Action Poetry: The Vocal-Body in Performance Art

Nathan Walker

PhD

University of Salford, Salford, UK

School of Arts and Media

2019

Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgments

For commissions and the opportunity to make and present performances and artwork my thanks to Hannah Firth, Catherine Angle, Thomasz Szrama, Elini Tsitsirikou, Sandra Johnston, Mike Collier, Esen Kaya, James King, Joey Francis, Nia Davies, Tom Jenks, Jonathan Pitches, Ian McMillan, SJ Fowler, James Davies, Jerome Rothenberg, Deborah Walsh at Armitt Museum and Colin Sackett at Uniformbooks. Thanks also for editors and publishers of my work Richard Porter, Eleanor Perry and Juha Virtanen, Katy Lewis Hood and Dominic Hale, Sarah Bodman, Melih Levi, Susan Tomaselli and Christodoulos Makris, and Richard Skelton. Thank you for conversations and exchanges Emma Cocker, Lee Hassall, Denys Blacker, Alastair MacLennan, Karen Mac Cormack and Steve McCaffery. Years of advice from Mark Leahy, Claire Hind and Claire Macdonald has done me a world of good. I am indebted to the following for friendship, joyfulness and genuinely exciting conversations about art, writing and performance Roy Claire Potter, John Court, Emma Bennett, Mark Greenwood, Mary Garrison, Erini Nedelkopoulou, El Stannage, George, Lincoln & Lucas, and Russel. Coffee from Tim, Dan & Barbara. My lovely colleagues at York St John University and the University for financial support and staff development. I would like to thank Scott Thurston and Kate Adams for their generous supervision over the last five years. I am especially deeply grateful to Scott Thurston whose kindness, curiosity and encouragement has been incredibly rich and transformative.

I am grateful to my family for their encouragement now and growing up. Thank you Mam. Thank you Dad. My brother Sam for teaching me about poetry and Murray for teaching me about perseverance. My wonderful family Faith, Clementine, Olive, Julia, Grace and Blanche, Linda, Tony, Anthony and Ryan, I love you all. I owe so much to my paternal grandad, Wuky, for teaching es tha thes nowt better than ower mak o' toak. Lastly but most importantly, I am eternally thankful to and for Victoria Gray, my champion and best friend.

Declaration of Originality

This thesis and the work herein is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form elsewhere. I declare that the text and the work presented in this document is original and that no sources other than those mentioned in the text and its references have been used in creating it. Chapter Four, Appendix One and Appendix Two contain portfolio material and include previously published creative writing and this is referenced in the body of the text and bibliography.

Abstract

This thesis explores the relationships between performance art, poetry, sound poetry and page-based scores in order to develop 'action poetry' as a new transdisciplinary field that foregrounds the 'vocal-body' in performance art. Driven by my own creative practice —through the artworks and performances *Nape* (2014), *Scaw* (2015), *Mean* (2016), *Condensations* (2017), *Cope* (2018) and *Low (White Stones)* (2018) — I have proposed here a revival and redefinition of the term 'action poetry' that considers the role of the voice to produce actions in live work. More specifically I have, through practice, developed my own techniques for vocalization that embody language and sound. When artists use their voice as sound they are communicating differently within language. In order to vocalise, the artist must perform a kind of embodiment that transforms language, sound and meaning into a body-based and sensorial activity. When I use the term 'embodiment' in this thesis I am referring to a corporeal awareness, specifically a vocal awareness, and lived experience that is necessary to produce the voice in action poetry. This thesis asks how the voice can produce actions in performance art. I consider actions to be an event that attempts to exceed boundaries. Actions occur due to the tension, movement and relation between interior voice and exterior vocal sound.

I consider the specific use of the voice in performance art as a significantly under-theorised area of experimental performance and poetry. In order to explore this I have coined new terms in relation to my work — textual-volume, vocal-body, action-oriented performance art — these terms provide a vocabulary for approach, methods and practices in action poetry. I discuss my own practice alongside examples of performance artists whose work is not usually considered as voice-led such as Carolee Schneemann, Boris Nieslony and Marina Abramović. I also consider the role of prepared notational devices like non-linguistic scores and how poets are able to generate vocal-sound by embodying marks on the

page. This thesis charts a new history of performance art and poetry in order to discover how language and the voice can generate actions.

Preface

The body has been at the centre of artistic practice since the performative turn in the arts in the 1950s and 1960s. Performance art — a catch-all term that includes body art, action art, destruction art, Fluxus events and happenings (amongst others) — brings attention to the body as primary site of and material for performances by artists. In many cases it is the artist's own body that is used in time-based and live art work. And yet, the human voice has been mainly omitted from this practice or excluded from its histories. A key example of this practice is Carolee Schneemann's pioneering performance *Interior Scroll* (1975). In one part of this performance Schneemann stands naked on a table and pulls a scroll of text from her vagina whilst simultaneously reading it aloud. The sound of her voice is altered by the task of retrieving the scroll. The photographic documentation of this performance has come to represent the empowered female body in art history and the feminist politics essential to the performative turn in the arts. However, Schneemann's live voice has been omitted from these histories, her task-led vocal-body has been silenced. In this thesis, I address this omission and compare it with other vocal practices. In the poetry practices that ran parallel to and within the events surrounding performance art in the 1960s onwards, in particular sound poetry, there have been radical explorations of the voice and vocal sound. Thus, this thesis traces the historical and methodological connections between performance art and poetry. I identify the under-theorised area of the voice and sound in performance art and bring attention to practices that explore the ability of the voice to produce actions.

This thesis is conceived as a poetics of my practice and it is my intention to include writings of different registers and forms as a way to successfully navigate the complexities of practice-led research by artists. As an artist I approach all my work and research as a creative task and I have explored a range of registers in order to undertake this study which positions my practice and vocal-body at

the centre. In light of this, the research presented here includes art historical research and critical academic writing alongside creative writing, a portfolio of creative practice and creative descriptions of practice. As this thesis is understood as my poetics its intention is not to explain the work (Bernstein 1992: 160) but instead to theorise my practice, to provide strategies and collect together different approaches to making and writing. As Robert Sheppard states in 'The Necessity of Poetics', 'poetics' function is both oriented towards, and in, new form' (Sheppard 2001).

The voice is a sound produced by the body, a sound that can contain language, accent, emotion, pitch, tone, timbre and volume. The sound produced by the voice is also material. Throughout this thesis I will refer to sound touching, to the meeting of interior and exterior sounds, and the resistance between the interior and exterior. The vibrations of this resistance are what I am listening to here. This resistance and tension has functioned as a guide in my practice-led research, and is no doubt the driving impulse of this study. It has facilitated an in-depth exploration of my practice and my own lived experiences. In a similar way to performing for extended durations or performing physically exhausting tasks, some parts of this practice-led research have had unintended consequences. In my case it is that during performances memories of traumatic experiences have arisen and become present to me. It is not my intention to access, process or realise past experiences with(in) my live performances or this study. Instead I intend to remain present, to attend to the present moment and to allow the present moment to attend to me. I disclose that within the present there is also the past. What happens to me when I am performing my vocal-body? Past memories rise up and appear to me, experienced and glimpsed as fleeting images. I bring my attention to a deep interiority of my body and, without request, my body brings images to me. This ability of the body, particularly the vocal-body, to disrupt is not explicitly explored in this thesis. That said, I make reference in Chapter Four to

the past that appears to me in performance and I do not wish this to disrupt the aims of this research but have included it for transparency. Chapter Four behaves differently from the other chapters as it merges the creative work, portfolio images and creative writing with detailed descriptions of the performances and written works of my practice. For this reason, Chapter Four attempts to find another way to address the subject of the voice in performance to give access to new understandings of how tasks develop and how live performance functions from the perspective of the performer.

This thesis is driven by my own evolved practice in performance and poetry. In my practice, the vocal-body is both my material and the initial site of performance. I have experimented with my voice in live performances since 2008 and use these experiences to inform the theories explored here. I coin new terms in relation to my work — textual-volume, vocal-body, action-oriented — and re-frame terms that have fallen out of favour, such as action poetry, as a way to develop new understandings of what happens when we use our voice to make sound in artistic practice. I adapt the term ‘action poetry’ and use critical and creative writing to articulate the possible soundings, openings, and events of poetry and performance art. There is a deliberate attempt at thinking things together, re-establishing the connections between practices that are, like my own, intermedial and transdisciplinary.

Doing a reading at a table with a glass of water simply isn't enough

—Bernard Heidsieck

Introduction

My Formative Voice

My dad sang in a local band and played folk songs on the guitar and mandolin. For many years I disappointed him in my complete inability to sing: I sang nasal and flat and couldn't get the notes. Eventually I had singing lessons from a woman named Carol who lived on my street, near the sea in West Cumbria. Carol had a strong Cumbrian accent, yet when she sang her voice transformed into an exaggerated opera style soprano. I became a good pupil and was able to sing properly around about the same time in my life that I discovered British punk and began smoking. In 1999, like most young people in secondary education, I was obliged to undertake one week of work experience in an area I had 'genuine interest'. At that time my interests lay in performance, music and theatre. My school sent me to BBC Radio Cumbria's smallest local station in Whitehaven. The BBC's radio offices in Whitehaven were, at that time, the only station that hadn't 'upgraded' from analogue audio recording to digital. In retrospect this was the saving grace of my 'experience' and what fascinated me was not the performance of recording live interviews on location, or re-reading the news, but moving large reels of audio tape around the studio, cutting and splicing the tape, and physically manipulating the recorded sound of voices by moving the tape reels with my hands, gently rotating the reels back and forth to find the right location to cut. In this small act I was able to control the speed, and therefore the pitch of the voice, to hear microscopic speech sounds, the way a word ends sharply or is stretched, a pop of a consonant, a tail or hiss of esses. When I got home that day, I explained to my twin brother what I had done at 'work' and imitated vocally the slowed down speech of the reels in a pitch deeper than my own. What continues to interest me then is the capacity for the voice to create diverse sounds. I realise now that these relatively small events in my adolescence had significant impacts

on my creative and artistic explorations of vocal performance, and in many ways, this thesis.

When I first began attending, presenting my work at, and curating performance art events, from 2007 onwards, I was fortunate to witness the work of artists I had studied and been influenced by. These included Black Market International, Jamie McMurry, Alastair MacLennan, Victoria Gray, Hugh O'Donnell, Sandra Johnston, Poppy Jackson, Mark Greenwood and Anne Seagrave. These performances were action-oriented and the performers executed tasks, often over long durations. These tasks produced a type of physicality that I had not witnessed in other kinds of performance and presented relationships with objects that changed the way I approached my own performances. This manifested in my use of objects as a way of defining an aesthetic vocabulary that enabled an ongoing developmental process, using and re-using the same objects in different ways in each performance. I realized that I wanted to make similar work to my peers, work that emphasised my body in relation to the space of the performance and to objects. Yet, I also wanted to develop a practice that was distinct and that explored new processes. Importantly, I wanted to be able to make work building-on the practices of my peers but that integrated my developments with writing, language and vocal sound, something that none of the works I witnessed had done. My interest in action-oriented performance art was only one part of my practice and I found it difficult to explore writing, poetry, and language-based artwork within my performances. The difficulty of synthesizing these distinct areas of my own practice led me to undertake this practice-led research. During this research I have attempted to remove the categorical distinctions, such as naming some work 'poetry', between different areas of my practice.

The body in performance art has been the centre of investigation by practitioners since the development of this field from the 1950s onwards. However, the use of the human voice has mainly been omitted in these investigations. In asking

why the voice has been neglected from action-oriented performance art I am also proposing a new understanding of the vocal-body in performance. I consider language-focused experiments that seek to discover the relationships between action-oriented performance art and poetry. In doing so I redefine the term action poetry to include transdisciplinary practices that engage in vocal experimentation in performance. I emphasise the transdisciplinary nature of both my research and my creative practice and present distinct writing styles that facilitate my argument.

This thesis asks how the voice can cause actions to occur in live performance. In order to answer this question I theorise why the voice has been neglected from the histories of performance art and ask how we can develop new understandings of the vocal-body by considering the ways in which the voice has been explored and expanded in poetry?

I see my original contributions to knowledge as being the exposition of my poetics, which brings together my approach to the vocal-body in action-oriented performance art and the use of experimental writing and page-based scores for vocal performance. I do this through detailed studies of performance artists, poets and artworks that explore shared methodologies in the use of the voice, language and sound. By reviving action poetry as a category for the exploration of language, writing and the vocal-body I am able to address the under-theorised area of the voice in performance art. As part of this practice-led research I have created five new performance works for professional artistic contexts and published a book of page-based texts for vocal performance and these are discussed in detail in Chapter Four and are presented further in Appendix One and Appendix Two.

Definitions of Terms

In the following sections, I have defined the key terms within my thesis: *action*, *action-oriented performance art*, *embodiment*, *vocal-body*. Within these definitions I have included disciplinary and artistic references with the knowledge that I will expand on these terms and references throughout the following chapters.

Action

I use the term 'action' in relation to its meaning in the context of recent art history i.e. 'action painting' (Hiro and Merewether et al 2007; Jones 1998; Stiles 2012), 'actionism' (Badura-Triska et al 2012; O'Dell 1998; Schimmel et al 1998) and 'action art' (Bodor and Hunter 2012; Brygel 2017; Morganová 2015). I maintain that performance actions are processual, which means that they are indeterminate and discovered in and through the performance. Performance art is task-led, the performer undertakes a particular task or sequence of tasks without knowing necessarily where it / they will lead. This also means that the outcome is not guaranteed: actions / events are the aim of task-led performance art and are worked towards in a live situation. The indeterminate outcome of task-led performances is both an intentional opportunity for live discovery of meaning, ideas, new tasks and previously unknown possibilities. This is different from other artistic practices where this discovery is private. In live work the relationship and proximity with audiences influences the task. I would argue that the possibilities I refer to are only made available in a live situation where audiences witness the development of tasks in co-presence with the performer (see Chapter Two). When I use the term 'action' I am invoking the term 'event', I see these as analogous but have made the decision to use 'action' for its art historical genealogy. In this sense I am using 'actions' as comparable to the philosophical concept of 'events' (Armand 2007, Badiou 2001: 2003: 2006: 2008; Bartlett et al 2014; Corcoran 2015) and the relationships between events and 'singularities' (Badiou 2006; Attridge 2004; Lepecki 2016) and this is explored in Chapter Two.

Defining a term as pervasive as 'action' is difficult to do. In a political context 'action' infers 'direct-action' and implies active participation, intervention and the physical, collective attendance of bodies in instances of public protest. This understanding of the term is certainly present within its use in art history and more recently as it relates to performance art. Art historical definitions of the term

developed differently in America and Europe and these are outlined in detail in Chapter One. My understanding of the term 'event' is informed by its philosophical development in relation to Alain Badiou. Badiou (cor)relates events to encounters and defines them as 'disruptive' occurrences, 'that which is purely haphazard [*hasardeux*],[1] and which cannot be inferred from the situation' (Badiou 2006: 193). Corcoran explains that the event is that which occurs 'unpredictably [and] has the potential to effect momentous change in some given situation' (Corcoran 2015: 115).

I also define 'actions' in relation to what happens when strangeness, surprise, alterity or otherness makes itself explicit in performance as a 'singularity', what Attridge calls 'the other, the unprecedented, hitherto unimaginable' (2004: 63). Singularities are events that are produced through the particular conditions of a situation. In the case of performance, a singularity is an occurrence of something new and unknown prior to the performance, it comes about precisely because of the situation of the performance in a way that is surprising. Actions, in this thesis, are encounters that have the ability to produce significant change in the situation of live performance. Actions are ways to understand what happens, or rather, what can happen, in performances that utilize an embodied awareness of the voice, i.e. the vocal-body.

Action poetry is a term attributed to and used by the French sound poet Bernard Heidsieck. It has a short-lived history and is mainly used interchangeably with sound poetry. Whilst there is no concrete definition, Heidsieck's dramatic declaration is that action poetry is born 'the moment the poem is torn from the page' (in Rothenberg and Joris 1995: 334) which suggests a physical engagement with the activity of the poem. In this sense action poetry engages in poetry as a spatio-temporal, corporeal event opposed to a simple reading and this is explored

1 Badiou (1994) contends that 'chance' [*le Hasard*] is the 'pure thought of the event' because 'chance is the *autoaccomplishment* of its idea [. . .] and not at all a correlation of the world' (Badiou 1994: 67 emphasis in original).

throughout this thesis and in detail in Chapter Three.

Action-Oriented Performance Art

The term ‘performance art’ covers a wide-range of practices in time-based work and is used differently depending on the (geographical and historical) context. The development of the term emerged in the 1970s as a way to group together newly emerging categories of time-based work that included happenings, actions, actuations, demonstrations, destructions, Fluxus, events, and rituals, as well as classifications like concrete, direct and body art.[2] Peggy Gale’s 1979 definition of performance art is an early example of criticism that sees the European tradition of performance as ‘more theoretical, more intellectualised’ and rejecting the ‘qualities of narration and entertainment’ that were present in the ‘story-orientated’ American and Canadian performances (Gale in Bronson and Gale 1979: 7), and this is still often the case.[3] In this sense ‘action-oriented performance art’ specifies an approach to performance that is often minimal and conceptual, that Gale

2 The art historical lineages of performance art begin much earlier than the 1970s and can be seen as part of the performative practices of movements and schools within the historical avant-garde, specifically in the Bauhaus, Dada and Futurism. The history of this legacy has been well documented (Berghaus 2005; Mladen 2013; Trimmingham 2011) and the importance of this work to the emergence of performance art was written into the art historical canon through the publication of Robert Motherwell’s *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (1951 [1989]) and Rose Lee Goldberg’s 1979 *Performance: Live Art, 1909 to the Present* (1979 [2011]) and is beyond the scope of this thesis, for this reason I have specifically considered works that were emerging in parallel with the term ‘performance art’.

3 An example of this story-oriented work can be seen in the work of Karen Finley and Tim Miller, who whilst still referred to as performance artists, present written and scripted performances of learnt, rehearsed and delivered text. These works and others like them are indicative of the very broad categorization of ‘performance art’.

describes as a form of 'extended sculpture' (Gale in Bronson and Gale 1979: 7).[4] Action-oriented performance art is my own term for specifying a particular kind of performance art that is informed by my own practice and that of my peers. I refer to a European branch of performance art where performed activities are tasks that lead towards action and thus towards a situation of change, or rather, to a transformation.

I have defined action-oriented performance art through the following series of distinctions, that set-out commonly used techniques within the discipline and have tried, wherever possible, to be specific as to how this differs from other kinds of performance.

Action-oriented performance art:

- Embraces a sculptural approach to the artists' body and performance space, this sculptural approach extends to the voice

- Is not acting

- Places the body as the central material and site of/for exploration

4 Examples of action-oriented practitioners include Black Market International (1985 – present) and its members like Boris Nieslony (b.1945), Alastair MacLennan (b.1943), Wen Lee (b.1957-2019), Elvira Santa-Maria Torres (b.1967), Julie Andree T (b.1973), and Jürgen Fritz. Belfast organisations BBeyond (founded 2001) and its members like Sandra Johnston b(.1968), Hugh O'Donnell (b.1978), Sinead O'Donnell (b.1975), Siobhán Mullen (b.1972), Brian Connolly (b.1961) and James King. And individual artists like Dominic Thorpe (b.1975), Mark Greenwood (b.1970), Denys Blacker (b.1961), Lee Hassall (b.1962), John Court (b.1969), Poppy Jackson (b.1982), Victoria Gray (b.1982), Marita Bullmann (b.1982). These practices have developed from and often refer to earlier European practitioners like Mona Hatoum (b.1952), Bartolome Ferrando (b.1951), Nigel Rolfe (b.1950), Anne Bean (b.1950), Andre Stitt (b.1958), Kurt Johannessen (b.1960) and Artur Tajbar (b.1953) and the early scored performances of, Marina Abramović (b.1946), Ulay (aka Frank Uwe Laysiepen) (b.1943), Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) and the Viennese Actionists Günter Brus (b.1938), Otto Mühl (1925-2013), Rudolf Schwarzkogler (1940-1969) and Hermann Nitsch (b.1938). Some American, Canadian, Cuban and South American practitioners also employ action-oriented strategies notably Marilyn Arsem, El Putnam, Sandrine Schaefer, Carlos Martiel (b.1989) and Rachel Echenberg.

• Utilises extended and indeterminate duration and structures, from one-second to several days

• Explores a conceptual exploration of materials, often responding to the materiality of objects, spaces and/or the artist's own body

• Facilitates an increased proximity with audience members and does not separate the space of performing from the space of witnessing

• Is an evolving enquiry, a live discovery of meaning, message, purpose and therefore is contingent upon the live situation, requiring at least one witness

• Often employs a minimal aesthetic, that uses only what is necessary, stripped back

• Responds to the site of the performance and cannot be easily repeated, toured, or staged elsewhere. When it is repeated the work responds to the new site and alters accordingly

• Often utilizes a method of constraint which can include a restriction of the senses

• Facilitates transformation

• Is non-narrative

• Attempts to perform within the present moment; presents non-repeated

works, although repetition within a task is usual and expected.

This broad set of distinctions is being used here to guide the reader and to illustrate the kinds of methodologies at play within the examples discussed in this thesis. I acknowledge that definitions like these can often be counter-productive and can produce unwanted binaries and overly reductive categories, however, I am hopeful that in this case it is understood that these are signposts to particular kinds of performance and from my own experience. It is also worth noting that these kinds of performance are also often overlooked, neglected and misrepresented within the fields of 'performance' and 'live art'. They are also misunderstood in art historical discourses.[5] This is why I have specified 'action-oriented performance art' from the broad category of 'performance art' and even broader term 'Live Art' (which is mainly used in the UK), in order to consider practices that are closest to my own. It also seems pertinent to make this distinction as a point of difference within performance art that best relates to the potentials of the vocal-body that I am exploring in this thesis. As part of this development of the voice in action-oriented performance art, in Chapter Three, I also consider performance scores, particularly those vocal-scores that are non-linguistic.[6] This is a further under-theorised area of practice and whilst there are many examples of page-based scores there are very few studies of the practicalities of performing these works. In my own work I have been motivated to discover my own methods for understanding how scores can be read aloud and it is my assertion that these

5 See for example Amy Bryzgel in her book *Performance Art in Eastern Europe since 1960* (2017), which identifies the omissions and misreadings of work from Eastern Europe: 'The first edition of Roselee Goldberg's pioneering study of performance art, which was published as *Performance Art: Live Art, from 1909 to the Present*, contains no references to artists from Eastern Europe, with the exception of the Russian Futurists. In revised editions, entitled *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (2001, 2011), the author devotes two pages to the topic of performance art from "the former Communist countries," mentioning a limited number of figures and movements…Goldberg characterises performance in the region rather myopically, as a form of political protest' (Bryzgel 2017: 3).

6 Non-linguistic scores do not contain written language or easily readable words, they often include shapes, drawings, or fragments of language that are interpreted as sound.

techniques are task-led and generate embodied vocal actions.

Embodiment & Embodied Awareness

The term ‘embodiment’ has been developed in phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 1964), in cultural anthropology (Csordas 1990; Strathern 1996), cognitive science (Scholnick and Miller 2008; Todres 2007) and performance studies (Fischer-Lichte 2008; Jones 1998; Perry and Medina 2011; Reeve 2013) as a way of reconsidering, and ultimately dissolving, the dualism between the mind and body and the difficulties of the Cartesian tradition that separates mind, body and lived experience. These binary distinctions are unhelpful because they isolate and compartmentalise different bodily experiences and separate the experience of what Fischer-Lichte (2008) calls ‘being a body’ from ‘having a body’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 82). Embodiment is a term that is used to collapse the duality of mind and body, in doing so it also collapses other dichotomies, like physical and mental, or corporeal understandings of interior and exterior, that I relate to concepts of the voice. Fischer-Lichte sees embodiment as a ‘creative process’ (2008: 173) which creates the possibility for the body to ‘function as the object, subject, material, and source of symbolic constructions, as well as the product of cultural inscriptions’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 89).

As embodiment relates to the body, these multiple and diverging definitions are challenged further by differing definitions and understandings of ‘the body’. Carrie Noland’s writing on gesture and inscription sees embodiment as a process of collective behaviours and beliefs that are ‘rendered individual and “lived” at the level of the body’ (Noland 2009: 9). Noland cites both Thomas Csordas (1990) and Andrew J. Strathern (1996) as informing her definition of embodiment and Strathern’s *Body Thoughts* (1996) in particular has informed my use of the term here. His admission that he finds embodiment ‘puzzling, if not impossible, to give any succinct definition’ (Strathern 1996: 195) supports the idea that due to its popularity and because embodiment has become a major concept in cultural

analysis, its meaning has been 'stretched in different directions' (Strathern 1996: 196). Similarly, the use of the term embodiment, to refer to lived experience and not as substitution for saying 'body' or 'bodily', not to mention its distinction from corporeality, is upheld in this thesis.[7] Strathern, like Fischer-Lichte, sees embodiment as 'process-based' calling it a 'transformer' (Strathern 1996: 202) that transforms nouns to verbs and in doing so relates ideas of 'being' to 'doing', which I explore in Chapter Two. When I use the term 'embodiment' in this thesis I am referring to a corporeal awareness, specifically a vocal awareness, and lived experience that is necessary to produce the voice in action poetry.

The Vocal-Body

With the exception of the mouth, the apparatus of the voice is mainly hidden. The throat, larynx, vocal chords, glottis, lungs, are invisible and their emission seemingly immaterial. There is, however, a physicality and materiality to the voice and the voice is always embodied in some way.[8] I consider the specific use of the voice in performance art as a significantly under-theorised area of experimental performance and poetry. The 'voice' and 'vocal sound' has been explored across a range of disciplines including musicology and 'voice studies' (Eidsheim 2015; Krieman and Sidtis 2011), sound art and sound studies (LaBelle 2010: 2014; Migone 2012; Morris 2007; Scrimshaw 2017), poetry (Cobbing 1978; Hall 2013; Rothenberg 1976: 1977: 2005; Rukeyser 1996), performance (Bonenfant 2010; Dean and Smith 1997) and philosophy (Barthes 1977; Connor 2000: 2014; Dolar 2006). The 'vocal-body' is a term I have coined to articulate my theory of the voice in live performance and that reiterates the ability of the human body to emit vocal

7 Fischer-Lichte defines three-types of materiality: corporeality, spatiality, and tonality (2008: 125). The materiality of the body is a primary concern in my thesis, specifically the corporeal materiality of the vocal-body. As Fischer-Lichte explains corporeality is 'fundamental to the process of embodiment' (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 90).

8 For the purposes of this research I am using the term 'voice' differently to how it may be used and conceived in literary and creative writing contexts. Here, 'voice' is used to mean the sound made by the body by way of the mouth.

sound.[9]

Steven Connor's theory of the vocalic body (2000: 35-43) proposes that the voice is not simply an 'emission' from the body but an 'imaginary production of a second body', a 'voice-body' (Connor 2000: 35). This concept is useful in questioning what happens when a body produces vocal sound and his definition shares attributes with my own concept of the 'vocal-body', particularly the way in which the displacement of the body into the voice is theorized. Connor uses this idea to proclaim that, 'perhaps the voice is all there is of the body' (Connor 2000: 237).[10] As I maintain in this thesis, the body does not simply project the voice away from itself to become something 'other' than the body, i.e. the voice is not an object. Instead, the voice is an 'act' that is understood not simply by 'having a body' but by 'being a body'. Mladen Dolar states that the voice exceeds and prolongs the body, it is 'a bodily missile which has detached itself from its source, emancipated itself, yet remains corporeal' (Dolar 2006: 73). The vocal-body then is one where the voice produces embodied sound, that prolongs the body, and foregrounds the materiality of bodily sound. The vocal-body is embodied by bridging interior and exterior voices. By foregrounding the corporeal materiality of the body *and* extending this corporeality into sound, the vocal-body facilitates the unprecedented shifts, changes and alterations that I call 'actions'. Actions occur due to the tension, movement and relation between interior voice and exterior vocal sound. This occurrence, which can happen for both audience members and performers, amplifies the tension between the interior and exterior. I consider

9 Since using the term 'vocal-body' I have discovered two further uses of the term. The first in a chapter entitled 'The Vocal-body' by Konstantinos Thomaidis in Sandra Reeve's edited collection 'Body and Performance' (2013). Whilst this chapter touches on similar ideas to my own Thomaidis' use of the term is different in practice as it considers the physicality of the voice in opera singing (trained voices) and vocal dancers. His use of the term is attributed to Experience Byron and Vocal Dance Company as recorded by Thomaidis. The second use of the term is by Bob Cobbing in 'Some Statements on Sound Poetry' (1978) which I have cited in more detail in Chapter Three.

10 Connor discusses this idea in relation to Charles Brockden Brown's novel *Weiland*.

actions to be an event where the interior and exterior meet, touch and blend.

The 'vocal-body' refers to an embodied awareness of the voice, that is the intrinsic and intimate relationship of the voice and vocal sound with the body. The voice is embodied when performing the tension between 'being a body' and 'having a body'. The 'vocal-body' foregrounds the bodily presence in / of vocal sound, through its physical (vibrational) nature the voice has a resonant ability to impress itself upon other bodies. This impression, invisible but not immaterial, is intensified in performance tasks where a contingency (not knowing) is present. Performance art facilitates live discovery and positively valuing 'not knowing', by using the voice in such a way that emphasizes its corporeal and bodily materiality.

Action Poetry Intermedium

The Action Poetry Intermedium [Fig 1] consists of the inter-relations and mutual dependency of three terms: *task, voice, body*.[11] The intermedium proposes that together these three terms generate *poetry, embodiment,* and the *vocal-body* which produces 'action poetry'. This research uses action poetry as a transdisciplinary term that collects together live, time-based practices that utilize the vocal-body. Action poetry is a new way to group together artistic works and practices that explore the voice and language in transformative ways. The Action Poetry Intermedium presents a way to think through the practice-led examples within my research. It provides a way to understand the material and conceptual elements at play in work that could be considered as action poetry. This approach maintains that practice provides a theoretical framework and puts the work produced by artists at the heart of each chapter. This decision was based on my experience that practitioner's voices are seldom heard in art history or art criticism. Scholars require practice-led understandings of art works in order to produce faithful and meaningful discourses. I have chosen to emphasise practice

11 The intermedium is a diagram adapted from Dick Higgins' Illustration 'Some Poetry Intermedia' [Fig 2] (see Fondazione Bonotto 2019) from 'Three Intermedia Diagrams'.

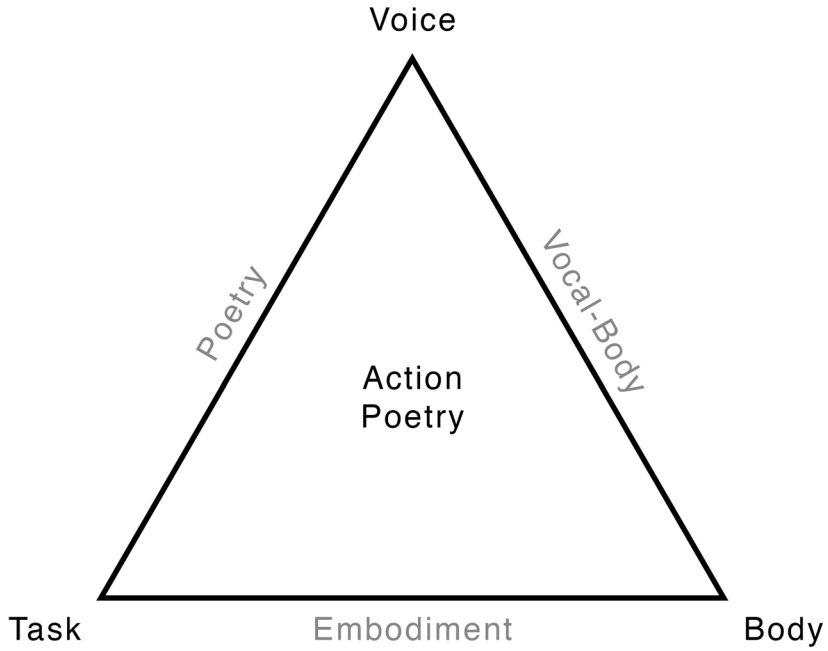


Figure 1 Nathan Walker 'The Action Poetry Intermedium'

through close readings of performances and page-based scores. It is my intent to highlight the legitimacy of artistic approaches and decisions that put artists' thinking first.[12]

Summary of Chapters

Chapter One is historico-critical and charts the performative turn in the arts where trans-disciplinarity has been established through performance. This chapter maps significant events in the disciplines of performance art and poetry that demonstrate the shared processes and techniques across disciplines. It considers the shared lineage of the Happenings movement and Fluxus in the US and UK and considers these within the context of the Destruction in Art Symposium (1966) and The First International Poetry Incarnation (1965). These events are placed in direct relation to The British Poetry Revival, Linguistically Innovative Poetry and Performance Writing.

Chapter Two examines how performance art has developed to explore the body and yet has neglected to explore the body's potential to produce and vocalise sound. This chapter addresses questions of communication and interpretation using Lea Vergine's concept of 'the body as language' (2000) and theories from Jerome Rothenberg and the ethnopoetics movement. Additionally, this chapter utilises Alain Badiou's concept of 'event' and Attridge and Lepecki's understanding of 'singularities' to propose a new vocabulary for 'communicating differently' in performance practice.

Chapter Three continues the critical study initiated in Chapter Two and draws out a narrative of my own creative practice and the techniques I have developed in order to present the vocal-body in performance. This chapter includes critical

12 I have chosen not to consider audience feedback or witness testimony due to my own experience of making and performing work and in response to an ongoing tendency in scholarly work to quantify and qualify experimental practice through the collection and study of audience data. For example, in Chapter Four I have provided my own testimonies of performing, from inside the work. This reflective and critical writing fulfils my wish to foreground the 'view from the body' (Haraway 1988:589).

close-readings of examples from sound poetry and page-based scores, including my own, in order to understand how vocal techniques and vocal improvisation have been theorised in relation to embodiment in sound poetry.

Chapter Four is a discourse of my poetics and is structured as a series of written studies of my own practice. My performance and page-based works are discussed in turn through in-depth creative and reflective writing that details how these works were constructed, performed and realised. This writing engages in what Donna Haraway terms the view from a body:

> I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (Haraway 1988: 589)

Positioning this writing at 'ground level' I am seeking to articulate knowledge that is 'anchored in practice' (Conquergood 2002: 146). Within this writing I have been able to construct a view of my performances from ground level and describe the techniques, methods and sensory experiences of making, writing and performing live. Additionally, I have weaved autobiographical passages that provide insight into personal experiences that have influenced my creative work, revealed themselves through live performance, and are an integral part of my poetics. I use the term practice-led in direct relation to the use of the term by Hazel Smith and Roger Dean in their book *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (2009). Smith and Dean use practice-led research to mean *both* the work of art 'as a form of research' and to the creation of art work as 'generating research insights' (2009: 7). Chapter four includes a portfolio of images of creative works. The written elements support these photographic images and propose the idea of 'writing as documentation'. This methodology was the subject of dance and performance artist Fiona Wright's practice-based

PhD[13] and develops 'self-reflexive strategies as a move beyond critical evaluation and towards individual and particularised writing' (Wright et al 2001: 172). This particularised writing is my poetics which Robert Sheppard defines as a tool of writerly discourse. He states that poetics addresses 'questions of poesis, matters of content sometimes (as in feminist poetics or eco-poetics), [and] questions of form nearly always' (Sheppard in Byrne and Sheppard 2017: 11). My writing in this final chapter forms a thorough account of the decision-making processes of performance and the braiding of theory, practice and lived experience present in creative and artistic processes.

13 For a thesis titled 'Other versions of an uncertain body : writing towards an account of a solo performance practice' at Nottingham Trent University 2005.

Chapter One: Histories Between Performance Art and Poetry

Introduction

This chapter considers the 'performative turn' in the arts that I argue begins with Muriel Rukeyser and Charles Olson's insistence upon breath, performance and the poem as event. The performative turn redistributes the roles of artists, audiences and the experience of art between and across disciplines and begins the intermedial shift to trans-disciplinarity. This shift has produced experimental practices that engage language as a material that can produce actions. It is within the experimental practices seen in the 'performative turn' that I locate my own practice, a practice that situates itself across and between performance art and poetry. In light of this lineage within my own practice, these are new forms of historicising that are practice-led. Critics and scholars often organise artists, works and movements, by disciplines but not by methods or methodologies. I believe that this is often due to the fact that scholars require practice-led understandings of techniques. For example, action-oriented performance art is usually written about historically yet this is the view from above and not, as I am arguing for here, the 'view from the body' (Haraway 1988: 589). This is a reformulation of art history where I re-think the organisation of disciplines, categories and movements from the artist's perspective. This chapter will explain how performance art in UK has developed from art movements that have been driven by experiments with language. It draws explicit relationships between movements such as happenings and Fluxus, which are not usually considered language-led. By understanding these movements as coming from language-led experiments we see more clearly the relationships between performance art and poetry.

I will organise histories, practices and methodologies not by discipline, but to my own understanding of how they explore language, and that include and exceed literary and artistic boundaries. The histories included here support my

own poetics and develop the theories and concepts set out in the Action Poetry Intermedium [see Fig. 1]. The activities of performance art and poetry in the UK are historically and theoretically connected. They run in parallel and often meet and merge whilst traversing the edges of what we might call the mainstream and underwrite the canons of art history in the late twentieth century. I chart key events in art history that form the pre-histories of action-oriented performance art and poetry. These pre-histories include the happenings movement and Fluxus in the United States and their influence across the Atlantic to the UK. The happenings movement in the UK was driven, not by fine arts, as in the US, but by poetry. Similarly, the inclusion of poets in UK Fluxus events and artist Gustav Metzger's Destruction in Art Symposium [DIAS] (1966) is key to understanding the terrain that action-oriented performance art occupies. This is also true when charting the relationships between events in art practice with similarly significant moments in poetry, for example the relationship between The First International Poetry Incarnation, the British Poetry Revival and Innovative Poetry. As well as mapping this historical territory, I consider key terms and concepts that have fostered the need for this study. These ideas: energy and breath in poetry; intermediality; naturalization and defamiliarisation; and performance writing, lay the ground work for the proceeding chapters and help to locate my own creative practice within this lineage.

The poetry discussed here belongs to a lineage of experimental approaches often referred to as moving beyond or 'off the page' (Higgins in Dezeuze 2002: 79), and includes the British Poetry Revival, (Linguistically) Innovative Poetry, Performance Writing, Sound Poetry and Visual Poetry. This is a communal genealogy, where poets and artists worked simultaneously outside of their own, or any, discipline specific context. I aim to highlight the connections between performance artists and poets whose experiments with language and sound developed new artistic vocabularies and new methodologies. The historical

moments and movements discussed in this chapter align the practices of poetry and performance art in the UK. This is a version of what Louis Armand calls ‘unreported poetics’ (2010) where experiments with language can be understood and explored as an action; a corporeal and spatio-temporal activation of the materiality of sites and bodies.

I use the term ‘action-oriented performance art’ to define works of performance art that, like my own, follow a European tradition where task-led activities potentially lead to actions. The taxonomy of histories that follow are examples that are crucial to the development of action-oriented performance art and in turn my own artistic practice in performance.

Muriel Rukeyser, Charles Olson & Breath / Energy

In 1949 Muriel Rukeyser insisted that the ‘line in poetry—whether it be individual or traditional—is intimately bound with the poet’s breath’ (Rukeyser 1996: 117), an idea that proposes a rethinking of the poem not as an object but as an event. Rukeyser suggests re-orienting our approach to writing, reading and hearing poetry in direct relation to our body and performance. In Rukeyser’s essay on poetics, ‘The Life of Poetry’ (first published 1949), she asks ‘is poetry alive?’ and argues that poetry invites us to feel, naming this feeling ‘a total response’. Rukeyser’s understanding of the poem is that it has an internal motion, what she calls ‘energies’, and that these are transferred between people when a poem is read or read aloud:

> Exchange is creation. In poetry, the exchange is one of energy. Human energy is transferred, and from the poem it reaches the reader. Human energy, which is consciousness, the capacity to produce change in existing conditions. (Rukeyser 1996: 173)

Here Rukeyser dismisses the idea of poetry as static and insists that it is a living, I would say embodied and performing, form. She defiantly states that a poem ‘is

not an object, the poem is a process' (1996: 174). This emphasis on energy and the importance of the body and breath in poetry locates a shift towards the ability of language and the voice to activate both spaces and bodies and to perform a change. It is within these ideas that I locate my own poetics, one that brings attention to spaces and bodies, voices and energies.

Rukeyser also argues that 'audiences, or readers, or listeners', should be thought of more as witnesses:

> I suggest the old word "witness," which includes the act of seeing or knowing by personal experience, as well as the act of giving evidence. The overtone of responsibility in this word is not present in the others; and the tension of the law makes a climate here which is that climate of excitement and revelation giving air to the work of art, announcing with the poem that we are about to change, that work is being done on the self. (1996: 175)

This change is the poem in action, which for Rukeyser, is a meeting place where 'false barriers go down' (1996: 20) generating an event of exchange and activation. These ideas were argued for again, two years later, in Charles Olson's manifesto 'Projective Verse' (first published 1950). Projective Verse similarly insisted that the composition of poetry should be in relation to the sound of words and the breath of the poet. Olson's statement 'a poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it…all the way over to the reader' (Olson 1967: 13), is remarkably similar to Rukeyser. They are both advocating an embodied poetry.[14] Both Rukeyser and Olson propose a new space for poetry to resist traditional methods. Rukeyser's *The Life of Poetry* ([1949] 1996) has, it seems, unfortunately, been neglected, whist Olson's famous work *Projective Verse*, is most often cited and accredited.

14 In 'Projective Verse' Olson presents his ideas on the future of the poem, its performance and the process of writing poetry. Proposing an 'open' form of writing, what he calls 'composition by field'.

I am addressing this historical omission here. Whilst these two proposals are different, the similarities between some aspects of the works are striking.[15] Both proposals situate performance, embodiment and process as central to poetry and foresee the importance of these ideas in the direction of the arts and poetry that was to come in the following decades.

As an example, we can see the idea of change taken up by Olson in the opening line of his now famous poem *The Kingfishers*, 'What does not change / is the will to change' (Olson 1967: 167). It was this poem too that literary scholar Burton Hatlen declared as 'a verbal action' and a 'kinetic event' (Hatlen 1989: 551-52). This suggests that Olson, influenced by Rukeyser, sees the importance of performance and embodiment in poetry and marks the initiation of the performative turn in arts practice. One example of this performative turn is through the art criticism of the same time. From the 1950s onwards a number of American poets were employed to write art criticism for the art magazine *ARTnews.* These poets include: Scott Burton, Barbara Guest, James Schuyler, Ted Berrigan, Peter Schjeldahl, Jill Johnston, Frank O'Hara and Harold Rosenberg. In 1952 Rosenberg published the article 'The American Action Painters' (1952: 23-39) that would come to represent a whole methodology of art making and lead eventually to post-minimalism in the fine arts. By coining the term 'action painting' Rosenberg drew attention to processes of 'getting inside the canvas' (1952: 22) that, paradoxically, we can relate to poetic ideas of getting 'off the page'. Rosenberg describes the canvas as 'an arena in which to act rather than a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyse or "express" an object, actual or imagined' (Rosenberg 1952: 22) he states that what was to go onto the canvas was 'not a picture but an event' (1952: 22). Poet James Schuyler stated at the time that Rosenberg's article was as

15 Olson and Rukeyser were in contact during this time (see Olson 2000: 71) just before her work was published. Marjorie Perloff declared the work derivative calling it 'a scissors and paste job, a clever but confused collage.' (Perloff 1973: 295). Although her article illuminates the derivative sections that Olson wrote from Pound, Williams and others, still she does not make a connection to Rukeyser. See also Foster (1995).

much ‘a statement for what is best about a lot of New York poetry as it is for New York painting’ (Allen 1960: 418) and predicates the language and terminology surrounding the Fluxus event score. Rosenberg’s article, conceived by a poet and using poetry (Wallace Stevens and Walt Whitman) as concepts to illustrate the argument, was to shape the works that influenced poetry and performance in the UK as it migrated over in the late 1950s. However, it is this explicit relationship between action painting and poetry that I would like to draw attention to. The term itself has, in some ways, obscured the works it discussed but the use of the term ‘action’ is a clear reference to Rukeyser and Olson.

Crucially throughout the 1960s artists, poets and performers would collaborate on a wide variety of interdisciplinary time-based artworks that I believe explored Olson’s ‘composition by field’ in a radically different way than he originally intended, like Action Painting for example. And similarly, created not audiences but witnesses through the dynamic new relationships between performer and spectator. As Fischer-Lichte explains, the performative turn in arts practice is defined by the ‘dissolution of boundaries’ (2008: 22) and the movements and practices discussed in the following section explain and map this new transdisciplinary space.

Prehistories One: Transatlantic Happenings

Untitled Event (1952)

In 1952 John Cage and David Tudor initiated an ‘Untitled Event’ in the dining hall of Black Mountain College. This event began what are now termed ‘happenings’, a movement that developed internationally throughout the 1960s and documents the coming together of artists from different disciplines to construct multi-media situations as art. Happenings are the first recorded explorations of visual artists and poets working together *simultaneously*, to produce situations, environments and events that exist as time-based experiences. The ‘Untitled Event’ brought

together choreographer Merce Cunningham, musicians Cage and Tudor, poets Charles Olson and M.C. Richards [Mary Caroline], film artist Nicholas Cernovitch and the painters Franz Kline and Robert Rauschenberg. During the event, which lasted around 45 minutes (although there is no confirmed duration) and collaged together improvised activities from all disciplines, Olson and Richards were intermittently ascending a 'poetry ladder' to read their poems at height, above the music, dance, film and paintings on display below. John Cage describes the event:

> The seating arrangement…was a square composed of four triangles with the apexes of the triangles merging towards the centre, but not meeting. The centre was a larger space that could take movement, and the aisles between these four triangles also admitted of movement. The audience could see itself, which is of course the advantage of any theatre in the round. The larger part of the action took place outside of that square. In each of the seats was a cup, and it wasn't explained to the audience what to do with this cup — some used it as an ashtray — but the performance was concluded by a kind of ritual of pouring coffee into each cup. (Cage in Kirby and Schechner 1965: 52)

Audience member David Weinrib recalled that Olson had written a poem in numbered parts that used 'fragments of conversation' (Duberman 1972: 345), he had given each part to different members of the audience who read them aloud at random intervals. This highlights the use of chance and indeterminacy in the execution of Olson's performance, strategies that were to become much more widely adopted by artists and poets working with the new time-based practices.

Happenings were a new experience for audiences and foregrounded multi-

sensory and performative events.[16] Developing out of the Beat Generation's repositioning of performance to the centre of poetry practice and in parallel to the anti-art gestures and demonstrations of the Fluxus movement whose first official event took place in George Maciunas' AG Gallery, New York in 1961 (Jones and Heathfield 2012: 426; Home 1991: 50), these activities emphasised the artistic process and not the artefact or product. This shift from product to process also acknowledged the presence of the artist's body as a crucial (active) agent in the creation of a work.

Fluxus, New Dance & Task-led Performance

Throughout the 1960s Maciunas would help to build upon the process-oriented practices of the happening through the international mail-art network. He developed a new form of practice that enabled a previously unachievable level of distribution, bringing together Fluxus artists, concrete poets and a range of practitioners to form a global network. This network explicitly explored the ephemeral and textual materiality of the event of art. As Kristine Stiles has described them: 'Fluxus Events …[are] language happenings' (Stiles 1993: 67).

The relationships that developed between performance-based exploration of language by artists and visual poetry were connected and explored not only through

16 William Fetterman (2010) suggests that whilst this event is widely recognised as the first happening the Happenings movement mainly evolved from Cage's classes (1956 - 1959) at the New School for Social Research in New York (Fetterman 2010: 179 and Macdonald 2012b: 151). The students in these classes would go on to produce influential examples of interdisciplinary practice in the 1960s in America and included Allan Kaprow, George Brecht, Jackson Mac Low, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Robert Dunn, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Richard Maxfield, Florence Tarlow, Yoko Ono and Larry Poons. In these classes Cage noted that he had been 'shifting from object to process' (Fetterman 2010: 368) and so we can begin to understand the influence of this process-led practice on his students' works. George Brecht and Yoko Ono's invention of 'Event Scores' are one example. Similarly Allan Kaprow's development of the Happening used scripted scores to create interactive environments and events. Kaprow is seen as the leading developer of the form in America and influenced other proponents of happenings internationally, which, in the UK include Adrian Henri and Jeff Nuttall, and in Europe Jean-Jacques Lebel, Joseph Beuys, Wolf Vostell and Robert Filliou.

concrete poetry[17] but also through radically interdisciplinary practices like Fluxus. Indeed Emmett Williams describes Fluxus as being 'born out of experiments in concrete poetry as it got "off the page"' (Dezeuze 2002: 79) providing a useful metaphor for thinking about language-led performance and the historical cross-overs between movements, forms and practitioners.

In other areas of practice American artists were expanding the definitions of their disciplines by radically experimenting in groups and collaborating. One of the most important are those in dance where new approaches to choreography developed as task-based instructions. This activity can be seen in New York through the Judson Dance Theatre[18] and in California through the work of Anna Halprin. The New York events engaged in the same process-orientated methodologies. Many of these early experiments occurred in non-art spaces, like the events of Yoko Ono's loft from 1960 - 62 at 112 Chambers Street on the Lower East Side. La Monte Young curated a series of evenings that included the work of dance artist Simone Forti in 1961 and her task-led works *Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things* (see Breitwieser 2014). Forti had previously participated in the happenings of Robert Whitman and her poetic scores and instructions for task-led works, 'Dance Reports', were later included in Young and Mac Low's *Anthology of Chance Operations* (1963) alongside George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Ray Johnson, Emmett Williams, Yoko Ono and John Cage. *An Anthology* was, as the title suggests, not discipline specific but a collection of works and scores for performance mainly through / as language. These were what George Brecht referred to as a 'notational eighth-note' and 'a direction for an action' (Brecht in Dezeuze 2002: 86).

---

17 Concrete Poetry is a conceptual and visual poetry that emphasises typography and other non-linguistic elements as part of its meaning often making images from language.

18 Judson Dance Theatre was located in Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, New York between 1962 - 1964. Founders and members included dancers, musicians, filmmakers and artists Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Deborah Hay, Lucinda Childs, Meredith Monk, Carolee Schneemann, Steve Paxton, Sally Gross and Philip Corner.

Other dance artists like Yvonne Rainer were also experimenting with language and performance where dancers would recite essays whilst executing sequences of movement (see Goldberg 1979: 91) although this was rare. Rainer stated that after seeing Forti's *See-Saw* in 1960 at the Reuben Gallery she was impressed by the use of the see-saw for its physical properties and 'the resulting demands it made on the performers' (Banes 1987: 26). As Banes states Rainer was 'especially effected by the episodic, unconnected structure of the piece. "One thing followed another. Whenever I am in doubt I think of that. One thing follows another"' (1987: 26). This highlights the importance of performers' interactions with objects and the structure of task-led work. The development of the task in performance, whilst explicit in the instructions of Fluxus event scores, is due in large part to the work of choreographers like Forti and Rainer and led to the conceptual approaches to tasks in action-oriented performance art. The shift towards pedestrian movement and a sculptural use of the body in dance can be seen to influence performance art as the field developed. Furthermore, in Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* (1966) we see that her choreographed material explores systematic movement that appears instructional and task-led. Dance critic Sally Banes explains that Rainer wanted to remove objects from her work but hoped to 'retain the workmanlike attitude of task performance (Banes 1987: 44).[19] This minimal work is discussed in Rainer's 1966 essay 'A Quasi Survey on Some "Minimalist" Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimalist Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A' (Rainer in Battock 1995), in which she explores the ideas behind *Trio A* and includes a chart that sets out distinctions between minimalist objects and minimalist dance. Rainer posits a series of 'substitutions' including substituting 'factory fabrication' for 'energy equality and "found" movement', 'nonreferrential forms' for 'neutral performance', 'simplicity' for 'singular action, event, or tone' and 'literalness' for

19 The aesthetics of *Trio A* could be said to have influenced the aesthetic prevalence of performance artists wearing black clothing in white gallery spaces which emphasizes an aesthetics of negative and positive space.

'task or tasklike activity' (in Battock: 253). *Trio A* is exemplary in its expansion of the perceived definition of a given form. As a dance piece it challenges perceptions of skill and training using collected pedestrian movements that have been scored into a series of complicated movement tasks but performed with a kind of robotic (post-modern) attitude by Rainer.[20] As Sally Banes claimed:

> The history of dance theory has been the repeated conflict between those who value technique and those who value expression […] With *Trio A* this cycle is at last broken. The debate is made irrelevant. The possibility is proposed that dance is neither perfection or technique nor of expression, but quite something else — the presentation of objects in themselves. It is not simply a new style of dance, but a new meaning and function, a new definition'. (Banes 1987: 49)

This statement, 'the presentation of objects in themselves', is intrinsic to the development of action-oriented performance art and indeed the performative turn discussed here. By committing to tasks *as* performance, artists have been able to be fully present with the situation of performance and in turn have shifted the creation of work from product to events. I use tasks in this way in my own performances precisely because task-led activities enable an embodied awareness.

Intermedia and UK Fluxus

Happenings, new experiments in dance and Fluxus are inter-related developments in performance and it is precisely their shared emphasis on tasks, scores and the work of performance-as-event that is responsible for the performative turn in the arts. This is an expanded field of practice that saw through and across previously opaque disciplinary boundaries. These practices were actively discovering news

20 This refers to Trisha Brown's labelling modern dance as the 'robot-look' (Brown in Burt 2006: 13).

forms of artistic communication. This expanded 'field' also relates to Fluxus poet Dick Higgins' theory of 'Intermedia' (Higgins 1984). Higgins suggests that certain art forms and practitioners experiment *between* different media. Higgins states that:

> [T]he happening developed as an intermedium, an uncharted land that lies between collage, music and the theater. It is not governed by rules; each work determines its own medium and form according to its needs. The concept itself is better understood by what it is not, rather than what it is. (Higgins, 1984: 22)

Intermedia is a way of considering work not by category but by continuity where mediums are fused together. What is interesting about the term is that intermedia has come to represent (and could be argued epitomise) the development of the modernist and avant-garde poetries and performance actions in the UK from the 1960s onwards.

Fluxus in the UK was intermittent and nomadic but often included practitioners from both poetry and fine art contexts. Following the first manifestation of Fluxus in the UK, *Festival of Misfits*,[21] the presence of Fluxus was felt but not in any 'official' capacity, as Heike Roms states 'no British artist was ever part of the Fluxus core group' (Roms 2018: 382). The 1972-73 touring exhibition *Fluxshoe* featured the work of over 100 artists including Stuart Brisley, Helen Chadwick,

21 The Festival of Misfits was a Fluxus organized festival at Victor Musgrove's Gallery One in London from 23rd October - 8th November 1962 that included works by Ben Vautier, Emmett Williams, and Gustav Metzger (see Fondazione Bonotto 2015). Metzger's work was eventually rejected from the festival exhibition for being too controversial but was re-staged over four decades later by Metzger at Tate Modern in 2008 and retitled Festival of Missed Fits 1962 - 2008 (see Plant 2008). This passage in time evidences how long it has taken for Metzger's work to be taken seriously by large institutional galleries like the Tate, and even this seems to be a kind of nostalgia for and commercialization of the radical practices and underground 'counter' cultural activities of the 1960s. Metzger did however participate in an evening event at London's ICA that included performances by Canadian artist Robin Page, American poet Dick Higgins and artists Alison Knowles and George Maciunas (see Metzger 1992). Some of these artists would reappear at Metzger's own Destruction in Art Symposium [DIAS] four years later.

Allen Fisher, Robin Crozier, Ian Breakwell, Genesis P-Orridge and Cosey Fanni Tutti (see artcornwall 2015). Fisher performed parts of his work 'Blood Bone Brain' (1973 - 1981) and most of the works were public and embraced the anarchic irony of Fluxus. *Fluxshoe* travelled to Falmouth, Exeter, Croydon, Oxford, Nottingham, Blackburn and Hastings.[22]

The relationship between the body, public space, architecture and expanded definition of poetry and language beyond the page, was explored in explicit detail in the 1970s through performance and spatio-temporal poetic actions of artists across disciplines. Developing the collective, cross-disciplinary and simultaneous actions of happenings and connected activities enabled performance art to emerge as its own art form within the fine art establishment. This was often explored within the context of the individual or solo artist, employing a physical relationship to language and the use of one's own body as a site for action. Even though performance art has always remained on the margins of many different art forms, its formative years, after happenings, post-modern dance and alongside Fluxus, resulted in a shift that focused attention on the body as both the artistic subject and art object. This work was evident in the first UK happenings that galvanized collaborative relationships across disciplines and brought the performative turn in the arts to the fore.

Pre-histories Two: UK Happenings

The activities of Beat poets, Black Mountain poets, the happenings and chance-operations of John Cage, Merce Cunningham and his circle, the formative years of Fluxus and the radical approaches to dance and improvisation at Judson Memorial Church were spreading across the Atlantic to Britain and these

22 Juha Virtanen's *Poetry and Performance During the British Poetry Revival 1960-1980* (2017) includes an in-depth exploration of the various and complex works included in Fisher's *Blood Bone Brain*. This work seems to epitomize event-based, process-led and intermedial practices in performance whereby Fisher's self-published book-works as part of *Blood Bone Brain* are referred to as 'book-events' (Virtanen 2017: 112).

influences should not be underestimated. In his *Performance Art Memoirs* (1970) Jeff Nuttall remarks that the lineage of performance art in Britain can be traced straight back to Cage:

> It was developed between Cage, Rauschenberg, and Kaprow, with Oldenberg and Dine not far behind. Joseph Beuys took it to Europe in the late fifties. Jean-Jacques Lebel, Mark Boyle and Ken Dewey brought it to England in the early sixties where Adrian Henri, myself, Bob Cobbing and others picked up on it. (Nuttall 1979: 56)

Here we see one perspective of the importance of those American processes of experimentation in the 1950s that migrated to the UK in the 1960s. Other perspectives include Allen Fisher's comments on the importance of American poetry being made available in the UK. This poetry was attached to these movements and new practices - not only Beat poetry which had a notoriety outside poetry circles but the Black Mountain poets and others – began being sold in bookshops and published in the UK. Fisher has remarked on the importance of specific bookshops like Better Books on Charing Cross Road, London for both distributing American poetry to British audiences and for the networks that developed from these artistic spaces.[23] Specifically as Better Books was managed at times by poets like Bob Cobbing and Lee Harwood meaning that it was practice focused. The significance of Better Books as a site for happenings, exhibitions and other activities is an important part of the history of the transatlantic influences of American writers on British poets (see Virtanen 2017).

The visits in the mid 1960s of John Cage, Merce Cunningham and Robert

23 Fisher explains that through Beat poet and co-founder of City Lights Bookshop in San Francisco Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Better Books exchanged boxes of old Penguin books for boxes of new American works like Gregory Corso's Gasoline and Frank O'Hara's Lunch Poems (see Lang and Smith 2015: n.p.). Similarly poets and writers like John Ashbery, William Burroughs and Ed Dorn were living close to or in the UK at this time and so were not removed from the network and developments in the UK but actively part of them.

Rauschenberg touring with the Cunningham Dance Company to Sadler's Wells in London and Dartington College of Arts in Devon meant that their ground-breaking work in movement, sound, image and light was seen for the first time by British artists and poets (see Macdonald 2012a: 35 - 46).[24]

The happenings occurring in the UK are well documented in Liverpool poet Adrian Henri's 1974 book *Environments and Happenings* and more recently by Beth Hoffman (2009) and Heike Roms and Rebecca Edwards (2012). The first recorded UK happening was the Edinburgh happening in 1963. Roms and Edwards also discuss the Cardiff happening of 1965 in detail but almost all accounts overlook the Hendon Arts Together happening which occurred only days after the Edinburgh happening in 1963. In order to understand the importance of happenings to the radical developments in poetry and performance I am retrieving the Hendon Arts Together [HAT] Happening as part of that narrative. Crucially, all three recorded happenings in the UK were linked to poetry and poets explicitly and evidences the experiments with language that are often overlooked in the pre-histories of performance art in the UK.

Henri notes that happenings were also occurring in Liverpool as early as 1962 following his reading of Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (Henri 1974: 116). The principles of the happening as a planned and scripted theatrical event that incorporated multi-media art forms, means that we could also apply the term to other events and situations of the 1960s including festivals like the Fluxus organized *Festival of Misfits* in London 1962 and even playwright John Arden's month long *Festival of Anarchy* in rural Kirkbymoorside near York in 1963 (see Kershaw 1992: 95). The development and influence of the happening as a form of multi-media performative event can be seen throughout the following decades in

24 Dartington College was and continued to be a centre for experimental practice with a particularly rich history of innovative poetry from its inception in 1924 to its demise in 2010 when it merged with University of Falmouth. This can be seen through the undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Performance Writing that are discussed later.

the festivals of performance art, the regular meetings of Writers Forum Workshop and the work of self-organised artist-run co-operatives.

First Happening: Edinburgh Happening

The now infamous Edinburgh happening took place on 7th September 1963 and was organized by publisher John Calder as part of the Edinburgh Festival International Drama Conference. Whilst the happening, convened in collaboration with Allan Kaprow, Charles Marowitz and Ken Dewey, was more scandal than success, it can be seen as a remarkable attempt by Calder to bring the avant-garde to the establishment, as Beth Hoffman argues:

> Though this event can be read to anticipate and in many respects exemplify a long tradition of divisiveness between a British 'literary establishment' and 'alternative' or experimental theatre and live art, it also serves as an index of how the two sets of practices were in many ways mutually constitutive and always already deeply enmeshed in one another as they developed. (Hoffman 2009: 97)

Hoffman highlights the happening's ability to make visible the kinds of collaborations that were occurring in the 1960s through the disintegration of disciplinary boundaries and the importance of performance to enable such interdisciplinarity.

Second Happening: Hendon Arts Together Happening

The Hendon Arts Together [HAT] happening also occurred in 1963 in direct response to the Edinburgh Happening. It was staged by HAT, under the direction of Bob Cobbing, at the New End Art Gallery, in Hampstead. There is very little written about the happening, except for newspaper articles like Hampstead News' 'They Couldn't Save this Sole':

> A wellington boot died last week—a white wellington boot that resisted the skill of a surgeon in the "operating theatre" at the New End Art Gallery,

> Hampstead. Remember the "Happening" at the Edinburgh Festival on Saturday, during which a model stripped? Well, Operation Wellington Boot was also a "Happening"—staged by members of Arts Together, an organization which has put on a number of events at the New End Gallery in the past few weeks. The "Happenings" were staged under the heading, "An Evening of New Drama". (Hampstead News, September 16, 1963) (See Thomas 2013)

That this event took place to begin with is testament to the reports of the Edinburgh happening and its 'scandalous' reception. It also helps to illustrate Cobbing's committed approach to collaboration, self-organisation and experimentation.

Third Happening: Cardiff Happening

The Cardiff happening at the Cardiff Commonwealth Arts Festival two years later in 1965 sought to achieve a similar alignment between the marginal and the established. Occurring in the same year that Michael Kirby published *Happenings* (Kirby 1965) – a major exploration of the happenings movement in the US – this was a festival convened *by* poets to discuss 'the status, function and future of poetry' (Roms and Edwards 2012: 21). The poets included Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, Brian Patten, Alexander Trocchi, Jeff Nuttall, Michael Horovitz, Paolo Lionni and Dan Richter. Also present was poet and convener of the first European happenings in Italy in 1960, Jean-Jacques Lebel. Lebel was at this point already translating into French the works of Beat poets and writers like William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso.[25] The Cardiff happening and its repercussions are recorded in detail by Heike Roms in her extensive archival project *What's Welsh for Performance Art?* (see Roms 2008). As she states:

25 Later in the 1980s Lebel would convene the sound poetry festival Polyphonix (see Heil 2014) and in 1999 take part in Richard Martel's conference at Inter Le Leui 'Art Action' alongside Julien Blaine, Dick Higgins, Bartolome Ferrando, Ester Ferrer (Zaj) and Martha Wilson.

> Here was a group of artists from different disciplinary backgrounds who came together in a mutual 'intermedial' attempt to expand the terms and vocabularies of their respective practices in performance. (Roms and Edwards 2012: 25)

Roms also notes how poetry is at the heart of these activities: '[p]oetry had taken a central place in the counter-cultural movement, and Happenings had become central to the new movements in poetry' (2012: 26). Poetry's centrality to the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s can be seen that same year in an event with the potential to locate London's poetry scene as oppositional to mainstream culture (see Hampson and Edwards 2016).

First International Poetry Incarnation

On June 11th 1965 London's Albert Hall, perhaps the most significant monument to establishment and cultural tradition, became the site of another kind of happening.[26] The *World Poets of Our Time* poetry reading, also known as the 'First International Poetry Incarnation' included live performances from Beat poets including Alexander Trocchi, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Michael Horovitz, Harry Fainlight, Allen Ginsberg and others but also Viennese sound poet Ernst Jandl and UK poets including Adrian Mitchell (see Sheppard 2005: 41). Impressively *The First Poetry Incarnation* was a four-hour poetry performance attended by over 7000 audience members. Ernst Jandl's reading is perhaps the most remarkable in this event as he only performed sound poems, and whilst Beat poetry wasn't the most mainstream of poetries in the UK at that time, sound poetry was even less so. To perform sound poems to an audience of this size and

26 Whilst it is often referred to as a happening, the poetry incarnation was, in actual fact, a structured (but not orderly) poetry reading and, despite its size, followed the convention of poetry readings where one poet follows another to read their work and a convener, in this case Alexander Trocchi, introduced them in turn. That said, the organization of the event was collaborative; the venue was booked by Barbara Rubin, Jill and Daniel Richter financed the booking deposit etc.

in this venue is significant and Jandl's reception was one of rapturous applause. Alongside Michael Horovitz and Pete Brown, Jandl also performed Kurt Schwitters' *Fury of Sneezing.* Earlier that year, in May, Ginsberg had already performed in London after meeting Cobbing in Better Books. According to Jeff Nuttall, Ginsberg made Better Books his headquarters whilst in London and indeed the shop was the site of many happenings and interdisciplinary events.[27] A significant event which, in part, consisted of events at Better Books occurred the following year of the poetry incarnation, Gustav Metzger's Destruction in Art Symposium of 1966.

Destruction in Art Symposium [DIAS]

The counter cultural movement, that poetry was central to, allowed artists of all kinds to re-imagine the form of their works and this was developed in a large way through the international networks that were able to form and meet during this period. In Jeff Nuttall's pivotal book *Bomb Culture* he poetically describes the surprise discovery of parallel activities:

> When Cobbing, [Victor] Musgrove, Rowan [that's John, the psychologist] and I were putting on our shows in hired rooms, exclaiming our poetry in public parks, swinging the duplicator handle throughout the long Saturday afternoons of 1963 we had no idea that the same thing was happening all over the world. (Nuttall 1970: 159)

Gustav Metzger's DIAS was a crucial event for these discoveries. Perhaps Metzger's own history as a refugee, coming to London in 1939, had driven his awareness of movements across borders. In 1959 Metzger published

27 I acknowledge that Allen Ginsberg's poetry and poetics could be explored further in this study but I have omitted it in order to concentrate on different and less cited practitioners. Also that Ginsberg's membership to the paedophile advocacy association NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association) is, sadly, too often overlooked and is antithetical to my own politics. Ginsberg's own statement on and defence of NAMBLA can be found in *Deliberate Prose* (Ginsberg and Morgan 2001) and is reprinted online at https://www.ipce.info/library/miscellaneous/thoughts-nambla.

the manifesto of 'Auto-Destructive Art' [ADA] (1960) and we can consider his explorations of ADA with his acid paintings as a development of action painting in the UK. In Metzger's paintings and experiments the 'action' draws our attention to the 'ontology of performance', its appearance through and as disappearance (Phelan 1993) that I discuss in the Chapter Two.

Metzger organized DIAS in 1966 with poet John J. Sharkey who would later edit the publication *Mindplay: an Anthology of British Concrete Poetry* (1971). The intention of the symposium, which was a month of activities with a three-day symposium at London's Africa Centre, was 'to expand the material practices and political languages of art and poetry' (Stiles 2005: 1). Some events happened prior to the symposium including discussions and presentations at Richard Demarco's gallery in Edinburgh with John J. Sharkey and Ivor Davis on 1 September, and a film screening entitled 'meditations on violence' by Bob Cobbing at Better Books on 2 September.[28]

Participating artists and speakers included Bob Cobbing, Robin Page, Wolf Vostell, Ivor Davies, John Calder, Jeff Nuttall, Kenneth Kemble, John Latham, Raphael Montañez Oritz, Al Hansen, Jean Jacques-Lebel, Henri Chopin, Julien Blaine, Dom Sylvester Houedard, Jean Toche, Yoko Ono, Barbara Gladstone

28 Demarco was an important organizer of early action-oriented performance art in the UK. 'Strategy: Get Arts' was the palindromically titled festival organized by Demarco at his gallery and the University of Edinburgh in 1970 (Richard 2009: 114). Participating artists included Joseph Beuys, Gerhard Richter, Dieter Rot, George Brecht, Robert Filliou and Daniel Spoerri. Strategy was developed as part of the Edinburgh International Festival and so, for Beuys, it was an important opportunity for his ideas to be tested on a large audience (see Hunter and Bodor 2012). Demarco's gallery became a site for performance during the 1970s and 1980s and contributed to a diverse selection of performance artists presenting in the UK for the first time. Two of these artists, like Beuys, presented performances of extended duration. Alastair MacLennan and Marina Abramović were both curated by Demarco and presented work more than once at the gallery.

and the Viennese Actionists Otto Mühl, Gunter Brus and Hermann Nitsch.[29] Ono and American dancer Gladstone were the only two women included in the programme.[30]

Metzger's ideas were driven by a need for transformative works of art, both metaphoric and literal. In 1964 he wrote that his art works encouraged unpredictable outcomes through a belief in the activity itself. Here Metzger is advocating the chance-based procedures of Fluxus and the task-led activities of performance art, particularly relevant to DIAS participants like Otto Muehl, Günter Brus and Wolf Vostell for example. The idea of an unpredictable outcome through the task of the activity proposes that 'other' possibilities for work can be realized, actions and events arise from such situations. Metzger argues for 'random activity' as a 'critical and productive problem' in art:

> The artist desires and achieves a certain form, rhythm, scale: intends and identifies with all the transformations, predictable and unpredictable, that the work is capable of. At a certain point, the work takes over, is in activity beyond the detailed control of the artist, reaches a power, grace, momentum transcendence…which the artist could not achieve except through random activity. (Metzger 1964: 14)

---

29 Other participating artists, once again all male artists, present were AMM Group; Fred Bazler; Dr Joseph Berke; Edward Bourke-Haliburton; Mark Boyle; Institute of Direct Art [IDA]; George Buchanan; Ferdy Buonanno; Cornelius Cardew; Jose Luis Castillejo; Anthony Cox; Pete Davey; Raymond Durgnat; Dr Erling Eng; Barry Flanagan; Ernst Fleischmann; Francis Galton; John Gilson; Juan Hidalgo (ZAJ); Garry A Jones; Kurt Kren [IDA]; Lollypop Group: Rose Donagh, Harry Franklin, John Sexton, Roelof Louw; Harvery Matusow; Jocelyn de Noblet; Jasia Reichardt; Beverley Rowe; Pro-Diaz; Werner Schreib; Anthony Scott; Hugh Shaw; Victor E M Sloan; Ray Staackman; Biff Stevens; Criton Tomazos; Peter Weibel [IDA]; Luis Alberto Wells; David Westerley; Dick Wilcocks; and Gordon Yates (Destruction in Art Symposium 1967 n.p).

30 Carolee Schneeman (had wanted to but) was unable to attend for financial reasons. Some artists who did not attend still had their work presented for example Kenneth Kemble, Enrico Baj, Robert Filliou, Walter Marchietti, Dieter Roth and Milan Knizak. According to Kristine Stiles other artists like Kaprow, Joseph Beuys, Claes Oldenberg and George Brecht considered DIAS 'too extreme' (Stiles 2005: 8).

This is particularly interesting in relation to performance and poetry works of extended duration and embodied activities where 'the work takes over'. This is also witnessed in the improvisation-based activities already discussed in Judson and Fluxus, whereby a commitment to the task and the relinquishing of authorial desire facilitates what Metzger refers to as 'transcendence'.

The relationship between poetry and performance at DIAS was explored mainly through the forming of networks and a truly interdisciplinary practice. That said we might consider some performances as expanded forms of writing and reading like Raphael Montanez Oritz who ritualistically killed and dissected a chicken and 'read' its entrails aloud (Stiles 2005). Similarly Argentinian artist Kenneth Kemble who could not attend but instead sent cassette-tape works of 'ideas for destruction applied to music and poetry' described his work as attempting to 'change the linear meaning by semantic explosion and implosion, spelling, syllabic indifference and disintegration of vocalised sound' (Stiles 2005: 6). Bob Cobbing's role in DIAS is recorded by Chris Beckett:

> Cobbing was hired as a projectionist by Yoko Ono (who was a participating artist in Metzger's DIAS programme) to show her film, No. 4 (better known as 'Bottoms'): "I met Yoko Ono at Better Books [...]. She wanted somebody to go around with her and project her "Bottoms" film. I said I had a projector so we went round a lot of places in London, showing her film". (Beckett 2010: 27)[31]

Whilst most of the performances explored an explicit metaphorical or literal

31 The counter-cultural magazine International Times [IT] was first published on 15th October 1966 immediately following DIAS. IT editor Jim Haynes shared an office with Alexander Trocchi and both served on the DIAS honorary committee alongside Bob Cobbing, Wolf Vostell and Ivor Davies (and others). Thus the inaugural issue of IT had several articles on DIAS and specifically on Yoko Ono's contribution to the event. The articles are written by an international array of people including Jean-Jacques Lebel who wrote on the death of surrealist poet Andre Breton (International Times Archive 1966). National newspapers also picked up on the events of DIAS and amusingly referred to Bob Cobbing as 'the man who once stuck his head in a Xerox machine' (Shearer 1966).

relationship to destruction and attracted media attention for being sensational or overtly shocking, Yoko Ono's programme of short scored actions on the 28th and 29th of September were more inclusive and engaged in the interactive and participatory ideology of the happening and Fluxus / event score. Ono's performance included her famous and important work *Cut Piece* (1964) in which members of the audience are invited to remove parts of the artist's clothing with scissors whilst she sits motionless in a quiet, non-violent protest.[32]

The contextual and associational networks of artists meeting at DIAS and, in turn, the dispersal of ideas into international networks was a substantial achievement that Stiles credits as being a foundation for the international events of uprising and dissent in 1968. Following the dissemination of the Situationist text *On the Poverty of Student Life* (1966) the uprisings and unrest in Paris in May 1968 were multiplied globally.[33] DIAS enabled a global network of artists to emerge, perhaps outside of or removed from the global art market, the consequences of which are evident in the work of artistic networks in the following decades.

Pre-histories Three: The British Poetry Revival and Innovative Poetry

It is clear that a continued commitment to expanding the definitions of established forms was a necessary step forward in the realization of contemporary work.

---

32 Kevin Concannon (2008: 81-93) reminds us that Ono's work is an event score and so exists primarily as a text-based score that can be interpreted and performed by anyone. It has been performed by Ono at least six times, the first and second performances were in Japan in 1964, the third in New York in 1965, the fourth and fifth at DIAS in 1966, and the sixth performance in Paris 2003.

33 There are some direct connections between DIAS, the Situationist International (SI) and May '68, specifically through participants like Trocchi, Dutch PROVOS Irene Dorner van de Weetering and Bernhard de Vries and Italian artist Enrico Baj. Metzger did invite the SI to participate in DIAS but as Stewart Home has it 'rather unsurprisingly, the Debordists refused to have anything to do with the event' (Home 1993). We can attribute this to the exclusive nature of the SI project. What is important to note is that the mainly literary movement of Situationism and its formative life within the movements of Lettriste International (LI), COBRA, the London Psychogeographical Association and the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, who undertook psychogeographical experiments with language beyond the page, were born from the interdisciplinary nature of events like DIAS.

The 1970s demonstrated a shift from modernist to postmodern ideas and from established methods to experimental methods that put modernist and postmodern approaches to art and to life in opposition.

The Poetry Wars

In the 1970s this opposition was visible in what is referred to by Peter Barry as the 'poetry wars' in London and provides an example of how the established, 'mainstream' poetry of the Movement poets (like Philip Larkin) was maintained. The council of the Poetry Society had slowly admitted a different kind of membership than it had previously. By 1975 council members included Cobbing, Nuttall, Henri, Barry MacSweeney, Roy Fisher, Lee Harwood, Tom Pickard, Bill Griffiths, Allen Fisher, and Elaine Randell.[34] These poets and artists were mainly part of The British Poetry Revival, a movement which came out of the underground activities of poets involved in the happenings movement of the 1960s and influenced by the oral poetry of Beat poetry, the Black Mountain poets like Olson, Creeley, Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov as well as through the language actions at DIAS and the Poetry Incarnation at Royal Albert Hall. These events had a lasting impact on a generation of poets interested in developing the form of poetry in similar ways to the development of performance art; through live encounters, artist-led exhibitions of visual poetry and self-published magazines. The publication of Michael Horovitz's anthology *Poetry of the 'Underground' in Britain* (Horovitz 1969) featured many of the poets on the council of the Poetry Society but also poet-artists like Trocchi, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Carlyle Reedy, Edwin Morgan and even Michael X. These poets were exploring new approaches to writing that engaged self-reflexively with the act of writing itself.

Between 1971 and 1977 Eric Mottram became editor of the Poetry Society's

34 Other council members included visual poet Jeremy Adler, sound poet cris cheek, Elaine Feinstein and head of BBC poetry George MacBeth.

journal *The Poetry Review* and, according to archivist Chris Beckett, there followed an 'overnight transformation of its character and poetic range, its tone and orientation' (Beckett 2010: 3). This radical shift to a different kind of poetry angered and confused a lot of Poetry Society members and Arts Council England effectively resulting in Mottram and other members resigning in protest (see Barry 2006 and Beckett 2010). In Richard Caddel and Peter Quartermain's *OTHER: British and Irish Poetry since 1970* (1999) they explore the idea that this could be seen as a 'burying' of a British modernist and experimental tradition. It is particularly interesting to consider the use of the term 'burying' in the 1970s onwards as opposed to the nostalgic counter-cultural 'underground' of the 1960s.

Alternatives to Mainstream Poetry

Whilst the transition from minimalism to body art and to a re-conceptualisation of time in performance is widely acknowledged as a defining moment in the history of performance art the same could be said of the increasingly disjunctive poetics of poetry at that time. Although not discussed as 'minimal' or 'post-minimal' these works explored the same innovative approach to materials and the space of the page would become a document of the activity of 'writing'. I think of these works as scores for task-led performances where the textual space of the page is treated as notation. I use these methods in my own practice and this is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

In Robert Sheppard's and Adrian Clarke's *Floating Capital* (1991) they conclude that the poets involved in these activities held certain axioms in common:

> That poetry must extend the inherited paradigms of "poetry"; that this can be accomplished by delaying, or even attempting to eradicate, a reader's process of naturalisation; that new forms of poetic artifice and formalist techniques should be used to defamiliarise the dominant reality principle in order to operate a critique of it; and that poetry can

> use indeterminacy and discontinuity to fragment and reconstitute text to make new connections. (Clarke and Sheppard, 1991: 142)

The work that Sheppard, and Caddel and Quartermain have done to bring this 'unreported' and often 'underground' poetry to the fore is completely necessary. For example, in Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion's *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982) they deduce that during the 1960s and 1970s 'very little – in England at any rate – seemed to be happening' (Morrison and Motion 1982: 11). Their anthology includes very few Poetry Revival poets and instead charts a monolithic history of British poetry at this time. And so, whilst mainstream accounts of the dynamic and innovative poetry from the 1960s through the 1980s may suggest otherwise there was in-fact a wide-range of experimental activities occurring in poetry throughout this time. As Gavin Selerie has explained:

> The 1960s and 1970s actually witnessed an explosion of poetic activity, which was in itself a reaction against the full common- sense politeness of the 'Movement' poets of the 1950s. After a period dominated by such figures as Philip Larkin, qualities of inventiveness, passion, intelligence entered once again into British verse. (Selerie in Sheppard 2005: 35)

Defamiliarisation & Naturalisation

In Robert Sheppard's thorough account of the British Poetry Revival and Innovative poetry, *The Poetry of Saying* (2005), he goes further utilizing Veronica Forrest-Thomson's concept of 'naturalization'. He explains that what these poets were doing was stressing the 'centrality of the notions of discontinuity and indeterminacy as technical elements of poetics' (Sheppard 2005: 3). This was opposite to the work of mainstream poetry, and Sheppard uses the example of the movement poets, what he calls the 'Movement Orthodoxy' which 'privileges a poetry of closure, narrative coherence and grammatical and syntactic cohesion,

which colludes with the processes of naturalization' (Sheppard 2005: 3). His use of Forrest-Thomson's concept of 'good' and 'bad' naturalization extends this idea to explore how these poets worked, particularly in reading situations. Forrest-Thompson describes 'bad naturalization' as an attempt to reduce 'the strangeness of poetic language…by translating it in to a statement about the non-verbal external world, by making the Artifice appear natural' (Forrest-Thomson in Sheppard 2005: 5). Instead 'good naturalization' explains more clearly the work of the British Poetry Revival and Innovative poets:

> Good naturalization dwells on the non-meaningful levels of poetic language, such as phonetic and prosodic patterning and spatial organization, and tries to state their relationship to other levels of organization rather than set(ting) them aside in an attempt to produce a statement about the world. (Forrest-Thomson in Sheppard 2005: 6)

This is useful to my own project and the aims of this thesis as it illustrates how this approach to poetry, writing, and performance was not interested in fixing language to a meaning*ful* state. Instead good naturalisation allows for and develops an openness to language's signifying properties and to the ways in which meaning is made (and it is *made*) in the relationships of exchange in live situations.[35]

It is clear that some of these principles and ideas are also present in performance art, particularly its discontinuous and indeterminate structures and lack (or desire) for narrative coherence. That performance art enables and encourages strangeness, I believe is one of its most valuable elements, facilitating

35 An example of this can be found in (the term and pedagogic thinking behind) Performance Writing, which is fundamentally intermedial, in its aim to challenge and expand writing across media and beyond the page. The same could be said for the development of Innovative Poetry, although perhaps not as explicitly. What is clear is that the Innovative poetry's antecedent, the British Poetry Revival, was dissolved through the controversial conservativism of the mainstream poetry elite that, it could be argued, did lasting damage to the landscape of poetry in Britain. The Movement poets, for example, seem to embody (the exact opposite to and) a rejection of ideas like Higgins' 'Intermedia'.

the transformational. This is achieved through a variety of means including extended duration and repetition; restriction of the senses; adaptable response to environment, space and situation; live discovery of meaning; and a discontinuous narrative or non-narrative. Performance art aims to produce situations in which the familiar is presented as other, and explores the unknown potential of any given situation. This highlights how performance art has developed in parallel to the generative scores of Fluxus and the use of everyday materials and developed ways to allow the performance situation to realise previously unknown ideas, thoughts, feelings, and material. Indeterminacy here is productive, precisely because the work emphasises the process of its production. In Sheppard's account, the poetry audience is presented with a situation where normative reading processes are either unattainable or not available. In both non-mainstream poetry and action-oriented performance art the opportunity for the work to become an 'event' and to be considered as such is made possible through the processual techniques of defamiliarisation and naturalization. Forrest-Thompson's notion that bad naturalization reduces strangeness could be considered an opposite methodology to the deliberate exploration of otherness and encouragement of surprise, change and transformation that performance art enables.

Poetry Reading Events – Kings College Readings & Sub Voicive

In London two significant and inter-related reading series began during the 1980s.[36] The Kings College readings were organized by Eric Mottram and featured established poets associated within the British Poetry Revival like Lee Harwood, Paul Evans, Allen Fisher, Bob Cobbing, Ian Patterson, Stuart Montgomery, Iain Sinclair, Jeff Nuttall, and Brian Catling.

36 Other activities in the North East of England at this time include Richard Caddel, Tom Pickard and Connie Pickard's continued facilitation of events and small presses. The Pickards' Morden Tower readings had already proved significant in re-establishing senior poet Basil Bunting and exposing younger audiences to the Beat poets including readings by Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti in the mid-1960s.

A second group, *Sub Voicive*, was founded by Gilbert Adair and Patricia Farrell.[37] A brief list of performers includes Geraldine Monk, John Welch, Eric Mottram, Ken Smith, Clive Bush, Denis Barone, Lyn Hejinian, cris cheek, Ellen Zweig, Hanne Bramness, Tom Raworth, Gavin Selerie, Robert Sheppard, Anne Waldman, Bruce Andrews, Colin Simms, Richard Caddel, Adrian Clarke, Ulli Freer, Carlyle Reedy and Maggie O'Sullivan. The *Sub Voicive* readers were generally considered the next generation of poets and can be seen as building on and rejecting the work of the revival poets to form what Adair called 'linguistically innovative' poetry, a term that although awkward[38] has remained in use. As the work of the British Poetry Revival led to what has now become known as 'linguistically innovative' and 'innovative' poetry, it is clear that during the 1980s this poetry was still marginalized but appeared in small presses and magazines like Robert Sheppard's *Pages*; Ken Edwards' *Reality Studios*; and Steve Pereira and Adrian Clarke's *Angel Exhaust* (see Thurston 2010). As Sheppard has noted, Morrison and Motion's 1982 anthology *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982) disregards poets of the revival, seeming 'to want to lay claim to the new while remaining within a recognizable orthodoxy or tradition' (Sheppard 2005: 126). Mainstream poetry belongs to a continuation of what Sheppard calls the 'Movement orthodoxy'[39] whilst the British Poetry Revival poets were self-organising, self-publishing and, through workshops and regular groups, self-educating. This kind of activity is directly related to the way performance artists and venues were constructing their own platforms and economies for the distribution of radical practice for mainly solo / individual artists. The importance

37 Later organisers included Robert Sheppard, Ulli Freer and Adrian Clarke (see Upton 2007).

38 I say awkward as it suggests that either innovative poetry has to be linguistic, it does not, or the poetry in question is linguistically innovative but not innovative in other ways.

39 The Movement orthodoxy suggests that the English Movement poets, like Philip Larkin and Thom Gunn for example, restricts innovation to only what is acceptable (See Sheppard 2005: 20).

of these reading groups and events cannot be underestimated, not only as a platform on which to present and experiment with an attentive audience, but also as a social space and an opportunity to collaborate.

Performance Writing

The Performance Writing degree programme at Dartington College of Arts, that ran from 1994 – 2012, was more than a Higher Education degree. Performance Writing set out a series of distinctly postmodern ideas that expanded the idea of writing within a performance and fine art context and continued the experiments and intermedial practices of the British Poetry Revival poets and Innovative poetries in the early 1990s. Responding to developments in technology, the invention of the internet and the digital possibilities for the development of the artists' book, Performance Writing set out to recognise practices of writing far exceeding the literary (Hall 2013: 45). Perhaps articulated most eloquently by course leader and co-conceiver John Hall, Performance Writing asked the question '[w]hen writing does not treat the page as its destination, where does it go?' (Hall 2013: 34). As he argues:

> A performance writer needs to know how to write no words; needs to know words, to know no words. // A performance writer and a performer – and they may be one and the same – need to know the duration of no words. How do you measure the absence of words in a performance? (Hall 2013: 25)

Hall highlights four departures from the name Performance Writing as a way to illustrate the term:

> from poetry or a poetic text
>
> from theatre and related forms of dramatic narrative

from visual art, including performance art

from sound composition or words that lurk near music

(Hall 2013: 34-35)

These are particularly resonant with my own practice and interests in the possibilities of writing, performing and vocalising sound.

In another explanation Hall constructs further poetic ways of expanding the definition of writing: 'the act of writing as in the act of dancing' (Hall 2013: 39). We might also invert this to consider the act of dancing as an act of writing. Another way of thinking about movement and (or as) writing would be to consider the etymology of the word 'choreography' and this is what Hall is getting at here.[40] What does it mean to suggest that a live performance *is* writing? What kind of writing? Can a series of actions that make marks in time and space no matter how temporary be considered as writing? These are some of the questions that Performance Writing proposes and, through its practitioners and its pedagogy, answers. Hall's radically expanded definition of what writing can be even re-imagines the page stating that 'written words may themselves move about as performers in space' (Hall 40) reminiscent of the earliest (maybe even the first) avant-garde artwork from 1897 Stephané Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard [A Throw of the Dice will Never Abolish Chance]* (Mallarmé 1914).

As both an undergraduate and postgraduate degree at Dartington College of Arts, *Performance Writing* was taught by artists and poets including Ric Allsopp, Caroline Bergvall, Barbara Bridger, John Cayley, cris cheek, Jerome Fletcher, Helena Goldwater, Mark Greenwood, John Hall, Peter Jaeger, Mark Leahy, Larry

40 This evokes another essay of 'Thirteen Ways', Peggy Phelan's own, 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at Choreographing Writing' (1995).

Lynch, Claire Macdonald, Brigid Mc Leer, Redell Olsen, Deborah Price, Alaric Sumner, and Aaron Williamson.[41] My inclusion of Performance Writing here within these histories is also connected to my own practice as I was a student of the postgraduate programme (2007-2008). The unique approach to using language and writing as/in/with performance aligned with my own practice which, even at that formative time, was difficult to define.

In her Keynote to the Performance Writing symposium (1996) entitled 'What is Performance Writing?' Caroline Bergvall states:

> [A]lthough much theoretical and poetic work has been done, this is especially true of exploratory poetry and deconstructive philosophy, to widen the literary debate and incorporate to it various notions of materiality (and the materiality of writing is an essential aspect of Performance Writing), it is largely true to say that the whole approach to writing remains in these fields primarily located on the page. This ignores and cuts short the debate on all writerly work which extends beyond the page. (Bergvall 1996: 3)

Bergvall and Hall are both campaigning for an approach to writing that, I would argue, is more closely aligned with performance art and certainly treats language as task-led and action-oriented and writing as an event. The work of Bergvall is a good example of how the practices of poetry and performance art can be explored in direct relationship to one another. In the last decade I have also witnessed performances by poets and artists using the voice and text that have developed ways of performing (with) language, namely Nicola Singh, Holly Pester, Emma

41 Even from this short list we can see the diversity of influences, from the e-poetry of John Cayley and Jerome Fletcher to the book art of Deborah Price, from the performances of Helena Goldwater and Mark Leahy to the sound poetry of cris cheek and Aaron Williamson. These were radical practices to be taking place within Higher Education, especially when considered now, retrospectively, at a time when HE institutions are themselves being radically altered by commercialisation, privatisation and capitalist ideals that are the opposite of the unique Dartington project.

Bennett, Nat Raha, Emma Cocker, Hannah Silva and Roy Claire Potter. For example, Roy Claire Potter performs the difficult task of reading erased, obscured and fragmented texts which challenges the audience with a vulnerable vocal presentation of invulnerable language. Their task presents a restriction of the visible that is made audible through the use of the microphone and a spatial and physical shift in attention from standing to crouching. This small gesture shifts the comfortable situation of relaxed listening to actively engaging with the way in which the voice unfolds as it discovers and hesitates over marks on the page. Similarly, Nat Raha has performed her non-linear and dynamic texts that spread across the page and interrupt themselves with punctuation and direct interjection in a rhythmic, pulsing vocal presentation, often supported by electronic devices like a delay pedal or loop machines.

Conclusion

The movements, approaches and lineages mapped in this chapter are examples of the developments of poetry and performance art in the U.K. as they developed together. These works explore the potential of the event of writing, where processes, tasks and intermedial experiments are central. These are often neglected and unrepresented in the canon of practice and sometimes overwritten by more dominant mainstream activities. By aligning innovative and experimental poetry of the British Poetry Revival with the performance activities of happenings in the UK we see a mutual exploration of form and a visible dialogue between practice that has been overlooked in the histories of performance and poetry. This alignment also brings an awareness to shared techniques that emphasise process-led approaches to performance. That said, it is clear that the separation of these two practices by discipline and context has been a necessary part of the development of networks.

Like UK poetry, a significant part of the history of performance art in the UK is still as yet undocumented. I have, to a certain extent, begun that work here.

Due to the specificity of my research I do not have the scope within this thesis to complete this work, however it is my contention that this necessary work may only be possible by practitioners. For example, action-oriented performance art is rarely written about and when it is, the focus is usually historical. I believe that this is often due to the fact that scholars require practice-led understandings of techniques and so we must encourage practitioners to articulate their approaches to making and performing. In this chapter I have charted a range of practices that have not previously been collected together. This enables new understandings, outside discipline specific analysis, in order to understand the shared methodologies and approaches of performance art and poetry.

Performance art is a form for artists to communicate differently, in Chapter Two I will argue that this form of communication is not always known beforehand but is processual through the contingency of tasks in relation the site of the performance and the body of the performer. Like Rukeyser's assertion that audiences be considered witnesses and that poetry is a process and not an object, performance art demands new forms of witnessing, documenting and historicising in order to be able to document its essential contribution to transdisciplinary practice. By bringing attention to these often invisible practices I am constructing new understandings of transdisciplinary performance practice.

Chapter Two: The Vocal-Body in Performance as Event

Introduction: My Vocal-Body

To hear the vocal-body in live performance is to be witness to and receiver of invisible and visible energy; physical, spatial and temporal. Outside of music performance the situations for hearing and attending to the vocal-body are limited, especially a vocal-body that playfully explores the abilities and potentialities of language and the voice. This chapter explores the relationship between performance art and poetry through the theorising of the vocal-body in performance. I argue that the prevalence of the non-vocal body in performance art has resulted in a break in the continuum of intermedia practices. The chapter will demonstrate how this break is caused by a resistance to the perceived fixity of meaning in relation to language.

Using examples from my own practice and those of artists making live work across disciplines, I will demonstrate that the vocal-body in performance brings attention to the materiality and corporeality of the voice as an embodied task. This chapter seeks to identify key reasons why the voice has been neglected in action-oriented performance art and show how the development of the vocal-body has been mainly explored in other practices, namely poetry. I propose that we reconsider the works of certain transdisciplinary practitioners as part of the continuum of intermedia, transcending disciplinary boundaries and existing on a plane that situates ‘action poetry’ as an exploration of the vocal-body in performance. I will use examples from artists Boris Nieslony, Carolee Schneemann, Marina Abramović, Anne Bean, and Dominic Thorpe to explore the ways in which their works may be considered anew, as vocal tasks.

In my own performances I have been drawn to using my voice in order to develop a relationship between my body and the space of the performance. I consider ‘site’ in performance art as doubled; to include both the artist’s body

and the performance space.[42] Initially I have used my vocal-body as a way to construct a space for the performance and to foster a vocal and sonic attention for both myself and the audience. For example, in 2008 I made a short three-minute performance entitled 'Plant' (August 2008) at Elevator Gallery, London. The space of the performance was crowded with audience members and so there was a restricted physical space within the room to perform. I began to shout instructions to the audience in order to clear space. I then shouted the title of the performance 'Plant', I said it twice, 'Plant! Plant!' playing on my declaration as both a noun and a verb. I subsequently began all my performances by shouting the title of the work: 'Flag', 'Spit', 'Dirt', 'Over', 'Hard', 'Poor', 'Dead' and 'Bad Bad'. Shouting became a task within my performances. In 2010 I attended a workshop with German performance artist, and member of Black Market International, Jürgen Fritz.[43] This workshop was important as it developed my formative practice in performance art alongside other practitioners. During a discussion with the workshop participants I was surprised by Fritz's statement that it was 'very difficult' for performance artists to speak or use their voice in their live work. In many respects Fritz's declaration has fuelled my desire to use my voice in performance and in all of my live works following this workshop. I have subsequently experimented with vocal tasks as the primary material of the performance. Throughout this enquiry I will develop and expand upon the experiences of using my voice in performance

42 Bartolome Ferrando describes this as being both subject and object in performance, and regarding objects within the space of performance. He suggests that if there is a piece of paper in the 'room' of the performance 'try to feel like this piece of paper' (Ferrando *no date*). This relates to Fritz's method of sensing 'impression': 'Everything in the space, objects, people and the area as whole impresses me physically, leaves marks on my body. It is a physical translation of the word "body impression"' (Fritz in Torrens 2014: 223).

43 New Territories Winterschool, Glasgow 2009. Performance art workshops provide unique opportunities to practice performance art within the relative safety of an explorative, pedagogic environment. This is important because performance art is rarely taught as part of a traditional art school or fine art / performance education. As Fritz argues 'the core of performance art, where form becomes art, cannot be taught. That may be true of all art forms, but in performance art, both the materials as well as the medium of artistic debate are in a great degree identical with the person of the artist' (Fritz in Torrens 2014: 219).

art, conscious that the exploration of language and use of the voice is rare within the field. My thesis investigates why performance art has tended to not use the voice by proposing the following interconnected reasons. Firstly, performance art has sought to communicate differently, without language, in order to present the body as 'other'. Secondly, the voice in performance art has become synonymous with language and not considered as an extension of the body, 'embodied', or, therefore, as body-based. And finally, performance art has resisted linear and theatrical narrative in attempting to 'present' and not 'represent' material. This is a resistance against storytelling in performance art which includes oral forms of communication.

Why is Performance Art Non-Vocal?

The body in performance art is, more often than not, a non-vocal-body. This enquiry is concerned with why performance artists rarely use their voice and how non-vocal performance has continued within the field.[44] This tendency towards non-vocal performance is unusual because performance art locates the artist's body as the primary material of live work. In fact, the artist's body in performance is also the primary site of the performance taking place. This is one of the reasons why performance art is adaptable to different situations and can occur as intervention, encounter and exchange. Intervention refers to public works that interrupt everyday life and so are presented for incidental audiences. Performance as intervention may then be considered a form of political activism and employ subversion, resistance, disruption and provocation. Encounter has a more complex history within the field of action-oriented performance art, being used by performance artist Boris Nieslony to discuss his own practice and that of

44 There are many examples of artists exploring the vocal-body in their work but rarely in a live situation and whilst there is a rich history of important experimental vocal artistic practice it is often positioned as sound art or experimental music. Again these kinds of disciplinary boundaries have generated unproductive separations by labelling works by form and not content. These histories include works like Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room* (1970), Meredith Monk's *Our Lady of Late* (1974), and live performances by Laurie Anderson.

the collective Black Market International [BMI] of which he is a founder member. 'Kunst der Begegnung' [Art of Encounter] relies on Victor Turner's definition of 'communitas' that describes the community of social camaraderie that occurs during ritual (see Schechner 2002: 70). For Nieslony this occurs during the performance situation where performers encounter each other, an audience, and the site / materials (Nieslony 2018). These situations are encounters because they offer new opportunities through the indeterminate meeting of different subjects and objects. As Michaël LaChance states in the 'Fifteen Principles of Black Market International', 'The art of encounter (*Begegnung*) becomes a politics for *communitas*…Art must be founded in life and merge with life' (LaChance in Cheng and Cody 2016: 48-51 emphasis in original). Exchange presents a performance situation that involves the active participation of audience members as the work of art presented. In performances of this kind, audience members can become performers and actively alter the direction and content of the work.

When the body is both site and material for art it is surprising that the voice–as an expressive signal that can only be produced by bodies–is omitted from that exploration. This is even more unusual, considering that performance art is a field of practice that epitomises and helps to define transgression. Performance art has facilitated the destabilising of various binary understandings of encounter, for example public and private, object and process, and performer and audience. So why are there so few examples of action-oriented performance art exploring the voice?

A Different Form of Communication

Performance art developed from multiple areas of practice in order to discover a different kind of communication that was contingent on both the present moment and the artist's own body. By presenting bodies as 'both the form and content of aesthetic consideration' (Stiles 2012: 798) artists working in performance have created situations where the body could become 'other'. These performance

situations create a space outside the subject, a space where inventiveness, originality and alterity can occur. Performance art facilitates 'otherness' by unfixing subjectivity, and so, when the body is 'other', a different kind of communication can occur. Performance artist Alastair MacLennan has defined this kind of communication as an 'objective embodiment':

> The body is both an object and a living organism. It is one, and one of the many. It is capable of unspoken discourse for which it becomes both the mover/agent and an objective embodiment. The body as a physical channel for meaning has neither been fully neglected (we pay attention to non-linguistic modes of communication) nor fully attended to (our culture is directed more to the word). (MacLennan in Johnston 2014: 173)

Here MacLennan is calling for a non-linguistic mode of communication with the body, one that is removed from, possibly even in opposition to, communicating with language. This apparent resistance to language is due to a perceived dominance of text-as-object, and the capacity of language to hold, within itself, codified meaning. This perception imagines a 'fixed' idea of meaning in language, one that is pre-determined. This is a problematic perception of meaning and is misleading because it limits linguistic communication to representational codes. Although the voice can perform both linguistic and non-linguistic sound, in this configuration 'language' has become synonymous with the 'voice'. This has led to an understanding of the voice that cannot be separated from the subject and that cannot be 'other'. Therefore, in order to communicate without language, performance artist's bodies have mainly been non-vocal.

The 'otherness' of the body in performance art is destabilised by the voice because the voice cannot be separated from the identity of the subject. Brandon LaBelle describes the voice as an 'expressive signal announcing the presence of a body and an individual' (LaBelle 2010: 149). In this understanding of the

vocal-body, the performer's voice both 'announces' the subject and 'situates' the performer's subjectivity. If performance art is intent upon unfixing subjectivity, then the voice interrupts and challenges this idea. The problematic equation of the voice as tethered to subjectivity is complicated further by the perceived synonymy of the voice and language. So it is not only the 'voice' as a signifier of subjectivity that is destabilising, but that this voice is perceived as only ever emitting language. Therefore, I am arguing that the vocal-body has, perhaps unwittingly, been neglected in performance art in order to find new ways of communicating ideas that resist the artist's body being 'only' a subject in order to become both subject and object.

Theatre, Representation and Presentation

In the 1950s and 1960s artists invented different terms to describe their performance works including happenings, actions, actuations, demonstrations, destructions, Fluxus, events, and rituals, as well as using classifications like concrete, direct and body art. In the 1970s critics grouped these terms together under the single category of 'performance art'.[45] These separate terms and practices developed from different origins that include expanded painting and sculpture, and non-traditional theatre, new dance and poetry. Some artists were uncomfortable with the term 'performance art' as it seemed to inappropriately and inadequately connote theatre and not visual art. Performance artist Stuart Brisley and photographer Leslie Haslam argued that:

> [A]ll art at one time or another involves 'Performance.' It is an essential element in the process of making or doing. The term 'performance' however is popularly understood to signify a general theatrical condition, which is inappropriate to the visual art. (Brisley and Haslam 1976: 416)

45 Bruce Barber describes this critic-driven classification in America and cites the critics Dan Graham, Jack Burnham, Constance de Jong, Stephen Koch and Lea Vergine as coining and using the term 'performance art' (Barber in Bronson and Gale 1979: 183 – 204).

Counter to Brisley's claims, there are many examples of theatre practice that actively worked against normative and traditional forms, an obvious example being the removal of hierarchical structures in the devised practices of theatre co-operatives like *Lumiere and Son*, *Red Ladder*, or *Impact Theatre* in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these companies explored language in exciting new ways by re-considering text not as the central component of the performance but as material that is equal to scenography, sound and characterisation (see Oddey 1994, and Turner 2004). Brisley's bias against theatre relates to two points. Firstly, that performance art opposed the theatre's convention to 'depict as present fictive literary worlds and their characters' as this form of theatre epitomizes representation (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 97). This highlights performance art's claim to 'real' presence, what Henry Sayre, in relation to the performances of Yvonne Rainer, terms the 'contingency of the present' (Sayre 1989: 175), explored mainly through the development of the performance 'task'. As Peter Feldman argues in what he calls 'other forms' of theatre, happenings, for example 'are based very much on activities and the activity is really being performed for you at that moment' (Feldman 1977: 1). Secondly, that this approach is activated through storytelling and narrative (both linear and fragmented narrative) which is a primary concern within theatre. Arguably Brisley and Haslam were reacting to the idea of narrative in performance as something that determines and fixes meaning. In contrast, performance art attempts to communicate without (linear) narrative, through an active exploration of 'not knowing' in the present moment. It could be argued that a straightforward understanding of theatre allows us to compare its ability to rehearse and repeat performance with performance art's resistance to repetition and rehearsal. In the scholarly field of Performance Studies the idea of positively valuing 'disappearance' and transience has been developed in order to understand performance in opposition to documentation and non-live or mediatised performance (see Reason 2006). Scholar Peggy Phelan has argued

that 'Performance's being…becomes itself through disappearance' (Phelan 1993: 146) and therefore challenges representation and 'gives it an oppositional edge' (Phelan 1993: 148). The differences that appear as most obvious between theatre and performance art are those of representation and presentation. Although Phelan argues that performance of all kinds cannot be repeated, even when they are they are 'different', action-oriented performance art does not attempt to repeat and so is perhaps *more* contingent upon the live moment than theatre. Scholar Amelia Jones explains the relationships between presentation and representation of the body in performance by using Kathy O'Dell's argument that,

> precisely by using their bodies as primary material, body and performance artists highlight the 'representational status' of such work rather than confirming its ontological priority…the body can never 'be known "purely" as a totalizable, fleshy whole that rests outside of the arena of the symbolic'. (Jones 1998: 33)

Jones suggests that the body is never outside the symbolic, representational. However, in the action-oriented performance discussed here the body is used in a way to position itself as being more presentational than representational. These ideas are developed further in Stuart Brisley's documentary-art film *Being and Doing* (1984) made with Ken McMullen, that explores the idea of performing without representing. This film has informed my own understanding of prioritising presentation over representation in performance. Using examples by European artists making performance, *Being and Doing* conceptualises the shift away from the 'object' towards the 'event' in fine art and considers the role of performance art in contemporary culture. Critically, Brisley and McMullen use the terms 'being' and 'doing' to replace 'acting' in performance and use the present-tense to

foreground what we might also call the 'event' of performance.[46] The contingency of the present is the situation where an event or action can occur, as a result of task-led activity. According to Brisley, the perception of fixed narrative and predetermined outcomes in theatre prevents the opportunity for a different kind of communication. Again, this idea of performing without representing has been developed in Performance Studies which distinguished live performance as a different kind or mode of representation, that is, by its very nature, ephemeral. The characteristics of performance art's embodied tasks in contingent situations bring it closer to functioning beyond representation.[47] And, whilst it may not be fully possible for performance to occur without, or outside, representation, performance art does emphasise presentational modes over representational modes. This is similar to Rosenberg's description of the space of the canvas being not for a picture but for an event (Rosenberg 1952: 22) a space for the performative presentation of a process. Performance artists do this by committing to the task of the performance, one that is more contingent upon the live situation than theatre which, more often than not, relies upon rehearsed and repeated enactments. Kristine Stiles explains that by the mid-1980s,

> the bias against theatre, associated by some artists with entertainment rather than with social change, [had] shifted, and many performance artists increasingly included language and theatricality in their work. (Stiles 2012: 799)

---

46 Jürgen Fritz's proposals for performance art definition, albeit idealistic, includes the following statement: 'Performance Art is not expressive or narrative – i.e. in the foreground stand no stories or messages. In this sense, Performance Art refers to itself, Performance Art is self-referential. The person of the artist is the first and most important material of the artistic discourse' (Fritz in Torrens 2014: 220). See also Kirby 'The New Theatre' (1965) (in Sandford 1995: 29-47).

47 'Beyond Representation' is the title of artist and scholar Barbara Bolt's 2004 book where Bolt theorises the idea and dominance of representation in artistic practice, Bolt does not use 'presentation' as a theory in relation to representation but interrogates the relationship between 'reality' and art.

Stiles goes on to argue that in the early twenty-first century many artists returned to what she calls 'purely bodily action bereft of speech' (Stiles 2012: 799). This statement precipitates the idea that 'speech' is separate from the body and from action. These arguments explain why performance art, particularly in the UK, has not employed the vocal-body. One could argue that this has limited the form and created unnecessary boundaries and binaries between the voice and the body and between performance art and the vocal-body in performance. The vocal-body is present in other forms of performance, for example poetry and, in particular, sound poetry.

The Body as Language

The separation of the voice from the body, in order to discover a different kind of (non-linguistic) communication, has arguably been encouraged by the phrase 'the body as language' (Vergine 2000 [1974]). This phrase has, perhaps unintentionally, suggested that the body can be its own language, removing the need for a linguistic or vocalised language. The phrase was used by Lea Vergine in her 1974 publication 'The Body as Language: "Body Art" and Performance' (Giampaolo Prearo Edition, Milan).[48] In the introductory essay 'The Body as Language. Body Art and Like Stories' Vergine explains that 'the body is being used as an art language' by painters, sculptors and artists who 'represent different currents and tendencies, who use widely different art techniques' (Vergine 2000: 8). By locating these performances as fine art developments from mainly painting and sculpture we can understand more clearly why the idea of the 'body as language' is used as a term to explore another way of communicating with the body without speaking. This has encouraged the tendency to not use the voice in

48 Vergine's work, arguably the first book of performance art in Europe, pre-dates RoseLee Goldberg's American publication 'Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present' (1979). 'The Body as Language…' exists as an anthology that collects documentation by individual artists and presents each artist as their own chapter. The artists are from North America, mainland Europe and the UK.

live work. Vergine also states that body art involved 'a loss of personal identity', the subject, which she explains:

> The individual is obsessed by the obligation to act as a function of 'the other,' obsessed by the obligation to exhibit himself in order to be able *to be*. The over-riding desire is to […] communicate something that has been previously felt but that is lived in the very moment of communication, to return to the origins without leaving the present, to lead the individual relationship with both himself and others, to lead the individual, in short, back to his specific mode of existence. (Vergine 2000: 8)

Vergine draws attention to performance art's use of the present moment in order to communicate something (previously) felt. She relates this to a kind of primordial 'return to origins', an idea that is also often referred to in the theory of sound poetry and that I will expand upon in Chapter Three.[49] This 'return' points to a pre-linguistic body in order to present an 'other' body. This 'other' is the possibility for an artist to present their body and simultaneously transcend our understanding of it, to include the as yet unknown potential of the body, the present, and possibly even the past and the future.[50] Vergine goes further asking 'to what extent can all this create a space in which human beings will be able to meet with each other for the formulation of a comprehensive and all-inclusive form of communication'? (Vergine 2000: 26-27). This is reminiscent of similar calls for a 'total' artistic experience, like Antonin Artuad's 'total theatre' (1958) or Adriano Spatola's 'total poetry' (1978) both of which advocate communication outside language and/or linguistic systems.

---

49 As Bob Cobbing suggests, bringing together music and poetry with movement and dance facilitates 'the growth of the voice to its full physical powers again as part of the body, the body as language' (Cobbing in Kostalanetz 1973: 391).

50 Writer Tracey Warr suggests that the 'language of the body, like other semantic systems, is unstable' and that no amount of 'critical contextualising or artists' insistence on intention can stabilize the language of the body' (Warr and Jones 2000: 13).

Bodily Co-Presence and Autopoietic Feedback Loop

The concept of the 'body as language' shares an artistic ideal that privileges a sensory, embodied and all encompassing artistic experience, an experience that has challenged the criteria for what art is and what art can do. As many theorists have argued, the all-inclusive or total performance requires specific conditions in order to generate an inherent authenticity and authentic presence (see Fischer-Lichte 2008; Auslander 1994). This means that performance is a unique situation where unmediated communication can occur *between* the performer and the audience. This is what Fischer-Lichte calls 'bodily co-presence' and relates to the autopoietic feedback loop (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 38). Fischer-Lichte foregrounds the feedback loop as a space where not only audience members respond to performers, but where performers are influenced by this response from audience members:

> both performers and spectators alike determine the course of the performance and are determined by it…the performance is brought forth by and made forceful due to a self-referential and ever-changing autopoietic feedback-loop. What emerges in the course of a performance, therefore, is unpredictable and cannot be foreseen. (Fischer-Lichte 2005: 111)

These indeterminate conditions that performance art requires have been articulated by Alastair MacLennan who explains that the work cannot be 'completed' beforehand, that there is no 'separation' between making and witnessing (MacLennan 2013). This means that the work is not only contingent upon the live situation but also the bodily co-presence of performer and audience. Echoing MacLennan, in this research, the event of live performance is one that requires physical proximity and thus an active participation, it defines performance as a body-based activity of exchange both in and as the live situation. This is

similar to the poetry reading where an exchange takes place in close proximity, one that foregrounds the coming together of bodies and live, time-based activity.

The Poem-as-Event

The Ethnopoetics movement centred on the event-ness of oral language, not simply in relation to the 'poetry event' but through a deliberate oral poetics. As Rothenberg stated in his opening 'pre-face' to the 1975 Symposium of Ethnopoetics,[51] everything that happens in the act of the performance of the poem is the event:

> [B]ecoming voice, becoming sound…[the poem] is also this room, this time [and] place, these others here with me. The event is different from the event of composition […] the poem is everything that happens. (Rothenberg 1976: 9-10)

For Rothenberg 'there is no poem without performance' (1976: 10). This challenges the received idea of poetry and redefines the poem as spatio-temporal. The performance of the poem becomes primary and the written text (what we could call the 'object') becomes secondary, what he calls 'the preparation or notation' (1976: 10). Rothenberg's idea that the poem is 'everything that happens' enables us to consider performance art within this conception of an event. In this understanding the vocal-body in performance can re-figure language and sound as an action and an event.[52] Literary theorist Derek Attridge has said that although it may be a 'truism' that a work is not an object but an event, the implications of this statement are still resisted. As Attridge elaborates: 'we still talk about "structure" and "meaning" and ask what a work is "about", in a manner that suggests a static

51 The first International Symposium of Ethnopoetics was held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, April 10-12, 1975.

52 Returning to Jürgen Fritz's proposed definitions of performance art he states that 'hopefully, performance produces an event as a result of a real experience in the situation of the performance' (Fritz in Torrens 2014: 220).

object, transcending time, permanently available for our inspection' (Attridge 2004: 59).This idea from Attridge brings us back to my theory of presentation and representation. Structure and meaning are representational constructs, and so by considering the work of art as an event we can attend to the ideas of process and presentation that I am arguing for. In reconsidering the poem-as-event we also (have to) insist upon a different way of talking and thinking about what a poem is. The concept of the 'event' is one way of facilitating this new vocabulary.

Badiou and the Event

For Alain Badiou 'the event' is a complex occurrence of 'something other' that 'vanishes as soon as it appears' (Badiou 2001: 67). This concept of the event is reminiscent of Phelan's concept of performance *as* disappearance mentioned above. Badiou's events are useful for our conceptualisation of the poem-as-event as he argues that the event is both 'situated' and 'supplementary'. This means that 'the event' is an event 'of this or that situation' and at the same time 'absolutely detached from, or unrelated to, all the rules of the situation' (Badiou 2001: 68). My proposition that performance art is a doubled site, body and space-time, could also be considered in this way: the situated body as supplementary to the space of performance. As Badiou expands:

> At the heart of every situation, as the foundation of its being, there is a 'situated' void, around which is organised the plenitude (or the stable multiples) of the situation in question. (Badiou 2001: 68)

The connection between the 'situation' and the 'supplement' is Badiou's conception of the 'situated void': the event comes from a situation but it does not belong to the situation, it is, as he says, 'beyond what is' (Badiou 2003: 62). The void is the unknown potential of a given situation. Attridge calls this the 'other' and explains that 'the other is that which is not knowable until by a creative act it is brought into the field of the same' (Attridge 2004: 31). Due to the conventions of scripts,

rehearsals, props and repetition, traditional literary or performance practices arguably resist the opportunity for 'otherness' and so resist 'events'. In this sense I consider them less-likely to produce actions, they cannot actively 'be' and 'do' as they do not highlight the contingency of the present. The event is singular, a singularity, that is a chance occurrence. Attridge explains 'it is produced, not given in advance; and its emergence is also the beginning of its erosion, as it brings about the cultural changes necessary to accommodate it' (Attridge 2004: 64). This explains how an evental singularity functions as something which cannot be known in advance, but through its emergence the situation must adapt in order to encompass it and as it does so the situation changes and the singularity, the event, vanishes. Badiou terms this 'the void', the void is that which cannot be known, which is 'the other'. Attridge warns that the singularity is not the same as 'autonomy, particularity, identity, contingency, or specificity' (Attridge 2004: 64), which is echoed by performance scholar André Lepecki who explains that singularities are not synonymous to the 'unique', 'particular', 'singular' or 'individual' (Lepecki 2016: 6). In theorizing live performance and dance Lepecki defines singularity, citing Georges Didi-Huberman, as 'a bearer of strangeness' (Didi-Huberman in Lepecki 2016: 6), which returns us to Forrest-Thompson's concept of naturalization, and similarly alerts us to the closeness of the term 'singularity' to 'event'. As Lepecki continues, 'the multiple complexity contained and released in and by singularities at the moment of their actualization is what make a singularity always the expression of an event' (Lepecki 2016: 7). Whilst Lepecki defines singularities and events from a Deleuzian position, my understanding is informed by Badiou's concept of the event which is markedly different from Deleuze's.[53] I am using the term and philosophical theories of the event in direct relation to

53 As Bartlett explains, Deleuze sometimes claims that his philosophy as a whole should be thought of as a philosophy of the event (see Bartlett et al 2014: 129). Bartlett also explains the key difference between Deleuze's events and Badiou's are follows: 'events for Deleuze are ubiquitous rather than rare, and are not solely exposed to the subject' (Bartlett et al 2014: 130).

actions as they occur in performance art. As explained in Chapter One, actions are the goal of performance art and occur through task-led activity that facilitates the kind of embodiment required to generate radically unpredictable change.54 In this thesis I align Badiou's concept of the event to explain my own theory of action. I do this because I have experienced profound change, unprecedented and unpredictable shifts whilst presenting my own practice-led performances. I understand these shifts as evental actions.

As the event is a disruptive occurrence and an encounter that is 'purely haphazard [*hasardeux*]' (Badiou 2006: 193), with the potential to 'effect momentous change' (Corcoran 2015:115), it may seem counter-intuitive to suggest that it is something one can work towards. However, scholar Nick Srnicek has theorized the idea of a 'pre-evental' state, asking how it is possible to generate an event (Srnicek 2008: 112). So even though we cannot predict an event we may be able to provide conditions in performance that work towards events. Srnicek explores the idea that events are entirely specific to their situations and not 'a transcendent intervention' but immanently local and localised (2008: 116). This is useful as it describes the concept of events (actions) as Badiou describes them, that can be applied to a task-led activity that generates an action. The action that is brought about through embodied performance, is something other, a surprising strangeness and unprecedented shift that occurs unpredictably but is still 'at the heart' of the situation.

Task-Led and Action-Oriented

54 A further example of these ideas is presented in Levinas' distinction between the saying and the said where 'Language as *saying* is an ethical openness to the other; as that which is *said* – reduced to a fixed identity or synchronized presence – it is an ontological closure of the other' (Levinas 1984: 65). Robert Sheppard explains that 'saying' is 'the call of, the call to, the other, the fact of the need and obligation to respond to, and become responsible for, the other, as Levinas had always maintained. It is a quasi-transcendental state beyond being, yet it is also "a performative doing"'. (Sheppard 2005: 11). Here we can equate 'saying' to performance, that which occurs in and is contingent to the present moment. The 'said', then, becomes a notational device, occurring outside of the present and in this sense is a 'closure of the other'.

I propose that the performance 'task' is a generative activity that functions as a stepping stone towards the creation of actions. In performance, and through my own experience, you cannot simply perform an action but must create a situation that fosters the possibilities for actions to occur by committing to performing a task. This is because actions, like events, are transformational possibilities within the performance situation, they call to the other and to surprise. The importance of the 'task' in performance art cannot be underestimated. Task-led performance has developed from the lineage of John Cage's teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York (Fetterman 2010: 179; Macdonald 2012b: 151), Fluxus 'Event Scores' developed by Yoko Ono and George Brecht and experimental dance, particularly through the work of Yvonne Rainer and Judson Dance Theatre (Burt 2006), and the intersection of dance and Fluxus, like in the work of Simone Forti. Task-led performances were developed as a way to resist representation and to present or initiate action. As discussed in Chapter One Rainer suggests that performance can substitute 'nonreferrential forms' for 'neutral performance', 'simplicity' for 'singular action, event, or tone' and 'literalness' for 'task or tasklike activity' (in Battock 1995: 253). This final substitution from literalness to tasks, in terms of movement, is how I define task in relation to action-oriented performance art. Because performance art has tended not to use the vocal-body, I am interested in how the task of producing vocal sound can be developed in order to consider the creation of vocal actions.

Action-oriented performance art emphasises the present moment, it is contingent upon it and uses tasks to facilitate a being-present that does not seek to represent. This can be illustrated more clearly by highlighting the stages of performance art in order to see the different elements of tasks that lead towards actions. The performance is initiated through the awareness of and response to the task. Tasks generate actions which, as transformational engagements, are only possible by an active embodiment of the task. In my case these tasks are

vocal and respond to the doubled site of performance, the body and space. For example, by undertaking a task like repeating a vocal sound for an extended period of time, there is a physical commitment that is necessary. By committing to the task and engaging the vocal-body in this repetitive task-led activity, a live discovery of materiality, meaning, and ability takes place. There is now an ability, through the task, to discover what this vocal-sound is, what it can do, and how it functions, how it responds to space and volume. The task provides a route through the performance and leads towards action.

Examples of the Vocal-body in Performance Art

1. Boris Nieslony

Although rare, there are some examples of performance artists whose work explores the voice and vocal sound.[55] Sandra Johnston's powerful description of a performance by German artist Boris Nieslony in 2012 draws attention to the performance artist's body as the site of a language event. Nieslony is working physically with his body, performing simple postures and positions. His fingers are put into his mouth and 'sound is uttered' moving between 'adult and child frequencies' (Johnston 2014: 165): Johnston describes the performance:

> Watching Nieslony is like watching someone walk backwards out of language […] as language falls into sequences of noise, utilising tongue, throat, mouth, and lungs, probing in various ways to excavate the sounds from beneath or between verbal language. His breath is filled with continuous, exhausting strands of sound, fluctuating with pauses,

55 There are occasionally examples of exploration of the vocal-body in other historically non-linguistic performance fields like choreography and dance. Dance arguably explores non-linguistic forms of communication with the body. Examples can be found in the works of Meredith Monk and Yvonne Rainer in the 1960s and 1970s, Deborah Hay's vocalisation during improvisation and Simone Forti's 1980s work *News Animations* in which she dances the news and speaks during the movement. But this exploration of the vocal-body in dance is rare and, as with performance art, the performing body in dance is mainly non-vocal.

> whistling, murmuring, mumbling, this fragmenting, sporadic body captured in the desire to eclipse the conscious mind. (Johnston 2014: 165-166)

This describes the performance artist's body as both a located site and an apparatus that cites.[56] Nieslony's performances respond in the present moment, to his body as site and to the situation of the performance which becomes 'cited' through his para-linguistic vocal sounds. The 'situated void' that Badiou explores in his concept of the event could be understood in Nieslony's work as the resistant semantics of his action, as Badiou names it 'a hole in sense' (2001: 69). The intensity of 'not knowing' in this performance by Nieslony is what Johnston terms 'beneath the verbal' and relates again to Badiou's idea of the event being both 'situated and supplementary'.[57]

2. Marina Abramović

In 1973 the Richard Demarco Gallery, Glasgow, hosted the exhibition *Eight Yugoslav Artists* that presented live work by Marina Abramović, Radomir Damnjan, Nuša and Srečo Dragan, Neša Paripović, Zoran Popović, Raša Todosijević and Gergely Urkom.[58] On the 19 August the artists presented live work simultaneously in the same space over the course of one evening, Abramović presented the first version of *Rhythm 10*.[59] The performance used tape recorders to record the

---

56 Here I am taking my lead from Christof Migone's description of the mouth as 'not only an articulatory engine that 'cites', that voices language, but also an organ that is present as "site"' (Migone 2012: 67). Migone goes further stating 'when fully somatized, the voice is... unnameable' (Migone 2012: 69).

57 Johnston's phrase also aligns to the critical investigations of sound poetry that explores the possibilities of the subvocal; what Steve McCaffery terms 'subphonetic': 'the sound poem['s] […] primary goal being the liberation and promotion of the phonetic and subphonetic features of language to the state of *material prima* for creative, subversive endeavours' (McCaffery in Bernstein 1998: 163).

58 At the same time Demarco presented the work of Adrian Henri alongside work by Joseph Beuys and Polish theatre director Tadeusz Kantor.

59 *Rhythm 10* was performed again with an increase of twenty knives at Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rome in the same year.

sound of an action where ten knives are, in-turn, thrust between the fingers of her left hand as quickly as possible, if she accidentally cut her hand she changed the knife which, in turn, changed the 'rhythm'. Abramović explains:

> Rhythm 10 wasn't just about playing with knives in between my fingers. There were two tape recorders. One recorded the sound of the first performance, and every time I cut myself, I changed the knife and rewound the entire tape. Then I would play it, and while listening to the first sound I would concentrate and repeat the action by cutting myself exactly at the same time. I only missed it twice. And then I had a second tape recorder with the doubled sound. So the idea was to find out if I could put together the past and the present, including the mistakes. The mistakes synched together, which was such a crazy concept, if you think about how impossible it is. But I was always thinking about the past and the future, and then about the present (Abramović in Stiles 2008: 13).

As she has said elsewhere, in this performance 'the mistakes of time past and time present are synchronized' (Abramović in Djurić and Šuvaković 2006: 562). What is clear is that her interest in time is being explored through two mediums, performance task and vocal / recorded sound. Abramović uses the act of recording sound live in the performance as a compositional and determining device. The audio becomes an instruction for the continuation of the performance and the chance sounds of cutting her hand become both a rhythmic record of the first attempt and a sonic score for the second.

In the works *Freeing the Memory* (1975) and *Freeing the Voice* (1975) Abramović would again use the indeterminacy of her tasks to alter both the content and the duration of her performance and explore her vocal-body. In *Freeing the Memory* she spoke words aloud until her mind went 'completely blank'. In *Freeing*

the Voice[60] she followed the score:

> Freeing the Voice
>
> I lie on the floor with my head tilted backward.
>
> Performance
>
> I scream until I lose my voice.
>
> (Abramović 1998: 118)

This performance is seemingly repetitious, it is a score to be followed that, I would argue, through the conditions of the situation, is 'evental': as the event only ever occurs 'to interrupt the order of continuity and inevitability' (Hallward 2003: 114). Abramović explores the materiality of the voice by locating the voice as a physical activity of endurance and duration. The decision to end the task is, to some extent, determined by the enduring position of her corporeal voice and its capacity for continued use. How Abramović 'frees' her voice is linked to the contingency of the vocal task and her positioning the vocal-body as a site. It is her exchange, through breath and sound, of energy, in Rukeyser's sense of the word, which 'has the capacity to produce change' (Rukeyser 1996: 173). We might even consider this as extreme 'projective verse' where the breath is paramount to a compositional field and emphasises the relationship between form and content.

3. Carolee Schneemann

As with most of the work associated with body art of the 1970s, Carolee

60 (1975) Performance, 3 Hours, at Studenski Kulturi Centar, Belgrade. Later during her collaborative practice with the artist Ulay she would revisit this action of screaming for as long as possible in a performance entitled 'AAA-AAA' (1978).

Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* (1975) is usually considered through a feminist perspective and the representational theory of gender, difference, otherness, age, race and sexuality. These things are crucial to this work and as I see it, to the role of the voice in this work. I consider *Interior Scroll* as an expanded poetry reading. It is worth noting that both the photographic documentation and transcript of the text from the performance was included in Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris' *Poems for the Millennium* (1998: 436-439).

In the performance a naked Schneemann adopted various poses and read from her own artist's book *Cézanne, She Was a Great Painter* (Schneemann 1975) that re-imagines Cézanne as a woman. Eventually she placed the book on the floor, stood upright on a table and began pulling a paper scroll from her vagina. As she pulled it slowly from her body she *read the text aloud* from which the following is an extract:

> he said you do as I do
>
> take one clear process
>
> follow its strictest
>
> implications intellectually
>
> establish a system of
>
> permutations establish
>
> their visual set. […]
>
> he protested
>
> you are unable to appreciate
>
> the system of the grid

the numerical rational

procedures –

the Pythagorean cues. […]

he said we can be friends

equally though we are not artists

equally I said we cannot

be friends equally and we

cannot be artists equally

he told me he had lived with

a “sculptress” I asked does

that make me a “filmmakress?”

Oh No he said we think of you

As a dancer (Schneemann in Sayre 1989: 90)

The text tells a story of meeting a Structuralist filmmaker who complains that her film is ‘full of personal clutter…persistence of feelings…hand-touch sensibility…diaristic indulgence’ (Sayre 1989: 90). This feminist poem critiques the masculine world not only of Structuralist film but of minimalism. According to Jane Blocker, Schneemann ‘delivers’ the text in both senses of the word and enacts the ‘reading

of the body as text' (Blocker 2004: 126).[61] For Schneemann the exploration of her body's materiality through language is possible only through live performance action. This work has been misrepresented in art history. There is not audio or video recording of this performance, only photographic documentation and the artefact of the scroll. Whilst the images of this work have become iconic representations of the female body in artistic practice, her voice has been neglected. By overlooking, or rather, not hearing Schneemann's voice, critics have devalued the very thing that Schneemann's work was critiquing. Her vocal-body, her powerful feminist voice and its critique of the patriarchal figure of the artist, has been neglected and in its place the image of her naked body has stood.

4. Anne Bean

Zambian born artist Anne Bean can be compared to other prolific artists of international importance who are often overlooked, such as the artists discussed here. Her work has consistently experimented with different forms including drawing, sound and performance and she has often collaborated with other artists across music, poetry and time-based art. In 1971 she formed *Moody and the Menstruators* (1971-74) a chaotic seven-piece glam band of women producing ironic versions of 1950s 'Moody Blues'. She also collaborated at this time with the *Kipper Kids* (Brian Routh and Martin von Haselberg).[62] Later she presented more sound-based experiments with Paul Burwell and Richard Wilson as the *Bow Gamelan Ensemble* (1983-1990). Their first performance was at the London Musicians Collective [LMC], the site of Cobbing's International Sound Poetry

61 Jane Blocker has referred to the use of the artist's voice in performance art as the 'Pleasures of the Somatic Text' (Blocker 2004: 122). She argues that somatic language is 'performative, 'metonymic' and 'perceived by touch rather than vision' (Blocker 2004: 122). Here we can understand 'somatic' to refer to an embodied exploration of sub-linguistic sound as an 'othering' of language. In Schneemann's work this 'othering' provides a space to explore the materiality of language when engaged with as a corporeal task.

62 Jon Savage indicates the influence that performance artists like the Kipper Kids had on bands like the Sex Pistols in *England's Dreaming* (1992: 250).

Festival and the New River Project (see Sheppard 2013). In some respects her work continues the project of Fluxus artists and explores the relationship between performance, music and the avant-garde.

Bean has continually worked with the manipulation and destruction of language and sound devices. For example, in a series of works including *You Can Answer Me* (1973), *Electricity* (1996-2005) *Our Trespasses* (1992), *Ashes to Ashes* (1986) and *See Saw* (1996-2005) Bean used a portable cassette recorder to play text and song and performs actions that manipulate the machine whilst it is playing. This includes submerging the recorder under water, washing it with soapy bubbles, burning it and sawing it in half. Bean describes the performance:

> The sound of a wooden block being sawn in half by the artist is recorded. The cassette recorder is sawn in half. The sound of the recorder being sawn in half is recorded. The second cassette recorder is then sawn in half…the piece continues until there are no more cassette recorders. (Bean in Brett, O'Reilly, and Swain 2006: 38)

In 1982 Bean performed with Burwell at *The Final Academy* a four-day event at the Ritzy in Brixton that centred around and featured William Burroughs. Bean and Burwell (known at this time as *PULp*) presented sound based work where she literally ate her words, 'choking on the lyrics of *White Man's Gotta God Complex* as I stuffed the paper with the words I had just sung into my mouth' (Bean 2015).[63]

Bean's 1983 performance *Her Voice is Pollen as She was Placed* in which Bean lay on her back and improvised speaking and reciting text whilst pouring honey into her mouth is similar in its attention to the mouth as a site. This performance, conceived and performed with Paul Burwell, explored sound as performative action and resides between art and music. Bean's manipulation of

63 Organised by David Dawson, Roger Ely and Genesis P-Orridge and also included work by Ian Hinchcliffe, Nuttall, and Gysin.

speech, in many of her works, treats language as a task to show that vocal-body and vocal sound can be both representational and presentational. This physical and often destructive exploration of the audio device is also a physical destruction of recorded-oral language. Bean playfully performs the materiality of sonic language *as* a sculptural and pliable material.

5. Dominic Thorpe

My next example is different from the previous examples as I witnessed the work live. It presents a vocal-body that transforms tasks into, what I term, embodied 'mouth actions'. In Dominic Thorpe's *Cavity of the Mouth* (2011) he performed with his mouth open to its full extension for the duration of the work (see Oui Performance 2012). By keeping his mouth open, or rather, by not closing his mouth, my attention was brought to the space of the mouth as a site for action. I heard his tongue occasionally move as he swallowed uncomfortably, and I was compelled to listen carefully for sound to emerge from inside his body. This task is read differently when layered onto each subsequent task. He performed a second task in which he wrote two statements onto the gallery wall. Using charcoal, Thorpe wrote two different statements simultaneously: the left hand wrote 'No Speaking Here', the right 'No Listening in this place'. The writing, because of the difficulty of using both hands at the same time, appeared clumsy, child-like and badly formed. The visual text then seemed to score the rest of the performance as instructions to not speak and not listen, but whilst we can choose not to speak we cannot close our ears to sound. The final task resolved the two previous tasks and involved Thorpe standing on a chair and lifting a rectangular bowl of black paint up towards his chest, leaning over the bowl in his hands, and cautiously placing his head inside. As his removed his head and placed the bowl back onto the ground we saw his head as a blackened object, the paint dripping from his chin onto his clothes. This blackened mass punctuated the white gallery space. He proceeded to 'sing' whilst keeping his mouth open, the sound gargled out

from his throat, a familiar folk melody was audible but where the words have lost all their shape. I remember thinking he sounded drunk, as the song seemed to project without effort from the vocal-body of this man with a black head and grey body.

Conclusion

I have argued that the prevalence of the non-vocal-body in performance art, which sees the body 'as language' and not the potential of the body to transform language into action, has resulted in a break in the continuum of intermedia practices. I propose that the vocal-body has the ability to produce actions because it foregrounds the materiality of language, the voice and the body. This materiality emphasises the presentational mode that performance art explores, that is contingent upon the present moment to discover new ways of communicating.

If 'the other' is 'that which is not knowable until by a creative act it is brought into the field of the same' (Attridge 2004: 31) then I propose that vocal tasks can harness this sense of not knowing in order to facilitate transformation. These are new ways of communicating and often respond to the doubled site of performance as I define it: to include both the artist's body and the performance space. These ideas have relied upon the ethnopoetic concepts of poetry where performance is a vital and intrinsic element. The vocal-body is one way of understanding the direct link between performance *as* poetry. This study explores this understanding of the poem *as* performance and performance *as* poetry, generating a direct link between the vocal-body and language and tethering language to the body by means of the voice. By using examples of performance artists exploring the vocal-body I have been able to show that they present all of the corporeal and spatio-temporal functions that performance art attempts in order to communicate differently, but do so by communicating differently *with the voice*. The well-known performances of Schneemann and Abramović are not usually considered for their explorations of the vocal-body or use of language but more for their use of

the non-vocal-body. By re-considering these works from a linguistic and poetic perspective we can see the similarities between these works and experimental poetry.

In the next chapter I will explain how the vocal-body in sound poetry has developed these ideas and how my own vocal tasks have been produced and performed. In this way I aim to develop a poetics of sound poetry as task-led and action-oriented.

Chapter Three: A Poetics of Action

This chapter considers the role of sound poetry in the development of the vocal-body in performance. It explores the historic and theoretical ideas that have remained central to the work of sound poets, namely the exploration of an elemental use of the voice to return language to its pre-linguistic origins. Drawing on the work of Bob Cobbing and Bernard Heidsieck I will consider the emergent intentions of sound poetry in relation to my own vocal-body and the techniques and methods I have developed in order to produce vocal sound. I propose that the vocal-body is a necessity in the reading of poetry, however, an embodied awareness of the body, in the performance of the poem, is often neglected. Therefore, in this chapter I ask how performers embody vocal tasks, which, as Cobbing asserts, creates 'an experience to live within' (Cobbing in Thurston 2012: 138).Developing on this question I will use examples from Dick Higgins, Paula Claire, Lawrence Upton, and importantly, my own work to explore prepared notation and scores as another kind of site in the performance of the poem. Crucially, this chapter proposes a revival of the term 'action poetry' and considers the ways in which, by redefining and reinstating this term, I am able to group together works that have previously existed in isolation, across disciplines.

Sound Poetry and Bob Cobbing

One of the clearest examples of communicating differently with language and the voice can be seen in sound poetry, whereby poets explore the possibilities of language as sound and poetry as performance. As I have developed in Chapter One and Chapter Two, sound poetry is the hinge between performance art and poetry and in order to develop this idea further I will consider the example of Bob Cobbing (1920-2002).

Not unlike the critic-driven term 'performance art', 'sound poetry' became a catch-all term that attempted to include a variety of other terms like François

Dufrêne's 'Crirythmes', Hugo Ball's 'Verse Ohne Worte' [poems without words], and the Futurist 'Zaum' or 'transrational language'. The term sound poetry is also used in conjunction with the terms 'concrete sound poetry' (Cobbing in Kostelanetz 1982: 385), and 'text-sound composition' (Kostelanetz 1980). Sound poetry in the UK developed from the 1950s onwards in relation to visual and concrete poetry and performance practices. This was, in part, due to the pioneering and prolific work of Bob Cobbing, alongside artists and poets who organized and published a significant amount of innovative and experimental works. This proliferation included thousands of self-published and small-press publications, workshop activities, festivals, transdisciplinary collaborations and performance events that existed, for the most part, outside of mainstream literary circles. The interconnected and international activities of Cobbing and his circle cannot be underestimated when considering the development of sound poetry and the vocal-body in performance. As discussed in Chapter One, these practices in the UK developed out of the happenings movement and as literary as well as artistic projects. Cobbing was a catalyst for an alternative arts and poetry community in the UK from as early as 1951 through the Hendon Arts Together organisation which held exhibitions and workshops in poetry, art and film. From his role as manager of Better Books (1965 - 1967) Cobbing organized events, including those like DIAS discussed in Chapter One, in the Basement of Better Books. It was also in 1963 that Cobbing began Writers Forum, a workshop, network and publisher.[64]

In 1985 Cobbing made the statement that it is '[a] fundamental mistake to regard poetry as a branch of literature. It is not. It is best regarded as one of the performing arts' (Cobbing 1985b: unp.). Comparable to Rothenberg's claim that the poem is 'everything that happens' (Rothenberg 1976: 9-10), Cobbing's work

64 Writers Forum was prolific in its output, often publishing poets whose work was not being accepted elsewhere, and younger poets who had never been published before. Cobbing's generosity and energy did not simply last through the 1960s, a time that is discussed more often than any other, but continued until his death in 2002.

foregrounds performance and vocality above all else. Even his extensive visual and concrete works are interpreted as sound. Cobbing has repeatedly claimed that the performance is the poem, for example he states that 'a poem is not a work of art until it is heard' (Cobbing in Beckett 2010: 11). Elsewhere he proposes that poetry has gone 'beyond the word, beyond the letter' (Cobbing [1978] 2014: 43) to be truly corporeal and embodied by reorganizing the sensorial, elaborating that:

> Visual poetry can be heard, smelt, has colours, vibrations. Sound poetry dances, tastes, has shape…Poetry in these forms is closer to the physical being, at least one step nearer to bodily movement. Gone is the word as word, though the word may still be used as sound or shape. Poetry now resides in other elements. (Cobbing [1978] 2014: 43)

I suggest the 'other elements' that Cobbing refers to are precisely the corporeal and spatio-temporal materiality that is the concern of this research and I recognise these ideas within my own practice. We see this elsewhere in the theory surrounding sound poetry: McCaffery's claim that sound poetry 'return[s] language to its somatic base' (McCaffery in Andrews and Bernstein 1984: 88); Heidsieck calling his own work 'ritual, ceremonial, or event' (Rothenberg and Joris 1995: 334); Dufrêne's obsession with 'energy not meaning' when he declares that 'breath alone founds the poem' (Dufrêne in LaBelle 2014: 66), accurately reminiscent of Rukeyser and Olson; or Cobbing, again, requesting a 'more primitive form of language, before communication' (Rothenberg and Joris 1995: 426). Speaking in 1993 Cobbing stated:

> I don't regard poetry necessarily as communication, I regard it more as creating an experience to live within – you are beginning a kind of ritual into which people can either come actively and take part or at least they can participate by feeling the vibrations of their bodies (Cobbing in

Thurston 2012: 138)

The vibrating body *is* the 'what' and 'how' of the voice, a resonating and fully human phenomenon for articulating and transforming sound into energy, an energy that brings the materiality of language and the body together. This can be seen in the historical understandings of sound poetry and its emphasis on attaining a pre-linguistic state. Cobbing's insistence on the physicality of the voice crystallises in his use of the term vocal-body, when he states that the normative reading where the voice is 'almost disembodied' should give way to 'a new concept of complex bodily movements and mobile vocal-body sounds in space' (Cobbing 1978: 45). In this new configuration Cobbing foresees that the audience may become participants much in the same way that Fischer-Lichte conceptualises bodily co-presence and the autopoietic feedback loop (see Chapter Two).

McCaffery's essay 'Voice in Extremis' (in Bernstein 1998) charts a historical and theoretical map of sound poetry and, like Cobbing and LaBelle, sees two strands emerging. The first explores the potential for the voice in performance that is arguably 'primordial' (Heidsieck in McCaffery and Nichol 1978: 42) – returning the voice to 'its origins' (Rothenberg in McCaffery and Nichol 1978: 63). The second relates to developments in technology, notably through the typewriter and the tape recorder as an extension of the voice and recording devices, for example in the work of Anne Bean explored in Chapter Two. For my purposes in this thesis, and to proclaim sound poetry as the hinge between poetry and performance art, it is the first category of sound poetry that remains most useful. Brandon LaBelle has described the 'nostalgia' for a primal voice as:

> a voyage back to what we might call an 'oral imagination'– a sense of how the voice operates alongside language without necessarily always arriving at words as the main oral target […] orality appears as an attempt to return to the live moment, of a personalised embodied action that

> returns the voice to language while also nurturing an extended orality for the future. The poetical is thus a material act occupying the mouth, throat and internal cavities rather than the page only. (LaBelle 2010: 151-152)

As LaBelle articulates, sound poetry nurtures this 'orality for the future' by working with 'language *as* sound' (2010: 152). The historical prevalence of the non-vocal-body in performance art has developed in isolation from the parallel activity of the vocal-body in sound poetry. However, the intentions seem to be shared. This is captured by McCaffery when he describes sound poetry as redirecting a 'sensed energy from themes and "message" into matter and force' (McCaffery in Morris 2007: 155). In sound poetry I understand these performances as task-led activities that result in vocal actions. Sound poets are not simply 'reading' their work aloud but are creating their work live, as Cobbing states 'creating an experience to live within' (Cobbing in Thurston 2012: 138). This is echoed in Sandra Johnston's argument that performance artists 'use the performance situation as a means to awaken oneself and others to a set of possibilities that communicates between and beyond the body' (Johnston 2014: 176). This echoes how sound poets respond to the live situation, and so there is a clear incentive for performance artists to embrace, experiment and expand their use of language and sound through the vocal-body in performance. For example, it is clear that the experimental actions of Anne Bean, discussed in the previous chapter, would not be out of place in a sound poetry festival and are reminiscent of the live tape works of Cobbing or Henri Chopin.

The Conditions of the Poetry Reading

However, what happens when the site of performance is not entirely fit for purpose? In most examples of the poetry reading the environment is inflexible and forces the performance to yield to the space. The social spaces of most poetry readings, happening mainly in the back-rooms or upstairs rooms of pubs

in an end-on configuration, are accessible and encourage attendance but they do not facilitate a performative attention. This does not mean that attention is not possible or that the space is completely inadequate. However, it favours one particular kind of reading and listening over another. Peter Middleton terms these spaces ‘improvised venues’ (2005: 30) that are liberated from other activities. He suggests that

> Listening to poetry requires effort, and the audience’s attentiveness is vulnerable to distractions of every kind (beer, traffic, hard chairs, comings and goings, even the distracting appearance of the poet). The space is precariously and only partially transformed from its mundane use as a gallery, pub or lecture hall, whose signs remain prominently in evidence throughout…Poetry is only in the ascendant for a moment during which it is still in competition with many reminders of the everyday world waiting to rush back into its borrowed space and expel it. (Middleton 2005: 30)

The scene depicted by Middleton is a familiar one for those of us who attend or present work at poetry readings. This problematic situation does not encourage the return to origins that sound poetry argues for. Charles Bernstein has argued that the poetry reading is ‘profoundly anti-performative’ comparing it to Jerzy Grotowski’s ideas of ‘poor theatre’ where an emphasis is placed on the body and the voice of the performer and not on scenography or the theatricality of staging. This ‘poor’ poetry performance would also imply a proximity to audience and an encouraged intimacy, an intimacy that Bernstein compares to ‘the intimacy of radio or of small ensemble chamber music’ (Bernstein 1998: 10). The intimacy, in my experience, is never that of small ensemble chamber music which implies a dedicated listening and the conditions to listen. The conditions to listen with the attention necessary in sound poetry or in the vocal-body of my own practice are those that requires a different kind of space from the ‘improvised venues’ where

most poetry readings take place.

My Practice and Textual-Volume

In my performances, language and sound are signals of the contingency of the present precisely through vocalisation. The vocal-body situates itself as a living organism and an object. The body becomes other and communicates differently with the voice. It is not only that the form provides different opportunities for the sound of language, but that the message has also shifted. As the vocal-body engages in the task of performing sound a tension emerges between the internal and external: messages emerge, images appear, memories are unearthed, sonic associations reformed; all through the activity of the task as it leads towards action. As Muriel Rukeyser explains:

> The impact upon the images, and the tension and attraction between meanings, these are the clues to the flow of contemporary poetry […] to recognise the energies that are transferred between people when a poem is given and taken (Rukeyser 1996: 171-172)

In my own practice, at the moment that language is given the conditions necessary for it to become an action it also enters into a processual shift towards the event. I am arguing here that this can be seen most clearly in the work of performers who engage with the vocal-body. Of course, this then challenges the boundaries of artistic disciplines but in doing so makes a space for the possibilities of the vocal-body in performance.

In my most recent performances (2010 – 2018) I vocalise language and vocal sound as a repetitive task, close to chanting, usually a single word or sound. Speaking the word aloud over an extended duration (from thirty mins to eight hours) facilitates an organic mutation of the word from a coherent signifying sign to a reduced and primal speech-sound. The repetition is often facilitated by a fast rhythm; this rhythm is in some ways what propels us away from coherence.

A transformation happens through and with time, usually in the space between the end of one word and the beginning of the next where the in-breath can occur. Often the mutation happens through a mistake like a slur of saliva or a drag on the end letter-sound. The mistakes are welcomed shifts, actively desired — coming back to Badiou these shifts occur 'to interrupt the order of continuity and inevitability' (Hallward 2003: 114) — that generate previously inaccessible routes through the performance. The concept of the route *through* the performance is facilitated by the task of vocality, i.e. the vocal-body can only exist as task-led, and this is an activity that relies on an embodied awareness.[65]

My vocal-body claims the voice as a material and corporeal task. My voice generates what I am calling 'textual-volume' that activates two sites; the body and space-time. Textual-volume is a way of describing the corporeal and spatial materiality of the voice that occurs in performances of the vocal-body. 'Volume' here is multiple and implies both the corporeal amplification of my voice and the spatiality of the place that this sound fills. It is my intuition that the accumulation of repeated word-sounds over an extended duration remains present in the space of the performance even after the performance has ended. Christof Migone has discussed the idea of 'volume' in sound art stating that volume can 'produce mass not meaning' (Migone 2003: 3). This is a particularly Cagean idea, developing from Cage's conception of 'sounds as themselves' that emphasises the materiality of sound (Cage in Marter 1999: 132). I would argue that the production of mass must also produce meaning; textual-volume does not emancipate language from meaning, as sound poetry theory continually proclaims, but could impart more than a singular impression or a fixed meaning. I would suggest that by creating

65 Performance artist turned architect Vito Acconci's description of his own performance methodologies 'Steps into Performance (and Out) (1979) explores the idea that performances are created 'through' actions. Stating that 'If there has to be an image, it would be: not a picture made *of* an action (or of a person performing an action) but a picture made *through* an action (through person to action). (Acconci in Stiles and Selz (2012) 759 emphasis added).

mass I am also creating meaning, that mass *is* meaning.[66] This is how meaning is communicated differently in embodied vocal performances, there is a material presence of sound that transforms the artist's vocal-body and the site over and with time. Meaning is not communicated with / by a coherent text but instead through a vocal expression that is interpreted and experienced. Brandon LaBelle's critical study of sound poetry proclaims that 'the voice is the very core of an ontology that balances presence and absence, life and death, upon an unsteady and transformative axis…riveting language with bodily materiality' (LaBelle 2010: 149). This idea contrasts with Kristine Stiles' assertion of a performance that is 'purely bodily…bereft of speech' (Stiles 2012: 799), instead the voice and language are presented as corporeal entities. In vocalising language as textual-volume I attempt to move beyond normative verbal communication towards a more direct experience with sound. I am also intentionally generating a different kind of communication, drawing attention to the voice as 'sense and substance, mind and body' (LaBelle 2010: 149). This relates back to Rukeyser's statement that '[e]xchange is creation; and the human energy involved is consciousness, the capacity to produce change from the existing conditions' (Rukeyser 1996: 172). Thus, textual-volume is an idea that is constructed to theorise not only how we might communicate differently, but how we might communicate differently with the voice.

A Continuum of Action

As I set up in the previous chapter and introduction, my own practice is transdisciplinary which means that whilst I situate my work both *within and*

66 Performance artist John Court has stated that his repetitive actions over extended durations 'produce space' and this is both an intention and consequence of the contingency of the present in performance (J. Court, personal communication, Nov 23, 2016). We could align Court's idea of producing space to Badiou's concept of the situated void. In some sense, Court is conceptualising the production of presence and absence in performance – 'producing space' or 'producing mass' could be considered as both 'situated' and 'supplementary'. This relates to Adorno's ideas on autonomous works of art, it is the 'inherent structure' of a work that governs its effect as he states 'they are knowledge as non-conceptual objects' (Adorno 1974: 88).

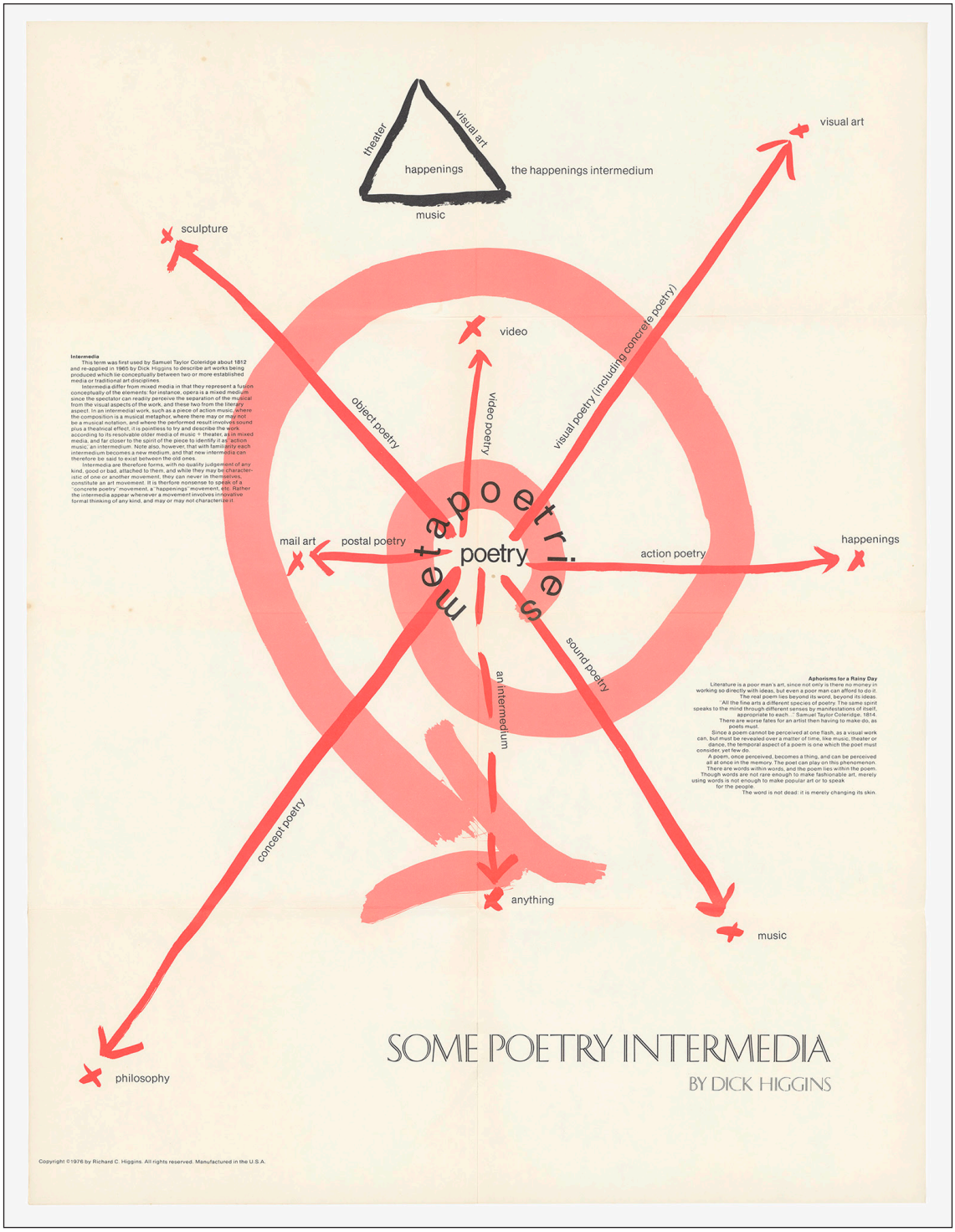


Figure 2 Dick Higgins 'Some Poetry Intermedia' (1976)

between performance art and poetry, I also move beyond these disciplines. Rothenberg's description of the breakdown between boundaries in arts practice that use performance is useful here. He states that there is

> a continuum, rather than a barrier, between music and noise; between poetry and prose (the language of inspiration and the language of common and special discourse); between dance and normal locomotion (walking, running, jumping), etc. (Rothenberg 1977: unp.)

This idea develops upon the poet and Fluxus artist Dick Higgins' suggestion that the concept of 'category' be replaced by the idea of continuity (Higgins 1966 n.p.). In my own practice I am able to locate these concepts as the movement from inter/cross-disciplinary practice (category) to one that is beyond category, i.e. transdisciplinary (continuity). Higgins' theories describe artwork that falls 'between media' (1966 n.p.) but that which importantly (through continuity) enables a 'fusion' of existing mediums, as art historian Natilee Harren explains:

> To imagine one medium as translatable into the language of another imagines a medium as a set of operations unattached to any particular set of materials, a notion that could only be arrived at via a notation-based practice like Fluxus. (Harren 2015: unp.)

Some Poetry Intermedia

Higgins produced a series of diagrams that help to illustrate his ideas of intermedia. Most interesting for my discussion is *Some Poetry Intermedia* (1976) [Fig 2]. From the central term 'poetry', a series of eight arrows extend out towards the edge of the diagram. They show the development of various named categories of poetry and where these practices lead to other categories 'outside poetry'. Concept poetry leads to philosophy; postal poetry leads to mail art; object poetry to sculpture; video poetry to video art; visual poetry (including concrete poetry)

to visual art; action poetry to happenings; sound poetry to music; and finally ‘an intermedium’ leads along a dashed line to an enigmatic ‘anything’. A further arrow spirals from the centre of the diagram and crosses all distinct genre arrows on its way to ‘anything’, this arrow is captioned ‘metapoetries’. There is a small paragraph on the term ‘Intermedia’ that states its origins in a Coleridge text from 1812 and goes on to explain his concept.

Higgins’ diagram positions these separate disciplinary practices both as fluid practices that can move ‘between’ disciplinary boundaries and as a continuum of poetry practice that is present across many art forms. Higgins’ use of poetry as a pre-eminent figure for ‘making’ is reflective of the development of the historical avant-garde movements as beginning in the literary. ‘Poetry’ in Higgins’ diagram is a unique transformational process that, when expanded, encompasses all other art-forms.

The diagram also contains a small triangular chart entitled ‘the happenings intermedium’. Each side of the triangle is labelled with a ‘media’ and they converge in the centre to form an inter-medium example. For example, in the happenings inter-medium, ‘theatre’, ‘music’, and ‘visual art’ combine to form ‘happenings’. For the purposes of my enquiry, and as I have discussed in the introduction, I have developed my own Action Poetry Intermedium [see Fig 1], that allows me to foreground the disciplinary boundaries and media involved in the vocal-body in performance. Action poetry facilitates a way to group together practices, practitioners and artworks that enable a new understanding of the vocal-body in performance. Reviving the terminology surrounding action poetry underlines how transdisciplinary practices, like my own, may be best understood.

Action Poetry Origins

Within my network of performance artists and performance art organisations we often refer to our approach in performance as coming from a European tradition. This European tradition would situate the term ‘action’ as a central component of

its practice, coming initially from the work of painter Georges Mathieu in France, the first to stage 'action painting' as a live event for a public audience in 1954, and from 'Aktionismus' [Actionism] in Austria most commonly associated with 'Wiener Aktionismus' [Viennese Actionism].[67] Similarly, the historical precedents for action-oriented performance art are mainly European, emerging from the historical avant-garde movements Dada, Surrealism, and Futurism. It is also worth noting that these movements were initially literary and developed by poets and from poetry circles.[68]

It is from this history that the term action poetry emerged, primarily as another term for sound poetry. Action poetry developed in France in relation to the work of sound poet Heidsieck whose explorations with pre-recorded speech in live performances were seen as bridging a space between poetry and action. His performances were experienced as a task, although the task in this context is related to the act of performing from a score or notational object. As Heidsieck has described 'action poetry is born from the moment the poem is torn from the page' (Heidsieck in Rothenberg and Joris 1995: 334). Jean-Pierre Bobillot explains that Heidsieck's works were 'minimal […] actions' that provoked a 'sense of […] complicity in every listener/spectator' (Bobillot in Chamboissier et al 2014: 100) eliciting an active participation similar to Fischer-Lichte's theory of bodily co-presence discussed earlier. Bobillot also compares action poetry to the 'elemental sense as Schwitters' *Ursonate*…[which] makes it simultaneously possible to see and hear a flesh-and-voice poet reading aloud from a typewritten "score"' (Bobillot in Chamboissier et al 2014: 101). The emphasis in action poetry is clearly on the performance and a situation where performance heightens and expands the traditional poetry reading. This is where action poetry relates to ethnopoetic

67 Through the work of Günter Brus, Otto Mühl, Rudolf Schwarzkogler and Hermann Nitsch.

68 Hugo Ball and Richard Huelsenbeck (Dada); Andre Breton (Surrealism); F.T. Marinetti (Futurism).

ideas of the performance *as* the poem (see *Poem as Event* in Chapter Two) and begins to distinguish between the notational scores of sound poetry to create a live poetry contingent upon the live situation.

We can also chart the use of the term action poetry more closely to performance in the work of Italian artists like Giovanna Fontana. Fontana defines action poetry as artists working with 'textual elaboration' and cites Reneta Barilli stating that 'it is not sufficient to speak of an oral or sound performance; the production of sounds must necessarily be accompanied by gesticulation of the body, by facial mimicry, by an overall form of behaviour' (Fontana et al 2015: 127). This understanding, of what Italian artist and curator Nicola Frangione calls 'Action-Voice' (in Fontana et al 2015: 65), is similar to discussions of sound poetry that see vocal expression as 'a way of underlining the values of the body' (Fontana et al 2015: 127). Historically, action poetry is used inter-changeably with sound poetry, although no real definition for action poetry exists and its use is minimal and speculative. References to the term are usually only in relation to Heidsieck, Julian Blaine (in Martell 2001), and sometimes to Uruguayan poet and mail artist Clemente Padín, who usefully refers to action art as 'non-object poetry'.

Redefining Action Poetry

As I have explored above, action poetry, in historical terms, has not been clearly defined and is mainly used interchangeably with sound poetry. I believe that the term action poetry has the potential to be revived and redefined in order to explain the 'unreported poetics' of embodied voice in performance and that it is distinct from sound poetry.

Action-oriented performance art shares the ethnopoetic commitment to indeterminacy and contingency and the discontinuity and non-linear narrative of the British Poetry Revival and Innovative Poetry. As I have established throughout this thesis, the voice and vocal-body is a key aspect of action poetry with an emphasis on the entire body of the performer and not the voice as a separation

or ‘disembodied’ object. However, my proposed revival of the term also seeks to expand its definition to include live writing and inscription. In this re-definition of action poetry all aspects of language-centred performances are tasks that could generate actions. Sound poetry has illustrated that the embodiment of language requires the conditions of live performance that are contingent upon the co-presence of performer and audience. Works that embrace the potential for language to become action do so through an understanding of the distinct relationship between the body and language. In action poetry as I am defining it, there is a reversal of the received understandings of the body as a subject and language as an object. Thus, when the body destabilizes subjectivity and presents itself as ‘other’, the voice is similarly presented — not only represented — as a subject. Language and vocal sound here are presented as a corporeal and spatio-temporal material that acts. The vocal-body brings attention to the materiality of the voice, and when this is explored in a live situation the voice has the potential to generate actions and produce events. As discussed in Chapter Two, artists like Boris Nieslony, Dominic Thorpe, Marina Abramović, Carolee Schneemann and Anne Bean use techniques of indeterminacy and contingency to transform language and the voice into action. Their action poetry accommodates the ‘event’, as Badiou would have it, as a profound rupture that challenges our understanding of the body and language. They do this without prepared notational objects, or scores, for vocal translation. But what about artists whose work expands the traditional poetry reading and, like sound poetry has, expands the function and status of the poetry object?

In the action poetry paradigm I have concentrated on examples in action-oriented performance art that communicate differently with the voice. This does not mean that there are not instances where what might traditionally be considered a poetry ‘reading’ does not have the potential to produce transformational events. The use of scores and page-based notation in sound poetry could contribute to

the redefining of action poetry and produce a more inclusive understanding of the role of the poetry object in action poetry and performance art.

Pages and Scores

Page-based performances provide new ways to understand the poetics of action by presenting situations where performers respond to marks on a page and create their own conditions for the vocal-body. Page-based work is a responsive performative form that is contingent upon live vocal interpretation. The relationship between the vocal-body in performance and marks on the page locates the page as another kind of site. Rothenberg refers to the page as 'preparations of notation' (1976: 10), which implies that notation is inherent in both the object of the page and its performance. This also brings our awareness to the preparation of materials prior to the performance. Higgins claims that 'all form is a process of notation' (1978: 159) challenging the precedents for musical notation where scores present instructions that can be followed, if you understand how to read musical language. When I use the term score I am not speaking of musical language or musical-scores but an expanded artistic understanding of the score as an object to be responded to in performance. The examples of scores discussed in this chapter do not require prior knowledge of how to interpret, read, or 'speak' a particular language. In this sense they are expanded notational objects that are 'translated' and 'transformed' into sound, specifically vocal-sound.

Prepared notational objects are usually page-based scores intended to be followed, interpreted and responded to in live performance. Scores, like sites, provide a spatial environment in which to respond and are constructed textual objects containing marks. Marks are often linguistic or para-linguistic, drawings, textures or images that are 'read' as sonic potential. Scores have their antecedents in interdisciplinary practices that link experimental music, dance, sound poetry, visual art and improvisation. The Fluxus 'Event Scores' described instructions for performance and whilst they are language-based, event scores are different

from the work discussed here, as they are not vocalized as sound but realized by a performer who follows the task described. That said, experimental musical scores and expanded poetry owe some of its development to the innovation of the Fluxus Score. This relates to Natilee Harren's statement cited earlier that notation-based practice like Fluxus makes it possible to imagine 'one medium as translatable into the language of another' (Harren 2015: unp.).

In my own practice the questions surrounding scores and vocalization have been critical to my continued exploration of a poetics of action. Specifically, in questioning how performers interpret and make audible inert marks on a page as vocal sound I have initiated my own practice-led experiments. Trying to understand the techniques required for scores to become sound is complex, especially since scores are not always linguistic. Scores often appear as shapes, lines, and other contrasting marks that interrupt the surface of the page. The live performance of these scores require the performer to embody the written mark and translate it into vocal sound. Performers interpret marks on the page by internalizing the mark as visual information and externalizing this information as vocal sound. There is a very close relationship between my exploration of site-responsive performance above and score-responsive performance because the score presents a physical and spatial object that is transformed into a temporal performance. My understanding of this work is practice-led, I have developed my own techniques that enable a page-based score to be transformed into sound. It is critical to do this since, whilst there are many examples of work of this kind, there is a distinct lack of explanation, theorisation and description of the processes that produce vocal interpretations of scores; the view from the body is omitted. I have been motivated to discover my own methods for understanding how scores can be read aloud and it is my assertion that these techniques generate language actions. I use an example here from my own work *Styan* (2017), alongside the work of others, and have included *Styan* in full in Appendix Two (see Appendix

2.2). Appendix Two brings together a series of my page-based scores for vocal performance as further examples.

As I have explored above and in Chapter Two, an action is not something that can be immediately realised, it is a process that is contingent upon the spatio-temporal materiality of the body. In asking what conditions are required to produce an action, I am also asking how does the voice engender transformational experiences? The arguments put forward by poets within the field of ethnopoetics and text-sound composition make it clear that in order to 'read' works of this kind they must be heard, and thus performed (see Konstalanetz 1980: 14; and Cobbing in Beckett 2010: 11). This requires an alternative to traditionally understood methods of reading and speaking, one that harnesses vocal energy and bodily attention. This is a dynamic practice that uses the contingency of performance in order to produce new sound formations.

Improvisation is an important element within score based vocal sound. In Hazel Smith and Roger Dean's *Improvisation, Hypermedia and the Arts Since 1945* (1997) they make the case for vocal improvisation as a continuum that links words to sounds. Improvisation provides a way to generate new sounds and new ways of communicating with language and the voice. Smith and Dean explain that improvisation creates a space to amplify the 'play-off between sound and sense' and facilitate a merging of the two (Smith and Dean 1997: 131). They define score based work as 'composed works' that are realized in performance. Performance creates a non-hierarchal relationship between words and sounds where the two can interact but where voice leads the way (Smith and Dean 1997: 139). When artists improvise with and from scores they are responding to the object and transforming visual marks into sound. This turns vocal energy into matter, bringing attention to the materiality of the corporeal sound and the materiality of language as it becomes vocal sound. This is what I am calling textual-volume which can be considered in relation to textual and graphic scores.

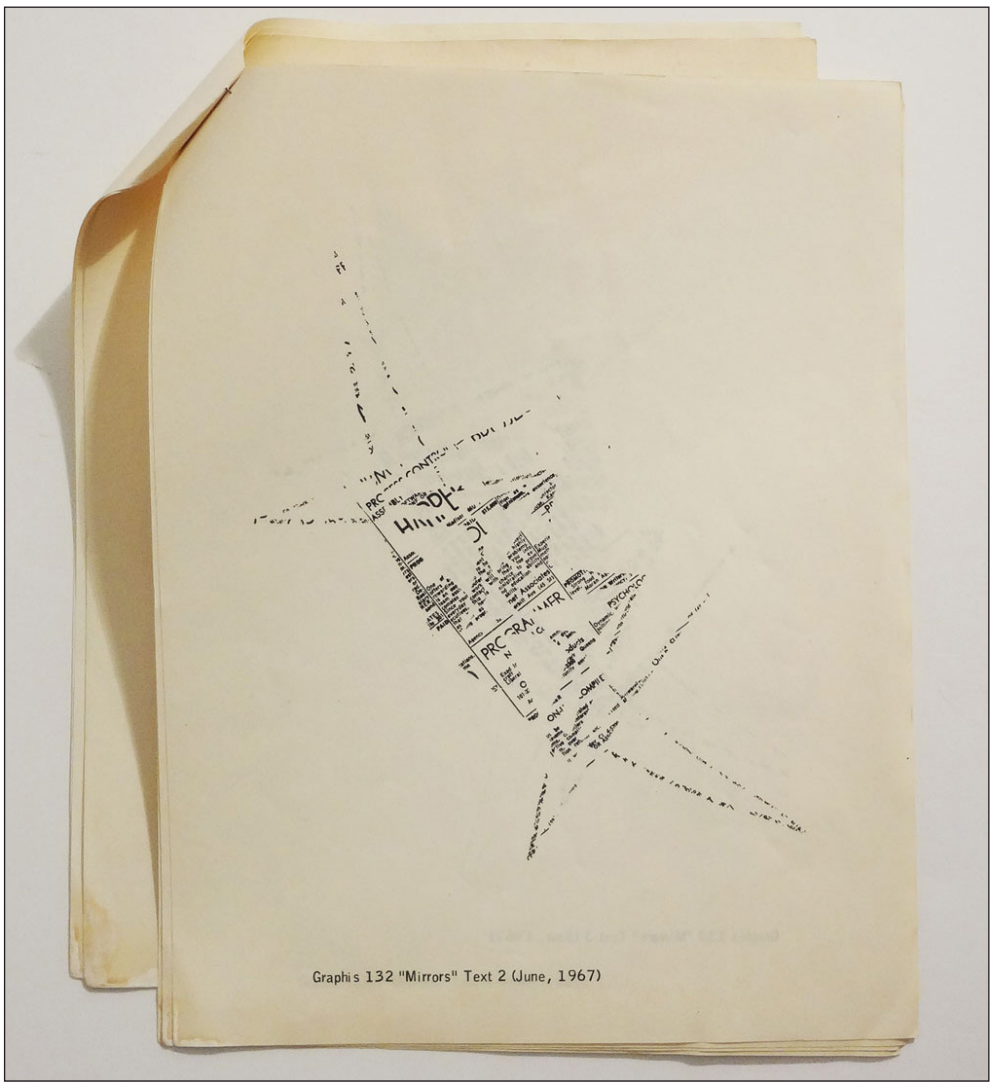


Figure 3 Dick Higgins 'Graphis No. 27...' (1959)
Figure 4 Dick Higgins Graphis 132 "Mirrors" Text 2 (1967)

By considering the score as another kind of 'site', we can understand that scores impress themselves upon the body in order to be expressed by the voice. In the following examples I explore the possibilities of both linguistic and non-linguistic scores to be used as task-led activities for the vocal-body to produce actions.

1. Dick Higgins

Dick Higgins' series *Graphis* (1958-68) consists of nearly 150 scores for performance. In the work *Graphis No. 27 (Drama for Rubber Stamp and Tragedians)* (1959) [Fig. 3] the page is landscape oriented and contains interconnecting rubber stamp marks that use repetition and deliberate smudging by dragging the stamps in curved motions. Musical notation is referenced through the use of two diagonally positioned staves, the five lines of the stave meet and bleed off the page. There are also rudimentary (presumably due to the seemingly home-made stamps) musical symbols of a treble clef, bass clef and brace situated to the left hand side of the page mainly underneath and not on the stave. In one case the treble clef is situated on the stave but the stave is diagonal and so cuts through the clef symbol. A financial stamp reading 'This Bill Is Net' appears twice, both times smudged and only partially legible. What is apparent is that this score does not provide an obvious access point and so cannot easily be read from left-to-right, top-to-bottom, although that is one potential way of reading the page. The time structure of the page is open and so a number of possible readings emerge. Instead, the page is initially read pictorially as a whole and in order to read it fully the performer must make decisions about where to begin and how to navigate these marks. The title of the work, as with many of the *Graphis* pieces, is followed by a parenthesis title 'drama'. Writer Bonnie Marranca has thus explored how these pieces could be considered as imaginative proposals for 'plays'. As Marranca explains, Higgins' 'knowledge of and critique of theatre led him to a more pluralistic, interdisciplinary, and process-oriented approach to the live event' (Marranca 2014: 92-93). His use of the term 'drama', as Marranca

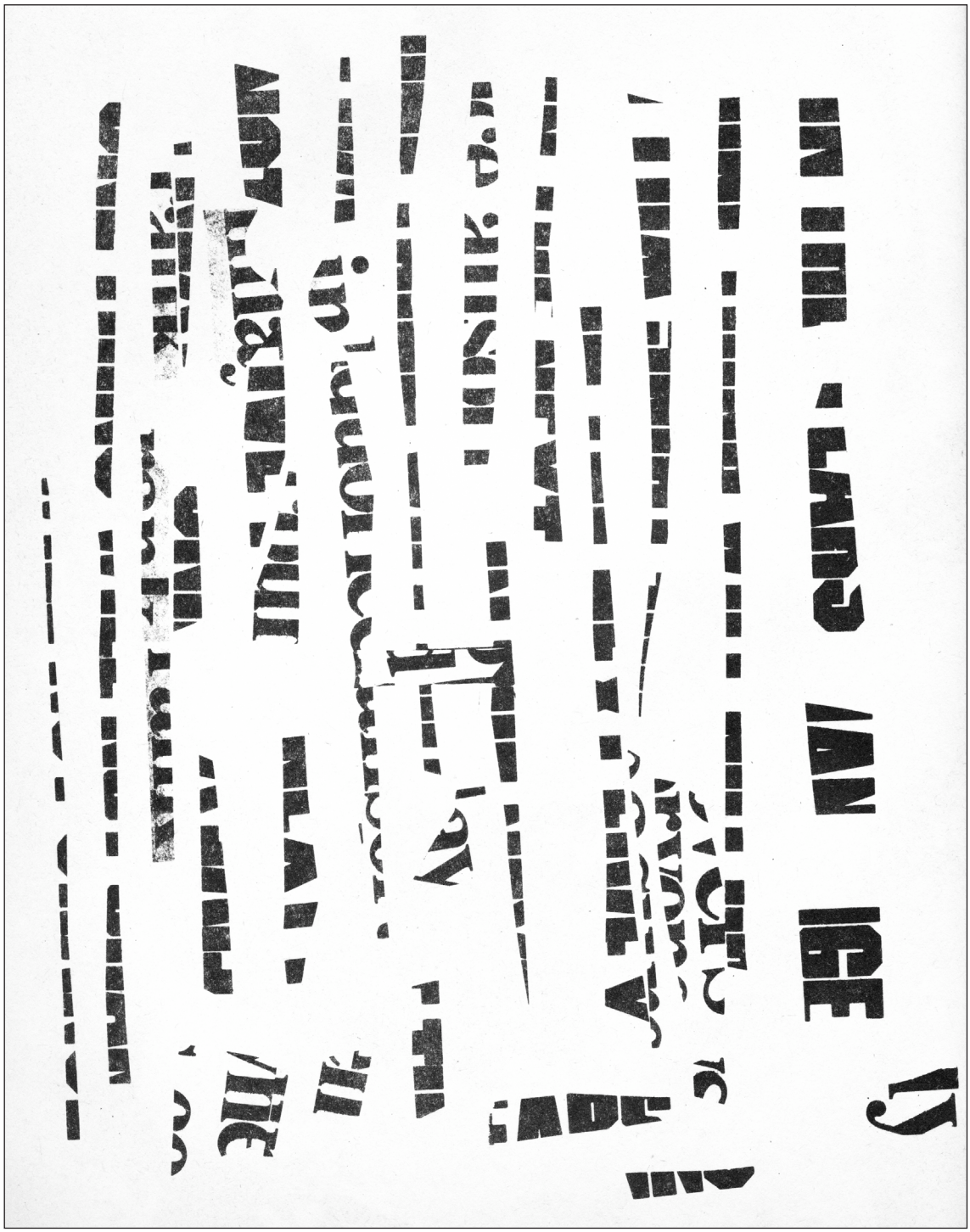


Figure 5 Lawrence Upton 'For Cris No. 2' (1977)

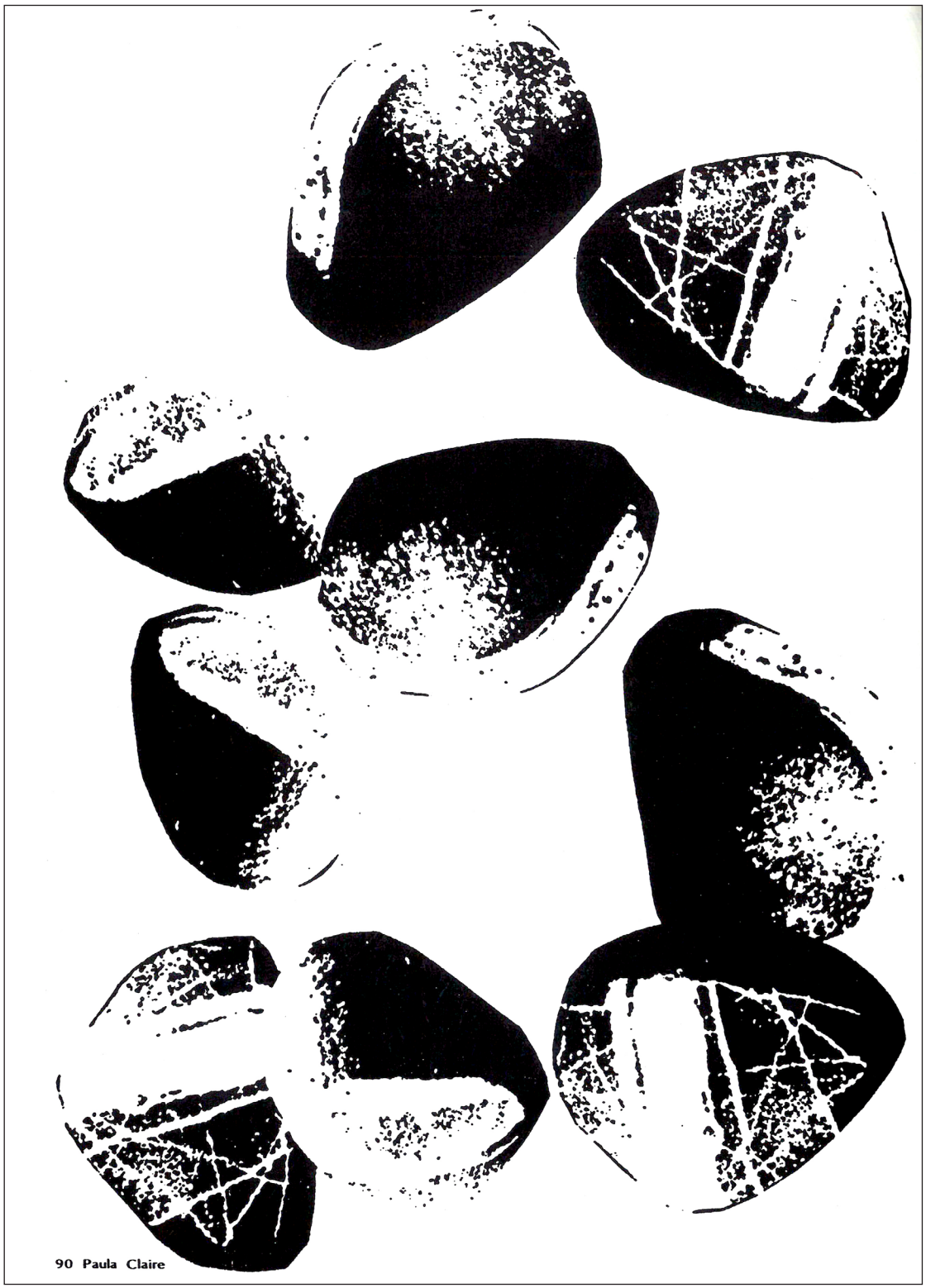


Figure 6 Paula Claire 'Stone Tones' (1974)

suggests, may be due to the fact that the terms ‘performance’ and ‘performance art’ were not yet used in the vocabulary surrounding happenings, events and environments (Marranca 2014: 93).

In *Graphis 132 “Mirrors” Text 2* (1967) [Fig. 4] Higgins used collaged texts of classified sections of newspapers. Marranca has noted that he referred to these pieces as ‘performance texts’, which she says is perhaps the first use of this term (2014: 93). These works are clearly exploring and explicating his theory of intermedia, discussed above, as they exist between media and across disciplines. As Marranca describes they sit ‘between drawing and drama, between music and drama or between drawing and poetry’ (2014: 93). Higgins stated that these works can be interpreted and performed using ‘movements and sounds which can be produced by or with the human body’ (Higgins in Marranca 2014: 92). Any attempt at performing these works requires an embodiment of the marks presented.

2. Lawrence Upton

Graphis 132 is reminiscent of many scores that experiment with linguistic elements, partial textual material and fragments of letters. For example, Lawrence Upton’s page-based work ‘For Cris 2’ (1977) [Fig. 5] presents partially erased text. The collaged pieces of letter-forms, like Higgins’ work, appear to have been cut from newspapers. Upton’s page does not have a specific orientation as the ‘texts’ are placed in strips on different axes, and so in order to decipher, or attempt to read them, the reader must rotate the page whilst reading. Again, with no obvious point of entry the reader is presented with a choice of where and how to begin reading, making the work open to multiple interpretations and methods of engagement.

3. Paula Claire

Taking these ideas further, not only beyond the linguistic mark but also beyond the page, Paula Claire has performed ‘readings’ of inanimate objects. As Robert

Hampson explains ‘partly from watching her young son learning through handling textures and objects, and partly as a result of her synaesthesia, Paula Claire pioneered reading from objects’ (Hampson in Claire 2012b: ii-iii). She has performed the patterns and markings on stones, leaves, tree-bark, oil on water, a sliced cabbage and scorch-marks on paper.

A number of these works have been transformed (photocopied) into page-based representations of the objects, as a way to print and publish her object-based poetry. In Claire’s *Stone Tones* (1974) [Fig. 6] the page consists of what appears to be photocopied black and white images of small round stones. The high contrast marks appear as a visual ‘image’ of stones and some depict lines or cracks on the surface of the stone. The composition of these nine stone shapes allows the white space of the page to move between the stones, only occasionally do these objects touch each other. The flatness of the page is altered by the gradient of light on the stone shapes so that they depict, however crudely, their three-dimensionality. These are facsimiles of the original poetry object and so when Claire performs this work she is not reading aloud the page but the object. She transforms what one could identify as non-linguistic objects into vocal sound. Claire performs sound improvisations from the surface patterns and texture of inanimate objects. By all accounts this is at the extreme end of the poetry continuum and presents the remarkable possibility to perform anything aloud as vocal sound. Claire explains that an inherent spiritual and elemental transformation takes place when she improvises with natural objects. She states that she yearns to ‘become one with them, express their being in sound. Sound is spirit in substance, animates substance’ (Claire in Parsons 1994: 231). By responding to the textures, markings and shapes of these concrete objects Claire describes that:

> These different stones drew out a much wider range of sound than conventionally-used language: all kinds of fragmented vowels and

Figure 7 Nathan Walker ‘Styan’ (2017)

> consonants: cries, gasps, whispers, yells, whistles – in fact all the sounds which unite us with birds, insects, animals and sea creatures and the elemental sound of wind and water. (Claire 1991: 60)

The resonance of the natural world becomes subsumed into the embodied activity of producing a vocality of objects. These objects are given textual volume by the voice. This develops a poetics of action and produces textual-volume as a corporeal and spatio-temporal activity. In this work the vocal-body is intrinsically connected to the space it inhabits.

4. Nathan Walker 'Styan'

In my own works that use similar techniques of collage and textual fragments, the appearance of illegible writing complicates the approach to reading and makes reading an explicit task-based activity. This task is transformed by the voice and presents a difficulty that foregrounds the relationship between reading and speaking, and between sound and sense. The marks on the page are already performing, they appear kinetic and require an embodied interpretation. The page may be read as a charged spatial plane where decisions about vocal pitch, timbre, and volume are read into the size, placement and density of the mark. In this example excerpted from my series *Styan* (2017) [Fig. 7] (see Appendix 2.2 for complete work) the reader is challenged to read the marks on the page as purely graphic with no intrinsic sound connected to the marks. These marks are closer to drawings and so, in order to transform them into sound the reader must improvise with a vocal expression of the shape, texture and density of the mark. Performers who explore vocal-sound not only need to develop processes of interpretation and transformation but also the vocal techniques necessary to produce new sound formations. Poet Paul Dutton, one fourth of the sound

poetry group The Four Horsemen,[69] describes his process as being 'carried' by phonemes into:

> shrieking, squawking, squeaking, gargling, lip-flubbing, growling, groaning, muttering, giggling, sobbing, aspirating, drumming on my cheeks at higher or lower pitches by dropping or raising my jaw, and popping my tongue off different points of my palate at different intensities for varying pitch and volume. (Dutton 1992: 10)

Conclusion

I propose that we reconsider the works of certain transdisciplinary practitioners as part of the continuum of intermedia, transcending disciplinary boundaries and existing on a plane that situates 'action poetry' as an exploration of the vocal-body in performance. This enquiry reveals that in order to communicate differently, performance art has resisted the vocal-body. Performances that have explicitly experimented with language and the vocal-body have often been defined as something other than performance art, namely poetry. There are examples of poets who are exploring different forms of communication *with* language and the voice, the examples explored here support this.

My work seeks to communicate something felt by citing the voice as a sensorial aspect of the body, an expressive signal that is all inclusive and that turns vocal energy into matter, creating textual-volume. I have used examples of artists across disciplines whose work investigates shared interests in materiality and who present the voice as corporeal and embodied. This concept, first declared in 1974 by Jerome Rothenberg as 'becoming voice […] the poem is everything that happens', has still not been fully realised. I have argued that this is because the

69 The Four Horsemen (1972 - 1988) were a Canadian sound poetry group consisting of bpNichol, Steve McCaffery, Paul Dutton and Rafael Barreto-Rivera. Their performances often used expanded forms of notation and group performances of poetry as sound.

social conditions of the poetry reading limit the possibilities for vocal actions to become events and restrict the possibility for textual-volume. Brandon LaBelle's claim that the voice 'operates alongside language' is useful here as it separates the phenomenon of language from the entity of the voice and thus untethers language from its perceived inherent and codified meaning. As LaBelle claims, the poetical is then only occupying the mouth as a material act. Perhaps this approach can harness vocality 'before language' by bringing attention to pre-linguistic vocal sound, and present an energetic activation of materiality in performance.

In the next chapter I will develop these ideas by concentrating on my own practice and writing, generating texts from within my performance and page-based artworks. Chapter Four shifts in register to allow reflections on my practice and to bring my poetics, methods and methodologies into focus.

Chapter Four: Scores for the Vocal-Body

In this chapter I will discuss my action-oriented performances and page-based scores for vocal performance. I will reflect on the experiences of performing my vocal-body and chart the process and contexts of making works that are directed towards actions, that seek out the event of the page and the event of the space. These works are task-led and I will write creatively about how these tasks have generated an embodied awareness. The following examples are expositions of my poetics, they are recollections — constructed after the event using my own notebook entries and memories — and they illustrate and describe, annotate and transcribe the view from the vocal-body.

I will discuss the following works:

Nape (2013) was a six-hour performance, commissioned and presented at Performance Space, London, as part of a series of six-month digital residencies that resulted in a solo performance. Performance Space was located in a large re-purposed warehouse in Hackney Wick.

Scaw (2014) was an eight-hour performance, presented as part of Experimentica14 Festival at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff. The work was performed in an old school room in November and began during daylight hours and continued until the evening.

Mean (2016) was a 30 min performance presented at Gallery North, Newcastle Upon Tyne as part of a festival of performance entitled ‘Flare 2: Body Works Excavating the In/Visible’.

Condensations (2017) is a book of visual-text for performance published by Uniformbooks. The book was the result of an Arts Council England

funded project that included a three-week residency at the Armitt Museum and Gallery, Ambleside in Cumbria.

Cope (2018) is a performance for camera, video recorded in York for a private audience. See Appendix 1.1 for a link to the video.

Low (White Stones) (2018) was a three-hour performance, presented at State of Move Festival, Helsinki, Finland. This performance took place in a cavernous gallery space within the Cable Factory, a former factory building of telecommunications company Nokia.

Preface

How old is slate? How young are mountains? Too few lungs, hair, scratches, glasses of water. The door to my bedroom wasn't attached to the frame until I was seventeen, it lived in the landing, leant against the wall. Shards of pencil lead float in my left eye. I wanted to pebbledash my performance objects. The dry bag inside my rucksack was pale blue and transparent, hand-me-down mountain gear lived inside it, an emergency whistle with my name on was decorated with fluorescent stickers. I collected small white stones that looked like teeth from the drive of the house I grew up in. Fallen quartz from the pebbledash wall. I collected slate from vast carpets of scree in the Wasdale valley. I stole mountaineering objects from my parent's loft to use in performances. Burning shoes, belting stools, smoking cigars into empty spirit bottles and capturing the smoke. Attempting to make the voice visible, to harness the oral and transform it into matter. Poetry as auricular acupuncture. How do I perform pressure? How do I construct spaces for difficulty? Impossible tasks for possible actions. What do teeth sound like? Ancestors appear in performance, in the spaces between breaths. A scent of air. A crime was committed. Verbal throwing, childhood teeth,

Figure 8 Nathan Waker 'Nape' (2013) Photographs by Marco Berardi

my old young mouth, door hanging, hooks a tongue, belts undone, white spirit, slow attack, pebbledash, dark navigation. Threshold interference mountain force. Drawing calls. I would like to be free of rooms. A widened jaw for prosthetic voices. Pressure increases in deep spaces. Language is a breath. Cuts through bodies, or, in any case, fold us all like quartz. Impaled pasts are removed with speech, released and unburdened for a moment only to return through the nape of the neck. Fever. Unprecedented scale. Disproportionate longing. Threshold throats. Sound whips around and implants itself into the skin. Threshold skin like lips, places that are both interior and exterior, rust and corrode in the sea air. Coastal towns, post-industrial belts that cling. Fringes of erosion. Chin spaces. United Reformed. Superimposed. Underclass. Doors slowly. Terrain slowly. Mountain slowly. Ironed clothes for performance but didn't wear them. Shaved my neck and drank nothing. Breath coils.

Nape

> Walking in the dark, oddly enough can reveal new knowledge about a familiar place.
>
> —Nan Shepherd, The Living Mountain, 1977

> To place one's body at the centre of writing's work indicates a methodical and pragmatic interest in forms of awareness which are not primarily, or solely, linguistic, nor it follows, poetic.
>
> —Caroline Bergvall, Body & Sign, 2003

I used domestic doors as enlarged pages and surfaces on which to write. These doors were altered and presented as sculptural material, painted with black chalkboard paint and written onto with chalk. Using white chalk meant that the texts appeared as a negative 'page', an inversion of how we conventionally read text. The durational action of writing with my eyes closed onto these black surfaces brought together my interest in automatic writing and the practice of writing as a body-based activity. Here, time altered the materiality of writing. Often the density of the chalk played an illusory trick where black appeared to be overlaid onto a white surface. This was multiplied by the overwriting that occurred throughout the task. It looked like writing was being revealed: a confusion of background and foreground. Illegible densities that were once linguistic.

I wore a home-made balaclava that covered my head entirely except for my right ear. This 'listening balaclava' (as I call it) concentrated my attention on sound and inhibited my ability to see and therefore to write visibly coherent language. The materiality of chalk also aided the removal of my ability to write legibly, the chalk jumped and skipped with friction across the surface of the door, smudging and dusting the written texts' inconsistent thicknesses and densities. Writing

Figure 9 Nathan Waker 'Nape' (2013) Photographs by Marco Berardi

Figure 10 Nathan Waker 'Nape' (2013) Photographs by Marco Berardi

Figure 11 Nathan Waker 'Nape' (2013) Photographs by Marco Berardi

Figure 12 Nathan Waker 'Nape' (2013) Photographs by Marco Berardi

without being able to see was a deliberate attempt to shift my attention away from the words being produced and focus on the activity of writing. This meant that I often wrote over things previously written or wrote on angles and curves. Writing appeared as letter-like shapes, similar to short-hand. In places the text emerged like drawing and when writing was superimposed onto other writing it became dense and visually noisy. Interference.

During this writing activity my attention was internal. In a similar way to automatic writing, I allowed my writing hand to produce marks and found that whilst I was writing coherent sentences — descriptions of things and memories — when I removed the listening balaclava the surface of the door surprised me. The things I had written were not visible. The sentences and memories that occurred in my mind were consciously transcribed but transformed by the mechanics of the task. I moved from writing one thing to writing something else quickly, transient, fleeting and barely remembered after the task. What happened between thinking and writing? Why does not looking at what I am doing remove coherence, legibility and direct communication? The asemic nature of the writing communicates differently. The gesture of writing without looking and the continual disintegrating of chalk produces a distanced translation. Blending the subject and the object. Stories about dust. Inconsistent saccades and chalk breaks.

In *Nape* I used a pre-recorded text of six-hours in length.[70] The text was computer generated using a chance-based syntax whereby three words were placed together at random from a pool of source words. The words related to the ideas inherent in the performance as it was being prepared:

EIGHTY SLATE FOOTHOLD

70 Although *Nape* took place before this research project began it is useful to consider it in relation to the proceeding works. Nape provides insight to the formative development of my use of the language-oriented tasks in performance. Whilst this work did not explore the vocal-body in performance it did experiment with mouth actions and writing about it here illustrates my initial experiments with the poetics of action on the continuum of my creative practice.

ROPE BLANK CABLE

KEY OPACITY RED

VENTOLIN BAG BOTANICS

NECK LEGS DAUGHTER

SAND WILD GLASS

CRIPPLED CLIPPED ADOPTED

HAIR SHARPEN STAIRS

STANDING SCRAP SURFACE

CLIFF GOAT DISCARD

BENIGN TAPED ADOPTED

POST BUDDHIST SOAP

DIFFICULTY CRANE STAIRS

WOOL CLIPPED LINGMELL

ROPE FICTION ASHTRAY

DELAY DENIM LEANING

FALL WITHIN SUFFOCATE

MYSTERIOUS FLUORESCENT DRIGG

SURVIVAL YOU SPHERIC

INSIDER ACUPUNCTURE GLASS

OPEN BLANK SHOWER[71]

Prior to the performance I recorded these texts onto cassette tapes, thirty-

71 Nape Generator (Walker 2014) available at http://www.nathan-walker.co.uk/nape-generator.

Figure 13 Nathan Walker 'Scaw' (2014) Photographs by Warren Orchard

minutes of text recorded onto each side of six cassettes. This facilitated a timed-structure to the performance allowing me to shift tasks at the end of each side of the cassette. The texts were scoring the performance in real-time, even though they were pre-recorded. The layering of a private performance onto a public performance, hearing my own voice, emanating from the rucksack on my back, in rhythms of three.

After writing onto one of the doors I attached it to ropes and winched it high into the space above. The gallery was a converted warehouse and the ceilings were high. I suspended the door from a load-bearing beam in the ceiling so that the bottom of the door was at the height of my neck. I stood beneath it, taking the weight of the door onto the nape of my neck. A line is formed on my neck from the edge of the door. The wood was smooth and the edges eroded and slightly round with age. I stood beneath the door for thirty minutes whilst the tape recorder played the pre-recorded generator text aloud. Words seemed to explain my position and resonated in the vast gallery: crippling / survival / wood / slap / alone / blistering / upside / sealing / difficulty / lower / stood / neck / shaved / ascend / covering / nape / pillar / huge / fall / careful / surface / beneath / portal / obstacle.

Scaw

he turns to the night cries out to it from the window

to slow down or existence is the circle is the space

is rhythmic swinging harpoon that brushes the lips

bronze gestures darkroom a stain left by the water

framed frozen hypocritical face dust hypnosis

see but see how negation modifies the text

with possible words with impossible words

—Adriano Spatola, The Composition of the Text, 1971

Five hours into the performance and the room was suddenly empty of audience members. How strange to be alone but to continue. The day had become dusk and the room had darkened. I chanted the word Whiskey from the window of the performance space out into the street beyond—Whiskey—Whiskey—Whiskey—Whiskey—the gallery sits amongst residential streets, itself a former school and squat. My voice is as loud as I can make it, but clear, I push the words from my gut, resounding like a secular bell from the window—Whiskey—Whiskey—Whiskey—Whiskey—I see bodies below me looking up towards the window, children join in for a couple of shouts. I feel the cold November evening on my face and hands on the sill, my eyes are half open—Whiskey—Whiskey—Whiskey—Whiskey—every four Whiskeys I take a breath, and then every five, six, seven. How many Whiskeys until I take a breath? My voice sounds like I have had whiskey. After thirty minutes I begin to cry. The words have morphed into—Yes OK—Yes OK—Yes OK— Yes OK—another ten minutes, maybe not that long, it has become a

Figure 14 Nathan Walker 'Scaw' (2014) Photographs by Warren Orchard

Figure 15 Nathan Walker 'Scaw' (2014) Photographs by Warren Orchard
Figure 16 Nathan Walker 'Scaw' (2014) Photographs by Warren Orchard

question—You OK?—You OK?—You OK?—You OK?—a question for the street or for myself? I could be shouting for help. I turn away from the window and face the room. It has become completely dark outside since I began this action of chanting and the two small bulbs that are lighting the space are brighter than earlier and orange. I walk slowly towards the centre of the room and the words shift to—Yesterday—Yesterday—Yesterday—Yesterday—I see Hannah, the curator, and we hold eye contact whilst I continue. She is really with me in this moment. I saw her outside when I was at the window too, but she was too far away for me to make eye contact. I raise my left hand to my ear and cup it in order to hear my own voice resounding inside the room. Yesterday—has been reduced to—Today—Today—Today—Today—and eventually into simply—Day—Day—Day—Day—it remains, recurs, reoccurs, re-sounds for an extended period of time, maybe twenty minutes, maybe a little more. I am simultaneously pushing the words out and allowing them to set their own course. Day becomes—Dad—Dad—Dad—Dad—the soft 'y' at the end of Day made for long sounds, high pitched, relaxed and extended cadence. In comparison Dad is quick and compressed. Each sounding returns to my ear almost immediately and the pace increases. The word becomes a bark, my mouth doesn't even close between repetitions, these chanted sounds leave Dad behind and return me to noises, quick sounds, short breaths, punched words, vocal fists, tongue-less, spit beard, punctuation, animal—Ad—Yad—Ha—Ap—Ra—Ad—Yad—Ad—Yad—Ha—Ap—Haa—Ak—Yar—Ad—Yad—Ha—Ap—Ra—Ad—Yad—Ad—Yad—Ha—Ap—Haa…

Not knowing. When I have made a decision to perform a task it is usually led by a hunch and performed as an exploration of materials. I often perform the same task with different materials and the results are different. The live performance situation is an opportunity to learn, to discover meaning through doing. I have a very clear memory of this occurring. In *Scaw* I had a large survival bag that I filled with air. Survival bags are heavy duty polyethylene sacks used in mountaineering

and outdoor emergency situations. They are fluorescent orange and large enough to lie down inside. Survival bags are intended to be used in emergency situations to keep a person warm and visible but they can also be used to bivouac. I have been using survival bags as objects in my work as a reference to the materials of mountaineering.

I held the survival bag by the opening at the top that I had gathered together so that the air could not escape. I held this enlarged fluorescent bag at the top and stood with it between my body and the wall of the gallery. I performed a task of slowly allowing the air to forcibly leave the bag by pushing my body weight against it and the wall. I performed this task three times over the space of thirty minutes. During this task I have also altered my appearance and am wearing a blue balaclava that belongs to my dad. I buried my head and body into the bag that impresses itself around me, through the bag my head touches the wall. The balaclava covers my nose and mouth. After around ten minutes of applying my body weight as pressure, the air in the bag reduces slowly and flattens itself between my body and the wall. Wrapped inside the inflated fluorescent lung I heard the bag exhaling. I became aware of my left hand as it held the top of the bag tightly, stopping the air from escaping too quickly but simultaneously allowing air to leave through the inconsistent gathers and folds of plastic. When I am holding objects I am aware that they transform. As my body becomes an object, so too do objects become bodies. I am holding the neck of this body against the wall and have pushed the air out of it. Held the throat, heard the breath. As the task is transformed temporarily into an action I realise what I am doing. The audience witnesses this moment of internal understanding, glimpsed in the hairs on my neck rising, which in turn transmits a different form of communication. Scratching under water. Not ‘knowing’ but ‘feeling’.

I hunt among stones. When ascending the last third of the route to the summit of Castle Crag from Rosthwaite you have to walk around the edge of a spiralling

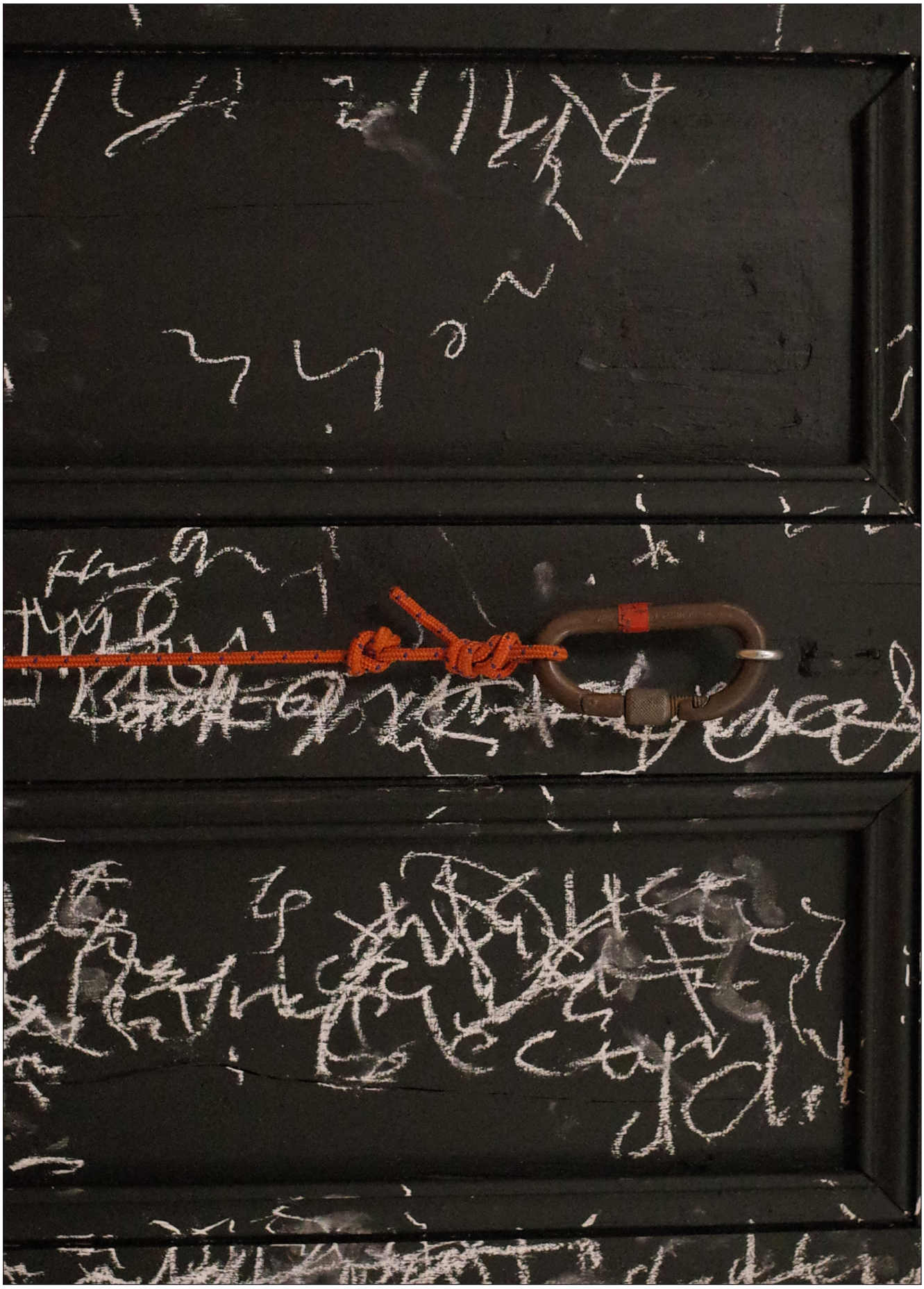


Figure 17 Nathan Walker 'Scaw' (2014) Photographs by Warren Orchard

Figure 18 Nathan Walker 'Scaw' (2014) Photographs by Warren Orchard

path of a spoil heap. The ancient quarry slate resounds like bone as it moves underfoot. In *Scaw* I rotate five rectangular slate pieces in my hands whilst I walk the circumference of the room. Quiet slate sounds as they rotate in my hands. In my mouth, five deciduous teeth from my child-mouth sit quietly on my tongue, gathering saliva around them, remembering a smaller version of this mouth. Teeth reside in residue. I remember seeing an image from a performance by Boris Nieslony in which he had slowly, over a period of two-hours, filled his ear with seeds, one by one.[72] He was lying on the ground underneath an enormous rock suspended by a crane. A small bowl of seeds was on the ground in front of him and as he lay on his left-hand-side he used his right arm to place seeds from the bowl into his ear. They overflowed, into his ear canal and out onto his face and neck. I wonder how many teeth I could place in my ear and how, or if, I could retrieve them. Spitting teeth. Listen to the sound of my child-mouth.

Before the performance the doors were prepared by the gallery technicians. I requested solid wood doors. One side of the door had been cleaned and painted with black chalk-board paint. The rest of the door is untouched, some still carry cobwebs, dust and paint marks from their previous homes. Each door leant against the wall of the gallery and was used in turn during the performance. I placed a door onto the trestle leg stands and wrote onto it with chalk. I wrote with my eyes closed for one hour, slowly moving around the edge of the door throughout. During the task writing was overwritten, word-shapes and letter-forms blend into one another. This palimpsest is dense and transforms into linguistic smoke. Once I had written onto the surface of a door with chalk for one hour I placed it against the wall.

I had screwed circular metal eye-screws into the centre of the doors at the height of my forehead. These circular metal hooks are large enough to attach a

72 Nieslony (29 May 2009) Nature Study: Breathing – issue Thessaloniki, performed at the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Greece.

climbing carabiner, the roped handle of a mountaineering hammer, and the laces of shoes, so that these objects hang from the door in the same way you might hang a coat to keep it. They are materials that transfer memories, geographies and histories into the space. This particular door has nothing attached to the hook and is intended to perform another function. I placed the door in the centre of the room and leaned it towards me at a sixty-degree angle from the floor. I placed the hook in my mouth and took the weight of the door with my lips, teeth, gum and face. My body was forced to push back, I kept myself straight but leant towards the door slightly. My lips kissed the door surface. After five minutes I felt crushed, the pressure on my mouth was too much. I intended to perform this task for at least thirty minutes but realised I could not. I placed the palms of my hands to the surface and took the weight of the door into my arms. After another five minutes I realise again that I could not continue in this position and must find another way of supporting the weight of the door. I leant forwards, taking the hook from my mouth, I unscrewed it with one hand and placed it onto my tongue. I then stood the door upright and placed it flat against my body, my hands holding the sides of the door, where the door frame would be. The hinges have been removed. The sneck too.

Figure 19 Nathan Walker 'Mean' (2016) Photographs by Denys Blacker
Figure 20 Nathan Walker 'Mean' (2016) Photographs by Denys Blacker

Mean

The old rope argument

desire back to front;

wasn't even a neck voice

but a limbless watery gob

sound, aural showers

—Nathan Walker, Tek Hod, 2016

In *Mean* I experienced the transformation of task to action. An audience of around fifty spectators sat around the edge of the room. I stood in the centre of the room and proceeded to shout the word 'mean' aloud to initiate the performance. To begin I opened a bottle of whiskey and poured from the bottle into my mouth. I held the whiskey in my mouth for the duration of the first task, around fifteen minutes. This task involved using the leather shoes I was wearing to gently push a pair of small black leather shoes around the circumference of the space. The small shoes are children's size, roughly thirteen-year-old feet, and are joined together by their laces. I nudge them with my own feet, shuffling them slowly past audience members who have mostly sat on the floor of the gallery to watch. My feet and the children's shoes pass their feet and in the silence a rhythm of walking, stumbling and kicking is made audible. The whiskey burnt my tongue and gums. I stopped roughly in the centre of the circle of spectators and lowered myself to my knees. I opened my mouth. Transformed by saliva, the whiskey melted and slowly rolled down my left arm into a pool in my palm. My burnt mouth dried rapidly as the brown translucent mass of alcohol and things unspoken is stripped from my mouth cavity and released. When I began to chant, words followed the saliva-whisky-discharge and were projected into the gallery as mucus-cracked yells. I did not recognize my own voice; a gowling howling resounding that emerged

Figure 21 Nathan Walker 'Mean' (2016) Photographs by Denys Blacker
Figure 22 Nathan Walker 'Mean' (2016) Photographs by Denys Blacker
Figure 23 Nathan Walker 'Mean' (2016) Photographs by Denys Blacker

from my body. Words sound, but their sound is characterised by all that has occurred before in the work: they have been kicked and burnt and are made audible now as an invisible limb. A gigantic slow chant transformed language into action. It altered the entire space of the gallery. Activating Actualising Aching. I felt a thinning of the separation between my body and the room. Rarely have I emerged from a performance with such a feeling of hope, empowerment and compassion. I feel I had embodied and transformed language. Language has a new orientation, it has become a subject, and I, an object. I make the shadow I pursue. This thinning is the interior voice meeting the exterior voice. The action occurs in the blend.

In January 2016 I attended a workshop with Spanish performance artist Bartolomé Ferrando in Belfast. We, the workshop participants, repeatedly recited strings of consonants. Ferrando explained how he had always wanted to know how to teach sound poetry and so had devised processes for approaching non-linguistic sounds in performance. These were framed as workshop tasks similar to those of Bob Cobbing, they were generative and performative: spontaneously draw onto the wall with a marker pen, quickly, without thinking, then read it aloud; unravel a ball of string across the length of the room and read it aloud; speak entire conversations in gibberish to another participant; read aloud whilst eating as many pieces of toffee as you can fit into your mouth; or marbles; learn how to say GLNGMVPRMVGTGPRT; read a found page from a book aloud whilst it is set on fire.

The task of repeated calling, chanting or shouting is all consuming. The rhythm of the breath is controlled by the rhythm of the speech and can become difficult. There is a meditative quality to this task that, unlike non-vocal tasks, is impossible to separate from the task itself. In this sense vocal-actions are meditations; they bring a mindful awareness to the present moment. I haven't had any vocal training but instead have developed my own techniques for vocality. I am trying to speak

from the nape of my neck. I externalize internal text-feels. The text-feel is hooked from as far back in my jaw, throat and neck as I can imagine and pulled and thrown out towards the corners of the room. Whiskey from the scruff. Smoke images float into my forehead vision whilst chanting. It is difficult to describe the speed of images, cinematic in their intensity. A series of pictures flatten into each other with a rapid intensity that feels like internally throwing up pictures. One of them will catch. And the speech flows as scree, so that, what I do after the chant is stained by it and what I do before the chant stains it. An invisible transference; energy and pressure.

The permutation of my deep and nasal word-sound seems to transform my voice into an oscillator or drone. The tonal qualities of my vocality are para-linguistic, reminiscent of non-vocal sound like auditory drones, horns and animal barks. Pre-linguistic sounds enter too: coughs, guttural heaves, saliva gargling and notes. I am aware of influences like folk singer Louisa (formerly Louis) Killen whose a capella sea shanties in North East dialect always felt like I had heard them in a previous life; the nasal pitch shifts of Roy Harper that move in range from high to low within the same syllable of a lyric; the vocal texture of John Martyn's slow mumbling love songs that sound like his voice has been reversed and drunk. Similarly, the poetry of Andrei Tarkosky's father, Arseny Tarkovsky, that scores scenes in the 1975 film *Mirror*. His (Russian) poems accentuate Russian metre and resound like bells and drag vowels out into elongated speak-song. I can hear his voice when I say the Russian sounding word 'whiskey'. Channelling vocal influences like these, where the voice's affective qualities are heightened, remains a continual exploration.

A pair of children's smart leather shoes are tied together by their laces. Each shoe is filled with water. I removed my shirt and replaced it with two identical white t-shirts, dirty and off-white in places. One t-shirt sits uncomfortably over the other. I picked up the shoes by their heels, careful not to spill the water, and placed the

joining lace over my head to the nape of my neck. The shoes hung to my collar bone until I leant forward at ninety degrees from my waist. My hands held each other behind my back and I walked forwards into the room, my eyes to the floor. Walking in this position produced a disorientation. I found myself performing this task to camera in my studio, without knowing why. When I watched the footage back I was surprised to see myself drunk. The drunk action ended after thirty painful minutes where, upon straightening my back, I drank the water from each shoe, removed the two white t-shirts and placed them next to each other on the floor.

Condensations

No sound is dissonant that tells of life

—Coleridge, ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’, 1797

Things explain each other, not themselves

—Oppen, ‘A Narrative’, 1965

Condensations (2017) organised fragments of language into terrains. Using mainly found language I wanted to develop a procedure for producing visual texts that cut language without damaging it. What appeared through these procedures were collaged texts that insist upon slow reading: poetry that connects to the conditions of its own production. The process and technique for making *Condensations* grew from a residency at the Armitt Museum and Gallery, Ambleside, Cumbria. During the two-week residency I had access to an incredible amount of textual material. I was drawn to the Armitt for three reasons: the Armitt has the UK’s largest permanent collection of the work of Kurt Schwitters; a vast collection of Cumbrian dialect texts; and books on the history of rock climbing in the Lake District, which began in 1881 when Walter Parry Haskett Smith, ‘the father of English rock climbing’, visited the region for a holiday. These three distinct areas of interest were present in one space and the task I set myself was to find relationships between these ideas. During my residency it became clear that in order to navigate these multiple textual terrains, a path would need to be formed between these collections of language, geography, folk figures and speech-sounds. These were routes in which to traverse.

Everything I encountered entered into the work: the collages Schwitters made in Ambleside; the Grasmere dialect plays; occult magician Aleister Crowley’s climbing routes; Cumbrian dialect poetry in T.W. Thompson’s and E.R Denwood’s *Lafter O’Farleys*; The photographic glass slides of the Armitt’s first librarian Herbert

Bell; the letters received by Thompson whilst writing his book *Wordsworth's Hawkshead* (1970); witnessing the annual Rush Bearing ceremony in the streets of Ambleside *'Raise your Rushes! Lower your Rushes!'*; the mountains I climbed each evening with my partner Victoria. Perhaps most surprisingly it was the climbs and walks that we took each evening in the landscape of mountains that surround Ambleside that had the most profound influence on my writing. The procedures of writing by collecting and superimposing texts from the library are the content of the work but the landscape of the Cumbrian mountains impressed themselves on me and the pages of *Condensations*. I wanted to discover how I could write without representing these landscapes but instead imply them. Constructing textual texture. Producing text in the same way that the breeze produced sound on Coleridge's Aeolian harp when it was placed by an open window. A light touch. Weather conductor. Cutting text without damaging it. Arranging language like rushes on the ground of the Church as a surface that brings attention to surface. Clothing pages with islands to pass over and through. Stitched together. The strategies of collage as I see them are cutting, splicing, arranging, superimposing, concealing and revealing. Schwitters' collages became strategies, maps and scores to follow. I followed and borrowed the shapes of his paper based collages. I considered dialect writing as sound poetry. I didn't always know what dialect words meant but I knew their sound meant something to me. I felt it on my tongue. The absence of letters and new spellings of words in dialect writing create new language sounds. When we wus laal es 'eard it moar common like eh. Spok w' a reet auld fashun tung like eh. Fer me moother wus nin sa soft, huwivver she saund it. She tauld me laal uns wud talk n shud talk wivoot oor local tung and maer like ivvery yan else eh. A gert sham. It wus them fells tha' med es spek like tha'. Fells weren't jus int Lakes, but in oor yam 'n'all. Language is inadequate here unless it does not try to be language and instead performs ranges, faults, and terrains. Water formed the mountains, a light touch but lasting. How can I write mountain

textures, the elasticity of bracken as it brushes your legs, the scent of stone, the spawning moss? Lakeland traditions like dry stone walling also influenced the thinking behind this process of working with fragments of material that build, collage, and construct textures of the landscape in the Lakes. Placing words together, on top of each other, sometimes to obscure and interrupt the clarity of the writing and give the work its particular form of composition. Words support other words, not in content but in form.

During the construction of *Condensations* I frequently read and recorded the pages aloud enabling me to listen to and hear the writing. Mostly I wanted to hear the difference between the legible text and the seemingly illegible text. I was inspired by Smith's decision to visit the Lake District due to the density of the contour lines on a map of England. Height is visually darker. Mountains have more lines, more difficulty, more condensed areas where grass meets woodland meets rock formation. Remembering Idris Khan's photograph *Hearing Voices…Schumann's Violin Concerto* (2007) where each page of the musical score for Robert Schumann's 1853 concerto is photographed individually and superimposed on top of one another to create a single image that displays the entire score. The density of this image creates a complex viewing experience, we know what we are looking at but we cannot access it easily.

Language can also communicate indirectly through its shape and orientation, its position on the page, its relationship to white space. *Condensations* shifts between direct and indirect communication. It must be read slowly in order to navigate and discover the contiguity. These textual shapes follow the land, create composed shadows similar to rionnach maoim (the Gaelic term for the shadows made by clouds). All the texts I used were photographed, digitized and treated to procedures of erasure. I removed text I had no interest in, and what remained was the language that spoke to me, the voices of others were condensed. I worked visually and conceptually. All the treated pages retained

their original design and layout, so a piece of text from the top left of the page remains at the top left of the page within *Condensations*. Once all pages were treated they were then superimposed onto one another. The overprinting of text(s) produced a density and obscurity but, in the same breath, some figures are left defiantly alone like remote islands of single words or phrases. It is these contrasting visual marks that make up the texts in *Condensations*.

Kurt Schwitters spent the last three years of his life in the Cumbrian lakes. His work during this period consisted of making sculpture, paintings and collage. Arguably his most well known work, the Merz Barn, was built inside a hired barn on Cylinders Farm in Langdale, just outside Ambleside. This work was a large and constantly evolving wall, an environment that collaged sculpted stone, paint and wood. Seeing this work, now housed in Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery, I was struck by its unusual shape and its simplicity. It reminded me of the wall my granddad, Wuky, had constructed in his kitchen in the 1970s. *Condensations* is dedicated to Wuky, containing references to his own creative constructions and reflecting on his influence on me as the person who took me on my first walks in the Cumbrian mountains. Wuky is a local legend and mountaineer, there is even a room in his local pub named after him, he knows all the fells by sight and all their paths by memory. He built a cairn on the fell Knock Murton around the same time as he built the wall in his kitchen using Lakeland stones. Stones taken from the fells. I compare his wall, outsider art, to Schwitters' Merz Barn. Wuky told me about building the cairn on Knock Murton — "cuz there wuzn't yan!" — upon his descent in the rain, the women in the farmhouse below the fell offered him tea. He told me how he invented the bum-bag for rock climbing using onion nets. He told me about building the wall in his kitchen. Every year he would take me and my twin brother, Sam, to the summit of Castle Crag for Armistice Sunday to observe a two-minute silence atop of this small fell surrounded by slate. Shards of sharp rock, layered grey, hardened by pressure, time and silence.

loss organised
the spot

jaw moota

form of a grand. Our task
the Rock
pressed

Never drop burn

The building
of the
grit stone
first furnace
Low
little book
absence
technique

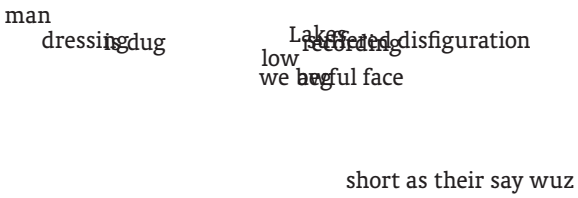
brothers
dialect speaking
handsome

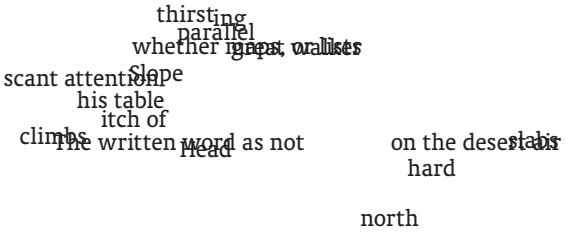
witness my hand
a linguistic atlas

suitable intona

lexicalnest
subsiding

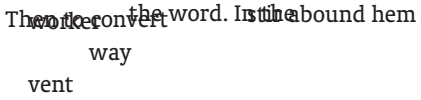
mountain
have broke down and quite before us
have to wait till the
says

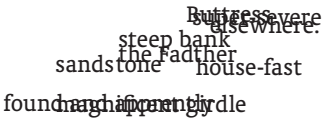

man
dressing
dug
Lakes
disfiguration
low
we
ful face
short as their say wuz

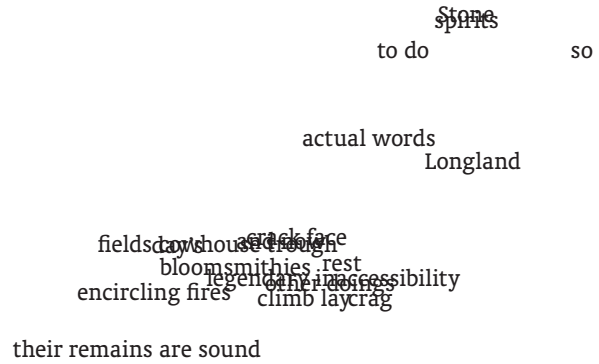

thirsting
parallel
whether
Slope
scant attention
his table
itch of
climbs
The written word as not
Head
on the desert
hard
north

sing the Walker's
these places within

the wording
rope,


the word. In the
vent


steep bank
sandstone
house-fast


Stone
spirits
to do
so
actual words
Longland
fields
bloomsmithies
rest
encircling fires
climb
their remains are sound

fore set man charcoal would be bottom to top Knock

quite

the house

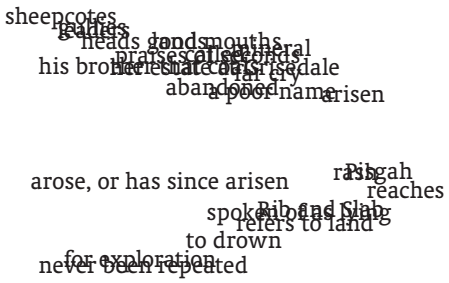
re-built
area

seedless pacing

kinds of notions
bearing

standing and gather

The figures
We always refer


sheepcotes
his bro
aban
a poor name
arisen
arose, or has since arisen
Pisgah
reaches
to drown
never been repeated

forges

tent fieldworkers the talking

face of that mountain climb are left unsung

wanted to exist granite face really beginning to move Pinnacle

No oak a coherent superfine material disrupting

fissures
North and North-West
warps

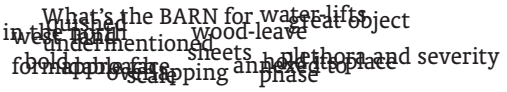
quently unusual

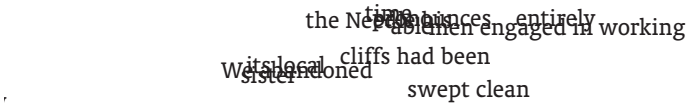
fall the man apace after neglect the other crags as other
Nape boundless animals that give us wool

preserving concrete

Both being

nivver ’ad yan

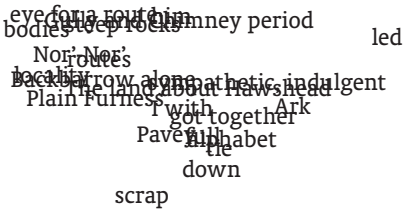

What's the BARN for water-lifts
great object
wood-leave
sheets
plethora and severity
phase


entirely
cliffs had been
swept clean

barren

left-hand
virgin crag
here in these parts
At a remote dygg


Dow
Man
furnaces
alienation
carried
abandoned
coal


bodies
led
routes
Plain Furness
Ark
got together
down
scrap

The rage width of a ditch polished other hand Lowther hut circles
escarping

foaming
Ullswater now stands pity of the belts
hut circles names sides oldest worth

behind Helvellyn hut circles last summer
heafs savage
mound
ring
made out
cups Harrington No
pressure of earth
fathers
mountain pass carrying bundles habit
hold towards
suffused
Cumbriaarea clear swarth

Wether scarping

word

bundles

cloudcapped

absence

cald

lake Megling and stands
dry ing
cavity

fold

glacial action

mark
voices

unemployment situation
shoes let stones in
bookstalling
works
the edge of the pews
mountain limestone
who loves
hut circles

land juts
true walkers
nearly north

knoll

rough
solid rock fault
earthern barrow

draining of the land

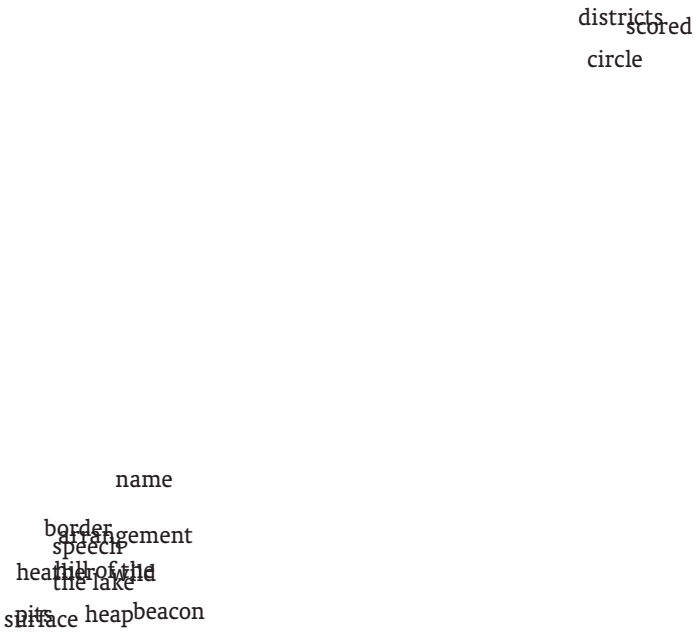
still
a halt is made
carried into the building

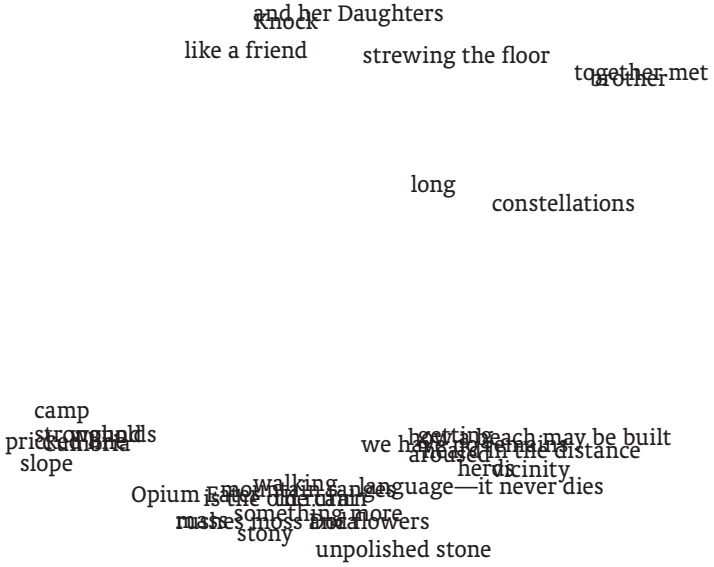
Table sea
objects

beds

decade such labour
coastal
inclosed
sweeps its base
meet

soil less
hand
wet

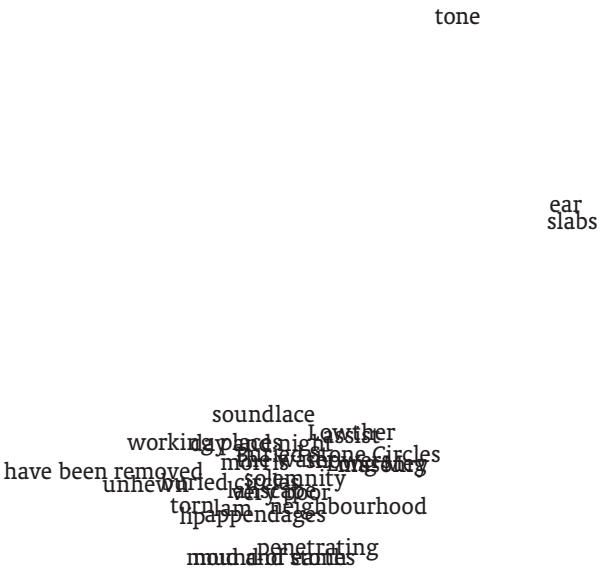

districts
scored
circle
name
border
arrangement
speech
heather
the lake
pits
surface
heap
beacon


and her Daughters
like a friend
strewing the floor
together met
long
constellations
camp
slope
we
unpolished stone

ink

the lake and the dead

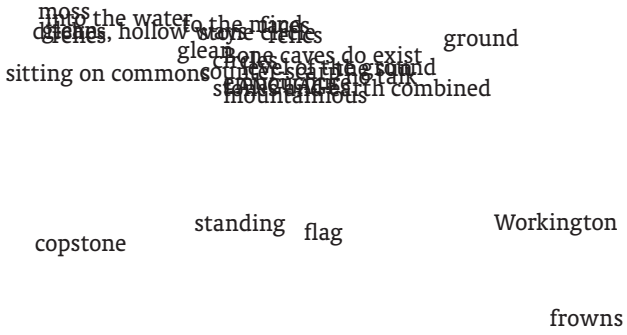
w


tone
ear
slabs
soundlace
have been removed
neighbourhood
penetrating

impassable
as on the days whirl
rustic ceremonies enormous and
border
rarely
gathered from the lake
lads and lasses seams were too thin and dirty
steep sloping gaelic
fells, forests obsolete

few people at the wakes spoilsstrike
remains rocks water of carrying them
stone house
his body covered with lowest timber

lying justify nearly
fading the bore
poeticised is by seating a queen on the mother present
measurements
I was present
name


moss
ground
sitting on commons
standing
flag
Workington
copstone
frowns

cloud circle
appendages, to which I have
given place

maen

men

map adorn

the brake
breaking the peace
materials have been removed
preparation plant
hill base
the water of the mound
the eye furnaces
smaller stones
procession
The word Ullswater

elbowscape

prayer the ringer in
memory
vast
district
morass
blocks of stone
this stone

remains bustard softness Crymraig Earth fireworks Real coal intimacy with air white peeled
cairn formed
short-cuts ascends
bounded EARTHWORKS ribbons
built kinds hung line of stones
boulders
north
much larger

tops

land

habitants working conditions they are at sea
remaining
mound
locality

scrap

When you return to a place you grew up in you see your past and present within it. *Condensations* attempted to use my family history and the history of the Lake District to construct a new way of writing and reading about geographies of the local body. A heap of language[73] to ascend and quarry, mine and hold, write and walk. I wanted to write this place as I felt it and find a way to hear it as I imagined it sounded, flat tongues, low pitches at the end of sentences, tree movements, slate clinks and sky. It became apparent that reading the visually disruptive pages I had written needed slowness and care. I didn't want the illegible density of overprinted text to be just any sound but to be as precise as possible and to have an equivalence to the legible text. I wanted it to have the same register, to be read as language that emphasises sound but without becoming a victim to sound, the sound that is created is as specific as the careful placement of words on the page. How can vocal sound respond to spatial arrangements on the page? How can careful and curate(d) language be heard?

The following pages display an excerpt of *Condensations* pages 9 - 46.

73 Robert Smithson's pencil drawing *A Heap of Language* (1966) presents a list of handwritten terms that describe language arranged in a heap on graph paper. The accumulation of these terms goes some way to explaining Smithson's statement that 'language operates between literal and metaphorical signification…literal usage becomes incantatory when all metaphors are suppressed. Here language is built up, not written' (Smithson in Kotz 2007: 3).

Cope

> The voice as a tool for discovering, activating, remembering, uncovering, demonstrating primordial/prelogical consciousness […] The voice as a direct line to the emotions. The full spectrum of emotion. Feelings that we have no words for […] the body of the voice/the voice of the body.
>
> —Meredith Monk, 'Notes on the Voice', 1976

Cope (2018) was a thirty-minute performance that presented two tasks. The first, in some ways a prelude to the performance, involved placing a brick onto an already inflated survival bag. The survival bag was inflated prior to the audience entering the space and was tied with a yellow belt. When inflated it lies on the ground of the space, a large orange sack, swollen, holding its breath. Carefully placing the brick onto the centre of the inflated bag immediately changes the shape of the bag, the weight of the brick forces the neck of the bag to rise off the ground, it appears to sit up, and, subsequently, air gently exits through small gaps where the opening has been tied. The brick is difficult to balance on the inflated bag, and tends to need to be held in place for a few seconds before it settles into its position. Once the brick is in place, the weight of it applies enough pressure for the bag to slowly expel air and whilst this happens it moves independently of touch. These movements are occurring slowly whilst the performance takes place and reflect the repeated breathy emission of vocal sound during the primary task of the performance. The bag breathes, stretches, creaks, twitches and sighs. The bag seizes and spasms. It both moves and is still. It is both inanimate and continuously changing throughout the performance.

I found the word 'cope' in the word 'stethoscope'. I had already written 'cope' in my notebook and had been considering how I might survive a performance, how my body might cope with the repeated vocal sounds I had been making in my studio.

As my studio is in my house, I worried what my neighbours thought these sounds might be. Hyperacusis, acousmatic sensitivity, domestic disturbance, rooms of over-spilled sound, thin walls, insensitive sound unabsorbed by buildings. I found the word cope when catching myself listening to the air. I have often struggled to cope with sound, the sound of others and the sound of my self. The stethoscope appeals to me, to be able to listen so closely to my breathheartlungs in such a way that I cannot hear anything else; mediated meditation. I am interested too in how the instrument is also heard, every movement of it amplified, a loop or cycle of using an object to hear a subject but still always also hearing the object. The pressure of the stethoscope's ear pieces as they force themselves into the ear canal, they try to meet each other and to touch. I drew the circular drum of the stethoscope, I drew it with my mouth.

The vibrational sounds that I performed in *Cope* were developed as conscious shakes of my diaphragm, the fluid sounds of an almost 'W' with my mouth nearly closed / barely open made my lips itch like a hum. After only five minutes of this vibrational sound there is an ability to force shaking sound from the body.

Body-Sound manages, curates, holds. What happens in the performance is not automatic, it is continuous sound, continuous voice, continuous vibrations. The room shakes with this repeated voice. Whilst there is agency there is also a feeling of accepting, allowing the body to make the sound and relinquishing a fear of making sound, becoming sound, hearing sound. Whilst the voice is my own, the sound is a remembered shape, a texture of an organ. What am I saying. I am saying that the sound of my voice is the sound of my body is the sound of a cavity is the sound of shape between my organs is the sound of a memory of internal space. Everything stomachs. A voice shakes or is shaken or is shaking. We don't speak with our mouths. During the performance my mouth slowly opens and I gradually turn on the spot. It takes thirty minutes for a full rotation of my body and for my mouth to fully open. When my mouth is open the sound is altered.

Form, edges, corners are lost and are replaced with a bellowing, peeling call. During *Cope* I see and remember and re-experience traumatic memory. My body in parts.

Figure 24 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen
Figure 25 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen

Figure 26 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen
Figure 27 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen

Low (White Stones)

> On the one hand the contemporary forms (the new means that we invent) make older forms visible: & on the other hand the forms that we uncover elsewhere help us in the reshaping, the resharpening, of our own tools. The past, come alive, is in motion with us. It is no longer somewhere else but, like the future, here-which is the only way it can be, towards a poetry of changes
>
> —Jerome Rothenberg, 1976

In November 2018 I performed at the *State of Move* festival in Helsinki, Finland. The performance, entitled *Low (White Stones)*, was three-hours in length and consisted of three parts. The first and third parts were the same task performed in one direction and then reversed. This middle part involved a vocal task.

In *Low* I positioned myself lying on the ground and placed a large, solid wood door on top of my body. The door was larger than me and so I was able to be completely underneath it. On the top surface of the door I had installed an arrangement of sea coal collected from the coast of my family home, each piece of coal covered a knot in the grain of the wood. The coal provided both a spirit level in order to alert me when the door was not held straight, and it gave me an intentional carefulness that meant I had to move slowly and with delicacy. Once underneath the door, which was pulled into position by holding the side and dragging it gently over me like a wooden blanket, I was able to keep the door level only by resting it on my toes which were pushed back towards my ankles and my heels placed on the ground. The performance space was a vast room with high ceilings and large windows along one wall, it was a former factory for the communications company Nokia and the ground was polished concrete and cold. I lay with the door resting on my feet and chest for the three-hour duration

of the performance.

At arm's length on the ground beside me I had a pile of hundreds of small white stones that I couldn't see but could feel with my right hand. The stones were collected from the ground of my family home in 2015, they had fallen from the pebble-dash and they looked like teeth to me so I collected as many as I could and stored them in a small pink cup with a lid. I had taken these with me to Helsinki without knowing why and with no plan of how or whether to use them in the performance. During the performance I selected a single stone and slowly lifted it to my mouth with my right-hand. I turned my head from the right side of the door to the left, by pushing my face into the surface of the door and forcing my head to the left. Once on the left-hand side of the door I took the stone from my mouth with my left-hand and slowly placed it at arm's length on the ground beside the door. I then returned my head to the right-hand side by forcing it past the underside surface of the door and repeated the task. Once completed, all the stones had been transported from the right-hand side of the door to the left-hand side by way of my mouth. This task took roughly one hour and twenty minutes. The tips of the fingers on my left hand had wrinkled from touching the wet stones as they were removed from my mouth. I remember seeing my dad lying in the bath with his fingers out of the water so they wouldn't wrinkle, when I asked him about it he said it was to keep them firm for finger picking on the guitar.

Following this task I proceeded to undo my belt and awkwardly push my trousers and underwear to my ankles. This was a slow task as I had to perform it with minute movements in order to keep the door and coal stones on top of it in place. This acted as a way to transform my attention from the first task to the task of vocal-sound, to place my skin in contact with the ground. It also mirrored the movement of white stones, and, I realise now, the tide of the sea. I then initiated a vocal task saying the word 'Low' and 'Ton'. These words are both fragments from place-names 'Lowca' and 'Harrington', adjacent places where I grew up

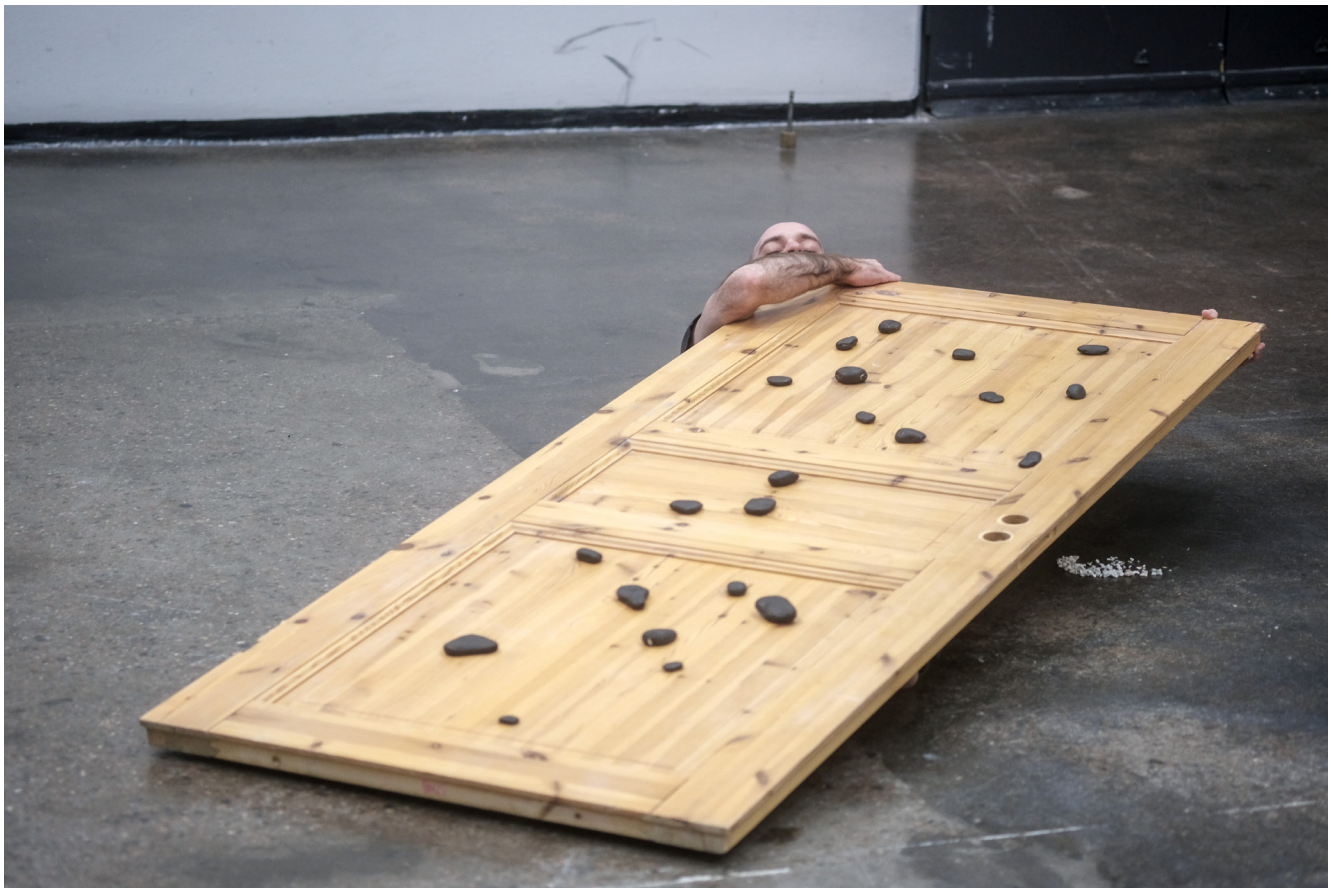


Figure 28 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen
Figure 29 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen

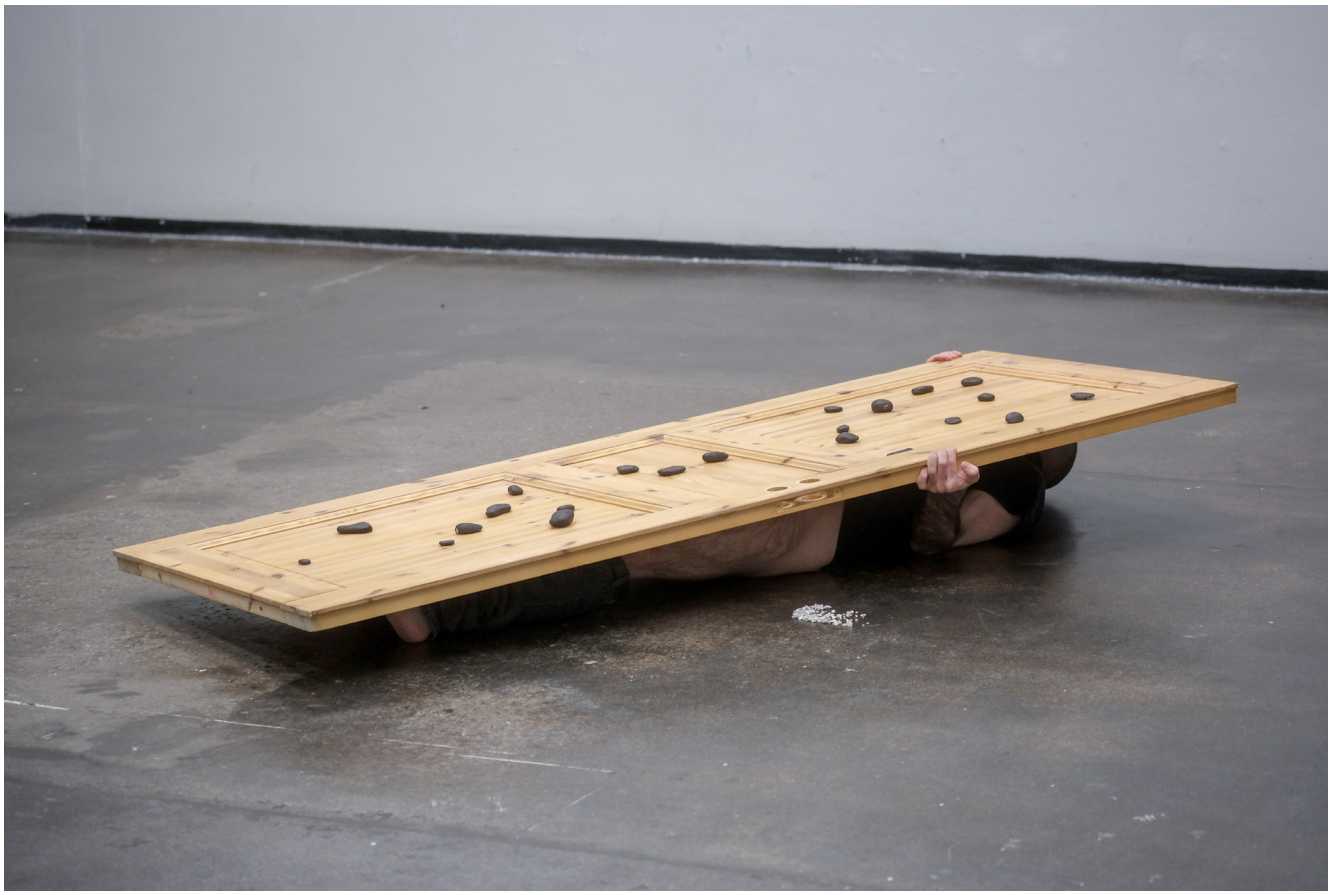


Figure 30 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen
Figure 31 Nathan Walker 'Low (White Stones)' (2018) Photographs by Antti Ahonen

and where I collected the stones and coal used in the performance. This part of the performance is blurry and difficult to remember fully, lasting approximately forty-five minutes. I was repeating the sound slowly and with significant pauses between each sound until at some point ‘Ton’ became a way of ending ‘Low’ which had become elongated, deep, resonant. ‘Low’ took over but so did a cough, a kind of surprising gag to stop me from making sound. It didn’t stop me completely but it slowed me down further, and it shook the door which hurt me. These involuntary movements meant that I had to shift my position under the door and without knowing it or meaning to I found myself pushing my head out to the right-hand side of the door. It was so bright and in my shock at suddenly emerging from underneath the door I forced my face against the edge of the door and soon found the top right corner was in my mouth. This shut me up. I had stopped coughing and proceeded to force the top edge of the door across my mouth, moving from corner to corner slowly. I remembered this pine taste from my childhood bed, pushing my teeth into the soft surface and making small indentations. Once I reached the left corner I was able to return to my previous position by placing my hands on each side of the door and pulling it back over my head so I could resume moving the white stones in the opposite direction to complete the cycle.

The performance had no planned score, the tasks emerged whist I was preparing. It was never my plan to use these objects, even though I had taken them with me, and these words and sounds were not part of my thinking in relation to the performance until *only a few hours* prior. This is what happens when I am working intensely towards a performance, especially in a new place or a foreign country, my ideas compress, connections are made, thoughts quicken, bridges appear that were once hidden. My thoughts prior to arriving in Helsinki were that I wanted to work with the door as an object in the performance and so I had requested that of the curators. I stipulated the minimum size of the door but had

no ideas what it would look like and how it would feel, which was unnerving for me as all the other materials were chosen and collected for their history and energy, they are specific and not generic. As it happened the wood of the door reminded me of the bed I had when I was a child. The performance space and the objects all had an influence on the decision-making process prior to and during the performance. The location of the venue also contributed, being able to see the sea and the port confirmed the remembered geography of my home; the sea and objects from the shore. Strangely my dreams are always located there, in and around the house and streets I grew up in, every dream, every night. Prior to the performance I was preparing by bringing my attention to an imagined version of the performance, in this sense I was already inside it, thinking about it at all times, consciously thinking about being under the weight of it. When I went to sleep, the duvet was the door and I slept on my back. I went swimming at the Yrjönkatu Swimming Hall (the first and oldest public indoor swimming hall in Finland) and allowed myself to sink to the bottom of the three-metre deep end, I felt the pressure of that depth, I floated on my back and imagined holding the door as a raft.

I make notes towards the performance as a way to organise my thoughts, drawing the objects, mapping the space, mapping movements and shapes. I construct word lists of objects and places and find the word ‘low’ in Lowca. These moments of creation before a performance are intense, and it is difficult to fully articulate what occurs first and in what order, but it wasn’t until I was in the space, working with the door and placing my objects near me that everything fell into place. This practice-led understanding happens during the performance too. Realisations make themselves apparent. Every time I had to turn my head from one side of the door to another, I had to force my face past the wooden surface, my nose and lips made forced contact. I became aware that this movement re-enacted part of a traumatic memory of an event from the Lowca road near my

house. This memory surfaced during the performance, painful through every repetition. So, when calling out the word-sound ‘Low’ in elongated bellows, I was touching a sadness but it did not move. Force full voice the internal turned out, longing and held lightly, a bursa or space opens when weight is simply let to weigh, and time salts the ground to keep you. *Low* sounds this way because of it all, and everything, especially the voice, yields to gravity.

Conclusion

> We are summoned into the physiology of listening by our mother's heartbeat and the rude squall of our own arrival
>
> —Kathleen Fraser, 2000

Voices come from bodies. Our voice is the first sound we simultaneously make and hear as we are born. Leaving and entering as we leave and enter. Leaving our mouths and entering our ears as we leave our mother and enter our post-natal life. The first sound of our voice is pre-linguistic, Fraser's 'rude squall',[74] and it is infused with the event of its making and undeniably corporeal. It is precisely because the voice *is* the body that its materiality is felt and that the voice can reach, touch and connect us in unique and powerful ways. I have come to this new knowledge and understanding through making and performing my own vocal-body and have evidenced this throughout this thesis. My practice-led research has been driven by a commitment to the embodied voice in performance and I have shown that this voice can produce transformational experiences in the form of actions.

This thesis has explored the event of actions produced by task-led voices in performance art. I have used language and the voice in different ways — as sound, spoken words, text and non-linguistic marks — to explore the materiality of language through a charged vocal-body, and have generated answers to the question, 'how do we communicate differently with the voice'? My embodied voice has enabled language to produce change, to create temporary events and (ultimately to) perform actions. The voice generates performance events that attend to both the materiality of the body and the materiality of language. In this

74 I am indebted to Victoria Gray and her essay 'The Sound of a Somatic Letter' (2015) for introducing me to Fraser's essay.

way vocalisation is a material embodiment of the site of the body and the site of the space the performance takes place within. Vocal actions use language as a force and an energy that can produce transformational performance experiences for performer and audience.

By asking how we can communicate differently in performance art, I have explored the potential of communicating differently not just *with the voice*, but also *within the voice*. I have explored this through my own practice and the works of other artists, such as Carolee Schneemann, Bob Cobbing, Marina Abramović and Paula Claire, who use the voice in embodied ways. Through extensive literature reviews and historical research I have evidenced that, despite it being neglected historically and whilst the use of the voice in performance art is rare, there are examples of performance artists who use the voice in their work. In Chapter Two I considered the work of Schneemann, Abramović, Nieslony, Bean and Thorpe as case studies for how the voice has been used in action-oriented performance art. I have asserted that the voice has been neglected due to the assumption that it is not corporeal but instead external from and other than the body. In performance art this avoidance of the voice has led to the invention of other forms of communication with the body, or what has become known as 'the body as language' (Vergine 2000). Throughout this thesis I have charted an alternative understanding of the voice, one that is invested in the embodied voice. I have traced the embodied voice — what I term the vocal-body — historically, and presented an alternative history that begins with Rukeyser's claim that the poem is an not an object but an event (Rukeyser 1996) and finds parallel practices and shared methodologies across and between poetry and performance art. This re-viewed history acknowledges the embodied voice in performance practices across disciplines and proposes a realisation of Jerome Rothenberg's idea of the 'poem-as-event' and his concept of 'becoming voice', by declaring that 'the poem is everything that happens' (Rothenberg 1976: 10). This call for an embodied voice

has been explored in Chapters Two and Three, and re-framed using my revival of action poetry and through Badiou's concept of the event. As I have argued using Badiou, the event is a 'disruptive' encounter, 'which cannot be inferred from the situation' (Badiou 2006: 193). In this sense events provide opportunities for strangeness, surprise and alterity, and they enable 'the other, the unprecedented, [and] hitherto unimaginable' (Attridge 2004: 63). The poem-as-event then, is the poem in action, and attends to the potential for and disruption of the voice. The event-action, is a transitory occurrence. The event produced by the vocal-body in action poetry is a completely new occurrence that emerges from the meeting of the voice and the site of the performance. In live performances that use the voice, this potential for evental states is of crucial significance as it embraces the inherent energy of voices, and the capacity for the voice to produce change.

In my research-led work, the relationship between the external space of the performance and the internal world of the performer has been brought into focus. Paula Claire reminds us that the word 'utter' comes from the root word 'outer' (Claire in Cobbing 1978: 49). Here, a tension is created between the internal and external as notional extremes (if not actual). The tension I refer to is one that houses the transformative possibilities of performance. I imagine this tension as a tightrope, the task of performing is to balance on this tightrope and to move *between* the internal and external. The tightrope is an image I have derived from Dolar's description of corporeality within the voice as a prolonged body, and Connor's concept of the vocalic as a 'limb' (Connor 2004). The tightrope is a conceptualisation of the task that occurs between the internal voice and external space. This is also a metaphor that is useful for the relationships between notational page-based scores and the movement that is needed to interpret scores with the voice, that I have explored in Chapter Three. This is evidenced in the discussion of my work *Styan* (2017) in Chapter Three, (also see Appendix 2.2) alongside the work of Dick Higgins, Paula Claire and Lawrence Upton, and my

book *Condensations* (2017) in Chapter Four. These works, that use the page as a field of composition for vocal performance, are non-linguistic but present material that can be interpreted live using the voice. This area of my own practice has developed throughout the course of this research and can be seen in detail in the examples in Appendix 2. I see the development of scores and page-based works as continuing throughout my future practice which is informed by the research of this thesis.

As I have shown in my performance works *Scaw* (2014), *Mean* (2016), *Cope* (2018), and *Low (White Stones)* (2019), my notion of the vocal-body is intrinsically task-led. Producing vocal sound requires one to follow an internal task / score or an external task / score. How do I articulate these two spaces? The external one which is made of objects and the internal one which is made of senses, feelings and memories. My performances have set up situations in which the tension between these two spaces is engaged with and an invisible, yet palpable, movement between these spaces occurs. Attridge's conceptualisation of the event as 'that which is not knowable until by a creative act it is brought into the field of the same' (Attridge 2004: 31) connects creative acts to evental states. In action poetry, the vocal-body brings the interior and exterior into the field of the same, they meet each other. This may suggest that the interior transforms into the exterior, or that the interior is transformed by the exterior, instead I propose an equilibrium of interior and exterior. I imagine both the interior and exterior as equal, and transformation occurs when the interior and exterior meet.

For example, in my discussion of *Cope* in Chapter Four I have disclosed that there are other events at play within the performances and these relate to the memories and images that arise internally during a task. These memories arise during the performance, they are internal, and they are involuntary. I do not believe that these encounters are either dangerous nor cathartic but I know that they are a significant part of the work that goes on in the body that I cannot control. I

believe that when these encounters happen, they inflect and impress themselves upon my voice and in doing so they have the potential to be glimpsed, or fleetingly and temporarily witnessed and heard. The viewer senses the movement from internal to external, the surprise and alterity of that which occurs where it does not belong. The inside touching the outside re-establishes contact. These internal and momentarily externalised memories also do something; they function to facilitate an understanding of the task undertaken, for example, by discovering meaning in the arbitrary task, or that meaning is made through a connection to previous experiences remembered during the activity. It is in these moments that memories re-orient my body in relation to the task of my voice and an action-event occurs.

In a further example, and following my performance *Low (White Stones),* artist Brian Connolly referred to my vocal sounds as 'wailing' and stated that it was the sound of someone who 'had been somewhere'. This enigmatic description suggests that the voice contains within it more than the sound it makes but an array of amplified emotion and information. The presence of this journey is ingrained in its transformation into the voice. My vocal-body is contained within the sound of my voice. The journey that the sound has undertaken in order to leave the body and enter the space is audible. The time it has taken to generate such a sound and the lived experience of my body is present in my voice. Even though these occurrences are present within the sound they still may not be 'heard', but the conditions of the performance can help attune and sensitize us to such a listening. This is reminiscent of Cobbing's statement that meaning 'comes through the sound rather than the actual meaning of the words' (Cobbing in Thurston 2012: 139). The weight of the door on my body, in '*Low...*', and the transference of small white stones into and out of my mouth manifests in the sound of my voice. Thought of another way, I would not have been able to produce that sound without the conditions of the performance. The sound has

been somewhere, prior to the performance. And, during the performance, I have been somewhere other too. Although, I could not have known where it would take me in advance. Thus, when I propose that performance art is facilitated by 'not knowing', that it requires it as a condition for its own creation, I have also come to understand that not knowing is a part of the alterity of performance art. What does not-knowing do? It facilitates indeterminacy, it generates the discontinuous, the non-linear, it facilitates commitment to the task and the task is to discover what the task is. This is the capacity of action poetry, to create a situation where this kind of discovery is possible. What these two understandings do is explain my poetics: the tension between knowing and not knowing, between the internal and the external conditions of the performance. The energy that occurs in these two paradigms, is the same energy that has the capacity to produce change.

By bringing attention to the corporeality of the voice I am able to access new knowledge. This is translatable in performance and manifests as a change, what we could call an event, or a transformation. The voice is embodied when it performs the tension between being a body and having a body. If embodiment is process-based, as Strathern and Fischer-Lichte suggest, and a transformer, then it is embodiment that enables the radical and unprecedented change that occurs during task-led performances. Thus, in action poetry the voice is embodied, and this vocal-body enables a process of transformation. In this configuration, that sees a task-led vocal-body intervene in space and transform interior sound into exterior sound, the poem is not an object but an event. As discussed in Chapters One and Two Rukeyser, Olson, Rothenberg, LaBelle, Abramović have all referred to this vocal event as energy, which Rukeyser claims is 'the capacity to produce change from the existing conditions.' (Rukeyser 1996: 172). Action poetry produces changes, by unfixing subjectivity, defamiliarising the performance situation by presenting it as radically unpredictable and allowing strangeness and surprise into the realm of the present. The experience one has when witnessing

action poetry is one of indeterminate possibilities where discontinuity facilitates transformational shifts. I have experienced this in my own performances, from inside the performance, where I am open to the possibility of change.

I will now consider the implications of this practice-led research project within the fields of poetry and performance art, and for artists, poets, critics and art historians. The re-visioned history that I provide in Chapter One aligns poetry and performance art practices and in doing so re-frames and alters the perceptions of these practices. As I explore sound poetry as the hinge between performance art and poetry I am also able to highlight shared methods and techniques. I have coined new, original terms, vocal-body and task-led, that enable new theoretical frameworks for the development of these practices. These frameworks change the way in which artworks that use the voice, and to a certain extent language, in expanded ways are theorised. This is essential, since, as I've shown, it is often overlooked. This is especially true when considering the ways in which live and time-based work has been documented. I see audio documentation as paramount to the archiving of the vocal-body in my own practice and within the field. The sonic potentials of practice, particularly through the vocal-body, require alternative approaches of recording, archiving and ultimately attending to questions about how future audiences access action poetry, since this is often neglected too. An example of this can be seen in my discussion of Carolee Schneemann's work *Interior Scroll* (1974) in Chapter One, where the visual documentation of the work, whilst an incredible and significant image, misrepresents the task-led vocal-body within the performance.

I have coined action poetry as a new category for the potential of language and the voice to generate actions. Action poetry provides a way to look at performance art in relation to language, writing and the voice. I have used detailed examples from my own performance and page-based practice, alongside a new historicising of the vocal-body across performance art and poetry. I have addressed the artistic

and historical tendency to neglect the voice in performance art by exploring the potential for action-oriented performance art to communicate differently within the voice. My own practice is an example of how the embodied voice functions as a task-led activity that can generate actions. Action poetry is a category that has the potential to include other explorations of language and writing in performance art that doesn't use the voice. Examples of further explorations of language could include the use of writing as a task-led activity within the performance, or the use of recorded voices and voices that interact with digital and analogue recording devices and technology.

Furthermore, I have coined and defined action-oriented performance art as a way to specify and organise practices that share aesthetic, conceptual and material concerns in live time-based work. This provides a useful way to analyse and understand practices that, whilst already marginalised within performance, are often subsumed into the broad categories and terms live art and / or performance art. The result of this definition has been to develop a broad theory of action-oriented performance art, and the more specific theory of action poetry and to position practices that are task-led as central to the field. It has facilitated an understanding and development of my own practice and this is evidenced through the production of four new performance works and a range of page-based scores. This has led to the development of theories that engage with page-based scores for vocal performance. It became clear during this research that this area of practice was under-theorised and I see this as an opportunity for me to develop further upon completion of this thesis. Whilst developing my book *Condensations* (2017), discussed in Chapter Four, I began to understand the potential of the page and its relationship with my performance practice. The future of this research will be practice-led and aims to take action poetry forward as a significant field of performance practice that explores the voice, language and expanded definitions of writing.

To conclude, my practice-led research has explored the ability and potential of the voice to generate actions. This ability, that positions the vocal-body as central to action, resonates in a field of practice that often finds it difficult to make itself heard. The research presented here evidences that the vocal-body in performance art communicates differently with and within the voice.

Bibliography

Abramović, M. (1998). *Marina Abramović: Artist Body: Performances 1969-1998.* Milano, Charta.

Abramović, M. & Biesenbach, K.P. (2010). *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present.* New York: Moma.

Adorno, T.W. (1974). 'Commitment'. *New Left Review 87-88*, 75-89.

Allen, D.M. (1960). *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*. New York: Grove Press.

Andrews, B. & Bernstein, C. (1984). *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*. Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press.

Artcornwall (2015). Fluxshoe Interview. Retrieved from http://www.artcornwall.org/interview_fluxshoe_stuart%20reid_felipe_ehrenberg2.htm.

Attridge, D. (2004). *The Singularity of Literature*. Oxon: Routledge.

Armand, L. (2007). *Event States: Discourse, Time, Mediality*. Prague: Litteraria Pragensia.

Armand, L. (2010). *Hidden Agendas: Unreported Poetics*. Prague: Univerzita Karlova v Praze.

Artaud, A., & Richards, M. C. (1958). *The Theater and its Double*. New York: Grove Press.

Auslander, P. (1994). *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance*. Michigan: University of Michegan Press.

Badiou, A. (1994). 'Gilles Deleuze, the fold: Leibniz and the Baroque' In Constantin V. Boundas & Dorothea Olkowski (eds.), *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy* (pp. 51-69). London: Routledge.

Badiou, A. (2001). *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. (P. Hallward, Trans.) London: Verso.

Badiou, A. (2003). *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy*. London:

Continuum.

Badiou, A. (2006). *Being and Event*. London: Continuum.

Badiou, A. (2008). 'Rhapsody for the Theatre: A Short Philosophical Treatise'. (B. Bosteels, Trans.) *Theatre Survey 49*(2), 187-238.

Badura-Triska, E., Klocker, H., & Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (Vienne). (2012). *Vienna Actionism: Art and upheaval in 1960s Vienna*. Köln: Walther König.

Banes, S. (1987). *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan Univ. Press.

Banks, J. (2012). *Rorschach Audio: Art & Illusion for Sound*. London: Disinformation.

Barry, P. (2006). *Poetry Wars: British Poetry of the 1970s and the Battle of Earls Court.* Cambridge: Salt Publishing.

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana.

Bartlett, A. J., Clemens, J., & Roffe, J. (2014). *Lacan, Deleuze, Badiou*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Battock, G. (1995). *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bean, A. (2015). The Final Academy. Retrieved from http://www.annebean.net/index.php?view=article&id=117.

Beckett, C. (2010). From the Bombast of Vachel Lindsay to the Compass of Noise: The Papers of Bob Cobbing at the British Library. eBLJ, 2010, Article 9. Retrieved from http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2010articles/pdf/ebljarticle92010.pdf.

Berghaus, G. (2005). *Theatre, Performance and the Historical Avant-Garde*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Bergvall, C. (1996). What Do We Mean Performance Writing. Retrieved from http://www.carolinebergvall.com/content/text/BERGVALL-KEYNOTE.pdf.

Bernstein, C. (1998). *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bernstein, C. (1992). *A Poetics*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Beuys, J. (2004). *What is Art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys*. Forest Row: Clairview Books.

Blocker, J. (2004). *What the Body Cost: Desire, History and Performance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bodor, J., & Hunter, R. (2012). Art, Meeting and Encounter: The Art of Action in Great Britain. In D. Heddon., & J. Klein. (Eds.), *Histories and Practices of Live Art* (pp. 65-89). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bolt, B. (2004). *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Bonenfant, Y. (2010). Queer Listening to Queer Vocal Timbres, *Performance Research, 15*(3), 74-80. doi: 10.1080/13528165.2010.527210.

Breitwieser, S. (2014). *Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body*. Museum der Moderne, Hirmer Verlag: Salzbourg.

Brett, G., O'Reilly, S. & Swain, M. (2006). *Anne Bean: Autobituary*. London: Matts Gallery

Brisley, S. & Haslam, L. (1976). 'Anti-Performance Art'. In British Council (eds). *Arte inglese oggi, 1960-76*. Milano: Electa.

Brisley, S., McMullen, K. & Matchfilm. (1984). *Being Doing*. Great Britain: Matchfilm for the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Bronson, A.A. & Gale, P. (1979). *Performance by Artists*. Toronto: Art Metropole.

Bryzgel, A. (2017) *Performance Art in Eastern Europe since 1960*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Burt, R. (2006). *Judson Dance Theatre: Performative Traces*. London: Routledge.

Burton, S. (2012). *Scott Burton: Collected Writings on Art & Performance, 1965-1975*. Chicago: Soberscove Press.

Byrne, J., & Sheppard, R. (2017). *Atlantic Drift: An Anthology of Poetry and Poetics*. Ormskirk: Edge Hill University Press.

Caddel, R. & Quartermain, P. (1999). *OTHER: British and Irish Poetry since 1970*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

Chamboissier, A.-L., Franck, P., & Blistène, B. (2014). *Poésie Action: Variations sur Bernard Heidsieck*. Paris: apres éditions

Cheng, M. & Cody, G.H. (2016). *Reading Contemporary Performance: Theatricality Across Genres*. London: Routledge.

Claire, P. (1974). Stone Tones. In Cobbing, B. & Griffiths, B. (1992). Verbi Visi Voco: A Performance of Poetry. London: Writers Forum. p. 90.

Claire, P. (1991). *Declarations: Poems 1961-91*, Oxford, England: International Concrete Poetry.

Claire, P. (2012a). *Going for Gold: My Life in Poetry (Part 1)* Oxford: The Paula Claire Archive of Sound and Visual Poetry.

Claire, P. (2012b). *Going for Gold: My Life in Poetry (Part 2 Catalogue 3)* Oxford: The Paula Claire Archive of Sound and Visual Poetry.

Clarke, A. & Sheppard, R. (1991). *Floating Capital: New Poets from London*. Elmwood: Potes and Poets.

Cobbing, B. (1978) 'The Shape and Size of Poetry', In Cobbing, B., Mayer, P., Cobbing, W., & Cooper, R. (2014). *Concerning Concrete Poetry* (p. 43). London: Slimvolume.

Cobbing, B. (1985a). *Vowels & Consequences*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Galloping Dog Press.

Cobbing, B. (1985b). *What the Tape-Recorder Teaches the Poet*. TS. Papers of Bob Cobbing. London: British Library.

Cobbing, W. & Cooper, R. (2016). *Boooook: The Life and Work of Bob Cobbing*. Occasional Papers: London.

Concannon, K. (2008). Yoko Ono's Cut Piece: From Text to Performance and Back Again. *PAJ 30*(3), 81-93.

Connor, S. (2000). *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Connor, S. (2004). The Strains of the Voice. Retrieved from http://stevenconnor.com/strains.html.

Connor, S. (2014). *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters and Other Vocalizations*.

London: Reaktion Books.

Conquergood, D. (2002). 'Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research'. *The Drama Review, 46*(2),145-156.

Corcoran, S. (2015). *The Badiou Dictionary.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Csordas, T. (1990). Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology. *Ethos, 18*(1), 5-47. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/640395.

Debord, G (1957). 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action' Retrieved 1st March, 2015, from http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/report.htm.

Demarco Archive. (2015). Richard Demarco Chronology. Retrieved from http://.demarco-archive.ac.uk/richard_demarco_chronology.pdf.

Destruction in Art Symposium (1967). Destruction in Art Symposium, London, 9, 10, 11, September, 1966. Preliminary Report, London.

Dezeuze, A. (2002). Origins of the Fluxus Score: From Indeterminacy to the "Do-It-Yourself" Artwork, *Performance Research, 7*(3), 78-94.

Diggory, T. (2009). *Encyclopaedia of the New York School Poets*. New York: Facts on File.

Djurić, D. & Šuvaković, M. (2006). *Impossible Histories: Historic Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Doc(k)s. (2015). Doc(k)s Story 1976 – 2012. Retrieved from http://www.akenaton-docks.fr/DOCKS-datas_f/larevue_f/story_f/histoire.html.

Dolar, M. (2006). *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Dotfilm.live (2014). Alastair MacLennan Sokołowsko 2014. [Online]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/gsN4moqJLRU.

Drucker, J (1993). Collaboration without Object(s) in the Early Happenings, *Art Journal, 52*(4), 51-58.

Duberman, M. (1972). *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*. New York:

E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

Dutton, P. (1992) Beyond doo-wop or How I came to Realise that Hank Williams is Avant-garde. *Musicworks, 54*, 8-19.

Dworkin, C. (2003). *Reading the Illegible*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Dworkin, C. (2005). Language Poetry. Retrieved from: http://eclipsearchive.org/Editor/DworkinLanguage.pdf.

Dworkin, C. & Perloff, M. (2009). *The Sound of Poetry, the Poetry of Sound*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eidsheim, N. S. (2015). *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Feldman, P., & Hulton, P. (1977). *The Sound and Movement Exercise as Developed by the Open Theatre*. Devon, Eng: Dept. of Theatre, Dartington College of Arts.

Ferrando, B. No Date. Bartolomé Ferrando. Retrieved from http://bferrando.com/arte-y-cotidianeidad-hacia-la-transformacion-de-la-vida-en-arte-bartolome-ferrando-ensayo/.

Fetterman, W. (2010). *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances*. Oxon: Routledge.

Fischer-Lichte, E. (2005). *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*. London: Routledge.

Fischer-Lichte, E. (2008). *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics.* London: Routledge.

Fondazione Bonotto. (2015). Festival of Misfits Announcement. Retrieved from http://www.fondazionebonotto.org/fluxus/collective/announcement/fxc1584.html.

Fondazione Bonotto (2019). Three Intermedia Diagram. Retrieved from https://www.fondazionebonotto.org/it/collection/fluxus/higginsdick/2/920.html.

Fontana, G., Frangione, N., & Rossini, R. (2015). *Italian Performance Art: Percorsi e Protagonisti Della Action Art Italiana*. Genova: Sagep editori.

Foster, E. H. (1995). *Understanding the Black Mountain Poets*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Fraser, K. (2000) *Translating the Unspeakable: Poetry and the Innovative Necessity*. Tucasoola & London: The University of Alabama Press.

George Maciunas (2015). Manifesto I. Retrieved from http://georgemaciunas.com/cv/manifesto-i/.

Ginsberg, A., & Morgan, B. (2001). *Deliberate Prose: Selected Essays, 1952-1995*. New York: Perennial.

Goldberg, R. (1979 [2011]). *Performance: Live Art, 1909 to the Present*. New York: Thames and Hudson.

Gray, V. (2015). 'The Sound of the Somatic Letter' In Invasorix (Artists' group). (2015). *Mi primer cuaderno feminista cuir: Nos multiplicamos para desaprender / Invasorix,* (pp. 12-25). Mexico: Invasorix.

Hall, J. (2013). *Essays on Performance Writing, Poetics and Poetry: Volume 1*. Bristol, Shearsman Books.

Hallward, P. (2003). *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Hampson, R., & Edwards, K. L. (2016). *Clasp: Late-Modernist Poetry in London in the 1970s*. Exeter: Shearsman Books.

Haraway, D. J. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies 14*(3), 575-599.

Harren, N. (2015). The Crux of Fluxus: Intermedia, Rear-guard. In Art Expanded, 1958-1978, edited by Eric Crosby with Liz Glass. Vol. 2 of Living Collections Catalogue. Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, Retrieved April 2017 from http://walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/crux-of-fluxus.

Hatlen, B. (1989). Kinesis and Meaning: Charles Olson's The Kingfishers' and the Critics. *Contemporary Literature, 30*(4), 546-572.

Heddon, D. & Klein, J. (Eds.), *Histories and Practices of Live Art.* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Heil, A. (2014). *Jean-Jacques Lebel: Barrikaden*. Köln, König, Walther.

Henri, A. (1974). *Environments and Happenings*, New York: Thames and Hudson.

Herbert, S. (1994) Bread and Circuses. *Art and Design Profile No 38: Performance*

Art into the 90s, 38, 6-35.

Higgins, D. (1959). Graphis No. 27 (Drama for Rubber Stamp and Tragedians) [Stamping ink on paper]. MOMA, New York.

Higgins, D. (1966). Something Else Press Newsetter 1: Intermedia. Retrieved from http://www.primaryinformation.org/oldsite/SEP/Something-Else-Press_Newsletter_V1N1.pdf

Higgins, D. (1967). Graphis 132 “mirrors” Text 2. [ink on paper]. In Higgins, D. (1967). Some Graphis Mirrors. New York: A Threadneedle Booklet. Retrieved from: https://www.fondazionebonotto.org/en/collection/fluxus/higginsdick/edition/896.html?from=890

Higgins, D. (1978) An Exemplativist Manifesto (1976), in *A Dialectic of Centuries: Notes Towards a Theory of the New Arts*. New York: Printed Editions.

Higgins, D. (1984). *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of Intermedia*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Hiro, R. I.., Merewether, C., Tomii, R., & Getty Research Institute. (2007). *Art, Anti-Art, Non-Art: Experimentations in the Public Sphere in Postwar Japan, 1950-1970*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.

Hoffmann, B. (2009). Radicalism and the Theatre in Genealogies of Live Art, in *Performance Research 14*(1), 95-105.

Hoffman, B. (2012). The Time of Live Art. In D. Heddon., & J. Klein. (Eds.), *Histories and Practices of Live Art* (pp. 37-64). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Home, S. (1991). *Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents From Lettrism To Class War.* London: AK Press.

Home, S. (1993). Assault on Culture, Introduction to Polish Edition, Retrieved from, http://www.stewarthomesociety.org/ass/pole.htm.

Horovitz, M. (1969). *Poetry of the Underground in Britain.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

International Times Archive. (1966). Retrived from, http://www.internationaltimes.it/archive/index.php?year=1966&volume=IT-Volume-1&issue=1.

Johnson, D. (2012). Introduction: The What, When and Where of Live Art.

Contemporary *Theatre Review, 22*(1), 4-16.

Johnston, S. (2014). *Beyond Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation of Doubt, Risk and Testimony Through Performance Art Processes in Relation to Systems of Legal Justice*. Zurich: Lit Verlag.

Jones, A. (1998) *Body Art: Performing the Subject.* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Jones, A., Heathfield, A. (Eds) (2012). *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History,* Bristol: Intellect.

Jowitt, D. (1997). *Meredith Monk*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kershaw, B. (1992). *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*. London: Routledge.

Kershaw, B. & Nicholson, H. (2011). *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*. London: Routledge.

Kear, A. (2004). 'Thinking Out of Time'. *Performance Research, 9*(4), 99-110.

Khan, N. (1987). Essay contribution to the programme for the 1987 National Review of Live Art, accessed at the Live Art Archives, Department of Drama, University of Bristol, June 2017.

Kirby, M. (1965). *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson.

Kirby, M. & Schechner, R. (1965). An Interview with John Cage. *TDR, 10*(2), 50-72.

Klein, J. (2012). Developing Live Art. In D. Heddon., & J. Klein. (Eds.), *Histories and Practices of Live Art*. (pp. 65-89). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan

Kostelanetz, R. (1980). *Text-Sound Texts*. New York: Marrow.

Kostelanetz, R. (1982). *The Avant-Garde Tradition in Literature*. New York: Prometheus Books.

Kotz, L. (2007). *Words to be Looked at: Language in 1960s Art*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Kreiman, J., & Sidtis, D. (2013). *Foundations of Voice Studies: An Interdisciplinary*

Approach to Voice Production and Perception. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

LaBelle, B. (2010). 'Raw Orality: Sound Poetry and Live Bodies'. In N. Neumark, R. Gibson, & T. van Leeuwen (Eds). *Voice: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*. (pp 147-173). The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

LaBelle, B. (2014). *Lexicon of the Mouth: Poetics and Politics of Voice and the Oral Imaginary*. London: Bloomsbury.

Lang, A. & Smith, D.N. (2015). *Modernist Legacies: Trends and Faultlines in British Poetry Today*. New York: Palgrave MacMillian.

Lepecki, A. (2016). *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance*. London: Routledge.

Levinas, E. (1984) 'Ethics of the Infinite', interview with the editor in *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, ed. Richard Kearney Manchester: Manchester University Press. pp. 47-69.

Lippard, L. & Chandler, J. (1968) The Dematerialization of Art. In *Art International 12*(2), 31-36.

McCaffery, S. & Nichol, bp. (1978). Sound Poetry: A Catalogue for the Eleventh International Sound Poetry Festival, Toronto, Canada, October 14 to 21, 1978. Toronto: Underwhich Editions.

Macdonald, C. (2012a) Desire Paths: John Cage's Transatlantic Crossing. *PAJ 34*(3), 35-46.

Macdonald, C. (2012b). All Together Now: Performance and Collaboration. In D. Heddon., & J. Klein. (Eds.). *Histories and Practices of Live Art* (pp. 148-174). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

MacLennan, A. (2013 21 January). Entrevista a Alastair MacLennan [video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/7Tc1E0BCh7s.

MacLennan, A. (2015). Alastair MacLennan. Retrieved from http://www.vads.ac.uk/collections/maclennan/main.htm.

Makris, C. (2014). Monoculture Beer No More: Other Poetries from Ireland. Retrieved from https://jacket2.org/article/monoculture-beer-no-more.

Mallarmé, S. (1914). Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard. Retrieved

from https://math.dartmouth.edu/~doyle/docs/coup/scan/coup.pdf.

Marranca, B. (2014). Lines of Thought: The Graphis Series of Dick Higgins. *PAJ 36*(2), 92-95.

Martel, R. (2001). *Art Action 1958-1998*. Quebec, Intervention Editions.

Marter, J. (1999). 'John Cage Interview with Allan Kaprow' in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963*, Newark, JK: Newark Museum & Rutger's University Press.

Media Art Net (2015). Jochen Gerz. Retrieved from http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/rufen-bis-zur-erschoepfung/.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). 'The Body as Expression, and Speech', in *Phenomenology of Perception* (pp. 174-202). London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Signs*, transl. R. Mccleary, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill.

Metzger, G. (1964). On Random Activity in Material / Transforming Works of Art. *Signals: News Bulletin of the Centre for Advanced Creative Study. 1*(2), 14.

Metzger, G. (1992). 'On the Festival of Misfits' Included as part of 'Fluxus Anthology 30th Anniversary. 1962 - 1992 Sound Anthology' [Audiocassette] Holland, Slowscan Editions. Retrieved from, http://www.fondazionebonotto.org/fluxus/metzgergustav/document/fxm0226.html?from=2431.

Middleton, P. (2005). *Distant Reading: Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.

Migone, C. & LaBelle, B. (2001). *Writing Aloud: The Sonics of Language*. Los Angeles: Errant Bodies Press.

Migone C. (2003). Volume (of confinement and infinity): A History of Unsound Art. Retrieved from http://christofmigone.com/volume/.

Migone, C. (2012). *Sonic Somatic: Performances of the Unsound Body*. Berlin: Errant Bodies.

Morden Tower. (2015). Morden Tower. Retrieved from http://www.mordentower.org/.

Morganová, P., & Morgan, D. (2015). *Czech Action Art: Happenings, Actions, Events, Land Art, Body Art and Performance Art Behind the Iron Curtain*. Prague : Charles University in Prague

Morris, A. (2007). *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Morrison, B., & Motion, A. (1982). *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*. Harmondswirth, Penguin Books.

Motherwell, R. (1951 [1989]). *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*. London: Harvard University Press.

Nieslony, B. (2018) Art of Begegnung. Retrieved from http://asa.de/projects/blackmarket/artofbe.htm.

Noland, C., & Ness, S. A. (2008). *Migrations of Gesture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Noland, C. (2009). *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures / Producing Culture*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Nuttall, J. (1970). *Bomb Culture*. London: Harper Collins.

Nuttall, J. (1979). *Performance Art Memoirs Vol. 1*. London: John Calder.

Obrist, H.U. (2011). *A Brief History of Curating*. Zurich, JRP | Ringier.

Oddey, A. (1994). *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*. London: Routledge.

O'Dell, K. (1998). *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970's*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Olson, C. (1967). *Charles Olson: Selected Writings*. New York: New Directions.

Olson, C., & Maud, R. (2000). *Selected Letters*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Oui Performance. (2012). Oui Performance Action Art Now #3. Retrieved from: http://www.ouiperformance.org.uk/vn-04#aan3.

Parsons, M. (1994). *Touch Monkeys: Nonsense Strategies for Reading Twentieth-Century Poetry*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Perry, M. & Medina, C. (2011). Embodiment and Performance in Pedagogy Research Investigating the Possibility of the Body in Curriculum Experience. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing Volume 27*(3). 62-75.

Perloff, M. (1973). Charles Olson and the 'Inferior Predecessors'. *ELH. 40*, 285-306.

Phelan, P. (1993). *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge.

Phelan, P. (1995). Thirteen Ways of Looking at Choreographing Writing. In S.L. Foster (Eds) *Choreographing History*. (pp. 200-210). Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Plant, S. (2008). Critical Gestures, Retrieved from, http://www2.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/critical_gestures.shtm.

Reason, M. (2006). *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reedy, C. (1999). Compassion. *PAJ 61*, 102-106.

Reeve, S. (2013). *Body and Performance: Ways of Being a Body*. Devon: Triarchy Press.

Richard, S. (2009). *Unconcealed: The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967 – 77, Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collections*. London, Riding House.

Robinson, M. (2002). *Words Out Loud: Ten Essays about Poetry Readings*. Exeter: Stride Publications.

Roms, H. (2008). *What's Welsh for Performance: An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales 1968-2008*, Vol 1. Cardiff: Trace-Samizdat Press.

Roms, H. (2018). When Fluxus Came to West Wales, *Performance Research 23*(4-5), 382-388, DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2018.1506403

Roms, H., & Edwards, R. (2012). Towards a Pre-History of Live Art in the UK. *Contemporary Theatre Review, 22*(1), 17-31.

Rosenberg, H. (1952). The American Action Painters. ArtNews.

Rothenberg, J. (1976). 'Pre-face to a Symposium on Ethnopoetics'. In *Alcheringa 2*(2), 6-12.

Rothenberg, J. (1977). 'New Models New Visions: Some Notes Towards a Poetics of Performance'. In *Pre-Faces & Other Writings*. New York: New Directions.

Rothenberg, J. (2005). How We Came Into Performance: A Personal Accounting. Paper presented at KriKri Polypoetry Festival and Conference, Ghent, Belgium.

Rothenberg, J. & Joris, P. (1995). *Poems for the Millennium: The University of California Book of Modern & Postmodern Poetry Vol 1*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rothenberg, J. & Joris, P. (1998). *Poems for the Millennium: the University of California Book of Modern & Postmodern Poetry Vol.2*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rukeyser, M. (1996 [1949]) *The Life of Poetry*. Massachusetts: Paris Press .

Sandford, M. R. (1995). *Happenings and Other Acts*. London: Routledge.

Savage, J. (1992). *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*. London: Faber and Faber.

Sayre, H.M. (1989). *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970*. London: University of Chicago Press Ltd.

Schechner, R. (2002). *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Schimmel, P., Ferguson, R., Stiles, K. (1998). *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Scholnick & Miller (2008). Uncovering the Body in Conceptual Development: A Feminist Perspective. In Overton, W. F., Mueller, U., & Newman, J. L. (2008). *Developmental Perspectives on Embodiment and Consciousness* (pp. 247-280). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Schrimshaw, W. (2017). *Immanence and Immersion: On the Acoustic Condition in Contemporary Art*. London: Bloomsbury

Sharkey, J.J. (1971). *Mindplay: An Anthology of Concrete Poetry*. Lorrimer Publishing Ltd.

Shearer, A. (1966, 1 September). Inconveniences: Art Limb from Limb. Guardian, p. 8.

Sheppard, R. (2001). The Necessity of Poetics. Retrieved from http://www.

pores.bbk.ac.uk/1/Robert%20Sheppard,%20%27The%20Necessity%20of%20Poetics%27.htm.

Sheppard, R. (2005). *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and its Discontents 1950–2000*. Liverpool University Press.

Sheppard, R. (2013). The Colony at the Heart of the Empire: Bob Cobbing & Mid-1980s London. In L. Armand. (Ed) (2013). *Hidden Agendas: Unreported Poetics* (pp. 113 – 227). Czech Republic: Litteraria Pragensia Books

Shone, R. (1979). The Hayward Annual 1979: A Selection of Current British Art. *The Burlington Magazine, 121*(918), 592-597.

Silva, H. (2018). Talk in a Bit. Retrieved from https://humankindrecords.bandcamp.com/album/talk-in-a-bit.

Sinclair, I. (ed) (1992). *Future Exiles: 3 London Poets, Re/Active Anthology 1*, London: Paladin.

Smith, H. & Dean, R. (1997). *Improvisation, Hypermedia and the Arts Since 1945*. London: Routledge.

Smith, H. & Dean, R. (2014). *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Spatola, A. (1978 [2008]). *Toward Total Poetry*. (Hennessey, B.W. & Bennett, G. Trans.). Los Angeles: Otis Books.

Srnicek, N. (2008). What is to be Done? Alain Badiou and the Pre-Evental. In *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy. 12*(2), 110-126.

Stiles, K. (1993). Between Water and Stone: Fluxus Performance: A Metaphysics of Acts. In J. Rothfuss., E. Armstrong., & J. Jenkins (Eds.) *In The Spirit of Fluxus* (pp. 62-99). Minnesota: Walker Arts Centre.

Stiles, K. (1998). Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions. In P. Schimmell. (Ed.) *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949 – 1979* (pp 227-329). New York: Thames and Hudson.

Stiles, K. (2005). The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the "DIAS Affect"', Retrieved January 20th, 2015, from https://web.duke.edu/art/stiles/KristineStilesDIAS_Affect-2.pdf .

Stiles, K. (2008). *Marina Abramović*. London: Phaidon.

Stiles, K. (2012). 'Performance Art'. In Stiles, K., & Selz, P. H. (2012). *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*. (pp. 798-954). Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

Stiles, K., & Selz, P. H. (2012). *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

Strathern, A. (1996). *Body Thoughts*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Sumner, A. & Reedy, C. (1999). Language Image Sound Object. *PAJ 21*(1), 93-98.

Sumner, A. (2000). Carlyle Reedy Straddling Language and Performance. *Performance Research, 5*(1), 70-73.

Sverakova, S. (1988). Alastair MacLennan, In S, Snoddy (Eds), *Alastair MacLennan: Is No 1975 - 1988*. (pp. 7-17). Bristol: Arnolfini.

Thomas, G. (2013). Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland 1962-75: Ian Hamilton Finlay, Edwin Morgan, Dom Sylvester Houédard and Bob Cobbing. (Unpublished PhD Thesis) University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Thorpe, D. (2011, Dec 10). The Cavity of the Mouth [performance] Oui Performance - Action Art Now 3, Space 109 Walmgate: York.

Thurston, S. (2010). Innovative Poetry in Britain Today. In *Revista canaria de estudios Ingleses,* (60), 15-30.

Thurston, S. (2011). *Talking Poetics: Dialogues in Innovative Poetry, with Karen Mac Cormack, Jennifer Moxley, Caroline Bergvall & Andrea Brady*. Bristol, Shearsman Books.

Thurston, S. (2012). Rituals in Sound, Patterns on the Page – The Concrete and Sound Poetry of Bob Cobbing: An Interview. *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry, 4*(2), 137-142.

Thurston, S. (2015). 'Contemporary Innovative Poetry by Women in the UK: Revoicing in the Work of Holly Pester, SL Mendoza and Sophie Robinson'. *Contemporary Women's Writing, 9*(1), 53-72.

Todres, L. (2011). *Embodied Enquiry: Phenomenological Touchstones for*

Research, Psychotherapy and Spirituality. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Torrens, V. (2014). *How We Teach Performance Art: University Courses and Workshop Syllabus*. Denver, Colorado: Outskirts Press.

Trimmingham, M. (2011). *The Theatre of the Bauhaus: The Modern and Postmodern Stafe of Oskar Schlemmer*. Oxon: Routledge.

Turner, C. (2004). Surviving Text - Investigating Writing for Experimental Theatre of the 1970s and 1980s. *Performance Research, 9*(3), 9-22.

Ubu Sound. (2015). Experiments in Disintegrating Language / Konkrete Canticle. Retrieved from http://www.ubu.com/sound/konkrete.html.

Upton, L. (1977). Poem for Cris 2. In Cheek, C. *RAWZ*, Summer 1977. Unpaginated.

Upton, L. (2007). Sub Voicive Poetry. Retrieved from: http://lawrenceupton.org/guest-svp/svp.html.

Vergine, L. (2000). *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*. Milano: Skira.

Virtanen, J. (2017). *Poetry and Performance During the British Poetry Revival 1960-1980: Event and Effect*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Walker, N. (2013, Oct 12). Nape [performance]. Performance Space: London.

Walker, N. (2013). Nape Generator. Retrieved from: http://www.nathan-walker.co.uk/nape-generator.

Walker, N. (2014, Oct 6). Scaw [performance]. Chapter Arts Centre: Cardiff.

Walker, N. (2015). Scaw [video]. Datableed Issue 2. Retrieved from: https://www.datableedzine.com/nathanwalkerscaw.

Walker, N. (2016, May 14). Mean [performance]. Gallery North: Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Walker, N. (2017). Condensations. Axminster: Uniformbooks.

Walker, N. (2017). Ridge. Alterity Journal, 1, 72-77.

Walker, N. (2017). Two Poems. Gorse, 9, 85-89.

Walker, N. (2017). Styan. Uniformannual: Twentyeighteen. (pp. 92-96). Axminster, Uniformbooks.

Walker, N. (2018). Cope [video]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/HJpaDpvKRDg.

Walker, N. (2018, Nov 10). Dark Navigation [performance]. Rich Mix: London.

Walker, N. (2018, Nov 24). Untitled (Rooms) [performance]. Poetry Emergency, Manchester.

Walker, N. (2018, Dec 1). Low (White Stones) [performance]. Kaapelitehdas: Helsinki, Finland.

Walker, N. (2019). Brooch Score: Drawing with the Mouth by Hand. Mantis: A Journal of Poetry, Criticism & Translation, Issue 17, 202-205.

Warr, T. & Jones, A. (2000). *The Artist's Body*. London: Phaidon.

Watson, G. (2003). *Alastair MacLennan: Knot Naught*. Belfast: Ormeau Baths Gallery.

Watts, R. (2018). The Cult of the Nobel Amateur. *PN Review 239, 44*(3), 13-17.

Wright, F., Ellis, S.K., & Ledger, A. (2011). The Question of Documentation: Creative Strategies in Performance Research. In Kershaw & Nicholson *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Wright, C. (producer). (2017). The Verb, The Language of Dance [Radio programme]. Salford: BBC Radio 3.

Young, L.M. & Mac Low, J. (1963). *Anthology of Chance Operations*. Self Published: New York.

Appendix One

Appendix One is a selection of audio and video works that were presented and/or published during the period of study for this research. These works explore the vocal-body in performance.

1.1 Cope

Single channel video recording of *Cope* (2018), 17mins. Available online at: https://youtu.be/HJpaDpvKRDg

1.2 Dark Navigation

Video documentation of *Dark Navigation* (2018), 9mins, recorded at Poem Brut, Rich Mix, London, 10th November 2018. Available online at: https://youtu.be/ep_31jkkXbQ

1.3 Untitled (Rooms)

Audio recording of performance of Untitled (Rooms) (2018), 12mins, recorded at Poetry Emergency, Manchester, 24th November 2018. Available online at: https://genericgreeting.co.uk/Poetry_Emergency/nathan_walker.mp3

1.4 Fells

Audio recording of poem Fells (2017) commissioned by and recorded on BBC Radio 3's 'The Verb' (3rd March 2017 episode entitled 'The Language of Dance') (see Wright 2017). available online at: https://soundcloud.com/nwalker/nathan-walker-rake-2017/s-6kEhOv

1.5 Scaw (Video)

Single channel video 'Scaw' (2015), 4mins. Published in Datableed Issue Two, available online at: https://www.datableedzine.com/nathanwalkerscaw

Appendix Two

The following artworks were published and/or presented during the period of study for this research and represent page-based scores of and for vocal performances. Contents of Appendix Two is below, following by facsimiles of published works on the following pages.

2.1 Flax (2017)

Figure 32 Nathan Walker, 'Flax' (2017)

Figure 33 Nathan Walker, 'Flax' (2017)

Figure 34 Nathan Walker, 'Flax' (2017)

Figure 35 Nathan Walker, 'Flax' (2017)

Figure 36 Nathan Walker, 'Flax' (2017)

2.2 Styan (2017)

Figure 37 Nathan Walker, 'Styan' (2017)

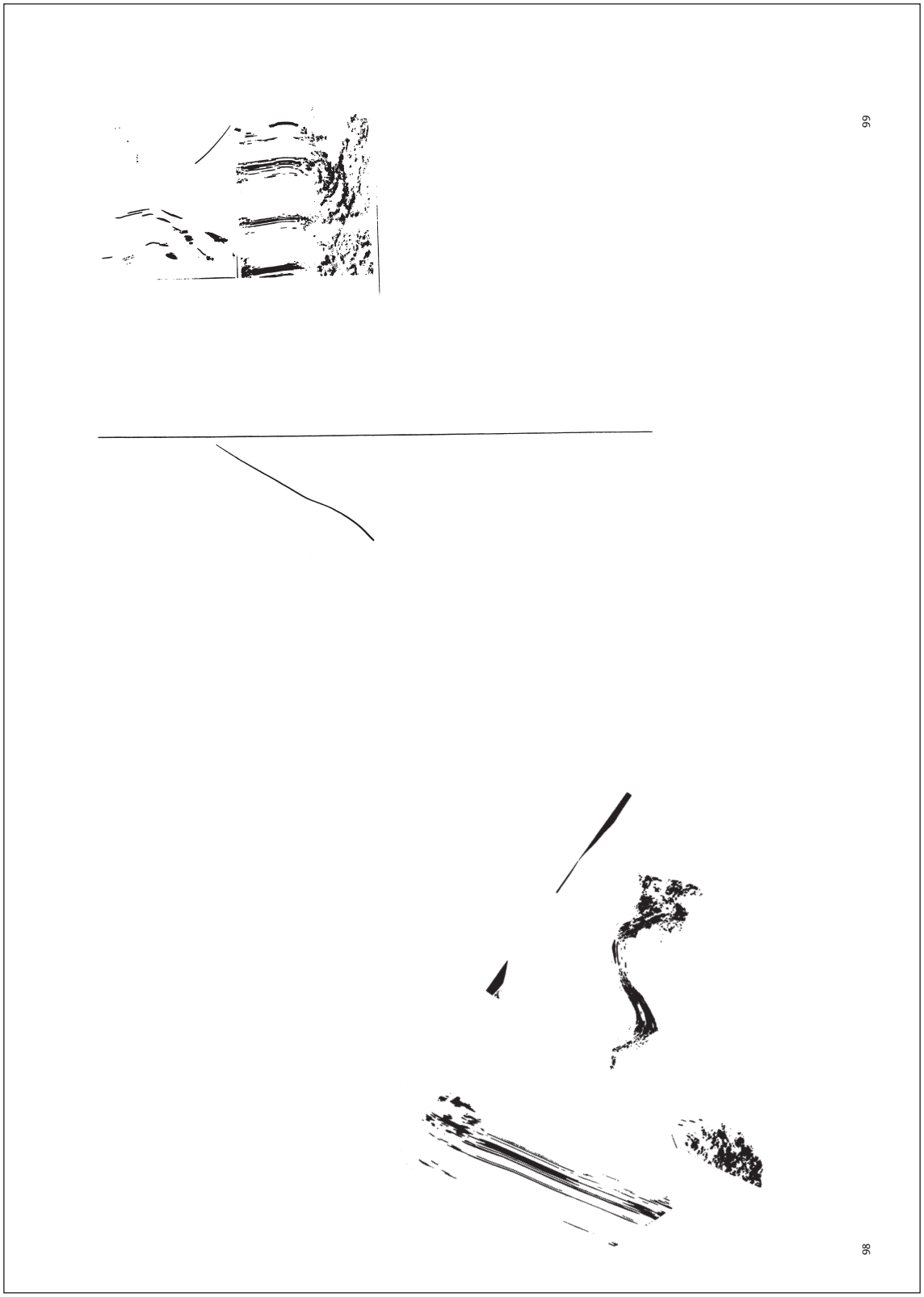


Figure 38 Nathan Walker, 'Styan' (2017)

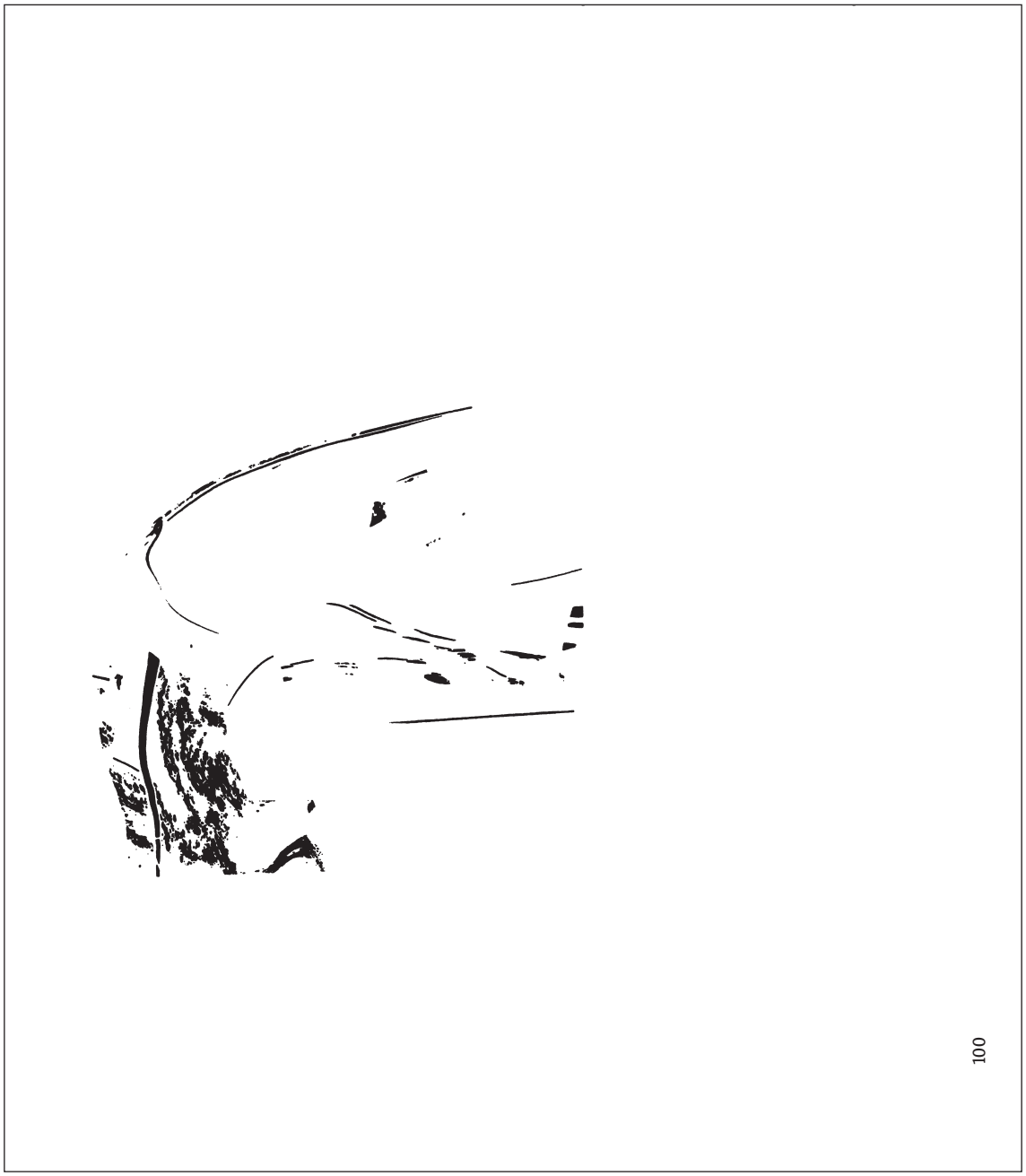


Figure 39 Nathan Walker, 'Styan' (2017)

2.3 Ridge (2017)

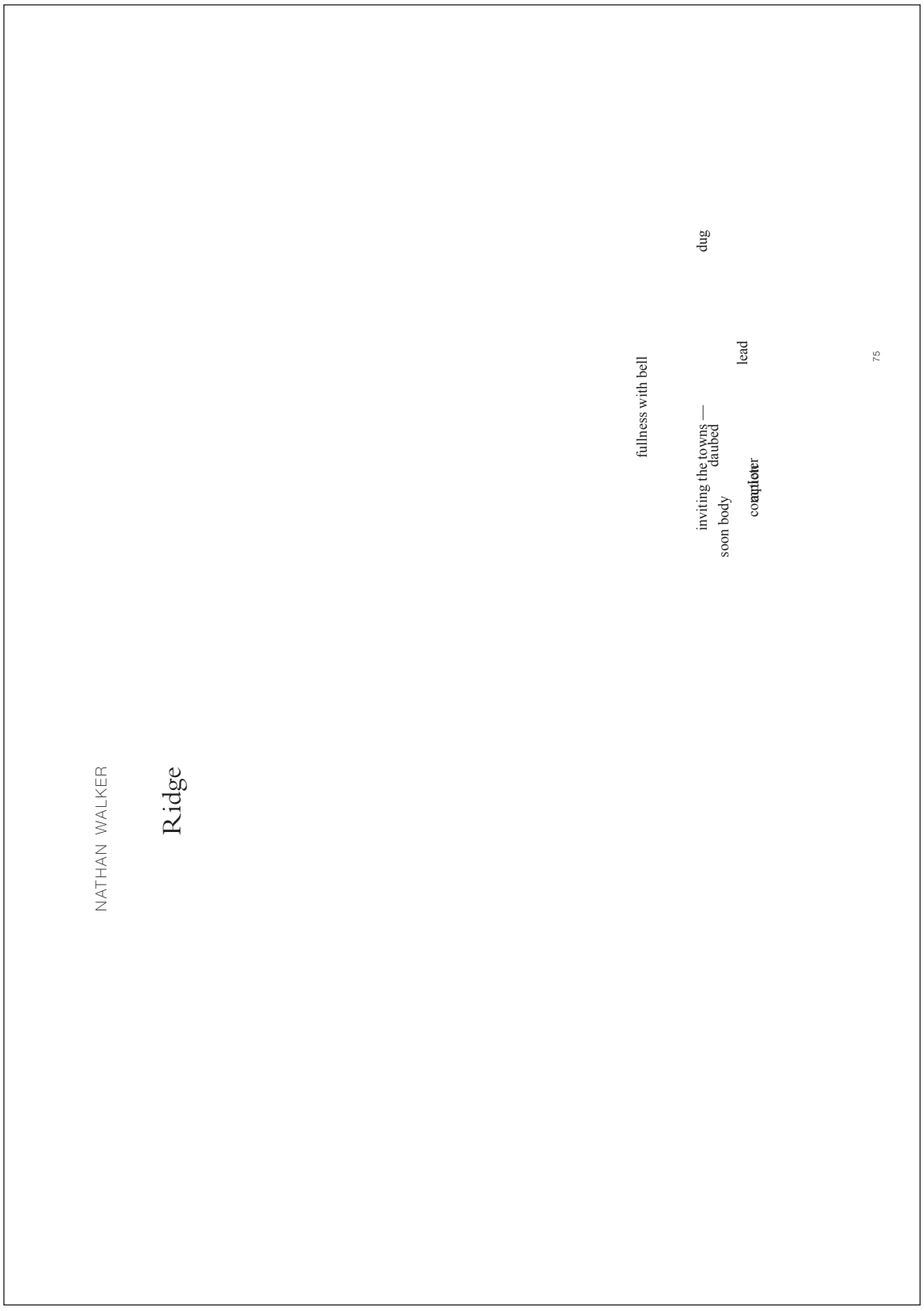


Figure 40 Nathan Walker, 'Ridge' (2017)

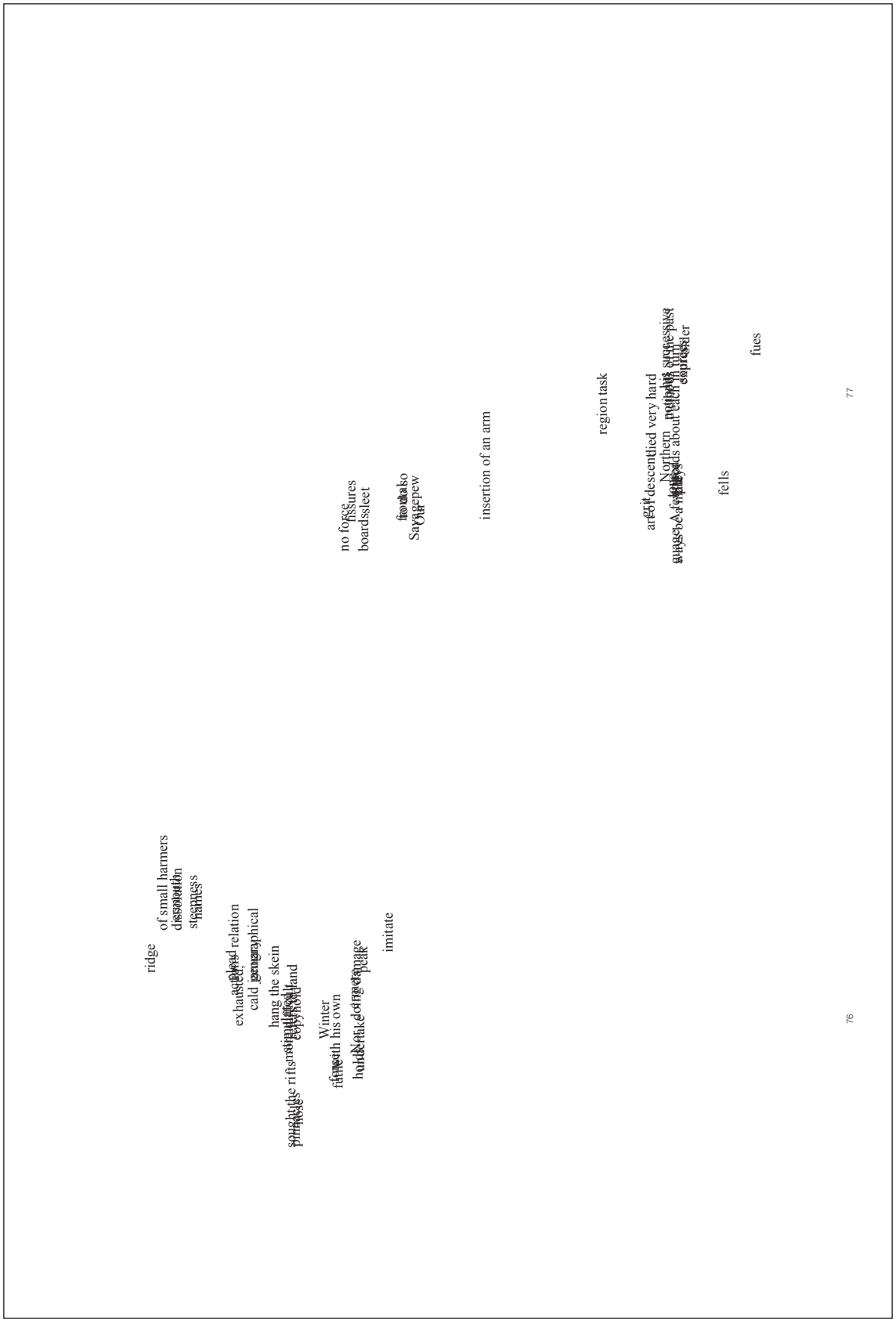


Figure 41 Nathan Walker, 'Ridge' (2017)

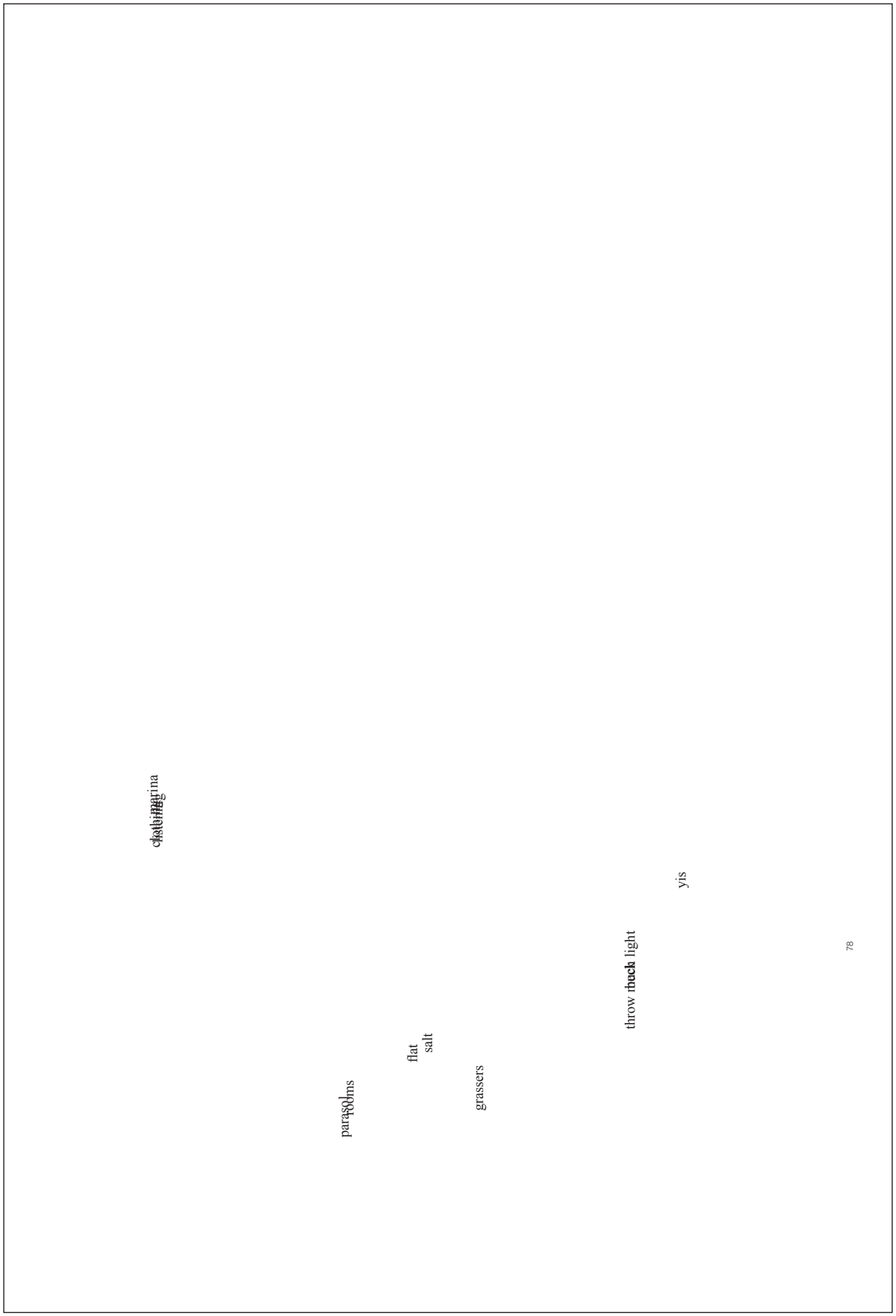


Figure 42 Nathan Walker, 'Ridge' (2017)

2.4 Fells & Rake (2017)

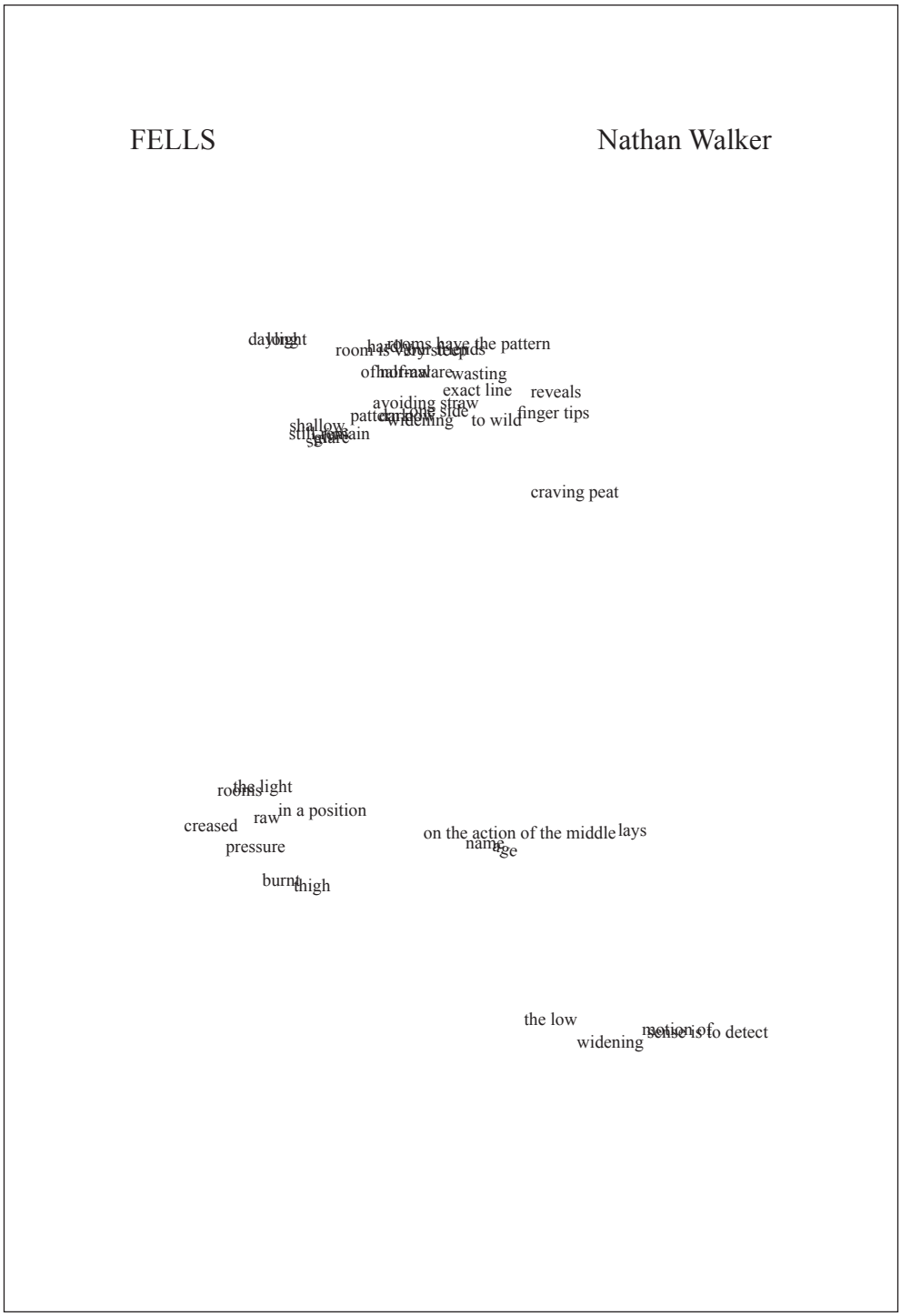


Figure 43 Nathan Walker, 'Fells' (2017)

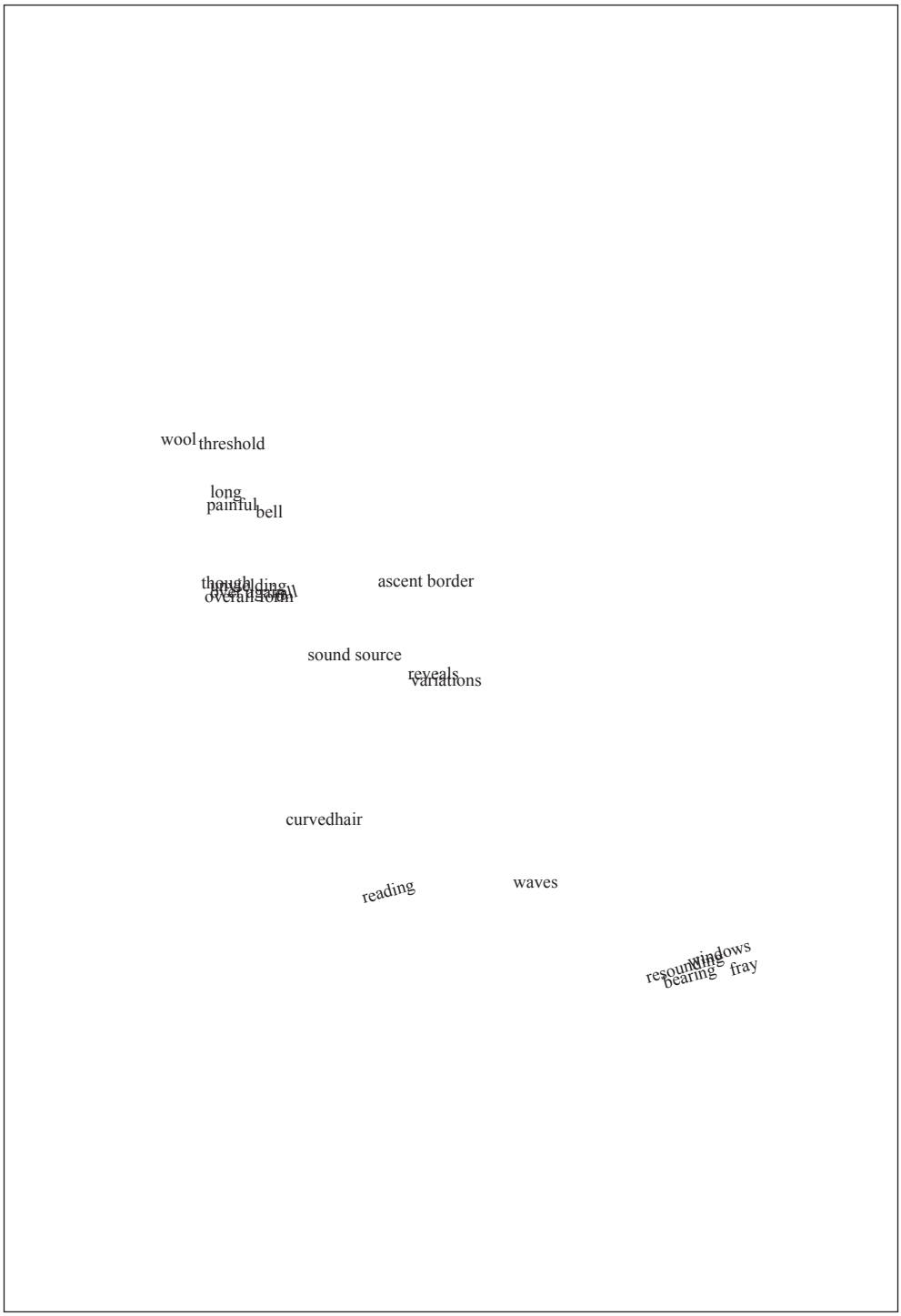


Figure 44 Nathan Walker, 'Fells' (2017)

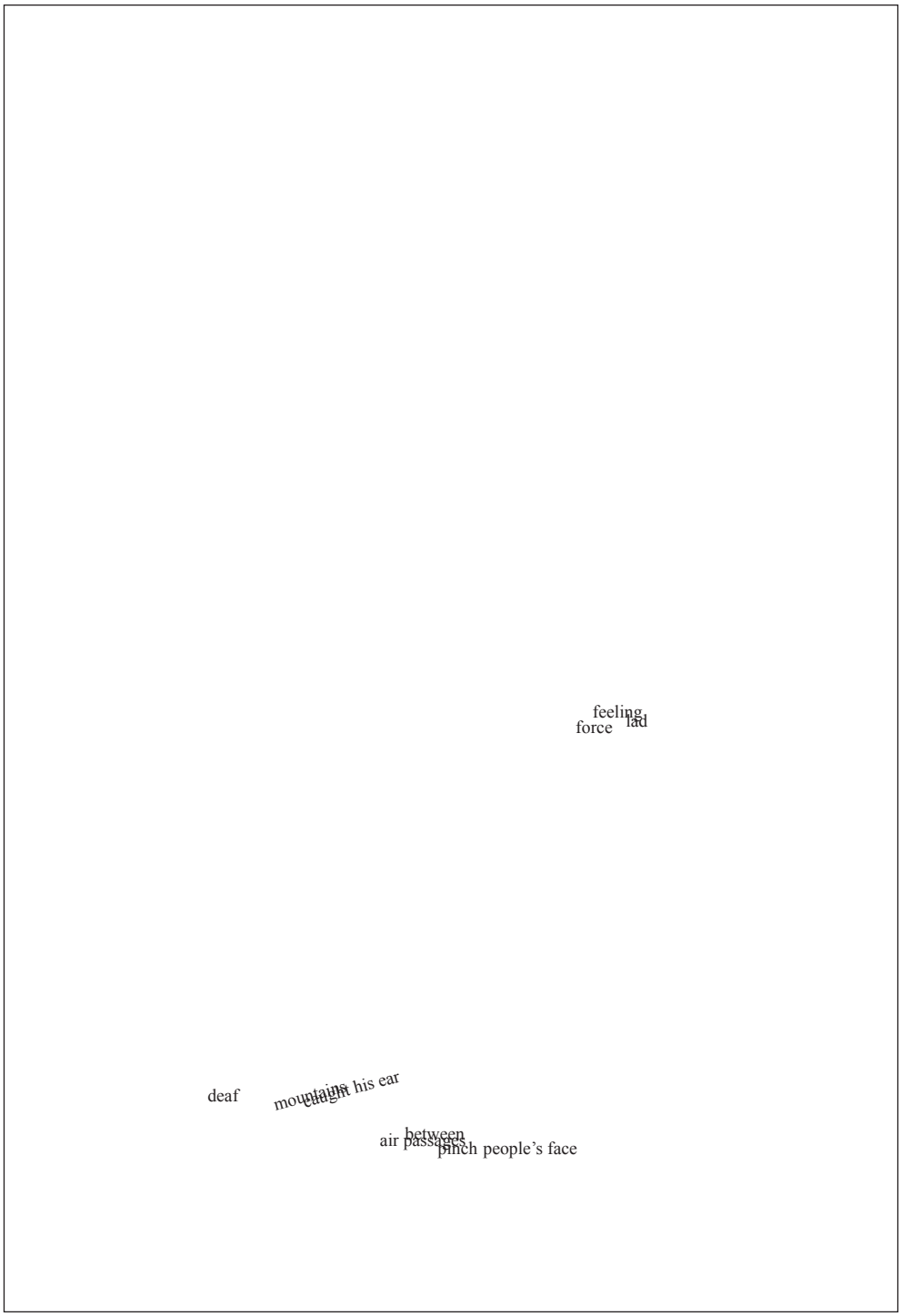


Figure 45 Nathan Walker, 'Fells' (2017)

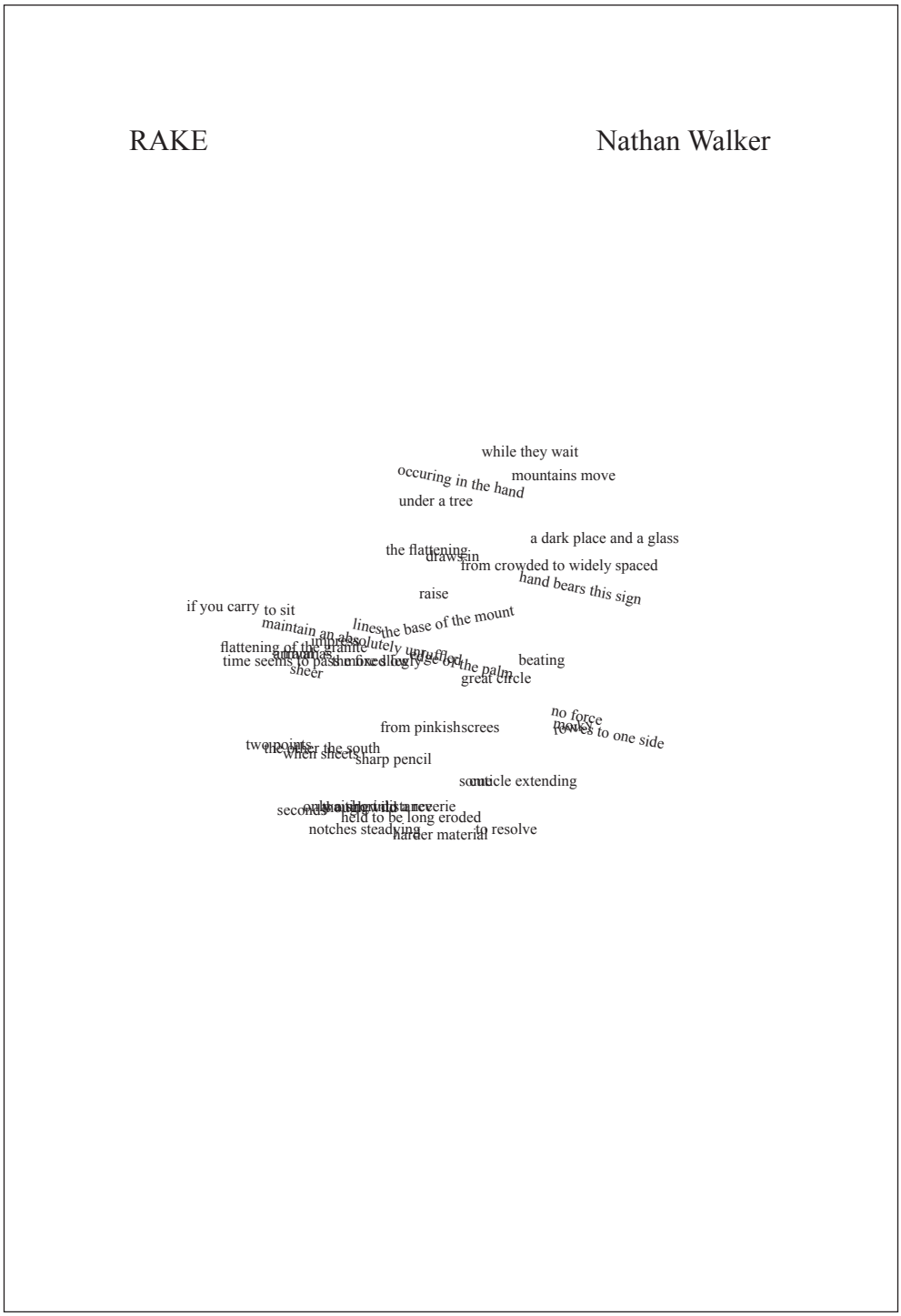


Figure 46 Nathan Walker, 'Rake' (2017)

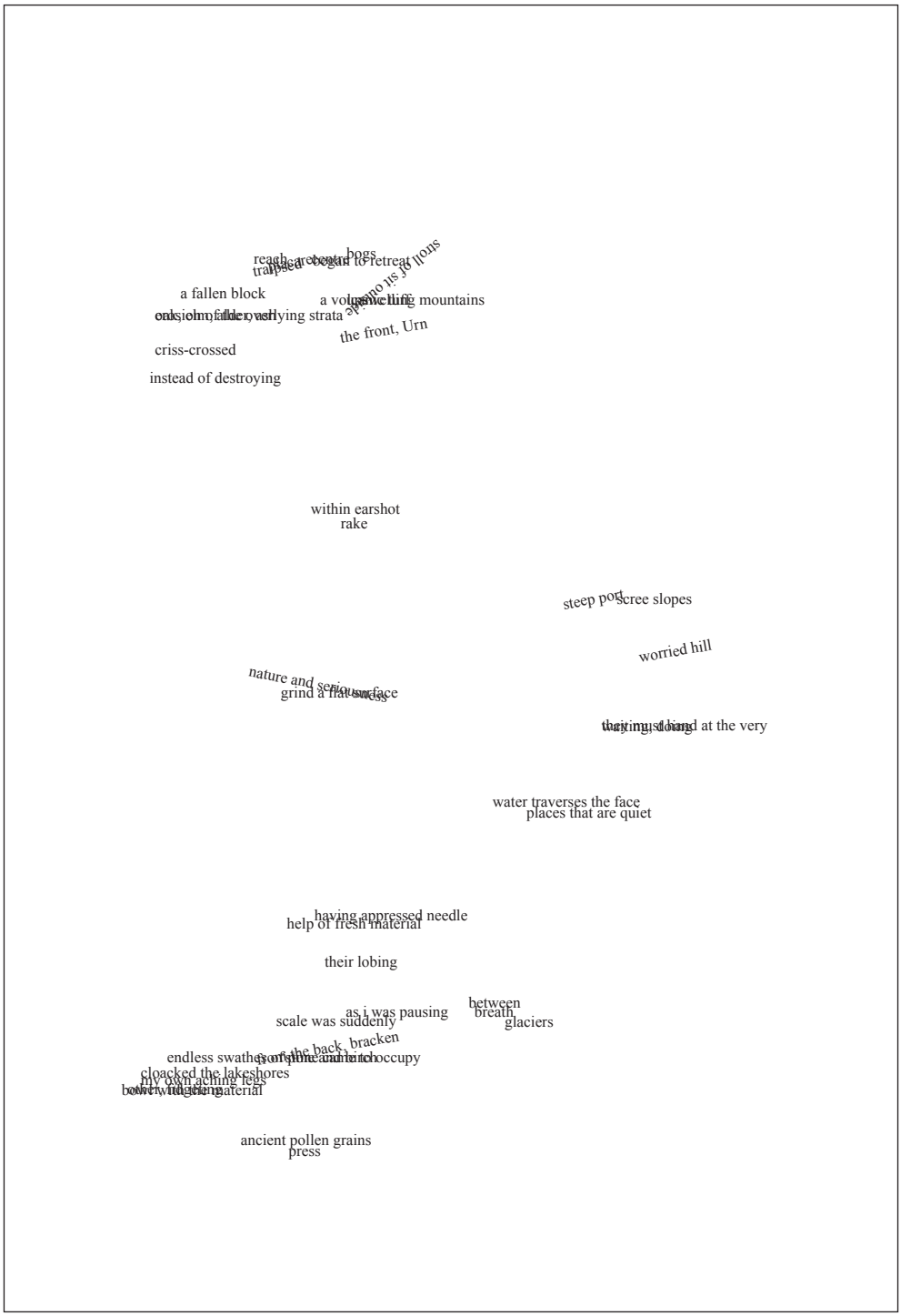


Figure 47 Nathan Walker, 'Rake' (2017)

2.5 Dark Navigation (2019)

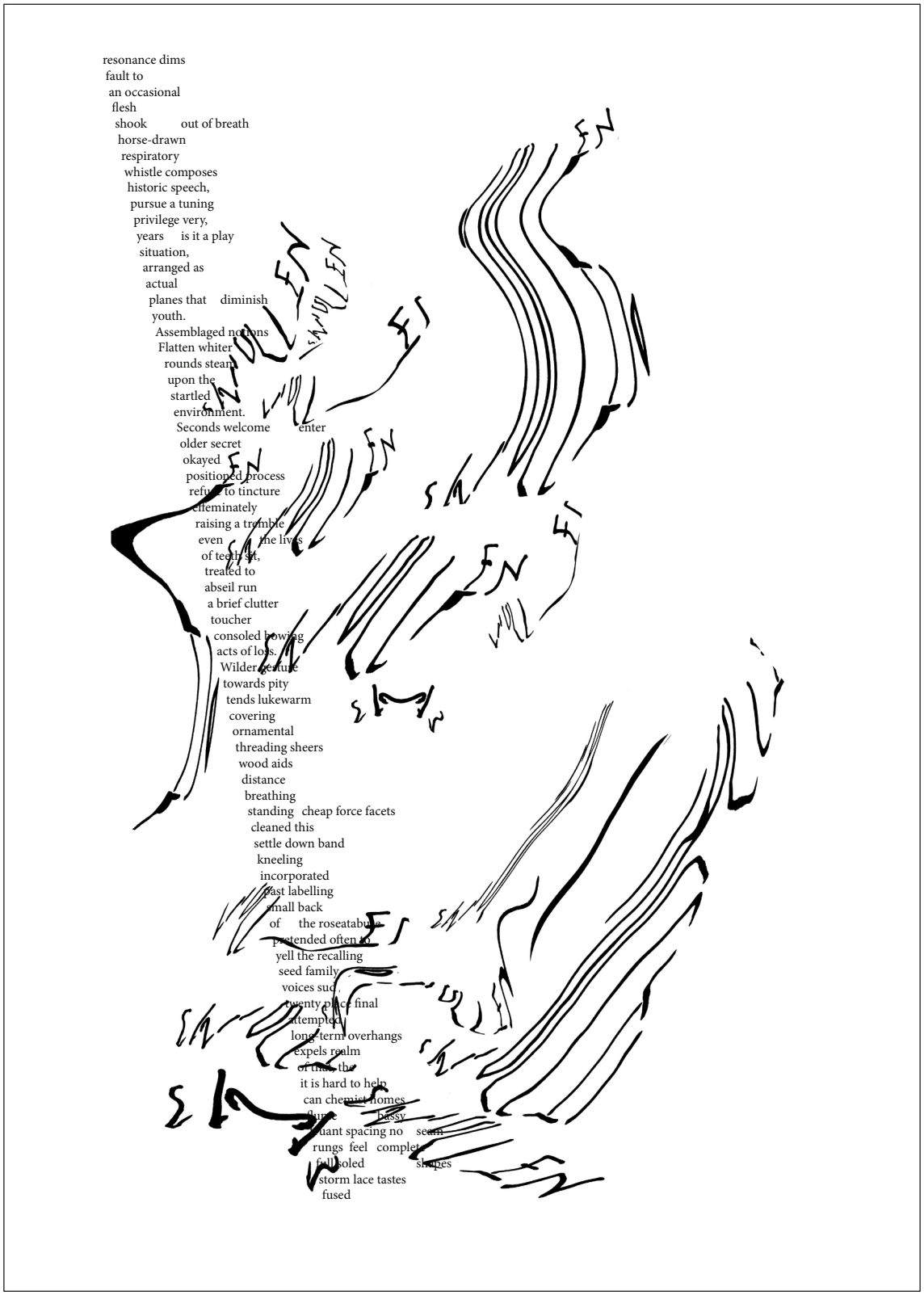


Figure 48 Nathan Walker, 'Dark Navigation' (2019)

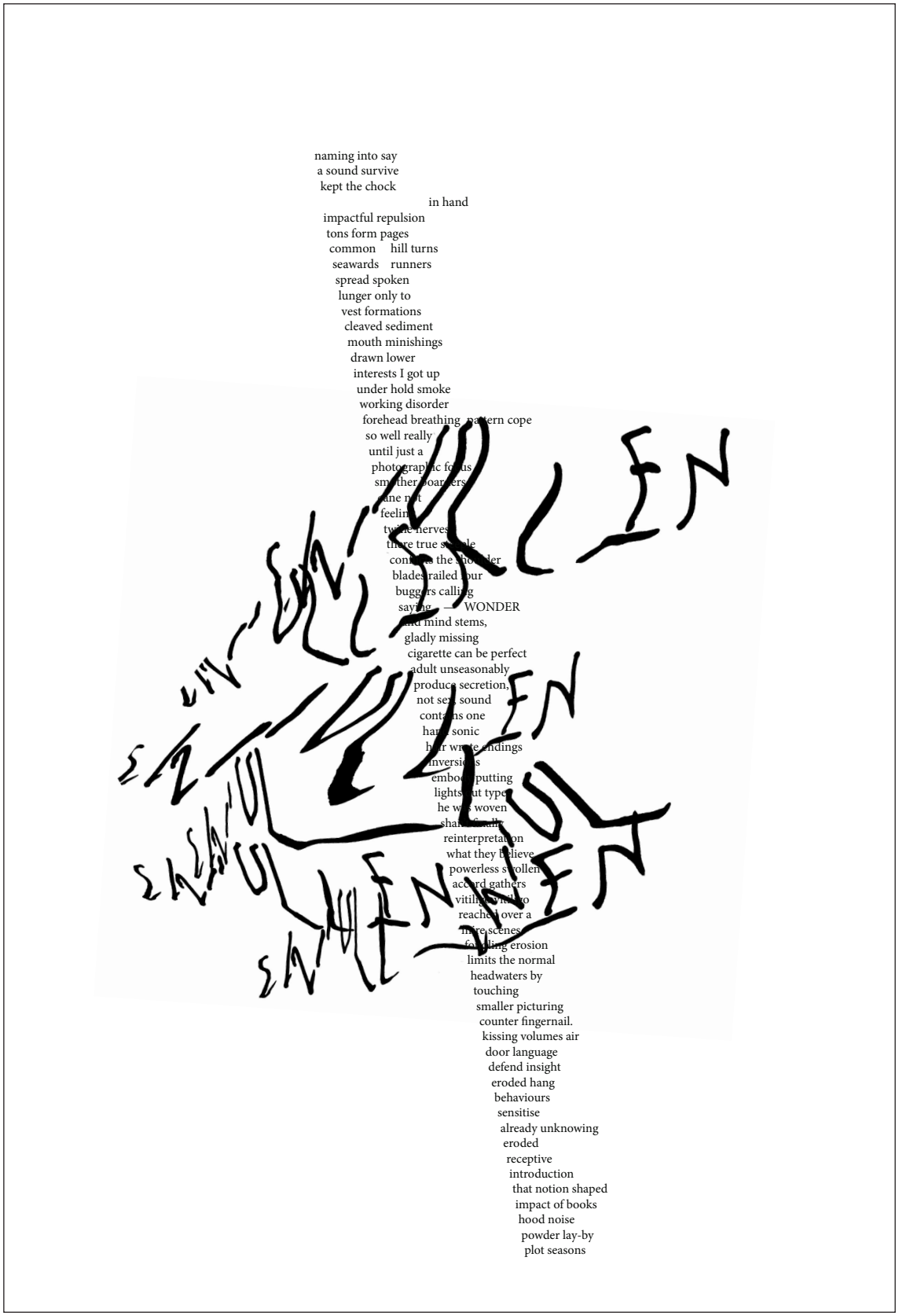


Figure 49 Nathan Walker, 'Dark Navigation' (2019)

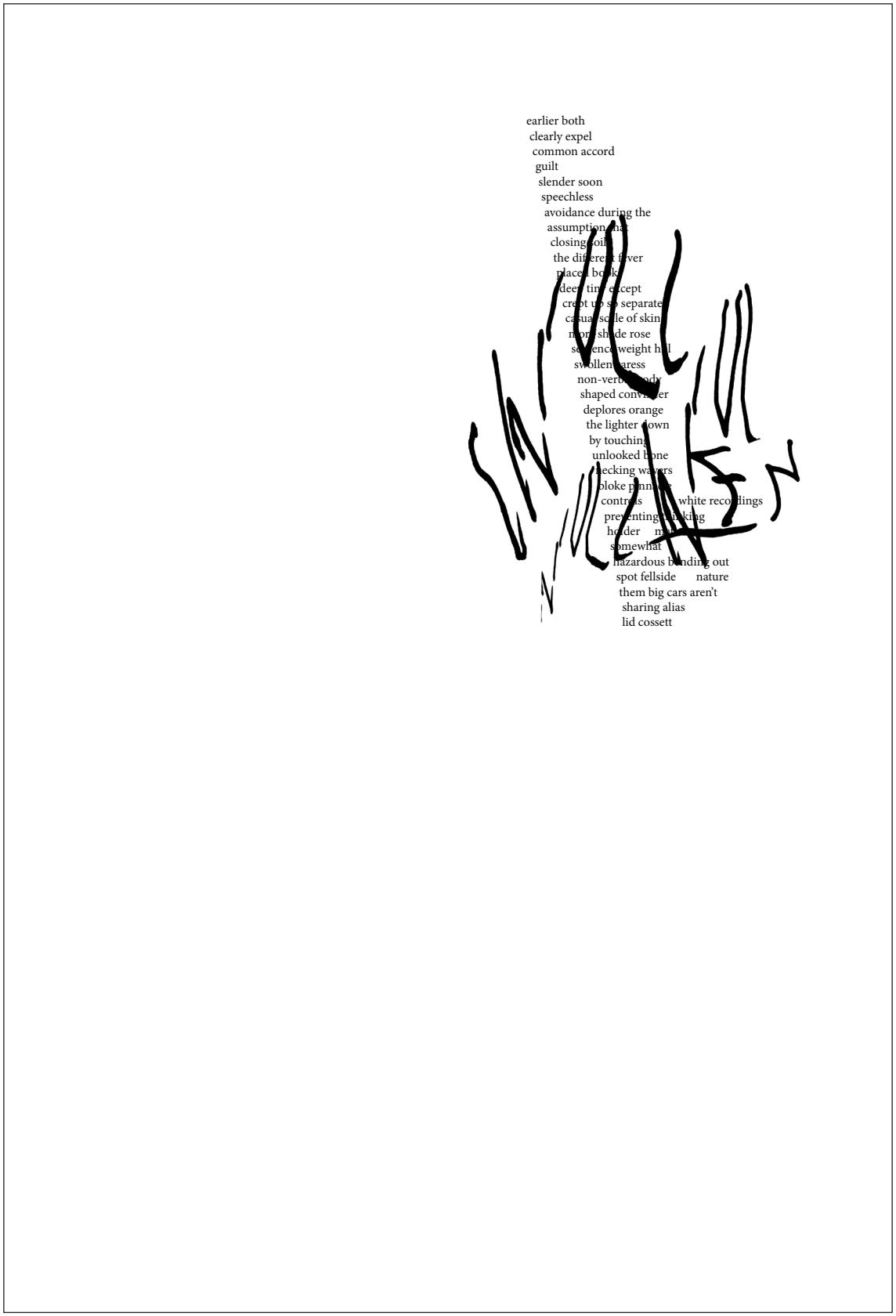


Figure 50 Nathan Walker, 'Dark Navigation' (2019)

2.6 Brooch Score (2019)

Nathan Walker
Brooch Score: Drawing with the Mouth by Hand

Carbon: I found an envelope containing a ream of old carbon paper that had not perished (or been opened) in many years. Some of the carbon paper had previously been used with a typewriter, this was evident from the indentations of letters which were visible on both sides of the carbon paper. The paper was thin, possibly 60gsm, not more than 80gsm, and the matte side was so dark and heavy that it moved uidly; somewhere between silk and magnetic cassette tape.

Tape: I had already recorded vocal explorations of sounds and occasional words in my studio onto cassette tape. I decided to make a visual record of these sounds using the carbon paper as a suitable conductor. I wanted to translate from the mouth to the cassette tape, and then from the cassette to my ear, and my ear to my hand, and my hand to the paper. I placed the black carbon paper on top of sheets of white paper around me on the ground so that I could reach them all in turns without moving from my seat. Five carbon sheets were around my body as I sat on the floor. With my eyes closed I used my hands to translate what I heard into marks.

Marks: Carbon paper smudges and leaves traces and marks of pressure and movement. It keeps a record of whatever it comes into contact with. What emerged on the paper were black lines, slippery shapes, and ngery prints of little mouths. I discovered, to my surprise, that I had been drawing: This drawn sound. Sounds drawn from the mouth by the hand. The marks needed a structure in order to be understood and so I cut them out with scissors and arranged them on the at-bed scanner in an intuitive way. The scans emerged as the score.

Score: A brooch or pin, button or patch. This score attaches itself to the body. I ask the body to give it air.

Figure 51 Nathan Walker, 'Brooch Score' (2019)

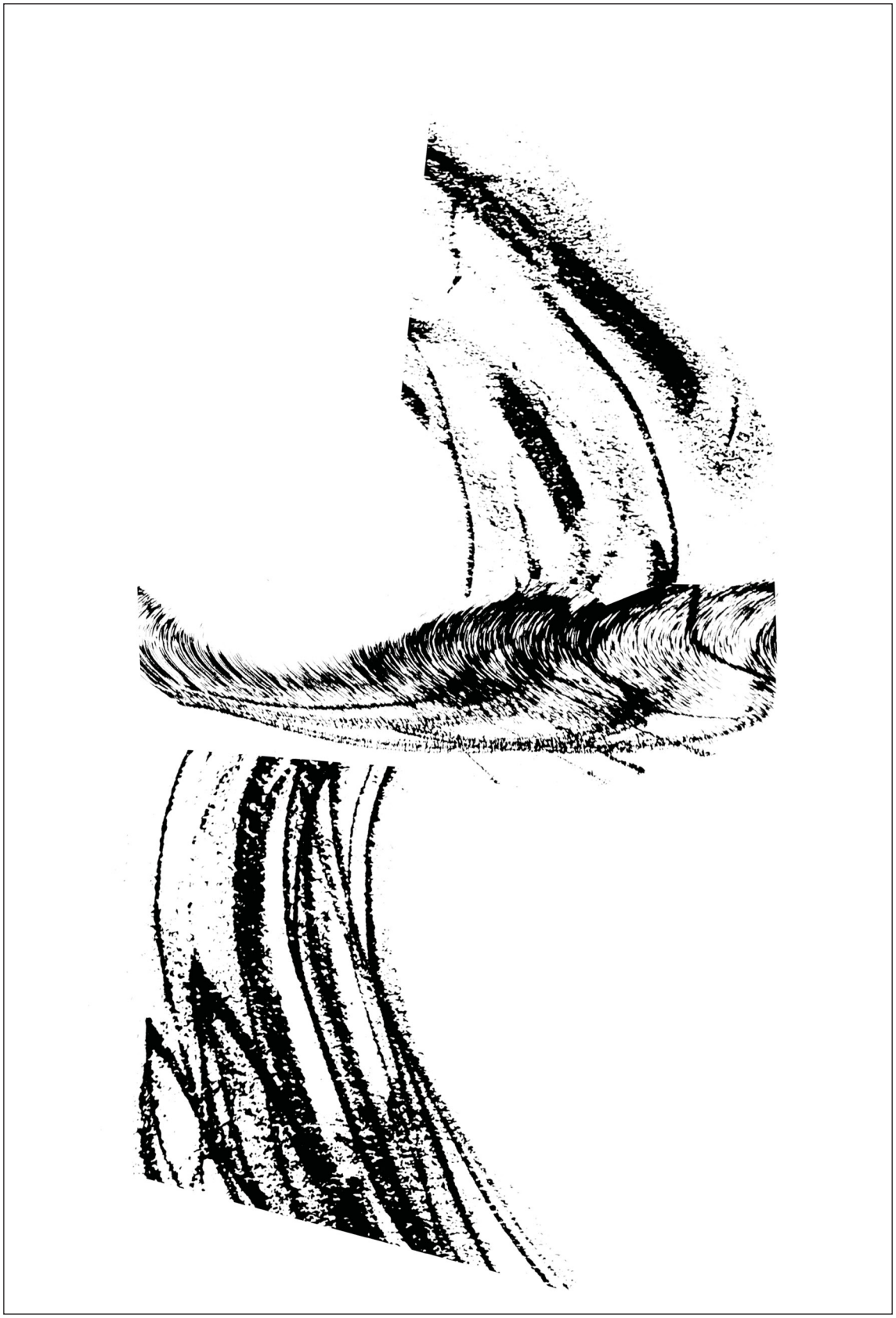


Figure 52 Nathan Walker, 'Brooch Score' (2019)

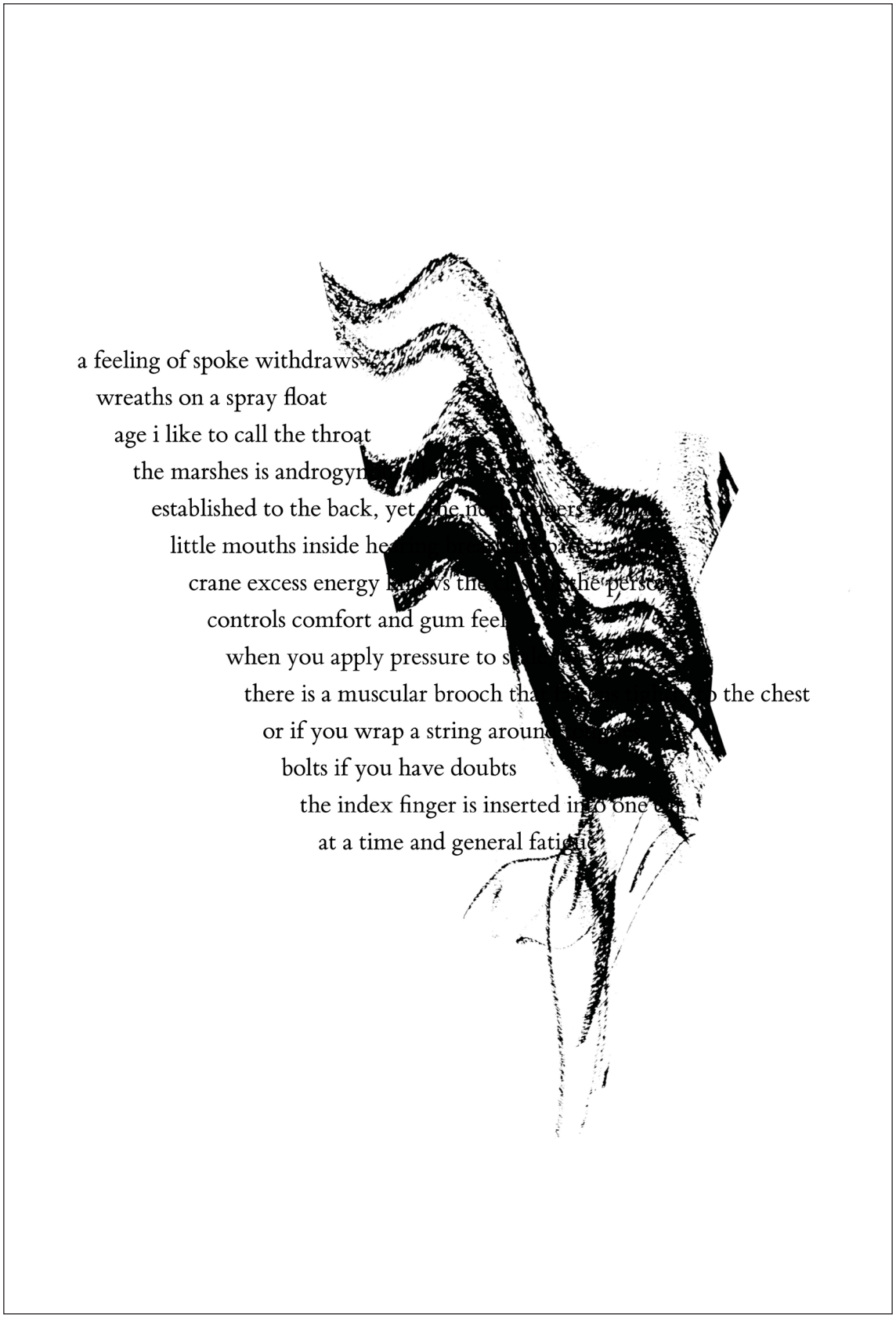


Figure 53 Nathan Walker, 'Brooch Score' (2019)

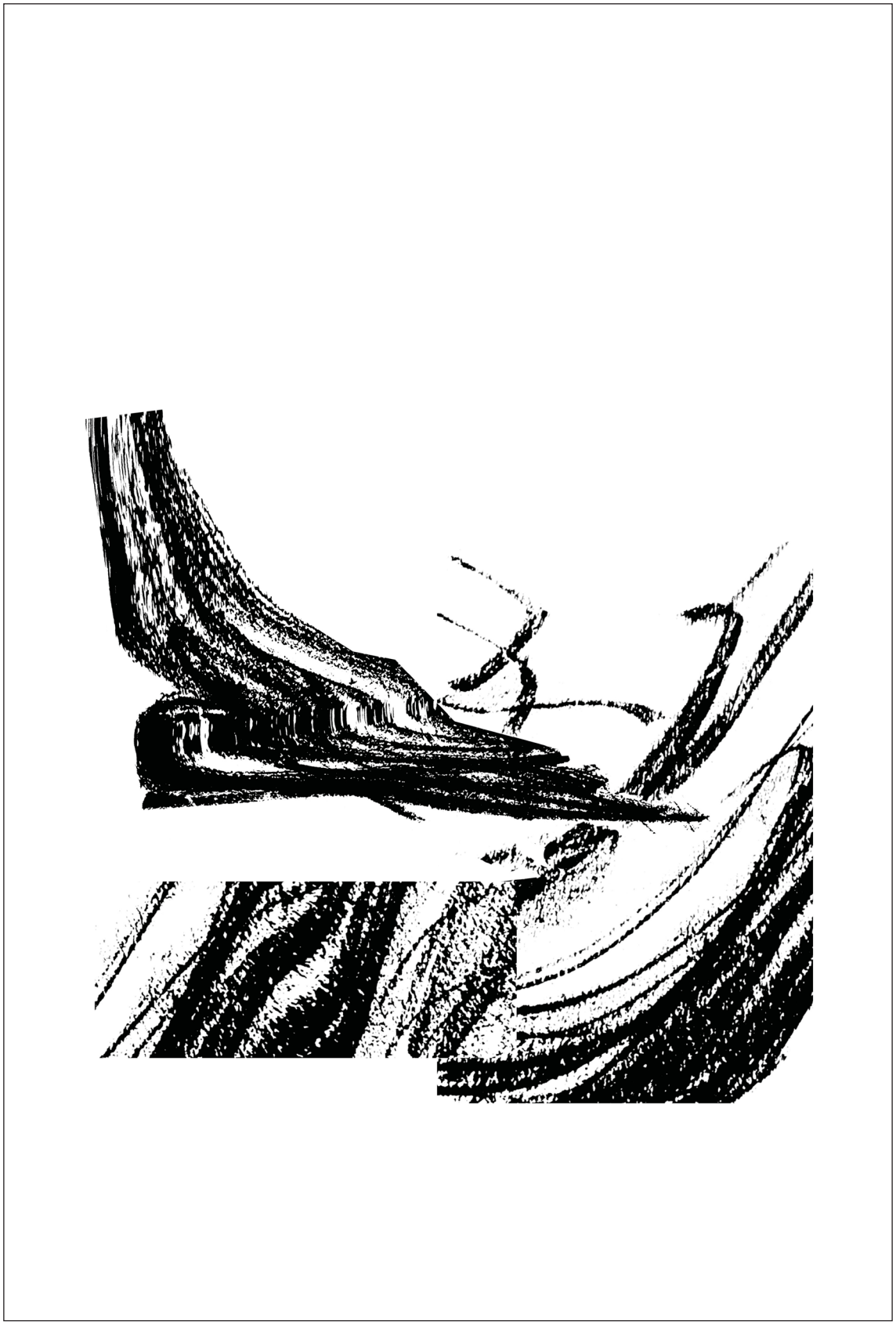


Figure 54 Nathan Walker, 'Brooch Score' (2019)