

WORD ORDER/WORLD ORDER:

A STUDY OF THE POETRY

OF

bp Nichol

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ABSTRACT

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As a poet, bp Nichol is concerned with the need to devise poetic structures capable of evoking those perceptions of our physical experience of reality which traditional poetic structures are incapable of evoking. For ideology, or world order, is implicit in every poetic structure, or word order.

To avoid chaos and insignificance, these new structures must be systematic. The 'input and feedback' Nichol received from the Concrete movement allowed him to systematically develop new rules for a new game, a game in which language particles become palpable objects and the reader becomes an active participant in the organization of the text.

Concrete poetry, however, attempts to separate itself from tradition. The Martyrology, the work at the centre of this thesis, attempts instead to contain tradition. I have considered this poem from a structuralist perspective since structuralism attempts to discover the ideology implied by structure and is therefore not tied to any one ideology as is Concrete poetics.

I conclude by showing how the poetic structures of The Martyrology are concerned with the problems of ontology. Since this concern was also the concern of Gertrude Stein, I acknowledge the ongoing influence of Stein on Nichol.

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Note

Many of these figures appear in more than one location. I have therefore attempted to cite the most accessible source. The sources are indicated in one of two ways. A single letter followed by a number indicates a source listed in the bibliography of bp Nichol following. A longer series of letters indicates one of three anthologies: CPWV -- Concrete Poetry: A World View, ed. M. E. Solt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968); CPIA -- Concrete Poetry: An International Anthology, ed. S. Bann (London: London Magazine Editions, 1967); and ACP -- An Anthology of Concrete Poetry, ed. E. Williams (New York: Something Else Press, 1967).

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Chapter 1

"The poem is dead long live the poem"

Like many young West Coast poets of the early nineteen sixties, bp nichol, who lived in Vancouver from his birth in 1944 until 1963, was unhappy with the structural limits imposed by traditional poetics. He had three options. He could ignore the structural limitations and work within the framework of tradition. He could try to rework the conventions of tradition, to force the evolution of the existing system, as did the very active group of students at the University of British Columbia who began the Tish movement which they based on the just emerging Black Mountain concept of projective verse.¹ Or he could revolt against the old order and look for a radically new poetics, as did bill bissett and the group surrounding the Blewointment Press. In the end it was this third possibility and the publications of the Blewointment Press with their emphasis placed upon such areas of structural potential as personal orthography, dislocated syntax and the collage effect on the page, which struck a resonant chord in Nichol. But he did not attach himself to a West Coast group or movement. In 1963 he moved to Toronto to begin his own explorations into language.

He found a job at the University of Toronto Library and, as he later noted,

when you spend day after day under the dusty stacks of the well-meant words of millions of people, it changes your view of literature and what the point of it is . . . It made me unable to read for a period of time. I had a surfeit of print. It was

¹cf., Chapter 3, p. 54.

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the feeder of much of my reaction against a lot of traditional books. I just felt, well, most of it had been done in a way.²

What was the point of it? Writing had become a game that had been played too many times. The rules no longer reflected our everyday experience of reality. Ten years later, in the co-authored TRG (Toronto Research Group) reports, bp Nichol and Steve McCaffery were better able to articulate this problem. First, they quote from Eugene Jolas:

words in modern literature are still being set side by side in the same banal and journalistic fashion as in preceding decades, and the inadequacy of worn out verbal patterns for our more sensitized nervous systems seems to have struck a small minority.

They then comment:

Jolas highlights the crux of the modern response to the language/reality relationship. The relation is desynchronized, the word order in no way reflects the world order.³

What Nichol intuitively responded to in the Blewointment Press publications was the willingness to subvert traditional language structures in order to bring 'word order' closer to 'world order'. His intuitive rejection of the old 'word order', which reached its peak in his inability 'to read for a period of time', gave energy and focus to his subsequent poetic explorations. He had come to realize that for literature to be revitalized, traditional structures would have to be radically subverted. The new poetics he was looking for would have to be, at least in the beginning, a subversive poetics.

In 1964, when he began publishing and distributing the Ganglia Press

²Caroline Bayard and Jack David, Avant-Postes/Out-Posts (Erin: Press Porcepic, 1978), p. 18.

³bp Nichol and Steve McCaffery, "TRG Report 2: Narrative (part 5) TRG Research Report 2: Narrative Paper 2 -- The Search for Nonnarrative Prose" Open Letter, ser. 2, no. 9, (1974), p. 70.

handouts, Nichol underlined the scale on which the language revolution⁴ was to take place by announcing that, "the poem is dead."⁵ The realization which forced Nichol to make such a pronouncement is identical to that which forced the De Stijl Group⁶ (an offshoot of the Dada Movement) to declare in their second manifesto in 1920 that 'the word is dead'; and which forced Nietzsche, in the 1880's, to declare that 'God is dead'. For the purpose of both art and religion, as Nietzsche tells us, is to provide an aesthetic experience of the world which makes intelligible our physical experience of the world⁷ -- Nichol's word order/world order. When aesthetic structure can no longer contain our physical experience of the world then it must be seen for what it is: dead. The task of the poet is therefore to clear away the dead structures and to discover new structures capable of conveying our experience of the world -- to make the poem live again.

* * *

There have been two major changes in our experience of the world which traditional poetic structures are incapable of evoking. First, since the acceptance of Einstein's theory of relativity, it is no longer possible

⁴Nichol's use of the term 'language revolution' is by no means unique. It appears as early as the first three Ganglia Press handouts and by the time of the TRG reports is commonplace. George Steiner, the critic, has also used the term prominently. See especially his book Extraterritorial (New York: Atheneum, 1971). Nichol suggests that this book by Steiner should be read by one and all. See "TRG Report 2, Part 2 of the Search for Nonnarrative Prose Which is the Second Part of the Report" Open Letter, ser. 3, no. 2, (1975), p. 58.

⁵Nichol announced that the poem was dead in the very first Ganglia Press handout, gronk 1, no. 1.

⁶For more information on De Stijl, see Manuel Grossman's Dada; Paradox, Mystification, and Ambiguity in European Literature (New York: Pegasus, 1971). There is a useful bibliography.

⁷See Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vantage Books, 1967) especially the 1886 Preface and sections 5 and 24.

to accept as irrefutable a linear pattern of significance. The particles of significance are relative in time/space and must be conceptualized in a field of possible relationships and not in a straight line progression. Second, it is no longer possible to live with the unchallenged assumption that language particles are what they pretend to refer to. Words are symbols and therefore subject to an infinitude of possible subjective response. The word-as-symbol has no fixed ideal or essence. What is signified by language is understood within a range of possibility only because of the power of convention. But the rules of convention can change because, as has been discovered, communication can take place even when the rules are ignored. Language must be seen as a game, albeit a serious one, with mutable rules. It can no longer be perceived as a natural resource of immutable particles.

bp Nichol was not the first poet to discover the need for a language revolution. In fact, all innovative poets revolt against traditional structures in one way or another. But the revolution which Nichol became part of, the revolution which sought to account for the relativity and the mutability of language, can be traced back at least as far as Mallarmé. For in Un Coup de Des, published in 1897, Mallarmé declared that he was using the spaces of the page as an element of meaning. The syntactical relationships were made relative within a field. The French and the German Dadaists shattered syntax even further and their intentional self-destruction left behind the ashes out of which the Concrete movement could rise phoenix-like in the 1950's.⁸

⁸ Many other writers are, of course, connected to this scheme. I give here only a skeletal line of heredity for the sake of conciseness. It was perhaps inevitable that a symbolist, such as Mallarmé should lead to Dada and then to Concrete, for both Dada and Concrete recognize the symbolic nature of language objects -- a realization only one step removed from the dependence upon the referential symbols of language.

In England and North America, however, Mallarmé was looked upon with little more than the curiosity due an aberration.⁹ Dada was seen as an extreme reaction to the violence and chaos of the First World War, which had, thankfully, disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.¹⁰ It wasn't until the Noigandres Group of Brazil, which had started in 1952, made contact with Eugene Gomringer in 1955 (Gomringer had been formulating his theory since 1953) and decided to name their collaboration the 'Concrete' movement, that the English speaking world began to look on with interest. What had been a European phenomenon became international, but very slowly.

When Nichol first arrived in Toronto it is unlikely that many people had heard of the Concrete movement. When Nichol acknowledged in the first Ganglia handouts¹¹ that his work was influenced by Dada, he did so because he had not yet heard of Concrete. He was an isolated figure whose work aroused, at best mild curiosity, at worst total scepticism. Then, in late 1964, his friend Andy Phillips sent from England the two issues of the Times Literary Supplement¹² which featured Concrete poetry. Nichol, recognizing his natural allies, began immediately to establish links with this international movement which were to prove invaluable to him. He has said:

⁹Un Coup de Des was Mallarmé's last work. His reputation rests upon his earlier symbolist works and his translations of E.A. Poe. This work begins to approach the language object as symbol (see note 7). It was thought to be the eccentric envoi of a dying poet and to be essentially beyond full comprehension. See for example the third chapter of Malcolm Bowie's Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978). The bibliography is useful.

¹⁰See Grossman's book on Dada.

¹¹See Ken Norris, "Interview with bp Nichol: Feb. 13, 1978" Essays in Canadian Writing, no. 12, (1978), pp. 248-249; and Bayard and David, pp. 17 & 24.

¹²See the Times Literary Supplement for Aug. 6 and Aug. 20, 1964.

From 1965-1967 it was really vital that I have the European-South American connection because it was really the only place from which I got feedback/input that propelled me on.¹³

He became a satellite of the Concrete movement. His reputation was made internationally before it was made in Canada. In 1968 when Mary Ellen Solt published Concrete Poetry: A World View, Nichol was the only Canadian represented.

* * *

When perceptions of the world change then so must the modes of expression. Concrete poetry looks for structures which can accommodate these changing perceptions. The basic assumption of Concrete is that the structure is the content. All of the particles which make up language -- words, letters, phonemes, morphemes -- must be consciously deployed as objects palpable in their own right. When the poet recognizes this, then he is able to use language particles with the freedom needed to create new signs and new relationships within a four dimensional time/space field. The particles of language therefore only gain meaning in terms of their functional relationships. The referential message is undermined and the structural message is emphasized. This new orientation is away from linear self-reflection and towards an egoless display of particles within a field of relative structural possibility. The poem is therefore a text or an artifact but it is not autonomous. It is a cultural artifact open to the influence of any other semiotic pattern of reference which can be shown to exist.

To admit that the structure of a text carries the burden of meaning

¹³Norris, p. 250.

is to admit that it reflects the ideology which provides the context for the perceived meaning. When Nichol attacks the 'language trap'¹⁴ of traditional structures he is attacking the incapacity of traditional structures to escape the ideological context to which they belong. To place the raw material of language, the particles, into wholly new structures, such as Concrete structures, is therefore to discover what Nichol calls 'exits and entrances'¹⁵ of language; it is to discover hidden meanings beyond the range of, because beyond the structure of, the old ideologies. For it is not the language particle in isolation which produces meaning but rather the ways in which the particle is made to collide with other particles. The meaning lies in the gap between the particles, not in the particles themselves. When particles collide (when they are placed in structural relationship) they are doing what McLuhan calls interfacing and what Nichol calls borderblurring.¹⁶ The particles are no longer discrete but interfaced, or blurred together. The Concrete poet, since he is no longer restricted by the conventions and codes of traditional poetic structures, is free to search for those ways of blurring particles together which he feels are better able to evoke his perceptions of reality.

Since language is used as object and since structure is content, it follows that what the reader will confront is a field of objects with possible relationships. The Concrete poem therefore activates the reader. It demands that he establish whatever patterns of significance he can. Eugene Gomringer, in his manifesto on Concrete, 'From Line to Constellation', says that the poem is a play area that the reader must

¹⁴ Bayard and David, p. 36.

¹⁵ See Jack David's "Writing Writing: bp Nichol, at 30" Essays in Canadian Writing, no. 1, (1974), p. 27.

¹⁶ Nichol borrowed the term 'borderblur' from the English Concrete poet Dom. Sylvester Houéard.

join.¹⁷ Nichol feels that, as a poet,

the best you can hope for is to present a text which demands of the reader that they organize it themselves.¹⁸

The text bears the same relationship to both the author and the reader; both must organize the particles.

Concrete poetry, then, attempts to provoke and not to inform; it is anti-rhetorical. The relationships of the particles are no longer linear and continuous but relative, discontinuous and mutable. The poet interacts with language, and documents his research. The reader interacts with this documentation and tries to sense the perceptions it is capable of evoking.

The critic's task is to show how a reading of a Concrete poem can take place. To do this he must identify the fields in which particles can be placed and then show how the particles placed in these fields can be related to each other. Mike Weaver, in his analysis of Concrete poetry,¹⁹ sees three distinct fields of structural possibility: the visual, the phonic, and the kinetic. Within these fields the activity can be either constructionist -- a structure of relationships adhered to according to its own terms, i.e., close-ended -- or expressionist -- a structure of intuitive relationships, i.e., open-ended. While this scheme appears to contain the four dimensions of time/space, I would suggest one change that should clear up a possible confusion. The kinetic field is the field of time and is of a different order than the visual or the phonic. For although both the visual and the phonic can stand as categories on their own, the kinetic can exist only in conjunction with one or the other or both. I would suggest that the kinetic become a second order classification and that the possibility

¹⁷See Eugene Gombringer's manifesto "From Line to Constellation" in Concrete Poetry: A World View, ed. Mary Ellen Solt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 67.

¹⁸Bayard and David, p. 27.

¹⁹See Solt, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

of infinity be placed in opposition to the unit. The single time unit would be called 'stationary'. The stationary poem would be contained within a single time frame, or, in other words, on a single page; the kinetic poem would be one which forces the reader to relate to more than one time frame, or, in other words, to more than one page.

Thus, a Concrete poem can be either visual or phonic or both; then, this visual or phonic field can be either stationary or kinetic; and finally, this visual or phonic poem which is either stationary or kinetic can be either constructionist or expressionist. I will use these categories to discuss the achievements of the Concrete poets.

Chapter 2

"Sense out of nonsense"

Although bp Nichol was attracted to Concrete poetics and wrote Concrete poems, it would be a mistake to think of him as primarily a Concrete poet. His first commitment has always been to the exploration of the aesthetic use of language -- a commitment which can draw energy from, but which cannot be bound by, any one movement. Coming into contact with the Concrete movement, like discovering the Blewointment Press publications, was important to Nichol because it helped to release him from the oppression of isolation. There were others who found it necessary to radically subvert the old order of things in order to find a new poetics. From these others he could get 'feedback' and 'input'.

Concrete theorists provided for a freedom of structural exploration which was useful to Nichol. There were, in effect, only two restrictions. First, language had to be used; and second, poetic structures which could be analyzed by traditional prosody could not be used. As Eugene Gomringer wrote:

Being an expert both in language and the rules of the game [the poetry game] the poet invents new formulations.¹

It was the poet's task to reinvent the game, to discover new rules, a new poetics.

For Nichol, writing Concrete poetry provided practice in inventing new rules. The reader who wishes to understand his later work, especially

¹Eugene Gomringer, "From Line to Constellation" in Concrete Poetry: A World View, ed: Mary Ellen Solt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 67.

The Martyrology, must first understand how these new rules were invented. He must learn how to play the game called 'Concrete poetry'; he must learn how to make sense out of what at first appears to be nonsense.

Using Mike Weaver's scheme and the modifications I have suggested, there are three levels of classification -- visual/phonetic, stationary/kinetic, and expressionist/constructionist -- which yield twelve distinct categories. Although these categories are distinct and although poems exist which can be adequately described by a single category, it does not follow that a single poem must be attributed to a single category. Many Concrete poems exploit the relationships of several categories.

The levels of classification are all based on an either/or proposition. For the sake of clarity, only the first two terms, visual/phonetic, have been allowed to stand in conjunction as part of a category title. This is for obvious reasons. A word is at once visual and phonetic; we see it and we hear it. In this light their separation is a significant contrast to their conjunction in that it shows the capacity of Concrete poetics to accommodate poems which attempt to be either wholly visual or wholly phonetic.

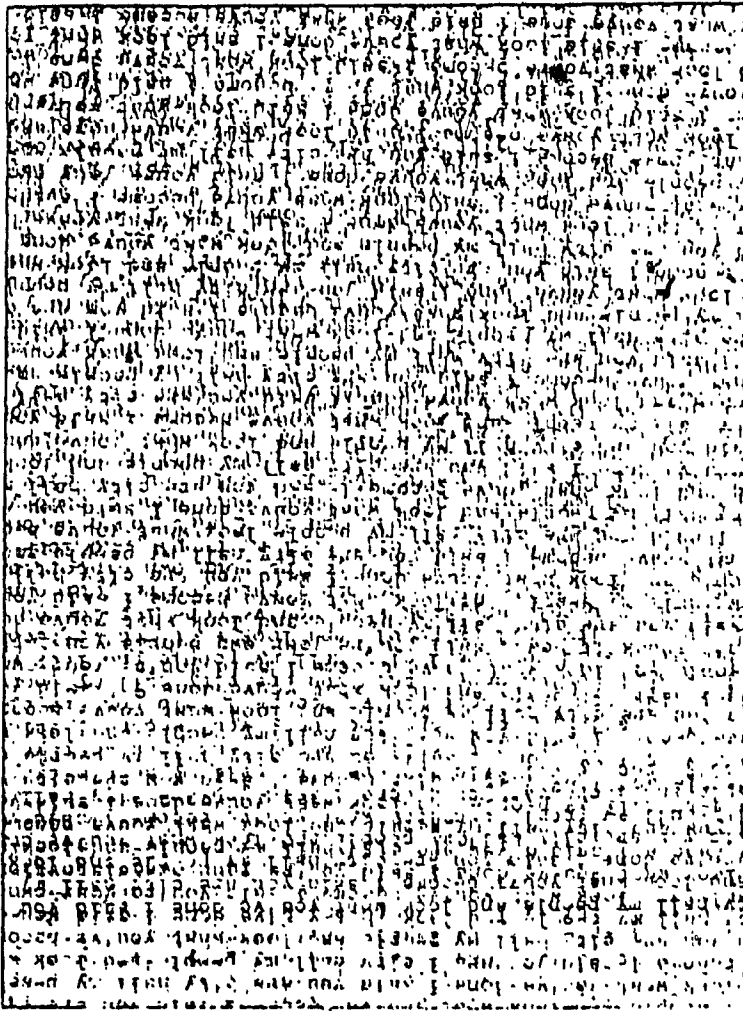
These categories should allow us to describe the poetic structure of any Concrete poem.

Visual - Stationary - Expressionist

In this category we find poems which we do not vocalize. These poems force us to see elements of communication in visual patterns only. They are single-framed and appear either incomplete in themselves or as only one of an infinite number of similar possibilities.

In bp Nichol's 'Lament' (fig. 1) we have a grey area of garbled letter fragments enclosed in a clearly drawn rectangular frame. There is

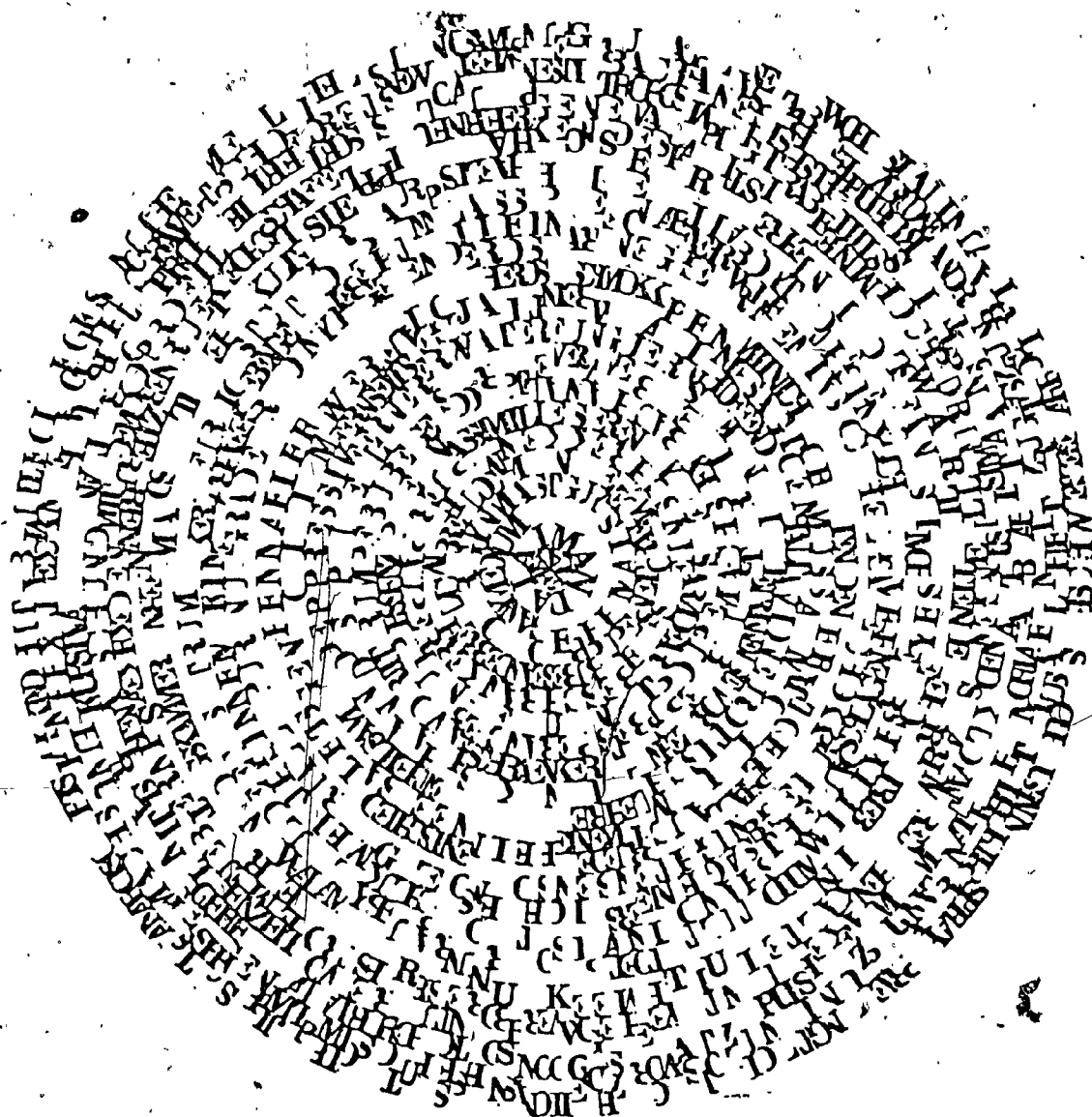
Figure 1. bp Nichol, 'Lament'.



both an overlapping of letters, and letters which are only partially clear. The effect is that of passing two films through a micro-film reader at the same time, one at fast forward and one at rewind. What the reader experiences as a poem is a single frozen instant of this mechanical absurdity. We are told that this poem is 'for d.a. levy who took his own life'. In the initial shock of grief it is highly likely that the need to express this grief, combined with the inarticulateness of shock, would combine in just such a frustration of greyness. It is a visual articulation of something which cannot yet be articulated in words and sentences.

Ferdinand Kriwet, a German Concrete poet, has achieved a similar effect in his 'Visual Text XIV' (fig. 2). The only words I can make out in this poem are the words "I Mandala" in the centre. (But since these letters are arranged in a circle we could conceivably start the letter sequence at any letter. The words are therefore mutable rather than fixed; we can visualize this mutability but we do not vocalize it.) Once again we have a random gathering of fragmented and overlapping letters, this time framed by a circle -- the shape of the mandala -- rather than a rectangle as in Nichol's 'Lament'. But even though 'mandala' means circle and this is a circle, we still have no sense of unity. The overlapping indicates that this is only a two-dimensional representation of a larger four-dimensional structure. It is only a single slice. The apparent randomness of the letter fragments could be reproduced in infinite variety without loss of effect. The mandala is a force which gives structure to chaos. We have, in this poem, a sense of circled chaos, but we would need more than this to receive a sense of structural unity. This is only an aspect of the mandala, an intuitive 'plugging in' to a larger structure. But there is no way that we can discover the uniqueness of this particular mandala. It can be no more than superficially different from any of an infinite number of similar

Figure 2. Ferdinand Kriwet, 'Visual Text XIV'.



structures.

Visual - Kinetic - Expressionist

A poem in this category will be visual and not phonic; it will use more than one frame; and it will be open-ended. Two frames taken from bp Nichol's 'Aleph Unit' (fig. 3.1, 3.2) are representative. In this poem the letter 'A' is used as the frame, or outline, for various drawings. The two examples I have reproduced here show us that each frame can be seen in relation to the other frames in the manner of a 'variation on a theme' but that the number of possible variations is potentially infinite. When we look at these frames we are 'plugging in' to a series of moods or contemplations evoked by the letter 'A'.

The first three frames of Hansjörg Mayer's poem produce the same effect (fig. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3). Mayer has put the letters of the alphabet into a random placement generator and switched it on. To participate in the poem the reader must play with the relationships between the letters. Frames one through three increase the number of letters, or particles, randomly placed, until the frame is full. But frame three (fig. 4.3) cannot be taken as a unique structure. Once again it is a structure of apparent chaos forced into a frame of arbitrary shape and size. This poem could be reproduced on all but the superficial level in infinite variety. If the placement of the letters is unique to a certain structure, that structure has not been made explicit. Speculation is possible, but unlikely to produce any definitive answer.

Visual - Kinetic - Constructionist

When we add the fourth frame of Mayer's poem (fig. 4.4) the poem becomes constructionist. We now have a unified visual structure -- but

Figure 3.1. bp Nichol, from 'Aleph Unit'.

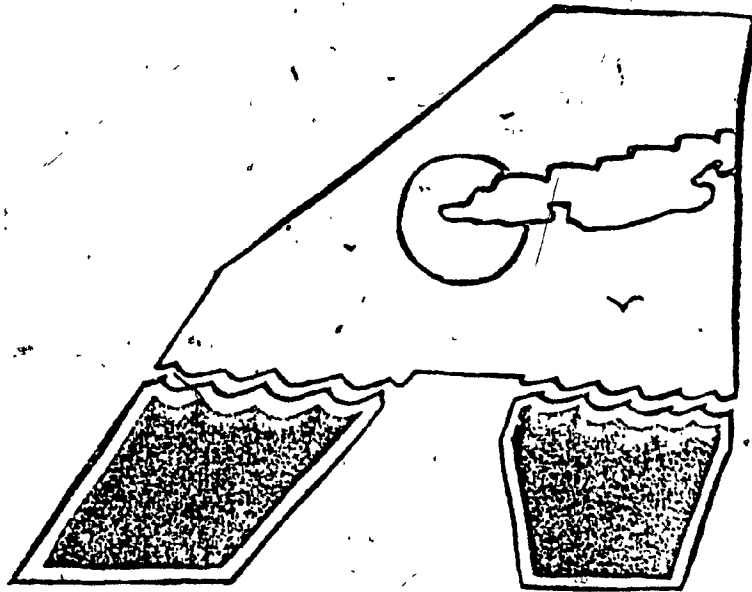


Figure 3.2 bp Nichol, from 'Aleph Unit'.

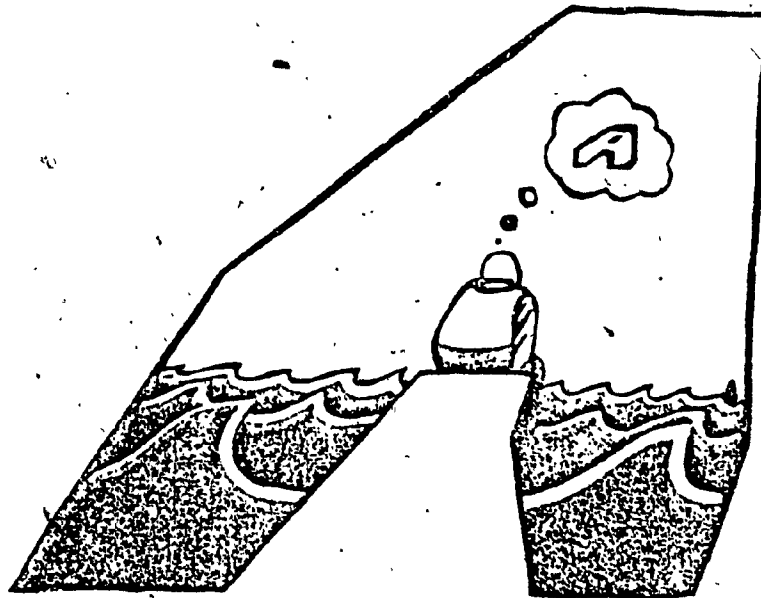


Figure 4.1. Hansjörg Mayer.

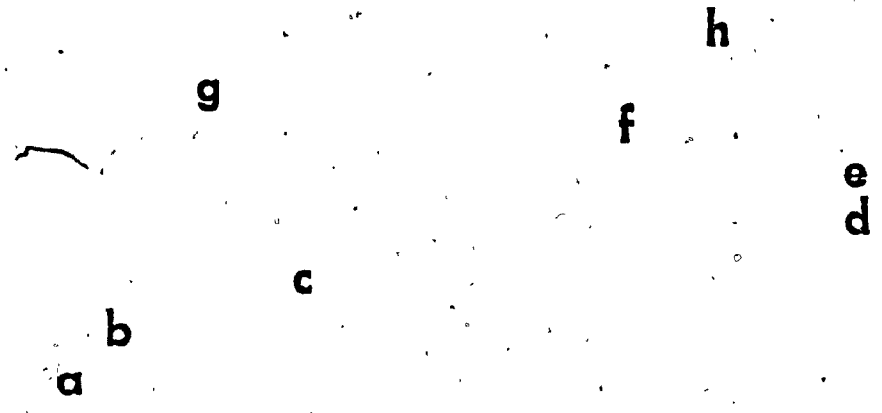


Figure 4.2. Hansjörg Mayer.

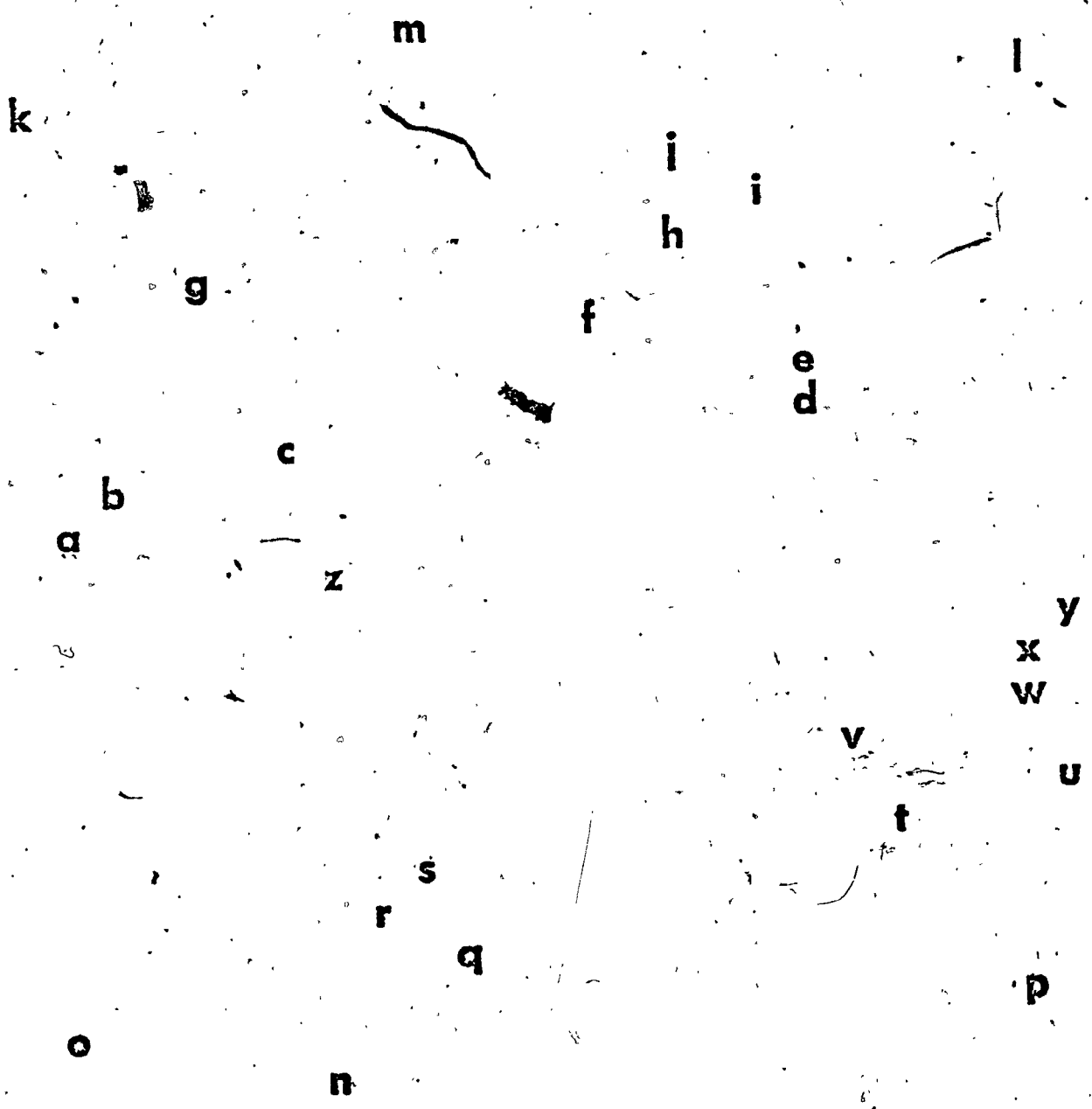


Figure 4.3. Hansjörg Mayer

e w a j x g b o t k m r z q c l s h p y f u i n d v
 o f s z c i j v x a k r y r w u b e m h q g d p l n
 f k r t y g a l g a z m s i v o u d e x c b j n h w p
 d k c f t j b o d v s y p h z w b e i q y o r e q n m r v
 f c a f j b o d v s y p h z w b e i q y o r e q n m r v
 l y r e m y g e p x s r t b c u o z h i o l h d a n q f m
 k v y w i g e p x s r t b c u o z h i o l h d a n q f m
 j q z e s g i y v a p n d k f r v u s t e i p i x y b
 z o c f n k m a w h q a n x l r q n h w v y e o i j i u b p w
 y g e c o x k v f z a m p z k n e r d u g o h w l k t h r d
 r b f l q d u c h y i v q n o b a f s g h w t k n v e y
 q m k b n w o z i r x f p m x o b a f s g h w t k n v e y
 p e a y i b g j c i z q o p j l v r t b x a m j s x p w b t e v h w
 w y a r x c l i k t a j x b r c i a d y n b f p l i n g r z y m
 u d z r m f o c s f a e h i k l c s d a l t p c g l f t u c e r b c x
 i b r m f o c s f a e h i k l c s d a l t p c g l f t u c e r b c x
 p h d u y g k m z e h i k l c s d a l t p c g l f t u c e r b c x
 n u l y q n g a r i o m g s k a b s p c g l f t u c e r b c x
 f y z q x c u r j b o r s q a b s p c g l f t u c e r b c x
 z i k x h z f j d o r s q a b s p c g l f t u c e r b c x
 q w u v h o w x k d i s x d e n f v q t o j y i m k y o j y p h
 n e v h o w x k d i s x d e n f v q t o j y i m k y o j y p h
 a y m l o h w l z s x d e n f v q t o j y i m k y o j y p h
 t d w v j h l z s x d e n f v q t o j y i m k y o j y p h
 q a o j w i g z l d e n f v q t o j y i m k y o j y p h
 d m k u s e b w n l c f v q t o j y i m k y o j y p h

unified only because we have the first three frames to point this out to us. In frame four we learn that if the fictional random placement generator is allowed to run on long enough, then eventually every position will be occupied by every letter of the alphabet. The structural statement is, in effect, that the particular is the general and the general is the particular; one is in all and all is in one.

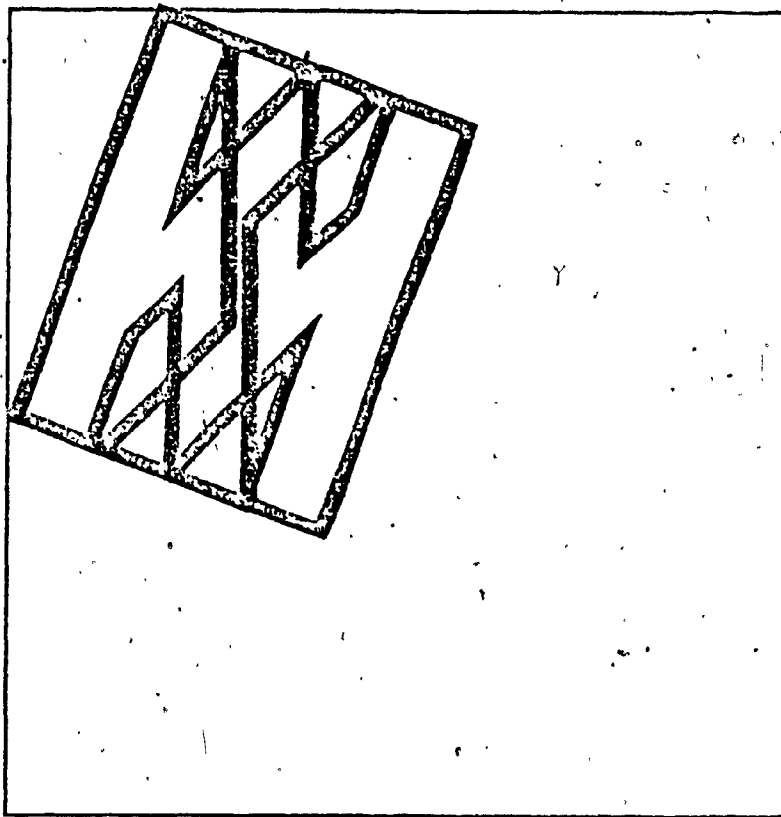
The same statement is made in bp Nichol's ABC The Aleph Beth Book. I have reproduced here two letters from this book, 'K' and 'O' (fig. 5.1, 5.2). The book consists of a symmetrical graphic representation of each of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. When all twenty-six letters are taken together, the poem is constructionist, because a structural unity is established: there is a unique symmetrical graphic representation of each letter, of each particle, of a closed system, the alphabet. However, the visual aspect of this categorization is applicable only if we ignore the words which are placed outside the frame of each letter. These words represent the addition of structural elements from another category which I will speak of later.

Visual - Stationary - Constructionist

We find unity in a visual, stationary poem if we single out one of the letters from ABC The Aleph Beth Book (fig. 5.1 or 5.2). Each of these graphic manipulations can be seen as a unique and closed structure. For they are symmetrical and not random. The letter 'K' could be graphically represented in an infinite variety of ways, but none would be able to replace the version we are given. If we look back to figure 3.1, we are forced to admit that this too is a unique expression of the letter 'A'. The difference between this 'A' and this 'K' is that, because of the demands of symmetry, we can neither add nor delete anything from the 'K' and still maintain the same

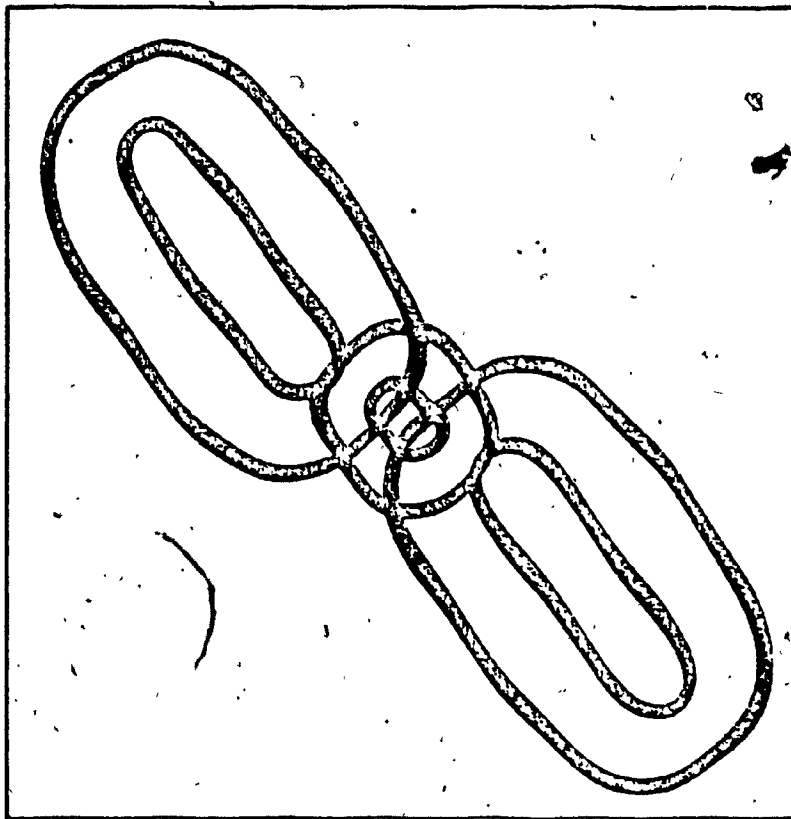
Figure 5.1. bp Nichol, from 'ABC The Aleph Beth Book'.

ARTIFICIAL



BOUNDARIES

Figure 5.2. bp Nichol, from 'ABC The Aleph Beth Book'.



WE MUST PUT THE POEM IN OUR LIVES

effect. Symmetry is a closed structural statement. If, on the other hand, the letter 'A' were to have four birds instead of three in the sky of the upper half of the letter, it would make little difference to the expression of 'A-ness' evoked by the drawing.

In Mary Ellen Solt's 'Moonshot Sonnet' (fig. 6) we find once again a single frame, symmetrical, visual structure. With the letters 'L' and 'T' Solt has created a unique and symmetrical structural unit which reminds us of both the structure of the sonnet and the structure (i.e. the various phases) of a rocket.

There are two quatrains and a sestet. Each line has five feet of two strokes each (one vertical, one horizontal, for the stressed and unstressed syllables) with enough variation to allude to a sense of the irregularities possible in the iambic pentameter line. We have no sense of the relative placement of end-rhymes and so we can make assumptions about the relationship between the sonnet structure and the rocket structure accordingly. We know that a sonnet reads down and that a rocket is propelled upwards and so we look for visual movement in both directions. The result is a coherent stationary unit which derives meaning both from the relationships of the particles and from the structural allusiveness.

Visual/Phonic - Stationary - Expressionist

In this category we find poems which use both visual and phonic effects in a single expressionistic frame. I have chosen the first frame of the serial poem 'Trans-Continental' (fig. 7) as an illustration. In this poem we immediately see the need both to vocalize the language particles and to visualize the relationships between them. The letters are like snowflakes in a field. When they are gathered up into a snowball (i.e. into a conventional structure) they become words. When the snowball (the word)

Figure 6. Mary Ellen Solt, 'Moonshot Sonnet'.

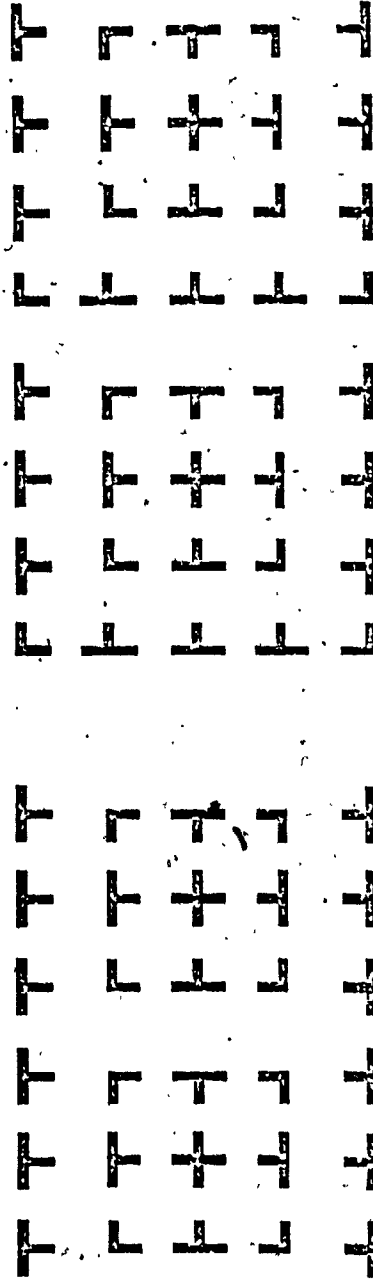


Figure 7. bp Nichol, from 'Trans-Continental'.

1

an h moves past an m
an i becomes an r

someone throws a snowball

o p
t r s u
v v v

w

i i i i

is thrown, the constituent particles are once again randomly scattered. This poem can only be called stationary if we look at a single frame as a discrete unit. When this frame is reconnected to the rest of the poem, it becomes part of a kinetic relationship.

In bill bissett's poem 'Yes', (fig. 8) we have a similar expression of an achieved structure in the midst of random scattering. The single word 'yes' seems to have been born out of a confused jumble of numbers and letters, of language particles. Against such a background, the very existence of a single vocalized word is a structurally affirmative act: the infinite and inchoate mass of possibility beneath the surface can be used in a positive way, but only if we do not attempt to deny or to ignore the existence of such an inchoate mass. We can discover significant structures -- perhaps because they are innate, perhaps only because of the power of convention -- but we cannot hope to impose an all-encompassing order.

Visual/Phonic - Stationary - Constructionist

If the inchoate background is removed and we are given only the ordered structure which has been extracted from it then we have a constructionist stationary poem rather than an expressionist one. In both bp Nichol's 'The End of the Affair' (fig. 9) and Emmett William's poem from 'The Clouds' (fig. 10) we have symmetrical constructs. Words and letters are presented and then go through a series of visual and phonic transformations until they either arrive back where they began or have given birth to new forms. In Nichol's poem the word 'organ' contributes its letters to the emergence of the word 'going'. These two words are thereby forced into a relationship that implies a hidden narrative base. The letter 'g' which is extracted from 'organ' forms three diamond shapes which, in combination, form a single diamond. The word 'organ' fills the two left diamonds; the third is almost

Figure 9. bp Nichol, 'The End of the Affair'.

EE
E E
E E
E EE
organorgan E
ogranogran EE
gorangorang E
gorangorang E
E oragnoragn E
E organorgan E
E E E E
E E E
E E go
EE goi
EE goin
E E going
E E E
E E E
E E E
E E
E

Figure 10. Emmett Williams, from 'The Clouds'.

SENSE SOUND
SONSE SEUND
SOUSE SENND
SOUNE SENSD
SOUND SENSE

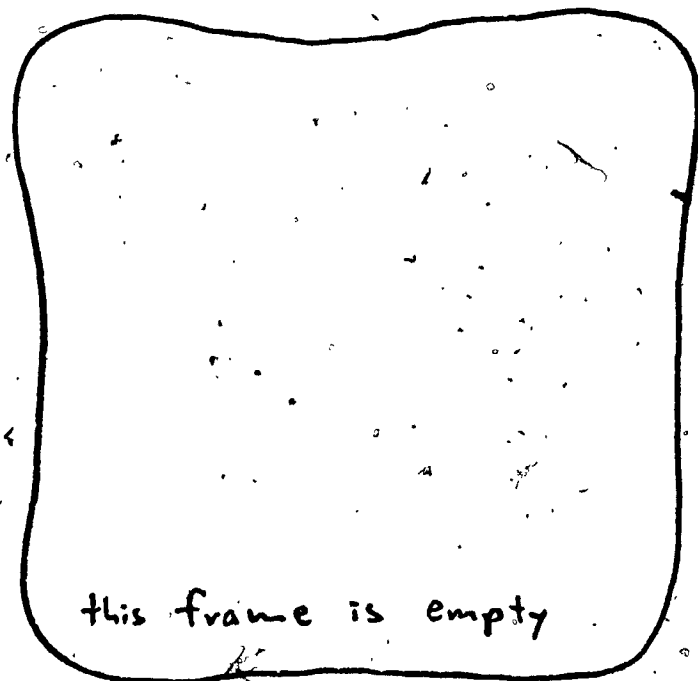
empty; and the word 'going' grows outside of the diamond which is the furthest on the right. These structural relationships indicate that 'going' means leaving the diamond shaped structure or in other words, the original relationship. There is a fourth diamond shaped structure at the bottom left. But this diamond is outlined by '8's' rather than by 'g's' indicating that a right angle step has been taken towards a new relationship which, since this fourth diamond is both empty and smaller than the others, has not yet come to much. The carryover of shapes, the '8' and the 'g' and the diamond shape, indicates that the nature of the old relationship is influencing the nature of the new relationship.

Emmett William's poem (fig. 10) sets up the word 'sound' against the word 'sense'. The letters are then transferred from each word to the other until each word becomes the other. The implication is that there is 'sense' in 'sound' and so we go back to vocalize and to contemplate the various intermediate letter groupings.

Visual/Phonic - Kinetic - Expressionist

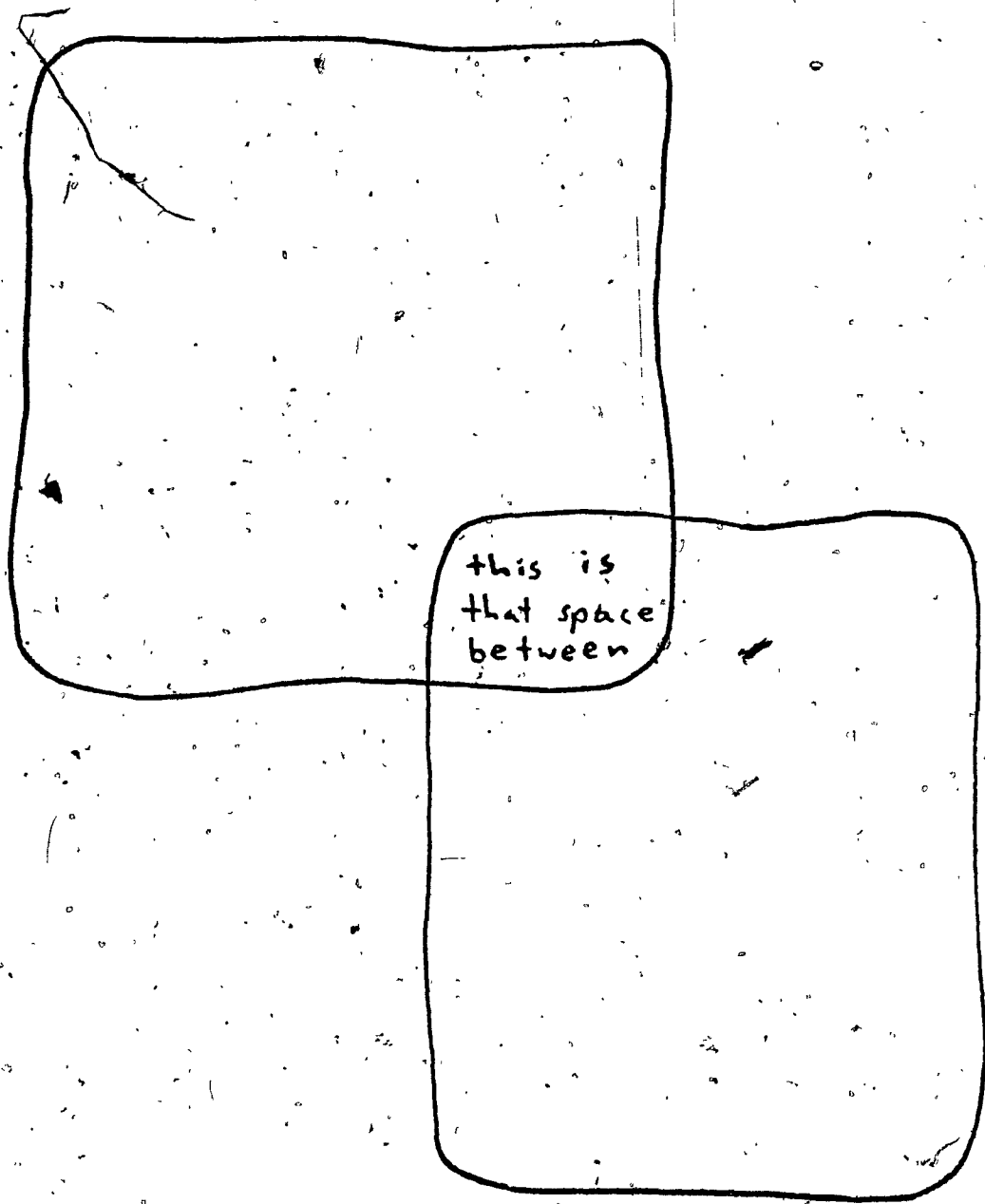
-In frame 8 of bp Nichol's poem 'Frames' (fig. 11.1) we are told: 'this frame is empty'. There is a free-hand drawn line framing a random area which encloses this phrase and which contradicts the statement. Frames 9 and 12 (fig. 11.2), which are in fact one frame since they exist together on the same page, are overlapped at one corner. In this overlapped space (presumably it constitutes the missing frames, 10 and 11) is the phrase: 'this is that space between'. There are, of course, many other frames in this poem. Each frame gives us a different and apparently random idea of the structure of the frame (in that each frame constitutes yet another example of an infinite number of similar possibilities). Frames are inside other frames, next to frames of different sizes and in varying spatial relation-

Figure 11.1. bp Nichol; from 'Frames'.



Frame 8

Figure 11.2. bp Nichol, from 'Frames'.



Frame 9 + 12

ships. The overall impression gained from the relationships of these various structures is that the frame is a totally arbitrary limiting device which often contradicts itself, and that we only accept its intention to order particles of communication because we recognize that the arbitrary structure is self-conscious and the result of the impulse to structure. Similarly, we can always create a new and larger frame (or system of structural order) around a collection of existing frames, or find new and smaller frames within an existing frame.

In Eugene Gomringer's poem about snow (fig. 12.1, 12.2, 12.3) there is a similar meaning to be found in the structure. We can see in the structure of this poem both the possibility for infinite ingress and infinite egress. This poem could exist simply as the incomplete copula 'snow is', or it could be extended indefinitely, giving to snow (metaphorically) every attribute imaginable. Gomringer, by stopping his list half way down the third page makes the structural statement that this is the point at which he wishes to establish his arbitrary limit.

Visual/Phonic - Kinetic - Constructionist

When we looked at figures 5.1 and 5.2 (see Visual - Kinetic - Constructionist) we saw that each frame had a few words around the outside which appeared to be taken from a coherent source. This source is the first page of ABC The Aleph Beth Book (fig. 13). This statement by itself is stationary; it is unique. But when it is divided into short phrases and placed around the other frames of the book, it becomes kinetic. There is an overlapping and fragmenting of what had once been a single frame structure. The new relationships produced by this fragmenting allow for additional meanings to become apparent.

Decio Pignatari's poem (fig. 14 -- he is a member of the Noigandres

Figure 12.1. Eugene Gomringer.

snow is english
snow is international
snow is secret
snow is small
snow is literary
snow is translatable
snow is everywhere
snow is ridiculous
snow is difficult
snow is modern
snow is hindering
snow is senseless
snow is musical
snow is gorgeous
snow is sedimentary
snow is meaningless
snow is elemental
snow is phantastic
snow is curved
snow is inauthorized
snow is disgusting
snow is ignorant
snow is irresistible
snow is rare
snow is exhausting
snow is civil
snow is smooth
snow is amusing
snow is epidemic
snow is hereditary
snow is risky
snow is analysable
snow is satisfactory
snow is catholic
snow is tasteless
snow is elegant
snow is absolute
snow is experimental
snow is neurotic

Figure 12.2. Eugene Gomringer.

snow is instructive
snow is selfish
snow is unique
snow is prepared
snow is expensive
snow is alphabetical
snow is unsocial
snow is sexless
snow is political
snow is provisional
snow is predominant
snow is reasonable
snow is violet
snow is distracting
snow is looking
snow is utopian
snow is evangelic
snow is inevitable
snow is cheap
snow is comprehensible
snow is delicious
snow is relative
snow is norwegian
snow is military
snow is comfortable
snow is light
snow is salutary
snow is harmful
snow is cold
snow is offensive
snow is brute
snow is scientific
snow is irregular
snow is indefensible
snow is independent
snow is annoying
snow is sad
snow is enormous
snow is pale

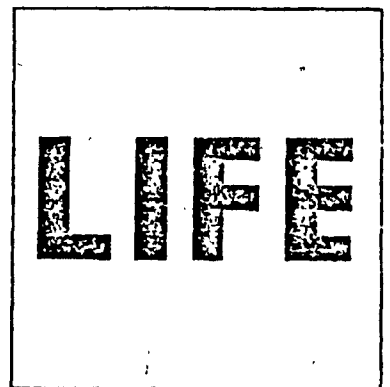
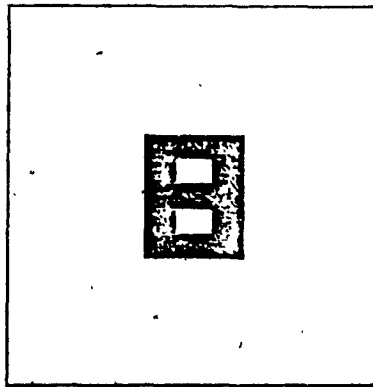
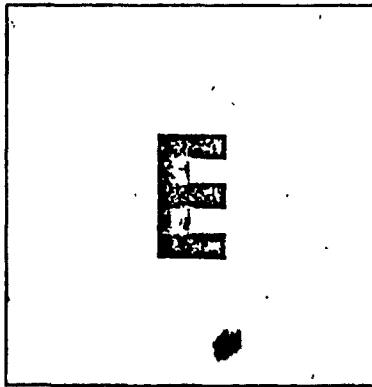
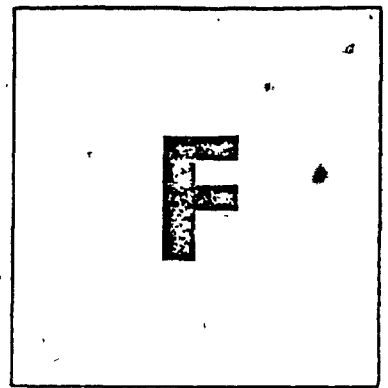
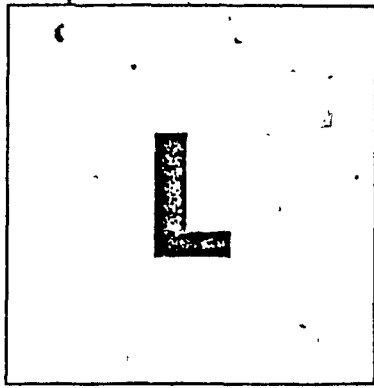
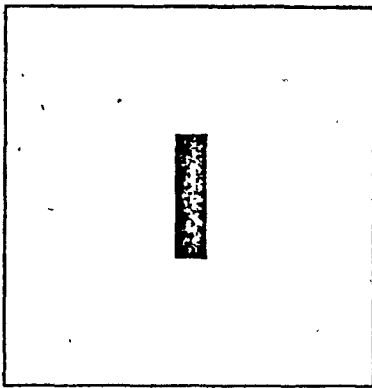
Figure 12.3. Eugene Gomringer.

snow is bare-footed
snow is corrupt
snow is cordial
snow is converse
snow is libidinous
snow is permitted
snow is sublime
snow is tawdry
snow is imaginable
snow is abstinent
snow is exact
snow is etymological
snow is fragmentary
snow is honourable
snow is immortal
snow is ancient
snow is illustrative
snow is aristotelian
snow is outside
snow is abstract
snow is divine
snow is white
snow is contradictory

Figure 13. bp Nichol, from 'ABC The Aleph Beth Book'.

POETRY BEING AT A DEAD END POETRY IS
DEAD. HAVING ACCEPTED THIS FACT WE ARE
FREE TO LIVE THE POEM. HAVING FREED
THE POEM FROM THE NECESSITY TO BE THE
POEM IS NOW CONSTANTLY HAPPENING IN
OUR LIVES. WHAT HAS BEEN CONSTANT TILL
NOW HAVE BEEN THE ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES
WE HAVE PLACED ON THE POEM. WE HAVE
PLACED THE POEM BEYOND OURSELVES BY
PUTTING ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES BETWEEN
OURSELVES & THE POEM. WE MUST PUT THE
POEM IN OUR LIVES BY FREEING IT FROM
THE NECESSITY TO BE. WE MUST BE TO FREE
OURSELVES FROM THE NECESSITY OF PLACING
BOUNDARIES BETWEEN OURSELVES & THE POEM.
THE POEM WILL LIVE AGAIN WHEN WE ACCEPT
FINALLY THE FACT OF THE POEM'S DEATH.

Figure 14. Decio Pignatari.



Group in Brazil) operates in the same manner. This poem was originally printed on six consecutive pages. (The version I have copied here is from an anthology which placed it all on one page due to space limitations.) Each of the first four figures, when combined, can produce either figure 5 or figure 6. The straight line, as the visual orthographic element of language, is shown to be, according to placement, capable of producing both the number '8' and the word 'LIFE'. Each of these structures is unique, yet each is formed using the same straight line elements. These structures therefore result from the arbitrary placement of the same elements, or particles. Because of this we are forced to admit that there is an inherent symmetry in the relationship between the structure of the number '8' and the structure of the word 'LIFE'. In both of the above cases, what appear to be random particles are shown to be elements of unique structures.

Phonic - Kinetic - Expressionist

The purely phonic poem can only be performed and heard. Once the score (even if it is only directions for improvisation) is written down, it becomes visual as well. The examples I have chosen for the phonic categories are all, for the sake of convenience, in score form. I shall be talking about them, however, as if they were being performed.

Taken together, the first six frames of bp Nichol's 'Dada Lama' (fig. 15.1 - 15.5; frames 2 & 4 are printed together as fig. 15.2; see phonic - stationary - constructionist) are a random selection of letter sounds, which, depending on the manner of performance, can evoke any emotion. Since there are so few recognizable words to clutter the surface with misleading messages or references, it is the actual expressive quality of the performance which is all important. In those frames where there are words (fig. 15.3, 'leave'; fig. 15.4, 'tlic tloc'; fig. 15.5, 'freedom') we are given only

Figure 15.1. bp Nichol, from 'Dada Lama'.

1

hwеееее
hwеееее
hyonnnn
hyonnnn

hwеееее
hwеееее
hyonnnn
hyonnnn

tubadiddo
tubadiddo
hyon
hyon

tubadiddo
tubadiddo
hyon
hyon

fffffffffffffffftsssssss
fffffffffffffffftsssssss
fffffffffffffffflitsssssss

hyonnnnn
 unh
hyonnnnn
 unh

Figure 19.2. bp Nichol, from 'Dada Lama'.

2

eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
eeèeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

4

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

Figure 15.3. bp Nichol, from 'Dada Lama'.

3

oudoo doan doanna
 tinna limn limn
 la leen
 untloo lima
 limna doo doo

dee du deena
 deena dee du
 deena deena
 dee du deena

ah-ooo runtroo
 lintle leave lipf
 lat lina tanta
 tlalum cheena
 ran tron tra troo

deena dee du
 deena deena
 dee du deena
 deena dee du

da dee di do du
 deena
 deena

Figure 15.4. bp Nichol, from 'Dada Lama'.

5

tlic
tloc

tlic tloc
tlic tloc

tlic tloc tlic
tloc tlic tloc

tlic tloc tlic tloc
tlic tloc tlic tloc

tlic tloc tlic tloc tlic
tloc tlic tloc tlic tloc

tlic tloc tlic tloc tlic tloc
tlic tloc tlic tloc tlic tloc

tlic tloc tlic tloc tlic
tloc tlic tloc tlic tloc

tlic tloc tlic tloc
tlic tloc tlic tloc

tlic tloc tlic
tloc tlic tloc

tlic tloc
tlic tloc

tlic
tloc

Figure 15.5. bp Nichol, from 'Dada Lama'.

6

wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
 mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
 wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
 mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

Wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
 Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
 Wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
 Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW
 MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
 WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW

OUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUH
 MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
 OUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUH
 MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

FEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
 EEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH
 FEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
 EEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH

FEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
 DUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
 FEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
 DUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

one word per frame. The word 'leave' appears randomly in a random background and is a recognizable structure only because of convention. The 'tlic tloc' of figure 15.4 is not really a word but bears such strong resemblance to 'tick-tock', the sound of a clock (tlic tloc is like a clock under water) that the power of convention forces the reader to accept it as a word. (The power of convention to make an obvious non-word acceptable as a possible-word is neological; the meaning must be derived from the context and is therefore a function of structure.) In figure 15.5 'freedom' would be immediately recognizable in performance even though on the page it is much less so. In each of these cases the letter groupings which we recognize as words, because of the conventions of our language code, are parodied. Depending upon the manner of performance, 'freedom' can be a curse or a celebration of joy; 'tlic tloc' can be a metronome gone wild or a subdued and comforting rhythm.

In a single performance, a single frame could be presented in contrasting versions; or the different frames could present contrasting evocations of emotion. On the other hand, all of the frames could be performed to evoke the same emotion or sensation.

The structural meaning once again pits randomness against arbitrary order. The great mass of particles which constitute the material of language, the objects of language, can serve to convey any sensation or emotion. The selection and attribution are arbitrary. We have come to automatically associate certain language objects with certain meanings only because of convention. To break language down into its constituent phonic particles and to evoke meaning with apparently random regroupings is to point out the arbitrary quality of convention.

The score for Henri Chopin's 'Sol Afr' (fig. 16) indicates this same structural meaning. The letter sounds which go into the making of the

two words 'Sol Air' are to be recorded in apparently random groupings on different tracks and at different speeds, and then all played back at once. In this way the words 'Sol Air' are made to evoke a far greater range of sensation and meaning than convention normally attributes to them. Once again the variations on a theme are only arbitrary moments in what is a potentially infinite field.

Phonic - Stationary - Expressionist

If we were to isolate a single recorded performance of frame 6 of 'Dada Lama' (fig. 15.5) or of the 4.75 cm track of 'Sol Air' (fig. 16) then we would have a phonic stationary poem. It would be unique in itself but, once again since a small change would not make us feel that the structure had been destroyed, there is no explicit sense of a unified structure.

Phonic - Stationary - Constructionist

If, however, we were to isolate a single recorded performance of frame 5 of 'Dada Lama' (fig. 15.4) we would have an explicit sense of a unified structure. There is an obvious symmetrical relationship between the particles.

In Alain Arias-Misson's score (fig. 17) we also have a sense of structural completeness. A series of vowel placements is followed from a starting point to a logical conclusion. And even if the series is not complete in this frame it is obvious that the series is a finite set.

Phonic - Kinetic - Constructionist

If bp Nichol had performed a series of sound poems based on the five vowels or on the twenty six letters of the alphabet and following the same alternating pattern found in frames 2 and 4 of 'Dada Lama' (fig. 15.2)

then the kinetic, or multi-framed poem, would have a sense of closure, of completeness, and could be called constructionist.

Although all of the examples I have chosen have been those which could be reproduced on a page, these categories are capable of describing Concrete poems which move beyond the limits of the page. Carlo Belloli's wall poems and poster poems are obviously stationary poems which can be either visual or visual/phonic and either expressionist or constructionist. Poems in the three spatial dimensions, made out of steel or concrete or whatever, can be described. Poems which come as loose leaves in a box and are meant to be shuffled, or which come as fold-outs, or which come with instructions which ask the reader to burn them when he is finished, are all obviously kinetic. The only limiting factor is that the function is to make an aesthetic language statement.

Chapter 3

"Caught between the opposites"

A poem can be Concrete only if it is consistent with the demands of Concrete theory. Any poetic structure which can be described only by recourse to a poetics other than Concrete must be eschewed. A revolution demands a clean sweep. Out with the old; in with the new. The categories I have used to describe Concrete poetry appear so all-encompassing because they have been extrapolated from a theory which declares that it is starting from base zero, that it is separating itself from tradition. These categories are accountable only to Concrete theory. It is not necessary that they be capable of describing traditional poetry as well.

Although bp Nichol's The Martyrology -- his most accomplished achievement and for that reason the one I have chosen to concentrate upon -- could not have been written without the influence of Concrete poetics, it is not a Concrete poem. In this work, Nichol makes use of traditional structures in a manner far more generous than Concrete purists would accept; so much so, that many of the stanzaic and rhythmic patterns can be described by traditional prosody. However, the context in which he places these traditional structures always allows the reader to see them as anachronistic. For no matter how frequently he draws from the past, the larger structural context is always informed by the perspective of Concrete poetics. As Gertrude Stein might say, he is bringing the past into the present.¹

¹See for example, Stein's How To Write (New York: Dover Publications, 1975) p.xiii. I discuss further Stein's influence on Nichol in chapter 6.

In The Martyrology Nichol has attempted to show that not only can particles within a single concept of structure be relative but also that different concepts of structure can be placed in relative structural relationship. Where concrete poetics demands a synchronic relationship of structures, The Martyrology exploits the diachronic relationships of structure. Concrete poets can use only the techniques of Concrete poetics; Nichol can now claim the freedom to use the techniques of any other poetics -- as long as it is made apparent that the techniques of these other poetics must be seen in contrast to a word order/world order at least as complex as that explored by Concrete poetics.

It is evident that, since The Martyrology is not a Concrete poem, the descriptive categories generated by Concrete theory will be inadequate as a critical methodology. It is equally evident that a critical methodology which is incapable of accounting for Concrete poetry will be inadequate. What is needed is a methodology which can accommodate both the old and the new, which can contain both the pre-revolution order of things and the post-revolution order of things. The structuralist theory of literary criticism is well suited to this project. For structuralism does not attempt to find meaning in the substantives of language; it attempts instead to describe literature in terms of the placement and function of language particles; it accepts that meaning is relative, and dependent upon the reader as much as on the writer-performer. Structuralism attempts to discover how a poem means rather than what it means. And since structuralism is not committed to a single ideology, as is Concrete poetics, it provides a useful methodology for describing as yet uncoded structures (and the inherent ideologies) and not just the already coded ones.

The categories developed for an understanding of Concrete poetry, in other words, must now be set aside. They provide the rules, or the context, for only one game. Structuralism's claim is that it provides a context which

can encompass the rules of any game. The classifications of structuralism absorb the categories of Concrete in the same manner as they absorb the categories of traditional prosody. For structuralists see all categories as heuristic. They are only to be called upon when the ideology (i.e., the structural system or word order) to which they are affiliated requires clarification in terms of its relative relationship to other structural systems. In isolation, the categories of Concrete are useful for understanding Concrete poetry. In a larger context they are revealed as idiosyncratic and treated as such.

In the first chapter I suggested that Nichol had three options: to embrace tradition, to force the evolution of tradition, or to revolt against tradition. Once again, the formulation is heuristic. I have given labels to these three possibilities only because they help to clarify the background out of which Nichol emerged. This, like all heuristic formulations, can be misleading. Where does one draw the line between 'forced evolution' and 'revolution'? As with all theoretical questions of degree, the response is unlikely to be useful. The perception of change as either gradual or radical is dependent upon the context provided by the perceiver. The Tish poets considered their approach radical. But viewed in the wider context which must account for Concrete poetics, it appears to be gradual. The broader the context, the easier it is to reduce revolutionary leaps to gradual steps. To attempt to define degree, then, is unlikely to be productive. It is more useful to describe the manner in which something differs from its background. In using the labels 'evolutionary' and 'revolutionary', I have not intended to judge the degree of change in any absolute sense but only to indicate the relative degree of change.

Also, no matter how revolutionary a new poetics claims to be, it can never totally disconnect itself from tradition. A revolution must have

something (tradition) against which to revolt. 'It is tradition, therefore, which constitutes the background of any new form -- limiting what can be done by implicitly indicating what cannot be done. Evolution, of course, operates in the same manner: the difference being that the background is considerably more visible. Jonathan Culler says that a text with no connection to tradition (if such a text is possible) is necessarily sterile, just as a text which is totally predictable is sterile; for the tension of art comes from the gap between the intelligible and the problematic.

The problem, Culler goes on to say, is to show "how poetic structures emerge from the multiplicity of potential linguistic structure."² If a poetics is not to be discarded as totally random (i.e. sterile in that it has no connection to tradition) then what emerges from this multiplicity of potential structure must in some way bear a relationship to what has come before. Structuralism, since it acknowledges this vast potential, is well suited to dealing with avant-garde structures which are continually challenging the limits imposed by tradition.

When a structuralist is faced with an apparently random concept of structure, he attempts to discover a structural system or context which can connect this new structure to the already existing body of convention; for the meaningless can always be made meaningful by providing the necessary context. It is in this light that Culler says that the most radical text can only be unified when it is seen as a subversive structure. When faced with a radical text, a critic must look not only for those 'actions' which can be described by existing conventions, but also for 'reactions' against existing conventions. These 'reactions' are then unified with tradition by showing that, even though they rise out of a multiplicity of potential

²Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 74.

structure, they are subverting existing tradition, and hence connected to it.

Y.M. Lotman³ says that in art there must be deviation whenever a norm is expressed (if we are not to have the sterility of predictability) but that this deviation must be systematic. We have seen that Concrete poetry, whose aim was to subvert tradition, can be described systematically. Having systematized, or conventionalized, a subversive poetics, and having provided a context which indicates the essential connection between this subversive poetics and tradition, we have, in effect, begun to naturalize this new poetics, or in other words, to bring it into the fold of tradition. The process is dialectical: the thesis and antithesis are synthesized -- synthesis being the process of naturalization. The structuralist attempts to discover how this naturalization takes place, to discover, in other words, how literary structures are related; he does not attempt to show that because there are differences between structures, they are intrinsically separate and unique.

Structuralism replaces critical theories which are atomistic, which look at works of art in isolation and seek only to discover uniqueness. Concrete poetry is obviously unique, in that it is different from traditional poetry, but does this uniqueness tell us anything about Concrete poetry as a literary endeavor? A random structure which has emerged from the multiplicity of potential structure is obviously unique, but is it therefore literary? Structuralism attempts to discover the larger context which allows us to answer these questions. For structuralism is both holistic and epistemological. It looks for the context which will allow us to see both the beginning and the end.

³See Ann Shukman's Literature and Semiotics: A Study of the Writings of Yuri M. Lotman (New York: North Holland Publishing Co., 1977). Lotman is perhaps the best known of the Russian structuralists.

Roman Jakobson⁴ has proposed that a structure, as opposed to a random collection of language particles, must have wholeness, and the capacity for both self-regulation and transformation. It must have wholeness because it is an aesthetic model of reality which allows us to cope with experience which, if viewed as random, would be insuperably chaotic. It must be self-regulated -- there must be codes and conventions -- so that we have recognizable limits which allow us to understand the manner in which a structure functions. And there must be the capacity for transformation so that conventions can change along with our perception of reality. As Heidegger has said, "Language speaks. Man speaks only insofar as he artfully complies with language."⁵ To say that something has structure is to say that it is an aesthetic response to reality and that therefore structure is a reflection of perception. Robert Scholes has said that "man exists in a system beyond his control but not beyond his power to re-arrange."⁶ We arrange what we perceive not in any ultimate sense but only in a way which allows us to continue re-arranging. The aesthetic, or poetic, use of language is both relative and mutable.

* * *

Bertolt Brecht has said that "revolutionary art must admit the arbitrariness of signs."⁷ One of the achievements of Concrete poetics is the underlining of this arbitrariness. But while Concrete poetics discards tradition because tradition denies this arbitrariness, structuralism feels

⁴See David Robey's discussion of Roman Jakobson in Structuralism: An Introduction, ed. David Robey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁵Jonathan Culler quotes Heidegger in Structuralist Poetics, p. 29.

⁶Robert Scholes, Structuralism in Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 199.

⁷Jonathan Culler quotes Brecht in Structuralist Poetics, p. 87.

no such qualm about mixing old structures with new perceptions. No matter how valid the current point of view appears to be, it should never be allowed to exist in isolation. This is summed up well by Genette:

The figure is nothing more than a sense of figuration and its existence depends totally upon the consciousness the reader develops or fails to develop of the ambiguity of the discourse he is offered.⁸

The sense of figuration is the point of view or ideology which informs a figure -- the world order in a word order. The reader senses the ambiguity of a sense of figuration only by seeing that the sense of figuration in the figure he is perceiving is but one of an infinite number of possible word/world orders; for to subscribe to only one sense of figuration is to deny the inherent ambiguity of a figure. Concrete poetry, oddly enough, risks such a denial of ambiguity by using only the structures of one sense of figuration. The Martyrology, on the other hand, by using the figures of more than one sense of figuration, avoids this potential structural contradiction.

Given the arbitrary nature of signs, how then can we discover meaning? John Lyons says:

The meaning of a word is a function of its relationship with other words in the same language.⁹

The rules, codes and conventions which govern these relationships provide us with ways of both recognizing them and of limiting their ambiguity.

Culler says that since

the response of imagination to language when language is freely displayed as a system of differences permits the production of so many meanings as to undermine the notion of positive or determinate signs;¹⁰

therefore

⁸Robert Scholes quotes Genette in Structuralism in Literature, p. 162.

⁹John Lyons, "Structuralism and Linguistics" in Structuralism: An Introduction, ed. David Robey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 9.

¹⁰Culler, p. 107.

the signified can be grasped only as the effect of an interpretive or productive process [a process informed by codes and conventions] in which the interpretants are adduced to delimit it.¹¹

It is evident that the placement of language particles is of the utmost importance since meaning is both produced and limited by the relationships of the particles. To write a poem which matches a perception is to discover where to place the language particles. This manner of consolidating a perception is what Culler is referring to when he says that,

to work something out one makes it into a story so that its parts may be disposed in orderly sequence.¹²

The 'story' in Culler's sense here is the 'perception' or world order to be found in the structure. Therefore, reading involves the same operation as writing: the discovery of the perception which matches the arrangement of the particles. This implies two things. It implies that a poem is always a statement about poems because the placement of the particles is always influenced by poetic convention. And it implies that to a large extent the discrete ego is removed from the text since structure is both immanent and related to all other structures. That is to say, a perception is potentially related to all other perceptions and not to be seen as the unique product of an individual poet.

As I remarked earlier, structuralism is not committed to a single ideology. It can be applied to and can reveal the structures of any ideology. Culler has said that "to understand the language of a text is to recognize the world to which it refers."¹³ It is this capacity to relate structure to ideology (we might also say to 'perception', to 'world order' or to 'poetic vision') which allows structuralism to integrate structures which have diachronic relationships, such as is the case with The Martyrology.

¹¹Culler, p. 20.

¹²Culler, p. 224.

¹³Culler, p. 135.

The emphasis is no longer placed on identifying the historical period -- for structuralism is a-historical -- but on discovering how one structure relates to other structures. For the structures of the past must be analyzed through the eyes of the present (we have once again Gertrude Stein's 'bringing the past into the present').¹⁴

The point of view of the present does not claim to be an isolated and exalted vantage point. It contains all of the points of view of the past and subordinates them to the 'cutting edge' of the present point of view, thus connecting them to a continuing process. And it is the cutting edge or avant-garde which,

by offering sequences and combinations which escape our accustomed grasp by subjecting language to a dislocation which fragments the ordinary signs of our world, [allows] literature [to] challenge the limits we set to the self as a device or order and allows us, painfully or joyfully, to accede to an expansion of self.¹⁵

* * *

Structuralism grew out of the study of linguistics as a semiotic discipline. Semiotics is the study of signs. All particles of communication are signs, which are relative and which gain their meaning from their functional relationships, and from the codes and conventions which govern these functional relationships. There are three types of sign: the icon, the index, and the sign proper, or symbol. The icon is a physical representation of what it stands for; for example, the statue of David represents 'David'. The index bears a causal relationship to what it represents. A dark cloud, for example, indicates the possibility of rain; and smoke indicates fire. The sign proper or the symbol is arbitrary and exists only because of con-

¹⁴See the first note to this chapter.

¹⁵Culler, pp. 129-30.

vention. All language particles are symbols. A 'tree' is not an 'arbre', it is only the word 'tree'. It stands for the idea of 'tree', an idea which can be infinitely variable. When Concrete poets treat language particles as objects in their own right, they are emphasizing this arbitrariness and variability. As Roman Jakobson says, "promoting the palpability of signs deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects."¹⁶

The conventions which control our use of these arbitrary symbols constitute grammar. For the purposes of the structuralists, a grammar cannot explain a language; it can only describe it.¹⁷ Rules must be consistent with the ability of a native speaker to generate chains of language particles which can be understood by other native speakers, but it is not necessary for the native speaker to know the rules behind the structures he generates. For the rules of grammar are not absolute, they only delimit what is acceptable and are part of the intuitive equipment of the native speaker. A grammar generalizes from what already exists; it does not impose rules which must then be followed.

We therefore have the first of the four dichotomies of language: langue/parole. The 'langue' is the underlying system (which has been intuitively learned) and the 'parole' is the discourse or the performance.¹⁸ Jonathan Culler calls this dichotomy, 'rule' and 'behaviour'. The rule represents the language competence of the native speaker out of which can come the infinitude of possible structures; the behaviour is the particular manifestation of structure under observation. The behaviour need not, of

¹⁶Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics" in Style in Language, ed. T. Sebeok (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), p. 356.

¹⁷The terminology used here is Noam Chomsky's. To 'explain' a language is to discover its universal roots. Structuralists consider this impossible. To 'describe' a language is to show how the existing phenomena function.

¹⁸These four dichotomies were first suggested by Ferdinand de Saussure. See his Course in General Linguistics, trans. Peter Owen (Fontana, 1974).

course, always represent the rule. It may try to subvert, to confuse or to puzzle.

The three other dichotomies of language are: substance/form, syntagm/paradigm, and synchronic/diachronic. The 'substance' of a language is made up of all of the particles of that language. The 'form' is the structure given to the substance. Substance and form should not be confused with 'langue' and 'parole', for both 'langue' and 'parole' have their own 'substance' and 'form'. For 'langue' equals the sum of all possible structures and is not to be confused with the inchoate mass of particles represented by 'substance'. The 'form' of 'langue' is the grammar which has been generalized from the infinitude of possibility. The 'substance' of a 'parole' is the sum of the language particles used in a particular structure. The 'form' of a 'parole' is the specific grammatical description which can be assigned to it. Signs and structures can be either syntagmatic or paradigmatic; they can either function in combination or as a repetition of a model. A sentence, for example, is syntagmatic because it depends on particles being placed in combination. A verb has a paradigmatic function because it is a particle which repeats a model delimited by the rule which defines 'verb'. Finally, a structure which is 'synchronic' is one that works with the codes and conventions of a single ideology (grammar, language, lexicon, genre etc.); while the 'diachronic' brings into structural relationship the structures of differing ideologies. I have already pointed out that Concrete poetry is synchronic while The Martyrology is diachronic.

Language is referred to as a primary modelling system. Its communicative purpose is to transmit a message and the success of the transmission depends upon language competence. Literature, however, is a second-level modelling system and as such, depends not only on language competence but also on literary competence. Lotman says that

it is a unique feature of art as opposed to other communication systems . . . that the work gives out to each reader different information, 'to each according to his understanding'.¹⁹

A knowledge of literary convention is necessary, then, if we are to understand literature. And the more knowledge we have of literary convention (i.e., the more literary competence we have) the more we are likely to understand. The sophisticated reader, the reader with a high level of literary competence, will approach literature with different expectations from those of an unsophisticated reader, a reader with a low level of literary competence. It is these expectations which allow the reader to differentiate between art and non-art. To have well-informed expectations is to understand poetics. For it is the task of poetics to define the limits between art and non-art. A poetics is nothing more than an outline of the laws of literary experience which allows us to recognize the predictable. As Culler says,

a work has a structure only in terms of a theory which specifies the ways in which it functions, and to formulate that theory [for literary structures] is the task of poetics.²⁰

But since, as we have seen, poetry must continually deviate from the norm if it is to avoid sterility, it is usually the case that poetry starts where literary competence leaves off. This does not, however, dismiss literary competence as little more than a tool of hindsight. For as Lotman says, "a sign can be perceived only against a background,"²¹ and this background is literary competence. Lotman also says that knowledge is a process and not an attainment and that therefore the discovery of one system can only be preliminary to the discovery of another.

¹⁹Shukman, p. 126.

²⁰Culler, p. 109.

²¹Shukman, p. 39.

One of the expectations we have of literature is that it must make sense. In response to this demand we develop new ways of reading; we make the text intelligible by inventing appropriate conventions (as for example I have done in chapter 2), thereby developing a new poetics and redefining literary competence. Even the incoherent must be made to yield coherence. To make the incoherent coherent is to bring enough to the text so that the gaps are filled and the apparently random particles are joined to a unifying structure. Literary competence therefore depends largely on the contextual codes or, as Lotman calls them, the 'extra-text' codes, which the reader can be expected to supply.

Language and literature are, of course, inextricably connected. To say that literature is a second-level modelling system and therefore requires literary competence is not to say that language competence is no longer needed. Literature simply increases the number of ways in which language can function. Roman Jakobson²² suggests that language has six possible functions: the referential, the emotive, the phatic, the conative, the metalingual, and the poetic. It is the addition of the final function which separates art from non-art. Each of these functions has a different orientation or focus. The 'referential' is oriented to the content of the message. It depends upon the pretence that a word is what it represents. The 'emotive' is oriented to the sender. It is an attempt to evoke or to otherwise communicate the emotional state of the sender. The 'conative' is oriented to the receiver. It attempts to manipulate and is often imperative. The 'phatic' is concerned only with contact. Pleasantries are often 'phatic'; there is nothing to be communicated other than a desire to establish

²²Culler, pp. 55-6.

original contact or, once contact has been established, to keep the channels open for possible future communication. The 'metalingual' is oriented to other social or cultural semiotic codes. The 'poetic' is oriented to the message itself: it acknowledges the poetic function, the relationship between substance and form. It is self-reflexive.

Lotman says that "cognition is possible only by the act of establishing an opposition."²³ A language particle can only be recognized as distinct because it is in some way different from or in opposition to its background. We have a sense of what 'open' is because it is in contrast to 'closed'. We sense what 'yellow' is because we can recognize how it stands in contrast to its background, the full spectrum of colour. Greimas, in his study of semantics,²⁴ suggests that all isotopes (two particles alike in all but a single feature, that feature giving rise to opposition) can be reduced to the opposition between life and death. Artistic structures are then built up from this base according to a dialectic of multiplicity. Whether or not we agree that 'life/death' is the base isotope, the pattern of binary opposition and the dialectical process which follows remains the most direct procedure for discovering that balance of structure which we accept as unified. For the 'life/death' opposition provides -- whether or not we believe as Greimas does in its universality -- a structural sense of beginning and ending. And a structure must be holistic and epistemological.

Both sides of an opposition need not necessarily be found in the text. It is quite possible that the reader will have to provide the background. Therefore the contact between the reader and the text is as important as the text itself. The structure of a text will indicate the deitics of the text -- a sense of time and place and persona. The reader must

²³Shukman, p. 34

²⁴See the chapter on Greimas (chapter 4) in Culler, pp. 75-95.

recognize the deitics -- the task of literary competence -- and then bring to the text the appropriate codes and conventions which will act as background. These codes can be social, cultural, generic, grammatical, lexical or poetic; the structure of the text can invite relationships with any other semiotic code. The reader will not necessarily be conscious of making these additions. For a reader with a large experience of literature will often automatically provide what is missing in order to make sense of a text. An inexperienced reader, however, a reader unfamiliar with the deitics and the codes demanded by those deitics, risks the possibility of becoming lost, of not discovering the sense of the text. It is the critic's goal therefore, "to make explicit the implicit knowledge used in the recognition of signs."²⁵ The critic must describe the way in which the reader can discover the binary oppositions of the text. Since the meaning is in the gap between the opposites, the critic must help the reader to discover how to be 'caught between the opposites'.

A reader understands a work of literature when he has discovered its structural order. This structural order can be one which has already been consolidated and coded by a poetics, or it can be a subversion of existing codes which is attempting to communicate a new mode of perception. A poetics is a system which delimits the possibility of structure; it is a system of codified constraints. Jonathan Culler points out that "it is the forbidden which offers the most promising material for studying limits,"²⁶ since the forbidden must recognize previous limits before it can move beyond them. A critical theory which can recognize the forbidden (or the avant-garde) but which has no methodology for coming to terms with it, is obviously lacking. Robert Scholes says that

²⁵Culler in Robey, p. 25.

²⁶Culler in Robey, p. 27.

the perception of order or structure where undifferentiated phenomena had seemed to exist before is the distinguishing characteristic of structuralist thought.²⁷

Structuralism is not a methodology which relies upon an existing poetics as a system for describing poetry (It was such a limited method that was used in chapter 2 to describe Concrete poetry. In the first chapter I define Concrete as a genre; in the second chapter I use the poetics of that genre to describe its poems. The use of a single poetics allows the critic only to recognize those poems which fall within a specific genre and to exclude those which do not.). Structuralism attempts instead to discover the poetics of a poem. Culler says that structuralism

can lead to a mode of interpretation based on poetics itself, where the work is read against the conventions of discourse and where one's interpretation is an account of the ways in which the work complies with or undermines our procedures for making sense of things.²⁸

Structuralism is a methodology of process capable of discovering the perception behind the most revolutionary poetic structure. Therefore, as Tzvetan Todorov says,

exegesis is to be assessed according to its coherence and not according to its truth in any absolute sense.²⁹

For an exegesis is dependent upon perception and is therefore relative.

It will be my purpose in the next chapter to discover the perception (or world order) behind the structure (or word order) of bp Nichol's The Martyrology. To do this I shall analyze the functional relationships of the semiotic particles (no longer just language particles since The Martyrology integrates graphics) in four areas: the visual, the phonic, the syntactic and the tropological. I shall consider the particles and

²⁷ Scholes, p. 41.

²⁸ Culler, p. 130.

²⁹ Tzvetan Todorov, "The Structural Analysis of Literature: The Tales of Henry James" in Structuralism: An Introduction, ed. David Robey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 73.

structures in each of these areas in terms of the type of sign -- icon, index, or symbol -- in terms of the four dichotomies -- substance/form, langue/ parole, syntagm/paradigm and synchronic/diachronic -- in terms of the six functions -- referential, emotive, phatic, conative, methalingual and poetic -- in terms of the deitics of the text, in terms of reader contact, and finally, in terms of the creation and resolution of opposites. (see appendix 4).

Chapter 4

"Kill us Will us dead & gone"

Taken together, the first four books of The Martyrology contain almost four hundred pages. To provide a comprehensive textual commentary, a commentary which attempts to uncover as many of the perceptions in the text as possible, would be a massive undertaking. I need only point to Roland Barthe's S/Z.¹ In this book Barthe provides over two hundred pages of commentary on Balzac's short story 'Sarrazine', a work of less than twenty pages. My reading of The Martyrology is necessarily selective. I hope to raise as many questions as I face, if not more. However, I have tried to provide a commentary with a focus strong enough to suggest further readings and not just a commentary which is little more than an idiosyncratic sampling.

Since there are no existing structural readings of The Martyrology I have chosen not to introduce material from previous readings of the poem, no matter how perceptive the insights.² I have attempted to be systematic; to account for intuitive responses to the poem would have required digression of the sort which might have weakened my focus. There is one notable exception. I have borrowed the term 'particle' from E. Quigley's article 'Particular Poetry'³ since it is a useful term for describing the 'object' quality of language.

* * *

¹ Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

² For previous readings of The Martyrology see section 'G' of the bibliography of bp Nichol provided.

³ E. Quigley, "Particular Poetry" in Rune 6, (1980), pp. 30-53

At the end of Book 4 Nichol tells us that the first three books of The Martyrology correspond to the letter 'M' of the word 'MARTYROLOGY', and that the fourth book is the first which corresponds to the letter 'A'. At this rate (if, from such slim evidence, we assume that each letter of the word 'MARTYROLOGY' will have three corresponding books) the projected length of the completed work would be thirty-three books. Each book so far (my description concerns only the first four books) has taken two years to write. Book 1 was written between 1967 and 1969; Book 2 between 1969 and 1971; Book 3 between 1971 and 1973; and Book 4 between 1973 and 1975. If Nichol maintains this regular pace, the thirty-three books will take sixty-six years to write. Nichol was born in 1944 and was therefore twenty-three when he began this project. We can assume therefore, that if all goes well, he will complete The Martyrology in 2033 at the age of eighty-nine.

But of what use is it to the reader to make such a tenuous speculation? In allowing for, in fact by demanding, such speculation (regardless of the actual numerical results of the mathematical manipulations) Nichol is making the same structural statement as that made by Ezra Pound when he announced that there would be one hundred Cantos; and by Gertrude Stein in Stanzas in Meditation, which was an ongoing 'journal' of poetic meditations which ended only at her death and which was only published posthumously. This project, we are being told, is epic in proportion; it is a narrative -- or in other words a documentary -- of a poetic journey through the world. Each new book is a documentation of recent poetic research. (We must assume that if the poet lives past the age of eighty-nine the structure of the work will be extended. The need to attribute a definite number to the number of books in the series is the need for a postulated end, not the need for a known and immutable structure.)

It is important to recognize this sense of ending, for without it

the reader's task is made considerably more difficult. Lotman tells us that we can only view a text in relationship to its end.⁴ When we recognize that the only possible end is the death of the poet we are able to see each new book as a continuation of the struggle for poetic vitality and life in the face of unavoidable death. However, to say that death is unavoidable is not to say that it is an absolute. At any moment death can end the poetic struggle of a particular poet, but it can not bring to an end the aesthetic response to the world which we call 'poetry'. The open-ended structure of each book therefore reinforces the essentially arbitrary nature of any ending. Death can end a poetic journey but it cannot signify the achievement of a poetic absolute.

Looking at the overall structure of The Martyrology in this way, we find that we have arrived at Greimas' base isotope: life against death, the struggle for vital poetic structures in the face of potential sterility. We must now look for the multiplicity of structures which extend from this base. I shall proceed book by book, looking for the types of structural relationship outlined in Chapter 3.

Book 1

I have organized each book into its constituent 'segments' (see Appendices 1 & 3). Nichol announces each segment (signified by a letter: 'A', 'B', 'C', etc.) by either a volume cover or a full page title page with graphic. The 'sub-segments' (signified by a number: '1', '2', '3', etc.) are introduced by either an epigraph or a sub-title. I shall look at each segment individually and at the relationships between the segments.

⁴Ann Shukman, Literature and Semiotics: A Study of the Writings of Yuri M. Lotman (New York: North Holland Publishing Co., 1977), p.

'Segment A'

This first segment consists of the cover of the first volume, an epigraph and an untitled preface. It is part of the front matter, along with segments 'B', 'C', and 'D'. When a reader first comes into contact with this book he will notice that the copyright data is missing. Many readers, myself included, always read this data as a matter of course. Such information is not insignificant, especially when one is reading an author, such as bp Nichol, who habitually works with small presses. Knowledge of the publishing house and the date of publication can influence a reader's expectations. Is this an old work or a new work? Is it likely to be experimental or traditional? Is it likely to be allied to a specific movement? Of course, if a reader is familiar with an author's work already, this information will be less important -- but only because the information is already known and has already influenced reader expectation.

Traditionally, the copyright page is reserved for information which outlines the legal status, the library location, and the printing history of the book. The publisher and the city of publication although found on the copyright page, can also be found on the title page. The copyright page, then, gives us the technical information concerning the book's physical existence. This background information both validates and gives substance to the name of the publishing house on the title page. In The Martyrology there is a title page with publishing house and city, but no copyright page -- or at least not at the beginning of each volume. The removal of the copyright data from the beginning of the volume to the end of the volume is, therefore, a subversion of the structure of traditional bookmaking. This has two effects. First, if the reader is unacquainted with the publishing house in question he will have little information with which to temper his expectations. Second, the reader will now be able to move from the outside

cover into the text without being interrupted by subsidiary technical information. The title on the outside cover becomes part of the text and not just a preliminary to the text. The boundary between book and non-book is rendered more illusory. The book is still a physical object with obvious physical boundaries, but the structure of the object itself no longer reinforces this sense of boundary by isolating the text within a frame of extra-textual information.

The epigraph which immediately follows the outside cover is from Gertrude Stein. "Let me recite what history teaches. History teaches."⁵ This is located at the bottom of the page. The text traditionally begins at the upper left-hand corner of the page. By placing the epigraph at the bottom, reader expectation is once again subverted.

(The page is light purple -- a progressive lightening of tone from the dark grey, with the purple and white lettering, of the outside cover to the dark purple of the inside cover. There is a grey hand-drawn line -- the same tone as the outside cover -- approximately one half inch from the physical limit of each side of the page. The outside cover is framed by a mechanically-drawn line of the same tone of purple as the inside cover. This constant carry-over opposes the effect of the framing.)

Syntactically, this quotation from Stein appears incomplete. The reader must either complete it or find a new way of reading. The verb 'to teach' can only be intransitive if it has an animate subject. The reader must therefore supply an object to complete the predicate. If we take the

⁵bp Nichol, The Martyrology vol. 1 (Toronto: The Coach House Press 1977), p. 5. All subsequent quotations from The Martyrology are from the two volume edition of the first four books published in Toronto by The Coach House Press in 1976-77. Location is indicated by volume number and page number only (see Appendix 3). The Martyrology is unpaginated. My attribution of page numbers is for convenience of location only and should not be considered a critical comment.

repetition of 'history teaches' as the object of the first phrase we must still supply this repetition with an object. This can lead to repetition ad infinitum which, especially if spoken out loud, will soon remove any possibility of referential meaning by turning the words into nonsense sounds. The epigraph would then function conatively; the reader would be manipulated into forgetting the referential pretensions of the words. This repetition would underline the arbitrariness of limits.

We can read this epigraph in another way. Stein tells us that she is going to 'recite' what 'history teaches'. This is undoubtedly an allusion (and therefore a metalingual function -- an introduction of an extra-text code) to a genre of joke we have all heard as children. The first person says: "Don't just stand there, say something." The second person replies: "Something." Once again the referential function of language is undermined, this time in favour of the phatic. The repetition of 'history teaches' is meant to indicate that we should keep the channels of communication open. We should remember that each book is open-ended and therefore inherently, although not uniquely, phatic.

The untitled preface which follows this epigraph is a genealogy of the Saints (see Appendix 5). By listing these Saints, the poet creates in the reader the expectation that he will be hearing more about them. These family trees also provide a background against which the more detailed accounts of the Saints' lives can be played. In other words, this background, this web of relationships, is paradigmatic; the chains of events which are the individual life stories of each Saint are syntagmatic; the chain, or syntagm, then becomes that multiplicity of structures which is represented by a particular Saint in the paradigm -- or the model of relationships which is the revealed genealogy.

The reader has every right to strongly suspect that he is entering

an allegory. The way in which the Saints' names have been structured makes it appear highly unlikely, at this early point, that they refer to actual people. Each of the Saints' names is three words. Saint Orm, for example, can be read as two consecutive words -- 'Saint' and 'Orm' (an orm, or orme, is an antiquated word for the husk out of which a flower grows)⁶ -- or as one word -- 'storm', that is, 'St.' the abbreviation of 'Saint' plus 'Orm'. Similarly, 'Saint Rain' can be 'strain', 'Saint Iff' can be 'stiff' and so on. The reader recognizes that he is being introduced to a tropological structure and he adjusts his expectations accordingly.

The hand-drawn grey lines continue to frame each page. These frames, however, are only visual. There is a syntactical carry-over which flaunts the boundary and which shows it to be arbitrary, reminding us of the kinetic quality of concrete poetry. At the bottom of the verso page of the preface we have:

saint aggers wife is now forgotten
gave birth to saint ump and saint rap
gave birth to noone
dying in the fire reat had set

(vol. 1, p. 6)

At the top of the recto page following we have:

is nothing but a history
brief at best
an end of one thing
beginning of another

(vol. 1, p. 7)

In addition to the carry-over that is to be seen here, there is a sort of syntactical loop-delay or echo effect which Nichol often uses. Referential meaning can only be suggested if we repeat certain words. In this case the repetitions coincide with the change of frame and cause the reader to go

⁶The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 2011.

forward and backward and backward and forward before he earns the right to go on. Thus we have: "saint aggers wife is now forgotten/ gave birth to saint ump and saint rap" and "saint ump and saint rap/ gave birth to noone" and "saint ump and saint rap/ . . . / dying in the fire reat had set" and "the fire reat had set/ is nothing but a history."

This structure is reminiscent of a childrens' word game. A verse is recited to a point where it is obvious that a taboo word must be said. But the taboo word is miraculously swallowed by an acceptable word which becomes the first particle of a new syntactical chain. Thus we might have:

And if you don't
you'll go to hello
Mr. Rodgers and
how are you today . . .

Although in The Martyrology it is not a question of disguising taboo words, the similarity of structural pattern, and therefore the metalingual function, is clear. Playing these games, and pointing to the arbitrariness of boundaries, carries the structural meaning that syntax is mutable. The particles themselves are not even stable; they derive meaning only from their relationships -- from the gaps between particles.

The two pages of this preface have both visual and phonic relationships to traditional verse forms. Although the text is oriented to the lower left hand corner of the page instead of to the upper left hand corner (this paradigm holds throughout the four books and becomes, in its turn, an expected convention) the words, or language particles, are presented in recognizable stanza forms. There are stanzas of great rhythmic regularity, such as this quatrain of two stress lines:

saint iff married saint rive
gave birth to saint reat
who married saint agnes
gave birth to saint rand

In traditional verse the regularity of stanza and line give rise to the expectation of continued regularity. There can of course be variation but if the variation is to be extreme -- say from a two stress line to a seven stress line -- then it must be signalled, or approached gradually; or if there is no bridge, then there must be some element of repetition, as is the case with free verse, so that the reader can see that the variation is neither random nor simply a sign of the poet's lack of control. Nichol's structures self-consciously flaunt these expectations. In the middle of what is predominantly a two stress pattern he places a seven stress line.

an end of one thing
beginning of another
premonition of a future time or line we will be writing

one thing makes sense
one thing only
to live with people
day by day

(vol. 1, p.7)

On the two pages of the preface, out of forty-nine lines, there are no other seven stress lines; there is no line which even comes close. The self-conscious subversion of poetic structure is the poetic function of language.

Nichol also warns us that he is going to undermine the arbitrary limits imposed by the symbols of language -- the words.

a future music moves now to be written
w g r & t
its form is not apparent
it will be seen

(vol. 1, p. 7)

As in Concrete poetry the particles of language are to be treated as particles in and of themselves. In an effort to free the reader from an automatic acceptance of the referential value of symbols, the poet breaks

these symbols up into their constituent particles (the letters of the alphabet) and then displays them randomly.

k l m n
b r v
a hymn for saint iff

(vol. 1, p. 7)

The structure is both phatic and conative. It is phatic because at one level it does nothing more than keep the poem moving. It is conative because it forces the reader to search for meaning, and the only meaning possible is the structural meaning that the referential function of language is pretentious and arbitrary. For we are given language particles with no obvious referential meaning and told that they are a hymn. We expect a hymn to have referential meaning.

'Segment B'

Segment 'B' is introduced by the title page for The Martyrology, for the project as a whole. The reader therefore expects that what follows will be a comment on the nature of the project and not just on the nature of the first volume, as is the case with segment 'A'. Once again the orientation is to the lower left-hand corner of the page; the convention is establishing itself by repetition.

In the passage we are given 'from The Chronicle of Knarn' we are introduced to a poet who has witnessed the death of an old and immutable world (Knarn?) and is now faced with "useless repetition." (This reminds us of Stein's use of repetition in making 'the present continuous'.) The poet is faced with a language which is "no longer spoken," and hands which "turn the words/clumsily." (vol. 1, p. 13). The old and stable is pitted against the new and unstable. The poet's "arms ache from not holding" (vol. 1, p. 13) his lover, or in other words, the containable form which

had been the muse, because in this new and mutable world everything is deceptive. He cannot hold on to anything; least of all the muse.

There is a structural contradiction between the subtitle and the text. A 'chronicle' is a way of recording history by listing in detail and in chronological order the events as they took place. There should be no interpretation or analysis of these events, and no authorial intervention. And yet the excerpt we are given is full of interpretative digression and authorial intervention. It is more a collection of moods and impressions which relate to the death of the traditional poem. But even this one event, the death of the poem -- an event which could conceivably be the basis of a chronicle -- is not presented with any precision. The narrator equivocates: "i think it's over." (vol. 1, p. 11). We cannot expect anything to be what it claims to be.

The tropological structure of this segment -- the land of Knarn being a metaphor for traditional poetry -- is a nest of ambiguities. Is Knarn dead or alive? How did the legend grow? What, in fact, is the legend? What comes after Knarn? Is it any better? We are given a chronicle which is not a chronicle, and a present which is chaotic because it has no focus. In the midst of all of this there is an intimation that the poet-narrator might be happy to return to the past. He wishes he could,

scream your name and you could hear me

(vol. 1, p. 12)

Still, this need not be interpreted as a call for the old order of things. It can also be, as we will come to appreciate, an expression of the desire to know the present by understanding the past. The first thing the poet must do is to get the legend straight, to provide enough information so that the tropological structure can be unified.

It is obvious that this 'chronicle' was written in retrospect.

(a long time ago i thot i knew how this poem would go, how the figures of the saints would emerge. now its covered over by my urge to write you what line i can. the sun is dying...)

(vol. 1, p. 12)

The legends of the past -- the legends of the immutable Saints, of poetic tradition -- will be told in the mutable present. Traditional structures will be placed in a context which subverts their claim to validity.

The syntax of this segment is left intentionally ambiguous. There is little punctuation, and when it is used it is used expressively -- such as the use of a question mark -- rather than to limit the possibility of referential ambiguity. Thus we have structures such as:

i've looked across the stars to find your eyes
they aren't there
where do you hide when the sun goes nova?

(vol. 1, p. 11)

where the antecedent for the pronoun 'they' can be either 'your eyes' or 'the stars'; and the pronoun 'you' can refer to either the person whose eyes are being searched for, or the general and plural 'you'. However, due to the power of convention, a reader will likely supply the missing punctuation and accept the more obvious reading. But without the punctuation he would be justified in adding the less obvious, alternative readings. In doing so he would be recognizing the mutability of the syntax.

Some of the pages in this segment undermine the visual conventions of traditional poetic structures. The spacing is by field -- reminiscent of concrete poetry -- and not just by line and stanza. The phonic patterns however, are still strongly related to traditional structures. The use of rhyme for emphasis and to indicate parallelism is frequent.

into the great rift

i only know i drift without you
into a blue that is not there

tangled in the memory of your hair

(vol. 1, p. 11)

Graphics begin to appear in segment 'B'. They are related to each other in the same way that the consecutive frames of a cinematographic film are related to each other. The first series of graphics (see Appendix 2) represents a bearded Saint. As the series continues, the face of the Saint grows larger and appears to be coming closer to the reader. By zooming in on the Saint, the graphics parallel the text. We will learn about the Saints in more detail.

'Segment C'

The graphic on the first page of segment 'C' continues the series that was begun in segment 'B' and is twice as large. The graphic thereby joins what is otherwise separated, providing a common denominator for the continuing series of segments.

By segment 'C' certain visual conventions have been established: the purple colour of the page, the hand-drawn line framing the page, and the orientation of the text to the lower left-hand corner of the page. But, no sooner does the reader begin to expect this orientation than the convention is undermined. The epigraph following the title page is centred in the upper portion of the page. This change of positioning places this epigraph in structural opposition to the first epigraph. The first epigraph is a quote from Gertrude Stein; it challenges the pretensions of language by presenting a structure which exposes the arbitrariness of language. The epigraph in segment 'C' is 'from The Writings of Saint And' and presents the claims for immortality (or the absolute) represented by the Saints. But the opposition is weak; it is only the potential for opposition. For this excerpt is an equivocation. It is the positioning on the page which indicates

that Nichol wants us to see the opposition. In the end, the choice is left to the reader. He must either accept, deny, or reserve judgement on the possibility of this potential opposition.

It is the reader's expectations and his contact with the deitics of the text which will influence his judgement. If the reader is sympathetic or curious, then he will continue; if he denies the opposition because he believes in the immortality of the Saints, then he must realize that if he does continue to read, it will only be in order to weigh the structures he finds against a concept of structure which he believes to be superior -- in effect, to expose, at best, incompetency and dilettantism; at worst, sacrilege. By making this opposition equivocal, Nichol is forcing the reader (once again a conative function) to be responsible not only to this particular text but also to poetry and poetics (a poetic function) in the most general sense.

The dedication which follows this epigraph is in two parts. One is traditional and easily understood on a referential level; and one is a nonsense chain of letters which serves the phatic function of keeping the channels of communication open by producing a phonic display -- in effect, the book is dedicated to the power of sound. (It is possible that there is a private reference in 'palongawhoya' and therefore a possible metalingual function, but the reader cannot be expected to 'pick up on' it -- this will obviously be the case with any apparently random chain of language particles.) It also undermines the referential pretensions of language symbols; syntactical convention tells us that 'palongawhoya' must be a noun, and so we automatically attribute to it the object quality of a noun; but it is a noun with no referent and therefore not a symbol; it is only an object.

'Segment D'

This segment consists only of a title page, a graphic which is not part of any cinematographic series, and an epigraph. It marks the beginning of Book 1. So, in the first four segments we have been referred to the first volume, the whole project, back to the first volume and now to the first book.

The visual structure returns to the conventions established in the first two segments. As I have indicated in chapter 3, even a revolution must be systematic. The function is poetic. A background is being established from which future structures will be able to deviate.

The epigraph is short and colloquial.

the breath lies
 on mornings like this
 you gotta be careful
 which way you piss

(vol. 1, p. 21)

The first line is both tropologically and visually separated from the ditty which follows it. Metaphorically, the wind -- the 'breath' and therefore the phonic quality of poetry -- opposes the 'piss'. The particles of language, as instruments of sound, can lie; they can deceive us. When we piss -- that is, when we function as the biological organism we are -- then we had better make sure that we are pointed in the right direction -- that is, language should work in consonance with the body; sound should be a function of the body. When the breath lies, when it is not in consonance with the body, we suffer the consequences.

The use of the comical ditty (the structure is self-conscious and therefore serves a poetic function) is in opposition to the potential tragedy evoked by the tropological structure. The result is a tragi-comic synthesis.

'Segment E'

Segment 'E', The Martyrology of Saint And, is the beginning of the text proper. Its title page begins the third series of graphics, a series which begins and ends within the boundaries of this segment.

The title causes the reader to expect to find in this segment the legend of Saint And's martyrdom. In segment 'A' we were told that Saint And did not marry; because of this we are aware that he represents the end of his line of issue. A martyr dies for a cause or purpose outside of the self (not necessarily religious). Saint And, it appears, has made such a 'stand' (the joining of St. and And). In so doing he has brought to an end not only his own life but also that of a system. The reader therefore expects to discover in this segment the nature of this 'stand'. The reader might also justifiably expect the nature of this 'stand' to have something to do with the equivocation found in segment 'C'. These expectations are the result of the relationships to be found in the genealogy of the Saints, in the tropological paradigm.

The epigraph is once again oriented to the top of the page. Once again it is equivocal. The birth of Saint And was a non-event, the implication being: how were we to know that he would do what he did? But, of course, the reader has no idea yet what he has done, only a feeling that he must have done something.

The text has two beginnings. The false start:
so many bad beginnings
you promise yourself
you won't start there
again

(vol. 1, p. 25)

is oriented to the right side of the page. The developing convention allows the reader to react to this as a positioning of challenge,

a positioning of opposition to the text which is oriented to the left-hand side of the page. The second beginning returns to the left-hand side of the page; we recognize it therefore as the real start.

The tropological structure -- the syntagmatically presented events of the Saints' lives -- is complex. New background material is introduced. The colours blue and red are immediately recognized as important; a circus is important; and clouds are important. We begin to learn the deitics of the allegory.

A poem, we learn, is like a cloud. Boundaries are ephemeral and mutable. The most obvious type of cloud is made of water vapour. But a cloud can be made of any gas, with boundaries visible or invisible, with a result pleasant or unpleasant.

the undated poem is
found and
forgotten

passes

like gas.

(vol. 1, p. 25)

A fart, if we accept the allusion, is both difficult to see and unpleasant.

The colour blue is more than just the colour of the sky and therefore the background which allows us to perceive the structure of a cloud. It is also the colour of Saint And's eyes. These eyes frame the world, and Nichol tells us that he has been looking at the world through these eyes for years. Also, blue is the colour of the ocean -- both the literal ocean and the figurative ocean, the ocean of all thought which exists inside And's head. The colour blue, then, is the 'substance' of language and the 'substance' of poetry. There is a continuum from the blue of the sky (the substance or background of the cloud or form) to the blue of Saint And's eyes; and to the blue ocean of all thought which is inside Saint And's head.

Even his hair is coloured blue.

The aspect of tradition represented by Saint And is likened to a circus. The incompetent performers survive by setting up a tent from time to time on sandy beaches beside an ocean. But these tents, the structures imposed and condoned by tradition, are inadequate. They cannot contain the 'now', the 'joy' which represents the desire for aesthetic communication.

hucksters
strip your trees
and leave

centre poles fall

in the ring
saint and
trips in a circle

on his head.

(vol. 1, p. 27)

The poles which support the tents -- the rules which support tradition -- are like trees stripped of their leaves, are like the family trees of the Saints stripped of their progeny. There is no new growth. There is collapse.

Red is the colour of the mask. It hides true emotion. Saint And's face is painted red because:

the terror in his heart can't be shown

(vol. 1, p. 31)

He has no way of articulating his frustration because the red of the mask -- the censor of tradition -- filters his efforts. When the travelling circus moves on it leaves a dead brown patch where before living, green grass had been. Green covered by red, the organic covered by rules of tradition, produces brown, the death of the organism. The hills where the old Saints go:

to dwell in caves on
berries & raw meat

(vol. 1, p.34)

turn red,

if you ever cross over

(vol. 1, p.39)

To retreat, to give up, is also to die.

But where does Saint And really 'stand' in the middle of all of this allegory? On the one side we have the series of tropisms aligned with the colour blue and on the other side we have the series of tropisms aligned with the colour red. We must assume that Saint And represents the first intimations of a synthesis; for although his face is red, his eyes, his hair and his thoughts are blue. When blue and red come together we have purple.

the bearded ladies and men
parade themselves in purple bathingsuits
offering smiles to the crowd below

saint and moves innocuously through the scene
nodding his head at the awestruck faces

(vol. 1, p. 31)

Given the best of intentions, the best that can be achieved through a red mask is purple. We should remember that the paper this poem is printed on is purple.

Saint And, however, remains equivocal. He is a spectator at his own freak show where the best way to evoke awe is to parade bearded ladies in purple bathing suits. So Saint And's 'stand' is to accept the blue but not to deny the red -- to accept a new world order but to confine it in an old word order. He has the blue in his head but he doesn't know what to do with ~~it~~. He is passive. He is not a seeker. Saint And's 'stand' is, in effect, 'no stand'. For,

saint and has lost all hope

(vol. 1, p.32)

and,

death is simply
a way of giving up

(vol. 1, p. 33)

He will martyr himself because it is the path of least resistance.

The graphics parallel the tropological structure. The pointillist drawing of the Saint becomes progressively less distinct -- more obviously mutable. In the penultimate frame (series 3, p. 35) the only relatively distinct feature left is the eyes.

the terror in his heart can't be shown

only his blue eyes let it through

(vol. 1, p. 31)

The equivocation returns in the last frame of the graphic series when the whole figure is one again distinct. For although he lives with the blue,

saint and is living
without understanding

(vol. 1, p. 37)

In himself he is innocuous but those who can perceive his background can also perceive him.

saint and does not amaze
he is a statue
a corner lost

(vol. 1, p. 30)

His statue-like presence can lead the reader into that lost corner of blueness. As his name 'And' suggests, he is simply a conjunction.

The sound structures in the segment indicate a constant awareness of poetic fiction. Conventions are often mocked, such as in this passage where the over-use of sibilants creates an intentional clumsiness:

the feel of colour
in the fingers' tips
your hands
questions words cannot
understand

(vol. 1, p. 26)

Once again there are patterns of great regularity interrupted at random by un-repeated irregularities. There is much rhyming, but no rhyme pattern. If we were to borrow the descriptive categories used to describe Concrete poetry in chapter 2, we could describe the use of rhyme as expressionistic rather than constructionist.

The syntactical relationships are disjointed and discontinuous, thus causing the syntactical field itself to appear mutable, and not just the particles. In other words, the placement of the language particles on the page undermines the pretension that open field placement is capable of clarifying the boundaries of syntactical relationships. Thus we have:

close the door

i didn't open my mouth

(saint and measures the levels of the moon

his spoon is full)

all questions become rhetorical if the pose holds

I TOLD HIM DIFFERENT

how can you
write the news if you

won't listen

(vol. 1, p. 35)

The reader's first response to this might be to read it consecutively. But there are six statements here and none of them is joined by conjunctions of any kind. There is therefore no explicit connection or subordination. As a result, the reader is free to arrange and to re-arrange his own connections and subordinations. (This way of reading is meditative; the reader must

slow down and return to each particle or structure more than once.) The fifth statement can be seen as a response to the fourth statement. But since it is in capitals and since the first statement is in italics (all other lines being in the same typeface) the fifth statement can be read as a response to the first. The sixth statement would then realize a closer relationship to the first. There are many other possible and plausible relationships to be made. The statement in capitals might be seen as the central statement around which all the other statements revolve. The parenthetical statement might be treated likewise. But no matter what syntactical relationships the reader formulates, he cannot accept one reading as being more correct than another.

I might liken the reader's contact with the text to that of the ball in a baseball game. Before the ball is pitched each player in the field (each particle or structure) is in its place. When the ball is thrown, when the reader contacts the text, there is infinite potential. When the ball is hit or missed the players respond and a relationship is formulated. No two plays are the same, although many seem very similar (text deitics and the reader's literary competency will not allow any two readings to be exactly the same). Also, the reader can throw as many balls as he wishes. These structures demand a meditative reading. He has the option of formulating a whole game's worth of options or of leaving after the first inning.

The field is part of the process; it is mutable. Even though Nichol uses traditional syntactical chains he places them in structural relationships which point to the arbitrariness of boundaries, to mutability. Thus we have old word order structures in a new word order context -- a diachronic function.

'Segment F'

Segment 'F', Scenes From The Lives of The Saints, as the graphic

on the title page indicates (the only graphic in this segment), is a group exhibit. There are three sub-segments, each introduced by an epigraph. The epigraphs provide the background against which a Saint will be considered. In the first sub-segment we hear about Saint Reat, in the second we hear about Saint Ranglehold, and in the third about Saint Reat again, along with his wife Saint Agnes. These three Saints are contemporary with each other and constitute the whole of the third generation of the first family (see Appendix 5).

As the poem continues, the allegory continues. The reader learns that Saint Reat is going to be around quite a bit, that his function is somewhat ambiguous, and that,

he was a sort of latter-day muse

(vol. 1, p. 43)

If the reader takes the trouble to look in a dictionary, he will discover that a 'reat' is an offence or a wrong doing.⁷ If we match this with the combined word, 'streat' (and disregard the misspelling) then we reach the happy conclusion that Saint Reat's offence is his preoccupation with the straight and narrow, the street, or in other words, with linear structure. Saint Reat's world is,

the cool cold of the marble staircase

(vol. 1, p. 43)

a world of solid monuments and set ways, a world in which fixed traditions would thrive, a world which would see itself as a:

world without end

(vol. 1, p. 43)

Reat, in his world of immortal marble columns,

⁷O.E.D., vol. 2, p. 2432.

this marble this phony architecture you hide behind
(vol. 1, p. 45)

is remote from the poet whose
flesh does ache

(vol. 1, p. 46)

The poet-narrator finds it difficult to connect with this 'latter day muse'.

The poet insists that his world,

is a real world you saints could never exist in

(vol. 1, p. 46)

Saint Ranglehold, unlike the distant Saint Reat or the innocuous Saint And -- the only Saint, we are now told, who "understands the honesty of chance" (vol. 1, p. 42) -- is direct and violent. He is a policeman who enforces the law with a heavy hand. He does not think about the law, he simply makes sure it is followed. He is always ready with a 'stranglehold', always [w]rangling, always corralling the unaware and the untamed.

As the epigraph tells us, we must,

Superimpose the sea against his whole life.
Only then does the randomness and cruelty of
Saint Ranglehold become apparent.

(vol. 1, p. 47)

Ranglehold willfully violates the blue, the substance of thought and the potential of language.

We also learn that he has studied under Saint Orm, the first generation patriarch of family 1 (see Appendix 5). However, Ranglehold has apparently taken too much to heart, for his favourite pastime is sinking ships. And who knows,

how many ships were lost in his fucking storms?

(vol. 1, p. 46)

The ship metaphor is similar to the cloud metaphor. It is a structure

which gains its definition against the blue background of the sea. The ship is an attempt to cross the blue, an attempt to communicate, a poem. But Ranglehold's idea of communication is artificial. He sits,

oblivious in his bathtub
sails plastic boats & sinks them

(vol. 1, p. 44)

If it is someone else's boat, he,

snickers knowingly
as they flounder on dry land

(vol. 1, p. 47)

The romance between Saint Reat and Saint Agnes,
has caused much speculation & given us our
only real glimpse into their questionable humanity

(vol. 1, p. 51)

The metalingual function connects this Saint Agnes to the original Saint Agnes, who was an early Roman martyr and is the patron Saint of young maidens. The original Saint Agnes vowed to marry no man but Christ. So how, the reader wonders, will Mr. 'straight and narrow' get on with such a symbol of rectitude.

Saint Reat is smitten with love. He wants to join, "green to blue" (vol. 1, p. 52), to join the substance of emotion (green and organic like grass) to the substance of language and thought. All of a sudden he wants to communicate in the real world, not in Saint Ranglehold's bathtub world. The result is left ambiguous. We are left wondering whether or not Agnes has requited his love:

maybe the maybes can come to be!

(vol. 1, p. 53)

The insertion of material from metalingual codes is frequent. There are many allusions to structures which have traditionally been ignored because they were considered to be spurious, lacking in seriousness, or

unimportant. Characters from these structures, from comic-books and from television -- Dick Tracy, Sam Spade, Emma Peel, and Nura Na1 -- are juxtaposed with the particles of the tropological structure in such a way that it is made obvious that the Saints do not acknowledge them. These characters enter the text as asides or digressions. They seem to come out of the 'blue' but in such a way that they remain immune to the allegorical influences of the Saints.

There is now a complex and well developed tropological structure of opposing forces. Every new figure, every new tropological particle, plays some part in the conflict between the 'red' and the 'blue', between prescribed structure and relative structure. There is a feeling that a confrontation of some sort is imminent.

The syntactical structures have a feeling of imminence as well. Chains are started and left glaringly incomplete. Particles are placed in relationships as if things were being rushed, as if there were only enough time to say, or write, every third word. Thus:

the bells

the bells

dear funny paper-i write upon

a star

(venus longhair

half moon

soft belly

sighing

the car cries

emma peel

(vol. 1, p. 49)

The parenthesis which starts before 'venus' is never closed. The next

right-hand bracket is to be found twenty-eight pages later, but with a corresponding left-hand bracket four words before. There are just enough particles here to form a narrative (to document the experience) if the reader supplies his fair share. The reader might connect some of these fragments to structures from other frames. 'The bells' connects visually to:

you've got me by the balls & won't let go

(vol. 1, p. 48)

on the verso page facing. This can provide us with new relationships for the series of images surrounding venus. When we turn the page and read:

random brain stranded in the station

(vol. 1, p. 50)

we then have something to relate to the otherwise apparently random 'the car cries': It is a train car which is stranded, unable to get to venus, to emma peel; it is held by the balls and can't get away; it is a ship stranded at sea. But this is only one way of reading.

The word 'car' comes just a few lines below the word 'star'. The rhyme joins these two otherwise random particles; we now have a 'star car' in which to travel to 'venus'. The 'sighing' and the 'car's cry' are also joined by rhyme. So the star car's arrival at venus, at emma peel, is orgasmic. We have two opposite readings, both justifiable and, taken together, they show how subversive structures can exist under the noses of, but unnoticed by, the Saints.

The visual and phonic structures continue to follow the examples of the preceding segments. Now that Nichol has established how he is going to use traditional phonic structures, he has a background of convention which is secure enough to enable him to go further back into history. Hence we find such neo-classical echoes as:

a ship in perilous storm
the lover doth compare his state to

(vol. 1, p. 47)

Such diachronic sound shifts are frequent.

'Segment G'

On the title pages of both segment 'G' and segment 'H' there is a graphic representation of a single Saint. If the reader looks at these two pages separately the Saints appear to be obviously different. However, if the pages between these two title pages are flipped through, it will become apparent that the two Saints are one and the same. For the series of graphics in between gradually alters the features of the first Saint until they become the features of the second. The next thing to notice is that the first Saint is Saint Orm and that the second Saint is Saint Reat. So Saint Reat -- just like Saint Ranglehold who spent so much time studying under Saint Orm -- appears to owe much of what he is to the influence of his grandfather.

Segment 'G', The Sorrows of Saint Orm, like segment 'F', is divided into three sub-segments. But unlike segment 'F' these three sub-segments do not deal with different Saints. What we are given instead is a prayer-like supplication; we are brought into the private life of the poet-narrator; we are witness to three moments of meditation.

Since the tropological structure is now so firmly established, these references to the poet's private life have a background against which to form relationships. There is no feeling here of confessional shoulder-sobbing. The reader immediately sees the figurative function of the private-life details.

Saint Orm appears to be a central figure, a starting point. He stands at the head of the family like a patriarchal figurehead. His name reinforces this. An orm, or orme, is the husk out of which a flower grows, just as Saint Orm is the beginning of his family. Fittingly, Saint Orm inhabits the heaven of the poet's dreams, and in this

. . . land of clouds

you moved at your whim

(vol. 1, p. 61)

So Saint Orm, 'storm', is the model or paradigm for all clouds in the sky; he is the standard of poetic structure. A cloud, of course, is nothing but evaporated water: a combination of the blue of the ocean and the blue of the sky. Saint Orm's wife, Saint Rain, brings forth the progeny of the clouds: rain. The cycle continues until the rain water is once again evaporated and becomes a new cloud. A storm can be both benevolent and despotic; it can make the world green or it can be an agent of destruction, causing fatalities at sea.

The references to the poet's private life revolve around an unnamed woman.

my lady my lady

this is the day i want to cry for you
but my eyes are dry

(vol. 1, p. 59)

For one reason or another, however, the poet finds it difficult to cry. To cry is to communicate with, or to write poetry, for the muse. But,

. . . the sky
outside this window
gone grey

(vol. 1, p. 59)

The poet is in a state in between. He can see neither the blue nor the clouds. He is blanketed by this frustration of grey. There is 'substance' but no 'form'; 'langue' but no 'parole'.

The first sub-segment is a prayer for peace and for calm seas. When the sea is calm the poet will be able to travel to the muse he has been separated from. The second sub-segment is a recollection of a time when the storm was destructive, when personal relationships were calamitous and

when he

gave up the ship and sank into misery

(vol. 1, p. 67)

Failing at relationships is failing the muse.

in the (i want to tell you a story
old way
i can't

haven't the words or
the hands to reach you

(vol. 1, p. 60)

Words are like hands. The third sub-segment is the sorrow of silence, of loneliness, and the determination to break out of it, to move beyond it, to create, to write again.

saint or i need the rage to lead drive my hand

(vol. 1, p. 71)

Before there can be a new beginning the past must be accounted for.

i will return my lady
but these worlds burn

i cannot stop the flow

(vol. 1, p. 73)

As in the previous segments, it is the tropological structure which is expanding most rapidly. At this point, the visual, the phonic and the syntactical structures all consolidate what has come before; they continue to establish convention and to create reader expectation.

'Segment H'

In this segment, Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World, the character of Saint Reat is more fully developed. The reader now discovers that even if at one time Reat's offence had been that he was too straight and narrow, the scenario has changed. We are told in the epigraph that

at one time Saint Reat,

lost his voice but was given it back on the
condition that he go on a quest for the origins
of all breath

(vol. 1, p. 77)

To do this he must seek out the four corners or the four winds of the world. We recall that when Reat fell in love with Agnes he wanted to cry out but couldn't; his voice was gone. It now seems that his offence was to love Agnes, to challenge the rules of tradition. His offence was against the Saints and not against the poet-narrator. The 'streets' he walks are the streets walked by a world-weary traveller who must roam the earth (and heaven) to fulfill his Hercules-like labours. Only when he has found the origins of the winds will he have earned the right to pay suit to Agnes, his muse, and to consummate the relationship.

Saint Reat is dethroned, he becomes human, his quest becomes the quest of the poet. The poet recognizes this.

i do know you

how you dwell in that place filled with questions
the rest (written in a book) destroyed my childhood
began this drifting focusless twist of speech if
you reach towards saint reat

(vol. 1, p. 77)

The 'i' and the 'you' become the interchangeable pronouns of a doppelganger. Together they will earn the right to write by discovering where breath comes from.

They must,

learn the meaning behind the meaning said

(vol. 1, p. 86)

And they do succeed.

the trick was seeing there was nothing there

& the sense hit you of the fight won

(vol. 1, p. 95)

They realized that there is no absolute; they realized that language is arbitrary; they realized that,

there are no myths we have not created
ripped whole from our lived long days

no legends that could not be lies

(vol. 1, p. 102)

They recognized the relativity of language, the same relativity that lies at the heart of Concrete poetics.

With this ending comes a new beginning.

let your sounds lead you out of that dead time

(vol. 1, p. 102)

If clouds are the visual structure of poetry (and clouds come from the blue water) then the wind is the phonic structure of poetry because wind comes from the blue sky. Also, wind is an essential part of any storm. It is capable of both benevolence and despotism.

The tropological structure of the first book has allowed the poet to create a series of protagonists and antagonists with which to bring to life the dynamic oppositions of what otherwise would have been a prosaic probing of theoretical possibilities. As allegory, it emphasizes the difference, the opposition, between the experience of reality and the attempt to express that experience of reality. For to write an allegory is to make symbols out of what are already symbols (words) and therefore to underline the arbitrary way in which symbols are created. It is to emphasize that symbols can only be understood relatively and in terms of the structures in which they are placed. The symbols (words) of 'langue' become the symbols of a specific allegory or tropological structure. The general symbol 'cloud' gains an idiosyncratic symbolic identity by virtue

of its placement in The Martyrology. It is all a myth and it could all be lies.

Book 2

'Segment A'

When a norm is expressed there must be deviation. The conventions established in Book 1 are inevitably undermined in Book 2, not radically, but undermined none the less. As the graphics on the title pages of segment 'A' and segment 'B' indicate, this book is going to leave behind the world of Book 1. Through the keyhole, which is no longer blocked by the body of a Saint, we begin to see a new world.

The epigraph following the title page for Book 2 is a cryptic hint at what is to follow.

speech

eech to
each

(vol. 1, p. 107)

This structure points not only to the difference between the visual and the phonic functions of language -- 'eech' and 'each' sound the same and are accepted as equals, but look different, only the latter being acceptable according to convention -- but also to the way in which sound particles are far from absolute -- 'eech', when it is part of 'speech' has no discrete referential meaning; the only reference possible depends upon the whole particle; and yet when 'eech' is separated from 'sp' it does have a discrete referential meaning. The comment 'eech to each' reminds us also of the first requirements of concrete poetics: language particles must be treated as objects. 'Speech' is the relationship of 'eech' particle to 'each' other particle.

'Segment B'

Segment 'B' calls itself a Book of Common Prayer but it is not a Book of Common Prayer, at least not in the formalized religious sense. For The Book of Common Prayer contains the rituals of worship, the liturgy. If anything, Nichol's Book of Common Prayer is a book which contains a somewhat common prayer. It is the farewell prayer, often hallucinatory and profane, of a man who has turned his back on the ritual of the traditional Book of Common Prayer. But this farewell contains no sense of a new direction. It is a hiatus at the edge of hell, a test of resolve before the final and irrevocable separation. And as can be expected at such times, there is vascillation. From:

USELESS SAINTS
YOUR FUCKING LIES

(vol. 1, p. 112)

i wanted to end it
step into my room happy
still this nameless ache upon the chest
i wanted reach you one more time

(vol. 1, p. 126)

As in the Sorrows of Saint Orm segment (Book 1, segment 'G') the private life of the poet provides much of the raw material for the tropological structure. His farewells to old lovers, like his farewells to the Saints, show the same determination to leave, complicated by the same unwillingness to do so.

The graphics in this segment are non-consecutive. They reinforce the fragmented, hallucinatory, between-worlds feeling. Also, for the first time, a graphic is oriented to the left-hand side of the page (series 10, p. 115). There seems to be no purpose for this other than to undermine

what has become convention: the orienting of the graphic to the centre of the page. Unlike the graphics to this point -- all of which have been representations of Saints -- the graphics of this segment are all of fantasy landscapes; and they separate the reader even further from these landscapes with stage-like curtains. These graphics, then, serve the same purpose as the allegory. By making self-conscious symbols of what are already symbols they demand that the reader not confuse the real world with this aesthetic world.

The phonic structures oppose the other levels of structure by making metalingual connections to the alluded-to Book of Common Prayer. There is repetition similar to that of ritualized prayer.

let us forget them

let us put them behind us forever

let us join hands and be free

goodbye

goodbye to you saints

goodbye to you saints of pain and wisdom

(vol. 1, p. 118)

or,

all things fall

all things are one in the end

all that is all encompassed in that word

ah sweet saints of sameness

you are that saint

his all

(vol. 1, p. 113)

But the repeated particles are always just out of rhythmic phase and the elevating effect associated with religious incantation is subtly undermined.

The syntactical structures are beginning to place more emphasis on the dissection of particles -- in the manner of the epigraph. One type of dissection is the pun. Thus we have: "friandise" (vol. 1, p. 114) which is both a dainty edible and 'free and easy'. We have:

& i'm holding you aggie
 ah sweet agnes
 holding you to me
 being mister reat

(vol. 1, p. 123)

where the double meaning is obvious and requires suppression of the visual structure. But just in case the reader thinks that the only purpose of these puns is to elicit the chuckle due to a clever 'double-entendre', the poet sets him straight:

these puns are obvious and seal the mind
 blinding the eye
 which is the imprecision of the word

(vol. 1, p. 123)

And so we progress to structures such as:

mirror into mirrors
 into mirror
 into or

(vol. 1, p. 125)

where the particle 'or' is squeezed out of the particle 'mirror' like water out of a sponge. Ordinary puns lead to puns with particle dissection which lead to particle dissection without the pun. The reader finds himself looking at and listening to each particle in a different way; he tries to find more than the obvious; he tries to find the meaning behind the meaning.

'Segment 0'

This segment is entitled Clouds. Since the reader knows that a 'cloud' is a poem, he expects this segment to be about poetry. The very

first line supports this:

this time the sky screams BLUE

(vol. 1, p. 131)

The 'scream' or the 'cry' as the reader has learned, is the poetic effort. The sky is screaming; it seems that at last we have the new beginning we have been waiting for.

The visual structures remain conventional. The graphics return to the representation of a Saint and run, in a single consecutive series (series 13) from the title page to the last page of the segment. The one important feature of this series is that the face of the Saint is always at least partially hidden by a sun-like circle. Towards the end of the series this circle covers the whole of the Saint's face and in the last frame of the series there is nothing but the circle. This circle -- and we don't yet know what it is -- has consumed the Saint.

This segment is divided into seven distinct sub-segments, each one, except for the first, being introduced by an epigraph. First, we learn that the birth place of the Saints is the sky. They came to earth to find the land at the end of the rainbow and they:

. . . set their feet upon the earth
as if it were the lost home
the lost planet of their birth

(vol. 1, p. 133)

The following six sub-segments, each with an epigraph excerpted from The Folk Tales of the Saints, tell in more detail the story of this migration, from the arrival of the first two Saints, Saint Reat and Saint And, to the end.

within one millenium the original saints had passed away

(vol. 1, p. 167)

The second sub-segment adds to our knowledge of the tropological

structure and specifically to our knowledge of Saint And. The Saints have come down by the rainbow and the rainbow is a combination of yellow sun and blue water -- the refraction of sun light by water vapour. Yellow and blue also make green and can make things grow:

in that brownness which is the mind

(vol. 1, p. 140)

So, in the cycle of things, life comes out of death. For yellow and blue make green, or living nature, while green and red -- the colour of the mask -- make brown, the death of nature. And it is out of this accumulated death, this brown, that new life, green life, springs. Out of the brown earth comes the green plant, fed by the blue water and the yellow sun.

We learn more about Saint And's passivity. He was the first Saint to leave the sky; he was the first connection with earth; he was the first one to want to cry in a way the clouds could not cry. At the centre of his quest was the 'cloud woman'. We eventually discover that:

she was no cloud lady
only cloudy

only as a tree is only
become a ship and lost at sea

drowning bodies slipping off its body

silenced dreams

(vol. 1, p. 141)

His quest was aimed at an ideal, at a dream. And the,

. . . lady almost destroyed the muse
& you let her use you
willingly for your own destruction

(vol. 1, p. 139)

For the nature of And's passivity was to seek salvation through suffering.

you were such a stupid little fucker
nailed your hands upon the cross you bore
up & down the streets

tearing your clothes
in joy in grief

(vol. 1, p. 138)

This suffering was unnecessary; it was beside the point. There was no need for him to passively bear the cross of traditional poetics once he had reached the earth. Such passivity can destroy the poetic impulse and destroy, by falsifying, the muse.

The next sub-segment presents Saint Reat as a comic book superman-like figure.

could've come from anywhere
planets exploding at your birth

(vol. 1, p. 146)

He came:

from cloud-town to earth [when] he was still
a child . . . it was less than a year before
the details of his life in cloud-town became
so vague they were virtually forgotten.

(vol. 1, p. 143)

If Reat is a superman, then what are his super powers? (It should be remembered that Reat is the poet's doppelganger.) It appears that the reader must discover this for himself; and to do this he must face:

 this last chance to start now
new the moment faces you

.....

live through this moment
this moment carries you

(vol. 1, p. 144)

No sooner are these questions about Saint Reat raised than they are forgotten; we are led into a digression on "poor old raits" (vol. 1, p. 147). We would expect Saint Raits to have a harshly pecuniary (rates) cast of mind, and we would expect him to stay within the limits (straits)

of what he would consider to be his mandate (tradition).

he'd taken the rainbow but found only pain
as he had in the world that went before
stepped from one door into another
moving always within the frame

(vol. 1, p. 147)

The next sub-segment deals with Saint Orm and Saint Ranglehold. These two Saints marked the beginning of the mass migration. We learn little that is new about these two. They are introduced to mark the shift in power from the Saints in the clouds to the poet on earth. The two Saints arrive in a storm which the poet finds almost inconsequential.

oh fuck it's raining
stick my hand in the sea
that's poetry ..

(vol. 1, p. 150)

It is obvious that once on earth, the power of the great patriarch is diminished. He is:

just a word
just a sign

(vol. 1, p. 152)

And so the poet can accept Saint Orm,

saint orm i always pray to you

(vol. 1, p. 153)

but only if the acceptance is mutual:

pray to you to love me
as i do you

(vol. 1, p. 153)

The poet has accepted the structuralist point of view that tradition must, at one and the same time, be acknowledged and subverted; and he demands this same acknowledgement on the part of tradition.

The next sub-segment concerns Saint Iff and,
the prepositions proposition

(vol. 1, p. 158)

A preposition joins a substantive, a noun or a pronoun, to another language particle, most often a verb. In other words, it joins a particle which pretends to have absolute reference, something 'stiff', to a particle which puts that substance into action. But this logical proposition must be recognized as governed by the conditional, 'if'. If a language particle had absolute reference then this would be the 'stiff' relationship. But:

forgets does not remember
who began this moment wakens
faceless strange face faces facing

(vol. 1, p. 158) ✓

Language particles are arbitrary symbols. The particle 'forgets' does not remember or remind of an essence; it 'wakens faceless' and gains meaning from its structural relationships.

We learn next that most of the Saints have made the migration to earth. "Saint rike & the lady of past nights" (vol. 1, p. 160) are among the few who stay behind. It is logical that we would recognize a 'lady of past nights' by the 'stains' she has left. It comes as no surprise when we recall (see Appendix 5) that Saint Rike is married to Saint Ain -- 'stain'. It is also appropriate that the one who stayed behind should be called Ain -- an Old English word for north -- because the land of the clouds is often referred to as off in the distant north. The word 'rike' has Old English roots as well. It is the English spelling of the German word 'reich' which means 'kingdom'. The English word can also be used as a verb meaning 'to reign' or 'to rule'. The ruler, of course, must never abandon the ship of state. And so Rike and Ain have stayed behind.

Curiously, the legend of Saint Rike's love for the 'lady of past

nights' becomes the poet's own legend.

do you remember me saint rike
remember me

morning gaze into the mirror
who is that there that man
did i own him, once his face reach out yes the hands
these ladies we said we loved saint rike

(vol. 1, p. 160)

Like father, like son. We recall that Rike and Ain had a child: 'the nameless one'.

saint rike you left no word
gone like the clouds
this first spring day

i am gone like the wind
like the 'like'
father

(vol. 1, p. 166)

As often happens in classical mythology, the deity barely acknowledges his offspring. They are left to their own wiles -- often with the aid of the mother, 'those ladies we said we loved', until they are strong enough to challenge their father. And yet, disquieting memories linger.

father i am sorry for this mood
brooding when i should be happy
who has had so much given to him freely

(vol. 1, p. 165)

But what has he had given to him except his birth, and therefore a direct connection to tradition? Nothing. The 'brooding', the disquieting memories, are the frustration of weakness, the frustration that gives rise to the type of revolution which tries to deny the past. The 'happiness' is the realization that strength can be gained by acknowledging the past, by granting the past, tradition, its proper place in the present scheme of things.

In the last sub-segment all of the original Saints have passed away.

The poet, by learning their legends, by acknowledging and learning the conventions of traditional poetics, has assimilated the past and is ready to move on; he is now strong enough to take over the leadership from his fathers. He warns the poets of the present:

do not destroy each other with your jealousies

(vol. 1, p. 171)

because

all poetry a function of history
breathing now

referenceless world

i do take refuge in
surrounded by memory

(vol. 1, p. 171)

Tradition must be brought into relationship with the 'now' (Gertrude Stein's 'make the past present'); a now which is perceived as referenceless -- that is to say, that it does not refer to an absolute, that the meaning of 'now' is to be found in, and is dependent upon, the relative nature of structural relationships. We can now attribute a meaning to the graphic on the final page of this segment: the empty circle which has consumed the Saints. It is the 'referenceless now'.

In this 'referenceless now' the tropological structure has reached a resolution (all of the opposites have been synthesized) and will now become the background for what follows. We have witnessed figure after figure line up on the side of tradition or on the side of revolution -- this includes the points of resolution of subsidiary confrontations. They have now all come together at a single point where all 'jealousies' are forgotten.

'Segment D'

Segment 'D', Auguries, is not the great leap forward the reader might have expected. It is a Gertrude Stein-like repetition of what has already been repeated. The relationships of Comox Ave. (relationships of the poet's private life, and the beginning of his efforts to cry -- i.e. the beginning of poetic sensibility) are probed yet again. It is made increasingly clear that all of the Saints are in fact facets of both this particular poet and, in general, the poetic response to tradition. The relationship between Saint And and Saint Rike -- allegorical brothers -- is explored still further. And's passivity is brought into more direct contrast to Rike's activity; And 'stands' while Rike 'strikes'; Rike stays in cloud-town while And was the first Saint to come to earth. It was necessary for the poet to bring these two together before either could cry: the poet must learn to become an active participant in the relationships which involve him while at the same time remaining receptive to others: the particles of language must assert their palpability while at the same time remaining open to all potential relationships. The single portent (the segment is after all entitled Auguries) which all of this resifting and all of this re-arranging gives rise to is:

you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry
 you started to cry

(vol. I, p. 188)

The 'referenceless now' of Clouds, the containing circle, or cycle,

of potential relationships, has become a purging, primal-like scream. The combined power of the four winds which Saint Reat went in search of are finally released with all their inchoate comprehensiveness. The seal which bound together the referential pretensions of poetic tradition has been broken. This scream, this breath, reconnects language to the body, makes it once again sentient.

The visual structure subverts what has been established as convention in two ways. First, the graphics in this segment continue a series which was begun in Book 1. To this point each segment has introduced a new series of graphics. Significantly, the graphic series which is repeated is the one which coincides with Saint Reat's search for the four winds. Also, small hand-drawn clouds have been introduced to separate verse structures, re-emphasizing the arbitrariness of the frame and the kinetic (see chapter 2 on Concrete poetry) relationship of the frames. For these clouds do not coincide with the frames created by the hand-drawn lines around each page. By establishing two separate but over-lapping frame indicators the poet increases the self-consciousness of the structure -- the consciousness of the object quality of the frame structure. The poet is reminding the reader not to take anything for granted. For when something is taken for granted it is soon forgotten and begins to assume qualities that it does not in fact possess.

The syntactical structures are becoming more various and more self-consciously mutable. A chain of particles such as:

naked your flesh is my thots run
hold up the moon.

(vol. 1, p. 175)

forces the reader to formulate several patterns of structural relationships: 'my thoughts run to your naked flesh', 'your naked flesh causes my thoughts to run to the moon', 'In my thoughts I hold your naked flesh up to the

moon', and so on. The referential function of the syntactical structures is made intentionally problematic, intentionally mutable.

allow what is to be
is not to ceases is
allow to be to do

(vol. 1, p. 183)

Where is the subject and where the predicate? Is this one statement, two, or three? In the first line are we to take 'what is' as the object of 'to be' in an imperative statement? Or do we take the 'is' at the beginning of the second line as the operative copula and the first line as a noun phrase? This sort of questioning can continue at length. In the end there is no 'right' answer to these questions, no 'one' reading; there is only a range of possibilities which all point to 'being' becoming 'doing'. In other words, the particles do not have 'essences' they only have functional relationships. They are particles which 'do'.

'Segment E'

More repetition. This segment, Sons & Divinations, is divided into four sub-segments -- the text of the segment title, a birthday sequence, a fasting sequence and a coda. But it is little more than:

the book of days
the book of days
the book of days

(vol. 1, p. 213)

Now,

this poem becomes a diary of a journey
personal it evolved impersonally

.....

how would you call it
'a problem of resolution'?

(vol. 1, p. 215)

In the first sub-segment of the text he continues, by repetition,
to repossess his past, because:

trapped by a history you cannot acknowledge
the poem become the life work
a hymn

(vol. 1, p. 202)

Everywhere he turns he feels:

trapped as we are in signs

(vol. 1, p. 203)

He has lost the feeling of the 'cry' but hopefully this quotidian repeti-
tiveness will allow the poet to:

return again to the human voice & listen
rip off the mask of words to free the sounds

(vol. 1, p. 208)

because:

we must protect the sacred energy
energy seen now as something to be shunned

(vol. 1, p. 207)

in a world where:

the social organism becomes a cancer [and]
we attempt to simplify something that does not exist

(vol. 1, p. 206)

The poet, in order to escape the traps, must:

fulfil my energy potential here on earth

(vol. 1, p. 213)

Whenever the poet forgets to acknowledge his past he loses his poetic energy.

The fasting sequence is a continuation of purgation, a renewed
effort of preparation. In a pastoral setting the poet contemplates the
constellations and the Greek myths which have lent their names. These myths,
as they are recognized, are repossessed. The challenge is to:

find a focus

expell the poisons through the fast

(vol. 1, p. 214)

which is possible because:

this close to anger you recognize yourself for who you are

(vol. 1, p. 214)

In the coda sub-segment he returns to the optimism of the birthday sub-segment.

i know the way out will be found
a question of letting energy mass

(vol. 1, p. 216)

This is the same energy that bursts out at the end of the birthday sub-segment.

oh let me sing

oh let me dance

oh god please give me
a second chance

i was never for prayer
i was never for peace
i was never that happy
i was never that pleased

but oh let me sing

oh let me dance

oh god please give me

a second chance

(vol. 1, p. 209)

This, in its turn, reflects the opening of the segment where the poet realizes that there is a:

real energy my body releases

I can gain the reins of.

(vol. 1, p. 196)

because, having poetic sensibility, he is sitting between:

the blue dragon on my right
the white tiger on my left

(vol. 1, p. 195)

The 'blue', as we know, is the inchoate source of thought and language and the 'white' is the 'cloud' or the form which expresses the 'blue'. The 'blue' is the 'energy' he will 'rein' in: the 'white'. He is in the gap between 'langue' and 'parole'. Between these two opposites:

cappella its brightest star
now known to be a binary system

(vol. 1, p. 210)

the sparks fly, and:

there is music in the moment comes together

(vol. 1, p. 196)

This is the music, the breath, that is felt in the body, the music that was missing when:

language was the prototype
perfect model of the robot run amuck,
the tool that could never replace its master

(vol. 1, p. 206)

So, after the freeing 'cry' of segment 'D' the topological structure now indicates that all is not nirvana. The 'cry', the 'song', the 'dance', the energy that bursts the seal, must be continually regained. The repetitions of a poem which is a documentation of a journey, a 'book of days', must make this clear. There are times when the energy is lost and the poet is left floundering once again. The attainment of energy is the attainment of 'now', not the attainment of 'forever'. It is mutable, not absolute.

The graphic series accompanying this segment makes a similar statement. There is a drawing of a Saint with hands, then without hands, then with hands and so on. Now you see me, now you don't. When the hands appear they appear inside the same sort of circle that is related to the 'referenceless now', to the containment of tradition. The hands are like poems achieved against this background.

'Segment F'

The final act of purgation is death. Segment 'F', Friends as Footnotes, is death in full measure. It starts with a description of the burial of a friend, somewhere in Ontario, and ends three thousand miles away in Victoria -- after reflections prompted by meetings with friends along the way in Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver -- with:

oh god you are dead you are dead dead dead
 christ you are dead you are dead dead dead
 what shall i do who shall i be i can't see you anymore
 no direction sign or longing
 only the space behind my eyes screaming
 you are dead you are dead you are dead dead dead
 no joy to feel tho i free you gladly
 no chain of words to bind you to me
 how can i live who cannot be without you
 knowing you are dead you are dead you are dead dead dead
 dead you are dead
 no longer to live or to walk in comfort
 only the skies empty my tears
 hell i could fill the space with moaning
 oh you are gone & i am left
 lonely father
 i am lonely father
 father i am lonely
 knowing they are dead
 they are dead dead dead
 they are dead
 they are dead
 they are dead dead dead
 & i'm lonely father
 i am lonely father
 father i am lonely
 lonely father
 i am

They may all be dead and he may well be lonely but the deaths were necessary.

witnessed all your deaths each night for weeks
the agony

living now as energy
flows from my fingers into these poems

(vol. 1, p. 235)

His poem exists only because of death. For only out of death comes new life. To deny death is to seek stasis -- the confinement of tradition. Deviation and subversion are necessary to the creation of the energy required by poetry. Death is necessary. It is unavoidable. The final scream of this segment is orgasmic -- the death and the life of sexual orgasm. Only by driving relentlessly towards death is the energy of life realized.

The tropological structure has reached Greimas' base isotrope: life/death. Its synthesis is the creative act. Nichol calls on Gertrude Stein for support:

stein did say
the hardest thing is making the present continuous
living day by day

(vol. 1, p. 230)

To live in the past, in memory, in history, is to try to fool death, to try to deny it, to keep it at bay. To fantasize about the future, to search for a utopia, is to do the same. To make the present continuous is to live the death of each moment of the 'referenceless now'.

'Segment-G'

The epilogue is introduced by a graphic which shows a clearly defined Saint in the foreground holding a book, and a crowd of spectre-like Saints in the background who seem self-concerned and not at all interested in the Saint in the foreground. It appears obvious that the Saints in the foreground is Nichol himself and that the book is The Martyrology to the end of Book 2.

the poem is written in spite of
all the words i once believed were saints
language the holy place of consecration
gradually took flesh
becoming real

scrapures behind me
i am written free

(vol. 1, p. 239)

Anything which acknowledges tradition -- both necessary and unavoidable -- becomes tradition. The new tradition in the foreground is seen against the old tradition which is the background. In its turn the new tradition is martyred.

Chapter 5

"The longed for beginning"

Book 3

'Segment A'

This segment is nothing more than the title on the outside cover. But it must be remarked because in the previous volume the cover title was integrated with an epigraph and a preface. Now it signals only that a new volume is beginning and that the physical quality of the book maintains the conventions established with the first volume.

'Segment B'

Moving backwards -- or outwards -- the second title page reminds us that this volume is part of a larger project called The Martyrology. The graphic which follows the title page is the first in a series, each of which introduces a segment -- segments 'B', 'C', and 'D' -- and which, when taken together, join the front matter to the text proper. These graphics show: a Saint with a cloud over his head; a hand coming out of the cloud and touching a tongue which flows upwards out of the head of the Saint; and a Saint with his head joined to the cloud and his beard joined to the sea. This series represents, therefore, a movement from the separation of 'substance' and 'form' to the joining of 'substance' and 'form' -- from the position of the text at the beginning of the project to what we assume

the poet is suggesting as the present position.¹

The line framing each page is now mechanically drawn; it is without the idiosyncrasy of the hand-drawn lines. Also, the colour of the line has changed. It is no longer grey, the colour of the outside cover, but purple, the colour of the inside cover. These changes parallel the manner in which convention works. When a characteristic begins to stabilize it also begins to fade into the background. Its acceptance is marked by an increased uniformity of expectation and by its being less and less noticed.

The preface seems to indicate that a fresh start is in order.

sit around the table
talk of nothing
good feeling for the job that's done

(vol. 2, p. 7)

Nichol starts by listing the ingredients for 'hollopchis' (which appears to be similar to a cabbage roll) and ends with a reference to a friendly wind and a clear blue sky. The setting is one of pastoral contentment and optimism. This is in stark contrast to the worldly and sophisticated ending of Book 2. The reader who has come to Book 3 with Book 2 still fresh in his mind will wonder what is about to happen. This is not what he might have expected. The last two lines are especially puzzling:

blue sky above you always
pray that will be so

(vol. 2, p. 7)

Is this not the expression of a utopian wish, a wish for stasis, a wish contrary to everything that was achieved -- and apparently at a high price

¹The Graphics throughout the first four books of The Martyrology contain much more detail and are much more closely related to the minutiae of the text than I have been able to indicate here. Allusions to, among other things, medieval manuscripts and alchemy, are numerous and complex, and could in themselves provide the basis for a full scale commentary. Such a commentary would have to explore the nature of the collaboration between the designer of the graphics, Jerry Ofo, and Nichol.

-- in the first two books?

'Segment C'

In segment 'C', The Martyrology Books 3 & 4, there is a dedication and two epigraphs. The dedication is an emphatic repetition of the one found at the beginning of Books 1 & 2. It is no longer tethered to the bottom of the page but has been allowed to float, cloud-like, to the top. Of the two epigraphs, the first is a letter from 'David' to the poet (the Dave of the relationship central to Books 1 & 2) and the second is a 'Batak Prayer to find a bride'.

Both of these epigraphs seem not to contradict, which the reader might expect, but to ignore the tropological structure of the first books. They both have the same sort of euphoric and utopian pretensions that were found in the preface. They seem to be begging for some pastoral other world, for:

some paradise

a slice

(vol. 2, p. 13)

Relationships are unreservedly healthy and gardens are "coming in good."
(vol. 2, p. 13)

In the Batak Prayer the poet asks for "a beneficent dream" (vol. 2, p. 15) so that he will know whether or not he will marry the "daughter of poetry" and whether or not they will "grow old together." (vol. 2, p. 15). He wants to have his cake and eat it too. He wants to know beforehand that he will live happily ever after. Is all of this a seductive hallucination? Has the poet thrown in his spurs and decided to accept an early beatification in exchange for a little propaganda writing? The clear blue sky the poet asks for in the preface seems to be rapidly filling up with the clouds of

static traditionalism.

By this point the reader is totally confounded. He no longer knows what to expect. Is this an intentionally placed red herring? Is the poet setting himself a trap so that he will have something to escape from? Or is he sincere? Is this a wrong turning, a painful digression?

'Segment D'

Segment 'D' is the text proper of Book 3. There are twelve sub-segments. They begin as if they are going to be structured around the number three, with three groups of three sub-segments and each group separated by one of three interludes. This would be a very secure, preordained and by all appearances, intentionally utopian structure. But the last group shatters this expectation just as it is being formulated. Sub-segment 'IX' never materializes; the third interlude -- the 'coda' -- takes the eleventh position and a tagged-on 'variation' becomes the twelfth sub-segment. The utopian dream is deflated before it is achieved.

In the first sub-segment Nichol is trying to discover the priorities of a new beginning. But in resifting the loneliness and the anxieties that have brought him to where he is, he finds himself more anxious and afraid of loneliness than before. This pressure forces him to believe that,

there must be a beginning made
a starting over a writing down
times when other voices do not distract

(vol. 2, p. 22)

This is surprising. Does this mean that he now wishes to ignore the traditions which he fought so hard to assimilate and to perceive in the context of the present world view?

The second sub-segment continues this confusion.

i wanted a portrait of a man

so perfect it was weak in his weaknesses

(vol. 2, p. 23)

What has happened to his sense of mutability? Why is he asking for something perfect, for a static ideal,

within the limits of my vision

(vol. 2, p. 23)

Why is he all of a sudden limiting himself? All perception is necessarily limited but that does not mean we accept the limitations, it means that we attempt to overcome them -- or so seemed to be the message of the first two books. Finally he realizes:

the days are spent piecing things together
 the nights strewn with pages you do not remember writing
 third person to first person
 am i the fool
 i have nothing to say
 & i am saying it

(vol. 2, p. 24)

And he continues to say it. Somewhere in this rambling, day-book listing of events, this genuflection to the ignored importance of the ear, of sound, somewhere in this lonely pleading for guidance, we are asked to find a new beginning.

an order is perceived
 it is mentioned
 the task is once again begun
 all of us who occupy this body linked as one
 an ear for an i want to talk to you

(vol. 2, p. 30)

But the only beginning I can perceive is that of continued existence, the bare minimum:

i can't throw my pen down in the old way
 when retreat was easier than continuing

(vol. 2, p. 28)

Yet sub-segment three continues to give signals of retreat.

you have to pay old debts
before you catch the moon

(vol. 2, p. 30)

Does the poet really think that he can even the score and enter nirvana? Surely he can only hope to advance by incurring new debts. The continuing inconsequence and the continuing repetition of clichéd poetic sentiment cause us to agree with the poet's own self-critical comment:

magic words of poof poof piffles
make me just as small as sniffles

(vol. 2, p. 31)

It is only in the last line of this sub-segment that we begin to feel that perhaps this poem might regain some of the energy of the first two books. Quite unexpectedly we read:

tear down these wires that obstruct my ear

(vol. 2, p. 33)

The old rage has re-surfaced. But this is a curious thing to write in light of the phonic structures of the dozen or so pages which precede it. Segment 'D', so far, has been free verse of a conventional nature which is hardly distinguishing. And the syntactical structures are, if anything, more traditional and linear than those found in Books 1 & 2. The slight intimations of self-awareness are far outweighed by the poet's attempt to pay off bad debts with old and devalued currency.

In the first interlude, INTERLUDE: The Book of Oz, Nichol returns to the tropological structures of the first volume. He describes how Saint Iff died by falling from the sky. To find Iff, the poet enters an Oz-like dream world of comic book characters. In this dream world he accepts death and renewal. But this acceptance is allegorical and not visceral. The reader now sees the allegory of the first two books as the background which opposes the attempt to write viscerally. Nichol's first attempts to write

viscerally have led him into a sterile dead-end, an escape into looking for a utopia. This interlude brings back to the poet the structural message of the allegory. He admits:

its not easy living out our history
we want oracles and visions
they come they don't come
that's as may be

(vol. 2, p. 35)

He quotes Dorothy's question to the mangaboos (from The Wizard of Oz):

'How long do you live after you're picked?'

(vol. 2, p. 35)

The question is rhetorical. The answer: you don't. This allows Nichol to re-orientate himself:

at night in the garden i see mangaboos
full grown ready to be picked
hear the mutter of their vegetable voices
feel their thorns pride

(vol. 2, p. 36)

He could only 'feel their thorns pride' if he were picking them. Once again he is incurring debts.

In 'IV' Nichol returns to the quotidian. He recounts the daily events,

supper at sean's
bread fruit mangoes soursop
goat's cheese with crackers
green tea

(vol. 2, p. 40)

which keep the channels of communication open but which do little more. He has resorted to the phatic; we feel that he is biding his time. He tells us that together

we draw nearer & nearer to that moment when
poetry and living merge

(vol. 2, p. 40)

In 'V' he enters the past looking for paradigms of 'we'. The tropological structure is no longer allegorical as in the first two books but metaphoric and metalingual. He introduces references to many social and cultural codes which bear a diachronic relationship to the present and which he hopes will provide clues, or 'oracles', concerning his direction. References to Gilgamesh, to the I Ching, to the Australian Aborigines, to Yoga, to Tiahuanco and others are introduced in an effort to reclaim

the myths that gave us history
a geography of time

(vol. 2, p. 55)

Intertwined with these borrowings and allusions are the day to day events we have come to expect of this ~~third~~ book. But now the present no longer seems so inconsequential or so clichéd because:

the cycle which is history
gathers us in
a kind of litany

the sphere
we with we

(vo. 2, p. 43)

This litany of 'we' has become progressive once again.

we are free to move as we please
in a land where boundaries are a frame of mind

(vol. 2, p. 41)

A litany, of course, is a dialogue of invocation and response -- a dialectical movement. The 'we' is placed in opposition to the 'I' in this dialogue. The 'we' is the 'I' connected to the world in time and space; not isolated, not seeking to petrify limits and boundaries. No longer is the poet vainly demanding a static ideal.

there is no way to encompass everything
we need to encompass as much as we can
the pain is the recognition, the work outlives us

we die before we's completion

(vol. 2, p. 56)

The poet is re-acknowledging the process and opposing his earlier desire to retreat. He is dragging himself out of his visceral morass.

This new energy revitalizes the poem at all levels. With 'IV' the graphic series changes from a dream-like and benign ascent towards heaven (with all the innocence of dream-like wish fulfillment) to an earthbound figure, surrounded by men of similar appearance, who is shattered by something falling from the sky and is then reborn out of his own destruction.

The syntactical structures once again signal their mutability.

rob & i or
connections

4 or more
friends
no ends or means
living

(vol. 2, p. 41)

We can put the first three lines in series and place them in opposition to the second three lines; or we can place the first two lines against the four following; or the first four against the last two; or any other of numerous possibilities.

In 'VI' Nichol continues to play the past off against the present, this time in a contemplation of death. The past he 'plugs into' now is not that larger past that history has given us but a specific past: the allegory of the Saints. But this allegory is no longer given special status. It is part of all myth and history which are joined in the present. Nichol intertwines these past events with his own continuing narrative in the present. The poetic journey is now also a physical journey as we hear about the poet's travels across Canada and of his relationships with his contemporaries. All events, no matter whether from the past or from the present,

occur in the 'now'; no attempt is made to make the time frame of past events distinct.

now that it's over
 now that the long road's gone
 your wife dead your tongue stilled saint or
 we are left as we are always left
 moving on

(vol. 2, p. 60)

everything comes together

.....
 all life a sphere we move within
 poets friends-lovers saints
 caught up in
 carried out on
 the current of we which is history

(vol. 2, p. 61)

At last we feel as if something is beginning.

after the instances of forced conclusions
 realities thrust upon you you cannot escape

(vol. 2, p. 61)

In the second interlude, INTERLUDE: Double Vision, Nichol brings together many of the loose strings that have appeared from time to time and ties them together in a topological structure. This new structure brings together three oppositions: fecundity/sterility, process/stasis, and contaminated/uncontaminated. Impurities are naturally culled from particles in motion, in process; particles in stasis, stagnate; the former gives rise to uncontaminated fecundity, the latter to either sterility or contaminated fecundity. This sub-segment begins with the story of a search for a clear-water well. The search is proving difficult. Previous wells have proved contaminated and lethal. Clear water is a source of fecundity and contaminated water is a source of stasis and death. An elephant is introduced -- a circus performer, or the average unaware man -- who falls into the well and has to be hauled out. The elephant in the well is a

tropism for coitus.

well as cunt
elephant as prick

(vol. 2, p. 67)

The potential for contamination is obvious. The unaware, and therefore the unpure, will unwittingly fill the well with sewage by falling into it. At the same time we are made to appreciate the peculiar fecundity of sewage. If the level of contamination is not lethal, the result will be mutation and the emergence of spurious forms. And so the concern with contamination is joined to the concern with the journey.

still water like the heart
reflects grows stagnant
putrifies in time

(vol. 2, p. 60)

Running water cleans itself of impurities.

Nichol is situated in Toronto, a city which is located in the centre of a country which spans 4500 miles and which has an ocean at either end. His constant journeying from coast to coast keeps returning him to great expanses of clear blue water. But living in the centre he must dig wells. And so the journey to the ends is the journey to the centre, the constant movement which keeps the water clear. Contrary to what might seem to be the obvious, roots can come from this constant travelling.

set down roots if she welcomes you
it is a matter of permission
full partnership lets you take the trip

(vol. 2, p. 69)

Further, the journey east and west is also the journey up and down.

that one goes west (to vancouver)
or east (to halifax)
is matter of facts - geography
placing yourself relative to 4500 miles of country
whatever the journeys up or down that might have gone

* have yet to come before you

(vol. 2, p. 70)

The physical journey will become the mental journey; the physical fecundity will become the mental fecundity:

felt as stillness in the brain or
vortex or
the whirlpool

(vol. 2, p. 60)

This is the 'double vision'.

In 'VII' Nichol continues the travel metaphor. But only just. The journey now is the journey into the mind and the main concern is the concern with boundaries, with doors that open and close. The poet wants to know,

that these ones the ones who travel in the mind
make it home again :

wheels folding down

frozen ground

(vol. 2, p. 73)

After all, travelling in the mind is a dangerous business. It is a whirlpool.

how is it done how is it said the head
sheds the lies its lived by what comes screaming
into focus we talk about the real world because
the unreal exists inside us beside us the ones we
meet the streets are full of us

(vol. 2, p. 73)

Inside the mind the words pile up and move in all directions, so:

how do you follow it then the swift shift connections
i am talking of nothing she hits me in the place
out of place the whole conversation

(vol. 2, p. 72)

The visual and syntactical structures are beginning to change accordingly. In this sub-segment, for the first time, there are prose shapes

which alternate with verse shapes; the one set off against the other. The prose shapes are compacted and dense looking -- like the interior monologues they are -- the verse shapes are more ordered and open; they are the external context, the objects of time and place and persona (the deitics) which surround the contemplations.

east coast morning
 salt in the aire
 you are nowhere near me saints
 left to walk where i choose
 i place my feet with care

(vol. 2, p. 70)

The disconnectedness and the fragmentation of the syntax in the prose shapes is in direct contrast to the referential clarity in the verse shapes.

younger days as are remembered the thing builds
 up takes over as the poem ends when the sphere of
 that is moved thru all directions similar one word
 at a time it ends faint words in the evening aire
 send you looking for paper to write them down
 someone to read them to

(vol. 2, p. 73)

Each word, each particle, can either continue the chain of the word which comes before it or start off a new chain, or refer backwards or forwards, to a rhyme, a similar part of speech, or an idea. No syntactical chain is started and finished as if it were capable of saying anything definitive. The prose shapes appear as if they have been lifted in a chunk out of some larger and equally undefined chunk. Such structures are both phatic and poetic; they are phatic because they manipulate the reader's manner of perception -- they do not allow him to forget the object quality of language in order to concentrate on the referential message--and they are poetic because they subvert the traditional forms against which they are juxtaposed by drawing attention to their structure.

In 'VIII' the travel metaphor is extended even further. The journey becomes the migration, both in time and place; it becomes translation --

the transformation from Indo-European language roots to our present 'langue', and the translation of thought from 'langue' to 'parole'. Again the exterior deitics are intertwined with the interior deitics. All metalingual codes are incorporated into the 'now'; they are not presented as capsules of fact from the past.

dead or alive the tribe of saints goes on
 its not the town but what you founded
 the land you claimed carries your memory
 every bush haunted by what went before
 history is with us in viscera & bone

(vol. 2 p. 76)

All the events of history are translations of the initial act, the beginning:

your names many
 your attributes the same
 it is your parallels not the differences confuse us

(vol. 2, p.77)

It was this initial act which set man apart. Because of this there is incompleteness and urgency. Therefore the poet can:

. . . understand the necessity of destruction
 the fire that purges

(vol. 2, p. 78)

Words, names, saints, gods, are all part of:

a game of shifting allegiance

(vol. 2, p. 79)

But now is:

a time between gods when no one god holds sway
 is this century's become
 the elders we can respect are few
 we suffer the confusion disillusionment brings

(vol. 2, p. 78)

and so the poet seeks:

. . . the one name by which to call you

(vol. 2, p. 79)

To do this he must:

right the day to day order of things

.....
in the equivocation which is translation

(vol. 2, p. 80)

This one name, the right order of things, is elusive.

the jews knew
that if they never named you they would never lose you

(vol. 2, p. 80)

The opposite of this is also true.

it is all here father
as it has always been
all language names you
all description as i make it clear
the nine billion names of god

(vol. 2, p. 82)

The question of translating this initial act becomes one of establishing convention.

(so many ways language can be used

.....
speak as we choose
knowing friends are there

(vol. 2, p. 84)

The creation of such tradition is a powerful motivator because:

the worth of taking the phrase literally
takes you out of the tangle of liberty

(vol. 2, p. 83)

But tradition is only 'tradition', a stop gap against chaos, a conspiracy to provide an aesthetic order. It is necessary but vain -- a contradiction in terms which demands constant renewal -- it is death and birth. For,

we will never encompass it
never fix it with the name home

even our own galaxy
 how much can you grasp in any real sense
 at what point does the mass or density of it all overwhelm you

retreat to details of shoes how you tied your laces on
 what it would mean to you to lose them

(vol. 2, p. 83)

When the poet refuses to retreat, to accept a tradition, there is

death
 the internal fire
 i am burned alive daily

(vol. 2, p. 85)

To enter this aesthetic realm of no retreat is to enter a realm of mirrors
 where nothing is discrete, where all sub-structures become facets of the
 initial structure because they have been filtered through translation. The
 'me', the potentially discrete, becomes the 'we', the inextricably joined.

Nichol presents woman, the muse, as the unifying force.

w's omen
 it turns over & reverses itself
 the mirrors cannot trick us

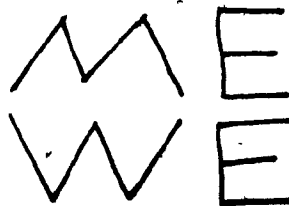
(vol. 2, p. 87)

The reversed 'w', the omen of 'women' is the 'm' of 'me'.

the sign complete
 the w and the circle turned
 add the E

.....

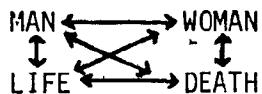
the saints returned to this plane



(vol. 2, p. 87)

The 'W' turned becomes the 'E'; the 'W' mirrored becomes the 'M'. Topologically the opposites are joined and the 'me' is connected to the cycle of

'we'. And so the tropological structure has become, not Greimas' base isotope, but a four term homology with no further possibility for reduction.



In CODA: Mid Initial Sequence and (variation on a line by H.D. -- in memoriam), Nichol parodies the power of translation to create an apparently discrete, dogmatic and solipsistic tradition. By manipulating language particles -- letters and words -- he presents a prophecy whose claim to legitimacy is derived from the undeniable internal logic by which the conclusions are reached. But it is all a game, albeit a serious game--the inherent contradiction providing poetic tension and the gap wherein meaning is to be found.

The syntactical structures are merely ingenious.

↳ last note

no t
no e

l as no

l body
l where
l w here

no w
for w's sake

no is
e
against the silent sleep

(vol. 2, p. 89)

We are told to make certain translations and transformations, and if we make them this passage has a very mundane referential message. The ability to force these changes of symbol relationship so easily upon the reader points, of course, to the arbitrariness of the symbol itself.

The real structural parody lies deeper, however. By plugging into a cyclical concept of history, Nichol shows how history will repeat itself under the titles 'E.H.' and 'F.G.' -- 'E.H.' corresponding to 'B.C.' and 'F.G.' corresponding to 'A.D.'. Since in the palindrome (a mirror image and therefore cyclical),

dogma i am god

(vol. 2, p. 94)

the 'D' is on the left, we are to conclude that the left hand side of the cycle, i.e. 'F.G.', is the work of 'D' or in other words, the 'devil'; and since the 'G' of 'god' is on the right hand side we must conclude that the right hand side of the cycle, i.e. 'E.H.', is the realm of God. There are many other manipulations made to support this theory. The implication is that we are to await the return of the 'God' of 'E.H.', and that we are to pray only to this God. This is, of course, absurd. But it is also undeniably the way in which tradition works. The logic is internal and depends upon certain givens, such as the authority of the palindrome 'dogma i am god'. In this case the logic is obviously internal. With tradition it is not so obvious because that which lies outside of the logic of the situation cannot be treated logically. It is an imponderable.

Nichol ends this book with a self-reflexive and apt comment:

'dogma i am god'
 heresy
 hearsay
 in the worst sense,
 false pride
 who thinks to bestride the world
 because he feels crushed by it

(vol. 2, p. 96)

Book 4

Book 4 is a breakthrough, a dervish swirl of uninterrupted energy.

It has only one segment, a sign of unfragmented structure that is paralleled by both the sound structures and the syntactical structures. It is the orgasmic scream of a poet who has been seduced by the unbridled potential of language and who is riding the wave-crest of that scream. The poem is no longer a polemic against tradition, operating largely at the tropological level, and placing traditional structures in a context which questions their pretensions; it is now an open and playful display of the inherent contradiction between the phonic structures, visual structures and syntactical structures of a language.

All reminders of the frame have been banished except for the physical existence of each page. There are no titles, no segments, no clouds, and no hand-drawn or mechanically drawn lines around each page. The colour of the paper has become white. (The purple tone of the paper gradually lightens through Book 3 until the last page which is all but white.) Thus, in effect, the first books are disconnected visually from the fourth. One cycle is completed; another has begun.

—There is only one graphic series (series 22) and, whereas the graphics to the end of Book 3 depict Saints, this series depicts a contemporary personage. Even the graphics have a sense of playfulness. The man depicted disappears into his hat. Art -- artifice -- is a world of its own, not to be confused with experienced reality. Signs, or semiotic particles, in an aesthetic structure can be manipulated freely; they can consume each other in the most unlikely ways.

There is one other graphic, but it follows the text and is in the form of a signature. It is a drawing of what I take to be Nichol himself. He is seen only from the shoulders up and is just emerging from the ground as if he were a plant in spring. The face, however, shows lines of age, indicating that renewal -- death and rebirth -- is continual.

The nature of the tropological structure can be seen in the relationship between the epigraph and the first few lines of the text.

'They steal the Saint
while you're making the shrine'

'Looking for it all over the place
three years
carrying it all the time like a baby'

Korean proverbs
translated by
W.S. Merwin

(vol. 2, p. 101)

and,

purpose is porpoise

a conceit

is there a sea

yes

is there a cloud

yes

everything elemental
everything blue

the precision of openness
is not a vagueness
it is an accumulation
cumulous

yes

oceanic

yes &
anything elemental
anything blue is

sky

sea

the heart of

the flame .

stories
 st orie's domain

(vol. 2, p. 103)

The 'story', the structure, is us, 'we'; it is not a Saint we build a shrine for -- a prescription, a tradition. The poet must be aware that he is contriving conceits.

if i let the actual speak
 it will reveal itself

admire the form
 be reduced by it
 as part of
 the love of
 language

(vol. 2, p. 105-6)

The metaphor for the process to be joined is: fluid.

i want the absolute precision
 of fluid definition

(vol. 2, p. 107)

In other words, the only absolute is that there is no absolute. Everything becomes fluid: landscapes, the skin, anything that represents a possible boundary. The only sin is the:

sin of
 partiality

(vol. 2, p. 108)

the attempt to separate. Language must be re-attached to:

the whole
 flows thru
 into the universe
 absolute and open
 poem of
 perfect movement
 containment of
 the flux

(vol. 2, p. 108)

The referential function of the words in this passage shows the inescapable

tension of such a program. How can something be absolute and also open? How can something be contained and also in flux? These are the contradictions of language. Every time we write we put objects in a fixed form and yet somehow this form must evoke flux and openness.

. . . i am granted
 signs
 to reach who i cannot touch

(vol. 2, p. 112)

If we look at a passage such as:

all its elements

el

em

en

t's

o

pq

r

or bd

bidet

confusion of childhood's 'kaka'
 the Egyptian 'KA'

soul

(vol. 2, p. 113)

we can see that the phonic structure (if we were to hear only) will be the result of the reader having made certain choices. We might hear this: all its elements, l, m, n, t's, o, p, q, r, or b d, bidet, confusion of childhood's 'kaka', the Egyptian 'KA', soul. We would get a sense of swirl -- the original word sounds occasioning a digression into letter sounds which in their turn lead into a new series of word sounds. But there would be a break between 'bidet' and 'confusion'. At this point there is a separation in the flow of the sound.

The visual structure and the syntactical structure allow us to re-arrange the particles in different ways. The syllables and the letters spread out in the middle can be re-arranged into proper alphabetical order:

l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t. We can rejoin 'el', 'em', 'en', and 't's' so that 'elements' is repeated. When we see the word 'elements' twice, then we see the connection between 'kaka' and 'KA' -- the doubling of the pattern. We see that 'pq' is placed on a single line and not on two lines because 'p' is the mirror image of 'q'. We notice the repetition of the letter 'e' at the beginning of 'el', 'em', and 'en'; and we see that the syllables are arranged like steps, in an orderly progression.

Syntactically, we must relate 'elements' to 'bidet', to 'childhood confusion', and to 'kaka' and 'KA'. If we consider the splitting up of the word 'elements' as a digression which refers only to the word itself (a parenthetical comment) then we have this lineup: all its elements or bidet . . . confusion of childhood's kaka the Egyptian KA soul. The conventions of language demand that a sentence have a verb. If we were to fill this gap as neutrally as possible, with the appropriate form of the verb 'to be', and also add the missing preposition, article and conjunction (these are transformations the reader is likely to make automatically and without thinking, in an effort to discover meaning), then we would have: all its (the pronoun antecedent is 'the world') elements, or bidet ('bidet' is forced here to stand as a collective noun) are the confusion of childhood's 'kaka' with the Egyptian 'KA' or soul. With the addition of the referential and the metalingual functions, we end up with somebody stuck in the Freudian anal stage -- looking for the meaning of life in effluence, with overtones indicating that this effluence issues from the female genitalia.

This is, of course, only playful speculation. But it is justifiable speculation of the sort that is likely to pass quickly through the reader's mind and be contrasted with the other more obvious readings. The referential limits of language are undermined once again.

There is an increased use of brackets, especially in passages with prose shapes.

the prob-
 lem is in summing up prematurely (false). he is
 31 (yesterday) but i's what? (joking to a friend
 he said 'i used to be 18 to myself but i'm catching
 up') a question of tension in telling a power in
 print opposed to speech

(vol. 2, p. 134)

When speaking, it is very difficult to effectively put across parenthetical material. This is what might be heard: the problem is in summing up prematurely, false. He is thirty-one yesterday, but eyes what? Joking to a friend he said: 'I used to be eighteen to myself but I'm catching up -- a question of tension in telling a power in print opposed to speech.' This changes the syntactical relationships considerably. The visual structure allows us to see 'false' as a comment on the first statement rather than as a qualification. By hearing the 'i' as 'eye', the question becomes, not the existential 'what am I?', but rather: what does he have his eye on now? Without being able to see the closing quotation mark and the closing bracket, the phrase beginning 'a question' is joined to, and continues, the quoted speech which precedes it. It thus becomes a comment on the quote rather than on the whole passage.

An extended series of parentheses within parentheses adds more and more limits to visual and syntactical structures. (In one passage there are twelve opening brackets and fourteen closing brackets -- the passage ends with four consecutive closing brackets on a line of their own.) Such an ostentatious imposition of limits undermines the attempt to limit by increasing the potential for ambiguity. It also takes the reader further and further from the narrator -- the first set of parentheses being authorial intervention and a comment on the narrator, the second being a comment on

the authorial intervention and so on. The further the reader gets from the narrator the more obviously artificial the whole structure becomes. To underline this artificiality is, to undermine the pretension that language is capable of unambiguously representing real-world experience. For these qualifications could go on forever.

The playful manipulation of language particles is more than just a Saturday afternoon puzzle. These self-conscious, inward turning moments of contact with language are the peregrinations of a seeker, for whom language is geography. We should not be deceived by the humour.

these rhythms
insistent as the brain is
with images
a pounding in the chest of
words
the 1 imposition of the earth
the singular
word + 1 = world
i seek
solutions to the equations that are already solved?
no!

(vol. 2, p. 106)

The one imposition of the earth; the '1' for 'language' imposition; the limp position of the singular; the word plus one is the world; the 'i' is the 'we'. The images are insistent. Layer upon layer of meaning is perceived, is revealed.

we work
the changes
always
to reveal
lest the actual re-veil itself

(vol. 2, p. 106)

The world of the present is always being invented. It is a function of all that has come before, but we must not dwell on the past; instead, we must let the past surface as constituent particles of the present.

to rid me of

the ugh in
 thought
 i spell anew
 weave the world
 out of or

(vol. 2, p. 112)

To get 'rid' of the 'ugh' in 'thought' -- 'thought' is the past tense of 'think' and therefore no longer a process -- it must be respelled: 'thot'.

New structures must be devised, new rules invented. The important thing is the 'ore', the source of the particles. The particles of the 'ore' are mutable and must be continually reshaped. We can not dwell on any one manifestation of the 'ore'. This meaning is structurally reinforced by

the pun on the language particle 'or' and its reference to variability.

Further, 'or', or gold, the goal of the alchemical search and the symbol of the base element, is not the undistilled essence of the world; it is only one manifestation, and one for which the potential number of secondary manifestations is infinite. We weave our word world from 'ore' or 'or' or or. The pun, the game, the puzzle, appear to be more than "the surface play of words [and] the skin deep of language,"² that George Woodcock claims them to be in his review of The Martyrology.

To contemplate language in the present, to make contact with language particles in a vital and energetic way, and to be self-conscious while doing so, is to enter language in the spirit of a game. For language is not an absolute; its boundaries, its rules and conventions -- like the rules and conventions of all games -- are arbitrary. They are weighted down heavily by the self-imposed seriousness of communication and of culture and history -- a seriousness allied to the need to invent rules in the first place, i.e. the need to create order from chaos -- but they are

²George Woodcock, "Review of The Martyrology" in The Ontario Review, no. 13, (1980-81), p. 111.

arbitrary none-the-less.

the stuttered b
 ing
 that is living

.....
 in the press of speech
 awkward words are chosen

.....
 the choice of
 building blocks

the 'b' locks into place

a command

(vol. 2 p. 114)

We are hurried and rushed into decisions which, once taken, tend to stand. But the choice has been a stuttered choice; it has been no more than an effort to connect; it has not been meant as a command, a 'b' locked into place.

The 'longed for beginning' is a scream strong enough and long enough to unlock the 'b', to bring the poet into the present. It is a life scream in the face of inevitable death.

Chapter 6

"Some questions answered but the rest remain"

In the first three books of The Martyrology bp Nichol is primarily concerned with describing the pretensions of both traditional language structures and traditional literary structures. However, from the point at which he begins to look for the source of the four winds -- the breath and therefore the physical source of language -- he is also concerned with ontology, with the question of 'being'. The poetic concern is no longer with discovering structures which will illustrate the arbitrariness of language signs and their potential ambiguities, but with exploring the scream of 'being' and with articulating this exploration. It is appropriate therefore that towards the end of Book 3 and in Book 4 he confronts the act of translation. For every interaction with language is a translation, or as George Steiner sees it, we must think of 'understanding as translation'.¹ In articulating the scream, Nichol is trying to express aesthetically what is felt in the body, to translate into language his physical experience of reality.

I have said very little about Gertrude Stein up to this point, even though her influence on bp Nichol has been significant. I have stressed instead the influence of the Concrete movement. Although the influence of this movement has been essential it has more than likely outlived its usefulness. The influence of Stein, however, is likely to continue. For Stein was also concerned with 'being'. Her objective was to manipulate

¹George Steiner, After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

the reader's attention into seeing language as an aesthetic object of the present. For only by treating language as a palpable aesthetic object could language be used artistically.

creative art is a learning process for the artist and not a description of what is already known.²

and,

the business of art . . . is to live in the actual present, that is the complete actual present and to completely express the complete actual present.³

To achieve this artistic present, this act of 'being', is to create a new syntax capable of accommodating the density, the continuity, and the speed of the perception of language objects.⁴ For Stein believed that,

the work of the creative imagination was not to reflect but to invent it. Proceeding like blind explorers, the painters (those who influenced Stein -- notably Picasso) invaded the world, so to speak, broke down appearances, and brought to light hidden versions of reality.⁵

The time of 'being', the present continuous, which Stein saw as essential to the creative interaction with language, was the liquid time of duration and not the encapsulated time sequences of the past which give to time a spatial rather than a durational quality.

It is this combination of time as process and language as aesthetic object which provided Stein with the theoretical base from which to create a syntax of 'being'. Each time she interacts with language she is in effect, analyzing it; she is involved in an activity (the production of text) in which she is continually deconstructing the signs of language in

²Patricia Meyerowitz, "Introduction" to How to Write by Gertrude Stein (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), p. xiv.

³Gertrude Stein, How to Write, p. 104.

⁴See Norman Weinstein, Gertrude Stein and the Literature of the Modern Consciousness (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1970).

⁵John Malcolm Brinnin, The Third Rose (Boston: Little Brown, 1959), p. 128.

an effort to invent a syntax of 'being'.⁶ It is this aspect of Stein which has influenced The Martyrology and which has the potential for continued influence. Concrete poetics provided a specific word order in response to a perceived world order; Stein provides a programme for discovering new word orders.

In his introduction to a collection of essays by various authors, published under the title Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism, Jacques V. Harari suggests that

the most fundamental difference between the structuralist and the post-structuralist enterprises can be seen in the shift from the problematic of the subject to the deconstruction of the concept of representation.⁷

Structuralists describe a phenomenon, while post-structuralists attempt to explain it. Post-structuralism, therefore, is also ontological. The connection to Stein is obvious.

Jacques Derrida, perhaps the best known of the post-structuralist philosophers, draws impetus from Nietzsche's attacks on logocentrism and develops a complex metaphysics of 'being' in which the sign is a constantly supplemented 'presence' with no possible 'essence'.⁸ For Derrida, the text is an activity, a struggle with signs, and not a permanent artifact; it is a sort of quasi-artifact which is constantly being supplemented by shifts in the external context. The post-structuralist critic does not

⁶It should perhaps be pointed out here that 'being' in the Steinian sense is process and not stasis; and that therefore, in the customary opposition, being/becoming, it is closer to the process of becoming than to the achievement of being. Undoubtedly Stein did not use the word 'becoming' because it implies that there is something to 'become' and that therefore there is a Platonic sense of the ideal. The word 'being' therefore indicates durational existence and not ultimate achievement. Her concept of 'being' is similar to Derrida's concept of the sign as a 'presence' which is constantly supplemented.

⁷Jacques V. Harari, ed., Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 29.

⁸See Jacques Derrida's Of Grammatology, trans. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

describe the field of possible relationships; he deconstructs the activity which is the 'text', the Steinian struggle with the signs of language. From Book 4 of The Martyrology on, a knowledge of post-structuralist theory and of the ideas of Gertrude Stein becomes increasingly important to the reader who wishes to understand the deitics of the text, or, in other words, the context in which the text was produced.

The apparent drawback of a programme which acknowledges this ontological indefiniteness is that it can lead, theoretically, to a stance of limitless interpretation. And yet, as Edward Said, another post-structuralist, has said:

to insist upon the limitlessness of interpretation is to disregard a text's decisive claim on actuality -- its participation in shaping the conditions of production of the interpretive activity which bears upon it.⁹

The physical act of text production implies delimitation. It implies an effort to limit critical reaction. Yet a post-structuralist reading must always qualify itself by asserting that it is only one of a limitless number of potential readings. It is for this reason that Stein, and her insistence that the process of 'being' be framed by its existence in the 'present', is important to Nichol; for although Stein's world view, and therefore her sense of the structural relationship of signs, was of the twentieth century and therefore relativist, she was always concerned with the ability of language to delimit, to convey 'sense'. She has said:

I found out very soon that there is no such thing as putting them [words/signs] together [in structures] without sense. . . . Any human being putting down words had to make sense out of them.¹⁰

In his book on structuralism, Justin Leiber says that

⁹Harari, p. 45.

¹⁰Robert Bartlett Haas, ed., A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Gertrude Stein (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1975), p. 18.

the commanding metaphor of our age is the game. To say that something is like a game or is a game is everywhere regarded as a crucial route to understanding one or another aspect of some segment of our existence and activity.¹¹

I have used this metaphor to analyze Nichol's response to language. Leiber goes on to say, however, that the pervasive characteristic of the game is that all rules are artificial and arbitrary and that therefore there is an acceptable detachment from real life. The rules which delimit and which therefore convey Stein's 'sense' also detach this 'sense' from the physical reality of 'real life'. Does this not contradict Nichol's (and Stein's) contention that the self-conscious use of language as a palpable object allows the poet to invent a syntax that reconnects language to the physical experience of reality, to 'being'?

Perhaps this comment of Gertrude Stein's is a suitable final word.

Mr. Owen Young made a mistake, he said the only thing he wished his son to have was the power of clearly expressing his ideas. Not at all. It is not clarity that is desirable but force.¹²

¹¹ Justin Leiber, Structuralism (Cambridge: MIT Press, TWL Series, 1978), p. 121.

¹² Gertrude Stein, Four in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 127.

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Appendix 1: Public debate concerning bp. Nichol's nomination for the Governor General's Award.

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2. Hansard. 29 June 1971, p. 7458.
3. Toronto Telegram, "Poet bp Nichol's work was 'impressive'-- award judge," 19 June 1971.
4. Toronto Telegram, "Row over award for 'bad pornography'," 8 July 1971.

Appendix 2: Anthologies which include work by bp Nichol.

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6. Gordon to Watkins to You. Toronto: New Press, 1970.
7. New Directions in Canadian Poetry. Toronto: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1971.
8. Future's Fictions. Princeton: Panache, 1971.
9. Evolution of Canadian Literature: 1945-70, Toronto: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1973.
10. Where? the other canadian poetry. Erin: Press Porcepic, 1974.
11. Canadian Poetry: The Modern Era. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.
12. The Poets of Canada. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1978.
13. The Long Poem Anthology. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1979.
14. Text-Sound Texts. New York: William Morrow, 1980.
15. Fiction of Contemporary Canada. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1980.

APPENDICES

The information in the appendices which follow is applicable only to the two volume edition of the first four books of The Martyrology published in 1976-77 by the Coach House Press of Toronto.

Appendix 1

The Segmentation of the BooksBook 1

- A. 1. The Martyrology Books 1 & 2 --- title
 2. Epigraph 1
 3. Untitled Preface
- B. 4. The Martyrology -- title
 5. 'from The Chronicle of Knarr' -- sub-title and text
- C. 6. The Martyrology Books 1 & 2 -- title
 7. Epigraph 2
 8. Dedication
- D. 9. Book 1 -- title
 10. Epigraph 3
- E. 11. The Martyrology of Saint And -- title
 12. Epigraph 4.
 13. Text of (11)
- F. 14. Scenes from the Lives of the Saints -- title
 15. Epigraph 5
 16. Text of (14)
 17. Epigraph 6
 18. Continued text of (14)
 19. Epigraph 7
 20. Continued text of (14)
- G. 21. The Sorrow of Saint Orm -- title

- G. 22. Text (21)
- 23. Epigraph 8
- 24. Continued text of (21)
- 25. Epigraph 9
- 26. Continued text of (21)
- H. 27. Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World -- title
- 28. Epigraph 10
- 29. Text of (27)

Book 2

- A. 1. Book 2 - title
- 2. Epigraph 1
- B. 3. The Book of Common Prayer -- title
- 4. Dedication
- 5. Text of (3)
- C. 6. Clouds --title
- 7. Text of (6)
- 8. Epigraph 2
- 9. Continued text of (6)
- 10. Epigraph 3
- 11. Conintued text of (6)
- 12. Epigraph 4
- 13. Conintued text of (6)
- 14. Epigraph 5
- 15. Continued text of (6)
- 16. Epigraph 6

- C. 17. Continued text of (6)
- 18. Epigraph 7
- 19. Continued-text of (6)
- D. 20. Auguries -- title
- 21. Text of (20)
- E. 22. Sons and Divinations -- title
- 23. Text of (22)
- 24. 'birthday' -- sub-title and text,
- 25. 'fasting sequence 1' -- sub-title and text
- 26. 'fasting sequence 2' -- sub-title by number only and text
- 27. 'fasting sequence 3' -- sub-title by number only and text
- 28. 'fasting sequence 4' -- sub-title by number only and text
- 29. 'fasting sequence 5' -- sub-title by number only and text
- 30. Continued text of (22)
- F. 31. Friends as Footnotes -- title
- 32. Text of (31)
- G. 33. Epilogue -- titled by graphic only

Book 3

- A. 1. The Martyrology Books 3 & 4 -- title
- B. 2. The Martyrology -- title
- 3. Untitled Preface
- C. 4. The Martyrology Books 3 & 4 -- title
- 5. Dedication

- G. 6. Epigraph 1
- 7. Epigraph 2

- D. 8. Book 3 -- title
- 9. 'I' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 10. 'II' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 11. 'III' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 12. 'Interlude: The Book of Oz' -- sub-title and text
- 13. 'IV' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 14. 'V' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 15. 'VI' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 16. 'Interlude: Double Vision' -- sub-title and text
- 17. 'VII' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 18. 'VIII' -- sub-title and text of (8)
- 19. 'Coda: Mid-Initial Sequence' -- sub-title and text
- 20. '(variation on a line by H.D. -- in memoriam)' -- sub-title and text

Book 4

- A. 1. Book 4 -- title
- 2. Epigraph 1
- 3. Text of (1)

Appendix 2

The Arrangement of the Graphics

Legend: l - left hand side of page R - recto
 r - right hand side of page V - verso
 c - centre of page

t - top of page h - height
 b - bottom of page w - width
 m - middle of page

Book 1

series no.	page	location	size
1.	10	c.t.V.	1/3h,1/3w
1.	12	c.t.V.	1/3h,1/3w
1.	14	c.t/m.V.	2/3h,2/3w
2.	19	c.t/m.R.	2/3h,2/3w
3.	23	c.t/m.R.	2/3h,2/3w
3.	27	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
3.	29	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
3.	31	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
3.	33	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
3.	35	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
3.	37	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
4.	41	c.t/m.R.	2/3h,2/3w
5.	57	c.t/m.R.	2/3h,2/3w
5.	59	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	61	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	63	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	65	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	67	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	69	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	71	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	73	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
5.	75	c.t/m.R.	2/3h,3/3w
6.	79	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
6.	83	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
7.	89	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
8.	95	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w
8.	96	c.t.V.	1/3h,1/3w
8.	99	c.t.R.	1/3h,1/3w

Book 2

series no.	page	location	size
9.	105	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 2/3w
9.	109	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 2/3w
10.	115	l. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
11.	119	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
12.	123	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	129	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 2/3w
13.	131	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	133	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	135	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	137	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	139	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	141	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	145	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	147	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	151	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	153	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	157	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	159	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	161	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	163	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	165	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	169	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
13.	171	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
14.	173	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 3/3w
5.	175	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
5.	181	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
5.	185	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	193	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 2/3w
15.	195	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	197	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	199	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	201	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	203	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	205	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	207	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	221	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 2/3w
15.	223	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	225	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
15.	227	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
16.	238	c. t/m.V.	2/3h, 2/3w

Book 3

series no.	page	location	size
17.	6	c. t/m.V.	2/3h, 2/3w
17.	12	c. t/m.W.	2/3h, 2/3w
17.	17	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 2/3w
18	21	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
19.	25	1/c/r.t/m.R.	2/3h, 3/3w
18.	27	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
18.	31	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
18.	33	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	37	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	41	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	49	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	53	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	57	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	63	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	67	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	75	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
20.	81	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
21.	89	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
21.	91	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
21.	93	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
21.	95	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w

Book 4

22.	99	c. t/m.R.	2/3h, 2/3w
22.	105	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
22.	109	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
22.	119	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
22.	131	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
22.	133	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
22.	137	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
22.	141	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w
23.	145	c. t.R.	1/3h, 1/3w

Appendix 3

Pagination

Although The Martyrology is unpaginated, I provide here, for the sake of convenience, the page numbers which would prevail if it were paginated. The numbers are consecutive; the outside cover of each volume (volume one containing books 1 & 2, volume two containing books 3 & 4) being counted as the first page. In this appendix I have correlated the page numbers to the segments of each book (see appendix 1).

Book 1

- A. pp. 1-8
- B. pp. 9-13
- C. pp. 14-18
- D. pp. 18-23
- E. pp. 23-40
- F. pp. 41-56
- G. pp. 57-74
- H. pp. 75-104

Book 3

- A. pp. 1-4
- B. pp. 5-8
- C. pp. 9-16
- D. pp. 17-98

Book 2

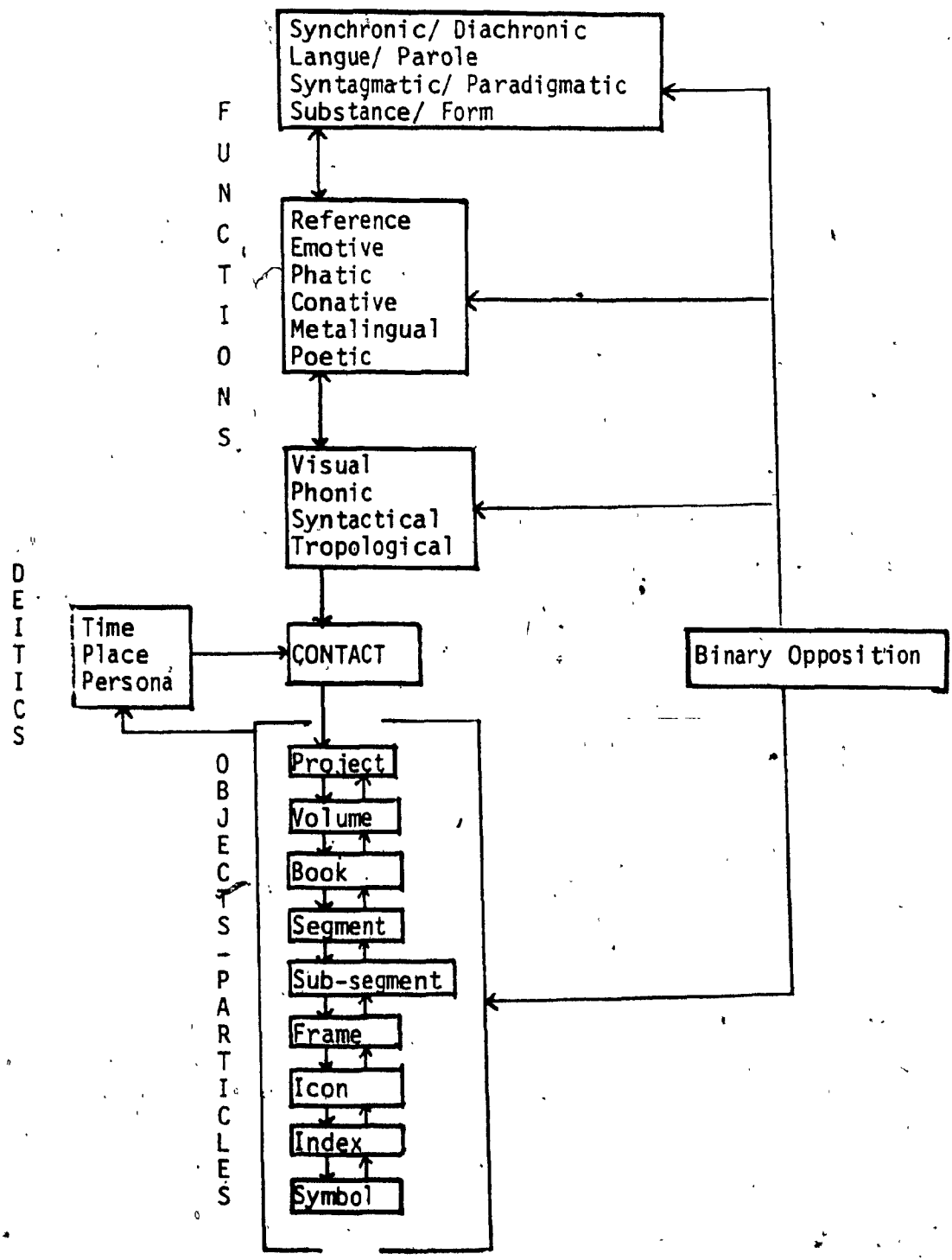
- A. pp. 105-108
- B. pp. 109-128
- C. pp. 129-172
- D. pp. 173-192
- E. pp. 193-220
- F. pp. 221-237
- G. pp. 238-241

Book 4

- A. pp. 99-145

Appendix 4

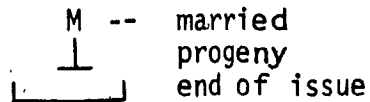
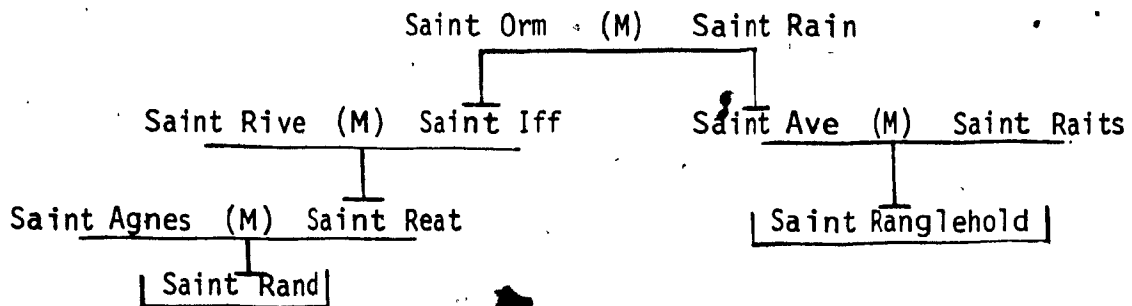
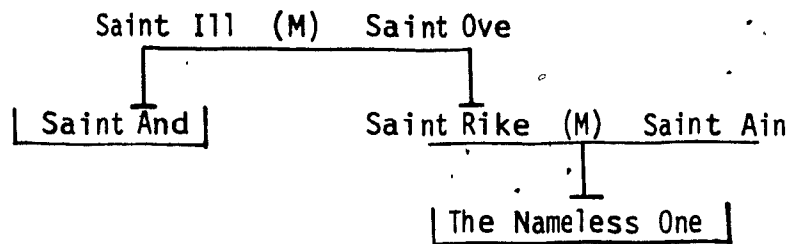
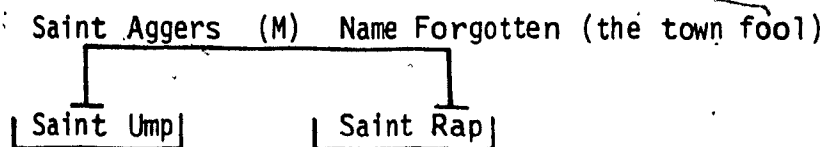
Structural Relationships



Appendix 5

Genealogy of the Saints

Legend

Family 1Family 2Family 3Unaffiliated

Saint Ory

Saint Utter