Poetics of Materiality:

Medium, Embodiment, Sense, and Sensation in 20th- and 21st-Century Latin America

By

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Abstract

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My approach to poetics in this dissertation is motivated by Brazilian Concrete poetry and digital writing as models for alternative textualities that reconfigure, through their material dimension, what a poem is and how we read it. These writing models also invite us to think about the ways in which cognitive and physical processes generate meaning. With these insights in mind, this dissertation returns to a broad range of so-called experimental poetry, from Hispanic American *vanguardista* visual poetry and Brazilian Concrete poetics to present-day Latin American media writing. By emphasizing cross-national and cross-linguistic connections, I explore poetic intersections of verbal and non-verbal modes of signifying, from non-linear poetic texts to poetic images, objects, performances, events, and processes. These different poetic movements and styles are tied together through their foregrounding of materiality, which implies a meaningful engagement with the text's physical characteristics and with the particular medium in which texts are produced, stored, and circulated in both creative and receptive processes. I thus argue that the common ground of Latin American experimental poetry from the avant-gardes to the present is the emergence of a poetics of materiality that places multiplicity, productive tensions, and embodiment at the center of how we conceive of the text itself, the subject, time, and space, and posits meaning as actively generated through the convergence of matter, language, and sensation.

The opening chapter examines the visual turn in the Latin American avant-gardes, particularly in the work of *vanguardista* poets Vicente Huidobro, Juan José Tablada, and Oliverio Girondo in Hispanic America and the *Noigandres* group of Concrete poets in Brazil. I examine these not as isolated and ultimately dismissible experimental movements, but as the starting point for a prolonged artistic engagement with the senses, the body, and materiality in Latin America. The following chapter explores how poetry migrates not only out of its traditional linear forms into different visual configurations, but off of the printed page altogether, creating the poem-objects of Augusto de Campos, Jorge Eielson, and Cecilia Vicuña, or the poem-processes and poem-events of Raúl Zurita, Octavio Paz, Wlademir Dias-Pino, Clemente Padín and Eduardo Antonio

Vigo, thereby exposing and undermining some of the most deep-seated implications of print culture. Chapter three turns to processes of meaning that emphasize embodiment and multiplicity in time and space: the colorful, performance-based poems of Augusto de Campos' *Poetamenos* and the hand-drawn poems of Cecilia Vicuña and Ana Cristina César all return to the space of the book, but in non-traditional configurations. In the fourth chapter, which includes multi- and intermedia performances by Arnaldo Antunes and Augusto de Campos, as well as electronic and digital poetry by Eduardo Kac, Ladislao Pablo Györi, Ana María Uribe, Belén Gache, and Eugenio Tisselli, I discuss how new media represents, much like the visual in the avant-gardes, an almost utopian opening of poetic possibilities, where poems are conceived as processes and as instances of multiplicity, and where our interaction with the text is ultimately transformed through digital modes of production, media integration, and network-based textualities. By putting a broad variety of experimental texts into dialogue with one another and with current media studies, my research recontextualizes and affirms the continued relevance and impact of materially-based poetic texts that challenge the norms and the dominance of print culture.

To the memory of Joseph Becker.

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Introduction

Fig. 0.1. Goldsmith, Kenneth. "Código." "Word-Things of Augusto de Campos Revisited." Ed. Zack Friedman. *BOMB Magazine*. 1 Feb. 2012. Web. 30 Jan. 2014.

This is a QR code. It is also a work of art by Kenneth Goldsmith titled "Código, and it is also a translation of Augusto de Campos' poem "Código." It is also a kind of digital link or node: if you scan the code with a QR Reader app on your smartphone, it will take you to an *UbuWeb* page titled "Todo o código do Código, a page of nothing but what looks like code on what must be a corrupt page. In other words, we have a poem (Augusto de Campos' "Código" from 1973; *Viva Vaia* 209), a translation of a poem (Kenneth Goldsmith's "Código" from 2011), and a critical "essay" ("Todo o código do Código"[1]). All are entirely non-verbal, and yet they form a clear poetics; they seem to resist signification and meaning altogether, and yet as a whole, they make some of the major points that this dissertation will try to unravel.

Let me explain.

QR codes were designed in the 1990s as a type of digital barcode, a machine-readable label that would provide information about the item to which it refers. It thus identifies something by serving as a gateway to information. The particular QR code pictured here is by the poet Kenneth Goldsmith, and appears the catalog of the 2011 exhibit "Telefone Sem Fio: Word-Things of Augusto de Campos Revisted, organized by the creative translation journal *Telephone* that featured works and translations of the Brazilian Concrete poet Augusto de Campos. It took me a while to figure out that the page on *UbuWeb* that links to Goldsmith's QR code was not intended to be a readable page of text. Having scanned the code on my cell phone, it took me to a mobile site where I got a page full of jumbled letters and special characters. Assuming this must be an error—is it a broken link? is the page outdated? is this an issue with my device?—I copied and pasted the URL into an email, sent it to myself, and opened the page on a Web browser on my desktop computer. The same page popped up (fig. 0.2):

[1]I I would like to note that the *Ubu.com* coded page is only accessible by scanning the QR code, not through *Ubu Web*'s search page.

Todo o código do Código

Ã¢PNG

IHDRfÃ…Ug,Ã"iCCPICC ProfilexÃ—TÃ"kAË›6nÃ©â€"Zkâ‰ªxÃª"IYÃ´hEâ€˜6Ëbkâ ¬â^ EÃªd3IÃ·n6ÃŽÃ"&Ãµâ€¢Ã â€ºâ€šâ€"*ï¬EÃŒÃºË†Ã ziî¿d/JÃ—ZE(ï¬Â´(bÃ‘
râ€œ4Ã‡Ã ,â€º
Ã«RÃ¢il|BjÃ¸Ã Ã©Â¢ A4%Uâ ¬Ã‘$AÃ‰sË˜{ÃÃ¿zÃ…[Vâ^š{Ëšwâ‰ªwâ‰ Ã¶â€œâ^ Ã¶Ã'Ë@â€!GÃ¶Å¸*â^žÃ"q
YÃ <ï¬ Å°)Ã«tï¬ â€žÃ¿ÃšÃÃ¨9NyxÃ!Ãµ+=Æ'Y"|@5-Å'MâˆSÃ•¶â€¢Ã‰H8Ã©Ã‡qR>Ã©â—ŠÃ£Ã©â—Šinfâˆ†Ã»Î©OÃªÃ¶NË†Ãª Î©Ã¹Ã™~Nâ‰¥ï¬>Ã¬Ã¬â‰ ?I
Ã'Ã²Ã†ËVÃšJÃ‡pÃª8Ã daÃ ,sZHOâ—ŠLnÃˆâ^«Ã!}&â—ŠÃˆâ€šwVQÃ·yÃ¨gï¬â€˜â€¢Ã"Eâ Ã˜OÃ¶
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Fig. 0.2. Goldsmith, Kenneth. "Todo o código do Código." *Ubu Web*. N.d. Web. 30 Jan. 2013.

I recognize this as a kind of essay, or some sort of a critical text, by its context and its physical appearance rather than its content, of which there is little to say except that it plays with the title of the original poem, "Código, by mimicking computer code, the dreaded type of code language we discover with horror when we open a corrupted Word document, for example. The "essay, in other words, is an essay because I found it on *Ubuweb*, a site that tends to house other critical essays about experimental texts, and because it visually resembles an essay in its layout, length, and paragraph divisions. Its "meaning"—commenting ironically and playfully on the role of code in contemporary digital writing and questioning the possibilities of non-verbal signification—arises not from verbal content, but from an engagement with materiality: how we interact both physically and cognitively with the concrete characteristics of the text, with both its verbal and non-verbal aspects. These interactions, in this particular case, mean manipulating certain technologies, analyzing the text's visual make-up, taking into account its situatedness on the Web, and recognizing as language a text that is ultimately illegible.

A conventional reader of poetry might be similarly confused when approaching Augusto de Campos' original poem, "Código": what makes this a poem? What can it possibly mean? Pictured above at the start of Goldsmith's "essay, the icon-poem, published in 1973, has a plastic quality that, at first glance, brings to mind a symbol or advertising logo. The reader immediately recognizes that the structure does not follow a discursive or linear order. The poem's title, "Código, is also the poem's only verbal content, and the single word asks us about the relationship between language and code, which in cryptography refers to the use of symbols, letters or numbers to represent, usually for secrecy or brevity, a verbal message through arbitrary substitution. At the same time, there is an iconic dimension to "Código": it resembles a labyrinth

that invites us to find a reading path. Linear reading habits will lead the reader from the exterior C and O—the "co-" that gives the reader an equal role in constructing meaning—into a closed circle.

Trapped within the poem's outer O, however, we see how possibilities of meaning are multiplied within this limited space. The word "DIGO" reminds us that the poem is not merely a visual shape, but also contains the verbal and sonorous dimensions of speech that continue to resound with meaning. Furthermore, the spatial distribution of letters no longer follow a linear order, but rather are reversed to spell the word "GOD, not only making this a kind of global, multilingual poem, but also leading us back to the idea that the Concrete poem is pure innovation, the creation of a self-sufficient reality. This opens the poem up to further structural modifications: the I creates a central axis of symmetry that divides the circle and, within the closed O, allows us to bounce back and forth between the sides and the letter G, O, and D. The axised structure turns "GOD" into its palindrome, "DOG, an ironic play on the arbitrary nature of language that emphasizes the drastic semantic shift that a change in structure—here the direction of reading—can create.

Although my reading is by no means the only possible one, I believe this poem succeeds in materializing the different types of codes that are present in materially-based poetry, which I define in more detail below. It iconically reveals the labyrinthine nature of poetic language and its multiplicity of meaning. Semantically, the title of the poem and the different words created anagrammatically from it draw our attention to the coded nature of all language, and how it functions non-verbally. By putting both the plastic, iconic qualities of the poem and the verbal, conventional nature of language into play, the poem deals with the complex nature of codification of language as well as with processes of cognitive encoding—the perceptual process of making meaning out of incoming stimuli—and of what happens when we take known codes apart and reconfigure them in new ways. As a result, de Campos creates a dynamic tension that both traps the reader in the conventions of code and simultaneously opens up possibilities and directions of reading, making us all the more aware of how we might find ways to break away from conventions of poetic creativity, reading, and interpretation.

In Goldsmith's translation of "Código, the notion of code is updated and visualizes how we use this term today. In addition to recognizing language, writing, and meaning generation as coded, Goldsmith—rather ingeniously, I think—brings de Campos' notion of the *código* into the 21st-century world of digital programming and computer code. In a digital age, code both transforms language into something that we can read and even see and hear on the screen, and it also serves—like the QR code—as a means of transporting us between different texts, versions, or translations, a way of moving us between one digital space and another through URL redirection. The fact that he translates not from one language to another, but between two different forms of code, signals that there is more to be done, when engaging with a text, than interpreting verbal content. When we end up at the *Ubu Web* page "Todo o código de Código, Goldsmith seems to be telling us, at the very least, that there is much to be said about the non-verbal, material processes and relationships between writers and readers, between different modes of generating meaning, and between different cognitive operations. And perhaps we need to talk about poetic processes and meaning in a different way.

To sum up what the assemblage of the three texts discussed above implies for this dissertation: they make visible, perhaps in an extreme way, the role of materiality in generating poetic meaning. What I mean by materiality here is the intersection of various non-verbal modes of signifying and the meaningful engagement with the text's physical characteristics—those that

appeal to the senses and the body rather than just the intellect—and with the particular physical medium in which a text is produced, distributed, stored, and conveyed. A poetics of materiality challenges those conventional categories we rely on when attempting to pin down poetic meaning: the singular and unitary figure of the poet, concepts of creativity and individual genius, temporal progression and linearity, spatial discreteness, depth of meaning, and the boundaries between arts and genres. The specific coordinates of the above texts or versions thus open up questions that will guide the various analyses in the coming chapters: how can poetic texts mean in non-verbal ways? In what sense does the non-verbal invite us to consider cognitive processes of meaning that include embodied practices and sensorial or even more visceral approaches to the poetic text? Wherein exactly lies the role of the poet, and for that matter, where does it intersect with the role of the reader, who is asked not just to read, but to see, to listen, to manipulate materials?

In the process of attempting to answer these questions, this dissertation also has several other objectives. The first has to do with the categorization of most all of the texts I will study here, from avant-garde visual poetry to Land Art and animated digital poems, as experimental. The term *experimental* is significant in that it contains within it an element of tension that is also present in many of the poems analyzed in this dissertation. This tension lies in the dual meaning of the word as something tentative and exploratory, on the one hand, and on the other, etymologically, as that which is based in experience, in our concrete contact with the material and observable world around us. The former implies an ultimately closed and progress-driven trajectory from uncertainty to knowable evidence; the latter is more nuanced, referring to processes of perception and cognition. I want to evoke both meanings when I refer to materially-based poetry as experimental, as one of various kinds of tension that will be explored throughout these chapters, notably tensions between innovation and tradition, simultaneity and progress, multiplicity and singularity, surface and depth. In each case, there is a certain reciprocal relationship between the terms that is maintained. In the case of the experimental in particular, the different connotations of the terms—one a drive to find solid meaning, the other a more open kind of experience through perception—open a critical discussion of how we might bring the progress- and goal-driven aspect of the experimental to a close while retaining a sense of continuous experimentation that provides glimpses or provisional manifestations of meaning.

In a literary context, the experimental is also usually equated to innovation in technique and the breaking of convention, and unfortunately, experimental texts are thus often equated with interesting, but ultimately dismissible tangents to "serious" poetry. I must admit that I am motivated in part by something of an affectionate wish to rescue these poems from literary obscurity; but there is also a sense that there are important connections that have yet to be drawn between various instances of experimental poetics throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Within the poetic history of Latin America, then, my dissertation aims, firstly, to investigate the broader questions that are taken on by those forms of poetry that are often thought of as poetic "niches." By considering the points of contact between different, often short-lived, experimental movements and bringing them together, I am able to draw out broader poetic, literary, philosophical, and social motivations behind the turn to materiality. My aim is thus to show that, in Latin America, individual experimental movements are not disconnected tangents, but are fundamentally linked through their turn toward materiality, the body, the senses, and sensation as ways of generating meaning.

With this emphasis on cross-national and cross-linguistic connections in mind, then, this dissertation is motivated by a textual approach emerging from the insights gained from reading

Concrete and digital poetry—briefly outlined above—that question the nature of the poetic text, the act of reading and generating meaning, and the cognitive and embodied role of the reader/viewer/user in this process. These questions are then asked of a wide range of poetic texts that fall under the umbrella of the experimental, starting with the Hispanic American *vanguardia* and Concrete poetry in Brazil, and moving through various manifestations of materiality: visual poetry, poems that move off the page and out of the book, poems that appeal to the senses and to a logic of sensation, and poems that flicker across the computer screen. My main objective is to draw out some of the characteristics that these various instances of experimentalism have in common through the role that materiality plays in the literal shape and form of the poem and our relationship to the poem's meaning. In simple terms, the primary points of contact between these different texts, spanning an entire century, is that they ask us to do more than read: they ask us to see, to touch, to listen, to perceive each text as possessing multiple points of entry and multiple modes of generating meaning.

To expand on the selection of texts, particularly the historical and geographical range of the texts in this dissertation, I should start out by saying that my mode of collecting texts and poets is also somewhat experimental, and—like many of my other modes of approaching the poems—informed by a digital logic. Although there is a somewhat chronological structure to the chapters, this dissertation does not primarily aim to outline a linear history or to organize an analysis around particular national or cultural histories. Instead, taking materiality as a key point of intersection between various traditions and movements, I've chosen to structure my ideas around different manifestations of materiality in Hispanic American and Luso-Brazilian literature, creating four broad categories: visual poetry, poetry off the page, poetry of the senses and sensation, and digital poetry.

Rather than referring to these as categories, we can imagine these more like concentrations, a kind of density of texts that engage with a particular mode of materially-based poetics. This concept of density serves as an alternate way of thinking about poetic history that is in line with various metaphors for non-linear conceptions of history, such as Walter Banjamin's constellation as an intersection in the present of various moments, or Octavio Paz's spiral as a constant re-motivation of the present. I've chosen the concept of density to refer to my particular approach to poetic history in reference to the "Manifiesto Ludión, a 2011 manifesto that represents the interests of a collective of writers and critics of digital poetry, but in which I think the idea of "poéticas tecnológicas" can easily apply to a poetics of materiality more broadly: "Ludión sostiene que es posible leer la historia de las poéticas tecnológicas sin atender a la cronología, identificando momentos 'densos', condensadores e irradiadores de procesos que aunque se gesten en un momento determinado, irradian—hacia delante y hacia atrás en el tiempo—modos de habitar el espacio del arte y su vínculo con el 'ambiente técnico'" ("Manifiesto Ludión").

My dissertation is thus organized around such "dense" moments that reach outward in time and space in various directions, promoting connections and continuity rather than chronology. The poets studied here are aligned in a particular poetic trajectory that does not run along national or linguistic lines, but rather constructs a trans-national and trans-linguistic network of texts (rather than a lineage) that responds to an increased attention to and conscious manipulation of the materiality of language and of the physical dimensions of poetic texts, objects, and events. Materiality serves to create this continuity that reaches across national and linguistic boundaries, but it does not ignore the fact that different cultural and literary histories impact *how* materiality affects the shape and impact of poetry. This becomes clear when we see

how certain poets introduce elements of indigenous traditions into their poetry, for example, as in Cecilia Vicuña and Jorge Eielson's use of the *quipu* as a model for poetic texts, but also in positing the differences and similarities in the Hispanic American and the Brazilian poetic traditions, particularly in how they balance the global and the national/local in establishing innovative modes of poetic expression.

In this sense, despite the fact that these issues do not drive the analsysis, there is an ongoing question underlying this analysis of how a poetics of materiality dialogues with the local, the regional, the national, the Latin American, and the globl/universal context. I address this primarily in two ways. Firstly, I am interested in exploring to what degree Luso-Brazilian and Hispanic American poetry shares a common path within Latin America. While academic discourse tends to separate out these two literary histories, this separation seems increasingly artificial, especially when we look at the shared preoccupations emerging from a poetics of materiality throughout Latin America.

Secondly, it is important to consider how the Latin American dialogues with poetry—experimental or canonical—in a global context. We find in the Latin American avant-gardes several different ways of approaching the foreign: in Hispanic American visual poetry, for instance the influence of French poetry is highly visible, while the Brazilian *Noigandres* group emphasizes Concrete poetry as a universal expression and chooses an international group of precursors as important influences. At the same time, Brazilian *Modernismo* lays the ground for a lasting legacy of an anthropophagous mode of devouring the foreign only in service of strengthening local expression. The ways of appropriating Western poetry are thus diverse and posit a variety of stances toward the relationship between the local and the global. On the other hand, from a contemporary perspective, we can note how in Latin America, the fate of experimental poetry is distinct from in other literary histories, particularly those of the so-called West. In the United States, current theorists of digital poetry, for instance, seem delighted to point out the connection between digital writing and the Brazilian Concrete poets, for instance, noting how digital media have brought Concrete poetry to the world's attention. This perpetuation of the myth of experimental literature as short-lived, aesthetically esoteric trends is what I'd like to challenge here by filling in the gap, in a sense, between the experiments of the avant-garde and digital experiments today, positing a continuous engagement with various modes of materiality as particular to Latin American poetry of the past century[2].

To sum up my comments on the scope of this dissertation, then, I'll restate that in no way is this an attempt to draw up a comprehensive chronological history of the concept of materiality or even of experimental poetics in Latin American poetry since the avant-gardes. The chapters are organized, rather, along certain aspects of materiality that I see emerging across national and linguistic borders: the visual turn in poetry in chapter one; experimentations with different physical forms outside of the page and the book in chapter two; in chapter three, the emphasis on the body, performance, senses, and sensation; and in the closing chapter, the complex functioning of materiality within (new) media and digital poetry.

[2] In this regard, I believe that this dissertation also opens a door to trans-Atlantic study that is beyond the scope of the present work. Some further areas of inquiry opened up by this dissertation might include a comparative approach to some of the poetics of materiality within Europe. For instance, how does this trend toward the material connect to what Oulipo is doing in France? What about Portuguese experimental poets like Ana Hatherly? I see several further points of contact with other Lusophone and Hispanic literatures, but also with what we call "experimental poetry" of other linguistic traditions, that would make for an interesting point of departure and further investigation.

Turning now to some of the primary theoretical background and the key terms of this analysis, I'd like to start by reiterating the fact that Brazilian Concrete poetry and digital writing served as the two main conceptual frames for reading the range of poems presented here. Looking at the first of these frames, we can see that Concrete poetry provides the basis for the concepts of functional structure and embodied perception. Specifically, the role of the senses and of the body in interacting with poetic meaning is inherent in the Concrete principle of the *verbivocovisual*, which posits that verbal meaning, sonorous qualities, and the visual properties of the text all carry equal weight. Concrete poetry also emphasizes the idea of functional structure, which leads to a questioning of the role of the physical support of the poem as complicit in its meaning. As for Digital and media poetry, the term *materiality* itself is central to media analysis, and the way it develops as a reference not just to something tangible and solid, but to certain processes and converges as well is central to how to I use the term throughout this dissertation. Overall, I see it as designating a coming together of language, matter, and the body; it foregrounds process, interaction, and encounters rather than properties; it uses the logic of the body and the event rather than the logic of the mind, at least in the sense of the intellectual, disembodied mind that has been foundational to the structure Western thought.

To expand a bit further on how materiality is defined here we can look to a few key theorists that have focused on materiality as a frame of analysis. In media analysis particularly, materiality can refer to the mode of production of texts, as Johanna Drucker uses the term, so that a poetics of materiality has to do with making us conscious of the specific technologies and physical artifacts in place in the production of poetic texts. In new media theory, materiality tends to refer to either a pre-discursive, pre-linguistic realm of experience—this is Mark Hansen's definition of the term—or to an engagement with medium, as N. Katherine Hayles puts it. It is through her concept of media-specific analysis that we reach a definition of materiality as that which arises out of the interactions between the work's physical properties and artistic strategies, between physical manipulations and conceptual frameworks and human intelligence (*Writing Machines* 33). Medium itself, then, can be broken down into several different aspects that will all be in play here: medium can refer to modes of production and distribution (the printed page and the book versus the digital page and the computer), to technology in a basic sense (analog, electronic, digital), and to language itself (the alphabet, writing, speech). Materiality engages with the physicality of all of these aspects, and emerges from the interplay between us and this physicality, which is to say that materiality is not an *a priori* attribute: "In the broadest sense, materiality emerges from the dynamic interplay between the richness of a physically robust world and human intelligence as it crafts this physicality to create meaning" (33).

Hayles is a key presence here because she poses a resounding question at the start of *Writing Machines*: "Why have we not heard more about materiality?" (19). Although discussing media has had a stronger presence in the realm of cultural criticism and philosophy since the mid-century emergence of works like Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong's, it had not had the same presence in the realm of literary studies. Hayles asserts that within literary production, material practice—with the exception of "the exuberant experiments of such materially-based practices of concrete poetry"—has been rarely seen (*Writing Machines* 19). For Hayles, materiality is not just, as it is for Hansen, a category of experience, but is related to the context, form, or situatedness of the word and how this situatedness affects meaning. Hayles thus clarifies that materiality is about more than a change in form that changes something about the act of reading: materiality constitutes meaning by situating it.

This situatedness refers to both the text itself—its components, its characteristics, its situation in space—and its position relative to the human presence on both the creative and receptive ends. Materiality is thus connected in an important way to the idea of physicality, which refers both to the solidity and tangibility of matter and to the human body. Physicality thus serves as a kind of hinge that connects the material to the body, the senses, and sensation. Again, in both Concrete and digital poetics, embodiment and materiality go hand in hand, but unraveling how embodiment functions in other experimental poetics is more complex. In a way, the question of how meaning is made in, on, and through the body is a guiding question that structures the four chapters that follow. In the first, poetry appeals to the reader/viewer visually, using the materiality of written and printed language to draw attention to some of the implicit cognitive processes involved in reading. In the second, the body gets involved in the text in different ways when the text moves off the page and becomes an object to be touched, viewed, or manipulated, or an event or a process one can participate in. Bodily acts and performances are central to both the third and fourth chapters, where we begin to see how poetry, through performance, digital modes of reading/viewing/listening, and gestural modes of writing, produces sensation—a bodily effect that can incorporate, but is more than and different from individual sense data.

While I will explore some of the theories on individual senses and their capacity to generate non-verbal meaning, as formulated among others by Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Martin Jay, and Mladen Dolar, I will also consider the role of the body through the theories of perception of Henri Bergson, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Gilles Deleuze, and will ultimately turn to cognitive theories of embodiment and to Deleuze's idea of figure, body without organs, and sensation to map out the role of the body as it evolves as an agent of poetic meaning throughout the 20th century. Both a cognitive science-based and a Deleuzian notion of embodiment imply tapping into the unconscious, visceral, and instinctive rather than the rational, logical, and contemplative mind. They call for an active body in sensation rather than the passive body receiving sense data, and they demonstrate that human intelligence implicates a complex interweaving of different bodily processes.

It is important to note that the idea of body does not by any means ground the self as a biographical being in the sense of a coherent self that is grasped through rational thought and reflection. Instead, the self is just a mind-body, and this mind-body is just an object in the world. Because the body is understood as an object in the world, we can begin to see how embodiment implies that meaning is not seen as residing in a given text, but that it emerges when bodies, textual attributes, and verbal content come together. In other words, meaning is generated in the present moment, in the convergence of matter, texts, language, and embodied selves. Throughout this dissertation, then, I will explore in detail this relationship between materiality, embodiment, and meaning, asking questions about where it "resides"; what sort of relationship it implies between writer, reading, and text; whether we can talk about one meaning or more than one, and how a plurality of meanings is different from meaning as multiple. Implicit in all these questions is a deliberate consideration of meaning over knowledge: while knowledge tends to imply some sort of grasp on truth or firm set of propositions and beliefs, meaning has more of a provisional and situated way of making sense. It is conceived of here as multiple and always in process, emerging through different convergences of bodies, objects, and texts.

My analysis of these questions begins, in chapter one, with a look to the Hispanic American *vanguardia* and the Brazilian Concrete poetry as two instances of a series and ongoing engagement with a break with poetic convention through the visual. To outline some of the

major forms of avant-garde visual poetry in Hispanic America and Brazil, I will address the concepts proposed by some of the major theorists of the avant-garde and of visual poetry and arts in particular, like Johanna Drucker and Rosalind Krauss, who frame the visual as a mode of bringing awareness to linguistic and artistic conventions—either by visualizing them or by visualizing poetic alternatives—and to how they structure our understanding of reality. Hispanic American *vanguardista* poets like Oliverio Girondo, Vicente Huidobro, and José Juan Tablada, among others, experiment with pictorial and calligrammatic poetic forms with different shapes, fonts, and reading directions. These illustrate not only that language—like an image or an object—has material properties beyond the verbal that come into play in generating poetic meaning, but also that a multitude of non-linear directions can visually mirror the complex cognitive operations of reading poetry. The Brazilian Concrete poets Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari develop these ideas in a related, but somewhat different direction, with their use of diagrammatic and constellatory forms that explore the structural relationships between so-called word-things. In both cases, we can draw out an overarching idea of shallowness, to borrow Krauss' term: the visual is not to be equated with the surface level of poetic formalism, but it does away with notions of poetic depth, that is to say, of an underlying subjectivity or truth. Meaning emerges through the contact between the body that sees and the tangible, visible, audible—*verbivocovisual*, as the Concrete poets assert—poetic text.

Visual poetry also establishes, in this chapter, a particular conception of time, both in terms of the temporality of the poem and as historical time. To address to former, we can see that there is a notion of temporal progression that corresponds, in a sense, to the difference between surface and depth. This progression in time accounts for the process of reflection and interpretation, the time it takes us to get to the core of meaning. Visual poetry, as I've already mentioned, does away with this difference, so that we find ourselves instead with a simultaneity of perceptions—both verbal and non-verbal—that replaces the idea of linear time and, with it, the centrality of rational thought and reflection in generating meaning.

In terms of history and chronology, this chapters considers another aspect of linear I see in both *vanguardista* and Concrete poetry: the relationship between the historic avant-gardes with a certain utopian drive and a progress-driven notion of temporarily. As instances of the avant-garde, both *vanguarista* and Concrete poetry inherently manifest a certain belief in the visionary and revolutionary nature of the engagement with materiality and the senses as a new and ideal mode of expressing the contemporary experience of the world. It may seem paradoxical to connect the material and the utopian, but this will be a unifying thread throughout the experimental movements considered here, all of which see, to a certain extent, a poetics of materiality—poetry that finds new modes of expression through a conscious attention to the materiality of language and to material processes of reading, writing, producing, and distributing texts—as a mode of finding a new and ideal expression, one that combats the sense of belatedness that has characterized Latin American modernity. At the same time, the visual opens a door and turns this initial avant-garde experimentation with materiality into a more long-lasting exploration, going beyond what we would consider the historical avant-gardes and venturing into other modes of connecting texts, bodies, mind, and matter. In this sense, the initial chapter sets up the possibility of identifying a poetics of materiality with a kind of continuous experimentation with different possibilities of generating meaning, one that contains traces of the utopian without necessarily subscribing to a linear understanding of poetic history.

Chapter two will deal with one of the continuations of this ongoing poetic engagement with materiality: the reconfiguration and reimagining of the physical support of poetic texts. The

chapter explores how poetry that has migrated visually out of its traditional linear form make the move off of the printed page altogether, creating the poem-objects of Augusto de Campos, Jorge Eielson, and Cecilia Vicuña, or the poem-processes and poem-events of Raúl Zurita, Octavio Paz, Wlademir Dias-Pino, Clemente Padín and Eduardo Antonio Vigo, thereby exposing and undermining some of the most deep-seated implications of print culture. These physical reconfigurations enter into existing philosophical and cultural debates that pit speech against writing, and thus my analysis will refer to some key theories from the past decades, including Derrida's concept of logocentrism and media and print theory by Walter Ong, Elizabeth Eisenstein, and Marshall McLuhan.

Overall, the poem-objects, -events, and –processes considered here—poems written on sand, next to rivers, and in the sky, poems to be physically manipulated and moved around, poems written like knotted *quipus*, poems in never-ending shifting shapes, and poems performed on the street—show that two fundamental characteristics of both matter and meaning are their situatedness and their malleability. They illustrate that rather than residing somewhere in the text, meaning actually takes place in the sense of a process or an event, a convergence between texts and bodies. We can also identify here a key tension in how poetic materiality functions that becomes key in the third and fourth chapters, particularly in the digital realm: it is both solid and malleable, tangible and shifting.

Reading the materially-based poem in terms of a process or event is a natural bridge to the third chapter, which deals with embodiment and how materiality appeals to and activates the physical body, bodily acts, the senses, and sensation. One part of this analysis consists in drawing out the role of the senses—which is in continuity with the previous chapters—in creating non-verbal poetic meaning, and to this end I consider briefly some of the theories of the senses, in particular Martin Jay's writings on vision and Barthes' writings on hearing. However, I am interested from the start in looking at bodily sensation that is more than the sum of the individual senses. To this end, I will explore two main theoretical routes to establishing a clear link between a poetics of materiality and a poetics of perception and sensation: cognitive science and linguistics, on the one hand, through the work of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Mark Turner, and philosophical theories of perception, on the other, most notably through Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings on embodiment and perception, Henri Bergson's concepts of duration and the multiple, and Deleuze's notions of sensation, the figure, and the body without organs.

This theoretical frame puts into place a textual analysis of rhythm and sensation that questions what the active role of the body is in disrupting purely verbal meaning and imagining an embodied textual process. In terms of the poetic texts themselves, the third chapter will look firstly at the colorful, performance-based poems of Augusto de Campos' *Poetamenos* as examples of how a particular logic of sensation emerges from a layering of sensorial and non-verbal textual dimension. Then, I will discuss the hand-drawn/hand-written poems of Cecilia Vicuña and Ana Cristina César as instances of a poetic system informed by bodily acts, movement, and gesture. Overall, it is notable that these poems all return to the space of the book, but in non-traditional configurations that emphasize how embodiment implies a multiplicity of both time and space, and an interplay between presence and absence, challenging the idea of the singular text and the singular subject as constitutive components of poetic meaning.

Embodiment and performance are also central to the fourth chapter, where we enter the realm of digital media to explore the complex interweaving of machines, media, and processes of reading, viewing, browsing the Web, and interacting with a computer. Here, I will look at an array of digital texts from the 1980s to the present in an attempt to argue that the digital widens

our understanding of materiality even further, to include not just solidity and tangibility, but physical, embodied materiality in the sense of energy and presence. Looking at some of the early instances of digital and (new) media poetry will allow me to circle back to some of the utopian impulses of early visual poetry that are recuperated in the digital context, especially in the early poems and theorizations by Eduardo Kac, Ladislao Pablo Györi, and Ana María Uribe. Along with a look at some early theoretical approaches to digital literature, I will thus discuss the initial, idealistic view of some of the key features of digital writing like hypertext, animation, and virtual reality, as well as the tendency in Latin America to see these as fulfilling many of the implicit ways of manifesting movement and non-linearity in earlier, non-digital experimental texts.

The chapter will also take a closer look at some more nuanced ways in which poetry in the past decades has engaged with digital media once the bright sheen of digital newness has worn off. Some poets have focused on the digital as a mode of mixing and hybridizing both analog and digital media, in particular the multi- and intermedia performances by Arnaldo Antunes and Augusto de Campos, which engage with questions of textual multiplicity across versions through poems that take different forms in different media and require multiple modes of reading/viewing/interacting. In the work of other, more recent digital poets like Belén Gache, Gustavo Romano, and Eugenio Tisselli, I will discuss some of the other debates and possibilities raised by writing in digital media. The first regards the relationships between poets and readers, and explores digital and Web-based processes of creativity—or *un*creativity, as Kenneth Goldsmith and Marjorie Perloff might put it—and networked structures of reciprocity. The second is the tendency to use both machine creativity and hypertext as modes of proposing non-oppositional structures of thought that instead rely on multiplicity. Here, poems become more fully identified with processes as processes, and our interaction with the text becomes more thoroughly imbued with the pace and constant adaptability of digital modes of production, media integration, and network-based textualities.

As a whole, these chapters thus attempt to trace various ways in which materiality serves to reconfigure the interactions between poetic texts and readers/viewers/users and to reshape poetic texts themselves. By putting a broad variety of experimental texts into dialogue with one another, my aim is to recontextualize and affirm the continued relevance and impact of materially-based poetic texts that challenge the norms and the continued dominance of print culture.

Chapter 1:
From Calligrams to Constellations: Visual Poetry, Functional Structures, and Poetic Language in the Latin American Avant-Gardes

Visual poetry, materiality, and the avant-garde

Word and image, whose relationship is throughout history fraught with implicit hierarchies and diverging claims to truth and authority, converge in the Latin American poetic avant-garde's attempts to reconstruct and renew poetry. The material nature of language—how we interact with its physical and structural features—appears here initially through an emphasis on the visual, as words acquire different colors, typefaces, and sizes, poems are painted onto canvas, discourse and image are juxtaposed, visual images receive the qualities of signs, elements of graphic art emerge on the poetic page, and words are given shapes that defy the foundations of linear verse. It is with this experimental manipulation of the physical and structural aspect of language and the consequent melding of various art forms into one that I begin this investigation into how materiality as a concept erupts into Hispanic American and Luso-Brazilian poetry and radically changes the shape and form of poetry in the first half of the 20th century. This chapter will look at two moments in different places in Latin America—the *vanguardista* poetics of Hispanic American poets and the work of the Concrete poets in Brazil—whose emphasis on visuality represent a significant shift in the poetic norms and expectations of the time.

The fact that both the Hispanic American *vanguardista* poets, who launch a radicalized renewal of poetry in the early 1920s, and the Brazilian Concrete poets, three decades later, initiate this avant-garde with a focus on visual materiality serves as the starting point for the present investigation. In both instances, the poets create a clear link between a innovative poetics and a focus on the visual materiality of the poem—the physical properties of words and their disposition on the page—and it is precisely the lasting impact of this initial visual experimentation that I seek to explore in this dissertation. At the start, visual poetry was often viewed by literary critics as frivolous and even dismissible experimentation, and it continues to be seen by many as a mere tangent in 20th century lyric, or a somewhat embarrassing digression from "real" or "serious" poetry. My contention is that the emphasis on materiality in avant-garde visual poetry in fact introduces new parameters into Latin American poetry whose impact on notions of poetic language, subjectivity, and modes of reading has continued to be felt long after the movements themselves have flourished and died out. In this sense, this chapter sets the ground for several of the key questions considered throughout this investigation: What does the visual, the change in the physical properties of a poetic text, *do* to and for poetry? How is lyric poetry to be read once its material coordinates have been so radically modified?

I would also like to reiterate at the outset that the present study will attempt to balance a global perspective with a focus on the particular situation of Latin American poetry. Many literary critics acknowledge this double perspective as inherent in the Latin American *vanguardia*, as Vicky Unruh affirms: "Latin American vanguardism as a whole was simultaneously international and autochthonous in its orientation, as artists interacted with European avant-garde currents in keeping with their own cultural exigencies" (10). On the one hand, then, this investigation arises out of a perceived need to draw attention to the particular trajectory of material-based poetry in Latin America and how, in this particular chapter, Latin American visual poetic practices set themselves apart from those of the so-called West. On the

other hand, the ties created between different poets and movements within Latin America, as well as their connections to European and North American artists, fall in line with the internationalist/global perspective of both the *vanguardia* and Concrete poetry and invite us to avoid separating poetic traditions along linguistic and national lines. One need look no further than the divergent models of these movements to see that visual poetry in the 20th century emerges as a global phenomenon, as evidenced in the broad range of poetry and philosophy that intersects with Latin American visual poetry, including Guillaume Apollinaire's calligrams, the Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*, and Italian Futurism, as well as emerging theories on the ideogrammatic qualities of Chinese as studied by Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenellosa, to mention only a few. The dissemination of new theories on language structure from Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Saunders Peirce, among others, as well as scientific theories that shake existing notions of cognition and perception, such as Einstein's theories on relativity and the rise of non-Euclidian and non-Aristotelian models, also explain the global interest in new poetic structures. As specific examples will show, a similar blurring of boundaries occurs concurrently between different literary genres and artistic disciplines, particularly here in the points of contact between literature, painting, and graphic art.

Along these same lines, I hope to show that a media- and materially-based study of poetry also bridges the rigid separation between the poetry of different historical periods. It seems clear that a line can be traced from the initial calligrammatic and constellatory visual poems in the 1920s, and the varying forms these took in subsequent years, to Concrete poetry in Brazil beginning in the 1950s. The Concrete poets deliberately return to materiality as a way of continuing what they considered the incomplete avant-garde project initiated in the 1920s, but also created links between their work and that of various other poets as part of their *paideuma*, the group of literary innovators whose ideas most impacted them, creating a group of poetic precursors that do not adhere to a linear historical chronology or a shared literary or national tradition.

The term *paideuma* is taken from Ezra Pound, one of the Concrete poets' primary literary models. In *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound explains that the term is originally used by Frobenius to distinguish acquired knowledge from knowledge that is "in the air" at a given time (57). Pound expands upon this idea, defining *paideuma* as "the gristly roots of ideas that are in action," as a knowledge of the past that is not chronological, but that ripples and spirals outward (58). This concept allows us to think outside of traditional boundaries—geographical, historical, and literary—as well as to reconsider how different poets, artists and thinkers are linked to one another. At the same time, Frobenius' formulation of ideas that are "in the air" also inherently relates broader artistic concerns with particular and contextualized realities: ultimately, the distinct historical, cultural, national, political, and literary traditions and ideologies of Latin America impact the social and artistic role that the more internationalist focus on the visual side of language takes on in Brazil and Hispanic America. A sort of production tension between the global and the local is thus inherent in many of the poetic projects that will be discussed throughout this dissertation.

In terms of the historical context, we must note primarily the rupture of avant-garde poetry in general with the past, a sort of voluntary discontinuity with tradition and convention. The visual becomes a crucial component in the avant-garde sense of renewal, to the point that the visual in a sense gives physical form to the idea of poetic innovation, to absolute novelty and even renewal *ex nihilo*, the creation of a new poetics from a blank slate. Regarding this sense of rupture, this chapter will thus engage throughout with a consideration of why the visual in

particular—and by extension, the material, in a broader sense—is seen to provide such a fertile ground for poetic experimentation and transformation. It is my sense that certain historical contexts have a significant influence on the turn to materiality, particularly in the sense that it provides something concrete to grasp onto in a climate of scientific relativity and political uncertainty and chaos following both World Wars. Historically, then, we can see the initial enthusiasm toward new physical and visual forms to be in direct relation with the inadequacy of rational and abstract thought to capture the experiences of this period.

At the same time, just as in the relationship between the local/national and the global/universal, there is a similar kind of productive tension in visual poetry in terms of history, between the idea of radical innovation and the acknowledgement of poetic tradition, history, and specific precursors. And there *is* a clear history, since the visual is by no means a new concept in poetry; arguably, visual form is not only present in all poetic forms—even the most visually conventional poems have a particular layout on the page that carries some level of meaning—but is also present in the figured poems of Simias of Rhodes around 300 BC and in Hispanic and Lusophone figured poetry in the 16th and 17th centuries.

This complex relationship of visual poetry to history and tradition thus implies that a dynamic tension is established between historical continuity and rupture, between tradition and innovation, a tension that continues into the digital poetics of the present day. This tension can also be considered in relation to different definitions of the avant-garde as a historically-bound, periodizing concept that we associate with the early 20th century, on the one hand, and as a more extra-historical category that refers to a more continuous process of innovation and experimentation. In other words, I argue that referring to both *vanguardia* and Concrete Poetry as avant-garde movements requires a conception of the avant-garde that incorporates both the idea of the historical avant-garde and the avant-garde as a more general spirit of critical experimentation and innovation.

To explain this in more depth, it is obvious that both *vanguardismo* and Concrete poetry are aligned with the historical avant-garde. As defined by Peter Bürger in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, the historical avant-garde is tightly linked to specific socio-political and economic conditions, and is, as Matei Calinescu emphasizes in *Five Faces of Modernity*, an extension or radicalized, utopian version of modernity in that it relies on modernist conceptions of time and progress. While the Hispanic American *vanguardia* of the 1920s does perhaps more clearly fit the definition of the historical avant-garde—in its search for absolute novelty and its positioning against the stagnant past—it is important to acknowledge that this label is not seamlessly transferrable to the Latin American context.[1] Here, I find it necessary to establish a definition of the avant-garde that takes into account both the historical avant-garde, with its insistence on forward progress and utopian renewal, and an avant-garde spirit that implies that certain elements, like its utopian perspective and critical experimentalism, persist beyond what is so often termed the inevitable failure, demise, or death of the avant-garde in the second half of the 20th century. In the analyses that follow in this and in subsequent chapters, I will show how the utopian view of materiality and critical and metapoetic practices are two particular aspects of the

[1] To indicate some of the concrete reasons why a broad and Eurocentric concept of the avant-garde is not useful for the content of the Hispanic American avant-garde of the 1920s, in particular, I will mention briefly the fact that some of the cornerstones of European theories of the avant-garde—the avant-garde's negation of the autonomy of art, as defined by Bürger, for example—are not applicable in the same way to the concrete history of modernization and institutionalization of art in Latin America. The particularities of this discussion are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but make a related point.

historical avant-garde that persist even in 21st century media writing, even though the linear and progress-driven structure of temporality and history have been reconsidered.

Another specificity that arises from the Latin American avant-garde is related to the historical avant-garde's tendency to seal off and label its different manifestations and "-isms," as well as to discuss art in dualistic terms of success and failure, originality and repetition, progress and primitivism. In Latin American materially-based poetics, we see, on the hand, this type of proliferation of such distinct movements; but at the same time, they generate a textuality that promotes openness and multiplicity of meaning, as well as connections between different movements and particular poets. Furthermore, the poetry discussed here proposes productive alternatives to the binary structure of thought, an idea I will return to throughout the following chapters.

Before moving on from this discussion of different conceptions of the avant-garde, I find it important to address one of the other ways in which the concept is addressed in the Latin American context: through a discourse of belatedness, of discrepancies between a literary and philosophical avant-garde and the fact that the institutionalization of art in Latin America at the time was just in its inception. This notion of belatedness depends, again, upon a tired dichotomy of original and imitation. It is not until decades later, with the Latin American Boom and the *neobarroco*, that we begin to escape the notion that Latin America is striving to "catch up" and writers formulate a uniquely Latin American aesthetic theory; but this still leaves the avant-garde of the early 20th century—and, I would argue, much visual and performative poetry after World War II—floundering in an atmosphere of doom, failure, or, at best, dismissal.

We can thus see emerging from all these versions of the avant-garde a complex and often contradictory notion of time and history. In many ways, a progressive understanding of time is the driving force behind the avant-garde's aesthetic. On the one hand, the Latin American poetic avant-gardes mark a certain digression from such a definition of time in their negation of linearity in a more general sense. The privilege accorded to the linear and successive nature of historical time thus perhaps explains why visual poetry in the early 20th century was marginalized and trivialized: the cognitive processes involved in non-linear spatial language and art ultimately undermine the avant-garde progressive project and the aesthetics of renewal. On the other hand, *vanguardismo* and Concrete poetry, as well as other materially-based poetics that follow them, make an uneven break with a linear historicity and temporality. They maintain some aspects of this forward-driven concept of time, notably a certain utopian faith that a poetics of materiality will prove capable of capturing the experience of and our relationship to the world around us as other poetic movements have failed to do.

Ultimately, I argue that the shift toward the visual and the material in Latin America undoes the primacy of time and history as the central coordinates of personal as well as socio-cultural expression, but that its utopian vision, ironically, serves as a bridge to the poetry of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, where it continues to surface in the possibilities opened up by writing in digital media. In other words, without ridding themselves entirely of some of the underpinnings of the historical avant-garde, *vanguardista* and Concrete poetry do move away from a diachronic, sequential understanding of history and of time in general, so that materiality opens the door to alternate forms of expressing and understanding personal and cultural identity that, in turn, invite alternative vocabularies and modes of analysis.

Standing out among those thinkers who step outside of a progress-based conception of the avant-garde is Rosalind Krauss in her book *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*. Here, Krauss exposes originality as a myth and proposes a method of reading that is etiological rather than

historical, denying historicity as the principal generator of meaning. Her reading, focused on the non-developmental formation of conditions that make possible a particular phenomenon, focuses attention away from notions of origin and a temporal conception of the generation of a work of art.[2] And while it is crucial to emphasize *vanguardismo*'s ties to the emergence of certain scientific, technological, and philosophical ideas and advances, Krauss's proposed reading allows us set aside the focus on the new, the radical, and the revolutionary, and to consider the avant-garde instead, in spatial terms, as unearthing a layer, bringing to the surface a previously imperceptible *thing*—for lack of a more precise term—that shapes human experience and interaction: the conventions of language and cognitive processes involved in human thought, how signs function in and organize the world, how linguistic and artistic conventions both reflect and structure our understanding of reality.

Another key insight arising out of spatial texts is that poetic materiality and visuality bring meaning to the surface of the text and thus question the foundational concepts of subjectivity and representation in art, focusing instead what Johanna Drucker calls "the capacity of works to claim the status of *being* rather than *representing*" (10). Paul Wood similarly identifies this trend as "a perception that how the representing is done precedes the question of what to represent" (195). This shift in perception is undoubtedly linked to the concrete technologies of communication, modes of transportation, and urban growth that are changing how people perceive and interact with each other and with the world around them. As Willard Bohn points out in *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry*, "the visual poets seek to inaugurate new cognitive patterns reflecting new modes of perception" (25). Throughout 20th century poetry, we find the explicit aim to participate in new technologies and scientific discoveries, in the new spatial and temporal dimensions these introduce, and in an art production that connects with the new sights, sounds, textures, and languages becoming more and more commonplace through urban development, global travel and communication, and new media.

It is also at this point that we can expand further on the question of *why* precisely the visual becomes a central focus for these poets. Although, as subsequent chapters will show, all of the senses are called upon to participate in materially-based poetry, the visual element is most prominent in early poetic experiments. Breaking with visual convention—that is to say, making words cross the page diagonally, representing animals or objects with words, or creating non-linear reading paths, to name but a few avant-garde visual practices—initially draws immediate attention to the poetic project; but it also exposes a deeper sense of insecurity in how we see and experience the world around us. Our sense of sight is often considered our most reliable way of perceiving reality and accessing truth and knowledge, an idea that underlies Western metaphysics since Aristotle and is reinforced by the honorary role it holds in the philosophy of Descartes, as Martin Jay argues in *Downcast Eyes*. Ironically, perhaps, a turn to the visual might represent a mistrust in the visual as a mode of access to reality, representing the same sort of "profound suspicion of vision and its hegemonic role in the modern era" that Jay identifies in France, where many Hispanic American avant-garde are first inspired to experiment with the visual shape of the poems (14).

The visual poem, according to this hypothesis, would thus reveal that people's relationship to reality is turned on its head, disjointed. This instability is reinforced in scientific

[2] It is important to note that Krauss' ahistorical approach to the avant-garde has been widely critiqued, as well, and that I do not propose here an ahistorical or decontextualized reading of the avant-garde. Rather, I bring up Krauss' points on a spatial understanding of the avant-garde to add a layer of meaning on top of the complex relationship of Latin American avant-gardes to time, tradition, and historicity.

discourses at the start of the 20th century, specifically Einstein's theory of relativity, which declares the stable foundations of human experience—time, space, and matter—to be fundamentally uncertain. The abstractions and absolute values of Euclidian geometry and Newtonian physics are replaced by the principles of irregularity and mutability. At the same time, Freud's psychoanalytic theories and theories of the unconscious questioned the reliability of the mind as the basis of knowledge and perception.

Not surprisingly, then, structural linguistics similarly reveals that language operates on a equally uncertain ground. The theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and later those of Charles Saunders Peirce, Roman Jakobson, and Umberto Eco all reveal the instability of linguistic meaning, first identified in the separation of the signifier from the signified. In general terms, the immediate impact is that the illusion of the transparency of the sign is shattered. Typographical experiments in poetry and the creation of the marked text, as Johanna Drucker documents in *The Visible Word*, are among the initial strategies that denounce the attitude that the written word—the material signifier—is insignificant, unworthy of mention, a mere substitute that stands in for the absent signified (13). Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* reinserts writing as a component of language, and the framework is set for poetic investigations into the materiality of language. Although all of the above-mentioned theories on the nature of the sign have important consequences for how we consider the visual materiality of the signifier, it is primarily in the poetic—and metapoetic—realm that this issue is fully examined.[3]

To recapitulate, I hope to have shown here that the context within which the *vanguardista* and Concrete poets write is one fraught with tensions based on time, history, and the desire for novelty that others have examined in much more depth.[4] I will focus my attention, in the remainder of this chapter, on materiality in its visual manifestation as a device that serves different poetic movements as a tool for undermining linguistic and literary conventions, and, by extension, the conventions that rule over our contact with reality.

In the subsequent section, I will look at visual poems of the *vanguardia* in Hispanic America in the 1920s and 1930s that begin to redistribute words across the page and play with such visual formal properties as size, color, and spacing. My discussion will then shift to Brazilian Concrete Poetry of the 1950s and 1960s, where visualizing the structure of the text is one of the central characteristics of the poems. I by no means aim to give a complete historical overview of these movements, nor even of the trajectory of visual poetry within them, although

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[3] Drucker points out that ironically, Saussure's theories contain a tension between his emphasis on the signifier as more permanent, solid, in its materiality, and the idea that writing remains a sort of 'acoustic image' of the spoken word, relegating it, in its arbitrariness, to a nonmaterial realm. He clearly privileges speech, because in the utterance, signifier and signified and simultaneous, whereas such a unity is shattered in writing. We might make a connection between Saussure's underlying faith in such a unity and the early utopian phase of the historical avant-garde. I will not go into more detail on this here, but a more in-depth analysis of the relation between Saussure and a material turn in poetry can be found in Drucker's *The Visible Word*.
In terms of other theorists, it is not until the 1960s and 1970s that a systematic analysis of the signifier's material character is developed with Kristeva, Barthes, and Derrida. Here the signifier operates on the senses in a very different way than in Saussure's sense of abstraction, and their writings will be explored in more depth in subsequent chapters.

[4] The "cult of the new" is discussed, for example, by avant-garde critics such as Hugo Verani, Saúl Yurkiévich, Octavio Paz, and Jorge Schwartz, who discuss the avant-garde and its tradition of rupture, the pragmatic nature of its utopian project, its active transgressions of the canon and literary conventions, its exaltations of uniqueness, and later, the idealism and desire for revolution fostered in the connection between literature and politics, as well as the desire for a new socially conscious poetic sensibility.

my presentation will be chronological for practical reasons. My readings of what I consider to be key poems, critical texts and manifestos by the poets are intended to clarify in a larger context how materiality, in this case visual materiality, becomes a locus for reframing poetic expression within, but also beyond, the two movements themselves.

Through the close readings of visual poems, I will argue that the visual is one of the key ways in which these poets play with the position of the self vis-à-vis outside reality. By visually calling attention to form and structure rather than content, the poems propose a mode of reading that corresponds to a non-conventional understanding of how human perception, thought, and language function. By disturbing the established reading process, the reader becomes involved in the text in a way that upsets the definition of lyric poetry as the expression of a unitary poetic subject—depending, as I will show in the analysis that follows, on a progressive understanding of time—and emphasizes instead the dynamic and complex simultaneous interplay of human thought and physical or formal properties—spatial in nature—in the poetic process. To sum up, then, one key concept that will frame my discussion of these two poetic moments is the relationship of word and image to reality, and the hierarchies implicit in this relationship. Other key concepts emerge around the intertwined temporal and spatial dimensions of this relationship. Firstly, I will propose that the spatial redistributions of words on the page is related to the spatial metaphor of shallowness, which is an alternative to both the imagined depth of a text, on the one hand, under which lies transcendent meaning and a coherent and singular subject, and to the surface level of formalism, on the other. Secondly, I will explore the challenge made by visual materiality to time in the sense of progress, a challenge related to the breaking down of oppositional structures of thought and the exploration of productive tensions in the present.

Overall, it is my contention that shifting the image from the metaphorical realm of content to the physical, surface level of poetic language points to a growing understanding that discourse, and especially the written word, structure knowledge and cognition, and that existing structures of thought no longer seem to adequately grasp reality or the objects around us. The sequential nature of language, the "transparency" of the written word, the unmediated perception of reality through the senses: all of these are challenged and revised. What I hope to examine, then, in what follows is how avant-garde visual poetry can be read today not merely as a utopian experimentation that is doomed to closure and/or failure, but as a way of posing questions about poetry, language, thought, and reality that re-shape poetics well beyond the literal re-shaping of poetic form in the *vanguardia* and Concrete poetry.

In the next section, I will look at this re-shaping in terms of calligrammatic and constellatory, drawing connections between *vanguardista* poets and the work of Guillaume Apollinaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, using these as different models for how word and image are brought together. As individual readings will show, the different visual configurations illustrative shifting notions of poetic structure, subjectivity, and meaning, and continue to explore the productive tension at the intersections of innovation and tradition, shallowness and depth.

Painted Poems and Calligrams in Hispanic American *Vanguardia*

Alongside some of the most representative works of the Hispanic American avant-garde published in 1922—Oliverio Girondo's *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en un tranvía*, César Vallejo's *Trilce*—stands a singular event: the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro's exhibit in Paris, titled *Salle XIV*, in which 13 *poemas pintados* are exhibited. Not only the content of the

Huidobro's painted poems, but also the fate of the exhibit is worth noting: set to run for several weeks, the exhibit is suddenly closed after only a day and a half. Little documentation remains to explain the abrupt ending, except a letter in which Huidobro describes the outrage of the masses and the admiration by the elite of his painted poems.[5] In a sense, the exhibit can be seen as representative of the fate of the visual turn in *vanguardista* poetry more broadly during the early 20th century: shocking to the masses, hailed by a small elite, and quickly set aside.

Huidobro is, of course, not the only poet to initiate the Hispanic avant-garde with a focus on the visual. Following in the line of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, published in 1918, other poets on both sides of the Atlantic similarly cross the boundaries between verbal and visual art: in Mexico, José Juan Tablada's *Li-Po y otros poemas*, published in 1920, consists of calligraphic and typographic shaped poems; Guillermo de Torre publishes his collection of typographical poems, *Hélices*, in Spain in 1923. In addition to these more systematic productions of visual poems, isolated experiments with visual form appear in poems by Salvador Novo, Alberto Hidaldo, and Luis Quintanilla, as well as in Manuel Maples Arce and Oliverio Girondo's body of work, among others. What all of their poems have in common is that they require both verbal comprehension and visual perception on the part of the reader/viewer. They all emphasize that the poem's visual materiality—the shape and size of the letters, the distribution of the 'verses' on the page, the visualization of linguistic and syntactic structures—plays a role in shaping its meaning.

In general terms, it is obvious from the start that the shock value of the radically new inherent in the historical avant-garde is clearly at play in some of these early visual experiments. Changing a poem's visual aspect declares boldly that its key coordinates are innovative and so break with tradition, making Huidobro's display of his painted poems on the walls of a museum a radical gesture that demands attention. On this basic level, the visual poem announces its own ground-breaking nature. Often, within the context of the poet's body of work, the visual experiments serve a similar function in that they visually announce a radical newness that permeates even subsequent, more visually traditional poems.

In many cases, however, a closer look at the individual poems reveals that underlying many visual innovations are in fact constituted by traditional verses. Returning to Huidobro's exhibit as a case in point, we can clearly see how resolute novelty collides with tradition in these early painted poems. In the seven poems that survive of the original thirteen shown in 1922, everyday objects and common images—the moon and stars in "Minuit," piano keys in "Piano," the shape of waves in "Marine" and "Océan," the windmill of "Moulin"—appear in a range of colors either shaped by or alongside verbal content. The relationship between image and word here is that is a tautology, or one could even say that the images are mere literal illustrations of the poetic words and phrases. The innovative gesture thus lies not in the particularity of the verbal content in relation to the image, but in the simple act of juxtaposing image and word at all. Although visual art and poetry have been combined before, as I mentioned earlier with the examples of Simias of Rhodes and Baroque Hispanic and Lusophone visual poems, the critical response to the poems demonstrates the fact that the blurring of artistic boundaries upsets conventional understandings of how we read, where meaning resides, and what the role of the poet is. By combining painting and poetry, Huidobro blurs the line—clearly marked since Lessing's *Laocoon*—between painting as a spatial art that permits simultaneity and the

[5] Rosa Sarabia traces in more detail the sources which mention the exhibit's reception and its closure in her article "Vicente Huidobro's Salle 14: In Pursuit of the Autonomy of the Object." The painted poems themselves are reproduced in color in her article.

perception of a whole, and poetry as a temporal art characterized by succession and the difficulty or even impossibility of grasping such a totality. What implies is that the painted poems disturb the reader/viewer's grasp on coherent meaning by confounding temporal and spatial modes of coherence.

Huidobro's contemporaries, in particular, exemplify a process of reading that relies on an understanding of image and word operating on two irreconcilable planes. Maurice Raynal, in the preface to the exhibit's catalog, *Une Exposition de poems de Vincent Huidobro*, emphasizes historical continuity and minimizes their revolutionary nature—his way of making sense of the painted poems—by contextualizing the poems within an existing tradition; in reference to medieval shaped poems, he writes: "les poèmes de Vincent Huidobro loin de constituer des recherches révolutionnaires, suivent ici les données d'une tradition ancienne et traditionelle." Additionally, Raynal's focus on emotional expressivity and the poet's refined sensibility, especially in the resounding final line of the preface—"Le coeur du poète vous est offert ici à livre ouvert!"— shows how his reading is in alignment with a Romanticist/Modernist understanding of lyric poetry as subjective and expressive. And while his comments perhaps served, at the time, to mitigate the potentially negative response to such a radical literary experiment, they also reinforce the fact that Huidobro's experimentation remained, in the eyes of the contemporary public, on the surface level, so that the interpretive task resided in delving underneath what we see to find meaning.

I bring up Raynal's comments and this perceived surface level of the poetic text to differentiate it from a poetic shallowness that I am arguing is actually at play in visual poetry. Both concepts are proposed by Rosalind Krauss in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*. The notion of surface, according to Krauss, implies working on the top layer of a structure that possesses another, deeper layer—absent and corresponding to the poet's intentions, the text's coherence and pre-established meaning[6]—so that meaning is located in the poem's depth, and is marked by a temporal distance between the act of creation and the act of reading. The notion of shallowness, on the other hand, conceives of the text as possessing only one "layer" in which form and content do not correspond symbolically to one another, but are overlapping, are one and the same thing.

Both are spatial metaphors that actually reconfigure how time operates in conventional versus visual poetry. Surface and depth imply temporal progression, and this temporal progression is what ensures that we, as readers, will be able to decipher a coherent and intentional meaning that lies waiting in any given text. Shallowness, on the other hand, is a metaphor that evokes, for me, an image of both the poet and the reader splashing around in something like a kiddie swimming pool, where it is the act of splashing around itself that confers meaning. In other words, meaning emerges in the present, simultaneously with the act of reading, and it emerges from a single space in which verbal content and physical dimensions are overlapping. So while Huidobro's contemporary critics may have still been looking at his work in terms of that other, undisclosed, absent layer of meaning, I hope to show that his poems are

[6] I find this distinction useful, but I do disagree with Krauss on one particular issue that comes up in her description of surface and formalism. She writes that formalism focuses on the surface of the work to "preserve and protect the life of the organism, such as unity, coherence, complexity within identity, and so on," a process that never questions the boundaries of the particular work of art, medium, author, and oeuvre. While I agree that formalism tends to focus on unity and coherence, and that avant-garde visual poetry does not, I do not adhere to the kind of post-humanistic implication that we must also forgo the organism in this process. In other words, I do not believe that the organism is necessarily defined by unity and coherence, as I believe my discussion of Deleuze and my understanding of embodiment and sensation will show in chapter three.

actually marked by the kind of shallowness that indicates that image and verbal content begin to coexist on the same plane.

The many "notes critiques" included in the *Salle XIV* catalog, also contain a spectrum of other references, literary and historical precedents, and contemporary parallels that elucidate Huidobro's use of a visual poetic language. An obvious link can be drawn to the work of the Futurists, and several critics note how Huidobro, like the Futurists, tries to free poetry from linear constraints and register visually new modes of communication, velocity, and dynamism made possible by industrial and technological developments. But whereas Futurist painting, especially, advocates for the absolute autonomy of art and breaks with figurative representation to insert violence, dynamism, and speed into the static image, Huidobro's images are still and quietly representational of mundane objects. Even those objects that move in some way—the ocean, the windmill—are visually static in the *poemas pintados*. There is undoubtedly a parallel between Futurism and the poet's own poetic theory of *creacionismo*, which proposes that the poet as a demiurgic figure create a poetic reality that is entirely a product of the poet's mind, disconnected from the external world. The figurative, however, contrary to Futurist poetic ideals, does play a significant role in the *poemas pintados*, so that we can see their non-linearity to be more in line with the calligrammatic poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire—where verses are typed and hand-drawn in various configurations to represent visually some of the figures its verbal content designates—than the poems of the Italian Futurists. What such a calligrammatic poetry looks like in Huidobro's poems is best illustrated with an example.

To this end, I will look toward the most well known of the exhibit's poems, "Moulin" (originally in color; fig. 1.1), of which a non-colored version was included as an insert in the catalog (fig. 1.2).

Fig. 1.1. Huidobro, Vicente. "Moulin [color]." *Caramelos de Violeta*. Ed. Belén Gache. 08 Oct. 2011. Web. 15 Mar. 2012.

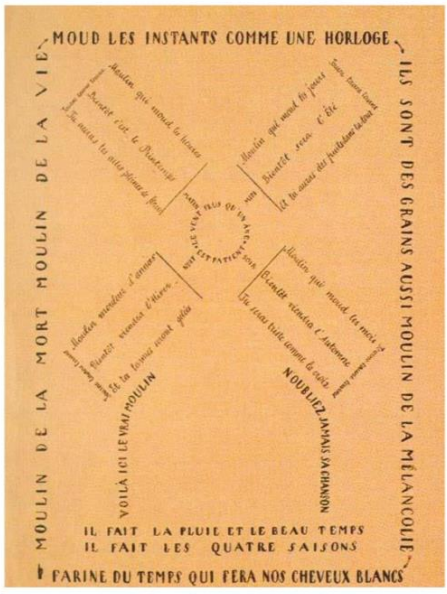


Fig. 1.2. Huidobro, Vicente. "Moulin." *Une Exposition de poèmes de Vincent Huidobro*. *Catalogue-invitation*. Paris, La Galerie G. L. Manuel Frères, 1922. N. pag.

The poem appears in two forms: on one side of the insert, the poem's verses form the

base and the sails of the windmill as well as the frame that contains it. The poem's content revolves around time: each sail alternately describes morning, noon, evening, and night; hours, days, months, and years; and spring, summer, fall, and winter. It is the windmill of death and of life, milling time itself. The windmill's sails and their implied circular movement, as well as the circularity of the text constructing the frame, give the poem a distinct dynamism that seems to invite a more active participation of the reader, who has to physically move the page to read some of the verses. But this circularity functions only superficially, as there is an explicit order of reading contradicting the apparent circularity and continuity of the windmill's movement: a small hand and arrows in the frame's corners indicate the correct reading path, and the poem in its second, linear form—appearing on the reverse side of the insert—puts the windmill's "verses" in traditional form, complete with conventional rhyme and rhythms.

Huidobro's poems, then, mark the beginnings of a 20th century poetics of materiality, wherein the visual and the verbal intersect, but their individual modes remain largely conventional. In fact, many of the painted poems in the collection are nothing more than verses written over a painted backdrop. The intersection of text and image itself, however, places at the forefront a fundamental question: how does viewing affect the process of reading? One verse in particular stands out when we begin to pay attention to space and the visual image: the claim to truth on the base of the windmill, "Voilà ici le vrai moulin." It is a seeming reversal of Magritte's famous painting stating "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," but what does Huidobro's statement really mean? Which windmill does Huidobro in fact refer to? The windmill as pure concept, as the metaphor of passing time, as opposed to a literal windmill? Or precisely its contrary: the visual and concrete windmill shaped out of letters, the surface structure of poetic language? Is this claim to truth an ironic statement about the arbitrariness of language, or does it illustrate the creationist ideal of constructing an autonomous truth or reality in the poetic realm?

In fact, it is all of the above: the "movement" that arises from "Moulin" is not only the circular movement of time, but the dynamic tension of signifiers both resisting signification and searching for it, of the dissemination of meaning and the visual and auditory concreteness of poetic language, a preoccupation that Huidobro explores further in the dizzying linguistic flight of *Altazor*. Just as the "molino" that jumps from one signifier to the next without settling on one meaning, almost like a self-generating machine, in *Canto V*, "Moulin" explores the structuring of reality through language, questioning the rationality and order of linear succession by hinting at the possibilities of simultaneous perception. In fact, the principle of shallowness mentioned above would imply that the act of reading structure and verbal content simultaneously provides meaning, so that the reader/viewer is invited to engage with a poetic structure that appears circular and theoretically endless, but whose path is given, offering only a limited circular displacement within the space-time of the poem.

All in all, Huidobro's rootedness in certain conventions and traditions allows us to see his poetry as a sort of hinge between the utopianism and Symbolist transcendentality of existing poetic traditions and a rising avant-garde aesthetic of irony and impurity. And although the radical novelty is a major component of Huidobro's poetry, we can also see that this novelty is, ironically, achieved by reaching backward and outward to other times and cultures, a theme that will manifest itself in many of the poetry that will appear in the pages to follow. Thus Huidobro's poetry maintains a productive tension between the radically new gesture of juxtaposing word and image and existing traditions that do so, opening up an exploratory space in which various relationships between the verbal and the visual can be put into practice. Concretely, we need look no further than *Salle XIV*'s catalog to see the connection, made explicit

by Maurice Raynal, between the painted poems and the pattern poetry of Antiquity and the Renaissance, on the one hand, the *technopaignia* of the Greeks and the *carmina figurata* of the Romans, and, on the other, Chinese and Japanese ideogramsconceived of as iconic signs that visually represent their content.

Both of these models function along a tautological or pictographic principle in which verbal and visual content reflect one another: as in "Moulin," the visual functions as a representation of the verbal theme. This type of visual poetry, which we can refer to as calligrammatic poetry, is—as indicated above—what we find in many of Apollinaire's poems: for example, in Apollinaire's "Il pleut," words streak the page just as voices, memories, and regret fall like the rain the verses refer to (fig. 1.3); in "Coeur couronne et miroir," a heart, a crown, and a mirror are formed with the poem's lines (fig. 1.4).

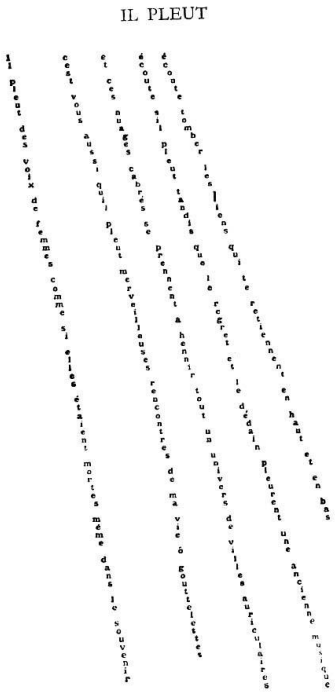


Fig. 1.3. Apollinaire, Guillaume. "Il pleut." *Calligrammes: Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre (1913-1916).* Paris: Club du meilleur livre, 1955. N. pag. Print.

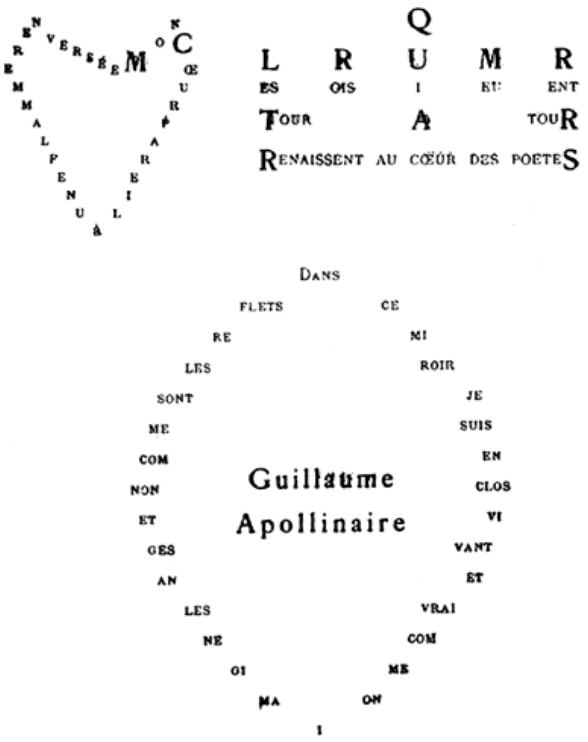


Fig. 1.4. Apollinaire, Guillaume. "Coeur, couronne et miroir." *Calligrammes: Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre (1913-1916).* Paris: Club du meilleur livre, 1955. N. pag. Print.

Among the two poles identified by visual poetry critics like Willard Bohn and Rafael de Cózar—the figurative on the one hand, and the abstract on the other—calligrammatic poems correspond to the former, in which representation is the principle that structures the relationship between word and image. And generally speaking, of the aforementioned types, it is primarily poetry of the figurative, pictographic type that erupts onto the Hispanic American poetry scene in

the early 1920s, with most poets experimenting with innovative visual forms that closely resemble Guillaume Apollinaire's calligrams. We can find several examples in the work of Mexican poet Luis Quintanilla, who in his poem "Lluvia" plays with the vertical distribution of verses to signify rain and/or tears, and in Salvador Novo's pictographic poems that depict commonplace objects and animals like a vase, a butterfly, and a Buddha. In both cases, the poems are playful and experimental rather than representative of a major shift in the poem's overall structure and content. The Peruvian poet Alberto Hidalgo produces several visual poems of a similar vein, for example "Sabiduría," a poem in which, like Apollinaire's "Il pleut" and Quintanilla's "Lluvia," the verses unfold vertically, this time representing rising smoke. Its novelty resides in the fact that some of the verses must be read from bottom to top rather than the usual order of top to bottom, but in its metrical structure and rhyme scheme, the poem remains surprisingly traditional, employing an ABAB rhyme scheme and *alejandrinos*. Some of Hidalgo's other visual poems are more minimalist, but the key point these poems make, as Willard Bohn points out in *Reading Visual Poetry*, is that traditional verse form continues to underlie their visual arrangements (72).[7]

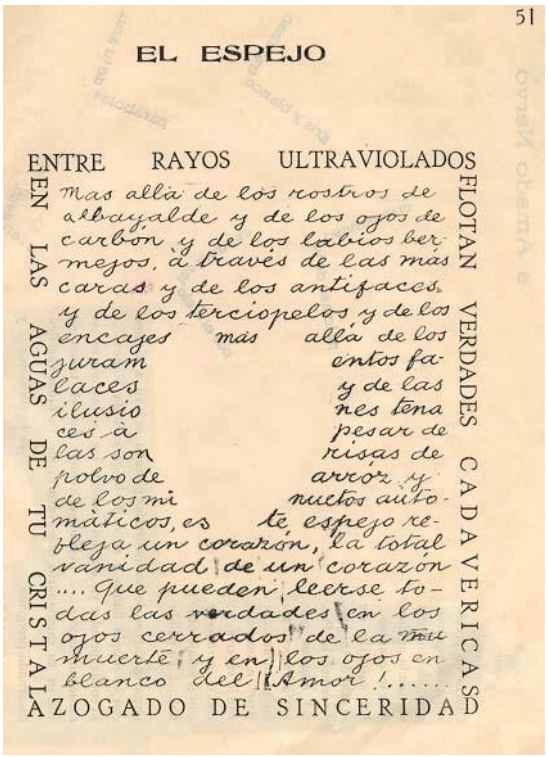
One of the first avant-garde poets to dedicates a larger portion of his work to calligrammatic poems is José Juan Tablada, whose *Li-po y otros poemas* represents one of the first systematic uses of the visual element in poetry, and is composed of short shaped poems influenced by his trips to Japan and the study of haiku and ideographic language. At first glance, both Apollinaire and Tablada's poems may seem limited in scope and depth; once the reader understands the poets' systematic creation of parallels between word and image, it feels as if the game has been understood and little remains to be said. After all, what does the *shape* of a frog contribute to a poem *about* a frog? Not all the calligrammatic poems have as strong a tautological component—one might look, for example, at Apollinaire's "Lettre-Océan," which is a more complex mix of different communication systems, languages, and visual shapes, or at Tablada's "Polifonía crepuscular" or "La calle donde vivo"—but even those in which content and form seem to mirror one another actually complicate the relationship between word and image, and the ability of both to represent reality and subjectivity, pointing toward some of the deeper aesthetic and existential concerns being explored through the convergence of visual and verbal signs.

To provide a more detailed example, it is worth noting that both Apollinaire and Tablada use the images of the mirror in calligrammatic poems dealing with questions of truth and representation. In Apollinaire's "Coeur couronne et miroir" (fig. 4), the words that form the shape of the mirror's frame read: "Dans ce miroir je suis enclos vivant et vrai comme on imagine les anges et non comme sont les reflets." Again we have the separating line of the frame, but here it is somewhat ironic: after all, what is within the frame is, we suppose, an identical reflection of the outside, "real" world. The circular shape of the poem reinforces the idea of a never-ending poetic loop in which the speaker is trapped. But to which of the mirror's qualities does he refer when he states that he is trapped, but also, on the other hand, alive and real? It is clearly not the mirror's reflective or mimetic abilities that give the speaker this "real" or "true" quality. The mirror's reflection is asserted to be false, whereas he claims to be as real as imagined angels. In other words, this mirror made of words—a metaphor for poetic language in general—cannot claim any mimetic quality, any ability to reflect either reality or the poetic subject. Instead, the

[7] Bohn gives more in-depth readings of the aforementioned poems along with other examples of pictographic poems in *Reading Visual Poetry*, which is one of the most comprehensive analyses of the different relationships between image and word in 20th century poetry.

calligramme creates an alternate space in which the real and the rational no longer rule over language. This is emphasized all the more by what is reflected in the mirror. The proper name in the center, Guillaume Apollinaire—ironically, the signifiers with a "real" extra-textual referent—are the only ones that do *not* take the shape of the thing they represent. Furthermore, the words are not reflected at all: rather than being written in mirror script, the name gives the impression that what was once the coherent poetic subject, now proven to be a fictitious and constructed entity, is a purely textual entity looking out at us in a gesture of defiance against seeing both poetry and language as reflections of external reality or the internal self of the subject.

José Juan Tablada's "Espejo" (fig. 1.5) is clearly in dialogue with "Coeur couronne et miroir," although it appears to do just the opposite of Apollinaire's poem, reflecting the shape of a heart, a Romantic symbol of emotion and interiority seemingly revealed by looking into the mirror. Ultimately, though, this poem deals with the question of truth in a similar way as Apollinaire's, by modifying our expectations of what the mirror of language can reflect back at us. The words that compose the reflective surface of the mirror reveal that that which we see within—both human physical characteristics and the material objects around us—is illusory, and beyond it we see the heart. However, in the type of tour de force typical of Tablada, we learn that what we see is "la total vanidad de un corazón," a heart lacking substance, which is reflected tautologically in the depiction of the heart as an empty blank. These visual poems, then, defy both the 19th-century poles of Realism and the Romantic/Symbolist tradition: not only does the mirror prove that the mimetic principle in art is no longer tenable, but the Romantic principle of the lyric poem as the revealer of inner truths is discredited while being, in a certain sense, maintained.


51

EL ESPEJO

ENTRE RAYOS ULTRAVIOLADOS FLOTAN EN LAS AGUAS DE TU CRISTAL VERDADES CADAVERICAS

Mas allá de los rostros de
albayalde y de los ojos de
carbon y de los labios ber-
mejos, á través de las más
caras y de los antifaces
y de los terciopelos y de los
encajes más allá de los
juram entos fa-
laces y de las
ilusio nes tena
ces á pesar de
las son risas de
polvo de arroz y
de los mi nuetos auto-
màticos, es te espejo re-
fleja un corazon, la total
vanidad de un corazón
.... que pueden leerse to-
das las verdades en los
ojos cerrados de la muerte
y en los ojos en
blanco del Amor!.....

AZOGADO DE SINCERIDAD

Fig. 1.5. Tablada, José Juan. "Espejo." *Li-Po y otros poemas*. Caracas, 1920. N.p. *UNAM*. N. d. Web. 21 Mar. 2011.

Tablada also offers an interesting perspective on vision: the final part of the poem's inscription reads "pueden leerse todas las verdades en los ojos cerrados de la muerte y en los ojos en blanco del amor." The universal trope of eyes as windows to the soul, as capable of revealing truth, is turned on its head here. It is precisely in eyes that are closed or blank, turned away from reality, that truth can be found, an ironic assertion that resonates with many of the principles of the material-based poetry of the 20th century, especially with Michel Foucault's study of image and word in *This is Not a Pipe*. Foucault writes that "the calligram aspires to playfully efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read" (21). The effacing of these oppositions is made possible by replacing the idea of resemblance—in which art imitates reality, the privileged term between the two—with similitude, in which reality and art are "like"

one another, but without the ontological primacy of reality. In other words, both Tablada and Apollinaire's mirrors reflect back the possibility of a reality all their own, one in which the visual poem resembles, but does not reproduce external reality or reveal the poetic subject in its depths.

In sum, we can see that within the category of the calligrammatic poem, even many of the simpler pictographic poems that rely on a one-to-one relationship between form and content reveal a consciousness of the arbitrariness and instability of time, space, vision, and language. Whether they use the visual dimension of the text as a redoubling of verbal content or to create tension between different forms of transmitting meaning within the same text, the calligram appears in *vanguardista* poetry as the announcement of radical newness, creating playful tensions between poetic and linguistic norms.

The calligram as a form also facilitates the synthesis that these poets saw in Eastern ideogrammatic languages by allowing for a reading that does not simply alternate between the verbal and the visual dimensions of the text, but that creates a third textual dimension arising from the conjoining of these two processes and the meaningful relations this creates. As Tablada explains in a letter regarding his ideogrammatic poems and his haikus: "Mi preocupación actual es la síntesis… porque sólo sintetizando creo poder expresar la vida moderna en su dinamismo y en su multiplicidad." (Willard Bohn quoting a letter by Tablada in "Visual Trajectory…" 201).

This desire for synthesis evokes the avant-garde search for a new form that corresponds to the complexity of human experience at the time, and as such calligrammatic poetry ties—ironically, considering its claims to innovation—into *modernismo* and Symbolism's yearning for wholeness, for correspondences, for a harmonizing union of the multiple and dynamic forces at play in modern life, and into a utopian conception of the poetic project. The ideogram in the Hispanic American avant-garde thus appears, initially at least, primarily as metaphor, as the potential of poetic language to synthesize the fragmented and fragmenting forces of modern life.

In the aforementioned letter, Tablada also links his poems explicitly to the work of Stéphane Mallarmé on the basis that he similarly strives to use poetic language so it may reach a pure state in which discursivity and Romantic pathos are removed from poetry. For both the Hispanic visual poets and the Brazilian Concretists, Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* is a key point of reference for the contemporary use of the visual in poetry. His rupture with verse does not entirely disavow discursivity in the poem, but by dispersing visually the elements of discourse, the movement of the poem is subjected to constant accelerations and decelerations, from which a new sort of poetic rhythm arises. The visual dimension of the text plays a different role from that of the pictographic poem: they do not form recognizable shapes, which have an iconic function, meaning, in Peirce's terms, that there is a relation between word and image based on similarity; instead, individual and groups of words are isolated from one another and differentiated through a non-linear layout and varying font sizes and styles (fig. 1.6). The blank space of the page becomes a signifying element and invites the reader to explore different combinatorial possibilities, reading sequences, and modes of constructing meaning.

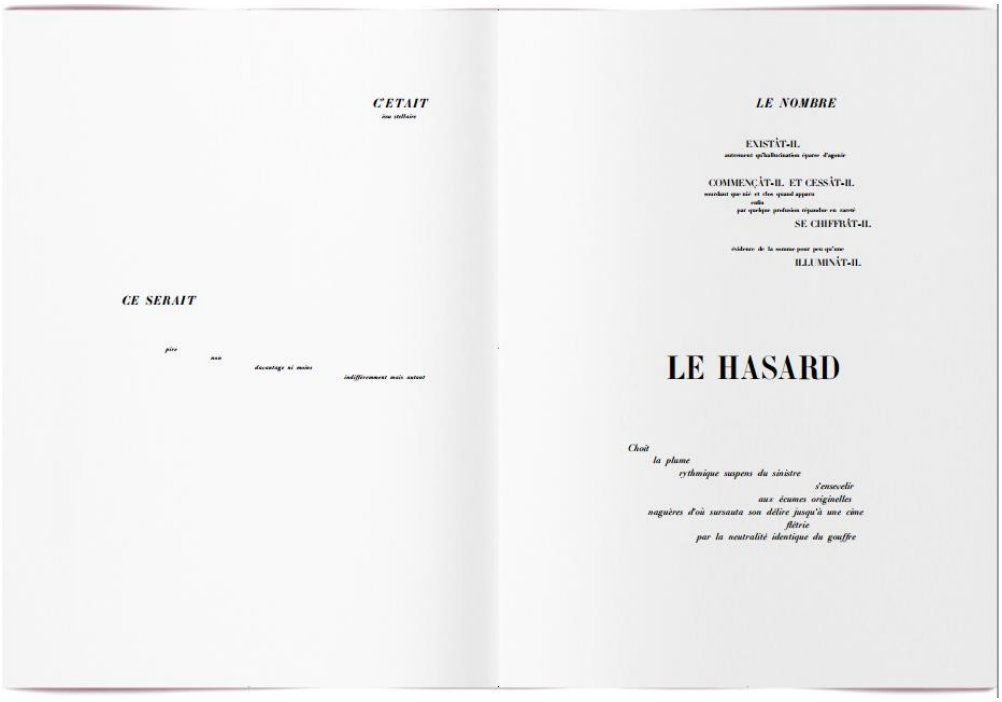


Fig. 1.6. Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard.* Ed. Michel Pierson & Ptyx. 2002. N. pag. Web. 24 Nov. 2014.

Both verbally and visually, *Un coup de dés* culminates in the notion of a constellation. The structure of words and phrases scattered across the page visually reflects one of the verbal threads that appears toward the end of the poem, referring the poem back to itself: "rien n'aura eu lieu que le lieu excepté peut-être une constellation." The poem thus draws an interesting connection between itself and the cosmos, inscribing this type of visual poetry, again, within a Symbolist frame of creating meaningful correspondences between linguistic and natural orders. Standing on the border between the Symbolist tradition and the uncharted territory of this constellatory type of visual poetry, *Un coup de dés* stands paradoxically between conflicting ideas of language as deterministic and arbitrary, and between the process of assigning meaning as the task of the active reader, on the one hand, and that of the poet as the demiurgic master or visionary, on the other.

These central tensions speak to the debate, in the late 19th century, between mechanical determinism and scientific theories of probability, into which figured questions of divine laws, natural universal order, chance, and free will.[8] The blank page of *Un coup de dés* as "that ethereal medium sustaining the energetic charge of the words in their field of relations" relates it to a probabilistic model in which meaning is not fixed—quite unlike the calligrammatic shaped poems—but rather persists in the combinatorial possibilities available to the reader (Drucker, "Stéphane Mallarmé"). If this self-referential poem is about the process/problem of arresting meaning, it is similar to the cognitive process of mapping out constellations in the night sky: a constellation is created, after all, through arbitrary connections and is, conceivably, only one in a myriad possible ways of perceiving meaningful structures. The poet maintains a privileged position as a visionary figure, but his is not a metaphysical quest that finds a cosmic truth or

[8] Johanna Drucker provides a more detailed assessment of this debate in her article "Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* and the poem and/as book as diagram."

meaning; the cosmos seems to contain, rather, structures analogous to those at work in language: both function as a space in which meaning is a dynamic force, performative and mutable. It is in this sense that the constellatory poem begins to break away from Symbolism and its conception of poetic language as capable of transcending the barriers between the material and the spiritual realms, albeit without completely relinquishing the idealist or utopian drive behind much of the visual poetry written until the 1960s.

Turning back, then, to the *vanguardista* poets, we can see that many visual poems function on the limits between pictographic and constellatory poetry. Huidobro's poetry in particular contains elements of both the iconic or ideogrammatic function of language, and with a more abstract use of the space of the page. Huidobro's earliest experiments with visual poems in *Japonerías de Estío*, published in 1913, are clearly influenced by Japanese ideogrammatic language as well as Renaissance shaped poems.[9] In most of the poems, though, the visual design seems abstract and arbitrary, except for the last poem, "La capilla aldeana," in which the chapel appears both in the visual shape and in the verbal content of the poem. In other words, *Japonerías de Estío* can be read as an exploratory collection of poems that play with various ways of structuring the relationship between image and word.

This exploration continues in *Horizon carré* and "Tour Eiffel," written in 1917-1918 during Huidobro's time in Paris. The poems here resemble *Un coup de dés*: here, the visual represents a break with linear poetics and seems to allow different voices to intersect within the poem. Notable visual components include the use of capital letters, isolating and setting apart blocks of text within the poem, and words in diagonal appearing next to more traditional verses. Elements of an iconic relationship between word and image are present here as well, most notably in one of the more well-known poems of the collection, "Paysage," a sort of landscape "painting" in which verses are laid out to visually represent a moon, a tree, a mountain, a river, and grass (fig. 1.7). And even though the verse about the moon resembles a moon, each natural component of the scene contains a surprise element that questions the nature of perception and representation: the moon—"la lune où tu te regardes"—is also a face or a mirror; the grass—"l'herbe fraichement peinte"—is not natural, but man-made; the mountain—so enormous that it exceeds

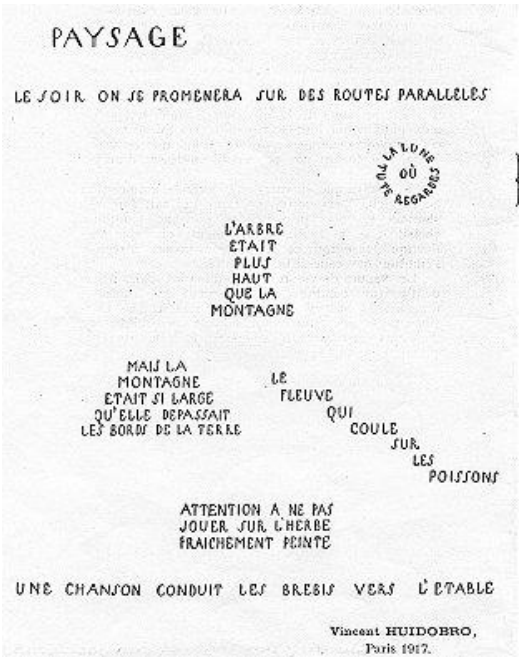


Fig. 1.7. Huidobro, Vicente. "Paysage." *Salle XIV Vicente Huidobro y las artes plásticas*. Madrid : Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2001. 19. *Memoria chilena*. 2014. Web. 10 Oct. 2014.

[9] To expand briefly on these poems, we can look at what Sarabia says about the poems. She describes "Japonerías de estío" as a parody, i.e. a repetition with difference that results from an ironic trans-contextualization (here she uses Linda Hutcheon's definition) (148). It is a return to classical visual poetry of Greece and Rome, but it also contains the exoticism and orientalism that can be considered, in a sense, parallel to certain aspects of primitivism, in Brazil for example. This is not consistent in Huidobro's visual poems, however. This exoticism is in contrast, in particular, with the use colloquial language in "La capilla aldeana," so that these poems appear to experiment with social and cultural registers and references as well as visual shapes.

earth's extremities—fits neatly within the page (*Horizon carré* 274).

For Huidobro himself, poems like "Paysage" make a statement that reinforces his creationist ideals as exposed in his manifestos: the poet, a god-like entity whose primary task is to create, wields the power to forge a poetic world complete in itself, "independiente del mundo externo, desligado de cualquiera otra realidad que no sea la propia" ("El creacionismo"). In the epigraph to *Horizon carré*, Huidobro restates his vision of poetic creation: "Faire un POEME comme la nature fait un arbre" (261). From both a contemporaneous and a current perspective, much of Huidobro's creationism tends to be read as a case of vanguardist elitism.[10] But the lack of perceived connection between poetry and external reality is more than a radical refusal: it points toward an understanding that language and art structure reality rather than just imitate or represent it. Huidobro is playing with norms and expectations, and carries through a desire to address the nature of reality outside of conventional modes of poetic subjectivity or mimetic representation. By juxtaposing image and word, he underscores the tendency of both to distort reality. The fact that he approaches this disjuncture between art and reality through spatial manipulations of language and the poetic page is quite telling of the fact that reality does not quite seem to fit within existing modes of poetic representation, which, I would argue, are based on the separation of artistic disciplines and on linear time as the primary coordinate of language arts.

Aside from *Salle XIV* in 1922, Huidobro's subsequent poetic production becomes increasingly experimental and fragmentary in terms of language, but less so in terms of the visual aspects of the poem. This is true for most of the Hispanic American avant-garde poets that experiment with visual form: it remains in large part a short-lived phase. Previously mentioned poets such as José Juan Tablada, Luis Quintanilla, Salvador Novo, Alberto Hidaldo, Luis Quintanilla, and *estridentista* poets continue to write with traditional structures and forms as well. And yet it seems useful to conceive of these forays into the spatial and visual elements of poetry as more than just entertaining, but ultimately pointless formal experimentations. We have seen how these poets use the visual to illustrate the difference between formalism—the manipulation of the surface level of language which always corresponds to a coherent depth of subjectivity and meaning—and shallowness; how different models, specifically the calligrammatic and the constellatory logics of Apollinaire and Mallarmé, respectively, introduce different relationships between image and word; and how meaning emerges in the present through an engagement with the poem's visual and verbal components simultaneously.

I want to take a short detour away from these primary materials here before moving on to a discussion of Concrete poetry in Brazil to dwell on some of the more theoretical implications of Hispanic American avant-garde visual poetry. The poems I have analyzed thus far represent a sort of bridge between more conventional modes of poetry and a poetics of materiality, and I think it is worth expanding on the philosophical dimensions of this change, firstly in terms of time and space. I will argue here that there is a relationship between temporal progression and a spatial conception of depth, which underlie many of lyric poetry's most foundational notions, particularly the idea of the unitary and coherent subject, and the traditional concept of interpretation as an act that seeks to reveal a true meaning that lies underneath the surface. While subsequent chapters will reveal multiplicity as the key coordinate of a poetics of materiality, the

[10] Gonzalez and Treece on Huidobro: "Huidobro speaks of a poetry as refuge and solace – closer to that of Baudelaire than Apollinaire" (42) – interesting. Their idea is that the creation of an alternative reality is a form of withdrawal, and of self-delusion (46).

following theoretical outline seeks to lay out the origins and inception of this move toward multiplicity.

Conventionally, then, we can state that we discuss poetry in terms of different levels or layers, divided along the lines of form and content. Form is traditionally seen as the material representative of content, reinforcing the verbal message, reaffirming on the surface what can be found "beneath" the surface of the page, of words, of letters, of their sounds. The division between the form and the content of words rely, in turn, on a corresponding division within the individual subject between exteriority and interiority, body and soul. And it is this division that places interpretation at the center of our interaction with the poetic text, an act that involves explaining or deciphering the meaning contained within poetic language as a code, and that views the surface level and the deeper meaning of the poem as separate.

We might see Symbolism as the apogee of this view of poetry, in which the dominant system is one of analogy between form and content, where the latter maintains a privileged position. It relies on a conception of expression as the exteriorization of what lies inside the subject, and of interpretation as the reverse operation, the interiorization of what is expressed through poetic language. Octavio Paz, in *Los hijos del limo*, addresses *modernismo*'s analogical principles, describing modern poetry as a "tradición de ruptura," a continuous dance between analogy and irony, in which the disruption of analogy and faith in universal correspondences takes place through a consciousness of linear time, of history, of death.

Another time-bound concept operating in the avant-garde is simultaneity, based on the Cubist principle of fragmenting and juxtaposing multiple points of view in order to achieve a sense of totality, of complete vision, that breaks with classical perspectivism. And yet, simultaneity remains a somewhat elusive concept. For Octavio Paz, simultaneity implies sensation and movement and, by extension, is tied to temporality. Avant-garde visual poetry in Hispanic America remains, for Paz, a metaphoric simultaneity that is ultimately analogical in nature. In other words, the poem *represents* simultaneity, while still asking the reader to connect the form and structure of the poem to a deeper meaning. For Gloria Videla, on the other hand, the simultaneity of the *vanguardista* poem refers to both time and space being presented simultaneously rather than successively, which is related to the poet's status within a creationist frame as a demiurgic figure that has access to the unknown, a status inherited from Romanticism and Symbolism (47). In both cases, simultaneity is seen to operate not within the reader, but on a metaphorical level, leaving the concepts of progress and succession largely intact.

The centrality of time within avant-garde poetry remains intact even today among many critics. Although contemporary media-based poetry has, as I have mentioned, begun to reflect an understanding of sensation as multiple—differences and divisions are no longer structural principles—we can see that even contemporary readings of visual poetry often rely on divisions, oppositions, and hierarchies. For instance, visual and verbal readings of the poem are considered separate, sequential, and in some cases, the result of intentional choices. Willard Bohn, for example, has written extensively on visual poetry and on the different ways in which verbal and visual meanings cross paths within this field, and his work has made great strides in legitimizing the critical study of visual poetry; yet he describes the process of reading a visual poem in terms of separate, sequential operations, which are brought together through a final synthesis of the two modes of reading (*Reading Visual Poetry* 14-16).

Bohn's reading thus reflects an ongoing poetic mode that rests on the division between surface and depth. The same sort of logic can be found in Latin American avant-garde critics. Saúl Yurkiévich, for example, identifies formalist poetry —composed of "entidades estéticas

autosuficientes, autorreferentes, autotélicas" (362)—as one of the main axes of modern poetry, conceding that they propose other ways or perceiving, conceiving, and representing the world. While he states that their "simultaneísmo sensual" and the privilege granted to space and sound invalidate succession, he goes on to describe their "apartness," and their status as the pure exteriorization of an inner—irrational, emotional, imagined—reality: "Se convierte en un puro dispositivo placentero: se desrealiza para procurar al deseo su realización imaginaria. Artificio seductor, absuelve de las censuras realistas, del sentido común y del sentido práctico." (365).

In response to this view, I find Rosalind Krauss' critique of formalism to be a useful starting point: she asserts that formalism contains a focus on the surface of the work to "preserve and protect the life of the organism, such as unity, coherence, complexity within identity, and so on" (3). She proposes, instead, the notion of shallowness: by doing away with notions of origin and temporality, we can break with the analogy—among others—between poem and poet; the surface of the work no longer evokes its depth, just as the exterior expression of the subject no longer evokes an internal, deep, or "true" self. In conjunction with this spatial metaphor, I would like to suggest, as well, a temporal one: that a poetics of materiality is a poetics of presence, both in the physical and the temporal sense: meaning emerges always in the now, and through the physical presence of the embodied reader/viewer engaging with the text.

In addition to the temporal and spatial implications of materiality, I think it is important to elaborate on the idea that materiality—and this applies all its manifestations: the image, the object, the performance, etc.—is more than the combination of two different modes. I make this point in order to signal that another important requirement set by a poetics of materiality is a willingness to step outside of oppositional and dualistic modes of thinking. A case in point is the fact that viewing the visual poem as a genre in inevitably brings up the history of both disciplinary separation between word and image, and more recent critical attempts to study how they come together tend to reinforce, in some way, the opposition between the two.

In the 20th century, the relationship between the visual and the verbal in literature and cultural study is explored primarily through semiotics in early sign studies by Saussure and Peirce and in French post-structural theory. Semiotics presents itself as a theory that can apply to any discipline, thus minimizing the distance between image and word by positing both as signs, but contemporary skeptics of semiotics question its claim to discipline neutrality, on the one hand, and its optimistic view that semiotics can somehow undo the privileging of language within the word/image system.

Without reviewing in all its complexity the history of thought on word and image, it is worth noting, firstly, that French post-structuralist critics like Barthes, Kristeva, Derrida, and Foucault open up a conversation around the material aspects of the written sign in a continuation of the theories of signs proposed by Saussure and Peirce. Johanna Drucker reminds us that Derrida's underlying idea of dissemination of meaning creates a complicated discourse of presence and absence in which there is no clear resolution of the problematic idea that language as a play of difference denies the notion of substance at the heart of materiality (*The Visible Word* 39).

More recently, the work of Mieke Bal and W.J.T. Mitchell stands out in their efforts to emphasize how word and image come together in both literary and visual arts without resorting to this oppositional structure. Bal's central question—"What's a word, what's an image, and what difference does it make to identify a difference?"—places word and image in a relationship that implies neither a collapse, nor a binary opposition between the two terms, but rather mutual dependence and interconnectedness (84). I wonder if we could not even conceive of this

reciprocity as another form of simultaneity, as I defined it above, or of multiplicity, a term I will further explore in the third chapter.

All of these terms—shallowness, simultaneity, multiplicity—suggest an important idea: that perhaps different materially-based poetics have in common a certain equalization of difference. In the case of the visual, the difference in question is that between word and image, a relationship with a long history of opposition. So theories like Bal's provide an interesting perspective. Like other critics, most notably Derrida in his critique of Western logocentrism in *Of Grammatology*, Bal questions the binaries and hierarchies inherent in language. But Bal avoids responding to such binaries by destabilizing or undermining the dominant term, as Derrida and, more recently, Drucker's work tends to do, or by seeking an alternative to this duality.[11] Instead, Bal focuses on the reciprocal relationship between the two, pointing to the prepositions that we place between the two—word and/in/on/as/versus image—that point to the space in between and how, as readers, might fill it, a point of concurrence between Bal and Mitchell.

In spite of his disagreement with Bal's "utopian and romantic" hope of going "beyond" the opposition between image and word, Mitchell similarly proposes that we must "explore and inhabit this space" between word and image (56). He proposes understanding these terms as a dialectical trope, and his explanation is worth citing in its entirety:

> It is a trope, or figurative condensation of a whole set of relations and distinctions, that crops up in aesthetics, semiotics, accounts of perception, cognition, and communication, and analyses of media (which are characteristically "mixed" forms, "imagetexts" that combine words and images). [...] [I]t resists stabilization as a binary opposition, shifting and transforming itself from one conceptual level to another, and shuttles between relations of contrariety and identity, difference and sameness. We might summarize the predicates that link word and image with an invented notation like "vs/as": "word vs. image" denotes the tension, difference, and opposition between these terms; "word as image" designates their tendency to unite, dissolve, or change places. Both these relations, difference and likeness, must be thought of simultaneously as a vs/as in order to grasp the peculiar character of this relationship. (54)

I propose a reading of word and image, then, that, like Mitchell's, neither attempts to dissolve nor to maintain as fixed the boundaries between word and image, and also recognizes the "value-laden ideological judgments" that often determine the contours between the two (56).

Recognizing the ideological and culturally specific component of the word/image dialectic takes us back to the Hispanic American avant-garde, where we find little criticism dealing explicitly with these questions. Rosa Sarabia, whose *La poética visual de Vicente Huidobro* is one of the few book-length studies of visual poetry and *vanguardia*, recalls the utopian drive critiqued by Mitchell in that she uses Spariosu's concept of liminality—"a space that outstrips all oppositions and creates favorable conditions for an alternative art"—to define visual poetry as "an encounter between two entities**—**the word and the image—in a cross-field in which each seeks the specificity lacking from its own system: writing becomes figurative while the image is made readable, literally and metaphorically" ("Vicente Huidobro's *Salle 14*" 41). Sarabia thus describes *Salle XIV* as a sort of effacement of dichotomy and a proposition of an

[11] According to Drucker, the image undermines language itself, as the authority of language has always lain precisely in its capacity to signify, a capacity that is denied by the visual mutability of the marked text (46).

alternative art. Placing visual poetry as she does, however, into an alternative space falls into the trap of isolating it from both verbal and visual arts, when in fact, the *vanguardista* poets themselves and others later in the 20th century carry both the tensions and the similarities of the "word as/versus image" dialectic into both more traditional poetic forms and into other sort of texts both on and off the page.

The utopian view of visual poetry can also be found in Sarabia's view of the relation of history to the word/image debate, framing Huidobro's visual poetry within what she terms a "double itinerary" in which the conscious desire to be culturally modern operates under a different rationality than that of the actual socio-economic modernization of Latin America at the time (*La poética visual* 161). This realm of desire, in a sense, allows for the operation of non-standard conceptions of time, space, and the relationship between the two that exist only in the mind. The common error here is thinking of that which exists solely in the mind as pure imagination or fantasy; here we can look to science of the time for a parallel. In the early 20th century, theories of the fourth dimension, space-time, and non-Euclidian geometry, first formulated by Charles Hinton and later modified in Einstein's theories of relativity, theorize a fourth dimension of space that is not directly perceivable by the human senses, as well as a revision of linear geometry to which I will return in discussing the Concrete poets.

Early theories of the fourth dimension are very much in line with Cubism as well as calligrammatic poetry. Relating modern art to science, Linda Henderson describes the intellectual and artistic impact of the aforementioned theories in the early 20th century, drawing specific links between the fourth dimension and an idealist philosophy of a higher spatial dimension, as well as Cubism's new modes of representing space. Apollinaire himself writes of the importance of this concept to artists in 1913 in *The Cubist Painters*, referring himself to its utopian quality: "Regarded from the plastic point of view, the fourth dimension appears to spring from the three known dimensions: it represents the immensity of space externalizing itself in all directions at any given moment. It is space itself, the dimension of the infinite; the fourth dimension endows objects with plasticity. It gives the object its right proportion on the whole [...]" (265).

Being, as Henderson proves, more than a poetic metaphor, it is notable that one of underlying principles of the fourth dimension, in relation to the visual poetry in question here, lies in its ability to develop new mental capacities, as Hinton himself asserts, explaining that the mind can be trained, by opening itself up to grasping many details at once and by activating its latent power, to perceive the fourth dimension with its "mental and inner eye" (quoted in Henderson 29). In this sense, this physical principle provides insight into the leveling of depth and surface mentioned earlier: sight conceived as both concrete and abstract place physical perception and interpretation—surface and depth—on the same plane, making them one single operation made possible by the implementation of a different cognitive process.

While this discussion of physics and cognitive processes provides a transition to the Brazilian Concrete poets, I would like to note first that it also allows us to view the visual poetry of the *vanguardia* not simply as the ultimately fruitless quest for the autonomy of the art object, as critics often maintain, which is in fact autonomous only in appearance.[12] Although Rosa

[12] Vicky Unruh explains in more detail precisely how this apparent autonomy relies on a connection to reality: "If we filter Ortega's metaphor through Bürger's view, we can argue that the vanguards challenged artistic recipients, notwithstanding the daunting optical gymnastics required, to focus on the interaction of the windowpane and the garden, a reflexive engagement of art with life. Thus the very distancing quality in modern art that Ortega called dehumanization turns the public toward, not away from, lived experience. [...] Extending Bürger's view, I would

Sarabia ends her discussion of Huidobro's visual poetry in these terms, she does make an important point: that Huidobro's is a project to *materialize* rather than *represent* the fourth dimension, which exists in the mind only as abstraction (*La poética visual* 41). Her statement points to the idea that the physical and material proportions of the visual poetic text are ultimately not completely detached from reality, but demonstrate, instead, the introduction of new cognitive processes of reading and writing that reach far beyond the historical avant-garde. This cognitive-focused point of view allows us to position the *vanguardia* not as the end point of the modernist trajectory, but as a ground of exploration for the new dimensions and directionalities—both literal and figurative—of poetry's material qualities in the 20th and into the 21st century.

A case in point: Oliverio Girondo, in 1932, prefaces his book *Espantapájaros* with a single visual poem: a calligrammatic text shaped like a scarecrow whose body is made up of ironic and humorous assertions of the inability to know and to express knowledge in language (fig. 1.8). The play on words located in the scarecrow's abdomen—"Creo que creo en lo que creo que no creo. Y creo que no creo en lo que creo que creo"—juxtaposes the idea of creating, thinking, and croaking (crear, creer, croar) to ironically collapse the distance between these activities and find meaning beyond the verbal content of words. Of equal importance, then, are the events that surrounded the publication of the book off the page: to publicize *Espantapájaros*, Girondo had a giant papier-mâché scarecrow-academician made, based on the painting on the cover of the book. He paraded it around the city, then installed it in front of his home until his death, when the figure was given a new home in the Museo de la Ciudad in Buenos Aires. The poem materialized in sculptural form can be read as more than a clever advertising ploy, or even a mere physical representation of the poem: it gives the poem a multidimensional physical existence that pushes the boundaries of the poem off the printed page and into the "real" world, neither as an object detached from reality, nor as mere representation, but, in a sort of reverse ekphrasis, the deployment of a poem-object, which has both artistic and use-value, out into the world.

Yo no sé nada
Tú no sabes nada
Ud. no sabe nada
El no sabe nada
Ellos no saben nada
Ellas no saben nada
Uds. no saben nada
Nosotros no sabemos nada.

La desorientación de mi generación tiene su explicación en la dirección de nuestra educación, cuya idealización de la acción, era — ¡sin discusión! — una mistificación, en contradicción con nuestra propensión a la meditación, a la contemplación y a la masturbación.

(Gutural, lo más guturalmente que se pueda). Creo que creo en lo que creo que no creo. Y creo que no creo en lo que creo que creo.

"Cantar de las ranas"

¡Y ¡Y ¿A ¿A ¡Y ¡Y
su ba llí llá su ba
bo jo es es bo jo
las las tá? tá? las las
es es ¡A ¡A es es
ca ca quí cá ca ca
le le no no le le
ras ras es es ras ras
arri aba tá tá arri aba
ba!.. jo!.. !... !... ba!.. jo!..

Fig. 1.8. Girondo, Oliverio. "Espántapájaros." *Espantapájaros: En La Masmédula*. Guadalajara, Jal., México: Ediciones El Viaje, 2009. N. pag. Print.

Girondo is one example of the fact that the utopian and idealist quality of Latin American avant-garde poetry does not necessarily close it off or doom it to failure. Neither is it just a sort of false copy of the utopianism of the European avant-garde that is to be replaced by postmodern skepticism. The point that this poem, and the poems of the Brazilian Concrete phase that follows,

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also argue more specifically that the drive toward engagement—intellectual, social, or metaphysical—was a defining feature of the international vanguard movements and that this was particularly true in Latin America. Artists employed antimimetic strategies, among a range of vanguardist activities, precisely in order to turn art toward experience in more provocative ways." (23)

make is that visual poetry and material poetics in general maintain a certain utopian vision for much of the 20th century. But visual poetry also passes through phases of skepticism that allow the focus on the material and physical aspects of the poetic text to outlive this idealism, and to explore new spatial dimensions outside of the extreme utopianism of the avant-garde and continue to relate them to the specific Latin American experience.

Concrete poetry in Brazil: Constellations, Space-time, and Word-Objects

Historically concurrent to the year of Huidobro's exhibit in Paris and a central moment in Hispanic American *vanguardia*, the 1922 Semana da Arte Moderna in São Paulo, during which a group of writers, painters, sculptors, and composers set out to renew and reinvigorate Brazilian art and literature, marks the start of Brazilian *modernismo*. Despite its name, it is essentially an avant-garde movement, seeking a new artistic and cultural order and led primarily by poets, notably Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade. Similarly to the Hispanic American *vanguardia*, their work demonstrates, as Charles Perrone affirms, "utopian beliefs in progress, in the possibilities of reform, and in the wonders of technology" (2).

A major difference between Brazilian *modernismo* and Hispanic American *vanguardia* lies in its approach to such artistic and linguistic renovation. While in Hispanic America, poets such as Huidobro, Girondo, and Tablada sought renewal through a sort of cosmic linguistic purity and looked outside Latin America for models, the *modernista* project was much more grounded in Brazilian national, cultural, and linguistic identity.[13] Thus we find in Brazil what Perrone calls "the dual impetus of *modernismo*," which oscillates between the inherently contradictory, yet inextricably linked poles of "contact with, and adaptation of, the novel ideas and formal proposals of the European avant-gardes" on the one hand, and "a nationalism of resistance to the foreign and [an] emphasis on Brazilian originality," on the other (5).

The relationship between these two poles is best understood in terms of Oswald de Andrade's two manifestos, "Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil" from 1925 and "Manifesto Antropófago" from 1928 or, as the latter states, "Ano 374 da Deglutição do Bispo Sardinha" (29). This critique of Western linear time is emblematic of Andrade's broader critique of the colonial, hegemonic order, and of the need for a new language and artistic practice that returns to the primitive, invoking the natural expression of "primitive" cultures and the liberation from the enslaving "civilized" modes of thought and Western logic. The two key proposals in the manifestos, which will link us to the Concrete project of the 1950s, are Brazilian poetry as product for exportation, and cultural cannibalism as a process in which foreign literary models are swallowed, digested, and then reemerge as something wholly Brazilian. The metaphor of antropophagy thus encompasses a way of knowing that inserts agency, as opposed to passivity, imitation, or adulation, into our contact with the universe and other forms of expression: "Morte e vida das hipóteses. Da equação eu parte do Cosmos ao axioma Cosmos parte do eu. Subsistência. Conhecimento. Antropofagia." (27).

[13] While a similarly culturally specific source of avant-garde renewal existed in Hispanic America, there is a notable divide between the two groups. In *Latin American Vanguards*, Vicky Unruh traces these two parallel ideological approaches in more detail, identifying, on the one hand, a "search for linguistic purity, for a 'ground zero' of verbal expression that becomes entangled with vernacular concerns," as in Huidobro's *Altazor*, and on the other, as in Asturias' writing, "the affirmation of ethnic or national linguistic identities within a vanguardist mode" and "the elaboration of a cultural critique that includes exploring cultural differences through language and developing artistic practices that will foreground linguistic difficulty and estrangement" (210-211).

Modernismo thus effects considerable change in Brazilian poetry, without, however, significantly venturing into the realm of visual, typographical, formal, or structural experimentation. The popular outcry at the radical nature of their project, along with more existential concerns raised by World War II, actually brings about the eventual return to traditional lyric poetry with the so-called Generation of '45, so that Concrete poetry emerges as a direct response to this lyric project so directly opposed to the advances of *modernismo*. From the point of view of focusing on material innovations in poetic form, Concrete poetry is most directly related to the Hispanic American avant-garde. Despite the historical leap from the 1920s to the 1950s, the connections between the Hispanic avant-garde and the Concrete poets abound. Experimenting with many of the same visual uses of poetic language, the Brazilian Concrete poets—consisting in the movement's beginnings of the core group of brothers Augusto and Haroldo de Campose and Décio Pignatari, along with Ronaldo Azeredo—are frequently seen to take up material poetics in Latin America where the Hispanic American poets left off decades earlier, with far-ranging implications for 20th century poetry within and beyond Latin America.

Concrete poetry in the early 1950s, its "organic phase," is characterized by a rupture with syntax and the centrality of the poetic subject, positioning itself in direct opposition to the foundations of lyric poetry: verse, emotional expressivity, the exteriorization of subjectivity, and linearity. The first publication by the São Paulo Noigandres group, their journal by the same name, appears in 1952, and comes at the same time as their contact with Ruptura, a group of visual artists with more explicitly avant-garde principles. The manifesto of the Ruptura group reads much like a Hispanic American ultraist or creationist manifesto in its complete break with the past, but instead of placing the image front and center in its manifestation as metaphor, as do poets like Huidobro, the image is renewed through its quality as "espaço-tempo, movimento, e matéria" (*Poesia Concreta* 15). It is in the second number of *Noigandres* that these principles become visible on the page, most notably in Augusto de Campos' *Poetamenos* series, generally considered to be the first Concrete poems.

It immediately becomes clear, when leafing through *Noigandres* 2, 3, and 4—all part of Concrete poetry's orthodox phase that solidified and defined the movement—that the calligrammatic dimension has been left behind, and that there is more at play than a simultaneous activation of a poem's content and its physical—that is to say, tangible, visible, and auditory—qualities. The *Poetamenos* poems in particular use color and spatialization—structurally related to the theories *Klangfarbenmelodie* or timbre melodies derives from the composer Anton Webern—to fragment language at the syntactical and morphological level, and disperse these fragments into multiple, nonlinear directions.[14] The new relationship between verbal content, visual effects, and sound is termed the "verbivocovisual" in homage to Joyce, one of the poets' main literary models, part of their *paideuma*, to designate not only that each element is on an equal plane, but that, put into relation with one another, they form a concise gestaltian or isomorphic entity that is more than the sum of its parts. This "more" can be found in the materialization of the relationships between the different elements as poetic structure.

In "poesia concreta," one of the first theoretical texts defining the project, Augusto de Campos describes this dynamic poetic structure, proposed as an alternative to verse, in the following terms: "…os *poemas concretos* caracterizar-se-iam por uma estruturação ótico-sonora irreversível e funcional e, por assim dizer, geradora da idéia, criando uma entidade todo-

[14] The *Poetamenos* series will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, where the visual elements will be explored in relation to the poem's vocal, musical, and performative possibilities. The *Poetamenos* poems are all included the de Campos' *Viva Vaia* anthology (63-77).

dinâmica, 'verbivocovisual' – é o termo de Joyce – de palavras dúcteis, moldáveis, amalgamáveis, à disposição do poema" (55). Both space and words themselves cease to be indifferent or neutral vehicles of meaning; structure takes on a functional role. Nor are they made of a kind of stable matter: their moldable and dynamic nature make them active participants in generating meaning rather than innocent or transparent bystanders.

Visually and conceptually, the Concrete poets—like the *vanguardistas*—look to Mallarmé as the crucial innovator in the realm of poetic space. While they acknowledge their indebtedness to Apollinaire as well, they take from his work the theoretical understanding of a need for new cognitive approaches to poetry, quoting Apollinaire in the "plano-piloto": "il faut que notre intellegence s'habitue à comprendre synthético-idéographiquement au lieu de analytico-discursivement" (215). Gonzalo Aguilar specifies that the two French poets represent two distinct modes of linguistic organization: "la lineal (de la que el verso participa) y la constelar que despliega los signos simultáneamente en el espacio. Esta última es la adecuada a la 'nueva realidad rítmica' que impone un mundo tecnologizado y donde la comunicación visual deja en un segundo plano la cultura libresca y discursiva" (*Poesía concreta brasileña* 206). Haroldo de Campos in particular connects linearity to an Aristotelian, Indo-European linguistic order, to Occidental logic and its reliance upon syllogisms, and to traditional discursivity, all of which are based upon abstraction and distort the relationship between word and object, making it appear to be one of identity ("poesia concreta—linguagem—comunicação").

Although one might be tempted to see this as an extension of the break between signifier and signified identified by Saussure or a reaffirmation of the signifier's arbitrariness, de Campos' insistence on the notion of "espaçotempo" in the same essay reveals a more complex motivation. Much like Charles Hinton in his description of the fourth dimension, Haroldo de Campos suggests a need to be conscious of and responsive to new mental habits that are directly related to scientific changes in how we perceive reality: "as transformações operadas nos hábitos tradicionais de pensar, a cosmovisão que nos oferece o estágio atual das ciências (a geometria não-euclidiana, a física de Einstein etc.), exigem que a torne capaz de se adequar com maior fidelidade à descrição do mundo dos objetos" ("poesia concreta—linguagem—comunicação" 105).

The earliest model the Concrete poets identify as implementing space in such a way as to put words and objects into a new relation to one another is Mallarmé. The white space of the page in *Un coup de dés* is, for the Brazilian poets, a visible manifestation of a sort of space-time. From this perspective, the definition "poesia concreta: tensão de palavras-coisas no espaço-tempo," which appears both in Augusto de Campos' "poesia concreta (manifesto)" and in the group's "plano-piloto para a poesia concreta," becomes clearer. In his notes on his translation into Portuguese of the seminal poem, Haroldo de Campos describes Mallarmé's "subdivisões prismáticas da Idéia" in terms of a structure that inextricably binds time to space, manifested in "o acelerar por vezes e o delongar também do movimento, escandindo-o, intimando-o mesmo segundo uma visão simultânea da Pâgina: esta agora servindo de unidade como alhures o verso ou linha perfeita" (*Mallarmé* 151). *Un coup de dés* thus helps them to define in positive terms what has theretofore been expressed negatively as the crisis and subsequent death of verse, leading them to their particular conceptualization of dynamic and isomorphic poetic structures.

The constellation that is left at the end of *Un coup de dés*, and that also bears resemblance to the layout of the poem as a whole, has been used as a symbol of this new type of poetic structure, although it carries within it deep ambiguities worth noting. The Swiss-Bolivian poet Eugen Gomringer, the concomitant founder of the international Concrete poetry movement, uses

the term in one of his earliest manifestos, "From Line to Constellation," affirming it as the basic structure of the concrete poem, as "it encloses a group of words as if it were drawing stars together to form a cluster" (67). Gomringer also refers to the constellation, diametrically opposed to verse, as an invitation, and this makes sense in that it requires the reader to make connections in a potentially infinite field of combinatorial possibilities. The Concrete poems themselves frequently refer to the "poema-constelação" as a way of referencing the sort of "estrutura pluridividida ou capilarizada"—which does away with linear principles such as beginning, middle, and end—created by Mallarmé (49).

The constellation thus seems to both fulfill Symbolist ideals and stand in for a complete renewal of poetic structure. Linked to Mallarmé's quest for the Absolute, the Ideal, and the cosmic purity of poetic language, the concept may seem doomed to the same fate as the extreme utopianism of the avant-garde of the 1920s. Indeed, there is in Concrete poetry a distinct initial utopianism that believes in a universal language attainable through poetry. More broadly, it is difficult to dissociate the image of the constellation from a sense of universal order and harmonious correspondences between earthly existence and a spiritual plane. However, from a more scientific point of view—which the Noigandres group certainly espoused, in general—the constellation must be thought of not just spatially, but in relation to time as well.

The concept of the constellation in its relation to time is laid out best, perhaps, in Walter Banjamin's use of the term in the *Arcades Project*. Here, the constellation is likened to a flash that appears in the now, the sort of coming-into-consciousness that happens when the apparent meaninglessness of disconnected elements takes on a meaningful structure through the interrelation of components (462-463). Already for Benjamin, the constellation expressly negates the idea of linearity both in terms of progressive time and in spatial sequence, an idea that is very much in line with how the Concrete poets understand the term. And, perhaps most importantly, Benjamin specifies that the constellation is never just a collection of fragments: the constellation is the recognition of the constellation almost as a network, where the structure illuminates the reciprocal relationships between its constitutive parts. In other words, through Benjamin we see that linearity does not give way to fragmentation, but rather to a complex web of interconnection.

It is interesting to note that the Concrete poets—despite Benjamin's understanding of history as non-linear—associated this constellatory logic with a distinctly non-Occidental mode of understanding history as well as the social role of the poet. As Haroldo de Campos would write decades after the close of the orthodox phase of Concrete poetry, the constellation stood for a defiant posture vis-à-vis Occidental ideology: "O poema constelar, na disseminação da forma, rompe a clausura da estrutura fixa e estrófica, dispersa a medida tradicional do verso (e nisto indica, para o Derrida da *Gramatologia*, a ruptura da clausura metafísica do Ocidente, regida pelo modelo épico-aristotélico e pela linearidade da concepção clássico-ontológica da história)." ("Poesia e modernidade" 260).

From this perspective, Mallarmé's reevaluation of poetic norms sheds light on the Concrete poets' social role: his use of space, interpreted as a refusal to use language as a passive medium, is described by the poets as a basic foundation for an "engajamento em poesia" (*Mallarmé* 28). As Gonzalo Aguilar points out in *Poesía concreta brasileña*, out of the alienating experience in the face of the modern metropolis comes a change in the poet's social mission and position, an idea to which I will return in what follows. The key difference between what the Concrete poets and Mallarmé—and, by extension, the European avant-garde—conceives of as engagement is traceable to distinct historical circumstances, an idea central to Gonzalo Aguilar's seminal study of Concrete poetry, *Poesía concreta brasileña: las vanguardias en la encrucijada*

modernista. Whereas the European avant-garde, as Peter Bürger describes it, seeks to reintegrate art into social reality as a gesture of engagement, in Latin America, radical avant-garde form is primarily positioned defiantly as a negation of established cultural, artistic, and socio-political practices: "una *no conciliación* que se basa, justamente, en una radicalización de la forma que, en disposiciones no tradicionales ni convencionales, desafía hábitos y prácticas culturales. Es por esto que en mis análisis le presto una atención particular a esta dimensión de la escritura poética: la forma como lugar de encuentro de la poesía con las fuerzas sociales." (17)

Within what are considered Latin American avant-garde poetic movements, we can then see how Concrete poetry takes off in a different direction than the Hispanic American *vanguardia*, despite their shared roots and European models. Like the Dadaists and Futurists in Europe, the Hispanic American avant-garde was largely an offspring of a French Symbolist aesthetic. While Huidobro, Tablada, and Girondo, among others, all make use primarily of the pictorial or figurative aspect of language in the calligram—even if it is to ironically play the verbal and visual aspects against one another—the Concrete poets focus from the start on a diagrammatic or constellatory layout of words that thematizes not the word-things themselves, but rather the structural relations between them.

Looking toward the context, it is easy to see that the aftermath of World War II, modernization in Brazil, globalization, as well as the history of a more primitivist initial avant-garde place Brazilian artists in the 1950s in a complicated position. In a sense, the distortion of existing views of time and space is taking place on a global scale after the two World Wars. Not only do they mark the artistic scene with the shock of senseless violence and of large-scale death and destruction, but in Latin America, and Brazil in particular, the war-time period cuts short the global circulation of artistic ideas, alienating artists from artistic developments happening around the world. The avant-garde, under its military definition of moving forward, is brutally stopped in its tracks. Concrete poetry, sensing itself cut off from artistic developments in the rest of the world during the war, thus steps in and reaches back, in a sense, to continue the trajectory of the *modernistas* where their project left off, and finds in the structure and verbivocovisual materiality of the text the means to bring poetry up to speed in Brazil and transcend the local to insert itself into the global poetry scene.[15]

In a sense, the Generation of '45's distaste for formal experimentation in the face of global war and violence is comprehensible; for the Concrete poets, however, it represents a step backwards at a time when Brazil is trying to move ahead. Within Brazil, the uneven process of modernization initiated in the late 1930s under Getulio Vargas and the Estado Novo give way to energetic industrial development, including the founding of Petrobras in 1953. The 1950s subsequently represent a period of intense modernization, industrial growth, political democratization, and economic development under Juscelino Kubitscheck. The need for an up-to-date artistic expression responds to the accelerated rhythm of city life, new modes of communication like telephones and television, modes of transportation, technological

[15] Marjorie Perloff comments on a similar situation giving rise to the Concrete poetry of Gomringer, identifying the link between his "constellations" and the situation of Switzerland in the period immediately following the postwar era: "In the 30s and 40s, there had been much talk of German Switzerland becoming a separate nation by adopting a written German variant of its own. Although the plan was abandoned, the war further isolated Switzerland, turning it into a neutral island surrounded by warring power blocks. After the war, a unified but still trilingual Switzerland once again opened its borders to the larger European world, but that world (including Germany itself) was now newly divided by the Iron Curtain. Concrete poetry, Gomringer insisted, could break down the resultant linguistic and national borders by transcending the local dialects associated with *Heimatstil*, the endemic Swiss nativism" ("Writing as Re-Writing").

innovations, imported products, and colorful publicity ads. It is now the present moment, rather than an avant-garde notion of futurity, that demands a new poetic form; the avant-garde cult of novelty and its shock value are not entirely absent here, but the illusion of complete originality and a radical break with the past are abandoned through the particular relationship to poetic precursors and to materially-based poetic and artistic traditions.[16]

The design and construction of Brazil's new capital Brasília is perhaps the most telling emblem of the modernized nation, and one that profoundly impacted the Concrete poetry movement in its early years. Christopher Dunn describes Brasília, designed by urban planner Lúcio Costa and architect Oscar Niemeyer, as a "bold monument to high modernist architecture" and "the supreme expression of developmentalist ideology" in the sense that it not only represents, but actually achieves modernity (31). The fact that the Concrete poets' manifesto is named "Plano-piloto da poesia concreta," a name that hearkens back to Lúcio's "plano-piloto" of Brasília. As Dunn also notes, the reactions from within Brazil to Concrete poetry in the 1950s are often mixed, and sometimes sharply critical. While the poets themselves saw their alignment with these emblems of modernity as the creation of a "poetry for export," as conceived by Oswald de Andrade in his "Manifesto da Poesia Pau Brasil," it confounds many critics, "who regarded it as overly formalistic and impervious to the 'national exigencies' of underdeveloped countries such a Brazil" (Dunn 32).

At the same time, certain elements of Concrete poetry, and of its utopian nature, seem precisely to resist their own exportation, something Charles Bernstein explains when he notes that Haroldo de Campos' poems resist both exportation—"becoming dependent on what's exportable"—and importation—"developing a subsidiary relation to the powerful literatures beyond" ("Charles Bernstein on Haroldo de Campos"). It is the tension between the nationalist and the globalized, universal impulses that allow us to see the Concrete aesthetic's later

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[16] The historical circumstances and the characteristics of Concrete poetry lead some critics, such as Marjorie Perloff, as well as the poets themselves, in certain moments, to place the movement within the so-called "arrière-garde." In military terms, this group literally brings up the rear, and by recuperating the incomplete avant-garde initiated by *modernismo*, the *Noigandres* poets are, figuratively speaking, doing just this.

Whether or not this label—along with the "avant-garde" label in general, or the "neo-avant-garde," a term used by critics such as Charles Perrone and Caroline Bayard to describe Concrete poetry—is useful and accurate remains up for debate; however, it is my belief that, especially from the perspective of a 20th and 21st century material poetics, these concepts emit a sort of anxiety surrounding concepts of originality, repetition, and closure that I do not find particularly convincing or productive. Rosalind Krauss's *Originality of the Avant-Garde* deals with these questions much more extensively, and I will summarize here only briefly the points that I think are most relevant to the present discussion.

First, I agree with Krauss' statement, derived from Benjamin, that "authenticity empties out as a notion as one approaches those mediums which are inherently multiple" (152). And while Concrete poetry, as I have mentioned, does emerge within an avant-garde frame, Krauss makes the important point that "if the very notion of the avant-garde can be seen as a function of the discourse of originality, the actual practice of vanguard art tends to reveal that 'originality' is a working assumption that itself emerges from a ground of repetition and recurrence" (157-158). Originality and repetition are not opposites, one valued and the other discredited, but rather function interdependently, although both modernism and the avant-garde tend to repress the copy as the complement to originality.

Krauss follows up this discussion with a question that will be worth addressing in subsequent chapters: "What would it look like not to repress the concept of the copy? […] to produce a work that acted out the discourse of reproductions without originals […]?" (168)

Fig. 1.9. Pignatari, Décio. "Beba coca cola." *Poetry Foundation*. Dec. 2012. Web. 27 Jan. 2013.

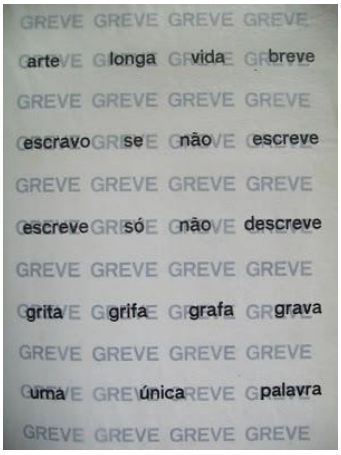

Fig. 1.10. Campos, Augusto de. "Greve." *Viva Vaia: poesia 1949-1979*. São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2000. 111. Print.

extension from an avant-garde movement into a continuous "non-utopian grappling with social complexity," a process formulated as "sign materialism" by the poet himself.[17]

The second phase of Concrete poetry, the "participatory phase," focuses on a more explicit critique of the socio-political situation of the nation. Décio Pignatari in particular makes his critique of imperialism's effects on Brazil quite clear in poems such as "beba coca cola," one of the most recognized Concrete poems (fig. 1.9). Pignatari's poem visually mimics a coca cola ad, but through the anagrammatic play on the words "beba coca cola"—resulting in drool ("babe") and excrement ("cloaca")—he puts an ideologically critical twist on Oswald de Andrade's cultural cannibalism. However, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos' poems, as has been intimated earlier, are ideologically critical in a different, and less explicit, way: centered around nonconformity in language, they critique the ideological power of artistic and linguistic structures through poems that materialize language's opacity and distortive tendencies. A case in point is Augusto's poem "Greve" from 1961 (fig. 1.10), which superimposes a transparent layer of words onto a background that repeats a single word, "greve" (*Viva Vaia* 111).

Gonzalo Aguilar interprets the "strike" as a questioning of the poet's position, deeply ambiguous in that the poet's mission to socially critique through writing denies him the possibility of the very strike he depicts here ("Some Propositions" 180).[18] In this sense, the Concrete poets' use of structure and visual elements carries an ideological weight. The 1961 post-script to the "plano-piloto" quotes Mayakovsky: "sem forma revolucionária não há arte revolucionária" (218). Their ideological posture can thus be summarized as subverting the *material* through which ideology and

[17] Bernstein sees theories of transcreation—Haroldo de Campos' designation for his particular philosophy of translation—as "a metaphor for refusing dependency": "De Campos's translations are not subsidiary or secondary to some original but have themselves become original work. De Campos's elaborations and extensions around a shifting center are the Baroque element of his work, with its insistence on the materiality of its languages and holding to its own specific gravity. It comes to this: de Campos's work resists translatability through its cultural and linguistic thickness." This Baroque element will be an object of study in the discussion, in Chapter 5, of Haroldo de Campos' *Galáxias*.

Altnernatively, the discourse around Concrete poetry and the idea that it constitutes the exportation of a particularly Brazilian product can also be discussed in post-Colonial terms. Jorge Schwartz's introduction to the anthology titled *Las vanguardias latinoamericanas* suggests, for example, that an alternative to turning to primitive language to resist the Occidental order imposed by Colonial powers might be precisely a language that appropriates the tools of the colonizers, in this case, a globalized language. This sort of strategy has often been deemed a form of submission to the established power structure on the part of the Concrete poets; but this is a concept to which I will return in Chapter 2.

[18] Aguilar goes on to link this initial poem to Augusto de Campos' broader use of negation and exile to frame his poetic position and project. Although Aguilar sees in "Greve" the poet's utopian hope of rejoining society—"the mutation of the ex-poet into the poet"—he positions it at the outset of an ideological stance that complicates this question, and in which an aesthetic of rejection comes to signal that there is no plenitude for the "ex-poet" to return to ("Some Propositions" 182).

the established system is reproduced in everyday life and in art. Herbert Marcuse, in "Art and Revolution," explains that even in the seeming divorce of art from socio-political reality—of which the Concrete poets were indeed accused—we can identify the desublimation of the prevailing order through "the radical transformation of man's sense experience and receptivity" by "search for a *sensuous* culture" (82).

The sensuous, as Marcuse conceives it, is imagined as a preconceptual experience of language, and is connected to the transcendent in the sense that without the transcendental separation between art and reality, the two collapse and art succumbs to the established order (101).[19] Regarding the critique of elitism that this type of poetry often engenders, Marcuse responds: "isolation and alienation from the given reality may indeed lead to an "ivory tower," but may (and do) lead to something that the Establishment is increasingly incapable of tolerating, namely, independent thinking and feeling" (129).

In sum, Marcuse notes the necessity of the tension, in art, between idea and reality, between the universal and the particular, between the transparency and the opacity of form. This tension plays out, as Marcuse himself implicitly suggests, in the dimensions of both time and space, an idea that brings us back again to the image of the constellation as formulated by Walter Benjamin in the *Arcades Project*. This tension is a non-linear dynamic that plays itself out, in the Concrete poem, in different dimensions of what we consider to be materiality: on a physical plane, which will be discussed further in the following chapter, we find the migration of poems off of the page and out of the book; on the level of sound, which will be the focus of the third chapter, we find the manifestation within a single poem of multiple reading paths, vocalizations, and temporalities through performance; in spatial terms, non-linear structures are explored through graphic elements and geometric layouts of words; and in the sphere of time, the concepts of synchronicity, simultaneity, and multiplicity are explored. The crucial point to be made about these different material aspects of the text—elucidated by its comparison to a constellation existing in the fourth dimension of space-time—is that the relations, the tension between them is where meaning resides, in its quality as energy waiting to be deployed in one direction or another.

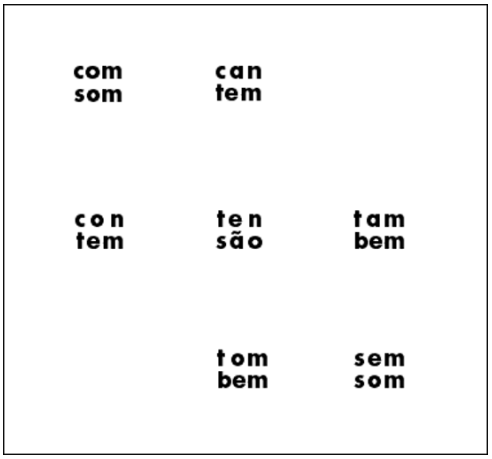

Fig. 1.11. Campos, Augusto de. "Tensão." *Viva Vaia: poesia 1949-1979*. São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2000. 95. Print.

Octavio Paz writes, in *Signos en rotación*: "la misma constelación no tiene existencia cierta: no es una figura sino la posibilidad de llegar a serlo" (48). To further explore the constellatory structure and its relation to tension, let's take Augusto de Campos' poem "tensão" from 1956, the year in which Concrete poetry made its first major public appearance with the "Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta" at São Paulo's Museo da Arte Moderna (*Viva Vaia* 95) (fig. 1.11). Composed of seven blocks of two single syllables each,

[19] In connection with the previous note on Augusto de Campos' political engagement as a poetics of negation, it is interesting to note that Marcuse calls the subversive potential of art the "power of the negative" (110). This negativity is what contains the element of alienation that can make form and structure subversive; in this context, he also discusses the risk, in contemporary art, of reaching "the point of no return, that is, the point where the *oeuvre* drops out of the dimension of alienation, of *formed* negation and contradiction, and turns into a sound-game, language-game—harmless and without commitment, shock which no longer shocks" (116)

we can see the affinity to a constellatory form, albeit a highly geometric one: the white space of the page is like the connective tissue on which we map our meaning. And this space thickens with possible reading paths: a linear reading takes us from sound to silence ("com som" / "sem som"), but as we know, linearity is probably not what the poet had in mind in this composition. The word "tensão" located in the center of the cube can be the starting point, a reference point to which the reader might return throughout the multidirectional reading, or an axis around which the entire structure revolves.

The detours the reader takes through the white space of the page can—and have—literally been mapped out visually, showing a dense thicket of lines that represent the eye movement of readers faced with the poem. This mapping depicts on a two-dimensional plane what might better be depicted as a tesseract or a hypocube, the geometrical figure of four-dimensional space. In a sense, Concrete poetic language acts like the space-time dimension that keeps the other dimensions rotating and in suspension. There is no beginning or end, but a manifestation of how language might function—and might or might not *mean*, depending on how we read the poem—when severed from the discursive and linear constraints of language that are inadequate in expressing a new spatio-temporal understanding of the world. Furthermore, the central space is clearly occupied by tension, which displaces the poetic subject conventionally thought to hold the central position, being the source of the poem's coherence. Instead, a dynamic and creative tension rules over the poem and holds it together structurally. It signals, along with the opposition at the extremities of the poem's diagonal axis of silence and sound, that the Concrete structure brings opposites together without attempting to unite them, allowing the tension, instead, to generate meaning, productive friction, rhythm.

Fig. 1.12. Azeredo, Ronaldo. "Velocidade." *antoniomirando*. Ed. Antonio Miranda. N. d. Web. 19 Apr. 2014.

The poem "tensão" is among the most metapoetic and geometrically structured texts from this orthodox phase, and its unique relation to space lies more directly in line with new scientific and non-discursive thought. A different use of space and visual elements can be found in poems like Ronaldo Azeredo's "velocidade" from 1957 (reproduced in Campos, Campos and Pignataro, *Teoria da Poesia Concreta* 132) (fig. 2.12). This poem does the complete opposite of Vicente Huidobro's "Molino" and its placement within the visual frame of verses: the reader, as performer, follows the geometric rows of Vs, gaining speed as a result of repetition, giving rise to the very velocity that then appears as the sole signifier of the poem. The structure of the poem produces velocity in the cognitive process of the reader. Does the actual velocity of the reading process hit us first, or does the word? Either way, the square also contains implicitly the possibility of a continuation, of the word slipping further to the left edge of the rectangular poem.

Azeredo's rectangular layout is visual reminiscent of a grid, where each letter is mapped out on both a vertical and a horizontal line. The idea of the grid, however, has more complex aesthetic implications that might be worth considering here. Rosalind Krauss, for instance, refers to the grid in visual art as an object in which the physical and the aesthetic planes are demonstrated to be one and the same; "the bottom line of the grid is a naked and determined materialism" (10). The grid also has, according to Krauss, the abstract

quality of extending, theoretically, ad infinitum into all directions, so that "Velocidade," despite its distinct borders, again uses the blank space surrounding it and imbibes it with meaning, pushing our gaze outward in all directions. It is a compelling alternative both to the poem within-the-frame and poems whose content refers us explicitly and directly to the world outside the text, and commands a different sort of sensibility.

The identification between the aesthetic and physical planes of the work of art Krauss sees in the grid is the same principle underlying the ideas of isomorphism and the ideogram. This term was so significant that the Concrete poets had in fact chosen the ideogram as a label for their poetry before the contact with Gomringer. Much like Tablada decades earlier, the Concrete poets were attracted to the brevity and concision of Asian ideogrammatic languages, as well as their capacity to unite form and content in a way that Western language systems do not allow.

Bringing ideogrammatic principles into poetic language is, for the Brazilian poets, a way of rescuing signifiers from their arbitrariness and of superimposing on a single plane multiple levels of meaning, as well as a replacement for the defunct structural principle of verse and for the use of discursive syntax in poetry. The Concrete poets' interest in the ideogram comes from their contact with Fenollosa's work via Ezra Pound, another of the literary models in their *paideuma*. It is a principle that, in Western linguistic theory, is most similar to iconicity. As Augusto de Campos explains:

> I think that iconicity is a general characteristic, independent of nationality. In the best concrete poems iconicity began to have a determining character to the extent to which it created an additional parameter, i.e. the necessity of making material and matter coincide […]. As a requirement of the same functional degree as the visual and the sonorous, the semantic level was an additional complication, which contributed to consolidating the form of the poem, in the perspective of a `verbivocovisual' unity, a neologism created by Joyce that we already used in our writings of 1955 with a precise meaning, before McLuhan would refer to it. ("Concrete Poetry as an International Movement")

In *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, Fenollosa and Pound lay out their understanding of the role of the ideogram in contemporary poetry. The ideogram is based on a "natural connection between thing and sign," and on intuitive knowledge, whereas the alphabet leads away from experience and from the particular since it is pure convention, purely abstract, which, for Pound, is precisely what Aristotelian logic does (Fenollosa 45). In this sense, it becomes the start of a new "lineage of a material poetics," as Derrida claims (Saussy 31).[20] And while for Fenollosa, poetry appeals to emotion—the ideogram "must appeal to emotions with the charm of direct impression, flashing through regions where the intellect can only grope"—and for the Concrete poets this might be better described as perception, the basic idea is the same: that the intellect on its own does not suffice to take in this new type of poetic language (53). Echoing what the Concrete poets themselves say, Fenollosa writes that "[p]oetry agrees with science and not with logic" (57). All in all, it comes to represent, as Saussy explains

[20] According to Saussy, Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, "claims Fenollosa for the lineage of a material poetics that might have the power from its off-center position to unsettle, as science or philosophy cannot, 'the founding categories of language and of the grammar of the episteme'" (36). This material poetics, part of Derrida's establishment of a history of writing, is a direct response to the West's 'history of being'.
It is also worth noting that Saussy discusses a divide in the interpretation of the ideogram in Western language within readers of Fenollosa: the breath, energy and performance (Olson) and the irreducibly graphic, the opacity of language (Zukofsky/Bernstein, Derrida) (38). We might consider Concrete poetry as capable of mediating between these two.

"the expression of a desire for new mental powers" (31).

We might acknowledge from the start that from a contemporary perspective, the ideogrammatic method is more fantastical than real: to most users of modern Chinese language, the visual resemblance of the signifier to the signified is lost, making the ideogram somewhat closer to an arbitrary sign than Western artists and writers—Fenollosa, in particular—imagined. However, this fact does not discredit the fact that the ideogram as principle—its density and concision, its visual and spatial syntax—has a profound impact on Concrete poetry. The "plano-piloto" affirms: "daí a importância da idéia de ideograma, desde o seu sentido geral de sintaxe especial ou visual, até o seu sentido específico (fenellosa/pound) de método de compor baseado na justaposição directa – analogical, não lógico-discursiva – de elementos" (154).

It is the discursive structure of language that impedes the simultaneous perception of linguistic and poetic elements, leading to readings that separate the viewing process from reading and finally interpretation processes. The ideogram is based, instead, on direct juxtaposition; Gonzalo Aguilar calls the Chinese ideogram a "*lengua poética*," significant in that it is constructed from characteristics of language itself, rather than an arbitrary and violent imposition of an arbitrary signifier onto language (*Poesía concreta* 210). And yet, Aguilar is careful to distinguish how the Concrete poets differ from their predecessors in their application of this method: for them, the ideogram is not a metaphor, but "el camino hacia la *materialidad* del signo y del espacio en el que estos signos se relacionan" (211). An ideogrammatic disposition of the signs in space means that the reticular forms, synthetic and simultaneous, replace the lineal dispositions of the verse, which are successive and recursive.

In theory, then, the ideogram corresponds to isomorphism, which recalls what we previously referred to as shallowness, in Rosalind Krauss' terms. Isomorphism is the term used to convey simultaneity of movement, or the multiplicity of concomitant movements, as Décio Pignatari originally asserts in "poesia concreta: organização": it is the tension of form and content—"conflicto de fundo-e-forma-em-busca-de-identificação"—parallel to which we also find the "isomorfismo espaço-tempo" (128). Isomorphism is closely related to Gestalt theory, in which the poets find "la simplicidad y el orden como criterios científicos y estéticos y el carácter del objetivo de estas estructuras que son propiedades comunes de la mente y la naturaleza" (Aguilar 213). Pignatari explains that in an initial phase, isomorphic form is organic. Among the examples he mentions is "ovo novelo," Augusto de Campos' poem composed of four circles resembling the egg and ball of yarn mentioned in the title (fig. 1.13). But beyond this figurative resemblance, the circularity of these figures takes meaning in multiple directions: the visual circularity leads into other associations, specifically the circularity of time and the cycles of reproduction; the acoustic resonance of these different round objects lead into still other directions, developing content based on form rather than pure intellect. In yet another example, Pignatari's poem "um movimento" creates movement by structuring the poem along a vertical

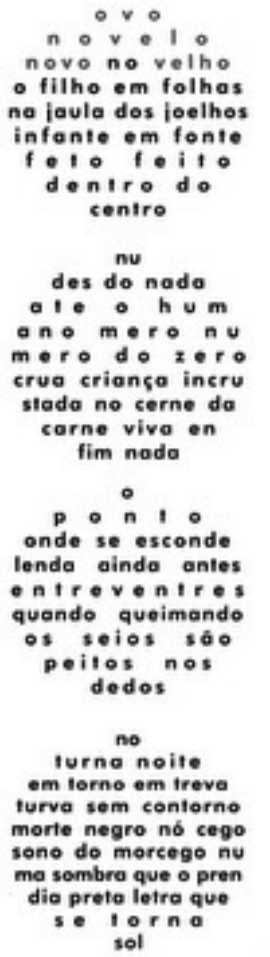

Fig. 1.13. Campos, Augusto de. "ovo novelo." *Viva Vaia: poesia 1949-1979.* São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2000. 94. Print.

axis of Ms, around which the poetic lines—not verses, but emerging word-things—seem to rotate.

The second phase of isomorphism, for Pignatari, is more advanced—i.e. more rational—and here "o isomorfismo tende a resolver-se em puro movimento estructural, estructura dinâmica" ("poesia concreta: isomorfismo" 129). Examples include "tensão," "velocidade," and "terra." The last of these, Pignatari's "terra," is another grid-like poem that, like "velocidade," is a rectangular playing out of the linguistic possibilities inherent in a single word. Here, though, the letters of the word "terra" unfold structurally, so that the word itself determines, both visually and anagrammatically, the unfolding of meaning. Rather than the organic relation between structure and content, it is linguistic structure that gives rise to the concepts of working and wandering the earth; the grid created by the letters produces visually—and from there, conceptually—the lines of tilled earth and the word "arar," as well as the diagonals of blank space, the path of the lost wanderer on earth, that allow for the play of letters that then produce the word "errar." The second phase of isomorphism in Concrete poetry thus brings us closer to a scientific and geometric structure of poetic language, and further from the constellatory structure that initially describes the Concrete poem.

To close this initial discussion of visual poetry, I would like to emphasize that by framing the present study in terms of a 20th- and 21st-century material poetics, we are able to look at Concrete poetry in a broader frame, and in connection to what is becomes when it ceases to be, in fact, Concrete poetry. The poets themselves mark the end of the Concrete phase in coincidence with the authoritarian political regime of the 1960s and the abrupt loss of a utopian vision that this brought with it. As de Campos explains:

> [we] began to orient our production in the sense of trying to embed significations at least emblematically linked to the idea of revolution and socio-political transformation into the new texts, abandoning the auto-metalinguistics of the poems of the orthodox phase. The military dictatorship of 1964—which lasted 20 years—upset our poetics. The routes of the Brazilian concrete poetry were deeply affected by this detestable political situation. We could not just make structural poems any more. The concrete rationalism was run over as our utopias shattered on the floor. ("Concrete Poetry as an International Movement")

Although the work of the three founding members of *Noigandres* subsequently moves in different directions—Augusto de Campos forays into more performance- and media-based poetry; Décio Pignatari experiments with semiotic and nonverbal forms of poetic expression; Haroldo de Campos works increasingly on translation and on developing a new baroque aesthetic—they continue to share a primary focus on material poetics and on the possibilities of isomorphic form, even once the utopian perspective has been abandoned. As Johanna Drucker states, formal and visual experimentation begins with "the challenge to the romantic subject, the assertion that the transformation of symbolic systems was a politically significant act, and the proposition that a new aesthetic form would bring about, construct, envision, a new utopian vision of the world" (*The Visible Word* 11). And yet, it transcends the utopian moment. The lasting impact of Concrete poetry lies not, then, in its status as a constellatory structure, with its inevitable association with cosmic harmonies and universality, but in the idea that arises from within it of tension as a dynamic force that structurally suspends word-objects and creates a poetic space that materializes perceptual possibilities.

There seems to survive, in the subsequent writings of the Concrete poets and in the other artists that will be discussed in subsequent chapters, a tension between the vestiges of a utopian

project—the belief in poetry's transformatory role—and what Michel Foucault, in *The Order of Things*, refers to as a heterotopia:

> the disorder in which a large number of possible orders glitter separately, in the lawless and uncharted dimension of the *heteroclite*. […] *Utopias* afford consolation […]. *Heterotopias* are disturbing probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy syntax in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to but also opposite one another) to "hang together." […] heterotopias … dessicate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of language at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences. (xvii-xviii)

The material poetics that continues to develop in the 20th and into the 21st centuries is not one or the other, but both at once, maintaining and putting into dialogue this contradictions rather than resolving or undermining one of their terms. And parallel to the contradiction of utopia and heterotopia we find other, equally unresolved sets of terms: universality and particularity, subjectivity and objectivity, concreteness and abstraction, interpretation and perception, East and West, image and discourse.

And while the period of intense visual experimentation ends in the years following the institution of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes throughout Latin America, the many points of contact between the embodied reader, language, and the world, laid bare through a focus on materiality, migrate off the printed page to performance and other media, and ultimately persists even in poetry that returns to more visually traditional forms, as the subsequent chapters will show.

Chapter 2:
Physical Reconfigurations: Poem-Object, Process-Poem, Poem-Event

In the previous chapter, we looked at the visual transformations of poems in the Latin American avant-gardes, positing them as a gateway into an involvement of the senses and the physicality of the word and the text in 20th-century poetics. It seems a natural extension from visual poetry, then, to look at texts that go beyond questioning the form of the word on the page to displacing, more broadly, the poetic text from the page into other physical spaces. As the poets in this chapter will show, these "poems off the page" draw attention primarily to the assumptions and cognitive processes—inherent but often invisible—of print, and their creation of innovative poetic objects offers new conceptions of the relationship between poetry, other art forms, the reader, and the larger world.

It is notable at the outset that, just as visual poetry reaches back and recuperates a well-established poetic tradition of pattern poetry, questioning the material nature of the poem—asking what the poem is literally made of—engages several debates and issues that have accompanied poetry for centuries. The question of the poem's material shape brings up a broader discussion regarding the written and the spoken word, a debate that reaches back to poetry's origins as an oral tradition, dialogues with contemporary debates by Post-Structuralist theorists on concepts of logocentrism, and stands at the start of the media revolution that has the greatest impact on the production, dissemination, and physical form of literary texts since the print revolution in the 16th century.

Attached to these traditions are a series of ideological and epistemological questions that will drive the analysis of the present chapter: What are the effects of literacy on how we know, how we read, how we create meaning? What, if any, are the ideological implications of the printed page in the book, with its characteristic linearity and succession? What are the implications of texts that step outside of this format? How does this sort of textual migration affect the ontological status of the poem and break open disciplinary and artistic borders? In what way does the spatial reshaping of poetic material also reshape our relationship to time?

As in the previous chapter, underlying these questions is a certain desire to rescue these "poems off the page" from being branded interesting, but ultimately limited, poetic experiments. But more than that, these texts are emblems of a wider change in the ontological status of the text and the epistemological process of the reader: poems, objects, and events become inextricably linked, as do body and mind, and ultimately, as texts migrate off the page and onto scrolls, into streets and skies, both we as readers and the spaces that surround the poems take on an active role in how they function and how they generate meaning.

As indicated above, visual poetry provides a natural link to poetry that goes on to explore alternatives to the printed page, and as we have already seen, some of the poems seen in the previous chapter already question the page and the book as the sole or most effective modes of transmission of poetry. In the poem "Greve," for instance, the semi-transparent page overlaid on another changes the relationship between the component elements of the poem: the words take on a different meaning in succession than they do when the two layers are superposed, and both of these dimensions—the successive and the simultaneous—take on meaning in conjunction with one another.

Such texts are indicative of the influence of Gestalt psychology on the Concrete poets in their more orthodox phase, through which the totality of the poem consists of more than the sum of its parts: the relations between parts—in this case, the successive and the superimposed

relations between words—take part in creating meaning. There are, as this chapter will demonstrate, many other ways in which the physical support of the poetic texts contributes to its overall meaning. Augusto de Campos writes other poems that exceed the confines of the printed page, and also collaborates with visual artists and sculptors to create three-dimensional poem-objects, especially as the orthodox phase of Concrete poetry comes to an end. At the same time, in the 1960s and 1970s, other poets in Hispanic America and Brazil abandon poetry of the printed page in other ways: Jorge Eielson writes poems that return to the oral tradition of *quipus*, Octavio Paz writes poems on movable discs and a single endless page, Edgardo Antonio Vigo and Clemente Padín write Process-Poems, while Cecilia Vicuña and Raúl Zurita cross borders between poetry, objects, and events through poems on the streets, in the sky, and in the desert.

This type of "poetry off the page" both is and is not directly related to visual poetry. In a broad sense, both serve to undo some of the formal norms that govern the text and, by extension, how we read, how meaning is produced. They also question the text's ontological status, asking where meaning resides—or rather "takes place"—and how the physical dimensions of the text affect it. In texts where the verbal content and material properties of a text create meaning in conjunction with one another, we are faced with multiple processes—we can summarize them as intellectual interpretation and physical perception—that are traditionally posited as being singular, opposed to one another, and bound to specific cultural implications and hierarchies. A look at post-Structuralist theorists writing around this time shows a theoretical preoccupation with the same issues being fleshed out by these Latin American poets: the Western privilege accorded to speech as opposed to written language in Derrida's critique of logocentrism and Foucault's writings on the historical and cultural boundedness of concepts of order and reason, to name but a few. And yet, post-Structuralism serves more as a jumping-off point for both the poets and artists in question, as well as for this analysis, than as a theoretical foundation. In the sort of cannibalistic gesture central to Brazilian Modernism, the Latin American poets of the 1960s and 1970s take up the philosophical debates around writing and orality, print and speech, presence and absence, and Western privilege, but create an alternate space around these, carving out, as I hope to show, a space for poetry that is in some way parallel to the unique situation of Latin America as both a part of and excluded from the Western world.

Regarding the different texts and poets presented in this chapter, what is notable in the juxtaposition is that, as a whole, they do not share explicitly in any poetic project or artistic agenda, and yet they can be brought together to indicate a shift in perspective within Latin American literature and philosophy. Seen side-by-side, they provide insight into the direction of poetry after the historical avant-garde and the utopian drive behind Concrete poetry of the 1950s and early 1960s has dissipated. In general terms, all convey a rejection of the poem as a finished product or a fixed container of meaning, one of the first indications of an end of avant-garde utopianism and its reliance on the idea of progress. Positing that succession in space and linear time are connected, this chapter will explore how space and time, within and outside of the poem, are reflected in poetry through various attempts to reconfigure poetry's spatial dimensions and positions.

Another key influence in this shift is the increasing use of non-literary models for poetry, specifically through the proliferation of modes of communication, advertising, and media. The affinity between Concrete poetry and the succinct and universally intelligible messages provided through advertising is one element that especially illustrates the origins of poetry moving off the page. The poem that reads like a billboard message—visually appealing, situated within a public and social environment—is thus one of the first instances of poetry moving off the page. But

what this brings with it is also an increased attention to the density of media. As Marshall McLuhan's well-known phrase "the medium is the message" has clearly instructed us, when content moves into a different medium—from the page to the public space, for example, or from the book to a movable object—it draws our attention to the medium itself and how it constitutes meaning. A consciousness of the medium's message is thus a foundational notion both to this analysis and to the poets in question here; in fact, it signals one of the key shifts in attitude at the time from seeing language as a neutral vehicle to convey meaning to recognizing it as a tool laden with ideological implications. In a sense, then, the aforementioned poets are inviting us to do a medium-specific analysis, asking us to consider how both language itself and print are media that affect not only how a text is produced and disseminated, but take an active part in the text's emerging meaning.

In a sense, Lessing already advocates for a kind of medium specificity in *Laocoön*, so the concept itself is not new. Today, with the advent of new media theory in the age of digital communication and reproduction, the concept has sparked renewed interest. And although the centrality of medium will guide the subsequent chapters, it is, at the start, a term that is hard to pin down within the literary context. A natural initial response is that the medium of literature is language. However, the matter is not so simple: Is language in its written form considered the same medium as spoken language? Is the handwritten word equivalent to the printed or, to complicate matters further, the digital word? Poetry's origins certainly lie in the oral tradition, and its very structure and the devices that characterize poetic language—rhyme, meter, alliteration—serve a mnemonic function that remind us that poems are meant to be read aloud, not just read silently on the page.

Worth noting, then, is the common claim—or accusation, perhaps—that Concrete, visual, and other materially-based poems of the 20th century are unpronounceable, unutterable. Yet a visual poem that focuses on the text's material dimension—its physical properties, the effects of its medium, and the interaction of these with the verbal content as well as the reader's mind and body—is not simply an attempt to fly in the face of poetry's roots in oral culture and adjust poetry as an art form to a written medium. It is rather, in my view, an attempt to bring visibility to the implicit—and erroneous—assumption that the written, printed word is a neutral medium capable of transmitting the same message as a spoken word. Visual poetry, as seen in the previous chapter, makes manifest the capacity for meaning of the visible, physical dimension of the poetic letter, word, and line; the sort of "poetry off the page" we will see here is merely an extension of the same drive to materialize that which we tend to think of as a neutral, unbiased support of words as verbal content, in this case exposing—and ultimately seeking alternatives to—the operations and effects of print culture, the written word, the alphabet, and the book.

To provide an overview of the epistemological implications of, chronologically, written language, the alphabet, the book format, and print culture, an initial view of the historical development of language from oral cultures to the 20th century standards of writing and print may be helpful. Today, it is impossible to discuss the implications of print without butting up against its opposite, orality, and the debate sparked by Saussurean linguistics and post-structuralist theorists. To this end, we will look to the work of Jacques Derrida, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Walter Ong, and Marshall McLuhan, whose writings on oral and print culture reveal some of the basic theories on the cognitive implications of language in its spoken and printed form, and whose ideas will carry over into performance poetry as well as language and digital technologies in subsequent chapters. Derrida's *Of Grammatology* exposes the privilege of speech in Western culture, the binaries—of interiority and exteriority, of presence and absence, and of

proximity and remoteness—upon which this privilege is based, as well as the ethnocentrism underlying the concept of logocentrism. Positioning himself against Saussurean linguistics and its emphasis on writing as complementary to, but not transformative of speech, and against the idea of meaning residing outside the text, Derrida's form of grammatology posits that meaning resides in the text itself and in the way writing, and specifically alphabetization, structure knowledge.

What is interesting, however, and what forms the basis for the following observations, is that within Latin America, the tendency seems to be to sidestep a dualistic debate on the matter. Derrida's claims in *Of Grammatology* bring the issue into focus, and the question of Western privilege is certainly present in Latin American artists of the time. But the tactics of these poets, at least, seem to involve a search for alternate forms of expression outside of print without giving up or entirely adopting one side or the other of this debate.

To clarify, then, the focus on materiality in this chapter rejects the centrality of deciphering *what* is being said—a rejection of a poetic process that aims to pin down meaning—in favor of a new emphasis on *how* meaning is created, on the poem as a process, as meaning that is always "in the making," so to speak, through an interaction with our physical bodies in conjunction—and without a dualistic, Cartesian split from—the body. This chapter will explore how print culture and the written word are related to ideas of fixity and stasis, and how the Latin American poets presented here propose an alternative ontology for the poem, one that expands the poem's boundaries and blurs the lines between poem, object, and event, as well as between the poem and the human mind, body, and senses.

Departures from the Alphabet and the Printed Page

In the years following what is generally considered the Orthodox phase of Concrete poetry in Brazil—the 1960s and 1970s, when the three *Noigandres* poets broke off into their own directions—we see some of the most extreme examples of poetic experimentation and rejection in the so-called "semiotic" poems of Augusto de Campos and Décio Pignatari. While still appearing in print, they reject verbal language code entirely, and can thus be read as a sort of bridge between visual poetry and poems that cross into other codes, other arts, other disciplines, and other physical spaces.

Clemente Padín, who is not only one of Latin America's most well-known visual and experimental poets, but one of the first to attempt to theorize around a common thread in both Hispanic American and Brazilian poetry, emphasizes that the semiotic poems and *pop-cretos* are the outgrowth of Concrete poetry that lead, like a bridge, to the creation of various other non-print or non-book poetry like the *poema / processo* and the *poema inobjetal*, to which I will return later in this chapter[21]. Among the semiotic poems that Padín includes in his collection of essays and poems titles *La poesia experimental latinoamericana (1950-2000)*, we can see some lesser-known semiotic poems like Dailor Ravela's "Chave léxica" (fig. 2.1), which is composed of variations on two geometric shapes and their semantic key: a white or transparent square, framed in black, stands for "incomunicabilidade," and a completely black square stands for "comunicabilidade." Putting these two into contact with one another, we are presented with various levels of overlap of two transparent squares; in overlapping, they become black and thus

[21] As Padín also mentions, the distance between the *poema / proceso* and semiotic poetry is considered minor by many critics, for whom "el *poema / proceso* no es más que el *poema semiótico* sin clave léxica" (93).

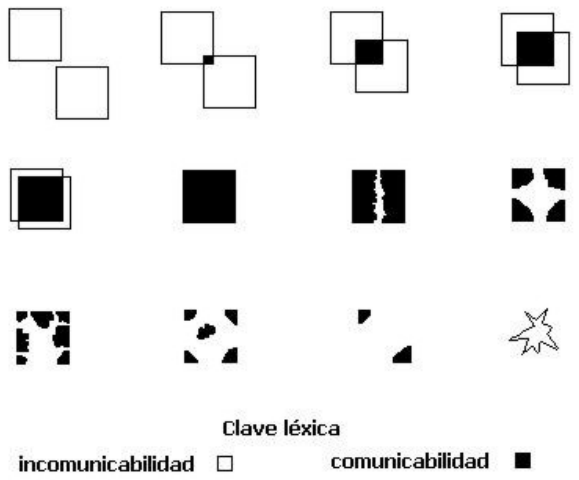

Fig. 2.1. Ravela, Dailor. "Chave léxica." *La poesía experimental*. Ed. Clemente Padín. 2 Jun. 1994. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.

are characterized by incommunicability, which in turn decomposes, ultimately into a transparent scrap, a mere remnant of communicability.

Like "Chave léxica," many semiotic poems are composed of geometric forms that are—or at least appear to be—arbitrarily created signifiers that are put into relation with one another in a way that does not mimic any existing discursive structures. As Philadelphio Menezes points out, semiotic poetry is in many ways one extreme end of the relationship between form and verbal content, and one that quickly exhausts the possibilities it lays out, as does the calligram: "Both are facets of two extreme points that touch in contemporary poetry: if in calligrams we have the maximum determination of form by theme, in semiotic poetry the opposite occurs, that is, a degree of absolute indeterminacy of the theme in relation to form" (71). This indeterminacy means that the geometric shapes in "Chave léxica" could be assigned a different meaning—almost any pair of opposite terms, essentially—and the poem would still "function," so to speak. In a sense, this arbitrariness, though, seems to be the point of the poem, hence the title: the poem is not "about" the concept of (in)communicability, but rather about the arbitrary nature of signifiers.

This is true of some of the other better known semiotic poems, for example Luis Angelo Pinto's "Poema Semiótico," in which opposite pointing triangles stand in for "male" and "female," or Décio Pignatari's "Pelé," which is only slightly less arbitrary in that the geometric elements—a circle, a rhombus, and a rectangle; representing "pelé," "the country is the amplified family (with television set)," and "at the end all ends well," respectively—make for a critical commentary on Brazilian cultural identity by being recognizable shapes that make up the Brazilian national flag. Other semiotic poems do, however, have a higher degree of determinacy: some of Pedro Xisto's *Logograms*, for example, are based off of the shape of a letter to a evoke a theme, as in "Epitalâmio III," for example, where sharply defined, square L-shapes form a labyrinth, and "Longing—os longes laços" uses a cursive L as the base for a more undulating design that evokes an emotion. Other examples that Menezes points out are Pedro Xisto's "Zen," where the word strikes a perfect balance between design, syntax, and semantics through the resemblance to an Eastern temple, and the symmetry that evokes the principles of complementary opposites found in Eastern thought (76).

Pushing even more toward the non-verbal, albeit in a different way, we find Augusto de Campos' *Pop-cretos*, also from the mid-1960s. "Olho por olho" (fig. 2.2) is perhaps the most famous, and certainly one of the most striking, of the *Pop-cretos*. It marks the moment of transition from Concrete poetry's orthodox phase into a more politically engaged phase that also corresponds to a break with verbal language. Appearing in 1964, the same year of the military coup in Brazil, the poem/collage may raise, initially, more questions than can be answered. On the surface, a poem like "olho por olho" addresses the breaking of disciplinary boundaries: How can we read a poem that contains no words? Is it even still a poem? If we can overcome the hurdle that these questions present, and read the cut-out eyes as some form of linguistic signs, we are confronted with the task of finding meaning.

Fig. 2.2. Campos, Augusto de. "Olho por olho/Eye for eye." *Augusto de Campos - Site Oficial – UOL*. N. d. Web. 20 May 2010.

"Olho por olho" plays with perception and visuality on various levels. Firstly, not only does the poet create an irreverent juxtaposition of pictures of eyes, belonging to everyone from the poet himself to Hollywood stars and political figures, but mixed in with the eyes are other things—the headlight of a car; the logo of a Westinghouse washing machine—that convey the ubiquity of a controlling gaze. Both Kenneth David Jackson and Gonzalo Aguilar, in *Sobre Augusto de Campos*, emphasize that the poem denounces the idea of a singular and centralized power structure. Aguilar, comparing this to Great Seal of the United States, reads the poem as a play on such a graphical representation of divine or state power: it questions "o estatuto monocêntrico do olhar ocidental" (43); power and prohibition become synonymous in the poem (44).

Both Aguilar and Jackson read the proposed solution as one that involves a plural and always incomplete and contingent mode of seeing. This mode of seeing is clearly deeply political; as Augusto de Campos himself has reiterated, the poem is a direct response to the 1964 coup in Brazil and the start of the military dictatorship that not only imposed restrictions on the general population's freedom, but on artistic freedom of expression. The traffic signs at the tip of the triangle are quite straightforward: on the right, we find "direita livre," and on the left, "esquerda proibida," a reference to the prohibition of art that expresses left-leaning political content. But I think that, in the present context, we can extend the meaning of these traffic signs to more than just opposite ends of the political spectrum.

Can it be pure coincidence that this prohibited leftward movement has clear political meaning, and simultaneously goes quite literally in the opposite reading direction of Western

systems of writing? Is this not just another way in which we can see the deeply embedded parallels between the strict regulations in the political realm and those that regulate writing? What I mean to suggest here is twofold: on the one hand, there seems to be a proposed parallel between political dissidence and dissidence on the page—refusal of linearity, pluri-directionality—and on the other, it is important to stress that this dissidence goes unnoticed by government censorship precisely because it is only content—not structure—that is understood to be politically meaningful, and therefore politically dangerous. In other words, the poem seems to suggest the subversive potential of structure rather than content. One wonders, in the end, whether the continued invisibility of structure in processes of meaning makes it a more or a less powerful subversive tool. In either case, the poem attempts to undo this invisibility and show the meaningful implications of shifts in poetic supports, frames, and structures.

I wonder, then, if we can't read the tip of "Olho por olho" as evidence of the way in which the very support of language, the very structure it inhabits, is seen at the outset to be imposed as a part of a globalized, Western-dominated global power structure. It speaks to the fact that even those supposedly neutral and traditionally invisible structures that mediate our thought—writing, in this case—may in fact be embedded with deeply meaningful constructs, and that an attempt to question the process of generating meaning involves questioning how value and privilege are granted to seemingly neutral elements of the structure and the materials of writing. While, with a few exceptions, the experimental poems presented here may seem—at first glance and from a common critical perspective—to be far removed from the socio-political realities in Latin America, I would like to remind the reader from the very start that there is, perhaps, nothing more deeply political than questioning the very structures of language and art, our modes of contact with reality and with the outside world. In other words, proposing alternatives to those mediations of our thoughts and knowledge, defying conventions and rejecting tradition, is a political gesture, without necessarily having any overt political content.

I suppose this is just another way of visualizing the signifying capacity of the medium, a strategy I brought up earlier in reference to McLuhan. Laying bare the ideological and the signifying capacities of medium is, in a way, the message of semiotic poetry itself: writing as a system imposes certain structures on how we organize thought. Thus a poetics that departs from linear, alphabetic writing is an attack on conventional poetry and on language itself as a coherent and rational system, affirming that poetry as a language-based art must question its own medium, while also taking language *as* its medium. McLuhan, who sees medium as tantamount to technology more generally, thus paves the way for a more detailed discussion of what exactly constitutes medium, and what it might mean to turn to language as the medium of poetry, if we see language in its concrete and material dimension, as was the aim of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, albeit in a slightly different context[22].

[22] An interesting point of contact would be to explore in further detail the affinities between Latin American poets and the American L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets. Charles Bernstein, in writing that language is so pervasive that it becomes discounted, that we become "so accustomed to its presence that its constituting power over values and objects in the world is disregarded," in fact echoes the claims made by many of the material poetics developing in Latin America ("Thought's Measure" 62). While Bernstein indeed stressed the importance of "the *material*, the stuff, of writing," he also postulates "thinking" as "the conceptual basis of literary production" (63). Herein lies, I think, the primary distinction between Bernstein—and the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets more generally—and the Latin American poets in question here, for whom thinking itself disrupts materiality, bound as it is to established structures and a history of philosophical thought that privileges the mind and reason over materiality and the body. Rather than language and *thought*, the Latin American poets will identify the locus of materiality to be language and *the body* in a non-intellectual sense, as will perhaps become clearer in the subsequent chapter, especially.

This questioning of the medium, and the systematic changes it brings about, is made possible by seeking alternatives to the established conventions and by reaching beyond itself to try on, so to speak, the conventions of other media and other artistic disciplines. In other words, it can take on new meaning not simply by engaging with substitutions on a semantic level, but by reaching outside itself. Philadelphio Menezes uses a corporeal metaphor to describe this, which is quite appropriate in this context: "In the semiotic poem, substitution is realized outside the field of the poem, always on the edge of its body" (69). Reaching over this edge means reaching for substitutions in different modes of signification, thereby turning to the idea of the intermedia poem. And yet the image of the body, within a context of cultural cannibalism, reminds us that these extra-poetic elements are not simply combined with poetry, but are subsumed within a poetic system, are brought in to transform it from within.

In the tradition of the Brazilian concept of *deglutição* and cannibalism proposed by Oswald de Andrade, the poets I will discuss take what they can from both sides and place them alongside one another: they free poetic language from print to recuperate the sense of physicality and sensorial perception that plays a part in non-print communication and non-verbal art, while still emphasizing those qualities of language that are proper to the written and even printed word. César Vallejo is, in many ways, the starting point for many of these ideas, and can be seen as a sort of hinge on which we turn from the cult of novelty and the imitation of European models found in the Hispanic American avant-garde to the definition of poetic possibilities that seek to be an expression of the particularly Latin American. Vallejo, as Jorge Schwartz points out, sets himself apart from many of his contemporaries in his open repudiation of the "modernolatry" or the utopian cult of novelty, inherited from Futurism, of the *vanguardistas* (49). Rather than the new words and images related to new technologies, Vallejo was in favor of the new sensibilities they introduced. And these new sensibilities were ultimately in service of finding an "authentic" Latin American poetry.

Although the idea of "sensibilities" may seem quite contrary to the material and concrete realm of poetry that I am emphasizing here, he seems to be pointing toward the physical impact of the new pace of life and of the new materials and sensorial demands of poetry. In other words, these new sensibilities call to consciousness the modes of operating of new material aspects of modern life, as opposed to their invisibility or their inclusion merely as images. In fact, it is interesting how much Vallejo's description of new sensibilities resonate with what we today consider to be an underpinning of media theory and much of the theoretical debate surrounding print, literacy, and orality. In his manifesto "Poesía nueva," Vallejo explains his rather vague statement "[l]o importante son las palabras" by echoing what Marshal McLuhan would declare decades later, albeit in less spiritual terms:

> Los materiales artísticos que ofrece la vida moderna, han de ser asimilados por el espíritu y convertidos en sensibilidad. El telégrafo sin hilos, por ejemplo, está destinado, más que a hacernos decir "telégrafo sin hilos," a despertar nuestros temples nerviosos, profundas perspicacias sentimentales, amplificando vivencias y comprensiones y dosificando el amor [...]. Muchas veces un poema no dice "cinema," poseyendo, no obstante, la emoción cinemática, de manera obscura y tácita, pero efectiva y humana. Tal es la verdadera poesía nueva. (189)

What Vallejo here refers to as "sensibilidad," "temples nerviosos," "perspicacias sentimentales" and "vivencias" corresponds to what McLuhan later describes as "the change of scale or pace or pattern that [any medium or technology] introduces into human affairs" (*Understanding Media* 9). This change of pace is not related to medium or technology itself or

its use, but rather to how media, structures, and material dimensions of things affect relationships between people and between people and things, the world around them, and language. In short, the idea of a new sensibility is, from the start, related to an understanding of how medium and materiality inform human interactions. A new and "authentic" Latin American poetry thus consists in linking the concrete and material with a physical and affective shift, rather than the presentation of a novel message or content.

What this means is that in some cases, an attention to the material and physical dimensions of the poetic text is actually a reaching back to existing traditions. A case in point is the history of the *quipu*, a language of knots from the Incan culture, upon which I will expand here as a model for an alternative form of code or writing that is taken up by poets like Cecilia Vicuña and Jorge Eduardo Eielson. In fact, the history of the *quipu* demonstrates an early example of a type of structural and materially-based language that, due to these very characteristics, was not considered to be language at all. Tom Cummins, in *Writing Without Words*, explores why they were not immediately destroyed like many Mexican codices, for example, explaining that their lack of resemblance to European books meant they did not pose a clear threat to the Spanish conquerors. Due to the European understanding of language and writing, only language's content was conceived to be of any importance: "That is, the form of evidence, the *quipu* itself, which signified through its structure as a textile, never entered directly into the Spanish account as did native forms of signification in sixteenth-century Mexico" (198). We can see here why the *quipu* might thus be seen by artists like Eielson as Vicuña, seeking a localized poetic form, as an apt poetic model: it is not seen as challenging a European understanding of language and expression, but rather eludes European interest through its conveyance of meaning through structural rather than verbal means. The *quipu* thereby signifies through matter and texture rather than content or "data." Therefore, it is precisely the enduring understanding of language as verbal content that is being challenged, centuries later, in Latin American poetry.

Thus the logic of the *quipu* allows us to expand what we mean when we talk about writing in the Latin American context. Elizabeth Hill Boone's inclusive definition of writing is "*the communication of relatively specific ideas in a conventional manner by means of permanent, visible marks*" (15; emphasis in original). While the inclusion of a word like "permanent" will come up for debate later in this chapter as we discuss Land Art, this definition is certainly a useful starting point for a debate on non-verbal and non-book poetry. What is perhaps most interesting, at this point, is to take note of how this definition breaks from traditional conceptions of writing: conspicuously absent from this definition are any mention of specific material supports, such as pen, print, paper, or book, or structural components like sequence, linearity, etc. Notable also is that there is no reference to *what* is being communicated: writing here implies neither an embodied basis in speech nor a mental basic in thought.

And yet, the *what* and the *how* of communication is what has been given most attention in theory on this subject. In looking more closely at the theoretical debates around print and writing, we find that it is riddled with dualisms: writing and speech, verbal and non-verbal, literacy and orality. Other terms used to describe non-conventional writing—pre- and post-print, pre-alphabetic, etc.—are all subject to a historical trajectory of writing that positions different types of writing on a chronological timeline, wherein it becomes impossible to reject the alphabet or print without making an anachronistic return. I have already hinted at the fact that alternative histories and the rejection of dialectic opposites are central to the Latin American poets studied in this dissertation. So a brief look at the contemporary debates on questions of

language, writing, speech, and print will provide us with some historical contextualization as well as a jumping-off point from which we might seek alterative terminologies, histories, and theoretical frames.

I will look at a few seminal works here that represent several major fields of debate around these issues: grammatology, orality and writing, and print culture. I've already mentioned the role of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* as a key reference point in contemporary understandings of the history of writing and speech in Western culture. His claim that the Western bias toward speech and the view of writing as a mere derivative of speech, incomplete and lacking in presence, certainly parallels many of the major tenets that were the driving force behind the manifestos of Concrete poetry in Brazil and other materially-based poetics of the 1960s and 1970s. And yet, while exposing the faultiness of binary oppositions underlying this logocentrism, his own argument cannot escape dialectic thought or the fact that one of the two binary opposites persists in being culturally favored, while the other is, in direct correlation, undervalued. In other words, Derrida's proposal to revalorize these terms does not succeed in subverting the structural relations between them as binary opposites, as this would imply a revolution in thought that appears to be outside the realm of possibility within the Western world. What Derrida does make possible, however, is exploring further the specters of absence and presence that have been associated with writing and speech, and thus a possible discussion of how dualisms such as these might, rather than being either upheld or resolved, lead to explorations of spaces, objects, and territories of writing that play on the border of these oppositional terms.

Walter Ong, although primarily looking at contemporary human consciousness through a focus on oral cultures, similarly premises his argument on the evolution, in the Western world, from orality to literary and the resulting primacy of the written word. But Ong exposes some features within the orality-literacy dualism that are significant. While *Orality and Literacy* exposes, in terms similar to Derrida's, that orality in language is paramount and permanent, and writing serves primarily to enhance it, Ong claims that this enhancement lies in writing's capacity to record and facility study, organization, order, and make possible the critical distance between language user and thought: in fact, "abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and reading" (9). This clarifies and details the link between writing-dominanted Western culture and logic, rationality, and order. Taking a further step, Elizabeth Eisenstein looks at the shift, within the literate world, from manuscript culture to print, and finds that the same principles are further enhanced, describing the shift from script to print in the late 15th century as not just a switch in medium, but as an "unacknowledged revolution."

Through print, thought and knowledge become mediated or structured in specific ways. First, the alphabet and other forms of standardization further the urge to rationalize, catalogue, order, systematize, and index (Eisenstein 89). The publication of ever-improving editions strengthens a view of knowledge as an evolution toward perfection (112). The fixity of print and our ability to preserve and reproduce printed texts over time results, ironically perhaps, in a renewed faith in progress: "it seems to have been permanence that introduced progressive change. The preservation of the old, in brief, launched a tradition of the new" (124).

Order, progress, and succession in time and space, then, become print culture's central coordinates. The aforementioned theorists agree on the scope of the cognitive impact, the major shift in human consciousness and systems and structures of thought, that takes place in the

various shifts from orality to alphabetic language, writing, and print.[23] In Latin American poetry, all the characteristics that various theorists associate with each medium or technology (alphabet, writing, print, orality) become a ground of exploration to undo the ossified associations. Challenging Ong's viewpoint that orality is characterized by its lack of residue or deposit, and, as sound, by its evanescent, dynamic nature, as well as its ties to a magic potency, we find written words—like Raúl Zurita's poems in the sky—that equally efface themselves, or an object that takes on this type of magic potency. For Ong, writing lacks orality's presence, its "close[ness] to the human lifeworld," its situational and participatory, as opposed to abstract, nature (42). But poets like Padín and Vigo, to whom we will turn momentarily, propose the *poema / processo* or the poem-performance, upon which I will elaborate in the next chapter.

It is important to note, though, that the challenges to the conventions of alphabetic writing and print that take place do not simply move the poem into other spaces, media, or arts; rather, it is the structural principles and implicit operating systems of these extra-poetic systems or spaces that are brought in to modify the poem.[24] We might express this move as a question: how can we free poetry from the constraints of its medium: linearity, succession, abstraction, analytical thought, authorship, stability, individuality, and interiority? Can we, ultimately, change the ideological implications of the medium itself by effecting profound changes both within and without it? And, finally, can this tell us something about how knowledge in general is ordered and controlled in ways that are not organic?

I would like to dwell just for a moment on the notion—perhaps obvious, but worth reiterating—that "order" is not just a neutral concept signaling a useful mode of organization or even analysis. The idea of order that operates in linear and abstract structures is that which determines how things confront one another, as Foucault explains in *The Order of Things*:

> Order exists in every culture and is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront once another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression. (xx)

Seemingly transparent and natural, but imposed on us everywhere and at all times, the grid or net of order lies in wait to tell us how things fit together, and how different spaces, objects, and words fit together to create a culturally comprehensible, and most of all acceptable, meaning.

My argument, in relation to all these theoretical debates, is that in Latin America, the concept of cultural cannibalism makes possible an integrative approach to these dichotomous pairs and to the invisibility of structural relations that make meaning possible. Binary thought, arguably the major principle in the history of Western thought since Aristotle, is neither reevaluated in the sense of privileging the traditionally undervalued side of the opposition, nor

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[23] In the following chapters, a further step will also become a topic of interest: the move from print to digital technologies.

[24] A related debate is framed in terms of media specificity in the arts and is also relevant to this point. The discourse of media specificity from Lessing's point on is closely interwoven with that of artistic and disciplinary purity, aiming, as W. J. T. Mitchell puts it, at "the erection of a wall between the arts of vision and those of language" ("Ut pictura theoria" 351). Although Mitchell is primarily focusing on the idea of purity in the visual arts, discussing specifically Clement Greenberg's understanding of abstract art as the perfection or purification of the medium of painting and Rosalind Krauss' description as the abstract grid as a complete exclusion of the literary and language, his main contention is that both modernism and postmodernism are reliant on theory and therefore by definition participate in blurring the verbal and the visual.

completely rejected on principle, nor is it shattered and dispersed into dispersal and multiplicity; instead, poetry begins to explore how meaning is created by forging new structural relationships between different words, media, thoughts, objects, and perceptions, combining elements across different classes and categories. For Augusto de Campos, as we have already seen, the non-verbal, recycled image, taken directly from pop culture, is put into relation with a geometric structure to create the ubiquity of the presence of external power. For Eielson, for example, as the following analysis will show, the mystical and magical dimensions of oral language are incorporated into the non-verbal medium of the *quipu*, so that orality and physical object intersect. And for Octavio Paz, to whom I will subsequently turn, succession is used as a structure that allows for time and meaning to develop non-linearly, and writing rather than speech becomes, ironically, the medium that allows for a new sort of embodiment of the word.

I will turn firstly, then, to Jorge Eduardo Eielson's visual poetry that recuperates the Andean non-verbal language of the *quipu*. An admirer of Vallejo with an equal distaste for the imitative quality of "poesía de vanguardia," the Peruvian poet Jorge Eduardo Eielson is one of the first poets to self-consciously address the question of new sensibilities by drawing attention to, and ultimately proposing alternatives for, poetry's position within the printed page of a book. In extension, Eielson also engages with an alternate cultural history in parallel to this alternative form of writing. Overall, Eielson is recognized as writing at the borders between poetry and plastic art, writing and non-writing, modernity and tradition. The influence of the *quipu* on his work as a plastic artist means that he is, from the start, interested in creating meaning by non-verbal means and in exploring cultural alternatives to written and print culture; but his poetry, as we shall see, also has a strong visual component that sets the ground for some of his more radical plastic work with the *quipus*.

In "La escalera infinita," a talk given by Eielson at the occasion of a 1997 exhibit in Milan, he elaborates on the type of structure that underlies his thought process: he uses the metaphor of the net to illustrate his understanding of human existence in relation to the net-like structure of human DNA, the human mind and nervous system, and also the network of information and interaction that pushes human evolution onward. "Onward," however, may not be the most accurate word to describe Eielson's understanding of evolution, which is informed by Stephen Jay Gould's neodarwinist concept of non-linear evolution: "Gould [...] afirma que la evolución no procede linealmente, unívocamente, ni con la rigidez que el gran abuelo inglés le atribuyera, sino que se manifiesta dando saltos, hacia delante y atrás, hacia arriba y abajo, incluso hacia los lados, siguiendo la azarosa y compleja realidad natural" ("La escalera infinita").

Eielson posits the book and the page as sites of self-reflexive critique of underlying cultural assumptions and their cognitive implications. Toward this end, he begins by drawing attention and visibility to the print medium, so often overlooked as a carrier of meaning, cloaked in invisibility or, at best, neutrality. Defying linearity and drawing conscious attention to the visual and cognitive operations involved in reading a poem, Eielson's *4 estaciones*, *Canto visible*, and *papel*—written in the early 1960s and published as a part of *Poesia escrita* in 1976—make a statement through their ironic use of paper and the printed page. *4 estaciones*, a collection of 4 brief poems, one for each season, provides instructions, almost like a user's manual, or instructions for how to take each poem almost like a pill. The first poem starts out by inviting us to read it, under the right conditions: "tome este rectángulo de papel en primavera con una temperatura de 17 grados sobre cero y léalo tranquilamente" (263). The following seasons, however, call for more practical uses of the poems, instructing us to fan ourselves with it, write a poem on it, or burn it in summer, fall, and winter, respectively. Not only is the poem conceived

as an object, it is clear that for Eielson, the poem is indelibly attached to the page on which it is printed, so that it is not just the words themselves that constitute the poem, as we traditionally conceive, but rather the rectangular object on which they appear.

In *Canto visible*, Eielson explores further the relationships between word, image, and object, often calling to mind René Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. One series of poems describes, for example, the picture of a colored bird that is invisible on the page of the same color. In others, he plays with the contradictions between the content and placement of words, such as "abajo" written at the top and "arriba" at the bottom of the page. "Poema escrito al revés" is, as the title indicates, a backwards poem that we cannot help but then read in at least two directions. The same system governs much of *papel*, although here each printed page depicts another page and a short description thereof, so that the plain pages' poem/descriptions read "papel con 4 palabras," "papel y tinta," or "papel blanco con 5 palabras," for example (n.p.). The poems raise questions as to the relationship between the printed paper of the book in the reader's hands and the page depicted on its pages. The discrepancy is all the more obvious in a description of "papel agujerado," where the holes are photographed on the depicted page. The emphasis here, and in poems like "papel con huellas humanas" or "papel pisoteado," covered in dark smudges and shoeprints, respectively, seems to be on how to communicate human presence, how to make the reader conscious of the human interaction that goes into the process of creating meaning.

But these poems are more than a site of resistance against the printed page. A blank page titled "Poema por escribir," from *Canto visible*, calls attention to the process of writing and to the involvement of the reader in the creation of the poem; the poem itself and its meaning are not separate; they are one and the same. And this last example of an emphasis on process rather than completion is present, in a sense, in all the poems. They illustrate Eielson's conception of non-linear evolution by placing the creative process at their center, not in the sense that this process allows for an idea to evolve into a finished product, but that the process itself *is* the poem, *is* its meaning, an idea that also resists a linear understanding of time, to which I will return in relation to Eielson's other major object of interest: the knot.

Drawing parallels between biology, mathematics, religion, and myth, a recurring structural element in Eielson's work, revolves around knots, whose theoretical implications span from abstract mathematics to the Incan code of the *quipu*. Their broader structure renounces binary divisions and the hierarchies that underlie them in favor of tying and linking things together and seeing where they branch out into different directions. If indeed, as he claims in "La escalera infinita," true art does not passively reflect its own time, but propose models—for art, for thought, for human existence—Eielson's artistic production invites us to think beyond the divisions and borders between word, image, and object; oral, written, and abstract communication; poetry, sculpture, painting, and performance.

The knots take two primary forms: firstly, in his written work *Nudos*, and secondly, in his art objects that resemble quipus. The first, started in 1963, has become a sort of perpetual work in progress that has been expanded over the years. The brief poems are reminiscent of Oswald de Andrade's *poemas-pílulas*, whose synthetic nature made them a natural precursor of Concrete poetry. They set a precedent for a certain understanding of language's materiality, in that the knot collapses the distance or difference between the poem's meaning and its material. The knot is language, but also the negation thereof: "Indecibles nudos / De palabras / Que son nudos y de nudos / Que son palabras" (13). The knots are words, material, energy; so within this system of equivalence between signifier and signified, the knot's modes of meaning unfold along

metaphorical, literal, and sonorous lines, becoming "[n]udos de corbata" (51), "[n]udos de carne / Y nudos de hueso" (49), and, in a play on words, "estornudos" (27) and "desnudos" (47). In a reflection of the blurred lines between existence and non-existence, the *nudos* most notably are also not knots: the phrase "Nudos / Que no son nudos" is repeated several times in the small volume, indicating that Eielson's particular understanding of materiality is one that does necessarily rely on exclusive or opposition terms; the material or physical realm is not necessarily strictly opposed to the intangible realms of spirit, thought, or knowledge. It reflects an understanding of materiality grounded in the body; as Silvia Marcolin writes in "La poética del cuerpo": "las palabras qieren ser seres vivos mientras que el cuerpo, entidad tangible y real, se descubre ser efímero y abstracto, capaz de borrarse y desaparecer, como un escrito" (79). Every few pages, we find a drawing of a knot: tangled concentric circles culminating in a central blot of ink. The concept of the ineffable, persistent in poetry throughout the ages, takes a non-verbal form. William Rowe describes Eielson's knot as "una forma-signo-acto," a term that redefines the use of language and non-verbal materials in the type of poetry in question, and one that could be applied to the work of many of the poets presented in this chapter (88).

The second form that Eielson's quipus take is, like the drawing, non-verbal: a literal, physical knot, made from fabric and used as a non-linguistic carrier of meaning. While the knot clearly breaks new ground in terms of its use of poetic space—creating three-dimensional volume in the traditionally planar realm of poetry—it is clear from Eielson's own writings that there is also a strong historical force behind recuperating the tradition of textile weaving and quipus during the Incan empire, one that speaks to the clash of traditions in Latin America: "evidentemente, hay en ese trabajo un irónico mestizaje espiritual entre el mundo clásico europeo y el mundo incaico americano" (*El diálogo infinito* 49). From this perspective, one of the major draws of the quipu seems to be that it is a recognized code whose mode of signification is unknown. A similar field of meaning surrounds the quipus in their relation to cosmology. The quipus may have consisted in magical numerical combinations based on astronomy, and Eielson seems to tap into this magical, mysterious quality to place the knot as pure symbol, as the human drive to organize and order the universe, at the center of his poetics.[25]

The artistic practice around these knots led him to what he describes as an alternative reality, for which he later found expression in Eastern philosophy and the practice of meditation. Silence and incommunicability had, for him, the effect of reconfiguring what he considers to be the Western understanding of reality and its relation to time, leading him, through his explorations in art, to a different dimension, "la casi anulación de lo real y a una paralela suspensión del tiempo" ("La escalera infinita"). Alongside other authors interested in alternative poetic forms, such as José Juan Tablada, the Brazilian Concrete poets, and Octavio Paz, among others, Eielson speaks not simply to some exotic interest in the East, but rather to a growing sense that within Latin America, neither cultural history nor contemporary thought quite align with a Western ontology. In the same way, Eielson turns to myth, mysticism, and affect, to the

[25] A further investigation into the quipus and their relation to cosmology can be found in Verner and Boi's essay "Enlazar arte, ciencia y naturaleza," where the authors trace the relationship between the quipus, astrology, and physics. They emphasize that the form of the knot is capable of generating further forms when it is seen both in its literaly shape and in the scientific conception of the knot: "Las *fuerzas* del nudo se manifiestan en *formas* enlazadas. La comprensión espacial que involucra el nudo tiene el efecto de una implosión: los pliegues, el lienzo plegado de los quipus y aún la porción de lienzo torcida, se sumergen en el nudo, que muchas veces se coloca en los bordes del marco. En topología, el nudo es un elemento dinámico que permite la transformación del espacio según cierto tipo de incrustación. Para hacer una analogía con la f;isica, se podría afirmar además que el nudo viene a ser el centro de una energía 'gravitacional' que atraer;ia todos los cuerpos vecinos." (197-198)

idea of true poetry as the union of the soul and the universe, all of which we may see—from a Western, linear conception of history and evolution—as an anachronistic gesture. But his aim is to dislodge knowledge—and related concepts of comprehension, heuristics, and logic—from its position in our interactions with poetry and art. Ultimately, Eielson's critique of this "modelo lógico-determinista," Apollinaire's invitation to stop thinking "analytico-discursivement," and the Concrete poets' rejection of knowledge as "lógico-discursiva" all get at the same fundamental idea: the need for an alternative to the Aristotelian and Cartesian split at the center of Western thought.

In a sense, then, we can read even Eielson's printed poetry—despite its seeming disconnection from a chapter about poetry off the page—as an expression of the printed page's inadequacy in allowing for non-linear, non-discursive, and non-analytical meaning. Written language, and print in particular, are tied inextricably to only one side of the mind-body split: the mental capacity, developed through the technologies of writing and print, for analytical thought. Although he writes using words, he dissociates poetry from them: as he states in "Para una preparación poética," "No hay sino una sola posibilidad para escribir un poema: no creer en las palabras." He goes on to explain how, by cursing words, a poem is born. These apparent contradictions are, for Eielson, not mutually exclusive. Reaching beyond these dualisms and contradictions is what seems to push Eielson and, as I intend to show, other artists throughout the second half of the 20th century to find alternate spaces for poetry.

I will leave it to scholars in the fields of cultural anthropology and ethnohistory to address the lack of terminology for discussing systems of writing that fall outside of the traditional dualistic terms of this debate. While some studies have attempted to redefine the terms of the debate in the field of cultural anthropology, one of the most accurate reframings of what constitutes a system of writing, which I already mentioned briefly above, comes from the book *Writing Without Words*.[26] Elizabeth Hill Boone's essay argues that the current limited understanding of what constitutes a writing system reflects evolutionary models that "are based on harmfully narrow views of what are *thought* and *knowledge* and what constitutes the expression [thereof]" (Hill Boone 9). While this statement refers to the exclusion of the indigenous Western world from this system of thought, we can certainly extend this to the 20th-century poets that, in one way or another, take up forms of writing that similarly fall outside of evolutionary conceptions of systems of writing, thought, and knowledge. The history of writing in the indigenous Americas illustrates, for example, that the pictorial aspect of language, present in Aztec and Mixtec writing systems, and also, to a certain degree, in a recording system like that of the *quipu*, has the ability to describe structural relations much more aptly than purely verbal language (Hill Boone 10).

It is interesting to see how other poets put this particular Latin American history of writing into dialogue with other forms—both European and Asian, in the analysis that follows—of visual structures and non-verbal modes of generating meaning. Octavio Paz, for instance, implicitly connects the Mexican history of verbal and visual arts and poetry with both a

[26] *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica & the Andes*, a collection of essays that discuss different systems of graphic communication on a culturally specific level, is one of the most comprehensive studies that addresses this question. Particularly useful here is Elizabeth Boone Hill's introduction and her gloss of the terms "glottographic system," which refers to a writing system that represents speech, and a "semasiographic system," wherein "marks communicate meaning directly and within the structure of their own system. Semasiographic systems of communication convey ideas independently from language and on the same logical level as spoken language rather than being parasitic on them as ordinary scripts are." (15)

Mallarméan consideration of the meaning of the blank page and with an Asian philosophy of Tantrism that interweaves matter and language.

With *Blanco* in 1967, *Discos visuales* in 1968, and *Topoemas* in 1971, Octavio Paz ventures into an exploratory field of structurally unique poems, seeing the poem increasingly as a material art object.[27] *Blanco* can today be found, most often, printed within the pages of a book, but Paz's original design eschews certain aspects of print and draws attention to the physical support of words: it was to consist of one single page, 522 centimeters long, folded like an accordion, printed in three different fonts.[28] Paz describes it as follows:

> […] este poema debería leerse como una sucesión de signos sobre una página única; a medida que avanza la lectura, la página se desdobla: un espacio que en su movimiento deja aparecer el texto y que, en cierto modo, lo produce. […] La tipografía y la encuadernación de la primera edición de *Blanco* querían subrayar no tanto la presencia del texto como la del espacio que lo sostiene. Aquello que hace posible la escritura y la lectura, aquello en que terminan toda escritura y lectura. (145)

Paz is clearly calling attention to the active role of the page, the material support of words, in producing meaning. In *Blanco*, the white space of the page often stands for silence and its capacity for meaning, and reflects Paz's theory that, beginning with *Un coup de dés*, poetry takes as its foundational basis the idea of vacuity or nothingness, an understanding that the poem cannot reflect the universe. But here, in conjunction with the particular shape of the poem, it also materializes those invisible operations that determine how we go about finding or producing meaning. Essentially, he makes manifest the blanks that invite us in to any texts, and hints at how we might fill them, an act that, in the words of Wolfgang Iser, is the "filling for what the textual pattern structures but leaves out" (9). And although Paz uses the word succession in his description of the original *Blanco*, his text aims precisely at its opposite: a multiplication of reading paths and a use of space that allows a plurality of entry and exit points. As he states in "El pensamiento en Blanco," this texts marks the end of an era in which succession—"historia, progreso, modernidad"—reigns. In his introductory note, he outlines six possible ways to read the poem, each with its own theme, so that the left column, for example, is an erotic poem, the right column is a meditation on knowledge and sensation, and the individual blocks of text comprising both columns are independent poems.

In the following passage (fig. 2.3), we can execute three different readings: one of the black column, one of the red column, and one in which the two come together to—in Gestaltian fashion—form a third poem distinct from the simple sum of the two parts. The column formed by the black words on the left is a part of the erotic poem. In this particular passage, the erotic

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[27] I will not analyze *Discos visuales* or *Topoemas* in detail here, but it is worth nothing that *Topoemas* is Paz' venture into visual poetry that most closely resembles what was discussed in the previous chapter, while *Discos visuales* reflects a type of poetry that combines poetry with graphic design and involves a high degree of reader interaction with the movable discs, where turning the top part reveals words, albeit in a pre-determined order shown with numbers and arrows.

[28] Another design of *Blanco*—never executed—described the poem as a rolled-up scroll rather than a folded paper. Paz also imagined cinematographic and theatrical versions of the poem, for which he prepared notes and a screenplay. Later transpositions of *Blanco* into other media are made available online on Conaculta's 2012 digitized version of *Blanco*, in which the poem itself, theoretical and critical texts by Paz and others, audio and video interviews, multiple audio files of readings of the poem, and facsimiles of the original manuscript are all housed. The excerpts of the poem that appear here are screenshots from this online version, which most closely resembles the original design Paz had in mind.

poem hinges on the key terms *cuerpo*, *sombra*, and *nombre*, depicting a collapse between the bodies of the speaker and his lover, between the physical body and its name or language, and between objects and their shadow, seen here as semblance, but also as that region where discrete elements blur into one. The collapse implies movement both outward, spilling or fragmenting both figures into parts, and inward, at the same time, through the verb *repartir*, which echoes the idea of division into parts, but also contains the idea of sharing or spreading oneself out, one body over another, and these bodies over the earth, where they seem to become whole and ubiquitous—"entera en cada parte te repartes."

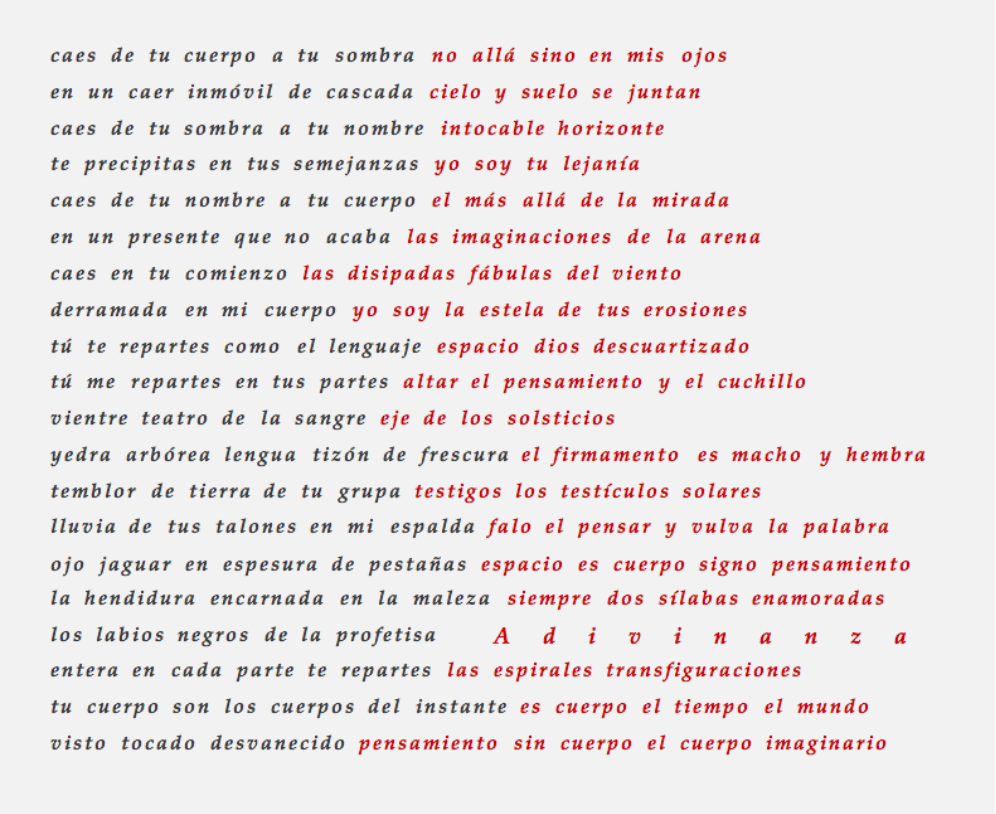


Fig. 2.3. Paz, Octavio. from Paz, Octavio. *Blanco. Apple App Store*. Vers. 1.2. Conaculta, 15 Jan. 2012. Web. 20 Sept. 2013.

Reading the red column—a part of what Paz calls the counterpoint of the erotic poem that deals with sensation, perception, imagination, and understanding ("Notas")—addresses the sense of sight. Here the union of lovers is a metaphor for the union of signs in language: thought—phallic—penetrates the word, and what is born from this union is not comprehensible meaning, but a riddle. The passage emphasizes the poem as creation, (re)production, and existence rather than interpretation or comprehension, a point Paz makes elsewhere in more theoretical language: "Objeto hecho de palabras, el poema desemboca en una región inaccesible a las palabras: el sentido se disuelve, ser y sentido son lo mismo" ("Claude Lévi-Strauss"). Adding to this the idea of "transfiguraciones," we can also clearly see that Paz' conception of the poetic object is defined by its mutability. In other words, the body, conceived here in the sphere of the imaginary, becomes a metaphor for art, but also for time and the world, all of which are by definition open and are not an end point, but like a door that leads elsewhere, perhaps to the reader's own transfiguration through the act of reading.

Combined, the two columns thus illustrate a key idea in Paz' work, related to the openness of the poetic text and to its ability to lead the reader on a transformative journey, one that relies on alternative conceptions of space as non-linear and time as non-progressive and non-successive. His thought, influenced by the Eastern philosophies he was discovering at the time, relies on the simultaneous acceptance of a thing and its opposite: the body is both physical and imaginary; time is both a gradual fading and a perpetual present. The first of these terms, the body, is directly related to poetic form. Through the juxtaposition of the physicality of the body in the poem's content and the construction of a poetic form that emphasizes the multirelationality of the poem's parts, the body becomes a sort of structural model for the poem, which is reflected in the accordion-like structure that can be folded and unfolded. Whereas an object—just like the book or the page—is defined by fixity in time and space, the body maintains its identity, its sameness to itself, while allowing for perpetual change. In his reflections on tantric philosophy and its role in *Blanco*, Paz explains that the human body is read as the double of the universe, closely connected to magic and a return to a primordial androgyny that counteracts fragmentation and separation ("El pensamiento").[29] For Paz, then, reading becomes a pilgrimage through the body of signs that is—to simplify—more about the journey through the words than the words themselves; and the act of contemplation brought forth through the poem brings about a release that seems to open a door leading always elsewhere.

As we have seen in chapter one, the act of contemplation conventionally implies a certain temporal distance or progression, but here, contemplation is part of a constant and cyclical process of regeneration. In this sense, we can see that Paz, in fact, engages with the concept of time in *Blanco* to challenge contradiction and opposition as structuring principles of thought. In his essays, Paz in fact identifies contradiction as the key principle in contemporary Western thought and art since the writing of Baudelaire. He sees contradiction as the ongoing oscillation between the poles of language and presence. Tantrism, on the contrary, does not aim for presence: the poetic word points always outside of itself, toward the beyond. In "Claude Lévi-Strauss o el nuevo festín de Esopo," Paz explains in depth the concept of time operating in a poem like *Blanco*:

> El tiempo del poema el cronométrico y, asimismo, es otro tiempo que es la negación de la sucesión. [...] ¿Fuera del tiempo? Más bien en el tiempo original... [...] Gesta, gestación: un tiempo que se reencarna y re-engendra. Y reencarna de dos maneras: en el momento de la creación y en el de la recreación, cuando el lector o el oyente reviven las imágenes y ritmos del poema y convocan a ese tiempo flotante que regresa... [...] Poemas y mitos coinciden en transmutar el tiempo en una categoría temporal especial, un pasado siempre futuro y siempre dispuesto a ser presente, a presentarse. [La poesá es una de las] artes temporales que, para realizarse, deben negar la temporalidad.

The time of poetry is, for Paz, like the time of myth: it exists outside of linear time, but not outside of time itself, functioning through the idea of a constant return that is relived in each reading, and of a past and a future that can become present at any moment, but that are more than a simple repetition.

[29] The body is, as the next chapter will show, a pivotal concept that shows that many of the dualisms that define what we mean by the material and the concrete are in fact unfounded. Through the body as an entity that is both mind and physical matter—as cognitive science in particular shows—we can begin to conceive of physicality and materiality as not necessarily entirely opposed to spirituality and myth, as we will see later.

This is a reiteration of ideas that Paz lays out in *El arco y la lira* and *Los hijos del limo*, where he similarly expounds his theories on the transmutation of the reader and the idea of the eternal present. But nowhere does it become clear how structure plays a crucial role in this as in *Blanco*. Here, tantrism—the "reincorporación de la palabra"—and its effect on *Blanco*'s form and structure, especially, clarify Paz' theories. The structural continuity of the text speaks not to succession, but to an uninterrupted temporal ebb and flow. In terms of time, the poem is rooted in the present moment, not in the historical sense, but as a time that contains all times. It reaches toward infinity not in a cyclical structure, but instead—like Borges' *aleph*—comprehensively. In terms of space, the creation of multiple poems within a single text, all separate yet forming a whole, reinforces a conception of space that is open and multiple rather than linear and fixed. It allows for the poem to be both immovable and in motion: the sign itself cannot be changed, but through this particular poetic structure, Paz invites the reader to put the poem in motion ("Claude Lévi-Strauss o el nuevo festín de Esopo").[30] A tantric understanding of the body as the site of constant transformation and re-generation thus precipitates the need for an organic structure like *Blanco*'s, one that accounts for the reader's interaction with the text on a conceptual and an emotional, but also on the perceptual, physical, and instinctual levels, where dialectical opposites do not reign supreme.

We may find ourselves facing, yet again, a sense of anachronism inherent in the creation of a poetic text/object that seeks out a ritual function in an age where, as Walter Benjamin has pointed out, the ritual, mystical and mythical dimension of art is a thing of the past. This spiritual or mystical dimension of the poetic text—also identified by Eielson—is indeed a perhaps surprising corollary to an emphasis on materiality and on unconventional poetic forms and structures. However, identifying this perspective as a broader trend in visual and non-print poetry, we can see it arising as one of the possible transmutations of the previously dominant utopianism of earlier avant-garde movements, once utopianism has been deemed unreasonable, irresponsible, impossible. It reflects, as well, the growing position, in Latin America, that a cultural history of myth, mysticism, and magic are a part of the collective consciousness that needs to be addressed and reflected in its literature. There is thus a certain commonality that can be found between the poetry presented in this chapter and the concurrent development of *lo real maravilloso* and the *neo-barroco*, the implications of which I will return to below. Suffice it to say here that exploring spirituality, utopia, and myth are all signs of an understanding of materiality that does not exist in contrast to its opposites, but is rather a concept that integrates these ideas, asking instead how the utopian and the spiritual might indeed find a place within the material, within the physical, through language, and, as the next chapter will show, through the close relation of materiality to the body and the multiple subject.

We must not see it as incomparable, then, that materiality and utopia come together in Latin America: the utopian moment is precisely based on the idea the concrete and material dimensions of human interaction and poetic production might be the site of human and social change, making materiality one of the very bases of utopian thought.[31] In Brazil, the Concrete poets, and Haroldo de Campos in particular, emphasize the utopian idealism of early, orthodox Concrete poetry and the shattering of this utopianism under the increasingly stifling political

[30] In "Claude Lévi-Strauss," Paz makes the following distinction between poetry and mathematics: "en la primera, los significados son múltiples y los signos inamovibles; en la segunda, los signos son movibles y el significado unívoco."

[31] As an example, we might think of the dream of the city of Brasilia, the ideally structured city to favor an aesthetic of modernity capable of physically illustrating the changing artistic and social situation of the Brazilian people.

atmosphere in the 1960s. In his essay "Poesia e modernidade: Da morte da arte à constelação. O poema pós-utópico," Haroldo de Campos returns to Paz, so I will too, summarizing what José Quiroga has already pointed out: that modernity, based—in Paz's view—on constant rupture and the promise of change, on revolution and rebellion, and on a desire for "a virtually impossible utopia," dissolves with the "dissolution of dialectical contraries," those "contradictions that give modernity its particular raison d'être" (112). De Campos concurs with Paz on the subject of the utopian impulse as a driving force of modernity and particularly the avant-garde. He also clearly identifies the loss of the totalizing utopia of the avant-garde with the reality of a suffocating authoritarian regime in Brazil, a political situation that is not unique to Brazil, but takes place in turn throughout much of Hispanic America. It coincides with the conclusion, technically speaking, of Concrete poetry. The only thing that does, and should, according to de Campos, survive of this utopianism is "a dimensão crítica e diológica que inere à utopia" (269).

De Campos lays out the implications of this residue of the utopic moment in poetry, claiming that what we are left with is "a 'semiose infinita' dos processos sígnicos," "sínteses provisórias," and "a admissão de uma 'história plural' [que] nos incita à apropriação *crítica* de uma 'pluralidade de passados', sem uma prévia determinação do futuro" (269). Although this may sound quite in line with French post-structuralist theory and the instability and plurality of meaning, and is certainly related to what Derrida has in mind when he defines his key concept of *différence* as a constant deferral of meaning, this post-utopic stance is also defined, on the one hand, by the concept of time outlined above and a cultural history that is pointing increasingly toward the dissolution of the structure of binary oppositions that defines Western thought, including (post-)structuralism.

De Campos also calls this post-utopic poetry "poesia da agoridade"—poetry of "nowness"—in reference to Paz. He sees in *Blanco,* which he translated into Portuguese, the combination of a Mallarmean structural syntax with the particularly Iberian tradition of metaphor (262), making the text a key reference point for a line of poetic theory and production—one and the same thing, in the post-utopic view—that is seeking alternative structures for a particularly Latin American art.

I propose, then, that despite the different national, cultural, and regional histories, and different literary and artistic traditions, the poets that are searching to push poetry from within the confines of the printed page of the book are a part of a broader trend within Latin America to seek an expression that does not rely on the philosophical, artistic, and cognitive frames of the Western world. This may seem obvious in Eielson's recuperation of the indigenous *quipu* tradition, as well as in Octavio Paz' interest in Eastern tantric philosophy, and in the imitation of ideogrammatic languages found in the poetry of the de Campos brothers and José Juan Tablada. But going forward, an increasing emphasis on the poem as object, as event, and as process will be, to various degrees, more explicitly connected to increased political participation in the poetic realm and an ever more critical eye turned toward what is perceived perhaps as literary traces of the repressive power of the West.

"Poetas de campos e espaços": Poem-Objects and Poem-Events

For Augusto de Campos, that the crisis of verse that began with Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* should end with poems that elude their traditional placement in a book entirely seems a natural progression. Concrete poetry, and what grows out of it after its orthodox phase, frees poetry from the constraints of the book, "transpondo os limites tradicionais que amarravam a

poesia ao verso e este ao livro," while simultaneously opening the doors for poetry to become what Augusto de Campos calls *poesia "entre"*: interdisciplinary or, in the words of Dick Higgins, "intermedia" ("Poesia entre"). When he met Júlio Plaza en 1968, the two began creating what would be published in 1974 as *Poemóbiles*, a series of 13 *poema-objetos* that, like a pop-up book, unfold multidimensionally. The words—many of which appear in other of de Campos' poems, like "ovo" and "abre"—project themselves forward in space, overlap with others, separate themselves from and rejoin other words; each movement and new positionality adds different relations between signifiers that layer each poem-object's meaning.

It's no coincidence that this *entre*—an in-between space for poems that are also objects and at times also events—is referred to by Augusto de Campos as a "terra incognita" ("Poesia entre"). As an object, a poem like one of the *Poemóbiles* stands at the start of an artistic tradition in which the poem begins to migrate off its place in the pages of a book and, quite literally, into the world as an object not just to be read, but to be seen, to be touched, to be put into contact with nature and with humanity in a new and much more physical way. When Caetano Veloso sings of "poetas de campos e espaços" in *Sampa*, he doesn't simply make a clever reference to the young brothers writing Concrete poetry at that time, but marks—consciously or not—the changing physical space of poetry, the locus where it exists, or takes place.[32]

Like visual poetry, the poem-object is not entirely new, nor is it unique to Latin America. The Catalan poet Joan Brossa is perhaps most recognized for creating poetry that made its way not only into museums as sculptural objects, but into the streets of Barcelona, onto the sides of buildings, into city parks and *plazas*. But Joan Brossa's poem-objects, which tend to align themselves with visual poetry, the theater of the absurd, and a satirical and irreverant undertone, are quite removed from what Augusto de Campos had in mind with *Poemóbiles* and, later, *Caixa preta*. De Campos' poem-objects reflect a desire to create an inter-semiotic and inter-disciplinary dialogue and operate more on a conceptual than a practical level. His aim is to alter the type of effect a poem can have on the us: it aims to make us viewers and users in addition to readers, and it thereby aims to expose—and, I infer, reconfigure—the short circuit between our mental and sensorial faculties, being "capaz de suscitar, num único movimento harmónico, o curto-circuito da imaginação entre o sensível e o inteligível, o lúdico e o lúcido" ("Poesia 'entre'").

The poem "subverter" itself clearly illustrates this point: when opened, the word "entre" is split horizontally into two; printed underneath, we see VER, TER, and SUB (fig. 2.4). The above-mentioned layers of meaning begin to unfold: the structure of the object quite literally illustrates the idea of *entrever*, to glimpse; but *entrever* also implies a kind of prescience, which lies outside the realm of rationality and the senses. Similarly, the other possible combinations imply other forms of tension: *entreter* can refer to a playful entertainment, but also to suspending, delaying, or detaining someone or something; *verter*, on the other hand, denotes a pouring out. *sub-*, which unlike the others cannot be combined grammatically with *entre*, reveals that *entre* is also a command, ushering us in to the poem's hidden layers of meaning, asking

Fig. 2.4. "entre." *Augusto de Campos - Site Oficial – UOL*. N. d. Web. 20 May 2010.

[32] The documentary *Poetas de campos y espaços* picks up this line as its title for the film about the de Campos brothers and the creation of the Concrete poetry movement.

us to look underneath: *sub*/*ver*. And finally, by contrasting the two layers of words, we understand that it is literally by reading in between (the "lines") that we find the true subversion, the true revolutionary potential of literature: *subverter*.[33]

The poem-objects are, on one level, the perfect illustration of one of the central maxims of new media theory. The message of *entre* cannot be summed by explaining the meaning of its words: it transmits meaning through the unfolding of the object, the rising of certain words toward the reader, the splitting of a word in two where the paper opens, the appearance of further layers of meaning, hidden at first, where at first we only saw a single word. The poem-objects of *Caixa preta,* from 1975, further diversify the reader's modes of interactions with the objects, and invite increased manipulation and participation. The *Cubogramas montáveis* that come in the box are literally to be cut out and assembled as 3-dimensional cubes covered on all sides with letters. A mixable stack of cards is printed in black and white with poems and geometric figures. A CD with two of Caetano Veloso's oralizations of poems is also included. Further unfoldable loose poems and other unconventionally shaped poem-objects are present, some of which are visible in the photograph below (fig. 2.5).

Fig. 2.5. Campos, Augusto de and Julio Plaza. Poem-objects from *Caixa Preta*. *Poesia concreta: o projeto verbivocovisual*. Ed. João Bandeira and Lenora de Barros. São Paulo: Artemeios, 2008. 56. Print.

There is thus a mixed media aspect to this box that makes the assemblage of poetic texts and objects a physical, even manual project for the reader/manipulator of these materials. The question of where the creative activity lies, here, is wide open: each person's interactions with these objects will be unique, each poetic object placed in different locations. As objects sent out into the world, the contents of *Caixa preta* will ultimately mean something quite different in different spaces and in different people's hands. And although these particular poetic objects remain rather obscure and difficult to obtain, they open an important door to poetic texts that are

[33] This is a shot of the version of the poem as it appeared on display at the 2007 exhibit *poesia concreta – o projeto verbivocovisual* at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake in São Paulo. It is reprinted here from the exhibit's catalog (157).

increasingly moldable and manipulatable, and that situate themselves as objects in the world whose meaning is inevitable determined by their situatedness.

These manipulatable poetic objects are thus not, as we shall see in the following chapter, isolated aspects of Augusto de Campos' body of work: the changing physical spaces opened up to poetry through technology in the decades since *Caixa preta*—from holopoetry in museums to poems projected on São Paulo's skyscrapers and poetic performances on Youtube—have continued to shape his poetry as a constant exploration of new physical forms and spaces. And while de Campos' later poetics center more around performance, embodiment, and digital writing, which will be the key coordinates of the following chapters, I would like to hold off on discussing these for a moment in order to draw attention to several other specific poetic movements in Latin America that push poetry out of its conventional space on the page, albeit in a way that will prove to be somewhat self-limiting.

From the late 1960s through the 1980s, a few other short-lived poetic movements significantly challenge the material space and support of the poem: the *poema / processo*, Mail Art, and Land Art. The first of these, the *poema / processo*, also known as *livro-poema*, is an outgrowth of Brazilian Concrete poetry created by Wlademir Dias-Pino, an early member of the *Noigandres* group who participated in the 1956 *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* and contributed to some of the first publications of the *Noigandres* journal. Dias-Pino had a slightly different approach to the Concrete aesthetic from the very start. In the early 1950s, he started work on *Solida* and *A Ave*, two projects that would occupy him for several decades. The plethora of labels applied to Dias-Pino's work over the years is overwhelming: *intenstivista*, precursor of semiotic poetry, creator of the *poema / processo*, precursor of cybernetic poetry,... Ultimately what they tell us is that his work resists simple classification.[34]

Solida and *A Ave* are the two most well known exemplars of the *livro-poema*. A term that may seem redundant to a non-initiated reader, the idea behind the *livro-poema* or "book-poem" can be traced back, ironically, to the same drive to question print as a medium and the book as a physical space that supports the poem. Dias-Pino, unlike other poets of the time, responds to the question of media specificity and aims to make visible the inherent biases and ideological implications of the book and of print by remaining faithful to it as a medium. As an artisanal object, the *livro-poema* is created specifically to explore the potentiality for meaning of the book and to make the process of interacting with the book as an object an explicit part of generating meaning.[35] In other words, meaning arises as a direct result of a conscious attention to the book as a material object, and not a neutral vehicle for verbal meaning. So, while all the constituting

[34] Although I will not elaborate on similarities and differences of perspective here, and that goes against my overall aim of drawing broader connections between the work of different poets, some of the descriptions of how Dias-Pino's poetics compare to the rest of the poets of the *Noigandres* group are interesting and quite detailed. Critics tend to see Dias-Pino's emphasis on function as a different perspective on the Concrete poetry of the de Campos brother and Décio Pignatari, whose preoccupations are primarily structural. Expanding on this, Dias-Pino's version of Concretism can be described as "precursora do poema/processo e dividida em dois livros/caminhos: *A Ave*: o ordinal – linha de continuidade / a sucessão ordenada / origem do unitário / Numéricos. *Solida*: o cardinal – geometria / coleções estrutura(s) / empilhamento (opacidade) / superposição / Elementos." (Cirne and de Sá).

[35] What is ironic is the fact that, as artisanal creations, neither *A Ave* nor *Solida* are readily available in their original form. The only way we can read them is through the reproduction of photographs of the poems in print or digital anthologies of Dias-Pino's work. For the poet, this is a natural consequence of his poetics, as he explains in "Leitura de wlademir dias-pino sobre o livro-poema a ave": "Na verdade, eu nunca fiz questão de lançar outra edição, porque o interessante para mim não era que a pessoa encontrasse o livro, mas que ela mesma o construísse. Ao construir, ela vai ver os meus defeitos e acrescer outras coisas da experiência dela. Eu não fico muito contente do cara encontrar o livro, é preferível que ele leia a estrutura do livro e reconstrua o processo" (31).

elements of a book, small changes in its material characteristics effect major changes in how we read: small perforations in the pages make certain letters part of multiple instances of meaning; semi-transparent paper superimposes different layers of signs.

As Moacy Cirne and Álvaro de Sá—two other members of the *poema/processo* movement—aptly explain, the *livro-poema* introduces several new key concepts onto the scene of materially-based poetics, namely the physicality of paper, the book as object, the emphasis on process, and the concept of the version:

> O que caracteriza o livro-poema é a fisicalidade do papel como parte integrante do poema, apresentando-se como um corpo físico, de tal maneira que o poema só existe porque existe o objeto (livro). A intenção do livro-poema não é a produção de um objeto acabado, mas, através de sua lógica interna, formar o poema durante o uso do livro, que funciona como um canal que, no seu manuseio, limpa a leitura fornecendo a informação, possibilitando assim um novo explorar em nível já de escrita, sobre o livro limpo: recuperação criativa dos dados informativos (versão).

There is a thus clash of seemingly disparate terms that collide in the *livro-poema*: body, poem, object, and process. And while the terms in which Dias-Pino himself frames the debate around his *poemas / processo* can be quite impenetrable, one of the claims he repeats is: "só o consumo é lógica (e não lógico)." It shows the ludic quality behind his poetic theory, playing with the idea of consumerism and logic or rationality, turning these terms back onto themselves to propose a kind of anthropophagic consumption of poetry as a system (a logic) to replace both capitalist consumerism and conventional logic and hermeneutics.

In *Solida*, the space of the page becomes a playground on which we get to explore the ways in which meaningful links are created. The function of these word games seems to be the process of exploration itself. Each of the following pages from *Solida* spells out the same series of words—"Solidão / só / lida / sol / saído / da / lida / do / dia"—but explores the possibilities of writing in the non-verbal codes of dots, lines, holes that indicate relations between letters (fig. 2.6; 2.7; 2.8).

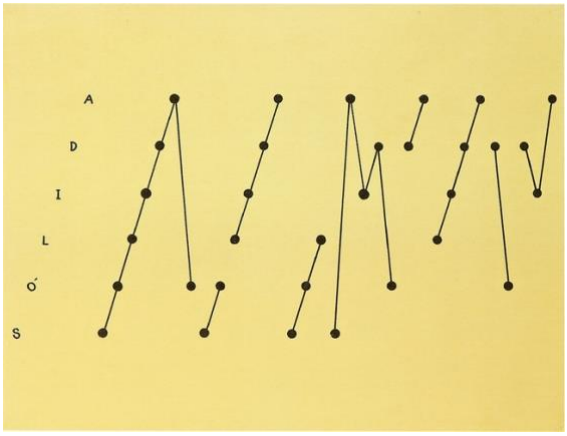
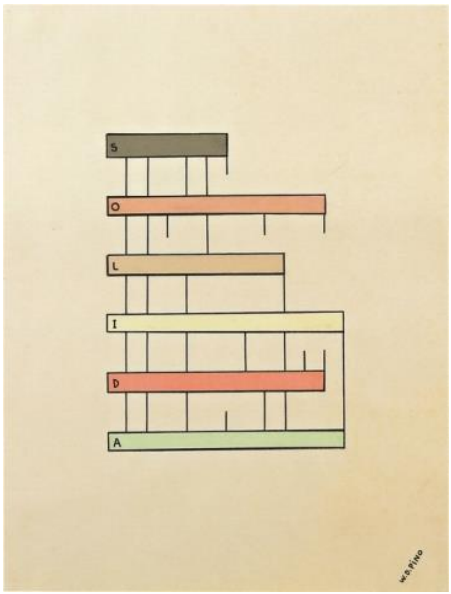


Fig. 2.6. Dias-Pino, Wlademir. from *Sólida*. *Enciclopédia Visual: Espaço Dedicado à Obra de Wlademir Dias-Pino*. Ed. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Arte da UnB. N. d. Web. 25 Mar. 2013.



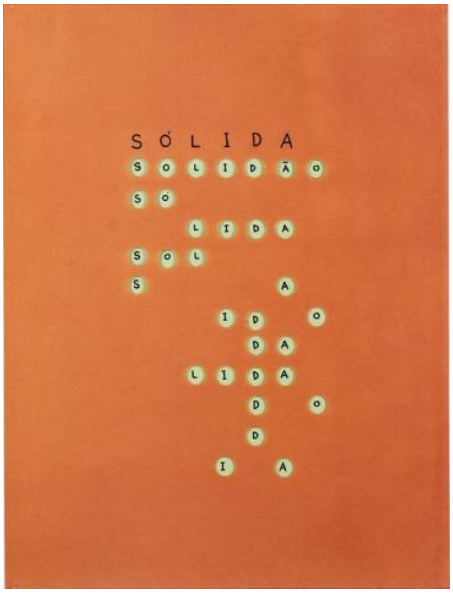


Fig. 2.7; Fig. 2.8. Dias-Pino, Wlademir. from *Sólida*. *Enciclopédia Visual: Espaço Dedicado à Obra de Wlademir Dias-Pino*. Ed. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Arte da UnB. N. d. Web. 25 Mar. 2013.

A Ave, on the other hand, exemplifies the notion of the poem as machine as described by Alberto Saraiva: here, the function of the *poema / proceso* is auto-generative, and substitutes the closed system of the alphabet for an open system of substitution of marks and perforations that later become the structure for electronic and digital encoding ("A poesia é a máquina"). The

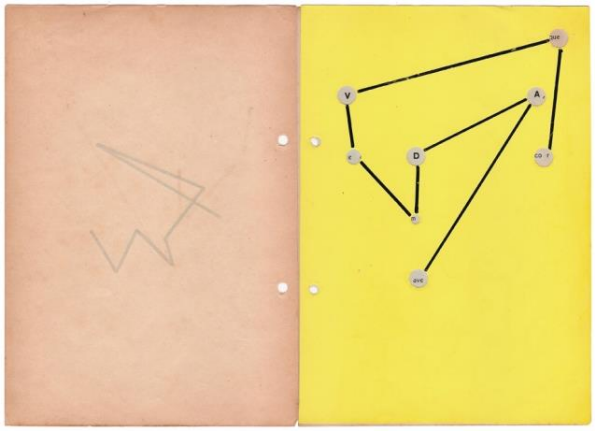


Fig. 2.9. Dias-Pino, Wlademir. from *Sólida*. *Enciclopédia Visual: Espaço Dedicado à Obra de Wlademir Dias-Pino*. Ed. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Arte da UnB. N. d. Web. 25 Mar. 2013.

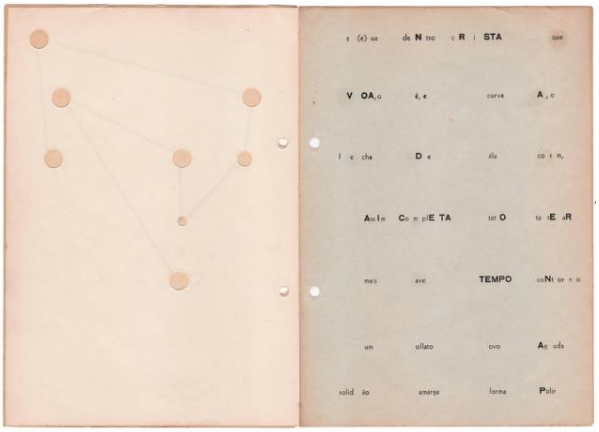


Fig. 2.10. Dias-Pino, Wlademir. from *Sólida*. *Enciclopédia Visual: Espaço Dedicado à Obra de Wlademir Dias-Pino*. Ed. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Arte da UnB. N. d. Web. 25 Mar. 2013.

images below show one of the perforated pages, revealing only select letters (fig. 2.9), followed by the subsequent page, of which we had seen only parts, revealed in full (fig. 2.10).

The fact that the letters on this final page are carriers of multiple meanings becomes fully clear only when we realize that this page is like the matrix that contains all other potential meaning within the book. It is only through a game of recombining these components that we grasp the idea of process; the meaning is in the making, the handling, the combining of a handful of verbal elements. As Dias-Pino himself explains, the book's new potential is maximized through its release of constraints. Here, turning the principles of print and book culture on their head, we find choice rather than fixity, participation rather than contemplation:

> OPERATÓRIO
> Não se busca o definitivo.
> Nem "bom" nem "ruim" , porem opção.
> Opção: arte dependendo de participação.
> O provisório: o relativo.
> Ato: sensação de comunicação, contra o contemplativo.
> Ato: operação das probabilidades.
> Permutação sem suas facilidades.
> O acaso controlado por um processo.
> Integração com o objeto: oposto de alienação. ("Proposição")

Further versions of both poems are like manifestations of some of the potential material combinations its structure implies: *Solida*'s later versions are purely non-verbal and explore through graphic symbols and shapes questions of codification, possible reading paths, possible orientations of the page, the meaning of different areas of the page's surface, and finally present themselves as a constructible sculpture series, in which different three-dimension objects are created for each word, a partial object for each word that arises out of the "solida" matrix.

If it seems impossible to imagine these different versions from a purely verbal description, it means they have, in a sense, achieved their goal: they constitute a verbal art that is only perceivable as a visual and tactile object, wherein the word itself—its "content"—has become aleatory. Overall, the book-poems or *poemas / processo* are premised on is a lack of opposition between object and process, relativity and fixity, control and freedom.

However, this premise remains largely theoretical, and its application is limited to a few *livro-poemas* like *Solida* and *A Ave* that are "saved" from complete meaninglessness, ironically, by not entirely dispensing of their semantic message. As Philadelphio Menezes explains, while the process-poem's functionality and its emphasis on reader manipulation/creation led in theory to a "reconsideration of the basic principle of logical, linear thought" (82), in practice, the latent logic of its compositional procedures functions only through an abstraction of content that returns the "process" to the realm of structure, "pure structures in uniform, rectilinear movement" (83).

Other tendencies in experimental art arise at the same time around two Hispanic American poets and thinkers, Antonio Edgardo Vigo in Argentina and Clemente Padín in Uruguay. Here, we find a less systematized poetic theory that centers around three key terms: Mail Art, *la poesía para y / o realizar,* and *poesía inobjetal*. One of the key difference between these and previous versions of open-ended or participatory poetry is that whereas the latter—Dias-Pino's single-edition artisanal books, for example, or even Augusto de Campos' interactive poem-objects—have tended, even in their beginnings, to be found in museums and the rare book collections of libraries, Vigo and Padín insist on the public, collective nature of these poems. As Padín writes, "sacan al arte de su 'zona de seguridad', de las galerías y los museos, y le

devuelven su sentido primigenio, al hacer estallar las significaciones en el espacio de la vida social" (*La poesia experimental*).[36]

Ironically, they are now largely unavailable, or at least a large part of their meaning, disconnected from their context in time and space, are not accessible to the contemporary reader. They are interesting, nevertheless, in the sense that they represent perhaps the most extreme point of the more militant anti-book and general anti-convention movements. Vigo's particular philosophy or version of a participatory poetics is *arte a realizar*, where the reader is transformed fully from consumer to creator, which arising out of a desire to overcome the top-down approach to artistic creation leading to passive consumption. His aesthetic critique is closely linked to a critique or consumerist society and its alienating effect. Padín identifies Vigo's primary motivation as a quest to overcome the contradictions inherent in the creation and consumption of art in a period where art is seen as alienating people from themselves and from others, and as an instrument of subjection and reproduction of social and economic injustices (*La poesia experimental*).

Mail Art is just another means to the same end, although it is a more direct reaction against mass media's contamination of personal communication. It is defined by Padín not as an –ism, but rather "an artistic phenomenon of disruption" (*Art and People*). The act of transfer is built into the poetic object or text from its inception, so that openness and communication are its key coordinates. Its participatory nature lies in its layering of messages and communication by different parties involved in the exchange.

Fig. 1.11. Vigo, Edgardo Antonio. Mail Art. *Mail Artists Index: Biographies, works and links of representative Mail Artists*. 16 Jul. 2008. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.

As the above example (fig. 2.11) shows, the visual and verbal art superposed onto the original letter is then further marked by the postage stamp dating and locating the point of

[36] Padín describes in more detail some of the *Proyectos a Realizar* that he and Vigo took part in in Buenos Aires in the early 1970s; for more details see *La poesia experimental*.

departure. The use of a stamp to create the image of the people looking up at the area stamped by the postal service is particularly clever. Was the image of the people gazing up there before, or only after the letter was stamped?

Yet, besides this lingering question of temporality and the idea of a collective form of art, we must acknowledge that the meaning inherent in the transfer itself is lost when we look at this decades after the event of its mailing. The mail art we find pictured and documented in the online galleries created by Padín, for example, are devoid of any real residue of this transfer. Divorced from its movement or transmission, the Mail Art "poem" is just a shell, an artifact. A current consideration of such a poem can be disappointing at best, and utterly devoid of meaning without being accompanied by its theory. But its status as an artifact says a lot about its relation to time: it is inextricably tied to the present, and can be only partially recuperated. It is like a living object; an object with an "aura" tied to human presence, as Walter Benjamin might say. Has it thereby failed, or quite the opposite, succeeded in its insistence on poetry as action?

Emerging at around the same time, *poesía inobjetal* is similarly dependent on participation and action. It is related to Ferreira Gullar's "Teoria do Não-Objeto," and thus aligns itself in opposition to Brazilian concrete poetry, at least in the eyes of Gullar himself. Gullar's non-object developed as a reaction against the mathematical emphasis on structure and surface in the Concrete poets' work, whose rejection of expressivity and subjectivity struck him as non-human. Seeking a poetic practice that would be highly structural and interdisciplinary, but also inclusive of the human and transcendent dimensions of art, Gullar in many ways paved the way for several of the poetic tendencies discussed here, from the book-poem to the poem-object. But the added element in Padín's conception of *poesía inobjetal*, built on a similar foundation, is action. It purports to be an art that permits the alteration of an undesirable reality rather than the mere verbal or artistic expression of the latter.[37] It is built on, and aims primarily to destroy, one main set of oppositional ideas: thought and action, conception and execution. Here, Padín proposes the complete elimination of the art object, whereby the privilege of the artist as well as the divorce of language from reality are avoided. As one of the movement's mottos states, "EL ARTISTA ESTÁ AL SERVICIO DE LA COMUNIDAD" (*La poesía experimental*).

Thus, while these tendencies are on a continuum with other avant-garde, visual, and Concrete poetics, they are mark a definite departure in their militant socio-economic and political stance. For Padín, who is the foremost theorist of these movements as well as a participant in them, the *poema/processo*, Mail Art, and other forms of poem-actions mark the definitive end of modernity and the start of new forms, made possible only by leaving behind the word as the central element of poetry: "Estas tres últimas tendencias [Poema/Proceso, la poesía para y/o a realizar y la poesia inobjetal], al dejar de lado a la palabra como elemento fundamental y determinante de la expresión poética, sellarían el ciclo de las formas poéticas que expresaban a la modernidad (progreso indetenible de las formas guiado por un ideal de perfección) abriendo cauce a nuevas formas" (*La poesía experimental*).

And yet, as only hindsight can tell, poetry has not yet forgone the word. And the three aforementioned tendencies did not succeed in their mission to alter poetry in all its foundations. On the contrary, they are a niche within Latin American experimental poetry. Looking at these poetic movements today consists of sifting through a mix of dense theoretical discourse and photographic documentation consisting of low-resolution grainy images of select public poetic

[37] In terms of other artistic tendencies that propose this participation or action, Padín claims that other art forms effect change only on the level of artistic language, which is merely a substitute for reality (*La poesía experimental* 193).

event or action. It seems entirely distant from the participation, action and human connection at its core.[38] But the collapse of the distance between art and action means that it can be experienced only as a process, an event, in its own present moment.

The final examples I will look at, select writings of Cecilia Vicuña and Raúl Zurita, continue in the tradition of a participatory and politically engaged poetics, and even write in media that are subject to erasure or effacement. However, their distinct relation to language, history and memory—or *memoria histórica*, to be more precise—makes the longevity and durability of their poetry an important aim, without, however, achieving this through the medium of print. Both artists write in direct response to the coup and dictatorship in Chile, and it is clear in their work that the ground laid by other poets writing outside of verbal codes, books, and printed words have a profound impact on the possibilities open to poets now seeking to write within the context of the military dictatorship, censorship, and generalized terror. And although the political climate has an impact on many of the poets presented here starting with the *Noigandres* group in the 1960s, no use of alternative poetic spaces is quite as clearly politically motivated as Cecilia Vicuña's extensive collection of poetic objects in *Saborami* and *Quipoem*, or Raúl Zurita famous writing in the sky and in the desert sands.

Unlike with the poem-events of the aforementioned movements, Vicuña and Zurita's poem-objects and poem-events find their way back into the pages of a book not as lifeless artifacts or remnants. Instead, by photographing, recording, and annotating them, and ultimately placing them alongside more conventional poems within the pages of the book, they do not feel out of place there, as these poets—especially Zurita—no longer aim for the extreme of a wordless, bookless poetics.

The period of Cecilia Vicuña's artistic production that I will focus on here, in which she experiments with non-print media and material means of expression, coincides roughly with the period during the rise of Salvador Allende's socialist government in Chile, followed by the military coup of 1973, a historical trajectory that has significantly marked her work. Lying at the intersection between poetry and other art forms, Vicuña's work is also an intersection of the global avant-garde and local expression, modernity and cultural history, the urban and the rural, Western and indigenous Andean culture. The nature of her art reflects a social, collective, and participatory component driving the inclusivity of different art forms, which is why this is an appropriate point at which to return to Dick Higgin's term "intermedia" to describe it. This is a broad umbrella term in many ways, which is significant in that it sets out precisely not to define or prescribe an artistic movement, but rather to classify an existing type of art and explore its characteristics, outside of any specific historical period ("Synesthesia"). But in its inception, the idea of intermedia art marks a utopian vision of art that effaces divisions just as society is moving toward the dissolution of class difference.

The intermediate zone that Vicuña herself claims to occupy is captures in the term she uses for the poem-objects she starts creating in 1966: the *precarios*. The name is etymologically connected to prayer, as Vicuña explains, placing the spiritual dimension at the forefront of this type of art: "Precarious is what is obtained by prayer. Uncertain, exposed to hazards, insecure.

[38] Writing retrospectively about his own initial writings on intermedia art, to which I will turn momentarily, Dick Higgins acknowledges that the experimental art of the 1960s and 1970s requires initiation and, to a significant degree, presence in time and space: "The world was filled at that time with concrete poems, happenings, sound poetry, environments, and other more or less novel developments; unless the public had a way of seeing into the work by causing it to stand still for a moment and be classified, the work was likely to be dismissed as 'avant-garde: for specialists only.' To any dedicated nonspecialist this could be frustrating […]." ("Synesthesia")

From the Latin *precarius*, from *precis*; prayer" (cited by Lippard, 10). Vicuña also calls them *basurita*—"little rubbish"—in reference to the fact that they, are for the most part, small sculptures and installation pieces made from found and discarded objects. They are also referred to as "visual poems, 'metaphors in space'" (Lippard 10), "haikus from nature" (14). The spaces the *precarios* occupy range from noted art galleries and museums to the streets or rivers where Vicuña often deploys them unannounced and unnoticed. Floating an object down the river, writing words on an urban highway, weaving strings through rural landscapes, or tracing visual signs onto sand, Vicuña creates poetry that is both inseparable from the spaces it occupies, and at the same time changeable, mobile, and subject to being effaced by human or natural forces, as one of her first examples of *Land Art*, *Con-cón*, illustrates (fig. 2.12).

The materials and the physical spaces she uses are tied, on the one hand, to the political nature of her project and, on the other, to a deeper principle of material mobility, flexibility, and openness. In political terms, the nature of these objects fulfills the important goal of not being perceived as politically active. The statements the *precarios* are designed to make about effacement at a time of forced disappearances of Chilean citizens, as well as about the nature of consumer society through the recycling of discarded objects, are hidden precisely by their intermedia dimension. The objects themselves are designed to fulfill a threefold mission, as Vicuña explains in *Saborami*: "tratan de matar tres pájaros en un tiro: hacer un trabajo mágico, uno revolucionario y otro estético" (13). But the spiritual or magic and the aesthetic dimensions not only make possible the masking of the revolutionary aspect in a moment of censorship, but also tie myth, magic, and spirituality to the implementation of aesthetic, linguistic, social, and political revolution in Latin America.

Fig. 2.12. Vicuña, Cecilia. *Quipoem: The Art and Poetry of Cecilia Vicuña*. Hanover, N.H: University Press of New England, 1997. Print.

As indicated above, the form that the linguistic and aesthetic revolution take on are that of a mobility of fixed objects that speaks to the broader trend of complementary, rather than oppositional, dualities in Latin American poetry and thought. The emphasis on connection—between human beings and with nature—is most notable in Vicuña's use of threads and strings to tie and weave objects and natural elements together, and in her recuperation of the *quipus*.

Transience and mutability show up in the *precarios*, for example in the collection of scuptural pieces shown here (fig. 2. 13), both at the level of the objects themselves and in how we interact with them. They are, to begin with, already repurposed objects, taken from their original context in nature or as manufactured objects, and given new meaning. Their mutability also lies in their physically precarious nature as objects held together by string, and also their positioning in space and in relation to one another. Some of the objects here, in a photograph from *Quipoem*, also appear in a different setting in *Saborami*. The particular positioning in this photograph also

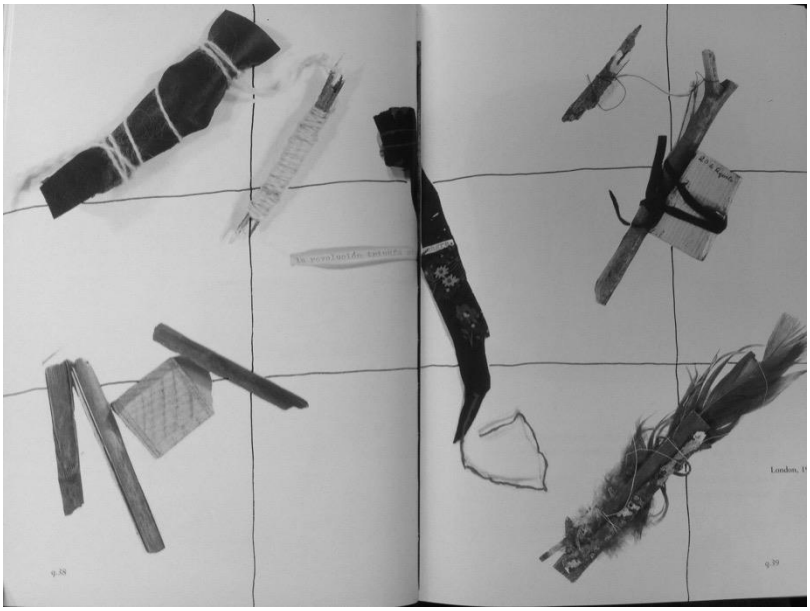


Fig. 3.13. Vicuña, Cecilia. from *Quipoem: The Art and Poetry of Cecilia Vicuña*. Hanover, N.H: University Press of New England, 1997. 38-39. Print.

shows the objects distributed on a sort of grid, but an uneven, hand-traced one, on that undermine a rigid or perfect order underlying the work of art.[39]

In the photograph, this visualization of the grid also functions like any lines in a photographic composition, guiding the reader's gaze from one object to the other and back around again, in this case without a fixed order. Furthermore, the use of string as a motif in Vicuña's work ties different elements together and reinforces the connections between them and between them and the viewer. The forces of nature put the whole into constant movement, especially the wind and the water, which is often the setting for bigger installation pieces. The string is not just a neutral device used for connection, however; it ties into the tradition of the *quipu* much like Eielson's work does, but with an emphasis on the constant re-making of meaning. As Zegher explains:

> [...] the entire quipu carries meaning: the length, the form, the color, the number of knots. Simultaneously the endless tying and retying of knots allows continuous marking and modification. At the most, on a literal level one could say that in contradistinction to other writing systems, the *quipu* provides opportunity for infinite inscription since what is 'inscribed' is never fixed. The act of doing and undoing, as in weaving, offer multitudinous possibilities or beginnings, flexibility, and mobility. (34)

And the *quipu*, according to Vicuña, also signifies an important cognitive model. She points to one of the reasons why it comes up repeatedly in these artists seeking a Latin American poetic expression: "All of the important ideas in the Andes, says Vicuña, are conceived in palindromes, or pairs, like the ancient *quipu* (one line, or horizon), with threads extending below (the amounts) and above (the summation). One mirrors the other" (Lippard 15).[40] Little is, in reality, known about the *quipus*' mode of signification, but whether what Vicuña identifies in them is "true" or not is almost secondary. What is telling is the establishment of a new, intermedia poetics on the

[39] In her essay on Vicuña, Catherine de Zegher does a more detailed reading of the use of the grid and its relation to Rosalind Krauss' definition of the grid in visual art.

[40] In this discussion of Vicuña's use of indigenous motifs and her positioning herself outside of the Western world, we may criticize her claim to an indigenous identity and the facile nature of such an identification coming from a woman from a privileged socio-economic position, a Western formal education, and the ability to write about resistance while living in exile. [I'm not sure I even need to bring this up, but i was thinking about this.]

ground of models that disrupt both the linearity of history and progress, on the one hand, and a structure of thought that relies on fixity and dialectic structures, on the other.

In the work of Raúl Zurita, we can find a handful of poetic projects that serve as interesting points of conclusion for this analysis of non-print poetry, and as a bridge, in a sense, to the upcoming chapter on poetry, physicality, and the body. What we can see of these poem-events or poem-actions today is visible in photographic and video recordings, and they represent small portions of a body of work that remains largely within the more conventional realm, as Zurita's most well-known works like *INRI* and *Zurita* illustrate.[41] Two poems in particular are worth noting in the present context: *Ni pena ni miedo*, his giant-scale poem traced onto the sand in the Atacama desert in Chile, and his writing in the sky of *La vida nueva*.

Ni pena ni miedo, pictured below in a screenshot from Google Earth, where we can still virtually visit Zurita's creation (fig. 2.14)[42], is striking in that it is not accessible, and is only visible in distinct circumstances: *Ni pena ni miedo* can only be seen from the sky, from a distance, or else from the ground, on such a scale that its verbal meaning is not visible.

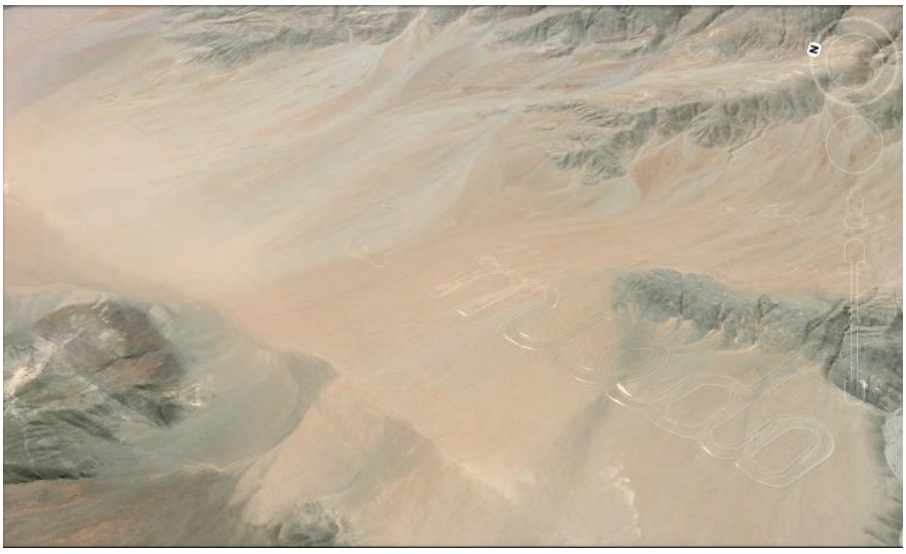


Fig. 2.14. Zurita, Raúl. *Ni pena ni miedo*. *Google Earth*. Web. 26 Apr 2014.

Using the earth as a surface for writing is first and foremost a comment on the material impact of words on the earth, and, as a self-erasing message over time, it plays with the effect and durability of words, with how long they can last, what lengths we have to go to in order to read them.[43] The verbal message itself is a reference to making visible and denouncing the culture of fear and terror that reigned in Chile for decades and greatly impacted Zurita's work.

In *La vida nueva* (fig. 2.15), phrases were written across the sky with an airplane over New York City in July, 1982. They require a reverse gaze from the view downward onto the earth from above of *Ni pena ni miedo*, asking us to look skyward in a symbolic, and perhaps

[41] The volume *Purgatorio* is an exception here, and is a mixture of visual and photographic or otherwise graphic elements. It will be analyzed in chapter 3.

[42] Created in 1993, the writing in the desert is visible today because people have continued to maintain it by keeping the sand in shape. In recent news, the townspeople of the nearby town have agreed to maintain the giant phrase in the desert, so that this will remain a sight for tourists, as well as to preserve the poem.

[43] For a detailed analysis, see Benoît Santini's "El cielo y el desierto como soportes textuales de los actos poéticos de Raúl Zurita."

Fig. 2.15. Zurita, Raúl. *La vida nueva*. "Poesía visual contemporánea: de la incorporación de la visualidad en la literatura a la disolución de la página convencional." María Andrea Giovine. *Revista Laboratorio* 4 (2011): n. pag. Web. 04 Sept. 2014.

ironic, gesture. Using the sky as a page on which he could write reflected both the disillusioned heavenly gaze that is also present in Zurita's other religiously themes work, and a hope for an inclusive medium that could reach a large community of people. They were, according to Zurita, an homage to all minority groups, and a clear action of protest at the time for an artist like himself, exiled from Chile during the military dictatorship and know for his radical performances and social/artistic actions with the CADA group.

Both poems have several characteristics in common: on the one hand, the giant scale and visibility of the project (the lines in the sky were between seven and nine kilometers long, while the line in the desert is just over three kilometers), and on the other, the possibility of effacement of the poem itself in these particular media. It is notable that here, after non-verbal poetry has more or less run its course, we find a return, even within non-print poetry, to the word as the fundamental element of poetry. But the poetic word, as we will continue to see, does not return to the page unchanged: instead, it has been recontextualized to draw attention to the literary, cognitive, and ideological implications inherent in traditional definitions of writing and the book, as shown here through the words made of clouds, made of sand.

Even more so than Vicuña's *precarious*, he chooses a medium that is as ephemeral as can be: the words are destined to fade into the sky in a matter of minutes. While scale and visibility are chosen over the durability of materials, this self-effacement is however, to a certain degree, only a gesture, in the sense that the photographs that later become pages in a book make this event frozen in time and placed within the pages of a book. Zurita's poem brings us full circle, back to the bound pages of a book.

We eventually return to the book, then, but we are conscious of the underpinnings of print—its associations with permanence and presence—and Zurita uses these to his advantage. In other words, we are not returning to the starting point, but rather to print as a medium that has undergone a profound transformation by venturing outside itself. It returns not like a circle but, like a spiral, coming back to the same place with a difference, exemplified here in a venture as far from the printed page as one might imagine—the desert, the sky, the natural world—and one that, as Zurita shows, we can always return to in the pages of a book.

There is also clearly an element of the performance in both of these poems, and thus a connection to the body, to the unrepeatability of the event, and yet the potentially infinite, always different repetition of the work itself. In what ways might a poem like Raúl Zurita's, written in the sky, or the construction of the *precarios* by Cecilia Vicuña, be considered a poetic performance? What does reading these acts *as* event or performance—that is to say, considering how embodied meaning and multiplicity inform their meaning—reveal about them?

In Zurita's case, these questions emphasize the text's ontological status, calling into question its singularity as an event, and revealing a contradictory pull between the singularity or non-repeatability of this "performance," on the one hand, and its potentially infinite repeatability, on the other. The contradiction makes us aware of the role of time and space in determining how we "read" it. After all, the same words of *La vida nueva*, in the same configuration, would not be considered to have the exact same "meaning" if they were written in the sky over Mexico City instead of New York, for example, or if they had been written there a decade later in the same place. This question is further complicated by the fact that the poem-event was accompanied by a planned photographic recording of the events which appears printed alongside more conventional print poems in several of Zurita's books. Which of these is "the poem"? How does our definition of poetry change and open itself up when such diverse physical, spatial, and temporal conditions can all encompass the "same" text?

Furthermore, when thinking of these as performance, we must also think of the public, not in terms of some anonymous and theoretical viewer, but in terms of the physical bodies and minds involved in viewing these words and phrases that appear in the sky apparently disembodied and disconnected, on such a scale that the airplane producing the traces left behind in the sky cannot be taken in by the casual observer. The mysterious nature of Zurita's sky-writing has this in common with Vicuña's *precarios*: they appear to the perceiver as if sprung out of the earth from its own raw materials, its origins unknown, surrounded by an air of magic. Other elements, both natural and subjective—sounds, surroundings, movements—make their way into the poem's space and into its meaning.[44] From this perspective, texts are often like bodies themselves: they move, they interact with their surroundings; like the cells of the human body, the physical substance they are made of is variable; it regenerates and changes in form, and yet they maintain their self-identity despite being changeable; they are always themselves while also being other. The body can thus become—both metaphorically and literally—the site of further explorations into poetry and materiality, corporeality, and sensation, as the next chapter will show.

Thus it is no coincidence that the topic of study in the next chapter—poetry, performance, and the body—shows poetry moving away from cerebral, theoretical notions of participation and toward a more embodied and collective experience. In part, as the poets here indicate, this starts with bringing elements of the artistic object, the event, the process, or the world around us into the specific realm of poetry transform it from within. And as new media, new social and artistic demands, and new technologies continue to spring up, Latin American poetry continues to negotiate its relation to space, time, and the human senses.

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[44] A parallel worth mentioning here in John Cage's *4'33."* It is perhaps the example *par excellence* of how chance elements can determine meaning, as if by accident, just like the audience and ambient noises in a performance of *4'33"* end up determining the "content" of the piece. This piece demonstrates clearly a principle that is also laid bare in Zurita: how the space and time of a performance, or a poem, determine its meaning, as a laying bare of this principle of which we are otherwise quite unaware.

Chapter 3:
Entangled Senses and Embodied Acts in Latin American Poetry Since 1950

Materiality and embodiment in recent Latin America—a historical and theoretical overview

All seems to take place as if, in this aggregate of images which I call the universe, nothing really new could happen except through the medium of certain particular images, the type of which is furnished me by my body.
(Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*)

In a performance by Cecilia Vicuña in San Francisco in 2012, I made the mistake of bringing a pen and notebook and attempting to take notes during the performance. At one point, Vicuña stepped into the audience, grabbed my pen, and drew a large circle across one of the pages, all while uttering what I will describe here tentatively as non-verbal voicings (fig. 3.1). I instantly felt vaguely embarrassed that I had been taking notes at all, that I was trying to put her performance into an academic box. In any case, the circle covering most of what remained of the page in my notebook precluded me taking any further notes. I put it down and just listened.

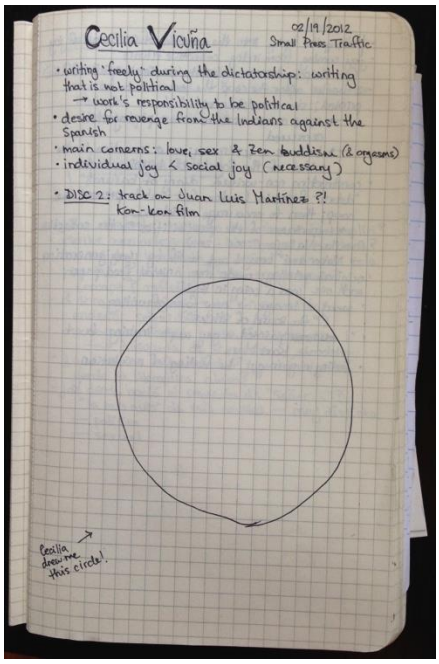

Fig. 3.1. Notes from Cecilia Vicuña's 2012 performance at San Francisco State University.

The moment exemplified several of the points that will be central to this chapter, especially in the way the physical body—through gesture, presence, sound, voice, and inscription—can become a mode of connecting verbal with non-verbal, embodied meaning. In this particular case, her gesture points toward the limits of written language in conveying poetic meaning, tied as it is to linear, analytical thought and critical distance. It also lays the ground for a reading of poetry through the concept of embodiment, seen here as the engagement with and generation of meaning on the level of physical, non-verbal experience and sensation, both on the productive and the receptive ends. What it illustrates particularly well is that discussing the limits of the written medium does not mean criticizing and seeking alternatives outside of the medium itself, a poetry outside of writing.[45] Instead, the characteristic that brings together the poetry I discuss here is that it seeks alternative forms of expression within writing itself. Instead, the characteristic that brings together the poetry I discuss here is that it seeks alternative forms of expression within writing itself by bringing the body into the poem. At the same time, it maintains a consciousness of writing and language's mechanisms and traditions, bringing assumptions and conventions to the surface and making space for other modes of meaning.

[45] This is not to say that such poetry does not exist: in fact, many poets in Hispanic America take visual poetry to the point of being a non-verbal art; some examples have already been considered in chapter 2, for example the semiotic poems of Augusto de Campos, Décio Pignatari, and others. Though I do not look at these poems in detail in this chapter, there is certainly room to make connections.

As many of the texts from previous chapters do as well, Vicuña's performance engages with meaning-making on several different levels. It challenges the definition of meaning as a mental and intellectual operation that takes place in the disembodied mind by using performance, gesture, handwriting, drawing, oralization, and other bodily acts. It thus marks a turn toward the body as a site of meaning-making in contemporary Latin American poetry, and toward materiality—that is to say, what emerges when we interact with the physical aspects of the poem—as a mode of producing meaning on a physical, perceptual level. It asks us to consider how meaning is made and unmade in and on the body, and where we might locate meaning as a process other than in the disembodied and intellectual mind.

My aim in this chapter is thus both to discuss how bodily modes of making meaning become integral to contemporary poetry in Latin America and, more broadly, to discuss those modes of "writing" that emphasize embodied practices and experiences, both of reader and writer. By focusing on sound, gestures, and handwriting as different, often non-verbal ways in which the body inserts itself into poetry, I will be discussing how the sensory perception orients us as readers. This has consequences both for how we conceive of the author, of ourselves as readers/viewers when engaging with the text, and of the poetic text itself. I will thus attempt to trace the manifestations of a broader change: a turn toward the body as a site of meaning-making, an attention to the materiality of both poem and subject as this materiality relates to the physical body. Overall, we see poetics and materiality becoming more and more inseparable from one another. And it is my contention that whereas the "experimental" movements in Latin America discussed in the previous chapter have a more totalizing desire to create an art that is a reality in and of itself, looking at the broader concept of embodiment in poetry is seeing the mark that some of these more radical movements—unsustainable and short-lived as they may be—make on the poetic landscape in the following decades.[46]

As a preliminary hypothesis, what seems to emerge from such an investigation is that "writer," "reader" and text extend outward, their meaning and their very ontology coming into being through engagement and interaction: instead of singular subjects, events, or objects, it is the field of relations between the aforementioned elements that, like a network structure, come into play in generating meaning. In this sense, it is important to note from the outset that the relational and reciprocal aspects of poetry emphasized in this chapter through an attention to embodiment become deeply connected to the new media and digital poetry that arises in the 1980s and 1990s. The multi- and intermedia aspect of digital poetry will bring the question of embodiment even further to the forefront, as the final chapter of this dissertation will consider in more detail.

At the start, I will put relationality in dialogue with the idea of embodiment as explored in the theories of perception of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Henri Bergson, as well as some of the writing of Gilles Deleuze, all of whom—despite their differences in perspective of some matters related to the body—emphasize that perception happens first and foremost through the body. The body does not get in the way of knowledge and our experience of reality, as the Cartesian paradigm would have it; perception constitutes and structures our contact with the world around us, with reality: I perceive the world only because I am an object in the world; I

[46] With the idea of a totalizing aspect, I am referencing Adriano Spatola's concept of "total poetry."Spatola suggests that the radical poetry of the 1960s that arises in different parts of the world represents a sort of total system, an invention of a reality that provides a different system of communication than the existing order (9). This can be seen as a continuation, and perhaps almost an end point, of the modernist and avant-garde idealism and faith in the absolute connection between art and life,

perceive the world only through my body. This echoes more recent findings from the world of cognitive linguistics and philosophy, which claim that language, meaning, culture, and reason all emerge from an embodied human mind. That is to say that all bodily perceptions, all conscious and unconscious thought, are processed through the central nervous system and through the brain. Theorists like George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Mark Turner, assert that any reference to the mind—not to be confused with consciousness—is also a reference to the body: "people have embodied minds whose conceptual systems arise from, are shaped by, and are given meaning through living human bodies" (Lakoff and Johnson 6).

It is a short jump, then, from embodiment to multiplicity. The idea of multiplicity in cognitive science is inherent in the link between mind and nervous system. Everything we process passes through this same bodily circuit, and thus embodiment is an integrative concept: such diverse elements as language, culture, unconscious thought, subjectivity—in short, anything that belongs within the realm of study of the humanities—all exist in the same place; all are "patterns and activity in the mind and its brain," as Mark Turner explains in *Reading Minds* (48). Secondly, embodiment is also tied to multiplicity in the writings of Bergson, who writes of a qualitative multiplicity—which is conceived as duration—that allows for heterogeneous and oppositional elements of perception to be positioned temporally along a progression where, since they are never spatially or quantitatively juxtaposed, they are not in conflict with one another.

But thanks to Deleuze, we learn to intuit that this non-juxtaposition is not limited to the temporal dimension of experience and perception. Indeed, if perception resides in the body, and the body is an object in space among other objects, this makes a spatial multiplicity possible. This then opens up a discussion of the how this idea of multiplicity informs our understanding of the text, of human consciousness and subjectivity, and of space and time in Latin American poetry in the late 20th century. It is not the idea of a multiple as opposed to the one, but rather of a pure heterogeneity in which the conventional structures that determine the relations between different concepts, perceptions, or objects do not exist. The idea that embodied meaning is multiple is to say that we can grasp meaning outside of the sequential and the singular, and that sensation becomes the primary mode of such an experience, in that is not narrative, representative, abstract, or or simply reducible to the sum of individual sense data. Multiplicity thus also functions as a flattener of differences in one sense: it allows us to see the body as a site where the apparently contradictory concepts of metaphysics and materiality, affect and scientific rationalism, subjectivity and anti-expressivity are no longer in a relation of opposition to one another. In a similar way, it shifts our attention away from the divisive experience conceived through the senses toward the more inclusive sensation. Sensation maps our experience of the world, and particularly of meaning and language, onto the body, but reminds us that embodied meaning does not simply consist in a sum or amalgamation of the various sensorial experiences, but in experience that is also *other than* the sensorial perceptions in isolation.

This is not to say that this chapter does not engage with the senses: in fact, corporeality and materiality are connected—albeit in a complicated way—to a shift that is traced in philosophical discourse of the 20th century, a shift away from vision's privileged status in producing knowledge. Martin Jay identifies the fact that vision and knowledge are more or less equivalent—a phenomenon he calls "ocularcentrism"—in particular in the French tradition, but, by extension, also in the history of Western thought. The privilege accorded to vision breaks down, according to Jay, in 20th-century French philosophy, but it is my contention that rather than a denigration of vision in Latin American literature, we can identify a reevaluation of the role of the visible: it remains a central component in reshaping poetry, literally and figuratively,

but it provides access to meaning, in all its multiplicity, rather than knowledge, and it does so only in conjunction with other bodily sensations. In other words, there is a certain parallel history between Latin American poetry and the French tradition, which this dissertation traces from the start, noting the influence of French poetry on the *vanguardista* poets that traveled to Paris and began to imitate some of the examples of visual poetry they saw emerging there. But the visual does not lose its centrality in Latin America in the same way that, Jay claims, it does in Europe. Instead, Latin American experimentation with alternate modes of *seeing* in poetry, of using the visual space and physical support of the poem in alternative ways, becomes a simultaneous search for alternate modes of *sensing* through other, non-visual means.[47] The embodied poetics we will see in this chapter are, therefore, an expression of a related, but different shift in the role of vision in generating meaning.

In Latin America, we will see, then, how embodiment overlaps, engages, and interacts with different socio-cultural, historical, and literary concepts and traditions. In Brazil, embodiment seems connected to a consciousness of writing both on the national and on a global stage. Augusto de Campos foregrounds the interplay between vision and sound through musical and vocal performances of written poems to trace a non-linear, cannibalistic poetics wherein the interaction of the senses results in readings that expand meanings outward. Ana Cristina Cesar's poetry, and her hand-drawn and hand-written "signs" in particular, explore multiplicity in the realm of subjectivity, questioning the borders between self and other, between language and non-verbal art. In the Hispanic tradition, Cecilia Vicuña's hand-drawn poems raise parallels between performance, sound, handwriting, and myth, drawing an embodied poetics out of an indigenous Andean cultural history.

To draw out the common ground between these poets, I will explore both traditional ways in which we can talk about poetry in relation to the senses and possible ways of thinking about the connection between poetry and the body outside of the sensory paradigm. How can we think of meaning being generating through the body without being simply sensory? How does non-verbal sound, for example, tap into our pre-conscious state and profoundly alter or distort that which is transmitted verbally, that which our intellect "understands"? What is the effect of inserting the material traces of bodily acts—the acts that precede or accompany writing—in the book, recorded or left behind as spoken, drawn, or photographed traces of the hand, the voice, movement? What do we make of apparent tension behind the "aliveness," the presence of the inscriber, on the one hand, and the written word as a mark of absence, as a lifeless trace, on the other? How do voice and gesture continually point to the figure of the author while at the same time moving away from the singularity of the artist?

In the following analyses, I will explore the body's capacity to push the written word to the limits of the verbal, the legible, the intelligible, and the representational, challenging our ability to make meaning. The challenge of an embodied poetics is thus the challenge to

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[47] Furthermore, it is no coincidence that, around the time period in question in this chapter, the neo-baroque literary movement is taking hold in Latin America. Martin Jay notes the baroque as one of the styles in which the de-centering of the dominant visual order can be found, so that the return to a modified version of the baroque in Latin American can be seen as another mode of exploring non-visual modes of meaning. Jay writes that in the baroque style, the visual, rather than demonstrating the value of clear vision in relation to scientific reason, demonstrates the confusion and blurring of borders between opposites (91). It is thus no coincidence that the *neo-barroco* uses of the body as one of the primary metaphors for the text. It is also not a coincidence that *lo real maravilloso*, closely tied to the baroque style, is considered by Alejo Carpentier an authentic expression of the Latin American. I think that a fruitful study could in fact compare the apparently contradictory literary movements of a poetics of materiality and the marvelous real, looking at some of their common points.

experience multiplicity, to read and even to analyze poetry, to consider what the text is and what happens to us when we read, using a logic that is not conceptual or intellectual, but of the body.

Musical Colors, Tactile Voice: Augusto de Campos' *Poetamenos*

I believe that the leap Deleuze makes in turning Bergson's temporal *durée* into a spatial concept is one that is very much in line with what the Brazilian Concrete poets do early on, and which appears especially in their manifestos from the 1950s and early 1960s.[48] Deleuze writes of the necessity of an "ontological duration" (49), which rests on the idea that movement is not only of consciousness—*duration*—but of things, and this movement places the capacity for alteration at the heart not only of consciousness, but of matter.

This definition of multiplicity appears in quite similar terms in "Aspectos da Poesia Concreta." Haroldo de Campos explains as much, writing, in reference to Bergson: "Não mais se trata de um tempo desprovido de qualquer estrutura espacial, mas de um espaço-tempo [...]. Através dessa interpenetração orgânica (*Durchdringung*), cada unidad 'verbivocovisual' é, simultaneamente, continente-conteúdo da obra inteira, *myriadminded* no instante" (145). In other words, it is through the *verbivocovisual*—the interweaving of different levels of perception—that the poetic enters into the realm of both time and space. This multiplicity that steps outside of the confines of the realm of inner consciousness and into the realm of matter, of sense perception, of the body, and of the text is a useful segue into Augusto de Campos' poems that engage the body by entangling the senses through an interpenetration of voice, color, verbal fragmentation and visual modes of recombination.

I thus propose that the *verbivocovisual* in Concrete poetry is one of the earliest and most thorough poetic explorations of a "logic of a body" or a "logic of sensation" in Latin American poetry, wherein the meaning produced *by* and *in* the body is no longer primarily verbal, but determined by the entanglement of body and senses in the act of reading/listening/seeing. This kind of logic, if we take up Deleuze's definition in *Francis Bacon*, is primarily made visible in painting, where the artist can "make visible a kind of original unity of the senses, and would make a multisensible Figure appear visually" through rhythm (42). Rhythm is not reducible to the sensorial (hearing or seeing), and is conceived by Deleuze as a kind of non-rational logic that conceives of sensation as having varying intensities rather than divisible sensorial experiences. It is not equated to a bodily organism or organs, but is a kind of nonorganic, living body.

Interestingly, Deleuze refers here to the egg as a form that reveals such a "state of the body 'before' organic representation," which is reminiscent of the Concrete poets' use of the egg as a symbol, most famously in Augusto de Campos' "ovo novelo," the poem composed of four

[48] As the above implies, Bergson's system itself rests on a clear-cut division between physical matter and inner consciousness. He believes that nothing can be transferred from one medium to another without undergoing a change. As he himself poses it, the question of the exteriorization of internal states reads as follows: "If, in order to count states of consciousness, we have to represent them symbolically in space, is it not likely that this symbolical representation will alter the normal conditions of inner perception?" (*Time and Free Will* 90). Is it possible, then, to exteriorize inner perception and still maintain somehow the multiplicity of *durée* that, for Bergson, can exist only in inner consciousness? I think that poetry itself engages with this question and can be read as an attempt to bring this multiplicity to the external world of objects.
This division was also one of the critical points that Merleau-Ponty takes up in Bergson's philosophy: "the body remains for him what we have called the objective body; consciousness remains knowledge; time remains a successive 'now'" (79). It is interesting to note that Merleau-Ponty points out that Bergson, amongst other things, precisely fails to see the "the unique movement whereby the three dimensions of time are constituted."

egg-shaped stanzas, written in the mid-1950s. It is an apparently tautological visual poem, but only on the surface: the poem uses the motif of the egg to engage the process of both physical and poetic creation and birth (fig. 1.13). Décio Pignatari describes it in physical—cellular—terms: "a gestação do poema-criança, num lento multiplicar de elementos – células semelhantes (*ovo novelo – novo no velho*) acaba por se resolver no plano puramente visual e fisignômico" ("Poesia Concreta: Pequena Marcação" 95). The egg-poem equates the poem with a body not by visually reproducing that body itself—i.e., an organism or organs—but as its living, constitutive elements: poetic "cells" that stress the poetic object as a living thing, that stand in for the cells of the living, but nonorganic body.

The fact that we can take Deleuze's theories on the history of painting and apply it to poetry already tells us much, in fact, about the history of poetry in Latin America, and about the shift that has taken place in the poetic tradition that posits the poetic and visual arts as intertwined, as previous chapters have shown, since the avant-garde in particular. For Deleuze, it is in fact almost exclusively painting that has the capacity to present this logic of sensation, whose essence he calls hysterical by virtue of its capacity to evoke the pure presence of the body. But in a *verbivocovisual* poetics that combines the verbal with sound, music, gesture, voice, movement, and graphic art, what do we make of this seeming tension between the visual and the musical, embodiment and disembodiment, presence and absence? All these forces are, in fact, simultaneously at work in an embodied poetics, and are in negotiation—although not necessarily in opposition—with one another. Through an increased interpenetration of different sensorial effects, the introduction of the body into poetry, and the increased intermediality of poetry in Latin America, we can begin see a poetics of sensation is one in which non-contradictory relationships between these apparent opposites, subsisting in a sort of productive tension, can be explored.

Ironically, Deleuze's brief hypothesis at the end of his chapter on hysteria actually serves as a quite fitting introduction to what we observe in Augusto de Campos' *Poetamenos*. Deleuze writes: "To hystericize music we would have to reintroduce colors, passing through a rudimentary or refined system of correspondence between sounds and colors" (*Francis Bacon* 55). Indeed, *Poetamenos* does this, and—adding verbal language—more: sounds, colors, and words are hystericized and embodied. It renders visible the invisible, and sonorous the unheard, as painting and music are able to do, but it also crosses the boundaries of each artistic medium, opening up new possibilities. Through the logic of sensation, then, it becomes possible to ask: how can time be rendered sensible visually and through sound? Can sound be illustrated visually? Can music be colorized? Can poetry speak and mean non-verbally through color and sound?

Poetamenos is one of the first works in Latin America to explore these questions, and it illustrates both the interpenetration of different sense perceptions and a particular attention to how the auditory rhythm of sound and music engage with the rhythm of intensities in the "logic of sensation."[49] Augusto de Campos' earliest Concrete poems, the multicolored *Poetamenos* series published in 1953, are steeped in musical theory and demand vocalization, actual or implied. The poems in the series appear, at first glance, to be purely visual, and at times seem

[49] Sound will refer here to both the human faculties associated with it both on the receptive end—hearing, listening—and on the productive end—voicing and speech Although I do not explore this directly in this chapter, the performances of some of the poems analyzed in the pages that follow become multi-media performances in the 1990s, and here we see the role of the body more clearly in relation to sound and music, as the performances—done in front of an audience rather than a studio voice recording—often involve gesture and movement.

quite unpronounceable. In each poem, words are fragmented and then put together in unexpected combinations, making the reader, in a sense, trip over the words and disrupt the linear flow of conventional texts. However, it becomes clear that the interpenetration of sensory perceptions informs the poetic system of composition and the physical properties of the texts, and that the poems are meant to be vocalized and performed. In the opening statement of *Poetamenos*, de Campos links his poems to Webern's conception, derived from Schoenberg's musical theory, of tone colors, with the idea that each color indicates a different theme and a different timbre, destined for a "leitura oral" in which real voices reverberate with sound (65).

Turning to an example where this theory is actualized, we can see how a poem such as "lygia fingers" (fig. 3.2) creates a sort of literary equivalent to the *Klangfarbenmelodie* concept in music by interweaving different verbal motifs through colors that represent different timbres. In "*Klangfarbenmelodie* in Polychromatic Poems," Claus Clüver, quoting Schoenberg, explains that tone color introduces a logic that is wholly different from verbal logic, but that apply nonetheless to thought (388). The implication, then, is that a poetic logic might consist of the interrelation of a logic of language—the intellectual, the sequential—and a logic of sensation. A key idea here is that these two different modes of perceiving are seen as possessing differences in degree rather than in kind, implying that they are *not* posited as polarized opposites.

Fig. 3.2. Campos, Augusto de. "lygia fingers." *Augusto de Campos - Site Oficial – UOL*. N. d. Web. 20 May 2010.

In "lygia fingers," one of the main ways in which two apparent opposites are woven together is by presenting deeply personal experiences and manifestations of affect and eroticism within the context of early Concrete poetry's militant stance against subjective and emotional expressivity. Just as the words visually interpenetrate one another, they do so with all the erotic charge of this interpenetration, and do so while often invoking the proper names of the poet as a biographical person and his lover and wife, Lygia. Indeed, what could be more personal, more "subjective," than proper names? It seems counterintuitive that a proper name could designate something other than a subject, and yet the poem is the perfect example of *haecceities*, or what Deleuze and Guattari call "a mode of individuation" that is different from subjects and objects, consisting instead "entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected" (261). Rather than pointing toward a subject, the proper name "fundamentally designates something that is of the order of the event, of becoming or of the haecceity" (264).[50]

[50] Consistent with this understanding of the proper name is also the lack of verb tenses in the poem, placing the entire poem outside of the realm of a particular time and place. There is the word "finge," but it melds into the "rs," exemplifying a type of *becoming* in itself between action and object, between different languages. We do have the

In this poem, then, part of the epithalamium that is *Poetamenos*, written by the poet for his bride, we can see the coming together of two people as a coming together of multiples: the name Lygia whose letters are taken apart to turn her into a lynx, a daughter, *illa*—a Latin deictic signifier—that make the poem an embodied event, depicting movement and alteration within the subject. The first words themselves stress this uncertainty at the center of identity: the poet references Lygia's fingers, typing—*dedat illa(grypho)*—and at the same time makes her a fictional being—*lygia finge ser*—that only pretends to be.

The structure itself resists logic in that it demands to be performed but resists pronunciation; it names subjects while denying the very concept of a singular, coherent subject; it splits words in a way that both multiplies meaning and makes the whole unintelligible. Using a traditional poetic form that designates the union of two people, de Campos also undoes both the fixity of this form and that of the subject through the rhythmic creation and fragmentation of meaning. Just as the different colors and implicit melodies seem to force the eye to jump from one word fragment to another, and the ear to take in verbal and non-verbal sound together, subjectivity itself becomes relational and provisional.

Similar processes mark the other poems of *Poetamenos*. In "dias dias dias" (fig. 3.3), the motif of memory and expression or articulation are explored; here the "IA" of Lygia's name literally break off to create the word "memoria," echoing a Bergsonian understanding of memory as the persistence of the past in the present—characteristic of perception as well—which the reader is, in a sense, forced to perform when reading "dias dias dias": with every new word or fragment thereof, the previous one is brought to life in a different understanding. The poem becomes, in other words, a living thing, just as the relationship between the poet and his young wife comes to be seen as an event, the two beings in all their multiplicity exploring different relations to one another and to the world around them.

Fig. 3.3. Campos, Augusto de. "dias dias dias." *Augusto de Campos - Site Oficial – UOL*. N. d. Web. 20 May 2010.

subjunctive form "seja" in the poem, but—much like the infinitive—it denotes the same sort of independence from "the chronometric or chronological values that time assumes in other modes" that Deleuze and Guattari identify with the infinitive (263).

Fig. 3.4. Campos, Augusto de. "eis os amantes." *Augusto de Campos - Site Oficial – UOL*. N. d. Web. 20 May 2010.

Nowhere is this erotic encounter of the one and the multiple more central than in "eis os amantes" (fig. 3.4). Here, we start out with a central column of words—in a linear reading: "eis os amantes sem parentes senão os corpos"—that introduces the coming together of the lovers. They are without lineage: only their bodies present themselves to one another, and then meld into one in the following part, with montage-words—"irmãum," "gemeoutrem," "cimaeu," "baixela," "estesse," "aquelele"—that denote a physical coming together and a multiplicity of simultaneous relationships that the two lovers take to one another: sister, brother, twin; one, other, I, she, this, he, that. There is a physical, erotic coupling of two bodies that point to the creation of a third life in reference to "infant," "semen(t)emventre," and "inhumenoutro."

This embodied erotic experience is not the coming together of two bodies, but of two collections of potentials and parts that have not yet been organized, not yet fixed in relation to one another. Through the use of the alternating colors and the coupling of word fragments, there is something disorganized about how these two bodies find one another: the bodies and the subjects are continuously articulated and de-articulated. The life that is generated within the poem—the embryo, the egg—is the creation of that pure corporeal state: not yet organized, not yet subjectified. The two figures themselves—just like the fragments of words—come to be defined only provisionally through the movement required by our reading: they find each other but in the rhythm created by the alternating colors and voices, as we shall see in more detail in discussing the recordings of this and other poems from *Poetamenos*.

Returning to the interplay of sound and color, we can see that the eye and the ear are, to a certain degree, both in conflict and in consort, just as the subject is presented in a constant flux between the idea of self, other, and multiple. In reading these poems, I must choose multiple reading paths visually to see the subtle (dis)connections created between different word fragments, while a reading aloud of the poem involves a series of either choices that preclude others, or overlapping sounds and voices that preclude any clear verbal meaning. By focusing on the non-verbal and on the embodied experience, we find that a rhythm is generated and that it plays with the idea of rhythm of a sensory, sonorous order. The rhythm in question here is akin to the progression of the poem, the vibration of its functioning rather than its auditory impact or the sonorization of meter. It is like the non-sensible rhythm that Deleuze identifies as the particular mode of the "logic of sensation," operating in the realm of time, as Merleau-Ponty also argues when he claims that poetry has "the same kind of existence as an object of the senses or a thing in motion, which must be perceived in its temporal progression by embracing its particular

rhythm and which leaves in the memory not a set of ideas but rather the emblem and the monogram of those ideas" (*World of Perception* 76).

Indeed, this understanding of rhythm and the logic of sensation bring to the reading of *Poetamenos* a possible response to common criticisms brought against the concrete aesthetic involving its promotion of a geometrical rationality, and its anti-subjective and anti-expressive stance. These are perceived by critics to be not only removed from the human element, but seem to promote a belief in a sort of pure, scientific reason. These (mis)understandings of Concrete poetry as devoid of human reality is seen as contrary to the social needs and realities of Latin America and particularly Brazil during the period. Indeed, Ferreira Gullar's famous break with the group, as expressed in his "Manifesto Neoconcreto," was based on his contention that concrete poetry had created an art form divorced from humanity; it had become too mechanical, too positivistic, too scientifically objective, too "rational."It was trying too hard, in Gullar's view, to make itself into a spatial art like painting, when poetry is ultimately a temporal art form.

Gullar's "non-object" is created in a spirit of recuperating human expression and affect in poetry, but I think that it misses a key point in what the concrete poets actually meant by their particular emphasis on a geometric rationality and functional structure. Various different schools of thought point toward what Gullar was missing: Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomelogy of Perception*, Deleuze's "logic of sensation," or even Herbert Marcuse "radical sensibility"—a concept that stresses "the active, constitutive role of the senses in shaping reason, that is to say, in shaping the categories under which the world is ordered, experienced, changed" (63)[51]—all inform us of what cognitive science, more recently, has proven to be true. Cognitive science and embodied philosophy has provided us with empirical data that confirms what Marcuse intuited while debunking the Kantian claim still present in Marcuse to any *a priori* experience. In a philosophy emerging from cognitive science, reason is not, as Western philosophy maintains, an autonomous, transcendent, pure, or universal faculty, nor is it a utilitarian or phenomenological function that derives from conscious and intentional observation or introspection. As Lakoff and Johnson explain in *Philosophy in the Flesh*, reason is embodied: it is "not completely conscious, but mostly unconscious"; it is "largely metaphorical and imaginative" and it is "not dispassionate, but emotionally engaged" (4).

It is worth noting that embodiment and cognitive philosophy do not imply a consciousness of our cognitive processes, something that Marcuse states already, describing the senses as participating in a "qualitative, elementary, unconscious, or rather preconscious, constitution of the world of experience" (63). The idea of the "cognitive unconscious" is central to Lakoff and Johnson's notion of embodiment. Not to be confused with Freudian repression, the cognitive unconscious simply refers to the fact that thought operates "beneath the level of

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[51] Although Marcuse's theory still operates under a Kantian belief in *a priori* experience, he stresses that the senses are not just passive, but participate in a concrete and material way in synthesizing concrete sense data with the concepts of time and space.

Deleuze, on the other hand, provides a more comprehensive understanding of a geometry that is not the cold rationality associated with it by many criticis of Concrete poetry. In fact, according to Deleuze, there can and perhaps even must be a relation, in art, between the geometric—the frame or diagram of the poem—and the sensible. "The geometry must be made concrete or felt," writes Deleuze (*Francis Bacon* 112). He goes on to explain "the law of the diagram" as follows: "one starts with a figurative form, a diagram intervenes and scrambles it, and a form of a completely different nature emerges from the diagram, which is called the Figure" (156). The diagram does not transform one form into another form, it substitutes different relations for the original form, thus making forces or relations visible.

cognitive awareness" (10).[52] This means that thought operates largely on an unconscious level, not because this unconscious is the locus of some transcendent, pure, or *a priori* reason or experience, but merely because of the limits of our cognitive awareness. The implication here is that we can locate at this unconscious level many more types of thought than we once thought, and that operations that we thought occurred through very different human faculties—the mind versus the body, the intellect versus intuition, inner versus external consciousness—are all in fact embodied operations that are determined by neural functions, the senses, and sensorimotor functions. Finally, if the findings of cognitive science are indeed accurate, "the locus of reason (conceptual inference) [is] the same as the locus of perception and motor control" (20); in other words, reason actually overlaps with out most basic and involuntary bodily functions.

It is striking how the Brazilian concept of "anthropophagous reason" as developed by Oswald de Andrade in the 1920s echoes the idea of an embodied reason and of the intersection of thought and bodily functions. In *Antropofagia,* knowledge, tradition, and modes of thought are all digested, *incorporated*; the metaphorical cannibalism stands in for a scientifically accurate understanding of how knowledge—and by extension poetic tradition—passes through the body. The metaphor is significant, especially given that cognitive scientists like Lakoff, in particular, emphasize that all conceptual thought is mediated through metaphors. Oswald de Andrade's particular understanding of cultural and literary cannibalism reflects a conscious intention to connect knowledge and the body, with significant implications for both a theory of textuality and for the construction of a shared literary tradition in Latin America.

A textuality and a practice of reading/writing that is rooted in the body and in sensation is indeed emphasized by the concrete poets from the start. Far from emerging from a disembodied rationality, meaning emerges out of the dynamic play between verbal content, a multiplicity of sensorial effects, and the rhythms of embodied sensation. In the "plano-piloto para poesia concreta," Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campo, and Décio Pignatari define "poesia concreta" as "tensão de palavras-coisas no espaço-tempo. estrutura dinâmica: multiplicidade de movimentos concomitantes." (216). The dynamic quality of this poetry is described as a tension that gives rise to poetic structure that is described in embodied terms, as a structure that is dynamic, in movement, and multiple, not only in the temporal kind of multiplicity conceived by Bergson, but a spatial multiplicity imagined by Deleuze. As Deleuze writes, movement is the key to conceiving of a spatial multiplicity: "It is only to the extent that movement is grasped as belonging to things as much as to consciousness that is ceases to be confused with psychological duration, whose point of application it will displace, thereby necessitating that *things* participate directly in duration itself." (48). The poem is a field of possibilities to be explored by both the poet and the reader/viewer/listener, where the structure in question is one that collapses the difference between body, objects, and words: all become "coisas," "things" to be physically manipulated, experienced, touched, heard, seen. This dynamic and organic quality is also clearly affirmed by Augusto de Campos in "poesia concreta (manifesto)": "o poeta concreto vê a palavra em si mesma – campo magnético de possibilidades – como um objeto dinâmico, uma célula viva, um organismo completo, com propriedades psico-físicas-químicas, tato antenas circulação coração: viva." (71).

These poems, in sum, put living objects and beings into movement, into relation with one another; poetry is thus an emergence of the rhythm that arises in the tension between the

[52] In fact, Lakoff and Johnson claim that cogitive science holds not only that at least 95% of thought happens at the unconscious level, but that this 95% of thought actually "shapes and structures all conscious thought" (13). Conscious thought, then, is seen as the "tip of an enormous iceberg."

simultaneous movements and vibrations of different letters, words, sounds, colors, and lines gravitating toward one another and in different directions, at the same time, in the process of generating meaning. The dynamic interplay of language, sound and color through *Klangfarbenmelodie* in *Poetamenos* can thus be seen as a process of making not just visible, but *material*: the sensory rhythm created through sound and voice comes into direct contact with the rhythm of sensation, that unconscious rhythm that allows us to experience sensation that is not subject to conceptual ordering and to intellectual reason.

Turning to the recordings of the poems of *Poetamenos*, then, we can see how movement and tension are explored through voice, both in recordings of readings performed by the poet himself and in oralizations and musicalizations by other artists.[53] Listening to the recorded readings, performances, and musicalizations of the poems mentioned above, "eis os amantes," "lygia fingers" and "dias dias dias,"[54] is a quite difference experience from seeing the poem on the printed page, where we spoke about the implicit vocal and musical quality of the poems. Intuitively, it occurs to us that an actual voicing of these poems would actually limit the multiplicity of possible reading paths and verbal connections that remain open in the print poem; after all, a reading is always already an interpretation, an approach to the text that reflects how the reader chooses the make his or way through it. While this may be true, voice itself, however, adds something to what we see on the page: the non-verbal quality of the voice, the possibility of conveying different tones, of creating sonorous rhythms that resonate with the rhythm of sensation.

Having spoken up to this point of an implied musicality and sound, I'd like to take a moment to dwell on how we can speak about voice in poetry. In recent decades, voice has been the subject of much discussion. Perhaps more than any other human function, voice lies at a paradoxical crossroads, in many philosophical writings on the subject, between evanescence and the physicality of the body, tied as it is, on the one hand, to an ineffable and immaterial pulsation of rhythm and song, and on the other, to a physical, sensorial experience, as Francine Masiello emphasizes at the start of her recent study of voice in Latin American poetry, *El cuerpo de la voz*. Masiello describes the experience of voice as "un ir y venir entre los efectos de la poesía en el cuerpo y los efectos extra-conceptuales de una voz imaginada en nuestro fuero interno" (13). But voice, as Masiello points out, never emerges in isolation: it overlaps and is interwoven with sound—whether it be the silence in between words, the rustle of a body in movement, or the tone of the voice itself—and these sounds are what put voice in relation to the materiality, palpability, movement (11).[55] As we will see, not only does this sort of movement arise from within the

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[53] While Augusto de Campos, along with other artists, is known to have experimented with readings and musicalizations of these poems himself, many earlier performances are not accessible to the contemporary reader. Today, we are able to access more and more of these audio materials as Augusto de Campos makes them available over the Internet, on his own website and on YouTube.
Charles Perrone discusses some of the initial performative options explored by the poets in more detail in his article "Versatile Vanguard Vectors," noting: "as early as 1954, Augusto and Décio, with musician Damiano Cozzella, struggled to produce 'oralizations' of proto-concrete texts (poetamenos). Décio recalls that the Ars Nova musical group performed select adapted texts, with music of Anton Webern's music playing, in the Teatro de Arena in São Paulo in late 1955 (*Teoria* 66). In 1955 / 1957 a certain Willys de Castro elaborated some "partituras de verbalização" of several authors." (73)

[54] The 1953 print versions of "dias dias dias" and "lygia fingers" as they appear in *Noigandres* and in the *Viva Vaia* anthology can be viewed online at <http://www.poesiaconcreta.com.br/poema/dias.html> and <http://www2.uol.com.br/augustodecampos/01_01.htm>, respectively.

[55] Masiello's understanding of sound emerges from the conviction that literature, as she puts it, traverses the body, becomes an experience of the body, of the flesh—"en carne viva"—and comes into contact with our nervous system

reading of the poem, in our relationship to the non-verbal aspects of voice, but in the tension created by multiple overlapping or differing readings.

In the recording of "eis os amantes" performed by Augusto and his wife Lygia,[56] for example, there is perhaps a clearer reading strategy than in other poems, owing to the play on dualism that takes place in the coupling of the two lovers and two colors through the two voices in the reading. Augusto reads the blue while Lygia reads the orange, and listening to it produces several effects. Because the words break down, as the poem progresses, into mere fragments, the reading emphasizes much more greatly the breakdown of verbal meaning, since the eye is trained to read linearly and thus prioritizes a verbal understanding over recognizing the split in color. When we listen, we are thus much more aware that the sounds spoken by each voice are not all significant verbal units in themselves, and our attention automatically shifts to the timbre, the quality of the voice, its non-verbal capacity to produce sensation, to produce meaning in the body, but not necessarily verbal meaning. As Mladen Dolar aptly explains in *A Voice and Nothing More*, the voice in its linguistic capacity may point toward meaning, create an expectation of and an opening toward meaning, present itself as a bearer of meaning, but ultimately, it is like a vanishing medium, to be defined simply as "*what does not contribute to making sense*" (14-15). By emphasizing the different voices, the recording illustrates, in a way that the written poem only partially can, that meaning arises here only through the rhythm that arises in the ebb and flow of the two voices, in their non-verbal interaction with one another that together creates—provisionally—a multiplicity of verbal meaning. The individual components—the words and fragments produced by one of the two speakers—are the living entities that mean only when they come into contact with the words of the other, and with the listener's capacity to perceive them.

In other poems, where multiple recordings of a single poem exist, it is interesting to consider the relation between the written poem and the different audio versions. For example, of the readings recorded by the poet himself, we find monovocalic readings, as in the voice-only version of "lygia fingers" which appears in the *Grupo Noigandres* CD and on the "poesia concreta" website, in which de Campos sonorously creates a flow, connecting the seemingly dissonant letters, syllables, and words. But over time, de Campos also produced other versions of the same poem: the second recorded version of "lygia fingers," for example, released in 1995 on the CD *Poesia é risco* and also included with the *Viva Vaia* anthology, superimposes electronic music by Cid Campos as well as multiple recordings of the poet's voice.

Both of these readings are similar in the sense that, without seeing the multicolored printed poem, the reader does not necessarily get a sense of the different timbres associated with the color tones. In this sense, the recording does not—as does "eis of amantes"—actually illustrate the different timbres and colors associated with the print poem. While we might be tempted to see this as failing to capture the "original" intention of the poem, or as a simplified version thereof, we can see instead how the different versions in print and audio come together to form an assemblage, as Deleuze might call it: a multiplicity of things, parts, and pieces—words, poems, voices—that tend toward totality, on the one hand, but are not quantifiable, are neither

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(12). The tactile experience of voice that she describes, emerging from a baroque understanding of the materiality of language, is, I believe, amplified in the poems in question here, where performance actualizes some of the tactile dimensions of sound she discusses. She writes: "Como la fricción de una tela contra otra o el crujido del taffeta contra los volados de la crinoline, el espectro de voces asordinadas se vuelve no solo audible sino palpable. Los sonidos del poema, por supuesto, nos alertan sobre el movimiento: la fricción de la material contra sí misma, la Resistencia de los objectos al tacto, el roce de una palabra contra otra."

[56] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSUBmYFuRec.

one not many.[57] Together they form a sort of field in which signification and asignification are in constant flux.

A single-voice recording that perhaps comes closest to capturing Webern's notion of timbre is Caetano Veloso's performance of "dias dias dias."[58] Veloso's version of the poem consists of electronic sounds and notes followed by a voiced reading of the poem in which six separate readings, each one corresponding to one color-motif and using a particular pitch and tone, are combined to create the impression of multiple voices performed by a single reader. For de Campos, Veloso's recording was not only a manifestation of the timbre and color-tone theories of Webern, but also a joining of poetry and popular music that results in an intermedial combination of different languages:

> "Você radiografou a minha cabeça," eu disse a Caetano em 1973, quando ele gravou "dias dias dias" em sua casa na Bahia. Melhor diria: *radiogravou*... Música-e-letra é o normal da canção popular. Mas música-e-poema — comum na música erudita — é uma *combinação* esquisita no âmbito da canção popular. O que Dick Higgins chamou de "intermídia" — conjunção de linguagens díspares. ("Expoesição")

Based on the above statement, we can infer that intermedia—the terms coined by Dick Higgins to designate a newly forged medium that consists of the inseparable fusion of diverse media—is linked to performance in the sense that a poem's intermedia quality is described by Higgins as a process or practice rather than an artistic trend or movement . This implies, then, that we must not view the vocalization or recording merely as a performance *of* a printed text, nor can we consider the printed poem a sort of score for a musical or vocal performance. The poem itself—whether in its printed or vocalized form—is inherently performative; the actual voiced performance is merely an alternate version—albeit, one that may be more or less privileged by the poet himself—of the performance that happens in the poets' and readers' minds, as de Campos himself indicates in the quoted passage.

The performance is, in a sense, both the presentation of the poem itself and an interpretive act, which resonates with the definition of Concrete poetry by Haroldo de Campos as an "obra de arte aberta," a multidirectional structure that, like a constellation, opens itself up to being approached from multiple directions and to being transformed in many possible ways (49). I would like to stress that "interpretive" here does not mean that the reader or performer is pinning down its meaning in one limited way, but rather that, by bringing it into the realm of sensation, the performance of the poem opens it up to one of many possible rhythms, one of many possible sensations that are opened up through the poem. This openness is also key to understanding how subjectivity functions here: the verbal content does indeed speak to a real or true experience, crystallized not only in the use of the proper name of Augusto de Campos' wife, Lygia Azeredo, in "dias dias dias" and "lygia fingers," but in the way this proper name

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[57] Deleuze and Guattari describe this idea of assemblage in more detail in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "[...] there are lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowlness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an *assemblage*. [...] It is a multiplicity—but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive. One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless makes it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity." (3-4).

[58] This can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpXwgmMQu5c.

reverberates as sound and echoes through words related sonorously—like "Egypt" and "sphynx" in "dias dias dias"—or reappears in visual patterns through the color-coded anagrammatic play on the letters that form the name "lygia" in "lygia fingers."In a sense, these poems show what becomes of what was previously termed subjectivity outside the lyric mode: the internal collides with the external; the names for people and things collide with one another. Rather than a subjective expression—the externalization of internal states, of affect, of a "true self"—these deeply personal poems do not seem to recognize a difference in degree between conscious states, names, people, and objects.

The "openness" of these texts also operates in another related way: it allows for the poem to be appropriated physically by others through performance, with significant implications for both textuality and authorship as a potentially collective experience.[59] The principle of multiplicity is what also allows other artists to perform the poem, an embodied act that blurs the borders between a text and its translations, transpositions, and transcreations. In addition, in this collision not of subjects but of performing bodies, any reader or performer becomes, in a sense, a co-author. Caetano Veloso is also a participant in the poem, to a different degree than Augusto de Campos. What appears to reinforce difference and individuation—the choices of each individual subject in how to "interpret" or speak the poem—are actually an affirmation of the fact that the author is no longer considered the "owner" of a poem, just as the idea of original and copy, of originality and imitation, no longer have any place in an embodied poetics. It is the performer's "self" just as much as pure chance and external circumstance that come to define the performance's so-called "singularity": both are mere material elements that come to bear on the poem as multiplicity. To clarify: in Caetano Veloso's reading of "dias dias dias," what situates the poem is not only the performer's particular tonality and pronunciation, which we might deem elements of intentionality. A key moment is hearing, with the volume at the right level, another voice in the background of the recording, what sounds like a child asking a question in the background between Caetano's "voas" and "ele."These kind of material deformations are what reaffirms the poem's embodiment: what Deleuze calls the ability for there to be *other* without there being *several* (*Bergsonism* 42).

Performance and voice thus raise questions about the self-identity of the poem, both in relation to time and space. Is Augusto de Campos' printed poem *the* poem? Is Caetano's recording the same poem? Are these differences, which appear to be differences in kind, actually differences in degree? Does greater "difference" from the "original" complicate this question? Caetano Veloso's reading of "lygia fingers," for example, puts into play the musical theory that was involved in the poem's composition, and is clearly, as cited above, sanctioned by the poet himself. Other performances and recordings demonstrate a greater interpretive departure from the printed text, such as Marcus Vinícius' 1976 recording and the 2004 recording of the poem by a group of Argentine artists, with music by Daniel Duarte Loza, made available by de Campos via youTube, in which both male and female voices in different pitches are juxtaposed and superimposed to create a performance that is faithful to the notion of *Klangfarbenmelodie* and also adds its own interpretive layers of meaning by selecting the pitch, the pronunciations, and the particular vocal combinations. All their physical properties are different: one exists as sound,

[59] Although it is beyond the scope of the present chapter, this particular point opens up to a wider discussion of the question of appropriation, property, ownership, and subjectivity in this kind of performative poetic project. The fourth chapter, in its references to "translations" or transpositions of poems between different media also brings up a similar point, which has the potential to connect this aspect of a poetics of materiality to a broader debate about translation, transcreation, and intermedia transposition.

when I turn on my computer and navigate to YouTube; another exists inside the pages of a book. Other versions exist on CDs by yet other authors and, in terms of sound, bear no resemblance to the other. Having just detailed how physical matter and substance are generative of textual meaning, how can such varying physical manifestations of a text still be the same thing, or, relatedly, still be saying the same thing?

The visible hand that writes/draws: Haptic traces of the body in the poetry of Cecilia Vicuña and Ana Cristina Cesar

I'll open the next analysis with the question of what this sort of experience of movement, flux, and multiplicity might look like when we add another dimension to the visual and sonorous aspects we have been discussing: the visible gesture; the trace of the hand that writes. Are there any connections to be made between voice as a trace of the body and the hand that inscribes as the same sort of vestige of the physical act of writing/creating?

To begin to answer this question, I'd like to turn for a moment to the history of the senses and their relation to meaning. If indeed, as Martin Jay has argued, vision has traditionally been associated with knowledge, then we can posit that voice and sound are traditionally associated with understanding, as Mladen Dolar points out. In 20th-century poetry that increasingly associated both the visible and the audible with the non-verbal, pushing language outside of the realm of verbal intelligibility, both of these senses make us question how vision and sound provide access to or, at times, impede our grip on truth, knowledge, and meaning. In an embodied understanding of our interactions with the world, we can see how the senses often in fact obscure meaning, and undo the dichotomous underpinnings in our privileging of voice, for instance, as providing access to presence, autonomy of self, and consciousness (Dolar 38).

More recently, then, once the metaphysical associations with the senses have been exposed and undone, more attention is paid to sensation that is unique to literature, and that does not correspond necessarily to the sensory experience. This seems to be what Roland Barthes has in mind when he describes, in "The Rustle of Language," the layering of voices that signifies the functioning of the poetic or linguistic machine. Such is the experience of listening to many of the vocal performances of concrete poems: the layering of voices upon one another obscures verbal meaning, but means in a different way, points toward the audible friction of language functioning in its material dimensions. In Barthes' view, the less we understand verbally, the more language rustles, and the more this rustle carries a meaning of its own. In "The Grain of the Voice," it becomes clearer what this implies for voice: here, too, we find that voice contains the sound of language that is not related to communication; it seems that for Barthes, the "grain" is that part of music and poetry that is related to the body, to sensation.[60]

There is a key sentence in "The Grain of the Voice" that I will use as my departure for my consideration of handwriting in poetry. Barthes writes: "The 'grain' is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs" (188). Could we, then, look toward other parts as the traces of the body that means, while escaping "the tyranny of meaning" (185)? Can we conceive of handwritten marks in poetry as something *other* than a visual mark? How can I take in the hand that writes, the body that moves across the page, without falling into the

[60] Barthes relies here on Kristeva's understanding of the difference between *pheno-song*—which communicates, expresses, represents—and *geno-song*—which has to do with language in its materiality, its volume, its sounds (Barthes 182).

trap of absence and presence? Toward the end of exploring these questions, I turn to poems by Ana Cristina Cesar and Cecilia Vicuña that use handwriting to make visible the role of the body in all writing.

From the outset, we can say that the hand that writes is much less frequently explored in relation to literature and poetry than sight and sound. Perhaps this is because handwriting seems to speak purely to the creative end of writing in a time when we have all acknowledged, as Barthes also claims, that the author is dead. This perhaps explains why, when we find references to bodily experiences in poetic theory and criticism, we are much more likely to find those that correspond to an organ of sense perception on the receptive end, so that even if we are looking at something drawn or written by hand, we are much more likely to focus on its effect on the eye as a visual sign. What I'd like to explore here is the possibility of connecting to sensation through the hand that writes as a way of perceiving the poem as a site of convergence of bodies and sensation. The haptic refers to the hand, to touch and physical manipulation, but these poems themselves do not invite the reader to touch in the way that a visual poem asks the reader to see and a sound poem invites them to hear.[61] Instead, we might see the haptic as the presentation of a Figure of a poetic dimension: a written trace that is not quite figurative, abstract, or narrative. The hand-written "sign" could thus be read almost like the "rustle" or the functioning—dynamic and in motion—of written language. We might also consider how handwriting functions as the trace of the literal body of the drawer, marking the page so that it cannot be mechanically reproduced—or cited, for that matter—in quite the same way as other printed poems.

As we will see in Cesar and Vicuña's poems, engaging with this question creates a sort of tension between seeming opposites: a presence-in-absence, a movement, and a rhythm that emerges from the sign that lies at the borders between verbal and non-verbal, visual and verbal, writing and drawing, representation and presentation. And as we have seen already, this tension generates movement, vibrations, rhythms; it makes the multiple possible. As Cecilia Vicuña's poetry illustrates, this movement can be brought to the page through the movement of the hand. In her books *Instan* and *I tu*, Cecilia Vicuña thus seems to present the endurance of multiple states: both a consciousness of different ways in which language functions and takes on meaning, and a multiplicity of meaning through the use fluid and multi-directional reading paths.

Visually, *Instan* and *I tu*—the latter growing out of the former[62]—return to the logic of the *quipu* to explore/explode the written word. While her more recent work has included the creation of literal *quipus* made of thread, exhibited at various point in Chile and abroad,[63] her written work has brought the *quipu* onto the page, applying the particular logic of the thread and its multi-directional motion to poetic language. In her talk "Knotations on a Quipu," she describes how her broader artistic projects sprang from her desire to make "a quipu infested with

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[61] We could call some of the poems seen in the previous chapter to be haptic poems, in this other sense: some of Vigo's poems, and certainly Augusto de Campos' *Caixa Preta* and *Poemóbiles* explore the haptic dimension of the poem.

[62] *Instan* and *I tu*, published in 2002 and 2003, respectively, are quite similar in structure and content, with *I tu* repeating the content of *Instan* with some slight variations. In discussing the content of the books, I will be referring to *Instan*, unless specifically calling out some of the unique features of *I tu*.

[63] Her most significant project in recent years in this area has been the creation of *El quipu menstrual*, an ongoing piece that she moves from the land and the mountains outside Santiago to museums and public urban spaces. In it, she uses red threads to signal the creative power of women, to cry out against censorship, and to protest the government's response to the major ecological issue affecting Chile, the melting of the glaciers. More information as well as images of various exhibits and installations can be seen on Vicuña's website, http://www.ceciliavicuna.org/en_exhibition.htm.

the idea of the book, a quipu contaminated and transformed by the book."We might see these two books of poem-drawings in particular, then, as books "infested" with the idea of the *quipu*: they involve a back-and-forth process of transcription of alphabetic language into the language of threads and vice versa; they illustrate Vicuña's interest in imagining the structure of words and sounds to one another as akin to the structure of threads; they are structured so as to retrace the memory of the body, making writing an act of returning to the thread of life ("Knotations").

The books consist of diverse elements, so that we find, in *Instan* the following: the drawings of "gramma kellcani;"[64] the transposition of the "gramma kellcani" drawings into the verbal, linear language of the "poema cognado / the poem"; the "fables of the beginning and remains of the origin," a section of poetic meditations and scattered reflections on the ideas presented in the first two parts; the end note, a personal description of how the drawing and poems came into being; and finally, the "dixio nario a diction," which glosses the key words in the drawings/poems. The final dictionary is a key to navigating the multiple languages of *Instan*. Oscillating between English and Spanish—as well as occasional terms from Quechua—the poems are born in part from the idea of the cognate: "The poem was born as a cognate, *un cognado potens* in search of a middle ground, a language that would be readable or unreadable from both."

Turning first to the "gramma kellcani (the drawings)," we find that the thread serves several visual and cognitive functions. In some drawings, words are formed out of the twists and turns of a line or a thread, often distributed on the page in a star shape (fig. 3.5). Stars and constellations are key elements of *Instan*: Vicuña points out that in English, the word "instar" means "to stud with stars,"[65] and stars appears throughout the book as something internal to words and the self, but also as that which connects the individual to a cosmic whole.

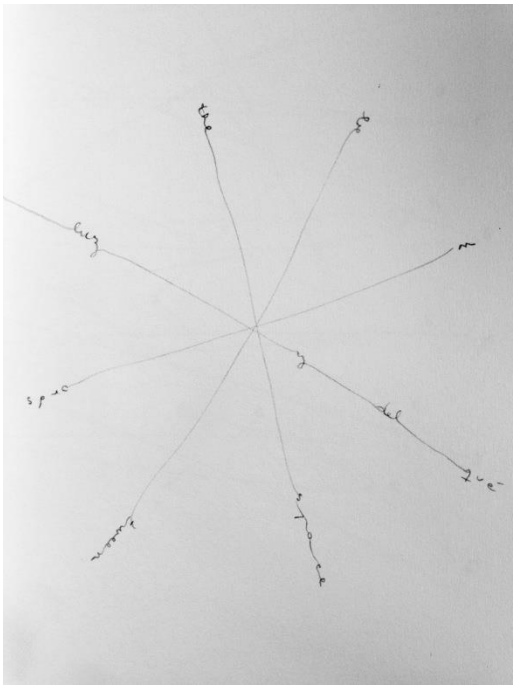

Fig. 3.5. Vicuña, Cecilia. from *Instan*. London: Kelsey St. Press, 2002. N.p. Print.

This particular star-shaped poem-drawing, which the cognate poem spells out as "luz y del qué / the space / between words," refers to the repeated connection between thread and light, and the fact that the "space between words" is not empty, but full. Whether this fullness consists of light or thread, it is important to note that it is physical, tangible, or otherwise perceivable matter that fills the spaces and builds the connections between words. In other words, the idea of "substance" shifts: the substance of poetic

[64] "Gramma kellcani" refers to *gramma*, the Greek word meaning "to scratch, draw, and write," and the Quecha verb *kellcani*, meaning "writing and drawing," as she explains in the book's " dixio nary a diction."

[65] It is interesting that the archaic English meaning of "instar" (etymologically derived from the prefix in- in conjunction with the English word *star*) that Vicuña mentions is, in fact, not the only one that exists. In fact, the other use of the word "instar" in English (derived from the Latin *instar*, which means "image," "likeness," or "an equal form") refers to a certain stage of development of anthropod creatures. The alternate etymology is interesting; although Vicuña never references this meaning directly, it creates a productive tension between the idea of the instant and the aforementioned fixed period of growth—the period between molts, so a period that always begin and ends with a mutation in form—which turns out to be quite in line with the book's treatment of the idea of time.

language lies in the material core that lies within words, not in a pinning down of meaning.[66]

There is, then, a definite relation to materiality in the poems. A definite synesthetic quality emerges from the *Instan* drawings. Vicuña herself explores these synesthetic possibilities in the "fábulas": "Hear the image? See the sound? The crossing performed?," she asks, pointing to the crossings of sensorial experiences made possible in the book through the use of image, sound, and gesture. By opening up words, she finds "lo que no es palabra al interior de las palabras," a kind of non-verbal, living core of words that creates unity, "commingling," continuity. This idea of continuity in space is where we see the role of movement and gesture through the hand that writes. The core of words that is non-verbal is experienced through the body, as a living things, and yet when we read it, we neither see, hear, nor touch it. Rather, the embodied reading means experiencing meaning as a sensation of movement. Reading is, as she writes in the coda of *I tu*, "el ojo entrando en la inscripción": it is not observing movement, but entering into the act of inscription, creating a physical sensation that is more than the sensory experience of seeing, because it is a sensation bound to the instant, precluding analysis or reflection; it is like the passing through of meaning at the intersection of the visual and the haptic.

The fact, also, that she refers to it as a performance—"the crossing performed"—implies not only the involvement and entanglement of the sensorial experiences she mentions, but the presence of movement, of gesture, of the active making and unmaking of connections.[67] Deleuze explains that, when it comes to the hand, we can distinguish between the digital, the tactile, the manual, and the haptic, all of which possess decreasing degrees of subordination of the hand to the eye (*Francis Bacon* 154). The less subordinate the hand, the more what we see "dismantles the optical," in the sense that the eye can barely follow what it sees—the *manual*—or "sight discovers in itself a specific function of touch that is uniquely its own, distinct from its optical function"—the *haptic* (155). The eye then "brings before us the reality of a body, of lines [...] freed from organic representation" (52). This implies a freeing up of meaning that can come from what we see, and corresponds closely to Carrie Noland's claim that "[p]erforming gestures can generate sensations that are not-yet-marked, not-yet-meaningful" (17). The meaning, then, is in the making, in our embodied interaction with the text.

When we look at a poem like the star-shaped one shown above, we can see its haptic aspect when we notice not just its shape, but the hand-written letters, the particular curve where letter and line meet, the uneven lines, the imperfect coming-together of the four lines in the center of the star, the marks clearly made by a pencil, by a hand in motion. In the sense that the drawing seems to leave behind a trace of a moving subject, it goes beyond the visual and allows for the word not only to become an object, but what Vicuña refers to as "a non-place for the

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[66] In fact, as we will see as we move through the different poems, Vicuña tends to pose questions—"¿cuál es nuestra verdad?," "¿por qué estamos aquí?," "the eye is the I?"—rather than provide answers. This idea is a response to what I see as a motivating force of poetry that cuts across time: the attempt to speak or write the ineffable. In a way, Vicuña signals that poets need not try to answer that question of how to say the things that we can't explain; instead, she repositions this question, focusing instead on *what*—quite literally—makes it possible for us to say or write anything at all.

[67] Carrie Noland, in her writings on embodiment, points to the fact that knowledge and meaning are produced—"lived"—as a result of performing gestures through the body, particularly when it comes to meaning that is not always intelligible, that we cannot process on the basis of reason, logic, or intelligence. Noland's definition of embodiment relies more on a basis of collective knowledge than does my own, which designates the experience and production of meaning in and on the body, in which the body becomes almost like a medium for experiencing the world. For Noland, embodiment is more specifically ""the process whereby collective behaviors and beliefs, acquired through acculturation, are rendered individual and 'lived' at the level of the body" (9).

encounter [between the object and the eye of the beholder] to take 'place'."This understanding of words as a non-place is key: the non-place, as Marc Augé defines it, exists only through the relation one has with a place, when that relation is one of transience, of passing through. "What reigns there," writes Augé, "is actuality, the urgency of the pressing moment" (83). This is the very definition of "instan," translated into English: they press, they urge.[68] It is as if the movement underlying the drawings makes the verbal meaning an always transient one, pressing upon the instant, dissolving, re-forming itself again, perhaps in a different configuration.

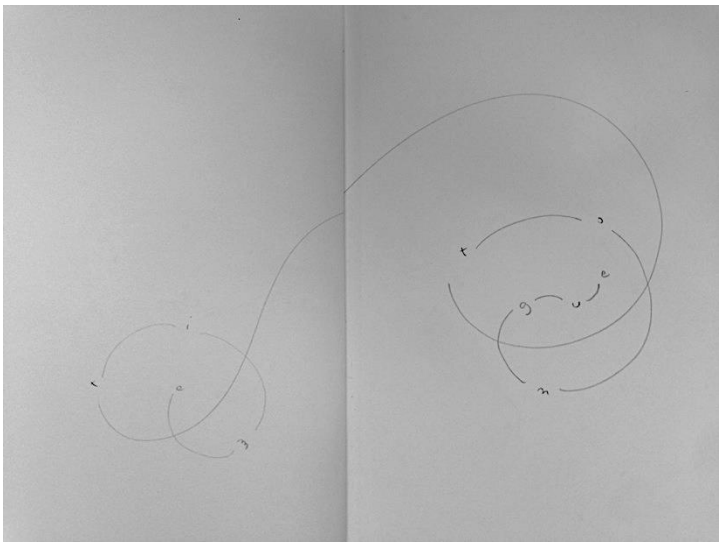

Fig. 3.6. Vicuña, Cecilia. from *Instan*. London: Kelsey St. Press, 2002. N.p. Print.

In other poem-drawings, this sense of movement, the transience of meaning, and the dynamic connections between words are created by connecting single letters through the drawn lines. Here, Vicuña plots words along a single thread, or ties letters to one another to form words, sometimes in a spiral formation (fig. 3.6), sometimes in the shape of zigzags, waves, or woven together in a less linear fashion, allowing for the creation of multiple words out of the same group of letters (fig. 3.7). The thread, even when it is not drawn as a straight line, does seem linear—leading inevitably from start to finish, from one end to the other—but the poems show a more complex manipulation of linearity and space: in the first poem shown here, for example, the first word plotted along the line, if read from the start of the "thread," would read "emit," when the word that is intended is its reverse, "time," as it appears in the cognate poem. The thread plays with its own linearity through the spatial layout, creating multiple

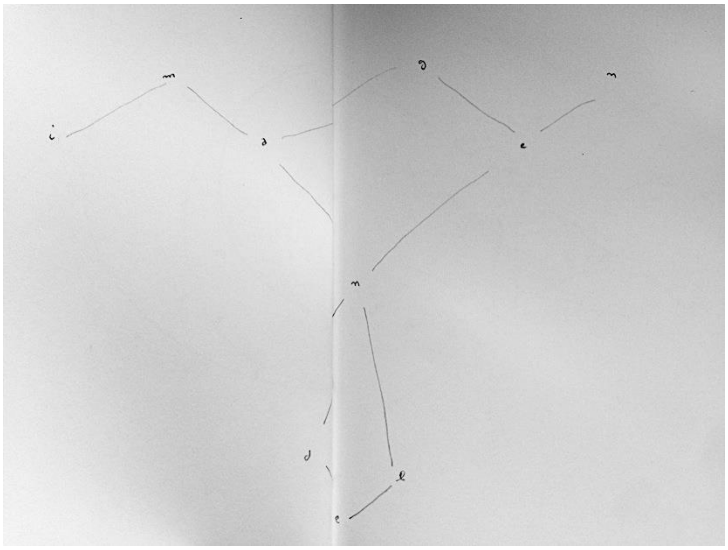

Fig. 3.7. Vicuña, Cecilia. from *Instan*. London: Kelsey St. Press, 2002. N.p. Print.

[68] A key difference, however, between Augé's theory on non-places and Vicuña's use of the term is that for Augé, the non-place is where individuality reigns (89). Vicuña's understanding of the self as always connected to a whole, as well as her understanding of a present moment that always reaches in both directions, to past and future, precludes the kind of "aloneness" and pure presence that Augé identifies in the non-place as the place of "supermodernity."

possible meanings through a visual spiral, an entanglement of the thread. In the cognate poem, the verbal transcription of this drawing is "time bending / tongue": the bending of the thread across the page thus carries meaning as well.

The thread's inherent multi-directionality, reflected in its shape on the page and its relation to the verbal content, makes us wonder if it is time that bends the tongue or the tongue that bends time. The former seems to imply that the particular properties of time itself make the tongue bend, make it lose its grasp on meaning, stumble over the logical or singular meaning of words; the latter signals that it is rather the tongue, the embodied words spoken by the poet, that is capable of manipulating our sense of time. As we get closer to Vicuña's understanding of opposites, dualisms, and contradictions, we can settle on the idea that perhaps both are true. "Time awakens inside words," Vicuña writes in the "fábulas" section of *Instan*, but time is also "undone by the instant": "A *continuum* contradicted by name, time is 'tem': to cut."

Time is experienced through the body as a continuum of past, present, and future, and at the same time, embodied language and its dependence on the instant seems to cut into this continuum, bringing past and future into the now. It seems that for Vicuña, it is not simply poetic language, but language that poses a question or an enigma, in particular, that generates this paradoxical experience of time as both a sequential continuum and a presence of all times in the instant. This explains her use of language that is always at the limits of the intelligible, as this sort of language, which forces us to constantly perform attempts to make sense of it, all time becomes part of a present whole: "The question feeds the enigma: an echo sent to the Milky Way, *Wiraqochan*, moves simultaneously towards the future and the past."

This understanding of time echoes with Bergson's concept of *durée*, except that Bergson sees *durée* as applying only to motion as something that eludes space. It is like the non-place, defined by transcience and movement, except that Vicuña's drawings are undoubtedly also objects, as we have already seen, explicitly tied to their material nature. But can we not see that these poetic objects, these poem-drawings, do indeed exemplify movement? That in the transitional nature of these drawings, we might see an object that does not preclude the organic whole, the idea of progress and process, the idea of multiplicity that Bergson assigns exclusively to the realm of time?

Another close look at one of the poems shows that the image of crossing that reappears throughout *Instan* also hints at this idea of process and movement. In the second poem from *Instan* shown here (fig. 3.7), we are presented with a visual representation of the crossing of the thread. Here again, through this crossing, a multiplicity of words emerges. The phrase that appears in the "poema cognado" is perhaps the least obvious: "imán del gen," which refers to the "image as the magnet of genes."There are, however, other words present in the drawing: "imanen"—the subjunctive of the verb meaning *to magnetize*—and the word "imagen" itself, spelled across the top of the page. The crossing is a presentation of multiplicity in the sense that is puts the letters in motion, belonging now to one word group, now to another; it is as if the words in the act of crossing—"imantando / el cruzar," she writes in another drawing—generate a magnetic field of meaning. Through the coming together of the very material nature of our bodies—our genes—and the images and inscriptions that create the magnetic fields that seem hold meaning together, even if only provisionally through this sort of crossing, it is as if meaning is transmitted through the physical pulsations that transfer from one person to another through the act of creating, reading, and writing.

These types of crossings and connections are emphasized throughout in the presence of words with the prefixes com- and con-, and the idea of connection inherent in the phrase "imán

del gen" is explained in *I tu* as follows: "imaginar la vida, y no la destrucción, actuar por un instante como un ser in *divi* dual /com *unal*, sería el salto quántico de la humanidad, escoger / con tinuar, el tenue tejido del *con*." In other words, the magnetic field of words emphasizes life rather than the meaninglessness of death, or even of the idea of constant deferral and displacement. It emphasizes multiplicity of meaning rather than its destruction, dispersal, or fragmentation: the poem-drawings are a playing out, a concretization of "possibilit[ies] *con*tained in the name."The tension between continuity and the instant—where tension refers to the simultaneous influence of both conceptions of time at once—generates this magnetic field. The same tension exists within our concept of self: the individual is itself, but is also indivisible from the whole, this whole referring at once to a social collectivity, a cosmic totality, and a world of perception, to which all beings and objects belong. As Vicuña explains:

> Per haps *in di vi dual* says
> un divided dual attention
> un divided dual belonging
>
> to itself and the whole at once.

With all this in mind, we can return to the idea of opposition, which has been a connecting thread throughout these chapters. The very idea of unity and continuity imply, for Vicuña, the merging of opposites, a union between two separate and contrary ideas.[69] We see dualities of both time and space maintained through the logic of the *quipu*: temporally, there is the coexistence of past, present and future through the use of these tri-lingual words pregnant with multiple meanings;[70] and we also find the merging of the instant and continuity in a simultaneous consciousness of both at once. Through the thread, space itself takes on some of the qualities of movement, as the individual elements—letters or words—only make sense when put into motion, into active connection with other elements on the page. This particular use of time and space in the *quipu* poem-drawings shows duality as a creative source, generating a sort of productive vibration, rhythm or tension. Instead of seeing these opposites at either end of a straight line, maybe we can envision them as two ends of an entangled thread. The idea of entanglement as that which makes "matter come alive," is "a memory of connection beyond time and space": we get to make new connections between things, based on our own embodiment, which are at the same time ancient connections. Thus the dualisms she refers to are not, as she emphasizes at the end of the "fábulas," to be seen as a pulling us in two conflicting directions. Instead, we find belonging in the two at once through the idea of reciprocal exchange and drawing together: we find meaning in the connections and exchanges we create between the most opposite things.

This idea explains the meaning that can be generated by combining the language of the *quipu* with verbal language. It explains the coming together of different languages within a single poem, just as entirely different cultural histories and worldviews come together through these different languages. The *quipu* is, for Vicuña, the embodiment of the other side: it can't enter the line, the box, the square; it is ungraspable by the Western imagination ("Knotations"). But *Instan* and *I tu* are not to be seen as writing *against* the Western mode of thought by appropriating the language of the *quipus*. Rather, they put into motion, into exchange, the

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[69] The image of the sexual desire and union as a way of conceiving of the unity of opposites is brought up in *I tu*, although not as directly in *Instan*.

[70] In the end note of *Instan*, Vicuña details the influence of the Quechua word *hatunsimi*, which refers precisely to a a word that opens itself to this kind of multiplicity, meaning "La palabra preñada que salen muchas de ella."

principles behind both indigenous Latin American and Western or cosmopolitan thought, making meaning movable, as she explains in "Knotations on the Quipu," moving language "back into the movable sphere of living thought."[71] They connect the magical and the sacred in poetry with the world of matter, both natural and artificial, man-made; the material dimension becomes one that is multiple ("Knotations").

Similarly, we can see Vicuña engaging with the opposition of speech or sound, on the one hand, and the written word, on the other, that has become central to the philosophy of language in the 20th century. For Vicuña, this dualism of speech/sound and is connected to memory. In a 1994 talk titled "Thread of the Voice," Vicuña recounts the following myth:

> a contemporary myth
> one that accounts for the origin of
> people
> who write
> and people
> who sing
> and in this myth
> the gods have created
> the indigenous people of south america and
> they have created them with great memory so
> only through sound
> they can remember the history
> of the whole
> people
> so
> instead
> the gods created some people
> who have no memory so because they have not
> this gift of memory
> they were created with a little notebook in their hands
> and these people are the europeans

"The myth for us / is language," says Vicuña, and the myth of language brings us back to questions of orality, as Vicuña's work is deeply affected by sound and spoken words. But the specific story she tells also makes it clear that myth and the relation it creates between memory, identity, and the body—through sound—is what defines Latin American consciousness, and is thereby used once again to position Latin America against the "Western" or "European" world.[72]

A key insight regarding this difference between Latin America and the Western world is that Vicuña does not place herself squarely on the side of Latin America and a non-Western

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[71] It is worth noting here that Vicuña uses her art to effect social changes, as well as to advocate for ecological issues in Chile, and this is particularly in line with another idea that Carrie Noland expresses: she writes that innovative or non-normative gestures—which are non-habitual gestures that allow us to "gain knowledge *as a result of performing them*" (7)—are what make possible a challenge to culture, as they open the door to agency and innovations in cultural practices (2).

[72] I place these terms in quotation marks to signal the irony of the term "West" in counter-position to Latin America, and whenever I refer to the West, I am conscious of the fact that the term applies with difficulty when we consider the American continent. This irony, a misapplication of terms, actually illustrates Latin America's position vis-à-vis the Western world, especially in the 20th century: it seems to situate itself—economincally, politically, and socially—neither within nor altogether outside of what we consider the West.

understanding of myth and time. While she certainly explores memory through sound in much of her work, we can hardly say that she does not live with a "little notebook" in her hands, some of which—like *Instan*—have found their way into our own hands.[73] We are aware, as well, that even Western thought on memory, speech, and writing has a complicated history, as exemplified by Plato's myth, told in *Phaedrus*, of the Egyptian king whose invention of writing was judged unfavorable because it would eliminate the human need to cultivate our memories, a foundational idea that would carry over into an entire culture based on logocentrism and the privilege of the spoken word in its relation to truth.

Vicuña's work does not, in other words, imply simply an embodiment of the indigenous South American access to memory through sound, but rather a constant negotiation between the different forms of accessing and preserving memory through voice, sound, language(s), and writing. This very negotiation is what creates a contemporary form of poetic materiality: an embodied experience of matter and sensation played out in language.

What Vicuña's poetics imply is that multiplicity exists not only at the heart of the text and of language themselves, but also with respect to the subject, in terms of a negotiation between self and other(s) through individual and collective experiences of embodied meaning and language. In a sense, the very idea of embodiment inherently implies a certain collapse of distance between self and other, but as we will presently see, for Vicuña the multiplicity of the subject relates to collectivity, whereas in the next poet I'd like to turn to, Ana Cristina Cesar, this negotiation within the self involves a collapse in distance between self and other that involves the collapse of distance between subject and object.

Although I identify Ana Cristina Cesar's writing with what I am calling an "embodied poetics," the connection to an embodied materiality is less obvious in her poetry than in the work of other poets presented here, like Vicuña's, which obviously engages the body and sensation, as well as the senses. In fact, Ana Cristina Cesar is a more conventional writer, in many ways. She shares some of the artistic ideals of the Brazilian marginal writers of the 1970s, artists seeking to carve out a space for themselves in a political regime that sought to control and silence artistic expression. Their use of instantaneous writing, fragmentation, humor, and daily life are each present in Cesar's writing. She also shares their refusal to perpetuate the dualism of political engagement or complete alienation that ruled over much of the poetic production during this time, attempting to sidestep this divide.

One of the central motifs that runs through all her poetry, and connects her with questions of subjectivity and the body, is an exploration of the limits between the poetic and the biographical "I," between this "I" and the other, between body, self, and object. When she writes "acho vagamente que não sou bem eu," she is, in a sense, questioning her own self-identity, herself as a thinking subject, and as a metaphysical subject, but also as an object. The implicit "eu" that is the subject of the verb "acho" is not the "eu" that is the object of the sentence, the thing that *is*: it can be read as play on a Cartesian *cogito* that signals that the *thinking* "I" and the *being* "I" are not necessarily the same; the "I" is both subject and object, singular and multiple.

This play between the self and what lies outside it characterizes much of Cesar's writing. Her collected writings appear like a self-portrait: using the diary and personal correspondence as the primary genres that inform her poetry, Cesar quickly reveals that these genres are manipulated to pose questions about truth, subjectivity, and (self-)expression. Drawing on the

[73] In "Knotations on a Quipu," Vicuña explains that she sleeps with a notebook next to her bed, and it is often in the night that she wakes up from a dream and writes poetry. It is interesting that she notes that she tends to write in the dark; she both takes part in and resists the need for writing in the traditional sense, as a mode of preserving memory.

reader's trust in the conventions of sincerity, authenticity, and intimacy attached to confessional writing, Cesar interrupts readerly expectations through references to feigning, lying, and masking; the interruptions of the other in the form of fictional characters, real acquaintances, and other writers; and finally, in her emphasis on divisions or plurality within the self. An example is the poem "Jornal íntimo" from *Cenas de abril*: a series of journal-entry-poems progress backward in time, dated from June 30th to June 25th, when, at the mid-point of the poem—which, not coincidentally, coincides with the reading of Borges "El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan"—time suddenly moves forward again, back to June 30th. Not only is the expectation of the confessional and intimate nature of the diary subverted by focusing instead on others, time itself and its implications of personal development are undermined by creating a circularity, both in the dates of the "entries" and the final line, unfinished and dangling: "Voltei ao" (*Álbum* 123).

Throughout her writing, the intimate seems to be constituted by other voices, affirming the idea of the poet as a fiction, a mask—"O Poeta É Um Fingidor," she writes in one of her critical essays (*Escritos no Rio* 105)—or of the subject as multiple subjects, embodied most famously by Fernando Pessoa and his heteronymous publications. In fact, Cesar asserts that the intimate, the subjective, have no place in poetry: "A subjetividade, o íntimo, o que a gente chama de subjetivo não se coloca na literatura. É como se eu estivesse brincando, jogando com essa tensão, com essa barreira. Eu queria me comunicar. Eu queria jogar minha intimidade, mas ela foge eternamente." (*Escritos no Rio* 195).

Flora Süssekind notes that Ana Cristina Cesar's writing portrays a deeply conflicted engagemenet with the "I"—poetic and autobiographical—and with the constitution of a poetic sense of "sense" that is both intimate and invaded by others, by the outside: "Numa espécie de tensão constant entre posia-da-experiência e auto-reflexão, entre dicção aparentemente 'muito pessoal' e postura quase sempre 'em guarda' – estrategicamente velada por uma sucessão de outras falas, aspas, citações –, sobretudo quando se trate de esboçar, nos seus textos, um sujeito" (10). One way to look at the conflict experienced with the self could be through an approach of the dialogic nature of this poetry. This is how Süssekind reads the conflict: her title refers to a *poesia-em-vozes*. In this respect, Ana Cristina Cesar's poetry seems to debunk Bakhtin's claim in *The Dialogic Imagination* that poetry is inherently monologic, that is to say, it maintains a unity of style and the "realization" of a unitary person through poetic self-expression (264). While Bakhtin claims that poetry tends to seal itself off to the social and historical forces that give language its "aliveness,"[74] Cesar invites the colloquial, the words of others, and popular culture not only into the poem itself, but, ironically, into her apparent attempts to portray herself as a subject.

Another word that Süssekind uses to describe Cesar's poetry is "descentrado," referring to both the text itself and the subject. The notion of the decentered subject has many different implications, and can refer to the fragmented, or split subject, an idea that echoes the postmodern and post-Structuralist criticism that occupied a significant portion of Cesar's bookshelf.[75] However, I think the notion of the subject and the text as multiple—integrative of difference rather than fragmented—resonates more closely with what we find in Cesar's poetry. For Cesar,

[74] Bakhtin does concede that some of the "lower" poetic genres do allow for this dialogism, for example, satire. While one might simply claim that this sort of assessment is no longer valid in the contemporary context, it is worth noting that Cesar's poetry in particular defies this notion, crossing "high" poetry with the colloquial, the prosaic. In addition, her work with both translation, intertext, as well as her interest in the "poema curto," impact the tendency in her poetry to bring in words that play with multiple social registers.

[75] Annita Malufe has written in more detail about the intersection between her poetics and the theories of Barthes, Deleuze, Foucault, Blanchot, and Derrida ("Ana C.").

the task of the poet is a fabrication or constitution of the real, presenting it rather than representing it or offering up an interpretation of the real. The central question, then, becomes, whether—and how—poetry can indeed present a Deleuzian Figure, and what this might look like.

Malufe does discuss the affinities between Cesar and Deleuze's philosophy, but she fails to consider how the fact that using (or imitating) the most intimate and personal modes of writing—the diary and personal correspondence—affects this idea of creation of reality. While Malufe takes a Deleuzian approach to identify in Cesar's poetry the autonomy of the word, the creation of a poem that is "um ser com vida própria, autônoma, que visa a interferer sensorialmente no mundo, nas pessoas, nos corpos, como cualquier outro objeto real" (34), she nevertheless avoids the fact that this creation of a "vida própria, autônoma" of the text is complicated by the fact that Cesar continually places herself as a biographical person, or at least as a proper name, within her poetry, continually reinforcing the ties between her work and her self, even if only in an ironic way.

In this sense, it is important to distinguish a two-way relationship of creativity between the poet and her creation: she may create a poem that is a living entity, but this poem, in return, constitutes a fictional self that is made itself only a difference in degree from the object that is the poem. It is in this sense that we can see in the "poetic subject" the presence of objects, shapes and forms; the disparity between interior and exterior, self and other, is razed to the ground. While this idea appears in different forms throughout Cesar's writing, I would like to focus my attention here on one particular "text" (if we choose to call it that): the small collection of words and drawings that is referred to as her *Caderno de desenho* or simply *Portsmouth/Colchester.*[76]

This little artist's book is a collection of hand-drawn figures, created during the poet's trips to England in the summer of 1980, that seem, at first glance, to be somewhere in between representational—what we could call pictographical—and presentational, that is to say, creating figures that are not quite abstract nor figurative or narrative, although they do possess some elements of all of these. The figures are unique in that they resist simple classification. Are they alphabetic, corporeal, ideogrammatic? Script? Drawing? Representations of human figures? Scribbles? Visual babble? (Fig. 3.8; fig. 3.9)

Fig. 3.8. Cesar, Ana Cristina. from *Portsmouth 30-6-80: Colchester 12-7-80.* s. l.: Ptyx,1980. N. pag. Print.

[76] I will refer to this as *Portsmouth/Colchester* here moving forward.

Fig. 3.9. Cesar, Ana Cristina. from *Portsmouth 30-6-80: Colchester 12-7-80.* s. l.: Ptyx,1980. N. pag. Print.

Flora Süssekind describes the hand-drawn scribbles as a form of "pictografia," and there is, in *Portsmouth/Colchester*, the possibility of creating a narrative—a vision of bodies seen, distorted, from the window of the train where the author observes the passing scene—or of turning the drawn figures into a pictographic—and thus representational—language where script and body meet. In any case, one grasps that there is in the drawings something like a creation of a kind of alternative language to the verbal, one connected to the body: as Süssekind points out, "parece ser exatamente a invenção de uma outra escrita, em relação simultaneamente mimetica e corrosiva com a lenguagem verbal" (63). What if we reframe this "outra escrita": instead of thinking of it in terms of what it looks like to us, as readers, its existence as quasi-verbal or quasi-representational sign, this "escrita" is the presentation of the act of writing itself, the hand that marks the page with that which falls somewhere between what we can see, say, perceive, recognize, and depict? The signs themselves could thus be read, quite simply, as figures of writing that present the "grain" or the "rustle" of the hand that writes: the embodied act of writing that encompasses the bodily aspect of the written word beyond its meaning.

In a manuscript, Cesar describes her poetic generation's task as follows: "É preciso mais uma vez uma nova geração que saiba escutar o palrar dos signos." (quoted in Malufe, *Territôrios* 17). She recognizes the need, here, for what we can describe as an embodied experience of poetry that nonetheless escapes a purely sensory experience. She calls for us to hear the chatter or babble of signs; in other words, to experience through the body the non-verbal aspects of language not through this babble itself, but in the multiplicity of poetic: in the visual representation of a sonorous babble through the medium of the hand that traces the non-verbal contours of such a language.

The hand that writes is moved to write/draw itself: it traces the invisible forces that act upon the body—that which Deleuze describes as proper to the Figure—and it depicts the intersection of language and body that takes place in poetry. Cesar herself describes the experience of "writing" and "reading" the figures in *Portsmouth/Colchester* as falling somewhere between premeditation and inattention; in other words, this is neither a sort of surrealist automatic writing, nor does it reflect authorial intention. She references "cuidado (floating attention)" to describe what gives rise to these figures: they lie somewhere between "o acaso e a estrutura," between chance and form.

Within this context, it is significant how Cesar describes these. The representational aspect of these unnamed little figures is characterized as an escape: "Daí escapam maps of England, birds, pessoas seguindo numa certa direção, bicho que vão virando gente, [...]" (*Portsmouth* n.p.). While this might be taken to mean that the figures *resemble* all the listed elements, the notion of an escape puts an interesting spin on how we might read this. Clearly a certain representationalism is present in this work, and yet that which is represented in these "signs" (if this is want to call them) slips away, avoids capture. On the one hand, this reminds us of the idea of a constant deferral of meaning. Yet, on the other, we might conceive of it as an escape from an established sign system all together: what if the representational itself escapes, leaving us with the presentation of figures that are devoid of the resemblance to other things, and are simply being-in-themselves, a presentation of the Figure as conceived by Deleuze in *Francis Bacon*? The hand-drawn figures would then be the traces, rather, of a writing/drawing body that is both absent and present. What remains of it is a trace of the aliveness of the body. In other words, the forms that she draws depict the forces that move the hand to draw.

She goes on, in the few verbal portions of the book, to describe the complex before-and-after of name and thing; of thinking a word and drawing, or of drawing and only then recognizing something in it; of the unexpected and the perception of meaning in something that arose out of meaninglessness. She writes: "uma forma determina a outra. a estrutura também é inesperada. alguns dão cri In other words, the structure is significant, and yet it is born out of structure itself; form is generated by form. The drawing or writing subject is present as a drawing body, and yet absent as a coherent, thinking subject. Despite its visual character, the figures do not demand simply to be seen: "não têm olhar, só têm direções. sem olhar, mas não cegos." The plural here is misleading: who does this act of looking refer to? Is it us, as readers/viewers, that are being asked to do more than just look, or find a different way of looking? Or do the figures themselves lack an ability to see or be seen?

Some of her figures are clearly to be seen as representations of human forms, as her notes indicate; for example, one of the drawings refers to "26 pregnant women sunbathing on the beach." Yet what is interesting is that she plays with the verbal as a tentative mode of fixing visually these images that—she seems to imply—can always also be read or seen as something else. Thus in an example such as the one below, the words that accompany each little figure seem less like labels or descriptions of the drawings than a game of "what is it," playing with word associations. Each one is more akin to a guess, a tentative verbal description that sticks only momentarily to each figure and is particular to the viewer's perspective (fig. 3.10).

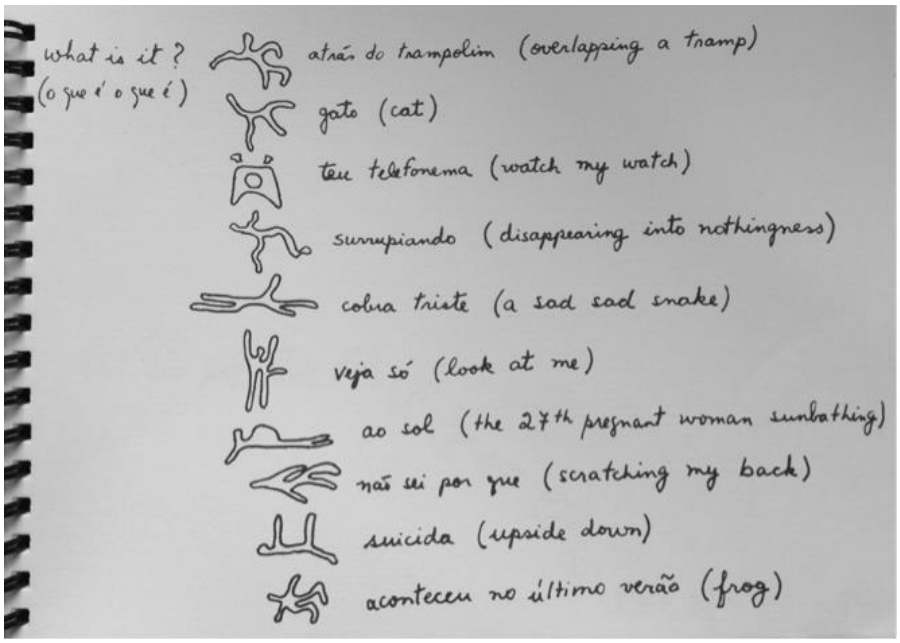

Fig. 3.10. Cesar, Ana Cristina. from *Portsmouth 30-6-80: Colchester 12-7-80.* s. l.: Ptyx,1980. N. pag. Print.

The interplay between reading, seeing, writing, and ascribing meaning is in flux here. There is certainly an arbitrariness to the descriptions of each figure—one is clearly human, another a dead frog—and a play with language where the English is at times a simple translation of the Portuguese and at others, a play with words, as in "atrás do trampolim (overlapping a tramp)" and "teu telefonema (watch my watch)." If nothing else, Cesar here creates a circuit between intellect and sensation, sound and sense, hand and eye. Even if they never completely overlap with the concrete, non-representation, and non-narrative, her figures portray the act of making meaning as situated in the body. The Hockney quote on the back cover of the book emphasizes this as well: "I assume people are always inquisitive and nosy, and if you see a little poem written in the corner of a painting it will force you to go up and look at it." Words will distract from the visual, this seems to mean, but the distraction is taken advantage of, becomes meaningful, in that is requires the body to apprehend the poem dynamically. It is through this interplay that Cesar can be seen, then, to be producing the Figure in language.[77] At the very least,

[77] It is interesting to note that another work by Ana Cristina Cesar, *Luvas de pelica*, is considered by Gonzalo Aguilar to achieve the same effect. Also using Deleuze as a theoretical foundation, Aguilar points out that Cesar creates in *Luvas de pelica* "una poética no sentimental sino de las sensaciones, no del sujeto sino de las intensidades" ("'Luvas de pelica'" 312). Through a college of visual images and literary, musical, and film references, Cesar emphasizes different bodily contortions and, as Aguilar points out, "[m]ediante esa violencia en el cuerpo y en lo visual, Ana Cristina Cesar se propone producir figuras en el lenguaje" (313). What is interesting is that Gonzalo Aguilar describes *Luvas de pelica* and *Portsmouth/Colchester* as being "incompatibles entre sí," one as the "contralibro" of the other (313-314). Whereas *Luvas de pelica* represents for Aguilar the making of a Figure out of words, the figures in the Cadernos illustrate the disjunction between the hand and the artistic project, an interpretation that I think rests on an outdated understanding of authorial intentionality and the idea of an artistic agenda. Instead, I think that both *Luvas de pelica* and *Portsmouth/Colchester* both achieve, in different ways, this play with the idea of a Figure within language.

Portsmouth/Colchester is an approach to such a Figure, a posing of questions about where language itself can give way to or intersect with the pictorial in both its figurative and non-figurative, abstract and concrete, narrative and non-narrative dimensions.

I'd like to point out one other, related mode in which the Figure appears in Cesar's work: in her insertions of photographs into the pages of the poetry and letters. Although a discussion of how photography can insert traces of the body into the poetic text certainly merits further exploration, I will limit myself in this context to bringing up Cesar's use of the photograph in connection with handwriting. In particular, I'd like to consider how her figures that resemble letters set up a system in which the photograph's ability to represent the subject is also put into question. Indeed, within the context of the drawings we have just been discussing, we might consider how the photograph might function as a non-representative sign. The photographic portrait has in fact come to play an interesting role in Cesar's poetic volumes, playing again with the reader's desire for an intimate and coherent portrait of the artist and her own refusal to give in to this illusion. The personal portrait is traditionally an image that provides some insight into the identity of the portrayed subject, some trace of the real. But as Natalia Brizuela points out in her article on the role of photography in Cesar's works, it becomes a medium in which Cesar stages desire, fantasy, artifice, and impossibility: the photographs of Ana Cristina Cesar are meant to be not mirror images laying a claim to truth, but instead poses, fictions, dramatic roles.

Much like the poems that take the form of diaries and letters, the photographs appear almost like poetic stagings of different attempts to give a physical form to the intimate self, to the impossibility of subjective representation: "la ilusión de una intimidad, una fantasmagoría" (Brizuela 136). How do we read these photographs? They appear in many of the posthumous collections of Cesar's poems and correspondence—*Álbum de retazos*, *Correspondência Incompleta*, *A teus pés*—and all seem to cast doubt, as do the verbal poems, on the line between reality and fiction.

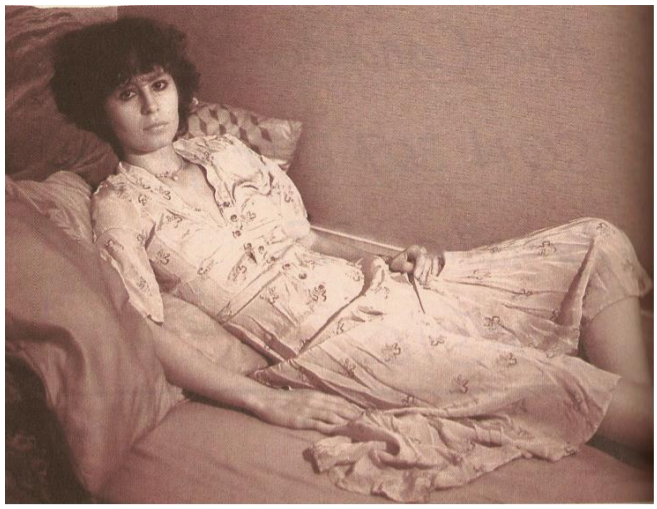

Fig. 3.11. Photograph of Ana Cristina Cesar from *Correspondência incompleta*. Ed. Armando Freitas Filho and Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda. Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano, 1999. 196. Print.

One photograph of Cesar stands out in this context. It appears on the back cover and inside the pages of *Correspondência Incompleta* (196) (fig. 3.11). Not only does the pose appear staged, it traces an interesting history that, as Brizuela indicates, points first of all to Matisse's "Odalisque à la culotte rouge," which Cesar sent as a postcard to a friend (*Correspondência Incompleta* 191-192), which in turn is a play on Manet's "Olympia."The portrait thus becomes a conveyor of *différance*; its only referent is another signifier: she is posing as another that is posing as another, showing the emptiness at the heart of the system of signification.[78] But what if we do not look at

[78] Not only that: the painting it all seems to point toward, "Olympia," was at the center of a great controversy and scandal at the time of its unveiling due to Manet portraying a sexual woman unafraid to flaunt her desire. What the audience at the time found most subversive was Olympia's gaze and the idea that the viewer was forced to return it,

the photograph as a form of signification of representation? Can we "read" it, rather, as a trace of the body, just like the handwritten scribbles in the *Cadernos*?

There is one detail in one of Cesar's letters that points to a connection between the photograph and hand-writing as a trace of the body, of the self and/or of the real. The following, from a letter to her friend Ana Candida Perez, plays with both the photograph and the signature as one and the same thing, forms of autography (fig. 3.12). What seems like an ironic gesture from someone who frequently discusses the relevance of Barthes' "The Death of the Author" on her work, the first autograph—the signature—is in fact not the author's name. The photograph, however, is of her. By naming both the photograph and the signature the same thing, she invites us to consider the play of reality/biography and fiction, of presence and absence, in both writing and photography. Both masquerade as evidence of the singular, biographical subject—these are both meant to be placed into the "álbum de família"—and of a singular event in time: the signing and the capture of the photograph. By making them interchangeable—and by not just doing so in name, but by tracing a circle around each and linking them together—Cesar engages with the illusion of presence and of the subject.

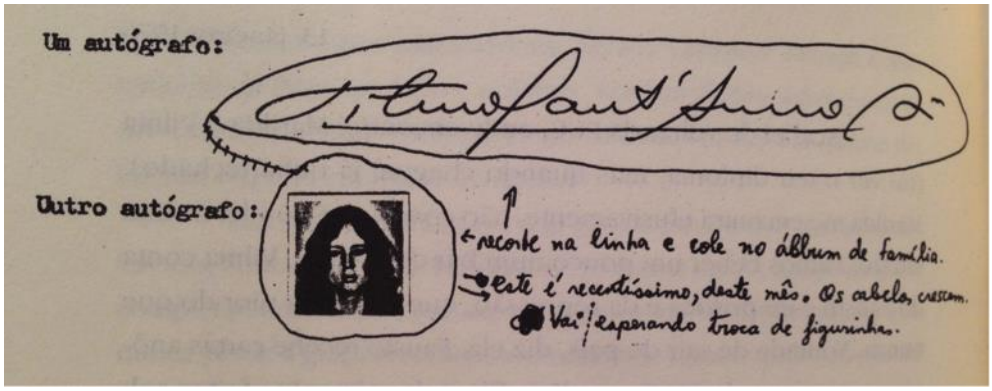

Fig. 3.12. Cesar, Ana Cristina. Detail from a letter to Ana Candida Perez. *Correspondência incompleta*. Ed. Armando Freitas Filho and Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda. Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano, 1999. 200. Print.

What Derrida has to say about the signature is illuminating in this context. As he explains in "Signature Event Context":

> By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer. But, it will be claimed, the signature also marks and retains its having-been present in a past *now* or present [*maintenant*], thus in a general *maintenant*, in the transcendental form of presentness [*maintenance*]. That general *maintenance* is in some way inscribed, pinpointed in the always evident and singular present punctuality of the form of the signature. [...] In order for the tethering to the source to occur, what must be retained is the absolute singularity

to become, in a sense, complicit in her desire. Although the threatening aspect of Manet's painting was the depiction of the independent, desiring woman, Cesar's gaze in her photographs engages the reader—the "you" of the poem—in a slightly different way. Here again, the implicit threat is the portrayal of desire, not necessarily or only sexual, but threatening nonetheless. As the tendency to construct a complete and "real" poetic subject illustrates, most of us are unwilling to accept the idea that at the heart of the poet, there is nothing but empty chains of referentiality that lead to many places, but not to a true, integral inner self.

> of a signature-event and a signature-form: the pure reproducibility of a pure event. (20)

This bears a remarkable resemblance to Barthes' definition of photography as "absence as presence" in *Camera Lucida*. Both Derrida and Barthes emphasize the breaking of a sense of continuity of time, a presentness of the past that is also, as we have seen, the characteristic of Bergsonian *durée*. Is Cesar's equation of the photograph and the signature another way of affirming multiplicity as central to subjectivity?

There are also a few clear differences between signature and photograph; or perhaps, what appear to be differences. Firstly, there is the question of viewpoint: since the signature seems to authenticate the subject through language, its connection to the *source* retains some sense of consciousness and intention on the part of the subject, underlying the utterance, whether written or oral. The photograph, on the other hand, approaching the subject from the outside, as an object, implies the presence or the gaze of the other. The photograph thus also captures the physical in a different way: through the visual, it arrests the exterior body (or parts thereof) in time, in what is destined to be a faithful reproduction of reality; the signature, on the other hand, "represents" the subject indirectly, through the hand, the gesture, the haptic. Secondly, the reproducibility of the signature that Derrida identifies is in conflict with the photograph as a unique and unrepeatable moment in history, as Barthes asserts.

I close this chapter with the juxtaposition of signature and portrait to signal that the combination of different media—in this case, writing and photography—places the connection between writing and subjectivity front and center. The following chapter will continue to engage with how the body and subjectivity are affected by material modes of meaning in new media and digital writing. But I would like to point out briefly here that other writers and artists explore further the crossings between photography and experimental writing in ways that intersect with Cesar's work. In Chile, Raúl Zurita's *Purgatorio* and Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica*, in particular, engage with the reciprocal relationship between the photograph and experimental writing. They blur the boundaries between the biographical subject and the fictional or poetic speaker by inserting photographic portraits of themselves that visualize some of the acts of violence that appear in the content of the books. In their case, this is a transgressive act that draws attention to what is at stake in writing, to how it interacts with what happens outside of the pages of the book. Although Zurita and Eltit's acts are much more overtly political than Cesar's, the photograph serves, in all these cases, to insert the body into the text in an act of disruption that plays with the subject in a poetics of materiality.

Overall, the figure—be it drawn in or photographed—plays around the edges of presence and its varying "opposites": the past, absence, and distance. As a sort of material trace of a subject, the trace of the physical body seems to evoke both memory and perception, showing the multiple ways in which the figure is present(ed): we seem to see inside and outside, presence and absence, part and whole. And while we find ourselves within the realm of vision yet again, we have come a long way from the sort of experience of seeing which we began with in the visual poetry of the avant-gardes. Seeing is, here, a bodily act: it involves movement, gesture, sensation, the nervous system. The photograph, the signature, the drawings by hand, the colorful music-poems: these are not objects of contemplation; they are traces of action, of movement, of the body's presence-in-absence.

They show that the body as a model functions primarily as a way of conceiving of our experience of the world through sensation, which is also to say outside of a binary framework and outside of the constraints of the idea of contradiction—and the related idea of the resolution

of contradiction—that dominates philosophical and literary discourse throughout the ages, but especially in modernity and, by extension, post-modernity. This chapter has sought to suggest a discourse of multiplicity in place of the idea of contradiction and its resolution. The self emerges as a process of negotiation between the intimate and the public, "I" and the other; meaning emerges through a reciprocal exchange between language, matter, thought, and the body. In the following chapter, we will see how the material—the way the physical form and the medium of poetic language gain meaning in and on the body—is explored in digital poetry and new media, where the body is involved in new ways.

Chapter 4:
Digital and (New) Media Poetry in Latin America

Hypertext, Holotext, Technotext: Where Digital Media and Poetry Intersect

The challenge in beginning a discussion about digital poetry is that it requires a certain amount of restraint from the outset, a clearly delineated approach within the excess and onslaught of information on and related to the computer and the Web. Even the operative concepts of medium and materiality are immediately expanded to encompass a broad range of textual processes and functions that take place through our digital machines: the computer is a means of creative production; it is a machine that displays texts of all kinds; it is an archive of texts both in print and digital; it is a kind of structural model that encompasses hypertextual and networked organizations of material; it is a non-space that is constantly in the making.

In this final chapter, then, my aim is to continue to explore how materiality operates within the realm of digital poetry in Latin America. What, if anything, is particular about digital writing in Latin America? What do embodied experience and sensory engagement with the material dimension of language and the text look like in the digital realm? How does a digital poetics position itself vis-à-vis both traditional and experimental print texts? And finally, what do some of the key concepts that have been operative in the previous chapters—process, multiplicity, sensation—look like in the digital age of writing?

First, a definition of terms: I use the umbrella term "digital poetry" in this chapter to refer to all the poetic manifestations that might be referred to elsewhere as e-poetry[79] or electronic poetry, (new) media poetry, technotexts,[80] Web poetry, or computer poetry. While I may also refer to digital poems designed for the screen as computer poems, digital poetry also encompasses texts like holopoems, which are digital without being tied to a computer. In this sense, what I am calling "digital poetry" for simplicity's sake, can seem like a bit of an over-simplification. It does not sufficiently call out the inherent blurriness of boundaries between media or between poetry and other art forms. I am less interested here in fleshing out the nuances of all these different terms than I am in defining a digital poetics as it relates to materiality, primarily characterized by the inclusion of the following: movement, interactivity (promised or real), non-linearity, and a critical manipulation of and reflection on language and meaning.

In his introduction to *Media Poetry: An International Anthology*, Eduardo Kac calls this type of poetry, more appropriately, "language-based media art," a term that points toward the fact that a poetic engagement with language—a manipulation of its sonorous, visual, and verbal components—is what unites those works that we are calling "digital poetry" (8). In many cases, the cut-off point between what is and is not poetry in the digital realm is unclear, crystallized in the questions I frequently asked myself as I read poetic texts online for this chapter: does this fit? Is this poetry?

Another question arises from within Kac's terminology: what do we mean when we talk about media? A simple definition would be that digital media encompass a wide range of

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[79] This term is privileged by Loss Pequeño Glazier in *Digital Poetics*. Glazier defines e-poetry as "innovative poetic practices in various digital media, that is, writing/programming that engages the procedures of poetry to investigate the materiality of language" (163).

[80] Hayles uses the term "technotext" to refer to literary works that foreground the relationship between themselves as material artifacts and the realm of verbal signification, mobilized in "reflexive loops between its imaginative world and the material apparatus embodying that creation as a physical presence" (*Writing Machines* 25).

technologies that involve coding and machine-readability. They are perhaps most easily defined in opposition to analog media, which include print media, photography, film, and audio tape. The frequently-used terms "media poetry" and "new media poetry" signal, among a variety of possible definitions, a conscious engagement with media and technologies in digital poetry, and tend to reflect—often either idealistically or critically—on the inherent possibilities, features, and limitations of writing poetry using digital media. I'd like to note also that, while they are still used almost interchangeable, I will follow in the vein of Eduardo Kac, who recently began to favor "media" over "new media" in reference to the outdated notion of "newness," and I will refer to "media" and "media poetry" in general, and to "new media" only to refer to poetic and critical approaches that indeed emphasize the novel and revolutionary nature of digital media.

Digital media as modes of display and distribution of poetic texts merit an in-depth discussion all their own, and this chapter only scratches the surface of a consideration of the computer and the Web as means of viewing, storing, disseminating, and publishing poetic texts, particularly experimental and multimedia texts that are made much more easily accessible through the inherently intermedia nature of digital media. It is worth noting that already we can see that the border between digital and analog media is quick to blur when digital poems are often the combination, setting into movement, or other form of digitization of texts, recordings, and images that already exist in print.[81] To keep to a clear topic amid the sea of digital poetry, then, the present study will focus primarily on texts that rely on digital media as their modes of creation and production, those texts that are created in, for, and by the digital.

In addition, I'd like to emphasize from the start that digital media are not just like the glue that holds the texts I will analyze together, but rather an object of study in and of itself that frames our understanding of how we read and how we find meaning in what we read. I am thus interested both in what the computer itself and specific digital and electronic technologies can bring to poetry as well as what kinds of questions these media and technologies allow us to pose about print texts and the process of reading poetry more broadly.

My study—in fact, this dissertation as a whole—is informed, to a great extent, by Katherine Hayles' key notion of media-specific analysis, a mode of reading that draws together the material aspects of language and literature with the embodied process of reading, and which emphasizes the materiality of media. Hayles defines it as follows: "Understanding literature as the interplay between form, content, and medium, MSA [media-specific analysis] insists that texts must always be embodied to exist in the world. The materiality of those embodiments interacts dynamically with linguistic, rhetorical, and literary practices to create the effects we call literature." (31). I think this frame of analysis makes it clear that it is a short—although significant—leap from the kinds of embodied textual practices we have been discussing in previous chapters and the digital texts that will make up this chapter.

In broad strokes, then, how *do* we make the discursive and conceptual move from print to digital, to a media-based analysis in the computer and internet age? Many critics, especially in

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[81] I want to state from the start that these categories are porous, and the line between print and digital is easily crossed. For example, is a print poem that is simply re-written on the computer and published on the Web a digital poem? For the sake of this dissertation, I will be discussing digital poetry as poetry that is written for and on a computer or other machine, and that includes the characteristics above, while acknowledging that this will represent only a subgroup of everything we could consider "digital poetry." I will not focus on the discrepancies between print and analog here, and try to use the term "electronic," which can refer to both analog and digital media, or a crossing of the two, whenever there is a crossing of boundaries. An example of such a crossing would be the *YouTube* version of Caetano Veloso's recording of "dias dias dias": the "video" is a filming of a print poem, and the recording was created in analog media, but they come together in the digital realm as a joining of these.

the early days of digital poetry, have done so by affirming and analyzing in detail the connections between experimental print and digital texts, seeking—it seems—to legitimize the digital realm as a space for poetry, on the one hand, or to legitimize, on the other, the experimental print texts that seemed bound to fade into literary obscurity until the computer came around to display and disseminate them in their ideal state. The discussion thus often revolves around the digital as a fulfillment of the promise of earlier non-conventional texts, particularly in the context of Concrete poetry. Lucia Santaella, for instance, in her essay titled "A Poética Antecipatória de Augusto de Campos," draws out a poetic trajectory in which the Brazilian Concrete poets along with their *paideuma*—their own group of poetic forerunners, so to speak, which includes Mallarmé, Oswald de Andrade, Pound, and Cummings, among others—are seen as "precursores da e-poesia" (168). Augusto de Campos himself has commented on this link, stating that "the 'wishful thinking' of the 50s came about with computers, an ideal space for 'verbivocovisual' adventures" ("Questionnaire").

Drawing attention to these connections between different poets and these experimental print and digital poetics is generative of new modes of viewing poetic history that recontextualize what may seem like marginal experimentalisms within a lasting poetic tradition that culminates in the present digital age. It affirms what I see as the creation of non-canonical, trans-linguistic, and trans-national poetic lineages and histories that is, I believe, characteristic of an internet age. It also emphasizes writing in digital media as a process of re-signification of existing texts and textual processes, and speaks to the inherent multiplicity of digital texts that encompass characteristics of both print and digital media.

At the same time, this analytical discourse around anticipation and precursors has its shortcomings in that the terminology itself reinforces a progress-driven understanding of history and a somewhat linear kind of temporality. One of the aims of this chapter, then, is to trace some of the early responses to electronic technologies and digital media as a revolutionary transformation to poetry while being cognizant of the risks of falling into a discourse of new media as bettering, perfecting, or augmenting existing poetic textualities. These responses invariably are shot through with certain levels of idealism that prove to be both persistent and unsustainable in different contexts. Thus, among the more idealistic theoretical formulations by both critics and poets themselves in the early period of digital and electronic poetry—the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, generally speaking—we find the following: the digital as the fulfillment, the realization, or even perfection of what is implicit in visual print poetry, poem-objects, poem-events, and poem-processes; the digital medium as radically transformative—again, in a sense of an improvement—of poetic language; and the inclusion of movement and integration of multiple media and sensory experiences into the poem as an end in itself.[82]

I do consider it key to reflect on the relationship between print and the digital, but comparing media to evaluate which is "better" is a process I will only be considering in the

[82] It is interesting to note in passing that some new media theorists go so far as to claim that "New Media" often are not media at all, but rather platforms in which other media are combined and hybridized. Lev Manovich, for example, author of *The Language of New Media*, makes this claim with the explanation that print, photography, and cinema are media that communicate cultural information, while the category of computer media encompasses "all stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulation, storage, and distribution; it also affects all types of media—texts, still images, moving images, sound, and spatial constructions" (19). What new media is, for Manovich, is the crossing of paths between media (photography, printing press, film, radio, television) and computer technologies. I believe that a more technical discussion of terms within new media theory and how different theorists implement them would be useful for a further study of digital literature and culture, although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

historical sense, in order to acknowledge that this weighing of the achievements of print versus digital is one of the earliest and, as I've already mentioned, most persistent responses to digital poetry. As Kenneth Goldsmith puts it in *Uncreative Writing*: "it goes both ways. Concrete poetry has framed the discourse of the Web, but the Web has, in effect, given a second life to concrete poetry" (61).[83] Emphasizing the relationship between digital and analog media as one of mutual reciprocity may be a more fruitful ground for the analysis of the state of digital poetry at the present moment. Only once we acknowledge that the migration of poetry into the digital realm, and thus into an intermedia realm, is neither a "better" material expression of existing poetics, nor an end or a meaningful experience in and of itself, can we look beyond how digital poems display their own materiality, beyond how they interweave and hybridize media, and begin to consider how digital poetics tell us something about where poetics are moving in the 21st century and what contemporary digital poetry is saying about meaning and sensation in a digital age.

Returning to some of the key terms of the previous chapters will allow me to provide a brief overview of how digital poetics continues to engage with and introduce new layers to conceptions of time, space, and subjectivity. I will begin my analysis with early examples of animated digital poems by Ana María Uribe, followed by an examination of Eduardo Kac's holopoetry and Ladislao Pablo Györi's Virtual Poetry. These poets in particular, being at the forefront of drawing out a digital poetics, illustrate initial formulations of the relationship between print and digital media, emphasizing similarities and differences that demonstrate the idealist and almost utopian attitude of many poets in the 1980s and 1990s, for whom the digital realm represented a fulfillment of expanded material and intermedial poetic possibilities a century in the making. I will discuss how for these poets, the introduction of movement and interactivity—more theoretical than actual, as we will see—was ushered in with an enthusiasm that echoes, in many ways, the utopian turn of the historical avant-gardes to materiality, visual poetry, and the verbivocovisual as modes of capturing the contemporary experience.

Moving next to digital poetry's engagement with the body and the senses, we can see that digital media posit at their very foundation an interrelation between technology and the body: digital technologies tend to appeal to multiple senses at the same time, but, in their kinetic dimension, are perhaps more clearly situated in the realm of a non-differentiated physical sensation, through reader-text interactivity and kinetic movement and manipulations of the text and of the computer itself. In other words, the particular materiality of the digital text, as Mark Hansen and Katherine Hayles point out, tends to generate a more holistic involvement of the body in the textual process. Specifically, I will discuss how embodiment in digital writing, on the one hand, and the media text as performance, on the other, inform meaning in performance poems by Augusto de Campos and Arnaldo Antunes from the 1990s and early 2000s. Their poems and performances illustrate how kinetic experiences like gestures and handwriting are used in a way that challenges and questions the formation of meaning in new media poetics and the role of the body and the human subject in a mediated world, more broadly.

The final section of this chapter will then provide an overview of several poets and art collectives from the past fifteen years that show some of the more recent directions that digital

[83] Adalaide Morris also writes in the introduction to *New Media Poetics* about "print and sound materials made newly visible, even pivotal, by their position in the lineages that have generated new media compositions, as, for example, the concrete poets Haroldo and Augusto de Campos," a statement that is indicative perhaps of a shift on the global poetic stage (7). Concrete poetry in Brazil was certainly pivotal without new media, but Morris is correct in pointing out that these poets have gained worldwide recognition for their poetry since the advent of digital writing.

poetics has taken. The process of creation and the creative role of poet, reader/user and machine come under special scrutiny in recent poetry, as artists like Belén Gache, Gustavo Romano, and André Vallias play with using unoriginal content and with the automated generation (and even *de*generation) of content. Collective and individual efforts like André Vallias' site *Errática*, Gache and Romano's collective *findelmundo*, Eugenio Tisselli's site *motorhueso*, and Claudia Kozak's *Ludión* collective demonstrate how the structure and organization of the computer and the Web—in particular the network and hypertext—reimagine the processes and structures of generating meaning and of what reading and writing imply in the digital context.

Overall, what we see emerging in all these types of digital poetics is a widening of what the text, the creative role of the author, and the task of the reader/viewer/user consist of. They emphasize and question the reciprocal relationships between poet, machine, observer and text through varying degrees of autonomy and programming. The resulting view of digital textuality is one in which the poetic text is alive, in a sense: it is in motion and in relation to the world around it, operating in a networked field of relations between different texts/versions, bodies, languages/codes, machines, and objects. Thus we can begin to define a particular *digital* materiality: seeing materiality in objects, language, and subjects not as solidity (characteristic of print), but as a flux, a convergence in the present moment, a provisional coming together of processes, words, and subjects that is defined by variability.

Early Digital Poetry and the Rhetoric of Novelty: Holopoetry and Animated Digital Poems from the 1980s and 1990s in Brazil and Argentina

I will open my discussion of some of the earliest Latin American digital poems, Eduardo Kac's holographic poems, with a surprising and disturbing idea I came across in reading the poet's description of his own work: the desire for the immaterial in the digital realm. For Kac, electronic media allowed for a decidedly immaterial poetic experience. He notes that the "newness" of digital poetry needed to lie elsewhere than in the visual, claiming that visual poetry is tied to print technology, and even three-dimensional poetic objects belong to the visual tradition. He explains: "I realized that the poetry I wanted to develop would have to jump off the printed page, but could not be embodied in tangible objects. I wanted to develop an immaterial poetry for the information age; that is, poetry native to the new cultural environment of digital global networks, with its dynamic data flux and distributed communication systems" ("From ASCII" 45). His early experiments with holographic poems thus reflect a desire to "develop a textuality […] which would be experience with its own rhythms, somewhere between the two-dimensional surface of the page and the solid three-dimensional form of the object" (46).

Seeing the use of the word "immaterial" in one of Kac's essays on holopoetry threw me into an initial tailspin. Had I completely misunderstood the connection between the embodied engagement with the materiality of poetry in print and digital textuality? And yet, I felt that perhaps Kac's use of the term indicated simply a need for a new terminology. My proposal, therefore, in the spirit of thinking outside of oppositional terms, is that the newness that Kac and other early digital artists sought be incorporated into and essentially expand the existing frame of materiality. I recognize the need for an understanding of materiality that is less solid, less stagnant, less firm, less tangible. I will rephrase this as a question, then, that will guide this whole chapter: what if we could posit materiality in the digital age as a concept that incorporates both solidity and flux, matter and energy, dynamism and stasis? In other words, while this claim

for an immaterial experience seems to contradict my basic thesis—that digital poetry creates meaning that emerges through an engagement with the physical and media-based dimensions of a text—it also, in a strange way, affirms its contrary: Kac describes his virtual poem as existing somewhere *between* two kinds of material objects. In other words, his early poems are conceived as a process that takes place in the shift—through the digital medium—between different physical forms, one possessing the tangibility and solidity of print, the other appearing merely as flickers and colors projected and displayed on objects and screens. Reconsidered through some of the more recent digital poetry from Latin America, I would venture to say that rather than an immaterial experience, Kac's poetry produces what I will argue is an expansion of how we conceive of materiality itself: rather than being associated with the solidity of matter, materiality in the digital context encompasses energy, flux, motion; just as media themselves become integrative of many different processes and forms, a material poetics dialogues with matter's intersection with non-tangible aspects of our experience of the world.

Indeed, as he further describes his own poetic process, Kac does not deny that his poems do have physical substance—and thus situate themselves within the realm of a poetics of materiality—but rather that this substance, through the reader's "personal choices of direction, speed, distance, order, and angle," is malleable, movable, part of "a textspace where the graphical substance of the verbal material is under constant disturbance, being transformed, morphed, or disintegrated in a new signifying process" ("From ASCII" 64). In other words, in the terms of this study, that which he calls *immaterial* calls, I believe, for an expansion of the concept of the material to include movement, transformability, variability, openness to manipulation; it is not opposed to materiality as such, but rather to "formal stiffness" ("Holopoetry" 131). These characteristics that he may associate with the *immaterial*, initially, represent the very characteristics that come to transform materiality from within, so that the question becomes, rather than whether the digital poetic experience is material or immaterial: what intangible forces are at play within the material realm? Can matter be variable, molded to the individual experience? How do movement in space and temporal dimensions interact with the physical matter and support of the poem?

We can begin to answer these questions by looking more closely at some holographic poems, one of the first electronic forms of poetry in the 1980s and 1990s, created by Kac himself and by other poets, including Augusto de Campos.[84] Kac's first holopoem, "Holo/Olho," created in 1983, is an anagrammatic play on the relationship between the hologram and the eye (fig. 4.1). The fragmentary images of interpenetrated and overlaid letters projected onto the surfaces signal the aforementioned disruption of vision that gives rise to a new syntax. In time, movement—still merely implicit in "Holo/Olho," where movement is created through the juxtaposition of fragments at different angles—is increasingly actualized.[85] The 1987 holopoem "Quándo?," for example, is a 360-degree hologram in which the rotating Plexiglass cylinder and the words reflected within it, suspended in mid-air in the center of the cylinder, turn in different directions and at different speeds, disclosing and concealing words at different times, and creating different

[84] Given the lack of space to develop a further analysis, I will not go into detail about Augusto de Campos' experimentation with holopoetry. However, I think a comparative analysis would be interesting, particularly taking into account the particular spaces and objects de Campos uses for his holographically projected poems, which range from screens in rooms of museums to the skyscapers of the Avenida Paulista in São Paulo.

[85] All of the holopoems by Eduardo Kac described here are reproduced and/or discussed in his essay "Holopoetry," and are also viewable on Kac's website, *Holopoetry, ekac.org/allholopoems.html*.

word sequences—and, by extension, different meanings—in clockwise versus counterclockwise reading directions.[86]

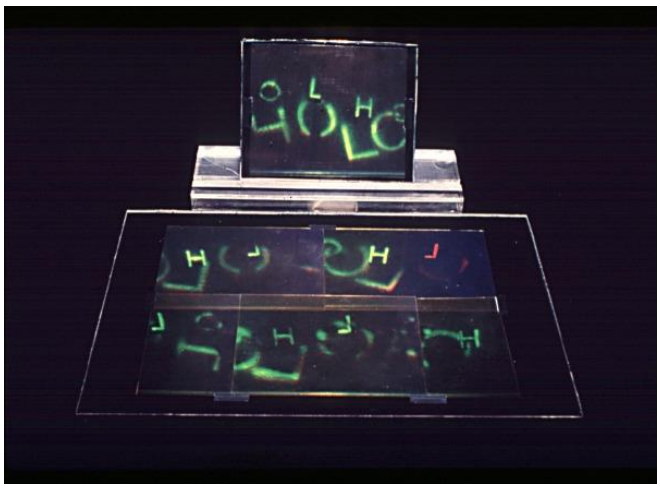

Fig. 4.1. Kac, Eduardo. Image of "Holo/Ohlo." Reflection holograms mounted on wood and plexiglass. *Holopoetry: Complete List of Holopoems by Eduardo Kac.* N.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2014.

In time, as digital technologies evolve, Kac finds other ways to play with movement and its role in structuring the relationship between reader, image, and text. In the 1993 poem "Zephyr," letters appear overlaid on a background of rippled liquid, forming the words LOVE, LIFE, IF, and LONE (fig. 4.2). The viewer's physical position vis-à-vis the text determines how the letters appear: from afar, the ripples can make the letters appear almost like an abstract pattern; from up close, it becomes visible that "the letters are made of minute particles" (154). As the viewer moves relative to the poem, these particles become a three-dimensional cloud that "flies away from the viewer and reconstructs the letters, as if the viewer had blown them away from him or her with his or her own gaze. […] [It is] as if the particles and the ripples were relying for their movement on the vagaries of air currents and the displacement of small air masses caused by the movement of the viewer himself or herself," Kac explains (154).

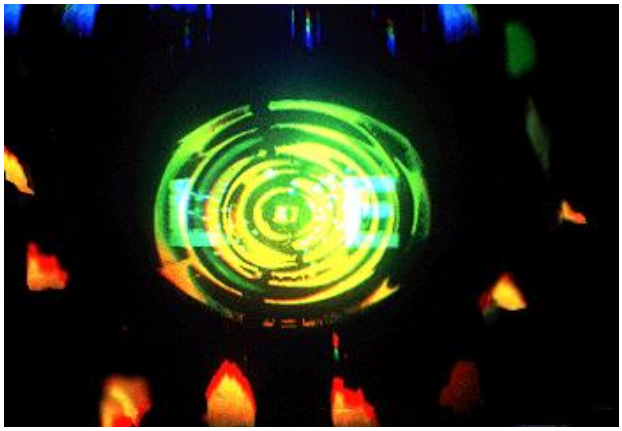

Fig. 4.2 Kac, Eduardo. Still shot of "Zephyr." Multicolor computer holographic stereogram (WL transmission). *Holopoetry: Complete List of Holopoems by Eduardo Kac.* N.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2014.

What is interesting here is that this poem creates the visual illusion of a reciprocal and interactive relationship between the reader/observer's movement and the formation of words and meaning(s)—the ripples, the particles, the disappearing and re-emerging words—in the poem, a relationship that is, however, very real, according to Kac. The ripple and the re-arranging of particles is a materialization of the process that takes place in all acts of reading, particularly in the context of a poetics of materiality, with the physical manipulation of poems as objects, and in the realm of digital poetry, with the manipulation of the computer interface. It is also not a coincidence that as the observer moves and perspectives change, the words

[86] Eduardo Kac explains in more detail: "The text was conceived so that it could be read at any angle, but there is a basic structure that allows it to be read either clockwise or counterclockwise. Counterclockwise the viewer reads A LUZ / ILUDE / A LENTE / LENTA / MENTE (the light/deceives/the lens/slow/ly); clockwise the text is A LENTE / ILUDE / A LUZ / MENTE / LENTA (the lens/deceives/ the light/slow/mind). Other readings, just as valid as these, may arise, for instance, A LUZ/ MENTE / LENTA / A LENTE / ILUDE (the light/lies [i.e. tells lies]/slow/the lens/deceives). In Portuguese, the adverb lentamente (slowly) is made up of the adjective lenta (slow) and the adverbial suffix -mente (-ly), which as an autonomous word may mean either 'mind' (noun) or 'lies' ('tells lies').

themselves alternate between opposite concepts: as Kac himself points out, the affirmation of LIFE is constantly undermined by the uncertainty of the word IF emerging from within in (151). "As the viewer moves relative to the piece," Kac explains, "it oscillates between preserving these oppositions and solving them by blending the opposite terms" (151).

This verbal tension created by oppositions that continuously dissolve and reappear is yet another instance of maintaining a productive tension between (seemingly) dichotomous terms, which was noted in the previous chapter as well. In fact, Kac identifies the idea of tension as a unifying thread of a poetics of materiality—my term, not his—since the avant-garde experiments with visuality. We can almost conceive of the trajectory drawn out here in terms of a history of "tension": in Apollinaire, there is "an ideogrammatic tension between the symbolic [verbal] and the iconic [visual]" ("Holopoetry" 133); in holopoetry, Kac identifies constitutive tensions between "visual language and verbal images" (132), between presence and absence (134). This tension is also present in the relationship between the material and the immaterial in holopoetry and, more broadly, in electronic and particularly digital poetry. We can see that in the confluence of object and event within the holopoem there is a pull between the intangible, dynamic nature of the holopoem itself as a projection of light and the physical materiality that the holopoem depends on, in the sense that the poem cannot be perceived without being projected onto an object or a surface.

Regarding the visual and material in relation to tension, Eduardo Kac relates this history even further back: by engaging with both the poem as an event and with the history of visual poetry, Kac affirms that holopoetry's "freeing words from the page" is an act that is in continuity with the earliest visual poems of Simias of Rhodes, avant-garde poetry, and the experimentalism of the 1960s and 1970s ("Holopoetry" 129). The fact that it is an event means, for Kac, that it is both material and goes beyond this materiality: the holopoem is quadri-dimensional, adding the dimension of time to the three dimensions of space. In a sense, holopoems allow us to "think of a written languages that moves in space-time. Such language […] is predicated on the dynamic passage from the verbal code (the word) to the visual code (the image) and vice versa" (130). This movement or passage between codes is thus in direct relation to earlier visual poetry, but it emphasizes the key point, for Kac, that thought is not a continuous process, but is irregular, takes constant turns and deviations, as predicated by the reader/viewer's decisions in following/shaping the structure of poetic language:

> As distinguished from visual poetry, it seeks to express the discontinuity of thought; in other words, the perception of a holopoem takes place neither linearly nor simultaneously but rather through fragments seen by the observer according to decisions he or she makes, depending on the observer's position relative to the poem. Placing bodily intelligence on equal grouding with linguistic and logical intelligences, holopoetry transfers to the kinesthetic phenomenon of reading aspects of meaning production which formerly were assigned to linear syntax. (129)

In sum, this is what Kac calls "perceptual syntax," a syntax that emerges from the "turbulent space" within which "textual instability" is created, similar to the visual turbulence and instability of the liquid surface of a poem like "Zephyr" (133). What the holopoem illustrates is that bodily intelligence, in relation to electronic media, depends on our experience of perceived time as well as the instability generated by the observer's ability to manipulate the structures and sequences of the poem, be it by moving the body in relation to the holopoem or by clicking and mousing on a computer screen.

And yet it's crucial to take a moment to step back and reflect for a moment on the fact that the reciprocal movements between reader/observer and text is framed by Kac with the words "as if": the fact is that the reciprocity is only simulated, pre-programmed and controlled by the poet himself. This is even further reinforced by the fact that Kac consistently offers detailed explanations of how we are to read his poems: what room is left, really, for the reader/viewer/user to interact with the text in an unrestricted way when the effects of this interaction are pre-determined? We are face-to-face here with what Marjorie Perloff has called the false interactivity of digital textuality, or what Adalaide Morris refers to as the "first-generation claims for interactivity" that are crystallized Landow's theories on hypertext, theories that Morris invites us to surpass in contemporary digital theory (13). It arises within a tradition that still compares digital to print, and is thus one component of the initial idealistic, almost utopian stance toward digital media. In its claims for interactivity and futurity, this attitude generates a discourse around novelty that echoes the avant-garde as well as the *poema/processo*'s overarching faith that experimentation in new media and new poetic forms will make possible new kinds of creation and poetic experiences.

On the one hand, this eagerness for the new and revolutionary is a global phenomenon in response to the possibilities generated for art within new media; on the other, we can see how it resonates particularly with Latin American writers who have found themselves caught up, since *modernismo* in the late 19th century, in a discourse of belatedness with regard to concrete processes and infrastructures of modernization in comparison with Europe and the United States. The term "new media" thus references an emphasis on the futurity of digital media, its great promise not only of bringing Latin America up to speed with new information technologies, but also of creating an equalizing forum for the creation and distribution of poetry and art.

It is worth discussing this idealism, because it characterizes not only the theory behind the holopoetry of Eduardo Kac, but also the writings of/on Ladislao Pablo Györi and Ana María Uribe, the two poets I will turn to next. In the work of all three of these poets, idealism and novelty seem to go hand in hand with viewing the digital against the yardstick of print, so that the first few decades of digital poetry are marked by this rhetoric of newness. Indeed, it is significant that Eduardo Kac chose to rename his 2007 anthology *Media Poetry* instead of *New Media Poetry*, the title on the 1996 edition of the anthology that was printed as a special edition of *Visible Language*: novelty for novelty's sake wears off with time, and when the bright sheen of new media fades, we must find other substantive ways to approach digital texts.[87] In this context, I will discuss other poetic texts generated from the same early enthusiasm for the possibilities inherent in new media, with a goal of discerning what some of the characteristics are that were initially most exciting to poets, and considering whether these are short-lived or ongoing characteristics of digital poetry in the present day as well. As the subsequent analyses

[87] From a current perspective, it is clear that Kac acknowledges that digital and electronic media are now no longer new, firstly, and also that "media poetry" is a more holistic term that refers to "the various means of mass communication thought of as a whole – in other words, technological systems of production, distribution, and reception" that encompass digital as well as non-digital technology (7). Furthermore, although the technical specificities Kac mentions are beyond the scope of this study, it is worth pointing out that he also identifies specific media tools that are not necessarily digital, but that intersect with it and that he uses in his own contemporary work: "Another fundamental aspect of the difference between the terms 'new media poetry' and 'media poetry' is that while 'new media' is often associated with digital technology, 'media' is broad enough to also encompass photonic and biological creative tools as well as non-digital technology (e.g., analogue electronic technology and poetic experiments conducted in zero gravity)" (7).

will show, some of the early ideals that give rise to digital texts do continue to shape digital poetry of recent years, albeit without framing these within a valorization of futurity.

One of the characteristics of electronic poetry that quickly made it seem like an ideal medium for poetry was its integrative nature, its ability to manifest various characteristics of different experimental poetic forms. The essays in Eduardo Kac's *Media Poetry* anthology all resound with enthusiasm for the computer-based creation of poetry as the sum and the new locus of all poetic practices. André Vallias describes the "irresistible challenge" of creating poetry on the computer: "the computer, as stage for the integration of various different codes (visual, sound, numerical, etc.) seems to me to include within itself, and to transcend technologically, a whole series of poetic manifestations which started out from the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, such as 'visual poetry', 'phonetic poetry', 'performance poetry', etc." ("We Have Not" 90). Ladislao Pablo Györi, in a similar vein of inclusivity, writes that "all creative processes will move into the virtual space offered by the machine" ("Virtual Poetry" 93).

The term often used to describes this quality of the digital medium is *sintético*, a term that captures the idea of a condensation of various complex concepts into something brief.[88] Györi explains that in the digital realm, materiality itself takes on a concision that is an idealized version of the materiality of the real world:

> The digital world (computerized, therefore synthetic) deeply differs from physical, real or analogical materiality and goes beyond its limitations and the usual categories of experience associated with it. It founds its mastery in the mathematic or numeric character of the elements that are contained in it and in the possibility to openly establish correlations between virtual space, objects and subjects, as no previous medium has allowed. (93)

In other words, the virtual is understood initially as that which takes us *beyond* materiality's limitations. This explains Györi's statement that the virtual is opposed to the visual: virtual poems "bear no resemblance to anything," and are laid out in a "vast and unexplored field" that is in direct opposition with the "superficial and static contact" the reader experiences with the traditional printed page (95). Much like Kac, Györi seems to take issue with the static and solid nature of print which, it becomes more obvious, seems to be equated with the materiality of the world. It almost seems as if materiality itself is inextricably linked to the limitations of print in these poets' eyes: the "physical, real or analogical materiality" is the materiality of the book, the page, the analog object. What, then, does *digital* materiality look like?

Györi's VPOEMS, which he describes as "interactive digital entities" (93), display several characteristics which clarify how they go beyond "analog materiality": condensation, three-dimensional movement, and the establishment of simultaneous, layered relations between elements, which is to say between words as both verbal and material entities of meaning. Specifically, virtual poetry involves using the computer to visualize the word or phrase as a three-dimensional object in space—which still has us in the realm of real materiality—visible from every possible angle—the multi-perspective and flowing materiality of the digital. Virtual poetry situates perception outside of the realm of the real, within the poetic space.

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[88] The term *sintético* appears frequently in the theory of concrete poetry and other Latin American poets writing around the time, but the English term "synthetic" does not carry the same meaning. I would like to point out that here and elsewhere I will use *sintético* in Spanish/Portuguese to refer to this quality of conciseness, of a poetry that sheds itself of all that is ornamental and accessory, as the early Concrete manifestos emphasize. It is worth noting that this term lends itself particularly well to a discussion of the digital mode of poetic composition, where its alternate meaning of "artificial" comes into play as well with the computer and specific concepts such as "virtual poetry," for example, as we will see below.

What emerges in this virtual space is perhaps best explored in an example: virtual poem 14, or "VPOEM14," shows series of words move across the screen in different directions and at different angles, zooming in and out, breaking apart and re-forming new groupings and semantic associations. Colors, arrows, and dots guide connections between certain words, but they never indicate a linear direction: instead, words break off to create different phrases and meanings that—as the still shot (fig. 4.3) illustrates to some degree—draw attention to the many manifestations of matter and its varying degrees of solidity and fluidity. Through the "gradual plastic deformation / of a solid body," we find the deformations of matter—liquid, gaseous, plasma—listed alongside the visual deformation of the words. Unexpectedly, a dotted line leads from "liquid" to "rock": the poem goes on to explore the geology of rock formation and the transformation between solid rock and its molten state, a reflection on how digital materiality leaves behind the characteristics of print.

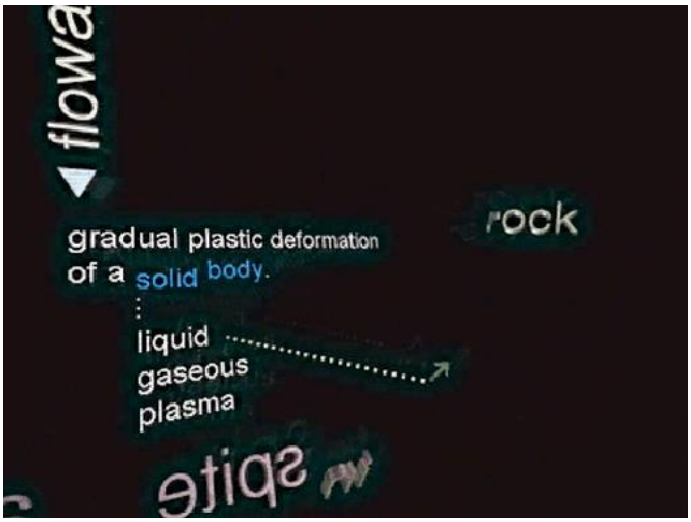

Fig. 4.3. Screen shot of Györi, Ladislao Pablo. "VPOEM14." *CCEB*. Centro Cultural de España en Buenos Aires. N.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

Györi's VPOEMS teeter-totter on the edge between concrete and unreal in such a way that we no longer see them as opposites. To be more precise, the idea of the virtual is the creation of a *concrete* simulation of objects that allow for the user to recognize the *formal aspects* of reality within the virtual environment. In other words, while the represented entity is simulated, our reactions to and perceptions of its formal, concrete, physical characteristics are "identical to what characterizes the represented entity in the real world" ("Virtual Poetry and Aided Creation" 2b). Why create a virtual entity instead of a real one? Much like Kac's reference to immateriality, Györi's ideal digital realm seems to concretize a more malleable kind of materiality, one that can be manipulated and is open-ended:

> fundamentally, it offers the invaluable possibility of manipulating *objects without factual equivalence*, ideal entities decidedly developed due to the existence of that support. And here is where the *poetic function* will intervene with enormity in fact for the *design* of events that respect neither natural laws, the processes that they impose, nor those solutions extremely often applied in cases of other previous supports. (*aerodita* 2; emphasis in original)

For Györi, the computer is a kind of support and storage system of data and information which he considers an active system of agents, in comparison with the passive system of books, tapes, disks, etc. Active systems require not only new processes of emission, reception, codes, and critical theory, but a "system of creativity *shared* with the machine" (3).

On the one hand, Györi's predictions of a virtual poetic world where users would physically interact with, move, influence, and view from different angles the poem in a virtual space sound either outdated or imbued with a futurism that still seems far-off and quite

unrealistic. While it is true that what Györi describes exists today in the realm of gaming, poetry has not taken this course, and this fact emphasizes the idealism in the theories of a writer like Györi. But on the other hand, the concept of a machine creativity that Györi imagines here, conceived as a virtual state or ideal, will in fact become an operative concept in digital poetry moving forward, an example of how an early ideal of digital poetics is realized in modified form, as we will see in the auto-generated digital automatons of Gustavo Romano, for example.

We see a quite different way in which print and digital texts are contrasted in the poetics of the Argentine poet Ana María Uribe. Uribe takes a very different stance in terms of how the digital is differentiated from print: rather than imagining the digital as fluid and multi-dimensional as opposed to the solidity and stasis of the visual, Uribe forges a continuity between visual and digital poetics, using similar typographical methods of composition in her poems, but using animation software that emphasizes movement. In *Tipoemas y Anipoemas*, Uribe takes poems she wrote in the 1960s, which experimented with the visual and sonorous aspects of poetry particularly through typography, and either juxtaposes them with or re-writes them as digital poems. Here again scholarly analyses tend to focus on the digital medium making possible that which was only implicit in print, but, as my analysis will illustrate, Uribe's poems set the stage for a discussion of multiplicity in the digital realm, one that makes poems exist in multiple forms and versions, and which open the door for a poetics of re-writing and re-working existing materials rather than privileging artistic originality.

Let's start with how Uribe forges a connection between the visual and the digital. The fact that she juxtaposes her 1968 collection *Tipoemas*, published as a print book originally, with the *Anipoemas*, written between 1997 and 2002 and published on her web page, signals that the *Anipoemas* can be read almost as an extension of what was done in print in the 1960s. The *Tipoemas*, to start, use typography representationally, and some show the creation of simplistic images: the poem "Bowling," for example, uses lowercase "i"s to represent the pins, while two "o"s placed below them represent the bowling balls one can imagine rolling toward them; "Catarata" is a rectangular shape formed by a regular pattern of parentheses that looks like downward flowing water. Others are less representational: "Poema cortante," for instance, begins as a line of "8"s, which half way through the line are cut open by a straight line, so that the divided "8"s become lowercase "o"s splitting off, upward and away from the line.

Even the more representational poems mentioned here are, however, more than the intersection of language with image. Movement is the desired effect of all the aforementioned poems, and "Poema cortante" shows a conscious manipulation of how linear movements in reading can be interrupted visually: our eye follows the initial lines of "8"s from left to right, but the horizontal cutting line appears to move toward them from the right (fig. 4.4). Much like the avant-garde visual poems we saw in chapter one, the poem is a typographical play on the dynamism of written language, but here, there is a certain presence of energy flow

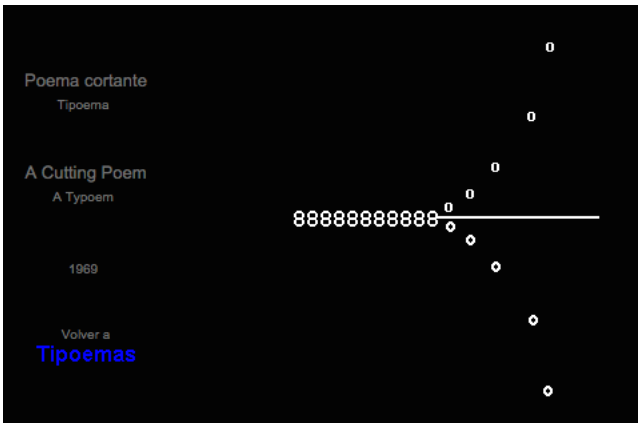

Fig. 4.4 Uribe, Ana María. "poema cortante." *Tipoemas y Anipoemas*. N.d. Web. 05 Feb. 2012.

and physical forces acting on the words. There is a centripetal force to this language, where objects move uniformly and adhere to one another, to their own center, while the visual, here, acts as the centrigural force that interrupts, that causes objects to fly away from their center. The same ideas can be applied to other *tipoemas*: in "Guggenheim Museum," the spiral created by the repetition of the title words; in "El poder de la reflexión," Uribe lays out concentric circles that, from the outside circle inward, endlessly repeat the phrases "creo que creo que…," "veo que veo que…," and "leo que leo que…," a reflection—very much in line with Oliverio Girondo's *Espántapájaros* poem—on the dynamic momentum created by the simultaneous acts of thinking, seeing, and reading.

In *Anipoemas*, it is interesting to note that letters begin to stand in for humans, animals, plants, and other living creatures: in these animated poems that progress along a feedback loop, endlessly repeating, we see the passing of "T"s—trees as seen from a train in "Panorama desde un tren"; herds of centaurs, shaped like "h"s, stomping across the area of the poems in the "Centauros" series; human figures doing gymnastics and a "pas de deux" as capital "P"s stick out their legs to become "R"s in the series of poems in which letters are anthropomorphized. Other poems evoke human movements by depicting objects that require physical manipulation, like the "H"s that attach onto one another to form a ladder, or the line of VVs that become Ws to resemble a zipper opening and closing (fig. 4.5; fig. 4.6).

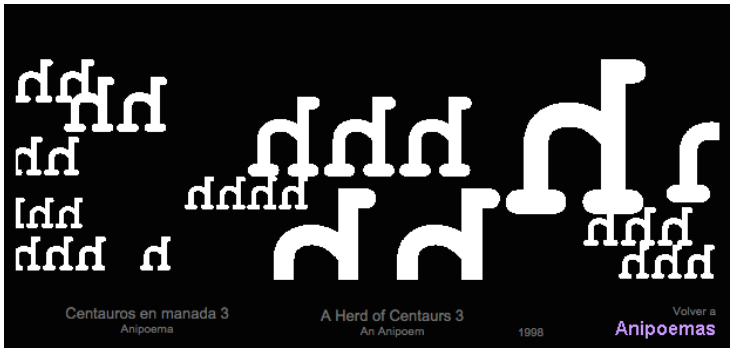

Fig. 4.5 Uribe, Ana María. Still shot of "Centauros en manada 3." *Tipoemas y Anipoemas*. N.d. Web. 05 Feb. 2012.

Fig. 4.6 Uribe, Ana María. Still shot of "¿Metálico o de plástico?." *Tipoemas y Anipoemas*. N.d. Web. 05 Feb. 2012.

What is particular to the digital medium in Uribe's poetry is thus not just a digital poetry that moves as opposed to a print poetry fixed on the page. Poetic language doesn't simply move, it is alive, it is humanized, it is performed. The letter-figures and -creatures reflect an understanding of the digital as a space—or, more accurately, a non-space—in which convergences between bodies and objects, matter and energy, language and non-verbal sensation take place. This is true both of the poems themselves in the sense that they play with structures of thought, images, and language influenced by the dynamic structures of the computer and the Web, but also in another sense we have not yet explored: the poems' mode of distribution.

Uribe's digital poems—"poesía visual animada con base en la WWW.," as the author's

description on her site reads—is created as a CD-ROM, but also as a website, in and for the Internet. Today, *Tipoemas y Anipoemas* are viewable on several different websites, but it's worth considering how the reader viewed the poems when they were originally published. They appear on a Tripod.com site: a popular Web hosting service that allows users to create their own web pages and generate their own content. The experience of viewing the poems on Uribe's Tripod page includes ads: as I look at the collection's main page, an ad in the lower left corner offers me free cake decorating classes; when I click to view the collection's table of contents, a video ad plays, promoting, ironically in my case, online Ph.D. programs.

Being used to dodging irritating banner ads, these aren't overly distracting to me as a reader, or at least I don't initially believe that they are. Upon reflection, however, I realize that the nature of the world wide web and the computer as a mode of access and distribution significantly influence how I read, especially if I compare this experience to reading a book. Opening a web browser and opening a book are two fundamentally different acts: when I open Google Chrome, my home page—in my case, my personal email inbox—opens automatically. My bookmarked pages pop up across the top of the screen. Maybe I remember something I was meaning to look up and forgot, and come back to what I intended to read only later. Maybe I'm opening a new tab in a browser open to various other sites I've been looking at. There are many variations on this, but suffice it to say that the poem read on the computer, and especially online, contends with the multiplicity of things we access there every day and, increasingly, with thought patterns that are increasingly erratic and attention spans that keep getting shorter. The print poem, and for that matter even the CD-ROM, occupy the entire space in which they are given: they fill the page or the screen; they occupy our attention. The digital web poem, on the contrary—and especially the small rectangles that enclose Uribe's poems—is always contextualized within the greater world of the Web and, by extension, the world beyond the screen: it responds to the increasingly short attention span and the increasing urge to multi-task of generations of digital natives reading computer poetry today.

Finally, there is yet another way in which we can conceive of an "aliveness" of Uribe's poetry: by returning to texts written as visual print poems in the 1960s, Uribe brings the texts back to life, in a sense. I wonder, then, if we cannot consider what Uribe does by re-engaging with previous texts almost like a performance of the former in a different medium. While the early idealist view of digital poetry might lead us to conclude that such a performance would be a return with an aim to improve, I think this would be a limiting and ultimately erroneous perspective. Performing similar texts in different media is not, I believe—or at least is not *only*—about perfecting the original.[89] In fact, the very idea of an original is contrary to the digital realm, within which we would be more on point to talk about versions without an original, bound by a structure that resembles a network more than a history, an archive, or a lineage. Textual versions in multiple media are part of a process of constant return and transformation, keeping it alive by putting it into dialogue with contemporary modes of expression, media, and technologies. At the same time, it takes up the sort of intermedial connections that do more than put into motion a more static visual poetic history:[90] it reaches back, yet again, to a looping trajectory of

[89] This idea of the digital medium "perfecting" poetic expression is implicit in many of the theories that have cited a certain idealism in this study; Jorge Luiz Antonio, a prolific writer on digital poetry from Brazil, performs an interesting analysis of Ana María Uribe's poems that ends by comparing her use of the digital medium to that of other poets, among them Augusto de Campos and Arnaldo Antunes, and stating: "se adhirieron al medio digital para hacer de él un aliado con el objetivo de perfeccionar la forma de expresión poética."

[90] This makes reference to a broader trend within critical studies of digital poetry, particularly regarding poets that write visual and later digital poems, to point to the connection between the visual and the digital and assert simply

experimental poets that is itself like a network rather than a lineage. In this sense, Uribe positions herself within the digital tendency to strive for an aliveness that encompasses movement and flexibility both on the level of the poem's material dimensions and on the level of its status as text, where it does not reach a finished state, but rather exists in a continuous process of making, a characteristic influenced by poetry written on and for the Web. As the following section will show, poetic performances in hybrid media, both analog and digital, align themselves similarly with a poetics that is open-ended, and which allows for a fluid and constantly re-creatable poem with shifting material dimensions.

Technology and the Body: Media Performances by Augusto de Campos and Arnaldo Antunes

In many ways, a discussion of media and technology picks up where the previous chapter left off, where embodiment is concerned. The embodied experience is a given from the start, with much of the early theory on literature, media, and technology taking up this point. Among the most well-known off these is Mark Hansen's *Embodying Technesis*. For Hansen, technesis, the "putting-into-discourse of technology," is determined by materiality, by which he means technology's impact on experience (4). Embodiment is key to Hansen's discussion, as he is in fact suggesting, with this book, that we stop privileging thought, theory, language, and representation over experience and practice when we discuss technology (14). Technology actually intervenes directly in our minds and bodies, asking us to recognize "robust materiality" as "technology's presubjective impact on our bodily experience" and "the foregrounding of the body as the site for technology's molecular material impact" (18). The same is true of Hayles' definition of materiality in digital texts, connected inherently to embodiment: "*The materiality of an embodied text is the interaction of its physical characteristics with its signifying strategies*" (*My Mother* 103; emphasis in original).

As Hayles explains in *How We Became Posthuman*, prevailing cultural and scientific discourse in cybernetics—or, more broadly, in the computer age—seems to reenact the Cartesian mind-body split in the privileging of disembodied information over materiality: "we participate in the cultural perception that information and materiality are conceptually distinct and that information is in some sense more essential, more important, and more fundamental than materiality" (18). Recognizing materiality and embodiment is "an opportunity to put back into the picture the flesh that continues to be erased in contemporary discussions about cybernetic subjects" (5). Embodiment, for Hayles, thus implies a situatedness in time, space, and culture.

This situatedness serves as a natural bridge to performance. In moving from holographic, virtual, and animated poems to intermedia performances, we can identify a continuity in the sense that all are involved in a metapoetic and metamedia process, bringing attention to the possibilities and ramifications of digital writing. This section, then, will focus on media poems and their intersection with performance, viewing the digital in all its multimedia, intermedia, and hybrid dimensions, which is to say that the digital will be considered, here, in terms of a platform

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that this continuity exists, or to point out the fact that digital poetry, and animated poems in particular, make static visual images move. Many conclusions echo this idea, like this one from a study of Ana María Uribe's web poems: "La obra de Ana María Uribe muestra claramente cómo la integración de movimiento a la poesía visual ha permitido lograr efectos que en papel hubieran sido imposibles" (Giovine). While this is undoubtedly true, the problem is, in a sense, that this assertion lies at the end rather than at the beginning of an analysis of the work: it sidesteps questions of what is particular to digital poetry, and how this reflects broader social and artistic concerns and modes of seeing and interacting with the world.

for the crossings of various other media, both analog and digital. Both Augusto de Campos and Arnaldo Antunes write from a position of a curious, critical exploration of what happens to poetic structures, language, and modes of meaning in this hybrid context, leaving behind some of the more utopian perspectives on digital media and the pitting of new media against old. Both experiment with meaning in multiple and hybrid media, where words are projected on a screen, spoken, or otherwise displayed, but are presented in conjunction with other forms of non-verbal sound, gesture, and images being either performed live or shown on film. What both poets ultimately show through the layering of media and meaning is that the media poem is malleable, can be transformed in different media, and never lands on any definitive meaning. Rather, with different media come multiple materialities, multiple contexts and embodied interactions that mold the text and its meaning with each performance or showing, revealing digital textuality as open to variability and multiplicity.

To contextualize these two poets and their interest in media performances and performance-poems, we can say that in the 1980s and 1990s, the experimental use of electronic media in poetry explodes in Brazil, with a wave of enthusiastic artists dabbling in the digital arts, including de Campos, Kac, and Antunes, as well as other Brazilian poets and theorists like André Vallias and Giselle Beiguelman. Notably, Eduardo Kac's 1996 anthology *New Media Poetry* is the first comprehensive collection of essays on and by media poets worldwide that is specifically about poetry written in new media, and has a strong component of Brazilian writers. In a way, electronic media and new technologies tap into the idealism that was key to early Concrete poetry, igniting the belief in new modes of making the poem *sintético*, as the Brazilians often note, referring to the ideal of poetic conciseness and brevity, of a condensation that opens up to multiple layers of perception and meaning.

For Augusto de Campos, the layering of different meanings and different material forms is generated by the interpenetration of various analog and digital media and different textual versions created through the years. I will begin with an example: the poem "cidade" and its trajectory from print to media performance. The first version of "cidade," from 1963, appears in *Viva Vaia* printed on a long, slim piece of paper that, when unfolded, is triple the width of the other pages (115). The poem is designed to make a critical statement *about* the book—breaking out of its dimensional limits, forcing the reader to manipulate the page physically—that depends on its ironic placement *within* the book. The poem's structure, with the three different suffixes, -cidade, -cité, and -city, at the end, allows for a sort of reading loop—the type of feedback loop that becomes common in digital media—in which different reading strategies create different sonorous and visual effects and verbal resonances. Despite its decidedly linear structure, then, the poem invites the reader to fragment it and recombine its parts with the three suffixes to explore what we might read as the multilingual and polyphonous constitutive elements of the city. At the same time, it invites us to read the single line as one long run-on word that creates a more harmonious vision of a city skyline, while its oralization introduces different verbal associations and non-verbal sound patterns.

A vocal performance of the poem by Augusto de Campos is found on the audio CD *Poesia é risco* from 1994, in which his son, musician Cid Campos, accompanies his readings with electronic music. The audio version manifests the implicit reading possibilities in the print text, creating a sense of fragmentation in its own way, mixing electronic effects with the poet's voice, so that the opening of the poem seamlessly transitions from a harsh electronic sound into a repetition of the word "cidade," rhythmically distorted and chopped as the repetitions become clearer and longer and the word becomes identifiable. The remainder of the recording heaps one

reading on top of another at different speeds, volumes, and pitches, creating a dizzying and disturbing effect. The variations in the poem's materiality—the changes in how the physical characteristics of the performed versus the printed poem interact with the poet's and the reader's physical and mental responses—manage to create, nevertheless, parallel responses through different means: each one transmits the city as a bewildering space, and each in their own way contains a resistance against a clear communication of verbal content.

I turn next to Augusto de Campos' intermedia performances of "cidade/city/cité," which offer up further versions of the poem in different physical forms and media. In recent decades, Augusto de Campos, along with Cid Campos and occasionally other poets and musicians, has given multiple performances of many of the poems from previously printed and recorded in audio form. In the video recording of a performance of "cidade/city/cité"—viewable on Augusto de Campos' *YouTube* channel—from a November 1996 show in São Paulo, de Campos achieves the effect of the layered voices and sounds through a live musical performance and vocal readings on top of recordings like those that appear on the CD. Not only does the performance bring together the previous versions of the poem in print and audio form, but it also incorporates the world outside and even transcreations of the poem by other artists.[91] First, the video alternates between a view of the city at night—squares of light in skyscrapers—and a strikingly similar display of white rectangles that are, in fact, close-up shots of a transposition of the poem

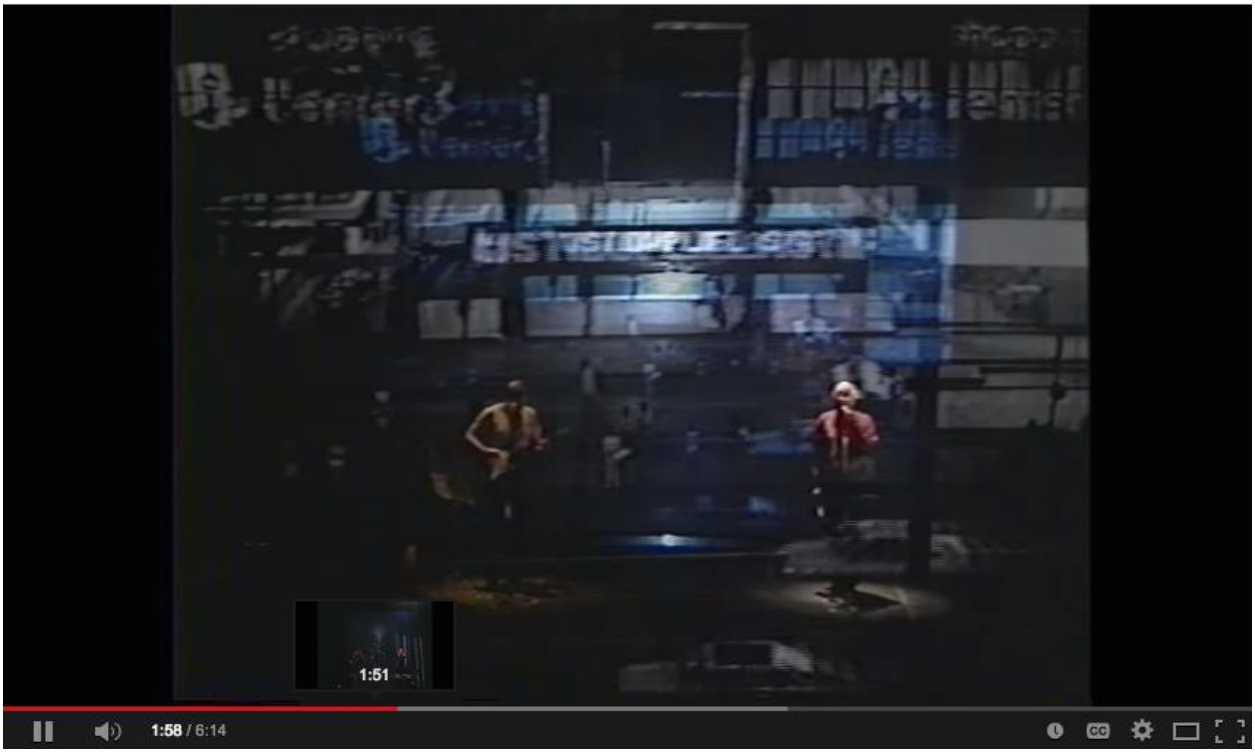

Fig. 4.7. Screenshot. Campos, Augusto de and Cid Campos's "cidade/city/cité live." 1996. *Poesia é risco Multimedia Show. YouTube LLC*. 26 Dec. 2010. Digital video file. Web. 15 Feb. 2013.

[91] The term "transcreation" is coined by Haroldo de Campos, and is used by both Haroldo and Augusto as a central concept in their theory of translation. Both prolific translators, they emphasize the creative and transformative aspect of translation, so that every translation is also an original text, to a certain degree. For further details, see Haroldo de Campos' essays on transcreation and translation in *Novas* or the new anthology *Transcriação*.

by Erthos Albino de Souza into code of the type that was punched onto a card to store data on early digital computers. The 150-character line that constitutes the poem passes by in different fonts at speeds that make reading more or less impossible. The video also includes a video recording of the poem being displayed on one of the avenues of São Paulo on the type of electronic message board one associates with banks or airports (fig. 4.7). As the velocity and multiplicity of the readings increase, the recognizable images give way to flashes of light and rapidly moving words or objects, indistinguishable from one another.

What the performance brings to the other versions is a conscious incorporation and manipulation of new technologies. One way of looking at the relationship between versions, then, is simply that the technology was not in place to release a performed version of a poem to the public when Augusto de Campos first began writing his poetry, and so their material dimensions shift as new technological possibilities are made available. What is interesting is that de Campos seems to perform or make manifest the many implications condensed into the print poem, thus seemingly unfolding the print poem's possibilities. On the one hand, the quality that we called *sintético* earlier in this analysis is lost with the proliferation of media; on the other, connections to different technologies, spaces, images, and subjects—through the presence of the audience—are gained.

This temptation to compare different versions and to speak about gains and losses, however, reflects our persistent belief in a textual original and in a need for a definitive text that is *the* text, which results in the evaluation of certain texts or versions as being improvements on others. Indeed, newer technologies may seem to make possible better—more dynamic, more hybrid—versions of print poems, but, as Augusto de Campos explains in a 2008 interview with Marina Corrêa, a multimedia poem like "cidade" scatters meaning in different directions rather than crystallizing the poem's original meaning:

> With digital resources, it is possible to reconstruct the poetic forms in unlimited ways. For example my poem "cidade" already had many non-orthodox interpretations, which deconstructed it, cast its words in various directions, riffling or scattering them, with sometimes interesting results, even though they can hardly advantageously replace the succinct form, the best form, the most economic and 'gestaltic' form of the original poem. ("Concrete Poetry")

It is unclear whether he is referring to his own performances when he talks about interpretations, but the idea certainly applies to them: although the poem is open to unlimited reconstructions, de Campos accords a certain privilege to the "original" poem, the "best" by virtue of being the most succinct and economic. Indeed, it seems contrary to the poems of the more orthodox concrete phase to produce newer versions at all, since the responsibility toward language meant that each word within the poem carried weight and intentionality: "chegar a produções às quais não se pudesse substituir uma palavra, uma letra, deslocar uma parcela do texto sem que o poema desmoronasse – algo que é afinal a meta de todos os poetas" ("Folha").

Why create new versions in different media at all, then? It seems ironic, given the above statement, that a poet like de Campos continuously takes up creating new versions of existing poems, and of modifying poems through the use of different media. But I believe that the proliferation of versions through media makes two important points. Firstly, what we privilege in a poetic text is both subjectively and historically relative: the condensation that the Concrete poets sought in the 1950s and 1960s is not necessarily the shape that the poem takes in the 1980s and 1990s, as cognitive processes in people that are digital literates and natives reflect more of a tendency to multitask, to process information in multiple forms at once. Secondly, even if de

Campos privileges the poem's original form, its constant remediation—moving it from one medium to another—is a way of keeping the text and its meaning alive, constantly in process.[92] This ensures that meaning is always being generated anew, never becoming stagnant.

How do we, then, as readers, critics, and writers, conceive of the relations between the different versions? Would we consider the recorded "cidade/city/cite" from 1995 to be the same poem as the 1963 printed version of "cidade"? Do processes of intermedia transposition alter a text to the point that they become discrete entities?

I believe that looking at the nature of performance can provide some insight into these questions. Unlike theater, where we have an "original" script that is performed many times in different ways, performance has no original: each performance *is* merely itself, unique but at the same time open to endless variations. Embodiment, performance, and digital media are thus connected in a significant way. Performance theory clarifies the tension between the definitive nature of the performance itself—the material aspects of the poem, the bodies it involves and the space it occupies *are* the poem—and the dynamic, fluctuating nature of meaning that can mold itself to different bodies and different spaces with each new performance or material form. Josette Féral points to several foundational characteristics of performance that might be useful in discussing not only performances that implement electronic media, but poems in the electronic and digital realm more broadly. The first of these characteristics is the manipulation of the performer's body, the body "made conspicuous" (171); this applies as much to the bodies of the two performers—Cid and Augusto de Campos—that we see on stage in the live performances as to the bodies that are involved in reading dynamic digital poems *as* performance, as we will see with Arnaldo Antunes, among others. The second is the manipulation of space: the performance space becomes an object to be explored; it is not a setting or a place, "but, like a body, becomes part of the performance to such an extent that it cannot be distinguished from it. It *is* the performance" (173). This echoes not only the situatedness of the materially-based poems as we have discussed in the context of poem-objects, poem-events, and Land Art, for example, but also the idea of media-specific analysis in the digital realm, where the physical space and dimensions of the poem are inseparable from its verbal content.

How, though, do we reconcile this idea of space as being identical to or constitutive of the performance/poem itself with the fact that a poem can move between spaces and undergo spatial deformations while remaining identical to itself? In what ways is the poem thus capable of being both itself and something else? If we admit this apparent paradoxical quality to be true, it opens up the question of what else this might apply to—all texts? other objects? subjects? In fact, as I will continue to argue throughout this chapter, digital textuality offers alternatives to the oppositions between difference and sameness, fixity and instability: meaning here is neither endlessly deferred nor rigidly established; it is always defined in relation to its concrete and situated characteristics and is, at the same time, variable, open to modification.

With this in mind, we can turn to the work of Arnaldo Antunes, a musician and poet whose work is, in many ways, relatable to that of Augusto de Campos. What interests me specifically are the affinities and differences between the two poets' use of hybrid media, and to conceptualize a materiality- and performance-based textuality as it appears in their work. Writing

[92] It is worth noting that the idea of process in digital poetry and digital performance is also present in the sense that the digital is a temporal process in a very concrete sense: as Hayles points out, "digital characteristics imply that the poem ceases to exist as a self-contained object and instead becomes a *process*, an event brought into existence when the program runs on the appropriate software loaded onto the right hardware" ("The Time of Digital Poetry" 181-182).

well after the orthodox phase of Concrete poetry, Antunes cannot be considered a Concrete poet, but his alignment with Concrete poetic principles is clear, creating a similar dialogue between the written word, graphic design, anti-syntactical structures, speech, and music.

Having begun his career as a vocalist with the rock band "Titãs," however, Antunes approaches poetry from a different angle that is more immediately related to performance. The poems that I will analyze here are different from the recordings of live performances by Augusto de Campos in that Antunes' video and audio poems are studio-recorded oralizations and carefully edited videos; in other words, there is no prior textual version of the performance, no option of seeing them as performances *of* poems that existed in another medium. They are not performed by a person on a stage, but bodily acts are constitutive of the poem, and engage with non-verbal aspects of language that engage the body and sensation on the receptive end.

Focusing on Antunes' multimedia and intermedia work, we can identify two main categories of performance-type texts. Chronologically, the first, presented in the book and videotape or DVD *Nome*, published in 1993, consists of printed poems alongside video poems. Unlike in Augusto de Campos' poems, in which the printed text exists prior to the performance, Antunes' printed poems are, for the most part, still shots and occasionally printed lyrics/verses derived from the video-poems, so that most often, the verbal content—that which is traditionally considered its principal substance—exists only as a transitory flickering across the scene.

In his comments on his own work, Antunes also emphasizes the fact that the body, in both its sensorial and kinetic functions, plays an important role in disrupting and/or presenting alternative layers of meaning to the verbal. He states with clarity the role of the non-verbal dimensions of language and performance—handwriting and vocal intonation, specifically—in the process of creating meaning:

> Calligraphy may work as a visual counterpart to the intonating resources of speech (or of singing). It's like graphic intonation. Exciting the verbal with suggestions of senses that go beyond it, offering contexts in which it is transformed, generating hybrid codes. […] The use of these features of writing or of voice (depending on the case) constitutes a language, which absorbs the word but amplifies its possibilities of signification. (Interview)

The two poems that that most overtly deal with questions of performance, embodiment, language, and signification are "nome não" and "pessoa." "Nome não" makes reference to different media and different registers, creating playful and ironic interactions between words and meanings. Its childlike melody and lyrics—Antunes sings about animals, sounds, and colors—create a light atmosphere that masks a deeper preoccupation not only with language's (in)ability to signify, but with the human impact of our constant attempts to assign meaning. The lyrics or verses on their own are absurd, as his stanzas on colors illustrate: "os nomes das cores não são as cores / as cores são: / preto azul amarelo verde vermelho marrom," followed later by "os nomes das cores não são as cores / as cores são: / tinta cabelo cinema sol arco-íris tevê."

Only through the video does it becomes clear that underlying the nonsensical verbal content lies a commentary on the cognitive processes involved in processing language and apprehending the world around us. Objects are made to clash with signifiers, signifiers and referents are multiplied, and the relations between names and the things they designate are pushed to the limits of comprehensibility: we can see, for example, a white horse painted with the word "branco," followed by large commercial letters spelling out the word "azul" that are being painted yellow, and pictures of toy dogs and cows being designated verbally with the words "cristal" and "madeira." The video poem seems to possess, for Antunes, the ability to

create new connections between words and ideas that are not discursive, linear, or syntactical, but rather function through visual associations, in a logic that more closely resembles hypertext and its ability to jump from one point to another. This hypertextual logic, however, is anything but arbitrary: interspersed with segments of workers manufacturing and painting words, "nome não" seemingly addresses the arbitrariness of language, but ultimately, the question of arbitrariness is reversed: is the name of the thing not indeed, in some sense, the thing—or at the very least, *a* thing—in itself?

In another of the poems from *Nome*, titled "pessoa," we witness a similar preoccupation with words and how they reflect or construct the world, presented through simultaneous, yet conflicting modes of conveying meaning. The poem heaps together the four different performatic elements mentioned by Antunes: calligraphy and verbal content, voice/intonation and structure. On a background of handwritten, illegible scrawls, a line of computerized words passes across the screen, at an ever faster pace. The written words seem to consist of various definitions or meditations on the meaning of the word "pessoa," while the voice speaks the structure of the given text, referring to each word in sequence using different grammatical terms.[93]

The first sentence, "Coisa que acaba," is read as "sujeito sujeito predicado," a verbalization of the phrase's grammatical structure and an attempt to convey verbally the poem's material and compositional elements. Toward the end of the poem, the two modes of verbal communication—spoken and written—mirror each other in ways that again ironize and complicate the role of language as both structure and content. To attempt to illustrate the parallelisms and devices used, I have transcribed the written message, followed by the oral reading: "Cara, bicho, objeto. Nome que se esquece" is visible while "Vocábulo vírgula lexia vírgula nome ponto objeto pronome relativo pronome reflexivo verbo transitivo direto ponto final" is the message being verbalized. The words "nome" and "objeto" form a sort of verbal-sonorous chiasmus, the word "nome" being vocalized while the written word "objeto" appears and vice versa (fig. 4.8).

The viewer/listener/reader's task when faced with "pessoa" is similar to that of rubbing one's belly while patting one's head, and ultimately, we come away from our contact with the poem without a clear grasp on the written content or the vocalized reading. As readers, we are likely to want to divide the poem into multiple sequential readings, each in their distinct medium, but the nature of performance makes this quite impossible.[94] The human and embodied elements of the text superimposed upon discursive, written

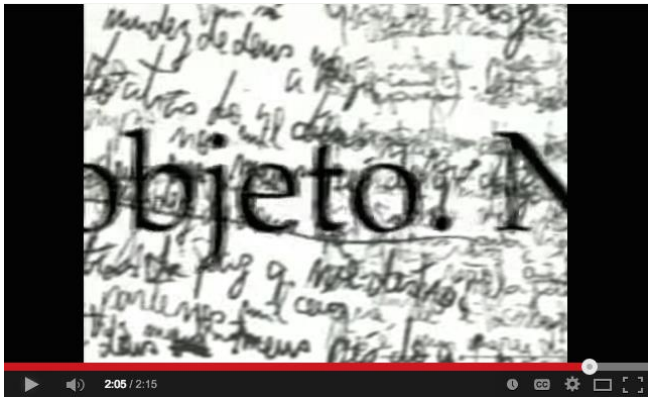

Fig. 4.8. Screenshot. Antunes, Arnaldo. "pessoa." *Nome. YouTube LLC*. 2 Jun. 2010. Digital video file. 10 Apr. 2013.

[93] Antunes himself does not clarify whether all the written sentences are meant to refer to the meaning or definition of "pessoa," but he does publish on his personal website Nelson Brissac's article on *Nome*, who describes "pessoa" as follows: "As definições de dicionário da palavra 'pessoa' são enumeradas sobre um fundo rascunhado, uma mistura de vários textos manuscritos ou datilografados."

[94] The entire written text does appear in the book, but this gives only a partial view of the performed poem as a whole.

language and the explicit naming of its functional structure produce a simultaneity of different and conflicting ways of transmitting meaning. It thus performs the sort of resistance that is inherent in language, but masked by the insistence on its discursive functions and their tendency toward unitary and stable meaning. In other words, the poet performs simultaneously the complex operations involved in 'reading' a poem: the materiality of the words, their grammatical functions, the presence of a subject in the voice and in scrawled handwriting in the background, and the deciphering—as well as the ultimate indecipherability—of all these levels of language at once. To put it another way, Antunes' performance answers the central question of *what* it is, in a poem, that is performed—structure or content—resolutely with the answer: "both." And while this obscures the verbal content we usually privilege, it illuminates features of language and poetry that have long been made to seem transparent.

Antunes's work thus allows us to reach a possible conclusion regarding the juxtaposition or combination of verbal and non-verbal content in different media. His combination of media through video footage, still images, handwriting, voice recording, and printed text propose a non-linear and non-syntactical way of reading that requires several cognitive operations at once from the reader/viewer. As such, they are an opening not merely into an alternative way of reading a poem, but into alternative approaches to language, processes of signification, and creation of meaning in general through the layering of conflicting meanings. Seen within this light, we can relate this process to de Campos' performances as well: they can be seen as promoting the same sort of non-conventional modes of reading made possible through hybrid media. The performance-poem's inherent multiplicity of material forms and verbal and non-verbal meaning represents a poetic materiality less tied to the discursive realm of stability and permanence, and more close approximated to the performative realm of digital media, more connected with a sense of reality as fundamentally relative, variable, and open.[95]

My final contention, and my conclusion to the analysis of these performance-poems, is that they represent a shift in how we conceive of the relationship between texts. Several digital and media theory concepts in particular are related to this shift and arise out of this plurality of versions in different media of one and the same text. The first is Marjorie Perloff's term

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[95] One final way of looking at the issue of the field of relationships that we can drawn between different texts or versions is through the concept of isomorphism that the Concrete poets used in many of their early manifestos. It allows the distinction, derived from abstract algebra and the Aristotelian law of identity, between the principle of identity between two objects in the sense that everything that is true about one is true about the other, and isomorphism, which unites two objects by the principle that what is true about a certain part of an object's structure is true about the other's. The link between elements of form and content, or of time and space, as they write in the "plano piloto para poesia concreta," is structural, and thereby abandons claims to the absolute: "renunciando à disputa do 'absoluto', a poesia concreta permanence no campo magnético do relativo perene" (217).
Another way to frame this issue—and one that does not resonate with as many historical and literary implications as the Concrete concept of isomorphism—is to use the notion of a constellatory logic to describe the relationship between different textual elements as well as between versions of texts. In a 1956 interview published in the Diário Popular, Augusto de Campos describes Mallarmé's legacy, from Un coup de dés, as resulting in "uma constelação de relações temáticas (que chama de "subdivisões prismáticas da Ideia")." I am certainly not the first to note the affinity between stars/constellations and words/poems; critics such as Mary Ellen Solt, Claus Clüver, and Marjorie Perloff have also used the metaphor of the constellation in reference to poems formed of non-linear clusters of words. It does provide a useful image of how we search for meaning in these types of texts: the words evoke a constellation in the sense that each word-object is a thing in and of itself, while also forming a constellation that is shaped not only out of its constitutive materials, but out of the relations between them as well. In this sense, the performatic poem can also be considered constellatory, permitting words and things to be both themselves and something else, and allowing for a plurality of points of entry that ultimately lead to a plurality of possible performances and dispersed meanings.

"differential text," "that is to say, texts that exist in different material forms, with no single version being the definitive one" ("Screening the Page" 146). No version has priority; we can read them all as "alternate was of tackling a given problem" ("Differential Poetics").[96] Through this lens, we can assert that the performance-poem, grounded in materiality, exists in various material forms and media, and allows for a variety of readings of the relations between poems, one that does not preclude assigning a definitive quality to a given version, but simultaneously forms a sort of cluster of versions that is always open to reconfigurations and modifications. The second term, variability, is used by Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* to designate a similar phenomenon that, he argues, is inherent to new media: "A new media object is not something fixed once and for all, but something that can exist in different, potentially infinite versions" (36). The third is Katherine Hayles' concept referring to a similar principle: she talks about the work as assemblage, texts forming clusters characterized by varying degrees of difference and similarity. According to Hayles, the cluster itself is what constitutes the "work," which is not itself connected to an object, but rather to the network of texts and the relations between them (*My Mother* 104-105).

In sum, each of these different terms represents a similar impetus: taking into account the field of relations between different texts and defining the text as a material object that is open to modification. Overall, I think, this also taps into the network structure of the computer and the Web, an interrelated net without points of origin, a rhizomatic structure, as Deleuze would call it. Together, these concepts point to a broad shift in how we conceive of texts themselves as objects/events in the world, allowing us to approach meaning in any given text as a provisional convergence of elements in the present moment that is always open to variation.

This networked structure, the principle of variability, and the theory of the differential text can also be applied to other aspects of poetics in the digital age. For instance, the idea of the network informs a digital understanding of subjectivity as relational, and of the subject as a convergence in the present moment of matter, energy, and language, as we will see in the subsequent section. The concept of the network also begins to generate collective art and authoring projects that emphasize the connections between different poets and artists. The importance of these modes of conceiving of the relationship between texts, versions, and subjects is not applicable solely to digital texts: it demands a new mode of reading poetry that allows us to go back to past poetic forms and conventions as well, and consider what aspects of the text might be illuminated by reading texts as performances, processes, or variable versions. Each version of a text, just like each reading, is situated in a particular time and space, and is related to a particular configuration of bodies, so that the text does not possess meaning by being simply visible, knowable; it is knowable and gains meaning *because* it shifts. Let us not forget that we live in the age of Wikipedia: new chunks of "knowledge" are added and subtracted every day; everyone is an author and everyone is an editor; content is updated instantly. Poems in the digital realm are taking on the ability to be transformed. If meaning is material, materiality itself can be transformed without making meaning obsolete.

[96] Perloff also offers a helpful way to deal with the complex terminology of multimedia, intermedia, and hybrid media, proposing the idea of differentiality as a way out of this: "The works in question are not so much intermedia (e.g., word + image or word set to music or recited on film) as produced *differentially* in alternate media, as if to say that *knowledge* is now available through different channels and by different means" ("Differential Poetics").

Current Directions in Latin American Digital Poetry: Uncreativity, Convergences, and Collective Makings

The final section of this dissertation attempts to outline some of the directions of digital poetry since the turn of the 21st century. To begin, I will look at some of the tendencies and terminologies emerging in the realm of digital criticsm and in how artists and scholars use the Web as a platform for collecting and distributing digital texts, noting particularly the role of the online archive, the formation of poetic collectives, and non-conventional forms of digital creativity. I will then focus the bulk of this analysis to the work, firstly, of two founding artists of the collective project *findelmundo*, Argentine writer Belén Gache and media artist Gustavo Romano, as well as Argentine media poet Eugenio Tisselli. Their work fits into a category of digital poetry that has been written roughly in the past decade, between the early 2000s and the present, characterized as a digital poetic project that arises after the hopeful and enthusiastic sheen of new media has worn off and new media have definitively become, simply, media. The emphasis in this section, then, will be on exploring the following features of contemporary digital poetics: real-time generation of content and machine creativity or (*auto-)poiesis*, network structures and their effects on oppositional structures, poetic time and place as convergence, and digital authorship as a form of uncreativity.

One of the first things to note in recent digital poetics is that the borders between different modes of writing and reading begin to blur, particularly at the lines between poetry and criticism, between originality and rewriting, and even between poet, reader/viewer, and machine. A key shift away from the idealistic view of new media can be observed in the fact that the terminology around digital poetry is no longer characterized by abstract formulations of how reality is depicted in the computer realm—the virtual being a key example of this—but rather by using operative concepts from the computer and Web—real-time, network—to critically reflect on how its modes of functioning and inherent structures conceptualize and transform poetic writing and reading.

We should note here that the utopian faith exhibited early on does not entirely disappear from digital and media writing; it becomes, rather, a point of critical exploration, generating questions around the more realistic possibilities and limitations of Web and computer poetry. What *has* changed quite definitively is that digital poetics takes a more conscious critical stance against the linear and progress-driven aspect of this digital and poetic idealism. Claudia Kozak—one of Latin America's most engaged writers on digital poetry and founding member of the Argentine group Colectivo Ludión—refers to this as avoiding a tightening, a "riesgo del tensamiento técnico" ("Manifiesto Ludión" 1). For Kozak, this tightening indicates the closure of the relationship between art and technology in a single direction, toward what she calls "las posiciones hegemónicas modernizadoras": novelty, progress, and the non critical acceptance of new gadgets and technologies. In other words, contemporary digital poetics opens the door to an exploration of how "techno-poetics," as she calls them, can perpetuate or offer alternatives to the digital as participatory in hegemonic forms of modernity. I believe that one of the main ways in which poets avoid this particular tightening—and I have made this point in other chapters as well—is through non-linear temporalities and histories and through alternatives to oppositional structures of thought.

As indicated above, another main way in which the digital—and the Web in particular—has recently transformed contemporary poetics is related to the figure of the writer and a broader conception of subjectivity. The art/poetry collective is one manifestation of a renewed interest in

collaborative projects and authoring, a clear reaction against the figure of the poet as individual genius and against conventional understandings of artistic creativity more generally. Digital theorists have also noted this collectivity as a form of broadening the lyric "I": Adalaide Morris writes that "the 'I' of the lyric morphs into the polysemous, constantly changing, distributive 'I' of the informational economy" (20); Katherine Hayles goes so far as to say that in the digital age, the posthuman condition implies that we envision ourselves as a collectivity, that an "I" is always seen as a "we" (*How We Became* 6).

In the poetic projects of the *findelmundo* collective, for instance, as well as on André Vallias' anthology site *Errática*, we see that not only the collective nature of digital poetry challenges the conventional creative role of the poet, but that these writers also explore the creative use of media along with the non-creative use of content—in other words, rewriting or recycling the texts of other poets in a digital context—and machine-generated creativity as digital, Web-based modes of poetic creation.

A related point, then, is how these poets posit the nature of the archive and the types of relationships it establishes not only between writers, readings, and machines, but between texts themselves, a question that addresses a similar idea of a textual assemblage that we saw in Augusto de Campos' poems. Indeed, the Web as a networked archive of texts and poetic objects shapes both the relationships between writers and between texts themselves, as well as the nature of what we expect from a digital archive. I think it is crucial to note, first of all, that two of the most significant Latin American sites that archive digital poetry and criticism—the *Colectivo Ludión* publications and André Vallias' *errática*—prominently display the idea of their own incompleteness and errors. The manifesto of Colectivo Ludión refers to *Ludión* as an "archivo blando," which she defines in her introduction to *Tecnopoéticas Argentinas* as "incompleto por decisión," "errático y sesgado" (7). André Vallias' site features a page titled "errata" where, instead of noting errors in published texts—a concept that is inapplicable in the digital realm of constant textual modifications—he provides a page of quotes by well-known (mostly Brazilian) writers on the concept of error.

These points remind us that the Web as an archive that is constantly being updated and modified, perpetually added to, is by definition always in the making, and this concept of *poiesis*—poetry as a process of making—becomes a feature not only of Web archiving, but of digital writing in the broader sense. André Vallias' various poetic projects are deeply imbued with this notion of *poiesis*, both in terms of his site *errática* and his own poetry on his site *andrevallias*. *Errática*, firstly, demonstrates how the online archive complicates notions of authorship. For example, on the front page of most recent poems, Augusto de Campos is listed as an author of "Dois poemas," two recent digital poems he has composed; another poem on the page, "Pierrô Lunar," lists Arnold Schoenberg as the author. Only when we click on the text itself do we find Augusto de Campos listed under the header "recriação poética." Another text on the same page, authored by André Vallias himself, is called "Rotonda" and is something like a GIF, a video-"sculpture," supposedly by Anish Kapoor, that consists of rain falling through the hole in the ceiling of the Pantheon. Who is the author in these poems and, more importantly, wherein exactly lies the act of authorship, the act of poetic writing? Is the task of the poet even writing at all, in the conventional sense?

It seems, in fact, that the idea of poetry as *making* rather than *writing* takes a strong hold in the digital realm precisely in response to a more fluid understanding of what it is that the digital poet *does* with the poetic material. It becomes an act that includes both composing and creating new verbal and non-verbal language and non-verbal content, but that also encompasses

processes of managing and manipulating existing materials, two terms introduced by Kenneth Goldsmith in *Uncreative Writing* to which I will return below. Regarding this broader concept of poetry as *making*, we can see that it is implemented both critically and creatively by André Vallias.

I mentioned Vallias earlier in the chapter as a poet that displayed a high level of enthusiasm for digital possibilities from an early point in Latin American digital writing, particularly for the inclusivity and intermediality of the digital realm. The idea of *poiesis* as a fundamental way of conceiving of digital writing can be seen, then, as a sort of bridge between the more utopian view of digital writing and current, more nuanced views on digital poetics. For Vallias, *poiesis* is initially conceived in relation to his idea of the text as an open diagram to call attention to the digital poem's structural relation to time and space, so that it starts as a mode of differentiating digital writing to print. The 1991 poem "Nous n'avons pas compris Descartes" (*andrevallias*)—clearly an illustration of the principles he discusses in his essay "We Have Not Understood Descartes," quoted earlier in this chapter—is a clear visualization of Vallias' understanding of the digital poem as diagram in the spatial sense (fig. 4.9).

The image shows the structure of the poem itself as incompatible spatially with the structure of the page; on a deeper level, it illustrates Vallias' view of the digital medium as restructuring basic foundational notions of space and thought through the use of non-Euclidian geometry and the negation of abstract thought as conceived in the Cartesian paradigm. Many of his own poems on the site *andrevallias* are, in fact, diagrammatic texts in which grids take on various shapes and movements, as for example in the poem "de verso," where a two-dimensional grid takes on three-dimensional textures that correspond to meter: the grid is patterned, spatially, with the notational shapes of iambs, anapests, dactyls, and trochees. The poem illustrates how Vallias aims to incorporate the multiplicity and interrelation of different codes in digital poetry; in this case, the written codes that correspond to rhythmic organization are merged with geometric codes, visualized on the screen through a complex process of computer coding.[97] It exemplifies his statement on his

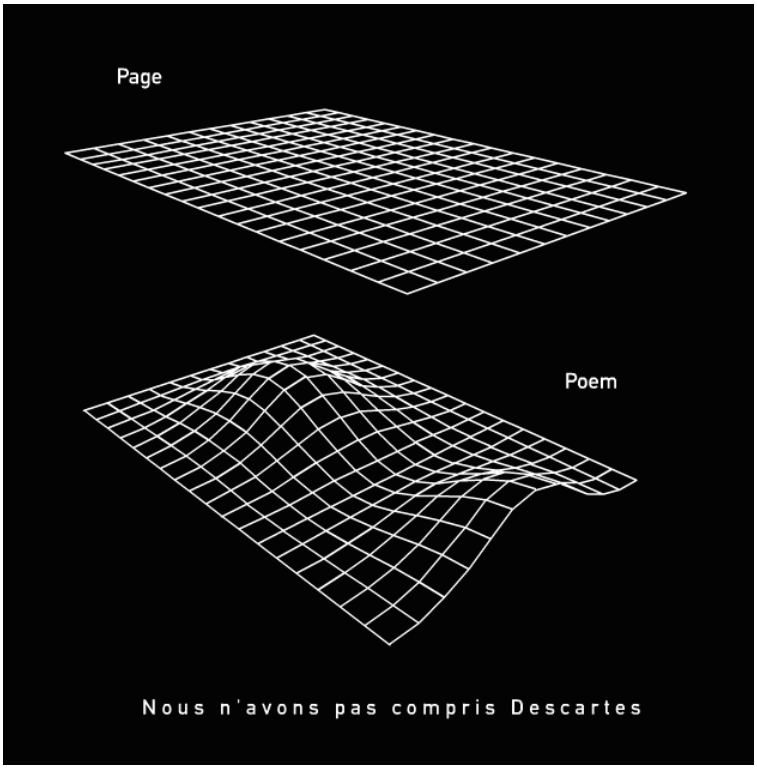

Fig. 4.9. Vallias, André. "Nous n'avons pas compris Descartes." *andrevallias*. N.d. Web. 15 Jun. 2013.

[97] I would like to mention in passing that there are some studies, particularly from earlier digital scholarly work, around the role of code in digital writing. While today most software programs mean that composing even animated and other complex digital texts are designed to replicate the word processing experience, making the coding process invisible to the user, it would be interesting to delve further into the relationship between poetic language and code.

website's main page of what the diagram represents:

> O conceito de poema como *diagrama aberto*, ao incorporar as noções de pluralidade, interrelação e reciprocidade de códigos, não só garante a viabilidade da poesia numa sociedade sujeita a constantes revoluções tecnológicas, como lhe confere uma posição privilegiada -> a de uma *poesia universal progressiva* (como antevia Schlegel) ou simplesmente: ***poiesis*** (do grego = criação, feitura)... (formatting in original; *andrevallias*)

Vallias, then, envisions an expansive kind of poetry that encompasses everything under the sun, which recalls a certain Romantic understanding of poetry's role that is not unrelated to the collective nature of writing in the digital context.[98] More broadly, though, the above definition indicates that the idea of *poiesis* not only protects digital poetry from becoming outdated through the development of new technologies, but it allows for a continuous exploration of different modes of creativity in the digital realm.

I will turn, then, to the Argentine poetry collective *findelmundo*, and firstly to its founder, Belén Gache, whose work explores the idea of *poiesis* as a making and unmaking of meaning through the intellect and through the senses, and as a process that oscillates between individual creativity and imagination, on the one hand, and the digital manipulation of existing materials, on the other.

The name of the collective is in fact based on the title of Belén Gache's book *El libro del fin del mundo*, published in 2002 as a book and CD-ROM combination, but with the print book available today as a PDF on the author's web site, and the CD-ROM content accessible there as independent poetic texts as well, compiled in the online book titled *Wordtoys*. *El libro del fin del mundo* is a book of knowledge about an alternate world, thereby already placing itself in line with one of the primary metaphors of even pre-digital hypertextuality: the encyclopedia. The hypertextual organization of information in the online encyclopedia also determines the structure of *El libro del fin del mundo*: "La inclusión de trabajos hipertextuales y el vínculo con el sitio del libro en Internet enfatizan las nociones de no linealidad y bifurcación implícitas en la concepción de la obra."

The dialogue between print and digital media in the book/site raises some interesting questions about language and modes of poetic writing and creativity in the digital age. The original book project, and, it's safe to assume, the art collective *findelmundo* as a whole, addresses its own continuity with previous literary imaginings of ideal books, like Mallarmé's absolute book, Borges' encyclopedias that contain entire worlds ("Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius") or else strange and disturbing taxonomies ("Emporio celestial de conocimientos benévolos"), or Leibniz's encyclopedia that would contain all fields of human knowledge. The latter is cited in the book's description on the *findelmundo* site, with a note that *El libro del fin del mundo* "se constituye igualmente como una enciclopedia sólo que en este caso se trata de un corpus inacabado y abierto, proporcionando un cuestionamiento acerca del espacio de identidades y diferencias según las cuales distribuimos, reconocemos y nombramos nuestro mundo."

As mentioned briefly above, the book is, in fact, an encyclopedic collection of texts that introduce the reader to the fictional world of *Belelandia* through shorts texts, drawings, and

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[98] I mention this connection to Romanticism in passing not in order to make a comprehensive point about the connection, although I think it would be worth exploring this connection further. I think that Romantic-digital link, unlikely as it may seem, is representative of the sort of digital conception of history that emphasizes non-chronological relationships between different artistic movements and interests, or even of the kind of anthropophagous logic that encourages the idea of incorporating those foreign elements that will strengthen one's own artistic project across boundaries of history and ideologies.

images representing its customs, creatures, citizens, archeology, cosmology, and other aspects. Many of these revolve around the concept of truth and spin fantastical stories about how we try to see it, reach it, pin it down, from emperors that tried to write it into books (11-12) to inhabitants of towns that see it written in the tops of trees (14). The images, on the other hand, often depict schoolchildren (15), or the pages of textbooks, with various solid-seeming scientific theories, overlaid with the question: "Is it true?" (20-23). The final page of the opening section shows the art of war of *Belelandia* depicted in fencing duels representing battles for truth between many of the same oppositional concepts we have discussed throughout these chapters: "sensible vs. inteligible"; "pensamiento vs. lenguaje"; "habla vs. escritura" (27) (fig. 4.10).

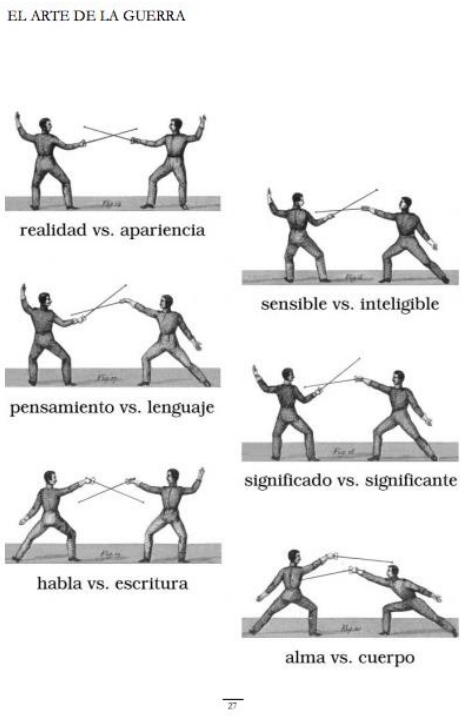

Fig. 4.10. Gache, Belén. "El arte de la guerra." *El libro del fin del mundo.* Buenos Aires: Fin del Mundo Ediciones, 2002. Web. 14 Nov. 2013.

How do these battles play out throughout the book? Regarding the former, we can see that while the senses prove dangerous in terms of shaping people's relationship to the world around them,[99] there is also no clear notion of the intelligible—that is to say, that which is logical or apprehensible by the mind—that emerges from the book. In fact, the whole premise of the book, of an encyclopedia of an invented land, speaks to poetic writing as an exploration of what can be said *outside* of the realm of the intelligible.

As for the speech vs. writing debate, it quickly proves to be a bit more complex than the two terms might indicate. Several of the animated poems we can see in *Wordtoys* are particularly illuminating. Writing, firstly, is described by Gache as static and dead, while the digital medium seems to bring it back to life, in a sense, by putting it into motion. I will explain with an example: "Mariposas-Libro" is one of the digital poems from *El libro del fin del mundo* (43). In *Wordtoys*, the introductory note states: "La escritura detiene, cristaliza, de alguna manera mata a la palabra conservando su cadáver. Un cadáver etéreo como el de una mariposa disecada." Written language as a collection of cadavers is a powerful metaphor, but it does not necessarily carry the implications of morbidity or stasis that one might expect. Clicking on each butterfly, in fact, brings up a quoted passage by a

[99] Regarding the sense versus intelligence duel in particular, we can see that Gache explores how the senses seem to construct a clear image of self, while also putting this self in danger. Several fantastical creatures and objects illustrate the dangers of trusting what we see, from the story to the octopus that kills with just a cruel glance (31), to the famous rose that people come from far and wide to see, only to discover that, the flower, when viewed straight on, makes the observer disappear (90). In another example, a drawing of an endless cycle of returned glances depicted in a mirror image that endlessly reflects the act of seeing itself, it is clear that seeing is dangerous when understood as a constitutive act. The same goes for other sense data: in "El sonido de antes de nacer y de después de morir," the speaker/protagonist overhears someone tell of a secret island where a snail shell guards the sound of before being born and after dying (39). When they discover the island, with mountains of snail shells covering it, an endless search—one that starts and ends with a false faith in finding truth in speech and in sound—begins.

renowned author—among them Manuel Puig, Virginia Woolf, and Marcel Proust, to name a few—that mentions butterflies. Does this imply, in a sense, that each time we say—or write—"butterfly," we say all this as well? Each word that has been crystallized in writing, when used again, thus seems to bring to life the patchwork of citations that makes up literary history. The multiplicity of ways in which a word has been used in past writing seems to be carried with it everywhere it goes.

Another ironic play on this idea is "Poemas de agua," where the main screen is a photograph of a bathroom sink with two handles. By clicking on a handle, we release a flow of jumbled letters that arrange themselves as a poetic line referencing water from Baudelaire, Ashbery, or Borges, to name a few, in a spiral shape in the bottom of the sink. The static nature of the butterfly cadavers are replaced, here, by the flow of running water. But a similar death awaits these lines: the poems eventually all run down the drain, to be replaced with someone else's words.

In another *Wordtoys* animated text, "El idioma de los pájaros," speech and writing are explicitly explored in their relation to truth (41). Gache writes in the introductory note to the poem of several fables about birds, which fall into two camps: stories in which birds are tellers of great truths, on the one hand, and stories of mechanical birds, on the other. She says that the birds in her poem are automatons or mechanical birds, pre-programmed to re-cite; in fact, entering the poem, we are presented with a drawing of several birds. Clicking on them starts a recording of a poem that, predicably at this point, is about birds. The lesson to be learned here, it seems, is related to something Ítalo Calvino says, and which Gache retells in her note: that all writers are machines, carefully placing letters one after the other according to rules established in advance by language itself. All attempts to speak the unspeakable, to reach some semblance of truth, are illusory. She writes: "la literatura no puede dejar de estar implícita en las reglas del lenguaje"; the birds are trapped in a cycle of repeating the same poetic words over and over again. She also seems to imply, however, that "El idioma de los párajos" does achieve a freedom of another kind: by putting the poems in the mouths of these birds, by putting different bird-poems together in the same context, and by cutting the ties of the original poems to their authors, there is an opening of an alternative process of signification in these poems.

It becomes clear then that, for Gache, a main part of the creative power of digital technology lies in its power of creating unique connections and combinations. What she refers to as "máquinas-poetas" in "El idioma de los pájaros" points toward the use of digital processes and structures like hypertext and machine automation to fill in for the originality that used to reside in the figure of the poet himself that is a remnant of Romanticism and persists into the avant-garde in many ways. Contemporary theorists of poetry in the age of media have recently pointed out how a spirit of "unoriginality"—to use Marjorie Perloff's term from her book *Unoriginal Genius*—or of "uncreativity"—to use Kenneth Goldsmith's in *Uncreative Writing*—arises in the digital age. Perloff calls them citational or intertextual poetics, and Goldsmith's book takes a similar direction, where uncreative writing is conceived as a new mechanistic process that grows out of "an ethos where the construction or conception of a text is as important as what the text says or does," one that I believe that we could identify as constitutive of the majority of the texts that have appeared in these pages (Goldsmith 2).

In its more extreme forms that flourish in the digital realm, "uncreative writing" encompasses literary practices that take existing language and reshape, recycle, and reappropriate it into something new, embodying the idea that "*context is the new content*" Goldsmith 3; emphasis in original). The notions of unoriginal genius and uncreativity do not

necessarily designate digital writing, at least not for Perloff, whose analysis begins with *The Arcades Project*, but they are certainly in line with the most basic functions of digital text processing, like copying, cutting, and pasting, and also with the inherently intermedia quality of the computer. What Gache shows us is that digital technologies have the capacity to add layers of meaning to the recontextualized text. It *means* something quite particular to make poetry flow like water out of a tap and down the drain, just as it means something related, but different to superimpose them on the types of butterfly carcasses we normally see pinned to a board inside a glass case in a museum. Without writing *about* language, the visual and kinetic dimensions—its material aspects—say something *about* language that the content alone does not, so that the manipulation of citations have a strong metapoetic function.

It is materiality itself, according to Goldsmith, its resurgence and its excess in the digital age, that brings up this urge to *manage* and *manipulate*, two of the key terms of his analysis: "Since the dawn of media, we've had more on our plates than we could ever consume, but something has radically changed: never before has language had so much *materiality*—fluidity, plasticity, malleability—begging to be actively managed by the writer" (25; emphasis in original). The fact that he equates materiality with terms like fluidity, plasticity, and malleability is worth dwelling on for a moment, because it points to a crucial understanding that materiality is *not* equated to the stasis or fixity we associate with tangible objects. Materiality in the digital realm—and this, in a sense, clarifies the way the concept has been used all throughout the present dissertation—is defined as it appears in the digital realm: it can be moved, manipulated, distorted, and reconfigured. And in terms of how it interacts with us on a physical level, it becomes clearer that *managing* and *manipulating* digital texts engages the body in ways that are creative rather than the receptive mode by which we acquire sense data.

For instance, Belén Gache quite literally turns the reader into a writer. By "reading" "Procesador de Textos Rimbaudeano," anyone can become a poet! The poem opens up to an empty square screen, which Gache calls the Rimbaudean processor. Rimbaud's letter-color resonances from the poem "Voyelles," reprinted on the introductory page, are brought into being as whatever we type generates a Symbolist synesthesia, turning our As black, our Es white, our Is red, our Us green, and our Os blue. There is another entertaining variation on this theme in "Escribe tu propio Quijote," where opening the poem opens up yet another text box, this one that is a recognizable mock-up of a Microsoft Word document. Here, we get to be Cervantes, or better yet, Pierre Menard, because no matter what keys we hit, the letters begin to appear across the screen: "En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme…," exemplifying Borges' theory that every writing is a rewriting, albeit with an ironic twist that simulates some kind of choice or agency on the part of the reader-become-author, playing with our powerlessness over the creative power of the machine and yet appealing, if only through a cheap simulation, to our yearning for genius, at the same time.

In some of her more recent work, Gache takes up some of the same ideas, playing with the poetic process and our aspirations as readers/poets. Her 2011 collection titled *Góngora Wordtoys* is particularly entertaining, especially "Delicias del Parnaso." Visually, it resembles a late 1980s Nintendo Game like *The Legend of Zelda*, with giant pixelated images and a similarly dramatic musical score (fig. 4.11). The aim is to correctly complete each of Góngora's stanzas by choosing the correct line from two possible final verses. Our aim: "emulando al genio barroco, alcanzar el Parnaso del los poetas españoles." Three little black and white Góngora heads turn green with each correct answer to represent our progress toward Mount Parnassus, and to confirm our baroque creativity. I must have a strong sense of the baroque genius, because I make

my way straight to Mount Parnassus on my first two rounds through the poems. This is poetry as I have never seen it before: a true interactive experience that redefines poetry without writing a single original word.

Fig. 4.11. Screenshot from Game. "Góngora Wordtoys." *Wordtoys*. *findelmundo: arte actual desde argentina.* Ed. Belén Gache, Jorge Haro, Gustavo Romano, and Carlos Trilnick, eds. Aug. 2011. Web. 15 Apr 2014.

Overall, then, the texts in *El libro del fin del mundo* and the related animated poems of *Wordtoys*, as well as other more recent digital texts, generate an understanding of poetic invention as both fantasy and the reconfiguration of existing language and ideas. Neither one of these modes of invention is privileged over the other, and Gache thereby inscribes herself into a new generation of writers for whom the Web and digital culture have redefined creativity and originality as, perhaps, their opposites. Looking outside of the poetic and literary, we can see that this unoriginal mode of creativity is in fact everywhere on the Web: we constantly quote and re-post on social media; we can "author" information on Wikipedia by adding half a sentence here, a word there.

The connection between the Web and the encyclopedia is worth exploring further, as it is a powerful metaphor for what the online environment does in terms of producing information and making it accessible. If indeed Wikipedia becomes the primary metaphor for information on the web, we can conclude that it is collectively generated and prolific, but unmonitored. Like in Gache's poems, on the Web, everyone becomes a potential author and a potential expert. This openness has consequences for several different textual processes: it lends itself to collaboration between artists, but also to a creative process that links writers and readers as co-creators of meaning. This aspect of co-creation is even further emphasized when we add the third collaborator that we also mentioned in Gache's citation poems: the digital machine.

To discuss the idea of the mechanistic digital poem further, I will turn to another poet that is a part of the *findelmundo* collective: Gustavo Romano. Romano is a digital artist whose work

is not exclusively poetic by any means, but he does have one poetic project that stands out in the context of the current discussion. He calls it *The IP Poetry Project*, which launched in 2006 with a Guggenheim fellowship, and consists of an intersection of various processes that can take place either on the Web or at live events. *The IP Poetry Project* presents the observer with audio-visual poems that are recited by a pre-recorded voice and that appear as a close-up of a speaker's mouth voicing the words. What happens behind the scenes—or behind the screens, we might say—is much more complex. The basic process involves the input of phrases or words that serve as the starting point for what the poem eventually becomes, because what is recited is not the input text itself, but a compilation of Web search results that pop up as a result of a search for the input text. The input text is taken from existing poems from various artists—including Gustavo Romano, Belén Gache, and others—or can even be created by the user online by putting in several different terms or phrases. How the output texts are voiced is also customizable: we can select texts to be read simultaneously or sequentially and in different orders. Overall, the result is a poetic text performed on computer screens that show a mouth and play pre-recorded sounds to speak the poetic text.

The process is complex and hard to grasp both practically and conceptually, and the resulting poems are actually hard to decipher. They produce a jarring effect because of the disjointed nature of the words and phrases formed by pre-recorded syllabic phonemes that do not quite come together in a way that mimics natural speech. Trying to use the poem-generator myself and manage the customized reading sequence resulted in more or less incomprehensible simultaneous noises coming out of the four mouths displayed across my screen, probably because I hadn't figured out how to set silences at the right times to avoid the simultaneous babble. But there are plenty of existing input texts to use instead of generating one's own, and even some pre-recorded poems from previous events that yield interesting results. In terms of the viewer experience these existing readings provide, there are several unique features to this type of Web poem worth looking at more closely.

There is, to start, a performance aspect to how these poems are recited at events: here, the machines are set up to register the presence of an audience and to begin reciting only when people are nearby. This adds to the strange sense that these disembodied mouths reciting poems like automatons also possess some very human capabilities, much like those of the performer. We can return here to Josette Féral's characterizations of performance to point to the fact that the process, the act of performing itself, *is* the meaning of the performance. The lens of performance is useful in the sense that we must admit from the start that these poems are hard to read *as* poems: with the constantly shifting verbal content, the modes of reading poetry—close reading of the content, an analysis of the poem's patterns, its layout, its metaphorical resonances—fall short and don't give us much insight into meaning.

Performance as meaning is a more generative mode of reading here: it implies a simultaneous absence of meaning and a constant generation of meaning. As Féral explains, "[p]erformance does not aim at *a* meaning, but rather *makes* meaning insofar as it works right in those extremely blurred junctures out of which the subject eventually emerges" (173; emphasis in original). But we must remember that the subject now intersects with the robot, the machine, the automaton. In fact, rather than identifying the subject with the figure of the singular poet or speaker, or with the singular reader or observer, subjectivity only emerges in the coming together of a large number of different subjectivities, both human and digital: the disembodied and automated speaking voice, the partial view of a speaker's face that was filmed without the person knowing what it would eventually be articulating, the intentions and expectations of the poet that

chose the search text, the programmer behind the algorithms that make the searches possible in real time, and the physical proximity of a listener/observer.

And this does not take into account the real, biographical subjects that have written the words that appear as the poetic text, those that the Web search engines pick up in real time and that change as users create and delete content online. Of the poems I hear, for example, one input text creates a search for phrases that begin with "antes yo creía." The resulting line I remember most clearly is "antes yo creía que la infidelidad nunca la perdonaría." Another I remember well is from a poem that uses the words "no sabía que" as its starting point: "no sabía que iba a querer volver a Honduras." Others, like those transcribed in *IP Poetry* from an exhibit in Spain, are less intimate, but equally mundane: "Es peligroso conducir con un GPS" (71); "no sabía que aquí había un grupo de origami" (73); "Tu debilidad son los mariscos" (72). They are the kind of personal statements one makes on online chat forums, comments sections of articles or opinion pieces, or in the pages of *Yahoo! Answers*. They are the kinds of personal reflections that strike me as being extremely personal, and extremely far removed from the type of content I usually come across in reading and analyzing visual, concrete, and digital poetry. They are like found words that are made poetic, but that maintain a certain distance to the new realm they enter. They seem to flow through the *IP* poems and right back out again, back into the real world, where they are connected to life, preoccupations, fears, reflections. Their meaning lies not in the content of the words themselves, but in the provisional crossing of these different thoughts through the algorithms that make them only briefly poetic, within the temporary digital meeting place and time of these various subjectivities.

This is where performance also echoes strongly with digital and electronic poetry in general, I think: as Féral explains, "there is nothing to say about performance, nothing to tell yourself, nothing to grasp, project, introject, except for flows, networks, and systems. Everything appears and disappears like a galaxy of 'transitional objects' representing only the failures of representation" (179). In a sense, *The IP Poetry Project* exemplifies an excess of subjectivity, of objects, of electronic and digital operations. This excess obscures content, leaving us with a vague memory of a few verbal and decontextualized traces, but foregrounds process and that other main principle of digital poetry we have already mentioned: *poiesis*.

For Loss Pequeño Glazier, whose 2001 book *Digital Poetics: The Making of e-Poetries* is still among the few comprehensive studies of electronic and digital poetics, *poiesis*—poetic making—is a definitive feature of digital poetry. His perspective moves away from reading the digital in relation to print and toward the processes and generative possibilities of the digital realm: "not the idea of the digital work as an extension of the printed poem, but the idea of the digital poem as the process of thinking through this new medium, thinking through making" (6). This contextualizes a poetic project like Romano's, which—unlike the digital poems by Augusto de Campos and Ana María Uribe discussed above—has little relation to anything existing in print, and does not seem to lay bare, as other digital poetry of the time often does, its own differences from and extensions of print. In fact, it takes as its primary material language that is specific to the digital world, that was written in and for the computer, illuminating two key points about this type of Web poetry: its material malleability and its generation of texts in real-time.

Regarding the former, we have already stated that *poiesis* emphasizes the process, the making of the text and of its meaning. This means, in *the IP Poetry Project*, that the actual materials, the words we hear, are constantly in flux. Writing about the poems' content is challenging: other users going onto the site might not encounter any of the same words I did in

my "reading," and yet they are reading the "same" text in the sense that its basic coordinates are identical, even though the input and output are not. It requires an absolutely new mode of reading and particularly of scholarly discourse and analysis, asking us to reflect on structure and process rather than the words themselves. While I mentioned above that performance provides a way into some of these processes, we also cannot analyze this without a certain grasp on the terminology of the Web and programming. The creative process that takes place is a human process at the outset, generating the idea behind the project as a whole and providing the words that serve as the poem's input, but between these and the output-texts, there is a process of machine creativity that is autonomous: there is ultimately no human control over content.

This is related to the real-time generation of content in *the IP Poetry Project*, an aspect that can be understood through the modes of both performance and digital technology, but not through print. As mentioned above, one of the main ideas that shapes the poems is the emphasis on real-time content creation. So, while the text itself remains the same, the poems will continuously be different as a result of new results being generated by the search engine.[100] Furthermore, in *IP Poetry* exhibits and events, input texts often follow themes related to the space in which they are shown, so that, for example, the poems displayed in Ushuaia, Argentina, in 2007 used input texts related to ideas of the *más allá* or *fin del mundo* in reference to the location.

This is, again, a type of situatedness that determines and modifies the content of the poems. In fact, real-time processes on the Web recall the kinds of poem-objects and poem-events discussed in chapter two, the kinds that resisted being written down or narrativized, but there is a key difference: real-time computing processes function through presence in time, but not presence in space; that is to say, real-time digital processes imply a *now* but function through a speaking or creating subject that is not *here*. Romano makes this play on presence and absence quite clear in his fragmented mouth-automaton: it hints at performance, at the presence of a living subject, while emphasizing its own robotic nature through the fragmentation of speech and of the human face; the movements of the lips never quite match the sounds being emitted from them, as the bots were only programmed to enunciate about 2,000 of the 25,000 phonemes of human speech. At no point does Romano attempt to make their hardware invisible, to obscure the machine behind the creative process, when they are displayed at events: everywhere there are speakers, cables, monitors—signs of the robotic (fig. 4.12; fig. 4.13).

[100] A further discussion that could be drawn out of this point is one that looks at the points of contact between this kind of digital poetry and the kinds of combinatorial poetry that is exemplified by French Oulipo poet Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliards the poèmes*, a book of sonnet lines that can be recombined in almost infinite different poems that can be generated from a limit number of possible lines. The idea of poetic self-generation or auto-poiesis is obviously connected to the digital, and could make for an interesting analysis in relation to Romano's project in a different context.

Fig. 4.12. Romano, Gustavo. *IP Poetry*. Badajoz: MEIAC, 2012. 6. Web. 10 May 2014.

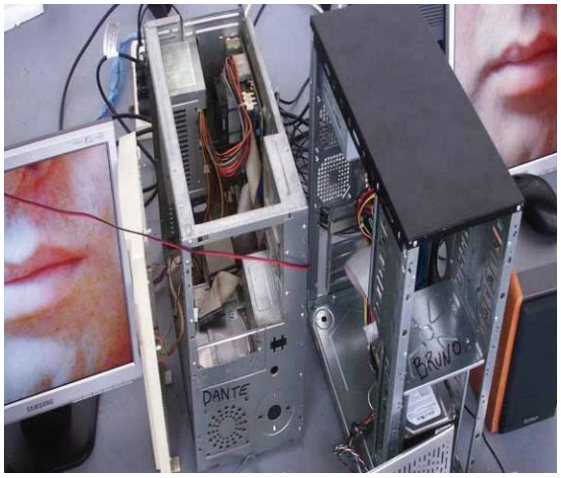

Fig. 4.13. Romano, Gustavo. *IP Poetry*. Badajoz: MEIAC, 2012. 102. Web. 10 May 2014.

The man-machine connection here can lead to various discussions that are worth a brief overview. One considers the cognitive abilities of the cyborg/robot, and asks about "machine (self-)consciousness," a question Scott Weintraub addresses by looking toward the idea of *auto-poiesis*, the idea of the *IP Poetry* bot as autonomous and regenerative, as constantly maintaining its own organization—*thinking*, essentially—by continuously circulating language.[101] Another concerns the absence/presence dialectic and how it loses its hold in this type of digital poetics, which instead seem to propose a duality of pattern versus randomness. As Hayles explains, pattern/randomness is a dialectic within which meaning is not "front-loaded into the system," but is "made possible (but not inevitable) by the blind force of evolution finding workable solutions within given parameters" (*How We Became* 185). Whereas pattern has tended to be the privileged term when it comes to making meaning, the value of randomness is also being asserted in *The IP Poetry Project*, as we increasingly "agree in seeing randomness not simply as the lack of pattern but as the creative ground from which pattern can emerge" (286).[102] Both of

[101] I will not go into it in detail here, but the notion of auto-poiesis that Weintraub articulates is based on Chilean biologists Maturana and Varela's theories in *Autopoiesis and Cognition* and provides a fertile ground for exploring the idea of machine consciousness and cognitive abilities, further blurring the boundaries between man and machine. For a detailed reading of *auto-poiesis* and the *IP Poetry* bots, see Weintraub's "Machine (Self-)Consciousness: On Gustavo Romano's Electronic Poetics."

[102] Hayles makes an important point regarding the failure of the presence/absence dialectic to capture how we make meaning in the digital realm. Hayles reviews the shift from presence/absence to pattern/randomness as follows in *How We Became Post-Human*:

In positing a shift from presence/absence to pattern/randomness, I have sought to show how these categories can be transformed from the inside to arrive at new kinds of cultural configurations, which may soon render such dualities obsolete if they have not already. This process of transformation is fueled by tensions between the assumptions encoded in pattern/randomness as opposed to presence/absence. In Jacques Derrida's performance of presence/absence, presence is allied with Logos, God, teleology—in general, with an originary plenitude that can act to ground signification […]. It is now a familiar story how deconstruction exposed the inability of systems to posit their own origins, thus ungrounding signification and rendering meaning indeterminate. As the presence/absence hierarchy was destabilized and as absence was privileged over presence, lack displaced plenitude, and desire usurped certitude. Important as these moves have been in late-twentieth-century thought, they still took place within the compass of the presence/absence dialectic. (185)

these directions of inquiry—the cognitive and conscious faculties of the machine as well as randomness as a possible mode of signification—ask where we locate the subject/speaker in this type of digital poetics. In other words, what becomes of the poetic speaker that is part human, part robot, and that manipulates words through both pattern *and* randomness, in this case?

Romano himself calls these "speakers" "autómatas (*IP Bots*)," but also refers to them as directors or Masters of Ceremony, playing with their role in producing and controlling the content of speech. Belén Gache's essay on Romano's project, "De poemas no humanos y cabezas parlantes," points out that they are like cyborgs in the sense that they have overdeveloped one human faculty in detriment of all others: they are all mouth, all speech. Gache poses a key question: "¿Quién es quien verdaderamente enuncia cuando habla un robot?" (33). The mouth, as the locus of both voice and ingestion, is an ideal anthropophagous speaker, digesting existing words of poets and Web users and spitting them out as something new. Gache also points to the activation of McLuhan's notion of prosthesis from *Understanding Media*: Romano's mouths are like a concretization of the idea of media as the extension of prosthesis of man, extending human capacities beyond the body and into the world of objects and technologies. What do the IP Bots make possible, then, if we see them as such technological extensions of the human?

They demonstrate a dual process: on the one hand, Romano explains, we subjectify the technology—"la creciente subjetivación de los sistemas tecnológicos, a quienes dotamos de determinadas características humanas aumentadas artificialmente" (5)—and on the other, the system relies on an actual collective subjectivity that can be found on the Web. The poet-robots tap into a subjective collectivity that is an interesting point in the trajectory of the subject in poetry since Romanticism. Belén Gache comments on this in her essay, noting that the 20th century is full of poetic reactions against the emotional basis of lyric poetry in which the idea of the manipulation of words is already present in the avant-garde conception of the poet:

> Contra esta idea romántica, han surgido durante el siglo XX numerosas alternativas que entienden a la poesía no ya como representación de verdades superiores, ni como expresión de sujetos especialmente sensibles, sino a partir de la propia presentación de la misma materialidad del lenguaje. Para las vanguardias históricas, el poeta es concebido no como genio creador ni como ser de especial clarividencia sino como 'operador', como combinador de elementos lingüísticos. La voz del sujeto cede su iniciativa a las mismas palabras. ("De cabezas" 25)

According to Gache, code, programming, algorithms, and the cyborg/robot all demonstrate the constructedness of a poetic tradition that equates poetry with the expression of emotion and sensitivities. And yet, Gache's focus on the robot-machine side-steps the fact that a new poetics that gives voice to the collective voices of the Web cannot help but reinsert self-expression and intimacy back into the poem.[103] Ironically, perhaps, once the digital poet literally becomes an operator in the 21st century, affect and self-expression seem to find their way back into the poem through user-generated Web content. While the pattern—the structure and process through which the program manipulates words—is what creates the poem's identity (what it *is*),

[103] Gache does provide a thorough review of the figure of the machine-man and the automaton in literature, art and cultural history in the essay, from a Chinese emperor's mechanical birds to ETA Hoffmann's doll Olimpia and Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto"; although I mention it in passing to get at the idea of other subjectivities, further exploration of the robot/cyborg figure, particularly in relation to how it engages with mechanisms of power and control in language, would certainly be warranted in connection with the present study, although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

we cannot avoid the fact that what it *says*—its enunciated content—is generated randomly by the Web, and that this randomness reinserts the human element, the connection to the world outside the digital and the poetic realm, into the texts. In addition, we begin to notice that if the content is determined by the way most digital natives use the Web—Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other social media platforms—self-expression is promoted above all else. The machine robot that uses words from the Web cannot help but generate meaning that is deeply imbued with self-expression, but we have come full circle from the Romantic poet's self-expression, in a sense: affect and genius are not coming from the singular figure of the poet, but from the networked, collective, and often anonymous kind of multiple subjectivities of the Web.

With the work of Gustavo Romano, then, we can see that we are far from the utopian sheen of digital and electronic poetics and a theoretical discourse around the promises these media can fulfill with respect to an ideal post-print poetic world. Romano explores how the computer and Web networks can generate a new kind of poetic process, and he is not alone: in fact, between the early 2000s and the present, other similar poetic projects and collectives have sprung up in other parts of Latin America. They represent what we can call a "digital-first" perspective, in which digital poetics are no longer necessarily considered in relation to their print predecessors, but rather with a critical interest in the modes of reading and creativity generated in a computer age.

Eugenio Tisselli's site *motorhueso.net* serves as a closing example of a poetic project that engages more critically with computer and Web processes.[104] *Motorhueso* is an archive of the poet's own texts as well as texts by other poets and links to other digital poetry sites and collaborative projects. The site itself resembles the coded messages of early computers, and immediately reveals Tisselli's interest in displaying the digital properties and coded nature of digital texts (fig. 4.14). In particular, his poems offer a panorama of explorations with different computer functions, like software animators, hypertext, and embedded media, and how they impact poetic language in the digital age.

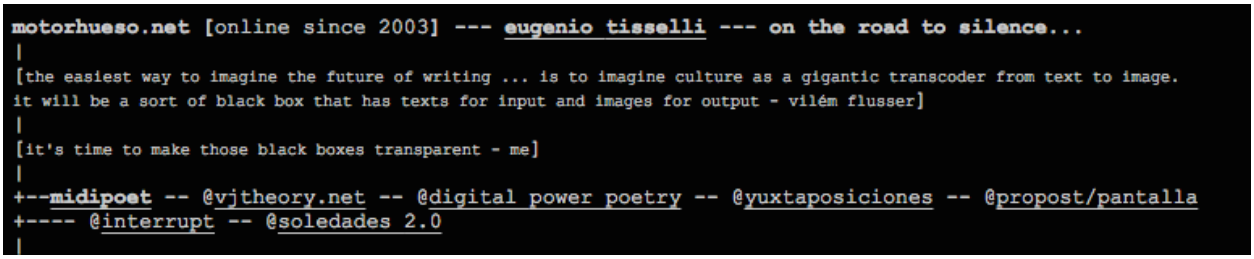

Fig. 4.14. Tisselli, Eugenio. Screenshot from the main page of *motorhueso.net*.

Tisselli's use of a wide variety of digital tools means that his writings are necessarily a reflection on the rapidly changing nature of digital writing through the use of computer programs and platforms that become obsolete extremely quickly. A case in point is one of his earliest projects, *midipoet*, developed between 1999 and 2002, which recalls Romano's project in that it consists of texts created by Tisselli and "performed" in the MIDIPoet software, but also invites us as readers/users to create our own MIDI poems. Unfortunately, more than anything else, the project currently reveals how quickly software on the Web becomes outdated: the MIDIPoet

[104] Tisselly later moves from Web poetry into social media poetry, and finally abandons Web poetry in response to political and environmental concerns.

software will not download onto my iMac computer. I can see a few archived stills of poems Tisselli created, and some video footage of the MIDIPoems filmed by a shaky handheld camera, but the creative, collaborative experience originally designed by Tisselli is lost. It shows the limits of relying on specific software to make the poem run, as well as the fact—also illustrated by Romano—that those software programs that allow for user interactivity are most often the ones that become obsolete and unusable; but as a whole, it means that his project is also a constant search for ways to update content, to keep creating and making on the Web. The poem I will analyze here, "creciente," makes use of some of the more lasting structural components of computers and the Web: hypertext and embedded media.

In "creciente," hypertext becomes one of the main ways of structuring—both concretely in terms of the digital reading path and conceptually as a non-linear paradigm of reading—the digital poem. While most hypertext theory has tended to be about fiction and more general Web-based structuring of information, it functions in the same way in the poem as it does elsewhere: hypertext refers to the computer medium of displaying text through hyperlinks, references that, with a simple mouse click, allow the user to immediately switch between one text and another, or to reveal further layers of text within a text. Hypertext is often considered a literary tool that responds to the failings of print, as hypertext theorist George Landow points out in *Hypertext 3.0*, in that it allows for multilinearity and an embedding of verbal and non-verbal information—audio, animation, images, etc. In Tisselli's poem, however, various media are embedded without the use of hyperlinks, and the links—superimposed on some of the words of the poem—serve to provoke a conscious reflection on how hypertext impacts cognitive changes in how information is processed and thought is structured.

Indeed, what is interesting about "creciente" is that, unlike some earlier hypertext literature—novels in particular—the links within the text do not take us from one short block of text to another, with multiple options of where to go, but rather are embedded within one long page of poetic text. In other words, the entire poem is there, and can be subjected to a linear reading from top to bottom, but links within the page will jump from one part of the page to another, so that hypertext is only one way to find our way through the text, in addition to scrolling. In terms of the verbal content, it is clear that structure and order are of primary concern here as well: existential queries and notions of circularity and silence all ask us to reconceive of the digital process of reading.

The words that constitute the hypertext links then become particularly meaningful: the word "existe" serves as the first linked word within the poem's first stanza, and sets up the play between searching and finding, existence and nothingness, that characterizes the poem as a whole:

convergen en un punto que coincide exactamente
con el epicentro de su convergencia. esto
es decir nada. esto es admitir que siempre
ocurre nada. el atractor
se sitúa allí donde ocurre el encuentro.
antes de que ocurra, el atractor no existe. **un detalle,**
una tontería. hacer visible
el proceso
para que el resulado sea *¿inteligible*? interrogar,
excavar. imaginar. construir

puentes con lo aprendido. todo es una
vía hacia el (lo) otro, todo esconde
un punto de fuga. **no caerse** *de*,
sino caer *hacia*. no caer sino volar.

The idea is that of an encounter or a convergence, of an occurrence that is not one: the phrase "siempre ocurre nada," in contrast to the more expected "nunca" or "no ocurre nada," implies that there is a process of happening, but that this happening is a manifestation of nothingness, of the lack of existence, of what I take to mean a lack of anything definite on which we can stop or which we can name. It is a process of searching and never finding, not even seeking to find, a search for the sake of searching. This process seems to be reflected in the hypertextual structure of the text that invites us to move through it, to see the links and nodes of points of convergence, but not points of stopping. The poem is a continuum or flow that presents us with an idea of a constant *hacia*, a constant movement *towards*, but that is not linear or even circular: it hints at an endlessness that folds back in upon itself without repeating its own structure.

Tisselli thus also engages with the real-time generation of meaning in the digital realm, but without using real-time software as a concrete tool. "Creciente" uses the modes of functioning of the computer and the Web, using hypertext, but also implements the sense of real-time generation of content and meaning through the verbal content and other elements embedded on the page, such as the use of dots to form lines and the inclusion of YouTube videos and images that emphasize continuity and connections. The hypertextual links or nodes thus literally create a continuous structure, but also metaphorically stand in for the subject as well, in a sense: as Tisselli indicates in the segment below, we can see the person as a convergence, a link or "nodo"/"nudo," a play on words that reminds us of Eielson and Vicuña's similar use of the *quipú* as a mode of signification.

existen (existirán) solamente puntos de convergencia. impredecibles hoy.

observar sin hacer daño. (esfuerzo inútil) *cada persona, un punto de convergencia.*
nodo. nudo. ...

To liken us as human beings to these knots/nodes is to posit subjectivity itself, in a digital age, as a provisional convergence. What converges in the subject? Tisselli implies, in the remainder of the poem, that it is passing images, observations, energy, exchanges: "existir solamente a través de las trazas / de lo que se da y se recibe." It is a subjectivity informed by the concept of the network, through which all people, things, and processes are connected, and it becomes clear that this network itself is invisible. One way he indicates this is through color: firstly, Tisselli calls our attention to the invisibility of the white support of words, asking us whether there is a white box enclosing the words on a white background (fig. 4.15). Then, in a portion called "hipótesis sobre la energía," Tisselli writes that

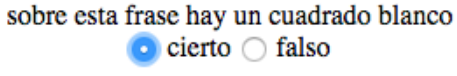

Fig. 4.15. Tisselli, Eugenio. Screenshot of a line from "creciente." *motorhueso.net*. N.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2013.

everything is connected by small black threads, and that this blackness is also invisible. In other words, the networks that connects things—words to their material support, human beings to one another, words to speakers—are obscured, but he offers us several options for making us conscious of them, by which he seems to mean equally making them visible and setting them into motion. He refers to this process of making conscious as a flow of energy, which makes the network of connections visible:

> 11. sugerencia metodológica para propiciar el flujo voluntario y conciente de la energía:
>
> 11a. visualizarla
>
> 11b. extender el brazo izquierdo, abrir los dedos de la mano izquierda. visualizar cinco hilillos que provienen de la bola de pelo y que entran por los dedos
>
> 11c. extender el brazo derecho, abrir los dedos de la mano derecha. visualizar cinco hilillos que salen de los dedos y penetran en el destinatario del haz energético
>
> 11d. el destinatario ha de ser elegido al azar. la voluntad deber ser silenciada absolutamente.
>
> 11e. no perder conciencia de la fuente de energía (sonido, luz, movimiento, etc)
>
> 11f. ser un canal de flujo durante un tiempo [in]determinado

As in the previous chapter, the body has a clear role to play here: like the strings or cords of a net, the connection between us and both other people and the objects around us is tangible, material, visible. Tisselli takes us back, in a sense, to respond to some of the early, first-generation theoretical approaches to media texts' effacement of its own mediality, as formulated most notably in Bolter and Grusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Bolter and Grusin's book highlights the process of remediation--"the representation of one medium in another" (45)—fundamental to digital media. Remediation is characterized by a paradoxical double movement of hypermediacy—multiplying media—and immediacy—the desire to make itself invisible: "[t]he digital medium wants to erase itself," explain Bolter and Grusin, "so that the viewer stands in the same relationship to the content as she would if she were confronting the original medium" (45). In other words, the medium effaces itself by appropriating the techniques of other media. Tisselli constructs a poem that engages with this tendency not simply by creating a poem that opposes this, that makes the medium and the structures that organize the text visible, but by posing questions about how processes of visibility/invisibility, materiality/immateriality, and consciousness/unconsciousness operate within the digital context.

In terms of these specific pairs of opposites, there seems to be no easy answer, no one side of these dual sets of terms that wins out over the other. Tisselli further emphasizes this by questioning the nature of matter itself, by challenging us to see beyond its apparent stasis and solidity. Whether we conceive of this net he constructs in his poem as being made of language or

non-verbal energy (sound, light, movement, etc.)—and Tisselli sees it undoubtedly as all of these things—it implies, firstly, that subjectivity itself, and an embodied experience of the world and of language, are in constant flux. Matter itself, it seems, does not refer in the traditional sense only to objects we can touch or grab, but to energy phenomena as well, as the following passage demonstrates:

[cara a la pared]
observar la propia materia en el
hervidero de átomos
[…]
observar en la
propia materia
el ir y venir
de todas las cosas

ambas caras de la moneda producen el mismo sonido al caer

Juxtaposing the image of the wall—matter at its most visible, its most dense—with this idea of "el ir y venir / de todas las cosas" eliminates the division within matter itself between things composed of energy and things composed of mass: all is both a mass of atoms and is a flow of energy at the same time. The poem's "last" line (if we choose to read it in linear fashion) reads "***el muro es el espejo***": we understand that this reflects that we, as human beings, are objects, are made of matter, but also that matter is not as solid as it may seem: it reflects whatever appears in front of it; it takes part in the same flows, fluxes, and convergences as language, energy, and bodies.

Furthermore, as the last line above shows, this also has a second key implication: that this networked, material structure that connects all the different convergences that make up the present are, much like a rhizomatic structure, flatteners of difference and duality. What matters is not whether the coin has two sides; what matters is the effect it has when it enters into circulation, into movement, and into consciousness: it makes the same sound. In other words, it may be dichotomous in its composition, but if we focus on its oppositional structure, we lose sight of how it functions in a holistic sense, as an object in relation to other objects and beings connected in the world.

Tisselli plays with the idea of doubles and opposites throughout "creciente." He notes both the impossibility of defining opposite terms—"pensar en 'mismo' y 'diferente' / es como intentar partir el aire en dos"—and the trappings they lead to when they structure our thoughts—"fuera – dentro: / quien piense así está atrapado." He explicitly invites us to contradict ourselves: "contradecirse siempre, / para que lo dicho sea todo / y a la vez nada." Rather than a nihilistic perspective that culminates in an idea of nothingness, Tisselli's emphasis on non-oppositional thought and speech conveys the point that the computer and the Web as structures offer other options for thinking about the experience of language and the world around us in the digital age.

Tisselli thus serves as a good closing point for this chapter. I believe that his poetry as a whole illustrates what the digital medium does for poetry when it has gone past the stage of celebrating its own possibilities and settles, instead, into the myriad ways that poetry is deployed on the screen. At the same time, Tisselli's ongoing work makes him a bridge to new directions of digital writing that continue to evolve. Tisselli's work goes on, in recent years, to take an often critical stance toward the Web, but he never quite steps away from. And overall, Tisselli's many

ways of using the digital medium in his work also demonstrates another of the new parameters of writing poetry in a digital age: it requires both writers and readers to be flexible, to adapt to constantly shifting URLs, social media platforms, digital add-ons, and online tools that continuously transform how we use our computers.

Closing the Book on the Book: Some Concluding Thoughts

My principal objective throughout this dissertation has been to propose the need for new modes of reading—of generating meaning—to accompany the visual, physical, and virtual reconfigurations of poetic texts in a time of colliding media and materially-based modes of experiencing the world around us. One could frame the trajectory covered in this dissertation in many different ways: through a shift from print to digital media; as a poetics that explores sense—as in meaning—through the senses and embodied sensation; as a series of textual experiments with texts as images, as objects, as events, as processes, and as convergences of media. All are variations on the same question: what common preoccupations and modes of reading and writing can we identify among the different ongoing manifestations of a poetics of materiality since the poetic avant-gardes in Latin America?

In one way, my inquiry has been motivated by a desire to rescue these poetic experiments with materiality from their shelf in a cabinet of curiosities, where they still persist as marginal poetic movements only tangentially related to a more canonical poetic history. In this respect, I have attempted to outline an alternative poetic history centered around an experimental poetics of materiality, one in which the literal rejection of linearity in print corresponds to a reconfiguration of how we conceive, firstly, of the relationships between different historical periods. This has allowed me to look at different concentrations of materially-based poetics and to draw relationships between a variety of poetic styles and trends that are tied together through an engagement with the material or the physical in one way or another. This approach arises, in an experimental spirit, out of an attempt to read across national and linguistic borders; it is the tracing of a poetic history that arises more out of a logic of the search engine—a flattener of linguistic and national particularities—than that of traditional scholarly effort. My dissertation thus responds in part to the question of what scholarly research looks like in a digital age, marked by new modes of contextualizing and drawing connections between texts across historical, linguistic, and national lines. The texts considered here thus outline a non-linear poetic trajectory in the geographic sense as well as the historical.

Secondly, this alternative poetic history also serves as a model for alternatives modes of conceiving of the structure of texts and the relationships between texts, poets, and readers. Different moments in this experimental poetic history propose different metaphors for this reconfigured structure: in the avant-garde, the calligram and the constellation are used as models for new poetic compositions; in the digital realm, these are reframed through the terminology of hypertext and network structures. In the moments in between, we have seen how structuring a poem like an object, an event, a process, a gesture, or a performance have similarly challenged existing notions of what a poetic text is and how its material configuration impacts its meaning.

Yet I think that today we might begin to reevaluate whether calling these types of texts "alternative" continues to be a relevant way of framing them. From a contemporary perspective, texts that foreground materiality and various simultaneous modes of signifying are increasingly in line with the types of materials that are native to the digital environment. In fact, digital and particularly Web-based possibilities of production and circulation privilege the kinds of textual objects that combine multiple analog media and appeal to the reader/viewer/user in several forms at once, usually including verbal, visual and audio components. What began as experimental approaches to poetic texts has in fact merged with dominant modes of textuality. I'd like to propose, then, at the close of this dissertation, that perhaps these so-called experimental texts actually have an established place within a poetic history that culminates in information

technology that turns their experimental structure into something quite mainstream. The poems studied here certainly originated with and contained, in various moments, a sense of searching for a medium or technical standard that might finally be able to capture reality as we experience it, the material satisfaction of an artistic demand, to borrow from Walter Benjamin's terminology in the still relevant essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (237). But I think we are now beginning to leave behind the avant-garde impulses and the utopian drives that sustain them, including those neo-avant-gardes and post-avant-gardes that are, even in their negation, still a continuation of the forward push of the avant-garde.

In a related point, this dissertation also thus fits into a broader push towards Digital Humanities projects that reimagine the relationship between the humanities and computing, particularly in the context of how we can collect, access, share, and distribute materials through computing and the Web. Digital Humanities projects, I believe, have the potential to completely reframe what we think of as experimental texts: indeed, many of the multimedia, digital, audio, and visual materials studied here are marginal in the literary sense only because they resist easy access and distribution in a world where print continues to reign as the primary and even sole mode of accessing texts and other materials. There is no reason why, given the Web's inherently hybrid nature, the digitization of many of the visual and media texts I've alluded to in these pages cannot make them much more easily accessible to the public than they currently are. It is not just a question of access, then, but of reevaluating the cultural and scholarly relevance of texts that flourish in the digital environment and might find a more adequate place there alongside more conventional texts.

In many ways, Concrete poetics and theory have informed many of the central ideas of this dissertation, and I will close with another concept from the *Noigandres* poets: the de Campos brothers' notion of the post-utopic as a way of understanding what it means to say that we are leaving behind the experimental poetics of the 20th century. What the umbrella term of experimental poetics signals, in my view, is a conscious search for new or alternative materials and cognitive modes of expressing a contemporary experience of the world and of language. With a new generation of digital poets that are natives in the world of computers and the Web, the trajectory of experimental poetics in the realm of the material comes to a close.

I think that Augusto de Campos' formulation of the idea of an "experimentação permanente" thus more adequately sums up the idea that the marginal nature of experimental poetry is subverted without losing a continued spirit of experimentation with different approaches to texts, objects, and bodies ("Questionnaire"). I want to make clear that a Latin American poetics deeply engaged with materiality is by no means coming to a close, but rather that we can no longer speak about the digital or about a materially-based poetics as a marginal field or a niche interest within broader contemporary poetics. Both digital media and materiality in general are central to the way we currently process information, communicate with one another, and conceive of creativity. The digital age and the winding path toward it are thus post-utopic, as Haroldo de Campos explains, in the sense that the post-utopic replaces the totalizing project of the avant-garde with multiplicity and open-endedness, retaining of the utopian only its critical vigor. It supplants the utopic with a pluralization of poetic possibilities and meaning as nothing but provisional syntheses ("Poesia e modernidade" 268-269). We are in the age of a "poesia da agoridade, a poetry of the now, a poetics of convergence in the present (269). Thus the various experimentalisms of the past century that have been outlined here are like a cluster of individual instances of loosening the grip, little by little, on linearity, solidity, spatial fixity, singularity, oppositional thought, and temporal progression.

What comes next, then? In terms of digital literature, we can observe an increasing focus, in recent years, on a culturally, socially, and historically contextualized approach to media and digital poetry rather than a focus on its experimental nature and the visualization of its implicit modes of functioning. But digital writing exists alongside a broader and perhaps more pressing question: what does it mean to write poetry—computer-based or otherwise—in a digital age? How do increasingly short attention spans, character limits, and a culture of multi-tasking impact how we read? How do we reconcile growing environmental concerns with a consumer code of disposable gadgets? How is print today being transformed by a digital-first approach to textuality and information? How do non-Anglophone poetic traditions respond to the increasing use of English as the language of the connected digital world? How are notions of canonical literature and of national and linguistic literary traditions, particularly in Latin America, reframed in the globally networked culture of the World Wide Web? Is there an opening for re-introducing and re-imagining existing poetic modes—the lyric, the epic, even a return to formal poetic constraints—within the digital realm?

All these questions take us down potential paths that are worth exploring, and I think some of the concepts that emerge through the experimental, materially-based poetics studied here can shed some light on these areas of inquiry. There is a kind of double trajectory at play here: on the one hand, a groundedness in the present digital environment takes us back to the avant-garde, and on the other, the beginnings and 20th-century developments of materially-based poetics have much to tell us about where poetry is headed today. The principles of Concrete poetry that extend into contemporary digital writing have allowed me to go back and read experimental poetry from the 1920s to the present through a lens of media; functional structures; network relationships between subjects, poetic objects, and language; and the (in)visibility of the codes that make meaning possible. And the reverse operation might prove just as useful: a consciousness of these previous poetic modes of engaging with materiality might serve us well in the analysis of contemporary poetics and, more generally, of reading and writing in a media-saturated environment where people tend, more and more, to place a digital gadget between themselves and the experience of the world around them.

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