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LEAPING OFF THE PAGE
AND MELDING MODES:
THE MULTIMODAL SPACE POEM
AS A NEW FORM OF POETRY

by

TODD J. ERICKSON

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SYNTHESIS*
MASTER OF ARTS
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

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Advisor: Professor Peter Taylor

Abstract: This paper develops and makes an argument for a new form of poetry referred to as a space poem, defined as a poem that is composed with an awareness of multimodality during its creation in such a way that results in a poem in which multiple modes work together symbiotically to create the poem. I trace the development of this concept over the course of my experience as a student in the Critical and Creative Thinking Master's degree program at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Beginning with a consideration of my past artistic multimodal projects created at different moments during said studies, I then attempt to analyze different conceptual understandings of the relationships between modes, primarily focusing on verbal and visual modes. This is followed by my research regarding multimodality in art, firsthand interviews with artists Patti Harris and Mark Mendel, current criticism of poetry, and my own experiences in writing poetry. Finally, I narrate and reflect on my process in making three space poems, and how these experiments resulted in the definition above as well as a series of guiding steps for anyone creating a space poem.

Overall, the paper provides an example of a journey through the creative process, which makes use of both critical and creative thinking, and includes but is not limited to phases of

reflection, research, idea development, innovation, experiment, risk-taking, and various habits of mind such as maintaining comfort with ambiguity, perseverance in the face of setbacks, open-mindedness, and flexibility.

* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

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LEAPing! Off the → Page
and Melding Modes:

The Multimodal

SPACE POEM

as a New Form of Poetry

Introduction

As you consider the image above, what representations do the words take in your mind—a voice? A collection of colors? If there's pause—a slowing down—in your reading, what causes it? Are there parts that you find yourself reading faster? How do the spacing, coloring, shaping, capitalization, and font of the text affect your understanding? Does “LEAPing!” evoke a sense of energy, as opposed to the yell of a fully capitalized “LEAPING!”, or even engender some expectation of an acronym? Does the use of an “→” and a punted “Page” evoke movement (and did the “→” just skip the record again)? Does a multicolored “multimodality” serve to provide an initial sense of the term's definition? Does the warped “Space Poem” and its shadow lead to a temporary reconsideration of the dimensions of the page?

In poetry, varied use of punctuation and capitalization is nothing new. A quick reminder of the common term, “poetic license,” as well as an invocation of e.e. cummings and Emily Dickinson might suffice to prove this, in that their “grammatical errors” actually serve to create or emphasize meaning. Indeed, even colored letters and varied use of font is nothing new on or off the printed page (consider any newspaper or magazine's front

page). Off the printed page, one sees this as well—consider the logos of the world’s most popular fast food restaurants, the designs of street signs, the dancing colored lights of a marquee, the sung lyrical lyrics of the latest pop song. No doubt, we do our best to make language come alive, to give it its own energy, and we do this through the use of multimodality.

Unlike said restaurants, however, you cannot literally step *into* this paper (unless you’ve now placed it on the floor and are trampling it in frustration). Nor will you be passing by these words as through the walls of a hallway (unless you’ve now hung it on the wall to read later). But what if you *could* step into this paper, into these sentences, through and by these words? What if the words literally moved? What if some were closer to you than others? Would it no longer *be* a paper? If I have just spun around in my chair, are you even aware of it? And what if it was the words that did the spinning? How would these changes affect a reader’s experience of the work? Would stepping into a room filled with research displayed in different modes change how that research was understood?

We can ask the same of a poem. The boundaries of two-dimensional language in poetry have been tested for quite some time, but there’s lots of challenging to be done. If one wants to read poetry, one goes to the bookstore, finds a section labeled “poetry” and has his or her pick of bound printed pages of poems. If one wants to hear poetry, one attends a poetry slam, a poetry reading, or downloads a recording. And that’s it. But what if one wants to move within a poem? Live in a poem? Be in a poem? What if it’s the place in which the poetry is written, sold, read, or heard that results in a wider audience never reading or hearing it? What if it’s *how* the poem is written and shared that affects the readership? How does one continue to challenge common perceptions in both form and culture in poetry in order to bring poetry to a new place? What changes might occur in our understanding of what poetry is in order to enable its adaptation to the reading public? How does one get poetry to leap off the page and into the public consciousness on a wider scale? How does one make poetry relevant for the same kind and quantity of populous that flocks to television sets or computers to watch the latest series? When would poetry be advertised on the outside of a bus, installed in one’s favorite park? How does one spread poetry in such a way that avoids a degradation of its value, a dilution of its meaning, an exploitation of its expression of personal experience?

In “What is a Poem?” Brett Bourbon expresses some frustration in a quest to answer the question of his essay’s title: “I want to be able to say that certain objects can be poems and others not be, while at the same time refusing any definition of what poems are” (28). He claims that, unlike sentences and fictions, which have a determinate nature and might be clearly defined, poems are quite different: “[Poems] have contingent relations with each other. Poems are kinds of things in absentia, or rather they are secondary things, things dependent on the idea of the kind of thing poetry is. The important question here is: in what way is a poem dependent on the concept of poetry?” (29). In this sense, a new “poem” can actually change our understanding of what a poem is, as long as it works within the “idea of the kind of thing poetry is.” But how does one go about changing “the kind of thing poetry is”? How does one invent a new poetry when what constitutes a poem is the very thing one is trying to adjust, when one is subject to the culturally accepted idea of the kind of thing a poem is? How can one overcome barriers encountered in a creative process that is aiming to challenge common perceptions of what poetry is, when what it might be changed into isn’t even quite clear?

Overview and Aims

So many questions—a great place to start. To begin an answer, one might look to the famous twentieth century sculptor Alexander Calder’s response to the popular perception of sculpture being stationary, something that might be literally or figuratively glued to the floor: “Why must sculpture be static? The next step is sculpture in motion” (Baal-Teshuva 47). Interestingly enough, Calder’s understanding of his own work led him to see his pieces as poetry (though without verbal language): “To people who look at a mobile, it’s no more than a series of flat objects that move. To a few, though, it may be poetry” (30). He even moves beyond that connection to yet another mode—dance: “When everything goes right a mobile is a piece of poetry that danced with the joy of life and surprised” (47). Beyond Calder’s connection between his work and what is traditionally considered a medium restricted to words arranged on a page, one can adopt both the

attitude and the modal inclusiveness of Calder's work to begin to answer the questions above.

In other words, in the consideration of the quest for a "new" poetry—one that stretches the genre's boundaries, that encourages more of us to see ourselves as poets, that is inclusive of the many ways each of sees the world along with the mode of printed or spoken language—we can certainly ask, "Why must *poetry* be static?" Two possible answers come to mind (perhaps not an exhaustive response on this author's part). The first answer might be a rather confident, "Poetry *isn't* static." This answer is constructed within an understanding of poetry's figurative capabilities—one that refers to the moving language of a poem, the lively and sensuous imagery, the galloping meter and tip-toeing sound devices of the poem's language. Likewise, having mentioned "poetic license" here already, one might say that poetry isn't static—that it's malleable, that it has limitless forms, and that—in general—minds are *already* open regarding what is poetry. Ask a group of bookstore browsers, and poetry might be said to appear in many ways: song lyrics; a few sentences read as wedding vows; the first group of words a child writes; a series of titles read from the spines of books stacked on a table; a nicely phrased coupon. However, this isn't always true when the established domain of poetry is considered. What of these possibilities exist when one goes to a bookstore to find poetry? What is accepted and supported by the poetic domain as poetry worthy of replicating, sharing, selling, buying, knowing? Clearly, at least one answer to Brett Bourbon's "What is a Poem?" is that a poem is something one hears at a poetry reading or slam or is something one finds printed on bound paper in a particular section of a bookstore.

This is all not to suggest some kind of complete inertia in poetry, or that any of these figurative understandings aren't meaningful, but that when understood in a literal sense, the commonly accepted poetry is, in the great majority, a static entity. When read aloud, for instance, aside from the sound waves of the speaker's language perhaps traveling through the air, the poem itself has not moved—the letters and language remain on the page (or then on a recording—perhaps the recording then "moves"). There's likely little kinetic movement involved besides the body language of the speaker, or the turning of the page, or the scrolling of the smartphone screen. And what of other modes? Was the poem composed with music or other sound effects in mind—is it then a song and not a poem?

What if the honking of a car's horn is added to the second and fourth line—or if it *is* the fourth line? Is there any color in the poem aside from that which might appear in the linguistic form of imagery? (And one can reference William Blake's illuminations in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* here, but oftentimes these poems appear in texts without them; perhaps a better example might be a work by Shel Silverstein, but to what extent do the accompanying illustrations rely on the language and vice versa?) Is there audience input aside from the closing applause or periodic laughter or tears—does the audience help to write the poem? (A poem doesn't need an audience to be read aloud.) What about the moving image? And if a poem is projected onto a screen, what's the difference? Was the projection a part of the poem's original identity—is it a projection poem? We'll see later on that such a thing might actually meet resistance in the domain. In cases such as those experienced by artist Mark Mendel, to the established domain of poetry, no longer is it a poem if it was designed to be anywhere but the printed page, for now it is "visual art." According to this view, a poem must be something that can be and is printed on the page; to intentionally change the modes involved means that the language itself was lacking something, that the poem on the printed page wasn't meaningful enough. The point here is not that poems have *never* appeared within, alongside of, or in some kind of cahoots with other modes, but that the genre hasn't paid enough attention to the possibilities that an awareness of multimodality offers. In fact, it seems that the domain so well-known for its persona of the rebellious and truth-speaking bard is unwelcoming of such possibilities. Hip-hop need not be the only popular form of poetry, and the printed page need not be the litmus test of great poems.

What if we consider a scholarly definition of that term, "poem"? Is there a text that attempts to answer in some kind of quotable, simplified manner the question of Brett Bourbon's "What is a Poem?" Of course. Consider the following definition, taken from a textbook used in a graduate poetry class recently attended by this author:

Poem -- a term whose meaning exceeds all attempts at definition. Here is a slightly modified version of an attempt at definition by William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman in *A Handbook to Literature* (1996): A poem is a literary composition, written or oral, typically characterized by imagination, emotion, sense impressions,

and concrete language that invites attention to its own physical features, such as sound or appearance on the page. (Schakel 405)

Without meaning to denigrate the text or the experience of the class itself at all (this definition wasn't even referred to during the course—we made our own), the “definition” here is telling. Even as the term “exceeds” attempts at a definition, the authors cite what they refer to as an “attempt.” In the cited definition, a poem must be a “literary composition”—a statement that seems to void all other modes—yet the poem “invites attention to its own physical features.” While this might initially *seem* as though considering adding modes might make sense—at least the incorporation of a third dimension, this is taken care of by stating what those two physical features might be: how the poem sounds and how it appears *on the page*. In this way, while the definition seems to imply a potential move towards multimodality, it then reigns in such possibilities and puts a two-dimensional restraint with a speaker on it.

But if the term itself is indefinable, how is it that a collection of the things can even be made? This problem will be discussed later, but let it stand for now that the genre, like any art form and in spite of the currently conventional and accepted norms of poetry being on the printed page, has built into it a little space for infinite growth, change, experiment (even the definition above seems to suggest this). I plan to move into that space. (I say “currently” conventional because at one point—not so long ago during the paperless history of humankind—there was no printed poetry, though poetry there certainly was. Perhaps this will also be the case in the future.)

In light of all of this, one sees a tension in the world of poetry—one in which the concept of what a poem is becomes pulled between what it can be and what it could be, traditional forms and formless (forming?) forms, the defined and refined and not-yet-defined; the announced iambs of a suited scholar and the mumblings of a drunk at a bar; that which looks like a poem and that which doesn't but maybe *feels* like a poem. No tension exists without pull. Why not follow it in a forward fashion?

As such, the second answer that comes to mind for the question “Why must poetry be static?” is as deceptively simple (poetic?) as the first: it doesn't have to be.

I propose that the new poetry is a multimodal poetry. It is a poetry that is composed with awareness of and exemplifies multimodality. It may move, involve color, incorporate music, have depth, be in constant change or motion. This is not to invoke merely the decaling of a stanza onto a wooden box or plane, however—an element of craft that has been used for quite some time. Nor is it the writing of poetry in response to a work of art, otherwise known as “ekphrastic poetry” that began in Ancient Greece. Rather, it is a poetry that seeks to challenge perceptions of poetry and poet and in doing so, redefines itself. It is a poetry that leaps off the page, but not simply for the sake of doing so.

This paper aims to provide a record of how this audacious idea came to be for this particular poet/artist, some support for its reasonability, and the movement of this poet/artist into the exploration of what will be referred to as “space poems.” More specifically, after reviewing an initial personal background of the exploration, it will then progress into a discussion of how a binary understanding of language and visuals morphed into an inclusive multimodal approach. Next, it will discuss how this approach found purpose within the context of poetry itself. A reminder of means and ends then leads to consideration of multimodality in one’s process, and this is followed by concerns and counter-arguments. Some of these concerns are then connected to two artist interviews, one of which will reveal that others have undertaken this poetic endeavor to some extent already. Finally, my own explorations and plans for “space poems” that aim to meet this lofty goal of challenging genre conventions are considered in a narrative of my process and idea development. This narrative will detail how awareness of multimodality brought about changes in my own understanding of what a space poem is or could be. Lastly, I will close with a consideration of some future plans for continued exploration.

Personal Background: Sources of Interest, Motivated Wanderings

How exactly did I end up caring about exploring these so-called “space poems?” This exploration has a clear personal impetus as well, and it is worth describing the journey thus far in that it will help to illustrate how this work itself has provided a conceptual and linguistic basis for my ending up here, at this point of exploration in a “new” poetry. As a

somewhat eclectic artist—a writer, builder of sculptures, filmmaker, and even musician—I have often found myself drawn towards projects that allow me to combine these interests. My own movement towards this project and exploration has been a rather organic synthesis of my experiences while completing the Critical and Creative Thinking at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

In fact, a consideration of two projects completed in the first course of the program might provide a meaningful glimpse of a creator making use of multiple modes, but not doing so with an awareness of how they might interact. The first of these was an ancillary component of a biographical project completed on Jim Henson. Given the requirement that we could not present our projects as ourselves, as an homage to Henson’s risk-taking, open-mindedness, optimism and combined use of image and music, as well as his innovations and development of puppetry, I created TREMIK, who claims to be the opposite of all these. The result of this kernel of an idea was a product that involved more modes than I had ever used in a single project before: I built a puppet from scratch, filmed the puppet actually driving my car, wrote a script for the filming, adlibbed other portions of the film, involved my friends in the filming, and even found myself explaining a scene to a police officer who thought there was something wrong as we filmed in a Somerville parking lot. Finally, I performed the puppet live for the class, including the film (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwI7wXJ48Mc>) as a segment of the performance.

However, while this piece managed to combine a variety of modes, it did so in the fashion of what had been learned about Jim Henson, a champion of the combination of images and sound/music. As a result, the multimodality was done without being aware of how the modes were necessarily affecting one another. Though this may have partially been due to a lack of my own experience in filming with a puppet, it was also true that I hadn’t considered *how* I was using film to emphasize language, or vice versa.

A final piece I created in that same “Creative Thinking” course was titled, “The Sky That Wouldn’t Fit.” This is a narrative poem in a storyboard fashion that considers the barriers we sometimes create due to our distorted perceptions of how others see us. It also displays another interesting mixture of modes. This time, the product was a solution for my purposefully seeking a means of combining interests in story-telling, the use of language in a narrative poetic form, and the combination of sequential illustrations and

color (it also made use of minified forms—each picture is about two inches by two-and-a-half inches—another mode that I’ve always found intriguing). In this particular project, upon reflection, I see that I sometimes made use of the interaction of the visual and verbal modes. Perhaps this was a result of my having more confidence in both modes (as opposed to film as in the prior project). That said, this combination of modes was done in such that the images were created in support of the words (having a kind of “anchoring” effect as will be discussed more later on), as opposed to the two modes necessarily relying on each other or always adding some significant meaning to each other. In this way, the text of the work can be read by itself and still make a coherent narrative, but the visuals, if read in a similar fashion, fail to make a coherent story in and of themselves. It seems reasonable to conclude that this was the result of my having written the entire text out first, the breaking it into lines which I would illustrate, partially dictated by the exact number of squares I wanted to have on the completed poster. (See Appendix G for some samples.) It didn’t occur to me at that time that an awareness of multimodality during the process of composing the piece may have affected the outcome in such a way that the verbal and visual characteristics might have been more symbiotic and perhaps even more meaningfully integrated. It will be seen later on that it is this kind of binary thinking could be understood as a basis for the close-minded thinking that visuals are only used as a “crutch” for language that simply doesn’t stand up to the task. The fact of the matter is that—and it seems reasonable to state that some poets might agree—language doesn’t always fit the bill, anyways—that poetry itself might have been derived from a frustration with the shortcomings of the conventions of literal and structured prose.

Closer to the end of my trajectory through the program, two more recent projects display well how this combination was done, as well as some of the limits in my thinking that I wasn’t even aware of at the time. Over a year ago, as part of a final project in a course on metacognition, I constructed the piece depicted in Appendix A, “Smoky Wonder.” This piece consists of a short poem composed as a collage from cuttings of vintage postcards. It is made with paper, wood, glue and paint. It makes use of collage, color, language, and depth. However, it does these things in a somewhat haphazard way. This is not imply that the piece lacks meaning, but that the degree of meaning might have been increased, or given more depth itself, had the arrangement been done with greater mindfulness of the

interaction of its modes. When the piece was displayed to the class, I recall being asked what the boat of people in the foreground might be, or how they work in the piece overall. I had no response whatsoever! I didn't know how to describe what I had done, I didn't know why I had done it, and I didn't know how I would convey these ideas to someone else. I hadn't thought about what the language did to or with the visual as a whole, and I didn't know what the depth, color, and illustrations did for the language. This isn't to say that every work of art needs to be explained in order to be enjoyed, or that an artist is necessarily even responsible for explaining or providing insight into his or her own work. Nor is it meant to imply that art can't be created haphazardly, or with a kind of purposeful haphazardness, or a kind of planned play. What it led me to consider was how my thinking in the development of the piece had affected the final outcome itself and how I thought about it. One might even consider the presentation of the piece and dialogue within the class about it as an additional mode for the work—an aspect that changed my own understanding of the piece while others built theirs as well. That said, at the time, the possibility that the piece I carried to class wasn't finished never actually occurred to me—I had simply built something and presented it. Indeed, if anything, the construction of the piece was merely a process of elaboration, of adding things on in a way that “looked good” or “felt right” to me. Such intuition is important, of course (as Patti Harris said in our interview—one needs to know “when to stop”), but how might the work have changed if I had considered how these modes interacted? How might the final product have changed if I held off closure, reconsidered when to “stop,” and considered the various modes I was using?

A subsequent work, completed independently of my studies, depicted in Appendix B and titled “Postage 1½¢ Without Message,” displays a somewhat similar effort in that it combined various modes and required a good deal of problem-solving in its construction, but differed in my mindfulness while constructing. This piece included a poem that was composed by organizing cutouts from vintage postcards, but the arrangement went through several drafts. And it wasn't until I had determined that the concrete subject of the poem would be Niagara Falls that I then wanted to somehow represent the movement of the water falling. Not sure how to build direct top to bottom flow, I thought of the possibility of using a movement mechanism of a music box I already had. As such, the

poem spins as one reads down. In this way, some of the chaotic and powerful energy of the waterfall might be conveyed—neither the poem nor Niagara Falls is going to be stopped by its viewer!

In this piece, I see myself moving towards a different kind of process in my thinking—one which takes into account how the different modes might support each other or emphasize meaning. However, I didn't exactly *know* what I was doing. My purpose, in retrospect, stopped at building and creating and combining things that otherwise wouldn't normally go together. Beyond this, despite an ability to narrate the development of the piece, I had no means of discussing the piece as a work of art.

What I was in search of was a means of “codeswitching”—the ability to transition my thinking between that of artist and that of critic. In “Using Language as a Tool for Clearer Meaning in Art,” Eubanks states that although the production of art may rely on calling upon the unconscious mind and inspiration, and that the analytic nature of codeswitching may seem to go against this idea, “when examined from the perspective of creativity theory, codeswitching leads to verification. ...Verification...is the last stage, following preparation, incubation, and illumination. ...[verification] can involve how the creative act, or work of art...is seen or decoded by its maker who has taken the perspective of the art critic” (14). Although Eubanks herself sees this decoding as the transfer of visual to verbal thinking, what matters in the context of this paper is an ability to develop language to describe one's work—it's purpose—the work of the work, and thus the work of the artist. How would I discuss a work that already incorporates verbal language along with the visual? How does one even refer to such a work, nevermind its purpose?

In a fortuitous twist, I was then able to take a graduate course on more traditional aspects of reading and writing poetry, which certainly encouraged and developed my poetic sensibilities, but left it up to me to explore what more varied multimodality might bring to a poem, a poet, and poetry. In addition to my desire to continue to explore how I can create products that synthesize a variety of my interests, I found myself inspired to consider how this could be applied to poetry itself. What limits seem to exist in this field that often prides itself on testing boundaries? What determines whether or not something is considered a poem? How might this work be interpreted as a poem that is challenging ideas of what a poem is? Is there a need for a new term for this kind of poetry? In haste, I

found myself referring to some of the pieces mentioned here as sculptures, or as poetic sculptures, but is that what they are? And if I called it something new (a “space poem,” perhaps) would that in fact alienate some of my audience? Would it then be considered neither a poem nor a sculpture? Did this matter? I needed language to describe what I was doing with language.

Initial Understanding—From Visual vs. Verbal to Concepts of Multimodality

The approach that I took in the previously described projects was one that understood, for the most part, the different modes I was working with as being disparate and not necessarily related. Only in the latter piece did I think to consider the movement of the poem, and at that I settled for the mechanism that was available to me. Even as it was a music box mechanism, I didn’t even consider how the song being played would influence the audience’s perception and experience of the piece as a whole. In short, I understood language and visual matter as being quite disparate: they were two modes that worked by clarifying or emphasizing aspects of each other, and a good deal of research analyzes them as such. Indeed, a careful consideration of scholarly literature reveals a possible classification of understandings: some theorists see the visual and the linguistic as very disparate entities (or ways of thinking) with qualitative differences that might be used to clarify each other’s meaning; others understand visual art as being a language that can stand on its own; still others understand these two modes as being part of a broader multimodal understanding of all art and/or communication. It wasn’t until I encountered this latter concept in my research that my understanding of art changed considerably.

Visual Vs. Verbal

The initial group of readings that were perused revealed that visual and verbal work has for some time been seen as two disparate modes, and does so to such an extent that the two are compared regarding the extent to which they may effectively communicate an idea.

An initial foray into the consideration of the visual arts and language my very lead one into the seminal work *Visual Thinking*, by Rudolf Arnheim. Despite being written in 1967, this remains a popular work that considers how visual and verbal language compare and contrast. Arnheim quite strongly states that verbal thinking alone is essentially “thoughtless thinking”: “the automatic recourse to connections retrieved from storage. It is useful but sterile” (232). He goes on to explain that language is better understood as a means for enabling our visual thinking: “What makes language so valuable for thinking...must be the help that words lend to thinking while it operates in a more appropriate medium, such as visual imagery” (232). With words to label abstract concepts, such concepts are able to be held more firmly (238). In light of this understanding, “the function of language is essentially...stabilizing, and therefore it also tends, negatively, to make cognition static and immobile” (244). While these concepts might seem to imply a kind of working relationship between visual and verbal thinking, it does so with a mindset that the two are somehow ultimately qualitatively different—the verbal exists in order to support the visual, which is “enormously superior because it offers structural equivalents to all characteristics of objects, events, relations” (232). The visual medium provides for “shapes in two-dimensional and three-dimensional space, as compared with the one-dimensional sequence of verbal language” (232). In “Art Means Language,” Ann Richardson echoes these ideas, albeit with less emphasis on superiority: “the visual mode of communication differs from the slower development of concepts acquired by decoding symbols on the printed page. Perception of the visual image is faster than interpretation of complex language and assessment of its significance. Words are cumulative in effect; art is frequently direct, instantaneous” (10).

No doubt, one might be able to divide works into the visual and verbal modes, and one can understand that this way of seeing the two modes isn’t inherently doing a disservice to the works or the modes. One can understand that some concept or feeling might, for a so-called visual artist, be better expressed through a painting or sculpture. Likewise, for a so-called poet, that same feeling might be better expressed in a poem. What this binary thinking excludes, however, is that that painting or sculpture will or will not have a title, will be marked by the artist’s name or “anonymous,” and will appear in the context of a particular space and time, with additional descriptions and information

perhaps on a placard at its side. Likewise, the poem will appear on some surface, perhaps on a page, with a certain kind of paper, in a certain font and font-size, read or heard in a certain context. In short, the thinking that Arnheim eloquently expresses fails to place these modes within a greater (and unavoidable) context of multimodality, and thus doesn't seem to recognize that the two are always inherently present in any work of art.

Visual Art as Language

Viennese art critic Alois Reigl once stated in a lecture in 1899, "Every work of art speaks its own artistic language, even though the elements of art are assuredly different from those of speech" (qtd. in Dynes 6). In this sense, a second grouping of understandings of how visuals and language interact might be seen as that which actually contends visuals as having their own language, as in fact *being* a language unto themselves, and as being capable of making statements or what Elizabeth Saenger refers to as "propositions" or statements. Saenger begins her essay titled "On Paintings and Propositions: A New Approach to Syntax in the Visual Arts" by stating that "the issue of whether art can express propositions is a controversial one" (353). Despite the opinion that a work such as Picasso's *Guernica* may seem assertively anti-war, she acknowledges that "arguments for construing particular works as propositions have not convinced many writers, who argue that art lacks the formal syntax necessary to embody propositions" (353). However, she responds to this by citing examples of works that "embody a proposition by functioning as a visual proof of contradiction" or as a "conjunction" or as a "conditional" (353-4). She goes on to cite several pieces of art that visual art may work as a statement even if lacking the "formal structure" needed for a proposition: "First, a work may create a paradox that serves as a counterexample to pre-existing conceptions about art. ...Second, a work may point out limitations or ironies in pre-existing solutions to the problem of visual representation" (354). Without citing here the many pieces she considers, it is worth acknowledging Saenger's argument that visual art in and of itself is capable of saying something meaningful. In "Art is a Visual Language," agreeing with Saenger and echoing Arnheim, Paula Eubanks acknowledges that although "art may lack enough agreed upon conventions to be considered a conventional language system of signals, and accepted as a language universally," this issue fails to "prevent artists from viewing art as a language, one that is

superior to words” (32). Taking this premise into account, one might even imagine the possibility of works of art communicating or responding to each other—this might be found in a ekphrastic poem that responds to a work (such as Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn”) or a work that directly makes use of another work such as Duchamp’s *L.H.O.O.Q.* which consists of a cheap postcard version of the *Mona Lisa* with a moustache and beard colored over the work in pencil, as well as a new title that makes use of a somewhat raunchy pun. In this case, though, one might consider Duchamp’s work as a kind of response to the original that relies heavily on taking into account the multimodal context of the original work’s cultural significance and even some of the idolatry of its viewers. That said, it can be seen that we end up once again considering the multiple modes of a work.

As such, as interesting as this may be, the concept that visuals can work without elements of verbal language is not necessarily of the utmost importance in this paper (what’s more, it might be argued that it’s impossible, anyways). Whether or not visuals can make propositions isn’t the question here. This is not said out of insecurity regarding the possibility that multimodality is “not needed” or futile if visuals already make propositions by themselves. Rather, this concept is important in that it points out a tendency to ignore the very real presence of verbal language and/or additional modes in *all* art, anyways—the actual presence of multimodality in *any* piece. In other words, in understanding art as superior to verbal language, and in understanding art as a language in and of itself, these authors fail to consider the possibility that works of art may in fact incorporate both visual and verbal modes, along with a variety of others.

Perhaps even more interesting is that this perception of visual and verbal language is in fact self-serving and limiting in the understanding that it claims visual art to be such a champion of. In “Art Means Language,” Ann S. Richardson writes about the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and that “we are limited by the structure of language, trapped in the Indo-European languages by verb tenses as time concepts and the tidy construction of equations, using the verb *to be*. This cultural dominance of linguistic structure forces Aristotelian reasoning: it’s either black or white, yes or no, art or language, never both” (11). Even while stating the limitations of verbal language, however, Richardson seems to still be caught in binary reasoning—she fails to consider art that is *multimodal*. Never moving

beyond the question of whether or not art is or isn't language, the consideration of art that makes use of verbal language in different ways is never broached.

Visuals and Language in Multimodality

But that doesn't mean it hasn't been considered elsewhere! A final classification here is of theorists who have begun to explore the concept of multimodality—that which sees visual and verbal modes as part of a larger multimodal understanding of any work of art. In “Visual Culture Isn't Just Visual: Multiliteracy, Multimodality, and Meaning,” Paul Duncum begins by declaring that “there are no exclusively visual sites. All cultural sites that involve imagery include various ratios of other communicative modes and many employ more than vision” (252). Here, finally, we have recognition that understanding various modes as disparate entities might be reasonable, but to not then place them within the overarching context of a multimodal understanding is shortsighted. Duncum recognizes that “Both Arnheim (1969) and Goodman (1968) argued that thinking is domain specific.... For them, visual and verbal thinking were... separate” (257). As this article places this issue in the context of art education, Duncum notes that this thinking has only been enabled in art education because it actually ignored the multimodal and cultural meaning of a work: “Art educators have focused exclusively on the visual nature of cultural sites only by excluding what is patently nonvisual in any actual use of the material” (258). In this sense, it was often overlooked that the broader cultural meaning of a work “was always reliant on an interaction between people's prior knowledge, the artifact, and its title” (258). Even when this information seems scant, the verbal has a real effect on the work's meaning: “Even when there is the most minimal information provided—the artist's name, the title of the work, its media and its date—meaning is provided in part through language, or rather through what people make of the interaction between the language used and the artifact” (259). Perhaps as a more explicit example, Duncum refers to the interplay of modes in that “One of the most common uses of words and music in relation to pictures is to help *anchor* the meaning of pictures. ...and anchoring between image and text works both ways” (256). For instance, if one happens to see an image of a fire-breathing dragon, the caption to the image can adjust how the image is perceived. Consider a caption of

“Horror engulfs the small village!” to one of “Consuming raw or uncooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of food borne illness.” The image and the caption here work in tandem to create the whole effect.

Much of this thinking is echoed in Gunther Kress’ *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. He begins this work with a clear explanation of multimodality via example, referring to a grocery store parking sign that incorporates color, language, and a map with an arrow. He wonders:

If writing by itself would not work, could the sign work with image alone? Well, just possibly, maybe. Writing and image and colour lend themselves to doing different kinds of semiotic work; each has its distinct potentials for meaning – and, in this case, image may just have the edge over writing. And that, in a nutshell – and, in a way, as simple as that – is the argument for taking ‘multimodality’ as the normal state of human communication.

Important to note here as well is that while one mode may in some way “fill the gaps” that are left by whatever semiotic limitations occur in another mode, modes are not necessarily set forms for giving meaning worldwide and across cultures. Rather, Kress states that “modes are the result of a social and historical shaping of materials chosen by a society for representation: there is no reason to assume that the mode of gesture in Culture 1 covers the same ‘area’ or the same concerns, or is used for the same purposes and meanings as the mode of gesture in Culture 2.” Avoiding such an assumption, it’s important to remember that “societies have modal preferences” and “the ‘reach’ of modes varies from culture to culture.”

Kress goes on to discuss how this concept is bringing about changes in the teaching of academic disciplines, which once had only particular modes as their focus (art had image, psychology had gesture):

One difference is that...now there is an attempt to bring all means of making meaning together under one theoretical roof, as part of a single field in a unified account, a unifying theory. A further reason, quite simply and yet most powerful of

all, is this: the world of communication has changed and is changing still; and the reasons for that lie in a vast web of intertwined social, economic, cultural and technological changes.

In short, theory is moving towards thinking in multimodal ways because it is reflecting various changes in society. As Kress states, insofar as a mode is a “socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning,” visuals, verbal language, composition, music, speech, three-dimensional objects, and moving image (among others) are examples of modes. The multimodal approach allows for a choice among these modes based on the rhetorical situation and available medium. In addition, a multimodal approach can allow for an artist to communicate beyond the means of the mode of language alone. In this case, other modes *can* make up for what language is unable to accomplish alone.

As a result of this journey through theory, my original specific concern with the use of language in visual art, and the aim to convince an audience that the two can be used as symbiotic aspects of a work of art, was altered—or perhaps replaced—by a new understanding of art itself as being inherently multimodal—all art involves the use of more than one mode, be it language, music, movement, color, and so on, due to the fact that art is ultimately created within a social context with many facets. In addition, instead of seeing a multimodal approach to my creations as some kind of crutch on which my expression was leaning, I can understand that “a multimodal approach to representation offers a choice of modes,” and that “depending on the rhetorical requirements and the media involved, there are different possibilities” (Kress).

But besides understanding this concept and gaining language to describe what I might be doing in my work, to what extent would the concept itself enable my process? What, in other words, was all of this research for? If multimodality might be considered a kind of thinking disposition, a focus of one’s thought, what aim was it working towards for me? How could this speed be turned into velocity? As such, barriers remained in the sense of feeling I lacked an overarching purpose for my work, and that as such, I wasn’t quite ready to get started beyond some brainstormed ideas that I usually do anyways. Granted, there’s no dictum that states one needs a purpose, but such thinking brings us back to the

idea that one determines one's own purpose anyways. I felt I needed a purpose, so I needed a purpose. Indeed, there's an element of confidence here. As an artist who has yet to enter the world of art shows and sharing, and as a poet who has yet to enter the published world of poetry, being unique and meaningful in both concept and product was something that aids in my own confidence. In light of the pressures of being labeled as poet, artist, teacher, or none, I have sought to create my own space in the space poem in which I can be all of the above. What's more, instead of making an army of similar sculptures, I felt I needed to adjust, change, make progress in my own mind, in order to take what I had done and build on it both conceptually and literally. How could I move forward in my exploration? Would multimodality somehow allow for the originality I wanted to have in my work, and resultant interest and curiosity to explore it?

A Why for the How: Finding A Purpose for Multimodality—What a Poem Is, and Problems between Poetry and Reality

At this point, I became most concerned with how multimodality might help an artist achieve his or her purpose. But what would that purpose be? What I needed to realize was that my own work, in fact, didn't have a purpose that I could state—the prospect or possibility of having to write an artist statement seemed daunting to me. It was, in fact, the use of multimodal activities—a combination of concept mapping and journaling—that led me back to the realm of poetry. If all creations are multimodal, how might my awareness of that multimodality enable me to more meaningfully choose and use multiple modes in my work, in order to more profoundly expand and challenge the boundaries of poetry?

Of course, this begs the question of whether or not any boundaries actually exist in poetry in the first place. One possibility that presents itself immediately is to look at some attempts to define what poetry is, what a poem is. This is not a new issue or task—the history of defining poetry is filled with subjectivity and ambiguity—poems are personal, after all. If one begins at the earlier part of the twentieth century, he or she might happen upon Edgar Lee Masters' 1915 indication of the degree to which the genre is flexible: "the complete artist must accept whatever forms are necessary to achieve the poetical effect.

...If it ripples, use a villanelle; if it roars, give us words so used that the roar is not lost. And in addition to this these sticklers for the old ways forget that the old forms were themselves innovations at one time" (307-8). Masters' thinking here might be seen as quite open-minded: poets are not just poets but "artists," and artists ought to use whatever means necessary to achieve a "poetical effect." That said, Masters fails to see the possibility of a poem being multimodal—if a poem "ripples" could it actually "ripple" in space and time? Could the reading aloud of the poem actually convey a sense of rippling? Still, his interpretation is noticeably more flexible than that found in Petronius Arbiter's 1918 definition of a poem: "A poem is an expression of thought and emotion, in a written language, of a more or less rhythmic form; and a poem is great in ratio of its power of stirring the highest emotions of the largest number of people for the longest period of time" (506). Not only does this definition lean towards a quantification of abstract "emotions," but it also states that a poem must be "written" and "more or less rhythmic," indicating a conservative approach to the genre, one which might even deny the existence of poetry that has no structured meter (such as what is referred to as free verse). Fast-forwarding to 2007, one finds the essay "What is a Poem?" in which Brett Bourbon moves through a variety of considerations of what makes a poem, only to find himself, in some ways right where he started:

Can we say what poetry is? We can say what poetry we like, what poetry has been read, what poetry has gathered its authority into how we have been trained to approach it—or ignore it. We can describe the poetic as that which we discover in beauty, in metaphor, in hope and imagination, in love—or we can call these something else and dismiss poetry as the fan of a fire only imagined, only working on those deluded by sophistry. What one person calls poetry another may call noise; most will care little for any poetry but that which they hear in songs they like or remember. ...the possibilities of poetry, the promise and demand of words that take more than they seem to give, or give more than we can at first understand, exceeds the limits of scholarship and academic criticism. (42-3)

Despite this challenging concept—that what a poem is depends on our ideas of what a poem is—and the possibility that it may have essentially endless different definitions, one doesn't have to look far to find barriers in the world of poetry—they reveal themselves in various arenas.

Consider my own experience in a recent course on reading and writing poetry, in which poems were written on a page, read from a page, or read aloud (performed) from the page. It occurred to me, after delving into multimodality, that no attention was given to poems literally written elsewhere, meaningfully incorporating other modes, or how their language may have interacted with other modes beyond that of spoken word. This is not to imply that the course was lacking—indeed, it was quite significant in my own growth as a poet, and one could argue that there is a skill that needs to be developed with regard to the two-dimensional language on a page before it might be ever considered multimodal. However, that argument implies that the incorporation of other modes is not a part of the initial writing of the poem, but rather some kind of addendum—a mere aesthetic choice. The manipulation of letters and words and punctuation on the page remained an act of left or right, up or down, never far or near, loud or soft, blue or red. And this is not to say that simply increasing modality increases the quality of a work—an equally misguided assumption. There are many choices in poetry already without additional modes (stanza structure, line breaks, sound devices, and so on), and the quantity of these within a poem doesn't determine the poem's worth. However, what the aim is here is to state that a multimodal poetry may in fact make for a better fit in a world that is increasingly multimodal and aware of its being so. It is not, then, a question of quantity, but a question of craft—a question of awareness in communication. One can imagine, for instance, a poet quite aware of multimodality who then chooses to still compose a poem on a page and not through the use of other modes. In this sense, the choices still have meaning, and the poem is, by negation, still multimodal.

Needless to say, there remain plenty of barriers in the domain of poetry to such thinking. Particularly strong among these is the idea that the use of poetry in visual art is in fact the domain of visual art. This was found to be true as well through an interview with artist Mark Mendel's. Here he discusses his encounter with such barriers when he

began to paint haikus on the sides of barns instead of simply submitting them to “little magazines”:

I thought, you know, there’s something stupid about writing these poems and sending them off to some little magazine, and they may accept them and they don’t pay any money and then they print them in a magazine that nobody sees. Why don’t I just go outside and paint my poetry on buildings?

So I started painting poems on barns in Maine, and those were my first ones that I did. And I painted a poem on a barn that’s still there to this day after all these years, and that was like ’74. Still there on that barn. And I learned a lot from that. It changed my whole life. And my poetry friend said to me, “Well that’s not poetry. It’s not in a book.” I’m like, “Well it’s the same words. You know, I started out on a piece of paper.” They’re like, “Yeah, but it can’t, it can’t stand up to the cold light of the printed page.” That’s the way they spoke. And also you can only put short poems up there. And it depends on the barn. The barn is doing the work. And this was kind of stunning to me. These were my friends who were telling me my work was shit, you know. But I was starting to make new friends who were visual artists and saw things differently and thought in a visual way. And the visual artists said, by thinking in a visual way, when you sent a poem to a magazine, you would type it on a typewriter, which was a specific medium thing, and you would put it in an envelope and send it with a stamp on it to some editor and he would take it out and he would read it, and he would send it to a typesetter or whatever.

But when you’re painting a poem on a barn, you have to make visual decisions that are very important. You have to decide how big are the letters and what font will I use and what kind of paint and what barn will I choose? So you’re making all these visual decisions. So when you’re making visual decisions about your artwork, you’re a visual artist. Duh. Right? So my visual artist friends said, “Well...” I said, “Well, you know, nobody says, people say it’s not poetry. It’s no good, you know.” And they said, “Well fuck it. It’s visual art. ...So call it visual art.” I said, “Okay.” So now I’m a visual artist. I’m not a poet anymore.

So, but it was the same text, right?

It becomes clear here that the response to a series of haikus painted on barns revealed general conceptions of poetry having to be put to the test of “the cold light of the printed page.” Poems, in this sense, belong on paper, in books—not elsewhere, and certainly not in a context or form that made multimodality more evident. Despite using the same text, the text was no longer considered a poem—at least not by his poet friends. Mendel even made a point about a common practice or convention that works should be titled, referencing a kind of stratification that titles bring about at readings, a means of separating poet and audience, of glorifying the poet, a kind of vanity:

...I didn't sign my barn works. You would just sit and there were no titles. I've started to believe titles in poetry are really archaic.

You know, you have this...guy in a tweed coat, a woman in a tweed coat who walks up to the podium and says, “This is a poem I wrote about my thing, you know, when I did this and when I did that and I did that and I...” you know and it's I, I, I, I, I, I, I. And the title is, and here's the title of the poem, and to me the title is like this 19th century, 20th century kind of archaic thing where it's like a flourish, like a musical flourish of trumpets. You know, the king walks into the room and the trumpeters play this ba-da-da-da-da, “The king has arrived,” and to me the title is maybe it's a flourish.

Mark Mendel's “Barn Poems” were completed in 1982, which might lead to an assumption that things have probably changed since then. However, John Barr's ideas expressed in his essay “American Poetry in the New Century” suggest that they haven't in that the world of poetry is ready for a new kind of poetry. Not only does Barr recognize the stultifying effects of the barriers of understanding poetry as only that which appears on the page of a book sold in a bookstore, but also that much of the poetry today doesn't reflect the reality in which it exists:

Poetry in this country is ready for something new. ...American poetry is ready for something new because our poets have been writing in the same way for a long time now. There is fatigue, something stagnant about the poetry being written today. ...A new poetry becomes necessary not because we want one, but because the way poets have learned to write no longer captures the way things are, how things have changed. Reality outgrows the art form: the art form is no longer equal to the reality around it. (433)

Accordingly, Barr recognizes the absence of poetry from our daily lives (lived in that reality): “Contemporary poetry’s striking absence from the public dialogues of our day, from the high school classroom, from bookstores, and from mainstream media, is evidence of a people in whose mind poetry is missing and unmissed” (434). This absence, however, is not necessarily the fault of the so-called “public” but rather the accessibility of the poetry itself:

As a friend puts it, our culture conspires to deny us our privacy, the quiet time it takes to read a poem. But I don’t agree. The human mind is a marketplace, especially when it comes to selecting one’s entertainment. ...A study completed earlier this year, commissioned by the Poetry Foundation and conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, finds that a strong majority of readers in this country think well of poetry and will read it when they see it. (Barr 4)

In this way, expecting the public to come to poetry might be a shortsighted approach. Instead, the poetry—the poet artist—can work to adjust poetry itself in order to bring it to the public. As a result, it makes sense to guess that “the place to look for the next poetry is probably not where you might look first” (Barr 435). Indeed, perhaps it won’t even incorporate the modes one expects.

Or that we might think it “should.” Referring specifically to the multimodality of a lecturer’s class, Kress writes that a multimodal “ensemble offers a ground which, in its multimodal orchestration is multiply meaningful; and so the effects for the students...are difficult to predict. The ensemble offers a choice of routes of meaning-making in

interpretation, which the students can take up according to their interests.” In this sense, the multimodal delivery allows for the greatest adaptation to the audience’s needs, understandings, and personal interpretations. While one might say that a multimodal approach in poetry might somehow mean that the original meaning of the poem ultimately becomes distorted and misinterpreted, honesty allows for a realization that this frequently happens in poetry already (and, of course, art as a whole).

A final point is worth making here. Kress writes that there are simply “domains beyond the reach of language, where it is insufficient, where semiotic-conceptual work has to be and is done by means of other modes.” However ironic it might seem to say, could it be the case that the genre of poetry itself—that which relies on and makes art of language—could in some ways be challenged to the point of being a domain in which that language by itself is not sufficient? (Will this paper simply dissipate into thin air now?!) I would not pretend to have a yes or no answer; instead, I might ask, “does it matter?” What regulation sits upon a mountain declaring that such a shortcoming is needed in the world of poetry in order to move it into multimodality, anyways? Poetic license is the only rule, it seems, and that is essentially that there are no rules. Any imposition of such guidelines is simply up to the leaders of the domain in a particular place and time, and these leaders are always changing, anyways. I might listen to such restrictions and simply point out to starry space and cite deep time as the only means of regulation, and it really couldn’t care less. We hurl with optimism towards change, into experiment, through space.

A Coming Together of Multimodality and Poetry

A synthesis can now occur between the concept of increased awareness of multimodality and the needs of the “world of poetry.” Considering together Gunther Kress’ reason for increased consideration of multimodality—namely that the world has changed and so has our understanding of communication in it—and Barr’s opinion that poetry no longer seems to be tapping into the greater public sphere but instead seems “stagnant” despite the fact that people will read it “when they see it,” it is intriguing to consider the possibility that the former concept can respond to the problem of the latter. In other

words, consciously incorporating multimodality in poetry, challenging standard concepts of poetry as that which appears on the page, can be a means for changing public perceptions of what poetry—indeed, a poem—actually is, can challenge perceptions that see poetry as something only bound in books or heard in a performance, and can bring poetry towards greater prominence in the public sphere itself.

Admittedly, this is not a completely revolutionary idea. The truth is that this has, to some extent, been done before, as will be made clear through the referencing of some works and artists in subsequent sections. That said, it might be argued that the degree to which an idea is “revolutionary” within its culture might be dependent upon the degree to which the society in which it takes place is in fact ready for such a revolution. The issue of one’s work catching on in time and place also arose in the interview with Mark Mendel, who expressed that not only did his work not work in an economic sense at that time, but that now there seems to be renewed interest in it:

What I’m finding now, the other thing was I should say I just felt there wasn’t any interest in my work. I mean it didn’t, you couldn’t put it in a gallery. You know, I’m flying an airplane through the sky with a poem. I didn’t have anything to sell. And that was okay, but I needed to make a living...

And the last couple years I’m starting to get some commissions to work, and I’m also finding a new audience with a younger generation. It’s like nobody got what I was doing back then, and now there’s an artist who called me, who came up. He’s a guy in L.A. and New York, and he said to me, “You know, what you were doing then now they call it interventions.” We called it environmental art. I called it environmental poetry, which was poetry out on the streets.

If John Barr’s ideas hold weight, one might understand this recent interest in Mendel’s work as an indication that the world of poetry might indeed be ready for poetry off the page—a multimodal poetry: what I will be calling “space poems.”

Slowing Down in a World of End-Gaining: Thinking Through Multimodality to Arrive at a New Poetry

Before moving forward it is important to acknowledge that my personal discovery of multimodality and an initial purpose for my work will not necessarily alone guarantee an outcome that challenges common perceptions of poetry. I state this here in order to indicate that there is a mindfulness needed in the development of an idea and project that can better lead to an end product that accomplishes a goal. As John Barr states, “Technical innovation for its own sake is like the tail that tries to wag the dog” (435). Simply consciously incorporating multimodality would result in poetry that fails to connect with any audience. It would be, for instance, quite the shortcoming, if my product was simply composed of a box with a line of clichéd poetry glued onto it. Quite a few home decorations at the local department store might have such an appearance. These do not challenge commonly held definitions of poetry. They might be said to challenge nothing, in fact, and that may be just as well if it’s not their purpose to do so. Such works might even indicate thinking on the part of their creator, and application of craftsmanship, but it might be well assumed that such works are meant to provide aesthetic support within a context that is anything but threatening. In fact, to declare that such works challenge ideas of what poetry is would exemplify, in this case, the concept and procedure of “end-gaining,” as opposed to the “means-whereby” principle, both concepts developed by F.M. Alexander.

Pedro de Alcantara’s work, *Indirect Procedures: A Musician’s Guide to the Alexander Technique* provides an excellent explanation of both of these concepts. As Alcantara explains, “to go directly for an end...causes a misuse of the self...which makes the end unattainable” (19). Examples of end-gaining are all around us, such as “Weight-loss diets are end-gaining; a healthy diet helps you attain your ideal weight, but a weight-loss diet is often unhealthy. It is end-gaining to take medicaments with the sole purpose of suppressing symptoms of disease. To blame others for the results of your own actions is to end-gain” (20). In short, end-gaining displays that an individual doesn’t see that the means to an end in fact affect the ability to reach that end itself.

The opposite of end-gaining is the “means-whereby” principle. In essence, this principle call for an individual to “create and use the best possible means to achieve any given end. This involves the ability to wait and make reasoned choices before acting, the awareness of your own use at all times, and the willingness to give up achieving your ends by direct means” (20). To apply this concept here, without understanding it as a mindful act of planned play, simply tacking on modes to build a final product that is multimodal would be an example of end-gaining. In opposition to this, the conscious awareness and use of multimodality in one’s creative process and the development of an idea could result in a work that not only makes meaningful use of such modes, but does so in such a way that can address other goals, such as that of challenging conventional ideas about poetry.

With this in mind, it is not only the end product that is of concern here. What also needs to be addressed are the barriers in my own thinking regarding poetry (and perhaps my creative process)—those that might be addressed through the use of multimodality in my process. An interview with artist Patti Harris made the benefits of this kind of thinking clear (see an example of her work in Appendix E). Although Harris’ doesn’t declare part of her purpose as being to challenge genre conventions, many of her pieces actually do. She has created amazing collages of mixed media, and her process itself benefits from multimodal practices. The result is mixed media sculptures, three-dimensional collage that combines materials of a variety of forms in flexible ways. A postcard, for instance might be used to indicate or symbolize communication within the context of a larger piece.

Despite the fact that she doesn’t consciously address or consider the concept of “multimodality” while constructing a piece, Harris makes use of it in a few ways in her process and does so quite consistently. For instance, when faced with a difficult project a few years ago, a sculpture created on a piece of a door, she felt the work wasn’t finished and “couldn’t figure out” what was missing or wrong with it. In response to this problem, she enrolled in a painting class, the skills of which she then applied to the project and found to allow the piece to be completed. In addition, Harris mentioned that she listens to music as she works, goes on walks to find inspiration in nature, watches CNN and “The Price is Right.” She often takes photographs of the beach, the water, and wintery days. Although she stated that for some pieces she might have a clear idea of where it will go, and might create a two-dimensional sketch of what it will be like (such as a series of works she calls

her “Archaic series”) she also said it is important to “let the piece grow itself” instead of designing it, and that the process is “spontaneous, like a puzzle.” She stated that “sometimes it’s extremely haphazard.” In this sense, Harris makes use of a variety of modes in her process. The outcome is often a piece that leads a viewer to consider otherwise disparate pieces and kinds of media as parts of a whole.

In light of this, the section that concerns my own projects will not merely display them, but also narrate to what extent my awareness of multimodality affected my process itself and therefore the final product as currently envisioned.

Looking at What’s Been Done Before Considering What Will Be

At the risk of being somewhat obvious, it seems nonetheless important to state here that the concept of a space poem does not attempt to make a complete departure from the world of poetry. Instead, it aims to bring the genre into a new direction. A meaningful parallel might be drawn from the groundbreaking work of an artist who was mentioned earlier on in this piece, Jim Henson. In “Enhancing Creativity,” R.S. Nickerson states that ideas or products that have been deemed unusually creative “have not represented complete breaks with the past but have built upon preceding products and ideas” (393). This is exemplified by Henson’s original Muppets of the early 1960’s. When Henson showed Jerry Juhl his puppets, Juhl remembers thinking, “These things weren’t even puppets—not as I had ever seen or defined them. This guy was like a sailor who had studied the compass and found that there was a fifth direction in which one could sail” (Finch 19). While it may be seemingly ridiculous to assume that I might be able to affect a “genre” such as poetry, the creative spirit suggests that it has to start somewhere. In this sense, space poems are intended to be poems, but are intended to be different as well—to encourage adjustment in what one’s sense of what a poem is or might be.

Indeed, one can argue that multimodality is, even now, consciously being incorporated into poetry. One can consider, for instance, the work of Jenny Holzer, who, among other things, has projected onto large surfaces (such as building facades) her own written word or that of others. A collection of these “projections” can be found at the

artist's website (<http://projects.jennyholzer.com/projections>), and one is included here in Appendix C. One might also consider one of the most popular works of artist Robert Indiana, whose 1966 piece *LOVE* is the colored imaged form of that term (Appendix D). One may even consider *Plinko Poetry*, an installation by Deqing Sun and Inessah Selditz that uses a computer interface that scrolls tweets for a “plinko” chip to randomly fall over, creating a poem out of the words the chip crosses—each poem is different, created by the viewer who dropped the chip. This can currently be seen in action: <http://vimeo.com/41302632>. This work can lead audiences to question their understanding of who a poet is by actually requiring their participation in the poem's creation. Likewise, a set of randomly chosen words compiled might challenge perceptions of what a poem is. Each of these works incorporates multimodality in its own way.

Along with the work mentioned here, it is worth mentioning a few other forms and artists who might be considered as working along similar lines. In their article, “Inspired by the Poetic Moving Image,” Joanna Black and Karen Smith, who consider themselves part of the “artistic movement to ‘de-genreize’ film, video, and poetry” discuss what they term as “Video Poetry” or “Experimental Film Poetry,” in which poetry is “constructed through sequences of images that make sense when one recognizes the power of the picture in experimental film and photography. Video poetry can foster imagination in a way that other forms of poetry cannot because it embodies a wide range of virtual and real possibilities available through animation and real-time videotaping” (26).

Of the artists encountered, it was the second I interviewed—Mark Mendel—whose work came closest to what this project has been moving towards. Appendix F provides images of three different works by Mendel, each of which places a poem in a very different context and makes use of various modes. In *Four Barns*, Mendel placed four different poems on different barns, each poem referring to a different season of the year. Depicted in the appendix is that for the season of spring. This work incorporates language, color, depth, and composition. Mendel describes this project as being very democratic, a work of poetry that can be seen by anyone at any time of the day, for no cost at all. It was important to him that this be the case, as he wanted poetry to be a part of peoples' every lives, and his description here reveals that he was successful in doing so:

I mean I did a project in Minnesota where I did four barns in the town of Red Wing and I painted these poems on the barns. And those poems, one of the barns has been torn down and has been remodeled and only has half a poem, but those poems are still there 30 years later and I went there with my daughter because she went to college right near there and we drove out there and I couldn't remember where the barns were exactly, and I asked this waitress in this coffee shop, and she said, "Oh yeah, you got to see the barns," and then she knew all the poems by heart. And then they have, there's a bicycle tour of the barns, like a poetry bicycle tour, and it's really become part of the environment. And what I wanted to do when I did that, did those barn poems, I wanted it to be like architecture, like part of the environment that people see every day. It's very democratic. You don't have to be rich or poor, educated, whatever. You drive down the road and it's there, and it doesn't say, the barns, nobody's – I never said they were poems, you know. I mean the people who live there say they're poems. So it's a very democratic thing. It's not an elitist thing. It's open to the public. It's open 24 hours a day. You can read them in the moonlight, you know. It's – but it has been, the one in Maine people used to give directions. You take a left after the barn, but you only get to Blue Hill. You go down, go left – go till you see the poem on the barn and you take a left. So it's part of people's every day landscape.

And we don't, at the time I was doing these in the 70s, I thought that was really important that people could have art and poetry in their every day landscape. I mean who the hell among the working class goes to buy a poetry book and sit and read it, whereas the same working class people are confronted constantly by advertising.

Another work, *Ojos Numerosos*, accomplishes a similar goal but also incorporates movement on the part of the viewer. Mendel best describes how the piece works: "So...I had a poem that I painted all over Cambridge of a large scale, and they were like haikus but they made up a long poem, but the only way you could get the whole poem was to drive through Cambridge here and there. And finally everywhere you go, you would see it's a stanza and it added up to one big poem."

A final piece included in the appendix, *Sacrifice*, involves movement of the poem itself, literally bringing the poetry to the public by having a plane fly the work over the somewhat captive audience of the 1989 Superbowl.

While this may be a somewhat limited collection of works to consider, what it provides is a sense that the concept of multimodal poetry is not necessarily new, but not necessarily old either. In addition, we see each of these works experimenting with language and its interaction with other modes in some way, and we see Mendel challenging ideas and conventions of poetry in a rather direct way. But what could be added to this conversation of works? How might I use my awareness of multimodality in the composition of what I refer to as a “space poem”?

Thus, we move on into a narration of three projects, “space poems,” in which I work towards defining what this new form of poetry might be.

Experiences in the Workshop—Adventures in Space Poems

Despite the existence of works of poetry that make use of multimodality, several reasons exist for its continued development, as well as for exploration my part. First, the fact that something has in some way been done before is not necessarily reason to not explore its possibilities. One might imagine if all painters had simply decided to quit once Picasso painted *Guernica*. Additionally, the mere existence of multiple modes in a piece does not indicate that the piece makes meaningful use of said modes, or that the content of the modes actually work together. What makes a space poem different from other poems surrounded by other modes is the degree to which those modes interact. The intricacies of this form are seen here through the first two experiments, “The Red DoT” and “Tall Tree,” from which several “lessons” were gathered about the composing of space poems, and then these are applied in the experimental creation of a third space poem titled, “Sintering.”

While the larger project of a piece (later to be titled “Sintering”) that utilized film was floating around in the phases of incubation, problem identification, further brainstorming, and planning ahead, my frustration with not quite being able to start physically building the project led me to experiment with “smaller” projects that could be

completed in a shorter time frame. What occurred to me after two of these projects was that I still hadn't quite fully developed my understanding of what it meant to write a "space poem," though I might be able to say what it was. Akin to my learning that the writing of a more traditional poem on paper requires a great deal more thought, judgment, and revision than a more novice poet might think, I realized that I was learning that a space poem couldn't simply be made out of thin air either—in order to imbue the work with meaning, it required patience, resilience, risk-taking, comfort with ambiguity, and a flexibility to consider and move between modes as a work was being created. All but the last of these might be considered true for the more conventional printed form of poetry.

Two of these experiments were completed in such a way that the process itself revealed to me with some more clarity exactly what I would come to see as a process and as a product in terms of a space poem—and both resulted in completely new challenges. Insofar as one might accept the concept that what a poem is depends upon what one's idea of a poem is, these experiments—along with some of the journal writing that was done during their development—resulted in a greater understanding of what a space poem is and how it might be different from other instances in poetry when a written poem is used alongside another mode. As a result, it can subsequently be seen that my approach and understanding of the larger project referred to above was changed. For purposes of clarity, I will apply some chronology to these projects, but it is worth mentioning that the beginning and end of each was not so specific in reality, and this hints at the iterative nature of the creation of the pieces (as might be true for any creative process). At the end, I will attempt to construct a set of helpful hints or tips for constructing a "space poem," without meaning to detract from the serendipitous and organic nature of the creative process—they are not meant to be a series of steps to follow, but rather a clarification of the concept.

Space Poem Number One—“The Red Dot”



Consisting of watercolor paper, watercolor paint, and marker, this piece was begun in the midst of a moment of anxiety for myself (partially due to dealing with some unknowns in this research!). Having stopped to listen to myself and try to give some sort of face to the feelings I was having, the image came to me of a simple fuzzy blue creature with large alert eyes. This fuzziness, in retrospect, might indicate some of the lack of clarity that anxiety often produces, and the eyes might indicate the heightened sense of fear and intense awareness common with anxiety. As such, I drew this figure on the sheet, and then to emphasize further the sense of helplessness I made the figure small, not even as tall as the grass in which it was standing. I then put a ridiculously small red dot on one of the blades, in the creature's line of vision, perhaps a source of anxiety completely out of proportion to the threat of the red item.

At this point, I had only created a scene that occupied the bottom part of the paper, but felt that the piece hadn't been finished. Likewise, I began to wonder if this could be turned into a space poem of some sort—how could language be incorporated? What other modes might I use, and how?

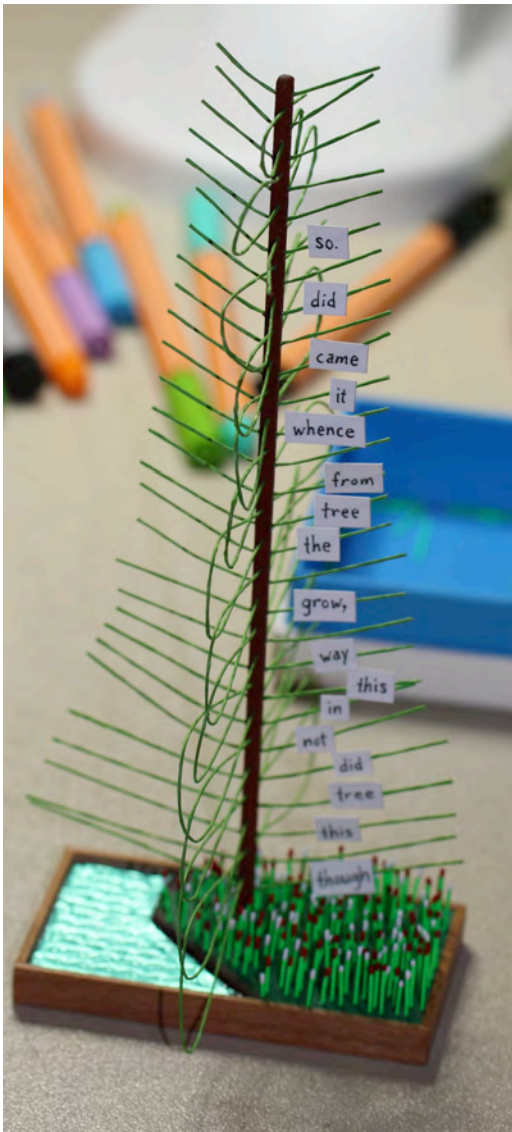
Initially, I thought of what language might be used, but before settling on it, which may have resulted in simply writing a couplet or quatrain somewhere, I set aside the requirement for a space poem to utilize language and considered other possible modes. Without music within my reasonable reach at the time, I then considered motion and what motion might add to the piece. While giving the piece a literal “spin” might create a sense of movement that could indicate some of the unsteadiness of anxiety, I realized it would also make the picture hard to see if done too fast. Additionally, anxiety is essentially a construct of both what one sees and how one sees it—how could I give the viewer slightly more control yet a sense of instability? What if the language was displayed in a scattered manner?

The result was a complete sentence broken into three phrases and punctuation (I believe/it was/a Tuesday/...), indicating a fruitless attempt to pin down a memory. The phrases can be read in any order with only slightly different meaning, though ideally conveying the same sense of movement and subtle lack of order.

At that point, having shared the piece with some friends, I came to see that the color palette didn’t necessarily support a sense of anxiety, and that if this was the first information acquired, then it might alter the piece was intended to evoke. I returned to consider the piece and what might be added or changed. I settled at that point on changing the title from simply being the language in the “sky” to a simple statement (“The Red Dot”) meant to indicate the significance of the red dot that the creature was watching with wide-open eyes. This title clearly emphasizes a certain understanding of the piece more so than the previous title. Finally, thinking about the title itself, I decided to use capitalization to indicate some disorder and emphasis in pronunciation (“ThE REd DoT”): it is *the* red dot, not any dot; it is *red*, not any other color, such as a less intimidating blue, and it has a sense of dreaded finality in the sound of *dot*. Had the whole title been in capitalized letters, it would not have allowed for the contrast and therefore emphasis on certain letters.

In the end, the piece was constructed to ultimately make use of several modes: a two-dimensional visual, language, motion or movement supplied by the reader’s reading of the language, and even sound indicated visually by the stylistic choices in the title. An additional benefit was that the creation of the piece served as a means of dissipating my own anxiety!

Space Poem Number Two—“Tall Tree”



Composed of wood, acrylic paint, wire, tin foil, and glue, this piece was an adventure of sorts, and began with a box constructed out of whimsy.

The base of the piece had been constructed some time ago, when I was yet to develop the concept of a “space poem.” The base was a small box with a slight rim around it, containing what was meant to appear as a section of a shoreline thick with flowers and some sort of tall tree of some sort in it. After having developed an idea for creating the flowerbed, I became exasperated with the process of cutting, painting, gluing, and inserting

so many “flowers.” Additionally, I didn’t know what I wanted to do with the tree. While I thought of wire branches, I felt that the piece was less meaningful. As such, I left the piece unfinished for several months.

After “The Red DoT,” however, my inspiration returned and I wondered how I might make the piece into a space poem of some sort. Of all the possibilities before, the idea of incorporating language in some way hadn’t occurred to me. It was considering the addition of this mode that encouraged me to return to the piece (i.e. I might make something of it after all). Instead of being concerned with the materials to be used in the tree, I focused on what language could be added. Through several drafts, I arrived at what might be considered a couplet in another form. What is of particular interest, though, is the change in the language itself so that along with the sculpture, all the modes would have an accumulated meaning working together that was not present when each was considered separately. This was not the case in my initial attempt to compose the language. Consider these first few lines of my first draft:

There’s a part of the self you cannot see
What of me can you not see
my roots
my roots
my roots

the tangle of the wrinkles of my bark
the maze of my roots
the awkward paths of my branches

There’s nothing symmetrical about a tree

a tree has no plan

in this tree I see the haphazard plans of life
the roots the branches the leaves

the melody of my
leaves

Though these lines in and of themselves have some promise and meaning, I realized that I was writing a poem that had no reliance in its meaning on the other modes being

used. The result was a second draft that tried to connect with the mode of a three-dimensional sculpture and the content of said structure:

It was because I saw this tree first
that my words now grow upon it
in this direction
that way

these
words
this
way
went
as
went
the
tree
as
thoughts
thrown
to the sky
they
reach
for
the
sky
and only
then
more sky
more sky

Finally, this text was changed due to the fact that the text above could not fit on the tree and because the notion of the direction of the reading became interesting. It allowed for the development of language that might both make use of movement or direction (as in the first space poem) and also the symbolic content of the literal sculpture (a tree, and the wood the sculpture is made of). The final text reads:

so.
did
came
it
whence

from
tree
the
grow,
way
this
in
not
did
tree
this
though

Although it requires some inquiry on the part of the viewer to do so, the text is meant to read from the bottom to the top, displaying the direction of the growth of a tree. As such, the text relies on the structure itself to make sense: though the actual tree from which the wood came grew from bottom to top, the “tree” of the structure was made in a different fashion (through machines that made a dowel, and my making, coloring, and assemblage of the parts), or even (fantastically) in the fabricated box. It conveys this sense without directly stating anything about direction, but by having the words “go” in that direction.

An argument may be made here concerning the content of the poem, and perhaps its quality—it’s not personal, but rather observational in nature—closer to a riddle than something with more feeling. However, certainly the first one did, and this can also be a challenge for the creation of my next space poem. Additionally, while both of these pieces were constructed with language coming later in the process, it might be meaningful to construct language or text sooner in the process so that upon building the rest of it the language might be edited to work together more closely with the piece.

Lessons Learned from the First Two Experiments—Clarifications in Space Poems for Further Creations

From these two experiments, several points can be determined that can be taken into consideration as I attempt to compose a third “space poem.” Again, these are not

meant to be steps to follow, are not chronological, but are aimed at clarifying the concept of a space poem and the thinking I might do as I continue to create them.

The “Order” of Things

The process is not linear (though progressive), but rather one in which the content and stylistic choices of modes inform each other. It does not necessarily matter if I start with language or if I start with another mode (a sound, a motion, a scene or setting, and so on). What matters is that I do not limit myself to the text of the poem and whether what I am “adding” is actually contributing to and affecting the meaning of the total product. In a piece that involves visuals and language, for instance, instead of the commonly accepted understanding that visuals are used to “anchor” language in a more comprehensible way, in a space poem the two would work somehow to anchor each other within the context of the greater work or whole that they create together.

Postponing Closure

A second point here to remember might be regarding the postponement of closure and that it can be important to question when a work is “finished.” A couple common beliefs among artists are actually antithetical to each other: a work may never quite be finished, but it is important to know when a work is done (when not to add or change anything else). A writer might publish a work, for instance, but then make edits prior to a book reading. In the case of space poems, it is a sense of doubt/wonder/curiosity that might lead to an addition of a mode that can change the piece significantly, or that can allow for the revision of the content of the modes based on each other. While this might not necessarily be new in certain fields (such as in the creation of a video recording of a live performance, where the camera shots might be influenced by the content of the performance itself), the application of it to the creation of a poem seems to build on a similar approach to the composition of a two-dimensional more traditional poem: one might decide later on in the drafts of a poem that the end of a line (or use of space on a page) ought to be altered due to a change in word choice (or vice versa). Beyond that, however, the addition of other modes beyond those available on the printed page offers a place for some exploration and challenges of what is accepted as a poem.

A Matter of Meaning—What does it bring to the poem?

In a space poem, the reason why the order of adding content cannot be prescribed is because the different modes are meant to work and inform each other in a way that results in a meaning that is unique to their combination. An analogy might help to explain this. If I am completely dressed and add a hat, then that can change the way my outfit is perceived. One can say then that I wasn't actually completely dressed before I put my hat on—the outfit was incomplete compared to the outfit after the hat was added. In the same way, a poem I envisioned as being “complete” isn't necessarily complete until I decide it is—incorporating another mode into the work is meaningful not based on when it is added, but rather why it is added at all; if it is unnecessary then it's just that—not necessary, and therefore actually detracts from the meaning of the piece. One can put on a hat for a variety of reasons: warmth, color-matching, cultural connection or capital, marketing, an indication of being a fan. If identity is what the wearer is constructing then the hat is needed insofar as the hat changes the perceived identity of the individual as he or she or it is seen. Perhaps it is the same for a poem. To what extent does the modality change the poem? To what extent would the piece be different without the additional mode? Is it needed? This issue can be seen earlier on in my explorations, when I was considering the visual depiction of a poem titled “Wollaston” (Appendix J).

A Possible Check for Meaning

One possible test of whether the modes are symbiotically influencing each other as the work is developed and in the final piece is if the content of each mode can be considered on its own and not hold the same meaning as it did when being used in conjunction with the other mode/s. If the content of one mode is extracted, then that content by itself should mean something different than it did in combination with the content of the other modes. This can reveal the extent to which a mode may have been simply “added on,” such as in the song-writing process (not to discount the meaningfulness of said process) in which the music might be written, then lyrics whose accents fit with the pulse of the music, then a music video which usually depicts what's actually being discussed in the lyrics.

A Means for Problem-Solving and Solution Generation

The consideration of multiple modes can serve as a means for generating possibilities while composing a space poem (and perhaps any work of art, for that matter), and therefore as a means for solving some of the problems that inevitably arise in the creative process. In “Tall Tree” this was made evident in the sense that the project had before sat in an incomplete state. The application of language to the process allowed for the piece to have meaning that was missing prior, and also influenced the design and process of the structure following the “road block.”

A Symbiotic Multimodality

The concept of a space poem does not simply mean the use of more than one mode, but rather maintaining an awareness of multimodality while composing a piece in such a way that leads the different modes to continue to influence each other while composing (e.g. a change in text may be influenced by a change in the visual, or vice versa) as well as in the final product (that is no longer being revised directly by the poet, though may be revised in the sense of an audience member or viewer might create his or her own interpretation of the piece).

Possible Analogies to Aid in Understanding

One analogy to aid in understanding how a space poem is composed is that it is similar to making a soup with several ingredients. In this sense, each mode that is incorporated might be compared to an ingredient in the soup. Let’s say the soup is going to have carrots, potatoes, and mushrooms. As each ingredient is added (carrots, for example) the ingredient both changes the flavor of the overall soup and has its own flavor changed as well. In this sense, if the carrot is representative of a mode, the flavor (and maybe even the texture) of it can be understood as the content of that mode. The same would be true of the potatoes and mushrooms. As the soup continued to be cooked (maybe simmering on the stove) these ingredients would continue to change in and of themselves as well as the soup as a whole. In the end, if one were to take out the carrots, the carrots would be very different than they were initially and wouldn’t be the same as they were while in the soup. The whole relies on its parts; the parts rely on the whole.

Another analogy might be that of some kind of balancing act of the content of the various modes, perhaps with each mode represented by a spinning plate which one continues to spin and balance in ambiguity and movement in order to avoid closure while the other plates are also kept spinning. The last image of a variety of plates spinning is the final piece, each spinning plate having affected the whole and the times when other plates could be spun. These analogies may not be perfect—no analogy is—but have helped me to think about the process of composing a space poem (something which is very new to me) in ways that are slightly more familiar to me.

Space Poem Number Three—“Sintering”

“Sintering” is a space poem that combines the use of language, color, music/sound, sculpture, and stop-motion film along with all of its variable aspects, such as variations in speed of frames-per-second, depth, point of view, and lighting. The piece was composed through the use of a planning sketch book, various drafts of the language (which were still being adjusted based on the filming), and various materials used to create the visuals, such as miniature scenery (grass, trees, shrubbery), painted figurines, hand-carved miniature boats with vellum tracing paper for sails, pompoms, spotlights, sand, clay, wire, and even some brass piping. A Canon SLR camera and a tripod equipped with a horizontal arm were used. Dragonframe software was used for the production of the frames, and a mini Korg synthesizer and Garageband software were used for sound. Though the development of the title will be discussed soon, it is worth mentioning here that the term “sintering” can be defined as the process by which heat and/or pressure is used to compact and form a solid mass without the matter melting to liquefaction. The process of applying glaze to a ceramic piece through the use of a properly heated kiln is an example of this.

The poem itself thematically focuses on the “speaker’s” journey of discovery and exploration as well as on the concept of a space poem itself. This concept evolved over the course of composing the piece (going through drafts as additional modes were incorporated), and is quite different from the initial idea developed some time ago of simply having moving pronouns overlapping each other in the form of a jukebox’s moving

neon bubbles (see Appendix I, image F). *That* concept morphed into various other forms (floating pronoun-labeled ping pong balls, floating boats down a river of real water, simply overlapping written words on pieces of paper, and so on—see Appendix I, images F-G) before the actual construction of one mode—the scenery—led to a revision of how the mode of language was going to be used so that it wouldn't simply be a series of pronouns. Due to feasibility, space, and some common sense, it was determined that real water wasn't needed, that a river wasn't needed either, and that the depiction of floating boats with language in motion could be provided by not only film but specifically stop-motion film using the “studio” I had. There are various other points in the piece in which the content of different modes affected that of other modes, and these will be outlined below. To begin, however, some broader conceptual issues will be discussed.

Overarching Concerns—Applying Lessons Learned

As I approached working on a third “space poem,” I found myself initially more reluctant to begin. I discovered that this was actually due to my own perception of the project and a focus on meeting the standards I had set up for myself—once again in my CCT journey I was faced with self-made barriers that created anxiety for me. Initially I wondered if this might be due to how the project was started: with “ThE Red DoT” I had started from scratch, and with “Tall Tree” I was working on something that I had built and left unfinished in frustration; but for “Sintering,” this was the momentous occasion I had let simmer on the stove for some time. Upon reflection, however, it occurred to me that the main differences between this and the first two space poems were that this piece had initially been envisioned as a larger undertaking—something that would be considerably more complex in the modes being used (stop-motion being the main newcomer) and that I had developed for myself a series of “lessons learned” after having completed the first two pieces. What this led to was a kind of loyalty to these lessons or guidelines, to such an extent that I found myself doubting quite frequently the decisions I was making regarding both my process and the content I was using to develop it. My old friend, the silly perfectionist in me, had to be calmed down, in order to let some comfort with ambiguity move forward. I had to still envision the work as an adventurous experiment, and no

experiment ever really fails. Once I got into the creation of the piece, this didn't seem to matter anymore—the secret, in that sense, is in the *doing*.

Eventually I realized how important to the process the withholding of closure was in terms of each mode. By this I mean not seeing the text as finalized, or the sculpture as finalized, or the series of film images as finalized, because once this is the case the modes begin to be pushed apart (there is no “Sintering” of them, so to speak). Use of variables might help to illustrate this. If one begins with, say, mode A, and considers said content as “finished” or permanent or static, then the content of mode A begins to be anchored by modes B and C, and not symbiotically vice versa—modes B and C, in a sense, become subsidiaries to mode A. This might be what leads us to consider a piece a “film” or “visual art” instead of a “poem.” Additionally, this subverts the goal of having the modes affect each other in the creation of the piece. In response to finding myself letting myself consider one mode “complete”—or, rather, not thinking about how it could be changed in response to another mode's content—I tried to remind myself more frequently of the symbiotic relationship between the modes that I was trying to create. I had to allow for a consistent questioning of the choices I was making. This might equate to my switching back and forth between divergent and convergent thinking, between brainstorming and judging, between an outward mode of thinking and the contained mode of meeting the guidelines (though broad they may be) that I had set up for the form.

A good example of this might be found somewhat later in the evolution of the piece. Facing some logistical issues concerning my time for and ability to complete actual filming of material, I chose to impose a deadline for having the actual shooting of film done. I then shared this compilation (a “draft”) with my peers, who expressed some desire to have sound or music along with the visuals. While this might indicated some expectation of different modes (and in and of itself indicates that the music in film in fact affects our experience of the visuals), my thinking concerning *adding* music had, again, to be paused and reconsidered. According to my definition of a space poem being a piece in which the content of each individual mode affects that of the other, simply adding music (such as might be done in adding a film score) might not exactly hold up. While a film score might certainly affect the emotions of the audience while watching (I think of *Star Wars* or *Jaws*, for instance), it would not necessarily be true that the film without the score would be

different content-wise (we would still see a large shark approaching the boat, or see the dangling legs in the ocean at night time, and that may likely still be scary). Without wanting to assume, it seems likely that in most cases a film score is designed to “fit into” the visual content of the film, not to literally change the content of the image (though it may certainly change the experience of the viewer). As such, the prospect of adding music or sound to my own visuals led me to hold off on considering the visuals as being complete even after having completed the filming and having moved around some of the images.

Another important example of this might be how I moved forward from having only the text of the space poem drafted. After the seventh draft of some text for the space poem, I began to consider how to go about incorporating other modes (not “adding” them). Initially, to do this, I printed out a single page, and tried to fit as much of the text as possible onto the page so that I might see it all at once. This allowed me to sit and consider several stanzas of the piece thus far at once. However, I found that this was leading me to consistently see stanzas as something I then had to depict visually, and creating an image to only anchor the text was not what I was going for. While I might consider a way to depict a certain line or stanza, I also needed to then consider how the visual component might actually influence the text itself. In what ways could a visual content alter the viewer’s understanding of the text, essentially changing the text, or in what ways could the visual content literally bring about a change in the text—lead me to change the words through revision or editing, to change the arrangement of the words structurally, or to change the structure of the words constantly in the final product (e.g. a spinning word, a shrinking word, a pulsating word)? Once again, I needed to forego the closure that I had assumed in the seventh draft of the text.

A fairly simple but effective adjustment in process was helpful. Instead of considering the text as a whole, I decided to consider it in smaller pieces, and to do so on larger pieces of paper. This allowed me to consider alternative phrasings, to rearrange the words, and to sketch out visual components of the stanzas. In addition, the previous tricky question of how to indicate stanzas in such a piece (or whether they were needed at all) found some answer in the possibility of having a change in view or scenery work as the indication. Whereas a “skipped” line might indicate a stanza in a typed poem, the change in space or place could indicate a similar shift in content. This might also be indicated by an

actual passing of time in the film, or a still shot which does or doesn't include text. Perhaps these choices are echoed already in the cinematic world, in which a change in the point of view of the camera can indicate a shift in speaker, or a broad shot of a landscape might be used to indicate a shift in the setting or affect the mood of subsequent content (or perhaps that is simply me seeing film as poetry).

These are broader examples of how my thinking needed to be adjusted while composing the piece. It is helpful, however, to see how this played out in even more specific moments of the creation of the piece—to see how I attempted to have the multimodal awareness affect all content and contextual levels of the piece. “Space poem” is not meant to be a mere label, but a form!

“Sintering” as a Space Poem

Please note that the piece, “Sintering,” can be obtained and seen for free online at the following links:

- <https://vimeo.com/126765086>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBtFNCVH3w4>

In order to convey a sense of how the content of different modes affected each other symbiotically (as opposed to a situation in which the visual only anchors the verbal content), the following specific examples can be considered more closely. Due to the assumption that viewers and readers will be more accustomed to visuals that anchor or depict the verbal content, more examples of the visual process affecting the verbal content will be provided. This is not an exhaustive list, but a set of examples arranged chronologically and chosen specifically to illustrate how the modes are working together and were influenced by each other. It should finally be noted that “Sintering” as a production is not perfect, and may not meet the guidelines of a space poem through and through, but has worked well as a third experiment in the new form. The first text of the poem (that which was written prior to filming began) can be found in Appendix H.

The title sequence, and the title itself (see Appendix I, images A-B), represents the first moments in which the language and visuals interacted in a symbiotic way. While at first unsure of what to title the piece (or if it even needed one), I let the blank space sit for a

while. After having planned out a visual of overlapping pronouns on sailboat sails in the closing shots, however, an issue occurred to me: that the final piece might seem to be disjointed in some ways, being that the stanzas were considered singly when incorporating multiple modes, as opposed to the piece as a whole. Of course, there is also a possibility that the quality of my having determined the poem's center lacks clarification. In other words, sometimes it is through drafting and revising a poem that one finds out exactly what the poem is about, or what one wanted to say (perhaps the same might be said about any written work)—sometimes very drastic revisions are needed late in the revision process. However, having foreseen this issue in the middle of sketching out plans for the filming, this issue was responded to with two concepts. The first is another indication of how thinking through a space poem is different from another form of poetry: I had caught myself thinking that I hadn't gone through enough revisions of the poem in order to be able to succinctly say or feel what the poem was about, but this was working with the assumption that the poem was somehow complete when, in fact, it wasn't—I still was incorporating other modes, and those were still affecting the use of language in the piece. Indeed, only when I had begun thinking about the use of film and visuals did I determine that a stanza in my draft ought to be cut, while an opening stanza could be added to indicate a more personal piece at the beginning. The second response to this issue of having missed out on a holistic view of the poem is actually indicative of such revision—the heart of the poem can also be emphasized and guided by those things that appear at its beginning and the end (imagine T.S. Eliot's "Wasteland" instead being called "Happy Place"!). Of these two points in the poem, I found myself considering what the title could be in order to connect with the essence of togetherness expressed at the end through indication of pronouns coming together as well as the multiple modes of a space poem. At this point, the term "sintering" came to mind.

This title then influenced the visual in the sense that I had the idea of somehow showing the word "sintering" itself sintering through having the sand in the depiction of the layers slowly turn into larger solid letters in clay. This was deemed too difficult for where I was in the process and time, and it occurred to me that the letters were simply anchoring the concept of the word itself. It didn't need to happen that way. Instead, I chose to show sintering through sand and clay, but to have the matter of the letters first come

together and then form a larger ball. At this point I was far enough from the text that I began to brainstorm other visuals of the title sequence: a building of brass piping, a dropping of smaller brass pieces which then morph into sand again as they fall, and some blocks were used to show depth in the word “poem.” Additionally, the word “space” of the term “space poem” was shown several times as it moved about and grew in the confined space of a cut-out circle, even becoming too big for that space itself. In this way, the language affected the visual content, but then the creation of the visual content affected the language, such as the word “space” being repeated several times.

I mentioned above that the visual production led to the cutting of one stanza and the addition of another. Together these can provide an example of how much the verbal content was adjusted through the incorporation of the stop-motion animation. The stanza that was cut was done so as a result of considering what visual content would appear along with the language. The stanza read as follows:

At meetings
I hand out my card
to collect
laughs.
I say, “Here’s my card.”
and all it says is,
“My Card.”

As is seen in photo Appendix I, image C, a few different ideas were considered for the visual content (use of playing cards, use of a figure on whom cards would stick and accumulate, the use of cards on the water, and so on), but doing this led me to understand the verbal content differently. Not only was I having a difficult time getting away from the “card” concept, but I also felt after thinking about the language more that the stanza itself simply didn’t fit into the rest of the poem. The joke in and of itself seemed to me too simple to not have been done already before (not that that is always a reason not to use something), but that the stanza also altered the setting indicated by language to such an extent that it might have been distracting. True, such a reference to a different place occurs later in the poem when a bee shoots from a dumpster, but this stanza lacked the movement of that one. As the draft of “Sintering” continues (showing the film doesn’t mean the work

is necessarily finalized!), perhaps the stanza can be found in some way to be important or useful, but for the time being it has been cut.

More interesting perhaps is the addition of the first stanza to the poem. While preparing to film, I came across some miniature figures that I could paint and use, one of which was a cameraman and a large camera. The idea of showing a camera filming as I was doing was intriguing—it was a depiction of the identity of the speaker in some ways. This led me to consider not only the use of the figure, but also how the act of filming and use of film could be incorporated into the language of the piece. The result was a first stanza that provides a sense of the speaker’s desire to catch a moment, to stop time, to latch on experiences in some kind of optimal way. Not only does stop-motion itself accomplish the capturing (in some ways) of a moment, but it also works by compiling these moments in a series of shots shown consecutively with variable speed, essentially making what appears to be a new reality out of a compilation of moments in a reality that wouldn’t allow such things to occur. In this way, the first stanza echoes the attempt of the poem—and of space poems—to challenge the sense of what a poem is, to change the assumed reality of the language it contains and to move the piece into a reality that better matches our multimodal experience as human beings able to internalize, understand, and receive content from a large variety of modes at the same time.

Another instance when the filming led to adjustments in language was the decision to add “There are no words for it” before the stanza that begins with “It really is / about time.” Not only did the size of the taxi determine the length of the lines that could be shown on it at once, therefore affecting the structure of the language, but the addition of this line emphasized the ironic and ambiguous concept that “There are no words for it” indicates. There are, literally words for it, but they aren’t felt to be enough. Having the line appear twice is intended to push the line towards the irony that might be lost if only said once, and thus the accumulation of words on the taxicab at the end of the scene is both humorous and indicative of some frustration, chaos, and loss of direction. The scene that immediately follows, with boats zooming across the water too quickly to be read, was an editing choice and a continuation of this sense of lack of control, contrasting with the subsequent slowing down begun by “Try again” and continued by the following scene in

which the speaker finds some balance, calm, and an answer through the “you” who is now included in the piece.

Perhaps there are a variety of examples of how the verbal content affected the visual, and perhaps this is because much of the verbal content was composed before the filming began, but a good example of how the written content affected the moving visual can be seen in how the visual was made to indicate pauses that otherwise would be left to space and line breaks (enjambment or end punctuation) on the page. These “pauses” appear in different ways. In the extended scene of a taxicab driving by buildings of different colors, intended pauses were indicated by moments in which the taxicab showed no language at all. In scenes where the words are being typed onto a computer screen, pauses are shown simply by the actual pausing of the writer. This allowed for the poem to display not only the line breaks determined by the poet, but also the pauses in the writing itself (moments of thought on the part of the poet). A final examples of this pacing is shown in the last few moments in which the boat pauses in the middle of the shot with the language no longer changing as a result of boats passing, but by the language on the stalled boat’s sail changing. This was done to guide the viewer’s reading of the poem—a viewer/reader can’t read the poem any faster than it is shown, so these shots were purposefully done to slow down the reading of the language, with the aim being that the rhythm of the last few stanzas would work out to allow for the rhyming to be heard between “see” and “me.”

A final aspect of this work that is worth considering is the incorporation of music, which although it may to add meaning to the piece, did not wholly influence the construction of content in the other modes as much as it might have, and so did not consistently follow the guidelines of composing a space poem. The use of music might seem simple enough at first, especially since I was only using my own recording of my own banjo playing, but of the modes involved, music actually proved to be the most challenging for me to include. As I went through the process of including music, I once again found myself simply “adding” it to the visuals: I was looking to see where the music “fit” or would emphasize ideas, and so on. That said, it became clear to me somewhat soon in the process that this was happening (indicating my own thinking and awareness had changed), and then I was able to determine two reasons *why* it was happening. One reason had to do with

my own limited understanding regarding some of the software I was using (Garageband and a recording interface with a pickup on my banjo). This learning led to some restrictions on my time, and also resulted in my not having a chance to also use the synthesizer I had purchased. Clearly, the need to become knowledgeable in multiple modes is a prerequisite to consciously making something that is symbiotically multimodal—such is the nature of the task. On the other hand, however, the habit of calming or quieting doubts about one’s abilities or possibilities is an important piece of the process as well. The second reason for this lack of intermodal influence, was that I had already gone through two drafts of the film and several drafts of the language, and with the film in particular, the prospect of having to go back and make significant cuts or to film addition scenes was imply too daunting at that point. As a result, the music is predominantly a soundtrack of sorts that emphasizes aspects of the visual. For instance, in one moment the recording is manipulated to have a “cathedral”-like effect, and this was used as the scene shifts from the flat opening title sequence to the depth of the view of the water. Another moment is the use of more lively and light-hearted music as the momentum of the language’s content and the visual’s picks up as well—as the taxi is moving through the street. A third moment might actually be the choice to *not* have music but to have typing while showing the computer screen as a stanza is written—by chance my breathing was recorded with this visual and it seems to work in emphasizing the intimacy of the language. Finally, the sound of a recording of shoreline waves at the end was manipulated to broaden and deepen the effect of the poem in visual and linguistic content. One is finally left staring into stars and then blank space with the sound of waves. This was meant to bring about a sense of slowing down, of pondering, and of returning to the pace of the quitter moments in the piece.

This emphasis on pacing is indicative of the greatest lesson learned from composing “Sintering.” Nothing works better than patience. The deadlines for completing the filming loomed heavily over me while I was working through this process. Allowing myself, or giving permission to myself, to be patient and trust in my abilities, along with the occasional compassionate self-motivation, allowed me to finally compose the piece. The fact that I am not 100% satisfied with the end product is besides the point here—the piece can continue to be revised. What matters most is that I have found patience and

thoughtfulness in the composition of a space poem to be the habit of mind that results in something closer to the actual concept of a space poem.

The Results From Experiments: What a Space Poem Is, What It Isn't, and How It Might Be Made

The combination of the three experiments above, subsequent reflection, presenting and sharing my work, and attempting to lead others in creating their own space poems has resulted in what I will deem a “working” definition of the form as well as a possible guide to aid in the creation of a “space poem.”

The resulting definition of a space poem is as follows: a space poem is a poem that is composed with an awareness of multimodality during its creation in such a way that results in a poem in which multiple modes work together symbiotically to create the poem. It may consist of content from as few as two modes, with no maximum number. Currently, I continue to debate whether or not written language needs to be one of those modes (an area for further exploration). Such modes might be extremely varied: music, language, motion, color, light, sound, film, depth, and so on.

An additional component of this definition, which may be particularly helpful when trying to grasp the concept, is a few examples of what a space poem is *not*. A space poem is not an ekphrastic poem, composed in response to a work of art. A space poem is not the placement of a poem onto an object without any further thought. A space poem is not simply lyrics written to go with a piece of music. In each of these examples, the different modes do not ultimately result in a change of the content of the other modes involved. Rather, these processes involve one mode exclusively affecting another or one mode exclusively anchoring the content of another mode.

At this point, one might have a reasonable counter-argument to this whole concept. If indeed all art is multimodal, then aren't poems—by default—already multimodal as well? Doesn't the paper, the book, the bookstore, the café in which the poem is read affect the poem insofar as these elements of context interact with the poem's content and thus the audience's perception of it? The answer is, without a doubt, yes. We don't see many poetry

readings happening in kitchen cupboards; and it's unlikely that a book of poems will be published with torn pages, tie-dyed typewriter ribbon and so on. The poem, in these instances, relies on the context in order to be understood at least somewhat closely to the poet's original intent. But a space poem is inherently different in that it is still being composed while additional modes are incorporated, and the content of those modes is being incorporated *and* continually changed until the piece is finished. As an example, it makes sense to say that a poem which is read aloud in a café to an audience is multimodal, but no element of that context has directly changed the content of the poem being read—any changes are situated solely in the reception of the audience, not the poet, whose piece is (presumably) finalized before reading it aloud. However, if a poet brought in a poem to such a place, considered the place itself (acoustics, colors of the walls, the arrangement of the seats, the taste of the coffee, and so on) and as a result made changes in the content of the language of the poem, and *then* perhaps changed the layout of the seats, or the coffee, or the acoustics, *then* you have a space poem. In other words, a space poem is not *simply* multimodal. It is multimodal with a purpose, and it is the result of that purpose.

A result from sharing this concept with a small group of classmates, and of attempting to have classmates create their own space poems, was the development of a series of guiding steps for doing so. While the concept of steps may seem limiting, it will be seen that the process is more iterative than such an understanding implies, and that the concept itself allows for the expansion of a piece into a space far less defined than such a series of steps.

In the series below, my audience was asked to first write a few words in response to one of two given prompts. Then these following steps were provided along with a box of materials to provide additional modes to work with (though these are actually already supplied in the room, if no other materials are available):

1. Take the sentence / language you wrote for the opening prompt—this will be your first mode's content (Mode A).
2. Consider another mode available to you (Mode B)—for today we'll use some "junk" materials to draw these from (color, depth, movement). You don't *have to* use the "junk"—*you* can provide the second mode (you could dance, sing, etc.).

3. Think about how that mode might be incorporated with the language, keeping the initial idea of your answer loosely in mind. Remember, though, that your language (Mode A) can still change!
4. Adjust Mode A again based on the content from the new mode (for language you might adjust repetition, placement, word choice, spelling, punctuation, etc.)
5. Adjust Mode B again based on adjustments in Mode A.
6. If you want to incorporate another mode, continue making adjustments in all modes.
7. Continue to build and change until it feels finished!

While I have no empirical data to suggest the successfulness of these steps, anecdotally I will suggest that they did work quite well. In the least, they worked well to get their first small audience's attention!

Planning Ahead, Planning Within, Conclusions

Multimodality in and of itself is not a silver bullet for the creation of original and purposeful works. Rather, it is a focal point of awareness—a kind of lens, so to speak, or perhaps even a habit of mind—that can be considered in the face of barriers one confronts in communication, be it verbal, visual, musical, and so on; be it with others or with oneself. This is true on both (or all) ends of communication—speaking or receiving. Indeed, even in the context of a famous painting, the degree to which the artist's ideas are being communicated can be altered by a viewer's awareness of multimodality. While Van Gogh may not have imagined the marble floors and pillars that surround his works now, he certainly considered titles (even more so perhaps as a prolific letter writer), and recognition of that language changes how it might be perceived (consider a simple change from "Self portrait" to "Untitled"). The fact that his work was not painted in a museum affects how the piece is understood. One might even consider multimodality as the aspect of a piece that lends it its timelessness—in multimodality a work is constantly changing, for the space around it does as well.

All of that “said,” there is a whole lot of room (or space) for me to move forward. I aim to continue to learn more about different modes, to continue to vary the kinds of creations produced, and to explore how I might share this work with a larger audience. Even in the last project alone (“Sintering”), the purposeful use of multimodality, has led me to become more familiar with modes that were of interest to me, but which I was not even novice in (at least as a creator). Digitalizing music, photography, stop-motion film, and the software used to configure these aspects in a piece were all very new to me, and I certainly haven’t learned all I want to in these modes and tools. With multimodality, in the sense that it is being applied here, along with endless possibility in terms of the creative products one develops, there is really a lifetime of learning that can be done in each mode: one learns what one doesn’t know, and then works to know or understand it. While on the one hand this can seem daunting (will my next poem require me to learn to drive an oil tanker?), optimism and a sense of adventure allow me to veer away from the negativity of such mantras as “Jack of all trades, master of none.”

In terms of the actual forms of future space poems, I have concepts for larger works that I simply don’t have the actual “space” for accomplishing at the moment, but will work to continue to create an environment for myself in which these ideas and possibilities are increasingly closer to becoming realities. With this in mind, the modes I have started to use here do lend themselves to the physical constraints of my current workspace, and the digital capabilities of current software are very helpful as well. Along similar lines, I aim to work on some “shorter” pieces, some which might be more compact and allow for me to explore the space poem genre within a series of briefer yet meaningful experiences. Such efforts are not qualitatively different from those already accomplished, but perhaps will allow for experiments that might then be incorporated into larger or longer pieces (granted, even such descriptors seem questionable in this kind of poem...). This exploration may even lead to the creation of some works that might be produced more quickly and in greater number, perhaps therefore able to be sold.

Another aspect that I aim to explore at this point is a display of my work thus far, beyond adding a clip to Youtube. A showing of my work was an idea that came up (or was suggested to me) quite some time ago, about halfway through my CCT journey, but which had been postponed. I would like to make one of my next goals to be to have a

retrospective show of my work thus far. I have only begun initial explorations regarding this possibility, but believe I now have the confidence to seriously work towards it.

The genuine exploratory nature of this work is something I am particularly proud of, hopefully short of hubris. Without meaning to imply any sort of ending or completion of the work, its development from this vantage point allows me to feel a sense of affirmation in that I have made good use of my time in the CCT program and have been able to explore that which most interested me. Multimodality is something that the discovery of which (perhaps a little “d” is more appropriate than a big “D” here) resulted from an effort and willingness to value what I noticed in my work, to explore and question what I wasn’t sure about in said work, and to acknowledge what I sensed as an unknown in my thinking about my work and my ability to discuss it. I saw what I was making, but didn’t know why. In response, I listened to myself, sought to change my thinking, to learn, to grow.

I went multimodal. And you have, too, though it may not be obvious until the end of this sentence, when the voice in your head stops reading with your eyes.

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Appendices

Appendix A

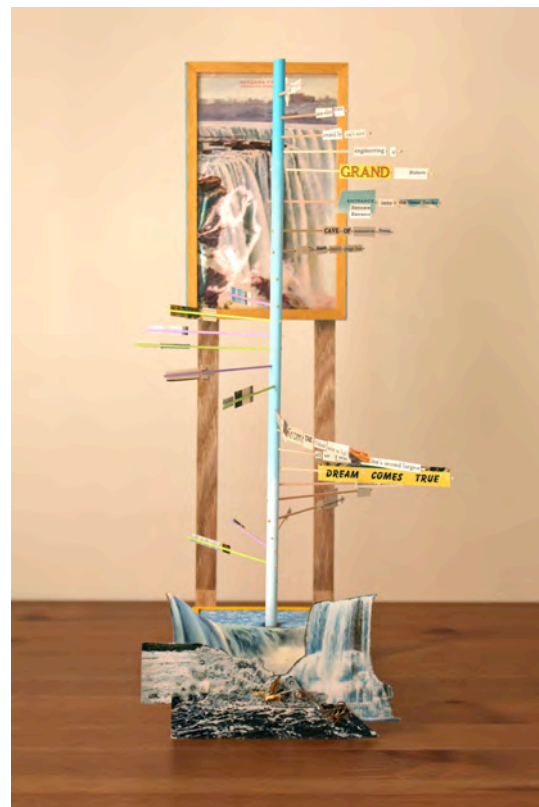
Smoky Wonder by Todd Erickson



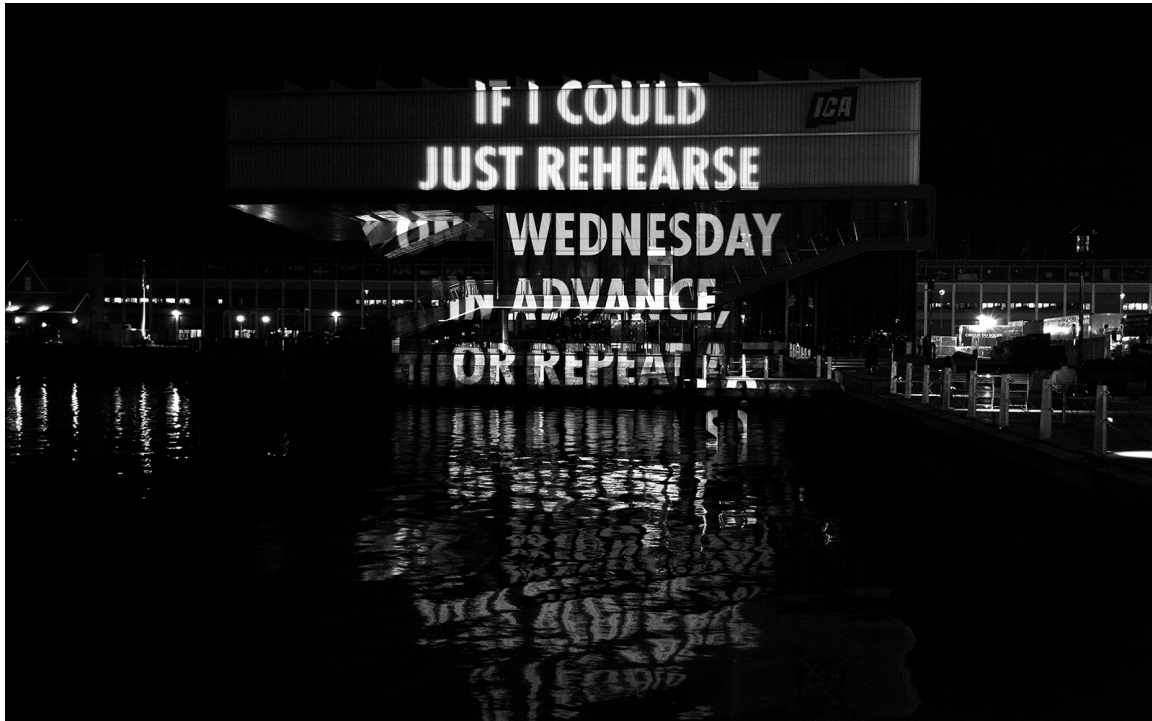
Appendix B

Postage 1½¢ Without Message by Todd Erickson

POSTAGE 1½¢ WITHOUT MESSAGE
O the Mysterious marvel of
snow-white Silence,
created by one's own mind
engineering a
GRAND Historic
Entrance into the Great Smoky
CAVE OF POWERHOUSE dreams
The Mammoth waterfall plunges down
A Giant Geological Wonder Horse
A Winner of all Time
THE WORLD'S BIGGEST
TURBINE SHEEP
Vacationing across
a sea of clouds
Bred and Raised Here by gravity
Crashing the majestic Crystal Palace
From the 5-block twice as high Chimney
Tops
all so that the nation's second largest
DREAM COMES TRUE
another 280 feet
Below
a generator of
daylight
fantastic formations
and beauty all its own.



Appendix C



Projection by Jenny Holzer, Boston 2010.

<http://projects.jennyholzer.com/projections/boston-2010/gallery#6>

Appendix D



LOVE by Robert Indiana, 1966. <http://robertindiana.com/works/love-5/>

Appendix E



Guns and Roses by Patti Harris
<http://www.pattiharris.com/collageassemblage.html>

Appendix F

Works of Mark Mendel

<http://www.montereymasonry.com/who-we-are/public-art/>



Four Barns—Spring. Red Wing, Minnesota. 1982



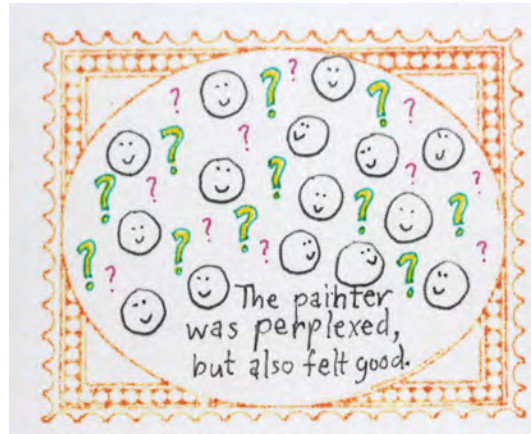
Sacrifice. Poem flown over the 1989 Superbowl, Joe Robbe Stadium, Miami, Florida.



Stanza from *Ojos Numerosos.* Cambridge Massachusetts. 1975

Appendix G

Segments followed by entirety of "The Sky That Wouldn't Fit" by Todd Erickson



Appendix H

"Sintering" text before filming

What would
you write
on a boat
on the moon
on the water?

Out here, I—

I haven't a humidifier's presence.
If there's a hum,
it isn't me.
I take things as I go,
like a centerpiece
and
hotel soap.

At meetings
I hand out my card
to collect
laughs.
I say, "Here's my card."
and all it says is,
"My Card."

I would like
genuinely to feel
something
presently
so
I might stone myself
with peanut shells
were it not
for the disorder,
the ridiculous juggling
act,
the throwing
that far.

But who has a chance in
all this
anyways?

I wish there was a way of floating
without;
my thoughts are lighter than air
and airy.

It really is
about time
I shoot for freedom
like

a bee
from a
backyard
dumpster,
unfilled for years
and absolutely
fine
with rot and rust
and a bunker-y
taste to things,
a place for
interpretive vines
to curl about in
slow and stubborn
rebellion,
indifferent to their flashy
armpit hair,
their
wonderful fortunes,
their
forgetfulness.

There are no words for it.

Oh what
would you write
on a boat
in the bath
of the moon?

Try again?

I recall the night we met
was cold,
but we met.

Since then
I've watched you
blink through years,
smile in
winter coats,
think of other things
besides sails on boats.

I've heard you

end stanzas
with
the best of them,

though I've yet to
see
I
you
me
us,
make
a
space
poem:

we

"Sintering" log of basic developments

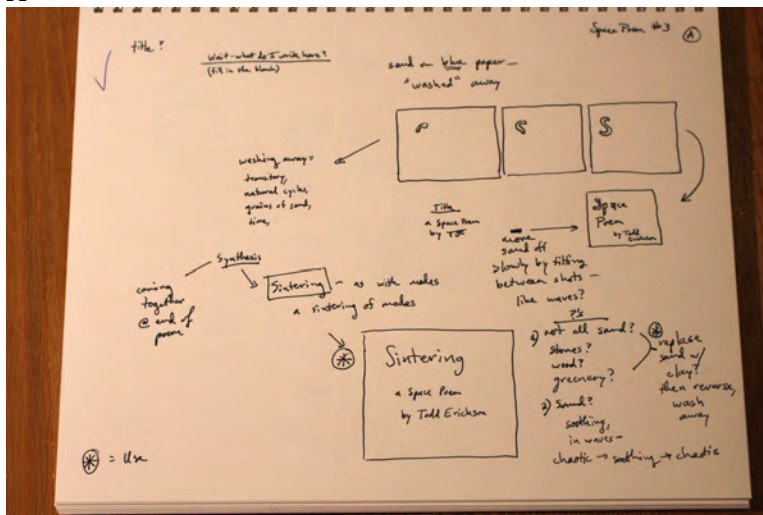
- development of jukebox poem idea with pronouns as chief text being used to emphasize commonality, collaboration, belonging
- change to moving water with items floating
- change to sailboats with text on sails
- led to additional text and content beyond pronouns
- building ideas about the physical piece
- adding more text with several edits
- revised planning of physical structure
- evidence of modes affecting each other as the poem is developed
- gathering of materials, learning some basic about different modes
- Stopped to consider use of other poems.
- revised other poems. questioned my approach.
- learned and experimented with stopmotion software
- Used sketchbook to begin planning out filming
- one page for every few lines, ability to visualize modes and to make adjustments to the language, total of 11 pages
- construction of largest and most used set, use of materials to create sense of depth/distance
- front side of page for drafting filming, back side of page left blank for record of revisions
- shooting of title sequence—initial issues with lighting, redo of sequences, adjusting depiction of sintering, use of different materials
- shooting scenes out of order based on feasibility and waiting for materials to dry after being made (such as sailboats)
- revisions in scenes such as "bee" scene

- continued challenge of modes interacting with and affecting each other
- issue of music and sound
- choice to take out a short stanza
- adding revisions in pencil, checking off scenes as I go
- Compile a bank of clips that have been filmed
- consider ordering of clips, ability to break up and intersperse clips while music is incorporated
- add final music take to visuals
- finalize filming of "Sintering"

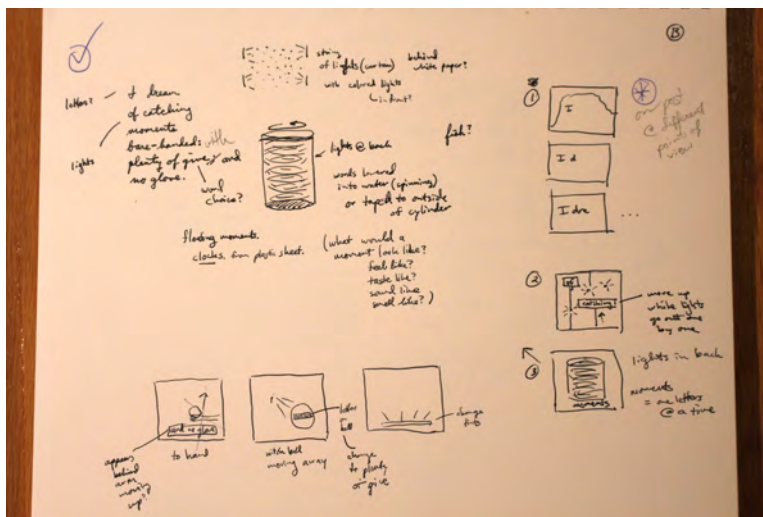
Appendix I

"Sintering" Workbook Pages

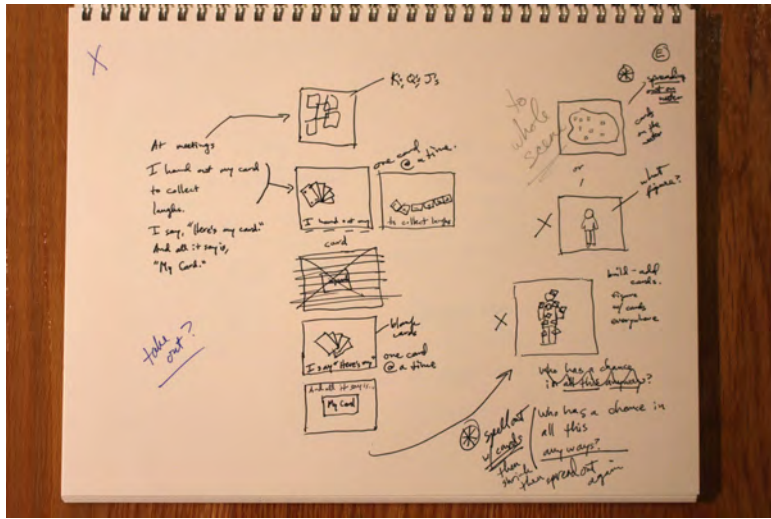
A



B



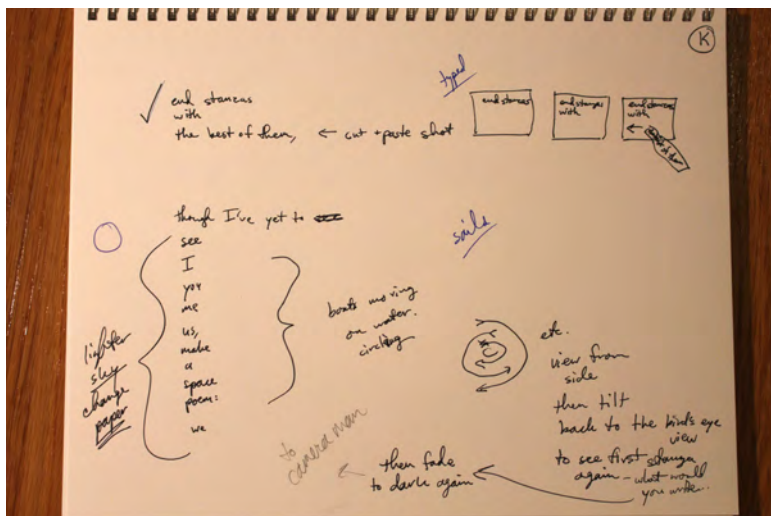
C



D



E



F

In a pizza/sal restaurant (Rosalia's) they had a Waiter Jake Day - plays 45¢ for 25¢ a song. While eating I was looking at the design of the pizza box itself - aesthetically (not the turntable mechanism) and noticed there are tubes of bubbles that travel the contour of it.

8/26/14
 with installation in Bar Harbor, ME

Is this how to impart depth in poetry?
 * What music could/would this play, or would it not?

* interconnectedness, a discourse a coming together, an overcoming, and it would/could cause viewers to think about how we interact with and affect one another. Promise would also (ideally) make the piece more accessible. It could cause a wide variety of reactions.
 You and I us + then
 you us I

I wonder if this could be made to mimic or represent somehow the colliding of voices, of discourses, and the various worlds of words, always in motion, as language is... always changing - heteroglossia (?) (I think I'm using that correctly)... with a group of words, instead of- or within- the bubbles that would sometimes connect, not connect, disconnect, or pass by... and what groups of words these would be. The first that came to mind was promises. If these could collide, join, pass by, break apart, then it would convey ~~these~~ their *

I you
 we us
 they them
 him her it

G

2 2x2 boards of plywood

Space Poem # 3
 Sketches + Plans
 beginning 3/1/15

Decisions to make:
 - live action or stop action
 - real water and boats or paper w/ scenery (stop action or magnets or other mechanism)

But need restricted light - either by enclosure or hole at front in room

What would be yet another way to construct this?
 Does it even have to be boats?
 Doesn't all have to be w/ this setup.
 What about music? Colors?

* What is the "set" adding to the piece?
 * How is this made confronting? Besides altering why there... perhaps not.
 Can add other elements in background that aren't in the poem.
 Would parts not that be odd in this setting? Incongruous?

* A scroll/sail for larger scene.

or paper would mean no basin needed

paper seems more reasonable
 - stop action, no real H2O - use acrylic film water

H

Attendance/Continued... 3/10/15

Perhaps water basin doesn't need to be that deep at all. Boats might be flat @ bottom - need to test.

Tests to do:

- 1) Small boats floating in H₂O - to decide if real H₂O is feasible.
- 2) Size of sails for text... test w/ camera

Text doesn't need solely to be on sails... may appear in other ways.

Such as up through the water (lit paper)

↓

e.g. frames

- ①
- ②
- ③

in clouds in sky

as a bee (stamina that reference bee - but bees don't fly @ night - make it a "restless bee" → alt test)

* Note: parts of scenes don't all have to be "to scale" b/c scale of world doesn't matter - what matters is the content of the works.

Appendix J

Additional Workbook Pages

Poetry in Space,
Space in Poetry.

Wallston Poem Ideas...

sky

water

water

Sand

concrete barrier

sidewalk

one stanza per block

poet's - sculpture each block?

- button on block that lights up sculpture (like: sky, truck, etc.)

- arrows, lines, wires connecting words to sculpture

Q: if sculpture is literal depiction of poem, what is it adding? Needs to be needed.

A: → poem placed throughout sculpture, not on sidewalk → sidewalk is only the buttons. or buttons are on other side of street

figure that walks down sidewalk?

what about something to do with sound? lack of sound? no waves? what are the waves?

everything @ the beach is water plus other various things - water interaction with other rocky materials. could all of sculpture be made of one medium? like clay? or...

what if it was "under water"?

or another place like a beach? a "fake beach" (fake fake beach)

Space = pause emphasis on word or image before or after

or to provide pacing... slow down speed up