'The essential is *reduced language*' (Solt, 1970, p.7). This is corroborated by the Dublin-born British author, editor, artist and poet John J. Sharkey in *MINDPLAY: An Anthology of British Concrete Poetry*, published in 1971, who emphasises the widespread, international character of the movement and its ability to 'bypass linguistic and national barriers' (Sharkey, 1971, p.22) due to the poets' use of reduced language. He is also in agreement with many authors, poets and historians, including Solt, who are of the opinion that 'nearly all definitions of concrete poetry hinge on the polarity of form and content' (Sharkey, 1971, p.10), that is, the arrangement of linguistic elements in graphic space to convey the semantic content of words.

The earliest record of the term 'Concrete poetry' was in 1953 in Öyvind Fahlström's 'Manifesto for Concrete Poetry', but the manifesto had little to no influence on the movement internationally because it was not translated from Swedish to English until 1968, by Solt (Solt, 1970, p.29). Although, in her anthology, Solt challenges and corrects the consensus that Eugen Gomringer was the 'father' of Concrete poetry (Fi Burke, 2011), the 1955 meeting between Gomringer and Décio Pignatari (the founder of the Noigandres group) is generally perceived by historians as the catalyst for the movement and is used as a basis for several critical and historical examinations of the movement (for example, Stephen Bann's *Concrete poetry: an international anthology*, published in 1967). The term 'concrete' was used in 1955 and 1956, two to three years after Fahlström, by Gomringer and the Brazilian Noigandres poets. 'Poesia Concreta'/'Concrete poetry' appeared in the *Noigandres* magazine (*Noigandres 4*), as the title of Gomringer and Pignatari's unpublished anthology, and during the National Exposition of Concrete Art at the Museum of Modern Art, São Paulo, in 1956, which established the Concrete poetry movement (Solt, 1970, pp.12-13). The definition of Concrete poetry provided by the Noigandres poets in their 'Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry', published in 1958, is one of the most widely used. The group claims that 'concrete poetry begins by being aware of graphic space as structural agent' (Solt, 1970, p.71) and they emphasise the idea of the 'tension of things-words in space-time' and Concrete poetry's 'verbivocovisual' nature – 'the phenomenon of meta-communication: coincidence and simultaneity of verbal and non-verbal communication' (Solt, 1970, p.72).

From the mid-1960s, the broadening of definitions of Concrete poetry to include Visual and Sound poetry by poets, critics, historians and publishers such as Cobbing and Mayer, was met with scepticism and discredited by some practitioners who favoured early interpretations of Concrete poetry. For example, in a letter to Bann in March 1966, Finlay asserts that this new wave of experimentation, labelled as 'Concrete poetry', which criticises the 'brevity' of his concrete poems, 'is surely NOT concrete. And I personally feel worried, now, that, in Britain, 'Concrete' is used to mean anything, almost, except something related to Bill, Mondrian, the early Brazilians, Gomringer, Arp, Albers...' (Bann, 2014, p.101). Alternatively, writer and critic Natalie Ferris highlights two approaches to Concrete poetry in *Abstraction in Post-War British Literature 1945-1980*, by examining Finlay and British Benedictine

monk, theologian and concrete poet Dom Sylvester Houédard's practices in relation to abstraction and post-war developments in interdisciplinarity. Ferris states that Houédard saw concrete poets in Brazil (The Noigandres group) and the French spatial/concrete poet Pierre Garnier as 'pure concrete' (Ferris, 2022, p.57) and 'saw Finlay as in some ways 'pure', crafting a 'poetry of NOUNS and concrete things', whereas he saw himself as the opposite, 'I experiment all over the place' (Ferris, 2022, p.59). Houédard's observation demonstrates a shift in perspective towards and a new phase of Concrete poetry.

A reluctance on the part of poets to call themselves 'concrete poets' – favouring broader definitions of Concrete poetry or more general classifications such as visual or sound poet (Solt, 1970, p.7) – has led to forms such as Pattern poetry and Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* often being confused with concrete poems (Draper, 1971, p.329) even though their forms are closer to representational images. However, author and academic Ronald P. Draper's article 'Concrete poetry', published in 1971, is one example of an analysis which effectively distinguishes Concrete poetry from its precursors – experimental poetic art forms such as *Calligrammes* (fig.5) and the Futurists' *Words-in-Freedom* – by stating that pure Concrete poetry cannot be printed conventionally and cannot abandon its spatiality or visuality because it is a 'structural principle' (Draper, 1971, p.329). Furthermore, Concrete poetry has often been misinterpreted as Visual poetry, which developed into a separate movement with a close resemblance to Pattern poetry and artists' books, but Draper uses George Herbert's 'Easter Wings' (fig.6) as a way of distinguishing between Concrete poetry and these other forms. For example, 'Easter Wings' is comprehensible when recited and would keep its meaning if its form followed traditional poetic conventions. Due to the poem's meaning not being reliant on visual form, Draper argues that Visual poetry is not exclusively 'Concrete' (Draper, 1971, p.330). In addition, Marvin A. Sackner, co-founder of the Ruth & Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry, distinguishes between 'concrete poems as those in which only letters and/or words are utilized to form a visual image whereas visual poems constitute those in which images are integrated into the text of the poem' (Bennett, 2008, p.4). Visual poetry is '[preoccupied] with the visual media of a given society (print advertising, television, video, film, photography)' (Polkinhorn,

1993, p.393), is intermedia in nature and like Pattern poetry, does not rely on its visual form to retain its meaning.

As Concrete poetry (in its 'purest' or strictest manifestation) started to decline Conceptual art emerged. Conceptual art was an experimental art movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Although conceptual artworks were being produced in the early 1960s, the earliest publications recognising Conceptual art as an art movement appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Often, academics such as Anne Rorimer in her 2001 publication *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality* and Peter Osborne in his publication *Conceptual Art*, published in 2002, contrast Conceptual art with Modernist art and theory to highlight changes in artistic techniques, approaches and discourse, and to situate Conceptual art in the larger context of Postmodernism. The term 'Conceptual art' was coined in 1967 by the American artist Sol LeWitt in his article 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' in which he distinguishes between the Conceptual art movement and conceptual artwork. As a pioneer of the movement, his view that 'the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art' (Alberro and Stimson, 1999, p.12) influenced many artists and was instrumental to the development of the movement. Although the origin and definition of Conceptual art has been debated for at least six decades, it is invariably described as an art about ideas/an art of ideas where materials and media are secondary devices in support of a concept (Rorimer, 2001, p.95). In addition, the process of seeing or reading a work is also emphasised – 'the primary experience is [the] audience's own. The responsibility lies with the audience instead of an intermediary' (Lippard, 1973, p.157).

Minimalists and conceptualists in the 1960s were reluctant to connect their work to the Concrete poetry movement. This perspective was, in part, shaped by artists such as Kosuth who criticised Concrete poetry for being 'cute with words, but dumb about language' (Thomas, 2020). It is also likely they were trying to distinguish their new and developing ideas about Conceptual art, from a post-war poetic movement which they saw as irrelevant and declining (Kotz, 2007, p.293). Jamie Hilder, in his publication *Designed Words for a Designed World: The International Concrete*

Poetry Movement, 1955-1971 states that 'Within the Anglo-American tradition, concrete poetry and conceptual art largely disavow each other' (Hilder, 2016, p.145) and this is due to a lack of understanding of the other movement on the part of artists, poets, critics and historians. This 'misunderstanding' (Hilder, 2016, p.145) is complicated by the terminology used. For example, Tony Godfrey provides an account of the history of Conceptual art, as well as definitions and examples, in his publication *Conceptual Art* (1998). He describes Conceptual art as a tradition, rather than a style or movement. Although the term 'tradition' is a contradiction in terms regarding Conceptual art because these artists questioned the nature of art, Godfrey uses the term to maintain that into the late 1990s, the history of Conceptual art was ongoing (Godfrey, 1998, p.16). Alternatively, Jon Bird and Michael Newman categorise Conceptual art as a movement in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, published a year later in 1999. They argue that a distinction between Conceptual art (the movement) and conceptualism (a tendency or attitude) is ambiguous and compromised by practitioners with multimedia and/or interdisciplinary practices (Newman and Bird, 1999, pp.5-6).

Similar to Concrete poetry, Conceptual art has been used as an umbrella term, but it is a much larger movement and because of this, many authors and scholars have separated it into phases signposted by significant exhibitions or smaller categories. For example, Andrew Wilson in *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* states that a series of group exhibitions between 1969 – the same year Kosuth published his views on definitions of Conceptual art and 'pure' Conceptual art in *Art After Philosophy* – and 1972, mark a shift in the understanding of and reception to Conceptual art (Wilson, 2016, p.53). Wilson suggests that Conceptual art started to be institutionally accepted by 1972 (Wilson, 2016, p.10) and indicates that some curators began to expand their views on what constitutes a conceptual artwork. For example, English art historian, academic and member of the Art & Language group Charles Harrison curated the exhibition *Idea Structures*, in 1970, at the Camden Arts Centre which had a limited focus on language-based conceptual artists such as Keith Arnatt (Wilson, 2016, p.53). The following year he curated *The British Avant Garde* at the New York Cultural Centre which was wider in scope and included text-based work, photography (as documentation of events), films, sound work and performances by artists including Gilbert & George, Barry Flanagan and Richard

Long (Melvin, 2016, n.p.). By 1972 curators were presenting Conceptual art 'within a wide frame of reference that encompassed analytical and theoretical conceptual art, and a conceptual art that was more inclusive' (Wilson, 2016, p.53), for example, editor, publisher and curator Rosetta Brooks aimed to redefine 'the concept of art [...] art's function, and its social purpose' in the exhibition *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* at Gallery House in August/October 1972 (Wilson, 2016, p.53). With regard to categories, that year American art critic, director, filmmaker and editor Lizzie Borden divided the range of activities associated with the term Conceptual art into three 'modes': the recording or documentation of past events, performances or 'actions occurring in the present tense' (Borden, 1972) and a rejection of the art object or materiality (usually through language) in favour of ideas (Borden, 1972). Osborne separates Conceptual art into six categories: 'Instruction, Performance, Documentation', minimalist inspired Conceptual art, language-based works, works produced using everyday or commercial forms (mail art, magazines, publishing), politically motivated works, and institutional critique (Osborne, 2002, p.11). Furthermore, Godfrey recognises a loosening of definitions in the 1990s compared to the 1960s, from Kosuth's notion of 'pure' Conceptual art (Godfrey, 1998, p.14) to more generalised characterisations of the movement. He outlines four forms of Conceptual art: a readymade, an intervention (a 'thing' presented in an unexpected context), documentation, or words (Godfrey, 1998, p.7). He also argues that a conceptual artwork is realised in the viewers mind and/or once they engage with it, and that Conceptual art is not media-specific but '[takes] a variety of forms: everyday objects, photographs, maps, videos, charts and especially language itself. Often there will be a combination of such forms' (Godfrey, 1998, p.4).

With regard to the various categorisations of Conceptual art, I am focusing on conceptual works which centre on using text/language in order to make comparisons between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. However, as Godfrey indicates, artists would use a combination of forms, so I am not discounting language-based work which involves other modes such as documentation, performance and installations for the purpose of conforming to artificial boundaries established by existing literature. The longstanding institutional and academic preference for discipline-specific analysis to categorise and historicise works of art (Shanken, 2002) and, we might add, literature limits analysis of the Concrete poetry and Conceptual art

movements because many of the members of these movements participated in cross-disciplinary environments and their practices were not solely determined by the media they used. In a wider sense, I am responding to arguments made by scholars against connections between the two movements, and to an extent, I am indebted to their focus on language and visual similarities as the only identifiable (yet apparently symptomatic) links between the two movements (Powell, n.d. [2014]) because they provided a basis for further research into other aspects of the movements.

Of interest to this thesis is the broadening of definitions. Generally, writers, scholars and critics since the turn of the twenty-first century, favour broader definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and include previously overlooked participants of the movements with intermedia or multimedia practices in their publications. Although authors such as Osborne are cautious that a broad or general definition of Conceptual art, that goes beyond the timeframe in which it was a 'recognizable artistic movement', could become confused with the notion of conceptualism which can be applied to all art (Osborne, 2002, p.18), they also suggest that works that can be classified as 'conceptual' predate but also extend beyond the temporal parameters of the movement (which Osborne defines as 1967 to 1975). For example, Osborne and Rorimer include Fluxus activity under the conceptual umbrella and Godfrey identifies Henry Flynt, who defined 'concept art' in the Fluxus publication *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, published in 1963, as a conceptual artist. Additionally, authors of publications such as Alex Balgiu and Mónica de la Torre's *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979*, published in 2020, and Nancy Perloff's *Concrete Poetry: A 21st-century Anthology*, published in 2021, favour more flexibility between artistic and literary disciplines and tend to draw on broader definitions of Concrete poetry to combat the issue that the terms 'concrete poet' or 'Concrete poetry' are seen as reductive while simultaneously presenting interdisciplinary and intermedia work under those headings.

There are some commonalities in studies of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, one being the notion of 'pure'/'classical' versus 'dirty' Concrete poetry and 'pure'/'analytical' versus 'impure'/'superficial' Conceptual art. John Roberts, editor of *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966-1976*,

published in 1997, states that 'linguistic or analytical conceptual art was largely an attack on the primacy of the visual' (Roberts, 1997, p.9) and an art 'which reveals the propositional content of the work as a requirement of its making' (Roberts, 1997, p.16). In *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990*, published in 1991, as well as presenting essays on the nature and presentation of art, and several definitions of art by artists associated with abstraction, minimalism and conceptualism including Ad Reinhardt, Donald Judd, and Sol LeWitt, Joseph Kosuth introduces the idea of pure (and therefore impure) Conceptual art. He states that 'The 'purest' definition of conceptual art would be that it is inquiry into the foundations of the concept 'art'' (Kosuth, 1991, p.25). In addition, he voices concern over 'the arbitrary application of [the] term' Conceptual art and separates his 'purer' work/propositions from the quantity of 'superficial' Conceptual art (Kosuth, 1991, pp.25-26) which he saw as being concerned with materiality or 'outcomes' rather than ideas. However, Roberts suggests that Joseph Kosuth's *Art After Philosophy* (first published in 1969) is 'one of the most notorious and quixotic statements of analytical conceptual art' because Kosuth overlooks how 'propositional content is to be presented' if it cannot reference the external world (Roberts, 1997, pp.13-14). Kosuth subsequently revises this by claiming 'that the art remains separate from its actual form of presentation' if it is given a 'temporal home' such as a disposable photostat that can be recreated (Roberts, 1997, p.14). Lippard's definition of Conceptual art in her publication *Six Years* disputes Kosuth's criticism because she demonstrates that concepts and ideas were prioritised by artists concerned with the dematerialisation of the art object and if material forms were used, they were secondary to the concept or idea (Lippard, 1973, p.vii). Altogether, the majority of this work is united by a resistance to Formalist principles (Kosuth, 1991, p.26).

This proposition of a pure and impure Conceptual art mirrors discussions on Concrete poetry. For example, American author, editor and academic Lori Emerson in 'the origin of the term "dirty concrete poetry" (en route to digital D.I.Y.)' examines the history and idea of 'impure' Concrete poetry, typically referred to as 'dirty concrete'. She states that this term represents a departure from 'the clean lines and graphically neutral appearance' of early Concrete poetry (the Noigandres group and Finlay) by poets in favour of a 'messy, typed-over aesthetic' (Emerson, 2011/2024). Early or 'pure' Concrete poetry is also defined as 'classical' by Greg Thomas, who in

Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland 1962-75: Ian Hamilton Finlay, Edwin Morgan, Dom Sylvester Houédard and Bob Cobbing states that ‘the classical concrete style’ is characterised by ‘minimal composition; use of visual presentation to clarify language; [and] a subdued sonic element’ (Thomas, 2013, p.21). Draper questions the concept of ‘pure’ Concrete poetry in his article ‘Concrete Poetry’ published in 1971, viewing it as a pretentious title for concrete poems which remain faithful to the ideas proposed by the Noigandres group at the start of the movement – ‘the spatial element is essential [...]. It is a structural principle’ (Draper, 1971, p.329). The divide between ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’ Concrete poetry presented by Emerson is visible in Finlay’s archival papers. In correspondences, Finlay regards his work as a purer example of Concrete poetry due to it being a silent poetry (Finlay, n.d.), in comparison to the work of Bob Cobbing and Dom Sylvester Houédard (whom he regarded with contempt) (Finlay, 1971b). For the purpose of this research, I am not providing a specific term for manifestations of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art that emerged after ‘pure’ Concrete poetry and Conceptual art because the movements expanded in multiple ways in connection with broader experiments in the arts, literature and music.

In light of how Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are presented in existing scholarship, this thesis regards them as movements, and the various modes of working and experimentation that come under these headings as tendencies, techniques or approaches. For the purpose of this research, the terms ‘Concrete poetry’ and ‘Conceptual art’ with a capital are used to refer to the historical movements and a lower case is used to refer to concrete poets, concrete poems, conceptual artists and conceptual artwork. In this thesis, the terms ‘counterculture’, ‘underground’ and ‘alternative’ are used to refer to the experimental activity and environment(s) of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in the UK and US. The term ‘counterculture’ represents a rejection of societal norms, mainstream culture and established political, social and cultural perspectives by a community of individuals and groups (which exceeded artistic and literary circles). The ‘underground’ is largely associated with the little presses, film culture and music scene, as well as the recreational use of psychedelic drugs, anti-war activism or the sharing of banned publications, and the term ‘alternative’ describes works, people and events outside of the mainstream but not necessarily part of the underground or countercultural scene.

The breadth to which the practitioners selected for this thesis have used and expanded the terms Concrete poetry and Conceptual art is how I define them. Consequently, references to external influences (for example, minimalism, sculpture, Land art, Mail art, the Black Arts Movement) are made when they are relevant to the individual and/or group discussed. Examples of Pattern poetry or Visual poetry which imitate shapes in their design have been excluded. Several definitions, perspectives and contexts are featured in this thesis and through analysis of the works of concrete poets and conceptual artists, similarities in terms of interests, modes of working, theories, and themes emerge. To proceed we can ask the following questions to provide a contextual framework.

Research questions

Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are often presented as separate or opposing movements. These movements overlapped in the 1960s and are contextualised by the countercultural phenomenon, shifts in artistic and literary discourse and advancements in modes of production. Despite there being some ambiguity in definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, these movements have comparable qualities, the most apparent similarity being language. This thesis revises how the relationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art has been portrayed by demonstrating how these movements are connected by more than just an interest in the presentation of language. This has been achieved by using the following sub-questions to conduct and guide the research:

- How did institutional and poet/artist-run infrastructure impact the relationship between figures producing Concrete poetry and Conceptual art?
- How do interactions, trade and correspondence between poets, artists and other figures help to reveal networks and crossovers between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art?
- How have the practices of poet-artists and intermedia figures impacted the histories and definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art?

- What affect does the physical manifestation of text in Concrete poetry and Conceptual art have on how the movements and works are categorised in art and literary discourses?

Methods

With regard to methodology, in addition to information obtained from secondary sources (published interviews and videos/recordings, exhibitions/exhibition catalogues, artist's books, publications and journals), this thesis also makes use of primary research including archival research and one-to-one interviews. In particular, I have utilised The Papers of Barry Miles and The Papers of Bob Cobbing at the British Library, which take the form of correspondence, photographs, notebooks, newsletters, mail art, draft exhibition catalogue entries, programmes and schedules or course notes to understand the role of infrastructure, networks, exhibitions and publishing in order to provide a well-founded and accurate account of how these things brought about interactions between practitioners and place poets and artists in relation to each other. I have also used audiovisual material provided by the British Library's sound archive (online) to access first-hand accounts of artists' experiences of the counterculture and alternative/underground art and literary scenes, including where they were situated, the networks they were part of and what, or more importantly, who influenced their work. This includes interviews with Ian Breakwell, John Latham and Barbara Steveni.

I have also referred to papers regarding Ian Hamilton Finlay in the Special Collections at the National Library of Scotland including correspondence between Finlay and several correspondents including Katy Gardiner and Derek Stanford, published works such as *Glasgow Beasts*, *An A Bird*, statements regarding Little Sparta and the Saint-Just Vigilantes, and a transcript of a BBC interview with Finlay. At the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, I acquired information on places and people of interest including Jim Haynes's correspondences in relation to the Arts Laboratory at Drury Lane, the development and organisation of the ICA and an exhibition catalogue of American artist Ray Johnson's work. Other online resources I have used are the Tate Archive's Collections of Digitised Archive Items, the Museum

of Modern Art's digitised press release archives and the Vasulka Archive for information on the New York multimedia art space The Kitchen.

I conducted three one-to-one interviews with American artist, writer and academic Johanna Drucker, American poet and academic Kimberly Campanello and British graphic designer, academic and co-founder of the independent publisher The Caserom Press, Barrie Tullett (see Appendix C). They were selected based on their knowledge of and interest in Concrete poetry, Visual poetry, Conceptual art and/or the relationship between text and image (looking and reading). These interviews inform this research study by providing a greater understanding of the current thinking and perspectives surrounding Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art. What is most beneficial is the differences in perspective, for instance, Drucker highlights the relationship between cognitive processes and the presentation of the work, Campanello blurs the institutional boundaries between Concrete poetry, Conceptual art and other artistic and literary experiments, and Tullett discusses Concrete poetry through the lens of a graphic designer, emphasising the artist's book, typography and the physicality/tactility of printed poetry versus computerised Concrete poetry. Interviewees were given the opportunity to comment on Concrete poetry and Conceptual art but the majority chose to discuss one of the two movements.

A limitation of the research was the Covid-19 pandemic which affected archival research and how I conducted interviews. Regarding archives, Covid affected travel, a number of sites and reading rooms were closed and online access to material from archives in and outside of the UK was impeded by financial constraints and access restrictions. Out of ten interview requests, three were successfully conducted. The others could not be completed due to financial constraints, refusal, or no response.

Comparisons between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art made since the turn of the twenty-first century, negotiate a mixture of conflicting and complementary ideologies, definitions and theories presented by poets and artists during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, to support arguments for or against connections between the two movements. Use of language, the relationship between visual representation and verbal representation, processes of signification and the

physicality of text are aspects of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. Accordingly, I posit that the form-content structure of a concrete poem shares similarities with the various modes of presenting ideas in conceptual artworks, or, to put it another way, both concrete poems and conceptual artworks are produced in whichever media serves the idea or meaning best (an aspect of Conceptual art) and therefore, their form represents their content (an aspect of Concrete poetry). In general, for both movements, language provides meaning or represents an idea, and the physicality of the work or text used is in support of the message that is being conveyed to and is often reliant on the viewer.

An example of how practitioners have explored the relationship between different linguistic and non-linguistic signs is Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three* (fig.7) series, where each concept (a chair, shovel, clothing) is subject to three modes of presentation – language, image, and object – which compels the viewer to ask questions about the nature of art. In *Methods & Theories of Art History*, Anne D'Alleva highlights art historians' application of semiotics to the discipline of art history and its development in the field of literature and states that semiotics – the study of signs – provides a system for understanding 'what works of art mean [and] how the artist, viewer, and culture at large go about creating those meanings' (D'Alleva, 2012, p.27). The same applies for works of literature. To interpret and analyse examples of art which use text as media, and poetry where the visual element is as important as the verbal element (and in some cases the auditory element), a consideration of semiotics aids in understanding how poets and artists can utilise the tension between text and image. Although concrete poets and conceptual artists may not have consciously used semiotics, the studies of the founding semioticians Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce can be applied to their work. For example, many conceptual works of art, including Kosuth's *One and Three* series (fig.7), are expressionless, impassive and literal, and semiotics is useful when analysing works created by conceptual artists who have a more explicit focus on denotation over connotation, because it aids in understanding these artists' intentions and their perspectives on the relationship between an idea, its interpretation and its materialisation. In Chapter Three of this thesis, I apply Saussure's study of semiology, which explored the relationship between signifier and signified, to the concrete poems of English poet,

artist and psychotherapist John Rowan. In Rowan's work both the words and images act as signifiers and the juxtaposition of and tension between these two modes of representation is used to emphasise or disrupt word meanings, making the viewer/reader think conceptually. As a result, it can be argued that, in the spirit of the concept of 'artificial ordering systems' (Beasley, 2007b, p.12), Concrete poetry and Conceptual art occupy a shared theoretical territory unified by semiotics.

Considering the interdisciplinary nature of this project, this thesis presents the processes of the dematerialisation of the art object in Conceptual art and the materialisation of language in Concrete poetry as complementary. Although these processes have been presented as contradictory, broader definitions and a blurring of boundaries by poets and artists in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s who often had multifaceted practices, and by a handful of contemporaneous and contemporary scholars, calls for a revision of the history of the movements and their points of convergence. This perspective is informed by Bann's proposal that Concrete poetry can be viewed as a visual art (Bann, 1967, p.27) and Anne D'Alleva's view that 'in semiotics, a text is an assemblage of signs constructed (and interpreted) according to the rules or conventions of a particular medium or form of communication [...]. So in this sense, a work of art can be referred to as a text' (D'Alleva, 2012, p.37). A concern with physicality is visible in concrete and conceptual practices and there is a crossover in the ways in which concrete poets and conceptual artists plan and produce work. The physical manifestation of text used by concrete poets and conceptual artists expands and blurs the boundaries of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. The physicality of the work ranges from printed text on a page, artists books, computerised or digitised poetry and art, and instructions presented as written forms or displayed on gallery walls, to text in the environment, landscapes, on buildings and in sculptures. For example, Ian Hamilton Finlay's *The Present Order is the Disorder of the Future Saint – Just* (1983) (fig.8) is a concrete poem realised in eleven shaped blocks of stone in his gardens called Little Sparta and Joseph Kosuth's *Glass Words Material Described* (fig.9), presented in a gallery setting, is comprised of the words 'glass', 'words', 'material' and 'described' which are painted on four glass sheets. In addition to the various forms that concrete and conceptual works can take, boundaries between the movements continue to blur when, for example, printed text is transformed by readings and performances where the

linguistic elements in written concrete poems and conceptual works are dematerialised each time they are performed (through the spoken word, sounds and actions).

In *From Looking to Reading: Text-Based Conceptual Art and Typographic Discourse*, published in 2013, academic, historian and designer Ruth Blacksell refers to Osborne's publication. In particular she highlights Osborne's statement that a conceptual artist's use of text 'does not mean that the visual dimension of linguistic inscription is irrelevant, even when it is the function of such inscription to *negate* the intrinsic significance of visual form' (Blacksell, 2013, p.113). This statement shows that even though dematerialisation was a dominant theme in Conceptual art, the materiality of text in conceptual artworks was still an element. This materiality was either criticised and avoided by conceptual artists attempting to deal only in ideas such as Kosuth or was embraced by artists who essentially replaced the materiality and visuality of the art object for materialisation through use of language. According to LeWitt, the latter group 'would want to ameliorate this emphasis on materiality as much as possible or to use it in a paradoxical way. (To convert it into an idea.)' (Alberro and Stimson, 1999, p.15). In short, this thesis demonstrates how the 'modes' or 'categories' of Conceptual art are comparable to the presentation or display of Concrete poetry (for example, minimalism and reduced language, performances and readings).

Review of the critical literature

An interest in experimenting with text and image developed into several art and literary movements or styles leading up to and during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s including Concrete, Visual and Sound Poetry, Conceptual art, Fluxus, Beat poetry and Dada. Publications by academics, critics and historians on the use of language in art, artists' application of the written word as media, and the relationship between the processes of reading and seeing either precede publications with a primary focus on comparing Concrete poetry and Conceptual art or have been published contemporaneously. Some early examples of examinations into the relationship between text and image by critics and historians are W.J.T. Mitchell's *Iconology: Image, Text and Ideology* and *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual*

Representation, published in 1986 and 1994 respectively, and Johanna Drucker's *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909 – 1923*, published in 1994. More recent examples include Simon Morley's *Writing on the Wall: Word and Image in Modern Art* (2003), Liz Kotz's *Words to be Looked at: Language in 1960s Art* (2007), and Michael Petry's *The Word is Art* (2018). These publications cover experiments in art and literature where a relationship between word and image is evident. In addition to these publications which have a broad word and image focus, to proceed, I am only going to discuss critical works which have a bearing on my argument. The following publications focus on either Concrete poetry or Conceptual art but refer to the other movement (and/or Fluxus activity), propose that Concrete poetry should be viewed as a visual art form, emphasise the interdisciplinarity of works associated with Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and set up subsequent research into how the movements are connected.

Stephen Bann, who is an English art historian and Emeritus Professor of History of Art at the University of Bristol, has an interdisciplinary approach to art history. He describes his investigation into the Concrete poetry movement in *Concrete Poetry: an international anthology*, published in 1967, as tentative and driven by his preoccupation with iconography and how individual and shared knowledge impacts a person's perception (Bann, 1967, p.26). He addresses the interrelationship between visual and verbal representation and analyses early examples of Concrete poetry, including examples which are 'almost the antithesis of concrete' (Bann, 1967, p.25). Bann sacrifices inclusivity to provide a concise, chronological view of the movement using key events, exhibitions, and significant poets as a structure (Bann, 1967, p.7). However, the title of his anthology is misleading because he only focuses on examples of poetry produced in Brazil, German-speaking nations of Europe, and by English-speaking poets (Bann, 1967, p.7). He states that the movement began in 1955 after a meeting of experimental poets Gomringer and Pignatari. Although they were producing 'concrete' work before they decided to unify Gomringer's 'Constellations' and the Noigandres groups' experiments under the title of Concrete poetry, the term Concrete poetry originated in Öyvind Fahlström's 'Manifesto for Concrete Poetry' published in 1953. Bann's anthology was written a year before Solt's translation of Fahlström's manifesto into English (Solt, 1970, p.29). Bann challenges discipline-specific analysis by questioning to what extent, and under what

conditions, Concrete poetry can be classed as art (Bann, 1967, p.27). The influence of this conclusion is evident in subsequent publications discussing the structure of Concrete poetry, including Ronald P. Draper's *Concrete Poetry* (1971) and in publications that compare the Concrete poetry movement to Conceptual art, such as, Jamie Hilder's *Designed Words for a Designed World: The International Concrete Poetry Movement, 1955-1971* (2016).

The influence of Bann's anthology is shown in Draper's article in which Draper uses a semantic approach and defines Concrete poetry as 'the creation of verbal artefacts which exploit the possibilities [...] of sound, sense and rhythm – the traditional fields of poetry' but also two-dimensional and three-dimensional space (Draper, 1971, p.329). Draper quotes Bann to support his investigation into how Concrete poets' use graphic space to convey the meaning of words and argues that without this structure the poet may be able to utilise arguments available to 'any practitioner of the visual arts' using text as media (Draper, 1971, p.333). Whereas Bann had a background in the history of art, Draper is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Aberdeen. Draper highlights how Concrete poetry's disposition as a visual art challenges principles of traditional poetry but concludes that 'it may be possible for concrete poetry [...] to be recognised as a vital part of the main tradition' (Draper, 1971, p.340). These publications share common themes and concerns including the shift in the relationship between verbal and visual representation which occurred in a range of art forms at the time, some concrete poets' proclivity for the visual arts, how verbal and visual expression should not be separated in analyses of Concrete poetry and if/how Concrete poetry should be interpreted as a visual art. These publications also highlight a defining characteristic of Concrete poetry which is its form-content structure. Bann's proposal encourages comparisons between Concrete poetry and the arts, and the interpretation of Concrete poetry as a visual art provides a foundation for this thesis which argues that Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are connected.

Concerning Concrete Poetry is a collection and chronology of texts, definitions, manifestos and examples of Concrete, Visual and Sound poetry compiled in 1971 by Bob Cobbing and Peter Mayer. The publication of the collection was meant to coincide with the tour of the Stedelijk Museum's exhibition *sound texts/? Concrete*

poetry/visual texts in Britain but the publication continued to be developed over several years due to unsuccessful attempts at acquiring Arts Council funding (Cobbing and Mayer, 2014, p.3). It exists in many forms due to it being intermittently published and/or printed but the first edition of the publication was published in 1978. The development of the collection over several years means it documents shifts in understanding and definitions of Concrete poetry. To a certain extent, it functions as an introduction to Concrete poetry because it charts the precursors to the movement and argues that 'concrete visual and sound poetry have developed together and in step with the evolution of the visual arts and of music' (Cobbing and Mayer, 2014, p.5). Although the statements on Concrete poetry included in the publication tend to contradict each other, because they are either 'pure' theories from the mid- to late 1950s or reflect the broader practices from the mid-1960s, the authors use the term 'Concrete poetry' to describe a wide range of experimental poetry because of 'its wide currency' (Cobbing and Mayer, 2014, p.6). They provide examples of shifts in attitude towards the term 'concrete' in poetry, art and music (Cobbing and Mayer, 2014, p.9) and demonstrate how the term 'Concrete poetry' has developed from previous trends in the arts therefore making it 'akin to both painting and music' (Cobbing and Mayer, 2014, p.14). The publication provides a framework for future research and rationalises revisionary accounts of the movement which blur boundaries and include various forms of experimentation with poetry in the 1960s and 1970s under the heading of Concrete poetry. Some examples are Nancy Perloff's *Concrete Poetry: A 21st-century Anthology* (2021), Alex Balgiu and Monica de la Torre's *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979* (2020), and Jamie Hilder's *Designed Words for a Designed World: The International Concrete Poetry Movement, 1955-1971* (2016).

The New Concrete: Visual Poetry in the 21st Century, edited by poets Victoria Bean and Chris McCabe, presents a collection of contemporary Concrete poetry produced in the wake of the digital age. In Kenneth Goldsmith's introductory essay, 'Make It New: Post-Digital Concrete Poetry in the 21st Century', he defines Concrete poetry as a movement which coincided with avant-garde ideas and experiments in art and music in the 1960s (Goldsmith, 2015, p.11). He places the movement's origins in 'Poundian imagism and Joycean wordplay' and classifies it as part of the twentieth century's turn towards using reduced language (Goldsmith, 2015, p.11). In particular

he draws upon the Brazilian Noigandres poets' aspiration to make a 'universal picture language' by using a form of visual poetry in which the graphically arranged words serve both a semantic and visual function (Goldsmith, 2015, p.10). Moreover, he distinguishes between the clear typesetting of early Concrete poetry and the visually noisy, often duplicated, or typewritten 'dirty concrete' exemplified by poets such as Cobbing (Goldsmith, 2015, p.13). As well as comparing Concrete poetry produced in the 1950s and 1960s to 'dirty' Concrete poetry, Goldsmith compares Concrete poetry to 'post-digital concrete poetry' which he describes as either a 'reincarnation' of the concrete poem in digital form or a reaction to digitisation and computer systems (Goldsmith, 2015, p.14). Goldsmith states that a recent increase in interest in Concrete poetry in the twenty-first century has led to young artists 'self-identifying not as 'text artists' but as 'visual poets'' (Goldsmith, 2015, p.15). This suggests a blurring of boundaries between text art (which was a facet of Conceptual art) and Visual poetry in the twenty-first century by those who are reviving avant-garde ideas and techniques for contemporary art and literary practices.

Concerning Concrete Poetry and *The New Concrete: Visual Poetry in the 21st Century* continue the themes present in the aforementioned publications, for example, situating experiments with Concrete poetry in relation to changes in visual and verbal representation in art and music, and an interest in reduced language. However, *Concerning Concrete Poetry* is not written from the perspective of the critic or historian and emphasises how Concrete poetry was used as an umbrella term for experiments with language including Sound poetry and Visual poetry. Bean and McCabe's publication features contemporary Concrete poetry and demonstrates that a blurring of disciplinary boundaries (which can be traced back to Bann's anthology) is visible in how artists who use text are choosing to self-identify as visual poets. This blurring of boundaries between art and poetry facilitates this thesis's investigation into the connections between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art. The following publications focus on different aspects of Concrete poetry (women in Concrete poetry and interdisciplinarity) but they still carry forward the tendency to place Concrete poetry in relation to contemporaneous experiments with language in literature (Sound and Visual poetry), the arts (intermedia, performative, event-based and conceptual modes of working) and music.

In *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979*, editors Alex Balgiu and Mónica de la Torre present a selection of female poets and their work to 'rectify some of the biases of historical narratives and the imbalances in representation' (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, p.17). They state that not all the individuals discussed used the title of 'concrete poet' and suggest that the term 'concrete poet' is a reductive, yet vague, description for the women included in the publication because some of them were situated on the peripheries of the movement and others had an intermedia or interdisciplinary approach to producing work (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, p.12). Balgiu and de la Torre build upon the selection of female artists and poets who participated in Mirella Bentivoglio's *Materializzazione del linguaggio* exhibition in 1978 (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, p.12) and they identify theories, publications, and individuals of interest to define their approach to examples of work included in their publication. For instance, they are sympathetic to the Noigandres group's concept of the 'tension of things-words in space-time' (Solt, 1970, p.72) and the verbivocovisual model but argue that the poems presented in the publication exceed the boundaries of pure Concrete poetry proposed in Gomringer's 'From Line to Constellation'. In addition, they approve of Solt's acknowledgement of the ambiguous nature of the work that comes under the umbrella of Concrete poetry and address Fahlström's contribution to the movement which Solt describes as '[bringing] to the theory of the concrete poem the painter's sense of visual-conceptual relationships (Solt, 1970, p.29). This description anticipates how the movement exceeded literary boundaries and how the poems are applicable to discussions on the visual arts.

Balgiu and de la Torre's revision of the literature surrounding Concrete poetry, which they describe as 'a practice rather than a movement' (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, p.17) imbues the discourse with a sense of inclusivity but also favours broader classifications of Concrete poetry. Their publication highlights the intermedia methods of working adopted by practitioners in the 1960s and 1970s and leads with a summary of the work which they consider relevant to Concrete poetry. This includes work involving the use of a typewriter or duplicator, collaged material (text), performative, site-specific or event-based work, conceptual modes of working, sound-based practices, and an exploration of the relationship between spoken-word performances and music (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, p.12). As is evident, more

recent literature favours flexible boundaries between disciplines. Balgiu and de la Torre's investigation includes 'views and perspectives that defy any attempt to define concrete poetry in strict terms' (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, p.17) and they analyse the work of a number of practitioners whose intermedia tendencies exceed some of the vaguest definitions of Concrete poetry.

Nancy Perloff introduces *Concrete Poetry: A 21st-century Anthology*, published in 2021, with a description of a 2016 exhibition of Augusto de Campos's art and poetry called *Rever* (Perloff, 2021, p.9). She views de Campos's work as part of a large collection of experimental poetry which is largely overlooked or unknown by viewers and readers in the twenty-first century. She describes '[encountering] poetry in countless forms – as printed pages, as screenprints, in journals, as folding cards, as part of three-dimensional reliefs, in free-standing sculptures [and] digital projections of poetry on the walls' (Perloff, 2021, p.9) at the retrospective exhibition. The publication is organised by country, but the emphasis is on individuals and groups who demonstrate different ways of working with language and the 'interdisciplinary and influential' (Perloff, 2021, p.7) character of the movement. Some of the examples provided are the Weiner Gruppe and Gerhard Rühm, Japanese concrete poets, the Brazilian poets, and Finlay. Perloff notes that Marinetti's *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* is quoted and influenced statements in Fahlström's Concrete poetry manifesto. Although it is an anthology of Concrete poetry, Perloff blurs the institutional boundaries of the movement and includes examples of concrete poems that function as scores for performances or readings, Sound poetry and Visual poetry. In doing so she imitates the model of a multidisciplinary and collaborative practice facilitated by the individuals and groups included in the anthology (as well as by those who are omitted). Balgiu and de la Torre's, and Perloff's publications demonstrate that since the turn of the twenty-first century, contemporary perspectives tend to draw on broader definitions of Concrete poetry and favour more flexibility between disciplines and the inclusion of relevant intermedia works.

This selection of publications do not agree on a single, set definition of Concrete poetry but make similar observations. In these publications Concrete poetry is considered to be a movement and/or a practice, is used as an umbrella term for a range of experiments with language, and the term 'concrete poet' or 'Concrete

poetry' is presented as reductive even though concrete poems and other works which are interdisciplinary or intermedia in nature are presented within the constraints of the discipline.

In *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality*, published in 2001, Anne Rorimer compares the influential theories of art critic Clement Greenberg to intermedia work created by Fluxus and text-based conceptualists. In particular, she contrasts the treatment of language as media in the latter half of the 1960s and Greenberg's call for an 'adherence to media' (Rorimer, 2001, p.71) in his publication *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*. The American art historian, curator, and author uses a theoretical approach to demonstrate how conceptual artists contested Greenberg's theory that a work of art can only achieve its 'task of self-criticism' if it conforms to the traditional boundaries between disciplines and media. Primarily she does this by examining the experimental approaches of conceptual artists using language as media such as Art & Language who aimed to deconstruct 'hierarchies which had served absolutely to distinguish the critical from the aesthetic and art from language' (Rorimer, 2001, p.108). Rorimer examines how and why artists of the 1960s and 1970s used text as media to discard formal characteristics of traditional painting and sculpture which they felt restricted communication in and the development of visual art. This is supported by an analysis of individual conceptual works of art in relation to the social political, economic, and institutional context of their production.

Rorimer's publication attempts to redefine the characteristics of the Conceptual art movement. She states that although individual artists and their conceptual works are analysed in detail and arranged in a chronological order to demonstrate the development of ideas, coined terms, and modes of working; the network of individuals and their interactions, as well as institutional and countercultural forms of infrastructure are not approached in this publication (Rorimer, 2001, p.8). Rorimer defines the beginning of the Conceptual art movement as 1965 and when discussing Conceptual art states, 'However imprecise it may be (and actually misleading since all art rests on concepts), the term 'Conceptual' is now used pervasively and loosely by art historians, critics, and curators to refer to non-traditional art forms' (Rorimer, 2001, p.7). Her perspective is reminiscent of Kosuth's concern over the widespread use of the term and his conviction that all art is conceptual but she is mindful of the

various terms used in exchange of 'Conceptual art' including Kosuth's 'Idea Art' and Lippard's notion of 'dematerialization'. However, she also acknowledges that interactions took place between individuals who were part of Fluxus and the Conceptual art movement and states that conceptual works may be viewed in light of strategies used by Fluxus because it was a precursor to the Conceptual art movement (Rorimer, 2001, p.7). Rorimer recognises that the material form of a conceptual work is secondary to its idea and states that the book is based on 'the idea that visual form and mental formulation are inextricably linked' (Rorimer, 2001, p.9).

The American art critic, writer, activist and curator Lucy Lippard's publication *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, published in 1973, was a pioneering history of the development of the Conceptual art movement. It is largely informed by Lippard's involvement in the feminist movement, the political climate and left-wing values, and her participation in Conceptual art as a critic and curator. Referring back to her and John Chandler's 1968 article *The Dematerialization of Art*, Lippard provides a chronological analysis that cross-references the various dematerialised practices of the late 1960s and early 1970s which blurred the boundaries of critical inquiry. Lippard states that *Six Years* examines and documents the various manifestations of Conceptual art and it therefore embodies the issue of blurred boundaries and contradictory definitions (Lippard, 1973, p.vii). However, she uses the term 'ultra-conceptual art' to distinguish between Conceptual art that is idea-based or action-based, and other experiments by artists using unconventional media or reliant on objects and material forms (Lippard, 1973, p.vii) that were categorised as Conceptual art.

Furthermore, Lippard refers to LeWitt's differentiation between Conceptual art with a lower-case 'c' or an upper-case 'C' (Lippard, 1973, p.vii). LeWitt used the lower-case term to distinguish his own work, which was concept driven and often realised in traditional materials, from the work of others. Whereas the upper-case term is defined by Lippard as representing work where the 'idea is paramount', or a term used by individuals wanting to be part of a movement (Lippard, 1973, p.vii). She argues and foresees that art criticism will be transformed by the development of Conceptual art which '[offered] a bridge between the verbal and the visual' (Lippard,

1973, p.x). Her approach to documenting Conceptual art has influenced many publications on the dematerialisation of art and conversely the materialisation of language, including, author and academic Pedro Erber's *The Word as Object: Concrete Poetry, Ideogram, and the Materialization of Language*, published in 2012, as well as subsequent publications examining the history of Conceptual art, for example, Godfrey's *Conceptual art*, published in 1998.

Lippard's publication is one of the first instances in which a comparison is made, by a critic of Conceptual art, between the processes used in Concrete poetry and Conceptual art – there 'is a distinction between concrete poetry, where the words are made to *look* like something [...] and so-called conceptual art, where the words are used only to *avoid* looking like something' (Lippard, 1973, p.157). This statement is from a transcript of a symposium moderated by Lippard, involving Douglas Huebler, Dan Graham, Carl Andre and Jan Dibbets, for the Pacifica Foundation's radio station WBAI (Lippard, 1973, p.155). Whilst discussing the topic of 'the word in relationship to the physical object, [...] sensation, and [...] experience' (Lippard, 1973, p.155) Lippard suggests that Lawrence Weiner's work bridges the gap between processes of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art which leads to a debate between her and Carl Andre as to whether Weiner is a poet or an artist who has 'taken poetry further than poetry can ever take itself' (Lippard, 1973, p.157). Lippard's comparison between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art starts a dialogue for and contributes to a discourse on comparisons and connections between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art. For example, the theoretical distinction that is drawn between the two movements is utilised by Neil Powell in his publication 'Concrete Poetry and Conceptual Art: A Spectre at the Feast?' to support his argument against a connection between the two movements.

In the existing literature on, and theories and definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art examined in this chapter, there is a consensus that Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are difficult to define due to the extent and range of experimentation by practitioners associated with the movements. Additionally, whether Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are defined as movements, genres or tendencies is unresolved. Depending on their approach, methodologies or sympathies, these critics, historians, and authors tend to gravitate towards whichever

definition supports their argument. In addition, the definitions poets and artists use to describe their work affects the theoretical framework of the movements and how the terms Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are treated and received in critical discourse. These scholars use similar groupings of prominent artists and poets and emphasise the international structure of the movements to support and organise their research. Disagreements occur when (contemporary) scholars consider the movements from both a literary and artistic perspective which challenges other authors' discipline-specific analyses of movements and questions their categorisation of typically fluid, multifaceted movements.

The views and questions raised in these publications frame discussions on the interrelationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. A number of academics, critics and historians from literary and/or artistic disciplines, since the turn of the twenty-first century, have compared Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, either arguing for or against a connection between them, including Neil Powell, Marc Goethals, Pedro Erber and Jamie Hilder. In addition to considering publications such as Hilder's and Goethals's which present the view that there is a relationship between the two movements (in particular between Anglo-American Concrete poetry and language-based Conceptual art in Hilder's case), it is important to consider the accounts of individuals who disagree with the aim/argument of this thesis, such as Powell and Erber, in order to clarify the need for this study. For example, while arguing against there being a significant connection between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, both Powell and Erber achieve the paradoxical effect of examining ways in which the two movements are connected. The following four publications which compare Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art, in addition to precursors which start to make comparisons between the movements (for example, Bann, Draper and Lippard) and early comparisons of the work of poets and artists such as the 1965 exhibition *Between Poetry and Painting* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (which included the work of both concrete poets and conceptual artists) inform and provide a rationale for the conceptual framework of this research study. This thesis adds to or challenges the arguments presented in these four publications.

Powell's article 'Concrete Poetry and Conceptual Art: A Spectre at the Feast?' (Powell, n.d. [2014]) is a causal analysis of factors that link Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. Initially, he states language is the 'largest common denominator' shared by the two movements but that an examination of other factors, that may demonstrate interactions between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, is needed (Powell, n.d. [2014]). However, principally, Powell argues against a connection between the two movements. Powell is a British researcher, academic, artist and curator and introduces his essay by stating that visual similarities between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are likely 'symptomatic or coincidental' (Powell, n.d. [2014]). His analysis focuses on European and Brazilian concrete poets. He defines Concrete poetry as a movement and suggests the work takes several forms: 'as visual art, as written manifestos and to a lesser extent as performance and sound works' (Powell, n.d. [2014]) and the influence of the Noigandres groups' concept of the verbivocovisual is reflected in this definition which blurs the boundaries between Concrete poetry, Visual poetry, performed and Sound Poetry.

Powell defines Conceptual art as a term used to describe any form of art that was unconventional during the 1960s and 1970s. He acknowledges writing by artists and critics on Conceptual art including Kosuth, Lippard and LeWitt, and places emphasis on Lawrence Weiner's *Statements*. Similar to Concrete poetry he argues that Conceptual art appears in several forms including a dematerialised form, information art, anti-form, site-specific art and Land art (Powell, n.d. [2014]). Although this follows Kosuth's argument that all art is conceptual, when referring to Kosuth and Art & Language, he also states that 'for the first time manifesto, proposal and artwork became interdependent components' (Powell, n.d. [2014]). However, it can be said that these three aspects are not reliant on each other and are often presented as individual 'works of art' by conceptual artists. Altogether, Powell's analysis is complex and sometimes contradictory. He analyses similarities between the two movements including their use of printed text, text written or composed for performance, and an association with a 'wider mobilisation that sought to incorporate written and spoken language into the realm of the visual arts' (Powell, n.d. [2014]). Powell also states that 'concrete poetry and Fluxus as the beginnings of conceptual art had at one time or another shared a number of common personnel' (Powell, n.d. [2014]). However, he determines that Conceptual art appeared in response to a 're-examination of

political, social and cultural values' and a 'counter cultural sensibility' (Powell, n.d. [2014]) in the 1950s and 1960s, and not from Concrete poets' experimenting with extending language beyond traditional literary limits. To conclude, he states 'Ultimately though, concrete poetry and conceptual art seem to be connected by little more than the spectre of perversity – a counter cultural sensibility that motivated poets to make pictures [...] and visual artists to use text' (Powell, n.d. [2014]).

In the exhibition catalogue, *Concrete Poetry, Fluxus and Conceptual Art: a Book Friction* (2008), Goethals, claims that although various poets and artists in the Concrete poetry, Fluxus and Conceptual art movements 'all separately engaged in a discourse about language and image' (Freiles, 2010), their interest in the 'artist's book' and the relationship between language and image are shared characteristics, even though language is treated in different ways by the practitioners involved. For example, he states that language in Concrete poetry was associated with typographic experiments to explore or emphasise the meaning of words, for Fluxus it was a 'strategic tool' to critique institutions and the boundary between art and life, and in Conceptual art it was treated as media and used as an 'analytical [and] self-reflective' form (Freiles, 2010). Goethals has shaped his discussion around the idea and form of the artist's book and how it influenced the production and dissemination of concrete poems, conceptual artworks and Fluxus works to identify similarities 'between the print work of the different art genres' (Freiles, 2010). In addition to highlighting this commonality, by describing the three movements as 'art genres', it can be argued that Goethals's appears to echo the views of Bann and Draper who explore the extent to which Concrete poetry can be seen as a visual art form. In contrast to Powell, Goethals argues that there was exchange between these genres in the form of 'Interactions, influences, sympathies and frictions' (Freiles, 2010) and that their influence on each other should not be underestimated. Rather than diminishing the significance of the interrelations between genres caused by a 'counter cultural sensibility' (Powell, n.d. [2014]), Goethals situates these genres in the text-image discourse that was popular during the 1950s and 1960s to assert that these 'artists with different points of departure still ended up with almost identical results' (Freiles, 2010).

In *The Word as Object: Concrete Poetry, Ideogram, and the Materialization of Language*, published in 2012, academic and author Erber, examines the legacy and theories of Concrete and 'Neoconcretism' in connection to the relationship between verbal and visual discourses, and its impact on avant-garde art in and around the 1960s. He defines Concrete poetry as an art in which 'the words themselves act as autonomous objects' (Erber, 2012, pp.85-86) and primarily (but not exclusively) focuses on the avant-gardes of Brazil and Japan in the 1960s. He argues that Neoconcretism challenges and deconstructs the notion of simultaneity – the ability to perceive the meaning of the words used in a poem and their spatial arrangement at the same time – in which concrete poets based their compositions (Erber, 2012, p.93-94). Erber observes that since the end of the 1960s, the terms Conceptual art and conceptualism have been used to describe 'almost any artwork that happened to cross the boundary between visual and verbal discourses' (Erber, 2012, p.74). Furthermore, he states that the terms conceptualism and dematerialisation have been applied to a wider range of works, following on from the established Conceptual art movement in the 1960s and 1970s, in which the material aspect is secondary or not essential (Erber, 2012, p.74).

Erber's critical analysis of language in visual art in the 1960s, is predominantly informed by Lippard and Chandler's concept of 'dematerialization'. However, he argues that this concept is limited to works of ultra-conceptual art and not for 'the wide diversity of ways in which the 1960s avant-gardes crossed and blurred the boundaries between visuality and signification' (Erber, 2012, p.74). As a result, he compares the 'dematerialization of the art object' with the 'materialization of verbal discourse' (Erber, 2012, p.74). He presents Brazilian artist, theorist and participant in Neo-Concrete Hélio Oiticica as an individual who created conceptual work using atypical means. Oiticica used the process of materialising language commonly associated with Visual and Concrete poetry in works such as *Mergulho do corpo*, instead of the process of dematerialisation associated with Conceptual art (Erber, 2012, p.74). Erber later describes Oiticica's approach as an impetus for a 'long-term process of materialization of language in the art object' (Erber, 2012, p.96). Although he draws similarities between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and suggests that some conceptual artists used the poetic tendency to materialise language rather than following the conceptual trend of moving away from materiality, he deduces that

there is an 'uneasy tension' (Erber, 2012, p.74) between the process of dematerialisation in Conceptual art and the notion of the materiality of language in Concrete poetry. His analysis of several poets and artists draws connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art but his focus on the friction between the processes of dematerialisation and materialisation suggest that he does not view Concrete poetry and Conceptual art as applicable to each other.

Examining Concrete poetry alongside developments in technology, culture and the emergence of Conceptual art, Jamie Hilder, in *Designed Words for a Designed World: The International Concrete Poetry Movement, 1955-1971*, describes the division between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art as 'artificial' (Hilder, 2016, p.147). He identifies Concrete poetry as a form – which 'some critics [...] apply to almost all poetry with a strong visual character' (Hilder, 2016, p.13) – genre, and movement. Although, like Solt, he acknowledges that the meeting between Gomringer and Pignatari, in 1955, is the most widely used historical account of Concrete poetry's conception, he states that the first time the term was used was in 1953 in Öyvind Fahlström's 'Manifesto for Concrete Poetry' (Hilder, 2016, p.5). In addition, Hilder recognises that Concrete poetry has been given both vague and specific meanings because it '[moved] between visual art and performance, music and writing, and [confounded] definition' (Hilder, 2016, p.6). However, he primarily uses the term Concrete poetry to refer to work produced during the height of the movement (between 1955 and 1971) and emphasises Gomringer and the Noigandres group's descriptions of Concrete poetry in his publication (Hilder, 2016, pp.6-7).

Although Hilder acknowledges that there is 'a strong argument against treating language based visual art and visual poetry as equivalent' (Hilder, 2016, p.14) he states that the 'boundary between concrete poetry and visual art becomes especially blurred by visual art's representation of language within movements like conceptual art and Fluxus' (Hilder, 2016, p.14). Hilder views concrete poems produced after 1971 as being 'highly personalized' in style especially in relation to early or 'purer' definitions of the international movement. This view, along with the prevalence of happenings, photography and collage in the practices of artists and poets in the 1960s (Hilder, 2016, p.13), and the significance of poet-artists and practitioners who

sit between experiments with language in poetry and the visual arts, for example, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Tom Phillips and Carl Andre, are some of the reasons why Hilder believes the boundaries between art and poetry became blurred (Hilder, 2016, p.14). Furthermore, he suggests that problems defining the Concrete poetry and Conceptual art movements, their connections and their wider influence are caused by members of the Anglo-American tradition each dismissing the legitimacy of the other (Hilder, 2016, p.145) and because art and literary scholars usually 'lack the lexicon to consider the work within its visual context' or 'lack the literary knowledge to deal with [...] the work as poetry' (Hilder, 2016, p.151).

Hilder, like several authors, contributors or editors of publications that precede him, explores the relationship between the concepts of dematerialisation and materiality – 'The dematerialization of the art object mirrored the rematerialization of the word: the canvas became a page and the page a canvas' (Hilder, 2016, p.15). In his fourth chapter, *Concrete Poetry and Conceptual Art: A Misunderstanding*, Hilder examines the relationship between the two movements. This is contextualised by discussions around definitions, the start of Concrete poetry's decline coinciding with Conceptual art's emergence, the dismissal or removal of the author, the difference in poets and artists' treatment of language, and the impact and disconnect caused by disciplinary boundaries. Although Concrete poetry and Conceptual art have different genealogies and the practitioners associated with these movements had different aspirations, Hilder aims to 'counter the dismissal of concrete poetry by those who produce the dominant narrative of linguistic conceptualism' (Hilder, 2016, p.160). He refers to Italian poet and critic Sarenco (Isaia Mabellini) and Italian artist Gianni Bertini's *Lotta Poetica* editorial which criticises 'the disproportionate attention granted to conceptual art' (Hilder, 2016, p.147) when catalogues and exhibitions have featured examples of Visual poetry and Conceptual art alongside one another. While their description shows similarities between works, the suggestion that conceptual artists are 'copying' concrete poets adds to the strained relationship between the two movements (Hilder, 2016, p.147). As a writer, researcher, artist and academic with a knowledge of art history and literary criticism, Hilder provides a leading examination of the various arguments supporting or denying a relationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. He concludes by stating that 'Concrete poetry is

intertwined with the work of the language-centred conceptual artists' (Hilder, 2016, p.237).

I am directly arguing against Powell's perspective that the 'minor revolution in graphic and literary communication' (Powell, n.d. [2014]) which Concrete poetry was a part of did not influence Conceptual art. I propose that infrastructure, networks, interactions and intermedia figures, and a 'counter cultural sensibility' (which Powell presents as an alternative influence), demonstrate that the two movements are connected by more than a 'visual correlation' (Powell, n.d. [2014]). In contrast to Erber, the dematerialisation of the art object using language (in Conceptual art) and the materialisation of language (in Concrete poetry) are presented as complementary in this thesis. With regard to Hilder's view that Concrete poetry and language-based Conceptual art are intertwined (Hilder, 2016, p.237) and Draper's suggestion that arguments from the visual arts can be applied to poetry (and vice versa) (Draper, 1971, p.333), this thesis develops their perspectives by arguing that the interrelationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art is not limited to language-based works. As examined in Chapter Two and Chapter Three of this thesis, interactions between poets and artists took place and in rare instances, a conceptual artist has documented how they have been influenced by a concrete poet, or vice versa, but this has received very little critical attention. This is due to the role of infrastructure in bringing together poets and artists, particularly concrete poets and (language-based) conceptual artists, being overlooked and this is examined further in Chapter Two. The relationship between dematerialisation and materialisation is explored further in Chapter Four through an examination of the practices of poet-artists/intermedia figures.

How will doctoral level research be achieved

In the context of these overlapping (and sometimes contradictory) accounts, this thesis contributes to existing scholarship by examining the role of institutional and poet/artist-run infrastructure of the art and literary worlds in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, interactions between figures associated with the movements and/or the counterculture at the time, and the impact of intermedia figures whose work blurs boundaries and definitions of Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art.

The role of infrastructure (the cross-disciplinary environments of Arts Labs, bookshops and alternative venues) has been overlooked by critics and historians in investigations into connections between the two movements. This is a gap in the literature that is addressed in this thesis. There are many publications that discuss or examine the underground, countercultural or alternative scenes of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in the UK and US which focus on a range of activities in a nation or capital. For example, British author Barry Miles's *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London since 1945* (published in 2010), American artist, activist and academic Kembrew McLeod's *The Downtown Pop Underground* (published in 2018) and British researcher David Curtis's *London's Arts Labs and the 60s Avant-Garde*, (published in 2020). My consideration of the role of infrastructure in bringing together poets and artists is informed by archival research and these publications which offer either extensive coverage of alternative histories and a broad range of events, places, and people, or are more specific and focus on a handful of individuals or one or more arts spaces. Infrastructure includes shared sources of funding, curation, dissemination and collection of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, in addition to the role of the Arts Labs, bookshops, little presses and other alternative venues as catalysts for experimentation. These artist-run centres encouraged and facilitated 'a liquid merging of the categories of film, art, music, theatre, performance, and literature' (Curtis, 2020, p.3) and allowed for mixing between practitioners from different disciplines. This is of particular interest to this examination. Although information about these alternative poet/artist-run spaces and the activities they facilitated is less well documented and has been lost over time, at a minimum, publications and archival material concerned with the various forms of infrastructure, the counterculture and little presses in the UK and US suggest that conceptual artists and concrete poets were aware of one another, collaborated and that news of their performances, exhibitions, and talks were printed in the same publications. Influence can also be seen across works scheduled concurrently and/or consecutively at these venues and this is predominantly examined in Chapter Two.

In addition, I focus on overlooked instances of interaction, trade and correspondence between artists, poets, and significant figures in the alternative scenes in the US and UK. The activities of these poets and artists are contextualised by the social,

political, economic and cultural climate at the time. There is limited research on interactions between concrete poets and conceptual artists and this is largely due to a lack of documentation on the part of the poets and artists because they did not feel the need to keep a written or photographic record of their activities, events and works for posterity (Curtis, 2020, p.43). Although the canons of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art have been primarily shaped by historians, academics and critics, early manifestos and publications by artists and poets established the theoretical framework in which experimentation took place. Interactions between practitioners occur through participation in and engagement with the same exhibitions, publications, interdisciplinary spaces, events and groups. This is raised in Chapter Two and demonstrated in more detail in Chapter Three which functions as two analyses of the relationships between artists and poets: Ian Breakwell and Dom Sylvester Houédard, and John Latham and John Rowan. This analysis contributes to knowledge because it demonstrates that concrete poems and conceptual works are connected by more than visual similarities.

This thesis reworks the accepted boundaries between the movements by examining the work and position of intermedia (cross-disciplinary) figures, individuals regarded as uncategorisable and those categorised as belonging to another movement even though their approaches or works are recognisable as Concrete poetry or (language-based) Conceptual art. Therefore, as well as investigating interpersonal relationships between poets and artists, I also contribute to scholarship on the connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art by examining the interdisciplinary practices of four poet-artists/intermedia figures – Ian Hamilton Finlay, Carl Andre, Paula Claire and Norman Henry Pritchard. Their individual practices include a combination of concrete and conceptual elements and I argue that their works belong in discussions on Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

How the thesis is organised

This thesis is comprised of four chapters. The following three chapters encompass my contribution to knowledge. ‘Chapter Two: Infrastructure and networks’ explores the infrastructure of the art and literary worlds of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and the creation of networks between poets and artists that were facilitated by the Arts

Labs, bookshops, galleries, art centres and various artistic and/or literary organisations and events. This chapter provides a context for the interactions that occurred between concrete poets and (language-based) conceptual artists and demonstrates that they were aware of each other and each other's work, ideologies, and theories. Marginal, intermedia and canonised poets and artists found common ground in these spaces, and in terms of researching and analysing the movements, the Labs and venues provide a context that does not negate the practitioners' differences whilst also allowing for relationships and crossovers to be identified between them. The chapter is divided into three sections: the transatlantic network of Barry Miles, the extended network of Bob Cobbing and the social network of Jim Haynes. The networks of these three key figures intersect and are extensive and this chapter assesses the impact and influence of these networks (and associated infrastructure and significant figures) in order to provide a richer account of the interrelationship between the two movements.

'Chapter Three: Interactions between concrete poets and conceptual artists' is comprised of two investigations. The first section is a comparison of the concrete poet Dom Sylvester Houédard and conceptual artist Ian Breakwell. It is an examination of their initial meeting and the external factors that led to it, their participation in the same exhibitions, their engagement with the opposing movements through correspondence, publications and in interdisciplinary spaces, and similarities in how they approach the relationship between language and (graphic) space in their work. The second section is a comparison of conceptual artist John Latham's and concrete poet John Rowan's work, their approach to producing work and their participation in the same artistic and literary circles. In particular, it focuses on the phenomenon of destruction in art, which was popularised by Metzger in the 1960s, and Latham's treatment of language and reversal of words in relation to Rowan's presentation and juxtaposition of signifier and signified to emphasise the meaning of words or to disassociate words from their meanings. In addition, there is reference to their collaborators and colleagues including the Artists Placement Group, Jeff Nuttall, John Furnival and Cobbing. Similar to several of the practitioners discussed in this thesis, Houédard, Breakwell, Latham and Rowan had multifaceted practices and engaged with the alternative venues, events, groups, and small presses in various ways.

'Chapter Four: The 'poet-artist' and intermedia practitioners' comprises four investigations into cross-disciplinary practitioners who have broad language-based intermedia practices which challenge the boundaries between art and literary disciplines/Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. The subsections centre on Ian Hamilton Finlay, Carl Andre, Paula Claire and Norman Henry Pritchard. Their practices are either situated between discourses on Concrete poetry and Conceptual art or exceed/extend the boundaries of the movements established by critics, historians, academics, and institutions. Additionally, this chapter demonstrates the need to consider external influences and interests including other modes of art or literary practice, correspondence and collaboration, and the socio-political and cultural context in which these practitioners were working. The work of these four practitioners challenges institutional categorisation and is explained by Dick Higgins's theory of intermedia. Higgins's use of the term 'intermedia' to describe interdisciplinary work produced 'between media' (Higgins and Higgins, 2001, p.49) or genres in the 1960s, plays a pivotal role in my comparison between the two movements because although Concrete poetry and Conceptual art emerged from different areas of concern, they did not develop in isolation (see Appendix A). The movements occupy the same realms of culture and interest, and practitioners from both movements did not have exclusively artistic or literary interests. The concept of being between media suggests a mode of interpretation, not restricted by traditional discipline-specific aesthetics, is needed to analyse these works in their wider context. Overall, this chapter demonstrates that Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are analogous by considering intermediality, a critique of who and what is and is not regarded as canonical and an analysis of the terminology and theories used by these poets, artists/poet-artists and scholars to describe their work.

Chapter Two: Infrastructure and networks

‘For many, the idealism and dreams of the 1960s – of both counter- and broadly popular/mainstream culture – can be identified as a ‘coming together’; a coming together of people, of ideas, a breaking-down of boundaries, a questioning of identities’ (Curtis, 2020, p.1).

Introduction

This chapter explores the infrastructure of the UK and US art and literary worlds and the creation of networks between poets and artists that were facilitated by the Arts labs, bookshops, galleries, art centres and various artistic and/or literary organisations and events that materialised in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The concept of ‘coming together’ presented by David Curtis in his publication *London’s Arts Labs and the 60s Avant-Garde*, published in 2020, establishes that a merging of or common ground between environments, places, people, cultures, disciplines, theories and phenomena existed. This perception of the 1960s scene as an artistic and literary ‘melting-pot’ (Curtis, 2020, p.24) is generally accepted and informs this thesis. This chapter is primarily focused on activities associated with Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art in the UK. However, work of interest from the US has been included due to American practitioners visiting, performing, participating, or starting groups and businesses in the UK, and/or becoming part of various UK networks. For example, the International Poetry Incarnation at the Albert Hall, in 1965, was where the Beat Generation – who rejected mainstream culture – met art and literary figures working at the time of the UK’s emerging countercultural and underground scenes. The chapter is divided into three sections: ‘The transatlantic network of Barry Miles’, ‘The extended network of Bob Cobbing’ and ‘The social network of Jim Haynes’. This selection is a result of Miles, Cobbing and Haynes being three prominent figures associated with the British alternative, countercultural and/or underground scenes whose contributions have been recognised and have received critical attention. In particular, Miles was involved in organising the poetry reading at the Albert Hall, in which figures visiting from the US, who were part of an underground/alternative community or scene, brought about the creation of an analogous scene in the UK. Cobbing encouraged interdisciplinarity

and collaboration between practitioners and endeavoured to validate the importance of experimental literature and poetry at the time by taking on various roles and Haynes established the Arts Laboratory. This was a blueprint that influenced and caused the creation of other alternative art centres across the UK, for example, English theatre critic and writer Kenneth Tynan, in an article from the *Observer* in 1968, states that Haynes's Arts Laboratory at Drury Lane was 'a ramshackle prototype' for the Institute of Contemporary Arts (Tynan, 2013). Critical attention appears in the form of publications (for example, Curtis's *London's Arts Labs and the 60s Avant-Garde*), through interviews with colleagues, collaborators and family contained in archives or published online, in books such as *Better Books / Better Bookz: Art, Anarchy, Apostacy, Counter-culture & the New Avant-garde*, and via broadcasts, documentaries and contemporaneous or contemporary newspaper articles by media outlets such as the BBC and *The Guardian*. Through their ventures, to a greater or lesser extent, Miles, Cobbing and Haynes encouraged the development of avant-garde art and literature, facilitated experiments in the arts, made the arts accessible, campaigned for better funding, and created melting-pots for people, cultures, ideas and art practices.

Work, events and collaborations outside of the categories of Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art, linked to experimentation with language, are taken into consideration in this chapter – for example, Gustav Metzger's Destruction in Art Symposium and Barry Flanagan's early work (which later developed in line with traditional sculpture) – to show crosscurrents and suggest the scale of the networks of practitioners at the time. Sound poetry and poetry performances are also included to highlight connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. Although concrete and visual poets aimed to write silent poems by emphasising the visual potential of words and moving away from the oral tradition of poetry (Solt, 1970, p.60), a number of concrete poems can be read aloud by the reader or author and have been re-made into or serve as scores for sound poetry. For instance, Cobbing produced poems that were for both the eye and ear, concrete poets '[incorporated] visual, verbal, kinetic and sonic elements' (Aube and Perloff, 2017) in their work, and the Brazilian Noigandres poets in their 'Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry' emphasised the 'verbivocovisual' nature of concrete poems (Solt, 1970, p.72). In addition, Dick Higgins's concept of intermedia, works of interest, links to Fluxus and text-based

conceptual artworks with performed or participatory elements such as John Latham's *Skoob Tower Ceremonies* are also examined. The centres, organisations and events discussed in this chapter provide a context for the interactions that occurred between concrete poets and conceptual artists. Interactions and interpersonal relationships between these poets and artists, and practitioners that elude easy categorisation but have produced work that can be interpreted as Concrete poetry or Conceptual art, are also included.

2.1 The transatlantic network of Barry Miles

In an article in *The Guardian* titled 'Spirit of the underground: the 60s rebel' (2011) Barry Miles recounts that his involvement in the counterculture and underground scene started in 1965 after attending the 'International Poetry Incarnation' at the Albert Hall (Miles, 2011), 'when people came over from the U.S. with acid and copies of American underground papers' (Pooley, 1976, p.28), and he was enthused by the size of the underground community. English author Miles managed the paperback section of Better Books; co-founded Indica Books & Gallery, Lovebooks Limited and *International Times*, and published biographies and histories on the Beat Generation and the counterculture. He also promoted experimental activity in the arts and publishing by expanding his network overseas. For example, he worked with American bookshop owners and publishers to import publications from the US and Europe, he was a correspondent for the American listener-supported radio station KPFA (Miles, n.d.a) – the principal station of the Pacifica Radio Network (see Appendix B) – recorded albums of American and British writers and poets for the experimental label Zapple (Miles, 1968), and wrote a column for the American underground newspaper *The East Village Other (EVO)* (Klein, 1966a).

2.1.1 The Beat connection and catering for countercultural readership in the arts

In this section, infrastructural connections between the movements are demonstrated by the transatlantic relationship between Miles, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Mandarin Books Ltd, which is discussed in relation to the circulation of a range of alternative literature and poetry, the momentum behind the Conceptual art

movement from the mid-1960s, the emergence of art spaces and conceptual artists' awareness of Concrete poetry.

One of Miles's transatlantic contacts was American poet, artist, publisher and activist Lawrence Ferlinghetti who co-founded City Lights Booksellers & Publishers, San Francisco in 1953 with American professor and founder of The New Yorker Bookshop (which opened in 1964) Peter D. Martin. Key members of the Beat movement settled in San Francisco in the 1950s close to the independent bookstore at 261 Columbus Avenue, North Beach, which functioned as a community centre (Ferlinghetti, 2012), 'a literary meetingplace [sic]' and was the 'first all-paperback bookstore' (City Lights, n.d.a) in the US. In an interview with American novelist, writer and editor Christopher Bollen, Ferlinghetti recalls that there were many opportunities for publishing in San Francisco in the late 1940s (Ferlinghetti, 2012) and at City Lights they stocked and sold periodicals, published international poetry, prose, translations, Italian anarchist newspapers, fiction, non-fiction and 'books you can't find at the public library' ([City Lights advertisement, San Francisco Chronicle, p.22], 1957, p.22). The bookstore also had unconventional opening hours (until midnight every day), offered a 'free mail and message service or visiting editors, writers and artists; [staged] lectures, [film] shows, and poetry readings' and had a bulletin board for a variety of advertisements (*Bookstores: Underground Headquarters*, 1965), making it one of the earliest examples of a hub for experimental activity for the 1950s alternative culture.

Despite the multifaceted nature of City Lights – which provided a model for prospective bookstores, art centres and other alternative organisations in the US and the UK – Ferlinghetti is quoted in 'Bookstores: Underground Headquarters' in *Underground* as saying "One most important aspect which tends to get ignored, or is not recognized for the importance it has [...] is the idea [of] the [bookstore] as publisher. [...] [Publishing] is a 'natural' and has been key point in the whole City Lights scene" (*Bookstores: Underground Headquarters*, 1965). To a certain extent, when Ferlinghetti launched the publishing side of City Lights in the basement of the store – intent on it being 'an international, dissident, insurgent ferment' (City Lights, n.d.b) – with the *Pocket Poets Series* in 1955, he became a patron for writers, artists, poets and others in the Beat and subsequent countercultural scene wishing to

publish avant-garde works. It is probable that Ferlinghetti knew of these works due to practitioners visiting City Lights and through influential Friday night literary gatherings hosted by American poet, translator, critic and key figure of the San Francisco Renaissance Kenneth Rexroth (Ferlinghetti, 2012). Having successfully established City Lights in between the Beat scene and the next cultural wave, Ferlinghetti, who was older than the generation of writers attending Rexroth's salons, was able to promote alternative authors who otherwise may have had difficulty getting published and share their artistic works of social, cultural and political value and/or criticism – an area of interest for both Rexroth, who was a conscientious objector, and Ferlinghetti who was a pacifist due to his experience of World War Two.

A series of letters between Miles and Ferlinghetti suggest that the two bookshop owners/publishers intended to set up 'City Lights London', a UK 'show place' (Ferlinghetti, 1965) and distribution centre for City Lights books. However, the sustainability of this transatlantic relationship was called into question by Ferlinghetti who would have been liable for debts if the London store was to fail. This uncertainty was reinforced by City Lights' (San Francisco) existing contract with Mandarin Books Ltd, London (with Mandarin paying £1000 every three months for City Lights books distributed in the UK) and a lack of clarity on Miles's part over total predicted costs and how the venture would be funded (Ferlinghetti, 1965) – an issue that Ferlinghetti appears to remain aware of in later letters, '(I have read about London in Time Magascene [sic] this week, and things are so swinging there that I doubted they still used Money [sic] at all.)' (Ferlinghetti, 1966). Subsequently, Ferlinghetti advised Miles to set up a bookstore under his own name with the prospect of City Lights (San Francisco) joining 'in with the distribution and etc later, the name could be changed to CITY LIGHTS LONDON ("incorporating Long Hair Books or Love Books Ltd")' (Ferlinghetti, 1965). Miles set up Indica which remained a separate bookstore and a dialogue between City Lights, Mandarin and Indica was created to trade, distribute, advertise and review publications by City Lights, the American avant-garde, the English avant-garde, *Long Hair*, little press items, and various recordings of poetry readings and albums of experimental (or underground) music. Overall, a more flexible network was created between these three businesses. It is plausible that this relationship allowed for a wider variety and larger quantity of publications to be published, sold and exchanged between them and disseminated to more readers

because they were aware of each other, their activities and their objectives and could identify the demands of the fluctuating American and English underground communities.

The circulation of European, American, and British poetry magazines and publications – made available by Miles, Ferlinghetti, Mandarin (and others who became part of the exchange, for example, Ed Sanders, owner of Peace Eye Bookstore in New York) – would have been assimilated into the experimental scenes in London and San Francisco's Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s due to the popularity and acclaim of the bookshop owners. Although the emphasis was on poetry rather than Conceptual art, the publications would have been accessible to American and British art and literary communities. The emergence of groups such as Art & Language and an increase in the number of artist-run spaces and programmes (Blake, 1992, p.7) made for and by conceptual artists such as Tom Marioni, who founded the Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA) (1970-1984) in San Francisco, meant Conceptual art gathered momentum in the UK and US in the mid- to late 1960s. Marioni, who moved to San Francisco in 1959, acknowledges that Ferlinghetti was a well-known figure there (Marioni, 2017) and in the exhibition *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989* he comments on Ferlinghetti's painting and refers to him as a writer (Baker, 2009). This conceptual artist's acknowledgement of a literary figure in the area suggests it is probable that conceptual artists were aware of the literary community in San Francisco and went to City Lights to utilise its capacity as a meeting place and bookstore in the same way as poets, writers and activists did.

Alternatively, African American poet, essayist, novelist, editor and playwright Ishmael Reed, in an interview with Kris Welch on KPFA radio (Reed, 2021), proclaims that Ferlinghetti's role as a poet was instrumental for succeeding generations of writers and should not be overshadowed by his association with the *Howl* obscenity trial, which usually dominates discourse on his life and achievements (Reed, 2021). Reed describes Ferlinghetti as prophetic and a populist due to his use of 'the American language' and idioms, and his criticism of materialism and interest in common experience which is present in multiple publications including *A Coney Island of the Mind*, published in 1958 (Reed, 2021). Although he is most well-known for his

publishing activities at City Lights Bookstore and his championing of a range of writers, it appears that through his poetry (which explored his personal experiences and the everyday) readers and writers became aware of him and how he shared in and showed empathy towards their concerns and beliefs.

Ferlinghetti's 15th poem, which starts with the line 'Constantly risking absurdity and death' (fig.10), in *A Coney Island of the Mind* is a visual poem which consists of enjambed lines of text arranged on a page. Ferlinghetti describes an acrobat climbing up to a platform and walking on a tightrope and compares this to performing poetry. When read aesthetically, the continuation of phrases and sentences across multiple lines of the poem, which are devoid of punctuation, is representative of the uninterrupted journey of the acrobat between two platforms. The shape of the poem is from the acrobat's perspective and in the mid-section of the poem the short phrases alternate between the left and right side of the page representing weight shifting from one foot to the other as the acrobat walks along the rope, carrying a narrow pole. The poem ends with the poet trying to capture the truth which he suggests is as important as the acrobat trying to capture his colleague. There are other poems (written for the printed page) in the book that have elements of Concrete/Visual poetry in addition to the use of enjambment. For example, Ferlinghetti has adapted William Carlos Williams's triadic/stepped line technique in poem 22 which starts with the phrase 'Johnny Nolan has a patch on his ass' where the words 'like a ball bounced down steps' descend the page. This phrase, when isolated, can be interpreted as a concrete poem because the spatial arrangement of the words communicates the subject (fig.11). Furthermore, in the Arion Press edition of *A Coney Island of the Mind* (2005) the letters of the title are arranged into the shape of a rollercoaster (fig.12) which is a landmark of Coney Island. Ferlinghetti's experiments with language share similarities with and occur at the same time as early developments in Concrete poetry. Ferlinghetti's awareness of the Concrete poetry movement (as well as other forms of poetry, various poets and techniques such as the cut-up) is demonstrated in his poem 'Populist Manifesto', published in 1975, where he uses the play on words 'pre-stressed Concrete poets' (Ferlinghetti, 1975, p.24).

2.1.2 What's Happening: fundraising, patronage and distrust of the Arts Council (ACGB)

From this section, the influence of small press publications of (concrete) poetry on figures in the countercultural scene, the impact of a lack of patronage or support from the Arts Council of Great Britain for alternative bookshops and poetry, and the blurring of boundaries between Conceptual art, Fluxus and Concrete poetry in Yoko Ono's practice (through collaborations and exhibitions with concrete poets) are explored to highlight instances of crossover.

Due to the impending sale of Better Books to Hatchards (a subsidiary of William Collins, Sons & Co Ltd), Miles left the bookshop in August 1965 to plan his own independent bookshop-gallery to preserve Godwin's 'enlightened policy of happenings, readings and film shows, as well as the concrete poetry and American Beat Generation mimeo-magazines' which he thought would not survive the change (Miles, 2010, p.159). Indica Books & Gallery opened at 6 Mason's Yard, Duke Street, St James's in mid-January 1966 (Miles, n.d.b) and was owned by Miles, Asher & Dunbar Ltd (MAD) – a company comprised of Miles; English guitarist, singer, manager, record producer and member of the pop group Peter and Gordon, Peter Asher (Keshvani *et al.*, 2018, p.312); and British artist, collector and gallerist John Dunbar (Miles, 2010, p.160). Initially, Indica – 'a reference to 'Indications' – the name of our group shows – or 'to indicate' but mostly named after *cannabis indica*, or marijuana' (Miles, 2010, p.160-161) – was a ground-floor bookshop (managed by Miles) with a gallery in the basement (managed by Dunbar). It partly owed its popularity to the presence, patronage and support of members of the English pop-rock band, The Beatles – Paul McCartney and John Lennon (Miles, 2010, pp.161-162) – who helped with the setting-up and running of the shop, had photos taken there and bought some of the products and publications (Miles, n.d.b).

Visitors to Indica Books & Gallery were introduced to the works and publications selected by Miles and Dunbar. At Indica, Miles stocked small press, Fluxus and City Lights publications; American and European underground papers, including *Evergreen Review* and the *Village Voice*; and 'specialized in American small-press poetry magazines such as *C*, *Lines*, *Mother*, *Now*, *Grist* and so on, as well as the

British *Poetmeat* and *P.O.T.H Underdog*, and European concrete poetry magazines and publications.’ (Miles, 2010, p.192). McCartney designed and printed wrapping paper (fig.13) for Indica, and it can be argued that it is a visual representation of the store’s location on a map (fig.14). It is plausible that the arrangement of text on the wrapping paper was influenced by the Concrete and experimental poetry publications that were initially stored in Asher’s parents’ basement before they were available at the store (Miles, 2010, p.161). Miles demonstrates that McCartney was exposed to and had an interest in the various forms of experimental literature at the time because he describes him ‘coming in late from a gig or a night club, [browsing] through the stock [in the basement] and [leaving] a note of books he’d taken’ and states ‘He was Indica’s first customer before we even had an address’ (Miles, 2010, p.161).

Two months after Indica opened Miles applied to the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) for Indica to be considered in their poetry centre scheme (Miles, 1966). If Indica had become a central hub for the distribution of British and American poetry endorsed by the Arts Council, one of the largest British public patrons of the arts, it could have started to establish a relationship between two cultures – the Establishment and the counterculture/underground – increasing patronage of underground venues, projects and activities. However, an unsuccessful Poetry Society conference at the Arts Council, London on 17th June 1966 and an ‘utterly inconclusive’ sub-committee meeting at Indica Bookshop on 7th July 1966, organised by the Literature Panel ([Report on a meeting of the sub-committee set up by the “Poetry Conference”], 1966), resulted in Miles and other applicants being left with no option but to consider applying for grant-aid from the Arts Council’s policy for subsidising Literature in 1966/67 (The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1966). Indica Books moved to 102 Southampton Row, Bloomsbury, London in September 1966 where it became more ‘commercially viable on the basis of local trade, students, and pilgrims’ (Boston, 1967, p.394) and Indica Gallery expanded to occupy the ground-floor of the original building in Mason’s Yard (Miles, 2010, p.162).

Furthermore, writers and poets were required to, and sometimes impeded by, the need to be ‘recommended by a responsible member of the literary community’ ([Typescript about the London underground scene with annotations], n.d., p.2) to

receive an Arts Council grant – an issue, for underground figures, that might have been facilitated by Miles's appointment as a junior member of the Literature Panel of the Arts Council on 26th January 1967 (The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1967). Miles envisaged that 'through [him] the Arts Council wanted to reach the thousands of people who read INTERNATIONAL TIMES and who pass through or who are in touch with INDICA' (Miles, n.d. [1967], p.1). However, the invite from Eric White, to join the panel was rescinded less than a week later by the Chairman of the Arts Council Lord Goodman who did not approve of Miles's association with the newspaper *International Times (IT)* – a forerunner of British underground papers which started in the basement of Indica Books at Southampton Row, published by Lovebooks Ltd and co-founded by Miles and John (Hoppy) Hopkins (later joined by Jim Haynes and Tom McGrath) – because 'the views and principles regularly advanced in that paper are [...] unhappily incompatible with the responsibilities of members of the Arts Council advisory panels' (Abercrombie, 1967).

The space created by Miles and Dunbar for readings and exhibitions brought art and poetry together. If conceptual artists had received funding, during the height of the movement, from large institutions such as arts councils in the UK and US, it could have undermined their anticommercial ethos. However, if Indica Books & Gallery had become an Arts Council-backed poetry centre the number of publications and the frequency of events would have increased, and there would have been more opportunities for artists and poets to meet. Indica (in a similar way to other bookshops, Arts Labs and underground venues) would have been able to use the funds to help practitioners create and present their work. Miles's plan to stock poetry that '[represents] all poetic activity in the world today' – which was unaffordable – and the construction of a stage in the gallery space (basement) for poetry readings and recordings could have been financially supported by the Arts Council (Miles, 1966) and this support may have led to a wider acceptance and distribution of the work.

In addition to early exhibitions shown in the basement, Dunbar presented happenings, and kinetic and conceptual work by several artists including Yoko Ono and Liliane Lijn (Juliá, 2012). Ono's exhibition *Unfinished Paintings and Objects*, from 8th-18th November 1966, included the conceptual artwork *Ceiling Painting/Yes*

Painting (fig. 15). This work is a continuation of her *Instructions for Paintings* (1961) – first compiled and published as a book called *Grapefruit* in 1964 – which were text-based conceptual artworks. A feature of Ono's work is the concept of a 'score'. As well as Fluxus event scores and scores as instruction for performance, display or participation in Conceptual art, language is used in some concrete and sound poems to indicate an action and serve as a score for the poet or reader. Japanese multimedia artist, singer-songwriter, performance artist and activist Yoko Ono was a significant figure in the international avant-garde collective Fluxus and collaborated with concrete poet Dom Sylvester Houédard (Lisson Gallery, n.d.b) on event scores (Trench, 2013). Ono's short statements are instructions that manifest in the mind or as performed actions, similar to the event scores of fellow Fluxus group members George Brecht and Alison Knowles. In *Grapefruit* they are categorised as music, painting, event, poetry, object, film and dance. However, Ono encapsulates the interflowing nature of Fluxus (Tate, n.d.e) by taking aspects from different categories and mixing them, therefore making categorisation aimless. For example, in 'Painting in Three Stanzas' (in the Painting section) she uses the literary term 'stanza' to divide the work into three sections and emphasise a shift in time (fig. 16).

There is reference to concrete poets' concern with establishing a relationship between language and space (Solt, 1970, p.7) in Ono's conceptual artwork. In my interview with American artist, writer and academic Johanna Drucker, she states, 'Concrete, conceptual, graphic (type-based), visual (any production method) works each activate the visual field in deliberate gestures meant to force the material aspects of a work into view and thus into critical consideration' (see Appendix C). Although this is true for these methods, in Conceptual art the material is secondary to the idea but it can be argued that in some conceptual works materiality is used to emphasise an idea or the process of dematerialisation (Alberro and Stimson, 1999, p.15) through performances or actions carried out by the artist or audience. The interactive work *Ceiling Painting/Yes Painting* consisted of a painted stepladder, a metal-framed sheet of glass suspended from the ceiling, the word 'YES' printed on a piece of paper positioned behind the glass panel and a magnifying glass hanging from the frame. The viewer is expected to climb the ladder and use the magnifying glass to find the word 'YES'. The idea of the installation, which is facilitated by its material elements and subjective to the viewer, is realised once the viewer

participates with it. Ono's use of a single word contextualised by a longer title is reminiscent of the structure of one-word poems; however, these poems usually feature a word repeated on a page and arranged to create meaning, as seen in Ian Hamilton Finlay's 'Ajar' (fig.17), published in 1967/1968. Ono relies on the participant to engage with the installation, investigate the graphic space (the framed area), and find the word 'YES' to obtain the work's meaning. In Ono's installation, the verbal elements and non-verbal actions of the participant are intended to be understood simultaneously. This is comparable to how the form and content of a concrete poem is designed to be perceived. Ono's association with the Concrete poetry movement continued after her show at Indica with her work being included in *Concrete Poetry: An Exhibition in Four Parts* (March - April 1969) alongside works by concrete poets, visual poets, conceptual artists, mail artists, Op artists, performance artists, typographers and multimedia artists.

2.1.3 The avant-garde community and the corporate world: curators correlating Concrete poetry, Conceptual art and more

Miles's transatlantic correspondence demonstrates that parallel approaches to curation were happening in the UK and US in relation to the experimental works being produced. Maurice Tuchman and Jane Livingston's *Art and Technology* exhibition in 1970/1971 and Jasia Reichardt's *Between Poetry and Painting* exhibition in 1965 centre on word and image relationships in the arts and literature and place a range of practitioners, including concrete poets and conceptual artists, together.

Ed Sanders and Betsy Klein provided Miles with a list of primarily American-based contacts who might show interest in Indica and its publications (Klein, 1966b). Included in this list of names was American curator Maurice Tuchman (mistyped Maurice Zuckerman) who was briefly curator of the Guggenheim, New York before becoming curator of Modern Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) from 1964 to 1994 (News Desk, 2015). It is unclear if there was contact between Miles and Tuchman, however, Miles was in contact with several American publishers, underground figures, gallerists, artists, writers and others. A number of Art and Technology Labs and Art and Research Centres or projects appeared in the US in

1966-1967 which focused on the relationship between art and corporation, art and technology and/or art and science including Tuchman's A&T Program at LACMA. Although extrinsic to the museum's operations, the programme (1967-1971) was sponsored by the Museum's Contemporary Art Council (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971, p.7) and was launched in late 1967 to 'promote an exchange between artists and the corporate world' (Bonin, 2005). Tuchman and American art curator and author Jane Livingston paired American and European artists, poets and musicians using a variety of styles and media with Californian companies capable of supporting projects financially or through offering expertise and/or residencies (Bonin, 2005). In the 'Report on the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum', Livingston states 'an interdisciplinary or total-context approach' was implemented to remove barriers between the avant-garde community of the 1960s and 1970s – which was critical of commercialisation and military conflict – and corporations in favour of technical advancements, some of which had military ties (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971, p.43). Out of two hundred and fifty companies, thirty-seven took part and out of the sixty-four artists who were approached by Tuchman and Livingston, sixty-one joined the programme. In the introduction to the report, Tuchman also mentions they received seventy-eight unsolicited proposals by 'relatively unknown artists [...] pairs or groups of artists wishing to work together', 'a high proportion of women artists' and 'eccentric, "primitive" or folk-traditional artists' (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971, p.19), all of which were declined.

Although interactions between avant-garde artists and companies were paramount (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971, p.12) to Tuchman, the A&T experiment was also expected to result in an exhibition called *Art and Technology* (The Getty Research Institute, n.d.) at the Museum in 1970/1971. Within the larger group of contributing artists there were conceptual artists, kinetic artists, concrete artists, concrete poets, performance artists and practitioners creating happenings and conceptual text-based or site-specific work. The artists were chosen based on the curators' knowledge of their pre-existing work and were offered the opportunity to develop their practices in a different environment. An example of an intended A&T work, which never came to fruition, is conceptual artist John Baldessari's proposal for a series of billboards – expanding on his previous text-based conceptual artworks

created by sign-painters using commercial fonts – in collaboration with Heath and Company, a commercial sign manufacturer and sponsor corporation for A&T (Los Angeles County Museum of Arts, 1971, p.102). In one of his proposals, he stated:

I would like to explore half-tone photo silk-screen color process to do large scale full color blowups of photos. The idea of mass art by conventional means I find intriguing. These billboards would continue the work I have already done with bus stop signs, seat posters, etc. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971, p.53).

The curators did not expect the artists to drastically change their practice (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971, p.14) which suggests that they perceived the mixture of art forms as connected and could therefore create a cohesive exhibition for the institution, its visitors, and the investing companies. Similarly, at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) exhibition *Between Poetry and Painting* (22nd October – 27th November 1965) organised by British art critic, curator, writer, teacher and gallery director Jasia Reichardt, poetry and art were brought together. Through her exhibition and its accompanying performances, readings and events, Reichardt established a discourse between Concrete poetry and language-based artwork created by conceptual artists, Lettrists, Futurists, Dadaists and typographers. Earlier examples of experiments with text and image/typography including Apollinaire's 'Il Pleut' (1916) and Lewis Carroll's shape poem, commonly referred to as 'The Mouse's Tail' (1865), are also included in the exhibition to complement the other works. Reichardt surmises that the work presented in the exhibition and the practitioners involved were all inspired, and therefore linked, by a statement by German author, poet and Dada artist Hugo Ball (Reichardt, 1965, p.21) that 'The word and the image are one. Painter and poet belong together' (Ball, 1996, p.66).

2.2 The extended network of Bob Cobbing

British concrete, sound, visual and performance poet Bob Cobbing assembled an extensive network by encouraging and mobilising individuals and groups in the fields of art, literature, music and publishing to collaborate on works, events, organisations and publications (newspapers, books of poetry and art, pamphlets and posters).

Unlike Miles, Cobbing did not just facilitate the experimental community of the time but was also involved in its activities. Cobbing was also an educator, writer, publisher, bookshop manager and organiser of events associated with the British counterculture and The British Poetry Revival (1960s – 1970s). Through his various roles he created networks with people from different professions. Many of his actions were in support of promoting poets as professionals and ‘improving [their] financial prospects’ (Cobbing, 1977). As an educator he created The Arts Today course – a student-led course on the inter-connectedness of the arts that also encouraged accessibility of the arts – and was the course co-ordinator for the Antiuniversity until he resigned in July 1968 due to issues with disorganisation and finances which he foresaw leading to the Antiuniversity having a short-life expectancy (Cobbing, 1968). Regarding his role as an organiser, he brought together several arts groups and societies in North London to form Hendon Arts Together (founded in 1952); he was a member of the Honorary Committee for the Destruction in Art Symposium which took place at various sites across London in 1966; and became a Council member of the Poetry Society in 1968 (Cobbing, 1976). He co-formed the Poets Conference which was an association that campaigned for more grant-aid for little presses, and for regional poetry centres and mobile poetry bookshops to be set up; and he ran the Poetry Society’s Printshop which allowed any poets, editors and publishers to use the equipment to produce poetry and publications (Cobbing, 1976).

Cobbing co-founded the Association of Little Presses (ALP) for independent presses to share contact information and offer support and began publishing writers and poets through Writers Forum in the 1960s including Paula Claire, Houédard and Allen Ginsberg (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.28). He also authored his own books of poetry and collaborated on publications such as *Concerning Concrete Poetry* with British-born American publisher Peter Mayer. He was manager of the paperback section at Better Books, collaborated with concrete and sound poets and formed the sound poetry group *Konkrete Canticle* with Paula Claire and Michael Chant (Chant was later replaced by Bill Griffiths) (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.174) who performed internationally. In addition, he formed the trio (and sometimes sextet) *abAna* in 1972 with British musicians Paul Burwell and David Toop who interpreted Cobbing’s concrete poems as scores for music (Willey, 2017, p.117). His national network was far-reaching. Certain facets of his extended network are discussed

further in relation to how they show connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art in the following subsections.

2.2.1 Little presses and a template for multidisciplinary initiatives

Cobbing's course, *The Arts Today*, is one of the first instances in the UK in which the concept of poet/artist-led spaces emerges. In this section, *The Arts Today* course and the Association of Little Presses are presented as forerunners of the interdisciplinary trends and multidisciplinary venues of the 1960s and 1970s.

Cobbing's *The Arts Today*, a course consisting of twenty-four lectures at the North Finchley Library (beginning in October 1958), was a precursor of the multidisciplinary initiatives that emerged in the 1960s and continued into the 1970s. Cobbing's notes on the course provide a template or guide for understanding how artists, poets and key figures in the 1960s and 1970s approached organising events and facilitating a mixture of practices that were not always easy to categorise. The aim of the course was 'to show that contemporary trends in the various arts are all fundamentally linked; that they are a natural development of the art of previous periods; and that they are open to understanding and enjoyment' (Cobbing, n.d.a [1958]). Cobbing envisaged this being achieved by incorporating various media including 'gramophone records, films, epidiroscope, reproductions and original paintings and readings of prose, poetry and drama' (Cobbing, n.d.a [1958]) and letting members of the course decide the direction of discussions. Therefore, the course would have reflected trends emerging at the time – with interests moving towards the possibilities of participatory and event-based art (happenings) created in the late 1950s and early 1960s, experimental music and literature. Cobbing's ideology that contemporary developments in the arts are all connected, and his encouragement of this idea, anticipates the inclusive and collaborative nature of the countercultural movement and the alternative/underground bookshops, arts labs and art centres.

Small, independent presses and publishers shared new ideas on the arts, listings/guides on events and exhibitions, as well as political and social issues, and libertarian sentiments. Cobbing published work by members of the Association of Little Presses (an organisation founded by Cobbing and Stuart Montgomery of

Fulcrum Press in July 1966) to act as a registry of presses and publishers, and a community for sharing information. The ALP was established in response to the Arts Council not providing funding for small presses because 'in the case of poetry and literature there are no organisations, no institutions into which the Arts Council can pour its money' (Cobbing, 1976). The Arts Council only subsidised 2.5% of the presses which were part of the ALP in 1974-1975. Despite this lack of funding, a large amount of new and experimental literature would not have been published without the little presses (Cobbing, 1976). In addition to being a forerunner of multidisciplinary initiatives, events and arts spaces, the ALP was a means to communicate, disseminate work (in the form of catalogues, publications and printed matter), and create a network between various individuals and groups across the UK with similar mentalities and interests.

2.2.2 The value of the arts: involving the community

For the purpose of this research study, the role of the body in performance (Borden, 1972), a negation of visual/written form through readings of poetry (Alberro and Stimson, 1999, p.15) and the correlation between written and spoken poetry in Cobbing's practice are discussed in relation to critics' views on the processes of looking at and/or reading art and poetry. In addition, in this section the impact of Cobbing's interdisciplinary approach to organising Better Books – encouraging practitioners to mix (and even collaborate) – is demonstrated in the work of Herbert Schuldts and Barry Flanagan, and John Latham's participation at the bookshop.

Value and accessibility of the Arts within artistic communities and for the general public coincides with Cobbing's concern over and ongoing experience with obtaining financial support for art programmes and courses such as The Arts Today; institutions and multi-purpose spaces sympathetic to new ideas in drama, music, film, performance and art (Cobbing n.d.c [c.1958], p.11); and his own work. His working relationship with institutions is described by Steve Willey as structured by 'tension between autonomy and dependence' (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.16) and this is demonstrated in Cobbing's *Setting up an Arts Centre* (c.1958) where he states local authorities and arts councils should be responsible for maintaining venues but 'The working of an Arts Centre must not be impaired by an institutional atmosphere'

(Cobbing, n.d.c [c.1958], p.4). British archivist Chris Beckett examines a notebook entry, in the form of a table, created in 1964 by Cobbing as a record of the poems he produced between 1954-1964 (Beckett, 2010, p.17). Using the heading 'experimental' ('Expl' or 'New Exp') to categorise visual or concrete poems, it shows that by 1964 Cobbing had produced five visual/concrete poems and his sound poem 'ABC in Sound'. In addition to this, British poet and co-director of Writers Forum from 2002-2010 Adrian Clarke also notes that Cobbing had collected a set of the published issues of French artist, curator, publisher, sound and concrete poet Henri Chopin's *Cinquième Saison* (renamed *OU* in 1964) in the early 1960s (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.36). This suggests that when Cobbing presented 'The Value of the Arts' at the 'The Arts: A Social Service in the New Boroughs' conference in Shoreditch, London on June 27th 1964, to demonstrate how the arts serve society, he was also advocating for a home for Concrete poetry and at the end of the year he joined Better Books paperback department as an assistant.

At Better Books Cobbing was responsible for organising poetry readings – 'This was probably the first time that such a series of regular readings had been organized in Britain' (Cobbing, 1976) – and for developing a diverse stock of poetry, books, pamphlets and little magazines 'not easily available anywhere else' (Cobbing, 1966). Amongst these were Concrete poetry publications which were available to read and were sold at the shop. In terms of performed poetry, Cobbing treated Concrete and Sound poetry as correlated, making multiple versions of the same work, and translating his written poems into scores for performance. His experiments are a precursor to how Concrete poetry has developed from the 1960s into the twenty-first century as printed word, sound, performance and moving image (British Council, 2024). Cobbing describes how the fragmented, spatially re-arranged and sometimes obscured language used in his concrete poems becomes part of his poetry performances/readings:

My earliest poems "might seem to be conventionally linear; but their urge is towards stabilized diagram, itemized pieces of information in a spatial lay-out which is in fact the syntax". In later poems, the dance of letters, half-letters, syllables and words on the page is the score for "a ballet of the speech organs". In still later poems, the scores are for instrumental as well as vocal

poetry; for a ballet of the whole body and not just the voice ([Statement (manuscript) beginning 'My earliest poems...'], n.d.).

Houédard, in reference to Cobbing, '[distinguished] not only between ear verse and eye verse, but between ear verse with an eye equivalent, eye verse with an ear equivalent, and eyear or 'oreil' [in] which the two aspects are equally important or so closely interwoven as to be almost inseparable' (*An Approach to Notation*, n.d.). When reading poems out loud, Cobbing uses repetition and stresses the sounds of words, letters, or syllables in relation to how text is arranged in his concrete poems (scores) but in turn he temporarily negates the importance of the visual form of the poem for the listener/audience. An example of this would be his recording of 'ABC in Sound', produced in 1966. A turn away from visual forms by using language is an element of text-based Conceptual art. Ruth Blacksell describes the difference between passively viewing a work of art and the act of reading and engaging with a text-based work as a shift from 'looking' to 'reading' (Blacksell, 2013, p.60). In the press release 'Language to be Looked at and/or Things to be Read' written in 1967, American artist Robert Smithson presents the opposing view that words are something 'to be looked at' and can be treated like objects. Liz Kotz expands on this in *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* but is conscious that the importance of language in art is not limited to just visual representation. She suggests that Smithson's text-based work *A heap of Language* (fig.18), which consists of terms associated with language being 'stacked' on top of one another to form a 'heap', is exemplary of the concept that words can be treated like objects (Kotz, 2007, p.3). Smithson's approach (which is affected by his preoccupation with sculpture) and Kotz's approach favour treating or viewing words as art whereas Blacksell applies the act of reading, more commonly associated with literature, to text-based artwork. Although there is a difference in Cobbing's approach and Conceptual art's turn to language, in this instance, they are united by a move away from visual forms in favour of the conceptual function of language because the audience does not need the visual element to understand the meaning.

In September 1965, Cobbing took over as manager of the paperback section and continued the schedule of events by organising readings, happenings and exhibitions with various self-organised art groups and the international avant-garde

including members of the Artists Placement Group; artist, (concrete) poet, psychiatrist, editor of *AND* magazine and member of Group H and Writers Forum John Rowan; and German poet, artist, writer and translator Herbert Schuldt (known as and published under the mononym Schuldt) who read his poetry at Better Books on 23rd February 1967. Schuldt's intermedia practice borrows techniques from art and literature/art and poetry, and he has experimented with or 'transformed' language since the end of the 1950s (Schuldt, 2001). In addition to readings, Schuldt's transformations (which start with a manuscript) take the form of word objects or word machines, happenings and performances (which usually involve the written or spoken word), audio pieces, murals and 'hypertext sculptures' that are a 'unity of object and words: the shape of the sculpture [being] the grammar of the text' (Schuldt, 2001). Schuldt was in London from 1965, and these elements of his practice resemble aspects of Concrete poetry, Sound poetry, Conceptual art and Fluxus, for example, the poem machines of Liliane Lijn and Ken Cox and the text-oriented happenings/performances of conceptual artist Ian Breakwell. The back of the card advertising Schuldt's reading at Better Books indicates how he uses language/words. The card includes 'Some information on the word black' which is a list of phrases and idioms featuring the word 'black' such as 'black sheep' or 'black death'. On the card Schuldt also demonstrates how he would trace the meaning of a word ('black') through associated words in a dictionary by selecting a word from a dictionary definition and then using that word's definition to find a new word, and so on (for example, black-strangulate-vein-marble-soapy) ([Folding card with photograph promoting reading by Schuldt at Better Books], 1967). His hypertext sculptures, which are objects with associated words printed on all sides (fig. 19), are interactive versions of this concept, where the sequence of the words is decided by the reader ([Folding card with photograph promoting reading by Schuldt at Better Books], 1967).

The sale of Better Books to the independent, traditional bookseller Hatchards in December 1965 (Keshvani *et al.*, 2018, p.28) generated concern among the underground community because the bookshop was regarded as one of the largest countercultural, interdisciplinary and experimental artist-run spaces in the UK. However, Cobbing maintained the bookshop's ethos and reputation as a meeting place for writers and poets as well as an exhibition space for artwork, performances,

poetry readings, and underground and experimental films, by developing a good rapport with the owners and promoting established, orthodox publications alongside “‘controversial’ literature’ (Rety, 1967). The nature of their relationship is conveyed in a letter dated 5th July 1966, to Assistant Secretary and Literature Director of the Arts Council, Eric White, stating ‘it is our policy, under our new owners William Collins, Sons & Co Ltd, to increase our stocks of poetry and little magazines to the widest possible extent, and to continue and expand all our services [...]’ (Cobbing, 1966).

Cobbing used Better Books to provide artists, writers, poets, performers, filmmakers and other practitioners with a space to collaborate and curate their own exhibitions and events, therefore, ‘taking them out of their isolation [and] allowing for useful cross-influences’ (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.89). An example of this is the influence of Concrete poetry on the development of Irish-Welsh sculptor and ‘part-time Conceptual artist’ Barry Flanagan’s work (Von Bartha, 2021). Flanagan was a student at St Martin’s School of Art between 1964-1966 which was across the road from Better Books. In an interview with Andy Holden, Flanagan states that ‘the location was important’, citing the poetry readings at Better Books and performances by French concrete and sound poets (notably Chopin) at the *Between Poetry and Painting* exhibition as inspiration for the titles of his sculptures (Flanagan, 2008). He exhibited an untitled sculpture in the basement of Better Books on 3rd August 1965 with artist, poet and writer John J. Sharkey’s magic poem ([Leaflet for an exhibition of Barry Flanagan’s sculpture at Better Books], 1965). A year later he exhibited it at the Rowan Gallery (August/September 1966) with the title *aaing j gni aa* (fig.20) – a phonetic title and acronym for the materials used in the sculpture (Flanagan, 2008). In addition to this he co-produced and edited the magazine *Silâns* (a phonetic version of the French pronunciation of ‘silence’) in 1964-1965 which featured work by Chopin, Sharkey, Northern Rhodesian-born British conceptual artist John Latham (who used books to create conceptual artworks/art installations), and more. Flanagan’s poem ‘O for orange U for you: poem for the lips’ (fig.21) is featured in *Silâns* (in June 1965) and the artist appears to play with the NATO Phonetic alphabet, speech sounds and/or the title of Chopin’s magazine *OU* which, with the aforementioned examples, shows he was influenced by Concrete poetry.

The bookshop also temporarily housed the theatrical group, The People Show, and accommodated some of the groups from the HAT collective – including Writers Forum and Cinema 65 (later the London Film Makers Co-operative (L.F.M.C) in October 1966) – who presented at and/or relocated to the paperback section of Better Books at New Compton Street. In addition to the activity of on-site experimental groups, John Latham (who was briefly a teacher at Saint Martin’s School of Art and a member of the Artist Placement Group founded by British conceptual artist Barbara Steveni) regularly worked within the same spaces and experimental circles as Cobbing and presented his work in the basement of Better Books. The interdisciplinary structure of the bookshop allowed Latham to circulate his conceptual practice within richer and more flexible art and literary arenas. As well as his publishing activities, Cobbing would perform poetry with Writers Forum and other groups and individuals experimenting with Sound, Visual, Concrete and performed poetry such as Austrian writer, translator and concrete poet Ernst Jandl. Cobbing and Jandl performed their poetry in the paperback section at Better Books in an event called ‘Sound Poetry’ in May [1965] (Cobbing, n.d.b [1965]). His varied activities show that in the same way alternative bookshops and Arts Labs were centres for international, avant-garde activity, Cobbing was a ‘hub’ or magnet within the countercultural community and the Concrete, Sound and Visual poetry movements – which he and Peter Mayer amalgamated under the heading of ‘Concrete poetry’ in *Concerning Concrete Poetry* – because he encouraged networking, accessibility of the arts and cross-disciplinary experimentation.

2.2.3 Destruction as a condition of creation

With regard to the role of infrastructure in identifying connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, the Destruction in Art Symposium, a gathering of primarily poets and artists, demonstrates a unification of poetry and art through the process of destruction. For example, comparisons are made between the destructive processes of Cobbing’s ‘dirty’ Concrete poetry and Latham’s events where he would burn his Skoob Towers.

Better Books was one of several locations for the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) formulated by German artist, political activist and author of the manifesto

'Auto-Destructive Art' (1959) Gustav Metzger. Metzger exhibited an installation of books and found objects to accompany the re-printing of his Architectural Association lecture on Auto-Destructive Art in 1965 and exhibited his *Art of Liquid Crystals* in January 1966 at Better Books (Keshvani *et al.*, 2018, pp. 205-206). He shared ideas on self-destructive artwork and the 'total unity of idea, site, form, colour, method and timing of the disintegrative process' (design manifestos, n.d.) with practitioners at the bookshop where 'ideas of transformation through destruction led to significant overtures between [concrete and visual] poets and artists; those taking risks with language and those hazarding the boundaries of visual culture' (Keshvani *et al.*, 2018, p.80). For example, Cobbing produced 'dirty' Concrete poetry for the symposium, which individuals (such as Finlay) who practised a 'purer' form of concrete would criticise, and Latham utilises the destruction of his Skoob Towers, which could be considered art objects, to produce his events. This culminated in the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS); a three-day symposium at the Africa Centre from the 9th-11th September 1966 and related events in London throughout the month devised by Metzger (the Honorary Secretary) and the DIAS Honorary Committee: Mario Amaya, Roy Ascott, Enrico Baj, Cobbing, Ivor Davies, Haynes, Dom Sylvester Houédard, Miles, Frank Popper, John Sharkey and Wolf Vostell (specific object, 2024). Fifty artists and poets (predominantly creators of happenings and visual and concrete poems) from the UK, Europe and North America were invited to exhibit their work at various venues and spaces in London including: Better Books, Hyde Park, the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), the Africa Centre at 38 King Street, the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre in Holborn, the Warner Cinema in Leicester Square, the St. Bride Institute, the London Free School Playground at Battersea Park, Conway Hall at Red Lion Square in Holborn and the Mercury Theatre on Ladbroke Road (Keshvani *et al.*, 2018, pp.219-222).

Among the auto-destructive performances, happenings and events, Latham presented his *Skoob Tower Ceremonies* (at the London Free School Playground), and Cobbing explored the destruction of language in his 'Destruction of the DIAS' event where he repeatedly fed the DIAS programme through a Gestetner duplicator until it was indecipherable (Keshvani *et al.*, 2018, p.90). In an interview with Rozemin Keshvani in 2012, multi-faceted Greek-Cypriot artist, co-author of *sTigma* and member of Writers Forum Criton Tomazos, compares Latham's reversal of words

and destruction of language by cremating publications (fig.22) to Cobbing's visual and performed poetry. He describes Latham's process of creating towers of books in public spaces, performing readings around them, and then burning them as 'anti-word' (Keshvani *et al.*, 2018, p.165) and similar to the destruction of the word in Cobbing's sound poems where words are reversed and 'cut-up', syllables are emphasised, and speech rhythms are investigated. However, it is unlikely that Cobbing's fragmentation of language was from an anti-word perspective – unlike Latham's approach – because Cobbing extensively experimented with various media/technology including typewriters, press-on lettering, duplicators, stencils, photocopiers, computers to create graphic texts and explore the sound potential of poetry ('*Changing Forms of Visual Poetry*', n.d. [1987]). He also advocated for poets to be treated as creative professionals and paid accordingly throughout the 1970s (Cobbing, 1977).

2.2.4 Art, technology and society: enabling artists to engage in non-art environments

Discussed here is one branch of Cobbing's extended network which is a consequence of his interpersonal relationship with Latham and critics placing Cobbing's work with other key figures from Fluxus and Conceptual art. The combination of two or more groups and individuals in this section demonstrates similarities in the running of alternative spaces in the US and UK. Aspects of poetry and art in works by Stan VanDerBeek, Ken Knowlton and Mark Mendel are also identified. Altogether, this shows a breakdown of boundaries between disciplines.

Cobbing and Latham engaged in various art, literary and publishing spaces but Latham, Barbara Steveni and the Artist Placement Group also engaged in non-art environments and were part of a tendency in the 1960s and 1970s to challenge boundaries between art and science/art and technology. Crossovers between Cobbing and Latham's practices are identified by Steve Willey in his essay *The Event in John Latham and Bob Cobbing*, published in 2017 and are also examined in Chapter Three of this thesis. Similar to Steveni's approach with the APG and Tuchman's approach to the A&T Program at LACMA, György Kepes's Centre for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) in the School of Architecture and Planning at

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) organisation brought together artists, scientists and engineers to expand and improve artistic and industrial production. E.A.T. was established in 1967 by co-founders Swedish engineer Billy Klüver, American engineer Fred Waldhauer and American artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman after they previously organised a series of performance art events in September 1966 called *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering*, in New York. The organisation met the APG in 1968. In addition to Willey viewing Cobbing and Latham as key figures in an age of experimentation (Willey, 2017, p.125), Cobbing is also grouped with E.A.T.'s Robert Whitman by Giorgio Maffei in the exhibition catalogue *Records by Artists 1958-1990*, published in 2013. Their work is included as 'examples of artists' use of sound' (Donlon Books, n.d.) alongside members of Fluxus and other key figures in this thesis including Yoko Ono, Robert Barry, Tom Phillips, Charles Amirkhanian and Lawrence Weiner.

The E.A.T. organisation aimed 'to develop collaboration between artists and engineers', '[expand] the role of the artist in contemporary society' and 'eliminate the separation of the individual from technological change' (Arts Catalyst, 2018). American artist, filmmaker and fellow at CAVS (1969–1972/1976–1977) Stan VanDerBeek and American computer graphics pioneer, artist and 'mosaic portraitist' Ken Knowlton collaborated on a series of eight films called *Poemfield*, produced at Bell Laboratories. Although VanDerBeek was not part of E.A.T., he was introduced to Knowlton through a mutual friend at the lab where E.A.T. were organising collaborations between avant-garde artists and the lab's scientists and engineers (The Box, 2014). VanDerBeek and Knowlton went on to screen and discuss *Poemfield* at a gathering for E.A.T. in 1968 (The Box, 2014). The *Poemfield* films include words, computer graphics, abstract forms, images, and collage. Each film is based on one of VanDerBeeks' poems which were typewritten columns of related words and phrases on a page (Nisbet, 2015). The format of these poems is similar to Cobbing's 'Meditation on Worms' and Schuldt's lists of associated words. VanDerBeek's poems were transformed into code using the BELFLIX (Bell Labs Flicks) computer animation program created by Knowlton and the text was transformed into 'dots of light' using a cathode-ray tube (Nisbet, 2015). In the credits of each *Poemfield* film VanDerBeek and Knowlton state they are a 'Study in

Computer Graphics', however, the American curator Leo Goldsmith states the films include 'fractured concrete poetry' (Goldsmith, 2015). It can be argued that the computerised poems function as text, image and object and the artist has experimented with the presentation of the text to convey meaning, which is an element of Concrete poetry. For example, in *Poemfield No. 1* (fig.23) the phrase 'TAKES A WORD TO COMPLETE' is presented with sections missing/blanked out. The graphic then shows the missing section of 'WORD' being moved into place. Once the object of the sentence – 'WORD' – is complete, the next slide/field is shown. Alternatively, the artist's belief that the computerised experience exists between objects and the mind is similar to Conceptual art; where the materials used are secondary to the idea and the viewer creates the work by interpreting it. *Poemfield No. 1* also includes the phrase 'SOME HOW WORDS FILL.... THE SPACE BETWEEN THINGS' (fig.23). Although this may not have been the artist's intention, due to elements of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art being perceptible in his work, this phrase can be interpreted as a comment on language being the most apparent common facet connecting the two movements.

The Centre for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) was created in 1967 by Hungarian-born painter, photographer, designer, teacher and art theorist György Kepes who directed the programme at MIT from 1967-1972. Kepes aimed to bring together a community of MIT scientists and engineers studying technology such as lasers, plasma, video and holography, and artists and musicians working with new media, film, dance, performance and within the environment (MIT News, 2017). In a similar way to how alternative bookshops, art centres and organisations in the UK and US provided spaces for practitioners from different disciplines to collaborate and experiment, Kepes intended for CAVS to provide a space for scientists and artists to 'find some common denominator between the landscape open to the artist and that which is open to the scientist' (MIT News, 2002). Early CAVS members and project organisers included composers, musicians, installation artists, multimedia artists, conceptual artists, environmental artists, filmmakers and video artists, poets, performance artists and kinetic artists.

American artist, stone mason, poet and writer Mark Mendel's *Poetronics* (1978) (fig.24) and *Slo-Scan Poem* (1979) (fig.25) were created while he was a fellow at the

CAVS (1976-1981). Mendel was influenced by German-American artist and co-founder of the avant-garde ZERO group Otto Piene (director of the CAVS from 1974 to 1994) who encouraged him to explore different approaches to producing and displaying work. Mendel started producing environmental poetry and began to see himself as a visual artist but '[he] never had both feet in any one category' (Mendel, 2020). Although placing his poetry outdoors is reminiscent of the poem-objects in Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta*, Mendel suggests his environmental poems belong to the discipline of art (Mendel, 2020). Consequently, it is plausible to argue that his poems should be considered in discourses on language-based (Conceptual) art in addition to their literary context. For example, *Poetronics* (1978) is an installation of neon-filled glass tubes shaped as words, which would light up at different times, in an aluminium cabinet. It shares visual similarities with the neon wall-texts of conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth and multimedia artist Bruce Nauman. In addition, the work is self-referential – it includes words that describe its formal characteristics as well as the processes of the electronics and car coils that power the installation – similar to Kosuth's *Neon* (1965) (fig.26) or *Five Words in Green Neon* (1965) (fig.27) and Nauman's *None Sing Neon Sign* (1970) (fig.28). Mendel collaborated with students, engineers and American glass artist Joe Upham to create the work and used materials commonly associated with commercial advertising and industry. Having someone else create the work and using materials not commonly considered to be art materials, is one approach used by conceptual artists to question the conventions of art. *Poetronics* was first installed in the window of Grolier Poetry Book Shop, Massachusetts and is listed under the category 'Poetry' on his website, placing the artwork in a literary context. Mendel aimed to 'break free from the printed page, the literary rituals of academia' (Mendel, 2020), and '[float] a poem in space' (Mendel, 2020). The departure from the characteristics of traditional poetry by concrete and visual poets, described by Sharkey in his anthology *MINDPLAY* (Sharkey, 1971, p.12), is visible in Mendel's installation. For example, the words, which are arranged in vertical columns, light up at different times and create movement which results in an abandonment of syntactical structure and an experimentation with graphic space. Altogether, Mendel's *Poetronics* combines elements of both Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

Cobbing epitomises a breaking down of boundaries between both art and literary disciplines, and between the underground and mainstream organisations and sources of funding from the 1950s to the 1970s. Cobbing was a magnet, he impacted practitioners who were part of or on the peripheries of his network and helped shape the underground scene. Although his blurring of boundaries between disciplines and practices was not for the purpose of connecting Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, his legacy provides evidence of connections between the two movements.

2.3 The social network of Jim Haynes

American publisher and multifaceted figure in the British underground scene Jim Haynes has been described as ‘a man who invited the world over for dinner’ (Baker, 2021), ‘a citizen of the world’ and ‘one of the first networkers’ (*Meet Jim, Citizen of the World*, 2019) before the concept of social networking became widespread and the emergence of social media platforms at the end of the twentieth century became popular. Through several art ventures he encouraged the development of avant-garde art, literature and drama; shared American avant-garde publications and Beat Generation literature with an emerging counterculture in Britain; developed his network of contacts; and promoted collaboration, communication and the sharing of ideas between practitioners and with the alternative community.

2.3.1 Pathways: developing a space for an international community of practitioners

This section maps out how Haynes’s Arts Lab project came to fruition. It indicates the importance of social networking, within the wider context of infrastructure, in bringing the various arts together. It also shows the influence of US practitioners and publications on the UK scene and the disconnect between the Arts Council and the underground which moved away from institutional ideals and traditional stylistic and formalist concerns.

Haynes is responsible for originating the term ‘Arts Lab’ (Curtis, 2020, p.24). He opened the Arts Lab on Monday 25th September 1967 at 182 Drury Lane, Covent Garden, London. Before envisaging the Arts Lab (concept) Haynes established the

Paperback Bookshop at 22A Charles Street, Edinburgh, Scotland in 1959 – the first paperback bookshop of its kind in Britain. The bookshop was a magnet for Beat enthusiasts and sold copies of British and American paperbacks, magazines and the American alternative newspaper *The Village Voice* (founded in 1955 by Dan Wolf, Ed Fancher, John Wilcock and Norman Mailer). It was also a venue for talks and performances organised by Haynes, who would later expand on the bookshop's event structure and apply the concept of a multi-functional venue for the arts and the community to the Drury Lane Lab (Miles, 2010, p.237). Haynes's work at the bookshop resulted in an invite to organise the 1962 International Writer's Conference *The Novel Today* at the Edinburgh International Festival with John Calder and figure of the London literary scene Sonia Brownell (Orwell). This event was centred around discussions on the state and future of the novel, William Burroughs's cut-up technique, criticism and the impact of sexuality, technology and censorship in literature, and was followed by the International Drama Conference in 1963 organised by Haynes, Calder and English theatre critic and writer Kenneth Tynan. These gatherings of international writers, critics, poets and performers supplemented Haynes's infamous global address book(s) which was useful when inviting practitioners to participate and contribute to the Arts Lab at Drury Lane (Curtis, 2020, p.43).

In January 1963, Haynes co-founded the multi-art-form arts organisation the Traverse Theatre Club and Gallery in Edinburgh with Calder, Scottish actor John Malcolm and Scottish artist Richard Demarco. They presented new writing and plays to international audiences at the Edinburgh International Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. When relationships between Haynes and the Theatre's Board deteriorated, he resigned and set up the London Traverse Theatre Company at the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre in Holborn, London in 1966 with Edinburgh Traverse Theatre staff Charles Marowitz, Michael Geliot and Ralph Koltai. Haynes adopted the previous theatre's objectives and methods at this new venue – which was supported by Chairman of the Arts Council, Lord Goodman – and hosted the *Spontaneous Underground Film Festival* and the London Filmmakers' Co-op (L.M.F.C.) (Curtis, 2020, p.14). In the same year Haynes became increasingly active in the countercultural scene in London, co-founded the alternative newspaper *International Times (IT)* with American film-maker and theatre director Jack Henry

Moore; English author Miles; British photographer, writer and activist John Hopkins and Scottish playwright, poet and editor Tom McGrath and resigned from the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre in February 1967 because '[he] wanted to bring in other activities like music, poetry, films and social painting' but was unable to (Miles, 2010, p.236). He started to evolve his vision of an arts venue with a social space into his Arts Lab project in March 1967 (Curtis, 2020, p.14). The Lab was 'a field study in open free environmental non-institutional activity' (Haynes, 1970) and set an example for over sixty ensuing art centres in Britain by 1970 (Haynes, 1970) which supported alternative figures, performers, filmmakers, musicians, (conceptual) artists and (concrete and sound) poets.

2.3.2 Bringing people together: facilitating new and alternative art forms

This section demonstrates how the Arts Labs facilitated the production and dissemination of a range of multimedia works. In particular, it focuses on how Haynes's enthusiasm for 'bringing people together' (Curtis, 2020, p.41) translates into a cross-fertilisation of ideas between practitioners and in some cases, shifts in approach to producing work. For example, Guillem Ramos-Poquí's event at the Lab demonstrates the influence of concurrent exhibitions and readings because there was a noticeable change in his practice. Cobbing and Annea Lockwood's reading presents how collaborations lead to a fusion of experimental forms and influences (including Concrete and Sound poetry and conceptual practices), and (in addition to his multimedia work), Criton Tomazos's participation in many groups and events, including at the Lab, demonstrates overlap between the networks of Cobbing and Haynes.

The Arts Lab and its successors were at the forefront of the countercultural movement and were instrumental in the development of new and alternative art forms and provided a centre for an international community of practitioners (*Arts Laboratory Schedule for May, 1968*). Curtis, author of *London's Arts Labs and the 60s Avant-Garde* and film programmer at the Arts Lab at Drury Lane and its successor the New Arts Lab (1969-71) at Robert Street, Camden Town, London, describes how at the Drury Lane Lab 'the programme was being formed by or among practitioners – its wasn't a reflection of an activity being carried out

elsewhere, it was the activity it was generating itself. As a 'Lab' this was an essential distinction [...] (Curtis, 2020, p.5). The Drury Lane Lab's staff also included American writer and painter Pam Zoline and British painter Biddy Peppin who managed the gallery space and art exhibitions, British musician, composer and inventor of musical instruments Hugh Davies who oversaw the music programme and Haynes, Moore and later Dutch actor Will Spoor who were in charge of the theatre program (Curtis, 2020, p.5). For Haynes the primary purpose of the Arts Lab was bringing people together (Curtis, 2020, p.41) and the Lab's structure gave those involved the opportunity to collaborate, produce and present alternative or 'underground' work from an amalgamation of disciplines. This is reflected in Haynes's statement that 'Everyone came to the Lab; it was like a melting pot' including artists, painters, printmakers, artist-performers, writers, poets, actors, filmmakers, musicians and 'people who just came out of curiosity' (Curtis, 2020, p.24).

When events, exhibitions and talks were scheduled at the Lab is less well documented, however, surviving Arts Lab schedules, the 'What's Happening' column in *IT* issues (Curtis, 2020, p.43) and records of when notable figures were visiting London, the Arts Lab, colleagues or exhibiting in other local venues such as the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) help develop an idea of the networks that were created and the works that were produced because 'events tended to be programmed at the last minute, taking advantage of the comings and goings of an international roster of speakers and performers, so the schedules were often out of date as soon as they left the Gestetner on which they were printed' (Curtis, 2020, p.43). Curtis also reveals that 'None of us involved in planning events at the Lab felt any need to keep records; we had little interest in saving materials for posterity, and in any case we were just too busy' (Curtis, 2020, p.43). Furthermore, the lack of records could be attributed to the ephemeral nature of work created by conceptual artists who favoured performances, happenings and ideas over marketable art objects, and language-based conceptual artists who used other elements of Conceptual art including performances, events, and installations in addition to language to present their ideas. The following sections include an analysis of works to show connections between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art at the artist-run Labs.

There were several Conceptual art shows at the Lab (Drury Lane) in 1968 including work by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Roelof Louw, Latham, Panayiotis Vassilakis (Takis) and Guillem Ramos-Poquí. The Catalan arte povera and conceptual artist Ramos-Poquí settled in London in 1968 to study at the Slade and the Royal College of Art, having previously acquired art fellowships to work in Paris and New York which were centres of avant-garde activity (Digital Art Museum, n.d.). He presented 'Mixed Media Event – BOX NO. 1.' (fig.29) on 28th and 29th September which involved 'a box, a happening, a selection, a poetry reading' and 'photographs of ideas' displayed as collections of found objects in an audio-visual environment (Curtis, 2020, p.57). A small diagram of the event, which shows the layout of the space, and the order participants should engage with the objects, is included on a flier for the Lab advertising events from 20th September – 26th October 1968 (Curtis, 2020, p.29). Ramos-Poquí's event is listed with 'films by Joan Duran, paintings by Robert Anglada, poetry by Stephen Wade' (Curtis, 2020, p.29). This demonstrates that a diverse range of activities were scheduled within the same timeframe and therefore a cross-fertilisation of ideas was taking place among the practitioners and the audiences. Although his earlier collages and mixed-media works – similar to the American avant-garde filmmaker and artist Joseph Cornell's boxed assemblages of found objects, excerpts of text and images – included letters, numbers, shapes and signs, the event at the Lab marks a change in his practice. Ramos-Poquí's event shares similarities with elements of the conceptual shows, happenings, and poetry readings at the Lab. For example, the element of ritual created by participants engaging with the installation in a predetermined order is comparable to Latham's concept of 'event structure' where the repetition of a short event establishes a habit that forms a structure (Tate, 2005). In addition, the inclusion of a poetry reading may have been influenced by regular performances by concrete and sound poets at the Lab, and Lennon and Ono's *Four Thoughts/Build Around* was an installation of found objects that had to be arranged by the Lab's staff (Curtis, 2020, p. 57). A statement by Spanish historian, writer and art critic Alexander Cirici in a 1972 *Serra d'Or* magazine article titled 'objectes pobres objectes conceptuals' ('Povera and Conceptual Objects: The Forerunners') demonstrates that the intermedia environment of the Lab and the 'turn to language' by conceptual artists in the mid-1960s (Blacksell, 2013, p.61) influenced Ramos-Poquí's practice because after his

exhibition he '[abandoned] both objects and "environments" to give witness through writings, [and] photographs, in order to reduce the content to an idea, without having to materialize it.' (Guillem Ramos-Poquí, n.d.).

Cobbing and New Zealand-born American composer and experimental musician Annea (Anna) Lockwood performed at the Arts Lab, Drury Lane on 20th October 1968. On a poster/flier for the Lab's events in late September and October, this performance is listed as "Sound Poetry" by Bob Cobbing and Anna Lockwood' (Curtis, 2020, p.29). Although Curtis does not provide further details of the performance, we can surmise from the *Bob Cobbing – The Spoken Word: Early Recordings 1965-1973* that Cobbing's 'ABC in Sound' (1965) and/or the sound poems recorded in collaboration with Lockwood – 'Are Your Children Safe In The Sea' (1966) and 'Soleil' (1968) – were performed at the Lab. Their collaboration and performance is shaped by their combined knowledge of conceptual art and Fluxus practices, experimental music, Concrete poetry and Sound poetry. The poem 'Are Your Children Safe In The Sea' appears in multiple forms; an original 'linear version' (1963), 'visual versions' (1965), an 'eye version' (fig.30) (Crone, 2012, p.15) where the (dirty concrete) poem is treated as a triptych and an 'ear version'. A similar development occurred with Cobbing's poem 'Worm' which started as a notebook entry of four columns of vocabulary about the subject ('Meditation on Worms' (1954)) (fig.31), then it became a typewritten concrete/visual poem (1966) (fig.32) and eventually a sound poem (1988).

[Linear version copied from Beckett's *From the Bombast of Vachel Lindsay to the Compass of Noise: The Papers of Bob Cobbing at the British Library* (Beckett, 2010, p.20)]

Are your children safe in the sea?
Are your children safely in the sea?
Are your children safe? In the sea
Are your children. Safe in the sea
Are your children. Safe? In the sea?

The ominous fifty-one-second sound poem consists of overlapping voices repeating the question 'are your children safe in the sea?' which is interrupted by

indistinguishable sounds (music) and concludes with the sound of water dripping. Recordings of water and rivers is a feature of Lockwood's work. She describes her influences as American composer, performer and founding member of the experimental music and interdisciplinary art hub, the San Francisco Tape Music Centre, Pauline Oliveros; American composer and music theorist John Cage – who influenced a range of musicians and artists including the Fluxus group, minimalists, and conceptualists (MasterClass, 2021) – and American composer, orchestrator, teacher and flautist Ruth Anderson (Anne Lockwood: Biography, 2024). Cage's conceptual piece "4'33" (In Proportional Notation)" scored in 1952/1953 (fig.33) – composed of vertical lines and numbers to be interpreted as sound – is intended to make the performers and audience listen to the sounds around them and this concept is present in Lockwood's interest in the sounds of the environment. Since the 1960s her interest in the sound of water has manifested through her change of name – adopting the Polynesian word 'Ea' which means 'to appear above water' (Tregear, 1891, p.37) – her River Archive project which includes recordings of rivers and streams and her installations *A Sound Map of The Hudson River* (1982), *A Sound Map of the Danube* (2005) and *A Sound Map of the Housatonic River* (2010).

Whether the 'eye version' (Crone, 2012, p.15) of 'Are Your Children Safe In The Sea' (1966-1998) or its original linear text (1965) were exhibited in the Lab during the performed sound poem version is unknown, however, 'Music events and poetry readings didn't have a dedicated space and occurred in the theatre, cinema or gallery' (Curtis, 2020, p.23) so it is feasible. In the 'Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry' (1958) the idea that the 'Concrete poem is an object in and by itself' and 'a mechanism regulating itself' (Solt, 1970, p.72) can be applied to the original linear layout of 'Are Your Children Safe In The Sea' (where the poet uses space and repositions punctuation to create alternative meanings) and the sound version (where the poet uses the intonation of his voice to re-phrase the question in his vocal performance). The triptych (eye version) consists of three pages of typewritten and printed text on paper, mounted onto panels of cardboard (Crone, 2012, p.26), and is a visual representation of the overlapping voices and music heard in the recorded version. Throughout the dirty concrete poem Cobbing's arrangement of text indicates when the speaker should be loud or quiet, for example, where the text overlaps and creates darker sections indicates when the words should be emphasised or read at

an increased volume. The text on the triptych's left panel starts from either side of the page and in parts it is reversed and overlaps providing a visual score for two intersecting voices. Halfway down this page the phrase also temporarily changes to 'safely' rather than 'safe'. The collage of words in the centre panel are less 'organised' and mimic the collage of sounds halfway through the recording. The arched shape of the text at the top of the page could suggest the shape of a wave and towards the bottom of the page the strings of words start to break apart as the recorded sentence becomes fragmented – 'are your children safe' and 'safe?'. The poem ends with the sound of water dripping and the shape of the text on the right panel resembles the shape created by a water droplet hitting a surface of water and bouncing back. Altogether, this collaboration between Lockwood and Cobbing is a coming together of conceptually driven art and music with Concrete and Sound poetry.

The influence of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, among other art and literary practices, is visible in Criton Tomazos's work. Tomazos was part of an interdisciplinary community of artists and writers in the 1960s and 1970s associated with the Islington Art Circle; Saint Martin's School of Art; Cobbing's Arts Together, Group H and Writers Forum; Alex Trocchi's Project Sigma; Jeff Nuttall's *sTigma* and the Destruction in Arts Symposium (DIAS) (*Visual Art by Criton Tomazos*, n.d.). His involvement with the underground scene in London started in 1961 through the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and his contact with Nuttall (Carruthers, 2011, p.9) who was a key countercultural figure associated with a number of artistic and literary groups that exhibited and collaborated at various alternative venues including Better Books. Tomazos helped organise and/or participated in happenings, readings, installations and exhibitions at Better Books, the New Arts Lab, the Students' Gallery at Herne Hill with Group H (Carruthers, 2011, p.20-21), and in lectures during DIAS. He resists categorisation and his work reflects the range of movements, styles and experimentation happening in the 1960s and 1970s; the (race-related) social, political and cultural issues regarding immigrant communities and the campaign for Cypriot independence from British colonial rule; and the libertarian ideas explored by the counterculture. The influence of the groups and individuals around him and the work they introduced him to, is shown in his experiments with installation, the 'cut-up' technique, text and image, collage,

performance, painting, drawing, theatre and film which explore the concerns of, and are techniques used in Mail art, Concrete poetry, Conceptual art, Fluxus, Auto-destructive art practice, happenings and Surrealism.

Tomazos was due to exhibit *I Never Said Exactly*, the last exhibition scheduled by Pam Zoline and Biddy Peppin at the Arts Lab, in November 1968. The Drury Lane exhibition, described by Curtis as ‘a display of artwork from the 16 pages of image and wordplay that made up his eponymous graphic poem [...] and a related event’ (Curtis, 2020, p.59) did not materialise due to several staff leaving the Lab to form The New Arts Lab at Robert Street. In an email to Curtis, Tomazos states, “As far as I recall, the event I planned was having two possibilities: (a) ... possibly a sound and visual poetry [performance] ... or (b) to allow an open ended, more spontaneous and unpremeditated event, letting people who came largely create [it], through negotiating and inter-acting at the space themselves. I remember I circulated a leaflet with a poem-like play on the title ‘*I never said exactly*’.” (Curtis, 2020, p.60n29). Tomazos’ description of the planned work shows the combined influence of the concrete, visual, sound and performance poetry presented by Group H, Cobbing, Lockwood, Greenham and others, and the multi-sensory installations/environments he created in collaboration with Nuttall, Latham, and other multi-faceted artists and performers at Better Books and/or the Arts Lab. Tomazos’s intermedia practice places him in an area between genres with *I Never Said Exactly* sharing characteristics of Conceptual art – ephemerality and using material to serve a purpose or idea – and Concrete poetry – the arrangement of words in graphic space to create meaning (which could be used as scores for sound and performance poetry).

Haynes developed his belief in ‘bringing people together’ (Curtis, 2020, p.41) into presenting the Arts Lab as a space for people visiting London to take refuge (*Arts Laboratory Schedule for May, 1968*) in addition to its multi-art function. However, this disrupted artistic activity and contributed to costs, resulting in staff concerns that the artistic function and ambition of the Lab had been compromised. In lab-workers’ meetings in October and early November 1968 issues of increasing debt, lack of or stolen equipment, the quality of scheduled material, building maintenance, financial viability and responsibility for organising the Lab and the allocation of space were

discussed (Curtis, 2020, p.77). Tensions between practitioners in charge of different areas of the Lab were exacerbated by a lack of Arts Council support due to Lord Goodman '[taking] it as a personal betrayal that Jim had left and was involved with *IT* and planning to start his own Arts Lab' (Miles, 2010, p.201) and believed Haynes was taking advantage of nineteen-year-old Nigel Samuel who had inherited his father's fortune – which Goodman administered – when he was appointed as company director of the Arts Lab (Curtis, 2020, pp.78-79). This resulted in a notice posted at the Lab on 18th November announcing that eleven 'Arts Lab Co-founders and staff... [were breaking] all connection with Jim Haynes's administration of the Arts Lab' ([Typescript declaration by some Arts Lab co-founders and staff regarding their disagreement with Jim Haynes's administration], 1968). In addition to the issues raised in relation to the Arts Lab at Drury Lane, the lab-workers' meetings highlighted a need for a dialogue between the increasing number of national art labs, art centres and groups, and the organisers of the conferences at the Drury Lane Arts Lab (November 1968) and the Cambridge Arts Lab (January 1969) aimed to create 'a "circuit"' for these groups and individuals to exchange information, work and discuss shared problems (Jeffrey, n.d.).

2.3.3 'They're Giving Away Your Money to Spoonfeed Hippy "Art"'

Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are not products of the Hippy youth culture. However, as reflected in the title of this subsection taken from a *Daily Mail* article written in 1970, the mainstream press categorised these movements (and other experimental activities that emerged in the 1960s) as 'Hippy' and as a result shaped public opinion against them. This perspective was influenced by a change in the socio-political and economic environment in the early 1970s, but this thesis does not attempt to extend the discourses of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art by defining the movements as hippy phenomena. The mainstream press and public dismissal of experimental art and literature coincided with the Arts Council's reluctance to fund it. The following section addresses reception to the New Arts Lab, the role of SPACE and the Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP) and instances of crossover between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art in the work produced at the Lab.

The group that left the Arts Lab at Drury Lane were joined by other underground practitioners working with print, film, computers and performance in November 1968 and they planned to set up the New Arts Lab – also known as The Institute for Research in Art and Technology (IRAT) and/or the Robert Street Arts Lab in London. This coincided with the Arts Council's establishment of the New Activities Committee; a body created to act as an intermediary between the Arts Council and the burgeoning alternative art-scene which lacked financial support. Although Haynes was not part of the New Arts Lab, his idea (the Arts Lab) was adopted by the group. English editor, scientist, market planning executive at the London Press Exchange and cinema assistant at the Drury Lane Arts Lab David Kilburn printed *The New Arts Laboratory Project* (March/April 1969) (Curtis, 2020, p.91) which outlined the groups aims, the purpose of the Lab, the trust, its projected costs, and the space required to accommodate the various departments, workshops, staff and visiting practitioners (*The New Arts Laboratory Project*, n.d.). In May they accepted the local council's offer of a two-year lease on an empty four-storey factory building at 1 Robert Street, Camden with low rent and rate relief (Curtis, 2020, pp.91-92). FACOP – established at the end of 1968 in response to 'grievances against the State's monolithic arts patronage machine' and the creation of the New Activities Committee (*Circuit 9, Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP)*, 1969, p.1) – included members of various arts labs, independent organisations and collectives, and underground magazines.

A conference at St Katharine Docks, London, on Sunday 8th June 1969 (SPACE, 2024) arranged by FACOP was attended by over three hundred artists who lobbied for 'the need for an artists' panel' (*Circuit 9, Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP)*, 1969, p.11) and 'a system which both responds to and represents the artistic community and its needs' (*Circuit 9, Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP)*, 1969, p.12) after the New Activities Committee 'revealed its inadequacy' (*Circuit 9, Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP)*, 1969, p.1). They discussed the inaccessibility of patronage for artists engaged in 'new activities', the support needed for Arts Labs and associated organisations, better facilities for the arts, arts role in society and how the Arts Council could subsidise alternative art forms (*Circuit 9, Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP)*, 1969). This is a continuation of the ideas Scottish Member of Parliament, first Minister of the Arts and

co-founder of the Open University Jennie Lee proposed in her 1965 white paper 'A Policy for the Arts – The First Steps' (*Circuit 9, Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP)*, 1969, p.7). Although support was given by the New Activities Committee to small-scale galleries that promoted experimental practices, the Lab lacked funds and its members (some of whom were members of the Committee) believed the Arts Council saw 'support and provision for the arts as a top-down exercise that couldn't easily accommodate support for the critical experimentation that the Arts Lab and IRAT embodied' (Curtis, 2020, p.6) and would not support the continuation of the Labs. IRAT operated under these circumstances but financial stability would have ensured the longevity and prioritised the New Arts Lab's emphasis on research and experimentation, and the exploration of the boundaries between art and technology.

English multimedia artist and associate of the Artist Placement Group (APG) Ian Breakwell exhibited and performed at the New Arts Lab with English conceptual artist John Hilliard and English filmmaker, installation artist and member of the London Film-makers Co-op Mike Leggett in late February 1970. *Unsculpt* (fig.34) was an amalgamation of Breakwell's artistic approach of 'always [using] whatever artistic medium seems necessary for what I have to say' (Breakwell, 1994) which was influenced by the artists, writers and visual poets he knew: 'from people who are painting, to people who are blowing things up and monks who are visual poets in-between [Houédard]' (Breakwell, 2004/2005a); Hilliard's exploration of the thing-in-itself through 'an interest in the limits to photography's means of representing things' (Tate, 2018); and Leggett's cross-disciplinary practice, largely centred around experiments with film and video, which was influenced by 'exposure within the [Robert Street] Arts Lab context and the possibility to be able to get hold of gear, a video camera and a monitor connected by a cable' provided by John Hopkins (Leggett, 2005/2006).

The four-week joint exhibition at the New Arts Lab involved wall works by Breakwell and three sculptures by Hilliard as part of an installation which was destroyed ('remade') during their performance in the gallery space (Curtis, 2020, p.114). This is documented in the film, also titled *Unsculpt* (1970-2007), created by Leggett using fragments of film, video, voice recordings (by Hilliard and Breakwell) and photographs from the event. The purpose of the opening night was to '[clear] a

backlog of hardware' (Mike Leggett, 2010) so it started with a retrospective of three abstract sculptures by Hilliard. At 8.30pm, as advertised, Hilliard announced that the work was available to purchase and would be replaced by new work to 'complete the process of making, displaying, selling that is assumed of work of this kind' (Mike Leggett, 2010). During this process the work was cloaked with paper with the word 'UNSCULPT' painted on it, turning the space into a 'word environment' (Breakwell, 2004/2005b). By covering the sculptures with the paper Breakwell emphasised the meaning of the word 'unsculpt' through the placement of text in space and introduces the concepts of reduced language and the 'tension of things-words in space-time' (Solt, 1970, p.72) from Concrete poetry into the performance/environment. Furthermore, this changed the work visually, initiating a transformation from the art object(s) into an idea – 'unsculpt'. Hilliard, Breakwell and two assistants then demolished the structures using a sledgehammer, axe, hammer and spanner and disposed of them in a skip to create space for the next piece in a series of alternating site-specific, ephemeral works – marking a shift in Hilliard's practice towards conceptualism and a move away from traditional art forms and processes of exhibition (Mike Leggett, 2010). This work is an extension of Breakwell's individual and collaborative practice that will be discussed in more detail in section 3.1 which presents evidence for connections between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art via Breakwell's association with Houédard and the Concrete and Visual poetry movements, Houédard's influence on Breakwell through a sharing of ideas, and Breakwell's capacity as an artist and writer.

Another practitioner whose work demonstrates how Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are connected is Carlyle Reedy. Reedy's 'lecture event for poetry' (Curtis, 2020, p.124) *With Grass/With Meat* performed at the Lab on 13th June 1970 – also referred to as 'Pig Theatre' (Roberts, 2015, p.570) – involved a lecture, a presentation of clips and slides of young conscripts and surreal pictures of the Vietnam War, and a performance/happening. In an interview with Eleanor Roberts, Reedy states it was in response to *LIFE* magazine's photos of young men at war and 'the 'piggery' in people. [...] The violence of just slaughtering each other; I didn't like it. [...] This was not alright with me. So I said so.' (Roberts, 2015, p.570). Curtis describes the language used in Reedy's lecture as 'dislocutory/intensely creative/poetic/prosaic' (Curtis, 2020, p.125) and it is plausible that her manipulation of text in her poems

and performances was influenced by Latham's Antiuniversity course and the poetry publications, poetry readings and workshops at the Drury Lane Arts Lab, The Crypt, Better Books and other associated underground venues and events. Reedy is an American-born London-based poet, writer, artist, collagist, performance artist, and was founder and Arts Director of the Arts and Community Centre in Notting Hill, also known as The Crypt (1967-1972). An example of her involvement in the Concrete poetry movement, which is absent from key anthologies and histories, is her concrete poem 'Have you noted the white areas' (fig.35) which was published in *Children of Albion: Poetry of the 'Underground' in Britain*, in 1969. Reedy describes the white areas of the cows' hides disappearing into a sheet of white clouds and achieves this visually by using words to represent the black areas of the cows, and the spaces between words to represent the white areas that are disappearing into the surroundings (the white page). The block of text could be interpreted as the black spots on the hide of a herd of cows or the hide of one cow. In the first line of the poem, she draws the reader's attention towards the 'white areas' of the page, placing emphasis on the importance of the structure of the poem to convey meaning. This is similar to how Eugen Gomringer used the white space of the page in his poem 'Silencio' (fig.36) to evoke silence and according to American art historian and academic Willard Bohn, in Gomringer's poem 'silence is defined as both absence and presence [and] the two semiotic systems, visual and verbal, can be seen to contradict each other' (Stephens, 2020, p.87). In addition, Reedy was influenced by Metzger's use of destructive processes to create art which she associated with her 'text-breaking' technique (Edwards, 1982, p.135), Ray Johnson's collage and mail art which resulted in her making her own collages (Roberts, 2015, p.565), and Latham's event structure and Antiuniversity course on collective practice which relates to her existential theatre performances and happenings (Edwards, 1982, p.135).

The range of activities in *With Grass/With Meat* are representative of Reedy's multimedia artistic practice which defies categorisation – described as 'a collection of activities in flux' comprised of video and book works, poetry readings, collage, painting, event-based practice and performance (Flat Time House, 2014) – and her approach to the The Crypt which 'embraced all art forms' including music, experimental dance, poetry, technology and light work, action painting, and encouraged experimentation between practitioners (Hades W10, 2008a). English

poet, writer, singer, songwriter and critic David Russell described his experience at the venue as “very free and open. There was a lot of intermingling [...] it was a sort of staggering experience in my life, in that I had hitherto considered things as being sort of very rigidly kept in separate categories” (HadesW10, 2008b). Although The Crypt was contemporaneous with Better Books, the Arts Lab and the New Arts Lab and Reedy exhibited and worked with many groups and individuals that were part of the English alternative scene and was present at well-known venues, both Reedy and her arts centre are largely ignored by art historians and critics. This marginalisation is partly due to Reedy operating between artistic disciplines, experimenting with multiple art forms and her existentialist perspective on art and life. However, her practice reinforces Higgins’s art theory on the intermedia approach which ‘emphasize[s] the dialectic between the media’ (dick higgins, 2021) and therefore between disciplines.

Higgins’s rationale on intermedia can be applied to the one-day Flux event arranged by Carla Liss – which may have included collections of (found) objects, artwork, Fluxus newspapers, and printed items called Fluxkits – that accompanied a screening of the *Fluxfilm Anthology* in the Lab’s cinema (Curtis, 2020, p.118) in early July 1970. The anthology is a collection of thirty-seven short films created by Fluxus members and compiled by Lithuanian artist and founding member George Maciunas between 1962-1970 (Electronic Arts Intermix, 2024) and includes work by an international network of interdisciplinary practitioners – including Higgins – who were associated with Conceptual art, Mail art and text-based work, music, film, performance, happenings and more. The Flux event was scheduled in the same month as the *Poetry Canada* event and an exhibition of English poet, artist and publisher of the Green Island Press David Kilburn’s Concrete poetry collection at the New Arts Lab, however, information on the latter two is limited. The *Poetry Canada* event for Canada Day (1st July) at the Lab featured work by Canadian author, editor and translator Seymour Mayne and Canadian writer and editor of the magazine *Up th tube w/ one i (open)* (Coupey, 1972, p.59) Chuck Carlson, and may have included their poster-poems (Curtis, 2020, p.125). Kilburn’s ‘international survey of concrete poetry’ (Curtis, 2020, p.118) was a showing of his collection of poems by Cobbing, George Macbeth, Robert Lax, Emil Autonucci, Finlay, A.G. Fronzoni, ‘two Japanese exhibitors and members of the *Amodulo Art* group, Gian Roberto Comini, Enrico

Pedrotti and Valentino Zini' (Curtis, 2020, p.118). The practitioners visiting, exhibiting and collaborating at the lab were exposed to poster poems, Concrete poetry, films which featured experimentation with text and the concept of time and Fluxkits (fig.37) which included (sometimes humorous) instructional pieces synonymous with Conceptual art within the same month which is likely to have led to an interchange of ideas.

Connections between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art are apparent in work created by practitioners engaged in either movement collaborating on events presented at the Lab, for example, Breakwell and Hilliard; by intermedia artists with aspects of both movements present in their work performing at the Lab such as Reedy; and through practitioners at the Lab being present at exhibitions of Concrete poetry, Conceptual art or Fluxus work taking place at the same time, for example, Ramos-Poquí's event. Although there is a blurring of boundaries between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art, it is possible to identify aspects that are concrete and those that are conceptual in the works and events analysed in this section.

Although IRAT was successful at providing a space for an extensive programme of events and activities by practitioners experimenting with alternative art forms and ideas, it also faced challenges. The main challenge was the lack of finances, and this was aggravated by limited support from the Arts Council. It is beneficial to consider the financial history of the Arts Labs in relation to how they operated, the work produced, and the connections created between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art because the decisions made by the Arts Council with regard to funding, were influenced by the larger social climate and the ideology of the conservative mainstream art scene. The Arts Labs would have continued to operate if substantial funding had been allocated to them. This is demonstrated in the 'Arts Council's 'New Activities' Committee Draft Interim Report' presented in the FACOP leaflet advertising the 1969 conference which states that the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) (which continues to operate in the twenty-first century) 'should be considered in this category [of new activities and/or organisations], although its size and present rate of subsidy make it something of a special question' (*Circuit 9, Friends of the Arts Council Operative (FACOP)*, 1969, p.25). By the time the Committee and Arts

Council agreed that the Arts Labs were deserving of support, the mainstream press turned public opinion against them – this is demonstrated in *The Daily Mail* article ‘They’re Giving Away Your Money to Spoonfeed Hippy “Art”’ (Rogers, 2020, p.70). Furthermore, conflicts arose between individuals and groups at the Lab due to the pressures of small audiences, equipment failures and because they ‘lacked a Jim Haynes-like figurehead, to charm the outside world and perhaps, more crucially, to preside over each evening’s activities as a benign host, to welcome people and make them feel at home’ (Curtis, 2020, p.151). Although Haynes did not fulfil this role at the New Arts Lab, his Arts Lab concept inspired the creation of numerous centres and is his legacy, for example, in a newsletter written in 1970 he states ‘[...] I am pleased to report that there are some sixty-odd Arts Lab type places in Britain and on the Continent now, so the idea continues.’ (Haynes, 1970). In debt and at the end of their two-year lease, the Lab closed in March 1971 (Curtis, 2020, p.153).

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, connections between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art are more easily identifiable in relation to spaces such as the Arts Labs, bookshops and galleries, and the organisations, newspapers and events created to facilitate and, in some cases, popularise experimental work. This analysis of the infrastructure and networks, in relation to the work produced, provides evidence for a reconsideration of the connections between the two movements that opposes the views of scholars who have deemed this connection ‘symptomatic’ due to visual similarities and/or the use of language being identified as the only ‘common denominator’ (Powell, n.d. [2014]). In addition, scholars who argue for connections between the two movements, for example, Hilder, or suggest that aspects of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are identifiable in intermedia practices such as Alex Balgiu and Mónica de la Torre, have not considered the significance of the infrastructure of the art and literary worlds in finding connections between the two movements. This thesis argues that some of the blurring of boundaries between disciplines is a consequence of an infrastructural assemblage of Arts Labs, bookshops, venues and events in which artists, poets and other significant figures came together. Further examination of the networks of Miles, Cobbing and Haynes – which intersect, are linked by the tendency of ‘bringing

people together' but are more extensive than shown here – as well as other centres of activity and international networks within and beyond the historical, geographical, and social parameters of this study, would result in more examples of connections between the two movements being identified. In the following chapter, case studies are used to investigate the connections between Concrete Poetry and Conceptual art in more detail, primarily through an analysis of interactions between the poets and artists, similarities in approach and a sharing of ideas and theories, and how a poet or artist would engage with the other's movement through events, exhibitions and publishing ventures.

Chapter Three: Interactions between concrete poets and conceptual artists

‘No one label can satisfactorily classify the rhizoidal activity of a period involved in [...] aesthetic reevaluation [...] From the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s, these once self-contained disciplines, each with its own methodology and history, were first opened to cross-fertilization’ (Rorimer, 2001, p.11).

Introduction

This chapter is comprised of two case studies and argues that significant connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art can be identified through an analysis of the theories, artistic practices and works developed and created by the individual artists and poets, groups and organisations presented in this chapter. In particular, it presents interactions between poets and artists as one source of ‘cross-fertilization’ between disciplines (Rorimer, 2001, p.11). Firstly, the work of and interpersonal relationship between Ian Breakwell (a conceptual artist and writer) and Dom Sylvester Houédard (a concrete poet) is discussed. In 3.1 their initial meeting and their acknowledgement of similarities in their approach, where they are based in the wider context of the experimental alternative scene in the 1960s and 1970s, and how Houédard’s influence on Breakwell is visible in his conceptual works is examined. In addition, the influence of their contemporaries, notably John Furnival who was instrumental in introducing Houédard to Breakwell and who worked within a community of artistic and literary practitioners experimenting with the relationship between text and image, is considered. Secondly, the work of John Latham (a conceptual artist) and John Rowan (a poet, author and psychotherapist), the context in which they interacted and similarities in their approach to language are compared in 3.2 to demonstrate crossovers between the practices of poets and artists. Although they were both part of Cobbing’s extended network (discussed in Chapter Two), Rowan’s contribution (as a poet) to the Concrete poetry movement has been overlooked as well as similarities between his and Latham’s theoretical approach to language in their work. Nuttall’s role as a networker, in bringing together Latham and Rowan, is also discussed.

3.1 Ian Breakwell and Dom Sylvester Houédard

In this section, interactions between Breakwell and Houédard, including their meeting at the Bristol Arts Centre in 1967 and their participation in the exhibition *Visual Poetry* at The Bookshop & Bookshop Gallery, Sunderland, in 1970, are examined. The aim of this section is to demonstrate connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art through interactions between Breakwell and Houédard (and their contemporaries) and how their influence on each other is visible in their approach to creating work. The role of Furnival as a catalyst for Breakwell and Houédard's initial meeting is also included in this analysis which identifies how, when and where the two movements converged via the activity of their members.

Houédard, also known as 'dsh' or 'the Dom' (Lisson Gallery, n.d.b) was a Benedictine monk, theologian and concrete poet who engaged with artist collectives and individuals in the 1960s alternative scene. His involvement in these experimental movements was unconventional due to his vocation. However, he had a unique approach that complemented the interest in Buddhism that some members of the counterculture had, and he viewed his participation in this period as being in service of the 'wider ecumenism' (Verey, 2012, p.27). Houédard was recognised by Alan Riddell in 1975 as 'a prominent figure in introducing concrete poetry to Britain in 1961' and one of 'its leading [theorists] as well as an outstanding practitioner' (Riddell, 1975, p.151). In 2012, in the publication *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard*, Nicola Simpson contextualises his cross-movement activities by presenting previously unpublished material and works by Houédard alongside his published essays on experimental poetry, and essays by writers and artists on his life and work. Houédard co-edited the Sound poetry magazine *Kroklok* with Cobbing and co-founded Openings (Press) in 1964 with British graphic designer and typographer Edward Wright and British 'drawer' and teacher John Furnival, who was active in the fields of Concrete and Visual poetry (John Furnival, n.d.). Houédard was also a member of the group of concrete poets called Gloup and Woup, specifically the Gloucestershire group (GLOUP) with Furnival and poet Kenelm Cox. The Westminster Group (WOUP) was comprised of Cobbing, Peter Mayer and Tom Edmonds (ArchivesSpace at the University of Iowa, 2024). Before engaging with the Concrete poetry movement, Houédard was

influenced by Beat poetry (Verey, 2012, p.25). Aspects of the Beat Generation's lifestyle, culture and literature, for example, their spiritualism and rejection of materialism bear similarities to monastic life. From the early 1960s he networked and collaborated with various groups and individuals, namely John Cage, Yoko Ono, Gustav Metzger, Fluxus (Simpson, 2012, p.5), conceptual artists and concrete, visual and sound poets, and participated in the Destruction in Art Symposium and the Mail art movement. Their influence is visible in his body of work due to the extent to which 'he experimented with the parameters of the concrete poem' (Simpson, 2012, p.6).

Breakwell was a self-proclaimed working-class multimedia artist and writer from Derbyshire whose introduction to the alternative scene was unlike most other countercultural figures who were predominantly young, Caucasian, middle-class men who gravitated towards London in the mid-1960s. Breakwell arrived in London later than his contemporaries and was not part of the student crowd but he felt he benefitted from this because he was able to '[bring] something different' (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). In an extract from 'Ian Breakwell interviewed by Peter Kennedy: 1973', Breakwell describes how his practice developed between 1961-1968. He was a student at the Derby College of Art from 1961-1964 when 'there was very little knowledge of what was being done other than painting and sculpture, not like London where people were coming over from the States' (Breakwell, n.d.). Instead of being exposed to modern and abstract approaches to sculpture, for example, Anthony Caro's teaching at the Saint Martin's School of Art, Derby's sculpture programme was limited to traditional clay-modelling. In response, Breakwell sourced inspiration from sculptors without formal backgrounds in the discipline of sculpture and abandoned traditional sculpture for creating large-scale performances which were 'time-based installations, constructed and deconstructed [...] built and unbuilt so they're like sculptures in time' (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). He also began to co-edit the little magazine *Exit* with John Hall whilst he was a student and in 1965, he attended the West of England College of Art, Bristol and worked part-time at the Bristol Arts Centre (Breakwell, n.d.). His involvement with *Exit* and the Bristol Arts Centre shaped his practice and demonstrates his interest in experimental art and literature characteristic of the work being produced in London in the poet/artist-run spaces in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

Breakwell received an education in English Literature and considered becoming a writer before deciding to go to art college (Breakwell 2004/2005a). In an interview with Victoria Worsley, he states this was because 'every time [he] imagined words, [he] imagined pictures, images' (Breakwell, 2004/2005a) and from a financial point of view, studying art would allow him to access facilities and acquire knowledge of different art forms, techniques, and processes in addition to being able to continue to write. By contrast studying to become a writer at university would not have given him access to the Arts (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). His decision to focus on art and literature is the reason why he called himself an artist and writer and determined the direction of his professional practice (Breakwell, 2004/2005a) in which the relationship between word and image was fundamental. Consequently, it gave him the opportunity to engage with artists and concrete/visual poets as well as immerse himself in the theories, methods and techniques used in the Concrete poetry and Conceptual art movements. This caused him to be exposed to new or different ideas and influences, widened his understanding of what an artist was (to the extent that he did not differentiate between artists, poets, musicians, filmmakers and other practitioners) and resulted in a more flexible way of working (Breakwell, 2004/2005a).

3.1.1 Breakwell and Houédard at the Bristol Arts Centre

Bristol Arts Centre was similar to alternative venues, such as Better Books or the Arts Lab, in that it housed a theatre, film theatre, rehearsal room, gallery, restaurant, coffee bar, licensed bar and bookstall to provide a space for 'different art-forms under one roof' (Bristol Arts Centre, 1967, p.1). Breakwell managed the gallery space but perceived the entire building as a potential studio for practitioners working in a variety of media to congregate and present their work (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). Although he was working in a conservative environment shaped by the Centre's funders – the Bristol Corporation, local businesses, charities and the Arts Council (Bristol Arts Centre, 1967, p.6) – who were in support of traditional theatre and art, he had a similar ethos to the founders and organisers of experimental spaces in the UK, such as Jim Haynes who brought people together at the Arts Lab. On a small scale and counter to what the organisation promoted, (Breakwell, 2004/2005a) Breakwell 'persuaded mixed-media artists, theatre and performance groups,

musicians, poets, filmmakers, etc. to present their work' in the theatre (Breakwell, n.d.) and gallery with no budget or insurance (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). Events scheduled for autumn 1967 included an exhibition (*Paintings, Drawings and Constructions*) and a reading by Jeff Nuttall, recordings of readings by Ernst Jandl, Cobbing, Henri Chopin and Austrian Dadaist Raoul Hausmann, and Breakwell's own work (Bristol Arts Centre, 1967). Later in the interview with Worsley, Breakwell describes how he started to become recognised as an artist due to his activities at the Bristol Arts Centre. In particular, he gained attention organising Visual poetry exhibitions and started to build a network with artists and writers across the country through word-of-mouth and via the little magazine scene (Breakwell, 2004/2005a) which subsequently expanded into alternative newspapers such as *IT*.

At the Centre, Breakwell met and scheduled exhibitions of work by artists, poets and musicians who were part of the growing alternative art scene in London including Metzger, Nuttall and the People Show (Breakwell, 2004/2005a), in addition to furthering his involvement in the Concrete and Visual poetry movements. One of the poets/artists who became aware of Breakwell was Furnival who was part of and collaborated with a network of poets and artists in Gloucestershire including Thomas A. Clark, Michael Horowitz, Ken Cox and Houédard (Harper, 2018, p.12). Furnival met Houédard when he exhibited his work at the Gloucestershire Museum and Art Gallery in 1963 (Harper, 2018, p.12) and Furnival was periodically active at the Arnolfini arts centre, in Bristol, from 1962 (John Furnival, n.d.) which exhibited Breakwell's work in the 1970s and 1980s (Arnolfini, 2021). As well as contributing to the Concrete and Visual poetry movements, aspects of Furnival's work have also been compared to the process of collage, the Beat poets and the cut-up technique, Fluxus, the Mail art movement, Conceptual art, Minimalism, and Cage's unconventional compositions (England & Co. Gallery, 2010). He is best known for his 'wordscapes', for example *The Fall of the Tower of Babel* (1963) (fig.38), which are comprised of letters, words and sentences drawn or printed onto paper. This is a term Breakwell used to describe a series of photographs of his own installations made in 1970. These installations were rooms filled with large sheets of paper covered in text in which Breakwell would manoeuvre a camera to play with 'perspective to produce landscapes of words' (British Council, 2014). Furnival is largely uncategorisable and refused the title of concrete poet. However, due to his

work with the arts community in Gloucestershire, as well as with an international network of practitioners experimenting with the relationship between word and image, including Ian Hamilton Finlay, Tom Phillips, Edwin Morgan, Chopin and Jonathan Williams, and participation in various group exhibitions of Concrete and Visual poetry, he is included in anthologies and histories of the Concrete and Visual poetry movements. Breakwell, Houédard and Furnival occupy a space between art and poetry, they explored text-image relationships and were all aware or part of developments in Concrete poetry. Furnival encouraged Houédard to meet Breakwell at the Bristol Arts Centre (Breakwell, 2004/2005a) and this meeting shows how Houédard's approach to Concrete poetry influenced Breakwell's conceptual art practice.

Breakwell met Houédard at the Bristol Arts Centre in 1967. Breakwell explains to Worsley how he found sitting in the theatre between performances and '[imagining] all kinds of strange scenarios that could take place' on the unoccupied stage (Breakwell 2004/2005a) more intriguing than the regular productions. An example of these 'scenarios' is *Buffet Car News* which was a scripted happening performed at the Centre in December 1967 that involved taped sound recordings, instruments, film, six performers, and voices (Breakwell, 1967-8). Breakwell's scripts were based on environmental noise, overheard conversations and activities he observed in various environments (Breakwell, n.d.). Houédard shared Breakwell's interest in the possibilities of the empty stage and provided different interpretations of and expanded on Breakwell's perception of the setting. On the stage was a stepladder in front of a white cyclorama screen and Houédard 'sat in the front row and talked animatedly about the stage he was staring at, throwing in Biblical, scientific and Buddhist references to the void, whiteness etc etc' (Breakwell, n.d.) and encouraged Breakwell to 'think how much more interesting it would be without [the] set of steps' (Breakwell, n.d.). Houédard's emphasis on the void and emptiness is comparable to the importance of the graphic space between typographic elements in a concrete poem which communicate its meaning. The act of talking into the space of the theatre, filling the room with language relevant to the space (form-content), can also be seen as a literal interpretation of words (sounds) in space which is an aspect of Concrete, Visual and Sound poetry. Although Breakwell states 'the only poetry I like is that that rhymes' (Breakwell 2004/2005a), he is interested in the manipulation of

words, for example, he added the prefix 'un-' to the word 'sculpt' in *Unsculpt*, performed at the New Arts Lab at Robert Street. He identified with Houédard's interpretation of the empty theatre space, where the act of 'throwing [...] references to the void' (Breakwell, n.d.) functions in a similar way to performed Concrete poetry or Sound poetry and can be interpreted as an explanation of the structure of Concrete poetry.

On the other hand, Houédard was aware of developments in Conceptual art due to his link with the Lisson Gallery which championed Conceptual and Minimal art (Noorali and Talbot, 2018), and his ability to attribute meaning to the empty stage is similar to how conceptual artists present ideas as art, favouring the transmission of ideas over material components and the art object. An analysis of Houédard and Breakwell's practices demonstrates a crossover between the boundaries of poetry and art, both individually and in conversation with each other because they both engaged with the other's movement. Breakwell was an artist who also called himself a writer and co-edited a magazine of Concrete/Visual poetry (*Exit*), and Houédard was a concrete and kinetic poet who was amidst the increase in activity in Conceptual art in the 1960s and collaborated with conceptual artists. A comparison can be made between what Houédard describes as his 'I-less' Concrete poetry (Simpson, 2020) and the self-referential, authorless quality of Conceptual art. Houédard perceived Concrete poetry as 'I-less' due to the simplified form and content structure resulting in 'the absence of the poet's self in the poem'. An example of this is Houédard's typestract 'bien au contraire' (fig.39), created in 1971. Simpson adds that they are 'I-less' because 'they undo the selfhood of all objects' (Simpson, 2020). A rejection of the art object and a critique of authorial presence is an aspect of Conceptual art. For example, in Breakwell's collage *Study for 'Circus'* (fig.40), created in 1978, the identity or intent of the artist is not needed to understand the work, instead responsibility for the production of meaning rests with the reader. This critique of the 'I' in poetry and art is part of a general shift away from the author having prominence, encapsulated by Roland Barthes in his essay *The Death of the Author*, published in 1967.

In addition to the meeting with Houédard, Breakwell states that organising exhibitions and events at the Bristol Arts Centre's gallery and theatre led him to

question whether previously established boundaries between media were nonsensical and unavailing (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). This was emphasised by the expanding definitions of poetry and art at the time, practitioners testing the limits of different media, and the dissolution of discipline-specificity because artists chose to stop defining themselves by the media they used (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). Given that for Breakwell ‘the theatre lets everything loose [...] all kinds of things [are] being used and it’s all the same to me from this point onwards. It’s all the same by virtue of being different [...]. It’s all art’ (Breakwell, 2004/2005a), it is highly likely that Breakwell associated the experiments with words in space in the visual art and concrete poems of Cavan McCarthy, Furnival, Morgan, Houédard, Phillips and Cobbing, among others in *Exit*, with the experimental work and happenings being presented in the theatre space. Furthermore, how Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are defined has continued to expand into the twenty-first century leading to more fluidity in terms of how the movements are defined, understood and how connections between them are made. Breakwell in 2004/2005 stated that the poets whose work he correlated for *Exit* or whose small press publications he sold at the bookstall in the Bristol Arts Centre, for example Finlay and George Brecht, were ‘now’ recognised as ‘being part of the art world’ (Breakwell, 2004/2005a).

3.1.2 **UNWORD** and other works

Breakwell and Leggett’s *SHEET* and *UNWORD* (fig.41), advertised as *Expanded Cinema Event by Ian Breakwell & Mike Leggett* (Curtis, 2020, p.116), were screened at the New Arts Lab in Robert Street in June 1970. Breakwell’s interest in word and image and the possibilities of language as media or as an element of a composition – also explored in works by Lettrists, Fluxus, concrete poets, visual poets and language-based conceptual artists – is seen in his multimedia performances of *UNWORD*. Leggett’s film includes recordings of four site-specific *UNWORD* performances by Breakwell at the Compendium Bookshop (June 1969), the ICA (October 1969), Bristol Arts Centre (February 1970) and Swansea University (January 1970) (Worsley, 2006, p.4). The visual and audio recordings from each event became part of the next event’s projections, and so on and these were edited into Leggett’s film. In ‘Notes concerning ‘UNWORD 3’, Breakwell states that ‘Conventional theatre’s foundation in words, which I had often used, ironically, as

starting points in my performances reached its peak in my UNWORD series of performances' (Breakwell, 1970) and describes '[using] words [...] as the 'scenery' [...] so that words might have as physical a presence as a grove of trees or walls of advertising hoardings, a forest of words' (Breakwell, 1970). As well as being comparable to the conversation he had with Houédard at the Bristol Arts Centre about creating scenarios from empty theatre sets and interpreting nothing as something, Breakwell's reference to scenery and the space it occupies is visible in Houédard's series of typestracts based on vowels. For example, in 'for the 5 vowels (i)' (fig.42) the letter 'l' is presented as a three-dimensional entity and has a physical presence which dominates and exceeds the borders of the white space of the page. *UNWORD* is an amalgamation of the concept of words in space from Concrete poetry and art as idea from Conceptual art. The set for each performance is a word environment including a series of words prefixed with 'un-' to reverse their original meanings. However, unlike a concrete poem the meaning of the words is not conveyed through the arrangement of words and letters on the large sheets of paper, instead, this is achieved by performers transforming and destroying the set and changing the relationship between each letter as it is placed elsewhere in the (graphic) space. In addition, the idea – the process of destroying language – is the work itself.

UNWORD 2 started with the destruction of a Ray Barrie sculpture. Breakwell wanted to start the event by 'destroying an exhibition of modern sculpture' and asked Barrie, who had turned away from the art object towards conceptualism, to donate his sculptures (Worsley, 2006, p.2). The audience were then guided into a performance area, filled with sheets of words hanging from floor to ceiling and films were projected onto the first 'wall of words' (Breakwell, 1969). Then, Breakwell moved from the front of the room to the back, ripping and 'eating' the words until all the sheets were destroyed revealing a woman in a straight-jacket with clothes pinned on top. These clothes were removed and pinned to the wall in the shape of a human figure and replaced with the ripped-up words creating a cloak which covered her and the floor. After Breakwell exited the space John Hilliard entered and used a hand-held sprayer to cover the word-cloak in black paint, *unwording* the words, marking the end of the performance (Breakwell, 1969). The process of removing the clothing and revealing the woman is wearing a straight-jacket represents Breakwell's interest

in what lies beneath the surface and the surreal within the mundane (Breakwell, 1994). The action of covering the jacket with words re-establishes language as the subject of the performance and removes the human element, similar to how concrete poets used words in space and removed self-expression from their work, making the words the subject.

The process of eating the words is reminiscent of the event that led to the creation of Latham's *Still and Chew: Art and Culture 1966-1967* (fig.43). In the British Library Sounds interview with Worsley, Breakwell states that the *UNWORD* series was influenced by the work presented at the Destruction in Art Symposium which Latham was involved in. In both Latham and Breakwell's work, the idea, the reason for the destruction is more important than the process itself. In terms of Conceptual art, Breakwell is using the material aspects of the work to support his idea (to *unword* the word). Latham has destroyed books in multiple pieces of work, played with the sequence of letters in words, and the process of chewing up Greenberg's *Art and Culture* is described as destructive (Moorhouse, 2005). However, the materials and destructive processes used by artists and poets in the Symposium, as well as by Latham and Breakwell are in service of creating an artwork, event, or to support an idea. By manipulating, tearing apart, and re-arranging words, Breakwell examines meanings created through destruction. In view of this, one interpretation of Latham's work is that the words 'still' and 'chew' create a portmanteau – a word that is a blend of two or more words which combines the meaning of both – 'stew'. To stew on a concept means to think about, decipher and/or interpret information, so, *Still and Chew* can also be interpreted as being about contemplation, thought and ideas.

A similar breaking down and blending of words to form a new word, occurs in Ian Hamilton Finlay's screenprint 'Catameringue' created in collaboration with the artist Peter Grant. The Tate categorises this print, designed by the concrete poet (Finlay), as a conceptual artwork. The word 'Catameringue' is a combination of the words 'catamaran' and 'meringue', and in the print the two hulls of a catamaran (printed in blue) are sandwiched together by curved black lines to represent a meringue (fig.44). Another example is Houédard's 'posterpoem' 'Sand Rock Tide' (fig.45), produced in 1964, where a breakdown and 'blend' of words is achieved via the arrangement of the words on the page. The composition can be interpreted in multiple ways, for

example, it can be divided into two halves with sand and rocks on the left and the tide meeting the sand on the right. The words 'sand' and 'rock' merge at the top-left of the page. The alternating letters ('sraoncdk' or 'rsoacnkd') form a land mass which is surrounded by negative space that represents water channels or rock pools. On the contrary the blending of 'tide' and 'sand' ('staindde' or 'tsiadned') in the bottom-right corner of the composition, and the connotative meaning of the word 'tide', suggests a more fluid mixture of the two subjects. In the negative space of the poem there are two arrow-like shapes that point towards the top or bottom of the page. Although these 'arrows' are perpendicular to the 'image' of the sea meeting the shore, they suggest incoming and outgoing tides.

A connection between Breakwell's *Description of a Picture* (fig.46), produced in 1968, and Houédard's 'Typestract 711207' (fig.47) produced in 1971, is that the works are self-referential. Ursula Meyer states in *Conceptual Art*, published in 1972, that 'An essential aspect of Conceptual Art is its self-reference; often the artists define the intentions of their work as part of their art' (Meyer, 1972, p.viii). Breakwell's *Description of a Picture* is an almost hallucinatory, mind-bending description of a series of events that have not taken place in reality but are taking place on the board when he writes them. The first line of the work – 'The picture is drawn in coloured inks on paper, forty inches high and twenty-five inches wide; on board divided into two panels, one above the other' – tells the viewer that the picture that is being described is the description itself. Houédard's typestract, comprised of obliques and dashes, features the phrase 'comment le present ouvrage suscite ces questions critiques' ('how the present work incites critical questions'). This phrase can be interpreted as a question posed to the viewer or as a statement which describes the work itself. In addition, it could be a comment on the process of interpreting it (how does the work incite questions) or it could be questioning whether or not the composition raises critical questions at all. Breakwell's documentation of the description's dimensions and materials is similar to the use and content of a wall label for a work of art. Houédard used a typewriter to create his typestracts and this example visually represents the rhythm of typing and traces the movement of the keys hitting the paper and moving one space over each time. Although their work does not share a visual similarity the self-critical approach of both of these examples links them.

3.1.3 Breakwell and Houédard in the Bookshop *Visual Poetry* exhibition at The Bookshop & Bookshop Gallery, Sunderland

Breakwell and Houédard contributed to the exhibition *Visual Poetry* at The Bookshop & Bookshop Gallery from 10th - 30th June 1970 that further demonstrates connections between them and therefore between Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art. The Bookshop opened in 1969 on Frederick Street, Sunderland and its director, British Arts Administrator Chris Carrell, organised events, exhibitions and readings by avant-garde artists, poets, writers and publishers including Cobbing, Furnival, Nuttall, Montgomery and Finlay (*A Programme of Events and Publications* [...], n.d. [1970]). Carrell stated that The Bookshop was 'for the encouragement of artists living and working in the borough and the introduction of these artists to the community through readings, publications, exhibitions and lectures' (CIRCA Projects, 2015). In addition to scheduled events the shop sold second-hand books, avant-garde and experimental poetry magazines and publications, and the underground newspaper *IT* (Lathan, 2020a). The Bookshop *Visual Poetry* exhibition was complemented by a catalogue published by Ceolfrith, a poetry press co-founded by Carrell, titled *Ceolfrith 1: Visual Poetry*. The catalogue was comprised of 'Poem Cards' by Apollinaire, Breakwell, Cobbing, Houédard, Edwin Morgan, American artist Man Ray and more, an illustrated booklet on Concrete poetry by British poet and co-founder of the Trent Book Shop, Nottingham and Tarasque Press Stuart Mills, and additional information about the exhibition presented in a polythene bag (*A Programme of Events and Publications* [...], n.d. [1970]). Incidentally, the presentation of *Ceolfrith 1* resembles the form of the final issue of *Exit*. Issue 5/6, published in 1968, consisted of Visual poetry examples by Cobbing, Furnival, Sharkey and Houédard presented in a polythene bag (Worsley, 2006, p.10).

Breakwell's poem card in *Ceolfrith 1* was a film still or photograph of one of his word environments or 'wordscapes'. The text on the card (fig.48) reads 'IAN BREAKWELL: Detail from 20:12 word-structure: London New Arts Lab, Mar. 1970'. Therefore, it is probable that this is a photograph of *Unsculpt* performed at the Lab between 28th February and 21st March 1970. Breakwell, Hilliard and assistants covered three sculptures with sheets of paper with the word 'unsculpt'

painted/printed on them whilst they were available for sale between 8:00 and 8:30pm (Mike Leggett, 2010). The photo captures this moment because the timestamp (20:12) on the card falls within this timeframe. Breakwell was considered an artist but his experiments with language and his connection to Concrete and Visual poetry via the little magazine scene most likely led to him being grouped with the concrete and visual poets included in the exhibition. Furthermore, a photograph of one of his conceptual artworks was included in the catalogue alongside examples of Visual Poetry, but in the form of a Poem Card, demonstrating how his work crossed disciplinary boundaries. Houédard's contribution to the exhibition was a 'reflecting poem [...] for ian hamilton finlay' called 'grove sings river a song' (fig.49). This Poem Card is in two halves, with 'grove sings' on one side and the title, the dedication to Finlay and instructions on how to read the poem on the other, separated by a line indicating where to fold the card. The meaning or purpose of this interactive concrete poem relies on audience participation; the participant is directed to fold the card, place it on a mirror or reflective surface and stand above it to read the reversed sentence 'river a song'. However, this poem can also be interpreted as an instruction piece or an event score. Houédard had collaborated and met/corresponded with Ono, Metzger and Cage. He produced the event score *c-dagesh* 'for a 'joint participation'' (Simpson, 2012, p.100) with Cage in response to Japanese artist, composer and performer Chieko Shiomi's instructional piece *Spatial Poem No.3* (fig.50) made in 1966 (Simpson, 2012, p.100). The instructions in 'grove sings river a song' and *c-dagesh* – a title comprised of Houédard's artist signature (dsh) and John Cage's last name (cage) – demonstrate the influence of Ono, Shiomi and Cage's conceptual ideas and/or approaches on Houédard. Furthermore, Breakwell recognised the impact of Cage's practice on the concrete poet because he stated, 'Houédard would be thinking simultaneously of some ancient Buddhist text and John Cage, at the same time [...] there's no difference, it's the same thing.' (Breakwell, 2004/2005a). This suggests that Houédard utilises several influences and amalgamated elements of practices, theories, and beliefs into his work.

Carrell moved The Bookshop & Bookshop Gallery to new premises and set up Ceolfrith Arts Centre, later known as Sunderland Arts Centre in 1971 which had an interdisciplinary approach (CIRCA Projects, 2015). Similar to the Arts Labs, centres and bookshops in London, Carrell and the staff at Ceolfrith organised exhibitions,

(theatre) performances, poetry readings, festivals and events (Lathan, 2020a). They published artists books, exhibition catalogues, works by members of Writers Forum, 'visual scores, conceptual writing and poetry' via the press (CIRCA Projects, 2015) and had a short-lived magazine called *Audience* (Lathan, 2020b). The title of the magazine was most likely influenced by the nature of the art and poetry being produced at the Centre which focused on audience participation and the diminished role of the author (CIRCA Projects, 2015).

This investigation into the artistic practices of Breakwell and Houédard shows several instances in which a crossover between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art occurs through various art centres, little magazine networks, exhibitions and exhibition catalogues, publications and Breakwell and Houédard's contemporaries; even though Houédard's concrete works are visually distinct from Breakwell's (language-based) conceptual artworks. The crossover between Breakwell and Houédard is facilitated by the development of experimental spaces across the UK and Furnival, Higgins's concept of intermedia which informed many groups of avant-garde artists and poets in the UK and internationally, and the expanding definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art at the time (which are examined in Chapter One).

3.2 Cobbing, Latham, Rowan and the Artist Placement Group

In Chapter Two, aspects of Cobbing and Latham's work and the organisations they were associated with were discussed in relation to the infrastructure of the countercultural art and literary world. In this chapter, individuals who were involved in and were influenced during their time in the Artist Placement Group, Group H and Writers Forum are discussed in more detail. This includes Barbara Steveni, Latham, and Rowan. Interactions between artists and poets who were part of Latham and Cobbing's network are examined in this section to demonstrate how cross-influences occurred via groups and individuals sharing their work, ideas, proposals for events, and their theories, and how these cross-influences indicate connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. In addition to the infrastructural context of Chapter Two, Steve Willey's essay *The Event in John Latham and Bob Cobbing* highlights the importance of 'the event' in Latham and Cobbing's activities and

provides a context for further discussion. Nuttall who was part of Cobbing's 'extended network' and Latham's circle, had ties with Writers Forum, Group H and Better Books as well as other organisations, groups, and individuals. His multidisciplinary practice and his role as a networker was intrinsic in bringing individuals together, including Latham and English poet, artist and psychotherapist John Rowan. Rowan was a member of Hendon Arts Together and Group H, edited the groups' magazine *AND* (Tomazos, 2012, p.165), co ran-Writers Forum and worked closely with Cobbing. Rowan and Cobbing's names are listed on a leaflet advertising 'The Unity of the Arts' programme at Braziers Park, Oxfordshire, in September 1953, as the providers/creators of the course. It can be argued that this leaflet demonstrates Rowan's awareness of developments in the arts and literature, including Conceptual art because the leaflet suggests the course includes discussions on 'the separation of the arts', rules and meaning in art, 'art movements today' and the nature of art itself (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.14). Commonalities in Latham's conceptual practice and Rowan's concrete practice such as the reversal of words (for example, Latham's use of 'skoob' (books), Noit ([atten]tion) or 'nodnol' (London)) and juxtaposition of word meanings (for example, Rowan's juxtaposition of visual and verbal signs) are analysed in this section.

3.2.1 The experimental environment of Latham and Cobbing

In Willey's examination of Cobbing's 'event-responsive poetry' in relation to Latham's theory of the event structure (Willey, 2017, p.109) he draws attention to their early paintings in response to their experiences of World War Two, aesthetic concerns, and demonstrates how 'the event' manifests in and connects their practices. He identifies several crossovers in Cobbing and Latham's practices including Alexander Trocchi's Project Sigma, the thirty-sixth Group H exhibition, the influence of Herbert Read's writings on their approach to creating work, a move towards performed or sound-based work, and a correlation between Cobbing's participation in state-funded arts organisations and the Artist Placement Group's relationship with industries and companies, which Willey connects to the concept of the event. By comparing their work and highlighting these points of convergence, Willey views Cobbing and Latham as key figures in a 'larger experimental generation' (Willey, 2017, p.125). This section shows how this experimental environment which was facilitated by

Cobbing, Latham, various organisations, and individuals influenced those who were part of it, and supports comparisons of artists and poets works and approaches which were interrelated.

Although Latham is usually categorised as a conceptual artist by libraries and art institutions such as the British Library, the Tate and the Lisson Gallery, he had a multimedia practice and used painting, assemblage, sculpture, film, installations, and performance in addition to philosophical and scientific ideas to produce artworks (events). Latham's time-based theory or 'event structure' was influenced by the ideas of British astronomer Clive Gregory and German-born British parapsychologist Anita Kohsen who formed the Institute for the Study of Mental Images of which Latham was an honorary founding member. In particular, their book *The O-Structure: An Introduction to Psychophysical Cosmology*, published in 1959, and their support of an 'event-based worldview as opposed to an object-based view' (Flat Time House, n.d., p.1) influenced the theories and concepts that underpinned Latham's approach to creating work and his collaborations with poets, artists and industries. His concept of an artwork as an event and his approach to language permeated through the Artist Placement Group (Steveni, 1998) which emerged during the beginning of a paradigm shift in art in the early to mid-1960s in favour of conceptualism and the dematerialisation of the art object.

3.2.2 The Artist Placement Group: 'context is half the work'

The Artist Placement Group was co-founded in 1966, in London by conceptual artists Barbara Steveni and Latham. The organisation was initially conceived by Steveni in 1965 who, when gathering scrap material from industrial sites for Fluxus artists Daniel Spoerri and Robert Filliou, realised artists would benefit from placements within industries and companies such as British Steel and The Scottish Office (Steveni, 1998). This was facilitated by British sculptor Frank Martin, who was Head of the Sculpture Department at Saint Martin's School of Art where Steveni and Latham taught for one or two days a week (Steveni, 1998). Martin suggested Steveni should contact Sir Robert Adeane who was a board member of several companies and who subsequently introduced her to a number of interested industries (Tate, n.d.). To assist in procuring placements in industries and companies, the group used

the term 'incidental person' instead of 'artist' to redefine the role of the artist and create a template for artistic practices within industry and society (Barbara Steveni, n.d.). Although artists and poets were not placed together by the Artists Placement Group, the groups use of the term 'incidental person' shows how they regarded the artists, poets, filmmakers and others who worked with them to be under the same umbrella. This is because the term 'incidental person' describes a practitioner with no preconceived idea of the work they are going to produce and who is interested in creatively responding to the context of an institution or organisation in which they are placed. Grouping practitioners who use different media together is similar to how Hendon Arts Together operated. Founding members and collaborators of the Artist Placement Group included Flanagan, Breakwell, Martin, Reedy, Anna Ridley, David Hall, Jeffrey Shaw and Stuart Brisley. The group's statement that the 'context is half the work' (Steveni, 1998) can be interpreted as the institutional context in which their placements occur, a representation of a shift away from object-based artwork towards conceptual concerns, and/or part of the information needed to understand word meanings in a conceptual artwork or a concrete or visual poem. For example, in Latham's wall-mounted assemblage titled *Belief System* (fig.51) produced in 1959, the viewers/readers understanding of the phrase 'belief system' and each word's multiple meanings, is 'half the work' in their understanding of the piece.

Steveni and Latham had an interest in conceptual and performative modes of working (Steveni, 1998). In an interview with Melanie Roberts, Steveni explains what the Artist Placement Group's NOIT panel represented and, in the process, reveals more about Latham's thoughts and ideas behind his use of language:

The NOIT panel was the NO-IT panel and it's the last bit of attention, t.i.o.n [...]. John was always playing with words and putting the language round other ways so that Nodnol would be London backwards and his burning of his skoob towers would be books backward and so NOIT would be the end of attention and it was also NO-IT, it was to go from nothing to one. Or from nothing to finding out, which is the way that one might be working as an artist [...]. We decided to call it the NOIT panel, the NO-IT, no object. Artists who were interested in the non-it, you know, the finding out and what would come out of that and [...] a lot of these influences of John's refusal to use language

with the baggage that it comes with but reinventing the language has [...] gone right through a lot of the APG (Steveni, 1998).

Here, Steveni observes and calls attention to Latham's process of reversing the sequence of letters in a word to separate it from what it represents. For example, by reversing the word 'books' and incorporating books into assemblages, he removes their original purpose as sources of knowledge and information and changes how the viewer interacts with them. Once his Skoob Towers (fig.22) are constructed, the books become elements of an art object. Conceptual artists' concern with the removal of the art object is achieved when Latham burns the towers of books and destroys them. Steveni also emphasises Latham's influence on members of the Artist Placement Group. An example of this is present in Breakwell's work. In addition to being influenced by Houédard and Concrete/Visual poetry, Breakwell was also associated with and completed placements for the Artist Placement Group, starting in 1970. On several occasions Latham and Breakwell were part of the same events, exhibitions and presentations (Hudek, n.d.) and Breakwell would visit Better Books as part of the London Filmmakers Co-op, of which Latham was a founding member. As previously discussed, Breakwell inverts the meaning of words in his *UNWORD* series and *Unsculpt* which were produced between 1969 and 1970. This coincides with his first placement with the Artist Placement Group. Although there was an increase after 1965 in the use and embrace of language as a medium by artists and visual poets, Breakwell's proximity and connection to Latham and his *un-wording* of words supports Steveni's claim that Latham's influence was far-reaching. Instead of turning the word back to front, Breakwell reverses a word's purpose or the action it represents, for example, to 'sculpt' becomes to 'unsculpt'. Furthermore, the influence of Latham's approach to adapting and reversing words is present in Rowan's work.

3.2.3 Latham and Rowan: a play on words

In *Bomb Culture*, originally published in 1968, Nuttall establishes that Latham and Rowan were working and participating in the same artistic circles. However, unlike Breakwell, Rowan was not associated with the Artist Placement Group. Firstly, Nuttall documents a meeting that took place in Criton Tomazos's flat in June 1965, stating,

‘Wilcocks [...] Bruce Lacey [...] John Latham [...] and John Rowan [are] there’ (Nuttall, 1970, p.144). Tomazos, a member of Group H, presented his drawings, plans and maquettes for his project *The Cage* which was an unrealised environment designed for a multistorey building (Nuttall, 1970, pp.144-145). The project was intended to follow on from the *sTigma* exhibition created in the basement of Better Books in March 1965 and involve the same collective of artists, writers and poets (Tomazos, 2012, p.175), some of which were involved in Hendon Arts Together or Group H. Secondly, although Latham was extraneous to these organisations, he was associated with them through Nuttall and would contribute to their exhibitions. For example, Latham would perform ‘events’ such as his *Skoob Tower Ceremonies* or small participatory happenings to engage the audience – ‘He opened a book and he would tear pages and then he would spread jam on the pages and hand them to those present’ – before the groups’ exhibitions took place in the basement of Better Books (Tomazos, 2012, p.174). Keshvani interprets Latham’s pre-performance as ‘breaking bread’ (Tomazos, 2012, p.174) which is a term usually associated with religious practices. However, by using pages of a book this performance also represents sharing or shared knowledge and the importance of language to Latham.

Nuttall includes Latham and Rowan in a list of ‘regular exhibitors’ for Group H together with himself, Cobbing, Tomazos and others (Nuttall, 1970, p.149). Rowan and Latham contributed to the thirty-sixth exhibition of Group H at the Drian Gallery in October 1966 and the accompanying catalogue. Rowan’s introductory essay for the exhibition catalogue, edited by Cobbing, ‘draws attention to the substantial differences between the gallery space and the catalogue’ (Willey, 2017, p.121) through comparisons of the work displayed in the space and what was selected for the catalogue. A review of the exhibition, printed in the first issue of *IT*, is an edited and condensed version of Rowan’s introduction for the exhibition catalogue. It includes a description of Latham’s *Skoob Towers* and wall-mounted assemblages of burnt books as ‘art [...] in spite of itself’ and art created through destruction (*The International Times*, 1966, p.10). This shows that as well as working and collaborating in the same circles as each other, Rowan was familiar with Latham’s work and understood it because he associated it with Metzger’s *Destruction in Art Symposium* which happened the month before. This was an event which, according to Steveni, was purportedly influenced by Latham:

Gustav Metzger came round and John was burning a tower of books, his first skoob tower thing in the garden [...] he looked at it and Gustav, I suppose at the time, now I know was doing his acrylic destruction works and after Gustav had seen that, he then came back about six months later and he said he was going to put together this Destruction in Art Symposium thing [...] (Steveni, 1998).

In addition to paintings and sculptures being exhibited by members of Group H, the thirty-sixth exhibition also included '[readings] of poetry and tapes of sound poetry at the drian galleries [...] by members of writers forum and others' (Barry Flanagan, n.d.). This interdisciplinarity, which was a key aspect of the counterculture, is a thread that links Group H, Writers Forum, Latham and others together.

Although Metzger came up with the idea for the symposium from watching Latham's first Skoob Tower Ceremony (Steveni, 1998), Latham's process of burning towers of books was not an anarchist gesture, however, the act of book burning does have negative associations. By using the word 'skoob' instead of 'books' Latham is interrupting the relationship between knowledge and language and by carrying out his book burning ceremonies he questions the importance and value given to language as a method of communication (Steveni, 1998). Rowan also interrupts the relationship between shared knowledge and language in his acrostic word composition 'POLICE' (fig.52) published in 1970, in *Writers Forum Quarto No. 8, Red White Blue*, his 'only venture into concrete poetry' (John Rowan, 2017). In the US and UK there was distrust of the police among the younger, countercultural generation due to raids of alternative venues (especially those that had a publishing wing) and alleged police misconduct. The concept of destruction as a form of creation, which was prevalent in artistic practices in the 1960s and 1970s and in Latham's work, is visible in Rowan's composition and his approach to representing language in his concrete poems/word art. Rowan simultaneously destroys what the word 'police' is meant to represent publicly, disconnects it from its meaning and creates a new meaning using satire. He associates each letter with an adjective that is ironic and presumably intended to offend, for example, poetic, open, loving, insightful, creative, ecstatic, and captures the radical politics and sentiment of

members of the counterculture. Rowan's 'POLICE' is one of several examples published in *Red White Blue* that can be analysed in relation to Latham's interest in and experimentation with language and its connotative and denotative meanings.

The works in *Red White Blue*, which is a critically and historically overlooked publication, can be contextualised in relation to experiments with word and image in visual art in the 1960s and 1970s and the Concrete poetry movement. This has not been considered by early art and literary historians. One work is comprised of a stick figure drawn inside a box with the word 'outside' written underneath (fig.53). This work can be interpreted in several ways. Rowan became a member of the Association of Humanistic Psychology in 1969 (Silvester, 2018). This area of study, which focuses on conscious thought and encourages individuals to fulfil their potential and develop their abilities (McLeod, 2023), can be applied to the work. The stick figure represents an individual trying to escape their limits and as a member of the association, Rowan's approach to psychology encourages people to change how they think and approach problems. However, the figure remains trapped because they are trying to physically escape, rather than mentally. On the other hand, this work can be interpreted as a comment on how a reader/viewer understands concrete and visual poems or an artwork. Usually, a concrete poem is made up of words or letters arranged in graphic space to create meaning. However, in Rowan's composition the visual elements placed in relation to each other are a drawing and the word 'outside'. In addition to being a visual representation of a stick figure, stuck inside a box and trying to break out of it, the work is a play on the phrase 'thinking outside the box'. Firstly, the viewer's thought processes happen outside of the drawn box on the page, that is, the meaning of the work is achieved when the drawing and the word 'outside' are understood simultaneously. This is similar to how text and its arrangement in graphic space is interpreted in a concrete poem. Secondly, the process of cognition happens in the viewer's mind and outside of the page-space. Finally, the meaning of the phrase 'thinking outside the box' means to think creatively or unconventionally and Concrete poetry was not constrained by the fixed rules of traditional poetry.

The relationship between word and image present in Rowan's untitled work 'outside' (and another work featuring the word 'man' written underneath a stick figure drawing

of a woman (fig.54)) can be viewed through the theoretical lens of semiotic theory. With regard to Saussure's two-part semiotic model, in the latter example the relationship between the signifier and signified is disrupted because the word 'man' (the signifying element) is paired with a universally recognisable symbol for a woman (the signified). This juxtaposition of man and woman/signifier and signified calls into question word meanings and plays with the interdependence of the signifier and signified to create a sign. In addition, this thesis argues that Rowan's approach to his poetry is tied to his interest in humanistic psychology. English academic and writer Peter Reason, who collaborated with Rowan to produce the publication *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research* states 'As well as setting his dialectical paradigm for research, John had been playfully writing poems and aphorisms that expressed the new paradigm' (Reason, 2014, p.26). Although the poems Reason refers to are not those in *Red White Blue*, the dialectical approach which involves the exchange of opposing ideas, methods or theories to determine a truth or come to an agreement, can be applied to Rowan's concrete poems. For instance, the poem presents the stick figure drawing as a representation of a man due to the signifying element ('man') but this is contested by other interpretations including shared knowledge of the sign for woman or the word 'man' referring to mankind as a whole, and so on.

As well as disassociating a word from its common meaning, like Latham, Rowan also emphasises the meaning of words, sometimes concurrently. In most of the examples in *Red White Blue*, Rowan takes a word and chooses to present it visually as its opposite (fig.55). For example, the word 'small' is written in large, red capital letters to fill the page space and the bold colour makes the word appear larger to the eye and draws attention to it. Although making 'small' as large as the page could be seen as removing or changing the word's original meaning to represent something else, conversely, the comparison between big and small emphasises the word's original meaning and highlights the significance of context. Rowan also makes use of elements of art and design including colour, line, shape and space in his compositions. In one work the word 'round' is repeated five times, stacked, and lined up to form the shape of a square which is five letters by five letters in size (fig.56). The letters are angular and not rounded, making the letters 'o' and 'd' look like squares which emphasises the difference between the chosen word and its shape.

As a member of Group H and close associate of Cobbing's, Rowan would have been aware of and have witnessed Cobbing's poetry readings, and in this composition Rowan demonstrates his understanding of the relationship between speech sounds and letter shapes by removing the curves of the letters. Speech and vowel sounds were emphasised in readings of Sound poetry where written language was sometimes used as a score for performances. In the recorded version of 'Worm', Cobbing emphasises the 'o' sound in the word 'worm', by stretching the word out over a duration of time at a lower pitch and repeating it throughout the recording.

Furthermore, it can be argued that Rowan's untitled composition based on the word 'triangular' (fig.57) can be linked to Concrete poetry's concern with form and content, but it is centred on an idea, similar to Conceptual art. In the work the word 'triangular' is written in the shape of a circle. Although, the two shapes are not visually similar, their meanings are. Triangles are regarded as the strongest shape and unbreakable and circles represent a whole and are described as infinite and unbroken. Whether the form of the work is the word 'triangular' in the shape of a circle, or 'circular' written in the shape of a triangle, its subject matter (unbreakable or infinite) will remain the same. Overall, Rowan's work sits between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and is a product of his own interest in psychology and the interests and influence of the artists and poets around him. The words he uses are meant to be read and act as visual components which are either separated from their meanings or arranged in space so the structure of the composition emphasises their meanings. Rowan's combination of text and image means his work belongs to a wider context created in the arts and literature by artists and poets who opposed the separation of media in favour of the incorporation of visual and verbal elements in compositions. As well as sharing similarities with aspects of Cobbing and Latham's work, Rowan's work, to an extent, defies categorisation but can be examined in relation to Concrete, Visual and/or Sound poetry, Conceptual art, artwork that includes text to resolve conceptual concerns, word art, word paintings, and works that experiment with the relationship between slogans and images seen in advertising. This analysis of Rowan, Breakwell and Latham's work reveals a shared interest in the reversal of language to destroy, create or invert meaning in literary and artistic arenas. Furthermore, Rowan's practice has aspects of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art but is best categorised as 'the drawn word' which Michael Petry in

The Word is Art, defines as 'drawings or paintings that feature text as a vital component' and work in which words exist in 'a liminal, fluid state between letters and marks' which are meant to be read and viewed (Petry, 2018, p.221).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the principal aim of this chapter was to identify and examine instances of interactions between concrete poets and conceptual artists (and/or individuals creating concrete or conceptual works). By comparing the work, methods, and approaches of Breakwell and Houédard, and subsequently Latham and Rowan (together with a consideration of the influence of Furnival and Cobbing), it is evident that crossovers occurred due to these artists and poets choosing not to work in isolation. As demonstrated, connections between individuals associated with and/or producing Concrete poetry and Conceptual art can be made through comparisons of their work, analysing similarities in their approach to language and the issue of creation and destruction in art at the time, and examining the ethos of the groups and organisations they were part of. Although Breakwell documented his meeting with Houédard and described how Houédard's ideas influenced him, Houédard, Rowan and Latham did not. However, Rowan and Latham's proximity to each other in the groups and networks they were part of – which was recorded by Nuttall – and Rowan's description of Latham's work for the Group H thirty-sixth exhibition catalogue confirms that they were acquaintances and that Rowan had seen and was influenced by Latham's work and experiments with language. This is also visible in Rowan's work which has been largely overlooked by art and literary historians and critics. In both case studies, the role of individuals such as Furnival, Cobbing and Nuttall, orbiting Houédard and Breakwell/Latham and Rowan, was fundamental. Although the four principal practitioners examined in this chapter are usually recognised as poets or artists, they do have artistic and literary interests and examinations of particular works, which are not visually similar, show aspects of and approaches to concrete poems which are comparable to conceptual artworks. Whereas the impact of interdisciplinary or intermedia practitioners – who defy easy categorisation and have described themselves as poet and artist (poet-artists) – on the argument for connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: The 'poet-artist' and intermedia practitioners

'Part of what is useful about language... is how it allows us to cut across categories and movements – like Fluxus, Minimalism, and Conceptual art – that are too often discussed in isolation. In addition, it allows us to understand the interrelations among experimental music, poetry, and art...' (Kotz, 2007, p.7).

Introduction

Liz Kotz identifies crossovers between contemporaneous movements in sixties art, literature and music by placing emphasis on the conventions of language. Although practitioners from these movements (and others including Concrete poetry, Sound poetry, Visual poetry and performance art) have used language to challenge and transcend the academic and institutional boundaries that exist between disciplines, value should also be placed on other aspects of their practices. For example, a shared characteristic of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art is experimentation with language and its relationship to form but this chapter, which analyses the intermedia practices of four cross-disciplinary practitioners, also considers how these two movements are linked by experiments with performance/happenings, physicality of text, materiality or immateriality, modes of dissemination and exhibition, sound, scores, and audience participation.

The aesthetic concerns of four intermedia practitioners, the theoretical and visual similarities in their practices, and the context in which their work is produced is investigated in this chapter. They are Ian Hamilton Finlay, Carl Andre, Paula Claire and Norman Henry Pritchard. Connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are visible in their individual practices, that is, unlike the poets and artists discussed in Chapter Three whose interpersonal relationships are key to demonstrating various links between the two movements, the individuals in this chapter have intermedia practices that are an amalgamation of artistic and literary forms or practices that borrow techniques from both the Concrete poetry and Conceptual art movements.

The presence of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art in Ian Hamilton Finlay's work is illustrated by his exploration of the physicality of text in his concrete poems, poem

objects and poems in the environment. It is also visible in the instruction-like quality of some of his pieces which are comparable to the instruction paintings/pieces of conceptual artists Chieko Shiomi and Yoko Ono, the presentation of his work in art contexts such as a sculpture park or gallery, and his prioritisation of ideas over material forms in his poetic practice. For example, Finlay's works produced in stone, ceramics, glass and wood are inspired by earlier, written concrete compositions and are produced by collaborators which suggests that the material the poem objects are made of is secondary to the idea or concept Finlay is trying to communicate. Similar to Finlay, Carl Andre explores the physicality of text but he treats the words in his (concrete) poems as particles, a term used to describe the individual material elements of his sculptures. Andre's connection with Conceptual art and Concrete poetry is revealed by critics and scholars situating him in relation to the movements. This thesis approaches Andre's work from the perspective that his wish to not be labelled as a concrete poet or conceptual artist should be respected but proposes that his work belongs in discussions on Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

The link between poetry and art in Paula Claire's practice is demonstrated by her employment of forms of Conceptual art such as happenings, and participatory or collaborative performances which are aspects of Concrete poetry, or more specifically Sound poetry. This thesis presents experiments with sound, such as Paula Claire's Sound poetry scores, as part of Concrete poetry practices and not separate to them. In addition to this, her Sound poetry features techniques used in experimental poetry, art and music (such as the cut-up) and together with the participatory or interactive aspects of her practice a crossover between concrete and conceptual tendencies is present in her work. Similar to Paula Claire, Norman Henry Pritchard (also known as Norman Henry Pritchard II) explores the phonetic features or possibilities of language but this impacts how words are written and presented visually or orally in Pritchard's poetry and verse. Therefore, a relationship between the linguistic, visual and auditory realms is apparent in Pritchard's work through his adaptation of techniques from multiple areas of interest in art, literature and music including Concrete, Sound and Visual poetry, Conceptual art, jazz music, destruction in art, chanting, black oral traditions, open-field poetics and the Black Arts Movement.

In Rebecca Beasley's examination of the theories of influential figures in the modernist movement, she highlights the English critic and poet T.E. Hulme's statement that 'we are unable to comprehend the world in all its plurality, so we create artificial ordering systems for it...' (Beasley, 2007b, p.12). This concept of ordering systems alongside the formalist arguments consistent with American art critic Clement Greenberg's critical position on 'formal purity', have marginalised work analogous to specific movements. With regard to Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, critics and historians influenced by and/or sympathetic to a discipline-specific approach have ignored the breadth of these poets' and artists' experimental practices and have disregarded language based-artworks and visual poems that do not 'fit' within the discourses of Conceptual art and Concrete poetry.

Dick Higgins used the term 'intermedia' to describe the interdisciplinary art and literary scene of the 1960s and the uncategorisable work produced by practitioners working between and within genres and categories previously established by various art institutions, critics and historians. His influential essay 'Intermedia' was published in 1966 in the first volume of the *Something Else Newsletter*, which was part of his Something Else Press founded in 1963. The term intermedia encompasses a variety of international genres, programmes, groups, media, and movements. In his essay, Higgins states that categorisation via media had become arbitrary in the early to mid-1960s and that 'the use of intermedia is more or less universal throughout the fine arts, since continuity rather than categorization is the hallmark of our new mentality' (Higgins and Higgins, 2001, p.50). This statement encapsulates the cross-disciplinary, multimedia approach facilitated and encouraged by alternative bookshops, Arts Labs, organisations, events and publications at the time. Although the intermedia poet-artists in this chapter, with the exception of Paula Claire, did not participate in the venues, networks or groups examined in Chapter Two, the same 'melting pot' (Curtis, 2020, p.24) mentality informs their work. The term intermedia also alludes to the shared interests of artists and poets. Recurring themes in Concrete poetry, Conceptual art and intermedia practices that have been identified in this thesis and are perceptible in the works and/or artistic and literary practices presented in this chapter, include word and image relationships, the concept of nothing equals something, performance and participation, destruction in art, and the absence of the author.

The chapter is divided into four sections and each section centres on a practitioner with a broad language-based or performative intermedia practice that is situated between discourses on Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and challenges the boundaries of the movements established by critics, historians, and institutions. The chapter includes UK-based poet-artists (Finlay and Paula Claire) and US-based poet-artists with links to the UK (Andre and Pritchard). External influences including social, cultural, national and stylistic contexts and other artistic, literary or musical practices are considered, and comparisons to other individuals, for example, Lily Greenham, are made to demonstrate cross-influences caused by participation in events and collaboration. To further understand the impact of intermedia practitioners and how social, cultural and institutional marginalisation of experimental work plays a role in the creation of and challenges to definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, there is also a need to distinguish between work defined as and work parallel to both Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. This is considered in this chapter through an examination of the work of these individuals, who have contributed to Concrete poetry and Conceptual art but are not always described, or do not describe themselves as part of these movements.

These intermedia practitioners are discussed in a canonical order, from the most well-known or most written about to least well-known and least written about in relation to the Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art movements. This order reflects trends in the literature, with a focus on the contribution of women and minority figures emerging since the turn of the twenty-first century. In addition, the order also indicates who was associated with early phases of the movements (Finlay and Andre) and those associated with later developments and broader definitions (Paula Claire and Pritchard). To illustrate, Finlay is among a number of poets who were the first to encounter Concrete poetry when it 'arrived' in Britain in 1962. According to Ferris, these poets were introduced to Concrete poetry via E. M. de Melo e Castro's response to the article 'Freeing the Mind VII: Poetry, Prose and the Machine' published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS) which he felt ignored 'the increasingly important movement of *poesia concreta*' (Ferris, 2022, p.64). Whereas Andre was writing poetry in which 'conventional grammatical structures [were] entirely supplanted by alternative organising systems' (Rider, 2011a, p.18) as

early as the 1950s and Alistair Rider in *Carl Andre: Things in Their Element*, proposes that 'it is possible to see [Andre's] own interrogation of literary form as not wholly disconnected from [Concrete poetry]' (Rider, 2011a, p.138). Furthermore, Andre collaborated with and contributed to exhibitions alongside conceptual artists in the early stages of the Conceptual art movement. For example, his work was included in the *Xerox Book* (an exhibition in book form) published in 1968, a year before there were movements towards Conceptual art becoming institutionally accepted, according to Andrew Wilson (Wilson, 2016, p.53). Although Paula Claire was producing 'mobile poems' in the 1960s, her involvement in the Concrete poetry movement started after she returned to the UK in 1968 and met Bob Cobbing in 1969 (Hoffberg, 1995, p.3). By this time, the aforementioned divide between 'clean' and 'dirty' Concrete poetry examined by Lori Emerson, was well established. Paula Claire's '[interest] in extending the forms of poetry' (Paula Claire, n.d.) materialised as an intermedia practice which corresponds with later, 'dirty' developments in Concrete poetry which were more common by the mid-1960s. Finally, in *Material Poetics in Hemispheric America: Words and Objects 1950-2010*, American poet and scholar Rebecca Kosick states that 'Pritchard's take on concrete poetry can be understood as rearticulating the form on less minimal terms than those put forward in the 1950s and 1960s' (Kosick, 2020, p.139).

The first of four practitioners is Finlay who is typically placed in a Scottish literary context and associated with the early, classical phase of Concrete poetry. For example, Greg Thomas, author of *Border Blurs: Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland*, states 'Finlay's engagement with concrete poetry [...] provided a means of self-definition against dominant currents within early 1960s Scottish literary culture' (Thomas, 2019, p.75), in particular, against the cultural, literary and artistic movement that started in the 1920s known as the 'Scottish Renaissance' (Thomas, 2019, p.75). Finlay was frustrated with this older generation of Scottish writers, including Scottish poet, writer and political figure Hugh MacDiarmid because they were insular and consciously ignored developments outside of Scottish literary culture (Linklater, n.d.). MacDiarmid's hostility towards Concrete poetry is demonstrated in a letter concerning Edwin Morgan's involvement in the Edinburgh University Press's poetry magazine *Poetry Scotland* – 'I will not agree to work of mine appearing in any anthology or periodical that uses rubbish of that sort, which I

regard as an utter debasement of standards but also as a very serious matter involving the very identity of poetry' (Corbett and Huang, 2020, p.199). Although Finlay saw Concrete poetry as a departure from the 'inhibiting national literary culture' in Scotland (Thomas, 2019, p.253), he was condemnatory of the countercultural scene and figures associated with it who were exceeding the limits of early (also known as 'classical' or 'pure') Concrete poetry and expanding the movement by tracing its origins back to movements such as Dada and Futurism and relating it to Higgins's concept of intermedia (Higgins, 1967, p.1). However, a number of critics and institutions, including the art critic Tom Lubbock, the David Nolan Gallery and the Tate, describe Finlay as a Conceptual artist and Bann claims that Finlay's 'work can in retrospect be seen to have had a certain kinship with the broad movement of conceptual art that developed in the 1960s' (Bann, 2014, pp.12-13). These contrasting views demonstrate the need to examine Finlay's work in an intermedia context.

Paula Claire is a self-proclaimed poet-artist based in the UK who was part of Cobbing's network, which was examined in Chapter Two. The national, cultural and social context in which Paula Claire participated in Concrete poetry and associated events and/or movements is different to the other practitioners included in this chapter. For example, Paula Claire participated in groups that were extending the parameters of Concrete poetry in the 1960s as opposed to poets such as Finlay who practised early forms of Concrete poetry. In addition, she observed that on average approximately 25-33% of visual poets were women (Hoffberg, 1995, p.9) and believes that it is her 'sustained creativity over nearly sixty years [that] has enabled [her] to make a contribution to [her] field' (Paula Claire, n.d.). In *Women in Concrete Poetry: 1959-1979*, Balgiu and de la Torre emphasise that the role of women in 'different European neo-avant-gardes [...] is rarely established with precision. In fact, it is regularly underrated. Their work is not always credited, and it has rarely garnered the visibility and recognition that their male collaborators' work received' (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, pp.13-14). However, Paula Claire's frequent collaboration with Cobbing resulted in contact with Mirella Bentivoglio and subsequently international poets and artists (Hoffberg, 1995, p.4). The exchange of work between these practitioners and Paula Claire assisted in the formation of her archive which is regarded as 'the largest archive of sound and visual poetry in

England' (Balgiu and de la Torre, 2020, p.467). Consequently, she is included in this chapter because she developed a practice outside of Cobbing's activities, that is intermedia in nature.

The rationale for the inclusion of American practitioners in this thesis is their involvement in the UK scene, events, and organisations. In this chapter the American practitioners' work was available to British audiences and concrete or conceptual practitioners through galleries, artist/poet-run venues or publications, and/or they were involved in events in the US alongside participating poets and artists visiting from the UK. Andre was one of several American practitioners whose work was exhibited at the Lisson Gallery in the 1970s. At the same time British audiences were being introduced to American Minimal art, Conceptual art and Fluxus activities (Lisson Gallery, n.d.a), so were UK based concrete poets and conceptual artists including Dom Sylvester Houédard and Ian Breakwell who were associated with the gallery. In a 1978 interview with Carl Andre, British art critic and magazine editor Peter Fuller stated that Andre 'achieved notoriety in Britain' (Andre, 1978) when his sculpture *Equivalent VIII* was purchased by the Tate Gallery in 1972. The work was displayed by the gallery between 1974-1976, resulting in the 'Bricks Affair' (Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1988, p.47), and exhibited as part of a larger exhibition of Andre's work at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in 1978 (Tate, n.d.a). However, the Tate Gallery exhibited other work by Andre earlier than the *Equivalent VIII* controversy, for example, in 1969 Andre's *144 Magnesium Square* was exhibited at the gallery alongside work by conceptual, performance, land and 'walking' artists including Richard Long, Hamish Fulton and Barry Flanagan (Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1988, p.47). In addition, Alistair Rider states that Andre and Long met in 1968, remained in contact and admired each other's work (Rider, 2011b, p.134) and Nicholas Wroe's article for *The Guardian* (Wroe, 2003) demonstrates how Andre was connected to British Conceptual art through Long who is described by the Lisson Gallery as 'in the vanguard of conceptual art in Britain since [...] 1967' (Lisson Gallery, n.d.c).

Although there is no record of Pritchard visiting the UK, his relationship with the UK appears in three forms: events, publications, and through a meeting with Clarence Major and Paul Breman who was a London-based Dutch writer, bookseller and

publisher. Pritchard participated in The 12th International Sound Poetry Festival in New York, in 1980 alongside British poets and artists, including Paula Claire, Bob Cobbing and British poet and visual artist Michael Gibbs who was associated with and influenced by Fluxus. (This festival is discussed further in section 4.4.1.) With regard to publications, Pritchard's poems and verse were featured in anthologies of black poetry and in underground magazines including the *East Village Other (EVO)*, which was sold by UK booksellers such as Barry Miles (Miles, n.d.b, p.3). In addition, Paul Breman included Pritchard's work in *You Better Believe It: Black Verse in English from Africa, the West Indies and the United States*, published in 1973 (Breman, 1973, pp.419-421). Breman had an interest in African American and black poetry which was encouraged by Dutch Jewish poet, activist and anthologist of African American literature Rosey Pool (based in London from 1949) who was an 'authority on Black Poetry' (Boyd, 2008, p.25). He started his *Heritage Series of Black Poetry* in 1962 and ran a bookshop with British bookseller Benjamin Weinreb from 1963 to 1967 (Barker, 2008). The bookshop was located at 72 New Oxford Street, London (later 39 Great Russell Street, London) which was within walking distance (7-10 minutes) of Better Books and St Martin's School of Art on Charing Cross Road. According to Clarence Major, in 1971 he and Pritchard met Breman in New York to discuss being published in Breman's *Heritage Series of Black Poetry* (Major, 2008, p.169) which 'rapidly developed a reputation, often spread among the poets by word of mouth [...] as a venue which was more open than some other outlets to the various styles being explored by black poets [...]' (Ramey, 2008, p.6). Although Breman did not publish Pritchard's work in the *Heritage Series* (1962-1975) and instead decided to include it in the concurrent anthology *You Better Believe It*, published by Penguin Books, it can be said that their meeting demonstrates that Pritchard was aware of Breman and his publishing activities in London – either through word of mouth or African American poet and publisher Dudley Randall's Broadside Press, which was the US distributor of the *Heritage Series*.

4.1 Ian Hamilton Finlay: beyond Concrete poetry

The poems or poem-objects that Finlay started to produce in the 1960s are representative of stricter definitions of Concrete poetry, including 'pure' Concrete poetry, whose boundaries are proposed in Eugen Gomringer's 'From Line to

Constellation' and examined by Ronald P. Draper in his article 'Concrete Poetry'. Finlay popularised Concrete poetry that was 'silent', and deliberately resolved the form of each of his poems so that they would '[arrive] at [their] perfect order before [they were] presented to the public' (Gray, 1972, p.2). This approach is comparable to Draper's observation that the spatial element in 'pure' concrete poems cannot be removed in favour of the poem being read aloud or presented as traditional verse because this element is necessary in communicating meaning. Principally, Finlay intended for his concrete poems, whether presented on paper or as an object in an environment, to be seen as immutable.

However, Finlay's interest in various disciplines, his affinity with the arts, and his multimedia approach has resulted in investigations into his work which are not limited to the parameters of early definitions of Concrete poetry, or discipline-specificity. Finlay has been described as a poet, artist, classicist, printmaker, small-press publisher, writer, land artist, philosopher, toy-maker and gardener. Critical attention since the 1960s, particularly since Finlay's death in 2006 in the form of publications, exhibitions, and symposia such as *Ian Hamilton Finlay: Little Fields, Long Horizons* organised in 2017 at the University of Edinburgh (dfarrier, 2017), has contributed to this range of labels which demonstrate the interdisciplinary character of his poems, artworks, and sculptures. In *The Independent's* obituary for Finlay, art critic Tom Lubbock describes Finlay as a conceptual artist and cites 'today's loose art-speak' (Lubbock, 2006) as the rationale for this categorisation. The Tate also portrays Finlay as a conceptual artist because he is focused on ideas and uses any media or form that serves these ideas best (Tate, n.d.b). Furthermore, Finlay wrote to Derek Stanford in 1967 stating 'My problem, you know, in everything, has never been 'ideas', but style, or form, that is, [...] the way of doing it – which is where I usually get stuck' (Finlay, 1967a). It can be argued that even though Finlay saw his sculptural work, garden and poem-objects as extensions of his concrete poetry, his conceptual tendencies position him as being beyond the boundaries of the movement and sharing an affinity with others such as Conceptual art.

Finlay is described by Stephen Bann as a pioneer of the 'English-speaking' branch of Concrete poetry (Bann, 1967, p.20) due to his participation in and contribution to the movement as a concrete poet, co-founder of the Wild Hawthorn Press (the

publishing division of Little Sparta) and editor of the periodical *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse. (P.O.T.H.)*. Finlay's oeuvre has been examined in relation to Concrete poetry produced in Scotland and England by many critics and academics including Bann and writer and editor Greg Thomas (Thomas, 2019, p.2). Finlay's body of work and the influence of the Wild Hawthorn Press is also recognised as internationally significant (Gray, 1972, p.4). Although Finlay saw himself as central to concrete activity (Gray, 1972, p.4) and distinguished between his work and the work of other concrete poets who were not trying to write exclusively silent poems (Gray, 1972, p.8), his move away from conventional modes of producing Concrete poetry in the mid-1960s towards using a variety of different media and approaches associated with art, architecture and landscape design, has resulted in him being regarded as 'eccentric and on the edge of things' (Gray, 1972, p.4).

Finlay published his first collection of concrete poems called *Rapel: Ten Fauve and Suprematist Poems* in 1963, a year after Scottish concrete poet Edwin Morgan introduced him to the Brazilian Noigandres poets, and five years after they published their 'Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry'. Finlay's description of the concrete poems in *Rapel* as fauve and suprematist, indicate an early interest in abstracted and simplified forms in art, which are key features of the Fauvist and Suprematist art movements. This theme of simplification is present in Concrete poetry which features reduced language arranged in simplified forms and evokes French concrete poet Pierre Garnier's statement on *Spatialisme*, that 'Every word is an abstract picture' (Solt, 1970, p.32). Spatial poetry was Pierre and Ilse Garnier's term for experimental poetry concerned with the structure of and relationship between verbal and visual elements in the 1960s, including Concrete poetry (Solt, 1970, p.32). Finlay's correspondence and working notes in his archive papers suggest he benefitted from adopting the technical devices of Concrete poetry because its literary and artistic qualities gave him the freedom to assimilate symbols, words, or phrases (and their associated meanings) from other disciplines he was interested in, including art, philosophy, and history, into his poems.

Finlay collaborated with artists, poets, stone carvers, artisans, letterers and letter cutters to produce the artworks or poem-objects permanently displayed in the grounds of Little Sparta in Dunsyre (Bann, 2014, p.14). His work has also been

installed outside of the grounds of Little Sparta, in Main Street, Biggar, and Canterbury (Gray, 1972, p.6). In 'Ian Hamilton Finlay, 1925-2006: sculpture as a fusion of poetry and place', Patrick Eyres describes the concerns and themes Finlay was exploring in his work as 'the separation of poetry and the visual arts, the modernist disjuncture between avant-garde and tradition, the privileging of object-based sculpture, and the phenomenon of the sculpture park' (Eyres, 2007, p.103). These concerns are visible in Little Sparta. Sculpture parks were originally institutions dedicated to the presentation of one specific medium. It can be argued that by inscribing his poetry into various materials and exhibiting his poem-objects in the landscape, Finlay challenges this medium-specificity by presenting the poems in an art context or as art. Some of his works are comparable to the instruction pieces of Ono or Shiommi or are self-referential and focused on an idea, similar to Conceptual art. For example, *See Poussin, Hear Lorraine* (fig.58) is a stone plaque which 'suggests a way to appreciate the landscape of pool, trees, grasses and stone works' surrounding the work (Little Sparta, n.d.a). The inscription refers to the work of seventeenth century French classical landscape artists Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorraine who captured the sensory experience of being in nature in their paintings. It instructs the viewer to observe the stillness of the water and listen to the sound of the leaves rustling in the garden (Little Sparta, n.d.a). Based on the claims of American art critic, director, filmmaker and editor Lizzie Borden that 'intersensory correspondences such as odors and noises' (Borden, 1972) are one mode of Conceptual art, it can be argued that there is a merging of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art tendencies in *See Poussin, Hear Lorraine*. Although Borden relates sensory systems to performance in Conceptual art, Finlay emphasises the visual and auditory senses in his poem when he encourages the viewer to become aware of their environment (to see and hear). It is clear that the sensory experience generated by *See Poussin, Hear Lorraine* is reminiscent of the 'intersensory correspondences' Borden identifies in Conceptual art but unlike conceptual artists who criticise the realisation of ideas as art objects, Finlay maintains Concrete poetry's concern for materiality and his interest in creating silent poetry in his poem-object.

Finlay's means of production, dissemination and collaboration exceed those of Concrete poetry. His internationally recognised experiments with Concrete poetry, including his interest in inscribing language onto objects and in the landscape –

usually in collaboration with letterers and letter-carvers (Bann, 2014, p.14) – are examples of the cross-disciplinary experimental activity that was prominent during the 1960s and 1970s. In the following subsections his intermedia work is examined in relation to the concerns of early Concrete poetry, the concept of ‘post-concrete poetry’ (Gray, 1972, p.7) – which is a critically contested term sometimes used to describe concrete poems produced after the decline of the movement in the late 1960s – practitioners who use text as media, concurrent and/or similar text-image movements, and the concerns of (language-based) Conceptual art.

4.1.1 Concrete poetry, the Wild Hawthorn Press and *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse* (P.O.T.H)

Finlay and Jessie Sheeler (formerly McGuffie) co-founded the Wild Hawthorn Press in 1961 and published work that ‘no established publisher was prepared to handle’ (Eadie, n.d. [c.1961-1971]) until 1967, when the focus changed to exclusively publishing Finlay’s work. Their periodical ‘*Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.*’, established in 1962, included traditional and experimental work by international poets and artists that were of interest to Finlay (Eadie, n.d. [c.1961-1971]). This included John Furnival and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, members of the European avant-garde such as Guillaume Apollinaire, American neo-objectivists, and concrete and visual poets namely the Noigandres group, Mary Ellen Solt, Ernst Jandl, Morgan, Gomringer and Houédard (Little Sparta, n.d.b). Through publishing and correspondence Finlay was exposed to the work of poets and artists exploring a fusion of text and image or spatial and lingual elements in compositions. Although Finlay’s vast catalogue of work made in a wide range of media ‘enlarged our concept of the poem as a functional object in the environment’ (Solt, 1970, p.44), towards the end of the 1960s, Finlay dissociated himself from Concrete poetry because the movement became ‘fashionable’ (Finlay, 1967b) and started to use the term ‘post-concrete poetry’ (Gray, 1972, p.7). However, printers, publishers and critics started to categorise his poems as visual art and would ignore ‘the fact that [they were] an extension of [his] poetry-booklets’ (Finlay, 1971a). He viewed each of his poems as having their own history which started with an initial idea and developed into prints or objects. This seriality is demonstrated in his re-creation of early concrete poems and his actualisation of

unrealised plans for larger concrete poems or poem-objects which initially lacked Arts Council funding or institutional support.

With regards to Mike Weaver's viewpoint that Finlay's poems are 'experiential' (Weaver, 1966, p.301), it can be argued that Finlay's concrete poem 'To the Painter, Juan Gris' also relates to the processes of performance and documentation in Conceptual art. In the journal article 'Concrete Poetry', Weaver states that 'Finlay's basic tenet that "the mind will always try to make words out of letters – to create movement" suggests the single word as the smallest unit of material in concrete poetry' (Weaver, 1966, pp.298-301). This principle is demonstrated in Finlay's spatial arrangements of language and his understanding of the cognitive processes involved in reading poetry where form is equivalent to content in the production of meaning. Although, the word is the smallest element in relation to meaning, the smallest, arrangeable material unit in a concrete poem is a letter or punctuation mark. For example, an exclamation mark is a symbol used in linguistic and non-linguistic contexts to represent a warning or hazard and is an exception to Weaver's statement. In the poem 'To the Painter, Juan Gris' (fig.59) the words 'happy' and 'apple' are arranged in the shape of an oval with the word 'pip' running vertically through the centre of the poem to represent an apple. The word 'pip' is associated with a seed in a piece of fruit and with an old-fashioned phrase meaning goodbye which is cheerful in tone. The meaning of the poem is achieved by the word 'pip' which is the core of the poem and connects the words 'happy' and 'apple' at their syllabic break ('p'). The 'i' in the centre of the poem, which is blue and stands out amongst the gold letters (Weaver, 1966, p.301), together with the title, emphasise that this poem is dedicated to an individual. The word 'apple' refers to the still life paintings of Juan Gris which were in a Synthetic Cubist style characterised by bold, bright colours and simplified shapes. These elements are also in Finlay's concrete poem.

In addition to how 'To the Painter, Juan Gris' functions as a concrete poem, another approach presented in this thesis is that the work is a conceptual artist's response to Gris's *Apples* (fig.60) created in 1924. Assuming that Finlay's work refers to *Apples*, one interpretation is that Finlay has documented the activity of cutting one of the apples in the painting in half, a process which is suggested by Gris's inclusion of a

knife in the composition. It can be argued that a mode of Conceptual art described by Borden as '[involving] actions performed in the past and documented in the present' (Borden, 1972) is in play in Finlay's poem because the viewer is presented with the core of the apple ('pip') which suggests that the action of cutting it in half has already taken place. Another example of this mode of Conceptual art is demonstrated by British sculptor and land artist Richard Long who recorded the result of an action (walking back and forth in a field) in *A Line Made By Walking* (fig.61), created in 1967. This work has been associated with Minimalism and Conceptual art due its performative, documentary and ephemeral aspects (Tate, n.d.c). Some features of Finlay's poem that suggest it refers to *Apples* is the use of blue and gold/yellow text which could represent the green apples in the painting and the compositions of both works can be simplified down to an oval inside of a square. Altogether 'To the Painter, Juan Gris' functions as a concrete poem but features the Conceptual art tendencies of performance and documentation.

Finlay's use of a multitude of techniques and materials to communicate an idea, is widely seen in Conceptual art. In addition, his entrustment of practitioners to create his 'off-the-page' poems (Finlay, 1967a) is reminiscent of how some conceptual artists or individuals creating conceptual work would hire or instruct someone to create their work for them to question what art is and its value. For example, John Baldessari hired sign-painters to produce his painted statements (fig.1) and in *Statement of Intent* (fig.62), Lawrence Weiner placed responsibility on gallerists and the audience to interpret, and therefore create the work. The concept of using the most appropriate material to serve an idea is shown in Finlay's statement, 'my point about poems in glass, actual concrete, stone or whatever is [...] --simply--that new means of constructing a poem aesthetically, ought to lead to consideration of new materials' (Solt, 1970, p.44). This is evident in the various iterations of Finlay's 'Wave Rock' which are two printed versions of the poem on paper, a poem-object or sculpture made with glass (fig.63) and fabric, and an installation constructed from engraved ceramic tiles (fig.64). The materials used to create the sculptural versions of the poem embody its content, and the combination of the quality of this material and how Finlay has arranged the language in graphic space creates meaning. For example, the ceramic tiles in the installation are hard and brittle. They evoke the

strength of the rocks as well as their fragility caused by waves crashing into them and eroding them.

In Finlay's sandblasted-glass version of 'Wave Rock' (fig.63), the glass represents the transparency of the waves. His typographic arrangement of the words 'wave' and 'rock' on the transparent glass panel represent the forms in nature and the Western literary convention of reading from left to right creates movement within the composition. The poet's intended meaning is realised when the two words collide, and the reading process is disrupted. The importance of the relationship between form (material) and content in Finlay's work is also visible in Kosuth's conceptual artwork *Glass Words Material Described* (fig.9) made in 1965. The relationship between the artwork's form and content/form and idea is central to formation of the piece. Part of *The Thing and The Thing-In-Itself* exhibition at the Andrea Rosen Gallery in 2014-2015, the work is comprised of four square, transparent glass panels with the words 'Glass', 'Words', 'Material' and 'Described' painted in the centre of each panel. Although the work is presented in a gallery space, the dialogue between the work's title and material components prioritises ideas over materials or objects. The work is self-referential and illustrates Kosuth's theory that "a work of art is a kind of proposition presented within the context of art as a comment on art" (Kosuth, 1991, p.19-20). The meanings realised in Finlay and Kosuth's works are both linguistic and visual and are created by the relationship between and simultaneous understanding of the language used and the form that the work takes.

4.1.2 The garden as an extension of the gallery

Finlay's agoraphobia prevented him from leaving his home in Stonypath from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s and as a result Little Sparta has been described as 'the epicentre of his cultural production' by writer, editor, publisher, and friend of Finlay's Patrick Eyres (2007, p.103). In a letter to actress and poet Katy Gardiner, Finlay disputes the idea that his poetry garden is 'the centre of [his] web' and instead describes it as his 'Launching-Pad' and states that he '[dwells] at the circumference' (Finlay, 1983). This is due to him seeing himself as central to the Concrete poetry movement, the critical attention surrounding it and its associated publishing scene but on the edge of the Scottish scene (Gray, 1972, p.4). It could also be in reference

to the process of producing his poem-objects which start as 'blueprints' on paper and are then outsourced to collaborators who construct the poems in different materials. Finlay named the site Little Sparta in 1980 in response to Edinburgh being referred to as the 'Athens of the North' (Sheeler, 2021, p.xxiv) and to compare the ancient rivalry between the independent city-state Sparta and the larger and more influential city-state Athens, to the disagreements he had with several individuals and organisations including Strathclyde Council, the Scottish Arts Council and Fulcrum Press. Although Finlay was, to an extent, marginalised by his agoraphobia, his description of the role of the poetry garden, his place within the Concrete poetry movement, and the implied significance of the name Little Sparta is comparable to the tensions caused by the countercultural, anti-establishment phenomenon which was predominantly in London, facilitated by alternative bookshops, Arts labs, venues, and publishers.

Although Eyres describes Little Sparta as 'a landmark work of art', it is arguably an amalgamation of poetry, art and culture and should be subject to art and literary criticism on account of Finlay defining himself as 'a poet who happens to also want to build lochs and make a garden' which are 'natural extensions of [his] poetry' (Gray, 1972, p.3). The site was created in collaboration with his wife Sue Finlay and is comprised of temples, 'gallery spaces' and works of art and poetry set into the natural landscape that reference society, classical studies, Western philosophy, culture, nature, ancient and modern warfare, Romanticism, the French Revolution, Nazism, and more. Finlay perceived the aesthetic and compositional techniques associated with gardening, writing, painting, and sculpture as equivalent and about 'making a harmony, with disparate elements' (Eyres, 2007, p.104). Although, his off-the-page practice is meant to be interpreted as a development of his concrete poetry, his choice of media, use of recognisable sculptural forms, references to architecture, histories and literature, and the way his poem-objects or artworks reference elements outside of themselves rather than being reduced to the concept of form = content, demonstrate that his approach should be interpreted as intermedia.

For example, 'Ripple' (fig.65) is a poem-object located in the stream in the Wild Garden and the poem alludes to aspects of the environment surrounding it – 'RIPPLE n. A FOLD, A FLUTING OF THE LIQUID ELEMENT' (Sheeler, 2021, p.102).

Regarding the relationship between form and content in Concrete poetry, the stream can be seen as part of the form of the poem because it is the space in which the text is arranged. Conversely, the steppingstone, as an alternative to a piece of paper, is the graphic space of the poem, and the stream and its surrounding environment is an additional element. The latter suggests the work should also be analysed in relation to site-specific art and Conceptual art and this view is substantiated by Finlay being featured in the *Starlit Waters* exhibition at the Tate Gallery Liverpool in 1988 and placed in relation to Land art and Conceptual art from the late 1960s to the late 1980s (Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1988, p.6). Although the work integrates with its surroundings and is a comment on its relationship to the topography of the area, unlike site-specific art it can be relocated without its meaning being altered. This thesis argues that as both a concrete poem and conceptual artwork, 'Ripple' successfully communicates the idea of ripples being created in water because the work's form and content complement one another, and the word 'ripple' generates associations with actions or objects that can disturb the surface tension of water. In addition, it shares two similarities to Kosuth's conceptual work. Firstly, the work is an imitation of a dictionary entry (Sheeler, 2021, p.102) and is similar to Kosuth's *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea)* dictionary definition series which questioned the presentation and production of meaning by artists and viewers. Secondly, similar to the aforementioned *Glass Words Material Described* (fig.9), 'Ripple' is an artwork presented within the context of a large scale 'art' installation, as a comment on it.

Finlay presented his poems in an art context in his *Temple of Apollo* (fig.66), which is a converted gallery space in the grounds of Little Sparta, inscribed with the maxim 'To Apollo, His Music, His Missiles, His Muses'. This building was the subject of a lengthy dispute between Finlay and the Strathclyde Regional Council. Although Finlay described this building as a 'garden temple', its original function was as 'a tiny and primitive gallery' where Finlay could present work made in stone and neon, with the aim of receiving commissions (Sheeler, 2021, p.xx). However, the Strathclyde Regional Council would not grant the status of 'religious building' (and subsequent tax exemptions) to the temple and insisted it was a commercial art gallery (*Public Statement from Little Sparta (Continued)*, 1988). Finlay believed the Council were 'Unable to grasp the nature of [the] building' and '[interpreted] the law within the confines of their own understanding, excluding custom and culture in favour of a

reductive secular 'norm' (*Public Statement from Little Sparta (Continued)*, 1988). Although, in principle, the building had a spiritual function and was designed in a neoclassical style to mimic a 'Canova-style temple' (Sheeler, 2021, p.xxiv), the painted columns on its façade make it more akin to an artistic representation of a temple. In addition, despite possible solutions to the dispute being discussed with the Scottish Arts Council, they would not challenge the Regional Council out of fear 'for a reduction in support for the arts' (Finlay, 2001) suggesting they also recognised the temple as a gallery. To an extent Finlay was trying to solve the 'problem of finding new ways to create metaphor' (Finlay, 1967a) through his poetry, art, and Little Sparta. In the garden's metaphors, his disputes become 'battles', art galleries become temples, poems and artworks become memorial plaques to art, literature, history and culture, and the site itself becomes an unorthodox exhibition space for Finlay's intermedia sensibility.

The conflicts Finlay had with various individuals and organisations were a catalyst for his artistic production and this is evident in several works at Little Sparta. For example, *The Present Order is the Disorder of the Future Saint – Just* (fig.8) produced in 1983 in the Lochan Eck Garden is a concrete poem which adopts the words of the French Revolutionary Saint-Just, it is realised in eleven shaped blocks of Purbeck stone and produced in response to the Regional Council 'battle'. With regards to Weaver's theory that 'The word, which is pared down to its bare lexical meaning, is as close as it can get to the univocal (or unequivocal) value of a unit in a non-verbal medium.' (Weaver, 1966, p.317), Finlay's decision to separate the phrase and carve each word into a separate stone suggests that it can be rearranged, and its meaning changed. This is illustrated in the printed version of the work (fig.67), published by the Wild Hawthorn Press, with the instructions 'Cut around outlines. Arrange words in order' (National Gallery of Victoria, n.d.). The work is in accordance with the Noigandres poets' definition of Concrete poetry as things-words in space-time. 'Order' and 'disorder' refer to the poem's arrangement in space and the concept of conflict as opposed to peace, and 'present' and 'future', together with Finlay's reference to a turbulent period in history, represent the standard division of time.

Conversely, the work is also a conceptual artwork because although it has a physical form, the idea is central, with the value of the work being placed on the thought processes and visuospatial skills of the viewer. This is due to the stones being too heavy for an individual to move, so the rearrangement of words within the composition happens in the viewer's mind. Sheeler describes the work as a portrayal of 'a thought-provoking dictum attributed to [...] Saint-Just' (Sheeler, 2021, p.139) but the equal spacing between the stones and the lack of a hyphen after the statement and before the name suggests 'Saint-Just' is not just an acknowledgement of the revolutionary but part of the overall sentence. Therefore, it is plausible that Finlay is suggesting that he is the 'the Future Saint-Just'. Both individuals had supporters and after multiple unsuccessful attempts at trying to change others' perceptions, they confronted their local councils (Crozier On Stuff, n.d.). For Finlay this was in the form of the Saint-Just Vigilantes (Finlay, 1985) and the Regional council.

4.1.3 Presenting Finlay's position within or between the movements and how boundaries and arguments are challenged.

There was an increase in the 1960s in the use of language as material in several art and literary movements, genres or forms including Concrete and Visual poetry, Conceptual art, multimedia works, installations, and poem machines. Finlay is predominantly recognised as a concrete poet and conceptual artist but his intermedia practice and perspective that 'you compose with words, or you compose with stone plants and trees, or you compose with events [and] It is all a matter of composing and 'order" (Finlay, 2001) leaves his work open to interpretation and comparison with other text-image experiments. Due to his international acclaim as a concrete poet, throughout his life he placed his work in relation to the Concrete poetry movement. Towards the end of the 1960s Finlay described being 'type-cast' as a concrete poet 'disconcerting" (Finlay, 1967b), he was disparaging of other poets' efforts with Concrete poetry including Cobbing and Houédard (Finlay, 1971b) and started defining his work as post-concrete. However, in retrospect, Finlay returned to defining his outdoor works as 'a broadening of [Concrete poetry]' and emphasised that despite changes in style, his work in stone, neon, and other materials was a continuation of his early concrete poems on paper (Finlay, 2001). This 'broadening' of his early work is not limited to the category of poetry because it

encompasses site-specific art, sculpture, Land art, garden design, Conceptual art and more. For example, text works in neon are commonly associated with conceptual artworks such as Kosuth and Nauman's neon wall works. Finlay's works in the environment have associations with site-specific art and Land art, and the appearance of documentation and sensory experiences in Finlay's concrete poems and poem-objects share similarities with documentation and the intersensory aspects of performance in Conceptual art, as discussed previously.

In addition, Jamie Hilder has compared Finlay's work to Carl Andre's 'poetic desire for the reduction of language to its constituent elements' (Hilder, 2016, p.162) and curator Laura Hoptman included Finlay and Andre in the *Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language* exhibition at the MoMA in 2012 alongside Nauman, Liliane Lijn and others. The exhibition included an international sample of modern and contemporary practitioners exploring the relationship between language and art (Williams, 1967, p.vi). It can be argued that there is a similarity between the arrangement of 'elements' or 'units' and reduced language in Finlay's compositions to Lijn's but Finlay prioritises the movement of the eye to create meaning whereas Lijn creates moving poem-objects. Lijn's *Poem Machines* (fig.68) are a product of her interests in language and the visual arts, kinetic art, Surrealism, feminism, mythology, science, technology, industry, and poetry (Tate, n.d.d). She was associated with Brion Gysin, William Burroughs, Sinclair Beiles, Gregory Corso and Takis, who she met in the late 1950s, and was influenced by Gysin's cut-up technique and '[treatment of] words like ready-made images' (Lijn, 2014). In addition, she was influenced by the Surrealists technique of automatic writing and French surrealist writer and poet André Breton's *Poème-Objets* (*Poem Objects*) (fig.69) which were visual representations of ideas or dreams. In the early 1960s, Lijn started to incorporate cut-up poems into her *Poem Machines*, sometimes in collaboration with poets such as Nazli Nour, to make viewers 'see sound' (Tate, n.d.d). The collaged fragments of poems in her *Machines* are similar to the particles (words and letters) that are arranged in Finlay's concrete poems and Carl Andre's early typewritten works. Her wide range of interests are comparable to Finlay's complex web of knowledge of art, literature, history, culture and more which he references freely in his work. Lijn states that 'In the circles [she] moved in, art and poetry were, if not interchangeable, at least in communication' (Lijn, 2014). This interdisciplinary culture is discernible in the various alternative or

underground venues in the UK and US, amongst networks of poets and artists, and as a part of Finlay's collaborative practice with artists, artisans and publishers.

Although Finlay received and continues to receive a great deal of critical attention and is frequently featured in anthologies of and publications on Concrete poetry, he was absent from the infrastructure examined in Chapter Two. If he had participated in the scene and mixed with artists, poets, and figures such as Steveni, he might have had more access to materials and found it easier to get his work produced. His absence was partly due to his agoraphobia but also due to his confrontational nature. Finlay's work has been recognised as several different art forms and is difficult to categorise as belonging to one discipline or style. His intermedia approach positions him between discourses on Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art. Although he saw his work as an extension of Concrete poetry, his oeuvre as a poet-artist and *Little Sparta* are exemplary cases for links between the two movements due to him working within frameworks associated with Conceptual art including performance and a dependence on the viewer to interpret the work, sensory inputs, documentation of past events, prioritisation of concepts and ideas over material forms, and working within the landscape.

4.2 Carl Andre: aligning poetry and the visual arts

Carl Andre is part of a large community of practitioners, historically categorised into different activist, linguistic and artistic movements, who explore the relationship between text and image and/or poetry and art. He was a member of the Art Worker's Coalition which was a large group of artists, writers, filmmakers, critics, architects, and museum personnel who advocated for artists' rights, curbing discrimination in exhibition programming, and reforms in museum policies in 1969 with their renowned '13 Demands' (Lowry, 1969). The group included individuals who used language-based art practices and/or were associated with the American counterculture, for example, Hans Haacke, Sol LeWitt, Kosuth, Robert Barry, Robert Smithson, Dan Graham, Lucy Lippard, Seth Siegelaub and Faith Ringgold, among others (Art Worker's Coalition, 1969). Although Andre is predominately associated with the Minimalist and Conceptual art movements, since the turn of the twenty-first century, historians, critics, writers, and researchers including Alistair Rider, Marjorie Perloff,

Caitlin Collins Murray and Kenneth Goldsmith have argued that his early typewritten works should be categorised as Concrete poetry and that his 'bricks and typings [are] but two sides of the same coin' (Goldsmith, 2015, p.13). They emphasise the importance of treating Andre's poems as parallel rather than supplementary to his sculpture, acknowledge his interest in how different art forms relate to each other and argue that his process of arranging linguistic units in his work belongs to the field of Concrete poetry. This reflects Andre's statement that "to talk about the link between my sculpture and my poetry: all I can say is that the same person does both" (Murray, 2013, p.4).

Although Murray describes Andre's association with conceptualism as a 'superficial' connection (Murray, 2013, p.79), Andre is featured in Conceptual art anthologies and publications such as Tony Godfrey's *Conceptual Art*, Liz Kotz's *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* and Lucy Lippard's *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* having worked, collaborated, and exhibited alongside conceptual artists. Andre rejects the title of conceptual artist 'because the physical existence of [his] work cannot be separated from the idea of it' (Andre, 1970). However, Andre's work adheres to a mode of Conceptual art identified by Osborne as 'minimalist conceptual art' in which premanufactured objects are used to detract from aesthetic value and place emphasis on the ideas of and decisions made by an artist (Osborne, 2002, p.24). Andre is also opposed to being associated with the Concrete poetry movement. This is demonstrated by his statement "I am not a Concrete Poet because concrete is poured. I do not pour, I write" (Hapkemeyer, 2020, p.6). However, his 'poems' have been exhibited alongside the work of concrete poets, developed at the same time as and parallel experiments in early Concrete poetry, and share the formal characteristics of Concrete poetry. In addition, Andre's focus on economy of language is an aspect of text-based Conceptual art and a defining characteristic of Concrete poetry. Andre's practice was influenced by the experimental 'revolution' in twentieth century modernist poetics, specifically the theory of the 'ideogram' introduced in Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, later expanded and published by the American poet and critic Ezra Pound in 1919 (Buchloh, 1980, p.34). Andre believed that the 'graphic possibilities of painting and poetry [could] be combined in [...] the spirit [...] of the Chinese written character' (Buchloh, 1980, p.34). However, Fenollosa and

Pound's theory is based on the misunderstanding that these characters are ideograms and visually resemble the thing they represent.

Andre is primarily recognised for his minimalist sculptures that are (re)arrangeable, repetitive, gridded, symmetrical and/or abstract 'cuts' in space. His concept of the 'cut' originated from his sculptural work and refers to the relationship between the object(s) and the space in which they are presented. He decided to 'use the material as the cut in space' (Dia Art Foundation, 2014/2015) rather than using traditional sculptural techniques such as carving, modelling, or casting to shape the material. This thesis considers Andre's treatment of industrial materials such as wood, concrete, brick, and metal (Dia Art Foundation, 2014/2015) as the smallest units in his compositions as comparable to concrete poets' use of words or letters as the smallest units in their poems. An issue highlighted in the exhibition brochure for the Dia Art Foundation's retrospective *Carl Andre: Sculpture as Place* in 2014 and 2015, is that he 'stressed the mobility and interchangeability of units' (Dia Art Foundation, 2014/2015) in his work. This identifies aspects of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art in his practice. For example, movement is created in a concrete poem by the arrangement of words in graphic space (fig.63) and by a viewer forming words in their mind from individual letters and punctuation marks. This movement is reminiscent of the re-arrangement of individual units in Andre's sculptures each time they are presented in a (gallery) space – 'I can find a set of particles which I used ten years ago [...] let's say today, I take up the same set of particles again. It's entirely likely that I would want to combine them in a different way' (Andre, 1970). Interchangeability is an aspect of Conceptual art and is demonstrated by Andre's reconstruction of *Equivalent VIII* (fig.70) where the change in material – from sand-lime bricks to firebricks (Tate, n.d.a) did not affect the work's concept. Another similarity with Conceptual art is a prioritisation of ideas over material components in Andre's practice. This is demonstrated in several other conceptual artworks, for example Kosuth's *One and Three* series, where interchanging the material elements – substituting one chair for another in *One and Three Chairs* (fig.7) or changing the order of the description, image, and object – does not compromise the idea.

Andre is also a poet focused on the visual qualities of language and the strategy of the 'cut' is present in his non-syntactic arrangements of words on a page. Historically

his poems have been portrayed as ancillary to his three-dimensional work and, until recently, a one-sided critical discourse that reinforced this relationship and placed his work within the history of visual art, discouraged analysis of his poems within the histories of Concrete, Pattern or Visual poetry. In several publications Andre's poems are compared to his sculpture, dominant movements at the time including Conceptual art and Minimalism or examined in relation to the phenomenon of the artist-writer emerging in the 1960s. However, Murray argues that 'the desire for a fit within existing discourses both accentuates important features of Andre's work, while diminishing others' (Murray, 2013, p.91). Where the 'poems' sit in a literary or artistic context and how they resemble or belong to Concrete poetry or Conceptual art is analysed in this section together with Andre's methods of dissemination, his correspondence with Hollis Frampton and the aesthetic concerns of art institutions and literary publishers to demonstrate how his practice is a point of convergence between Conceptual art and Concrete poetry.

4.2.1: The short-lived distribution of Andre's poems in a literary context

Throughout Andre's career, language has played a central role in his creative work. His relationship to poetry, literature and art is shown in *12 Dialogues: 1962-1963* which is a collection of typewritten conversations between himself and American avant-garde filmmaker, photographer, writer, theorist and friend, Hollis Frampton. In the 'editor's note', Benjamin H.D. Buchloh states the document shares 'the development of aesthetic ideas, artistic motivations and historical knowledge' in Andre and Frampton's early practices and demonstrates 'the constitution of artistic learning and thought of a whole generation whose work emerged in the early to mid-sixties' (Buchloh, 1980, p.VII).

Andre started experimenting with 'mapping poetry onto the visual arts' (Murray, 2013, p.13) towards the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s but did not publish his 'poems' until 1969 in *Seven Books of Poetry* (Hapkemeyer, 2020, p.8). The first public display of his experiments with poetry was in the *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* exhibition at the Jewish Museum in 1966. Andre submitted the poem *Leverwords* (fig.71) to the exhibition catalogue and his sculpture *Lever* (fig.72) was exhibited in the gallery space. *Leverwords* is comprised of four stanzas, each

line of the poem increases by one word, and each word is four letters long and treated as an identical unit that is arranged to create a form similar to the arrangement of the identical, mass-produced bricks used in *Lever*. By choosing to present *Leverwords* in relation to *Lever* he introduced the audience to the significance of poetry in his practice. However, this encouraged art critics to analyse his poems in relation to his sculpture rather than in relation to experiments with the material quality of language in poetry, literature, and text-based art at the time (Murray, 2013, p.3).

Kotz indicates that 'Andre has been exceedingly reluctant to permit the reproduction or publication of his poems, preferring these be encountered as original objects' (Kotz, 2007, p.140). This thesis argues that his partiality for his poems to be seen as objects emphasises the material quality of language in his work. Andre would take into consideration the dimensions of a space in which he was presenting his three-dimensional installations and this cognizance of space in relation to the arrangement of units, is also a feature of his poetry. His categorisation of his poems as (art) objects could be due to his dislike of the publishing world. Although Andre had a positive relationship with American poet and writer Reno Odlin, who established the literary newsletter *All Points Bulletin* and published some of his and Frampton's work, he typically had difficulty publishing his work in a literary context. Towards the end of the 1950s his fifty-two page 'short novel' *Billy Builder, or The Painful Machine* was rejected by Grove Press (Murray, 2013, p.75) – a controversial publisher of significant avant-garde literature under the headship of Barney Rosset from 1951, who is renowned for publishing banned books – for being longer than the maximum forty-page limit for short stories. Furthermore, in *12 Dialogues: 1962-1963*, Andre recalls his unsuccessful interaction with the Poetry Society of America, 'I never heard reply nor acknowledgment from them. Only now do I realise that sending poetry to a poetry society is like sending garbage to the garbage disposal' (Buchloh, 1980, p.18). This mirrors the difficulties concrete and visual poets in the UK faced when they tried to acquire state funding to produce and publish their work. However, this was due to the Arts Council suggesting there were no existent organisations, designed to publish experimental poetry, for them to give a grant to. Altogether, it is plausible that the combination of failing to publish his and Frampton's work and his

negative experiences with Grove Press and the American Poetry Society, contributed to Andre favouring the presentation of his poems in an art context.

Andre shares with minimalists and conceptualists of the 1960s, a reluctance to connect his work to the Concrete poetry movement. This perspective was, in part, shaped by artists such as Kosuth who criticised Concrete poetry for being a 'kind of formalism of typography... cute with words, but dumb about language...', a simplistic and pseudo-avant-garde gimmick' (Thomas, 2020). By connecting his poetry to his sculpture, Andre increased its financial value because it would be more likely to receive institutional funding as an art 'object' rather than as a concrete poem (Hapkemeyer, 2020, p.9). Despite being excluded from anthologies of Concrete poetry and not wanting to be labelled a concrete poet (Hapkemeyer, 2020, p.6) Andre's poems are visually and structurally characteristic of Concrete poetry. In 'Carl Andre: A Concrete Poet?', the art historian, curator and author Andreas Hapkemeyer argues that his poems from 1958 are 'early manifestations of Concrete Poetry to the degree that Andre could be considered one of the pioneers of this movement' (Hapkemeyer, 2020, p.8).

Andre's *now now*, produced in 1967, was included in MoMA's *Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language* exhibition which featured the work of Finlay, Nauman and Lijn. The work can be interpreted as a concrete poem due to the use of reduced language and the relationship between the words in the composition and its visual form, and a language-based conceptual artwork because it corresponds with Godfrey's observation that 'Conceptual art...was simultaneously linguistic and visual' (Godfrey, 1998, pp.301-302), the work is reliant on the viewer's interpretation to create meaning, and his collaborations with conceptual artists place him in relation to the Conceptual art movement. In *now now* (fig.73) the page is divided into four equal sections by a vertical and a horizontal line in the shape of an addition sign. The word 'now' appears once, in a different location, within each section and plays on Brazilian concrete poet Augusto de Campos' theory that the concrete poem is the 'tension of things-words in space-time' (Solt, 1970, p.72). The work is made from the movement of the eyes, that is, the meaning of the work is realised during the reading process as the viewer's eyes search each section before they pause on the temporal word 'now'. Andre's collaborations with conceptual artists also suggests that *now now*

influenced Robert Barry's conceptual artwork *Untitled* created in 1976 (fig.74). Andre contributed to the publication commonly referred to as the *Xerox Book*, alongside Barry and conceptual artists, Douglas Huebler, Kosuth, LeWitt, Robert Morris and Weiner. The book, published in 1968 (a year after Andre created *now now*), '[functioned] as an exhibition outside of the gallery' (Murray, 2013, p.79) and offered an alternative form of dissemination for artists wanting to circumvent institutional and traditional modes of exhibition. Barry's *Untitled*, is almost identical in form to Andre's *now now*. This work is also divided into four sections, however the words – clearly, somewhere, share, brief, part, float, follow and touch – are placed along the two lines. The words are either instructional and tell the reader to 'touch' the work or 'follow' its form or describe the work itself. For example, the words 'float' above, below, or next to the lines, they are placed 'somewhere' along the lines, and they 'follow' the form of the addition sign within the composition.

4.2.2: Displaying Andre's poems in museums and galleries

Andre displayed his poems and three-dimensional work biennially at the Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles/New York, between 1967 and 1971. His *Seven Books of Poetry*, first published in 1969 by Seth Siegelau and the Dwan Gallery, was included in the most significant exhibition of his poetry called *Words: 1960-1980* at the Paula Cooper Gallery in 1993. This exhibition toured the Kolnischer Kunstverein as *Words: 1958-1972*, the Stedelijk Museum as *Words – The Complete Poems* in 1994 and was later gifted to the Chinati Foundation (Galerie Greta Meert, 2008). The Foundation's permanent collection of almost five hundred pages of poetry produced by Andre, called *Words 1958-1972*, was installed in 1995. Within the collection are 'poems' that reference histories and narratives, erase the presence of the artist and their 'thumb print' (Buchloh, 1980, p.43) through the mechanical processes of the typewriter, and are unconventional interpretations of literary forms. For example, Andre stated 'We get trapped in our categories... I wrote sonnets that weren't sonnets and novels that weren't novels' (Murray, 2013, p.48) and this is typical of other poets and artists including Gomringer, Finlay and Marlene Mountain. Mountain created haikus and coined the term 'unaloud haiku' to describe the concrete poems she created (Living Haiku Anthology, 2023). Furthermore, at Chinati, instead of viewing and navigating Andre's wall or floor-based sculptures as you would in a

standard gallery setting, each exhibition uses floor cases designed by Andre, to present the poems at podium-level and at an angle that imitates 'the experience of holding the poem in one's hands' (Murray, 2013, p.85).

Although Andre has tried to distance himself from language-based conceptualism as much as Concrete poetry (Hapkemeyer, 2020, p.6), his *One Hundred Sonnets* and its presentation in galleries, museums and as an installation at the Chinati Foundation suggest links to tendencies in Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. Similar to concrete poets, Andre is experimenting with '*reduced language*' (Solt, 1970, p.7) to produce 'poems which begin in the qualities of words' (Buchloh, 1980, p.75). The format of the works in the series *One Hundred Sonnets*, which is part of the *Words 1958-1972* installation, follows the traditional fourteen-line arrangement of a sonnet but disregards the form's other conventions including a fixed rhyme scheme and set number of syllables. Alternatively, the work's form is constructed through the repetition of identical units – usually the title word – because Andre believes that 'Whole poems are made out of the many single poems we call words' (Buchloh, 1980, p.75). By reducing language down to its smallest semantic element (the word) and not incorporating words with associated meanings into his compositions, Andre is 'calling things by their right names' (Buchloh, 1980, p.52). Each 'sonnet' is a typewritten, grid-like block of words in the centre of a page (fig.75) and his use of repetition generates a visual equivalence between each word and each poem in the series. These 'sonnets' are examples of Andre's intent 'to write poetry in which the sentence is not the dominant form but the word is the dominant form' (Kotz, 2007, p.147). In comparison, Eugen Gomringer's 'Silencio' (fig.36) is the epitome of the early Concrete poetry style and similarly alludes to the fourteen-line structure of a sonnet. Its form and content are determined by the repetition of the title word 'silencio' fourteen times and the blank space in the centre of the poem which evokes visual and verbal silence. With regard to Kosuth's theory that all art is conceptual and that Conceptual art questions the nature of art itself, a similarity with Conceptual art in Andre's *Sonnets* series is demonstrated in the way his work is displayed. It is significant that Andre has presented his poems using a traditional mode of display (display cabinet) and in an art context rather than as 'cuts' in space (Dia Art Foundation, 2014/2015) which is typical of exhibitions of his minimalistic sculptures. It can be argued that Andre is following a Conceptual art tendency to create art about

art by not only making the viewer question the extent to which his poems can be classed as art but also by making 'a comment on art' (Kosuth, 1991, p.19-20) by using an atypical process to exhibit his work.

Although Andre does 'not want to write a narrative poem or a history' (Buchloh, 1980, p.77), his work, to a large extent, includes references to personal and local histories. Incorporating history into poetry is also an aspect of Finlay's work, especially in the works at Little Sparta. However, Finlay treats Little Sparta's existence and the history of the ancient city-state Sparta, as interchangeable. Andre's combination of reduced language, repetitions of single words and gird-like structures prevents the works from being categorised as narrative poems. In 'On Certain Poems and Consecutive Matters', part of the *12 Dialogues* publication, Andre describes 'tak[ing] King Philip's War for [his] subject and E.W. Pierce's [*Indian History and Genealogy*] for [his] source' (Buchloh, 1980, p.77) to produce the *Long History*, the *Short History*, *King Philip's War Primer* and eventually *Ode on King Philip's War*. Andre created an alphabetised matrix of over one thousand isolated terms for King Philip's War. On index cards, divided into rows and columns, isolated passages and words from the *Long History* and Pierce's text are mapped onto numbers from one to a hundred and rearranged to produce a poem. The poem *King Philip's War Primer* 'eliminates the poet, or at least makes the poet transparent in relation to the light cast upon his subject.' (Buchloh, 1980, p.79) and the history is condensed into the smallest selection of words possible without the subject matter being lost. This shift away from authorial presence in Concrete poetry is also an aspect of Conceptual art described by American author and professor of art history Alexander Alberro as 'the decentering of the artist' (Alberro and Stimson, 1999, p.xxiv). The process of listing terms associated with a subject to produce a poem, is an approach used by concrete poets including Cobbing (fig.31) and Schuldt and this deconstruction of a text down to its smallest elements is also comparable to the process of dematerialisation in Conceptual art which is used to critique the value placed on materiality and the art object.

4.2.3: Questioning others' placement of Andre's poems in relation to Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

Frampton questions Andre's Constructivist influenced aesthetic in 'On Painting and Consecutive Matters' and suggests an alternative selection of practitioners, movements and styles which preceded and could have influenced Andre's work instead, including Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, shape poems, Italian Futurist Marinetti's words-in-freedom, Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés* and Robert Indiana's sign-paintings (Buchloh, 1980, p.37). These are all examples of practices with similar form-content/text and image concerns to the practices of concrete poets and conceptual artists. Furthermore, Rider, Perloff and Hapkemeyer's claims that 'Andre's early poems should be categorized as Concrete poetry' (Hapkemeyer, 2020, p.9) are based on the poems' similarities to the established and broader characteristics of the movement. For example, reduced language, the relationship between language and space and/or language and time, the concept of the poem as an 'object' with its own validity of being, and a structure in which the visual and verbal elements can be understood simultaneously or as a whole (Solt, 1970, p.7). In comparison, primarily Andre is categorised as a conceptual artist through association with other conceptual artists and through exhibitions of/publications on Conceptual art. Examples of scholars and critics inclination to place Andre's work within a Conceptual art context are Godfrey's publication *Conceptual art* published 1998, and the inclusion of *The Xerox Book* and Andre's *Seven Books of Poetry* in Lippard's *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*.

His poems '[create] a cut in space between art and language, the cut itself materializing the space where the two coexist' (Murray, 2013, p.8). This supports an argument for expanding the discourse on Concrete poetry and Conceptual art 'to include those poets or visual artist who also make fluid these often isolated fields' (Murray, 2013, p.101) and uncover further connections between the movements. It is difficult not to define Andre, to a certain extent, as a pioneer of Concrete poetry or part of the loose collective of conceptual artists that emerged in the 1960s. However, Andre should be considered an uncategorisable, intermedia practitioner whose work belongs in critical discussions on and in the discourses of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

4.3 Paula Claire: the poetic and archival practice of a poet-artist

Paula Claire is an English poet-artist whose career has spanned over sixty years, from 1961 to the present day. She uses her first two names in tribute to the English poet John Clare and because she did not want her surname (maiden or married) to feature in her practice (Paula Claire, n.d. [c.2020]). This stance can be understood in relation to Mirella Bentivoglio's feminist view that 'language functions as both a form of alienation... and a tool for self-expression' (Cozzi, 2016, p.85). Paula Claire had a long-standing collaboration with the Italian sculptor, poet, curator, and performance artist Bentivoglio who is noted for her efforts in providing a platform for numerous international women artists and poets who were producing experimental poetry and exploring text-image relationships in their work (Zoccoli, 1976).

Paula Claire's work encompasses the areas of Concrete, Sound, Visual and Performance poetry and she is associated with the British Poetry Revival of 1970, the publishing imprint Writers Forum and its Sound poetry collective, *Konkrete Canticle*. One of her most significant contributions to her field is her archive, the *Paula Claire Archive: from Word to Art – International Poet-Artists* which she founded and started to assemble in the late 1970s. The archive includes books of poetry, artist books, exhibition catalogues and leaflets, photographs, recordings, and correspondence (Paula Claire, 2021). Paula Claire had an enduring professional relationship with Cobbing who was a member of the Poetry Society. In September 1969, she attended a Poetry Society conference and met Cobbing who subsequently published several of her poems in *Writers Forum* alongside John Cage's experimental compositions, Houédard's typestracts, and works by Gysin and Beat poet Ginsberg. (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.5). Although Paula Claire started to write poetry in 1961, she became associated with *Writers Forum* later than other poets such as Nuttall and Rowan. By publishing her poetry through the press, Cobbing acknowledged that her work was of equal quality and importance to the text-image phenomenon as the work of those who had joined the group sooner, were already published, and/or possibly regarded as professional poets.

From 1969 to the early 1990s Paula Claire was working within the experimental environment of Writers Forum which was a community interested in “the limits of poetry” including “graphic displays, notations for sound and performance, as well as semantic and syntactic developments” (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.29). Her collaborations with Cobbing, Bill Griffiths and others, her participation in important exhibitions such as the *sound texts/? Concrete poetry/visual texts* exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1970 and her connection to diverse intermedia activity in the UK and internationally, has contributed to the formation of her archive. Paula Claire’s UK-based archive contains work by over three hundred practitioners worldwide, who exchanged their work for her concrete, sound, performance and visual poetry (Paula Claire, 2021). In addition, Paula Claire’s practice has intermedia elements. In an interview for the *Umbrella* art journal, when asked how her work relates to the Fluxus group, she describes not knowing members of the group apart from Higgins who was present at Concrete poetry events but states that she ‘[hates] this idea of movements. [...] It’s useful to understand things, but I do not like categorizing’ (Hoffberg, 1995, p.5). Paula Claire’s early ‘mobile poems’, developed in the 1960s, invited participation by all present at her readings/performances. Similar to other members of Writers Forum, her ‘readings and performances tend towards music, theatre and dance’ (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.29) and her practice extends beyond Concrete and Sound poetry, sharing similarities with event-based art, performance art and happenings which are facets of Conceptual art (Osborne, 2002, p.66), demonstrated by Dick Higgins’s intermedia chart (see Appendix A).

Paula Claire’s activities within the movements of Concrete poetry and related fields, the event-based aspects of her work, her archival practice, and international correspondence with other practitioners engaged in experiments with the material, semantic and metric qualities of language is examined in this section to demonstrate how her poetry was informed by her knowledge of areas outside of the literary field. Her long-standing collaboration with Bentivoglio and an analysis of Paula Claire’s work in relation to Lily Greenham’s highlights the contributions of institutionally under-represented female practitioners to the countercultural and ‘verbivocovisual’ poetry scenes. Her performances of poetry which are often scored and involve audience participation correspond to what author of *Conceptual Art* Peter Osborne describes as ‘an explosion of performance-based ‘intermedia’ art of all kinds in which

works were distributed across and between a plurality of media' (Osborne, 2002, p.66) in the 1960s. The relationship and similarities between modes of Conceptual art – in particular performance, happenings and/or event-based work, instructions, embodiment, and the role of viewer/audience in creating meaning – and Concrete, Sound and Performance poetry in Paula Claire's practice are discussed in the following subsections.

4.3.1 Concrete, Sound and Performance poetry – Konkrete Canticle (Writers Forum)

Although performance is not exclusive to Conceptual art, Osborne identifies it as one 'type' of Conceptual art because via the action or act of performing, the scores and forms of documentation which tend to accompany or record these performances (or repeats of them) are dematerialised when they are presented in time as an idea or event (Osborne, 2002, p.20). This interpretation of Conceptual art can be applied to the activities of the Sound poetry group Konkrete Canticle, in particular their performances of Paula Claire's *Stone Tones*. The group was comprised of Cobbing, Paula Claire and Michael Chant – the latter replaced by poet Bill Griffiths in 1977 – and was founded in 1971. In *Booooook: The Life and Work of Bob Cobbing*, the group's practice is described as a '[response] in vocal form to word patterns, degraded type, and found material pushed again and again through a duplicator – writing, vocalisation and image pressured to breaking point.' (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.174). As previously discussed, this duplicated text is an aspect of Cobbing's ('dirty') Concrete poetry and was featured in the Destruction in Art Symposium. In addition to using fragmented text, scripts and signs the group used objects and material free of text. For example, *Stone Tones* (fig.76) was frequently performed (Wendt, 1985, p.13) and involved interpreting the surfaces of natural objects (stone, shells, bark) as sound (Paula Claire, 2024). The group described this as a 'blending of so many elements verbal through abstract to concrete sound' (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.175). However, this process is also comparable to the elements of performance, sensory perception (Borden, 1972) and documentation in Conceptual art with Paula Claire describing her visual score, published by Writers Forum in 1974, as 'documentation of my first vocalisations of lines and marks on a variety of stones' (Paula Claire, 2024). In addition, the groups' response to the material was

improvised and impulsive which made every performance different, and this is similar to the incidental and event-based characteristics of happenings.

The performative attribute of some Concrete poetry, the scale and diversity of concrete activity in Writers Forum, alternative bookshops and the Arts Labs, and the various experimental sound genres including the French *poésie sonore* and the Swedish 'text sound composition' active at the time, extend the stylistic boundaries associated with early manifestos of Concrete and Visual poetry. American artist, writer, author and Beat Generation figure William Burroughs states that 'the lines separating music and poetry, writing and painting, are purely arbitrary, and sound poetry is precisely designed to break down these categories and to free poetry from the printed page without dogmatically ruling out the convenience of the printed page' (Chopin, 1979, p.9). This theory aligns the printed form of Concrete poetry with Sound poetry (similar to how Cobbing and Mayer present the term 'Concrete poetry' as an umbrella term for experiments in Sound, Concrete, Visual and performed poetry in their publication *Concerning Concrete Poetry*) and coincides with Higgins's concept of intermedia and its 'interconnectedness' (Moren, 2003, p.17). It situates a significant proportion of the experimental art, poetry, music, and theatre (performance) being produced in the 1960s and 1970s in a no man's land between disciplines. Although Burroughs's comment on the arbitrariness of disciplinary boundaries is compatible with the phenomenon of challenging 'antecedent forms and strategies' (Alberro and Stimson, 1999, p.xvi) at the time, this thesis disagrees with the assumption that Sound poetry was specifically designed to dissolve the boundaries between writing and painting. Sound poetry tends to be a development of Concrete poetry practices such as Cobbing and Paula Claire's and is typically described as 'a return to an emphasis on the physical structure of language... the sign made by the voice' (McCaffery and Nichol, 1978, p.14) that suggests meanings which audiences may not have been aware of when viewing/reading written language alone.

Paula Claire's poem 'Sea Shanty' (1971) (fig.77), published in *Soundsword* in 1972, capitalises on the formatting and compositional restrictions of the typewriter, is comparable to a genre of music typically performed by a collective and functions as a score for multiple voices. In the poem the word order is 'restlessness, urge,

ceaselessly, restlessness, urge, cease' and this is repeated on every line. In an online event celebrating the publication of *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979*, Paula Claire states that the poem '[encapsulates] the two ideas of the power of the sea and its terrifying qualities, and its calmness' (After Eight, 2021) and this is demonstrated in the spatial arrangement of the words – a continuous script that becomes fragmented halfway down the page – and by using voice inflection when the poem is performed. Each line of the poem is intended to decrease in volume when read aloud to juxtapose the concepts of power and calmness (After Eight, 2021), imitating the sound of waves. The regular set-spacing of the typewriter evokes the regular rhythms and tempos used in traditional sea shanties that accompanied the repetitive rhythmic actions of sailors on working ships. Paula Claire's use of repetition emphasises the material quality of the written and spoken words. In addition, the 'call and response' characteristic of a sea shanty is similar to the 'responsive voices' and 'interactive voices' in her participatory poems and a process identified in Conceptual art performances by Borden as 'action and response' (Borden 1972). These polyvocal poems are improvised and 'involve everyone having a complex text which is 'scored' to create different densities of voices: solo, duo, quartet, octet, 2 groups and the massed voices of all...' (Paula Claire, 2021). This is evident in her sound poem 'H.M.S. Victory: Running Rigging' (fig.78) where participants are directed by the graphic illustrations on the page and Paula Claire, resulting in a concrete sound composition of units of language.

In my interview with American poet and academic Kimberly Campanello, she suggested that 'so much visual poetry is often [...] seen as a score [...] for performance and so I think that the overlap with conceptual art is also an overlap with performance' (see Appendix C). Paula Claire's concrete and sound poems, which centre on performance and communication between the vocal and visual elements of poetry, share similarities with aspects of Conceptual art including the relationship between performance and instruction. It can be argued that her work 'At Southwold' (fig.79), created in 1962, sits somewhere between a sound poem, an instruction piece, lyric poetry, and a score for performance. The instructions at the bottom of the page indicate how words should be read or improvised by the performer and those present. For example, a '⤿' represents a drumbeat or handclap

and words typed in bold should be emphasised (Paula Claire, 2021). Cobbing stated, 'some text sound pieces, with the addition of lighting and visuals, grew into happenings.' (Cobbing and Cooper, 2015, p.157). Although Paula Claire asserts that her performances are not happenings (Paula Claire, n.d. [c.2020]), aspects of her work such as the viewer being required to participate, the element of chance depending on the number of individuals involved, how participants react to the source material and the context in which the event occurs are comparable to happenings and Conceptual art. She also staged a happening, during the Covid-19 lockdown, to announce the publication of her book *fromWORDtoART: Browsing the Paula Claire Archive; International PoetArtists*, which involved 'three blasts of a ramshorn from her attic window' (Thomas, 2020) witnessed by neighbours and observers who were invited to the event. In addition, the notion of embodiment, associated with Conceptual art, is demonstrated in a statement by Paula Claire concerning the group performances of her pieces – 'When I trigger a group of people to sound the texts all around them, on the floor, in the air, in the texture of our skin, then we become aware of the incredible mesh of our own total structure which vibrates sympathetically with the whole universe' (McCaffery and Nichol, 1978, p.21).

Paula Claire compares her technique of obscuring text in 'I Say Open Water' to the techniques used in Tom Phillips' *A Humument* (fig.80) (Paula Claire, 2021). 'I Say Open Water' (fig.81), published by Writers Forum in 1978, is an annotated page that was part of Paula Claire's performance poem *Codestones of Venice*, presented in Bentivoglio's *Materialazione del Linguaggio* exhibition at the 1978 Venice Biennale (Paula Claire, 2021). The original object is English art historian, art critic, writer and philosopher John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* which was a book on Venetian art and architecture. This has been 'censored' by the poet-artist to create an alternative text, score for improvisation and/or a document of a performance. In comparison, Phillips was an artist, writer, critic and curator who experimented with painting, sculpture, music composition, Concrete poetry, site-specific art (Jennings, 2024) and Conceptual art (Walters, 2016). He was also associated with the Fluxus movement and in an article for the magazine *Poetry Review*, English poet, author and librarian Chris McCabe claims that 'When Dick Higgins invented the phrase 'intermedia' in 1965 it was almost a label-fit for what Phillips was about to embark upon' (McCabe, 2012). *A Humument*, started in 1966, was a fifty year project built on the concept of

transforming a traditional text – W.H. Mallock’s novel *A Human Document* (1892) – into an artwork. Treating the page as a field of textual units, Phillips reworks these units to create an alternative narrative using collage and the literary cut-up technique. This technique is featured in Liliane Lijn’s *Poem Machines*, Dadaist works, the work of Gysin and Burroughs and their co-authored *Minutes To Go* with Beiles and Corso. Phillip’s illustrations reinforce his narratives whereas Paula Claire’s illustrations create a work that is somewhat self-referential. These works are also similar in form to Houédard’s ‘poem-object’ *I possibly am again* (fig.82), created in 1967 (Simpson, 2012, p.86). These similarities across the frameworks of Concrete poetry, Conceptual art and Fluxus complement the perspective of Campanello who states, ‘I don’t often see a huge difference in the work that’s produced in these different contexts, it’s just the way its framed’ (see Appendix C) and emphasise the intermedia aspect of Paula Claire’s work which combines strategies from different artistic and literary genres/movements.

4.3.2 Paula Claire’s commitment to a multimedia practice and viewing her work in an international context.

Paula Claire’s extensive career, small press, ongoing and expanding archive, and publications demonstrate the breadth of experimental practitioners focused on the semiotic, auditory, and material properties of words since the late 1950s to present. Most anthologies and publications on Concrete and Visual poetry almost exclusively focus on the work of (Caucasian) male poets, manifesto writers, publishers, small press owners, and writers. However, the contribution of female artists and poets is emphasised in contemporary publications, namely, *fromWORDtoArt: Browsing the Paula Claire Archive; International PoetArtists and WordsWorkWonders*, Alex Balgiu and Mónica de la Torre’s *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979*, *Judith: Women Making Visual Poetry*, edited by Amanda Earl, and *The New Concrete: Visual Poetry in the 21st Century*, edited by Victoria Bean and Chris McCabe. The second issue of the journal *Tinted Window*, published in 2019, includes an interview with Paula Claire and is centred on ‘the first historical retrospective of women’s art ever mounted at the Biennial’ (Cozzi, 2016, p.84) – *Materializzazione del Linguaggio*. The exhibition featured the work of over eighty female text-art practitioners, including Paula Claire.

Although Paula Claire's work is generally categorised as poetry, it is helpful to consider external influences, including international experiments with and across media, her participation in Mail art (Hoffberg, 1995, p.4), and her integration of strategies from Conceptual art and Fluxus including performance, documentation, instruction, embodiment, and a privileging of processes and ideas over art objects in relation to the framework established by Higgins in his intermedia chart. Higgins's framework illustrates the relationships between disciplines/media and suggests that the boundaries separating them are permeable or traversable. This mixture of influences is apparent in other poets and artists' works and Paula Claire's intermedia practice is comparable to that of the Danish multilingual avant-garde artist, musique concrete composer and concrete and sound poet Lily Greenham. Both Greenham and Paula Claire produce Sound poetry, organise performances, are interested in and influenced by music genres, worked with Cobbing and were part of collectives. Greenham was part of the Wiener Gruppe in Austria in the late 1950s and the Groupe de Recherche d'art Visuel (GRAV) in Paris from the mid-1960s. Similar to Concrete and Sound poetry, the Wiener group had an 'avant-la-lettre concern with the materiality of language – the word on the level of sound and image' (Larios, 2013). GRAV's interest in audience participation and collaboration parallels and foreshadows performance art, happenings, and Conceptual art due to the material aspect being secondary to the idea or concept, and the element of action or embodiment being present. Paula Claire and Greenham's intermedia practices demonstrate the shared characteristics of Concrete poetry, Conceptual art and contemporaneous movements/genres.

Collaboration is a feature of Greenham and Paula Claire's poetry. Some of Greenham's recorded Sound poetry at the BBC Radiophonic workshop, sound poetry performances and her 'lingual music' were created in collaboration with experimental poets and musicians including Cobbing, Annea Lockwood, Hugh Davies and Max Eastley. These practitioners participated in the bookshops and Arts Labs of the alternative scene in London. Greenham describes her process of creating 'lingual music' in the Kontextsound catalogue for the 'Tekst in Geluid' (Text in Sound) festival at the Stedelijk Museum in April/May 1977. She starts with 'a "key-word", a sentence or a whole poem with semantic content' (Gibbs, 1977, p.22) and records fragments of words and sentences to create a source of reference for her

recorded tape-pieces. For the recordings Greenham uses stereo-panning and loops of repeated words at various pitches (creating chords of music), with long and short pauses between them, to 'emphasise the space-time relationship' (Gibbs, 1977, p.22) and musicality of speech. In the catalogue her work is featured alongside 'sound-poetry, text-sound compositions, poésie sonore, auditive texts, optophonetics, verbosonics and lingual music' (Gibbs, 1977, p.2). In the recordings by Konkrete Canticle for the *Experiments in Disintegrating Language* album, created in 1971 and funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain, there are multiple voices which function in a similar way to the looped, repeated words at various pitches in Greenham's recordings. For example, 'Breeze' which features both the voice and lyrics of Paula Claire, involves the layered voices of the group (male and female) repeating and overlapping the word 'breeze' and associated words such as 'branches' and 'leaves' (Konkrete Canticle, 1971).

In a KPFA Folio dated October 1972, Greenham is described as 'one of the most effective performers of sound poetry in live performance [...] With a solid background in music (the Vienna Academy), a knowledge of about eight languages, and a hard-headed women's rights lifestyle' (KPFA, 1972, p.14). During the pre-recorded interview with Carol and Charles Amirkhian she discussed her career and performed poems by Cobbing, Peter Greenham, Jandl and Gerhard Rühm as well as her own work including 'Do You Wonder About This Society?' (Greenham, 1972), which is featured in her album *Internationale Sprachexperimente der 50/60er jahre/Tendentious Neo-Semantics 1970 in English (International Language Experiments of the 50/60ies/Tendenziöse Neo-Semantik 1970 (in Englisch))*. Similar to Paula Claire, Greenham uses language as material in her sound poems and creates a 'score' of interconnected words related to the root meaning of her principal word. For example, in 'Do You Wonder About This Society?' she uses the words left, right, moves, moving, you and freely in relation to the word 'society'. Throughout the poem she plays with the balance of 'society' ('it') by manipulating the rhythms and syllables of language – the phrases 'right, left' and 'left, right' are repeated and set to a marching beat and the movement created by the phrase 'from the right to the left, from the left to the right' reflects the statements 'it moves (freely)', 'it is moving' and 'I move'. Alternatively, Greenham's feminist beliefs and engagement with anti-establishment, avant-garde networks and individuals associated with the New Left,

can affect how the poem is interpreted. At first, the question 'do you wonder about this society?' is enthusiastically answered with 'right you are!'. However, when the questions, 'are you left?' and 'are you right?' are introduced, the tone changes and the voice that answers 'right you are' directs the viewer to the 'right'. There is more syllabic stress placed on the word 'right' with the use of trills and staccatos and it is repeated more than the word 'left' throughout the poem. The poem ends with 'are you right? right you are, are you left?, are you right?'

Paula Claire's status as a poet-artist is justified by the nature of her intermedia practice. Much of her work was produced within a collaborative and experimental environment that stretched literature and art beyond their institutional limits. Her intermedia practice is determined by her ability to borrow from other art and literary movements, styles, and approaches to successfully realise her ideas or events. Although Paula Claire typically describes her work as Concrete or Sound poetry, and her experiments could be seen as an extension or continuation of her poetry, in this thesis emphasis is placed on the importance of measuring external influences and visual, aesthetic, formal and/or methodological similarities to other prominent activities at the time, when analysing her work. By positioning her work in relation to Greenham's, it shows that a concern with sound was part of and not separate to the practices of concrete poets. It also emphasises the participatory, interactive and documentary aspects of Paula Claire's work that are more commonly seen in happenings, event-based work or Conceptual art. Altogether a crossover between concrete and conceptual practices is present in her work.

4.4. Norman Henry Pritchard: *The Matrix* and his multifaceted practice

Norman Henry Pritchard is recognised as a writer, artist, concrete poet, sound poet, conceptual artist and was a member of the Umbra Writers' Workshop. The Umbra collective was a group of black poets, formed in 1962 and based in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York. Notable figures include LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Ishmael Reed and Tom Dent. During the 1960s the Lower East Side was the epicentre for small clubs, theatres and bookshops including the Peace Eye Bookstore, the Paperbook Gallery, the Eighth Street Bookshop, Cafe Au Go Go, the Fillmore East, and the New Bowery Theatre which was a temporary home to The

New York Poets Theatre founded by Diane di Prima and LeRoi Jones. The Umbra collectives' literary magazine *Umbra* was published between 1962 and 1965 and edited by members David Henderson, Dent and Calvin Hernton (Oren, 1984, p.169). It demonstrates the group's views on art, literature, politics and 'the black experience'. These are ideas which later emerged in the politically motivated Black Arts Movement (BAM) established in 1965.

Pritchard published two books of his syntactically and typographically experimental poetry: *The Matrix* in 1970 and *EECCHHOOEESS* in 1971. The former was reprinted in March 2021 by Primary Information and Ugly Duckling Presse due to a recent revival of critical interest in his work. Although Pritchard was almost forgotten by critics and historians, American poet, literary critic and author of *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism* Aldo Lynn Nielsen states that Pritchard 'was not always so extremely marginalised' (Nielsen, 1997, p.13) because reputable publishers in the 1960s and 1970s (the New York University Press and Doubleday) published his work, and selections of his poems and verse were also featured in periodicals and anthologies including '*Athamor, The East Village Other, Eye Magazine, Liberator, Negro Digest, Poetry Northwest, The New Black Poetry, and Umbra*' (Pritchard, 2021). The publisher Ugly Duckling Presse claims that Pritchard was interested in and influenced by jazz culture, spiritualism and experiments in concrete, sound and 'open-field' poetics (Ugly Duckling Presse, n.d.) – a form of poetry in which the line lengths, syntax and composition are determined by sound and/or the body or breath of the poet instead of traditional rhythm and metre (Poetry Foundation, n.d.). It is likely that this merging of media and techniques contributed to his body of work being overlooked because it exceeds discipline-specific analysis and raises questions about the context(s) in which Pritchard's work should be considered. Building on the publisher's assessment of Pritchard's oeuvre, it can be argued that American poet, professor and essayist Kevin Young's statement that 'Pritchard seems positioned outside whichever definition of "concrete" chosen, whether Black reality or reader-oriented physicality' (Young, 1992, p.37) can also be applied to other contemporaneous experiments in the visual arts, literature and music that Pritchard took influence from and engaged with (in particular through interpersonal relationships), but whose histories he is not included in.

American poet, writer and editor Quinn Latimer recognises that Pritchard was '[excluded] from so many historicizing narratives of [the] multifarious [1960s] – from critical histories of Umbra and the Black Arts Movement as well as concrete poetry and New York's conceptual art and poetry scenes' (Latimer, 2021) but places his works, in particular *The Matrix*, in these artistic and literary frameworks. This perspective on Pritchard's work, which resonates with the Ugly Duckling Presse's view that there is a synthesis of genres in his work and is substantiated by Pritchard's participation in festivals and workshops alongside artists and poets, provides a rationale for this thesis to frame his practice in relation to developments in postmodernism, including Higgins's theory of intermedia. Although this focus raises questions about whether cultural identity will be overlooked when placing Pritchard in a predominantly Caucasian male-dominated field, there is a need to engage with Pritchard's work in contexts that go beyond ethnicity. Examinations of Pritchard's work which consider black nationalism, the Black Arts Movement and the African American or black experience in the 1960s and 1970s include Nielsen's *Black Chant*, published in 1997 and Kevin Young's 'Signs of repression: N.H. Pritchard's "The matrix"', published in 1992. An examination of Pritchard's work in relation to developments in postmodernism, the largely Caucasian avant-garde and/or Concrete poetry does not negate his involvement in and the influence of the African American/black art and literary scene on his creative practice and activities. Lauri Ramey argues in *The Heritage Series of Black Poetry, 1962-1967: A Research Compendium*, the 'common perspective [...] that African American poetry was not engaged with the formal innovations of international modernism and postmodernism, and had an overwhelmingly political and populist agenda, especially during the 1960s and 1970s' (Ramey, 2008, p.16) is inaccurate. With regard to intermedia, the term suggests a merging of different media, and this process can result in a new form which exceeds existing disciplinary or media-specific categories. This is demonstrated by the Ugly Duckling Presse's description of Pritchard's *The Matrix* as 'a self-contained system of mimetic codes' (Ugly Duckling Presse, n.d.). Pritchard's intermedia or 'transreal' practice is informed by his education in art and art history (Ugly Duckling Presse, n.d.), interpersonal relationships with writers, artists, publishers and musicians predominantly in 'the New York intermedia art, music and film scenes in the late 1960s' (Stephens, 2019), culture, and developments in poetry and art in the 1950s and 1960s.

In this section, the intermedia quality of Pritchard's transreal practice and his theory of 'transrealism', which he saw as being symbolised by a circle (or the letter 'O') are examined. In particular, attention is given to his utilisation of Concrete poetry's verbivocovisual concerns to emphasise the relationship between written and spoken language in his work, and the influence of his interpersonal relationships with intermedia artists, poets and musicians which is demonstrated in his engagement with processes of dematerialisation (performances, readings, happenings and events), documentation and spatio-temporality in Conceptual art. Also under consideration is the art historical disregard or marginalisation of Pritchard's practice which is in part due to its intermedia nature and/or the perceptions of the boundaries between black and white practitioners created by the social, political and cultural climate of the 1960s and the alienating, fiercely political attitude of the Black Aesthetic. In addition, where Pritchard is situated in relation to canonised Concrete and Sound poetry works, Conceptual art, performance art, the Arts Labs and organised poetry and art events is discussed to argue that intermedia practices demonstrate connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

4.4.1 Pritchard's extensive experimentation and association with numerous art and literary scenes in the 1960s and 1970s

In an interview with Ethelbert E. Miller the American painter, writer, editor and poet Clarence Major states that there was lack of critical attention devoted to Black writers of prose, fiction and experimental poetry. He argues that 'No one was doing any serious criticism of literature... I think the consensus... all over the country wherever Black writers gathered – the consensus was that we had to do it ourselves' (Miller, 1976, p.7). This is comparable to the artist-led activities of the small presses and alternative venues in the UK and US who created organisations and publishing imprints to produce and disseminate their own work. Major has authored the *Dictionary of Afro Slang* (1970), *Juba to Jive: A Dictionary of African Slang* (1994) and *Necessary Distance: Essays and Criticism* (2001) and edited several anthologies including *The New Black Poetry* (1969), which includes Pritchard's work. However, Young claims that 'Pritchard certainly gathered respect, even acclaim during the late 1960s and early 1970s from black and white critics alike [and]

received much praise from the white avant-garde, particularly the anthologist Richard Kostelanetz' (Young, 1992, p.37) who was 'introduced' to Concrete poetry in 1965 by Houédard (Kostelanetz, 2016, p.5) at Houédard's ICA (London) talk on typewriter art, 'Machine poetry/Poetry Machines' (Kostelanetz, 2018).

With regard to black and white critical histories/interest, it is worth noting that similar to Major and Ishmael Reed, the concept of double consciousness – of being between two social and/or cultural contexts – pertains to Pritchard. Both Reed and Major were in opposition to 'the limiting notions [and] the artistic boundaries of the new black aesthetic' (Martin, 1987, p.39). They believed in exercising creative freedom and that black writers should not be restrained by particular criteria (Bell, 1994, p.6). It is noted by American poet, critic and member of Umbra Lorenzo Thomas that Pritchard had a range of influences including Langston Hughes, Ezra Pound and Imagism, James Joyce, 'Japanese HaiKai poets', Samuel Beckett and more (Oren, 1984, p.174). Furthermore, in a feature on 'Black Youth', published in Eye Magazine in 1967, Pritchard is described as 'politically aloof' (Eye Magazine, 1968, p.95) and it is suggested that 'he has conscientiously attempted to negate all those unique problems that [African Americans] encounter. Most of his friends are Bohemian "artsy-craftsy" types and he lives in one of the whitest sections of town (the East seventy's). He is also not involved in the Civil Rights movement' (Eye Magazine, 1968, p.102). Considering their approaches to producing work, which go beyond 'thematic and structural concerns with racial and political consciousness' (Bell, 1994, p.8) and are not limited by the separatist ideology of the Black Aesthetic, it is understandable that Reed, Major and Pritchard approached the publisher Paul Breman in London, who was known to have a broader aesthetic range and a less intense focus on protest poetry than other publishers of African American and black literature (Ramey, 2008, p.170), to be published (in the *Heritage Series*).

When asked about experimental black writers operating between media and movements, Major states 'I don't think the departure necessarily implies that there is a break with the concerns of one's culture and heritage – I think it's an extension' (Miller, 1976, p.5). This extension of culture is evident in Pritchard's concrete techniques and his aesthetic of 'transrealism' which signifies one-ness, collaboration, and a merging of different historical perspectives (Pritchard, 1978). Although

Pritchard experiments with the arrangement of Standard English instead of using the 'African-American dialect' or 'Black English' popular with black poets and writers, members of Umbra and figures associated with the Black Arts Movements – distancing his practice from socially, politically and culturally motivated activities in the arts and literature (Stephens, 2019) – his poems, spoken performances and recordings are influenced by the rhythms of jazz music and 'black song traditions' (Nielsen, 1997, p.14). British poet and scholar David Grundy argues that 'Pritchard's recordings [...] [parallel] the use of space in the work of free-jazz musicians like Bill Dixon (with whom Pritchard collaborated)' (Grundy, 2021) but it could be argued that Jerome Rothenberg's concept of 'ethnopoetics' is of equal importance to examinations of Pritchard's practice. According to American writer and academic Catherine S. Quick, Rothenberg believed that written translations of native oral traditions and performances were insufficient and inaccurate because the spoken words were presented using Western poetic meter and techniques (Quick, 1999, p.96). However, Pritchard utilises the verbivocovisual quality of Concrete poetry, which was intended to be a universal language, to surpass inaccuracies in presenting the relationship between written text and the spoken word in his work. Rather than relying on 'old grammatical-syntactical structures' (Solt, 1970, p.7), American poet and author Lillian-Yvonne Bertram observes that Pritchard '[presents] words as they sound, as in his use of "thru," "ajourn," and "accuring"' (Bertram, 2015) in the poem 'Metagnomy' from *The Matrix* and experiments with the spatial arrangement of linguistic units in his poems by using unconventional spacing between words and letters, also known as 'textual kerning' to slow down the process of reading and emphasise speech sounds/patterns (Bertram, 2015).

With regard to Major's statement about practitioners operating between media, Pritchard's intermedia practice extends culture by embracing techniques and media from other avant-garde groups. His term 'transreal' represents collaboration (Stephens, 2019) and the influence of Fluxus and Conceptual art is identifiable in Pritchard's practice as a focus on processes of production, destruction or dematerialisation in art, the concept of nothing equalling something, and performance or happenings which merge with his interests in Concrete and Sound poetry, the Black Arts, and spiritualism. Pritchard can be situated in the US intermedia art scene alongside intermedia practitioners such as American poet and

performance artist Vito Acconci, American text-sound artist, concrete and sound poet, and founder of the New York arts space Supernova W. Bliem Kern (Stephens, 2019) and the American 'polyartist', writer and critic Richard Kostelanetz – all of whom participated in Pritchard's series of workshops and events including 'The End of Intelligent Writing: A Transreal Awakening' in March 1972 (Primary Information, 2021). These workshops or 'awakenings' were 'a kind of Happening event, where writers and artists would spontaneously interact and perform' (Stephens, 2019). Considering Pritchard is included in Kostelanetz's anthology *Text-Sound Texts* published in 1980, which claims to '[represent] a fusion of the avant-garde in poetry, music and the performing arts' and includes examples of 'poems, scores, scripts, and detailed performance instructions' (William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1980, [excerpt on book cover]) it is likely that this was happening at these workshops.

Pritchard is included in *Text-Sound Texts* alongside significant figures associated with Fluxus, Conceptual art, Concrete and Sound poetry, text-sound compositions and intermedia in the UK and US including Kern, Higgins, John Cage, Annea Lockwood, Bill Bissett, Emmett Williams, Mary Ellen Solt, Brion Gysin, Lawrence Weiner, Charles Amirkhanian and Rothenberg. In addition to reducing language, Pritchard deconstructs it. In his poems there is a symbiotic relationship between written and spoken language (performance). As aforementioned, one way in which he deconstructs language visually is 'textual kerning' (Bertram, 2015) where the reader participates in the creation of meaning in his work through the 'process of repacking the unpacked words' (Bertram, 2015) either in their mind or aloud. This process of creating something through destruction is visible in the experimental works produced for the Destruction in Art Symposium and in the Conceptual art practices of Ian Breakwell (who 'unwords' words) and John Latham (who accomplishes dematerialisation through event-based work and reversing language). Auditorily Pritchard deconstructs language by repeating words and phrases and making slight adjustments to rhythm based on the selection of words being presented together, which causes the listener to experience semantic satiation and the words to lose their meaning. This is demonstrated in his poem 'Gyre's Galax' recorded in 1967 for the album *New Jazz Poets* (Release – Topic, 2015).

It could also be argued that Kostelanetz's term 'polyartistry' – individuals using 'two or more nonadjacent arts' (Kostelanetz, 2012) – describes Pritchard's practice. Although his transreal writing goes beyond the categories of Concrete and Sound poetry, Pritchard participated in The 12th International Sound Poetry Festival at The Kitchen and Washington Square Church, New York, in April 1980. Participants included poets, composers, writers, translators, jazz musicians, artists, performers, and filmmakers, for example, Cobbing, Paula Claire, Solt, American language poet Hannah Weiner and Kostelanetz. On the 15th April, Pritchard, Charles Amirkhanian (of KPFA Radio), Bob Holman, John Beaulieu and Paula Claire, performed/read at the festival. Paula Claire performed her Popcorn Individuals, 'JETAKEOFF' and 'TOTEM' (fig.83). 'TOTEM' was an outdoor event, based on a handwritten shape poem of the same name, in objection to skyscrapers. Unfortunately, a recording of Pritchard's reading is not documented by Recital who, in 2022, compiled the recordings and published a book with biographies and reproductions of the work (Recital, n.d.). However, recordings associated with the scores, sound poems and instructional pieces in Kostelanetz's *Text-Sound Texts* were presented on the first day of the Poetry Festival at the alternative art space The Kitchen and it is likely that Pritchard's 'Gyre's Galax' or 'Visitary' was included (Kostelanetz, 1980, pp.290-297).

4.4.2 *The Matrix Poems 1960-1970, EECCHHOOEESS and Pritchard's unpublished collection Memoirs*

The Matrix is a collection of over seventy poems that are divided into three sections, 'Inscriptions 1960-1964', 'Signs 1965-1967' and 'Objects 1968-1970', that demonstrate the development of Pritchard's unconventional experiments with syntax, typography, spelling, sound and semantics. The poems, particularly those in section three, are visually and conceptually similar to the work of canonised concrete poets such as Gomringer, Finlay, Houédard and the Noigandres group and the words 'inscriptions', 'signs' and 'objects' represent a progression in his reduction of language where, by the end of the book, the poems are reduced to their smallest, understandable, individual units. Throughout the book, Pritchard's notion of 'Transrealism = O' (Stephens, 2019) is demonstrated through the recurring transcendental motif of a circle, starting with the poem 'Wreath' and ending with the poem 'O'. Although the descriptors of Concrete poetry, Sound poetry and Black

poetics are typically attributed to Pritchard's published works by scholars and critics such as Nielsen, Stephens and Young, Latimer argues that 'Pritchard's collection reflects the experimental semiotic poetics and conceptual art rigors of the sixties moment' (Latimer, 2021). Correspondingly, the interdisciplinary aspects of Pritchard's practice are explored in this thesis to illustrate the impact of intermedia on connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

It can be argued that in Pritchard's work the symbol 'O' is a representation of nothing, zero, the letter 'o' and/or functions as a concrete poem-object, and an abstract visual representation of a wreath. In addition to transrealism, Pritchard explores mysticism which is an experience that was of interest to concrete poets and conceptual artists, including Houédard and Latham. This interest in mysticism or spiritualism is shown in the influence of Zen Buddhism on the post-war avant-garde and Houédard's studies of Tantric Buddhism. The Zen symbol Ensō, is a circular form like Pritchard's transreal symbol and has multiple meanings or interpretations including the beginning and end of existence, connectedness, 'emptiness or fullness' a meditative state, 'truth [...] equality and the void' (McIntosh, 2017). These interpretations are perceptible in the practices of Latham, who explored existence and the concept of nothing equals something, and Houédard who used the void to demonstrate his understanding of Concrete poetry to Ian Breakwell. 'Rising' (fig.84) is a section of the poem 'L'OEIL' (which translates as 'eye' in English) which is several pages long. Here Pritchard plays with the orientation of the page, the meaning of mysticism's higher state of consciousness, and the process of reading text from left to right and from the top to the bottom of a page. Spread over two pages, the word 'rising' is repeated in a column in the centre of each page, one column with the words the right way up and one which is upside-down. This section can be interpreted in several ways including one where the eye 'falls' when following the text, one where the upside-down text 'falls' towards the bottom of the page and one where the eye is forced to read/rise from the bottom of the column to the top.

Pritchard experiments with the concrete notion of 'form = content' and juxtaposes the action of reading the poem with the meaning of the word and its associated action – to rise. Unlike some of his other poems in *The Matrix*, the title of this poem (L'OEIL'), and the line 'the silent quest of eyes' (Pritchard, 2021, p.149) emphasises that it is

for the eye and because the poem occupies the eye, the reader/viewer is not compelled to read it aloud. This corresponds with Finlay's theory that Concrete poetry is a silent poetry. However, within the wider transreal context of the book, the two columns of text, that are symmetrical and travelling in opposite directions could continue indefinitely or form an oval/'O'. Building on the idea that this section of the poem is a representation of Pritchard's transreal symbol ('O'), a link to 'minimalist or systems-based conceptual art' can be made (Osborne, 2002, p.23). Aspects of this mode of Conceptual art are 'spatio-temporal relations', in other words, the relationship between an object, the space/site in which it is presented and the embodied viewer, the '[reconstitution of] objects as art via art ideas' and geometric units (Osborne, 2002, pp.23-24). In Pritchard's poem the geometric unit or 'object' is 'O', (comprised of the smaller unit, 'rising') and the site is the book (the transreal closed system) but because Pritchard is not restricted by page margins and produces poems that are comprised of multiple pages, the viewer is encouraged to look beyond the page space that each section of his poems occupies and envision how and where the transreal symbol ('O') appears throughout the publication.

Pritchard's view that '*words are ancillary to content*' (Pritchard, 2021, n.p. [epigraph]) is comparable to Solt's description of a concrete poem which 'communicates first and foremost its structure' (Solt, 1970, p.8). Conversely, his statement can be interpreted in relation to Conceptual art, where the material units (words) are used in support of an idea. During his interview with Judd Tully in 1978, Pritchard states that 'Visual and sound are the two elements that have been most important in my work, always run parallel, because that is the essence of poetry' (Pritchard, 1978).

Pritchard's poem 'Aurora', in *The Matrix*, spans pages 87-126 and the motion of turning the pages to navigate and ascertain the poem's meaning is equivalent to the kinetic element of the poem 'LIFE' (fig.85), produced in 1958, by Brazilian concrete poet Decio Pignatari. Within sections of Pritchard's poem, for example, '(W)HERE' and '(NO)W', the importance of spoken language in and the influence of jazz music on his practice, in particular the technique of call and response, is evident. The poem requires the participation of the reader/viewer who moves towards the meaning of the poem by joining the particles 'W' and 'HERE' – creating a question 'WHERE' and answer 'HERE' (fig.86). The four pages of 'NOW' (fig.87) read 'NOW'- 'NOW'- 'NO'- 'w'. This creates an argumentative dialogue between the individual units 'now' and

'no' and stresses the 'oh' and 'ow' sounds of the syllabic nucleus (and transreal symbol – 'o') of the two words. In addition, this exchange could be interpreted as having a political connotation in relation to the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and representing a call for change. On the contrary, similar to Andre's work *now now* (fig.73), which can be interpreted as a concrete poem and a conceptual artwork, this section of Pritchard's poem is self-referential. The reader's attention is drawn to the absence of the letter 'w' from the third word ('NO' – 'w') and the word 'NOW' is reduced to smaller, arrangeable units. The poem is a thing that describes itself and considering Latimer's view that 'Pritchard's poems [...] carry the look of conceptual art' (Latimer, 2021), it can be argued that the four pages of Pritchard's poem, with a word or letter in the centre of each page space, could comfortably take the form of Kosuth's *Glass Words Material Described* (fig.9) and successfully function as a conceptual artwork.

American poet, essayist, editor and scholar Charles Bernstein describes Pritchard's poetry as 'ideolectical [...] a synthesis of dialect and idiolect, centering on the use of nonstandard words and syntax – whether invented or based on the vernacular' (Bernstein, 2015). Pritchard's work draws on visual art, Concrete poetry, Sound poetry, developments in recording technologies (such as tape looping) and jazz music (Ugly Duckling Presse, n.d.). This amalgamation of interests in various disciplines and his approach to presenting the vocal tones of African languages or 'Black English' in written and oral forms emerges in his work as his own self-contained language system where what the viewer sees and hears are interdependent. This is evident in *EECCHHOOEESS* which is a continuation of *The Matrix* and includes work that is structurally similar to Carl Andre's typewritten, grid poems consisting of repeated words or letters, work that explores and emphasises the units of sound in a word by spelling them phonetically, and work where the typographical arrangement of words and letters is essential to its meaning (Concrete poetry). For example, in the third section of *EECCHHOOEESS* called 'VIA', one page features the word 'echoing' (fig.88), split into 'echo' and 'ing' which are spaced out across the page. This is a visual representation of how sound bounces off of objects and/or an enclosed space (in this instance the words bounce off the edges of the page). The self-referential nature of Pritchard's publication, with the words describing themselves (they are echoing), is compatible with a strand of Conceptual

art Australian artist, art critic, academic, philosopher and theorist Donald Brook identifies as '*Conceptual art as a restricted meta-activity*', in which works of art 'can make statements' but are restricted to only commenting on or extending the concept of art (Brook, 1972, p.50). Another example is a double-page spread which features the word 'crowds' (fig.89) repeated in a similar way to Andre's grid-like sonnets. Pritchard's 'crowds' occupy the entirety of the graphic space of the page which emphasises the meaning of the word. However, similar to Andre's 'breath' (fig.75), Pritchard juxtaposes how the word is presented visually with its meaning. Pritchard's 'crowds' are not crowded but instead are presented in structurally uniform parallel lines with each line spaced out evenly.

4.4.3 Pritchard's 'transreal' practice: expanding the discourse

The Matrix and *EECCHHOOEESS* were collections of poetry published during the concurrent/overlapping and anthologised eras of the Concrete poetry movement, Conceptual art movement and the Black Arts Movement. However, these works were neglected by critics and historians, specialising in either discourse. In the publication 'Signs of Repression: N.H. Pritchard's "The matrix"', Young comments on the critical attention Pritchard's poetry has received and argues that 'perhaps all of these creative and critical movements, while operating at the "cutting edge," sometimes end up amputating the work they try to save.' (Young, 1992, p.38). *The Matrix* is a product of Pritchard's intermedia practice and can be categorised as a concrete or sound-based work or African American text. Reed argues that Pritchard's work does not need to be legitimised by the Caucasian avant-garde (The Brooklyn Rail, 2021). However, refusing to examine elements of Pritchard's work which are connected to experiments in poetry, music and the visual arts, or the cultural context of his production reduces the possibility of a reworking of existing literature to give a critical and inclusive account of his practice.

As has been shown, Pritchard's practice follows Higgins's intermedia construct which was adopted by the Arts Labs, art centres, alternative bookshops, organisations and groups in the US and the UK. His practice embodies Major's belief that '...whatever area of literature you're concerned with – whether it's the area of experiments in technique or exploration of the political implications of subject matter – [...] there's

room for dialogue and [...] various groups of writers concerned with various things have a lot to offer to each other' (Young, 1992, p.7). Pritchard's work defies categorisation because it shares similarities with a range of movements, styles and approaches including Concrete and Sound poetry, Conceptual art, Fluxus, the Black Arts Movement, jazz poetry, jazz music and more.

Conclusion

Overall, the intermedia practitioners examined in this chapter have practices that are either situated between discourses on Concrete poetry and Conceptual art or extend/exceed the boundaries of the movements established by critics, historians and institutions. All four practitioners produce work that is recognised as several different artforms and is therefore best identified as intermedia. All four place a reliance on the viewer to create meaning and their work appears to be situated between an emphasis on ideas and concepts over material forms (Conceptual art) and an interest in the physicality/materiality of text in relation to space and time (Concrete poetry). In addition to written text (poem-objects, scores for performance, documentation and instructions), physicality and materiality/dematerialisation are explored through embodiment or 'intersensory correspondences' (Borden, 1972), performances, sound recordings/readings, happenings and events. Characteristics and theories from contemporaneous artistic, literary and/or musical movements and genres are identifiable in the structure, form and processes involved in producing their work and external influences such as social, political or cultural issues, have been considered. The oeuvres of these poet-artists or intermedia figures belong in critical discussions on and in the discourses of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. This chapter reinforces the influential role Higgins's concept of intermedia played during this international era of text-image experimentation and how this facilitated a dialogue between concrete poets and conceptual artists or those producing Concrete poetry and/or Conceptual art.

Conclusion

At the outset of this thesis, I proposed that the infrastructure of the art and literary worlds in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, interactions between practitioners and the influence of the networks they were part of, and the significance of poet-artists/intermedia practices in helping to break down disciplinary and institutional boundaries provided a rationale for a reconsideration of the interrelationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. I have contributed to existing literature on the connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art by considering these overlooked aspects (infrastructure, interactions between poets and artists and intermedia figures) and offering an analysis of the visual, interpersonal, theoretical, systematic and ideological connections between the two movements which is more sympathetic to the experimental and innovative ethos of the time.

On reflection, primary sources and in particular archival sources provided valuable insight into the attitudes, ethos, thoughts, relationships and networks of practitioners at the time and information that helped to clarify how these were related to or influenced by the creative or cultural contexts that they were working in and what their chief concerns were within a melting pot of activity. Primary and archival research complemented research via secondary sources, which generally presents the views of critics, historians, academics and institutions, by enhancing knowledge of the infrastructure that served concrete poets and conceptual artists, the formation of networks through events, publishing and various forms of communication, and the dialogues created between practitioners. Through this study the expectation was to find more than just visual similarities connecting Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. This was achieved through primary and secondary research which provided evidence of interpersonal relationships between poets and artists whose works have heretofore been examined separately, as well as records of national and transatlantic correspondence and trade between individuals, groups and publishers which demonstrated the extent of the networks discussed in this thesis. In addition, archival documents and publications (including autobiographical publications and those written retrospectively) demonstrated how arts spaces and bookshops were organised and included accounts of instances of interaction, shared influence and examples of works. For the purpose of this research, there was a greater focus on

the archival papers of figures at the heart of the countercultural and/or underground art and literary scene in London, for example, Cobbing, Miles and Haynes, to arrive at a more thorough understanding of the relationship between infrastructure and the work produced. Future studies should consider the archival papers of other poets, artists and figures, for example, Paula Claire, John Latham, Barbara Steveni, Ishmael Reed and Richard Demarco in order to reveal further connections between concrete poets and conceptual artists/Concrete poetry and Conceptual art that are likely to have happened. For this thesis, extensive research has been conducted; however, it should be noted that I have only included a selection of bookshops, arts labs, artist/poet-run spaces, publishers and individuals. There are considerably more, namely, the poet, artist, critic and art historian Allen Fisher who was aware of developments in Concrete poetry and Conceptual art (Virtanen, 2017, pp.155-175), the American pioneer of Mail art Ray Johnson, the American poet, artist and musician Ted Joans, and various bookshops and Arts Lab co-operatives across the UK, for example, the Beckenham Arts Lab.

This thesis approaches the relationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art from an infrastructural, interpersonal and interdisciplinary (intermedia) perspective, rather than the more common/widespread stylistic focus used by many historians and critics of both movements and establishes a framework for future studies into the implications of an interdisciplinary approach towards Concrete poetry and Conceptual art and how the two movements are connected.

In this thesis I ask how institutional and poet/artist-run infrastructure impacted the relationship between figures producing Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. The findings of this study suggest that, in general, the impact of infrastructure can be recognised as: transatlantic correspondence and relationships between artists, poets and publishers, interdisciplinary approaches to curation, shared spaces, and the influence of concrete poets on conceptual artists (and vice versa) being apparent in particular works. A focus on infrastructure highlights how practitioners, associated with Concrete poetry and Conceptual art, had shared forms of dissemination, collection, curation and funding such as exhibitions, organisations, newspapers, publications, events and placements. This approach will prove useful in extending our knowledge and understanding of how Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are

connected. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Yoko Ono's exhibition at Indica Gallery in 1966 and her utilisation of a 'score' merges Concrete poetry's concern with reduced language and scores for Sound poetry, instructional and action-based/performative conceptual works and the event scores of Fluxus. Additionally, experiments in poetry and art, particularly text-based art associated with conceptualism and Fluxus, were united by curators such as Jasia Reichardt in the *Between Poetry and Painting* exhibition at the ICA in 1965, Maurice Tuchman and Jane Livingston for the *Art & Technology* exhibition in 1970 and by the organisers (some of whom were also participants) of the Destruction in Art Symposium in 1966.

The analysis of infrastructure and the interpersonal relationships it facilitated, undertaken in this thesis, contributes to recent debates concerning the interrelationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. The impact of Cobbing's interdisciplinary approach at Better Books – where he encouraged practitioners to mix and collaborate – is demonstrated in the phonetic title given to one of Barry Flanagan's sculptures (*aaing j gni aa*) which shows the influence of Concrete poetry on 'part-time Conceptual artist' Flanagan (Von Bartha, 2021). Guillem Ramos-Poquí's 'Mixed Media Event – BOX NO. 1.' typifies the crossovers between different modes of working that Cobbing was striving for with his various groups, organisations and ventures and encapsulates Haynes's principle of 'bringing people together' (Curtis, 2020, p.41). The change in his practice shows the cross-influence of preceding or concurrent works by others at the Arts Lab. Criton Tomazos's participation in a number of interdisciplinary spaces, communities and events, including Cobbing and Haynes's networks (caused by his interpersonal relationship with Jeff Nuttall who was active in many networks) demonstrates that a blurring of boundaries between disciplines is also a consequence of infrastructural overlap.

This thesis questions how interactions, trade and correspondence between poets, artists and other figures help to reveal networks and crossovers between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. Having established the infrastructure of the art and literary worlds as one framework for this investigation and identified key individuals in these poet/artist-run spaces and bookshops, in Chapter Three I expand on discussions in Chapter Two by examining two significant interactions (which were

facilitated by wider networks of individuals and alternative spaces). The interactions that I identified between Dom Sylvester Houédard and Ian Breakwell, and John Latham and John Rowan in Chapter Three, demonstrate ways in which Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are connected, not only due to interactions/interpersonal relationships and participation in the same groups/networks of people but also due to similarities in theoretical approaches to producing work. This contributes to our understanding of the impact of interactions and interpersonal relationships between poets and artists on the work produced and to what extent this work blurs the boundaries between the movements. For example, Houédard's description of his approach to Concrete poetry influenced Breakwell's perspective towards producing work, in particular, how to present ideas in two-dimensional and three-dimensional space and to consider the relationship between a work's form and its content. Commonalities in the practices of Latham and Rowan are best demonstrated through their reversal of words and word meanings in their work rather than participation in joint exhibitions by clubs such as Group H. In addition to an analysis of their practices and works, there is written evidence of influence and interpersonal relationships between practitioners by the poets and artists themselves. This is most apparent in the archival papers of Breakwell.

In this thesis, I ask how the practices of poet-artists and intermedia figures have impacted the histories and definitions of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. My fourth chapter explores the practices of four practitioners: Ian Hamilton Finlay, Carl Andre, Paula Claire and Norman Henry Pritchard. I argue that these figures occupy a space between the two movements, extend or exceed the boundaries of the movements established by critics, historians and institutions, and/or belong in critical discussion on and in the discourses of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. My analysis of the oeuvres of these poet-artists/intermedia figures, who are part of different national and cultural contexts, demonstrates that Concrete poetry and Conceptual art did not develop in isolation and practitioners associated with these movements did not have exclusively artistic or literary interests. In particular, this is demonstrated in the treatment and the physicality of the text used in the poem-objects of Finlay, the merging of 'minimalist conceptual art' and Concrete poetry in Andre's typewritten works, Paula Claire's interactive sound poems and happenings and the multifaceted transreal practice of Pritchard where sound determined how

text was presented. In Chapter Four, I demonstrated that the concept of intermedia contributes to debates on the connections between the movements by identifying techniques from both Concrete poetry and Conceptual art in each individual's practice. The implication of this research into the intermedia and interdisciplinary practices of these practitioners suggests that the role intermedia plays in identifying crossovers and connections between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art is significant and it adds to the growing body of research that expands the boundaries of Concrete poetry and Conceptual art individually.

This thesis asks what affect the physical manifestation of text in Concrete poetry and Conceptual art has on how the movements and works are categorised in art and literary discourses. This study contributes to and expands on arguments in existing literature such as Jamie Hilder's – 'Concrete poetry is intertwined with the work of the language-centred conceptual artists' (Hilder, 2016, p.237) by treating the dematerialisation of the art object in Conceptual art and the materiality (or rematerialisation) of language in Concrete poetry as complementary. This research has been informed by the early views of Stephen Bann (and subsequently Ronald P. Draper) on the extent to which Concrete poetry can be considered a visual art form, alongside Anne D'Alleva's proposal that 'a work of art can be referred to as a text' (D'Alleva, 2012, p.37). I have examined works where although text is a key factor, they go beyond the scope of Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art, for example, Sound poetry, readings, performances, interactive installations, happenings and events. The insights gained by approaching the dematerialisation of the art object as complementary to the rematerialisation of language contribute to existing knowledge by demonstrating that although these processes are the reverse of each other, these poets and artists were asking similar questions about the nature of art and literature and even came to stylistically and theoretically similar conclusions.

This thesis has demonstrated that Concrete poetry and Conceptual art are connected by more than just an interest in the (visual) presentation of language. In particular, it contributes to existing knowledge through an examination of infrastructure (which has previously been overlooked by scholars who have argued for connections between the two movements), interactions or interpersonal

relationships between practitioners who are part of the counterculture, underground and/or artistic and literary circles, and Higgins's concept of intermedia. However, this study is limited to a focus on poets and artists in the UK together with significant figures and points of interest/influence from the US. A natural progression of this research is to investigate the interrelationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art beyond the social, geographical and historical parameters of this thesis. For instance, I acknowledge that the American practitioners Carl Andre and Norman Henry Pritchard sit on the periphery of the parameters of this study but conversely, Andre and Pritchard's practices confirm my suspicions that studies into other regions of the UK and beyond the geographical limitations of this study will attain further evidence in favour of connections between the two movements. This research has established that the role of infrastructure, and subsequently the social networks and interpersonal relationships between poets and artists associated with it, is a gap in existing knowledge and has been overlooked in investigations into the interrelationship between Concrete poetry and Conceptual art. Based on the conclusions made in this research study, further research into connections between the two movements, which considers the role and/or impact of infrastructure, could increase our knowledge and create a more comprehensive picture of the relationships between concrete poets and conceptual artists and the networks that were created and shaped by the environments in which they were working. Future research might also address the legacy of Concrete poetry and (language-based) Conceptual art on contemporary practitioners to gain more insight into how factors such as infrastructure, interactions, interpersonal relationships and intermedia practices shape understanding of how the two movements are inherently connected.

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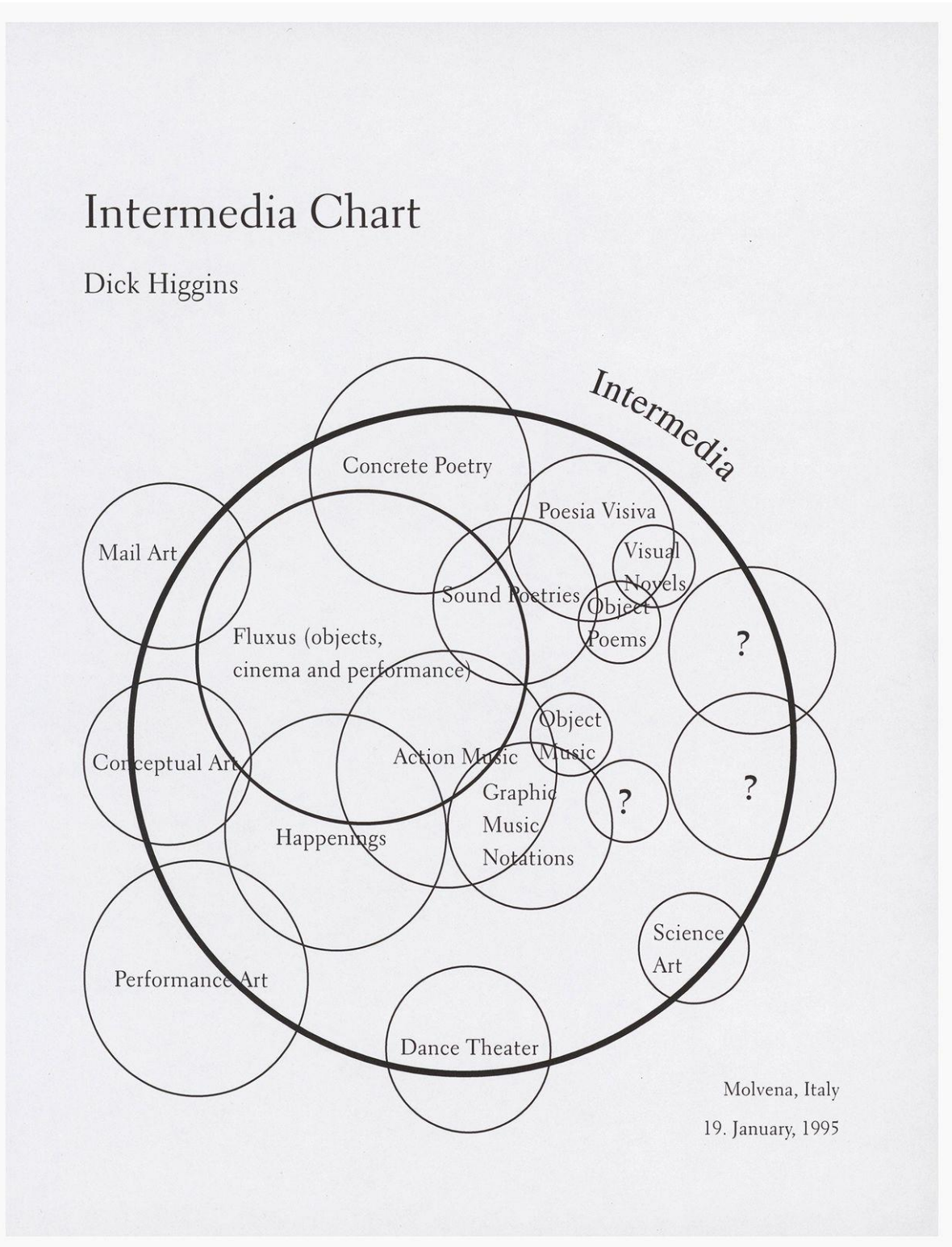
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Appendices

Appendix A: Dick Higgins's intermedia chart (dick higgins, 2021).



Appendix B: KPFA

Pacifica Radio stations broadcast on a range of issues and topics including public news and affairs, controversial and pioneering interviews, talks on the arts – censorship and obscenity, obtaining funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, women in the arts, interviews, lectures, and readings – and music. Avant-garde figures were interviewed for the radio station. Ferlinghetti was influenced by KPFA community radio station broadcasts (Ferlinghetti, 2012) and likely understood the impact and value of ‘bringing the Beat Generation to the airwaves’ (KPFA, 2024) and read a selection of literature with Ginsberg in 1955. From February – July 1971, there were a series of interviews on the relationship between art and technology and among those interviewed were Jane Livingston, Maurice Tuchman and David Antin (associated with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art’s Art & Technology Program); Robert Whitman (associated with LACMA’s A&T Program and the Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) organisation); and Billy Klüver (co-founder of E.A.T.). Lily Greenham was interviewed by Carol and Charles Amirkhanian. She discussed her career and performed poems by Bob Cobbing, Peter Greenham, Ernst Jandl and Gerhard Rühm as well as her own work including ‘Do You Wonder About This Society?’ (Greenham, 1972). Ono was interviewed for WBAI (a sister station of KPFA in New York) in September 1971 and discussed Conceptual art, discrimination against women artists and how her practice had developed since the 1960s (Ono, 1971). Figures in the British and American underground communities used radio broadcasts as an outlet to inform and reach a wider audience, therefore, listeners were exposed to countercultural ideas and had the opportunity to discover and/or listen to new approaches to art including Concrete poetry and Conceptual art.

Appendix C: Interview transcripts (Kimberly Campanello and Barrie Tullett) and written interview (Johanna Drucker).

**TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW
Kimberly Campanello (19.03.21)**

KP: What is your background?

KC: I am from the US originally and I came up as a poet and was mostly exposed to I guess what would mostly be known as the deep image poets, the kind of American deep image poets as an undergraduate at Butler University at Indiana. So my teacher, my kind of mentor at the time was called Fran Quinn and he was very good friends with Robert Bly and Robert Creeley and the whole kind of world of American poetry and so we had a lot of visiting writers, we had a lot of Irish writers, we had Seamus Heaney, we had Derek Walcott, we had a huge range of kind of more mainstream, I guess, poetic approaches. But that said, it was a really interesting experience. So, I studied English Lit and French Lit a double major there so there was no creative writing at that time, so I think I took one poetry writing workshop that was led by that tutor but the main way we studied poetry was just in these small groups in quite focused ways. So that's kind of how I became a poet, I guess. I was lucky enough to go to a small liberal arts university in the states where you just got a lot of attention. It was very much like every student's treated as a potential artist or potential writer, potential somebody, you know, so I try to treat my students that way because it is just true. And so I found that really, really interesting and then I went on and did an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Alabama where I actually specialised in fiction, strangely. Even though I always considered myself a poet, at the time I was writing more fiction so I kind of got accepted on and then, in the States anyway you kind of have to be accepted as the kind of thing you are. So, they admit a certain cohort of whatever genre and so then I wanted to take the poetry workshops so I had to the apply as a poet. So, then I applied as a poet and did some poetry there as well but that was a great period because that was when I was first exposed to Susan Howe's work. So, Donald Revell was a guest writer at Alabama and in one of his workshop sort of modules we read Susan Howe's *The Nonconformist's Memorial* and that was the first time I saw text doing weird things and I was like oh I love this. And so, it wasn't Concrete poetry per se cause her work

– it was just visual you know, and he was talking about – Donald Revell is a really interesting poet in his own right but he was talking about the breath. We were reading Charles Olson, and we were reading a lot of Black Mountain poets and also I studied viola, I always did viola, so I was around a lot of musicians and I played in the composer's orchestra which means that you play new music that has not been written for better or for worse. So, I did that as an undergrad which is the sort of thing you can do at a small liberal arts school. So, I was kind of around, I guess, experimental methods or saw things as permeable even if disciplinary boundaries didn't quite allow for that always. So anyways, when I was at Alabama that is when I encountered Susan Howe's work and as an undergrad I had also encountered, through Fran Quinn, HD's [Hilda Doolittle's] work and I still consider HD's work/images as quite visual, you know a kind of a visual poetry. So, the kind of Modernist aesthetic, so Dickinson, HD and Susan Howe were the way I kind of came to visual poetry I would say. Which is not what you would think of Visual poetry or Concrete poetry but then, of course, after that when you spend more time studying, then you learn about Dick Higgins's book on Pattern poetry, you start getting more exposed to it not necessarily as a result of the avant-garde but as a historical practice of writing, practice of presenting text in iconic ways or in other kinds of ways. So that's kind of the rambling answer (laughs).

KP: How would you define [Concrete poetry/language-based Conceptual art]?

KC: I think my definition of it [Concrete and/or Visual poetry] is possibly quite open because as I said I consider HD's work or a lot of the Black Mountain work, Robert Creeley's work with the dashes or Emily Dickinson's work with the dashes, like I consider certain poems to be visual poems or to be concrete poems of poetry. So, you have poetry and then you have the poem that is a concrete poem. A concrete poem is something else so it is not trying to be Easter Wings, it is trying to concretise poetry and what verse can do. So, I see a largely American thread in my way of thinking about, my personal way of thinking about it. That's not necessarily how I would teach it. I would teach it in a broader historical context and take on the Brazilians and the Germans and all of that sort of stuff but that is something I came to much, much later and I was not aware of that to a large extent until after I was already a visual poet. For me Visual poetry is I suppose, is poetry that – or Concrete poetry – I would make a distinction between Concrete and Visual because it is, I

think Concrete is striving for some kind of illustrative or iconic kind of status, as a kind of object in text but I would say that Visual poetry is poetry that foregrounds visual elements but I also think that this has to do with habits of reading, or expectations that the reader has or the viewer has and that's where the Conceptual art framework that you are asking about is really interesting because I don't often see a huge difference in the work that's produced in these different contexts it is just the way it is framed. And then the poets get paid a lot less than the conceptual (laughs), than the artists and I'm like why is that right? It is a bit murky for me but I think it is definitely – I am drawn to those more ancient forms of visual poetry, so, the *Carmina Figurata* and the techno- [technopaegnia] you'll know it from the Dick Higgins book. But I'm really drawn to the idea that A: it is not a bunch of white avant-garde dudes doing it and B: it is not new and in fact is probably older than paragraphs or stanzas. The book *the Written Poem [Semiotic Conventions from Old to Modern]* is all about the way that they would try to fill up the whole vellum and then they would use punctures to designate line breaks and stanza breaks, so they used different methods. So, the idea of the white space and all of these things that surround a poem is really new and is about the technologies of writing or technologies of printing more than – so for me I do think people don't know that and so they assume that what Visual poetry is doing is quite weird but it is like no this is just what poetry has always done, it is just one of the things.

KP: [Sub-question: Recently you were part of Klang Farben Text and with this in mind how would you describe our present relationship with Concrete/experimental poetry?].

KC: I mean one thing that I've noticed is that a lot of literary magazines and contexts are using the word experimental and it is not what they are talking about. For me experimental work is tied, I suppose to some of the similar political and theoretical questions around subjectivity and around how we know things, around our epistemology, around all those issues and that experimental poetry is not taking for granted that there is a subject that can observe things and reflect upon them in an interior way, or a private reader. So, all of those things that come out of the lyric assumption – I love Jonathan Culler's book on the lyric, I love lyric poetry but I just think – so for me experimental poetry right now is thriving and there's a lot of amazing work being produced by amazing small presses particularly in the UK, I

mean I think we have an amazing ecosystem of people writing but it is completely ignored by the mainstream media in a way that doesn't really make sense to me because when you go, say, to Klang Farben Text, we were in the national news and the Germans know about Concrete poetry and they accept that poetry can be different or can do different things. And in fact, they seemed way more interested in what we were doing than what sort of 'normal' poets would be doing. I think it goes back to the poetry wars in the UK, it goes back to stuff that I had to learn about when I moved here 10 years ago, the divide between the mainstream and whatever which in the states it is a completely different formulation and context. You have poets in the States like Joyelle McSweeney who are writing in an experimental mode but who are published in more so-called mainstream national media, national magazines, etc. and so it is just a really different context and it is kind of unfortunate but you can't really worry about it, you can't – it is not why you do it but I'm wondering if that's going to shift. I do think poetry at the moment is necessarily so focused on issues of representation and I think that's really important but I think that hopefully alongside that there can be a focus upon the aesthetics, the diverse aesthetics of poetry as practised by many people because it is a re-balancing, a necessary re-balancing of course but it is losing sight of method or it is losing sight of – if we're reviewing books by writers of colour then what are they doing with the poem not what is the poem about and I think that that is a disservice to the work of those poets so I am delighted that Pritchard's book – his Matrix is out and it is like yes! this is a poet who has been largely wiped from people's consciousness but whose work is amazing, you know. I have an old PDF of that book printed out that I have really dog-eared. So, your questions was what do I think is going to happen next?

KP: Yes, what's happening now.

KC: What's happening now is that there's a lot of excitement and really interesting work being done. I think someone like Steve Fowler is someone who has created a kind of space for experimental poets through his Enemies and Camarada projects but also through Poem Brut and that is kind of a network of quite a range of poets working in a range of ways and I'm not saying it is him causing it but I think his network, which is the network in a way because he brings so many people towards him, he's kind of a magnet for – and he just knows his stuff, he finds interesting

people to pair together and I've been part of many of those collaborations so I think that Covid has really blocked that because we haven't been able to do that sort of work. So, that's kind of what's happening now. I think there's a whole lot of different publications like *Dostoyevsky Wannabe* and I mean there's been KFS and there's been visual presses like Penteract Press and HVTN, there's a lot of interesting – Pamemar Press. I'm just constantly ordering things and they're filling up my cabinets which is good because it didn't feel that way ten years ago. I actually think social media has really helped the kind of world of short-run pamphlets and small poetry objects and ephemera much more than you would think it would cause it is just like you hear about it and you order it and it used to be all of that was constellated around the poetry book fair in London and so that was the only time I, when I moved here ten years ago, that was when I bought stuff like that or at readings but then a lot of readings were scattered all over the place so Manchester, Liverpool, London which is good but now we can see and find out about this stuff in a way that it didn't feel like that was the case – so hopefully there will be a longevity for those platforms. I do wish that there was more critical culture around it and more reviewing but I also think that we are the sort of people who don't want to spend our time doing it so (laughs) so, I can say that but if I have time then I'm not going to spend my time reviewing, I'm just not that nice of a person (laughs). Maybe in another year or two I'll change my tune but yeah, I hope that answers that question. Feel free to follow up.

KP: No, I'm really glad about the Henry Pritchard book too. I hadn't heard of him until I looked at the Umbra poets and found my way round that way so I'm glad that it has been reprinted but it is crazy that it just completely – it almost disappeared.

KC: Yeah, so, before I was at Leeds I was at York St John [University] and I was teaching an MA module there called Critical Approaches to Creative Writing and so I had us read that Pritchard book off of a PDF and the student were like 'why are you making us read a whole book' and I was like 'because it is out of print'. So, it is that sort of thing where – I do think there are, just to say about what the future holds, I think the difference between right now and say the poetry wars period is that there are people like me and Steve Fowler and others – and Barrie Tullett and others who are teaching in universities and who are setting texts. So, that's going to have a huge impact. Scott Thurston, you know, we've got a lot of interesting folks in various

positions who have a much more open view of what poetry can be. And what I always find interesting is we know what the mainstream poets are doing, I read them, I teach them, I set them because I like, you know, it is not like I have a grudge against them, but they don't know what we're doing. So, I think we feel a sense of responsibility – it is not about us and them but it does start to feel like that because you just think, well I'm studying all of your stuff because I understand poetry as vast and wide-ranging but then it doesn't work the other way and I don't know when that's going to happen. That'll be the next phase, but I do think it is in a better position and my students are very open as a result and they're flexible readers as well which is what you want in the world.

KP: Considering Concrete poetry and Visual poetry combine text and image/verbal and visual, what, if any, effect does its structure have on how it is defined within art or literature?

KC: I think that what's probably needed is a way of reading these texts that, for academic purposes, that doesn't draw just upon the sort of methods of close reading that we're used to in literary studies, or the methods used in visual art which are not about interpreting texts. So, I think that that affects how it is defined, if it is in one locale then the discourse is going to favour a certain way of defining it whereas – so visual art that uses text, it is primarily visual art and the text is seen as a flourish, as an ornament or as some kind of – yeah, as being in dialogue with whatever is happening visually rather than as being the thing to be read in and of itself. Whereas obviously in a visual poetic context people are reading the words or interpreting the language when maybe that's not what the work requires entirely so, yeah I think that those – I don't know that much about Conceptual art in a kind of academic way I just know it as a consumer of Conceptual art but I think that the visual art world feels to readers of literature much more rarified than the other way around and I think that that's just because we all use language all the time. So that's why people can show up to creative writing workshops but not necessarily into an art studio. Even though I think anybody would disagree, you know an art teacher or someone like Barrie would be like 'no, anybody can come in and try this', but it is like, it just feels less approachable because of the way we live, which is not a good thing, but I think it is part of what we're talking about. But I do think all poets think about text on the page and how the text looks and all those questions, but they just don't necessarily try to

do anything with that. So, I think that that in terms of definitions – I'm coming from a practitioner's view is that the definition for me is like to what extent are you exploiting the fact that this has a visual presence or quality to it. If you're not exploiting that or just assuming that then that's where you're just kind of writing poetry. So, I don't know if that answers your question? I feel like I'm just making it murkier and murkier (laughs).

KP: So, we've just talked about the disciplines of art and literature do you think [Concrete poetry/Conceptual art] do fall into those categories or something else? Where would they sit for you?

KC: I think it depends on what you're trying to do with it, if you're trying to analyse it, I think it should probably sit in both. I think people from both disciplines would bring really good things to looking at that work. I also think – I'm co-supervising a PhD at the moment with someone in Fine Art and this person is doing stuff with description and text but it is going to be an art installation, like a proper visual art practice-led PhD but using text and using a lot of concepts from poetry like ekphrasis and description and I think there should be more of that and I think most people bridge to some extent those two areas. I just don't, I just happen not to but I have been welcomed by both areas and I think my work has been welcomed – I did the performance of *Mother Baby Home* in an art gallery because I was looking for a place to do it and somebody suggested Oonagh Young's gallery and I was like gosh I'm not a visual artist and they said 'no, really approach her' and so I met with her and she was like 'yeah this is visual art' and she was saying that you're not charging enough for this (laughs). Me and Tom at some gala, we're setting the price for the six poetry objects and we're very much like it is basically at cost because it's the oak box, it's the vellum, the printing so even the boxes, which I can't even remember what we set the price at but Oonagh was like 'no, no that's not -' and I was like well they've already all sold now, they're already all in Special Collections and you know. Then the book itself, the reader's edition book we've set that price at cost because it is so costly so in that sense, I think the world of visual art has been very welcoming to what I'm doing but of course that throws up those questions around the financing of these things and access to these things and how that works. If I had priced them at two grand then the Special Collections wouldn't have bought them, universities wouldn't have bought them and the National Poetry Library wouldn't have bought it

so then nobody would be able to see it because they would end up in some private collection but that's what artists do and then they eventually get acquired by public collections so I think we set it at 200 quid or something really absurd but that means that a university will buy it and we cover our costs and it becomes something that is permanently there, that anybody can go in and look at. So, the question is does it fall into a discipline, I mean I think for viewers or readers we need to look at both. I mean I have an interest in ekphrasis because I have an interest in how language and the visual come together but I wouldn't call myself an expert in art but I think engaging with other art forms is just the job of artists full stop. So, if you're coming at it from a practitioners perspective then I think the very practical questions I brought up become very relevant: Who is the audience for the work? How are they going to get the work? Why did you do it that way? And my work is about how it would be contextualised so someone like Kenneth Goldsmith has somehow gotten away with being, well not entirely, but somehow gotten away with being an actual artist who sells work for tonnes of money but nothing that he does is different from, except in its politics and good judgement, but it is not different from what we might see anybody doing in this country. Who is not selling work at those prices, you know Tom Jenks does lots of conceptual stuff with Steve. Amazing performances that – or Holly Pester but their work is not, they're not a Kenneth Goldsmith kind of walking in and having that sort of – remunerated in that way because it is not being framed in that way or I don't know they don't have hard enough necks to do something like that but it is an interesting question because as soon as you step into the visual art world you are stepping into a completely different economy and that is very antithetical to poetry, even though poetry obviously has a lot of institutional support and you could say privilege, but it doesn't adhere to poets generally.

KP: When there are figures who sort of sit in between the two, say Ian Hamilton Finlay, I think he called himself a poet-artist at one point. How would you define those who sort of resist categorisation?

KC: I think it depends on who I am speaking to, if I was speaking to someone who thought poetry was only one sort of thing then I would be like he's a poet (laughs) you know because it is provocative. So, I do teach in that way sometimes. I do a poetry lecture where we have a first year introduction to poetry module and I do a poetry lecture called 'poetry experiments' and we look at loads of different stuff and

when we can do it in person, I would bring some of my poetry objects that I have and all of the things I order online. But that's the sort of thing where I would be like, I would provocatively say 'this is poetry' and then get them to think about why it is poetry. I mean just thinking of ekphrastic poetry – I mean I think Finlay's work – I don't know if anybody's written on this I'm sure they have but – the early ekphrasis was for the Greeks was the writing on tombs that would say 'I am the tomb of X, I am the tomb of this person' and that is very much what I think Finlay and others are doing. So, I think it depends on who's talking and who's asking and what their stance is and just opening up people's minds on what we can actually engage with and that so much of how these things are defined kind of impoverishes our experience of anything. I'm a big fan of John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, and he talks about how it is not arts fault, art being a broad category but it is not arts fault that people are confused by it or they find it impenetrable, it is that their lives are so impoverished that they are not able to tune in. Which I think obviously he is critiquing the kind of mechanisation of our lives and the kind of way in which we are 'Jeff Bezosed' (laughs), he was thinking ahead but he very much talks a lot about art as part of the everyday experience of human culture and that the only thing that's actually strange is that that's not more normal and that it is rarified and that the museum space is a rarified space and ultimately it could or has been more involved in day-to-day living. So, I think that those questions, for me anyway, the definitional questions are actually quite political questions around how art and how artistic seeing infiltrates our daily life or is allowed into our daily life or enabled and I think generally it is just not. Whereas buying books and reading the guardian reviews and then ordering it or whatever is something that isn't going to radically reshape how we spend our day, nor is going to a museum but actually rethinking why those things are like that are atomised so not part of day-to-day experience is much more politically interesting to me, so for me it has to do with who's asking and how much of an argument I want to get into (laughs).

KP: Yes, I think Barrie said that when he went to Klang Farben Text although he's a graphic designer, he was a poet for that period of time.

KC: Yeah, because someone like Barrie, I have his typewriter book but well that's poetry, I mean – but what is poetry? It doesn't really matter you know in some ways

you start to feel like the only reason why we have these categories is because we've all agreed that we can't have any fun and that we have to sort of know stuff and I understand for academic purposes you do have to delimit things in order to analyse them because you need to let people know what you're assuming but I think if that was done in a slightly more self-conscious way we would get richer readings than what we actually get and we'd just get people lightening up a bit because Barrie was very much 'but I'm not a poet' and we were like yeah you are, look at what you've done, that's poetry! I think, for me, Oonagh was like but this is visual art and I was so nervous meeting her because she is an amazing designer, she's a professional designer and I was thinking oh my god I've done this visual poetry in Microsoft Word, she's going to find me out she's going to say this is rubbish, and then she was like 'this is amazing' and I'm like 'what? Are you serious?'. So, I think we're also all really nervous about not doing things well that seem like they are outside of our comfort zone. So, I don't know how Barrie felt when he had to give a reading. He was probably like what am I doing (laughs) and when I met Oonagh and I was like oh no I'm showing this amazing designer who produces stuff, like she does some of the stamps for Ireland, she does real design – book commercial design and artistic design and I'm like Jesus, she's going to think this is awful but she validated it and also saw it as something, as not poetry – but she sees it as poetry, also she saw it as performance art which is another question because so much visual poetry is often, you know Cobbing's work, is seen as a score, as a score for performance and so I think that the overlap with Conceptual art is also an overlap with performance and the way that the poem is on the page or the words are on the page is leading to something else. Yeah, it depends. (laughs) I'm sure you know you're not going to get clear answers to any of these questions. Nobody's like this is what it is, and this is what this is (laughs).

KP: If we've created categories to make it easier for us to talk about things and understand them. Do you think then with some of the work that is now, I guess it is not necessarily Concrete or Visual poetry but inspired by it, do you think someone will create a separate category for it, a new separate one and call it something else?

KC: I don't think so because I think it is so vague anyway (laughs) as my answers have shown. Please make sure every quote that you make it clear that I don't know what I'm talking about (laughs). So yeah, it is such a vague and necessarily flexible and productively vague category, it is like an umbrella category and so much can fit underneath it that I think the debates are actually more about either matters of taste, like what we like, or matters of what we are or aren't doing. So if I look at Instagram I am not doing that, and I have my own opinions about that but I can see as a responsible academic reader and teacher of creative writing that I would put that I would put that under an umbrella of Visual poetry because that's helpful to other artists who are my students and I'm a nice person so I'm not going to try and say to them 'no that's rubbish you should be doing what I'm doing' because I actually don't want them to do what I'm doing because I've done what I'm doing. I think a lot of these questions are necessary questions of taste of the artistic camps we might want to be in but they all sit underneath this broad umbrella and not forgetting so much of what occurs artistically has to do with who people meet. We know this with the exclusion of women and people of colour from so many contexts is often to do with simply just who you know and who you know has to do with these power relations or, who you know has to do with your ability to have time to know those people and I think I've certainly been influenced by the people I know but that is coming from the perspective of I don't have any kids, I don't have caring responsibilities, I'm just kind of floating around so I can, I have a lot of time to worry about those kind of questions but at the same time that doesn't mean that that's necessarily defined my output but maybe it has. I think that those kind of sociological questions behind networks of experimental artists and writers and poets, that ties into what I was talking about earlier around how the mainstream doesn't know what we are doing but we know what they're doing, and that by we I mean everybody from you know Sascha A. Akhtar who is one of the most amazing writers working today and who should be on Radio 4 all the time as far as I'm concerned (laughs) but isn't and I think it is in part because of the presses she has published with but the presses she's published with

to me are the most interesting presses working today so those kind of questions are vast.

KP: Well, I was going to go on to feminism and civil rights. There was second-wave feminism and the Civil Rights Act in the 1950s and 1960s. So, how did the work produced and what was written about respond to these social changes?

KC: I would say that Visual poetry is generally seen as the purview of men. But I think that that has never been the case and also that that is a very specific angle on some of what was happening like much of the way creative work has been anthologised so I wouldn't say that this is a particular problem that Visual poetry has. I think it is a problem that all art has and so it is a big part of like I said the necessary rebalancing around voices of people of colour and voices of women and others because it is but also equally having a sense of that there is stuff happening in other languages and other countries that we can't read because of the homogeneity of English and I think Visual poetry does subvert that to some extent because there is not, simply not as many words to have to translate because also it has its own effect without you having to know necessarily what the word is or what it means – so I think all of those things are, I am sure you know about Amanda Earl's anthology that's coming out have you heard about that, I'm just going to post it in the chat, it is a big anthology of about 100 women visual poets so she has been collecting, she has got like a name for 1000 women visual poets, she is a visual poet in Canada she would be somebody to try to talk to about this I can put you in touch with her if you would like.

KP: Thank you.

KC: Because she really knows what she is doing – so there's going to be this big anthology of visual poets, women visual poets, from around the world that's, I'm just sending you the campaign – so if you sign up for the campaign you can then, we are going to have giveaways and perks and it is crowd funded. So back to you question I don't, I would say, it would depend on the visual poets that you looking at, I think certainly women visual poets have interacted with those questions, Paula Claire's work but I don't think there's a direct response in quite the same way that you see

sort of in a Adrienne Rich poem or in a poem by Audre Lorde it is not doing the same, it is doing political work but in a different way and with a different aim and I think the aim has to do with, I guess, like Viktor Shklovsky would say estrangement, trying to get us to not see the world as we think it is which is a kind of a political work and is relevant to those things, taking things, that seem to be a foregone conclusion and not making them so any more and I think that Visual poetry does do that but not necessarily not just naturally – so I am not aware of academic, overly, of all the academic work on this I, do you know Bronac Ferran?

KP: I think so.

KC: She has written, she is writing on some of the, she is doing a PhD right now you might want to look her up. Are you on twitter?

KC: No. But I can get it.

KC: I think you should just get on twitter and follow all these different visual poets because you might find more participants but also there has been some stuff shared, some of these questions, as well there that you might be interested in you can just make is visual poetry twitter. It is otherwise quite a nice place you know.

KP: Yes

KC: The people I think are really interesting right now working are Kate Siklosi, I don't know if you know her and Amanda Earl, these are all Canadians, I don't know if yours has a UK focus or?

KP: A bit of both.

KC: There are a lot of interesting Canadians and Sascha Akhtar is based here and then a person I was going to put you in touch with, if you want, is a PhD student of mine who is practice led PhD student Sarah Dawson but she has published visual work and has, will have, different things to say than I am sure I will but I think I don't see Visual poetry particularly as having an immediate response to those things but I

also don't see a lot of poetry at the time as having a response to those things, if you just think the work of the more kind of movement poets verses you know obviously saying people on the edge of the movement like Plath or Ted Hughes were somewhat engaged with those questions, certainly not race though but there's a lot of poetry not doing that work so I think it is important not to suggest that visual poetry is particularly bad a dealing with political issues but is certainly no better and to a large extent because there were so many visual poets that have not been acknowledged or considered and that why what Amanda's done has been amazing. I can put you in contact with her because I think she is really trying to show how international Visual poetry is but also how long it has been going on and how present it is in various contexts, the work she has done I think will lead to more readings of these texts that would I think make it possible to answer that question in a more detailed way with regard to the specific national cultures.

KP: I want to talk about *Mother Baby Home*. I really admire the work and it supports a really difficult subject and when I have been talking to people about Concrete poetry and Visual poetry they have said it is not particularly political or it does not want to deal with those issues and yet I was wondering why and how you decided to use, you said a poetry object? That poetry object to address the situation of the mother and baby homes?

KC: I think for me as I said they started my understanding of the kind of visual presence of poetry which is different from Visual poetry but I suppose, but those early readings of HD (Hilda Doolittle) and Susan Howe and Dickinson, the sense of Dickinson as in different editions of Dickinson, the manuscript work and the envelope poems, things that are much more easy to know about now because we have the internet which I wouldn't have known about as a high school student which I think is important to think about, we have a whole range of people who now know that Dickinson's poems did not look like they do in the Norton Anthology of Poetry which I do have a lecture on that with my students you know, that has a huge impact that's true of any manuscript of course but I think with Dickinson who wasn't publishing, it is like, it is a huge question about what it was that she was doing. What was she up to with that? It is more radical than it is and it was already more radical and you take that layer to it and it is amazing. I think for me I only did Visual poetry because I felt that I needed to though I didn't do this visually because I wanted to do this in visual

poetry and I had done two visual poems before, kind of concrete poems, on the Sheela-na-gig stone carvings that were in one of my poetry collections that just kind of look like kind of vulvas out of words. I had done those but I hadn't really done any other Visual poetry and I had some prototypes on some stuff on some other subjects but didn't take it any further, more concrete stuff but I just felt like there's no way that I can contain this in verse, I am going to have to use other methods and the other methods are fragmenting language, using concrete because there is a lot of concrete images, some of them are quite concrete, the layering of the velum which then creates, every page turn creates a kind of different poem because you can see down into the layering and that using that relationship among pages changing how we think about – because the whole thing is a concept so the commission and investigation was started and they were working on their report and in the meantime I was working on my report. So, my report is about, is a report on what was going into the report and so it then becomes about how we present material, how we understand material, how we read material, how we give space to material, so that all kind of fed into why I did it in that way. I couldn't have done it any other way and for me always, like, form and content have to be really tightly together and so that was why I kind of did it, I will probably never write more visual poetry again which is really interesting because I am now considered a visual poet. I am in these anthologies and like I'm talking to you and I teach a lot of visual poetry which is its own thing which I was already doing but you know I can't really imagine a circumstance in which I am going to do, make any more visual poetry because why would I do that, it is not just because I did it but I feel that I have used that now and I have used that, for you say, for really clear political reasons and I am not saying all Visual poetry does that or even should do that but for me I am not interested in playful Visual poetry because I am not playful in my poetry, I mean I am playful in other ways but I just don't see the point really I am glad other people are doing it because they are much better than I would be, so it is a really strange question because the longer that this has existed I think I have been commissioned to do various things and I am like are they expecting a visual poem because they are not going to get one. It is a little weird question and I think it is a question that different artists have is where is the signature that you have as an artist, is it in the way you use form or is it in the way you approach or is it in the content you approach or is it where does it come from? Susan Melrose is a, was the kind of convenor of practical

PhD's when I did my PhD at Middlesex and she talks about art's worth, having a signature, having a presence, having a – and she sees signature as having an impression that's unique to the artist and I feel like mine is kind of all over the place but I mean that was a big thing so it is like it is ok, I can kind of, but now I am just writing prose poems which are just squares which is a kind of visual poem, I think of them as visual in the sense that they, I don't want them to do anything else other than be justified box because I don't want – I think, line breaks are like a cheap trick now, it is like a psychology about form comes out but I don't know if that answers your question about how I came to it? I came to it by exhausting it, so I think I have exhausted that and it is interesting because as I was working on it, I then came across the work of M. NourbeSe Philip, her work on Zong which has quiet visual poems as well and also is a document of mourning and ritual and her work hasn't really done that since I don't think and hasn't really done it before and I think, I do think when you deal with major trauma or major suffering or those sorts of things, it does push you to think beyond the ability of meanings of language and meaning to kind of hold and I know poets who write in lines think they are doing that but I think you do kind of shatter things because they are and you have to kind of accept that that's what you are doing and that's why I felt that I just couldn't write. I couldn't write lines that would just be weird, I would be trying to control it with a literate voice and again there's none of my voice in there so there's no – I didn't do any writing so, none of the language is mine which also felt important.

KP: You kind of touched on this earlier because you were saying that you are aware of other poets but they are not necessarily aware of that sort of dynamic. How influential do you think the work of Concrete poetry and Visual poetry has been to art and literature? Considering that.

KC: I think it is hard to say, I think maybe taking literature first, I think it has been highly influential but it depends on who's talking about it and I mean I think that this definitely needs reconsidering particularly in any national context but say in a UK context, the way in which that is kind of completely written out of or just not included in the periods the 60s and 70s and so what are the implications for that, for how we understand what UK poets are doing right now, I don't know, I think that these questions – I mean I am glad, I am guessing you are going to work on this for your PhD because I mean these are the questions that I would have you know, I feel like it

is a gap in the knowledge which is how have they influenced people. I think that we have all influenced each other and are continuing to do that but if you look at the, if you say that say Mother Baby Home was entered into The Forward Prize and I am not, it is not like sour grapes like I didn't get short listed for The Forward Prize but if you think about a work like that is entered for The Forward Prize how is that received, I didn't even enter it, we didn't enter it in the T S Eliot Prize because it is so expensive and it would have taken 13 copies to get it in, 12 copies, so it is like you start making calculations and I think a lot of small presses do that and now it is really interesting that Bhanu Kapil won the T S Eliot Prize because Bhanu Kapil's work is very experimental and she was at the Jack Kerouac's school for disembodied poetics and at the Naropa University institute in the States. So, I think it may all depend on whose judging, of course but I think that the prizes are opening up a bit. You get someone like Vahni Capildeo whose work is influenced by experimental practices who won The Forward Prize a few years ago, so I think it is becoming more imbued with and it is interesting because there are too people of colour but that's not what their work is discussed – as their work is discussed in terms of what it is about and I am, no they are doing some of the most interesting work formally in the country. Can we please also talk about that and what it means to take on a subject using these methods but nobody is really doing that and I know it is because the newspapers don't work that way. I think it is having a huge influence, experimental poetry is having a influence. I think the networks are very linked up together and I think there is still a kind of a sense of and I think in parts because nobody talks about form they don't really talk about that they just assume it so but then you have Holly Pester who just recently got a book out with Granta which is edited by Rachael Allen. Things are opening up but we will just have to see what happens in the next 5 years because it could be that it all just becomes all really, really murky and that's fine but I think in terms of, in historical terms I would say we don't know how much has happened or influenced, we actually don't know, I just don't think that work has been done really. I don't know enough about Conceptual art to say but I would say it is probably similar but possibly there has been poets working in the Conceptual art world that haven't been noted as such I think it is very important to the history of both but it is only seen from kind of a narrow lens of, oh the weird stuff we had better talk a little about that. If you look at the Norton anthology they have got a lot of poems by Finlay in it and I think that's about it and a lot of it just has to do with again the

production of materials for teaching and in institutions and because I am at Leeds we do use the Norton in that module but I bring all that other stuff in because when I was at New York St John I did the same, well if I wasn't there that wouldn't be happening, so all those things have a big effect on how we understand things but I am not an academic so I am not going to turn around and write an article on that but I hope you will.

KP: I hope so. I think we may have talked about this before but considering collaboration, technology and performance are all being used as methods within Concrete and Visual poetry and as just methods themselves. Do you think that the work that's inspired by the movements from the 60s will continue to develop in the future and how do you think it will develop?

KC: I don't know if they are inspired by the 60s though, that's what we don't know, I don't really know that many of the people I am mentioning are actually inspired by the 60s. I think that they could be like me inspired by the 19th century or inspired by a sort of 4th century, I think that's the big question, is it is sort of well what is the avant-garde is the avant-garde a kind of return to a kind of primitivism is that a kind of colonising of other cultures, all of those questions are in flux but I don't – going back to your question because I got caught on that 1960s.

KP: How do you think the work at the moment the poetry the Visual poetry and Concrete poetry how do you think that's going to develop in the future?

KC: I think it is interesting. A lot of work is coming out digitally so I think the digital will be bigger yet, a colleague of mine Fiona Beckett is working on artists who work with AR and digital work so I think that that will probably come to the fore but equally it is possible that we just won't want that because we are so tired of it. So more object based ephemera stuff might return in a big way in the next few years. I personally can't wait to get away from screens, I don't want to go to screens for poetry but that doesn't mean that everyone is feeling that way, I mean the last art project that I just got funded from the Arts Council that's a digital art project that will be quite visual because it is working with another poet and Fallon Media because it is a Dublin based kind of digital publisher and it is going to build a kind of architectural site that will allow different kinds of digital stuff to happen that we want to have happen with text but we proposed it as purely digital because of Covid and because we are

interested in that. I think digital is probably going to develop, I think but then it could be kind of a return to some of the kind of 1960s vibe of really ephemeral bits of paper flying around which would be great, I think we could use more of that as well in the sense of it will be really nice to be able to do that again. I don't, what I hope happens is that the performance element gets opened up a bit more and that venues, our major national venues get a bit more comfortable with poetry that isn't either spoken word or wise poet coming up reading a lyric poem because I think we are still in the state where they are happy to programme that or ask poets to do that but they are less happy to give people a space to do what needs to be done, so that was how I ended up with Mother Baby Home in an art gallery. I think performance has a place to go but already that has changed, I did that in 2019 so I think that already that's getting a bit more flexible. I mean, I suppose my one caution would be that I think as I said at one point that the word experimental has been bandied about without necessarily understanding its recent history let alone the 1960s or 1970s so I think it has to do with, as I tell my students, reading and a range of people working right now and what it is that they are doing and how it is that they are doing that and why are they like that and I think you get a lot of that through attending readings and we haven't really been able to do that and the ones that have existed are quite you know stationary so does that answer the question?

KP: Yes.

KC: I kind of think the next phase is going to be a reopening of those questions but I don't know how the 60s actually factors in if it does, I mean it is probably going to vary from individual, what does Barrie say? Did he say he was influenced by that or? That he was influenced by studying design?

KP: Yes, I think he said it was more to do with design, I think there are a few people influenced by the 60s, or they are using the work from the 60s, the words from particular poets and putting them in their work now but it is not as much.

KC: I think it is interesting because you would think it is kind of technological because it was, I think, a major period for poetry but there are a lot of gaps and I think the gaps have to do with education so if you didn't have direct experience of

those poets from the 60s you would have to find them on your own or you know have been exposed to them in some other way which is probably how other people have come to them as opposed to a way we think about them like Ted Hughes because we know about Ted Hughes because we are taught because it is taught, I mean, Finlay is taught in the A level I think, pretty sure or was one time but it is an interesting question I will be interested to hear what people say and I will be like tell me what everybody else said but that's what our work is going to do.

KP: Yes, it is good to talk to different people about it because it is funny what people say. I was talking to Barrie about the female artists and the BAME community and he was like I can't answer the question, I don't know about it but I thought in a way that kind of answers the question too. Not being able to say much about them.

KC: I mean, I think, yeah well as I'm like here's this anthology with all these people in it and my list of people are primarily women in the chat so there is only one white man and one woman of colour and then I have been talking about Bhanu Kapil and Bonnie so – but to be fair to Barrie, he is not in poetry, he's not spending every year reading hundreds of poetry collections trying to figure out what poetry collections to put on syllabus for students which is what I am doing, he's looking at other things but I think that's the other thing that's challenging is I sometimes have friends who say how do you know all about poets and it's like because it is my job, I get paid a salary to read a bunch of poets. I don't have to do that but that's just how I approach teaching but I spend my time reading collections that actually a lot of times don't interest me, that formally I'm not interested in but because they exist today, I need to know what are the best ones to expose my students to because I want to tell them what's happening today because they are creative writing students and they need to kind of know. So if people are not sort of and this goes back to the John Dewey point that if people are not compensated to do that they are not going to do it, they are doing other things. This goes back to those questions about universal basic income or old political questions which are curiosity or enquiry which are at the basis of so many of our problems. I think in the divisions of society it is because people do not have the time and space to access the curious because unless they are not paid to do it, they don't do it and I know we have the responsibility to do those things on one level but on another level we are all kind of being screwed over so you know, like I

am just saying that Barrie is probably coming out of those two directions as your answer.

KP: Yes. I think that is all my questions so can I say thank you.

KC: Great thank you so much it was really interesting. I feel like oh I am going to disagree with you. So you said you might publish quotations or whatever.

KP: I might yes it depends on how it all goes really.

KC: Well, if there is anything you need to clarify or expand on feel free to get in touch if I have said something like I don't quite know what she means by that. Feel free to write to me because I can just update it.

KP: Thank you.

KC: A lot of what I said was quite vague but other people probably have more specificity because they have a different experience.

KP: I will transcribe it and I can send you a copy of the transcription if you want but there's no pressure, you don't have to.

KC: Actually, that might be helpful because then I could potentially even insert a few more names that might be nice to include just to name drop a few people because I think that the other thing is when these literary histories get written different names get mentioned all the time because they are the first that come to people's minds so I think that could be, I wouldn't mind doing that actually.

KP: That would be great. Thank You.

KC: It sort of helps get the record, get it on record.

KP: Yes. You have sent the consent form back so thank you for that. I think that's everything. Thank you very much.

KC: Shall I ask, would you like me to share your contact details with the women who are involved with this anthology and then if they wanted to, if they could offer themselves for interview would that be, that's probably the easiest way instead of me individually writing to them.

KP: Yes, that would be great thank you.

KC: I might, if it is ok, put you as I write to Sascha and Sarah because I think they are UK based so if you are looking at UK based people – but Sascha is connected to Pakistan, so she brings that as well just if you are looking for more, especially women, to talk to.

KP: Yes, that would be great.

KC: Cool yeah, I mean I don't want to load you up, you will probably get a feeling like people who do Visual poetry will do yeah, yeah I can talk about this now!

KP: Yes, it is great to talk about it, you know, when you think about it, it is just one area you are in, and it feels a lot bigger but other people you mention it to say I don't know what that is.

KC: Well you are going to convert the world. Well do keep in touch and let me know if I can help in any way with anything else and I will keep you in the loop of other network stuff and like I said Twitter, I know Twitter is ridiculous but I think you will find more people that you might want to talk to on Twitter. Have you talked to Steve Fowler?

KP: No, I haven't.

KC: You might want to talk to Steve because he went to Writers Forum not the iteration that Cobbing did but the kind of post, I think as a white British male who considers himself a poet he will probably be able to tell you how it all links up if it

does for him to that 1960s period more so than me because I am coming at it from a completely different angle.

KP: Yes, I will get in contact with him.

KC: I mean I don't, he can be quite well, he calls himself an avant-gardist if he says he doesn't want to talk to you don't be surprised because he can be quite like my record is my performance or whatever, so it just depends on the day probably.

KP: Ok.

KC: He is lovely, he has constellation around him and is a kind of constellation and he has given a kind of coherence to things that I sorely miss because of Covid he puts all his energy into making things happen and it is kind of sad that he is unable to do that now. So, anyway I will hopefully speak to you soon at conference or somewhere along the line.

KP: Yes, hopefully, it has been really nice to meet you.

KC: Great to meet you Kathryn, good luck with it.

KP: Thank you.

KC: Bye

KP: Bye

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

Barrie Tullett (07.01.21)

KP: Thank you for agreeing to the interview.

BT: That's alright it is a pleasure, I'm not sure how much use I'll be.

KP: Is there anything you want to ask me before we get started?

BT: No let's kick off. My only concern is that I'm a Graphic Designer and I went to Art School and I studied illustration technically but I did a lot of Letterpress work so I became more and more involved in word art and typography and Concrete poetry and those things and technically I work as a concrete poet or visual poet with words. I've been called a concrete poet and I've been called a sound poet and various things and I have been invited to events as those roles but my day job is teaching graphic design and I work as a graphic designer and I make typographic art and so some of the questions you are asking about the relationship between the Concrete poetry and the black lives matter and the social rights movements they are not really anything that I've ever touched on, they are not part of my personal research or, you know, or aware of Concrete poetry as a political movement and one that got people arrested it was more to do with the people who you know did the work and not those issues, so I don't know how much use I am.

KP: I realised that some of the questions might be – I didn't want to ask you about Conceptual Art in case you didn't know but also didn't want to leave them out in case you did.

BT: No, like I say I never studied Concrete poetry formally, I never went to a lecture on it, I never – I went to art school and that was my background. Have you bought the new Concrete poetry book [Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979]?

KP: Yes, I have.

BT: A bit of a corker I think. The cover image, I don't know why they chose that cover image I'm not sure about that, I wish they had shown a piece of work that was actually typographic rather than, anyway that is just what happened.

KP: Right then, I guess I will direct the questions more towards typography and Visual poetry a bit more. My first one was what's your background, what's your field of knowledge?

BT: Well, when I was at school, when I was 16 or 17 or something, my art teacher brought in a concrete poet who did a workshop and I did a piece of work but I didn't get it, I did not understand what they were talking about and I thought – I regret gravely now not making more of that contact. I went to a foundation course and then cocked up and spent three years as a school keeper at one point, mechaniker, a screen printer and a paster partly. Then I went to art school and I discovered the Caterham at Chelsea School of Art, the letter press and the typography and the good and better type and I just loved it, I just absolutely adored it and technically I was an illustration student but I was using typography and I graduated, quite odd because I was – I thought I was a typographer with Letterpress but I wasn't really I was a printmaker that happened to be illustrating using type rather than illustrating using other print mechanisms but I had words in my portfolio and the work I did, I began a project in typographic which I have been working on ever since and that ended up in Baseline Magazine and because I had words in my portfolio, because Baseline Magazine was a design magazine, I ended up being a graphic designer and I got work as a graphic designer and illustrator occasionally. Then I moved up to Edinburgh and the woman who ran the course, Maggie Gordon, had just moved up from Brighton and was desperately keen to get some different people in because it had been – I think the digital communication from Edinburgh was full of staff who had been to war and they had come out of the war and gone to Edinburgh since the late 1940s and they were just retiring in the 1990s and she was keen to get new people in and I turned up and I got a job working at the art school and so she went back to Brighton again and I ended up taking over the course and I worked there and worked at Glasgow and now teach at Lincoln. So, my background is as an art student and my career is as a freelance graphic designer and also an academic. I am currently Programme Lead for Graphic Design at Lincoln and my own practice has been to do with typography and word art and book arts but I would call myself an enthusiastic amateur really more than anything.

KP: What is it particularly about book art and typography that really draws you to that area.

BT: I don't know, I really don't know because I wanted to be an illustrator and I still really admire illustration and occasionally work for money but not very often. I don't know, there is something about, there's an outcome to printmaking that isn't – there's something special about printmaking but without screen printing or etching or colour, form, so whatever. So we were set a project at Chelsea to do, back in the day before the internet, Lonely Hearts Ache Columns, it used to be that that was the way you met people, you had got to send a lonely hearts letter and we were asked to design the Lonely Hearts Ache Column using Letterpress and I just thought it was amazing, the idea of playing with words and language and I think I did about 17 different ideas, different things, and I just thought it was brilliant. You could just set your type, send it out to as many persons you wanted to, as many times as you wanted, bearing in mind the graphic design at the time was all Pasteup, are you familiar with what Pasteup is?

KP: Partially, I'm not –.

BT: I've got some somewhere but I'm not sure where I put it. It is the process of making graphic design. You had a piece of card that you stuck things onto in black, black artwork, and then you put an Eleva onto it and you told it what colours it was going to be and everything was within regulation so the idea being the case that you could print these things in colour and as long as you were happy to turn a handle you could print additional things. I thought this was wonderful and I just felt that the Mail art networks/people who produce art by post and posted it out, visited people, this is long before the internet long before computers really kicked off, we had them at Chelsea but they were the Mac pluses, the tiny ones, you know, it is with a black and white screen and black and white print out you could see the observation in them. I found it liberating and I remember reading The Liberated Page, a copy is up here I think, and we had to work with people like Rejencko, Mositski and the 1920s coach fitters and people who were kind of using Letterpress in a very creative way and Ajent Murkman who was just a phenomenal influence on me and I just thought, I couldn't believe it, it is just amazing this stuff and that really kicked off the kind of creative journey that idea and I was doing a series of what we were saying, a little

series of typographic pages Cummings poetry and handed them out to people and then that developed into a piece of work that was illustrations, Dante's divine comedy and the idea was that the inferno would be Letterpress, poetry would be typewriter art, and then paradigms would be Letraset. I remember going home to do the first piece of work for the Anthems and it was possibly the easiest thing I had ever done in my life and it was the most straightforward and most obvious thing to do and, I have always worked in books as a graphic designer and always wanted to work in publishing. I have done some bits and pieces that aren't but most of my work is in publishing so then the artists books – I met Phillipa at Lincoln and we talked together when I was making a magazine at the time and she was making an artist's book and we ended up making the Caserom Press and this became the small artist book thing and I just love the idea of it the same way as I think concrete poets – you are poets, and you have to go through a graphic designer and publisher in order to get your work in the public domain but if you have a typewriter and you are patient enough you can photocopy your own work and you can control it. I think the same with the artists books, if you can make, design and control them it is yours, it is you isn't it, it is you in the public domain.

KP: Yes.

KP: I realise this is an open question but how would you define Concrete and Visual poetry?

BT: I think that's, I mean I can give you some more, I can pass you onto some more people who can give you, who you might be interested to talk to about the idea of Visual poetry and Vispo. There are lots and lots of definitions aren't there in terms of what is it is but I suppose you mention third-wave feminism and I suppose there is first-wave Concrete poetry and second-wave Concrete poetry and third-wave Concrete poetry. Have you spoken to Chris McCabe and Victoria Bean?

KP: Not Yet.

BT: You know they wrote the New Concrete?

KP: Yes.

BT: I don't know what your background is, are you Fine Art or Literature Student?

KP: It is Fine Art but I also have an interest in Literature. Both together.

BT: Well, yeah, same but I have an interest in Literature as well, same as graphic design, words are simply a phenomenally important part. You can't be a graphic designer without having words you can't. I think there is such a joy in words you know a purity in words. Maybe I can pass your name to Chris McCabe if you want because he would be good to talk to about the kind of 21st Century Concrete poetry and Nico Vassilakis who co-authored *The Last Vispo Anthology: Visual Poetry 1998-2008*, I can forward your email to him if you want.

KP: Thank you.

BT: He might be worth talking to as well. I suppose the only idea – yes, there's another quote isn't there in that *Women in Concrete Poetry* book, about Concrete poetry being a placement of words on a page so that the meaning is also visual as well as theoretical and you can kind of read Concrete poetry in other languages in a way, although it is quite interesting that there's translations in the back of the book on Concrete poetry books, to tell you what the text actually means because what it turns out – what I'm saying is you need to know that this word means smile and this word means so and so because that's the context of it but things like Eugen Gomringer's *Silence* where the actual silence is the bit that is missing, you know things like that are what is actually interesting about the poem. Is it actually even there? So, I suppose where the physicality of the page is as important as the meaning of the text itself and then there is such a wide range of what you could do, you know, if you have seen the typewriter art books the Marvin Sackler one and Helen Bouldover. Have you read Adam Gold's book?

KP: No, I haven't but I have read yours.

BT: I can send you a link to Adam's book it is online, I think it is on Monoskop. I can send you it as a pdf, it is worth buying if you see it on Abe Books, it is a lovely book

and you get people who are working with words. People who are working with punctuation marks and text marks and you get people who are working with patterns and things but I think of the keyboard as a kind of – as a pallet which is interesting. There was a little magazine called Tube by Edward Brodie in the 90s and it was digital fonts because you had disks with four fonts, some posters and a theme for the fonts and the idea was that if you take a keyboard, just because with a typewriter whatever physical key you do is a physical action and a type bar will strike the pallet or that kind of thing so, you know, that when you press that it can be either a ‘h’ uppercase or lowercase depending on whether you press the shift lock or if it is an old typewriter it could be a number and a ‘h’ whatever it be but his idea was that if you use a keyboard then it becomes an electronic pallet and you can do anything, key anything in with a stroke, you can make it do anything you want, it doesn’t have to be a ‘h’ but I think that part of that was the idea of typewriter art and you can do anything with this media if you move your paper, you can reprint and overprint and you can radically kind of change the way that works and I think what is interesting about typewriters and Letterpress and Letraset is that we are better than the technology. I have been reading about a family of cobblers that have been making shoes for two hundred years, you know, the family tradition has gone back two hundred years and one of them is in his 50s and he says he has just got the hang of doing a really tricky bit of a bow and he had been learning this skill over many years and I said yeah, as graphic designers regularly every six months Adobe release an update on the software we have got to use so you are never at a point where you are better than the software. Nick Goodman used to use an Oxidant piece of Design Software, Quark software because it was better than Nick was and he knew how it worked and he knew how he could muck it about to do what he wanted and he only moved on to QuarkXPress when his printer upgraded and he couldn’t use it anymore and he couldn’t print their files anymore and I think the same about Letterpress and typewriters, I know how they work and I am better than they are, whereas within design and illustration function I don’t know, I can do bits of it but it does far more than I realise it can do. I think part of that idea of why Concrete poetry is, in my view, is because it is better than technology if that makes sense.

KP: Yes.

BT: Might not have asked me the best question. There's a fantastic book by Raymond Federman, have you seen this book, *Double or Nothing* a novel by Raymond Federman.

KP: I don't think so.

BT: When the lockdown is over you will have to come and look at the library, it is a lovely book, it is a concrete novel, so that it is all typewritten and it is about, it is bizarrely about a guy living in a lockdown, he goes into living in an apartment for a year I think and it is written in the 60s and it is his diary about how he is preparing himself to live on his own but all the pages are kind of visual games so it is a kind of concrete novel he has been putting together. It has been reprinted with the joys and delights of the macintosh revolution but it is horrible compared to the typewritten one. It lacks the finesse and the joy, it just isn't the same as a typewritten one, it is not as nice so I think there is something about that technology which is important, about the fact that you are better than the technology, so it is worth a buy if you ever see it. Raymond Federman, you want to get the version – Swallow Press, that's the really good one. It shouldn't be expensive, I have a copy of it, on Abe a while ago. So, I suppose, in its most basic way – yes, it is where the placement of the words is as important as what the words say. I suppose it is where you are kind of liberated from some of the rules, grammar and/or syntax, you are liberated from the need to be readable or legible. There's a nice quote from David Carson about 'never mistake legibility from readability' and I think Concrete poetry gets away from that completely because it has such a wide range of how you can work and what you can do and I think people are far more forgiving of the readability and legibility of Concrete poetry, if that make sense.

KP: Yes. Recently you were part of Klang Farben Text -

BT: I was yes.

KP: And with this in mind how would you describe our current relationship with visual forms of poetry or experimental art forms that are using text at the moment.

BT: I think, yeah, I was invited to Klang Farben Text. Chris McCabe and Victoria Bean wrote the New Concrete and they, I don't know, they had seen the type of Dante work knocking about for a while, so it was on their radar, I don't quite know why they got in touch with me but it has been in a few magazines and a few books and things and when they had to launch that exhibition I did a performance piece, a sound poem and I gave Chris and Victoria a copy of Concrete poetry and knock knock jokes that I had written, which, when I get back to work I will send you a copy for info, it is not a big seller but Chris was brilliantly, funny and just brilliant, he just loved it, how bazaar you have to be to make Concrete poetry and knock knock jokes. It relies on a very, very sophisticated clientele knowing what the jokes are in the first place they don't make any sense otherwise and then he invited, tagged on a couple of working writers to exhibit at – the Dante work at the Southampton Centre and from that I was sort of on their radar as one of the six people they invited to Munich even though I am not a poet. I am not a poet, you know, I am not a concrete poet, I am not a sound poet, I am not a visual poet, I am a graphic designer but I was on stage, there was six of us from the UK and six from Germany and we were working with the German poets on the floor. It is a brilliant thing, it is amazing and if you ever get a chance to go to the Lyrik-Kabinett in Munich, it is just a magical place the most fantastic place it was, I couldn't believe I was there I couldn't believe that someone invited me to go and let me be in this place for three days it was a wondrous thing and that was really interesting and they are all very different people and they are people who are – Chris McCabe is a poet and Victoria Bean is a visual poet and there was Dermot McGrath who is – the language was really covered and it was really interesting. Now remind me of what the question was? So, yes I think one of the most interesting things is – so yes it was amazing to be part of and then there was the more Vispo manifestos and I did some more collage things so there was this huge range of things that are all going to be acceptable as examples – with performances pieces and written pieces and Robert Montgomerie actually had posters at his show which was very funny because he produced these quite big posters and artworks and said “I forgot they would have a projector” and he had bought the artefacts in, and I think one of the joys, I think is of making objects a joy

again, is we are all being so digital and so the idea of analogue things is quite important and the people who are making things again and enjoy looking at artefacts in a way that we haven't. When I first started teaching a lot of students weren't interested in a traditional printmaking facility, they didn't want to do screen printing or Letterpress because it was old, they wanted to use Mac's because they were new and exciting and they were desperate to use modern technology and I have been teaching so long that my students now think the Mac is just a bit of stuff and it has always been around but if they see a book art space or a Letterpress or screen printing space they are really excited because it is new. So I think one of the things that is a joy is that everyone has access to these technologies, so you can make stuff and assimilate stuff and you can get stuff out there and typewriters are suddenly liberated from their need to be anything which is to do with commerce because they are no longer commercial machines so you can muck about on a typewriter, you can scale it up and unload it and you can do the same and get stencil sets and things and whatever it might be and I think there's a liberation from the need to be commercial which means you can exploit it as an art form. If you watch things like Mad Men, I think there was a, there was a scene in Mad Men where they talk about someone they sold a typewriter and it was quite an expensive thing and it was a real issue that someone had taken a typewriter from an office – one of the ad guys had taken the typewriter home from the office to write his novel on but it wasn't something you would have at home because it was quite expensive but obviously most of us now have ways of producing, most of us would have kit and we have ways of producing promotions so I think the ubiquity of that, you don't have to use your laptop or your iPod as a commercial tool, it is also a tool you can play on you know, so I think there is a liberation for people to think I can actually do this without worrying. I don't have to, it is not an expensive toy to play on, it is an expensive thing I bought for my business pack that I can also play on. I can pick a typewriter up for £20 in a second hand shop and I can even play on that and I think there is – once things are liberated from the requirements of commercial then I think it gets really interesting. In the same way I wouldn't want to offend working at the beginning of the industrial revolution so you get one of the high end machines, was it a Teech or something, a proper high end piece of kit, you would pay a lot of money for it to use per hour and you would have to go in with a very specific idea of what you wanted because you were paying your printers to do the work, and it is suddenly the day

when it is Photoshop and you can actually mess about in the evening and you can try things out. There is a really nice book called *Typography Now* and it was published in 1996 and it is all the beginnings of the digital revolution and designers, that used to be paste up, using computers and we can finally see things on screen and the liberation of what we do and I think that's part of it. The fact that it is your feed to the commercial necessity, you don't have to be with Photoshop because it costs lots of money to be with Photoshop, you don't, it is like muck about, it is there anyway. I think it is the same with typewriters and those things, you're not – it doesn't have to be used as a tool, it doesn't have to be used only to write letters, it can be used for anything.

KP: The other thing I took from, I saw some of the performances from that festival and you mentioned diacritic marks? I had never heard of that before.

BT: I have got, where is it? I have been doing some filing. I am halfway through. I have a couple of artists books on – one of them is about diacritic marks and, here it is, diacritic, this is a little halfway made artists book but it is all the things that other languages use and that we don't use very much. So, it is all the circumfixes in French and umlauts and all the underscores and you know all the grave accent in French and all those things we don't tend to use anymore but they give – they tell you how to speak the word Cafe and Café. The accent on the 'e' makes them different words however you are going to use them. I think they are quite interesting because those kind of things, all written languages is a, all punctuation is a kind of guide to how to speak, there's a really nice book called *Design, Writing and Research* by I think, by Ellen Lupton and/or Stephen Penner I think maybe, and there is an essay in there about the ordinance of language or written language, it is all about tragen columns and apostrophes in text when the print runs left to right as the ox parenthesis carries on forever and ever, and the beginning of punctuation and how it was to do with how you speak, so the idea of – there are three dots which became commas and full stops but they were on a vertical line and it would tell you when to pause when you were speaking so all those things like commas let you know that that's a little gap and now we have it internalised, obviously, but it needs to be there when you are reading out in church or something. I think that's what's interesting about diacritic marks and the way they make you speak. There's a lovely book by, this is really nice, this is a German book called *Die Aktivitaet des Lesens* by

Stephanie Kaplan and it is all about how we annotate text and things and it has got pages devoted to the spaces between words and it has got one where it is about – I did a book of corrections called *A Ghost in the Fog*, the way we understand words and there's another one about the kind of way your eye follows words somewhere and I did a book which is a book of corrections. It has all the text from the book taken out and the corrections left in, those kind of marks and it even has a page torn out (holds book and page up to camera) because that's what you do to books and notebooks, so I was interested in those kind of marks and when we did, when Annah Falkner did *Klang Farben Text* she had her manifesto she had written which we had got to work with and she had these little green marks on it which were her diacritic notations for when she was going to perform it, so it told her where the stresses were and where the words would bump off each other and I thought that was really interesting so that became my contribution to the project to take those out of context and use those. There was a very famous comedian called Victor Borge, he used to do a thing where he did, with, audio punctuation where he actually spoke out the punctuation marks so a full stop would sound like Pffft and a comma was pffft chi, which is what I used to perform the thing that Stuart Mills – so those are the hidden marks whether that be the marks from the corrections, the print reading marks or whether is it the accents and things or whether it is the annotations that Falkner was making for her, so that she knew when she was speaking this word or carry on and so on, it is all based on the idea of diacritics which I think is fascinating but we don't really use in English, it is not part of our, you know, occasionally we have one left over but not very often.

KP: I found it really interesting when I saw that because we don't use them but my Dad speaks French and so I found it interesting how you were performing the marks that were there.

KP: Generally speaking, Concrete poetry or experimental art forms that use text tend to also use graphic space, we have spoken about this, what effect do you think this structure has on how it is defined in art or literature?

BT: I think, it doesn't really fit into any context does it. There's a, there was a comment about the first ever experimental novel which is generally accepted to be the *Life and Times of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, which is 300 hundred years ago

or so (started 1762) and there was a Boswell quote saying “the truly” something quite critical about it, saying it would not last and it is a flash in the pan and I can’t quite remember the quote but it was quiet critical. It’s “to innovation lances disappointment” and I don’t think there has been another experiment like it for another 200 years, so it was a one off thing and it was republished by Vis Editions about 10 years ago and there was a huge ‘stuff of interest’ in design press about it, how beautiful this new version was. I spoke to one person I met for the Typewriter Art Book who did her PhD on Tristram Shandy and I sent her the stuff and I was quite excited about this new version and she was really annoyed about it because it is exactly the same as the original book, it is just printed in, in a nicer way, it is just modern it is just in fluorescent ink, I don’t know if I have a copy, yes I do, here it is, Vision Editions and it is printed in nice and orange and there’s pages where there’s a time line where it talks about how you are supposed to read the book and it has those charts (holding book up to screen) and there’s a page that it turned down somewhere and there is a black page where someone dies which is over printed, it is an interesting book well enough but she was very annoyed because it is exactly the same as the original edition, it wasn’t doing anything different just looked more modern, you know. So I was having the idea, under the sun, think the idea of it is, never quite art and it is never quite literature, it is a very strange thing and I suppose it is also the way that you might read the novel, the page it takes a certain way of reading and you have got things like, you know, the way people work on walls like Lawrence Weiner, you know, you have a wall that is suddenly the page so it radically changes the readers experience and even I think virtual things where the page is completely and utterly irrelevant because you can zoom in and zoom out and there’s no kind of rule to it. I think Concrete poetry, it reasonably re-resonates and crosses over so many different lines like a Venn diagram of it all because you have poets who are poets who are working as concrete poets and you have poets who struggle with – Ellen Medell was originally a poet, a traditional poet and I think in Hmpton Feelings, then discovered this idea of Visual poetry and Concrete poetry and you know, became a different kind of poet entirely and you get people who are writers who are moving into a different sphere and you get artists who are moving in a different sphere so it is a very, very strange mix of different genres, it is not easy to pigeon hole because you might have someone who is a poet and he is now making Concrete poetry and she is making Concrete poetry, therefore, that goes in the

poetry section but you might have a fine artist and she is working with Concrete poetry effectively, oh that's in the fine arts section of, she's a fine artist and you have a writer she is writing concrete novels, oh that must be in the fiction section, you know. So I think it is quite interesting about how, that it is all these things if you look at the Vispo anthology or even that The New Concrete poetry there is such a phenomenal range of work which is/isn't it from this idea of playing with language.

KP: I think that answers my next question as well actually.

KP: Considering it falls under lots of categories and it crosses over lots of different things, with figures such as Ian Hamilton Finlay who sort of resist categorisation how would you define them or describe them?

BT: I think, yeah, as a student when I was first sort of finding my way, one of my tutors had told me look at Ian Hamilton Finlay and his work and I completely didn't understand any of his. I went to see a show of his work in Frith Street in London and it was, they were selling little bits and pieces and every piece of work had an explanation as to why it was clever because it was based on classical myths and classical legends and a knowledge of the French language or a knowledge of the Second World War. There was one piece about German art critics or something and it was, it was basically a piece of work based around U-boat captains sinking battleships, so German art critics were the U-boat captains sinking the arts in battleships and it was very, when you had the joke explained, it was very clever every single thing in the exhibition you had to look at the explanation to find out why is that clever, oh that's because that's Napoleon, oh that's clever, you know. So I think he was quite a miserable man, I never met him but I almost met him but I didn't. I know Robin Delangeles who photographed him is one of the few people he sort of let, who he let view/photograph him but I know his son Alec but I think he was a miserable man. I wonder if it can't have been – if you are a man and a concrete poet you have got to be miserable, Ian Hamilton Finlay was certainly quite truculent and Bob Cobbing I think was quite truculent as well I think, so if you want to succeed as a man in Concrete poetry you have to be really miserable but I think Finlay was really interesting because he did collaborate with people and literally put in Concrete poetry, you know, literally stone carved text and things and I think he collaborated with people like Patrick Caulfield, I think there's a piece they collaborated on together

as well, so I think he is very interesting in the fact that it is not just his work it is also the collaborative aspects of it all and I suppose even with what he was doing the printed mapping reference stuff, they were additions to the printer so there's never, they weren't just typewritten they were made and printed or created as specific sculpture or whatever they would be so there was always a plan with them which I am interested in and everything, it wasn't him just doing it. There's a book, Cobbing's no, no it is Apollinaire I think, he wasn't that bothered how he had written or reproduced them, apparently he needed calligrammes and things and stuff but he wasn't really that bothered on how they were disseminated he didn't really care, I don't think the early work was the important thing and to put too fine a spin on it. It was actually quite important how they represented what they look like and what the outcome was and there's some lovely books by Ken Coburn. I don't know whether we have got them in here now he's worth having a chat with too he did a couple of books, pocket books with Alec Finlay (holding up book called *Atoms of Delight: An Anthology of Scottish Haiku and Short Poems*). One of them is that one which is Scottish Haiku and short poems and he also did one about Concrete poetry, Scottish Concrete poetry and they did one called (holding book up *Green Waters: An Anthology of Boats and Voyages* by Alec Finlay) boats and waters one which is quite nice, it is and it is one particularly about Concrete poetry so he is worth having a chat too as well.

KP: Do you think then with this work that sort of goes beyond the page especially with more contemporary work, especially with technology, the visual sphere/visual space that work can now be created in, does it then become something else, not just Concrete poetry. Does it then become a completely different art form, can you draw a line there?

BT: I think that's just a really interesting point and one of the things that I'm acutely aware of when I am sitting away working at home on my little version of typewriter art. I'm aware that it is quite a weird thing to want to be doing. I think there is a, I suppose, people making this work – when we did the book a lot of the artists hadn't been, they had fallen out of favour for 20 or 30 years and the last book was '77 and lots of them were quite amazed that people were still interested, you know, they were quite old, they were quite, I was talking to people like Ronald Mythe and it was the first time that people were interested in the work he had done and that's one thing

that's hugely disappointing is that you work on this stuff and then you have got to get it published or disseminated somehow and there was a few poetry magazines and there was a few *Poor Old Tired Horse* or whatever it might be or any magazine. I think it went from and I suppose now one thing is you can publish it straight away so there's this phenomenal amount of stuff out there which is both positive and negative because it means that anyone is able to publish everything but also, anyone is able to publish anything, so there's not really any kind of, there's an editor to a magazine in a kind of sense of authorial voice, someone who is deciding this is good we will publish this although you can easily argue that's actually a negative thing because they are snobbish and they are caught up in their own world and it is you know certain people are in favour and out of favour with the establishment and the internet is more democratic in the sense it can do whatever you want. Now, I do think there's, again going back to the same idea of if you are a poet or a writer or a fine artist and you make this word, whether you make that word on paper or on screen doesn't really matter, it liberates you to do more things with it on screen, you can make it move, you can have a different relationship with it and again I think you also come back to that issue with the technology, you know, I work with a guy called Wayne Christan who does UI design and UX design and he basically just mixes them up and we did a project based on Dante's poem a paradox, it was a student project and one of the students was talking about the idea of reading this text and it was to do with being close to God and Wayne had this idea that if you had a screen, where you have a poem, and it would be one word at a time and if the word stayed in the centre of the screen and flicks over you can read those quickly without having to scan the page, so you can read and speak four times faster than what you can normally and it would be really good if you had the text and the closer you got to God the faster it went and he worked out how you could actually have your phone linked to GPS sites and it would find out where everyone's church was and the speed of the text would be depending on how close you were to the church, so if you walked closer to the church the text went quicker yeah, I thought that was a brilliant idea. I had the idea for it and the conversation, I would never ever have been able to make it happen because I have no idea where I would have begun but for Wayne it was quite simple because he knew the UX. I suppose that's the theorem then, so that you would then work with them, with Wayne and make it happen whereas most of the stuff that I do it is just me, me and the Letterpress, me and the typewriter, me and even me in e-

design to publish it so if there's one thing about the moving image and screeny stuff it requires a different kind of mentality, maybe a mindset. I suppose because it is a different kind of way of working and maybe that comes down to having a digital workplace or Matrix and younger people, like yourself, who have always known computers, aren't so daunted with how you might use software and how you might you know how to use a thing, I mean, I have a lot a graphic design students who are using some of the software on the ipad's to do work but the software kind of does a lot for you and I am always slightly wary about that because you are a graphic designer and you are supposed to be doing the work for your software not the other way around, otherwise why am I paying you. But you can see stuff on top of the line, and it is quite nice until you realise you can see someone else doing the same thing because that's what the software does and that's what the app does and that's what it is designed to do. I have seen a really nice blurb, it tracks text to moving images but it is not that complicated, once you know the software and that's a quite basic thing to do, it becomes quite boring and quite quickly because oh that's that thing again but having said that if you look at Letterpress, you think that's beautiful because you can see the woodgrain that never gets boring and no one ever says oh that's just Letterpress I have seen that before, everyone just says that's Letterpress. Whereas the computer stuff quite weirdly, you think, I have seen that trick before, and I don't know why that is and I think there's an interesting thing there. Where I think about the nature of books as well, you know, if you have a book, a novel, it is the same every page, we don't ever question that it is the same every page and then you make experiments of them. People expect it to be different every page they get bored with it being different as if it is not different enough, quite an odd way of thinking, I suppose, if that makes any sense at all.

KP: Yes, there's something quite special about when someone makes a book with the work in and you can feel where the paper has been printed, you can feel the texture, you can feel the paper and everything yeah but you can also – there's a lot of pros to digital too, unfortunately I don't understand any of them either.

BT: I prefer reading physical objects rather than on screen, I still prefer to read the physical thing, I still prefer to have a printout, I don't yeah, I still prefer written and a reading thing. I think there is an interesting thing about books, there is a quote about

a book “a book is a vessel you can pour words into”, it doesn’t matter what words you pour into a book at all, you could pour a book of Concrete poetry into a book you could pour a different chemical equation into a book, you could pour a novel into a book and it would always be (holding up a book) exactly the same and I think there’s another thing to think about where the nature of the book is related to the content where you might design your book specifically to do with the way of how it is written and why it is written or why it is written so that it just wouldn’t be a thing bound with certain pages because that’s not what the narrative is. There’s been a few books like that. B.S. Johnson wrote *The Unfortunates*, which was a series of, it was unbound pamphlets and you read the first one and the last one in the right order but the rest of them you could just swap around and there was a French writer who did a similar thing prior to that where all the pages were on a separate sheets and you shuffled the whole lot and read it in whatever order and kept on going and there are people who are playing with those things. I like the idea of the artists book responding to the narrative so if you are writing an experimental novel it will be an experimental book that will fit the narrative and I think if there’s a problem where the narrative went back and forth in time, there will be some of that in the way the book worked that would do the same, I think that’s a fair point for the future or past.

KP: I will skip the feminism and civil rights question if that’s ok?

BT: I think the *Women in Concrete Poetry* book probably has far more to say about feminism, Paula Claire is probably really worth talking to as well, she is an incredible, she built the Paula Claire archive in Oxford, she has a phenomenal amount of works she has collected Concrete poetry for years, she is about 83/84 now and she wrote about Bob Cobbing doing poetry work, so she – and she is quite frustrated by it and one of her works appeared in an ad for a dog book. Then anytime anyone thought oh well we need an anthology it was that same piece whereas she has quite a huge range of work, so I think, yeah there are probably better people to talk to about feminism or women in Concrete poetry. Again, I have never looked beyond the work in terms of the gender, race or anything about the people, you know, I was always looking at the work. I was aware that some pieces were done because they were politically motivated but I wasn’t, I never really then found out more about the political

motivations of the person. It was always the graphic language really because of my own background.

KP: I think Concrete poetry lends itself well to looking at the work itself rather than -

BT: Yeah.

KP: How important do you think the Concrete poetry or Visual poetry or experimental art movements using text at the time were to the history of art or to literature?

BT: I don't know, you kind of wonder, you worry that it didn't make any difference at all. I suppose that it is quite odd isn't it because I know lots of people, it is like being famous in dentistry isn't it, being famous in graphic design is like being famous in dentistry, nobody even knows apart from graphic designers and I suppose Concrete poetry is the same kind of way, most people are oblivious to it, most people in the street it wouldn't make any great impact in their lives apart from in advertising.

There's a lovely programme on BBC Radio 4 about advertising in poetry and it spoke about people who used that/started to use bits and pieces of Concrete poetry and how closely linked they were and there's lots and lots of visual wordplay in advertising campaigns which is kind of basically Concrete poetry. There's a famous one in the 60s called Tonnage and it has got the word tonnage and the stuff for the advert and it, all the layout and there's a lovely book by Massin, (Holding book up to screen) *Letter and Image* if you can get hold of a copy that's worth a look. It has got advertising in it and it has got people like John Furnival's works in it and – but it does provide – it has got things like examples of advertising campaigns that use the kind of language of Concrete poetry and I know the Tonnage one is in here somewhere but I can't find it and it talks about art, it is a really good book it talks about a lot of very important people and John is one of them but I suppose it has more – oh there it is – (holds up book at the page, the word TONNAGE is in capitals and enlarged/emboldened, taking up two thirds of the page, pressing down on smaller typed words occupying the bottom third of the page causing the words to be crushed) – it has a huge relevance but I suppose it is kind of what most people would know, I suppose it is probably, you would probably miss it if it wasn't there, if it wasn't there at all and I think it is odd isn't it then that there's all these people who do it and it doesn't make

that much difference. Having said that there were concrete poets who were arrested and were persecuted for their political beliefs and their Concrete poetry was considered to be dangerous, wasn't it, especially Brazilian poets they were actually arrested for making those statements because they communicated very quickly, visually, like protest posters, so they were, I suppose they weren't arrested because they were concrete poets they were arrested because they were agitators, provocateurs, you know but just happened to be using Concrete poetry instead of pictures and I suppose the idea of dissemination as well where you can type it, you can photocopy it and you can circulate it very quickly. So, I think it is a strange one for me, a phenomenally important thing that informs my teaching, informs my work and you know my spare time reading Concrete poetry but then in the great scheme of things it is nothing/anything.

KP: Yeah, being in it is very different.

BT: Yeah, Yeah it is and you meet up with other folk when I remember going to Munich and meeting six people, talking to people who are just like you, which is to be desired. I am part of the International Society of Typographic Designers which is a typography society module and I am part of the educational panel. We run projects for students and every year we get together on – not last year but every year we get together and mark the word, we sit in a hotel together and you are with your own equals and there's this really weird group of people marking typography, looking at these words and thinking this is really strange, these are my people, this is where I am.

KP: Considering where we are at the moment with so much variation in the type of poetry that is being produced, the type of art that's being produced do you think that this work will continue to develop in the future and how?

BT: I think that's an interesting question and I mean if you look historically we had art movements which we know, Impressionism and Modernism and Surrealism and they all they kind of follow on or reacted against each other and we have kind of rather conveniently put them into little sections like stratas of rocks, it is not really that simple, people are surrealists artists or all of those things and so on. Then people like Mondrian who cheated and changed their dates of their paintings so that it made

more sense, when you looked at them as a sequence so they all kind of worked and this is all very clever but it is kind of fake because it wasn't actually, was not that at all. Then I think that a few different things like magazine culture, like back in the 80s, The Face and I-D and Ritz magazine and if you were a particular type of fashionista you had The Face magazine, if you were a different kind of fashionista you had I-D, if you are more linked to a political magazine you had Enemy and many of these things and magazines, there were about five of them so you belonged to one of those five in terms of graphic designers: Enemy, Tempo and Eye magazine which imported Baseline these defined who you were, nothing unusual that's the thing and then everything – it doesn't exist anymore there's no magazine that everyone reads any more when they are teenagers, it is just we all get our stuff online instead and there's not even, I suppose any idea of Punk and New Romantics and Futurists and things, the Rockers and Mods and Teddy Boys people forming factions, it is all about – you want everything at the moment, there's no coherent sense of it and I think that's good and bad you know, assuming who you were before and what you were part of and you knew how you might disseminate and work with those people, get that recognition within that sphere and that field and get it back to printmaking. You see some stuff, some awful stuff, that goes out, some terrible stuff that goes out, they get more likes than you get, oh how does that work but it does and I think that shows there is no coherent art movement somehow it is all post modernism. It seems to be a very general thing people doing stuff but there's not any coherent focus on the stuff, it seems totally non-academic and I think the same with Concrete poetry and Noigar and Vispo they are going to pool it, people doing their thing with certain references and certain influences but it is not coherent in any way shape or form and there are going to be lots of people doing stuff instead of fashion and music it seems very, very hard to pin it all down. I suppose it's whether that's a general culture thing rather than a specific poetry thing, or Concrete poetry thing and whether we come out of it in the end with another focus and maybe it is better that way with everyone liberated from it you know. I'm doing a book about Keith Armstrong and there are things there where he would put stuff to magazines, where he would get his name up in lights and maybe on a bus, he had a nighttime gallery who would exhibit him in the gallery even on a Sunday and he would get exhibited and you think now he would be online and he would be probably, his work would be out there, he would be probably you know, without needing the magazines or the movement – but I am still quite old

school I still want the work done in magazines. I still want the work to be published and printed because I know it gets out there in a different way. If you go to look online and there's somebody you're looking for you google the exact thing. You know you will find it or you might choose to page forward and that starts another page spread but it is not the same is it, not the same as reading a book, it might not answer any of your questions but well.

KP: You are, you are. I think that was my last one. Is there anything else you would like to add or anything else I should have asked you that I have forgotten to.

BT: No, no, not really like I said, if you want I can forward your email to some people that might be worth having a chat to about Concrete poetry and about book arts and things and I find it an endlessly fascinating thing to have become involved into and I can't understand why more people aren't just as completely and utterly obsessed with the joy of letters and the joy of words and the potential you have. If I said anything, it is all about that, it is all about things isn't it. That's all about that thing you are going to do that's going to be really good, as well as the next piece is going to be really good, yeah, I don't know, it is a strange thing yeah it is a strange thing, no no I don't think there are any questions at all.

KP: Ok.

BT: Yeah there's a Nadine Faith Smith that I have put in the book actually, little typewriter portraits that are really lovely little things that – and there's one of a guy called Stephen Fowler who is a rubber stamp artist and there's this little typewriter portrait and if you know Stephen Fowler you know that's Stephen Fowler, you know it is the most simple portrait and there's a Robyn, what was it, in the book she does a section of typewriter portraits but she uses text in the portrait, definitely beautiful and I think that you are right, a liberation of all the technologies have their own opportunities and their restrictions you know. Letterpress is fairly flexible as she knew what to type, so you are limited to what you can actually print with obviously because it is a physical object and then you have got all these random colours, you can use typewriters that have a fixed character set you know, you have got one print size effectively but you can get them into a rhythm and so long as you can keep

hitting the key you can go on forever. Letraset again you are limited on how much you have got of anything and the fact it is old, and it doesn't always work – you know stencil sets again, you have got to buy the stencils and how much time have you got to be bothered to trace around them, so I think there is something quite lovely about the calligraphic mark. Do you know Tim Donaldson's work?

KP: No, I don't.

BT: He does, I don't think his website is up at the moment, he teaches at Falmouth, he is really good. He does stuff on Instagram, if you follow him on Instagram he does autographic marks, autographic writings, you know these beautiful kind of graphic art things. I am always wary of liking him because I don't know what he is actually saying, it might be terrible things he is saying I don't actually know because you can't search on the pictures and stuff but he is really good he is worth looking into.

KP: Thank you for that and thank you for your time.

BT: Pleasure if you want to catch up again, please just give me a shout you are welcome.

KP: Thank you.

WRITTEN INTERVIEW
Johanna Drucker (21.10.22)

What is your background?

I am an artist, writer, and academic who began publishing visual poetry in the early 1970s when I first had access to letterpress type and a flatbed printing press. I continued printing graphically scored books—not just poems, but full works whose sequence and development involved procedural and formal innovation—until 2012, when I published my final letterpress project, *Stochastic Poetics*. Since the 1980s, my scholarly work has included a significant focus on visual and concrete poetry as well as other dimensions of visual epistemology in the graphic arts, information visualization, diagrams, and written forms/formats. My scholarly and creative work have existed in a productive dialogue. My most recent book, *Inventing the Alphabet*, is a historiographic study of knowledge production in the area of alphabet studies and tracks intellectual lineages within various material modes of transmission that have not been systematically studied previously.

How would you define [Concrete poetry/language-based Conceptual art]?

[Sub-question: How would you describe our present relationship with [Concrete poetry/Conceptual art]??]

Concrete poetry has a narrow and distinct identity that is linked to the Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry published by Augusto de Campos, Decio Pignatari, and Haroldo de Campos in Brazil in the 1958. Their definitions and guidelines emphasized graphic space-time structures over linear forms. In Concrete work, meaning and expression were to be as closely linked to each other—even isomorphic to each other—as possible. Their success at demonstrating and embodying these principles was evident in their early work, as it was in that of their German counterparts. The collaborations between Augusto de Campos and Julio Plaza, *Objectos*, 1969, or *Poemobiles* a later version from 1974, are dramatic exemplars, but Eugen Gomringer's iconic poem "Silencio" which is dated variously to 1953 and its appearance in *The Book of Hours and Constellations*, 1968, also exemplifies Concrete poetics.

The broader categories of language-based conceptual art and of visual poetry have their own points of origin with conceptual art often linked to the Art and Language group, founded in 1967 by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin, and Harold Hurrell. But work slightly earlier in the 1960s by Lawrence Weiner, and Joseph Kosuth established clear parameters for Conceptual Art's commitment to so-called "language art."

Visual poetry is generally tracked to antiquity, to shaped poems in the Greek tradition, but in some sense, all written poetry is part of visual poetics. In the character-based writing systems, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, expressive features inflect graphical signs in ways that are less recognized or acknowledge in the alphabetic scripts that are used in the rest of the world. But the concept of the line, verse, stanza, and other fundamental features of poetic form are all graphical. Hymns to the ancient Mesopotamian goddess Inana and other cuneiform texts on still-extant tablets date back early 3500 years.

While visual poetry may be understood as a sub-field practice by writers interested in explicit exploitation of these features, all written poems use graphical structures in their composition and presentation to introduce line breaks, use the spatial field, play with breathing, create rhyme structures, and reinforce or push against sound patterns.

Considering [Concrete poetry/language-based Conceptual art] combines text and image, what, if any, effect does its structure have on how it is defined?

Visual poetry, explicitly practiced, calls attention to the ways graphical features enter into the production of meaning. Seeing and reading are done in different parts of the human brain. Seeing is spatio-temporal, reading requires mediation of sign and symbol codes, both are complex processes and when they are activated at the same time this can generate tension or amplification. Concrete, conceptual, graphic (type-based), visual (any production method) works each activate the visual field in deliberate gestures meant to force the material aspects of a work into view and thus into critical consideration.

Does [Concrete poetry/language-based Conceptual art] fall into the discipline/subject of literature or art?

[Sub-question: Why?]

This question is significant mainly within academic and institutional settings. Where is the work studied? What skills and competencies are essential for engaging critically with the work? Where is it acquired? Stored? Displayed? How is it valued. But also, from a compositional point of view, it seems important for an artist/writer to be able to locate themselves within the extant traditions, to know why they are doing what they are doing and how it is in dialogue with precedents.

How would you define artists/poets such as Ian Hamilton Finlay, who have experimented with [Concrete poetry/Conceptual art]?

[Sub-question: Are they broadening [Concrete poetry/Conceptual art] or does it become something else?]

I think calling Finlay an artist/poet works fine.

During the 60s, there was second-wave feminism and the Civil Rights Act was signed into law in 1957. How did the work produced and what was written about [Concrete poetry/language-based Conceptual art] respond to these social changes?

[Sub-question: How did female poets/artists play an important role in the [movement]?).

Very little. Amanda Earl has been doing a fantastic “recuperation” task to inventory the under-recognized work of “Womyn” who made visual work in the late 20th century. Her project, *Judith*, is well-worth looking at for a better sense of this work. But the men were the dominant figures in Concrete, Conceptual, and Visual poetry, especially insofar as public and critical attention goes.

[Sub-question: How did African American/African-European poets/artists play an important role in the [movement]?).

Again, very little. Derek Walcott once said to me (and no doubt put this in print as well) that poets from marginalized communities could not afford to be experimental, they needed to assert their authority within a mainstream. This was a political issue from his perspective.

[Sub-question: How did working-class poets/artists play an important role in the [movement]??]

This would be a hard question to answer, and the definition of “working-class” would need to be nuanced and made specific. The poets of the early 20th century European avant-garde were almost all middle-class, children of the very bourgeoisie they aimed to affront. Work in recent decades that makes use of protest graphics and activist visual rhetoric might connect more directly to working-class practitioners and communities.

How influential/important is the work produced in the [Concrete poetry/language-based Conceptual art] movement to the history of art/literature?

This work has remained marginal, for the most part, and restricted to a fairly narrow range of studies. However, I have seen several museum exhibitions—the one I did at the Neuberger Museum in 1999 and the one that featured the Ruth and Marvin Sackner’s collection of Concrete and Visual Poetry at the Pérez Art Museum in 2014 where the public response to visual poetry was highly enthusiastic. The coming of digital tools and availability of design platforms in personal computers has offered real potential for writers and artists to work in visual modes.

Thank you for your time, is there anything else you would like to add?

Good luck with your work!

Illustrations



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Figure. 66: Finlay, I.H. (1980) *Temple of Apollo* [Architecture].

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