right mind-minding: the practice and transmission of Zen and Tantric Buddhist method practices in the poemobjects of Dom Sylvester Houédard, 1960-1975

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Abstract

There are several important areas where this study makes an original contribution to knowledge. This is the first substantial study of the work of Dom Sylvester Houédard. Although Houédard features in the recent studies on the contexts of the British concrete poetry movement, no previous research has focused exclusively on his work or foregrounded his spiritual vision as method. The aim of this thesis is therefore to investigate the artistic experimentation and textual practices found in the poemobjects made by Houédard between 1960 and 1975, and to provide a conceptual theoretical framework based on Mahayana Buddhist epistemology, in particular Tibetan Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism and its associated performance rituals. Research to date has primarily focused on the influence of Zen Buddhism on the post-war American avant-garde, and although there is an emerging body of research addressing the influence of Tibetan Buddhism on a few individual American artists, little is known about the transplantation of Buddhism, Zen or Vajrayana, to Britain and this affect on the British avant-garde. This study aims to reposition Houédard, not only as a key figure in a community of British artists, but as a central figure in the Western encounter with Tibetan Buddhism and an important conduit for the dissemination, understanding and transmission of this wisdom.

The methodological approach taken in this thesis is a mixed methodology based upon archive as research, exhibition as research, interview, curation, performance and analysis. The analyses call on Buddhist and Tantric spiritual epistemology in providing close readings of text, image and performance. Drawing upon an extensive body of unpublished work and correspondence from private and public archive collections, this study analyses a comprehensive selection of unseen material.

Selections of this material have been curated into three exhibitions: *frog pond plop: the yoga of concrete,* The Gallery, NUA (2010); *The Cosmic Typewriter, The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard;* The South London Gallery (2012); *Performing No Thingness,* East, NUA (2016). I have also edited some of this material for two monographs: *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter, The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard* (Occasional Papers, 2012) and *Dom Sylvester Houédard* (Riding House, 2016). I have worked with a number of contemporary artists, poets and musicians to realize Houédard's poemobjects as scores for performance. These performances have been interpretative in nature adopting a Cagean aesthetic derived from Zen Buddhism whilst also exploring the potentialities of a Tantric Buddhist performance aesthetic.

Therefore this study makes a major contribution to research on Dom Sylvester Houédard by confirming his central role in a transnational network of artists encountering Buddhist epistemology, and by demonstrating the legitimacy of interpreting and performing his work within this conceptual framework. It also offers some important insights into the significant role that British encounters with Buddhism in the 1960s and 1970s played in shaping aspects of kinetic art, participatory art and concrete poetry.

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Introduction

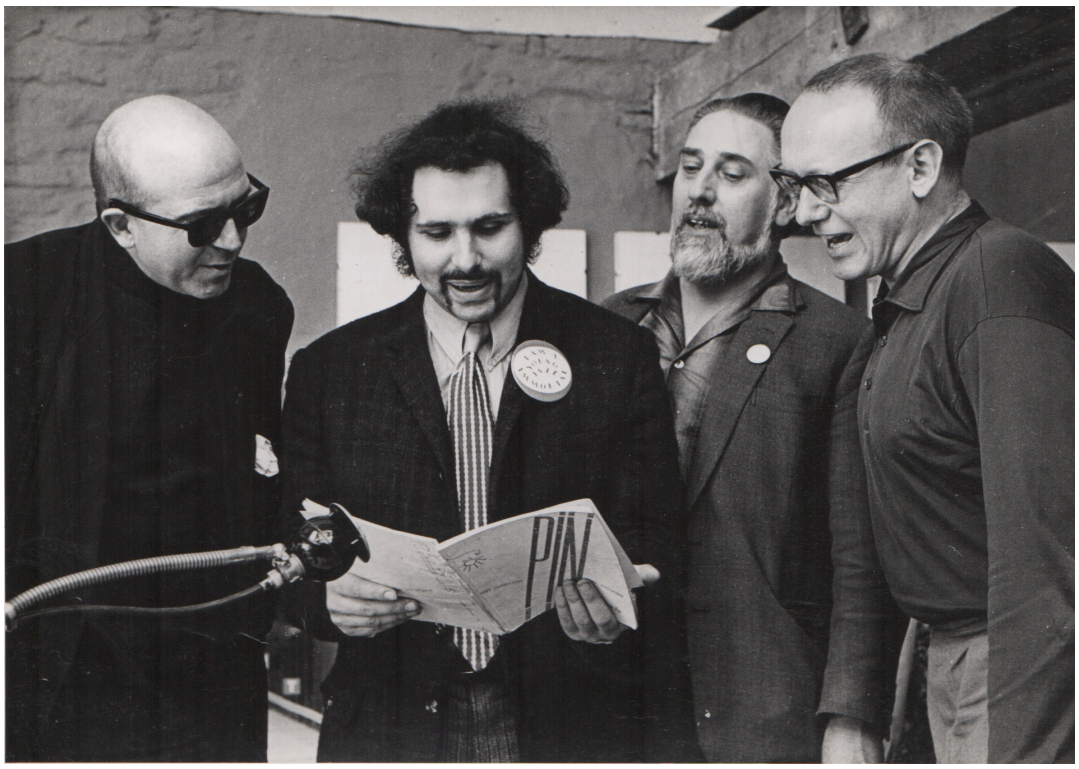


Fig.1 Houédard, with Pete Brown, Bob Cobbing, Ernst Jandl, reading Kurt Switter's poem, "The Fury of Sneezing", *Arlington-Une,*1966. Courtesy of Hayden Murphy.

monknik

The camera pans around the room, lingering for a moment on the monochrome figure of a balding middle-aged Benedictine monk in his black cape and Polaroid sunglasses. The monk drags on a cigarette. Slowly exhales.

Reed-thin, the poet Harry Fainlight moves wordless on stage, his dry, nervous palate occasionally pushing out reluctant syllables from his epic-poem *The Spider*. The Dutch writer Simon Vinkenoog, high on mescalin, chants "love, love, love" above the collective fidgets of the 7000 strong audience. ''Read the text … read the text" someone encourages the agitated and increasingly silent Fainlight.

Wholly Communion, the film of the first International Poetry Incarnation, staged at the Albert Hall on June 11th1965 and shot by Peter Whitehead is viewed as the "inaugural moment of the mass counter culture of the Sixties".[1] As the cultural historian Barry Miles explains, there was a "sense of constituency that was never there before […] All these people recognised each other and they all realised they were part of the same scene".[2] The

prominence of Dom Sylvester Houédard on the front row, dressed every inch a "Beatnik from the Middle Ages",[3] is one of the many archetypes of the 1960s, that Whitehead's film captures: a polka-dot Mary Quant devotee sipping red wine; young poets in duffle coats and striped Breton t-shirts making earnest protests; Flower Power girls inhaling smoke and dancing.

In the film's less focused moments the monk frequently comes into the camera's field of vision. Houédard is not sitting on the front row neither is he performing on stage. He is a poet sitting among poets who has literally positioned himself somewhere between the drunken Hindu mantras and finger-cymbal rhythms of Allen Ginsberg and the playful, clever concrete sound poetry of Ernst Jandl.

If, as Miles describes, the International Poetry Incarnation created a constituency of countercultural figures then it was a constituency formed from a number of co-existent poetry traditions, primarily the American beat, the British neo-beat and the European concrete. Houédard was conversant with all of these movements. His address book was overflowing with the telephone numbers of the key protagonists. However his constituency was in no way limited to the poets.

In the beginning of his essay "A Poetics of Dissent: Notes on a Developing Counterculture in London in the Early 1960s", the curator and writer Andrew Wilson cites two events that defined "the emerging counterculture of the mid-sixties".[4] The first was the four-hour-long International Poetry Incarnation; the second, the Destruction In Art Symposium (DIAS) just over a year later and involving over fifty artists from ten countries and various locations across London. Houédard was present at both, the "monknik" captured by Whitehead's camera with his unreadable face behind the black lenses. He was one of three concrete poets on the committee for DIAS (the other two being Bob Cobbing and John Sharkey).[5] Houédard's presence at both these events goes some way toward demonstrating how his constituency of influence was as wide and as encompassing as that of the underground of the 1960s. Houédard's presence at these events has been noted, however there has been no previous study that has engaged with his prominence in the counter-cultural Britain of the 1960s.

In locating the influence The International Poetry Incarnation had in giving "visibility to a developing counterculture" that was moving away from direct external political protest "towards a politics of internal liberation", Wilson outlines the general trajectory of underground thought at this time but also perhaps indirectly outlines the space Houédard's presence filled at these events.[6] As Houédard's friend and publisher Charles Verey attests,

"Dom Sylvester, deeply enmeshed in the centre ground of the putative revolution, might have had the opportunity to put his mind to becoming its prophet".[7]

To a significant extent this thesis intends to determine the extent to which Houédard can be considered the prophet of this newly emerging politics and poetics of "internal liberation". As couched as this phrase might be in the groovy parlance of the 1960s underground it is not as "far out" as it may first appear. That the Western transatlantic counterculture had its gurus is well established: Timothy Leary and his endorsement of taking LSD to enable one to "tune in, turn on, drop out"; the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his Transcendental Meditation techniques had a well-documented influence on many followers, including The Beach Boys and The Beatles; the first Western followers of A.C Bhaktivedanta's Krishna Consciousness began their Saturday afternoon, high-street chanting at this time and, in the words of Barry Miles again, many of the "hippie-orientated groups were started by self-appointed gurus".[8]



Fig. 2 Houédard at the opening of *Takis. Magnetic Exhibition,* Signals Gallery, 1964. Courtesy of Clay Perry.

The poet Hayden Murphy rejects the accusations that Houédard was regarded as little more than a "dilettante guru".[9] Yet it is easy to see how this opinion may have arisen. As Fig. 2 illustrates, the black cape and black beret lend an air of the "dilettante" in the same way perhaps that the Ray Bans and the chain-smoking captured in Whitehead's film may be a

cultural shorthand for “beatnik”. Both words: dilettante and beatnik suggest a degree of posturing, a remove away from the status of genuine artists. Sir John Gale, a former monk at Prinknash Abbey, now a writer and a psychoanalyst, warns against this kind of reductionism, stating: “Sylvester was neither a clown nor an erudite scholar”[10], two popular presentations to which he felt Houédard had been reduced. It is clear, from just considering the way in which Houédard signed off his poemobjects, dsh or the many names his friends and acquaintances knew him by: Dom Sylvester, the Dom, Syl, Sylvia, Sil, Silvester, Pierre, S, P-Dom Sylvester Houédard had (in the words of Gale again), “many selves”.

This research seeks to examine how one of Houédard’s many selves was a guru in the very real sense of the word, a transmitter and teacher of essential spiritual truths to the newly emerging transnational avant-garde in the London of the 1960s. It aims to explain how these spiritual beliefs and practices were communicated and shared, demonstrating that Houédard was a “guidefriend” to many of the artists and poets whom he knew.[11]

Houédard was ordained and remained a Benedictine monk, yet his poemobjects and theological writings engage directly with spiritual practices that are not specifically Catholic. Instead they are predominantly Hindu, Buddhist, Zen, Tibetan, Taoist and Esoteric. It is essential that any study that begins a discussion on the poemobjects Houédard made between 1960 and 1975 foregrounds his interest in a “wider ecumenism” and what he called “the eastern contemplative tradition”.[12] [13] In this thesis I use the term “poemobject” to cover the diversity of concrete poetry that Houédard made during the period 1960-1975. It is a word Houédard uses directly in relationship to concrete poetry in his essay “Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay” and it can be used to discuss his typestracts, collaged laminate poems, soundpoems, scores and theatre pieces.[14] It is also a compound word which foregrounds the self-reflective enquiry into the nature of objectivity with which Houédard’s works engages.

Therefore the aim of this study is to explain why and how Houédard, as a Catholic Benedictine monk, found in the method practices of Mahayana Buddhism an artistic method that informed most of the artwork he would make between 1960-1975. (See Appendix 7 monk-maker, for contextual information on Houédard’s early life before joining Prinknash Abbey and a consideration of monastic traditions in Catholicism, which enabled him to incorporate his interest in the Eastern contemplative traditions into the Benedictine Rule). To discuss this artistic practice I use Houédard’s phrase “right mind-minding”, taken from the title of his 1963 essay “Men-Men & Right Mind-Minding”, written with a focus on a “Catholic discussion of the dharma treasure”.[15] It is a phrase which is non-sectarian and

allows for the wider ecumenical nuances of such a practice. It is the contemplative meditative practice of using the mind to reflect on the nature and the function of the mind. In Zen Buddhism this is primarily a sitting practice known as zazen, when what can be referred to as the small (relational) mind becomes still enough to know the big (interdependent) mind.[16] In Tibetan Buddhism this is primarily presented as a series of meditations on the mind, in the Sutras and the Mahamudra scriptures leading to a direct realisation of the mind and its own emptiness.[17] Houédard also uses a repeated analogy of the "je/moi" flicker effect (as discussed in chapter 1) to refer to this habit of the je reflecting on the moi, or mind-minding as a method with which to perceive the emptiness of the mind, first notionally then actually.

The aim is to bring a detailed understanding of such concepts in Buddhisms, particularly as presented by the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist texts of the Madhyamaka Prasangika School[1], into a critical discourse that can examine the critical prose and poemobjects made by the Benedictine monk. I shall argue that the various ritualistic methodologies found in Mahayana Buddhisms, especially Tantra, correspond to Houédard's experiments in "the wider concrete", allowing for a close reading of his visual typestracts as yantra; the poemscores and soundpoems as mantra; the machinepoems and poemobjects as mudra and the poemenvironments and poemballets as mandala. These Tantric practices are intended to lead a practitioner to the experience of an enlightened mind, "right mind".

This critical discourse begins by exploring Houédard in his own word, locating the written statements that situate his artistic experimentation and textual strategies within Buddhist method practices. Through interrogating the theological methodology that Houédard himself used, appropriated and conflated from the contemplative traditions of Eastern Buddhisms, the research will establish a critical and conceptual framework that can be used to understand the conceptual riddles, games and paradoxes that his work presents. As distinct from many of the artists of the 1960s avant-garde the, for Houédard, the implementation and radicalization of the parameters of Asian rhetoric and methodology was never going to be just a strategy for creating a new aesthetic programme. The performative and the experiential, at the heart of both the Zen and the Vajrayana Buddhist method practices, provided Houédard with correlative methodologies for his own seeking of and transmission of spiritual truths. It provided Houédard with a metapraxis which could inform all his actions: typing on his Olliveti Lettera 22, cutting up newspapers and adding spit and sand into his laminate poems, hanging out with the Exploding Galaxy at 99 Balls Pond Road. The artist Shezad Dawood, writing on Tantric art practice, states:

> That creation and transmission might be read as one-and-the-same actions in the operation of certain practices. These practices often involve an abdication or 'stepping aside' of their creators, whether by immersion in process, or through a similar (but not unrelated) transmission of higher forces through the vehicle of the 'creator', who becomes the amanuensis of a shared or collective consciousness. Both in their own way enact a radical form of collaboration (with creative agency and audience).[18]

I suggest here that Houédard has a metapraxis, whereby the creation of his poemobjects and their transmission are part of a continued self-reflective discourse that engages with emptiness of the I, the self. A realization of the emptiness of the I, enables, what Dawood describes above as a "stepping aside "of the creator to "enact a radical form of collaboration" with a potentially transnational audience. The interdependence of people, places and objects can be envisaged in an unlimited matrix of relationships (as discussed below in **A Matrix of Interdependent Transmission**).

To summarize briefly as this point, this research has the following aims: in relation to Houédard's poemobjects:

1. To position Houédard's artistic metapraxis as an engagement with Mahayana Buddhist doctrinal discourses on emptiness.
2. To position his work as an engagement with the performative and experiential nature of Buddhist Zen and Tantric method practices.
3. To interpret his poemobjects within the Vajrayana Buddhist Traditions that foreground the imaginative creation of yantras, mandalas, mantras and mudras as method practices of Tantric Meditation.
4. To demonstrate the interdependence of this creation and transmission in Houédard's artistic practice through an exploration of his correspondences, collaborations and transmission within the transnational avant-garde.

However, in acknowledging the transhistorical nature of Buddhist and especially Tantric transmission, the research has two further objectives:

5. To develop an exploratory and interpretative methodology that can investigate transmission through curation and performance.
6. To improve the accessibility and therefore transmission of Houédard's work through publication, exhibitions, performance and symposium.

In order to do this, the study offers some important insights into Houédard's ideas and artwork and their reception by the cultural underground of Great Britain in the 1960s. In his essay "the third bridge", Houédard writes:

> […] here in gb we never had our gnsberg orlovsky kerouac corso since we never produced a burroughs – our west coast didn't face the orient – our beats are 1/5 of a century after the dharma bums – we never had a prophet – not a real holy wiggy one […][19]

This study seeks to address whether Houédard himself was that very prophet, holy and wiggy, in the North American colloquial sense of the word, uncontrolled, exuberant, "with-it'" and crazy. In a "note by dsh", in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Ceolfrith 15,* Houédard expounds further:

> what to me made ginsberg a 'real' holy wiggy prophet was not so much the happy excess of beat as the inner sacred source of his vision […] my 'enthusiasm' for the beats came not in the 60s but at rome in the 50s where I shared it with dom gabriel franks & what the beats met in me was my earlier 30s interest in the eastern contemplative tradition & my 40s awareness of what was lacking in the west […].[20]

Houédard's own "inner sacred source of […] vision" coincided with what Richard Gilbert has called "London's new intellectual direction and the religious revival based on love" and the more general spiritual revival documented in numerous ways at the time in the pages of the *International Times.*[21] Here, we can again turn to Miles. When outlining the interest in "oriental religions & philosophy" of the hippies and other figures of the trans-Atlantic underground, Miles' comments on Buddhism are brief. However, he does make the relevant distinction between Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, and, more importantly, makes one of the few connections between this underground scene and the emerging Tantric Buddhism from Tibet:

> The Beat Generation had shown a great interest in Zen Buddhism, but not until the 60s did it become popular. Then a number of Tibetan Lamas arrived in the west and this very different form of Buddhism attracted thousands of followers, possibly because of the mystical nature of the chants, the visualizations, the hints of tantric sex and the possibility of instant enlightenment.[22]

As stated above, Houédard's enthusiasm for the beats began in the 1950s alongside his interest in Zen Buddhism. This interest was life-long but in the 1960s he became increasingly absorbed in the teachings of Indian and Tibetan Buddhisms. As I will discuss below, Houédard was very much involved in the British reception of the first exiled Tibetan lamas,

and provided an important link between Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism and this constituency of the British underground at that time.[23]

Central to the story is the receptive environment he found in the countercultural art scene of the early 1960s, in particular the artists that exhibited at the Signals Gallery and the Lisson Gallery such as Mira Schendel, Ken Cox, Li Yuan-chia, John Dugger, David Medalla and other performers of the Exploding Galaxy. As Tibetan Lamas migrated to the West, the newly expounded Tibetan Buddhist doctrines found a home in the happenings, letters, events, conversations, chance-meetings and curated exhibitions of a transnational countercultural scene. In discussing the American reception of Tibetan Buddhism, the Buddhist teacher and scholar Reginald. A. Ray asserts:

> To cite the Tibetan case with which I am most familiar, many of the various Western Tibetan Buddhist communities have deliberately distanced themselves from the early, somewhat freewheeling but also open and intensely exploratory and creative days of the late 1960s and 1970s, when Tarthang Tulku, Chögyam Trungpa, Kalu Rinpoche, and other Tibetan lamas were first teaching in Europe and America.[24]

As I shall argue in this thesis, this “freewheeling” spiritual atmosphere began first here in the United Kingdom, creating an historical moment of real openness and fluidity, a moment of an interpersonal and transnational (what I have coined) "Matrix of Interdependent Transmission", before this wisdom was re-institutionalised in the newly formed Western Buddhist Traditions. Ray again:

> In a trend that I suspect may be a default to our Western cultural norms, now within Tibetan Buddhism in the West, there has been a pronounced institutionalization and conventionalization. […] The kind of open-ended curiosity, non-dogmatic flexibility, exploration, and creativity that particularly Trungpa Rinpoche and Tarthang Tulku envisioned when they were first teaching in America, and also their vision of the full transmission of the Tibetan dharma into the West and to Westerners, has somehow not materialized except among a few teachers and their students.[25]

In addition, not only has Houédard received little in the way of critical attention, neither has the influence of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism on British art practices and art since the 1960s. This research project, with its focus on the transmission of the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist methods and teachings in Houédard’s work, offers a critical framework with which to discuss early British Tantric art. Much has been written about the influence of Zen as method practice on artists but almost nothing on the Vajrayana Buddhist teachings that influenced artists in the early 1960s. Houédard, with his early contacts with these Tibetan Lamas, such as Chögyam Trungpa Rimpoche and Akong Tulku Rinpoche alongside his

autodidactic study of the first Western commentaries to the practices, was instrumental in acting as a conduit for the first transmission of the Vajrayana doctrine in the West.

Having established the context for the research aims and objectives of this thesis, this Introduction is divided into seven further contextual sections.

Towards a Western Vajrayana Buddhism establishes the varieties and gradual assimilation of Buddhism in the West as "Modernist Buddhism" developed. I locate Houédard at a key historical juncture between Western Buddhism as an autodidactic encounter with textual objects and the beginnings of more widely accessible practices and oral teachings from exiled Tibetan Lamas and newly ordained Western converts.

A Matrix of Interdependent Transmission addresses the scholarly problem of framing East-West encounters within art history and offers Houédard's typestract *5 buddhas and the womb of the tathagatas* as a conceptual model for visualizing the *inter*dependence of people, stories, objects, meetings and non-meetings as Houédard, and a transnational avant-garde, engaged with Buddhisms. This model also offers a way to conceptualize the Buddhist epistemological teachings on emptiness that underpin my critical framework. **A Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: dsh, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and me** examines my own place as a scholar and practitioner of Vajrayana Buddhism within this network of interdependence.

Archive as Research outlines my primary research method of locating documents, poems, artwork and writings in both private and public archives. I give a brief account of some of the problems I have encountered with this research method and some of the successful research outcomes.

Exhibition as Research discusses the development of my exploratory mixed methodology of curation and performance as way to understand Houédard's presentation of his work as yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala and the Buddhist epistemological understanding of objects as events. I demonstrate how I have explored the inseparability of artistic and spiritual transmission and method in his poemobjects.

Then follows my intention to foreground interpretative frameworks that can understand **Buddhism as/in Performance**.[26] Here I briefly outline the rationale for this approach and the literature that supports this.

The Introduction concludes with my **Chapter Outlines**.

towards a Western Vajrayana Buddhism

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to establish a full chronology and analysis of the Western twentieth-century engagement with Eastern religions. The varieties and gradual assimilation of Buddhisms in the West in general and Britain in particular are a significant context for evaluating Houédard's role in the transplantation and transmission of Buddhist teachings. It is important to establish that scholars are in agreement that the Western engagement with Buddhism came primarily through encounters with texts. In establishing the origins of Buddhism in the West, Lawrence Normand considers:

> The Buddhism that fascinated the British and Americans in 1900s can be defined with some precision. In the course of the nineteenth century, European scholars were sent Buddhist manuscripts of several Buddhist traditions by British colonial administrators in various parts of Asia […] These manuscripts, collected in several European Learnt Institutions, were translated, edited and interpreted, part of the process of creating 'Modernist Buddhism'.[27]

As Normand elaborates, Euro-America's version of Buddhism is variously labeled "modern", "modernist", "new", "Western", or "Protestant".[28] In the words of Raymond Schwab, it was a period marked by "the history of the recovery of texts" and the "recovery of doctrines".[29] Normand suggests "Buddhism, therefore for nineteenth-century Westerners" was "a religion that was located in texts rather than in the practices, rituals and beliefs that constituted Buddhism in its homelands"[30], continuing that "For British and American Protestants it was congenial to encounter Buddhism as a textual object, since they looked to Biblical texts to define their religion".[31] This Western literary Buddhism, is, as the scholar David Lopez has argued, "less the inevitable unfolding of a distinct and self-identical entity and more […] the dynamic process of borrowing, conflict and interaction between and within traditions' that has characterized Buddhism's entire evolution in terms of transnational exchange and hybridity".[32]

Since the nineteenth century then, Buddhism itself has been an impermanent concept, modified in particular by twentieth-century globalization and the constant East-West dialogue about its central tenets. As Normand summarizes, "The result is Buddhist modernism, a new form of the religion with its own beliefs and practices, and a metalanguage that has come to be understood globally".[33] Donald S. Lopez, Jr. characterizes this Buddhist modernism as follows:

> the Buddhist community (sangha) is replaced by a focus on the individual; the present moment is prioritized, past, tradition and lineage are second; Buddhism is compatible with Western physics, especially Quantum Theory: and the central practice is meditation, over ritual prayers and offerings. Buddhist modernism is 'above all an *experience'.* [34]

For many artists and writers working in the 1960s and 1970s, study and interest in Buddhism was a complicated negotiation between the mediated and the unmediated: their own initial autodidactic path through the translations and commentaries to the Buddhist Sutras as they were published and a later formalized practice within a Buddhist teacher/student relationship and a recognized religious tradition.

Robert Bluck demonstrates that, until the 1960s Buddhism in Britain, like the rest of Europe and America, was a private, intellectual, literary and autodidactic enterprise. Bluck argues:

> The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a gradual transmission from academic interest to personal involvement, though still on a small scale. The Buddha's life and teachings were increasingly seen as examples and principles to follow, and Buddhist rites of passage, together with the interest in meditation, show the beginnings of genuine Buddhist Practice.[35]

He continues: "The 1950s saw a move in some European countries from a general lay Buddhism towards different schools […] The pattern of Buddhism in Britain between 1945 and 1965 is one of gradually increasing complexity, including awareness of a wider range of teaching and practice".[36] Bluck discusses that for many of those interested in Buddhism during the immediate postwar period, the distinctions between the different Buddhist schools and traditions were not clear. Each emerging tradition had:

> its own sequence of events […] amongst a context of greater socio-economic mobility, further decline in Church attendance and increased interest in Oriental religions, an information explosion and the expansion of higher education, a new youth culture of rock music, drug taking and permissive sexual behavior, the Chinese invasion of Tibet and the American war in Vietnam.[37]

Concurring with Bluck, the American Buddhist Scholar Stephen Prothero writes about the transitional nature of American Buddhism at this time, "Among Americans brought up in other traditions, Buddhism remained for the most part a literary and intellectual enterprise until the sixties and seventies". Although writing about the history of American Buddhism, Prothero's comments are, I argue, applicable when describing wider Western Buddhisms, particularly those developing in Great Britain. Until the late 1960s Western Buddhism was almost exclusively a written tradition. Prothero resituates literary and poetic texts as valuable conduits of Buddhist philosophy, stating "Against this backdrop, the Beats can be appreciated as transitional figures constructing a middle way between the early era of armchair Buddhism and contemporary Buddhist practice, which usually involves a formal setting and study with a teacher".[38]

Houédard, as I shall argue in chapter 3, with his close correspondences with the American beat poets, his own interest in and experimentation with beat-influenced poems and his religious syncretism, is one such figure whose work and life situate him as a transitional and internationally influential figure during this period of transition. Within this written Western tradition, the literary transmission of Buddhist dialogues is to be found as much within the pages of a book of poems by Allen Ginsberg as in authentic translations to Buddhist texts. As Prothero has noted, commenting on the Zen Buddhist beat poet Gary Snyder:

> In the midst of a lifetime of considering how spiritual lineages are constructed and ancient wisdom handed down, Gary Snyder has noted that in traditional communities, wisdom is passed down orally from teacher to student, from grandparent to grandchild, without the intervention of texts. But in Western culture, Snyder has remarked, that same wisdom is often transmitted from author to reader, from book to book. Books are our elders, asserts Snyder, and libraries our repositories of spiritual insight. This observation can certainly be applied to Buddhism in America which until very recently propagated itself largely through books.[39]

But this lineage of the printed word as Dharma transmission in the West was about to change. The complex and flowering interest in Buddhism in Britain in the postwar period, resulted in the establishment of many Buddhist traditions and centres: The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order FWBO, (1967), Kagyu Samye Ling (1967), Thossel Hole Priory (1972), the Samatha Trust (1973) and the Manjushri Institute (1976), to name a few prominent examples. The first Tibetan Buddhist centre in Europe, The Karma Kagyu Samyé Ling, was established in 1967 by two young Tibetan Lamas: Chögyam Trungpa (1939-87) and Akong Tulku Rinpoche (1939-2013). They came to study in Oxford in 1963, where they met and frequently had conversations with Houédard. As holders of the Kagyu lineage, steeped in the Vajrayana Wisdom teachings and method practices, this meeting in 1963 between Trungpa and Akong places Houédard firmly at the beginning of the oral transmission of Vajrayana Buddhism to the West.

Here the histories of Eastern Oral Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist Lineages, the ahistorical presentations of the written Western Buddhist lineages, and Houédard become entwined. My research will demonstrate Houédard's initial position within a "transnational Beat Generation"[40] developed into a more encompassing transnational spiritual community, a sangha of artists and writers, before many of them took refuge vows and officially became "Buddhists" within the frameworks of these newly established Western Buddhists traditions.

Scholarly research into the character, nature and transmission of Vajrayana Buddhism, as it began this integration into Western society, is just beginning. Although Bluck

does not examine the countercultural and artistic context he references, what is clear from his research is that this period, between 1960 and 1975, is a moment when there was an openness and ecumenical approach to Buddhisms in this country, before the lineages and sectarianism of a multitude of traditions reasserted their differences in the West.

In considering the role Houédard played in the interdependent transmission of Zen and Tibetan Buddhisms, as they transited to Britain in the 1960s, I will investigate how he synthesized, these teachings and practices into the *counter*cultural contexts of concrete poetry, kinetic art and participation art.

My research will demonstrate how these works explore and reflect a cultural moment when a written Western Buddhist and literary transmission met a newly immigrant but very ancient Eastern Oral Transmission, and how, in the absence of an established Western sangha[41], the avant-garde artistic community formed their own transitory and transnational spiritual community. As Houédard said in his 1980 talk, "the dimensions of the dimensionless":

> […] at this moment of history, the presence among of us exiled tibetan monks imposes on western monks certain obligations to treat them as our guests & as 'pilgrim monks' open to what they may have sent to tell us […].[42]

Over the years Houédard received numerous Tibetan monks as his guests at Prinknash Abbey and, as this research will establish, he was influential in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's decision to establish a Tibetan tradition in the West, initially in Great Britain. As I will demonstrate, this openness went much deeper than any monastic obligations. As he continues in "the dimensions of the dimensionless":

> […] the need is not to ask if their dogma & its spirituality is true (especially when we can see the fruit produced by their practice in their lives & in the art they produce) but what truth is in their teaching, what truths they are explaining, what truths they have discovered […].[43]

Matrix of Interdependent Transmission

The scholarly "problem" of framing "East- West Encounters" within art history is clearly summarized by Chris Thompson when he writes of:

> […] the difficulty in speaking simultaneously to the histories and modes of analysis of Western art and visual culture and of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and spiritual practice, despite the unavoidable role that Tibetan Buddhism itself, in addition to other Buddhist traditions, has played in the lives and works of a number of twentieth- and twenty-first-century artists.[44]

Thompson reflects upon why a "meeting between two such legendary figures" as the Dalai Lama and Joseph Beuys, "two famous men whose every word and gesture have been habitually recorded by their respective entourages […] has gone all but unnoticed by academic as well as popular history".[45] This is only a tiny part of the unwritten narrative of the encounters between avant-garde artists and the Dalai Lama. Houédard met the Dalai Lama on several occasions and such events have passed largely unremarked upon, as too have his meetings with other prominent Tibetan Lamas resident in Britain or visiting Prinknash Abbey. Thompson offers up the phrase "interhuman intrigue" to explain the "the constellation of individuals, ideas, and practices that are linked historically" to Fluxus and a postwar Buddhist sangha of artists, Lamas, teachers and new western converts that congregated in a "peculiar from of collectivity" in postwar America. He suggests "a strange kind of art history" which can function as a "mapping of a constellation of individuals, ambitions, failings, ideas, initiatives, works and doesn't works" and also a "scripting of the theoretical machinations" required by the academic discipline to make this "intrigue […] intelligible as something other than a convergence of stories". Kay Larson, in envisioning the interdependent network of influence and Buddhist and Taoist teachings that informed the practice and influence of John Cage on other avant-garde artists, relies on the Buddhist image of the interdependence of all objects, "The Diamond Net of Indra". She writes:

> Imagine the universe as a vast net of silvery cobweb-like connecting tissue, stronger than steel, like a four-dimensional tennis-net stretched through infinity and eternity. At each node of the net is a diamond. Each diamond shines with its own inner light and collects and reflects all the lights from all the other diamonds. Tug on the net at any point and you will send waves everywhere, and lights flashing everywhere […] No one diamond is "greater" than any other. All are linked.[46]

The Diamond Net of Indra is a "shimmering image of interpenetration" which, Larson argues, can be used to understand Cage's own practice, but also how that practice is still affecting the transnational avant-garde today.

Both Thompson's suggestion of a "interhuman intermedia" and Larson's critical framework derived from the image of "the Diamond Net of Indra" focus on the *inter*dependence of people, stories, objects meetings and non-meetings in order to map out the relationships of a Western (read American) avant-garde to Buddhisms. To envisage the connections between Houédard and his contemporary transnational avant-garde, in particular the reception and dissemination of Vajrayana Buddhism, I suggest we turn to a conceptual model found in a typestract Houédard made in 1967, the *5 buddhas and the womb of the tathagatas* (Fig. 3). Compositionally the typestract it is an abstraction of the Womb World Mandala, which characteristically depicts five celestial Buddhas and their families.[47] It is also known as the matrix realm or the matrix mandala and as such is a way of visualizing the connections between all enlightened beings (Buddhas) and all phenomena. It is way of conceptualizing all the things that have ever existed and that will ever exist.[48]

Such a framework of interdependence, as visualized in *the 5 buddhas & the womb of the tathagatas,* is offered in this research as a way to conceptualize a Matrix of Interdependent Transmission. It is a work that presents a diagrammatic structure that can enable us to think about the findable and un-findable connections between Houédard and his 1960s sangha of artist, monks, poets and lay practitioners. Solid lines or broken lines that communicate the process of research or the archive material that can support these connections. This thesis therefore aims to demonstrate solid lines of East-West spiritual transmission between Houédard and Allen Ginsberg, John Cage, Kenelm Cox, Li Yuan-chia, David Medalla and The Exploding Galaxy.

What such a conceptual model enables is an understanding of *interdependent* art histories, spiritual practice and artistic practice that acknowledges the Buddhist epistemological teachings on emptiness and the *interdependence* of people and objects.

This thesis can of course only demonstrate a few of these relationships and the Matrix of Interdependent Transmission offers up many other connections that could be explored. As the artist Shezad Dawood notes with regard to contemporary and historical Tantric artists: "One of the key elements of practices of this kind, is their disregard for time or context: a kind of trans-historical internationalism par excellence".[49] A more detailed analysis of this typestract and how it offers a way to understand the interdependence of all phenomena can be found in 1.5 *4 stages of spiritual typewriting.*

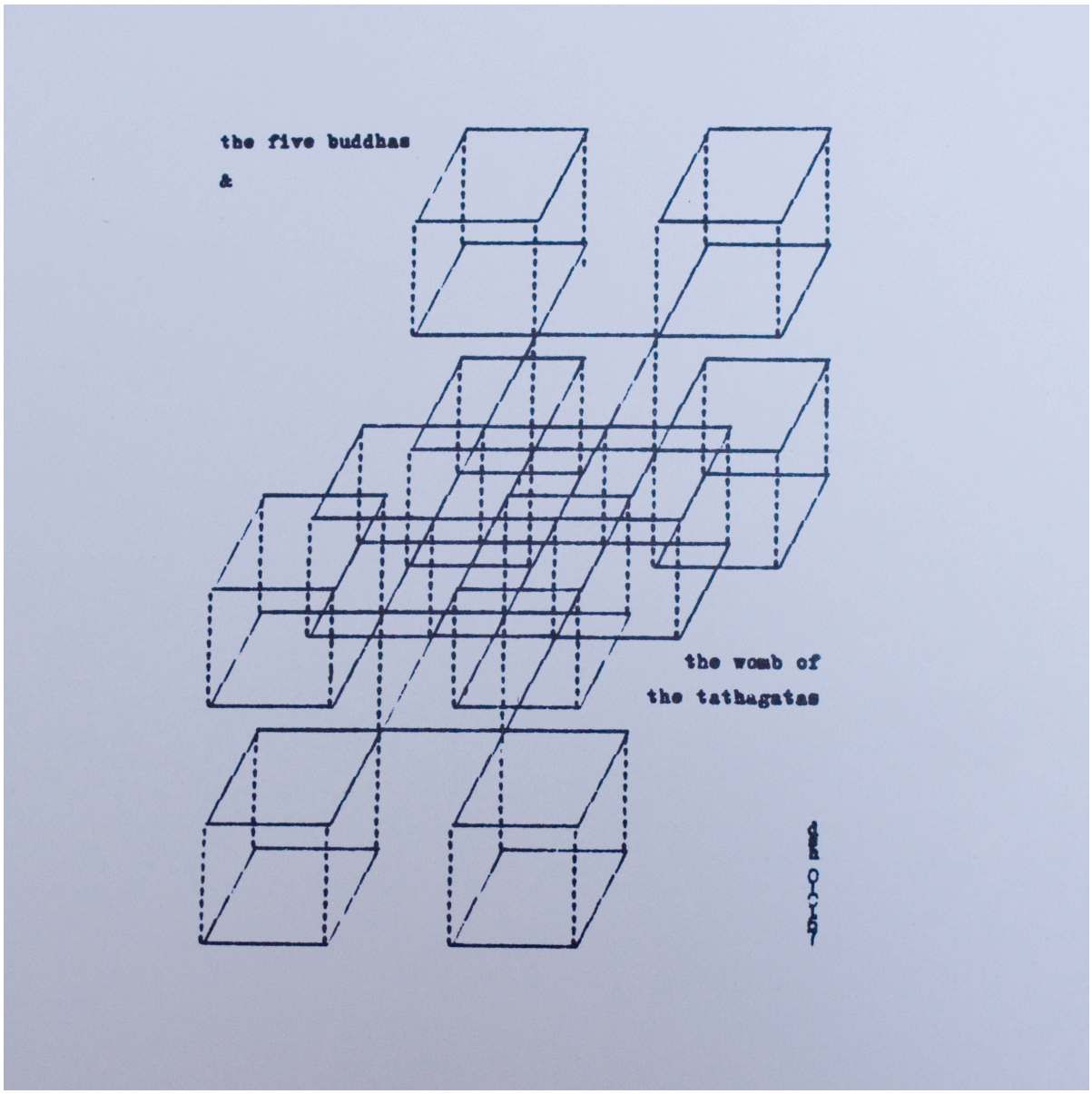


Fig. 3 “the womb of the tathagatas”, 010169, *Like Contemplation,* Writers Forum Folder, 11, 1972. Courtesy of Betina Bianculli.

The Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: dsh, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and me.

One important context to establish is my own relationship to the Vajrayana. As a scholar and as practitioner of Vajrayana Buddhism for two decades, it is important that I am aware of the role that Buddhism has played in shaping my own critical perceptions of Houédard's work, writings and the cultural contexts that have affected his modes of artistic method and my modes of critical reception, in other words my own position in this Matrix of Interdependent Transmission. I have understood the Tantric teachings and method practices presented by the Madhyamaka Prasangika[50] school of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism through my own study of the commentaries to the texts of this tradition, primarily as taught by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso[51] and translated by the New Kadampa Tradition.[52] As a student of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso since 1996 and as a practitioner of Vajrayana Buddhism it is through these commentaries that I primarily understand the Buddhist Sutras and Tantras.[53]

The reader should bear in mind that although my interest in Tibetan Tantric Buddhism and its transplantation to Great Britain has driven this research, the analysis is non-sectarian and presents a theoretical methodology based on established Buddhist epistemology and previous academic research and not my own spiritual practice. However I have followed my intuition that there was a transmission of dharma between Houédard and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso; that Houédard, Kelsang Gyatso and I are all connected in this interdependent matrix. Confirmation of a transmission of Buddhist Dharma between Houédard and Geshe Kelsang Gyasto only occurred when I was several years into this research. A trip to the John Rylands Library in June 2014, to see Houédard's book collection, finally revealed the evidence that he had a copy of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's *Clear Light of Bliss: Mahamudra in Vajrayana Buddhism* (Fig. 4).

Houédard had made careful notes in his copy of this book, annotating in the margins and underlining phrases and words of interest. Most importantly he had also translated his understanding of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's commentary into his own wider-ecumenical visionary language. Inside there was also a clutch of loose yellowing pages in Houédard's handwriting, providing evidence that Houédard had travelled to Conishead Priory in Ulverston in Cumbria, met and spoken with the Tibetan Lama. On one page there is a list of appointments for the month of February 1988. Next to the date "mon 17" are the words "conishead geshe Kelsang Gyatso" (Fig. 5).

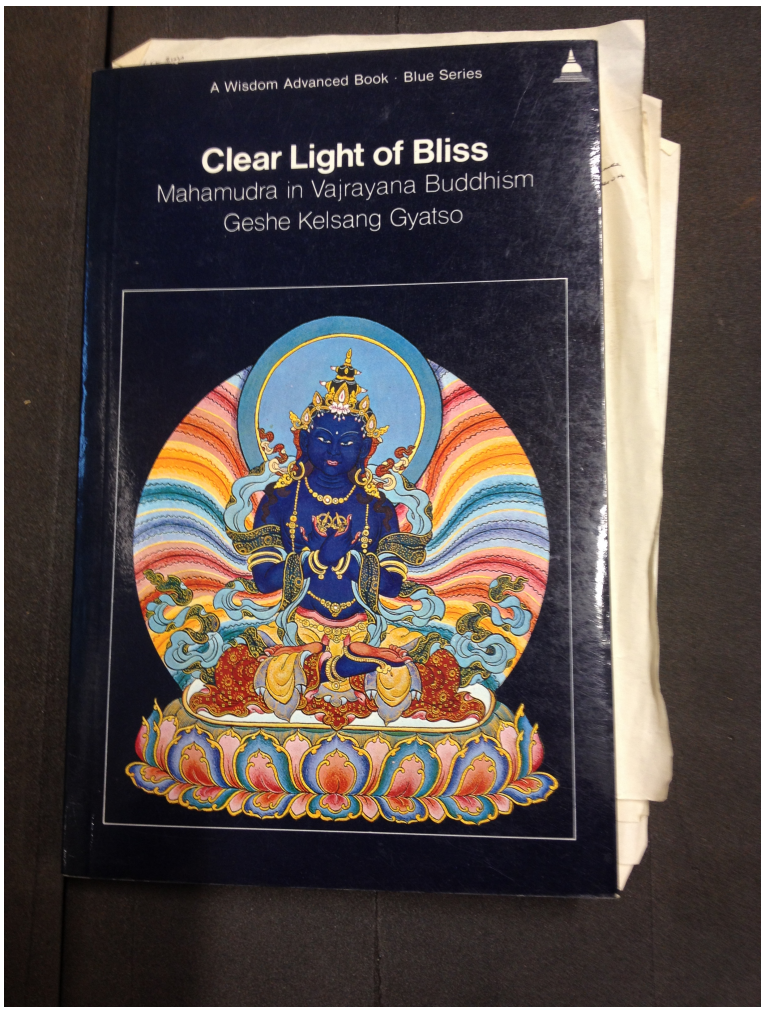


Fig. 4 Dom Sylvester Houédard's copy of *Clear Light of Bliss* by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands Library Special Collections. Author's image.

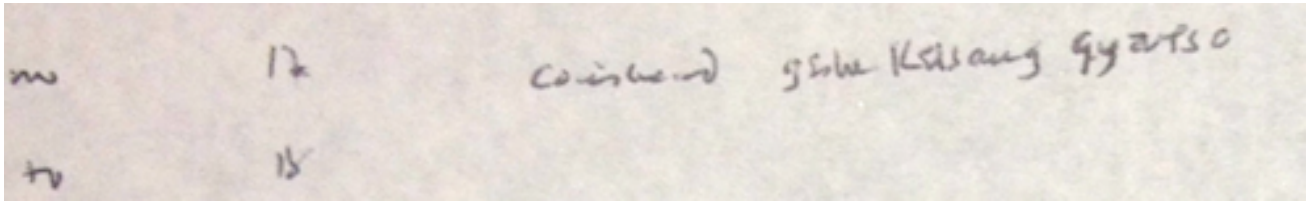


Fig. 5 Close up image of Houédard's list of appointments for the spring of 1988, Ephemera, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands Library Special Collections. Author's image.

What happened at this meeting? What no-thing or some-thing happened in the actual event indicated by this jotted date? If we return to the framework suggested in the Matrix of Interdependent Transmission, what dotted or solid line of transmission can be followed? In his book *felt: FLUXUS, JOSEPH BEUYS, AND THE DALAI LAMA,* Christopher Thompson focuses on the long awaited and unexpectedly (un)productive meeting between the German artist Joseph Beuys and the Dalai Lama, recounting "What Happens When Nothing Happens", and asking the question:

> […] there might, at least in the case of this particular encounter, be the makings of an alternative way to imagine the significance of such encounters across cultures, disciplines, traditions – across difference. […] its promises and its failures alike, might offer up a different way of addressing both Western avant-garde's relationship with Eastern philosophy and religious practices and the imbrication of these concerns with issues of cultural difference and cultural translation more broadly.[54]

It is tempting for me to speculate on a solid line, a scenario where my spiritual guide Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, as resident teacher at the Manjushri Centre in Ulverston, Cumbria, four years before he established the New Kadampa Tradition, met with Houédard. But beyond this projected plan to meet Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, I have found no further evidence that they actually met, or if they did whether anything actually "happened": whether the meeting had the "promises" and the "failures" that Thompson identifies within his book. Yet there is a record of Houédard's meetings with the Dalai Lama. Charles Verey writes:

> His [Houédard's] work with the Buddhists extended far beyond the call of duty. Jinpa Thupten Geshe, still today at the centre of the Dalai Lama's team of translators and interpreters, well known to those who attend the Dalai Lama's conferences, remembers an occasion when the Dom was in 'conversation' with His Holiness about his thoughts on the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness as well as the Tibetan Dzogchen view. His Holiness was rather struck by this and …mentioned something about the fact that Merton shared similar interests. [55]

Verey elaborates further on this meeting:

> Jinpa goes further: "It's a pity" he wrote, "that the Dom was not able to find a senior Tibetan monk or scholar who could have engaged more deeply and on a more sustained basis. Perhaps the problem was that there wasn't a partner on the Tibetan side who could match the range and depth of the Dom's interest – spirituality, philosophy, poetry and so on – to truly appreciate the opportunity.[56]

Did Houédard find in Geshe Kelsang Gyatso that senior Tibetan monk with whom he could engage deeply? It is an answer that lies, for the moment at least, in the space between the lines.

Archive as Research

The ideas for this thesis began in the archives of the John Rylands Library in Manchester. I was completing a post-graduate fellowship on the archive of the poet and ecologist Dawson Jackson and I was introduced to Houédard's archive. The Special Collections Archivist and Curator Stella Halkyard showed me the artwork and papers of Dom Sylvester Houédard. Knowing little of his work and serendipitously at the start of my own spiritual journey along the path of Vajrayana Buddhism, I was intrigued by repeatedly finding sacred Buddhist terminology and references within the work of this purportedly Catholic Benedictine monk.

Most of the work at this stage was uncatalogued and although the archive had little in the way of published work by Houédard, it did have an enormous amount of correspondence, notebooks, papers, scrap paper, scribblings, workings-out, tracings and imaginings. Most of these personal papers have been returned to Prinknash Abbey where they are currently unavailable to researchers and have been unavailable for the duration of this research project.

One archival discovery had central importance: a file marked "Cheiko Shiomi". Inside there were three typescripts that were crucial in bringing into focus my thinking about Houédard's work. These were: the original typewritten manuscript for *frog pond plop overture & phonate,* two annotated typescripts for *c-dagesh,* a seven-note suite written by dsh for a joint participation and performance with John Cage, in the Cheiko Shiomi concert of falling events, and twenty pages for *the cosmic ballet* manuscript, written for David Medalla and The Exploding Galaxy.

With their direct engagement with ideas about performance, these three pieces suggest a way of considering the actual method and processes by which Houédard made his poemobjects and transmitted their esoteric meanings: poem as score in the *frog pond plop overture and phonate,* poemscore as Fluxus-inspired event in the case of *c-dagesh* and score as Happening, as exemplified in the *cosmic ballet* manuscript. I began to consider the performative in all Houédard's work: typing as performance, performance as prayer and the influence of a Mahayana Zen and Vajrayana Buddhist methodology where the composing mind, the performing mind and the mind of prayer are always central.

Taken together, these three manuscripts were crucial in how I could take forward a critical dialogue that could not only rehistoricise and recontextualize the concrete poems of Houédard, but also recontextualise his position and influence within the countercultural avant-garde moment of 1960s London.

Finding work in archives has been my primary research. Most of the poemobjects discussed in this thesis have come from my research in the institutional collections held at the Johns Rylands Library, the Tate, the British Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Special Collections at the Chelsea College of Art & Design. Houédard gave away much of his work, therefore tracing the work in private archives and collections has been an important, if very time-consuming part of the project.[57] Other works analysed in this thesis are from the private archives of Charles Verey, South Street Publications, Nick Sawyer, Jill Drower, William Allen Word and Image, the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry, Richard Saltoun and the Cox Family.

I have been fortunate during this project to have had the opportunity to collate and publish some of these archive findings, alongside other work and writings by Houédard in two monographs: *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter, The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houedard* (Occasional Papers, London, 2012) and *Dom Sylvester Houédard* (Richard Saltoun/ Riding House, London, 2016) (See Appendices 4 and 5). These publications have their own co-ordinates within the Matrix of Interdependent Transmission as they enable Houédard's works to become far more accessible to a wider contemporary audience.

Exhibition as Research

Throughout this research trajectory there has been a close relationship between analytical argument and curatorial practice; joint journeys of exploration and discovery. As outlined previously, this led to two key objectives of this research: to develop an exploratory and interpretative methodology that can investigate transmission through curation and performance and to improve the accessibility of Houédard's work through publication, exhibitions, performance and symposium.

In order to investigate how Houédard's poemobjects may be critically framed as yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala, experiential and performative ritual Buddhist method practices, I have explored ways in which they can be experienced and performed by a contemporary audience.

To return to Dawood's reflection that in a Tantric art practice "creation" and "transmission" may be contained within the same action and that action may be a "radical form of collaboration" with a transhistorical audience, then foregrounding an *experience* of Houédard's work is key to my interpretative methods.

Alongside the extensive archive research that I have undertaken for this thesis I have developed a focused methodology of exhibition and performance as research. This has had the outcomes of three exhibitions: *frog pond plop: the yoga of concrete in the work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* The Gallery, NUA, 2010; *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* The South London Gallery, 2012 and *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016. The documentation of these exhibitions and their associated performances are included in the Appendices.

In the exhibition *frog pond plop: the yoga of concrete in the work of Dom Sylvester Houédard* I chose to exhibit for the first time the then unpublished poemscores, *frog pond plop overture and phonate* and *c-dagesh,* alongside published and known typestracts and poemobjects (Appendices 1a, b & c). I wanted to make the archival discovery of these poemscores and my developing critical framing of these pieces central to the exhibition and thesis, demonstrating that the execution of all Houédard's work was part of an overall spiritual yoga that positions method and performance before object. This yoga draws upon the philosophy of the Madhyamaka Prasangkia School of Vajrayana Buddhism which presents all phenomena, all objects as events. The curatorial intention of *the yoga of concrete* was to expand upon the critical discussion of poetry as event in the 1960s[58] and to demonstrate that Houédard's "kinkon", an idiosyncratic blending of the words kinetic and koncrete, was developed out of a deep understanding of Eastern phenomenology, in particular the Madhyamaka Prasangika school of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism.

Through the curation and performance of the event scores, *c-dagesh* and the *frog pond plop overture & phonate in three movements,* I created conversations around performance in these poemscores and opened up dialogues around the performative in his work. My central curatorial argument presented the idea that transmission and method, both spiritual and artistic are inseparable shaping constructs in all the work Houédard created in the 1960s and 1970s, and that these methods are devolved from Zen and Vajarayana Buddhist practices. The title of the exhibition, *frog pond plop: the yoga of concrete in the work of Dom Sylvester Houédard* foregrounded this idea, albeit in a rather poetic way: the meaning of all objects lies within action – like Bashõ's (and later Houédard's) frog jumping into the pond.[59]

It was a curatorial enquiry into the presentation of mind-events which would foreground the synthesis he achieved fifty years previously between Buddhist practice and art practice. I chose to place a circle of meditation cushions on the gallery floor to enable anyone to participate in the instructions of *c-dagesh.* The intention was to allow a transitional space to open up in the gallery, a space that could offer a time and a place for contextualization and contemplation. This was not just about the critical framing of Houédard's works within the Tantric rituals of yantras, mandalas, mantras and mudras or providing a space within which to contemplate them as being so, but, about providing a space wherein the quality of attention and mindfulness that is usually given to the art-object is instead the focus of contemplation in an act of "right mind-minding" or correct intention. The artist and architect Michael Rotondi states:

> How do you dedicate a space to explore the nature of our existence now, as opposed to just give people information about what's considered to be culture? [to] bring a kind of presence into museums where people can see things the way they really are: to not only learn through acquiring knowledge but to develop awareness and insight through direct experience […] exploring without interference the zone in between inner and outer worlds".[60]

It felt essential to provide the opportunity for inner exploration within the gallery, a place where participation in the meditative process could be openly encouraged. If, as this thesis will establish, Houédard's work is to function as mandala, mudra or mantra, then this work has to be contemplated. It was also a space where the inner processes of transmission and teaching, contained within the act of viewing mandalas and mudras or hearing mantras, could be contemplated and experienced. Within the yoga of concrete, as practiced by Houédard, is another yoga, one that can be practiced by a receptive audience. In our very practice of mindfulness, or "mind-minding" as Houédard asserts, is the practice of the yoga

of everyday life. A paying attention to the moment as life unfolds, every minute, every day and the direct perception of reality, a key position taken up by Houédard and so many post-war avant-garde artists, especially those in dialogue, like him, with Eastern aesthetics and metaphysics.

It is difficult, if not impossible to evoke a direct experience of reality with a mind full of the distractions of memory, plans, autobiography, feelings, dreams, conversations re-played and conversations imagined. The Buddhist practitioner and artist Eleanor Rosch writes,

> We don't generally believe talk about direct knowing, at least not with our cognitive minds. How can any experience be unmediated and free of time when we can so plainly see that the present experience is the result of who I am, my beliefs, feelings, expectations and all my past experiences? Isn't everything conscious filtered through our concepts, categories, and cognitive representations?[61]

This is not a new approach to curation or critically thinking about art but it is a new way to approach thinking about the work of Houédard in a gallery setting. That Houédard thought about his work in this way will be made evident from my close reading of his literary essays and theological writings. That a viewer should think about his work in this way was the premise of *the yoga of concrete.*

In 2012 I curated a one-day pop-up exhibition and symposium at the South London Gallery, *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard* (See Appendix 2). After the exhibition at The Gallery, Norwich University of the Arts, (NUA), Antony Hudek and Sara de Bondt of the Occasional Papers Press contacted me to discuss editing a small monograph of Houédard's work. In particular, they were interested in the performance pieces that I had discovered in the archives and wished to publish them. Initially this was the limit of the project- to publish *c-dagesh, frog pond plop overture & phonata in three movements* and *the cosmic ballet* and to choreograph a performance of each of these scores at the South London Gallery. In December 2011, Occasional Papers, the South London Gallery and I made a collective application to the Henry Moore Foundation for financial support for this project. We were successful.

Both the publication and the performance projects rapidly increased in ambition and scale over the next few months. With the support of Prinknash Abbey and the trustees of the Dom Sylvester Houédard literary estate, we were able to publish not only the performance scores but also a range of poemobjects that could demonstrate the full range of experimentation within his work. Marvin and Ruth Sackner, custodians of the largest collection of Houédard material in the world, made freely available to us much of their

collection for publication. I was now able to situate the reproductions of the event scores alongside images of other poemobjects by Houédard, which I hoped would better recontextualise how these performance works are a development from and consolidation of his other KinKon. With the Sackner's support, institutional collections that had been reluctant to initially support the project, now cooperated with the reproduction of images.[62]

What has struck me most in researching the letters and papers of Houédard is the central importance of the correspondence network he constructed, in the development of his artistic methods and in the exchange of ideas about Eastern phenomenology. In looking at the dialogues he developed with artists such as Kenelm Cox, Allen Ginsberg, John Cage, Mira Schendal, David Medalla, Lilliane Lijn, principally about Asia as method, or the wider aesthetic considerations around language as performance or the place of spirituality in the arts, as discussed in his letters with John Furnival, Tom A Clark, Tom Philips, John Sharkey, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Eugene Gomringer, to name a few correspondents, "sangha", seems a very appropriate word to use to describe such an inter-related community. It is a word that is used too by Christopher Thompson, as discussed above, in his search for a term that comes "closest to capturing the dynamism" of the events and "peculiar form of collectivity' between the artist Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Ben d'Armagnac, Robert Filliou, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles and Yoko Ono".[63]

As I have established previously, my concept of a Matrix of Interdependent Transmission is a way of visualizing and understanding accurately the network of relationships and influences that characterize Houédard's notional sangha and this artistic and spiritual community with their unplanned entanglements and planned collaborations. It is a concept that can cover the connections that Houédard made in his own lifetime between artist and practitioners of concrete poetry, mail art, performance art, conceptual art, happenings, dance theatre, action music, beat poetry, as well as the inter-faith conversations he had with practitioners of the world's major faiths. It is also a phrase that allows for these connections to continue after Houédard's death, and can encompass those artists practicing today, such as Sam Winston and Cameron Irving, who, although having never met him, can attest to his influence on their work.[64]

It was also the concept behind the creative symposium, which I organized as part of a day of events, *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard.* My primary aim was to bring together as many members of this sangha together to enable reconnections and new connections to be made. Invitations

to participate were sent and accepted by those who knew Houédard: John Furnival, Roger Smith, Hayden Murphy, Marina Warner, Jasia Reichardt, Tom Philips, John Sharkey, Bernard Moxham, Charles Verey, David Toop, Nick Sawyer, Guy Brett and those who have had subsequent relationships with his work; the art collectors, Marvin and Ruth Sackner and William Allen, artists Cameron Irving and Sam Winston, critics Rick Poynor and Greg Thomas, graphic designer Fraser Muggeridge and curator Gustavo Grandal Montero.

The main gallery space at the South London Gallery was filled during the day, not with a retrospective exhibition of Houédard's typestracts and poem-objects (this appeared as a multi-media pop- up exhibition in the adjacent Clore Studio) but instead with an experience of this matrix of interconnectedness that could perhaps open up conversations about Houédard's influence both in the 1960s and 70s when his most important work was made, and his place now, among a new generation of artists, performers, collectors and poets.

The pop-up exhibition was designed to show the most comprehensive selection of Houédard's work within the financial and practical restraints of a one-day exhibition. Most works were photographed or filmed in performance. These images and films were then edited and projected on a slideshow loop, by Christopher Daniels, from a variety of institutional collections: the British Council, the British Library, the John Ryland's Library, the Royal College of Art as well as from the private collections of Marvin and Ruth Sackner, William Allen, England & Co and Guy Brett. The three vitrines were also a composite of poemobjects and archive material from the institutional (here represented by the collection held at the Chelsea School of Art and curated by Gustavo Grandal Montero) and the private collections of Marvin Sackner and William Allen (curated by the collectors themselves).

With most of Houédard's work in the hands of private collectors, the exhibition thesis was designed to reflect this and provide a very rare opportunity to see this work. The symposium too, reflected this, with many of the participants: Jasia Reichardt, David Toop, Bill Allen, William Cobbing, Roger Smith, Guy Brett, Marvin Sackner, showing poemobjects, and letters and other archival material, in the context of their relationships to Houédard (See Appendix 2).

Most recently I curated *Performing No Thingness* at East Gallery, NUA, in 2016 (See Appendix 3). It was my intention for this exhibition to situate Houédard's conceptual kinetic poems within the context of his close friendships with Ken Cox and Li Yuan-chia and place unmade, un-exhibited and unperformed work by Houédard alongside the micro-environments of Cox's *5 Elemental Balloon Poem* and Li Yuan-chia's Cosmic Multiples and

reliefs. I wanted the exhibition to suggest an alternative curation of "the void" (or nothing or emptiness) which is usually presented within the frameworks of Western epistemological thinking and therefore as no more than a conceptual supplement to the somethingness of the calligraphic mark/ typed letter/ performative gesture. The exhibition presented instead an argument for dependent origination as the phenomenological underpinning of a new interrogation of objectivity, suggesting that it is this very refutation of the inherently existent object, and the resultant emphasis on the dependence of all phenomena on each other, that led to the dependence the reader/ audience/ participant. The exhibition foregrounded my argument, here, of a complicated Matrix of Interdependent Transmission as a network of alternative phenomenological insight that can be found in the artwork, group exhibitions, performances, letters and conversations of these artists.

Commentary on these three exhibitions and the performances associated with each event is interwoven into the analysis of Houédard's poemobjects in chapters *mantra, mudra* and *mandala*.

Buddhism as/in Performance

It is never going to be easy to tease out the entangled influences in the transplanted, transnational and translated Modernist Buddhisms that Houédard read and contemplated in the 1960s and 1970s or know what understanding he achieved from undocumented conversations with Tibetan Lamas and Western converts. As I discuss further in chapter 1**,** my research initially began with surveying and reading Houédard's own collection of Buddhist texts. His collection of commentaries by Western scholars Mircea Eliade, Philip Rawson and John Blofeld have been particularly important to establish Houédard's own approach to Buddhisms and Taoisms.[65] Chapter 1 establishes the wide breadth of Houédard's own autodidactic scholarship on Buddhisms but acknowledges his particular framing of his own work primarily within Buddhist Tantric practices. As outlined above, my own understanding of these Tantric Buddhist method practices is based on my twenty-five-year study of the commentaries to Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism as presented by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and my personal Tantric meditation practice.[66] Buddhist scholar Stephen Beyer writes of how it is all too easy for a scholar from a Western secular society to ignore the fact that Buddhism is basically a performing art.[67] My own practice has helped me foreground this understanding of Buddhisms and especially Tantra (see Chapter 1 and chapter *yantra* for a detailed explanation of Tantra.) This thesis foregrounds the understanding of Tantra as a collection of special ritual and meditative method practices, what could be termed *performative* practices, that enable a practitioner to develop an inner realization that functions to prevent ordinary appearance and conception, the realization of emptiness.

To help interpret Houédard's engagement with emptiness I rely on the presentation of emptiness by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and also the excellent analysis of the poetics of emptiness by the American academic Jonathan Stalling.[68] Houédard's artistic practice was singularly concerned with how he could bring onto the page what Stalling has termed, in relation to American poetics, an "extralinguistic experience of emptiness". [69]

As my research will establish, no symbol for emptiness, a blank page or the word "Nothing" can itself represent ultimate reality or offer an ontological stability as it cannot hide its relational contingent nature. The nature of Nothingness cannot be captured in language, but such contingency can be experienced in participation and performance.

Therefore in exploring Houédard's work as yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala, my analyses intend to explore distinct performance methodologies behind the Cagean-Zen

influenced poemscores, such as *c-dagesh* and the exploratory Tantric performance rituals that informed *the cosmic ballet,* alongside the Taoist ideas presented in Houédard's reversal and reflection poems. In order to formulate these interpretative frames, and in acknowledgement of the limited scholarship on Buddhisms and the British post-war avant-garde, I am particularly indebted to the research on the postwar influence of Buddhism and Taoism on American poetry and poetics by Stalling; the discussion on innovative Buddhist textual strategies in the work of Allen Ginsberg by Tony Trigilio; the nonlinear look at the engagement of the postwar avant-garde with Eastern spirituality by Chris Thompson and the extrapolation of the "Cageian revolution" at the heart of America's engagement with Zen Buddhism by Kay Larson. Each of these works have played an important role in offering creative and academic strategies that can consider the interconnected art historical, experiential and poetic points of entry into the work of Houédard.

Chapter Outlines

This thesis has six further chapters and a conclusion. The chapter titles are italicized throughout to distinguish their usage from the ritual practices they describe and remain in the lower case consistent with Houédard's use of case.

There is a full glossary of Buddhist terms in the Appendices.

This Introduction has established the contexts for understanding the transmission of Buddhism into the West, in particular research that has established that Buddhism in Britain, until the 1960s, was very much a private, intellectual, literary and autodidactic enterprise. Chapter 1 *the monk attuned by tantrism to the cosmos* introduces and contextualises Houédard's own writings about Buddhism, particularly the essays he writes for *The Aylesford Review*, offering an explanatory commentary as to how these statements may be understood within Buddhist Epistemology. The chapter also positions Houédard's metapraxis as an engagement with the self-reflective Mahayana Buddhist doctrinal discourses on the emptiness of the self, through a close reading and commentary on his concept of the "JE/MOI flicker effect".

Chapter 2 *new beat/ monknik wind* focuses on aspects of Houédard's artistic and literary practice before he became a concrete poet. A close reading of his article "Beat & Afterbeat: a parallel condition of poetry and theology", establishes his search for a prose style that could synthesize the Zen and Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist practices conceptually. The chapter also establishes Houédard's role as conduit for Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's Tibetan Tantric "Crazy Wisdom" Lineage into avant-garde poetics, through an analysis of previously unseen letters between the monk and the beat poet Allen Ginsberg.

Chapter 3 *yantra* is the first of four chapters which interrogate Houédard's own critical framing of his poemobjects as yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala and offer close readings that establish the performative nature of both the Tantric method practices used to make this work and the centrality of performance in understanding contemporary transmission today. *yantra* follows the development of his concrete poems from 1963 and the increasing assurance and skill with which he mastered on the typewriter to create what Eliade has termed an "intentional"[70] Tantric language. Through close readings of his work I consider his development of a basic geometrical grammar on the typewriter keyboard that could be adapted into an extensive range of both simple and complex geometrical Tantric yantra.

Beginning with a close reading of previously unseen correspondence between Houédard and John Cage, Chapter 4 *mantra* explores how Houédard's soundpoems and

poemscores engage with the interpenetration of sound objects and silence. This chapter establishes that these ideas were influenced, not only by his own autodidactic study of Hindu and Vajrayana Tantric mantras, but also the ideas about transmission he found in Zen Buddhism, and his encounters with the avant-garde's interdependence and entanglement with "Cagean Zen".[71]

Chapter 5 *mudra* reflects on the exhibition *Performing No Thingness*, my exploratory and interpretative methodology to investigate spiritual transmission through curation and performance. The chapter focuses on how archive documents can evidence the interdependent relationships between Houédard and the artists Ken Cox and Li Yuan-chia, analysing the interdependent art histories between objects and people and the transmission of Eastern practices. The discussion explores Houédard's concept of mudra as a critical term with which to look at the gestural in poetrymachines, poemsculptures and poemenvironments.

Chapter 6 *mandala* is a focused discussion presenting aspects of Houédard's artistic and spiritual practice within the conceptual framework of the Buddhist ritual practice of the Mandala. Taking two coordinates in the Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: the Destruction in Art Symposium (held throughout the month of September 1966) and the open performances of The Exploding Galaxy theatre group on Parliament Hill (during the "Summer of Love" in 1967), I explore Houédard's participation at these events, offering the first critical readings of his DIAS contributions and his poemscore *the cosmic ballet.*

The overall aim of this thesis is that an understanding Houédard's interest in the Eastern contemplative traditions in general and Zen and Tantric Buddhist method practices in particular is at the heart of his "inner sacred vision". It will reposition this Benedictine monk as the "real holy wiggy" British prophet at the centre of an interdependent sangha of avant-garde artistic practitioners in the 1960s and 1970s, and an important figure in the transmission of a transnational, even transhistorical Tantra.

[1] Jack Sargent, *Wholly Communion,* The Sticking Place.com, accessed October 10th 2014, http//www.thestickingplace/articles/wholly-communion/.html.
[2] Barry Miles, quoted in Nigel Fountain, *Underground: The London Alternative Press, 1966-74* (London: Cormedia, 1988): 18.
[3] David Toop, "On Meeting a Beatnik from the Middle Ages," in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 9.
[4] Andrew Wilson, "A Poetics of Dissent: Notes on a Developing Counterculture in London in the Early Sixties," *Art & The 60s: This Was Tomorrow,* eds. Chris Stephens and Katherine Stout (London: Tate, 2004): 93.
[5] Houédard describes himself as "monknik" in his essay "Beat & Afterbeat: a parallel condition of theology and poetry", reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 134.
[6] Wilson, "A Poetics of Dissent," 95.
[7] Charles Verey, *A Relationship with Dom Sylvester Houédard Part 1 (1965-1977),* accessed 16th September 2014, http://176.32.230.9/beshara.org/uploads/PDFs/A%20relationship%20with%20DSH%20part%201.pdf
[8] For a concise overview of the growing interest in alternative spiritual and mystical traditions, see Barry Miles, *Hippie* (London: Cassell Illustrated, 2003): 372.
[9] In his article "Dom Sylvester Houédard," Hayden Murphy writes how Houédard has been "regarded with some suspicion as well as admiration by those who knew him. His appearance in the famous *Times* (London) advertisement in the 60s for the legalisation of cannabis ('vive voce the propots') and his angry distress at the implications of Clause 28 (he was a self-propelled advocate for the 'gladguys') led some to dismiss him, to his personal pain, as a 'dilettante guru'". "Dom Sylvester Houédard", *Edinburgh Review,* 89, 41.
[10] John Gale in conversation with Nicola Simpson, Thursday 10th January (2013).
[11] Murphy, "Dom Sylvester Houédard," 41.
[12] Houédard first published commentary on his "wider ecumenism" appears in his essay "Heathen Holiness," *The Aylesford Review,* 3.3, Autumn 1960. It is likely that he knew Dom Aldred Graham, a Benedictine monk at Ampleforth Abbey in Yorkshire who published *Zen Catholicism: A Suggestion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963). If Houédard coined the phrase, it was quickly taken up the community of British Benedictines at the time. Dom Graham uses it in his autobiography *The End of Religion: Autobiographical Explorations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1971): 102.
[13] In "bits of biography," Houédard describes his early interest in the "eastern contemplative tradition". Reprinted in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 27.
[14] Houédard writes: "Concrete poems: dynamic structures – exist in tension between poem-objects & space-time […] "Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay", reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 160. Houédard's continues in the same essay "[…] concrete poems just ARE: have no outside reference: they are objects like TOYS & TOOLS […]". It is likely that Houédard was familiar with Andre Breton's "poème-object".
[15] See Chapter 2 for a detailed close reading of this article. See Houédard, "Men-Men & Right Mind-Minding", *The Aylesford Review,* 5.1 Winter (1962): 14-17.
[16] For a further discussion of this see Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (Boston and London: Shambala, 1970, 2011).
[17] For a comprehensive explanation of the nature and functions of the mind as it is understood within Tibetan Buddhism see Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Understanding the Mind, The Nature and Power of the Mind* (Ulverston: Tharpa Publications, 1993, 2002). See glossary for *Sutra* and *Mahamudra.*
[18] Shezad Dawood, "Open Circuit – Colour and Altered States," *Thinking Tantra Research Papers,* published on the occasion of the exhibition *Thinking Tantra,* Drawing Room, 24th November 2016-19th February 2017, (London: Drawing Room, 2016): 24.
[19] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "the third bridge", *Ceolfrith 15,* ed. Charles Verey (Sunderland: The Ceolfrith Arts Centre, 1972): 6.
[20] Ibid.

[21] Richard Gilbert "London's Other Underground," *Town* in March 1967, as quoted in Barry Miles, *London Calling: A Countercultural history of London since 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010): 244.
[22] Barry Miles, *Hippie,* 372.
[23] See glossary: *Vajrayana.*
[24] Reginald A. Ray, *Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2008): 7-8.
[25] Ibid.
[26] This phrase acknowledges the excellent research by David E. R. George in *Buddhism as/in Performance: Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practice* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd, 1999).
[27] Lawrence Normand, and Alison Wench, eds. "Introduction," *Encountering Buddhism in Twentieth-Century British and American Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 1.
[28] Ibid., 4.
[29] Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880,* translated by G. Patterson-Black and V. Renking (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1984): 27.
[30] Normand, *Encountering Buddhism,* 1.
[31] Ibid., 1-2.
[32] Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Buddhism in Practice.* Abridged Edition (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007): 3.
[33] Normand, *Encountering Buddhism,* 4.
[34] Donald. S. Lopez Jr., *Modern Buddhism: Readings for the Unenlightened* (London: Penguin, 2002): xl.
[35] Robert Bluck, *British Buddhism: Teachings, Practice and Development* (London: Routledge, 2006): 8.
[36] Ibid., 10.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Stephen Prothero, *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation,* ed. Carole Tonkinson (US: Riverhead, 1995): 4.
[39] Prothero, *Big Sky Mind*, 3-4.
[40] For a comprehensive discussion of the "transnationality" of the Beat Generation see *The Transnational Beat Generation,* ed. Nancy M. Grace and Jennie Skerl (New York: Palgrave, 2012).
[41] See Glossary: *Sangha.*
[42] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "the dimension of the dimensionless," paper given at *The Spiritual Aspects of the Rule of St Benedict* (*RSB*)*,* Ampleforth Symposium, (1980). Unpublished, John Rylands University Manchester Special Collections Archive.
[43]Ibid.
[44] Chris Thompson, *felt: FLUXUS, JOSEPH BEUYS, AND THE DALAI LAMA* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 161.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Kay Larson, *Where the Heart Beats: John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and the Inner Life of Artists* (New York: Penguin, 2013): 248.
[47] See Glossary: *Buddha Family*.
[48] See Glossary: *Mandala.*
[49] Dawood, "Open Circuit – Colour and Altered States," 26.
[50] See glossary: *Madhyamaka Prasangika.*
[51] The primary Buddhist texts I use are: *Understanding the Mind, The Nature and Power of the Mind* (Ulvertson: Tharpa publications, 1997); *Mahamudra Tantra, The Supreme Heart Jewel Nectar* (Ulvertson: Tharpa publications, 2005); *The New Heart of Wisdom, The Essential Wisdom Teachings of the Buddha* (Uk: Tharpa, 2012); *Tantric Grounds and Paths, How to Enter, Progress on, and Complete the Vajrayana Path* (Ulverston: Tharpa Publications, 1994); *Essence of the Vajrayana, The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala* (London: Tharpa publications, 1997); *Clear Light of Bliss, The Practice of Mahamudra in Vajrayana Buddhism* (London: Tharpa publications, 1982).
[52] See glossary: *New Kadampa Tradition*.
[53] The sutras are the teachings of Buddha that are open to everyone to practice without the need for empowerment. The Tantras are Buddha's teaching only available to the initiated practitioner. See glossary for further details.
[54] Thompson, *felt,* 210.

[55] Charles Verey, "Dom Sylvester's "Wider Ecumenism": Considered Words, Explosive Meaning," *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (Occasional Papers, 2012): 28.
[56] Ibid., 30.
[57] Houédard was a monk and could not have money. When his work sold, either through exhibitions or through the Lisson Gallery directly, he could not take a fee. Nicholas Logsdail has spoken about how he had an arrangement with Houédard, providing him with a cash allowance, a basic subsistence, whenever the monk was visiting London and needed money. This lack of financial incentive to make his work well known or pay, perhaps explains why Houédard simply gave so much of his work away. These typed Yantras were valuable as spiritual objects for contemplation, not for any intrinsic monetary value.
[58] See Wilson, "A Poetics of Dissent," 93-11.
[59] This idea is explored in chapter 4 *mantra.*
[60] Mark Rotondi, Interview with Mary Ann Jacobs, *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art,* eds. Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacobs (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 222.
[61] Eleanor Rosch, "If You Depict a Bird, Give It Space to Fly: On Mind, Meditation, and Art", *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* eds. Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacobs (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 44.
[62] Most importantly was the permission that the John Ryland's University Library now granted for the filming of what I consider two of Houédard's most important poemobjects: *zen box with moving parts* and *windgrove/ mind alone.* Due to the cost of transportation and the facilities requirements stipulated by the institution, I had been unable to borrow these works for either *frog pond plop: the yoga of concrete,* or *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* exhibitions. However, the John Ryland's Library did now concede to my request to film these works in performance with the intention of reproducing stills from the film in the *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* monograph and exhibiting the films in the Clore Studio pop-up exhibition, at the South London Gallery. I was finally able to borrow *zen box* and *wind grove* in *Performing No Thingness.* For further discussion see chapter *mantra*.
[63] Christopher Thompson, Preface, in *felt, FLUXUS, JOSEPH BEUYS AND THE DALAI LAMA,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): xxvii.
[64] Sam Winston and Cameron Irving in conversation with Nicola Simpson at *The Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* symposium, South London Gallery, December 4th (2012).

[65] See Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols, Studies in Religious Symbolism.,* trans. Philip Mairet. (London: Harvill Press, 1961); *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958); *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy.,* trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series LXXVI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*., trans. Willard R, Trask (London: Harcourt Inc., 1959); *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom.,* trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series LVI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). See Philip Rawson, "Foreword." *Tantra.* London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971; "Introduction." *Tantra*, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971: *The Art of Tantra: A symbolic vision of cosmic sensuality,* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973). See John Blofeld, *Gateway to Wisdom, Taoist and Buddhist Contemplative and Healing Yogas* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1980); *I-Ching: The Book of Change* (London: George Allen & Unwin, (1976) Reissue 1985); *The Way of Power: A Practical Guide to the Tantric Mysticism of Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970); *The Zen teaching of Huang Po: On the Transmission of Mind* (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

[66] See footnote 51 above for a list of these texts.
[67] Stephen Beyer, *The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (California: University of California Press, 1973): xii, as quoted in David E. R George, *Buddhism as/in Performance: Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practice* (New Delhi: D.K.Printworld (P) Ltd, 1999): 91.
[68] Jonathan Stalling, *Poetics of Emptiness, Transformations of Asian Thought in American Poetry* (U.S.A: Fordham University Press, 2010).
[69] Stalling uses the phrase to discuss the poetic strategies of Gary Snyder and Wai-lim Yip, but it is a way to articulate what I see as the correlative practice of Houédard. See Stalling, *Poetics of Emptiness*: 115.

[70] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom,* translated from the French by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969): 251.
[71] Alexandra Munroe, "Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde: Cage Zen, Beat Zen, and Zen," *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009): 208.

Chapter 1 the monk attuned by tantrism to the cosmos

The Introduction established a context for understanding the transmission of Buddhism into the West, in particular research that has established that Buddhism in Britain, until the 1960s, was very much a private, intellectual, literary and autodidactic enterprise. This chapter now introduces and contextualises Houédard's own writings about Buddhism, offering an explanatory commentary as to how these statements may be understood within Buddhist Epistemology.

1.1 Autodidactic right-mind minding begins with research into Houédard's own idiosyncratic autodidactic path through Western translations and commentaries on the Buddhist sutras available in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This personal path is made public as he moves towards publishing his interest in meditation in a series of literary and theological articles for *The Aylesford Review.*

Section **1.2 "the wider ecumenism" and *The Aylesford Review*** analyses closely these essays and his development of a prophetic spiritual vision that can revitalise Christian ideas about contemplation through embracing the method practices of prayer and contemplative ritual found in Zen and Tibetan Buddhisms. Houédard's negotiation of what Bluck identified as the increasing complexity of Buddhism in Britain at that time demonstrates how, between 1960 and 1963, Houédard initially communicated his interest in Buddhism through a literary and intellectual enterprise.

1.3 the monk attuned by tantrism to the cosmos then investigates how Houédard's understanding of Buddhist contemplative method practices were incorporated into an increasingly performative spiritual practice that engaged directly with Tibetan Vajrayana ritual and locates Houédard as one of the very first Western Tantric artists, if not the very first British artist to acknowledge that his work may be understood as yantra, mantra and mudra.

1.4 the JE/MOI flicker effect discusses Houédard's playful and paradoxical experimentation with the materiality of language and its conceptuality as a medium with which to signpost non-material non-conceptual reality.

This experimentation is explained through a close reading of two early concrete poems **1.5 *4 stages of spiritual typewriting*** and an earlier version *4 stages of contemplative t/writing.* These two works, I argue, provide a critical framework with which to discuss the typestracts that Houédard composed from 1963 onwards, especially works such as the *five buddha families and the womb of the tathagatas*. They also can provide a key to understanding the spiritual intention behind his move away from lyric poems and

conventional prose to the concrete poems and a contracted syncretic prose that is discussed in chapters 2 and 3.



Fig. 6 Dom Sylvester Houédard outside Prinknash Abbey c.1970. Image courtesy of John Rylands University Library.



Fig. 7 Houédard in the midst of an inter-faith dialogue with persons and date unknown. Image courtesy of John Rylands University Library.

1.1 Autodidactic right mind-minding.

When Stella Halkyard, Special Collections Curator at the John Rylands University Library, began to pack the boxes that contained the literary papers, books and artwork of Houédard, she was careful to retain the order of papers as she had found them in his cell at Prinknash Abbey. A series of buff files of Houédard's correspondence, organized alphabetically, have gradually over the years been removed from outsized Jaffa cardboard boxes and catalogued and re-homed into environment-controlled archive boxes. Mail-art and concrete poems have been wrapped in acid-free tissue paper. His book collection though, remains in the exact order in which it was left. For years it occupied a floor-to-ceiling bookcase in Halkyard's office. When I worked at the library, Halkyard often let me simply take a book off the shelves to read. It seemed a good entry point into Houédard's mind: to read what he had read. The sermons of Meister Eckhart nestled alongside books on Tibetan Highest Yoga, commentaries on Zen Sutras next to commentaries on the psalms, Sufism, Judaism and Islam (Figs. 8a and b). There were books on all the world's major religions but by far the greatest number were about Vajrayana Buddhism and the methods with which to attain a realization of the Buddhist teaching on Emptiness.

There is no way of definitively asserting which of these books Houédard had read when he was at his most prolific in the 1960s and 1970s, but the shelves as they stand today (removed now from Halkyard's office and safely stowed in the archives in the basement of the library) are a testament to his auto-didactic trajectory through Eastern meditative practices and his commitment to, what he gradually termed, "the wider ecumenism". He used this phrase to deliberately differentiate his position on theology. His was a personal, rather ambitious, commitment to "study very closely all the contributions that can be brought to it by the many tried eastern systems, by indeed the entire record of human conceptualization of the absolute"[1] and what he outlined as "the oecumenical activity"[2] of the Catholic Church.



Fig.8a Dom Sylvester Houédard's book collection illustrating his interests in Meister Eckhart and Tibetan Mysticism in The John Rylands University Library, Manchester. Image courtesy of Charles Verey.

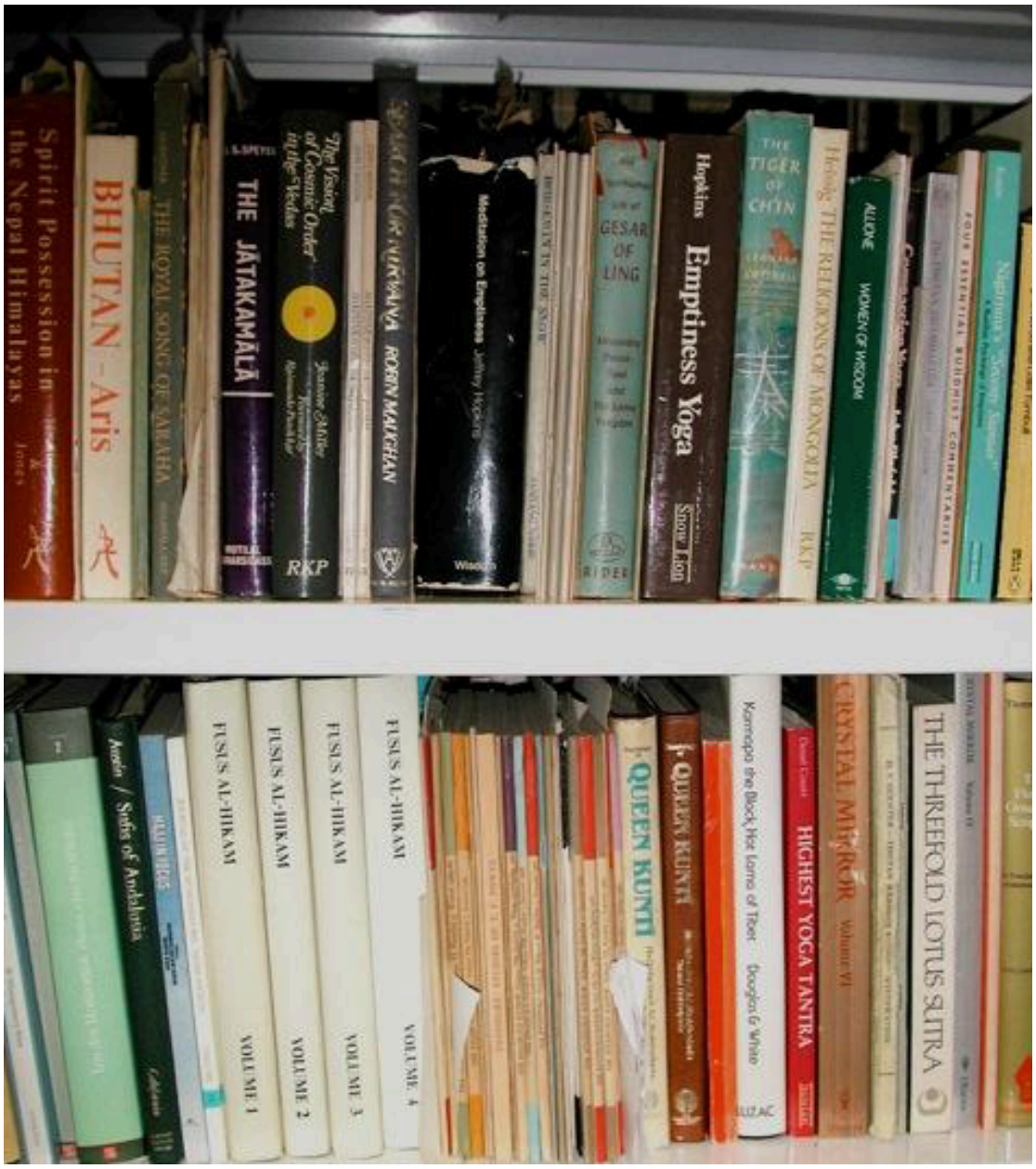


Fig.8b Dom Sylvester Houédard's book collection illustrating his interest in Tibetan Highest Yoga Tantra and the principles of Zen Buddhism, in the archives of The John Rylands University Library, Manchester. Image courtesy of Charles Verey.

1.2 "the wider ecumenism" and *The Aylesford Review*

There is evidence that Houédard was reading books on Zen Buddhism as early 1949, when, at the age of twenty-seven, he joined monastic life at Prinknash Abbey. In fact, as mentioned earlier, Houédard himself cites a fascination with Tibetan music when he was just seven years old. He also writes that at the same age he had an interest in "east contemplation &c &c".[3] So it was almost certain that his early interest in Eastern ideas and contemplative methods continued in the interim twenty years (see Appendix 7).

Houédard published no critical, literary or theological texts on the subject until the early 1960s when he began, rather prolifically, to publish regularly in *The Aylesford Review,* a periodical edited by Father Broccard Sewell and the English Carmelites at Aylesford Priory, near Maidstone, in Kent.[4] [5] In these articles, ostensibly functioning as literature surveys of contemporary publications on Eastern spirituality, Houédard began to reflect upon some of the mediated Mahayana Buddhist texts that he was reading at this time.

These Aylesford articles begin to formulate his ideas about a wider ecumenism and there is a correlative development of an equally complex prose style. Comments from his contemporaries, such as his speech was "splattered with esoteric references"[6] and "a letter from Dom Sylvester Houédard was like an archive"[7] exemplify how, for many, his words formed not only a "meditation on arcane mysteries[8]" but a "stunningly profound exegeses"[9]. As Guy Brett states, his "phenomenal erudition" was worn "very lightly" and used to "inspire people's work and move things forward".[10] As Brett elaborates: "[He was a] great scholar […] never superior with his learning, patronizing or excluding, but always ready to share it, with a bob of his birdlike head and a light in his eye".[11] However, in recollecting conversations with Houédard at Prinknash Abbey, Dom Stephen Horton remembers just how complicated this sharing of knowledge could be:

> Fr Sylvester in a sense moved in a different world to most of us – it was very difficult to follow his mind – so often his reasoning seemed obscure and one was left feeling like an idiot or rather exasperated. I personally found it hard to admit that I hadn't actually read all the apocryphal literature of the inter-testamental period, the Kabala, or the works of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Somehow he presumed we all had.[12]

It can be very difficult to follow his mind in his prose too. The first of these articles, "Heathen Holiness"[13], was written in 1960. In the opening paragraph, Houédard states who he thinks will benefit from reading this selection of books on Buddhism:

> To a certain old-fashioned type of western mind fascinated by Secret Doctrines, to contemporary minds that have brought the relief of Yoga and Zen to our impoverished west, and to all adult minds interested in a maturer approach to the humanities […][14]

Houédard was addressing the increasingly literary and radical readership of *The Aylesford Review* but also perhaps beginning to think about who his own audience might be. Who would be receptive to this "western catholic theologian who depends on books like these for his judgments about actual living thought and worship in the East"?[15] It would be easy to overlook the relevancy of the phrase "who depends on books like these" but it is he, himself, who is dependent on the books he has read about secret doctrines, yoga and Zen. Houédard's experience is characteristic in demonstrating how books played a central role, in the 1950s and 1960s, in the trans-cultural processes involved in the transplantation of Zen and Tantric Buddhist traditions to the West. Houédard's consideration of the five books under review also provides evidence of the subtle distinction he is making between what he sees as the "oecumenical activity"[16] of the Catholic Church post Vatican II[17] and his own "wider ecumenism".[18] It is not a mind for Western contemplatives only: "As any oecumenical mind in the West […] must precede any world-synthesis and the baptism of Hindu and Buddhist thought, so a similar mind must rise in the East".[19] There is a sermonizing didacticism to the tone of the piece, with declarative statements such as "What must be done for the full development of theology […] is to study very closely all the contributions that can be brought to it by the many tried eastern systems, by indeed the entire record of human conceptualization of the absolute".[20] It is clear from this article Houédard was inspired to find a form, linguistic and artistic, with which to give shape to this "theological synthesis"[21] of the conceptualization of the divine from the totality of world religious contemplative traditions.

Houédard devotes several paragraphs in the article to discussing the books he has read in light of the difficulties and obstacles inherent in finding a language to use to approach this theological synthesis. He finds an inadequacy in the English equivalents for words like karma, yoga, nirvana and maya. He draws attention to the fact that "Western terms will never acquire […] the shades of meaning" of the Sanskrit. He suggests that the "unfolding" of this "conceptualization of the absolute",

> into understandable truths, both to newer generations in Europe and to other mentalities outside, implies the constant and progressive development of terminology, analogy and concept. The translation of the divine into the human involves constant multiplication, just as much as the translation of the human into the divine involves constant simplification.[22]

"Heathen Holiness" seems an attempt at such a translation with Houédard developing his own commentary to the Buddhist mantra Om Mani Padme Hum at one point in the text. This focus on translation also highlights his awareness of a potential problematic (and paradoxical) reductionism in any co-option of the language of Eastern method practices to expand Judeo-Christian analogies and concepts of these experiential "truths". The complexity of this terminological development and what he sees as the "inadequate English equivalents"[23] for words such as nirvana, yoga, mantra, mudra and mandala explains, as I shall argue in the next chapter *new beat/ monknik wind,* the increasing shift in his own poetic practice from the lyricism of the beat-style poems he wrote in the late 1950s to his apparently immediate embracing of the ideas he located in the concrete poetry movement in 1962. It had as much a theological and experiential impetus as a linguistic one and it also foregrounds his later positioning of his experimental concrete poems as yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala.

These literary essays provided Houédard with an opportunity to put his developing theological and artistic methodologies in front of an audience. If his increasing interest in the Mahayana Zen and Tantric Buddhisms is to be understood, it is within this context of a developing concept of a "wider ecumenism" and an audience (initially literary, but rapidly reaching into a transnational avant-garde) that he located in the "newer generation in Europe" and "outside".

In "Men-Men & Right Mind-Minding"[24] and "The Wider Ecumenism",[25] two other important early *Aylesford Review* articles, Houédard again continues his own personal consideration of a synthesis of the contemplative traditions, "The 2 traditions western torah-gospel & eastern veda-zen".[26] In "Men-Men & Right Mind-Minding", Houédard expands his sense of audience to "a new social vacuum or receptivity a mental climate prepared at all sorts of levels for wholeness sincerity totality oecumenicaity & at every point full easy interchange of E & W ideas" in "1963 […] the bomb permitting". This acknowledgment and engagement with what the artist Jeff Nuttall termed "Bomb Culture"[27] is addressed later in this thesis. Referencing Allen Ginsberg, Houédard suggests that "the best young minds of our generation" have made "the relaxing tension of zen their home". They have "blown up all that prewar jazz with its prissy air of Bloomsbury Buddhism & gone back to the texts". In this article it is "Ginsberg, the benedictines of Kurusmala Ashram, or any of Kerouac's Dharma Bums" that exemplify, for Houédard, the autodidactic path to "the triple gem" of the "the dharma treasure" in the West. Such comments by Houédard concur with the ideas of Stephen Prothero when he states that among Americans brought up in other traditions,

Buddhism initially began as a literary and intellectual enterprise amongst the postwar avant-garde. As this example shows, Houédard is most certainly referring to the passages by American beat writer Jack Kerouac that describe the character Japhy Ryder (in real-life the poet and environmentalist Gary Snyder) and the passages when Kerouac describes Japhy's room, with its:

> […] slew of Orange crates all filled with beautiful scholarly books, some of them in Oriental languages, all the great sutras, comments on sutras, the complete works of D.T Suzuki and a fine quadruple-volume edition of Japanese haikus. He also had an immense collection of valuable poetry.[28]

Such an image could describe Houédard's own cell at Prinknash Abbey. A few sentences later in the essay Houédard describes himself as "this western bendictine bhikku", again echoing Kerouac's words at the beginning of *The Dharma Bums* when the narrator, Ray, says "I was an oldtime bhikku in modern clothes wandering the world […] in order to turn the wheel of the True Meaning, or Dharma […] I was a perfect Dharma Bum myself […]"[29] Houédard is still referring to Kerouac (who also remained Catholic) and the "benedictines of Kurusmala" [30] when he writes about "the increasingly normal catholic way of seeing this affinity between Christian mysticism (trinitarian monotheist & incarnational) & complete zen enlightenment (imperturbed rest in the imperturbable reality: anutpattikadharma-kshanti)". Or put more simply, the "immediacy of contact with the unwordable".[31]

Far from being just evaluative book reviews, these articles are valuable in providing insight into how Houédard was increasingly assimilating Eastern teachings. "Men-Men & Right Mind-Minding" may be primarily a book review about new translations and texts on Zen Buddhism, but Houédard's oecumenical vision is equally at home here in Zen as it is in the Tibetan ritual practice cited in another article, "Heathen Holiness". He is both the "western benedictine bhikku"[32] and "the monk attuned by tantrism to the cosmos"[33] and he is experimenting with a writing style to communicate this vision too. For example, the deliberate use of the lower case allows the words "benedictine" and "bhikku" to oecumenically share the same case in equanimity (bhikku" is the Pali word for a member of the ordained Buddhist sangha), therefore Houédard is experimenting with communicating an "easy interchange of E & W ideas" simply through punctuation.[34]

In the early 1960s, in these articles for *The Aylesford Review,* he is framing any personal interest in Tantric Buddhist practice securely within his Catholic practice, conforming to his Benedictine commitments and rule of prayer. This monk, as he self-reflects, is "attuned by tantrism to the cosmos, can use such forces for the benefit of all living beings. It is the conforming of the will to God".[35]

"The Wider Ecumenism", began as a paper on Buddhism, delivered to the St Anne Society, in 1964, later cut-up and spliced in and amongst a survey of almost twenty books on Eastern spirituality and thought. In this article Houédard synthesizes Zen and Tantric Buddhism conceptually (particularly within his own framework of a JE/MOI Flicker Effect, which I shall discuss below). It is in this synthesis of Zen and Tantric Buddhism that he positions the future success of the "wider ecumenism" arguing "[…] thru these two – tantra & zen – the west & especially western monasticism shld be able to make the most fruitful contact w/ the east – a new amay for the wider ecumenism will be a postconciliar necessity."[36] He also draws attention to the mediated lineage of Zen in the West "zen/ch'an (thru dr suzuki & the upasaka lu k'uan yü)" and the more direct unmediated transmission of Tantra that was becoming possible, "(thru the 25 refugee tulkus from tibet in italy oxford london hollond germany france usa & switzerland)[*sic*]"[37]. But as much as he acknowledges implicitly that he is "at home in zen or tantra", reading his books by Dr Suzuki or Lu K'uan yü or meeting with Tibetan Lamas in Oxford, he remains a Catholic.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that Houédard's own personal encounter with each of these different Buddhist traditions follows the path of the much wider cultural transplantation of the Zen and Tantric traditions into Britain at the time. Dr Suzuki and Lu K'uan yü were instrumental in promoting the emergent modernist Zen discourse developing in Japan to the West. However, such modernist forces had not penetrated so deeply into the Tibetan Culture, therefore "Tibetan forms of Buddhism did not generally develop in a modernist direction prior to their transplantation in the West".[38] Houédard's "25 refugee tulkus from tibet" were bringing with them a traditional shamanic Vajrayana Buddhism facilitated by the very shaman-like nature of the Tibetan Tantric teachers themselves and their "charismatic authority".[39]

1.3 the monk attuned by tantrism to the cosmos

In returning to Houédard's essay "Heathen Holiness" a close reading demonstrates this is his first published clear outline on the nature and function of Tantra as he understood it. As discussed above, in this essay he is discussing a group of new publications on Buddhism. In this review he focuses in particular on Lama Anagarika Govinda's *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*[40]*,* a commentary on Tantra that, in Houédard's words, "takes us majestically through the chief concepts of Tibetan mysticism". Houédard continues:

> Tibetan mysticism […] aims at liberation from all that is unreal […] it seeks attainment of a blissful knowledge of the Ultimate Reality […] The aids used in Tibet are based on the tantra (net, web, woveness) between the inner and outer worlds. Forces and their events, consciousness and its objects, all form a single weave; and tantrism is the discovery or establishment of inner relationships between the matter and spirit worlds, between ritual and reality, between mind and the universe, between the microcosm and the macrocosm. [41]

It is important not to overlook the relevance of the deepening understanding of Tantra that Houédard had developed on reading Lama Anagarika Govinda. Lama Govinda (1898 – 1985), born Ernst Lothar Hoffman, was German in origin, converting to Buddhism at the age of eighteen, and initiated into Tibetan traditions in the 1930s. If, as I have suggested previously, wisdom is often transmitted from author to reader, from book to book, then it can be argued that through his reading of *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* Houédard received an important transmission of Tantric ideas, from a Western convert. It was a part of a Western literary lineage, several years before the oral lineage was established in Britain with the refugee tulkus.

Another figure, central to this Western academic lineage and transmission was Philip Rawson (1924-1995). Rawson was the director of the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art at the University of Durham, curator of the influential *Tantra* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in 1971 and author of many books on Tantric and Taoist art until his death in the mid-1990s. Houédard knew Rawson personally and corresponded with him.[42] Houédard had Rawson's books in his collection and read them as they were published throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

What is of particular significance when establishing the influences on Houédard and how he received the transmission of Tantra is just how receptive he was to its initial presentation in Britain and how the development of his artistic practice in the early 1960s, founded on Tantric methods and ritual, was at the forefront of Western Tantric art. Rawson's exhibition, *Tantra* (that ran at the Hayward Gallery in London from 30th September – 7th November 1971) was, as Robin Campbell, the gallery's Director at that time, claimed, the

"first major exhibition of Tantra to be held anywhere".[43] As Rawson elaborated in his introduction to the accompanying catalogue:

> The art of Tantra has only come to light during the last ten years; […] so sudden was its discovery that even people professionally concerned with India had known nothing about it. Western museums contain many examples as yet unrecognized. Art critics have been at a loss how to cope with it: it was so different from anything they had seen before, even of Indian art […] But to artists, art-students and younger people in general it has come as a revelation.[44]

Rawson was very clear in his intent; the exhibition and catalogue were to "put the appreciation of this art on a sound footing" with a far-reaching audience beyond just the "handful of interested people in the West".[45] Rawson, in locating the increasing interest in Tantra and Tantric art in the early 1960s, establishes Houédard's firmly in this network of "artists, art-students and younger people" for whom Tantra, in Rawson's words again, "was something positive and special, something they were looking for".[46]

Such a search was for a Tantra that was "not a belief or faith, but a way of living and acting".[47] Tantra works with action. Texts on Tantra are only prescriptions for action, physical and mental. It is a definition of Tantra supported by contemporary Tibetan Buddhist monk Geshe Kelsang Gyatso in his more traditional method of transmission of the teachings. In his text *Mahamudra Tantra: An Introduction to Meditation on Tantra,* Gyatso states, "Tantra is defined as an inner realization that functions to prevent ordinary appearances and conceptions".[48] A mind that is liberated from all that is unreal, that has attained a blissful knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, has attained this realization. Tantra is not unique in asserting this position of "ultimate truth" as it is understood in Buddhist traditions. What characterizes Tantra is the methods used to experience this truth. Houédard states:

> Specifically, these aids are based on the triad body-speech-mind, and are respectively mudra, mantra, and yantra; mudra being hand-gesture and the inner attitude it expresses; mantra the spoken word to which inner attitude is reduced, and which can re-induce that attitude in another; yantra here being the same as mandala, the visible symbol to which the entire spiritual pattern woven between cosmos and mind can be reduced. Mudra, mantra, and yantra are translations of the inner experience into movement, speech, and pattern; they link inner and outer reality, they perfect the correspondence between micro- and macro-cosm.[49]

In this explanation, Houédard establishes his understanding of the performative reality of Tantra, what Rawson sees as "not a belief or a faith, but a way of living and acting". Houédard's subsequent art practice demonstrates what Rawson meant when he wrote "mere reading and thinking is no good at all". A Tantric practice is fundamentally a repetition

of rituals and meditative activities, "*real acts*", as Rawson emphasized, "both physical and mental" that can transform the practitioner's "body and consciousness".[50]

Houédard understood how a Benedictine monk can utilize these ritual methods from another tradition and become attuned to the cosmos by these very concepts of Tantra. It is important to reiterate that Houédard outlined his theological and performative interest in the Tibetan Tantric traditions two years before he directly encountered practitioners of this kind of Buddhism, in the form of the Tibetan Lamas he met in Oxford in 1962.

> In tantra, the body is a microcosm of the universe; and its life force, like that of the cosmos, is dual: the solar or light force leads outward to knowledge, intellect, analysis and discrimination; the dark or lunar force leads inwards to the subconscious, the undifferentiated, the regenerative, and the reunification by love of all that has been separated by the intellect. It is a movement out from and back to man.[51]

Houédard saw his Christianity and any practice of Tantric Buddhism as dovetailing in the mystic's journey to knowing his own heart. However, so far, he did not establish that he has his own Tantric practice:

> […] the Christian movement is out from and back to God (incarnation and resurrection, or God's appeal and his people's response). But it is a mistake to think that Christianity must *supplant* [his italics] that Tibetan scheme (old missionaries) or just *follow on* (new missionaries). The two movements must dovetail: Incarnation first, the initial move of God to man which makes grace and faith the beginning; then the mystic's journey to the All; and the ascending movement to the Father through the Son will be the mystic's re-entrance into his own heart.[52]

To summarize, as important as these *Aylesford* articles are in situating Houédard's wider ecumenism securely in the wisdom traditions of the Buddhisms of Zen and Vajrayana and the method practices of Tantra in particular, they also introduce his ideas about finding a way to communicate spiritual truths, as he understood them, in language and the experience of creative performance. In Houédard's words:

> To approach the world of zen & tantra – the world of mental events – there is only one centrally essential insight required – to recognize it **notionally** will give a critical base to discussion – to recognize it **really** is satori – […] [53]

In an artistic statement (first sketched out in "The Wider Ecumenism") published in the Introduction to his 1969 Writer's Forum publication *tantric poems perhaps…*[54] Houédard clarifies his understanding of Tantra in a particularly clear and concise statement of intention and practice. It is important to include this here in full:

> the 5 skandhas or categories of graspable material things to which poems language can refer – 1 like moon my eye my visual mechanism 2 the sensation 3 the abstract linguistic idea 4 my urge to know 5 my MOI or Je-as-MOI – satori

> is the real appreciation of the notion that these 5 (reborn in the past-future flux of the present) are all equally part of the MOI (persona) & all equally non-JE – to convert this notional into real appreciation tantras and zen use mentifaction of mindevents – of words as sounds and shapes – of mantra (like sound om) & yantra (like calligraphed om or a mandala)

Houédard concludes by writing:

> ive done yantras mantras & mudras these are yantras
> not zen but tantric perhaps[55]

If the early *Aylesford* articles were proposing Tantric Buddhist methodology as fundamental to the expression of a wider ecumenism here, in *tantric poems perhaps…* the concluding sentence situates Houédard's own artistic practice within the Vajrayana Tantric tradition, a tradition that was only just being made known to the Western art world, as Rawson noted. It is also a statement that locates Houédard as one of the very first Western Tantric artists, if not the very first British artist to acknowledge that his work may be understood as yantra, mantra and mudra.

1.4 the JE/MOI flicker effect

Before subsequent chapters can interrogate how Houédard's poemobjects may be understood as yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala, it is important for this chapter to establish how Houédard considered the objectivity of language and "the graspable material things to which poems language can refer". The whole paragraph as it appears in *tantric poems perhaps…* is unquestionably a dense statement and one that is crucial supportive evidence for the main interdisciplinary and metaphysical framework with which, as I state in the Introduction, I interrogate Houédard's poemobjects in subsequent chapters.

To understand Houédard's statement in *tantric poems perhaps…* the following close reading can be considered. In Buddhist phenomenology the definition of a person is an "I" (or as Houédard here uses JE), imputed in dependence upon any one or combination of the five skandhas, or five aggregates[56] as they are also known in English. These five aggregates are the five functions or aspects that, according to this philosophical system, constitute the human being. Houédard describes each of the 5 skandhas as follows. To illustrate each of Houédard's statements I have included directly below the definition of the correlating aggregate according to Geshe Kelsang Gyatso in his commentaries:

i. like moon my eye my visual mechanism: Here Houédard is referring to the aggregate or skandha of form.

> The aggregate of form includes all the objects of the five sensed consciousnesses – everything that our eyes can see, our ears can hear, our nose can smell, our tongue can taste, and our body can sense or touch. All gross physical objects such as mountains, tables, and books, as well as all colour and shapes, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects are therefore included in the aggregate of form. The aggregate of form of a person is the person's body, together with its colour, shape, and so forth.[57]

ii. the sensation: Here Houédard is referring to the aggregate of feeling, the sensing of an object as either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral.

> The aggregate of feeling comprises a particular type of mind, namely the mental factor feeling. Feeling is an example of an all-accompanying mental factor, which means that it is a mental factor that accompanies every moment of consciousness. When a primary mind comes into contact with its object, feeling functions to experience the object as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. There are therefore three types of feeling: pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings, and neutral feelings. The aggregate of feeling of a person is the mental factor feeling within the continuum of the person's mind.[58]

iii. the abstract linguistic idea: Houédard is referring to the aggregate of discrimination or perception.

> The aggregate of discrimination includes all examples of the mental factor discrimination. Like feeling, discrimination is a mental factor that accompanies every moment of mind. It enables us to distinguish one object from another, right from wrong, and so forth, independence upon the particular characteristics, or signs, of an object. The aggregate of discrimination of a person is the mental factor discrimination within the continuum of the person's mind.[59]

iv. my urge to know: This is the aggregate of compositional factors. According to the Mahayana, there are 51 mental factors[60] that compose a human mind, and the 49 remaining ones, after excluding feeling and discrimination (two independent aggregates- see above), are those mental factors that constitute the aggregate of compositional factors. For example: attention, inattention, faith, jealousy, mindfulness, regret…[61]

v. my MOI or je-as-MOI: In this phrase, Houédard is referring to the aggregate of consciousness that includes the six primary minds within the continuum of the person: eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and mental consciousness.

Buddhist spiritual teachings describe these aggregates as dependent-arisings.[62] In other words, one aggregate leads to the next in a linear or progressive fashion: from form to feeling to perception to mental formations to consciousness. What we experience and conventionally call our I is just a momentary mind event, for example an experience of form (such as our body), or a feeling such as happiness, (or anger or boredom), a categorization such as an opinion or a thought; all of which have no independent existence or permanence. Each aggregate has no inherent existence from its own side**.** What we think of as our I, or in Houédard's interpretive framework, our JE, is in actuality our MOI, a persona we impute on a continually changing flux of mind experiences and mindevents. Our MOI is, he writes "reborn in the past-future flux of the present". The MOI is reborn moment to moment in a continuum of becoming. These moments of mind run together, very quickly indeed. In fact they are indistinguishable, and where one begins another ends. This is the flicker effect. It is like one of those flick books that children draw, in an attempt to animate their drawings. As the pages are flicked together quickly, a moving image is discerned: a ME after a ME after a ME after a ME, creating a flicker effect of a permanently inherently existing JE. We rarely, if ever pay attention to the process of "the mentifcation of mind events".[63] So far we are still at "the notional". To get at a further understanding of what Houédard means when he alludes to the JE/MOI flicker effect, we can consider the following exposition from his essay "The Wider Ecumenism".

> To approach the world of zen & tantra – the world of mental events – there is only one centrally essential insight required – to recognize it notionally will give a critical base to discussion – to recognize it really is satori – […] the JE reflects on itself but can never see the JE it only sees the MOI – one further tropism is always necessary that can never be taken – the JE must be content w/ an image of itself - & as the JE is only known as the counterspace of its ikon or MOI so the creator is that wh is only known as the counterspace of its ikon ie creation – but in the cosmos man (because of his JE/MOI structure) is supremely the ikon of god & to me – *out of all cosmic objects that are ikons of god – the closest & most valuable is my own MOI – the counterspace to my MOI is thus both JE & the creator – both the self & the non Self – thru the MOI I intuit 2 sacred néants or nothings ie both JE & god.* [my italics][64]

Instead of being the mistaken appearance of the persona MOI, our true JE is the counterspace of this MOI. MOI is born out of JE and returns to JE, or as Mahayana Buddhist philosophy asserts in the Heart of Wisdom Sutra: Emptiness is not other than form; form also is not other than emptiness.[65] This applies to the other four aggregates too: sensation is not other than emptiness; emptiness also is not other than sensation: "my urge to know" is not other than emptiness; emptiness is not other than "my urge to know" etc. As Geshe Kelsang Gyatso writes, in his commentary to the *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*:

> Emptiness is the way things really are. […] although things appear directly to our senses to be truly or inherently existent, in reality all phenomena lack, or are empty of true existence […] they are mere appearances to mind, totally dependent upon the minds that perceive them.[66]

These "2 sacred néants or nothings" JE & god, that Houédard identifies are not to him a nothingness, as we would conventionally understand it, but rather the real nature of phenomena, emptiness. He writes:

> […] the structures that communicate themselves & imprison no nonmaterial entity – 'the wordable isnt TAO – the nameable isnt JE – the nameless is the counterspace of inner & outer worlds – named it is every concrete object – the mysterious is the non – the boundaried is the nonnon – & non & nonnon are the same & different – this door to ultimate mystery" (beginning of tao te ching) – we need artobjects (eg an image of god as the void the depth &c poems music &c) since only thru matter we intuit the other – [67]

If Houédard's explanation seems particular dense we can turn to the words of John Blofeld,

> Mahayana Buddhists have no one name for divine reality. It is so exalted and so subtle that any name must demean it since all names imply the limitation 'this but not that' and because things named are usually held to exist whereas we are now considering what is above the categories of existence and non-existence […] as a state to be attained, it is Nirvana; as the source of everything, One Mind; as the 'container of everything, the Womb of Dharmas; as the condition of one who has attained it, the Dharmakaya; as the principle of Enlightenment, the Buddhatathata; as free from characteristics; the void. [68]

Houédard continues:

> In zen or right mind-minding that is grasping matter (chairs & ideas of chairs are both graspable objects) & knowing that reality isn't that (neti-neti nada nada) or grasping JE to know what is grasped is always only MOI – creating moi after moi to systematically reject them as non-je – & in tantra we systematically create image after image (mental bodies) of buddha to similarly reject dissolve or 'demythologise' them – to understand this mentifacted buddhist pantheon that can fill all space between the two néants …[69]

So far this chapter has introduced Houédard's own statements about how he himself positioned his work within Tantric ritual frameworks and this section has offered an explanatory commentary to these statements in order that they may be understood within Buddhist epistemology. The final section of this chapter will now demonstrate how this conceptual framework can elucidate his poemobjects through a close reading of two works that engage directly with how the self, the I or Je exists.

1.5 *4 stages of spiritual typewriting*

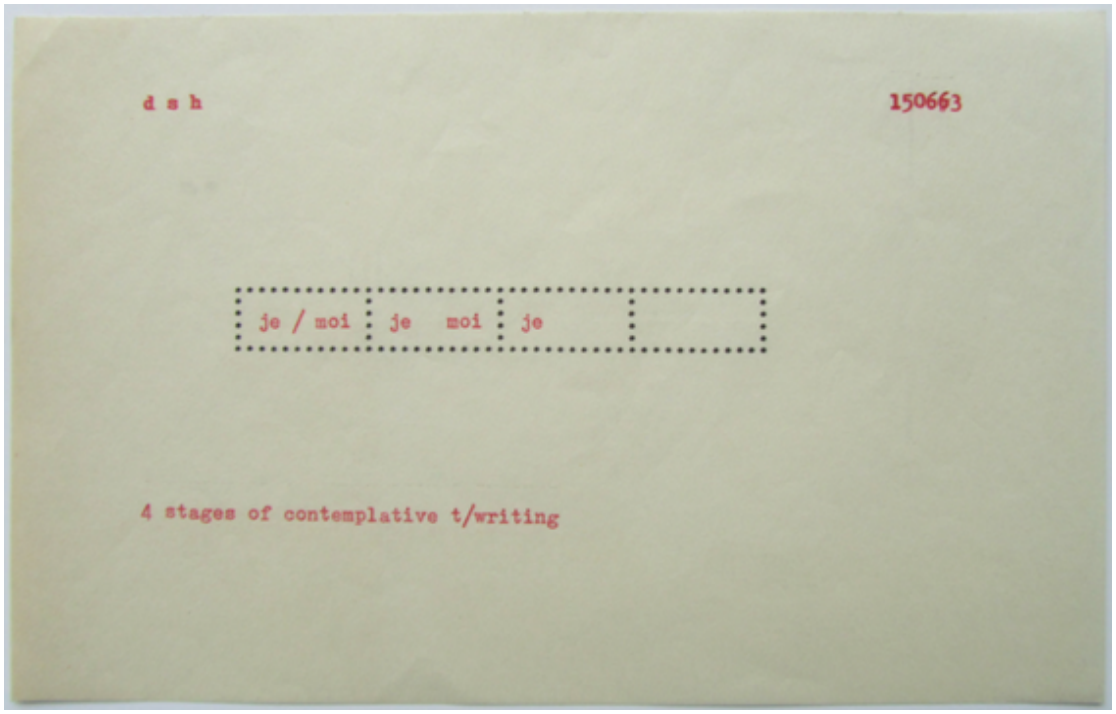


Fig.9 *4 stages of contemplative t/writing*. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

Composed early in the summer of 1963, the "4 stages of contemplative t/writing" (Fig. 9) is from the earliest period of Houédard's concrete poetic experimentation, and the first concrete poem that directly engages with the theoretical territory Houédard has been engaged with in his prose writings. Using the theoretical frameworks outlined above this work can also be read closely to articulate his understanding how the self and reality exist.

Stage one: The je and the moi appear to our mind as having a permanent and solid graspable existence. We feel that they are both part of a world of solid and permanent and graspable objects – poems/typewriters/full stops/monastic cells…

Stage two: Through the process of contemplation and/or prayer, the mind turning in on itself, we intuit the persona of MOI, and see our moods, minds and ideas as fleeting and impermanent. In Houédard's words above: "the JE reflects on itself but can never see the JE it only sees the MOI – one further tropism is always necessary that can never be taken – the JE must be content w/ an image of itself".

Stage three: – Houédard continues: "the JE must be content w/ an image of itself - & as the JE is only known as the counterspace of its ikon or MOI so the creator is that wh is only

known as the counterspace of its ikon ie creation – but in the cosmos man (because of his JE/MOI structure) is supremely the ikon of god & to me". We can only understand god by that which he is not – creation. In this box therefore we have the "je", the counterspace of "moi", now represented by the empty space on the page previously occupied by "moi".

Stage four: Houédard concludes: "out of all cosmic objects that are ikons of god – the closest & most valuable is my own MOI – the counterspace to my MOI is thus both JE & the creator – both the self & the non Self – thru the MOI I intuit 2 sacred néants or nothings ie both JE & god". At the final stage of contemplation, the emptiness of the self is realised, and the emptiness of "god" is realised too, or in other words, an apophatic intuition of that which god is not.

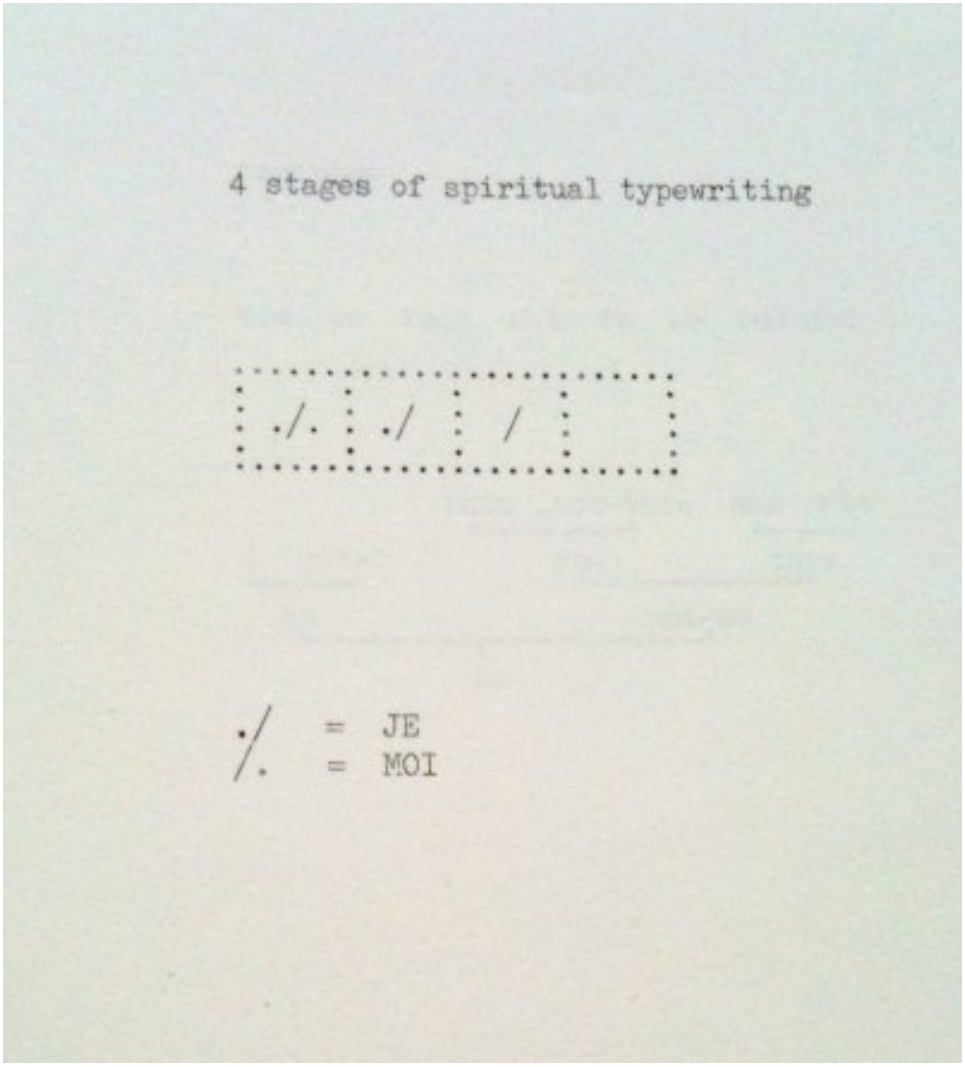


Fig.10 *4 stages of spiritual typewriting, op kinkon poems: and some non kinkon,* Writers Forum, London, 1965. Author's image.

Two years after the *4 stages of contemplative t/writing* was composed, a variation of the poem, *4 stages of spiritual typewriting* was published in his 1965 Writers Forum poetry pamphlet, *op-and kinkon poems: and some non-kinkon.* (Fig.10). The series of four boxes are consistent but there is significant change in the abstraction of the "je'" and the "moi" to two identical dot/ full stops.

Houédard instead provides a lexical key to this code of dots and slashes: JE this time is ./ and MOI is /. But this not simply an inverted code. The sharing of the / key is highly significant, as will be suggested in a detailed analysis of the four stages below:

Stage one: ./. Again, as in the *4 stages of contemplative t/writing*, the JE & the MOI appear to our mind as having a permanent and solid graspable existence. We feel there is a something, an "interiority of person", *in here* that both the pronouns I and me refer to and a world of solid and permanent and graspable objects *out there* – poems/typewriters/event scores/full stops/monastic cells …

Stage two: . / Through a daily practice of meditation and reflective prayer on the nature and function of the mind, what Houédard described as "right-mindminding" we intuit the persona of MOI, and see our moods, minds and ideas as fleeting and impermanent on a notional level but still grasp at an inherently existent JE, who is having these fleeting moods, minds and ideas.

Stage three: / In this stage the very existence of our I, our je is now the subject of our meditation. We can find this I when we think "I exist", "I am typing" and we can form a strong mental generic image of this I when we recall in meditation occasions when we have been frightened or embarrassed, but according to the Tibetan Madhyamaka Prasangika Buddhist monk and scholar, Kelsang Gyatso "the problem arises in our daily life when we look for an I other than the mere conceptual imputation I. "When we first realise the ultimate nature of phenomena, emptiness, we do so with our conceptual mind".[70] The emptiness of the MOI is realised, the emptiness of the JE is realised but the conceptual mind that apprehends this emptiness remains. This is represented by the / key. Both the je and moi in stage one and the je in stage two are dependent upon this conceptual mind- therefore the sharing of the / key. Kelsang Gyatso elaborates: "Moreover before we can realize emptiness directly with a non-conceptual mind, we need to realize it by means of an

inferential cognizer, which is a conceptual mind". The / symbol acts here as this "inferential cognizer".[71]

Stage four: When we first realize emptiness we do so conceptually, by means of a generic image. By continuing to meditate on emptiness over and over again, the generic image gradually becomes more and more transparent until it disappears completely, and we see emptiness directly. Stage four is this meditation on emptiness over and over again. The empty box of stage four, the blank paper is this generic image of emptiness, As Kelsang Gyatso states: "If we then meditate repeatedly on this conceptualization, eventually we shall realize emptiness directly". At that time our conceptual minds cease leaving, in Houédard's words again, "a nothing interiority of person". This recognition really is satori and as it is perceived by "the mind of a non-conceptual direct perceiver". This is stage five, un-representable by anything "conceptual" such as foolscap paper, typewriter ink or imprinted typewriter keys. Therefore defining this experience in a study such as this is problematic. To understand this work, the process by which the meditative mind may transcend the symbolism of a "dot", typewritten or otherwise, we can turn to the words of the Tantric art historian Ajit Mookerjee:

> […] a dot, a *bindu,* which, in Tantric metaphysics and cosmogony, is the symbol of the undifferentiated absolute, both holding within itself the whole cosmic and transcending it: to concentrate on this focal point is to "see the world in a grain of sand' and to transcend it, to open, that is, one's soul both to the plenitude and to the absolute pure void – *shunya*- of the supreme deity, invisibly present in such abstract symbols, to be reached and experienced through and by transcending them.[72]

Commenting on the difficulty of articulating satori, or enlightenment, or a mind that directly perceives the true nature of reality, within an art critical discourse, Chris Thompson states: "[…] while *direct perception* – is understandably unruly when approached via the lexicon of contemporary critical theory, we must bear in mind that its meaning for a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism is substantively different from a naïve notion of direct perception – a kind of unmediated engagement with the world".[73] As Buddhist scholar John Blofeld describes it:

> It follows that the aim of Buddhists is union with this state or, to be more accurate, conscious experience of a union that has never ceased to be. This is called Enlightenment and, in the sense it frees us from the shackles of our egos and the need to be reborn, Liberation […] men become so free that the limitations of 'I' and 'other' vanish; then each perceives that he contains the entire universe. Full consciousness of this more than god-like state is, as

> accomplished mystics have discovered, accompanied by a bliss that is inconceivable.[74]

Continuing:

> The concept of no 'God' follows inevitable from the more widely embracing one of no- own-being. It is held the absence of self is the true nature of every sort of entity – abstract or material, animate or inanimate – without exception. When Buddhists speak of finding one's true self, they mean finding the no-self which is a universal possession […].[75]

These close readings exemplify the conceptual framework that underpins what I term in chapter *yantra,* Houédard's "geometrical grammar". It is also a way of understanding how his typestracts embody the Buddhist teachings on emptiness throughout the creative process. A further example will demonstrate. *3-dimensional poem* was constructed only a few days later and it could be argued that the geometry of this typestract is constructed from out of "the empty box" of stage 4 of the *4 stages of contemplative t/writing* (Fig. 11). This work is the first typestract to present a 3-dimensional form. Although his sketchbooks from the 1950s contain pencil and ink 3-D forms, there is no record of a 3-dimensional shape in a typestract before this one.

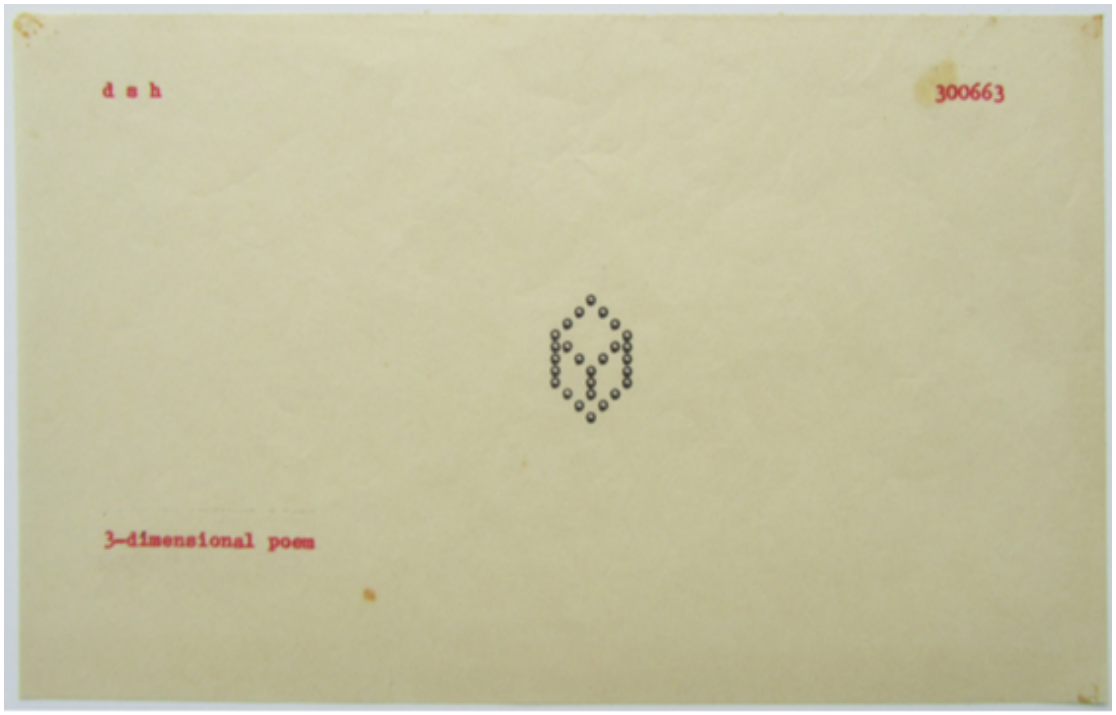


Fig 11. Original typestract, 3-*dimensional poem* 300663. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

The abstraction in this work suggests a meditation on emptiness: the fifth stage of spiritual typing. The empty cube, with Houédard's interplay of the inked forms on the page, produced by the typewriter ribbon and the blank page they are typed upon, suggest the interdependence between form and emptiness discussed above. The subtle development of the meditative mind and its perception and understanding of form can be inferred from the interplay of the broken ------ forms on the page and their relationship with the blank page itself. This simple cube is a recurrent form in many of Houédard's later typestracts and it is repeated with increasing ambition and skill throughout the years, taking on complex philosophical, phenomenological and theological meanings.

Here I return to the typestract the *five Buddha families & the womb of the tathagatas* to discuss further how this work may represent the Matrix of Interdependent Transmission between people, objects, poems and events that this thesis begins to discuss (Fig. 3). In Vajrayana Buddhism, this womb realm is the metaphysical space inhabited by the five Wisdom Buddhas. According to the scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism, these five Buddha Families are those of: Variochana Buddha, Akshobyha Buddha, Amoghasiddhi Buddha, Ratnasambhava Buddha, and Amitabha Buddha. These Buddhas are symbolic within many ritualistic practices, but what is interesting for the construction of my theoretical argument here is how each one of these Buddhas represents one of the five aggregates as discussed in 1.5 JE/ MOI flicker effect**.** Central to the esoteric meditation practices associated with the ritual use of this mandala, is the meditation on the emptiness of the five aggregates. The very abstraction in Houédard's typestract seems to suggest this meditation on emptiness. Each empty cube is an abstraction of the emanation body of the Buddha, usually depicted figuratively in the painted mandala thankas within Mahayana traditions. It could be argued that Houédard's implementation of both solid and broken outlines suggests the disintegration in the perception of the inherent existence of the aggregate of form (and by extension the misperception of the inherent existence of feeling, consciousness, discrimination) that such a meditation on this mandala aims to produce within the mind of the practitioner. Again, as in the discussion above about *3-dimensional poem,* the interplay of the inked forms on the page, produced by the typewriter ribbon, and the blank page they are typed upon, could suggest this interplay between form and emptiness. If, as outlined above, the / mark in the *4 stages of spiritual typewriting* can be said to represent the realization of emptiness by an inferential valid cognizer of a conceptual mind and the blankness of the interiority of stage four as representing the realization of emptiness with a valid cognizer of a non-conceptual mind[76], then so too in *the five buddhas* …the subtle

development of the meditative mind and its perception and understanding of form can be inferred from the interplay of the _____ solid and broken ------ forms on the page and their relationship with the blank page itself. In this way we can start to understand how an analysis of *the five buddha families and the womb of the tathagatas* can be undertaken within the context of Vajrayana Buddhism and the ritualistic method practice of Mandala. We already have a reference by Houédard, several years preceding the typestract to ideas of the "womb" of the "mother" and "matrix" from which the interdependence of all phenomena may be intuited.

> […] we need artobjects (eg an image of god as the void the depth &c poems music &c) since only thru matter we intuit the other – by existing the concrete is the nonother – & the boundary other/nonother cuts off all that is MAYA (root MATR – whence meter measure matrix matter mother &c) thru in & by which ALONE the nonmaya the infinite is revealed hinted-at manifested incarnated […].[77]

These ideas are a way of framing *the five Buddha families and the womb of the tathagatas* as such an "artobject" and as such, a method "thru which we intuit the other". But fundamental to the critical conceptual framework that underpins this thesis, this intuition of the "other" is that the other doesn't exist independently at all. The following chapters explore this embodiment of Buddhist phenomenology in Houédard's work, discussing in depth how we can understand and then position his artobjects, as he did himself, as yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala.

[1] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," *The Aylesford Review,* 3.3 Autumn (1960): 92.
[2] Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 90.
[3] Houédard, "chronobiography/autozoography," Ceolfrith 15, ed. Charles Verey (Sunderland: Ceolfrith Arts Centre, 1972): 26.
[4] Fiona MacCarthy, writes, in her obituary of Father Brocard: "In the 1950s at Aylesford, Father Brocard, whose religious name memorialised the 13th-century prior of the hermits of Mount Carmel, initiated the magazine that burgeoned to become one of the leading literary-intellectual journals of its period. The Aylesford Review, which has been seen as a successor to TS Eliot's Criterion, lasted from 1955 to 1968, and many of those early issues are now collectors' items." She continues: "Brocard's wide contacts and warm friendships gave the review its special flavour; it was the point at which the beat generation met the Roman Catholic church in England, an unlikely convergence only he could have achieved." Accessed 8 October 217, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2000/apr/04/guardianobituaries.
[5] These Aylesford articles can be found in the original editions of the magazine with the exception of "Beat and AfterBeat", which I republished in *The Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard* (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 126-141.
[6] Dom Stephen Horton, "Dom Sylvester Houédard" Funeral Homily given on the occasion of Houédard's funeral at Prinknash Abbey, 20th February, (1992), unpublished typescript, John Rylands University Library Manchester Special Collections.
[7] Mariana Warner, "Dom Sylvester Houédard," Obituary, *The Independent,* Wednesday 22nd January (1992).
[8] Ibid.
[9] Horton, "Dom Sylvester Houédard."
[10] Guy Brett, "Gloster Ode cosmic poet," Obituary, *The Guardian,* Wednesday January 29th (1992).
[11] Ibid.
[12] Horton, "Dom Sylvester Houédard".
[13] This article is a review of five books from Rider and Company, by Houédard, who 'listed [them] in descending order both of price and importance'. These are: *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism,* Lama Anagarika Govinda (1959); *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy,* Dr Chandradhar Sharma (1960); *Ch'an and Zen teaching – First Series,* ed. Lu K'uan Yu (1960); *Meditation and Mankind,* by Vladimir Lindenberg, trans. by Betty Collins (1959); *Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism,* Arthur Osbourne (1959).
[14]Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 91.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Charles Verey writes: "In the wake of Vatican II, an office was established by the papacy to set in motion a programme of monastic interfaith dialogue: Sylvester was enrolled as a committee member in Britain." Charles Verey, "Dom Sylvester's Wider Ecumenism", 28.
[18] Originally a talk Houédard gave at St Anne's Society, Soho, London, later published as "The Wider Ecumensim" *The Aylesford Review,* v.7, n.2, (1965). "The Wider Ecumenism" is a phrase Houédard coined to distinguish his own interfaith vision and the "wider concrete" methods of transmission of this vision.
[19] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 96.
[20] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 92-3.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] In this article, Houédard reviews: Juan Mascarò (trans), *The Bhagavad-Gita,* (Penguin Books, 1962); Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen,* (Penguin Books, 1962); John Blofeld (trans), *The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai on Sudden Illumination,* (Rider, 1962); Nyanaponika Thers (trans), *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation,* (Rider, 1962); Charles Lik, *Ch'ang & Zen Teaching,* (Rider, 1962); *The Aylesford Review,* 5.1, Winter (1962).
[25] Here Houédard reviews nineteen books, exemplifying the increasing critical and academic attention Eastern philosophies were garnering during the early 1960s. These books were: *Zen Catholicism,* Dom Aelred Graham osb (New York: Harcourt Bruce, 1963) and (London: Collins, 1964); *The Way of the Mountain,* Marco Pallis, (Peter Owen, 1960); *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation,* Charles Luk (London:

Rider, 1964); *Tolerance*, Phra khantipalo (London: Rider, 1964); *The Presence of Tibet,* Lois Lang-Sims, (The Cresset Press, 1963); *The New Religions of Japan,* Harry Tomsen, Chas E. (Vermont & Tokyo: Tuttle & Co, 1963); *What is Subud?* By Gordon van Hein (London: Rider, 1963); *My Land and My People,* Dalai Lama, (Panther, 1964); *Buddhism,* Edward Conze (London: Faber, 1963); *Buddha and Buddhism,* Maurice Percheron, trans Edmund Stapleton, (Longmans, 1957); *A History of Zen Buddhism,* Heinrich Dumoulin trans Paul Peachey (London: Faber, 1963); *The Axis and the Rim* by Arthur Osbourn, Vincent Stuart, (1963); *Crisis for Buddhism,* Holmes Welch, Life International; *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu ed D.C. Lau, London: Penguin, 1963); *Catholic Church and World Religion,* R C Zaehner, (Burns Oates, 1964); *At Sundry Times,* R C Zaehner, (London: Faber, 1958); *The Encounter of Religions,* Jaques-albert Cuttat, (Belgium: Desclée, 1960); *Essentials of Zen Buddhism,* D T Suzuki, anthologised by Bernard Phillips, (London: Rider, 1963), *The Aylesford Review,* 7.2, Summer (1965).

[26] Houédard, "The Wider Ecumenism," 119.

[27] Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture,* (London: Paladin, 1970).

[28] Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (London: Penguin, 2006): 19. *The Dharma Bums* was first published in Great Britain in 1959 by André Deutsch Ltd, and it is this first British Edition that Houédard read and kept on his book shelf.

[29] Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums,* 8.

[30] The Benedictine monk Bede Griffiths joined with a Belgian monk, Father Francis Acharya, OCSO, to establish Kristiya Sanyasa Samaj, Kurisumala Ashram ("Mountain of the Cross"), a Syriac Rite monastery of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Kerala.

[31] Houédard, "Men-Men & Right Mind-Minding", *The Aylesford Review,* 5.1 Winter (1962): 14-17.

[32] Ibid., 17

[33] Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 96.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Houédard, "The Wider Ecumenism," 119.

[37] Ibid.

[38] David N. Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism in Britain: Transplantation, development and adaptation* (London and New York: Routledge & Curzon, 2004): 17

[39] Ibid.

[40] Anagarika Govinda (born Ernst Lothar Hoffmann, 17 May 1898 – 14 January 1985) was the founder of the order of the Arya Maitreya Mandala and an expositor of Tibetan Buddhism, Abhidharma, and Buddhist meditation as well as other aspects of Buddhism. He was also a painter and poet.

[41] Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 95.

[42] I have not been able to access these letters due to the current restrictions placed upon the access to Houédard's archive by Prinknash Abbey.

[43] Robin Campbell, "Foreword," *Tantra,* catalogue to the exhibition *Tantra,* Hayward Gallery, 30 September – 7th November, 1971 (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971): 4.

[44] Philip Rawson, "Foreword," *Tantra,* catalogue to the exhibition *Tantra,* Hayward Gallery, 30 September – 7th November, 1971 (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971): 4.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Philip Rawson, "Introduction," *Tantra* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971): 6.

[48] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Mahamudra Tantra: An Introduction to Meditation on Tantra,* (Ulverston: Tharpa Publications, 2005): 19.

[49] Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 96.

[50] Rawson, *Tantra,* 6.

[51] Houédard, "Heathen Holiness," 97.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Houédard, "The Wider Ecumenism," 120.

[54] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *tantric poems perhaps*… Writers Forum Folder 2 (London: Writers Forum, 1969): unpaginated.

[55] Ibid.

[56] See glossary: *the five aggregates*.

[57] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso "The Paths of Accumulation and Preparation," *Heart Of Wisdom, The Essential Wisdom teachings of Buddha* (Ulverston: Tharpa,1986): 26.

[58] Ibid., 27.

[59] Ibid.
[60] A cognizer that principally apprehends a particular attribute of an object. There are fifty-one specific mental factors. Each moment of mind comprises a primary mind and various mental factors. Accessed May 23rd 2017 http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika.
[61] The aggregate of compositional factors comprises all mental factors except feeling and discrimination, as well as non-associated compounded phenomena. Accessed May 23rd 2017 http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika.
[62] See glossary: *Dependent-related phenomenon*.
[63] Another Flicker effect analogy can come from considering what is known as 'flicker fusion' in the technologies that present moving images- cinema, T.V or digital video. The flicker fusion threshold is the frequency at which an intermittent light stimulus appears to be completely steady to the observer. If the frame rate falls below the flicker fusion threshold, flicker will appear to the viewer and the continuum of image is broken. This is what happens in the process of inner contemplation, or meditation or as Houédard calls it "mind minding". The frames of self-projection slow down to a speed where the flicker begins to appear to the mind – What lies behind the flicker effect of this MOI, is JE.
[64] Houédard, "The Wider Ecumenism," 120.
[65] Gyatso, *Heart Of Wisdom,* 57.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "The Wider Ecumenism," 121.
[68] John Blofeld, *The Way of Power: A Practical Guide to the Tantric Mysticism of Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970): 52.
[69] Houédard, "The Wider Ecumenism," 121.
[70] Geshe Kelsang Rinpoche, *Understanding the Mind: The Nature and Power of the Mind* (Ulverston: Tharpa,1993): 25.
[71] See glossary: *Inferential Cognizer.*
[72] Ibid.
[73] Thompson, *felt: FLUXUS, JOSEPH BEUYS AND THE DALAI LAMA* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 210.
[74] Blofeld, *The Way of Power,* 52-3.
[75] Ibid., 53.
[76] The Mahayana Buddhist practitioner first apprehends emptiness with conceptual mind of an inferential valid cognizer before apprehending emptiness directly with the non-conceptual mind of a valid cognizer. For a more detailed explanation see Geshe Kelsang Gyatso *The New Heart of Wisdom* (London; Tharpa Publications, 2013): 22-3.
[77] Houédard, "The Wider Ecumenism," 121.

Chapter 2 new beat/ monknik wind

The Introduction established that Houédard himself and a number of writers, locate the significance of his interest in the American beat poets and writers in the 1950s. No previous study has established that this influence developed into actual friendships and correspondence in the 1960s and there are no prior accounts of Houédard's relationships with Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs and Gregory Corso. This chapter is structured around the first close reading of the unpublished letters between Allen Ginsberg and Houédard, locating in these archive documents evidence of a shared frustration with beat poetics and a search for new textual strategies that will embody their growing interest in Buddhism.

This account also seeks to trace the lineage of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's tranplantation of the Tibetan Crazy Wisdom Lineage to the West, in his first encounters with Houédard at Prinknash Abbey, and demonstrate the significant role Houédard may have played as a conduit for this lineage transmission, laying the groundwork for Ginsberg to meet Trungpa in the 1970s and later become one of his followers.

The overall structure of this chapter is divided into five sections. **2.1 new beat/ monknik wind: Dom Sylvester Houédard and Allen Ginsberg** begins with a close reading of Houédard's article "Beat & Afterbeat; a parallel condition of poetry and theology", and how, in sending this article to Allen Ginsberg, he initiated a lifetime friendship and correspondence with not only Ginsberg, but also other prominent beat writers such as Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs.

2.2 like its crazy I know locates a Buddhist discourse, primarily Tibetan, in the letters that illuminate Houédard's role as conduit for Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's Tibetan Tantric Crazy Wisdom Lineage into avant-garde poetics.

2.3 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche establishes the circumstances behind the meeting between Houédard and Trungpa in England and suggests that Trungpa's own commentary for the transmission of Crazy Wisdom can be used to further understand the frameworks of both the documented and undocumented connections between an avant-garde Buddhist sangha.

2.4 The Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: Om Mani Padme Hum explores the tangible evidence of transmission that can be brought to light in archive documents and looks at the transmission of the mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum" in the poetry of Houédard and Ginsberg.

2.5 Queer Dharma explores the homoerotic subtext of the letters, positioning them within the wider discourses of Queer Dharma and Tantric Buddhism.[1]

Through a close reading of his essay “Beat & Afterbeat”, alongside his correspondence with Allen Ginsberg, this chapter establishes how Houédard’s increasing study and contemplation of Buddhism, coincides with meeting the exiled Tibetan Lamas Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong Tulku Rinpoche, his move away from the lyrical poetic line in his verse and his search for an *after*beat prose and poetics.

new beat/ monknik wind: Dom Sylvester Houédard and Allen Ginsberg.

Houédard first wrote to Allen Ginsberg in the New Year of 1963. Houédard was at Prinknash Abbey in the cold English midwinter, hunched over his typewriter in "this lovely heaviness/ of January light". The "thin/ thoughtless/ plain orange & cotton" curtains in his cell half pulled against "a sky-grey winter sky".[2]

Ginsberg was at the other side of the world in Benares, India, "Spending lots of time at burning ghats watching corpses crackle on little woodpile beds – cows browsing & dogs sniffing & untouchables with long bamboo poles turning the meat dolls over on the flames […]".[3]

Houédard made contact with Ginsberg on the eve of the publication of his essay "Beat & Afterbeat: a parallel condition of poetry & theology" for *The Aylesford Review* in the spring of that year. He included a draft copy of this essay, interested to know what Ginsberg would think of the article, he wrote "if theres anything you think cld be changed or corrected let me know & i'll see how i can work it in – and if you think it stinks well let me know all the same".[4] However, as Ginsberg's reply makes clear, he never actually received the draft copy, "Your letter arrived forwarded but not whatever Aylesford you might have enclosed so partly the message I could read came thru garbled." In fact, Ginsberg went further, "I didn't actually understand your letter".[5] In response, Houédard reflects:

> yr letter of only 8 days ago came this morning & ive been going round asking everybody: do i talk the way i write? honestly i do not know – i usually try to think of writing the way i talk: (& do i talk & write the way i think?) its all communication problems inbetween the noword precision of computer language & the noword allness of contemplation[...].[6]

Houédard's prose style in the letter to Ginsberg is identical to that found in the article. "Beat & Afterbeat" is, like the articles discussed in the Introduction, in one sense a book review, surveying contemporary publications from both North America and Great Britain, such as *The New Poetry* by A. Alvarez and Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry, 1945-60* alongside periodicals such as *The Evergreen Review* and *New Departures.* It is difficult to follow Houédard's train of thought in the article, even with a knowledge of the poets, poems and publications mentioned, not least because he is also making the ambitious attempt to equate the fissure developing in the poetry scene in Great Britain in 1963 with that of the theological landscape:

> […] the same shape can be seen in theology: this new beat/ monknik wind of popular fauvre livedeparture biblical-liturgical theologies reacting against dessicated past systematizations […].[7]

The article is most useful in locating Houédard's own position at the time. It is the first published mention that he might be experimenting with form and the typewriter, "my typoems & wordsmudges"[8] and in and amongst his speculations as to what may come in this "afterbeat" landscape is a brief historical context for concrete poems, both visual and aural, that he later develops into the far more comprehensive ancestry and chronology in his essay "Between Poetry and Painting A Chronology".[9]

Perhaps the reason Ginsberg couldn't understand Houédard's letter is that this "new beat/ monknik" prose is located somewhere in that very fissure. In a conversation I had with Charles Verey, who has undertaken extensive biographical research on Houédard, we discussed the emergence of this bebop prosody in Houédard and were both in agreement that it seems to emerge in the winter of 1962/63 as a necessitated structural device for the writing of "Beat & Afterbeat" but is then sustained and adapted afterwards as a suitable linguistic style to further express both his "wider ecumenism" and notion of a "wider concrete" (see *yantra*).

It is a "new beat" not just *after* Ginsberg, but rather more obviously *after* Kerouac too. This is exemplified later in the article when Houédard gives a vivid and complex description as to how to listen to and interpret the syntax of Kerouac. This extract, cluttered up with adjectival clauses, abandoning standard grammar and punctuation for a rhythm of ampersands and assonance, embodies the methods of composition it alludes to:

> […] [the] abstract pattern of Kerouac sound in long long sentences switching off to jewelcentre every sort of real life distraction on their simple always basic simple way that end up sometimes pages after bang on the right fullstop to hiply leave reader wide aware its this improvisation variation offbeat deviation swinging everywhichway out of sentence theme & weaving in & out & thru a woof of stinging tingling ear-cling stardust before regaining orbit that's the true real Kerouac & worth reading him, the honey holy jubilus of light Gregorian pitching on & thru its swing sprung notes back & thru the 1/2 tone layer in & out & up away from words & sense & now on a's & e's of purest vowel-sound & back, the melisma of utter plainchant-jazz cool modal bop […].[10]

In this example, Houédard fuses together a musical vocabulary taken from life within the walls of a Benedictine Monastery; "holy", "Gregorian" "jubilus", "melisma of utter plainchant" with that from a secular "jazz" "improvisation" and "modal bop". It is a compositional method that imitates that outlined by Kerouac himself, in his piece, *Essentials of Spontaneous Prose.* Houédard's critical discourse, certainly adopts a style of writing and language, following Kerouac's instruction to allow words to "follow roughly outlines in outfaning movement over subject, as river rock, so mindflow over jewel-centre need […]

arriving at pivot, where what was dim-formed 'beginning' becomes sharp-necessitating 'ending"'.[11]

What this example demonstrates is how this method for writing appealed to Houédard. It is not just that Kerouac's statements in his *Belief & Technique For Modern Prose: List of Essentials* to "Remove literary, grammatical and syntactical inhibition", "No time for poetry but exactly what is" and "The unspeakable visions of the individual" are useful to apply to Houédard's prose, but that Kerouac's permission to the writer to allow words to "pile up" and "buildup" enabled Houédard to pile up theological thought from many traditions in just one sentence.[12]

Houedard's prose follows closely Kerouac's strategy of "No period separating sentence – structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid needless commas – but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing […]".[13] For Houédard it is a textual approach utilized to elucidate an ecumenical vision. He writes:

> [this beat] flight from unnecessary & uneven (pedantically) necessary elements in language wasn't just ellipsis zeugma & anacoluthon […]
> it was creative elimination: a gestalt tendency towards the sort of incoherence only oriental mentalities have carried off so far: imagist & zenward like haiku & tankas & hsieh-yi slapdash suiboku painting telegrammatical & at a peak in headlines […].[14]

In other words, when this is applied to his own practice, Houédard can be said to miss out words, modify others or disrupt grammar, as part of a deliberate "creative elimination", a dis-ontology that embodies the "incoherence" of the non-conceptual he found in "oriental mentalities". It is a textual strategy that is attempting to enact the emptiness from which all form emerges and returns, like the similar strategies Houédard found in Zen haikus, Tantric tankas or suiboku painting. Yet the extent to which this linguistic structure works with or works against the content is an area for debate. Donald Carlos describes Houédard's article "to freshen our sense of the language we do have" as "several pages" of cut up (?) prose" in an "unfathomable article-cum-bibliography", concluding "[t]he proof reading must have been a nightmare".[15] It is easy to see how a reader may interpret Houédard's writing, like Carlos, as "gibberish". However I argue these prose techniques are a sincere attempt by Houédard to put into language his "wider ecumenism". He is writing in a reductive, constricted language with contracted words, coinages, blended and compounded words and a plethora of other linguistic techniques all fused with an ear for the spontaneous and repetitious bebop prosody of beat. Proper nouns are almost always in the lower case. It is rare to find a full stop or a comma. Instead the flow of words is punctuated by the forward slash, dash and ampersand keys, an un-privileging of semantic clauses and nouns phrases.

No one referenced person or poem is more important than another, no statement is conclusive or the last word. It is a style suited to the art and literary histories he was drawn to write and his critical position that explored the entanglement of Western artistic experimentation and Eastern philosophy.

As he puts it to Ginsberg, "its all communication problem inbetween the noword precision of computer language & the noword allness of contemplation."[16] Here, for example, Houédard's playful compounding allows a visual play and pun on the "now word" experiential immediacy of communicating through type and the "no word" experience of contemplation. It is a philosophical and creative problem that he returns to frequently:

> is /isnt innerness related to outerness: do my images separate or unite my inside/outside worlds? […] how do problems of grabbing outside/inside worlds relate? these specifically – what common ground what sharing harmony & coexistence is there between human innerness & the abhomunist[17] outside?[18]

This theological question is also an artistic one. In "Beat & Afterbeat" he locates in the "indeterminacy in music" and "action painting" the same investigation into the "spiritual problems of simultaneity of innerness/outerness […] – the syncopation of self/nonself like creation/non creation".[19] Houédard is beginning to explore what, if any, resolution to the perceived paradox of "self/ nonself" found in Western philosophical and theological dualism that there may be in "zen" and an "oriental mentality" which encourages "dropping every fixed concept of self identity role ideal habit & pleasure".[20] In this phrase (a paraphrase from Ginsberg – see below) that Houédard positions himself as a beat too. As mentioned earlier, "Beat & Afterbeat" is the beginning of a personal dialogue with the beat poets that he has read and admired since the 1950s. In this article and in the subsequent correspondence with Ginsberg, Houédard places himself in the same poetic territory.

> By the 50s *our* generation if you can call it that of Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs Orlovsky & Corso had seen enough of stiff closemindedness doublethink hate apartheid tyranny mental restriction social irresponsibility bombs & defensiveness in all that shld be the most tender human onward plain & beneficent to all. [my italics].[21]

Houédard uses the pronoun "our" and later quotes Ginsberg at length in the article:

> Dropping every fixed concept of self identity role ideal habit & pleasure: dropping language itself & words as medium of consciousness: dropping any fixed language habit of innerthought monolog abstraction mentalimage symbol: exercising unknown unused areas of the physical brain with electronic SF drug & stroboscopic helps: breathing exercises: thinks for practice in music colours nothinks: originating & believing hallucinations: altering neurologically fixated habit patterns of reality & GIVE UP ANY POEM PRACTICE DEPENDING ON LIVING

> INSIDE THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE -ON WORDS AS THE MEDIUM OF CONSCIOUS BEING […] [Houédard's capitization].[22]

Indeed, quoting Ginsberg, it could be the monk himself saying:

> […] since then ive been living in the doldrums still keeping up with literature but uncertain if theres enough of ME left to continue as some kind of Ginsberg […][23]

Andrew Wilson concurs:

> Houédard had been aware of Ginsberg's poetry and that of other beat poet's since the early Fifties and had been initially attracted to the 'inner sacred source of its vision', though by 1962 he was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the truthfulness of such work.[24]

As "Beat & Afterbeat" demonstrates, Houédard was increasingly looking for a poetry that could be more truthful about reality – an "afterbeat" use of language that could move away from the confessional "self identity role ideal habit & pleasure" of beat. What Wilson does not acknowledge here is that Ginsberg too was looking for "the next step if any for poetry" and, like Houédard, was unable to imagine what that might be in 1962/3.

The tone of the article continues in the letters. He uses the pronouns "we" and addresses Ginsberg in the American poet's own metaphorical language, writing "we were sunflowers"[25] and "you & me I suppose – old angel midnights".[26] A further example illustrates the point further.

> […] some angels grow hairy wings & here in this bitter glittercloister of my skin trying god for junk i've seemed to be yr sort of incu/succu-bus at the maddest moments you & peter & j b & g have had – weve made the same sense […].[27]

It is a very telling and insightful phrase, "weve made the same sense". Houédard even goes as far as saying god is his heroin; "god for junk" in, what could be argued, as a conflation of linguistic registers: an Abrahamic religious discourse cut up with the slang of the underworld narcotics user, like that so often used by Ginsberg, Burroughs and Kerouac. And there is the description of his physical body as a "glittercloister", a compound word that oxymoronically co-joins the semantics of a transient deceptive (all that glitters…) worldly frivolity with a medieval cloister echoing with prayers.

It is a surprising familiarity of tone considering that the monknik and the beat poet have never met. However, Houédard is keen to for Ginsberg to visit him. And in his second letter, there is an open invitation to stay at Prinknash Abbey, not only to Ginsberg, but Kerouac, Corso and Burroughs, "When any of you is in the country warn me I'd give anything to fix a meeting […]".[28] Within a few months, although Houédard is still yet to meet any of the beats, he is writing directly, not only to Ginsberg, but to Kerouac, Corso and Burroughs too.

In the winter of 1962/3 when Houédard and Ginsberg began their correspondence, they were in fact both in search of textual strategies that could move their work away from the "holy wiggy" confessional poetry written by "some kind of Ginsberg" or "some kind of Houédard", textual strategies that, as I shall now argue, were to be found in their increasing understanding, and later practice, of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism. Therefore, at this stage, before either of them declared their poetic experiments to be Buddhist in any way, it might be fitting to ascribe to them Tony Trigilio's term "Practitioners of Reality". Trigilio states:

> […] in a 2003 Stanford University Poetics Seminar on Buddhism and contemporary American poetry titled "Practitioners of Reality", Michael McClure affirms that no such thing as an American Buddhist poetry can exist if such a poetry is described as one that depends on an author who represents him/herself as "committedly a Buddhist".[29]

It would be inappropriate to describe either Houédard or Ginsberg as "committedly a Buddhist" in 1963. However it would be accurate to suggest that both poets were in development of poetic strategies that were in a parallel development to the emerging Buddhist epistemology in the West: a poetics of reality. As Houédard summarizes in "Beat & Afterbeat", "The new wave afterbeats are alive because this is human reaction to presence of holy ALWAYS present in any ultimate - & poetry like that's a conforming of real to Real".[30] Certainly the words of a practitioner of reality. Trigilio states it was the aim of his book on Ginsberg "to map Ginsberg's competing, and at times eccentric, Buddhisms into something that might be called his 'Buddhist Poetics'", mindful of Ginsberg's own efforts to "reconceive [his] Beat improvisatory aesthetic as a Buddhist one".[31] If Ginsberg's reimagines his best improvisatory aesthetic to express his interest in Buddhism, Houédard is searching for a form with which to express his own "eccentric Buddhisms", and for a time, the beat improvisatory aesthetic was explored.

The letters between Ginsberg and Houédard are remarkable for the way in which the monk immediately discusses matters of contemplation and language, the "metawordable parapoetry of people whove found the point the point where poetry & prayer cross those 2 parallel links between time & the timeless",[32] most notably the Tibetan Buddhism that Ginsberg at this time was some years away from studying and practicing. In "Beat & Afterbeat", Houédard is facing up to his own poetic and theological position in the early 1960s, recognizing, like Ginsberg, that confessional syncopated and spontaneous poetic composition is too much "doing IN language" rather than "doing WITH language". It is a style that does not yield the poetic forms in which he can answer the repeatedly self-posed question, "How do 2 problems of grabbing outside/inside worlds relate?"

> at this point dilemma: is/isnt innerness related to outerness: do my images separate or unite my inside/outside worlds? This isnt poetry problem but human: 2 ½ M years old.[33]

Finding an appropriate poetic form to address “all spiritual problems of simultaneity of innerness/outerness” is a fundamental “phenomenological problem”.

2.2 like its crazy I know

This chapter, so far, has demonstrated that a spiritual discourse can be located in Houédard essay "Beat & Afterbeat". The following section will trace it in the correspondence between Ginsberg and Houédard and explain how this spiritual discourse is specifically Buddhist. If we return again to the content of this first letter, Houédard writes to Ginsberg with the presumption that the latter has received the intended enclosed copy of the "Beat and Afterbeat" essay. Therefore, confusingly for Ginsberg, Houédard simply continues on airmail paper the discussion he earnestly began in the article, outlining a possible new poetic method:

> […] this brink of blankness weve reached is loss of every me in a new direction as first step in real utter symbiosis […] its the nothing the pit the godpit below behind beneath above all round: everything is fine except its built on nothing (or Nothing) & its this nothing – Nothing *copulation* that gives meaning to anything that means anything: its got no meaning itself though or it wldnt be the neti-neti nada-nada *lay* […] Intuit the fence ahead, the breakthru point to wordless union, & even after look back & see how the wordless union was there in & thru & below the words all the time but unadverted too because of the words […] [my italics].[34]

Ginsberg is right. This explanation of poetic method is "too abstruse" if it is taken out of context of the Buddhisms, specifically the Tantric commentaries, Houédard is beginning to weave into his prose. There is a Tantric subtext here in the phrases "nothing *copulation*" and the "neti-neti nada-nada *lay*". Philip Rawson explains advanced sexual rituals are spiritual methods, within both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra:

> Tantra's view of the final goal is shaped by a vision of cosmic sexuality. The male principle of Universal Creation is the seed of Being, which is at the same time infinitesimally small and all-embracing. It is often called Shiva, and represented by an erect male organ, or lingam. The female principle, projected from the male, is the Goddess, or Shakti, who is the active partner, spreading out space, time and the universe before each individual […] Most important is the reverence paid to her as the female generative organ of the world, its yoni or vulva.[35]

Rawson articulates how "sexual intercourse" in Tantra "is thus taken as a paradigm or symbol of divine worship and bliss".[36] Houédard's phrase "nothing copulation" enables both a general Tantric reading of the cosmic heterosexuality Rawson outlines but also a more specific reference to the meditative goal of the union of bliss with emptiness, as depicted in the, again, heterosexual Vajrayana iconography of the Tantric deities such as Heruka (the male principle) in sexual union with his consort Vajravarahi (the female principle).[37] Yet, in Houédard's "copulation", specifically in the context of his letters to Ginsberg, there is also

offered the possibility of a union beyond heterosexuality, as I shall discuss in more detail in section **2.5 Queer Dharma**. As the Gay Buddhist scholar Jeffrey Hopkins has discussed, the emptiness, or nothing behind sexual identity in Tantric sexual yoga, and its purpose in revealing the Ultimate Reality beyond the world of appearances is compatible with both homosexual and heterosexual desire.[38] Houédard's expression "neti neti nada nada lay" confirms this. "[N]eti neti" is a Sanskrit expression, found in Hinduism, which means "not this, not that" and "nada", again means nothing. All sexual identity can be refuted as "not this" and "not that", when it is used within a ritual method to transform desire into a revelation of the divine, god or Ultimate Reality.

In the next part of the letter, there can be no doubt that Houédard's language is situated clearly within the context of Vajrayana Buddhism, and specifically the Kargyüpta Sect:

> It's a frightening world, one known maybe to some of the Kargyüpta (redhat) monks in tibet to shamans & magicians but it's a world THIS side of THAT & the only can be its pretending to be THAT.

Here, in his decision to reference the Kargyüpta Tibetan Buddhist Lineage, one that has ancient and very practical methods to "intuit the fence ahead, the breakthru point to wordless union" it is interesting to consider whether Houédard could have intuited Ginsberg's recent coincidental/ serendipitous meeting with "the head of Karguypta sects". As Ginsberg writes in his reply to the monk:

> […] a fat smiling young man. Has a magic black hat supposed to give you permanent liberation one look at it. I came on a good day in Sikkim to his monastery & saw it for an hour & talked with him.[39]

As the letters pass between this "monknik" and "old-hat" Ginsberg, there is serendipitous interest in Tantric Buddhism evident from both sides. On January 17th 1963, just eight days before Houédard sat down to type his first letter to Ginsberg, the beat poet had recorded a dream, in his journal, where:

> […] out of the closet or bathroom walks a tall red robed figure – large man in heavy tibetan robes – with seemingly no head but held by his hand a small bright hole where his head should be – he's holding by hand up there a telescope […].[40]

It must have been a particularly vivid dream as it illustrated by one of the few sketches in the journal. In another journal entry from the same week he writes "Tibetan Buddist [sic] 'Secret oral Doctrines' - & Visionary Experience"[41]. There are other auspicious references in the journals at this time, such as dreaming "a big busfull of Tibetan Monks just floated down

from the sky on a parachute".[42] However there are no references to receiving a letter from a Benedictine Monk in Gloucestershire, England.

Houédard addresses Ginsberg in a tone of voice far removed from the accent of received pronunciation he usually used. "My dear ALLEN Like its crazy I know…" and signs off "yrs maybe crazily but sincerely…" It is easy to gloss over the word "crazy" as Houédard emulating an American bebop jazz vocabulary, in the same way that later in the letter he references the beat writers as "cat catalysts" or his generation of writers as "weirdies". But I want to suggest that Houédard's use of "crazy" here is far more profound. That his use of the word "crazy" is in actuality a deliberate invocation, shamanic, even magical, perhaps, a secret of the "crazy wisdom" lineage of "divine madmen" found in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, a lineage later brought into popular consciousness in the 1970s by the exiled Tibetan Lama of the Kargyupta Lineage, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Keith Dowman explains:

> 'Crazy Wisdom' is the English term (based on the traditional references for the Tibetan "divine madmen") that has been used since the 1970s to refer to the full range of behavior and speech of such extraordinary adepts in various traditions. The source of the "craziness" of such a one is freedom, not peculiarity or feigned insanity. Crazy wisdom is not mere outlandish behavior, speech, or action. Rather, the crazy wisdom adept does not stop at the boundaries of conventional behavior in his or her compassionate effort to liberate those with whom he or she comes into contact.[43]

As Dowman explains, Crazy Wisdom may have come to widespread attention in the 1970s but is part of a long-established lineage of unorthodox Buddhist practitioners. Dowman continues, in his discussion of the eighty-four Mahasiddhis and the Tibetan Crazy Wisemen:

> Some were celibates, others sexually active tantrics, some were taught initially in monasteries, and others had no formal training whatsoever. What bound them together as a group was that they were free adepts, founded in a great realization, and therefore they brought an all-encompassing spontaneity and wisdom to all of their actions.[44]

It could be argued that Houédard is just making obvious connections between what could have been perceived as the beats' "outlandish behavior speech, or action" their renowned sexual promiscuity and intoxication and also their self-declared "spontaneity" of their writing methods. However more evidence accrues as their correspondence develops.

In his next letter, Houédard replies; "Kargyüptas I find very rewarding esp their great milarepa (disciple of founder marpa)".[45] Referencing Marpa and his disciple Milarepa is significant:

> In the West, the Tibetan crazy wisdom adept with whom we are most familiar is Milarepa (1025-1135), and his wild guru Marpa. Milarepa's sacred ordeal of testing and eventual growth at the hands of Marpa is justly renowned. But these

> great individuals are just the tip of an iceberg – now being uncovered by the world. The Tibetan tradition includes a rich tapestry of siddhas who taught directly and without hindrance or convention.[46]

And it is worth noting that Houédard doesn't just reference the Kargyüpta Tradition here, he even writes a poem, (one of three that he writes for the occasion of this second letter to Ginsberg, See Appendices 6a and 6b) that is about this very encounter Ginsberg's describes as having with the Kargyüpta magic hat:

> NOTHINKING CAP
> this poem
> s a tight Kargyüpta hat
> that every time
> you put it on
> will bring back hazy crazy
> intuitions
> of sacred
> nothing.[47]

Here, we have the use of the word "crazy" directly in association with the Kargyupta lineage and a special wisdom that can intuit "sacred nothing". It also resonates with Ginsberg's dream in Benares, where the tall red robed Tibetan monk had no head – just a hole of light, emptiness, a sacred nothing. Both Houédard's poem and Ginsberg's journal entry suggest an intangible non-conceptual experience of Buddhist transmission. This is confirmed by Trungpa's own words about Crazy Wisdom. Although there is no published use of the term by Trungpa until the two Crazy Wisdom seminars he gave in December 1972, it is likely that he had used the word in conversations beforehand. What is important here is that Allen Ginsberg was in attendance at the Crazy Wisdom seminars, hearing Trungpa's exposition of what Crazy Wisdom is:

> The idea of *lineage* is associated with the transmission of the message of *adhishthana,* which means "energy' or, if you like, "grace.' This is transmitted like an electric current from the trikaya guru to sentient beings. In other words, crazy wisdom is a continual energy that flows and that, as it flows, regenerates itself.[48]

Trungpa continued:

> The only way to regenerate this energy is by radiating or communicating it, by putting it into practice or acting it out […] The energy of crazy wisdom regenerates itself through the process of our living it.[49]

As I shall now argue, Houédard, through his letters and contact with Ginsberg, was instrumental in the transmission of this Crazy Wisdom energy.

2.3 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

In trying to establish the networks and contexts in which the transmission of Eastern-originated dharma reached Western monks and poets and artists at this time, the addresses and introductions that Houédard sends to his correspondents are important.[50] Once such example, that I interpret as irrefutable evidence that Houédard and Ginsberg are both practicing, acting out or living within the "Crazy Wisdom" lineage, comes two years later, after a number of letters have criss-crossed the world between Prinknash, Asia, and later 704 E 5th Street, New York. Houédard sends Ginsberg the address of two Tibetan monks he had met in Oxford:

> […] the ven rinpoche trulku TRUNGPA & his mate AKONG tulku who is/was at drohma monastery – they live 30A S Margarets road […].[51]

Ginsberg had arrived in England on May 8th, a couple of weeks before receiving Houédard's letter and on this occasion doesn't follow Houédard's advice to make contact with the newly exiled Tibetan Monks. His diary already seems very full. As Barry Miles writes in his biography of Ginsberg:

> It was the first time Allen had been in Britain during the summer and he took advantage of the good weather to explore the country, visiting poets and giving small readings in Worcester, Bristol and Cambridge.[52]

Ginsberg visited Houédard at Prinknash Abbey during this exploration of the country and particularly noteworthy is that Houédard's letter is sent just twelve days before the Ginsberg's performance at the 'Wholly Communion' poetry event at the Albert Hall. Houédard confirms he will be attending this poetry reading and acknowledges that in this visit Ginsberg has "met up with half the scenery --- ica betterbookskoob bob lee […] Jasia? & the rest". Miles confirms this; "Allen used Better Books, London's main literary bookshop, as his headquarters and went to stay with shop's manager in nearby Fitzrovia".[53]

In May 1965 Ginsberg and Houédard meet for the first time and the almost meeting between Ginsberg and Trungpa is not referred to again. There is a gap in the surviving correspondence, and I have not been able to find any other letters between Houédard and Ginsberg until the summer of 1973 when Ginsberg writes the following words to 'Dear Dom S------':

> Been studying tibetan yoga meditation with Chogyam Trungpa (who (?) be in Scotland) and so these last 3 years I sit an hour a day motionless with one syllable of the above Chakra mantra.[54]

Somehow, somewhere, in the intervening time, Ginsberg has met Chögyam Trungpa, and most significantly, he has been studying "tibetan yoga meditation" with him for the last "3

years" and received the lineage teachings of Crazy Wisdom. Ginsberg biographer Michael Schumacher recounts the first meeting between Ginsberg and Chögyam Trungpa:

> [In 1970 Ginsberg] met Tibetan Buddhist Guru Chögyam Trungpa in a chance encounter on the street in Manhattan. Trungpa's assistant recognized Allen, and the poet and Buddhist teacher exchanged addresses, beginning a very important friendship.[55]

In 1965, when Houédard first attempted to introduce Ginsberg to the monk, who would eventually become the latter's guru, "the ven rinpoche trulku TRUNGPA" was sharing a basement flat on St Margaret's Road in Oxford, "with his mate AKONG trulku".[56] When Ginsberg does finally meet Chögyam Trungpa the Tibetan Lama was the charismatic and "outrageous"[57] founder of the 'Tail of the Tiger', the first Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre in the U.S.A, having previously established The Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Meditation Centre in Scotland with Akong Rinpoche in 1967.

Honored since a baby as the reincarnated tenth Trungpa Tulku, he had fled Tibet in 1959, and after a time in India where "in a strange turn of fate, he happened to meet Ginsberg and Orlovsky when they were in the country, though Allen would only remember the occasion many years later when he was shown a photograph of the occasion".[58]

Ginsberg had met Chögyam Trungpa, therefore, whilst in India around about the same time that he received a poetically and theologically esoteric letter from a Benedictine Monk at Prinknash Abbey, Gloucestershire. This same Benedictine monk then urges Ginsberg, a couple of years later, to make contact with Chögyam Trungpa, whom he does, albeit seemingly serendipitously seven years later in California. I write *seemingly* because unlike Michael Schumacher, I view these meetings as much more than "a chance encounter".[59]

Within the framework of Tibetan Buddhism this is not fate, it is Karma.[60] Ginsberg, Houédard and Chögyam Trungpa can be confidently positioned within a broader network of karmically connected newly emerging Western Buddhist Sangha, but specifically in this case within the specifics of the ancient Tibetan Crazy Wisdom lineage as it spreads to the West finding new adherents and new adepts.

But how did Houédard and Trungpa meet? Evidence of their initial meeting comes from the Oxford educated poet and writer Charles Cameron. Writing about his time at the University of Oxford in the early 1960s, he reflects:

> [...] I became friendly with Nick Shoumatoff, an American studying Chinese, who had a curious friend upstairs in the same student lodgings, one Trungpa Rinpoche, studying comparative religion as a Spalding fellow at the time. So Trungpa and I struck a mild friendship, and I took him down to visit the monks at Prinknash, introduced him to Sylvester, and Sylvester in turn introduced him to

> the Abbot of Prinknash, so there was a private confab between the Benedictine and the Tibetan abbots […].[61]

Cameron continues:

> Trungpa later wrote (Born in Tibet, I think it's in the appendix to the 2nd edition) that this visit "strongly encouraged him," and that it "demonstrated that the contemplative life could be carried out in the West." Shortly after, Trungpa founded the first Tibetan monastic community in the west, Samye Ling, in Scotland.[62]

As Trungpa confirms:

> My ambition was to teach and spread the Dharma. I was strongly encouraged by visits to Prinknash Monastery and Stanbrook Abbey, which demonstrated that the contemplative life could be carried out in the West.[63]

To date I have found no evidence of their meeting in the available personal papers of Houédard. During the course of my extensive archival research I found no record of any meetings with Trungpa in any diary, or fold of notepaper slipped inside a book jacket. There are also no references to the particulars of conversations in any of Houédard's talks or articles. Considering the evidence from Cameron and Trungpa himself, that a visit to Prinknash Abbey, and indeed a "private confab" with Houédard, would prove so instrumental to Trungpa's subsequent role in establishing Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism in the West confirms the centrality of Houédard in this Matrix of Interdependent Transmission and the Crazy Wisdom Lineage itself. Paradoxically Houédard's omission of these meetings and transmissions only strengthens the case for them happening. And, in fact Charles Cameron's account of meeting Trungpa and Akong certainly supports the previously discussed ideas about "what happens when nothing happens" in the meetings between Tibetan Lamas and Western lay practitioners:

> Akong was working as a hospital orderly, leaving Trungpa free to study as far as I recall. He seemed pleasant, but I had the impression Trungpa had the brighter step and quicker mind, and I talked more with Trungpa than with Akong. The conversation didn't exactly plumb the Vajrayana depths, though - - I'm afraid my side was along the lines of "Do your monks chant/ our monks chant." [64]

I can of course only speculate that the conversations between Houédard and Trungpa may have, indeed, plumb[ed] the Vajrayana depths. Or maybe not. Here we can recall Trungpa's words that the crazy lineage is about a transmission of energy or grace and that there are three styles of transmitting this energy from person to person. It is important to quote this commentary in full and not paraphrase:

> The lineage has three styles of transmitting this energy. The first is called the *kangsaknyen-gyü.* Here the energy of the lineage is transmitted by word of

> mouth using ideas or concepts […] the dualistic approach is functional and worthwhile […] The second style of communicating, or teaching, is the *rigdzin da-gyü.* This is the method of crazy wisdom, but on the relative level, not the absolute level […] the crazy-wisdom guru does not speak or teach on the ordinary level, but rather, he or she creates a symbol, or means […]. The third one is called *gyalwa gong-gyü. Gong gyu* means "thought lineage" or "mind lineage." […] Here a mutual understanding takes place that creates a general atmosphere – and the message is understood. If the guru of crazy wisdom is an authentic being, then the authentic communication happens and the means of communication is neither words nor symbols […] Maybe it takes the form of waiting – for nothing […] For that matter, it might involve having a very casual relationship: discussing the weather and the flavour of tea: how to make curry, chop suey, or macrobiotic cuisine; or talking about history, or the history of the neighbours – whatever.[65]

When considering Trungpa's exposition and commentary to the three styles of transmitting the energy of the crazy wisdom lineage, a thesis such as this can engage with the evidence of transmission in the words of poems, archive letters and documents, what Trungpa describes as "the nirmanakaya level of teaching".[66] It can investigate and collate evidence of transmission in the signs and symbols in typestracts and art objects and in the situational gatherings at galleries and talks, in museums and monasteries, "the sambhogakya level of teaching", perhaps.[67] However there is no way to provided scholarly evidence of thought-lineage communication, the non-conceptual "teaching of the dharmakaya".[68]

As discussed in the Introduction, Thompson attempts various paradigms and symbols to articulate this thought-lineage transmission within an avant-garde sangha. Citing the relationship between John Cage and Marcel Duchamp as an example, he explains his notion of *interhuman intermedia*, a phrase that goes some way in explaining a model for the complexity of influence and the transmission of ideas.

> Cage once said, "The effect for me of Duchamp's work was to so change my way of seeing that I became in a way a Duchamp unto myself." Cage, through his "recerebrations", did not become "like" Duchamp but in a more complex sense became Duchampian in order to become more fully Cage. So what we might wish to focus upon is not the influence of individuals or ideas as such in an art historical sense but rather the performative practice – within the space of the interhuman encounter – of this kind of interpersonal intermedia".[69]

Quoting the anthropologist Michael Taussig, Thompson then highlights the moment when such mimesis becomes alterity: "[…] Then and only then can spirit and matter, history and nature, flow into each other's otherness".[70] Is it possible to co-join this notion of alterity with Trungpa's assertion that the "thought lineage is more of a presence than something happening"?[71]

> The crazy wisdom of the thought lineage takes a form that is somewhat disappointing to the eager recipitent of the teachings. You might go and pay a visit to the guru, which you have especially prepared for, and he isn't even interested in talking to you […] And there's nothing happening – nothing to such an extent that you walk out with a sense of relief, glad you didn't have to be there any longer. But then something happens to you as if everything did happen during those periods of silence or intensity.[72]

Can "alterity" be successfully positioned within the phenomenological framework of Tibetan Buddhism and in so doing suggest a Matrix of interdependent Transmission of which there is no scholarly evidence, no archive trail, no diary entry? If we return to Cage's words about becoming "a Duchamp unto myself" from inside the Tibetan Vajrayana framework of dependently-related phenomena that I have established in the previous chapter, whereby all phenomenon have no inherent self-existence, then how Cage or anyone of us could become "Duchampian" makes a lot more sense. As also do Houédard's words to Ginsberg quoted above: "here in this bitter glittercloister of my skin trying god for junk *i've seemed to be yr sort of incu/succu-bus* at the maddest moments you & peter & j b & g have had – weve made the same sense […]" [my italics]. Or, as in the small poem "the youpoem for allen ginsberg" that Houédard writes: "this poem/ when you've/ read it/ *will/ be / you*" [my italics].[73] These examples seem to illustrate how Houédard felt he could become Ginsbergian. It also suggests a way of thinking profoundly about the connections between individuals. How Houédard or Ginsberg could become Trungpa-ian. Reginald A. Ray, writer and student of Chögyam Trungpa, terms this the "interpersonal body".

> In the Mahayana, we begin to unfold our "interpersonal body", "the body" that expresses itself in the interpersonal dimension, in an immediate and somatically felt connectedness with other people.[74]

According to Ray, the "interpersonal body" is the second of the Tibetan "three yanas", or three vehicles, the first being the Hinayana Vehicle of the "personal body" and the third being the "cosmic body" of the Vajrayana vehicle. Ray articulates the meditative experience of this "interpersonal body" as follows:

> The fact is, the more we descend into our body, the more we uncover a very vast and expanding interpersonal world of connections with other people […] we discover connections with others that have already been there, perhaps 'forever", presenting themselves as fully formed, in their existence pre-dating any discovery of our own […] We discover that our own body is, at a more subtle level, actually an interpersonal body – our embodiment, this body of ours, has, inherently, a vast, perhaps unlimited interpersonal dimension.[75]

This “interpersonal body” of the Mahayana transforms into the “cosmic body” of the Vajrayana, depicted visually in the Womb Matrix and Houédard’s *five buddha families…* typestract.

> We become aware that there is a pattern that exists beyond the realm of concept or ego, beyond the realm of our personal or even interpersonal karma. Rather, it is a realm that includes them all. […] We begin to find, in our own experience, what traditional religions have meant when they talk about deities, forces, and energies as expressions of sacred, cosmic order […] finding connection with the “self-existing *mandala* (pattern) of reality,” as it is called.[76]

Scholarly research may be able to unearth discussion about the weather, the flavour of tea or how to make a curry but it cannot provide the archive evidence for this interpersonal spiritual exchange. There may have indeed been a profound transmission taking place behind Cameron’s reflection that “[t]he conversation didn't exactly plumb the Vajrayana depths, though – I'm afraid my side was along the lines of "Do your monks chant/ our monks chant”. Even if there was evidence of what Houédard and Trungpa said to each other would it perhaps give no indication that, as Trungpa outlined, “any mutual understanding” had taken place or that a “message is understood”. I can probably never find the evidence that Houédard said or wrote the words “Crazy Wisdom” first to Trungpa, in their initial “conflabs” at Prinknash Abbey. But I can intuit, at the level of the interpersonal, that he did.

2.4 Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: OM MANI PADME HUM

As I asserted in the previous section, when considering Trungpa's exposition and commentary to the three styles of transmitting the energy of the Crazy Wisdom lineage, a thesis such as this can engage with the evidence of transmission in the words of poems, archive letters and documents, what Trungpa describes as "the nirmanakaya level of teaching". Such a transmission can be found in Houédard's second letter to Ginsberg. In an extraordinarily dense piece of prose-poetry, entitled "The Wovenness of Tantra on Its Tripod", Houédard proceeds to give him nothing short of a written transmission of the Om Mani Padme Hum mantra. Perhaps it is a transmission that Houédard had earlier received from the "gewa karmapa lama"[77], now exiled in sikkim, (as Houédard writes to Ginsberg) or perhaps, more significantly, it is from an Oxfordshire encounter with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. A transmission now crafted into a free verse poem that outlines succinctly just what this Benedictine monk means by his own "Catholic Mahayana" and the Sanskrit terms tantra, mantra, mudra, yantra and mandala. The poem also follows closely the commentary to the Om Mani Padme Hum mantra that Houédard had included in his article "Heathen Holiness", discussed in the Introduction. It is a mantra central to all Buddhisms. As Rawson states:

> This mantra appears in many forms, […] Its basic components are: 'Om', the root syllable of origination and dissolution, the ancient Brahmin vibratory syllable in which the presence of the Brahman, i.e. total reality, was condensed (Om also appears as the nucleus of many Hindu and Jaina yantras); "mani' meaning jewel, synonym for vajra, the word which means "diamond', 'thunderbolt' and 'male organ'; 'padme' meaning 'in the lotus', a synonym for the openly displayed manifest world and female organ; and 'Hum' the nuclear mantra in which resides the highest force of enlightenment, an alternative image of the supreme Buddha of any sect.[78]

Given also that Houédard had outlined earlier in the letter that "i usually try to think of writing the way i talk", his commentary in this poem comes as close to an oral transmission of the Kargyüpta teachings, in the context of his own ecumenical theology, as was possible in the circumstances. This poem, "The Wovenness of Tantra on Its Tripod" is of particular interest too as it undoubtedly forms a structural precursor to an (un)conscious/(un)acknowledged influence on Ginsberg's later and well-known poem "Thoughts Sitting Breathing", written almost ten years afterwards (see Appendix 6c). Significantly "The Wovenness of Tantra on Its Tripod" takes each word of the Sanskrit mantra

of the Buddha of Compassion, Avolekitishvara, Om Mani Padme Hum, as four small "even one word poems" and riffs upon what each of these mean in a jazz style bebop:

OM

perfect poem
triple highest & most sacred sound
symbol of every universality
of yehweh the blessed trinity
& christ who is brahma made flesh
of perfection
catholic & mahayana
lived for other beings
&
for us
the path to active acceptance
of the total indiscriminate reality
of "THAT"[79]

What any close critical reading of a line of prose or poetry by Houédard reveals is a consistent syncretic vision of the "wider ecumenism". The Sanskrit seed syllable "OM" reverberates with a "universality" which is "active acceptance" and does not discriminate between the "catholic", the Buddhist "mahayana", the Hindu "brahma made flesh" and the Hebrew "Yahweh". Compare this stanza then to one from Ginsberg's "Thoughts Sitting Breathing" which similarly takes each seed syllable of the mantra and then expands the poetic line into mini exegesis:

OM- the Crown of Emptiness, relax the skullcap wove of formal thought,
Let light escape to Heaven, floating up from heart thru cranium, free
Space for Causeless Bliss.[80]

Trigilio, in discussing Ginsberg's poem suggests:

> The poem proceeds from what seems a cacophony of Tibetan-English speech, with complex Tibetan Buddhist visualization practices overlaid on the redemptive vocalizations of the poem […] Each strophe-line is introduced by one of the six syllables of the Tibetan Chenrezig mantra […] the fundamental, most often repeated mantra in Tibetan Buddhism.[81]

Is this obvious structural correlation between the two poems more than the tantric interplay between what Houédard describes as the "woof my mind & all my innerness" and the "weft the universal world"? Both poets, through grammatical choices and lineation enact the process of meditation, from a moment of single pointed concentration and focus – on the meditation object of the mantric seed syllable OM, which is capitalized and separate (on its own line in Houédard's poem, separated by a dash in Ginsberg's poem), followed by the moments when the mind then loses this object of meditation, dissolving concentration

instead into discriminating thought. In both poems this sets out a process of continually journeying from the inner world to the outer world as the mind moves from single-pointed concentration on an inner subtle object of the mind to a distracting object of the senses in the "outer" world – be it something heard, smelt, tasted, seen or felt, in Ginsberg's words "the wove of formal thought". It is a phrase that echoes the tantric loom metaphor in Houédard's poem. It is very difficult to hold the untrained mind on an object for more than a few seconds. The familiar path is for the mind to move rapidly and distractedly from object to object, freely associating one thing after another after another. This can be demonstrated if we compare, for example, Houédard's exposition of the word "Padme":

> PADME
> the mudfed filthfed lovely lotus
> growing up & thru & out with mindso
> away from dirt & depth
> & turning souldark powers
> into mindflower jewel centre nectar
> the antisin of sex
> & yabyum contemplation[82]

Then Ginsberg's:

> PA: Dog bellies crying happy in the snow, worms share mind's heaviest
> Part, elephants carry Angels whose animal trumpets blow from abdo-
> men deep navel up into the heart – free space for Causeless Bliss
>
> DMI: Down in the pecker, the empty piece of wood – Everyone I fucked
> Is dead and gone – everyone I'm gonna fuck is turning to a ghost-
> All my penis blessedness never'll get lost, but rise from loins & come
> In my heart – free space for Causeless Bliss[83]

This mantric aspect of his poetry became central to Ginsberg's developing Buddhist poetics of prophecy. Trigilio again;

> […] from the one speech-breath-thought strophes of "Howl" onward, the breath has been critical to Ginsberg's composition process. By the time of "Mind Breaths" [The collection in which 'Thoughts Sitting Breathing' was published] and extending for the remainder of his career, the importance of the breath is intensified by his Buddhist practice and study with Trungpa's Crazy Wisdom School.[84]

This primacy of mantra was shared with and understood by Houédard. This is evidenced in an undated letter where Ginsberg confirmed "Been studying tibetan yoga meditation with Chogyam trumpa".[85] In fact his letter reveals he has been a follower of Trungpa for "these last 3 years" and the mantra that he has typed along the top of the letter in capitals: A AH

SHA SA AH HA is part of his practice: "I sit an hour a day motionless with one syllable of the above 6 chakra mantra". This practice is continued:

> Carried subvocally to the heart region on each slow out breath- My chanting is longer breath & slower now, not so impetuous but its deeper […] So I make use of that in writing too, the voice mainly from heart, as a literal location for body – rumble of breath […][86]

Trigilio writes that particularly during this period of study under Trungpa, for Ginsberg the "breath finds language in the articulation of *Ah,* an anchoring syllable in his later career".[87] Here, in this letter to Houédard, the *Ah* syllable is strung along the top of the postcard in a mantra. It is easy to hear Ginsberg's voice and the clicking of his mala beads in the background.

Such a transmission of practice and discussion on mantra is characteristic of this transatlantic correspondence between Ginsberg and Houédard which continues intermittently throughout the 1970s and 1980s. There are occasionally specific mentions of Trungpa, too, not least when in replying to Ginsberg's letter above Houédard is prompted to reflect:

> i have a feeling i have terribly neglected trungpa whose influence grows daily brighter here where we cherish one of his multiplication bodies […] ive read most of what he writes but meant to try & get numbers of tailofthetiger as it comes – much real love to the rinpoche when you see him […].[88]

Again, a couple of years pass, before Ginsberg sends Houédard the following note:

> […] I'm working with Chogyam Trungpa, lots of meditation, and prostrations (100 000) to do this year- spent 3 months seminary study with him Fall 73 – will teach poetry at his Boulder, Colo. Neropa Inst. It's the Buddhist (?) mindfulness spontaneousness that I thrill to, (?) a "Crazy Wisdom" […].[89]

What is interesting to note though, as the years progress and as Ginsberg becomes a disciple of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Houédard maintains his more "wider ecumenical" vision and poetics, and a definition of Crazy Wisdom that transcends Buddhism. Responding to Ginsberg's disclosure of his 100, 000 prostration practice, he writes "[…] don't altogether forget the jewish-catholic atheist mindfulness – the crazywisdom of nothing – &- nothing – the docta ignorantia & the kabalah of the ayin-sof or holynothing".[90] Houédard's words are close to Trungpa's own comment that "one of the expressions of crazy wisdom is that you can't get away from it. It's everywhere (whatever 'it' is)",[91] lending credence to Houédard's assertion that it could be Jewish, Catholic, even atheist.

2.5 Queer Dharma

The final section of this chapter begins with a consideration of that the transmission between Houédard and Ginsberg is rooted in their emerging "Queer Dharma". It is beyond the scope of this chapter or this thesis to explore this dimension of Houédard's poetics in full, however, returning to the poems "Thoughts Sitting Breathing" and "The Woveness of Tantra" a close reading can illustrate how, when they began corresponding in 1963, he and Ginsberg were at a very similar point in their trajectory of developing a Buddhist poetics that included their practiced (Ginsberg) and abstinent (Houédard) homosexuality. Tony Trigilio, in his discussion on Ginsberg's Buddhist poetics, has noted, "Where surrealism, for instance, presumes desire and convulsive eroticism as its *telos*, so too, does Tantric Buddhism presume that attachment to desire is diminished only by an eschatological embrace of desire".[92] Trigilio goes onto establish:

> That Ginsberg eventually could find in Buddhism a discourse that would authorize homosexuality is not surprising, given the historical complexities and contradictions in Buddhism's response to homosexuality and given Buddhism's admonitions against attachment to *desire*, per se, instead of an outright condemnation of homosexuality as a so-called transgression.[93]

That sexual desire, in Buddhist discourse, is rarely discriminated as being either heterosexual or homosexual, and that this very desire itself can be a transformative means to enlightenment for a tantric practitioner of the Vajrayana, is something that is beginning to be acknowledged by both Houédard and Ginsberg. As we have already discussed, in his second letter to the beat poet, Houédard sends Ginsberg a transmission of the Om Mani Padme Mantra in his poem "The Woveness of Tantra". And as such, on first reading, this poem may seem to be located firmly in the heterosexual iconography of "yabyum." But in the context of an emerging queer dharma there is a homoerotic subtext to the poem. In the first section we read:

> & christ who is brahma made flesh
> of perfection
> catholic & mahayana
> lived for other beings
> &
> for us
> the path to active acceptance
> of the total indiscriminate reality
> of "THAT"

The "flesh" of Christ, the masculine body of "perfection" is transformed by a Mahayana "path of active acceptance" that doesn't discriminate between the objects of desire as

heterosexual or homosexual. An "indiscriminate reality" where the discriminations of contemporary sexual and political reality do not exist, this constitutes a reading supported later in the poem by the word "antisin" as if the tantric visualization can transform a "sinful" activity of desire. Then there is the *double-entendre* of "heartprick". These references in the poem are qualified later, in a subsequent letter, when Houédard makes open references to Ginsberg's homosexuality:

> i don't think ishvaras a thing to be searched for to be tender to: its what you are tender to surely? ishavaras seeing ishvara in well what? peter till you split your mother yr double vow poetry yr search blake cock god neal humanity meatdolls the wierd yr youness hallucinations: the image youre tender to s always you […].[94]

Houédard is using the word "ishavara" here in a number of significant ways. Firstly, I think, the reference consolidates the iconography uses in his earlier included poem *The Woveness of Tantra.* In Mahayana Buddhism Ishvara is used as part of the compound "Avolkitesvara", the Buddha of Compassion, whose mantra is as we have established Om Mani Padme Hum. But Ishvara is also a concept predating Hinduism, with several meanings, including highest reality, ruler, king, husband, chief of suitor and lover. It would be unlikely for Houédard's prose not to be alert to this etymology and I think the connotations of "husband, chief suitor and lover" are pertinent. There is a homoerotic reading of his phrase "ishvaras seeing ishvara" when it is qualified in the subsequent sentence by references to two of Ginsberg's well publicized love affairs. Firstly, that with Peter Orlovsky, with whom Ginsberg was in India at the time of receiving this letter, secondly to his well-documented muse and lover Neal Cassidy. And if that is not blatant enough, there is the unconcealed word "cock" between these references to "peter" and "neal".[95]

It is not just the early letters that support such a reading either. In a letter from 1965 Houédard states:

> End result you meditate on yrself meditating on yrself mediating on &c is ANAL REALITY – like everything EXACTLY BUT EXACTLY like what it was before – only its come out other side/way/end[96]

Other examples include: "why not bring lots of bodhisattvas taoists hsien-immortals & homotantric shaktis",[97] "I hope yr nights arnt too deprived of smile & a blisstouch of moonfingers",[98] "luv to you - & fruitish bodymind-bliss"[99] and a pun on the postcode of Prinknash Abbey "gloster gl4 8EX (gay lib for sex?)".[100]

If any coinage by Houédard can summarize his friendship with Ginsberg and the disclosures in their letters it is this phrase "homotantric shakti" in which he co-ops Shakti, the female Hindu divine force, the tantric goddess realized as a sexual partner, into this

queer dharma discourse. And it is therefore no surprise that these "homotantric shakti[s]" find a temporary home in the "Crazy Wisdom version of Tibetan Buddhism" that Trungpa brings out of Tibet, initially in Britain, and shortly afterwards in America. Trigilio comments:

> As a mode of Tantric Buddhism, where desire is a component of spiritual practice rather than a hindrance, Trungpa's Crazy Wisdom school introduces "worldly processes" to be integrated into one's spiritual pilgrimage […].[101]

I have found no mention of Dom Sylvester Houédard in any of the critical literature that I have read on Ginsberg and this is the first scholarly consideration of their friendship, poetics and beliefs. The many volumes of writings on the beat poet are in agreement on the enormous impact that becoming a disciple of Trungpa and his Crazy Wisdom Buddhism had on his poetics and life. This chapter has suggested Houédard was an important conduit in ripening the karmic seeds for Ginsberg to meet Trungpa. But of even greater significance is Charles Cameron's claim that it was the visit to Prinknash Abbey he arranged for Trungpa, and the conversation the young exiled Tibetan lama had there with Houédard that convinced him that the West was ready and open to accept the Vajrayana wisdom teachings. However, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Akong Tulku Rinpoche, Houédard and other British countercultural artists is more clearly understood.[102] There is also further important research to be made in following queer dharma in Houedard's other friendships, letters and poemobjects, not least in his continual advocacy of "gaylib" and "gayluv".

It is also interesting to note that in these early letters to Ginsberg and in "Beat & Afterbeat", Houédard gives examples of his own beat-style free verse poems with no examples of what he calls "my typopoems & wordsmudge". Any experiments in concrete poetry, "EYEVERSE poemogram […} typographs/ideograms" or "EARVERSE poemophones & unforgettable sonorisms" [103] he may be making at this time are not included. Like Ginsberg, he is yet to conceive his "afterbeat" poetics as Buddhist, but as shall I argue in the subsequent chapters, this realignment coincides with the first publications of his concrete poems.

If, as this chapter has argued, Houédard experimented with a writing style in "Beat & Afterbeat' that could express his increasingly syncretic "wider ecumenical vision", an innovative syntax which could compound and weave together otherwise disjunctive and culturally estranged conceptual frameworks for sacred experience, then this style of prose becomes even more important to him as a mode of expression with which to articulate the collaged and idiosyncratic lineages which will become his "wider concrete". The neo-beat style lyric poems found in his first letters to Ginsberg in the spring of 1963 are almost the very last ones he wrote. As he acknowledged he was already experimenting with "EYEVERSE" and "wordsmudges" and "typopoems" and by the summer of 1963 these concrete poems become

the poetic strategy that he was looking for, an answer to what he describes as his "desperate still need radical for something to showthru".[104] It is a pivotal point in his construction of an embodied "wider ecumenical" poetics dependent on the meditative and performance practices of Zen and Vajrayana Buddhisms and one which is closely investigated in the next chapter, *yantra.*

1.Tony Trigilio, *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007). Trigilio, in turn cites his debt to Winston Leyland's anthology of the same name, *Queer Dharma: Voices of Gay Buddhists.*

[2] Lines from Houédard's unpublished poem *heavy light/ winter 62 & 3,* 010163, Unpublished collection of poems, Special Collections, John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

[3] Allen Ginsberg, letter to Houédard, March 15th 1963, Special Collections, John Rylands University Library Manchester.

[4] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, 25th January 1963, Allen Ginsberg Archive, Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

[5] Ginsberg, letter to Houédard, 15th March 1963.

[6] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, undated (but postmarked from England 27th March 1963), Allen Ginsberg Archive, Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

[7] "Beat & Afterbeat: a parallel condition of theology and poetry". First published in *The Aylesford Review,* 5.3 Summer 1962. Reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 134.

[8] Ibid., 135.

[9] "Between Poetry and Painting A Chronology," was written as an introduction to the exhibition, of the same name and inserted as a separate supplement into the catalogue. Houédard's essay, in his own words, explores the overlap between poetry and painting and establishes a framework for thinking about the newly emerging genre of concrete poetry. The *Between Poetry and Painting* exhibition ran from 22 Oct 1965 - 27 Nov 1965 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. Curated by Jasia Reichardt (Assistant Director of the ICA at that time) exhibiting artists included a comprehensive list of international of concrete poets. See "Between Poetry and Painting A Chronology", Exhibition Catalogue, ICA, 1965. Reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, London): 143.

[10] Houédard, "Beat & Afterbeat," 30-1.

[11] Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," *The Portable Beat Reader,* ed. Ann Charters (London: Penguin, 1992): 58.

[12] Jack Kerouac, "Belief & Technique For Modern Prose: List of Essentials," *The Portable Beat Reader,* ed. Ann Charters (London: Penguin, 1992): 59.

[13] Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," 57.

[14] Houedard, "Beat & Afterbeat," 137.

[15] Donald Carlos, *The Aylesford Review,* accessed, February 12th, 2012, http://www.tartaruspress.com/brocard.html.

[16] Houédard, unpublished letter to Ginsberg, postmarked 27th March 1963.

[17] Houédard's neologism "abhomunist" can be interpreted as a blending of the word, abomunist, as used by the Beat writer Bob Kaufman, in his 'Abomunist Manifesto', City Lights, 1959, to refer to anarchic poetry & literature, and 'abhuman', as used by nineteenth-century Gothic writers, such as Bram Stoker, and later Modernist writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle & Rudyard Kipling, to refer to the almost human other. Through such a blending, Houédard achieves a concise word play that refers to both the artistic formal concerns within his "anarchic" concrete poems and his philosophical interest in the limits, margins and boundaries of the shared experience of human consciousness. The word functions as a concrete poem itself.

[18] Houédard, "Beat & Afterbeat," 135.

[19] Ibid., 135.

[20] Ibid., 132.

[21] Ibid., 128.

[22] Ibid., 132.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Andrew Wilson "A Poetics of Dissent," *Art and the 60s: This is Tomorrow* (London: Tate, London, 2004): 97.

[25] A reference to Ginsberg's poem "Sunflower Sutra" which recounts his much retold vision of the English poet William Blake and concludes with the lines: "We're not our skin of grime, we're not our dread bleak dusty imageless/ locomotive, we're all sunflowers inside, blessed by our own/ seed &

hairy accomplishment-bodies growing into mad black." See *Allen Ginsberg Collected Poems 1947-1985* (London: Penguin Books, 1987): 138-9.
[26] A reference to Ginsberg's poem "Howl" and the line "angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the/ starry dynamo in the machinery of night." See *Allen Ginsberg Collected Poems 1947-1985* (London: Penguin Books, 1987): 128-134.
[27] Houédard's letter to Ginsberg, 25th January 1963.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Tony Trigilio, *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007): 189.
[30] Houédard, "Beat & Afterbeat," 140.
[31] Trigilio, *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics,* 2.
[32] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, 25th January 1963.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Philip Rawson, "Sex and Reality," *Tantra, A symbolic vision of cosmic sensuality, an antidote to the anxieties of our age* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973, 2012): 102.
[36] Ibid.
[37] See Geshe Kelsang Gyatso commentary *Essence of Vajrayana: The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1997) for a detailed explanation of this practice.
[38] For Hopkins' discussion see his essay "The Compatibility of Reason and Orgasm in Tibetan Buddhism: Reflections on Sexual Violence and Homophobia", *Que (e) rying Religion: a Critical anthology,* eds. Gary David Comstock and Susan F. Henking (New York: Continuum, 1997): 372-83.
[39] Ginsberg, Letter to Houédard, 15th March 1963.
[40] Allen Ginsberg, *Indian Journals* (New York: Grove House, 1996): 155.
[41] Ibid., 169.
[42] Ibid., 196.
[43] Keith Dowman, "Editor's Introduction," *The Divine Madman: The Sublime Life and Songs of Drukpa Kunley,* trans. by Keith Dowman (California: The Dawn House Press, 1998): vii.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, 27th March 1963.
[46] Dowman, *The Divine Madman,* xi.
[47] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, 27th March 1963.
[48] Chogyam Rinpoche, *Crazy Wisdom* (Boston & London: Shambala, 2001): 167. This book is based on two seminars that Trungpa gave in America in December 1972. Allen Ginsberg was in attendance.
[49] Chogyam Rinpoche, *Crazy Wisdom,* 168.
[50] For example, Houédard, in his very first letter to Ginsberg, forwards the details of Bede Griffiths, "a monk in India founding a monastery a strictly eastern ashram" and then in his follow up letter, again asks "You know Bede Griffiths book The Golden String? He can talk Blake (& Sanskrit & Malayalam & syriac)".
[51] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter, dated 29th May 1965, Allen Ginsberg Archive, Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Trungpa writes, "Through John Driver, Freda Bedi and the Tibet Society of the United Kingdom, I received a Spalding sponsorship in 1963 to attend Oxford University, with Akong to accompany me. We sailed from Bombay to Tilbury aboard the P & O Line, an exciting journey made even more so by being completely surrounded by Westeners." Chögyam Trungpa, "Epilogue, Planting the Dharma in the West", *Born in Tibet* (Boston and London: Shambala, 1966): 252.
[52] Barry Miles, *Allen Ginsberg Beat Poetry* (London: Virgin Publishing, 2000): 366.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Allen Ginsberg, letter to Houédard, undated, Dom Sylvester Houédard Archive, Special Collections, John Rylands University Manchester.
[55] Michael Schumacher, *Dharma Lion a Biography of Allen Ginsberg* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994): 545.
[56] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, 25th March 1965.
[57] Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 549.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 545.
[60] See glossary *Karma.*

[61] Charles Cameron in a letter to Charles Verey, dated 1st June 2010, quoted in an email by Charles Verey, sent to Nicola Simpson on February 4th 2016.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet,* 252.
[64] It can be noted how this personal account corroborates the "official" Samye-Ling Monastery's version of events too. "Through the kind help of Freda Bedi, later to become Sister Palmo, he [Akong Tulku Rinpoche] and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Abbot of Surmang Monastery, sailed to England in 1963 to learn English in Oxford. Only the latter had a bursary and Akong Tulku Rinpoche worked for some years as a simple hospital orderly, supporting himself, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Tulku Chime Rinpoche of Benchen Monastery in the small apartment they shared." Accessed February 4th 2016, http://www.samyeling.org/about/dr-choje-akong-tulku-.
[65] Chogyam Rinpoche, *Crazy Wisdom,* 169.
[66] Ibid., 70
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Chris Thompson, *felt: FLUXUS, JOSEPH BEUYS, AND THE DALAI LAMA* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 81.
[70] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 40, 198, as cited by Thompson, *felt,* 81.
[71] Chogyam Rinpoche, *Crazy Wisdom,* 170.
[72] Ibid., 169.
[73] This poem is dated as 23rd March 1963 and is included in the second letter Houédard sends to Ginsberg, postmarked 27th March 1963.
[74] Reginald A. Ray, *Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2008): 258.
[75] Ibid., 279.
[76] Ibid., 259.
[77] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, undated (but postmarked from England 27th March 1963).
[78] Philip Rawson, *The Art of Tantra* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973): 61.
[79] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, undated (but postmarked from England 27th March 1963).
[80] Allen Ginsberg, "Thoughts Sitting Breathing" *Allen Ginsberg Collected Poems 1947-1985* (London: Penguin Books, London, 1987): 588-594.
[81] Trigilio, *Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics*, 132.
[82] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, undated (but postmarked from England 27th March 1963).
[83] Ginsberg, *Allen Ginsberg Collected Poems,* 588-594.
[84] Trigilio, *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics*, 135.
[85] Allen Ginsberg, letter to Houédard, undated, Dom Sylvester Houédard Archive, Special Collections, John Rylands University Library Manchester.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Trigilo, *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics,* 135.
[88] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, dated 7th July 1973, Allen Ginsberg Archive, Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.
[89] Allen Ginsberg, letter to Houédard, dated 10th August 1975, Dom Sylvester Houédard Archive, Special Collections, John Rylands University Library Manchester.
[90] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to Ginsberg from Houédard, dated 23rd January 1975, Allen Ginsberg Archive, Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.
[91] Trungpa, *Crazy Wisdom,* 172.
[92] Trigilo, *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics,* 46.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, dated 17th April 1963, Allen Ginsberg Archive, Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.
[95] It is of course problematic to read this homoerotic subtext in Houédard's poems and letters, due to the obvious fact that he was a celibate Benedictine monk at the time. When Prinknash Abbey first loaned Houédard's literary papers to the John Rylands Library, the Abbey had initially made the correspondence of Houédard freely available to researchers and the public. But several years ago this changed and all the correspondence has subsequently been returned to the monastery. It is not

inappropriate to hypothesize that letters such as these may have contributed to the decision. To date, during the course of this research degree, I have not been granted further access to these letters therefore I was very fortunate to have made copies of the Ginsberg correspondence when I was conducting my own private survey of the archive.

[96] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, 29th May, 1965.

[97] Houédard, letter to Ginsberg, 7th July, 1973.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Trigilio, *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics*, 22.

[102] As I state in the conclusion, I have been offered the opportunity by The Guillemot Press to edit a volume of letters between Houédard and the beat poets Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac and Gregory Corso and to include the to-date unpublished neo-beat poems that he composed at this time.

[103] Houédard, "Beat & Afterbeat," 135.

[104] Houédard "bits of biography," 27.

Chapter 3 yantra

This chapter establishes that Houédard's visual poems and typestracts are yantra. It follows the development of Houédard's concrete poems and his increasing assurance and mastery of the typewriter to create an "intentional"[1] Tantric language to ask questions about reality. The discussion now focuses on the units of language available to him on the typewriter; the graphemes and the letters of the alphabet that he transformed into a visual language that could embody and communicate his spirituality.

As *new beat/ monknik wind* established, there was a fissure in Houédard's poetic practice which coincided with his increasing interest in Tantric Buddhism and Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism and was consolidated by meeting, in 1963, some of the first Tibetan Lamas to live in Britain, including Akong Rinpoche and Chögyam Tulku Rinpoche. His intention to develop a poetic practice no longer dependent on words or a lyrical self, found a resonance in the concrete poetry movement.

The chapter is divided into nine sections. **3.1 zenga *perhaps*** introduces Houédard's early watercolour paintings. No research to date has discussed these works and this account argues the recurrent semi-figurative portrayal of monks, with their mudras and meditative poses, can be connected directly to Houédard's autodidactic interest and reading of Mahayana Buddhism.

In **3.2 tantric art *perhaps,*** I suggest these sketches and watercolours establish that Houédard had an early visual practice already engaged with the performative methods of Zenga and Tantric art and that they are as important as the neo-beat poems he classed as "jeux théologiques" in locating the spiritual methodologies behind the typestracts.

3.3 tantric weave *perhaps*, discusses how Houédard develops a poetry that structurally engages with the intercultural dialogue and intercultural aesthetics of his wider ecumenism and explores his experiments to find a meta-language with which to communicate the two creative languages of Tantric art & concrete poetry.

This leads him to developing poetry intrinsically linked to a Tantric practice and **3.4 an effort to overcome the semantic mode based on the noun.** Such a deconstruction of the language of the typewriter leads to the visual experiments of **3.5 Moiré Poems: "APERSPECTIVE NONSYNTATIC POLYREADABLE structure"** and from this point forwards he has an artistic methodology that transforms his visual poems into **3.6 yantra *perhaps*** and with a ritualistic engagement with language that can be critically framed as a **3.7 tantric practice *perhaps…***

There is a deliberately repetitive geometry in his work, composed from the grammatical geometric vocabulary that I established in Chapter 1. In the typestracts there is a reoccurence of the same forms (the square, cube, circle and triangle). This study demonstrates that within this

repetition there are identifiable recurring themes and clearly defined periods of personal and artistic development.

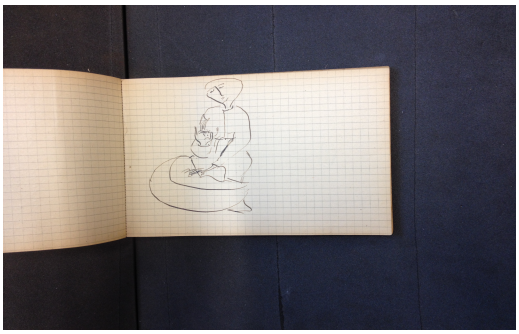
To exemplify one such theme **3.8 the tantric staircases *perhaps*** turns to Houédard's interest in shamanism and performance art and his particular engagement with the Vajrayana practice of **3.9 the body mandala.** The detailed and focused analyses in the chapter offer a critical conceptual framework that can be applied to a far wider range of Houédard's typestracts. It demonstrates that the visual forms are composed in an "intentional" concrete language which knowingly engages with a historical Tantric discourse in which a "state of consciousness is expressed" and the goal of which is the "transubstantiation of every *concrete* experience":

> […] a tantric text can be read with a number of keys: liturgical, yogic and tantric […] To read a text with the "yogic key" is to decipher the various stages of meditation to which it refers.[2]

As I established in the previous chapters, Houédard provided "keys" to his texts in his prose. This chapter will now use those keys in relation to a selection of his poems.

3.1 zenga *perhaps*

This section begins by arguing that the typestracts are a development from an earlier visual practice founded upon his 1950s interest in Zen Buddhism. I suggest that evidence for this can be found in the notebooks and sketchbooks Houédard created when he was a novice monk studying at Sant' Anselmo University in Rome.



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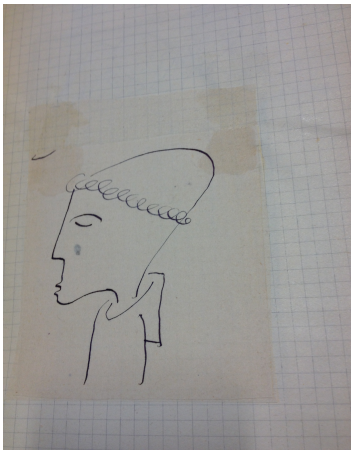

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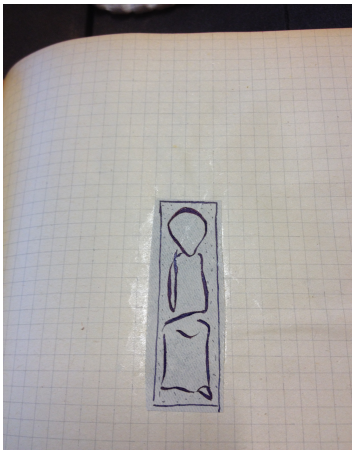


e

Fig.12 A selection of sketches of seated monks, 1950s notebooks, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands University Library.

When I first spent an afternoon looking at these notebooks, at the John Rylands Library in 2014, it was a surprise to find several books full of sketches.[3] Houédard, in his own autobiographical accounts, such as "bits of biography" or "autozoochronology", does not allude to a visual practice. Although he includes his early poetry - the "jeux théologiques" - as a significant phase in his creative development, he makes no reference to any painting. Turning each page in the sketchbooks, a repetitive visual symbolism is evident. In amongst the figures of Saints and other Christian motifs, three particular themes emerge: Jesus Christ on the cross, the Madonna and Child, and a monk in the practice of meditation. This last category, in particular, suggests a

clue as to their origin, meaning and methods of making. Although some of the hand-drawn monks definitely have a compositional stature suggesting medieval Christian manuscripts and iconography (Fig. 12d) others are more ambiguous in style (Fig. 12b and e). In fact some have the unmistakable sitting posture of a Zen monk in meditation (Fig. 12c) or the indisputable hand gesture of a Buddhist mudra (Fig. 12 a). It is this last group of monks, with their mudras and meditative poses that connect, this study now argues, with Houédard's autodidactic interest and reading of Mahayana Buddhism.

The drawings seem rather naïve, with an untutored line suggestive of Zenga.[4] The academic Yasuichi Awakawa, in his discussion on how to interpret the figures of the Zen Buddhist lineage that appear in Zenga, offers a way to think about the repetitive figures in Houédard's work:

> […] the first thing that strikes one about the human figures appearing in Zenga is the complete absence of the realism, balance and proportion that is apparent in, say, the sculptures of Europe. […] unity arises not from the physical form but from something spiritual pervading the picture […] kind of spiritual strength emanating from the work.[5]

In Houédard's drawings there is an "absence of the realism, balance and proportion" such as that to which Awakawa draws attention. In discussing the work of one Zen artist, Hakuini, Awakawa states, "[The] lack of any delicate techniques gives his pictures a superficial air of crudity or naiveté […] [we are] aware of divine inspiration informing the whole work".[6] Like Hakuini, Houédard too could be said to have a "lack of artistic training" but "as a result, the essence of his Zen experience is there in his painting".[7]

Houédard's ink drawings in fact have an increasing "absence" of "realism". They demonstrate a practice less and less engaged with "balance and proportion". As this selection of images of the crucifixion (fig. 13) or the Madonna and Child (fig. 14) suggests, the figures reveal a progressive abstraction, executed in fewer and fewer brushstrokes – what, in Zenga, is called gempitsu.

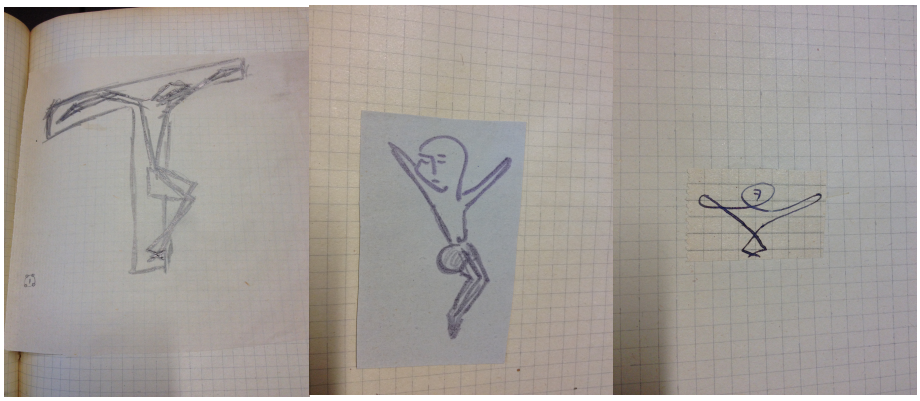


Fig.13 Ink paintings of the crucifixion are increasing executed in few brushstrokes – "gempitsu", 1950s notebooks, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands University Library Special Collections.

> Zenga are pictorial expressions of the Zen experience, and the yūgen quality must be present […] Thus a Zenga partakes both of the 'Absolute Void' and of the quality of the instrument, the artist […] yūgen is present for the discerning observer.[8]

The Buddhist scholar D.T Suzuki describes yūgen as when an artwork makes conceptually tangible a glimpse of the eternal world of constant changes, the secret of Reality.[9] This Zen experience is not so much the expression of an individual internal narrative in the Western sense but the direct experience of the "self" in the Japanese sense. The essence of these repetitive paintings of the crucifixion scene (Fig. 13) or Madonna and her Child (Fig.14) lies not in the symbolic characters as such but in the action or movement of the painted line. It is a movement that is informed by the direct experience of the self at prayer with the hands moving in direct response to the mind of a monk in a ritualistic visualization. "The act of artistic expression thus becomes a statement of the universal, and as such is an act of worship in the deepest sense".[10]

When these sketches were made, during the early 1950s, Houédard was a novice monk. I am not suggesting that these paintings have the execution, precision and awareness of a noted Zenga-artist but they are further evidence of Houédard's autodidactic teaching and understanding of Zen. His encounter with the Zen master was through the mediation of the printed word and in all likelihood in translation; as I have argued in the Introduction, the Western Buddhist lineages were initially established in precisely this way. After all, the point of Zen transmission is to teach oneself from one's own inner being, not necessarily from a burgeoning collection of books on Zen. As Suzuki states "Everyone must teach himself from his own inner being".[11] However, the lineage of knowledge is still important and perhaps evident from the painted lines themselves:

> Calligraphic works, especially by noted priests of the Zen sect, are often referred to as 'bokuseki', intimate traces […] for the practioner of Zen, this character 'seki' "traces" has a double meaning. Since Zen places so much emphasis on the transmission of the truth from person to person – tracing its line back to its founder, […] a single piece of calligraphy is considered to partake of the spirit not only of the monk who wrote it but also of all his predecessors.[12]

It is in Houédard's untutored line that a "seki", a "trace" can be found to connect to the Zen predecessors he had discovered in his idiosyncratic study of Zen. It could also be argued a similar "trace" can be found in Houédard's drawings, relating to the figures that populate the marginalia of medieval manuscripts (fig. 16 d); however it is beyond the scope of this thesis to follow this particular *seki.* Instead, here, I argue that these sketches show the movement towards a gestural syncretic line that could communicate the yūgen of, what Houédard termed "a true Western Satori". It is this line, as it transforms into the gestural kinetic calligraphy of the typewriter arabesques and typestracts that this chapter follows.

3.2 tantric art *perhaps*

The performativity in these sketches does not end with the completion of the brushstroke or the pen's line. The gestural syncretic line is not just catholic-zen, but I suggest, catholic-tantra-zen. These black sketchbooks are more like scrapbooks and each of the drawings, initially drawn on scraps of paper, torn corners of an envelope and other salvaged material have at some subsequent time been collected together. It is precisely in this method that there is a link to the execution and presentation of Tantric Art, both Hindu and Buddhist. Before they were pasted onto the graphic squared pages of these notebooks, what if these images had been stuck on the walls of Houédard's monastic cell? The repetition of images, the gradual building up of a sacred visual vocabulary on found-paper, resonates with the methodology that creates Tantric art, particularly Hindu Tantra. In considering the makeshift modes of production of Hindu Tantric art and their uses, the poet, artist and collector Franck Andre Jamme writes:

> these paintings have evolved into a distinct visual lexicon used to awaken states of consciousness. Made in tempera, gouache, and watercolour on salvaged paper, they are pinned to the wall for use in private meditation.[13]

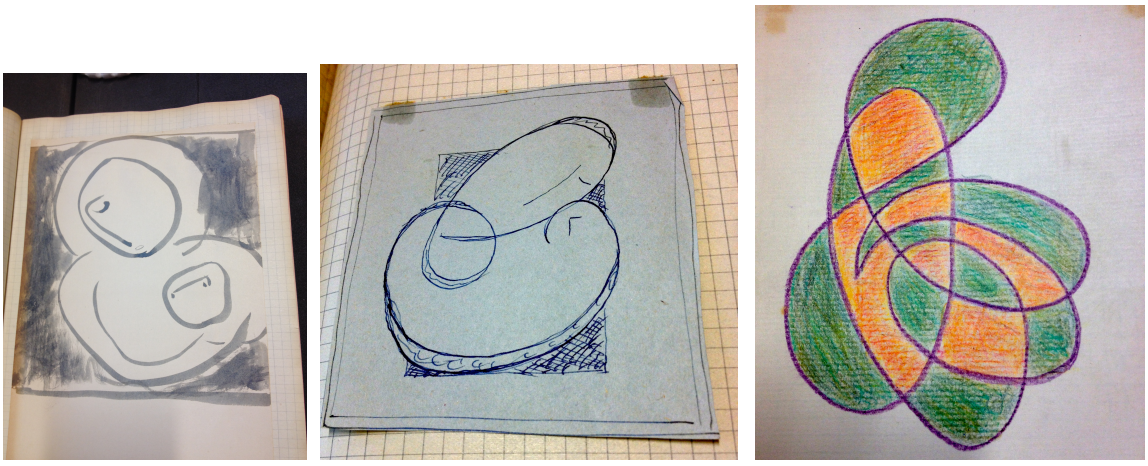


Fig. 14 The Madonna and Child develop into an increasingly abstract "wider ecumenical" representation of duality and unity, yin and yang, yabyum, 1950s notebooks, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands University Library Special Collections.



Fig. 15 “REALITAS”, 1950s notebooks, Dom Sylvester Houedard archive, John Rylands University Library Special Collections.

Like the Tantric artists of 17th century Rajasthan and subsequent generations of artists, Houédard’s images are made from whatever was to hand: pen and ink, biro, pencil or coloured pencils and crayons. But they are not simply doodles. There is something in their repetitious execution and subsequent preservation that suggests that these simple images were made by a mind deep in concentration and then used as part of a visualization ritual; their evolving “distinct visual lexicon used to awaken states of consciousness”.

> […] it is first of all a practice. First for the “artist’ himself when he paints a piece, and then for the people who are later going to work on seeing this image, to meditate on it and its meaning – and what is more, through this meditation, finally to make the divinity herself appear.[14]

A series of undated images demonstrates an increasingly abstracted Madonna and Child, which morphs into a Taoist yin and yang, a dualistic male and female energy suggestive of the Tibetan Tantric yabyum, before dualism is transcended into images which express the interdependence of all phenomena in a perpetual flux and motion (Fig. 14). Lawrence Rinder, commenting on Hindu Tantric art, reflects:

> Maybe art isn't quite the right word: let's call them experiences that ground us in the real, images that cut to the quick of what we might be. Obviously things like this […] don't require skill as commonly understood nor, for that matter, professional acumen. They have something, but it is impossible to describe what that is.[15]

Like Awakawa's discussion on Zenga, Rinder attests to the lack of skill in the execution of such drawings, that in no way hinders the experiential communication. When Houédard provides a lexical key, that "something" becomes easier to articulate. In Fig.15, for example, we have a similar, recognizable image of the dualistic/ non-dualistic and here Houédard labels it "REALiTAS", the latin word for "Reality". Rinder, again:

> I have noticed in the Tantric works *how* the simplicity of their conventional, geometric forms is complemented by the infinite complexity of their particular execution: water stains, flaws in the handmade paper, fragments of unrelated text combine to make each work not only unique but somehow perfect […] it is precisely that ideal forms – forms plumbed from the depths of the mind, of the soul – need to co-exist with randomness and the emptiness of chance.[16]

This image does contain such "flaws", executed as it was on the page of a notebook. The ink has smudged in places and the dots, shaded quickly, are uneven in length, very much co-existing with "randomness and the emptiness of chance", yet the drawing is unmistakably an instance of "ideal form[s] […] plumbed from the depths of the mind". A form that repeats and changes each time it is drawn.

In Fig. 16 there are examples of two further variations in a recognizable Christian iconography. In these drawings a nativity scene with Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus, the shepherds and the Magi, exists in the shadow of the cross and the crucifixion. Birth and death are placed upon Houédard's visual code for "REALiTAS". As such, Christianity seems to be born out of the infinite flux of time and space. These drawings are part of an intimate private visionary world, before it is clarified in the dialogue of his later, wider ecumenical prose. Padoux writes how "[…] the ritual, too, is a visionary world, of images mentally evoked, perceived in oneself or mentally projected onto a support, be it the image of a god, an abstract icon, or a linga".[17]

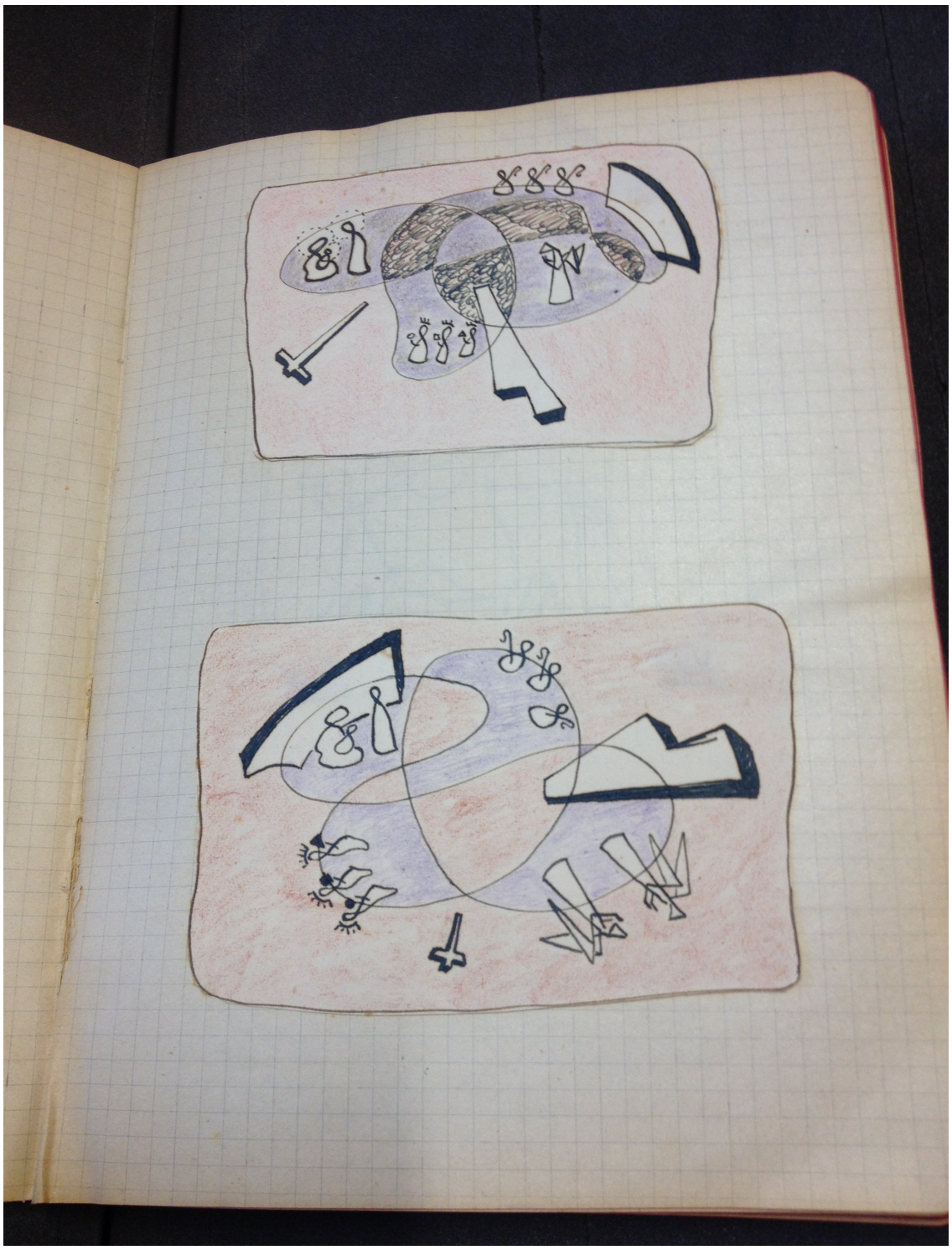


Fig.16 A simplified Christian code of images is seen to be a manifestation of this ‘REALITA’ of eternal flux and change, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands University Library Special Collections.

3.3 tantric weave *perhaps*

This chapter has established that Houédard had a visual practice before his typewriter art in the 1960s. These catholic-tantra-zen watercolours suggest to me that the yantras that he would type throughout the subsequent decade were a continuation of a visual spiritual lexicon used in prayer. They are evidence that Houédard had already experimented with translating the invisible into the visible. Executed in the 1950s these watercolours are examples of Houédard's first inter-cultural dialogue with Mahayana Buddhism and the beginning of his developing intercultural aesthetic with Zen. As such they are an important precursor to Houédard's later typestracts and their embodiment of a meta-language that could communicate the two creative languages of Tantric art and concrete poetry within his wider ecumenical vision.

A further possible explanation for this work might be the very real possibility that he drew and painted in the 1950s simply because he did not have a typewriter. As Charles Verey reflects:

> If not for his typewriter, and the skill with which he used it, *dsh,* would not have become so widely known and appreciated in the 1960s and early 1970s. His Olivetti Lettera became his medium […] The typewriter […] was the ultimate writing machine of the 20th century […] Its invention brought printed words to the touch of human fingers. For Dom Sylvester, its precise mechanical engineering, its easily operated shift, space and tab keys lent it an extended potential. He developed a fine touch on its keys and the machinery of his mind became attuned to the full range of its voice.[18]

As discussed in *new beat/ monknik wind,* the neo-beat style lyric poems Houédard was writing in the spring of 1963 are almost the very last ones he wrote. As he acknowledged in his letters to Ginsberg, he was already experimenting with "EYEVERSE", "wordsmudges" and "typopoems". By the summer of 1963 these concrete poems become the poetic strategy for which he was looking, an answer to his "desperate still need radical for something to showthru".[19] It was a pivotal point in his construction of an embodied "wider ecumenical" poetics dependent on the meditative and performative practices of Zen and Vajrayana Buddhisms, and had all begun just a few months earlier, as Rick Poynor explains:

> In 1962, Houédard, along with other key early exponents of British concrete poetry, including Finlay, had been excited to see a letter in the *Times Literary Supplement* about concrete poetry and a computer poem from E.M. de Melo e Castro, a textile engineer and experimental poet, and it seems to have lit their collective fuse.[20]

Houédard too cites a convergence of influences on his poetry in 1962.

> Influence of wm burroughs remark to allenginsberg as quoted in pa'lante re poetry getting beyond language: also of article in ark-32 on autodestructive art: & of letter 2505 in tls from de melo e castro on concrete.[21]

It would be misleading to suggest that until he saw de Melo e Castro's poem that Houédard had not experimented on his typewriter with spacing and form. As Houédard's friend Charles Cameron reflected:

> […] Dom Sylvester could do some pretty nifty graphics with his old **Olivetti Lettera 22** typewriter. He'd gotten into the habit while working in British Army Intelligence somewhere in the Far East during World War II as I recall — before he came home and became a monk. Why? Because Army Intelligence demanded he send them 16-page reports, and he could only ever find fifteen pages worth of intel to send them. They disapproved of blank pages; he complied with orders by filling the final pages of his reports with graphical poetry. And thus a tiny whirlpool in the arts was born…[22]

Houédard himself confirms that in 1945, while serving with the military, in "india in i'corps" he "felt at home" in Bangalore and had an "inner release at development of typewriter arabesques (that led directly to typestracts)".[23] Andrew Wilson draws attention to the publication of the Brazilian artist's letter in the *TLS* that alerted "Finlay, Houédard, Anselm Hollo and Edwin Morgan to the existence of concrete poetry".[24] Houédard agrees. "ian h finlay/ anslem hollo/ myself all came to concrete directions out of different places thru TLS letter 250562".[25]

To examine how the impact of reading this letter began to quickly show itself in his poems, I want to now turn to the 6th July 1962, a few weeks after the publication of the TLS letter. It is a day when Houédard wrote a five-section sequence called "re-graduating the time scale", in many ways unremarkable except for one important development. Although each poem is written in free verse and is "semantic", the titles hint at the lexical keys that will later be provided in the typestracts to help interpret the non-semantic sculptural forms: "elliptical orbit", "gravitational constant", "intrinsic spiral", "the shift effect", "the time stream".[26] The content of each poem is pedestrian and unremarkable after the cosmological hints promised by the titles for each part of the sequence yet significantly the poetry sequence includes an instruction directly addressed to the reader: "a poem sequence to be read between ten past nine & five to ten".[27] It is the idea that these poems are a performance, to be integrated into a precise moment of the day, that is worth noting. It is the first poem where the reader is directly included in the process. The lyrical "I" of the poems, that voices such lines as "as a matter of fact/ I do rather like god", seems inadequate to the demands made by the construction. It feels a pivotal poem where language is as "small" as "the god" that is kept in the "cage", a lyrical language that "could've done […] should've done so much" but in fact, apologetically hasn't "bothered", "there simply isnt any point/ in carrying on at all/ or

doing a scrap more […]".[28] By February of the following year, space has broken through into Houédard's poetic line:

sacred
art

outline
of space

inline
of
god

9 words

dsh 090263[29]

Two months afterwards, in April 1963, the typewriter has broken through into the poetry. Houédard again, gives a directive to the reader:

these were performed on an Olivetti 1959 lettera 22
thru a medium ink red/black ribbon
(3 weeks use)

typoems 1-2 exist also in carbon
3-6 do not exist outside these performances

each typoems may be performed repeatedly
each performance will be different
the typoems transmigrate in verse proportion to the typoet

dsh 23/04/63[30]

One notices the repetition of "performed", "performances" and "performance". These are not like any poems he has written before. They are events that can be documented (date of composition "23/04/63" on "an Olivetti 1959 lettera 22") but also event scores for a "different" execution and interpretation. These are "typoems" *performed* by a "typoet" through actions that are both repeatable and unique. Such coinages by Houédard emphasize the interdependent relationship between the typoet and the typewriter. It is a relationship that transforms the typewriter into an instrument, not just of composition, but of transmission too. Houédard's use of the word "transmigrate" plays on its many etymological levels. It is about the transposition of a state of mind, the translative

movement of phonemes and graphemes across a page from one poem to the next and the sacred transference of the spirit from one thing into another.

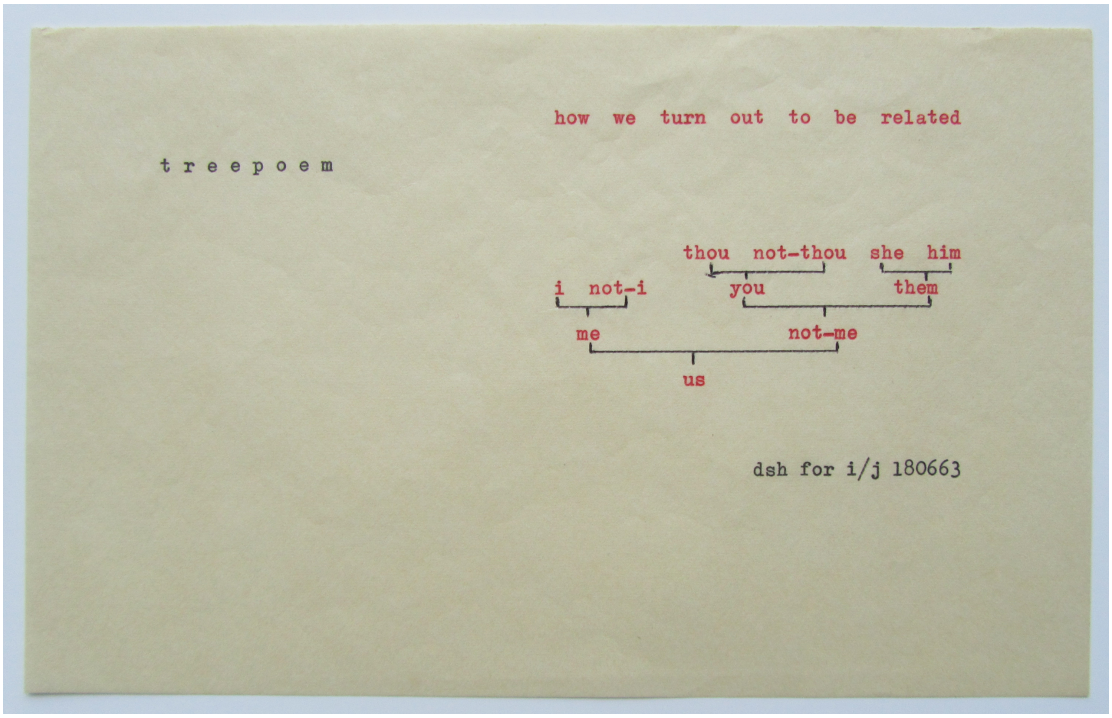


Fig. 17 *treepoem* 180663. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

April 1963 was a productive month for Houédard. He wrote several poems each day in what reads as an almost frantic search for another way of writing. On the 27th April he begins an untitled poem with the words "today/ i must/ make an apology/ for the language/ ive been using/ in poetry", concluding "[…] let's hope/ that tomorrow/ we may have something/ more computerised/ & less insulting/ to electronics/ & humans".[31] He does not achieve that the next day but by the June of that year he is using language in an altogether different way in work such as *treepoem* (Fig. 17).

It is evidently a *treepoem* in the sense that its structure is based upon that of a family tree. But here the family is both the immediate Christian family of his Benedictine tradition and also part of his vision for an inclusive global contemplative spiritual family. The mimetic visual structure is, in my opinion, far more successful than any previous poem in communicating, what he described as an intention to create poems "uncoding/ top secret documents/ about things going on/ in e minds and w minds" that break "the image barrier/ thru to god" from his own "one track ecumenical mind".[32] Houédard may have had in mind the "Tree of Jesse", common in medieval religious art and used to illustrate the genealogy of

Jesus Christ in terms of prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 11.1). But the typestract has other biblical trees in mind too, ecumenical trees. For, as Houédard writes in his article "the dimensions of the dimensionless":

> God created Adam of clay, breathed in the breath of life and put him in Paradise, with the Good Tree of Immortal Life and the Forbidden Tree of Knowledge of good and evil; one tree is Adam learning what God calls good and the other is Adam deciding for himself. They are trees of union with God and split from God; trees of contemplation and egotism; of *agape* and *eros;* of yoga and non-yoga.[33]

In *treepoem* Houédard has created a tree of meditative contemplation, a cosmic tree of "yoga", of union between the self and the other, of the self and God, a way back from the view of the other from the tree of "eros" and "non-yoga". This can be understood further by again considering his words about how through pure prayer and contemplation:

> […] we adapt ourselves to (and learn to anticipate) the future bliss by the union (yoga henosis) described in Jn.17: the Father loving us as he loves his son that we might be oned to the Father in the way the Father and Son are one: May they all be one as you Father in me and I in you – may they also thus be one in us.[34]

In this last sentence we can see the conflation of pronouns – they, you, me, I/i – into the "us" that correlates with the connective genealogy in *treepoem*. Through an individual's contemplation of their "i" and their "not-i" there can be a profound realization of selflessness, "how we all turn out to be related "in the one God, Tao, Emptiness. It is also a point to consider that if any phrase could sum up Houédard's syncretic vision for the "wider concrete" and "the wider ecumenism" it would be this phrase from *treepoem*; "how we turn out to be related" (See Fig. 17). It is a family tree that connects individuals not through genealogy, but through faith, open-mindedness and, at the deepest level, a syncretic "post E- post-W" (post East and post West) phenomenology. It is suggestive of the interhuman-intermedia so central to Houédard's ideas about spiritual transmission. As Ajit Mookerjee states about Tantric thought:

> Sa'ham 'I am She' or So'ham 'I am He', for there is no difference between 'Me and Thee'. Tantra has developed a system of thought and practice which can make us see the universe as if it were within ourselves, and ourselves as if we were within the universe. The form that our imagination creates then expresses our formless essence.[35]

The poem also has a structure not dissimilar to, perhaps even anticipating, the visual concrete mesostics that he was experimenting with only ten days later (Fig. 18 and Fig. 19). Houédard does not capitalize any of the letters, in keeping with his vision of ecumenism and equanimity and the use of the lower case. There is a relational structure between the words

that makes these works feel like treepoems. But here in the case of *pastpresentfuture* (Fig. 18), it is a tree of temporal experience. Our concepts of the past or the future can only be horizontal sprouting branches from the central trunk of the present. The human experience of the temporal can only ever exist in the present moment.

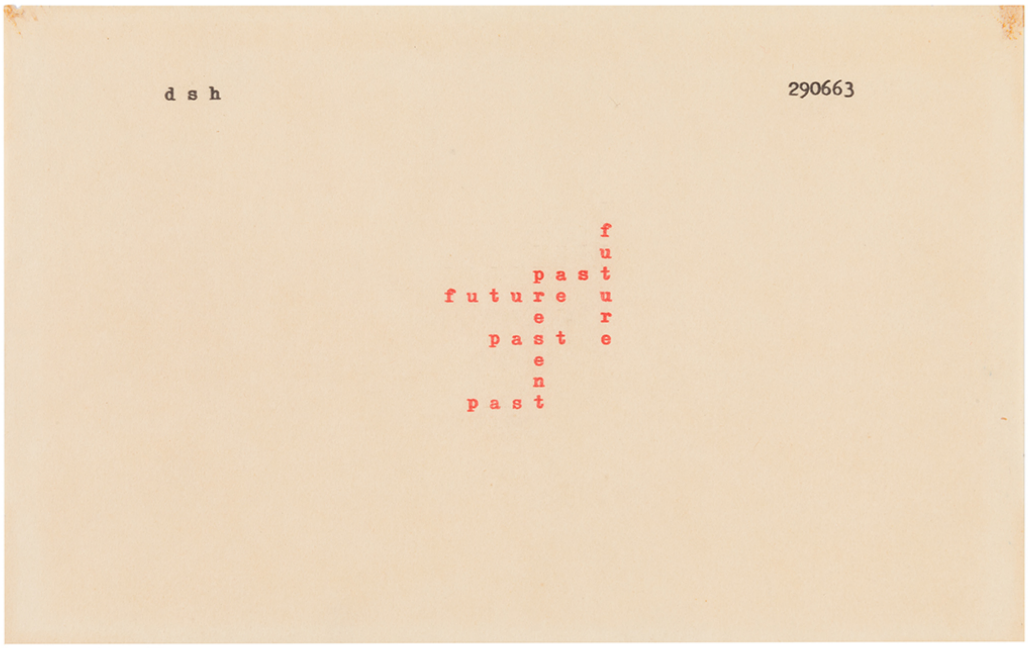


Fig. 18, *pastpresentfuture* 290663. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

The poem's structure has a playful reference to the grid-based form of crosswords, the spontaneity and serendipity of a scrabble composition but the poetic structure attempts also to communicate the contemplative experience of time. He writes:

> The instant, now, nunc or an at which the future touches the past, does not last a tiny stretch of time, it lasts for no time at all & so is time's exact equivalent of the geometric point in space. Outside this geometric point of time we never stray. It is here, in the luminous instant of now at apex mentis that we cannot say 'I am'. We observe moments of time with ordinary mind, mens or sems, but only with naked mind or sems nyid can be aware with rigpa or naked intent in the instant (not 'of' the instant) that lasts zero time.[36]

Although Houédard wrote this, twenty years after the typestracts were made, the central idea about "time's exact equivalent of the geometric point in space" is pertinent. As will be discussed in *mudra,* Houédard's practice – the movement of the paper in the typewriter; the constant readjustment of the rollers; the pressing of the typewriter keys; the realigning of stencils – became a repetitious gesture. He began to view these almost daily performative rituals at the typewriter as a mudra, an integral part of the Tantric Buddhist methods he was

so interested in. Inasmuch as no two typestracts were the same, so, similarly, the mudras executed to produce them too were a different combination or permutation of this process, whether sitting at his desk, selecting the paper, positioning the ribbon, selecting a colour to use or orientating the typewritten marks with geometrical precision. The date in the corner of each typestract is significant, documenting the day of the performance. It is a performance that foregrounded the yogic in a physiological diagram which included monk, typewriter, and later, the viewer. Each mark on the paper, every time a key is pressed, is also a performance of the present, the "instant that lasts zero time" of the contemplative experience, where past and future meet. It is an instant that cannot be known by the conceptual mind, but which is instead transmitted through the performance of a geometric point in space, which is then repeated and repeated. On this basis I would argue *past present and future* and *god* are an important pairing due to the fact they were composed on the same day and taken together they suggest the theological implications of experiencing "god" in the "present", and the "tradition of continuous prayer in Christian monasticism".[37]



Fig. 19 *god* 290663. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

3.4 an effort to overcome the semantic mode based on the noun

Before proceeding to discuss the continuing development of his spiritual and poetic methods, it is perhaps important to establish that just as *The Aylesford Review* articles enabled Houédard to develop his thinking on "the wider ecumenism", so too his articles, talks and essays on the early British concrete poetry movement provided a platform for his ideas about a "wider concrete". His essay "Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay" was in the words of Wilson, "the first definition of concrete poetry to be published in Britain".[38] Poynor agrees, stating:

> The place of publication of Houédard's article – Herbert Spencer's twice-yearly *Typographica* magazine – reflected Houédard's commitment to concrete poetry's boundary-dissolving challenge to art, literature and typographic design.[39]

Wilson too, draws attention to the fact that "Houédard's range of reference was much wider" than previous Brazilian or European definitions of concrete poetry, creating "a space in which concrete poetry, beat poetry and the exploits of Live New Departures could all exist on the same stage".[40] The same inclusive manifesto could be said to apply to his own work. For if Houédard was successful in outlining a definition of concrete poetry in Britain in these early essays then he was equally successful in using them as a platform to sketch out an emerging definition for his own practice. This definition would include the "coexistence" between his developing theological hypothesis on "the wider ecumenism" and the "alive blurring of frontiers between art & art, mind & mind, world & world, mind art & world" of "post-WW/2" avant-garde art".[41] In other words he constructs a framework for his discussions on concrete poetry not unlike the structure of *treepoem*.

This manifesto (perhaps we could title it "how we are related") is perhaps most comprehensively articulated in his 1965 essay "Between Poetry and Painting", where, in setting out the theoretical and critical approach to reading a concrete poem, he also makes bold attempts at, not only finding historical precedents for the overlapping territories between poetry and painting that the 1960s concrete poetry movement began to occupy but also in bringing his own very personal account of twentieth-century experimentalism to the fore. This, of course, is not unlike his very personal accounts of twentieth-century Buddhism in the West in *The Aylesford Review* articles.

"Between Poetry and Painting" was written as an introduction to the exhibition, of the same name and inserted loosely into the catalogue.[42] Houédard's essay, in his own words, explores the

"overlap" between poetry and painting and establishes a framework for thinking about the newly emerging genre of concrete poetry. As one example, taken from the opening paragraphs, begins:

> The area 'between' Poetry and Painting is where they overlap they do this (a) since all writing originates in painting (writing words) and (b) since it is possible to think in images alone – in diagrams models gestures and muscular movements, as well as in words alone, mind is the first place where Poetry and Painting meet.

Diagrams. Models. Gestures. Muscular Movements. Houédard's very first sentence takes concrete poetry from off the page into the sculptural, kinetic and the performative presence of the artist's body. He continues:

> There are other related areas 'between' poetry and music […] and 'between' poetry and mathematics (eg permutational poetry from Carmen XXVI of Porphry 323 ad to Zukofsky)

Music, mathematics and the possibilities of permutational verse from the historical to the contemporary avant-garde, again Houédard's sentences foreground three primary personal interests. Then, in his characteristic idiosyncratic prose he prioritizes an understanding of "the mind". Houédard's theoretical context for this experimentation is not political but spiritual and he prioritizes the link between "the Zen concepts of mind and meaning" that had influenced and "drawn poets and painters together in a common field" [43] and the game rules he wished to supply in drawing together his Chronology. It is a highly individualistic account, not least for the primary focus on this context of Zen. Houédard is creating a critical space in which he can situate his own typestracts and kinetic poetry machines as an heir to the calligraphy found in Zenga. If his letters to Ginsberg situate his poetry within a framework of Tibetan Buddhism, then these early critical essays on concrete poetry establish a framework of Zen Buddhism as a key reference point.

Such an account did not go down well with all practitioners of concrete poetry in Britain. If Houédard had made "the first serious attempt to evaluate"[44] Ian Hamilton Finlay's work, then the Scottish artist was quick to take objection to Houédard's prose. He describes "Between Poetry and Painting" as "absurd […] really too much'[45] going further to say "[…] Sylvester's prose is ridiculous. Quite ridiculous. And it says nothing" [Finlay's emphasis].[46]Continuing in a letter to Stephen Bann:

> I do feel that everyone should have to pass an exam (set by myself) before they' re allowed to set up as 'concrete poets'…Honestly Stephen, all those ignorant young ones are getting out of hand – they are like a blight with their 'Zen' and all that nonsense…They seem to appear like mushrooms now, and the first thing they do is, edit an anthology – or start a magazine…[47]

It was precisely this audience of "ignorant young ones" setting up their small presses in regional centres and their interest in counter-cultural spirituality that Houédard was addressing. That Houédard's interest in Zen reaches at least as far back as the 1950s has been established. A

possible reason for the emphasis on Zen, and not Tantric Buddhism, in these articles may be understood in the context of an observation in 1971 by Rawson:

> The art of Tantra has only come to light during the last ten years; […] so sudden was its discovery that even people professionally concerned with India had known nothing about it. Western museums contain many examples as yet unrecognized. Art critics have been at a loss how to cope with it: it was so different from anything they had seen before, even of Indian art […] But to artists, art-students and younger people in general it has come as a revelation.[48]

Again it was simply a matter of audience. Very few of the readers of the ICA Bulletin would be familiar with a reference to Tantric Buddhism whereas the link between Zen and some aspects of contemporary postwar art was firmly established. In fact, given the popular link between Zen and the beat poets, the focus on the comparatively unknown Tantra in their letters only strengthens the argument that Ginsberg and Houédard were part of a particular transmission lineage and sangha.

Houédard's vision for concrete poetry was expansive and inclusive. He not only framed concrete poetry within the European poetic traditions of visual poetry but within a global history of sacred poetry and visual language. More accessible and succinct is his earlier talk "EYEAR", a presentation in which he claimed, "& as far as I know this is the 1st talk on the subject in the English-speaking world", and it began with a point-by-point guide:

> 1st thing that stands up is that concrete moves out from our complicated language of grammar & syntax to this simple direct language of nouns – […]– it moves towards & past telegrammese & news headlines
> 2nd from this very simple pure FORM comes something that affects the content the absence of the poets self in the poem – concrete is I-less
> 3rd this absence of grammar & self means the poem is there simply for you to look at […] it is EYEVERSE
> 4th its like looking at nature or a painting –like all art today concrete tends to confuse the boundaries –to create borderblurs – to identify w/ the inbetween:
> 5th concrete doesn't have a line of thought –you dont begin at one corner & end diagonally opposite – it isnt linear or logical or sequential or syllogistic […] – it is constellation – field composition – all the elements grouped are simultaneous – like the way events […] all happen at once
> 6th […] simultaneity – grouping – the panoptic view – coexistentialisms – oecumenism – borderblurs – atomic structuring – these are the things common to any art today
> 7th concrete being i-less it is non-didactic – the poet isnt bossing the reader – poet & reader share the poem – interpenetrate on equal terms […]
> 9th concrete isnt mimetic – doesn't copy either nature or mind – either inner or outer cosmos – it is objective – creating structures to exist in nature – that can communicate themselves as fully as directly & as quietly as a sunset a daffodil a garbage tip […].[49]

In previous chapters I have argued that the coinages, neologisms and phrases Houédard invented in his prose to describe his spiritual vision feel like an attempt to move "out from our complicated language of grammar and syntax" into a "language of nouns". In "EYEAR" Houédard's first point is this direction of concrete poetry from syntax to noun, even using a noun-based analogy to suggest that poems can communicate themselves as fully as a "sunset" or "a daffodil" even "a garbage tip". But the very objectivity of a noun in Houédard's own poems is not as straightforward as this comment would suggest. If we return again to the poems *pastpresentfuture* (Fig. 18) and *god* (Fig. 19), both composed on 290663, there is an important shift in composition. In *god,* Houédard's work attempts something entirely different to the work he made before. *god*, I now argue, is a move towards, not the simple and direct language of nouns, as established in "EYEAR", but towards a language beyond the noun. *god* un-nouns the noun god. It is the first work by Houédard where there is what Rawson identifies within Tantric practice and art as "the effort to overcome the semantic mode based on the noun".

> It seems likely that much of the fantastic elaboration of imagery found in later Tantra, both Hindu and Buddhist, represents an effort to overcome the semantic mode based on the noun, without stepping outside it. […] One of the goals of Indian (and other) mysticism can be described as, in one sense, the "unselving" of objects, dissolving the individual man and his world of separate things by a vision of the endlessly mobile tissue of change borne by the currents of energy and kinetic principles of shape related to each other through time in different ways.[50]

Rawson's words about the Tantric "unselving" of objects, "dissolving the individual man and his world of separate things" are comparable to Houédard's own words about concrete poetry in "EYEAR", when he writes: "from this very simple pure FORM comes something that affects the content the absence of the poets self in the poem – concrete is I-less". Houédard's poems are not just "I-less" in the sense that they contain no narrative or lyrical self, they are "I-less" in the sense that they undo the selfhood of all objects. This unselving of the poet cannot be fully accomplished in a language of nouns. There is no inherently existent "I" to be found, but neither is there an inherently existent "daffodil", "sunset" "garbage tip" or "god". This convergence of Tantric and Apophatic thought, characteristic of all his subsequent work, begins to take shape literally in the poem "god", where the noun itself is unselved on the page.[51] A series of letters Os move upwards from earth to heaven in the first of many spatial Jacob's ladders, ziggurats or Tantric staircases, each one progressively un-selving the noun. Rawson continues:

> To think and speak of this vision should demand that the noun, which is semantic parallel to the "selved' object, should be overcome somehow. But Tantra, because of its Indian linguistic heritage, was obliged to refine "selved' concepts, to push continually further its refinement of supernatural noun-objects, deities, principles, definite shapes and sounds in an endless pursuit of the "unselved' and hence non-objective "absolute' which will never, in fact, submit to noun-shaped thoughts.[52]

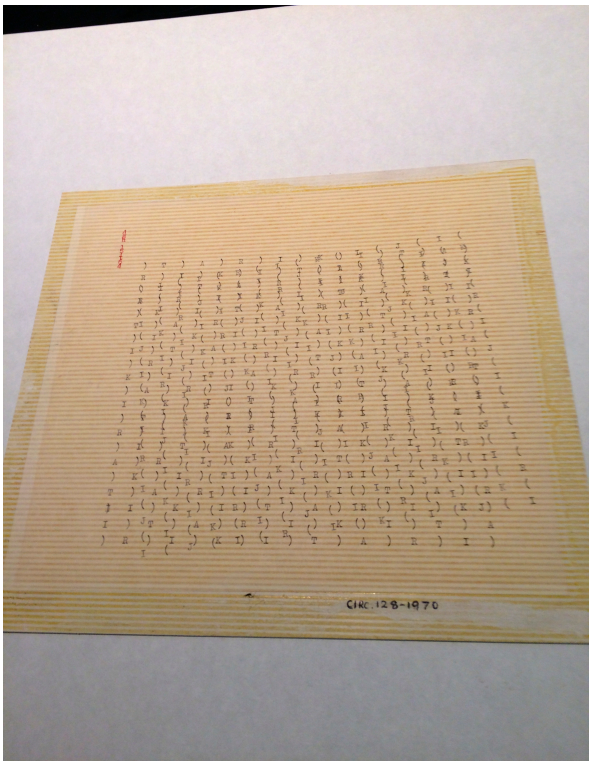
Houédard's poem *god* is his first work to articulate clearly a poem practice that could be characterised as the pursuit of the "unselved" and hence non-objective "absolute" which will never and could never submit to noun-shaped thoughts.

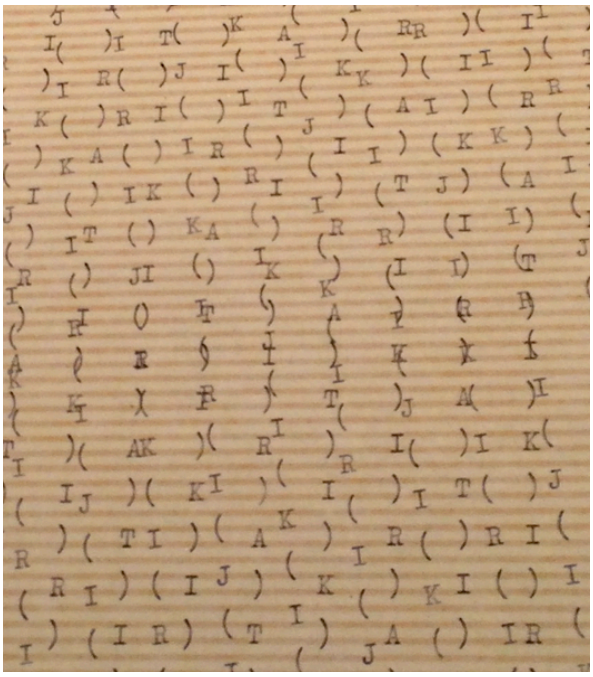
Increasingly, after this poem, his work explores an unselved language on the two-dimensional plane. As his notebooks from this period exemplify, he continually practiced making grids that are built up from the punctuation keys on his typewriter.[53] For example there are small squares composed of opening and closing parenthesis, "the outline of space and the inline of god" symbolised by just the two bracket keys and now conceptualised into planes of repeated graphemes. There are grids of colons, apostrophes and quotation marks. Experimental circles are made from the back slash and forward slash keys, rudimentary forms that gradually develop and change from spatialist landscapes and constellations towards the three-dimensional circles, ensōs, pyramids, triangles, ladders and stupas of his later work. There is repetition, each typestract has its own identity and independence yet collectively they form an extensive co-dependent record of a monk, at prayer, typewriting his inner contemplative experiences.

3.5 Moiré Poems: "APERSPECTIVE NONSYNTATIC POLYREADABLE structure"

In *god* the letters o, g and then d take the poem from the bottom left corner of the page, in a gradual ascent upwards towards the right hand corner. The word "god" emerges from a repetition of nine letters Os that seem far closer to a typographic ensō than an alphabetical letter. You can read the poem in this ascent from the ground heavenwards or alternatively from the heaven to the earth. It still has a linear perspective, is syntactic and offers, at most, a two-way reading. It is the beginning of a constellation that reaches for the corner of the page.

Houédard continued to practice extending the use of space, practicing grids of graphemes, sometimes superimposing one grid on top of another to create a dense surface or a variation on a pattern.[54] This work isn't linear or sequential and perhaps not syllogistic. Instead their field composition and atomic structuring offers the reader a panoptic view. Houédard called these "Moire" poems, after the French word meaning an independent, usually optically kinetic pattern, seen when two geometrically regular patterns are superimposed at an acute angle.





Figs. 20a and b *jiriki/tariki*, A moire poem. Author's image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum Archive.

Insight into how he saw this overlaying of two grids on top of each other might be found in a comment he made about Alain Resnais's 1961 film *l'Année dernière à Marienbad*, a film with an unfixable narrative perspective. Houédard writes, "of 2- overlapping not coinciding views of a shared event seen from inside two innernesses".[55] In his Moiré poems, Houédard experiments with a structural resolution to the communicative challenge of articulating in language or concepts his vision for a wider ecumenism and the co-existentialism of contemplative experience. This is a way of communicating his view that two different religions may offer coinciding views of a shared event: the experience of "god", Tao, emptiness during meditative prayer. The temporary solution he had found in the syncretic language of nouns in his bebop prose has developed into what he describes as an "APERSPECTIVE NONSYNTATIC POLYREADABLE structure".[56] The typestracts have the potential to create a multi-perspective, trans-historical and transnational image of god.

How this operates in such a poem can be seen in the following close reading of the Moiré poem "jiriki/tariki", 141164 (see Fig. 20a and b). Jiriki and tariki are words from Japanese Zen Buddhism. In a later poem (Fig. 21) Houédard defines jiriki as "selfhelp – acquired contemplation – yin" and tariki as "otherhelp – infused contemplation – yang".

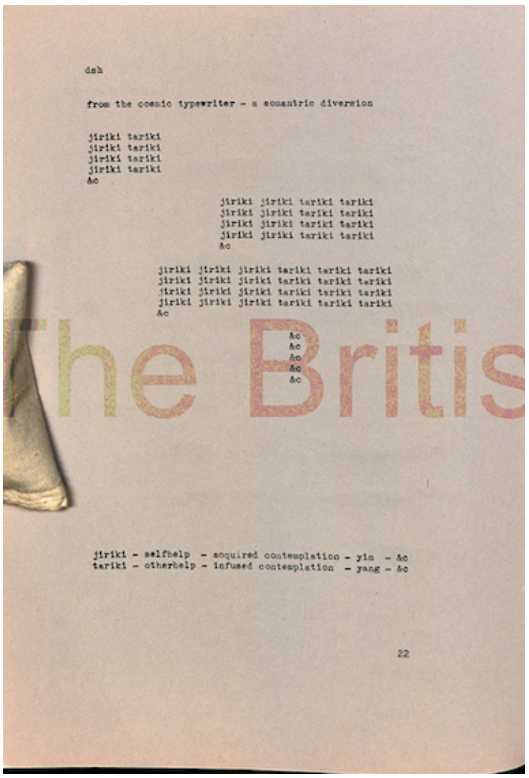


Fig. 21 “jiriki tariki”, Dom Sylvester Houédard, *Kroklok,* Author’s image courtesy of The British Library.

The poem enacts precisely the polyreadable narrative perspective of “two innernesses”. One grid of typed letters is composed of the letters in the word jiriki, self-power and self reliance, whilst the other grid of typed letters, positioned at an angle to the first, is tariki, a reliance on God or Buddha. There is not only the dematerialization of language into its constituent parts, j, i, r, k, t, a, but a materialization of the formless. This repetitive structure suggests a dance of materialization of “not this” and “not that”. In this typestract the parenthesis symbols become the spiritual ritual practices to be abandoned for the emptiness experienced by their methods; the wordless blank space of the page. As mentioned earlier, Houédard’s used these symbols to depict “(“ as the inline of space and “)” as the outline of god. This poem engages with the Zen practices that enable a human conceptualization of the absolute but is equally aware of the true nature of these practices too. In the words of the Zen scholar D.T Suzuki, “At the bottom, when you really get down to it, there is no jiriki and no tariki”. [57] The panoptic view of the field of letters and space in Houédard’s poem go some way to enact a panoptic view of theology and contemplation.

This typestract marks another important shift in his practice. It is directly engaging with the Zen Buddhist concepts of jiriki and tariki but within a poetic practice that un-selves the nouns jiriki and tariki too. The etymological implications of “moiré” originating from the French, a silk with a water-like effect are also a point of consideration, as too is how these

connotations of a woven fabric bring to the fore the word Tantra and its meaning as a weave. Tantrism appeared in India, within Hinduism, around the 5th or 6th century, C.E. In Sanskrit "tantra" means "loom" or "weave", but also "treatise". As I established in *new beat/ monknik wind,* Houedard had this knowledge of Tantra as weave, confirmed in the interwoven theological metaphor that he uses at the beginning of his article "Beat & Afterbeat":

> […] poetry the mad sad joy of the shadow church wefting nylon tantras inter man & man & world & yahweh patching up the zimzum with a certified 2-way stretch of now bursting thru our mental claptraps giftwraps & stale thought think outlines with delirious mantric words has come a bit unstuck. And poetry here to begin with can include any even l-line stuff from real poet shadow saints.[58]

Houédard's ecumenical metaphor conflates the conceptual space of the Hebrew "zimzum" (Tzimtzum) with the Tibetan Tantric spatial play between the "wefting" of non-conceptual ultimate reality and the warp of conceptual conventional reality. The ancient Semitic God Yahweh is attempting to patch up this "nylon" illusion of conventional reality that a burst of Zen-like spontaneous "now" has punctured. It is a playful pun on the Sanskrit word Tantra (to weave) with Houédard's choice of language weaving together theological teachings from Ancient Hebrew, Vipassanā Buddhism and Zen Buddhism. As demonstrated previously, this prose attempts to embody his wider ecumenism and "his vision of a movement which embraced all religions".[59] *new beat/ monknik wind* discussed how this syncretic syntax can obfuscate his intended meaning. Far more succinct is the typestract *jiriki/tariki* whose form enables Houédard to condense all these wider ecumenical connotations into two single symbols: (, a self-reliant spiritual path and), the path of reliance on the other and how they are combined within an individual's practice.

The writings of Dom Bede Griffiths confirm a similar understanding of how Eastern phenomenology can aid Christian prayer.

> Certainly from a Christian point of view the importance of Indian philosophy can hardly be over-estimated. It marks the supreme achievement of the human mind in the natural order in its quest of a true conception of God.[60]

In Houédard's typestract *jiriki/tariki*, a true conception of God lies inside and outside, above and below the parenthesis. Griffiths argues that the whole movement of Hindu thought, philosophy and culture culminates in the practice of Yoga, the search for union with "God". But this search for union with the incomprehensible mystery of Brahma, transcends all thought and expression. Griffiths writes, "sbefore this inexpressible mystery we can only say, Neti, Neti, Not this, Not that".[61] These words are very close to Houédard's own, "My

poetry examines interplay of god & non-god-image-of-god-concept as image (nadanada & netineti): cosmos as image: micro & macro cosms as image".[62]

Another example of these parenthetical symbols, as embodiments of ritual spiritual methods, occurs in a later typestract, from 1967 (Fig. 22). This untitled work is from Houédard's collection *tantric poems perhaps…*and depicts a Tantric loom with a cloth spun from an alternation of the bracket keys) and (. Mircea Eliade provides another definition of Tantra that has relevance for this work.

> It is not easy to define tantrism. Among the many meanings of the word *tantra* (root *tan "*extend", "continue", "multiply") one concerns us particularly – that of "succession", "unfolding" "continuous process". *Tantra* would be "what extends knowledge".[63]

The Tantric loom enables a continuous unfolding of the weave of self and other, inner and outer, form and emptiness. The fabric of this is developed from a continuous spiritual practice of what Houédard earlier described as "acquired contemplation" and "infused contemplation".

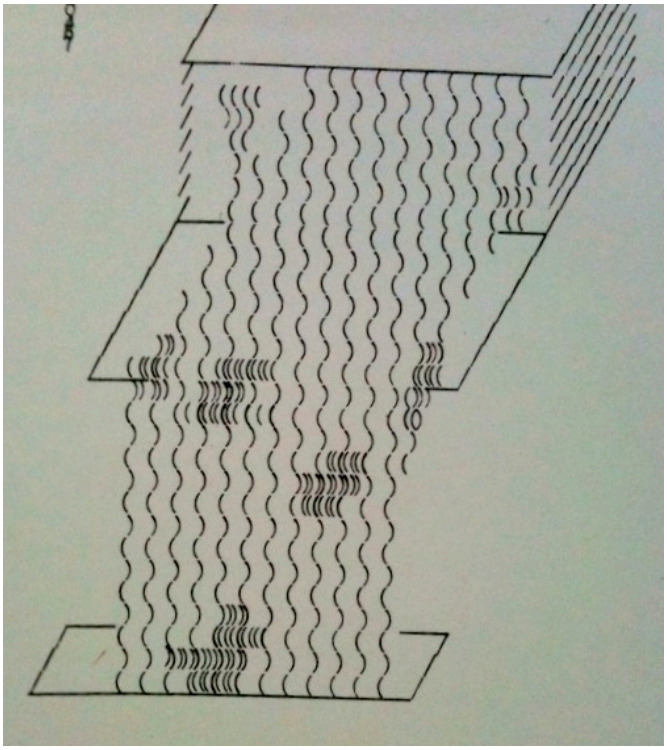


Fig.22 Typestract, *tantric poems perhaps…*Dom Sylvester Houédard, Writers Forum Folder 2, 1969. Author's image courtesy of Chelsea School of Art Special Collections.

It is this repetitive use of the same typewriter keys, as exemplified here with the example of the) and (signs and the ritual vocabulary of a spiritual geometry that positions Houédard's

typestracts in the context of other Tantric artists. As the Tantric art historian and collector Agit Mookerjee states about the work of generations of anonymous Tantric artists:

> In the world of contemplation, their experiments in art expression become as universal as their profound questions. In this approach, "the cry of 'Not this! Not that' which echoes so frequently through the Upanishads is a confession not of ignorance, but of the breakdown of human language before the memory of that experience". In the face of that realization art was driven to a highly abstract symbolism of vertical and horizontal lines, dots and circles.[64]

Similarly, Suzuki's words about Zen establish the ultimate rejection of anything that can be conceptualized, therefore anything that can be drawn with ink, typed on a page, made on a potter's wheel etc.

> The principle of *satori* is not to rely upon concepts in order to reach the truth of things, for concepts are useful in defining the truth of things but not in making us personally acquainted with it. Conceptual knowledge may make us wise in a way, but this is only superficial. It is not the living truth itself […].[65]

Houédard states "Fundamental is that all images of the other are images of me […] the same, grid-like, is mindscreen seeing serially conceptually".[66] One after the next, grid-like typestracts depicting, yantra-like, a "geometric portrait of some aspect of the absolute".[67] But this portrait is subsequently abandoned as "not this" and "not that".

3.6 yantra *perhaps*

As art historians such as Mookerjee and Rawson have established a yantra is essentially a geometrical composition. But to understand the "true nature" of these geometrical drawings, Mookerjee clarifies that "one has to go beyond the notions of geometry into those of dynamics". He continues, "a *Yantra* then represents a particular force whose power or energy increases in proportion to the abstraction and precision of the diagram". The Tantric practitioner, through his ritual use of yantra or power diagrams can create and control mental and physical forces.[68] If these typestracts are to be positioned critically within the dialogues around Tantric art then there is one crucial point to be made. These forms are not an arbitrary imaginative invention from the artist's mind. They are instead a revealed image of an aspect of the contemplative experience. It is also important to clarify the following point. Houédard was making these poemobjects in the 1960s, based upon his own understanding of Tantra as it was gradually revealed to the West in the spiritual commentaries he read. They are not in any dialogue with Tantric art as it has been subsequently framed through Western art history, curation or criticism. Rawson and Mookerjee both published their influential works on Tantric art in the 1970s. There were attempts to frame Houédard's work within this emerging discourse as it became known in the 1970s, as the following example from Guy Brett's introduction to Houédard's 1971 exhibition *Visual Poetries* attests:

> actual words appear in the typestracts, but they have no priority over all kinds of other signs. words are one stream in a convergence of graphic means. words, representational images, geometric figures, architectural spaces, orientation figures reminiscent of aircraft instruments, and signs of energy like fire, water or clouds – all these may be combined, but usually in a simple, highly synthesized pattern, rather similar in nature to mandalas and other cosmic diagrams.[69]

But the important point to remember is that Houédard's development of a powerful and creative contemplative language of (what Brett identified as) "geometric figures", "architectural spaces", "orientation figures" and "signs of energy" (Figs. 23-32) took place prior to even the concept of "Tantric art" in the West.[70]

If they are to be understood as being "similar in nature to mandalas and other cosmic diagrams", then an understanding as to *how* they function as yantra is paramount. Mookerjee provides a succinct definition of the yantra:

> Such basic geometrical figures as the point, straight line, circle, triangle, and square, have a symbolic value in representing the basic energies of the universe. They can be combined in increasingly complex figures to represent

> particular forces or qualities embodied in some aspect of creation, evolution, dissolution.[71]

Mookerjee's commentary on the geometry of Tantric forms foregrounds a rather universal vocabulary and meaning. Summarizing his ideas, he discusses how the dot (bindu), is "the One, the invisible point of origin; grouped dots may refer to […] self-multiplications of the source" and how "cloudy areas present undifferentiated energy […] a 'pre-crystalline' condition, before separate elements have established any definitive relationship."A straight line can be used by the Tantric artist to divide "one side of itself from the other: it is the original Mother, the primary separator". A cross "expresses mutual co-ordination, neutrality, the balanced spiritual", a "diagonal cross expresses dynamic instability of axes", with "the endless circle symbolizes the expanding universe, or cycle of repetition. Concentric circles are read both as narrowing down and radiating outward like waves of energy". Other symbols are the curve as a representative of movement and change and the spiral as "the universal symbol for growth, a two dimensional one must expand 'forever' from its centre". An upward pointing triangle embodies male energy; a downward pointing one embodies the complementary female energy intersecting to interpenetrate and reconcile the opposing sexual forces (Fig. 31-2). Man is found in the geometry of the pentangle. Writing about the square in particular, Mookerjee writes, "as a grid, squares are used to make arenas of space and time intelligible." As such, the square is "our fundamental image for the world of conscious experience, earth and terrestrial understanding". It is mystical. It is the matrix to be used, but always transcended. The square as a diagram "extends into space as the cube, and into time as the hyper-cube"[72] (Figs. 23-26). Appearing in 1975, one may wonder whether this universality may be a translation and simplification of Tantric forms to satisfy the increasing appetite in the West for Yoga. A survey of the typestracts demonstrates the Tantric forms Mookerjee identifies are present in this work, recombined and repeated. Eliade illuminates the function of the yantra further. The Yantra structure "maybe regarded as the linear paradigm of the *mandala* […] in other words, the *yantra* is an expression in terms of linear symbolism of the cosmic manifestations, beginning with the primordial unity" [Eliade's italics]. As such, when yantra is mandala, "it has an iconographic schema, "susceptible of countless variations".[73]

As I have argued in *the monk attuned by tantrism to the cosmos* and above in **3.5**, Houédard built up the "basic geometrical figures" from what I have termed a

basic geometrical grammar [my italics]. It is a geometrical grammar composed from all the available non-alphabetical typewriter keys: the brackets, the full stop, comma, ampersand, asterisk, and inverted commas. As the close readings of *4 stages of spiritual typewriting* and *jiriki/tariki* exemplified, Houédard imbues each particular key with "a symbolic value" that not only represents a performative ritual energy but embodies it too. In the case of *4 stages of spiritual typewriting* it is the forward slash key and the full stop. In *jiriki/tariki* it is the bracket keys. This basic geometrical grammar is then repeated precisely to form planes and sides and outlines of the "basic geometrical figures" that Mookerjee identifies within Tantric art and which Houédard, like generations of previous Tantric artists, combines "in increasingly complex figures".

Houédard's typestracts become diagrams of forces, dynamic graphs of the process of conceptualization itself; understanding of how the mind creates and destroys form, moment by moment, embodying precisely what Mookerjee identifies above as aspects of "creation, evolution and dissolution".

> Every kind of living matter is doing the same thing through constructive processes of composition and decomposition. Creation and destruction are the very essence of every existence. All objects consist of an aggregate of atoms brought together by force. Disintegration is as much a normal and necessary aspect of nature as aggregation. [74]

As argued in *the monk attuned by tantrism to the cosmos,* each form is interdependent with the emptiness from which it arises, the emptiness of a person is interdependent with the five compositional aggregates that constitute the experience of personhood. We can examine this interplay of form and emptiness in the relationship of a full point and the surrounding page, as in the analysis of *4 stages of spiritual typewriting*, in the broken lines of a geometric outline, as in the analysis of *5 buddha families*, in the compositional grid of *jiriki/tariki* or in the many repeated geometrical forms found again and again in a practice of making typestracts that lasted over a decade. From Houédard's extensive output we can apply Rawson's words about yantras, concluding, "No diagram is the One. It can only point beyond itself, towards it".[75]

> One has to learn use the diagram. The straight lines, circles, squares, triangles and spirals must transform into summaries of the experience of inner and outer reality. A contemplative mystic uses visual diagrams first to focus his mind, to bring his senses under control, and release himself from the habitual urgent wandering of attention that makes people unable to connect with their source and centre.[76]

The typewriter is so successful as the medial instrument in that it takes out the emotive personal calligraphic line. Houédard is no longer embodying his contemplative experience in the expressive ink-brushed line of Zenga, as in his 1950s notebooks discussed above, instead repetitively pressing the typewriter key to create a line is a way to focus, bring senses under control and make a “super-personal” yet “I-less” geometry.

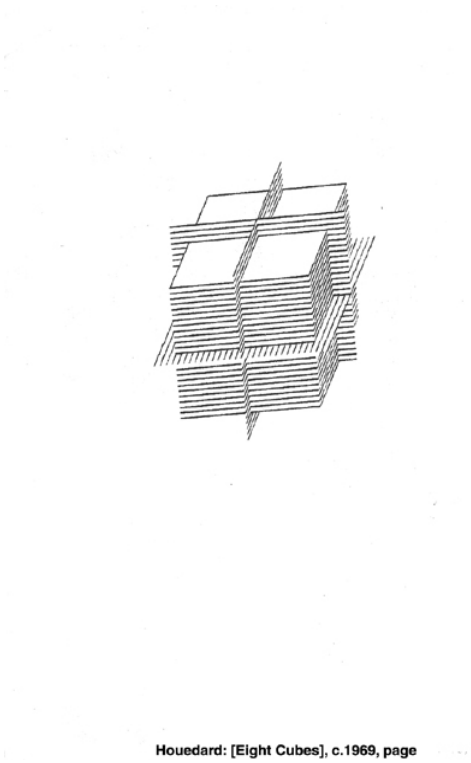


Fig.23 “Eight Cubes”, Typestract, c.1969 Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

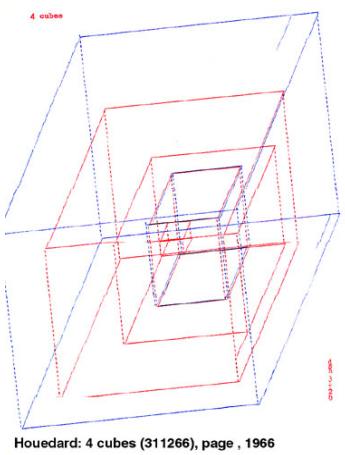


Fig. 24 “4 Cube”, Typestract, c. 1966, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

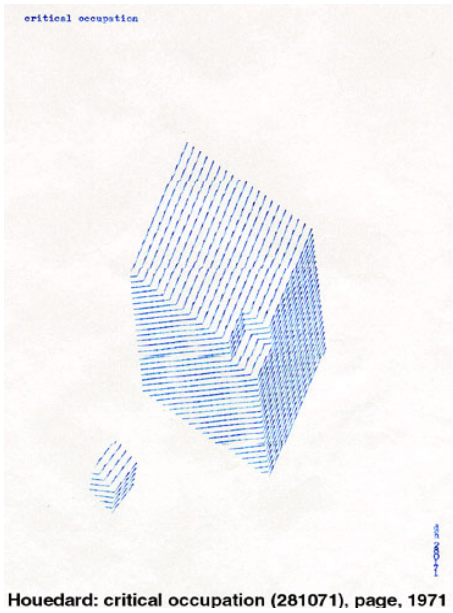


Fig. 25 “critical occupation”, Typestract, 280171, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.



Fig. 26 “red basket”, Typestract, 160267, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Images courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

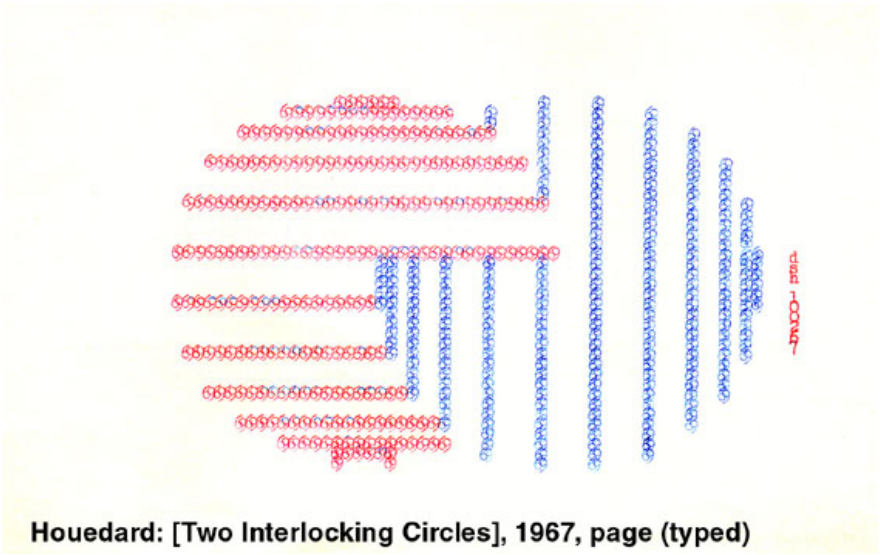


Fig. 27 “Two interlocking circles”, 100767, Typestract, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Images courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

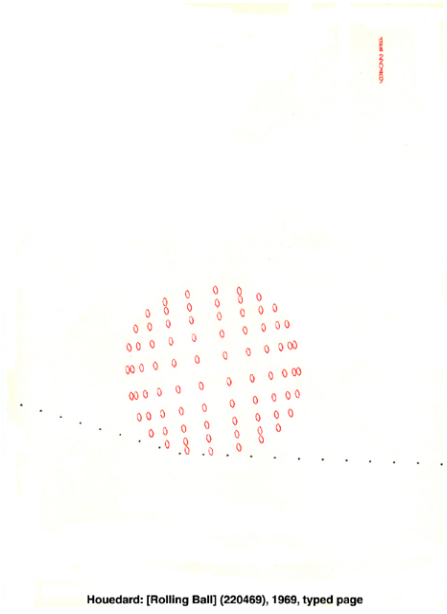
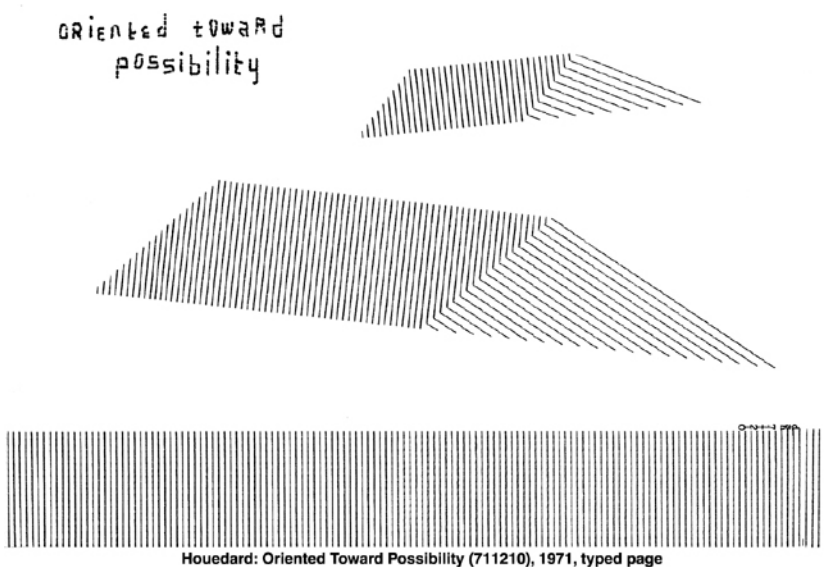
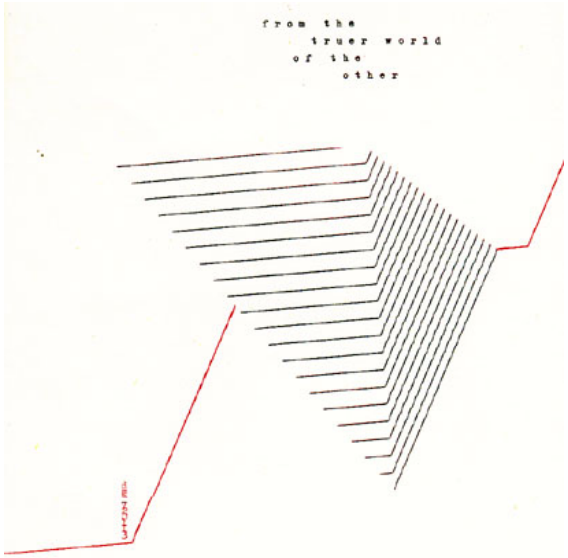


Fig. 28 “Rolling Ball”, Typestract, 220169, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.



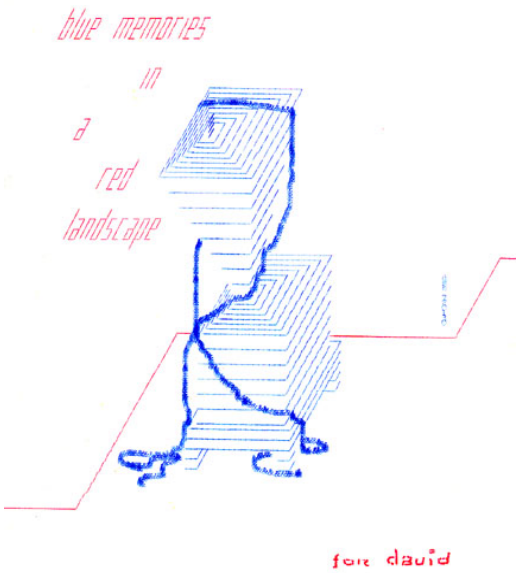
Houedard: Oriented Toward Possibility (711210), 1971, typed page

Fig. 29 “orientated toward possibility”, Typestract, 101271, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.



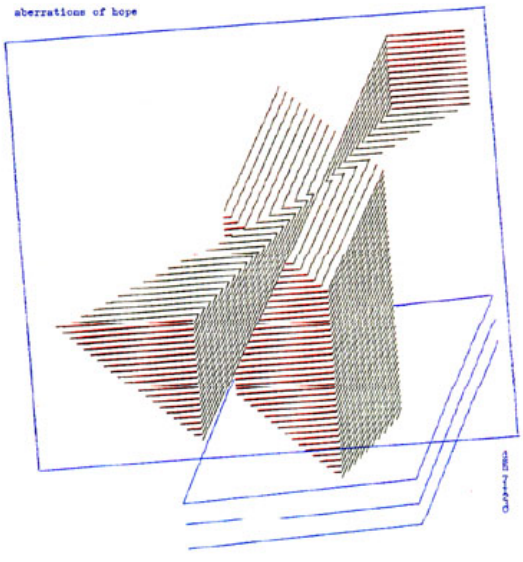
Houedard: from the truer... (720113), page, 1972

Fig. 30 “from the truer world of the other”, Typestract, 101271, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.



Houedard: blue memories in a red... (720130), page, 1972

Fig. 31 "blue memories", Typestract, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.



Houedard: aberrations of hope (711230), page, 1971

Fig. 32 "aberrations of hope", Typestract, 101271, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

3.7 tantric practice perhaps…

Tantric ritual practice is a complex ensemble of actions bringing together and arousing all of the bodily and mental powers of the practitioner in an ascending movement of identification with the ONE. For Houédard this could be the Christian God and a Buddhist manifestation of a Tantric deity such as Vajrayogini or Heruka. John Blofeld, whom Houédard knew and corresponded with, discusses how Tantric rituals can bring about a control of the mind of the practitioner and a focus to his spiritual practice.[77]

> Owing to karmic accretions from past lives, most beings have passions and desires which are stronger than their power of control; eliminating them is the work of many lifetimes and their persistence a grave obstacle to Liberation. Merely willing oneself to be passion-free does not help. Therefore the Tantric adept is instructed to make use of three methods – vanquishing, ennobling and yielding in a special way.[78]

In the context of this discussion about Houédard's yantra, Blofeld's use of the word "ennobling" is useful. Ennobling, as Blofeld illuminates, is a method by which the passion and/or desire is transferred to objects mentally created. If these mental symbols are related to the spiritual goal, the force of desire is transferred on to the symbol, and the symbol is then dissolved into emptiness, so that ordinary mundane desire is now concentrated onto a spiritual goal. A Tantric adept can create mental forms that are more real to him than the ordinary objects of his daily world.

> That mental creations can become so real for the adept is because the very nature of reality is void and all phenomena are the creations of mind; it follows that visions, dreams and imaginings are not less but 'more real' than the objects with which we may stub our toes, for their non-void forms are more akin to the real state of void.[79]

Houédard's visualization of form in his yantra is the characteristic distinguishing Tantric method of meditation. Blofeld again:

> The purpose of visualization is to gain control of the mind, become skilled in creating mental constructions, make contact with powerful forces (themselves the products of mind) and achieve higher states of consciousness in which the non-existence of own-being and the non-dual nature of reality are transformed from intellectual concepts into experiential consciousness – non duality is no longer just believed but felt. In short, visualization is a yoga of the mind.[80]

This is the experiential consciousness of the fourth empty box in *4 stages of spiritual typwriting* and it is this experiential consciousness that led Houédard to an understanding of the Mahayana Buddhist doctrines that state that the entire universe is mentally created. "All sentiment beings, including ourselves, are partakers in the act of creation; viewed one way,

our minds are to all intents and purposes individual entities; viewed another, they are indivisible from universal mind".[81]

3.8 the tantric staircase *perhaps*

If we return again to the typestract *treepoem*, we can see this doctrine in action in Houédard's coded lexical key, "how we turn out to be related". The conceptual tree in Houédard's poem enacts the Tantric meditation of the emptiness of the "I" and the emptiness of "persons" whereby the practitioner achieves the realization that the relationship between the "I" and the "not-I", or the "me" and the "not-me" is a subtle conceptual distinction. As Blofeld states, "It follows that distinctions between the products of a man's private thought and the objects in his environment – themselves products of the creative mind – have only relative validity".[82] He continues:

> Tantric Buddhism is a science of dynamic mind control which produces levels of consciousness deeper than conceptual thought. In describing those levels, words fail; in experiencing them, logical thought is transcended – hence the need for symbols.[83]

It is with this establishment of "the need for symbols" to enable the transmission of "levels of consciousness deeper than conceptual thought" that I will begin my discussion of Houédard's particular use of the symbol of the spiritual ladder or Tantric staircase in general and move on to a close analysis of this spiritual ladder as a particular dynamic diagram of the body mandala of a Tantric initiate. I have chosen this symbol for in-depth analysis, over the cube, square, triangle or circle as illustrated above, as its wider ecumenical and specifically Christian and Buddhist meanings are easily understood, and it is the symbol to which Houédard himself most frequently referred. It is the intention of such analysis to provide a critical methodology that can be usefully applied to interpret other visual forms in the typestracts. The "ladder" is far from being an exclusively Tantric or Christian symbol. As Mircea Eliade postulated:

> The ladder […] *gives plastic expression to the break through the planes necessitated by the passage from one mode of being to another,* by placing us at the cosmological point *where communication between Heaven, Earth and Hell becomes possible.* [His italics].[84]

As Eliade's research has established, the stairway and the ladder are transnational symbols found in the rites and the myths of initiation, funerary rituals, the rites of royal or sacerdotal enthronement or marriage.

> The *ziggurat* was, properly speaking, a cosmic mountain – that is, a symbolic image of the Cosmos; its seven stages represented the seven planetary sphere; by ascending them, the priest attained to the summit of the Universe.[85]

Houédard refers to many of his typestracts as "ziggurats" or "space-probes" that embody precisely this journey to the centre of being.

> the sort of visual communication which i try to help make – levi strauss I find particularly persuasive when he sees myths as establishing mutually exclusive dualities & then creating links and hybrids as magic bridges & jacob's ladders between them- ie pontificating (in its root sense) & helping the up-&-down traffic of angels – & for myths read 'poems' – for poems read 'abstract poems' – visual or acoustic – I see my typestracts as icons depicting sacred questions – dual space-probes of inner & outer […].[86]

Rawson is also uselful in establishing the symbolic importance of these "magic bridges" and "jacob's ladders" in the context of Tantra:

> Tantra is esoteric and much of it was always kept secret […] It can be approached from two distinct points of view: as a ladder of Genesis, leading down from an ultimate unknowable origin; or as a ladder to be climbed in the opposite direction, from the created world towards an ultimate goal. Goal and origin are identical.[87]

And, as Eliade confirms, this ladder of "genesis" is part of a very familiar Christian symbolism: "The bridge or ladder between Heaven and Earth were possible because they were set up in a Centre of the World – like the ladder seen in a dream by Jacob, which reached from earth to the heavens. "And behold! The angles of God were ascending and descending on it" (*Genesis* XXVIII, 11-12)".[88] This is the Christian journey Houédard also describes in his commentary "Prayer as a Way of Life", outlining the descent to the heart centre as an ascent towards God:

> […] it is only through our selfish spirit becoming holy as god is holy ie unselfishly that we can escape – as some of the fathers put it prayer will always being in eros – as a selfish desire to be good - & raising us selfishly to god will meet god descending & converting eros to agape – to selfless love – to god's own divine nature – this ascent to god can only begin by listening in prayer with spiritual ears, with the '3rd' ear, to the silent word that god is ceaseless speaking in the invisible hollow that fills the clay vessel.[89]

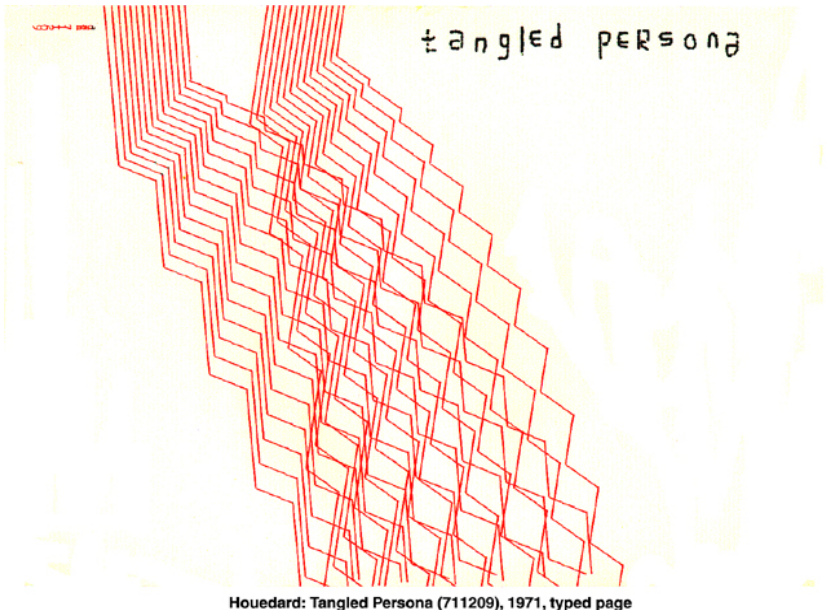


Fig. 33 "Tangled Persona" Typestract, 091271, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Images courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

Houédard uses the staircase as one of many of the component shapes of meditative diagram (Fig. 33). He does so, knowing the archetypal references widely accepted among different traditions, Eastern and Western. And, as I shall argue below in my analysis of two specific examples of these staircases, these plane figures, made up of straight lines, have specific numbers of sides and angles. Numbers, in practical mysticism, are not simply sums or functions of theoretically identical integers as they are in mathematics, but symbols of distinctive ideas and relationships between the world and man. Yantras therefore connect a person to the world in an intimate, "cosmophysiology".[90] The American Buddhist scholar Reginald A. Ray, elucidates on this relationship between meditative diagrams and the human figure:

> The person looking at them identifies himself with them, in the first place because the axis of the human body in relation to the ground and its horizon is vertical. Here is the nucleus of all diagrammatic thinking. Picture formats, architectural spaces and yantra designs, with their tops and bottoms, project and contain experience and action in relation to these axes.[91]

As human beings we are in a state of intimate relationship and connection with all that is. We can make an important distinction between the "feel" of a life lived predominantly in the head, wherein we experience the world as a conceptual reality and alternatively a life lived primarily through the body: inhabited and embedded and interdependent.

> It is no wonder the spinal axis is so central to yoga, as the centre of the circle, or the sphere, of surrounding space: for to know and propagate the world around

> him the human being scans his horizon, and estimates all reality in terms of 'up and down', 'before and behind' and 'left and right'.[92]

Eliade discusses how in many religions "What we have here is a sacred, mythic geography, the only kind effectually *real,* as opposed to profane geography".[93]

> Every microcosm, every inhabited region, has what may be called a "Centre"; that is to say, a place that is sacred above all. It is there, in that Centre, that the sacred manifests itself in its totality, either in the form of elementary hierophanies […] or in the direct epiphanies of the gods […].[94]

In Yoga, Hindu or Tantric, each individual is at the centre of the universe in an "unlimited number of centres" each considered "the centre of the world", the place in question being a "sacred space", consecrated by a hierophany, or ritually constructed, and not a profane, homogeneous, geometrical space.[95]

As I shall demonstrate both in this chapter and in *mandala* with my commentary on Houédard's performance score *the cosmic ballet*, Houédard was interested in the transnational symbolism of the Cosmic Tree. This Cosmic Tree is situated in the middle of the universe in ancient China, Germanic mythology, Vedic India and again in many old and aboriginal religions. In the Central and North Asiatic religions its seven or nine branches symbolize the seven or nine celestial planes, the planetary heavens, but in the Tantric practices this cosmic tree rises up along the practitioner's spine, at the centre of an imaginatively generated body mandala, and the seven branches become the seven chakra points. As stated above, Eliade argues that sacred space is the essentially *real* space. Within this space one has direct contact with the sacred, "whether this be materialized in certain objects" or "manifested in the hiero-cosmic symbols", such as the Pillar of the World, the Cosmic Tree (see *Mandala*) or, I shall discuss below, the central susumna pole in the Tantric body mandala. Here is a centre where all other cosmic planes intersect. It is an axis that can be travelled along from one cosmic plane to another. In many cultures only medicine men, shamans and priests were able to make this journey yet within the practices of Hindu and Vajrayana Tantras these practices are open to all initiates.[96]

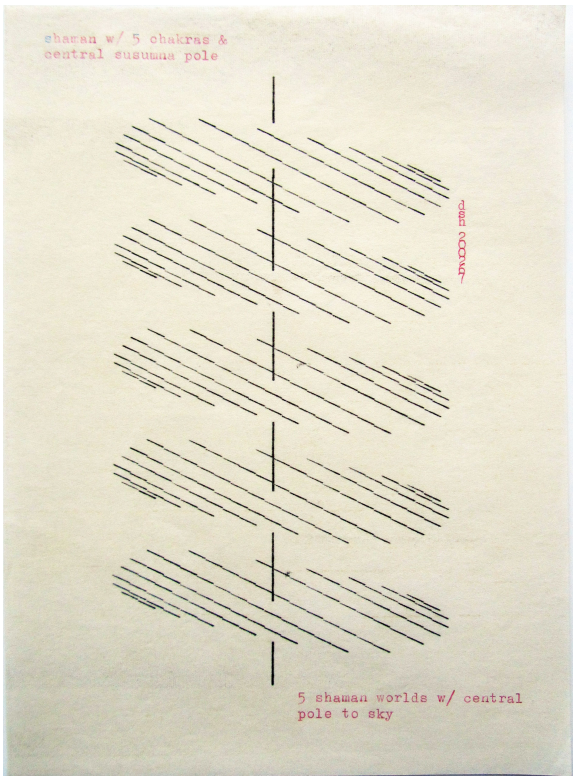


Fig. 34 *shaman w/ 5 chakras & central susumna pole* 200267. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

3.9 the body mandala

These ideas of "cosmophysiology" and the shamanic experience, are visually communicated by Houédard in his typestract *shaman w/ 5 chakras & central susumna pole*, composed in late February 1967 (Fig. 34). It was during a period when Houédard was intensely interested in shamanic transcendence, altered states of consciousness, the psychedelic drug experience and the non-semantic vocalization of sacred languages and performance art. As such, this work can be considered within the larger Western counter-cultural neoshamanship of the 1960s, discussed in detail in *mandala.* The axis of the Pillar of the World or The Cosmic Tree, the axis upon which one can travel to different spiritual planes, are here present in Houédard's synthsis of the shamanic "central pole to the sky" and the yogic "susumna pole". Likewise "the 5 shaman worlds" are also "5 chakras". The cosmic tree is without and within. Two weeks later, in just three days, 8th-10th March, he would compose a series of eight typestracts that would form his later publication *toward a book of chakras*, designed and printed by students at the Watford School of Art (Fig. 36).[97] To understand *shaman w/ 5 chakras & central susumna pole* it is important to consider it in relation to a wider sequence of works that focus on the chakra system of the subtle energy body developed from the ancient teachings of Hinduism, Tantric Buddhism and Kundalini

Yoga. Although Houédard's collection *tantric poems perhaps…* was not published until 1969, all the typestracts included in the folder were made between 260167 and 040467 and suggest a formal dialogue with the work in *toward a book of chakras* and *shaman w/ 5 chakras & central susumna pole*. This is particularly evident in the typestract *visualisation of idapingala staircases with mount meru in the middle* 260167 (Fig. 35).

The subtle energy body is a series of channels (nādi) that allow energy (prana) to flow around the human body. Eliade discusses how inside "both the physical" and "the subtle" human body there are a number of channels called nādis and chakras. "There are many nādis" but those "which play an essential role in all yogic techniques are the first three: idā, pingalā and susumna".[98] These two channels convey the two breaths and all the subtle energy of the body.

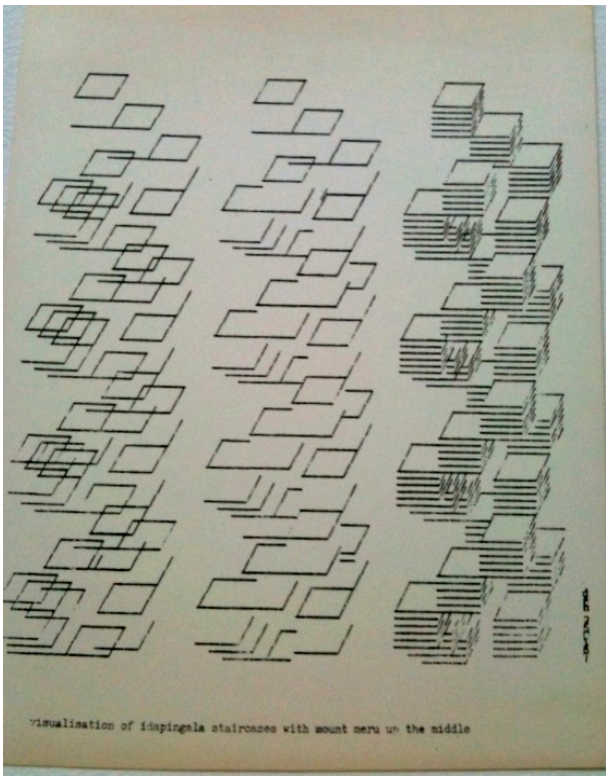


Fig. 35 *visualization of idapingala staircases with mount meru in the middle* 260167, *tantric poems perhaps…*Dom Sylvester Houédard, Writers Forum Folder 2, 1969. Author's Image courtesy of Chelsea School of Art Special Collections.

Chakra is a Sanskrit word that means wheel or disc or centre and within this subtle energy body a chakra is a place where the channels meet. Within these teachings seven chakras have been identified as having particular importance (five of these are depicted within the

typestract) and they revolve around the central energy channel, the sushumna (or susumna as Houédard calls it).

> Human experience owes to Tantra the discovery and location of the centres of energy – *chakras*- in the human body. Every individual, according to Tantra, is a manifestation of that energy, and the objects around us are the outcome of the same consciousness ever revealing itself in various modes.[99]

In fact, as Rawson collaborates these chakras can also be considered as yantras:

> The details of the subtle-body mechanism are as follows. Along the Susumna nadi are strung a series of mandala-discs; these are often known as cakras, or wheels, and they are usually represented in art as open lotuses with differing numbers of petals. Hindu and Buddhist systems vary in the number of cakras they recognize. […] The basic six can easily be discovered by a modest act of introspection. They are, in fact, a special type of yantra.[100]

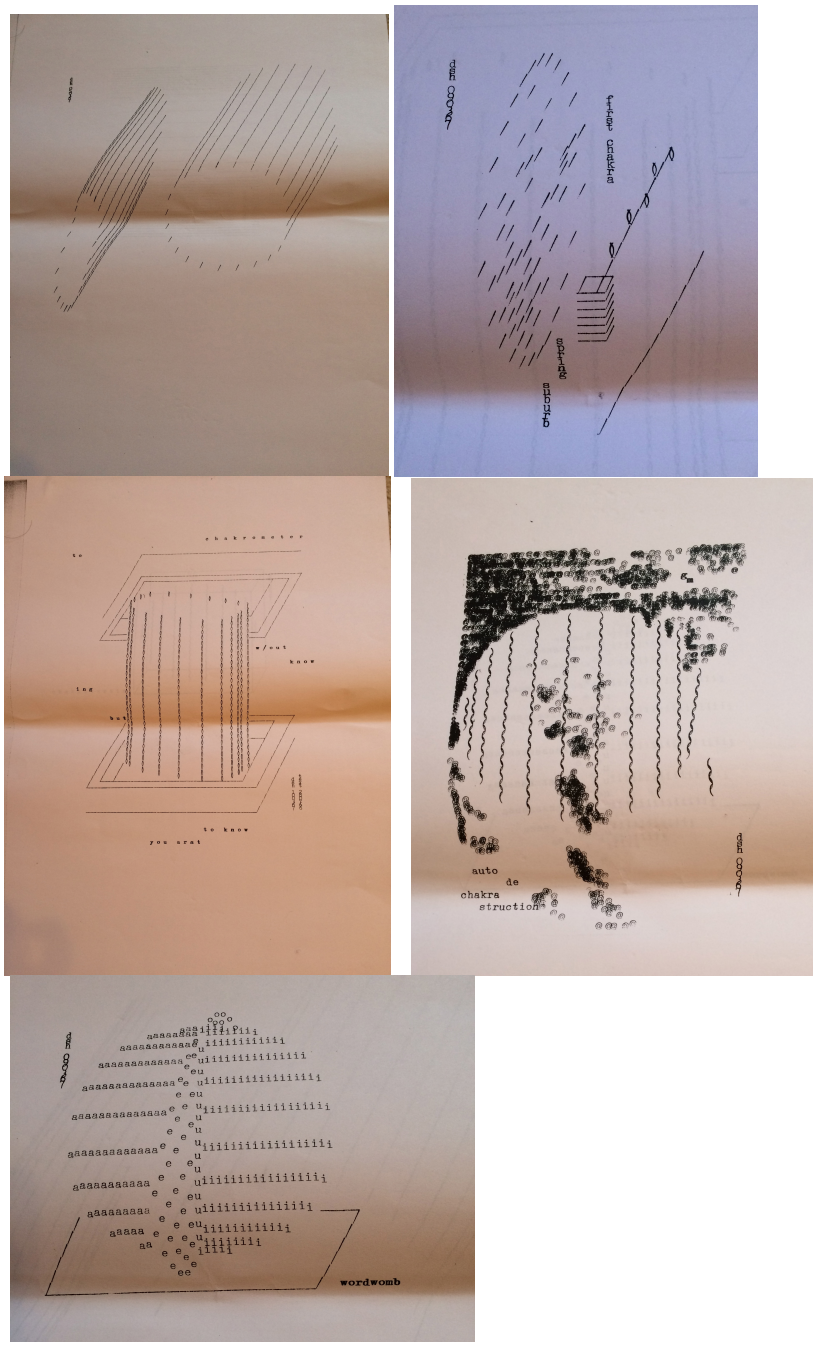


Fig. 36 Selection from *A book of chakras: 8 yantric poems,* Watford School of Art, Folder, 1967, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands Library Special Collections. Author's images.

Through an altered state of consciousness, either through meditation, autohypnosis or the ingestation of entheogens (hallucinogenic substances) the shaman travels along his central pole, the *axis mundi*, the celestial pole or cosmic axis, which acts as a conduit between heaven and earth and enters the spirit world or experiences Kundalini awakening, or nirvana (depending on the Tantric or spiritual tradition of the practitioner/ shaman).

Rawson provides a commentary that can be used as a yogic or Tantric key to understand the typestract *shaman w/ 5 chakras & central susumna pole* and *visualisation of idapingala staircases with mount meru in the middle*:

> The sadhaka then concentrates upon the energies which are flowing out around the root of his Merudanda projecting his world, at the centre of which he is now firmly located. He proceeds to use the inner image of his lowest chakra as a mandala-yantra with its mantras to withdraw and concentrate his outgoing energies. […] First he must set up a system of inner circulation along a pair of nadis which spiral from the top to bottom around the Susumna, passing points congruent with the left and right nostrils. These are called the nadis Ida and Pingalā, sun and moon, the right white, the left red. When this is done the outward-flowing world energies can then be withdrawn into the cakra circuit of petals, then into a central downward-pointing female yoni-triangle.[101]

It is this vertical axis of time that links conceptually Houédard's body as he typed the yantras to their spatial geometry. It is the temporal axis of the "present" in the typoem *pastpresentfuture* as much as it the shamanic tree to be climbed in the countercultural London he found himself in (see below and *mandala*). Rawson argues that all Tantric diagrams are intrinsically spatial and therefore need to represent time by one of their axes, or through the inclusion of abstract images of fourth or higher dimensions, whilst also acknowledging the essential asymmetry of time too.[102] The basis of all yantras and mandala diagrams lies in the human experience of action and being acted upon. Each line of the yantra embodies this action and has a relationship to the experience of time. The line acknowledges the duration it took to be made and the duration it takes to be seen. In Houédard's typestracts that depict chakras, the spinning discs that form each chakra create the impression of the subtle prana energy through the dynamic use of the backslash key (Fig. 36). The Tantric artist does not attempt to absorb something external to themselves but to release something universal they have experienced inwardly. The backslash key creates a movement that depicts Houédard's experience of action and energy. They are not just concerned with form but with the forces that give rise to form. Art of this nature has a spiritual origin and goal. The artist is involved in a continuous process of discovery, not of themselves, but of the roots of the universe, which they have been able to discover within themselves.

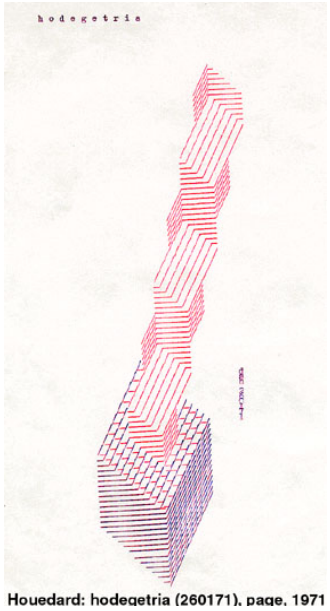


Fig.37 “hodegetria” Typestract, 260171, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive. Image courtesy of the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry

As I established in 1.5 *4 stages of spiritual typewriting,* Houédard’s typestracts repeatedly create and recreate a geometrical cube, an empty boxes, that can function as compositional units used to make tangible and visible the mental paths and staircases through which the mind can travel (Fig. 37). Many of the typestracts can be interpreted as a depiction of the subtle energy body of a yogic practitioner and the Chakra centre.

> The subtle body is probably the most important subject of Tantric art. It illustrates the structure of the inner human body used in yogic sadhanna, which has the essential Tantrik double value. From the aspect of Genesis it is the means by which his world is made around him for every individual. It is closely analogous to the Cosmic Body.[103]

Houédard’s depiction of this energy body can be interpreted within the wider contexts of Tantra and Yoga, outlined above, but also specifically as Deity Yoga, the essential practice of Vajrayana Tantric Practice. Within this yoga the practitioner repeatedly envisages their body as the body of the deity, repeatedly sees their environment as the pure land or mandala of the deity, repeatedly experiences all their enjoyments as the bliss of the deity and repeatedly performs all their actions for the benefit of others, acting as the deity. If we put this ritual visualization into the framework Houédard established in his introduction to *tantric poems perhaps…,* the “notional” imaginative self- generation of the deity is practiced until it develops into a “real appreciation”, the completion stage.[104] It is believed by practitioners of deity yoga that the actual body, speech, mind and actions of a Buddha can

be achieved through an imaginative, creative and performative methodology of meditation that transforms all of the practitioner's actions into those of the deity.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that Houédard's typestracts should be viewed as a comprehensive body of visual concrete poetry that are illuminated by a conceptual framework rooted firmly within Houédard's own autodidactic study of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. Houédard called his visual poems yantras and, as I have mentioned previously, critics such as Guy Brett alluded to their similarity to cosmological diagrams, but no previous study has explored *how* they may be critically framed as yantra or function as yantra within a spiritual practice. Neither has there been any previous investigation into how the compositional methods Houédard's used in the making of his poemobjects may be an integral part of his own spiritual practice.

The aim of this chapter has been to clarify several aspects of Houédard's poetic development and discuss these key stages of his textual practice as a concrete poet in relation to his understanding of Tantric practice. A key example is his development of a textual strategy to un-selve the noun, based closely upon the Tantric ritual methods used to un-selve objects and un-selve the self. Writing about the typestracts, Houédard states "in the moments of making […] they step by step control me & pose ultimate questions of their own identity dependence destiny & independence". As forms "they should probably be viewed like cloud-tracks & tide-ripples – bracken-patterns & gull-flights – or simply as horizons & spirit levels".[105] Yet to do so within the framework of Tantric practice that informed them, these "cloud-tracks" and "tide-ripples" are, as Mookerjee explains above, "interrelated in a vastly complicated but inseparable whole". As such, the yantras are as equally un-selved as a tide ripple, which cannot be separated from the sea or a gull-flight, which cannot be separated from the sky. Realizing his un-selved self the Tantric practitioner can impute his "I" on any form. The typestracts are yantras when Houédard, or another Tantric practitioner imputes their "I" upon their forms. However this "I" is as inseparable from the emptiness out of which it arises as the typed spiritual geometrical forms that are continually undone by a compositional grammar that engages the space on the page as referent to its own emptiness.

In summary, Houédard's typestracts are yantras both within the critical framework of his own post-East, post-West, wider ecumenical inter-medial understanding and within the wider critical Tantric conceptual framework that this research has established. When these yantras are spoken, as the next chapter will examine, they become mantras.

[1] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom,* trans. by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series LVI, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969): 251.
[2] Ibid., 252.
[3] The collectors Ruth and Marvin Sackner had purchased the only other substantial collection of these early ink and watercolour figurative drawings in the late 1970s.
[4] Zenga is the art of brush painting in Zen art. It is also used to imply a unification of mind and body within the artistic methodology. See glossary.
[5] Yasuichi Awakawa, "Introduction," *Zen Painting,* trans. by John Bexter (Japan: Kodansha International Ltd, 1970): 36.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 40.
[8] Ibid, p.29.
[9] D.T Suzuki, "Zen and Haiku," *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010): 220.
[10] Awakawa, *Zen Painting,* 30.
[11] Helen Westgeest quoting D. T. Suzuki, *Zen in the fifties, interaction in art between east and west,* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers): 1996.
[12] Awakawa, *Zen Painting,* 30.
[13] Franck André Jamme, front cover, *Tantra Song* (Los Angeles: siglio, 2011).
[14] Franck André Jamme, "Interview with Bill Berkson," *Tantra Song* (Los Angeles: siglio, 2011): 14.
[15] Lawrence Rinder, "Introduction," *Tantra Song* (Los Angeles: siglio, 2011): 8.
[16] Ibid.
[17] André Padoux, "Of Images & Beauty," *Tantra Song* (Los Angeles: siglio, 2011): 11.
[18] Charles Verey, "Notes on *the book of onomasticons," Notes One – onos and nons an introduction to the book of onomasticons by dsh,* ed. Charles Verey (South Street Publications, 2016): 9.
[19] Houédard "bits of biography", *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 27.
[20] Rick Poynor, "DSH's Typestracts: Horizons and Spirit Levels," *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 33.
[21] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "autochronozoology," *Dom Sylvester Houédard*, Ceolfrith 15, Ceolfrith Arts Centre, ed. Charles Verey (Sunderland: Ceolfrith, 1972).
[22] Charles Cameron reflecting on his friendship with Dom Sylvester Houédard in "When I was a young poet," January 4th (2013), Zenpundit.com, accessed November 12 2017, http://zenpundit.com/?p=18273.
[23] Houédard "bits of biography," 27.
[24] Andrew Wilson, "A Poetics of Dissent: Notes on a Developing Counterculture in London in the Early Sixties," *Art & 60s This Was Tomorrow,* eds. Chris Stephens and Katharine Stout (London: Tate, 2004): 93.
[25] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "paradada," republished in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 65.
[26] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "regraduating the time scale," 201162, *Selections from Jeux Théologiques,* unpublished & unpaginated. These early poems are dedicated to the American philosopher Donald C Williams who advocated realism in ontology and is best known for his expression of trope theory as the "Alphabet of Being". Special Collections Archive, John Rylands University Library Manchester.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Untitled poem, 090263, *Selections from Jeux Théologiques.*
[30] Untitled poem, 230463, *Selections from Jeux Théologiques.*
[31] Untitled poem, 270463, *Selections from Jeux Théologiques.*
[32] "the blousons-noire blues," 200463, *Selections from Jeux Théologiques.*
[33] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "the dimensions of the dimensionless" paper given at *The Spiritual Aspects of the Rule of St Benedict (RSB),* Ampleforth Symposium, 1980, unpaginated. Special Collections, John Rylands University Library.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ajit Mookerjee, *Tantra Art: its Philosophy & Physics* (Basel. Paris. New Delhi: Ravi Kumar, 1971): 11.

[36] Houédard, "the dimensions of the dimensionless."
[37] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Prayer as a Way of Life." Unpublished and unpaginated typescript for a talk Houédard delivered in the Chapter House at Worcester Cathedral on 13th March 1984. The MS is part of a collection of papers Houédard left with the Chinese artist Li Yuan Chia, at the LYC Museum, Bankside, Cumbria. Special Collections Archive, John Rylands University Library, Manchester.
[38] Wilson, "A Poetics of Dissent," 97.
[39] Poynor, *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter,* 33.
[40] Ibid.
[4141] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Concrete Poetry and Ian Hamilton Finlay," in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 158.
[42] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *Between Poetry and Painting Chronology,* Exhibition Catalogue, ICA, 1965. Reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, London): 143.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Stephen Bann, Footnote, *Midway: Letters from Ian Hamilton Finlay to Stephen Bann, 1964-69,* edited and introduced by Stephen Bann (London: Wilmington Square Books, 2014): 27.
[45] Ian Hamilton Finlay, Letter to Stephen Bann, 4th November 1965, *Midway: Letters from Ian Hamilton Finlay to Stephen Bann, 1964-69,* edited and introduced by Stephen Bann (London: Wilmington Square Books, 2014): 75.
[46] Ian Hamilton Finlay, Letter to Stephen Bann, 10th March 1966, *Midway: Letters from Ian Hamilton Finlay to Stephen Bann, 1964-69,* edited and introduced by Stephen Bann (London: Wilmington Square Books, 2014): 99.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Philip Rawson, "Foreword," *Tantra,* catalogue to the exhibition *Tantra,* Hayward Gallery, 30th September – 7th November 1971 (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1971): 4.
[49] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "EYEAR", unpublished manuscript for a talk given at the Royal College of Art, March 21964 and at the Institute of Contemporary Art, May 12th 1964, Private Collection.
[50] Philip Rawson, *The Art of Tantra* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973): 38.
[51] It is beyond the scope of this research project to investigate in depth the relationship between Christian Apophatic theology and Buddhist teachings on emptiness. Apophatic theology is also known as negative theology and is a form of spiritual practice, which approaches the concept of God in prayer through negation, what God is not. This is the opposite of Kataphatic prayer, which approaches the concept of God through words, images, ideas and symbols. See glossary: *Apophatic, Kataphatic* and *Emptiness.*
[52] Rawson, *The Art of Tantra*, 40.
[53] I have seen these notebooks on a recent visit to the Lisson Gallery archives. At the time of writing I do not have permission to use them in my research or publish any images.
[54] Houédard deposited many of his notebooks and files from 1962 -3 with his close friend Nicholas Logsdail. I have recently seen many examples of these grids and practice typestracts in the Lisson gallery archives but at the time of writing I have not been granted permission by the Lisson gallery to use images of them in my research.
[55] Houédard, "Beat & After Beat," 136.
[56] Dom Sylvester Houedard, "EYEAR".
[57] D.T Suzuki in *"Anjin: Zen to Shin," originally published in the June 1965 issue of Kokoro,* as quoted in Self-Power and Other-Power: A Beautiful Paradox, accessed 23rd April 2018, https://rethinkingreligion-book.info/self-power-and-other-power-a-beautiful-paradox/
[58] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Beat and Afterbeat: a parallel condition of poetry & theology". Here the original MS is consulted. The article is found in published form in the *Aylesford Review,* 5.3 Summer, (1963). In a poem, he writes at the same time as the article, this tantric-man-made fabrication of metaphor continues: "& that fresh from times old warm & hairy womb/ are now seen beat yad life & antinirvana/ the grow & the flow of me from me & the us from us/ feeling the faint strong curves of the future/ its hollows & happy rigidities/ through the two-way stretch of our man made nylon now?/ aren't we all so twisted & knotted/ unbearably knitted into the painful pattern/ of the hideous unwearable knitwear of tight reality/ so part & component & integer of the bloody unbreakable/ gods unbending intransigent whole […]" *Jeux Théologiques.*

[59] Dom Stephen Horton, Extract from the funeral homily for Dom Sylvester Houédard, unpublished typescript, John Rylands University Library Manchester Special Collections.
[60] Dom Bede Griffiths, *The Golden String: an autobiography* (Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1954), 171.
[61] Ibid., 172.
[62] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "me as poet rather than critic," *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Wilson and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 45.
[63] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom,* translated from the French by Willard R. Trask, (Princton: Princeton University Press, 1969): 200.
[64] Ibid., 13.
[65] Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2010), 218.
[66] Houédard, "Beat & After Beat", 136.
[67] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "INTRODUCTIONANCESTRYANDCHRONOLOGY," reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 167.
[68] Agit Mookerjee, *Tantra Art, its Philosophy & Physics* (New Delhi: Ravi Kumar, 1971): 20.
[69] Guy Brett, "Introduction", originally published in *Dom Sylvester Houédard: Visual Poetries*, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1971, republished in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 47.
[70] Rebecca Heald discusses how the art historian and collector Ajit Mookerjee may have devised the term "Tantric art" "as way of neatly packaging artefacts for a Western market" in the 1970s, "Thinking Tantra," *Thinking Tantra Research Papers,* published on the occasion of the exhibition *Thinking Tantra,* Drawing Room, 24th November 2016-19th February 2017 (London: Drawing Room, 2016): 4.
[71] Agit Mookerjee, *YOGA ART* (London, Thames & Hudson, 1975), 33.
[72] For full commentary to this Tantric geometry see Agit Mookerjee, *YOGA ART.*
[73] Eliade, *Yoga,* 219.
[74] Mookerjee, *Tantra Art,* 28.
[75] Philip Rawson, "Introduction," Agit Mookerjee, *YOGA ART* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975): 189.
[76] Ibid.
[77] See commentary in chapter 5 mudra about *wind grove mind alone* the work Houédard dedicated to Blofeld.
[78] John Blofeld, *The Way of Power: A Practical Guide to the Tantric Mysticism of Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970): 79-80.
[79] Blofeld, *The Way of Power,* 80.
[80] Ibid., 84.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., 96.
[83] Ibid., 98.
[84] Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism,* trans. by Philip Mairet (London: Harvill Press, 1961): 50.
[85] Ibid., 42-43.
[86] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Architypestructures?", first published in *Art Without Boundaries: 1950-70,* Eds. Gerald Woods, Philips Thompson and John Williams, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson, (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 172.
[87] Philip Rawson, *The Art of Tantra* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973): 43.
[88] Eliade, *Images and Symbols,* 45.
[89] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Prayer as a Way of Life," unpublished typescript for a talk Houédard delivered in the Chapter House at Worcester Cathedral on 13th March 1984. The MS is part of a collection of papers Houédard left with the Chinese artist Li Yuan Chia, at the LYC Museum, Bankside, Cumbria, John Rylands University Library Manchester Special Collections.
[90] See Eliade, *Images and Symbols,* 39.
[91] Reginald A. Ray, *Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2008): 54.

[92] Ibid.
[93] Eliade, *Images and Symbols,* 39.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] This myth of the centre of the world, as a cosmic mountain, or tree is widely diffused throughout world culture. "This symbol of a Mountain, a Tree or a Column situated at the Centre of the World is extremely widely distributed. We may recall the Mount Meru of Indian tradition, Haraberezaiti of the Iranians, the Norse Himingbjör, the 'Mount of the Lands' of the Mesopotamian tradition, Mount Tabor in Palestine […] and Golgotha […] see Eliade, *Images and Symbols,* for further discussion.
[97] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *toward a book of chakras: 8 yantric poems* (Watford: Watford School of Art, 1967), loose leaved folder.
[98] Eliade, *Yoga,* 236.
[99] Mookerjee, *Tantra Art,* 11.
[100] Rawson, *The Art of Tantra,* 165-6.
[101] Rawson, *The Art of Tantra,* 168.
[102] Rawson, *The Art of Tantra,* 150-51.
[103] Rawson, *The Art of Tantra*, 160.
[104] See glossary: *Generation stage* and *Completion Stage.*
[105] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Architypestractures?," 172.

Chapter 4 mantra

"EYEAR", the title of Houédard's very first talk on concrete poetry, blends together the visual and the aural, asserting the inseparability of materiality and sound. That the graphemes he used had a potential phonetic expression or an associated paralinguistic gesture was always at the forefront of Houédard's work. He writes about "the absence of the poets self in the poem – concrete is i-less", expanding the idea through stating "concrete being i-less it is non-didactic – the poet isnt bossing the reader – poet & reader share the poem – interpenetrate on equal terms […]".[1]

These notions of sound, absence and interpenetration are central to understand Houédard's use of the word mantra to describe his poemscores. As this chapter will establish it was a journey from words through the recitation of mantra to the wordless. His reinvention of the yantra on the typewriter demonstrates that Houédard was aware that spirituality was not a matter of unchanging dogma but of historical, even personal, reinvention. His ideas about an experimental, experiential and transnational spirituality inform how he positioned sound poems and poemscores as mantra.

This chapter explores how Houédard's poemscores make a journey from sound to silence and how this move towards silence was influenced not only by his own autodidactic study of Hindu and Vajrayana Tantric mantras but also the ideas about transmission he found in Zen Buddhism and his encounters with the 1960s avant-garde's interdependence and entanglement with what Alexandra Munroe has coined "Cagean Zen".[2]

That Houédard and Cage were in the same constellation of post-war avant-garde artists, poets and performers and musicians is perhaps an obvious conclusion to draw. However that they knew each other well, and met, has not been known or established in any of the prolific scholarship on Cage. This is the first study to undertake an analysis of the unpublished correspondence between Cage and Houédard and demonstrate how the Benedictine monk understood and engaged with the American composer's ideas.

The chapter, divided into five parts, follows a non-chronological journey through Houédard's poemscores and their exploration of the interdependence of mantric sound and silence. The chapter presents my curatorial methodology to bring these scores from out of the archive into exhibition and performance spaces. **4.1 super-cool nothing behind my inner mask** begins with a close reading of Houédard's letters to Cage, establishing the contexts of their friendship before drawing comparisons between Cage's oft quoted maxim "I have

nothing to say and I am saying it" and Houédard's understanding of the no-thingess of the "I".

4.2 mantra yantras & *the book of onomasticons* This section focuses on my analysis of the unpublished *book of onomasticons* and my aim to exhibit these works for the first time since they were made in the late 1960s. It also introduces the performative frameworks by which these typestracts may be understood as scores, positioning Houédard's instructions for their performance within Cage's employment of non-intentional chance operations and the circumvention of subjective decision-making and selection. Such forms of compositional practice offer a middle way between intention and non-intention, providing "rules [that] provide a means to diminish personal choice and self-identity".[3]

4.3 *frog pond plop overture & phonata* explores Houédard's best known work *frog pond plop*, focusing on Houédard's translation of Basho's haiku in light of his interest in Zen Buddhism and the development of this translation, through several variations, into the score *frog pond plop overture & phonata.*

4.4 *c-dagesh* is an event score, written in response to Cheiko Shiomi's *Spatial Poem No. 3.* It is a seven-note suite, composed of the letters d s h (as Houédard signed all his poems and art work) and the letters c a g e. This work exemplifies Houédard's understanding of the work of Cage, with each note in the suite focusing the mind upon direct, unmediated experience and where even the perception of dust falling constitutes a sonic event. The work also actively engages with the Cagean Zen of durational time, spatial transparency, and experiential being.[4]

The final section, **4.5 *pee stroke queue*** discusses Houédard's play *pee stroke queue* and the paradox of saying nothing. This play has no words and was written by Houédard for his friend Ben Vautier, the French Fluxus artist. The absence of any dialogue synthesizes Houédard's intention to create both a Cagean poetry that utilized the use of the term silence, "to indicate something other than the conceptual idea of silence"[5] and could be placed in the "context of communication theory and Wittgenstein's investigations".[6] Houédard's playful realization of the Zen teachings that foreground a direct transmission of Buddhism through objectivity over the syllogistic reasoning of other Mahayana Buddhisms is at the centre of this play.

4.1 supercool nothing behind my inner mask

During this research project I have not yet been able to establish the first time Houédard met or corresponded with Cage. What I have found is a sporadic collection of letters that span a decade. The earliest dated surviving letter between the artists is from Houédard to Cage in 1970, enquiring whether Cage would have "a ½ word answer" to whether "john furnival & i (openings press) might like to do an interesting? complete edtn of cage poems". As Houédard opens with no greeting and merely signs off "sunluv thru fogthoughts" it is clear they already knew each other well enough to use no names. In fact, in this postcard Houédard sends out an invitation, "anytime you englandly why not stay few days with us at monastery (memories of suzuki visit wayback before I joined)".[7] There is a postcard dated 1st June 1972, which hints at an almost visit to Prinknash, "i at least have been immensely enjoying the visit here you might have made",[8] before Houédard gets to enjoy an actual visit a few months later. In a letter to Minna Lederman and Mell Daniel, dated September 3, 1972, and posted from Teheran, Cage recalls a recent visit to Prinknash Abbey.[9]

> […] I stayed in Antoinette Vischer's country house in Alsace near Basel for 10 days after the London performance of *HPSCHD*. Before that, in England, I visited a Benedictine monk, the poet Dom Sylvester Houédard in Prinknash abbey, Gloucester (near Wales). What a busy life these monks lead! Meals are taken in "silence." Each one (each meal) a monk stands on a platform at one end of the refectory + reads from approved texts including, of course, the Bible. It was like a TV dinner! With father Abbott's permission, Sylvester + I stayed up each night until one a.m. visiting poets in the neighborhood. The services that I managed to get to there, were beautiful because of the Gregorian chanting. The architecture of the new abbey is modern motel in the worst sense. The food varied from nearly nothing to huge feasts with wine. Once the Abbott relaxed the rule, told the reader to stop reading + advised the rest of us to converse with our neighbors.[10]

The London performance of *HPSCHD* was organized and produced by Harvey Matuso as a BBC Prom concert at the Round House, London, on August 13th, 1972. Cage stayed with Houédard in the days leading up to this performance.[11] The letter, which Houédard would have undoubtedly written after Cage's visit, if it survives, cannot currently be located. However Cage did keep a Reversal poem that the monk made for him on 15th August 1972 (two days after the London premiere of *HPSCHD,* out of the letters of his name, *cage/nega*[12] (Fig. 38). In this work, the transparent page has four letters written from out of Houédard's experimental polyreadable alphabet. Reading from west to east, in landscape, the word spells out "cage". When the page is rotated 90° clockwise into a portrait position and the

page is rotated again, 180°, reading north to south, the letters spell out “nega” – the prefix of negation. The directionality in reading the name cage is very much intended, as are all the potential etymological and connotative readings.

We can not know what Houédard and Cage discussed during the musician’s stay at Prinknash Abbey but the word play in this poem indicates their shared interest, knowledge and practice of absence and negation, as do references in their intermittent correspondence to an ongoing dialogue about silence and “i-chinery things”.[13] Two further examples from Houédard illustrate the point: “a thought from glostershire this sesquimillenial year of s benedict (who said yet it’s better to be silent sed melius est silere)”[14] and “dominicans always made much of their devotion to our older benedictine ideal ‘aliistradere contemplata’ - to communicate things – contemplated to others – but I forget if i ever sent as i intended the happy phrase they have in their constitutiones […] pulchritude enim officii consistit in pausis ie the beauty of (Gregorian) music consists in the PAUSES” [Houédard’s capitalisation].[15]

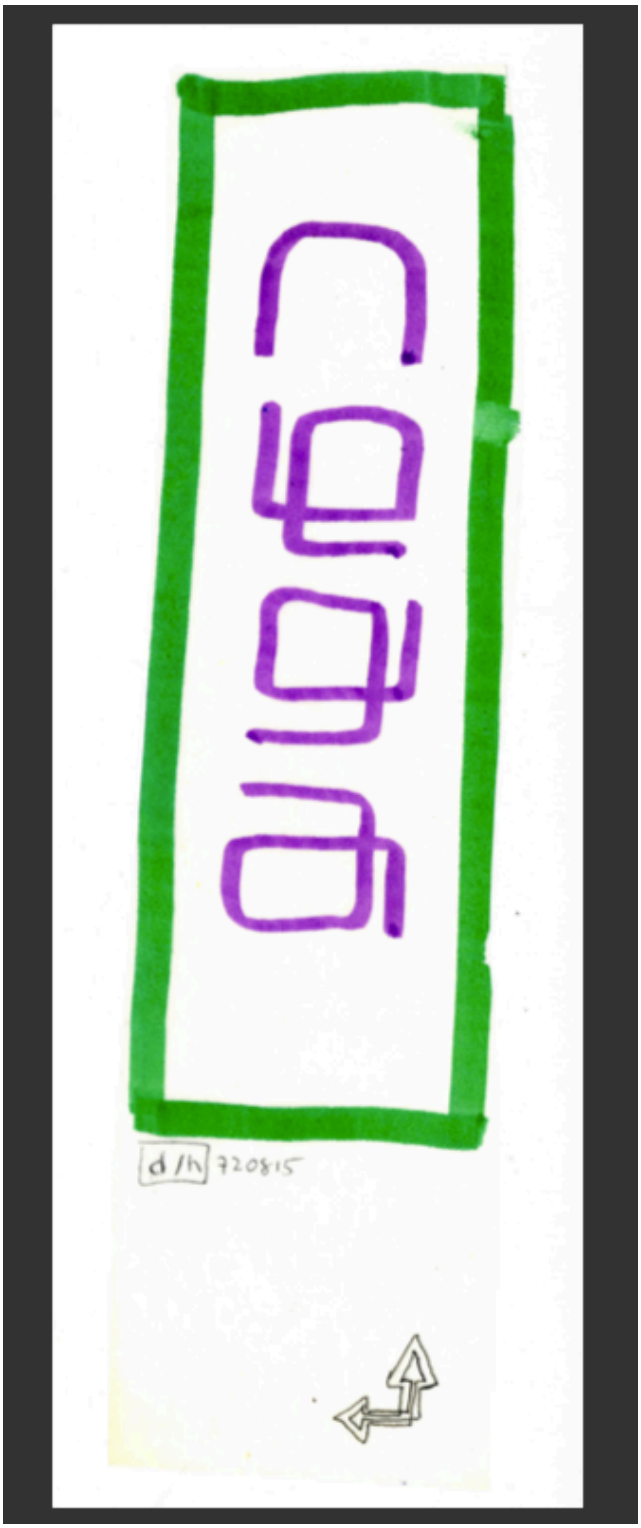


Fig. 38 *cage/ nega,* 15th August 1972. Image courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Wesleyan University.

Although this correspondence dates from 1970, there is clear evidence that Houédard knew Cage before then. As I shall discuss later in the chapter, in August 1966 Houédard writes *c-dagesh 7 note suite for johncage 7 dsh – a joint participation in the chieko-shiomi concert of falling events* and two years later, in 1968, when writing his *book of onomasticons* he suggests that some of the compositional methods he is using are influenced by Cage.



Fig. 39 Ink drawing of unknown figure, 1950s notebooks, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands Library Special Collections. Author's image.

Parallels can be drawn between Cage's autodidactic study of Zen and Taoisms and Houédard's own. Turning now to my hypothesis that comparisons can be made between Cage's oft quoted maxim "I have nothing to say and I am saying it" and Houédard's understanding of the no-thingess of the 'I", this chapter will briefly review some of the ideas set out in *yantra,* where I discussed Houédard's notebooks from the 1950s and the figures of saints or monks made from the gestured lines of a child's wax crayon or a coloured felt tip, a Bic biro or, occasionally, a pencil (Fig. 39). I argued these sketches are worthy of note because the blank page, both inside and outside the image, is as much a structural agent of the composition, as it would be in any of Houédard's typestracts. It is an early attempt, in his own words, at "structuring nothing" into them. Apart from the suggestion of eye, nose and mouth, the faces lack distinguishable features. Of course, it could be argued, this is directly

related to the prosopagnosia that Houédard had suffered from since childhood. But in the context of his later artwork and spiritual writings this very inability to recognize the faces of his friends and acquaintances is used by Houédard in his art to skillfully deconstruct how identity is created within the mind. As this thesis aim to establish, almost every work made by Houédard, whether it is a typestract, a cosmic dust poem made of spit, jam and cut-up newspapers or a reversal or a reflection, explores the emptiness of self hood. These early sketches and portraits are empty heads in that they are empty of a "self". They are empty, I suggest, not in the Western secular sense of an annihilation of selfhood or the nothingness after death, but empty in the way the Eastern Mahayana Buddhist means "empty"; an absence of an inherent findable self. In his article "d-r-a-w-n-i-n-w-a-r-d", Houédard clarifies what "emptiness" means to him:

1) attaining the emptiness of the ego or I at the nothing centre
2) seeing that as the image of God, of the Divine Nothing beyond each and every something
3) seeing the lumen deificum shining through that image.[16]

A particular interesting typestract that illustrates both the ecumenical ideas outlined above and the experiential "emptiness of the ego or I at the nothing centre", found in his art, is one that Houédard sent to the poet Charles Cameron (Fig. 40). Contextualizing this work, Cameron explains:

> I have an astonishing collection of his letters from back in the mid 60s, almost all of them heavily decorated in a similar manner, but my personal favourite is the self-portrait he did for me, in which he presents himself as a human-shaped void within a background of the repeated phrase" supercool nothing behind my inner mask".[17]

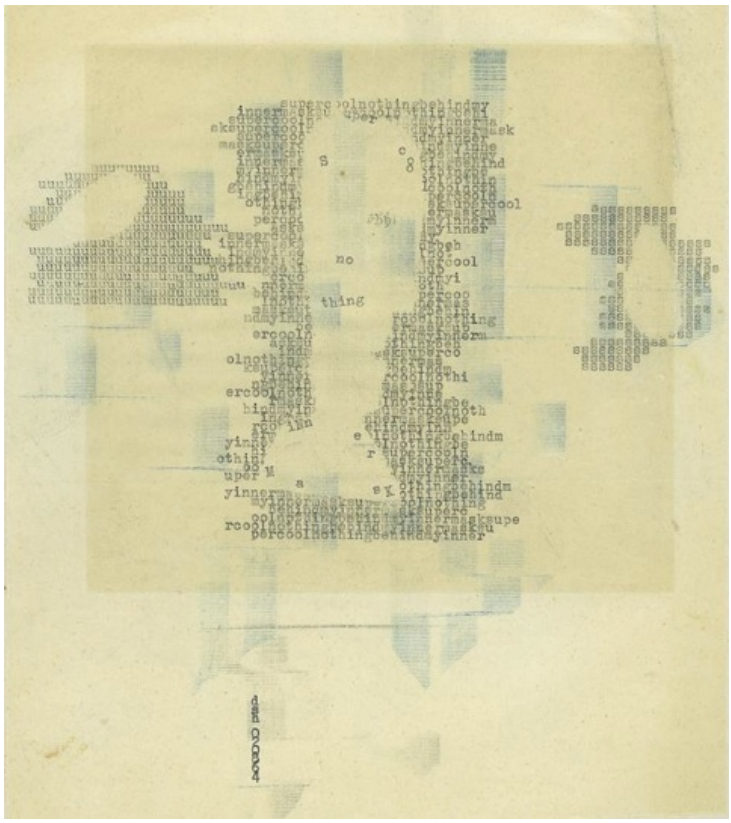


Fig. 40 *supercool nothing,* Typestract, 020664. Image courtesy of Charles Verey.

The likeness of the profile and facial composition in this self-portrait compared to the earlier sketch (Fig.39) is striking. And, this time Houédard's text itself informs us that that the blankness of the page, the spaces inside the text, represent "super-cool nothing". But what are the methods by which we can glimpse this "super-cool nothing" or, returning for a moment to his words in "d-r-a-w-n-i-n-w-a-r-d", intuit the *lumen deificum* shining through that image? How do we see our own nothingness? Cage has a suggestion:

> Breathing and walking and managing to empty the head sufficiently
> to notice what there is to see and hear in the theatre we happen to be living in.
> There's not much more to say, or rather no space nor time to say it in.[18]

When Cage writes "I have nothing to say and I am saying it" he is refuting an inherently dependent existence for his "I". His I is saying nothingness or emptiness and that act is a demonstration of interdependence. Peter Jaeger's words about Cage are helpful in understanding this:

> His 'I' says nothing because it refuses to recognize itself as an autonomous individual, and recognizes instead its interdependent relationship with words, sounds, nature and ideas.[19]

Jaeger continues:

> What becomes apparent in Cage's performative use of empty space is his deep affinity with the Buddhist concept of *śunyata.* Emptiness is merely a linguistic term for the insight that the phenomenal world is tied together in a non-dualistic, interrelated web, in which no single phenomenon stands alone. The void is not an absence, but the ground/ of all things, including the self and nature.[20]

There is an important correlative in this non-subjective cagean poetics – an acceptance of phenomena without discrimination.

> […] true self is no-self because phenomena in their own being are empty and only exist as a function of their relationship with everything else […] emptiness in Buddhism means interdependence.[21]

Jaeger's words help position Houédard's own work. In *super-cool nothing behind my inner mask* (or in the *autobiography of dsh* that Houédard drew for the artist Li Yuan-chia, Fig. 41), there is no binary opposition between self and other. Such interdependence can be demonstrated if we turn our attention to the two other "head shaped" voids on either side of Houédard's "super-cool" mask. Each of those heads appears as a void but this void is not an absence, it is the ground for the self. We can also recall Houédard's reversal poem for Cage at this point, remembering that in Houédard's polyreadable alphabet the two words "cage" and "nega" are inseparable. Emptiness *is* form and form *is* emptiness – there is no emptiness *and* form or form *and* emptiness. The blank page is not an absence, it represents the ground from which all things appear.

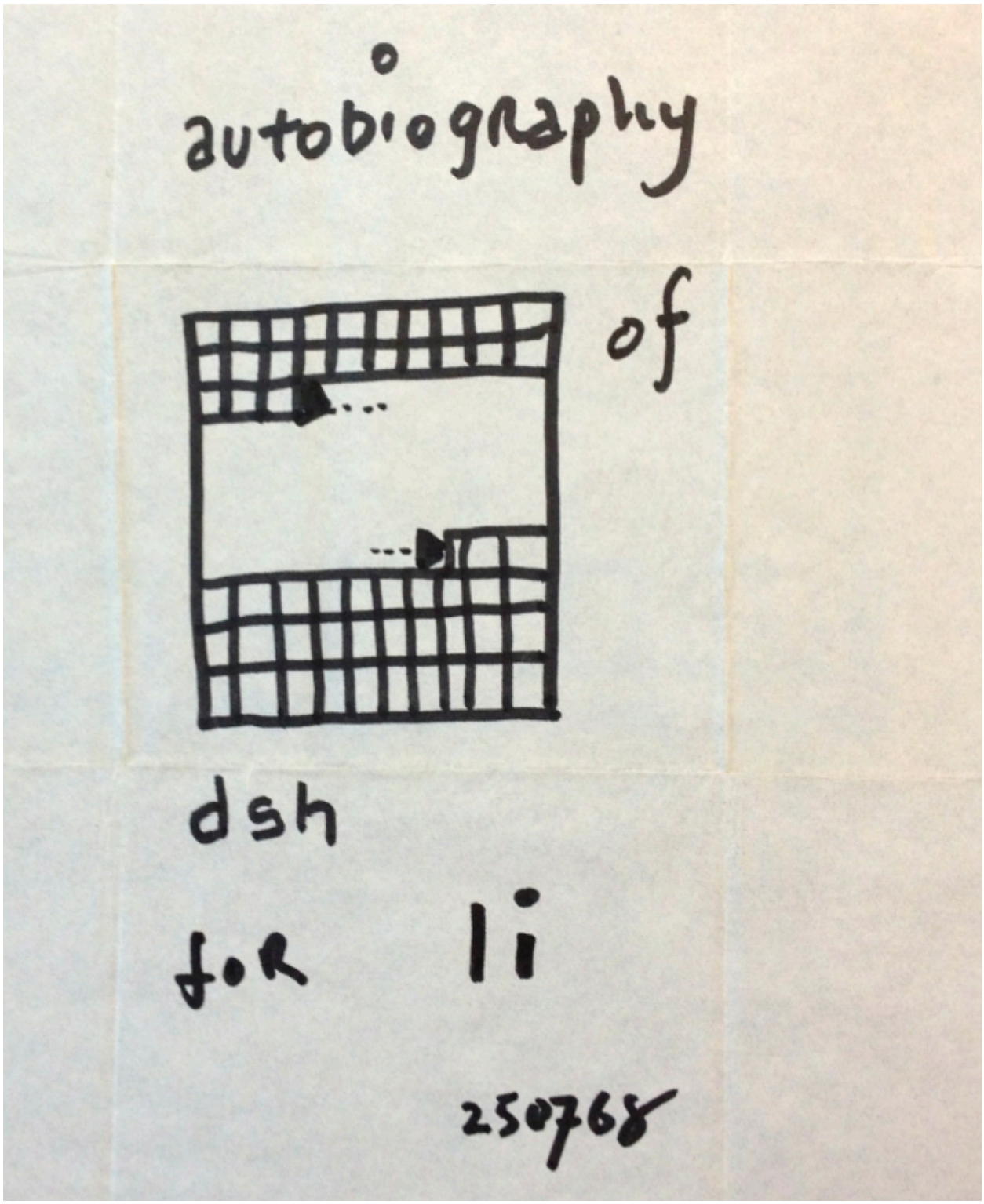


Fig. 41 *autobiography of dsh* for li, 25th July 1968, Dom Sylvester Houédard archive, John Rylands Library Special Collections. Author's Image.

4.2 mantra yantras & the *book of onomasticons*

It is within this established context of the emptiness of persons that this chapter will now consider Houédard's collection *book of onomasticons.*[22] He also called them polyphonicportraits, mantraportraits or mantrayantras. In a letter to the French artist Alain Arias Misson, Houedard writes: I enclose a few ONOMASTICONS (& NON-ONOMASTIKONS) for you – read them in any direction & with any pronunciation – they are little mantraportraits or yantra – mantras – useful sometimes as devil-traps".[23] These visual poems, constructed and dedicated to a personal friend, were a series of diagrammatic forms made up of all the letters in that person's name.[24] Houédard composed twenty-one of these scores, one for each consonant in the alphabet, yet they were to remain unpublished when South Street Publications, run by artists Charles Verey and Thomas A. Clark, ran out of money in the later 1960s.[25] Verey writes that "The *book of onomasicons* consists of 21 name odes" written between April and December 1968, "coming to an end with the death of Ken Cox".

However that there was, in 1963, a much earlier origin for the onomasticons; this comes from the "typikon" Houédard made for Stefen and Franciszka Themersen (Fig. 42). In this work two empty heads face each other and a small mantra-yantra grid is composed underneath. It is an important work in that it connects his thinking and experimentation from the early empty head sketches in the 1950s, his typikons made from alphabet grids on the typewriter and *the book of onomasticons.*

Verey suggests that in calling it a "book", it was:

> In a similar sense in which the *I-Ching* is the *Book of Changes.* It is not that he intends it as an oracle but that it has been written from his knowledge of the place from which oracles are spoken. A relative (a cousin perhaps), John Cage's work of 1951, *Music of Changes,* is arranged in four 'books' for a similar reason.[26]

As with the typestracts, Houédard appropriates the vocabulary of Tantra to describe them. The onomasticons are yantra-like in the sense that they are built up out of the constituent parts, the consonants and vowels in a name, into the grid form, again an "intentional" Tantric language, to condense all the power of each person's energy into one symbol. Verey writes:

> Each onomasticon begins with a name as a linear figure, a line of letters, letters that will undergo a series of modifications as they are drawn down, projected onto the screen of the typewriter's hidden underlying capacity for directional grids. The most obvious grid-system is square, north-south and east-west – letter-space-letters-space &c, followed by a left-hand sweep with the carriage-

> return lever to repeat the series again and again: or starting with – letter-space-letter-space &c, it is followed by a line of space-letter-space-letter to build a grid-screen of diagonals.[27]

In the *iconophonic portrait for spe j*, (Fig. 43) Houédard employs the "obvious grid-system" of the square. Simon Piney's name offers permutational possibilities with each of the eight letters that Houédard combines with the space on the page to form a square. Letters and spaces are alternated, with an intentional interdependence between the sound to be read out as indicated by the letter symbol and the space surrounding it that could act as a "notation for pauses".[28] The "invisible sound portrait of george and pauline" (Fig. 44) is an example of Houédard's proficiency at creating a "grid-screen of diagonals".

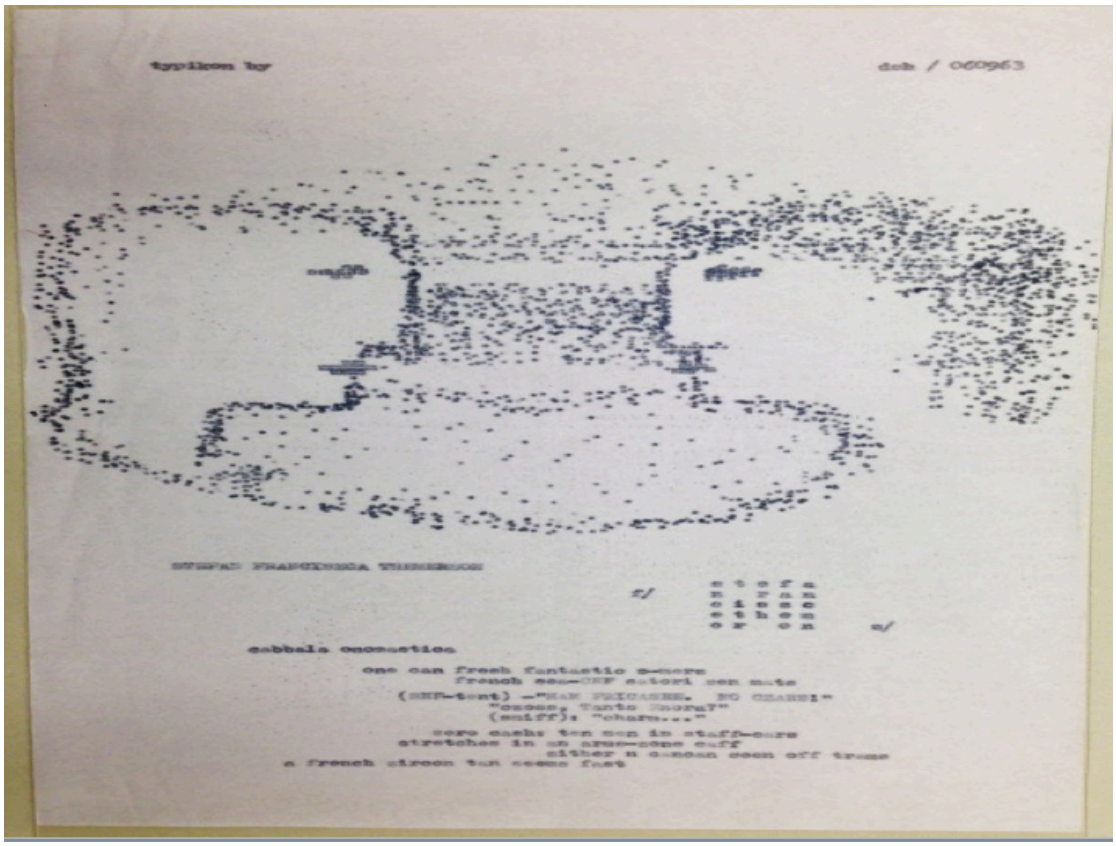
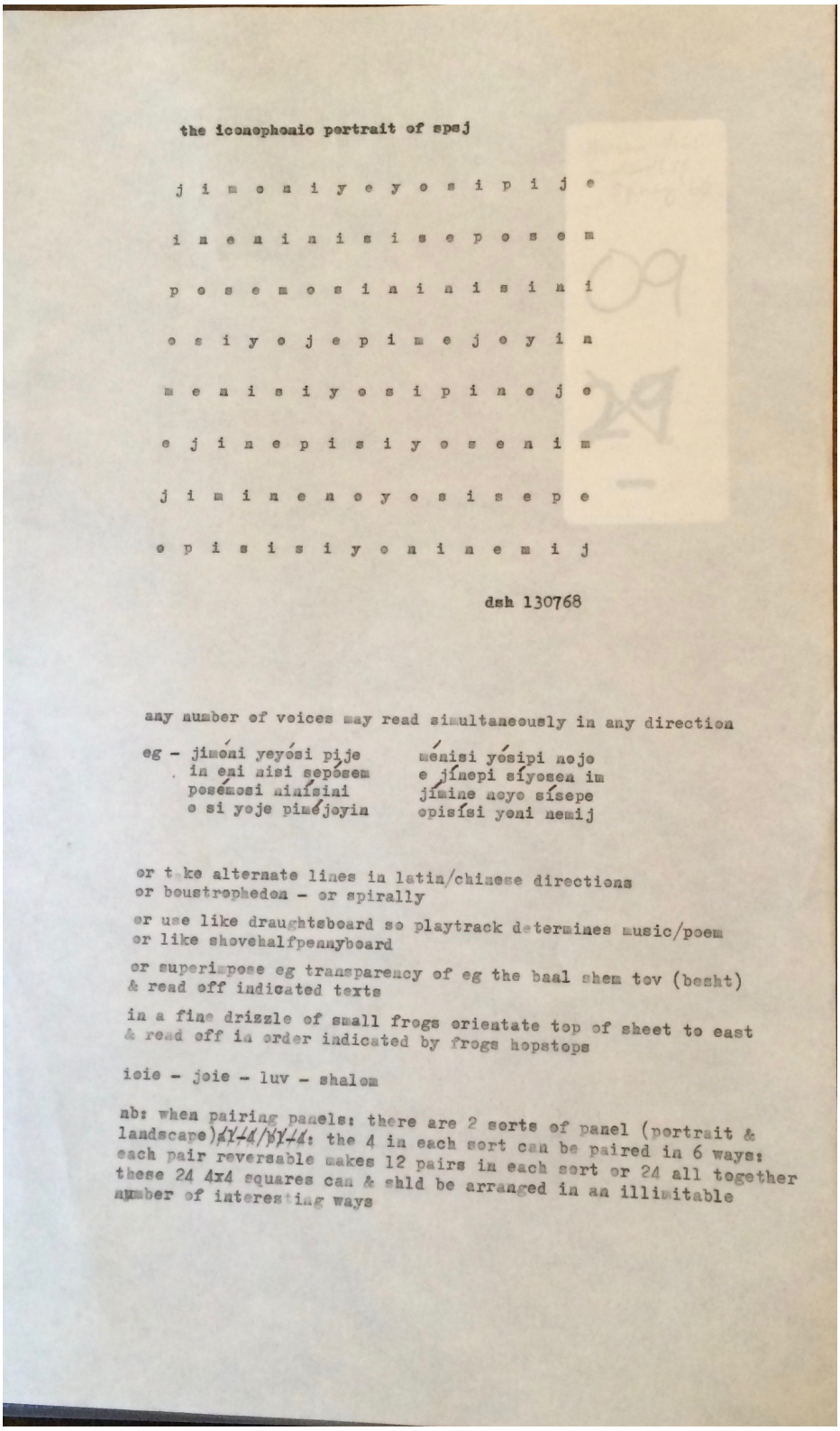


Fig. 42 "typikon", 060963. Image courtesy of Charles Verey.



the iconophonic portrait of spej

j i m e n i y e y o s i p i j e

i n e n i n i s i s e p o s e m

p o s e m o s i n i n i s i n i

o s i y e j e p i m e j o y i n

m e n i s i y o s i p i n e j e

e j i n e p i s i y o s e n i m

j i m i n e n e y o s i s e p e

e p i s i s i y o n i n e m i j

dsh 130768

any number of voices may read simultaneously in any direction

eg - jiméni yeyósi pije
in eni nisi sepósem
posémosi ninísini
e si yeje pinéjeyin

ménisi yósipi nejo
e jínepi síyosen im
jímine neye sísepe
episísi yeni nemij

or take alternate lines in latin/chinese directions
or boustrophedon - or spirally

or use like draughtsboard so playtrack determines music/poem
or like shovehalfpennyboard

or superimpose eg transparency of eg the baal shem tov (besht)
& read off indicated texts

in a fine drizzle of small frogs orientate top of sheet to east
& read off in order indicated by frogs hopstops

ieie - jeie - luv - shalom

nb: when pairing panels: there are 2 sorts of panel (portrait & landscape) 4x4/4x4: the 4 in each sort can be paired in 6 ways: each pair reversable makes 12 pairs in each sort or 24 all together these 24 4x4 squares can & shld be arranged in an illimitable number of interesting ways

Fig. 43 *the iconophonic portrait of spe j*, 130768, *book of onomasticons,* South Street archive. Author's image.

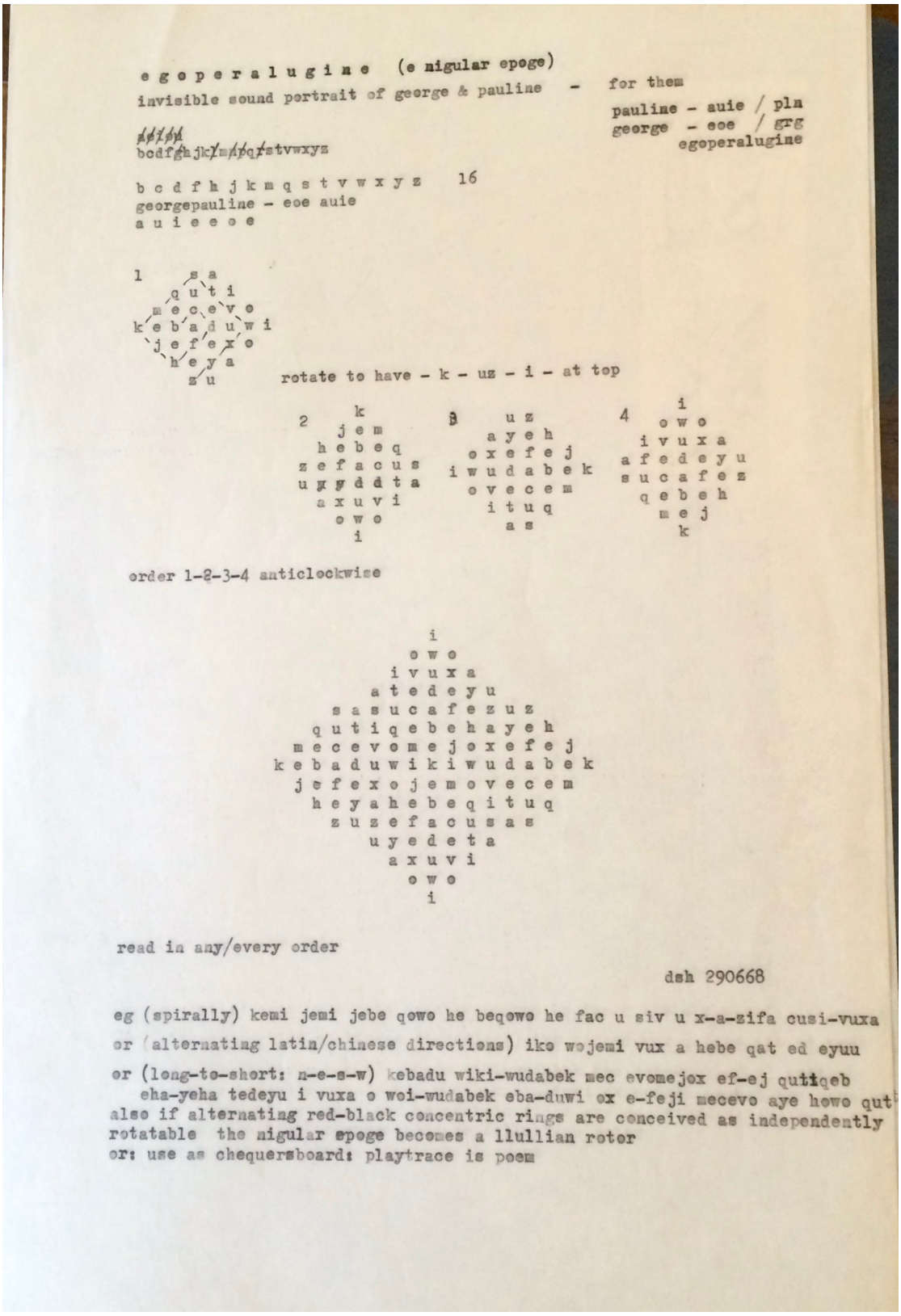


Fig. 44 *invisible sound portrait of george and pauline*, 290668, *book of onomasticons,* South Street archive. Author's Image.

It can be easy to focus on the primacy of the visual in Tantra, however, like EYEAR poetry, sound can be inseparable from the visual in Tantric practice too. As the eye traverses one of Houédard's typestracts, although the reader may not voice the phonemes out-loud, they are, nonetheless, sounded out in the mind. A mantra too is primarily a mental sound. It is recited silently in the practitioner's mind far more often than it is vocalized. As Houédard writes in his essay "introductionancestryandchronology": "Mantras: as mandalas (& other yantras) are geometric portraits of some aspect of the absolute so mantras are WORD portraits in syllables".[29] In both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra, mantra recitation is regarded as fundamental in both the creation and dissolution of all form. Ajit Mookerjee writes:

> A common practice in Tantra ritual is to make *mantras* out of each letter of the Sanskrit alphabet and to associated them with different parts of the body: the purpose or aim is to feel that the different parts of the body are merely the manifestation of the different aspects of the great power. The whole body with all its biological and psychological processes becomes an instrument in and through which the cosmic power reveals itself.[30]

It is not just the body which becomes an instrument for this cosmic sound. Mookerjee discusses the intrinsic relationship between sound and form, stating "that the cosmos evolves from the fifty *mantrika* sounds". Embedded within these sounds are possibilities of new forms; these potential forms materialize when, in the process of evolution, the basic *mantrika* sounds undergo permutations".[31] These two points are essential in order to understand the methodology behind Houédard's *onomasticons*: that the human body can become an instrument for sacred sound and that within this sound there can be "infinite opportunities of permutation and combination".[32]

Therefore we have to be wary of considering the *onomasticons* as visual poems. For just as important are his accompanying instructions as to how they could be read. Or performed with many voices. Or turned into games. For these are poly*phonic*portraits, *mantra*portraits and *mantra*yantras [my italics] and as such they can function as scores for multi-voiced sound pieces.

> Of every ritual element or notion there can be a perceptible form. Even mantras, insubstantial by nature, since they are word or sound, uttered or mentally evoked, may have a visible aspect – that of the deity of which they are the essence – an aspect that the adept often "sees" mentally when using the mantra. Seeing & saying, in that case, coincide, supporting one another.[33]

In Hindu and Buddhist Tantras, the Sanskrit syllables of the mantra are composed into geometric stanzas and used in both ritual mental visualization and recitation. Each mantra is an aspect of the deity that is to be visualized.[34] In Houédard's mantraportraits, each name

becomes a mantra in diagrammatic form and it is this friend that is to be visualized. In a letter to Camilla Gray Houédard states:

> some of my recent work seems – as I do it – to be feeling a sort of way between some of baljeus ideas & some of cages – cage because however much form I give the work it still leaves a whole range of ways in which it cld be made more actual- as score for reading singing playing dancing miming […].[35]

In fact, in the process of realizing these yantras in to mantras, Houédard's ideas are very close to Cage's use of the graphic score:

> Graphic Scores introduce visual and performative openness and indeterminacy into the process of composing music. Traditional scores oblige repetition; performers try to play the notes as the composer intended. The "unstructured" of the graphic score, on the other hand, offers performers a range of possibilities. The graphic score is a kind of abstract art (so to speak) – a drawing that evokes a field of sound.[36]

As Cage employed the non-intentional use of chance operations to circumvent subjective decision-making and selection, in the *onomasticons* Houédard offers performers a "whole range of ways in which it cld be made more actual". Such forms of compositional practice offer a middle way between intention & non-intention, what Jaeger interprets as "rules [to] provide a means to diminish personal choice and self-identity".[37] If we look closely at the *onomasticons* there are a number of ways Houédard envisaged this actualization happening. For example, in his instructions for the *iconophonic portrait of sps j,* (Fig. 43) where "any number of voices may read simultaneously in any direction" the dramatic possibilities for performance crescendo from using the poem as "a draughtboard" or a "shovelhalfpennyboard" to the final zen-inspired imperative; "in a fine drizzle of small frogs orientate top of sheet to east & read off in order indicated by frogs hopstops".[38] In *invisible soundportrait for george and pauline* (Fig. 44) Houédard states that the work can be "read in any/ every order" or even form the basis for a game of checkers. Using the poem for a game of checkers or a performance reliant upon a rainstorm of tiny frogs were only two of many ways of actualizing the form of these poems. Houédard, in his letter to Camilla Gray, suggests you could also simply make it up: "[…] read stochastically – any direction – with or without game rules – perhaps making up rules as you go along – or maybe cld be a true game".[39] Houédard's comment here raises the question: what "true game" did he have in mind? Is it our name itself which is the true conceptual game? Our name, according to the Mahayana Buddhist teachings that Houédard studied, is the sound we impute on an ever-changing collection of bodily parts and a changing mind: growing then shrinking limbs, a

straightening then crooked back, renewing cells that eventually stop renewing, impermanent memories, thoughts, feelings.[40]

In the context of a Cageian aesthetics, our name can also be considered the score for a sound piece that we are presented with at birth. How it is then performed in a myriad of ways over our lifetime may or may not constitute the total phonic event. It is whispered to us tenderly by loved ones, given plosive or fricative force through anger or rage, whined, mumbled and clearly enunciated. It is called to us across the open expanse of a beach, or in stifled offices, schoolrooms and hospital wards. Our name becomes a mantra, sacred seed-syllables that both we, and others, impute on our form. On each occasion the performance is different. The performer too has changed. Yet it is unlikely that in a lifetime the saying of our name can "eventually exhaust all possibilities".[41]

Then one day the potentiality for this actualization ceases. In a letter to John and Astrid Furnival, Houédard writes that he has "done several polyphonicportraits & mantrayantras &c recently anti-ikons (using letters of alphabet NOT in name) – or total alphabets".[42] When the artist Kenelm Cox tragically died in the autumn of 1968, Houédard was in the midst of a very prolific phase of constructing mantraportraits. Cox had been Houédard's close friend, artistic collaborator and fellow GLOUP member for much of the 1960s (see *mudra*). When it came to the creation of a poem that would serve as a memorial to Cox Houédard initially composed an "epitafion – haiku on the death of kencox", a phonemic play on the Greek word "epitaphion" for funeral oration (Fig. 45). On the surviving typescript for this epitafion, Houédard types out all twenty-six letters of the alphabet along the top before putting a line through each of the six letters in "kencox": c,e,k,n,o and x. With the remaining twenty letters he composes the following haiku:

zahi munu ta
siri badu wujila
ya
  bufipi – gu

Each of the seventeen remaining consonants; b,d,f,g,h,j,l,m,p,q,r,s,t,v,w,y and z are teamed up with one of the remaining three vowels; a,i, and u to create the seventeen syllables of a traditional haiku. Houédard doesn't state which languages, if any, this haiku is written in, but the phonetic sounds hover around Japanese. Of particular interest is the inclusion of the syllables *wú* or in Chinese *mu* 無. This approximately translates into English as no, not,

nothing, nothingness, un-, is not, nonexistence, nonbeing, awareness or the original nonbeing from which being is created. Therefore the haiku points to the central nonexistence that is at its heart: the absence of Ken Cox.

This idea is developed further in Houédard's subsequent *non-onomastikon* that like the epitafion, uses only the letters not in the name Ken Cox. In his *non-onomastikon*, entitled, *sun-cheese wheel-ode a double-rolling-gloster memorial for ken cox,* Houédard divides the consonants from the vowels to create a continuous mimetic rolling movement through the letters that is only made evident when the instructions on how to read it are followed (Fig 46). The trajectory through the letters is one that spirals inwards to a centre that does not keep still, remaining at the centre of the work only momentarily before revolving outwards again.

Houédard pointed out that these anti-ikons, using the letters NOT in the name, are still "total-alphabets". In a vocal performance of the *sun-cheese wheel-ode* all the letters not in Ken Cox's name are read out but it is the sounds that are not read out, those in the name Ken Cox, that are the sound piece. As outlined above, an understanding of Cage's interdependent silence is, again here an important theoretical collorary for interpreting Houédard's use of silence.

> Cage's concepts of space and emptiness informed his theory on the interactive relationship of art, the viewer, and what he calls 'the environment'. Here silence and emptinesses are not opposites of sound and form, as in Western thought but rather contain in themselves the complete presence of duration and change.[43]

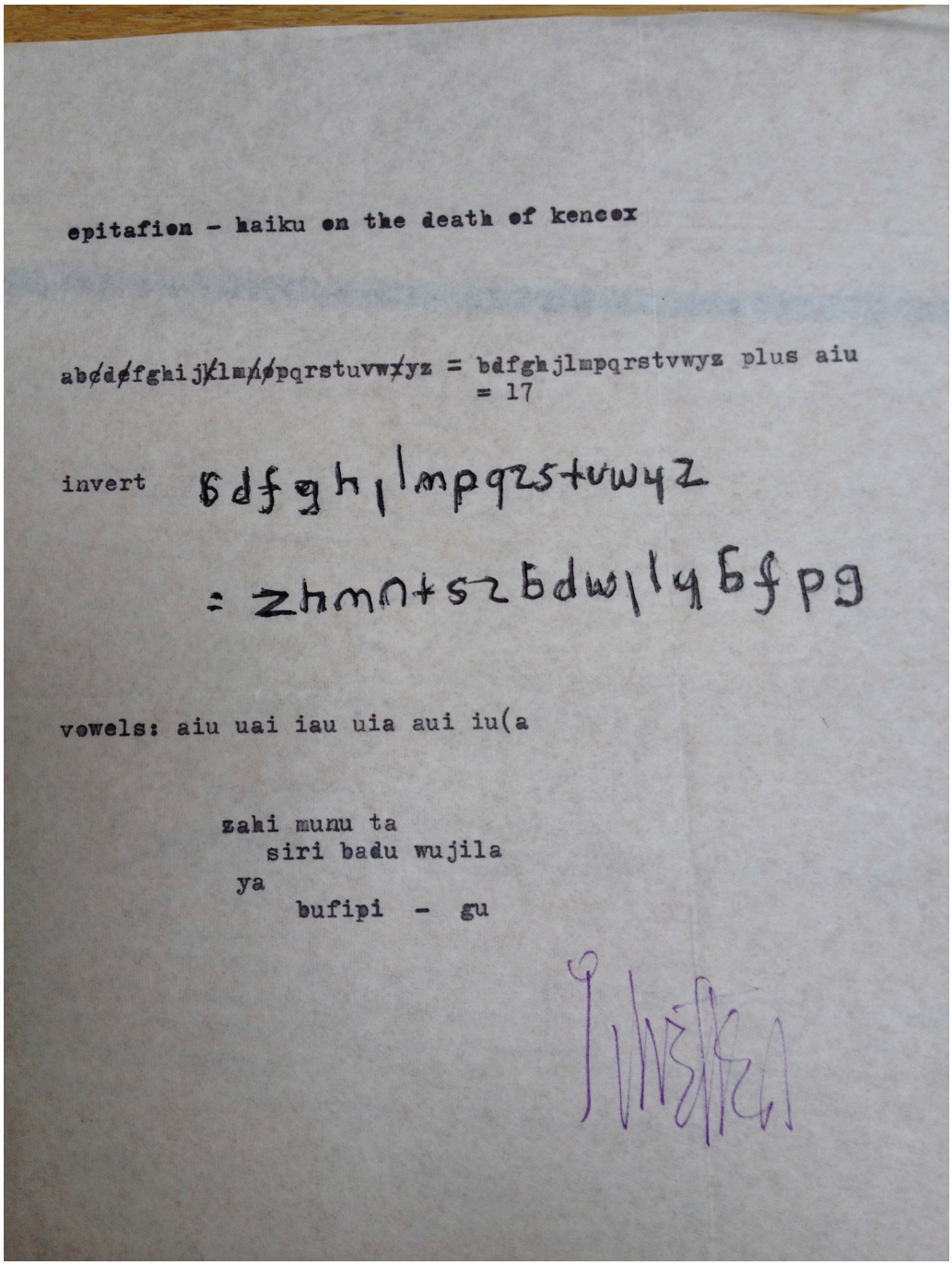


Fig. 45 “epitafion-haiku on the death of Ken Cox”, South Street archive. Author’s image.



ken cox memorial, 1968 (4 different fronts)
Courtesy William Allen Word & Image

Fig. 46 *the sun-cheese wheel-ode*. Image courtesy William Allen Word & Image.

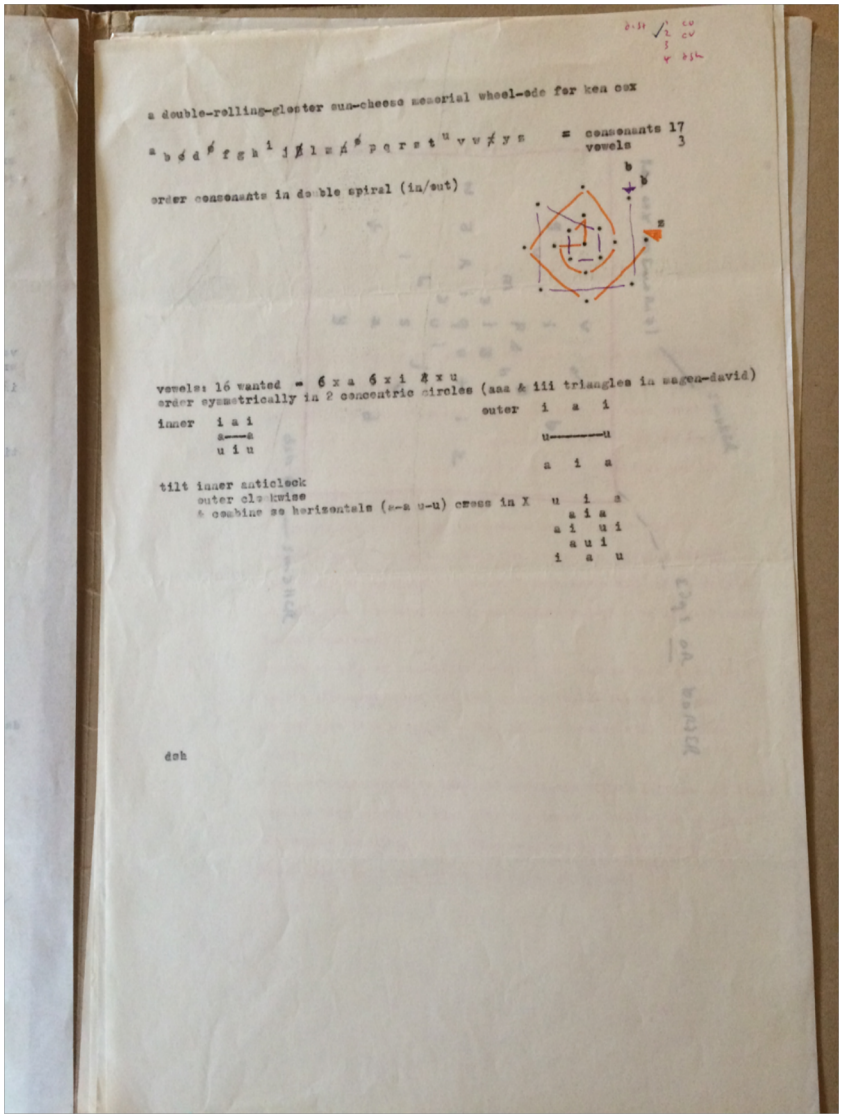


Fig. 47 Houédard's instructions for the consonant spiral and two vowel circles in *the sun-cheese wheel-ode*, South Street archive. Author's Image.

Houédard sent *the book of onomasticons* to South Street for publication in 1968, alongside specific instructions to have the Cox memorial poem made into a poster print (Fig. 46). The instructions for reading *the sun-cheese wheel-ode* are to be found on the back of the print (Fig. 47). The letters form a star cluster on the page, like constellation poetry, but in actual fact, if you flip to the back of the work, there are instructions on how to read it. It is called *a sun-cheese wheel-ode* after the festival in Gloucestershire of rolling cheeses down a hill, so there is the sense of this ritual, an annual, whimsical English folk event. There are two circles in the cluster of vowels: one is to be read anticlockwise, while the other is pivoted and read clockwise. Two voices are required to read these vowel circles. These voices perform the "the double rolling" momentum of the event. The two vowel circles move in opposite directions in the piece and there is scope for a third voice to read the consonants,

which travel inwards in a spiral from the outer edge of the piece to the inner centre, than outwards again. There are three different movements that require at least three voices. The journey through the consonants is one that draws inwards to a centre that keeps revolving and then outwards again (Fig. 47).

One of my curatorial intentions in the *Performing No Thingness* exhibition, East, NUA, 2016, [see *mudra* and Appendix 3] was to exhibit and perform this work alongside other pieces from *book of onomasticons.* This was to give the work a context as a *non-onomasticon* but also to foreground how this work might be performed. From a typographical perspective it is a well-known work, but it has never been considered as a score.[44] To commemorate the first performance of this piece I invited the Cox family to read it with me. Margot Cox, Ken's eldest daughter brought her mum, Margaret, Ken's widow and her own son Laurie, Ken's grandson.[45] Margot was the voice of one the vowel circles, while her son Laurie read the other cycle. I read the consonant spiral and the artist Laurence Bradby read Houédard's "epitafion – a haiku for Ken Cox" over the top of our performance. Houédard began composing his *nonomasticon* for Cox on the day he died in 1968, almost forty-eight years to the day it was vocalized. The duration of time and change since the Cox family lost Ken was palpable in the performance. His absence was still felt.

4.3 *frog pond plop overture & phonata*

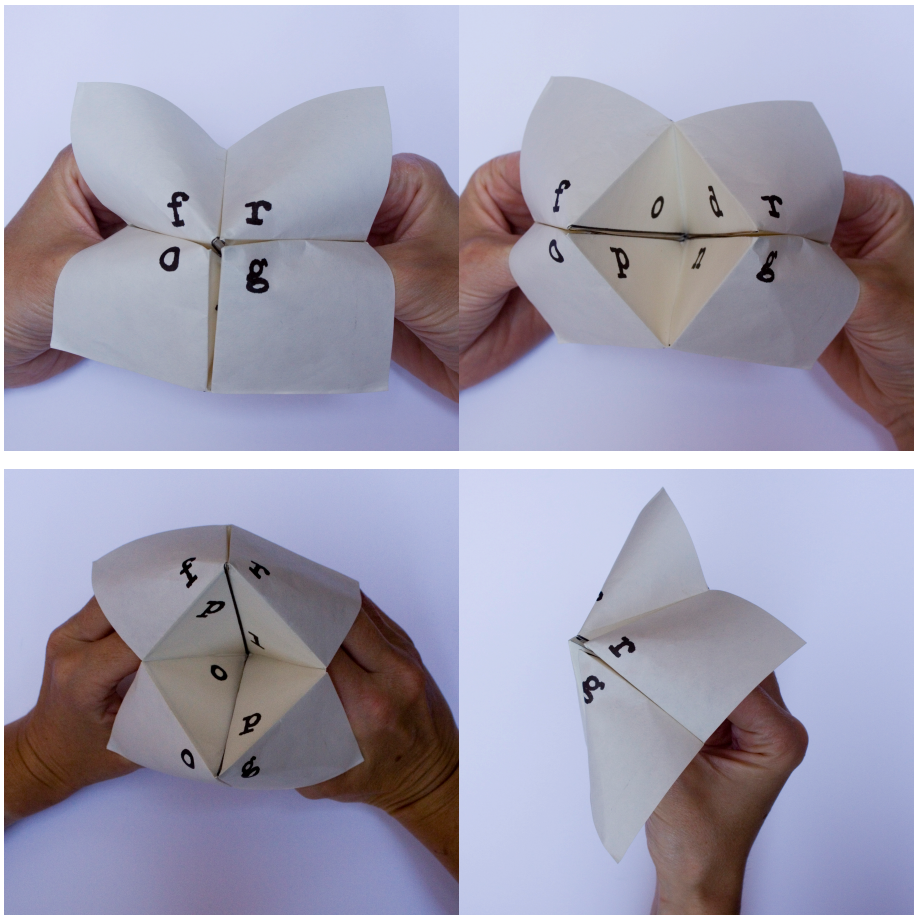


Fig. 48 Dom Sylvester Houédard, *frog pond plop*, 1965, Openings Press. Image courtesy of Betina Bianculli.

Haiku is the origin for another poem by Houèdard, where the interdependence of sound and silence are performed.

> furu ike ya/ kawazu tobikomu/ mizu no oto
> Into the ancient pond
> A frog jumps
> Water's sound![46]

In 1965 Houédard condensed this well-known Haiku by the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō, into just three words; frog pond plop. Like Bashō before him, this has become Houédard's best-known work and one he tried out in several different forms.

Houédard's first version of this poem appears in his collection *Op and kinkon poems: and some non-kinkon.*[47] The Haiku is constricted to just the three constituent nouns and syntax is "replaced by the typographic arrangement of words on page".[48]

f r o g

p o n d

p l o p

Houédard's intention is that "the reader provides the missing links".[49] The pond can be "lonely", "ancient", "old", "quiet", "still", "dark", "sleepy" or "silent". The frog can "jump", "leap", "plunge", be "curious" or "plunking". The plop can be "heard", make a "sound" or a "deep resonance".[50] The poem "frog pond plop" can contain all of these potentialities and none of them. The adjectives, the verbs, the pronouns and other linkages are provided by the reader and what Houédard described as the reader's own "mind-gum-syntax".[51] The poet and his subjective choices are dissolved in a poetic form that (as I discussed in *yantra*) Houédard outlined as "I-less, ego-less self effacing, not mimetic".[52] Houédard, in his "intro to catalogue of arlington-une", asks "how far can the poet go in ego-elimination?"[53] It is certainly a question that the Zen monk Bashō would have pondered. The poet removed from the poem enables the words to function like "objects" and "tools" and this in turn allows the viewer, in Houédard's words again, "to see of himself […] like mysticism, any zen, breakthru".[54] "frog pond plop" co-exists with a Zen koan, becoming a meditative tool for the reader to consider the border-blur between his/her own subjectivity, the objectivity of the poem and the philosophical themes at the heart of Zen Buddhism and the haiku tradition. This is a meditation therefore on impermanence, non-duality and the momentary. In the words of Suzuki, "when a frog becomes a frog, Zen becomes Zen".[55]

When Houédard collaborated with the typographer Edward Wright on a variation of "frog pond plop", as a mini-poster poem for the 1967 Brighton Festival, this co-existential overspill into Buddhist philosophy, particularly Zen, was made more playfully explicit. The letter O in each of the words frog, pond and plop is enlarged, repositioned and emphasised in a bold typography. Constructed like this the letter O is an ënso, a Zen circle, both kinetic and contemplative, forcing "the reader to cross the border & enter"[56] into the poem. It can also function as a graphic score. The typographical change between these two poems emphasises more clearly how "frog pond plop" existed in what Houédard viewed as the "common field" of "Zen concepts of mind and meaning" that has "drawn poets and painters

together".[57] The letter O, as in traditional Zen calligraphy, inhabits this actual space in "the area 'between' poetry & painting". It also inhabits the space where the boundaries between form & emptiness blur, the space where a mind can unify both the universe and the void. The O becomes what Houédard describes as an "unself-graspable hole in the universe that each mind (zen) is to itself – try to solve the meaning (of words) & you get zensick – accept it – use it – as the image 'of nothing'''.[58] In his 1970 article "parameters & paramitas", he expounds this idea further:

> […] there are two stances – to try & solve the paradox when it presents itself at the centre – or to be content that it itself is the solution – […] it isn't the paradox so much as seeing it that is the solution- either just glimpsing it or going all the way to identifying with it – like frOg- paradOx-plOp- because what i call central is a paradox that is one only with the help of our cooperation – by our letting it impinge on our minds & vibrate them […] zen is mind & zen is also training the mind to take up that stance of mind aware of mind […][59]

A novice Zen practitioner may think that the kōan, "What is the sound of one hand clapping", is a riddle to be unriddled with answers such as "two hands", "silence" or "nothing", rather than be content in seeing that the true nature of the paradox is itself the solution. In the same way the reader/viewer of Houédard's poem "frog pond plop" may just glimpse the paradox or go all the way and identify with it.

The next variant on "frog pond plop" was an origami folded poem (Fig. 48). As discussed in *mudra,* the space on the page as structural agent is now given another dimension. The page turns through the space of "the cosmos in which it moves".[60] The reader's own hand movements connect the words frog pond and plop together but this time the words are covered and uncovered, repeatedly coming into being, repeatedly re/co-creating. In this way the poem dynamically performs the movement and impermanence at the centre of Bashō's haiku. Everything is in flux. The pond changes from still to disturbed. The frog moves through three elements, earth, air and water. The frog is visible then invisible to the eye. There is the silence of the still pond which then changes to the sound of moving water: the flux of the universe, constantly changing, re/co-creating itself in the mind of the perceiver. Such a perception of the immediacy and the nowness of how things truly exist, in a process of constant change, is the playful and profound paradox to be glimpsed or identified with in this poem.

Children make these origami games in the playground, manipulating their carefully folded pages in accordance with a number, letter, colour, chosen by a friend until a secret fold at the centre is unfolded, and the boy whom you will marry, the number of times you have been kissed is revealed. It is game where the answers are read out. In Houédard's

poem the tradition of the game is honoured, but if you choose to unfold a letter you simply reveal the heart of the paradox: a letter p covers an empty page; the letter l a blankness; the letter n a nothingness; the letter d an emptiness; a letter o the centre of the circle. The reader unfolds a silence.

The way the three words of the poem run into each other, frog becoming pond becoming plop becoming pond, also illustrates the perception of reality as non-dual. The reader is not separate from the writer, the frog is not separate from the pond when it jumps in, and (most importantly for Houédard, in his expression of the Cagean Zen discussed above) the pond is not separate from the water sound. The Zen Master D.T. Suzuki describes the connection as follows:

> This sound coming out of the old pond was heard by Basho as filling the entire universe. Not only was the totality of the environment absorbed in the sound and vanished into it, but Basho himself was altogether effaced from his consciousness.[61]

This interdependence of sound and silence is explored further in the undated *frog pond plop overture & phonata in three movements*. I discussed in the Introduction, this work was one of three key pieces by Houédard that I identified in the archives of John Rylands Library as having importance in resituating his work from typographical into performative contexts. In this score Houédard does not translate Bashō's haiku into English, instead he uses all 17 syllables of a phonetic translation furu ike ya/ kawazu tobikomu/ mizu no oto. This he turns into a score that layers the sounds fu ru ik ee ya ka wa zu to bi kp mu mi zu no oo to into an aural simultaneity suggestive of philosophical non-duality (Figs. 49 and 50).

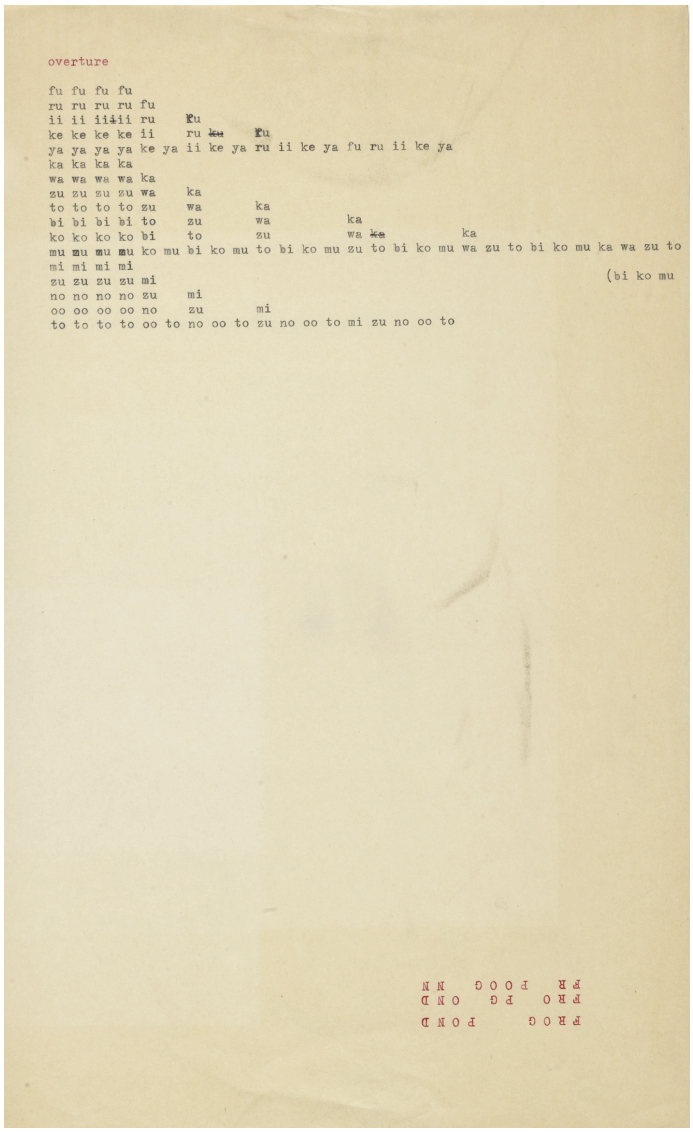


Fig. 49 Original typestract *frog pond plop overture and phonata*, c.1964. Image courtesy of John Rylands University Library.

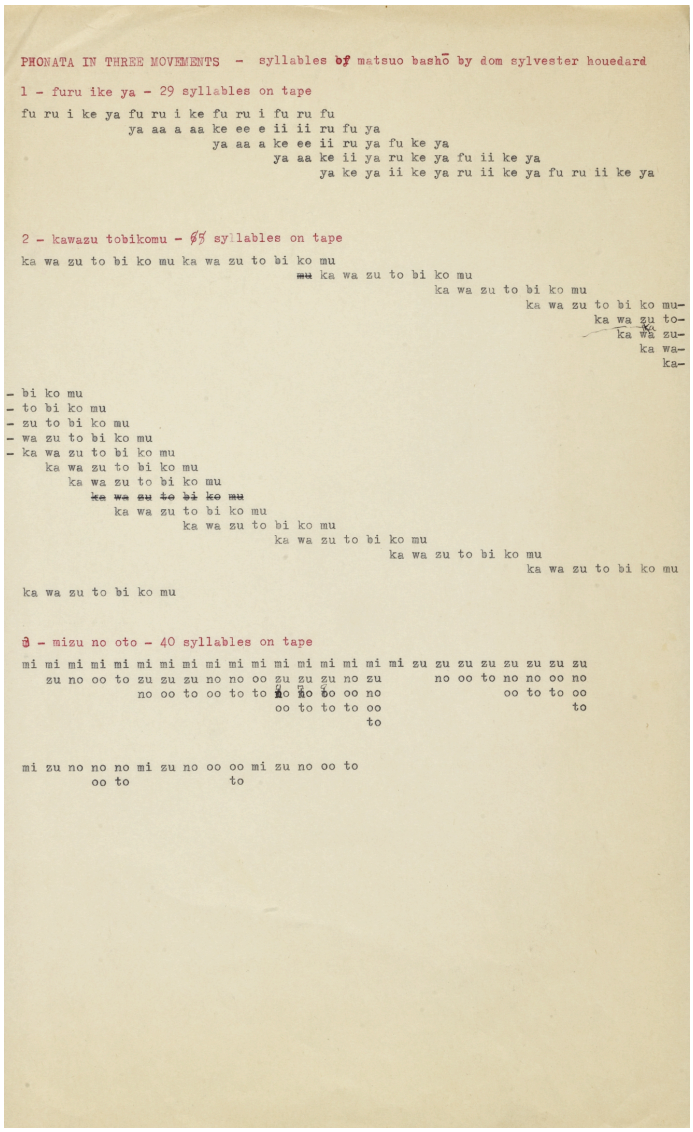


Fig. 50 Original typestract *frog pond plop overture and phonata*, c.1964. Image courtesy of John Rylands University Library.

Again, like the *onomasticons,* this typescore exemplifies his intention to create concrete poems as "APERSPECTIVE NONSYNTATIC POLYREADABLE structure"[62] and although interpretations can focus on the visual the forms are composed of phonemes or paralinguistic graphic marks. As Houédard puts it: "syllables by matsuo bashō by dom sylvester houédard".[63] Houédard's poemscore acknowledges the strict formal game-rules of writing Haiku and the 17 syllables composed in a pattern of 5-7-5. However in this poemscore Houédard divides Bashō's words up into their 17 constituent syllables to create equal visual and aural units: fu ru ik ee ya ka wa zu to bi ko mo mi zu no oo to. It is these aural linguistic units, rather than the words themselves and their less translatable semantic resonances that become the concrete material of the work.

The *overture,* presaging this symphonic poem, introduces us to all 17 syllables, while the phonata (a blending of the words phonate and sonata) retains both the traditional three sections of the haiku and the three classical movements of a sonata. The first movement, the exposition, is composed of the 5 syllables furu ike ya; the second movement, the development, using the 7 syllables kawazu tobikomu; the third movement, the recapitulation, is made up of the 5 syllables mizu no oto.

The *frog pond plop overture and phonata* could be considered a "simultaneous poem […] like apollinaire however meant by seeing a poem all in one go like a poster."[64] Houédard continues; "an abstract simultaneous poem" is to be "read by 2 or more voices – or by one voice processed on tape […]".[65] This statement, in Houédard's essay "introductionancestryandchronology", suggests that such a score can be performed "simultaneously" by up to 17 voices (as required by the *overture)* creating a synchronic verbal portrait. The instant perception of "seeing…[it] all in one go" cannot be performed. The sound-shape, produced over duration of time with sound objects and silence interchanging, can, however, be performed.

The score Houédard creates from these sounds retains the linear recitation of the haiku, but through the process of repetition, reproducing the method by which a Buddhist mantra is reiterated and renewed with each citation, the haiku is transformed from poem to prayer. no oto, the "sound of" the plop reverberates from the pond, outwards, ooooooooo, filling the universe with an ever-expanding circle of sound. Frog, pond, plop, Bashō, Houédard, the viewer, the audience and & art environment, are absorbed and vanish into the sound.



Fig.51 Documented performance of the *frog pond plop overture & phonata,* the *yoga of concrete*, The Gallery, NUA, 2010. Author's Image.

During the course of this research project I have curated two performances of this piece. The first was at the private view for the exhibition *frog pond plop: the yoga of concrete,* where I and a number of participants performed the work "simultaneously" to attempt to create the synchronic verbal portrait of Houédard's instructions. This performance was documented and then exhibited for the duration of the show alongside Houédard's original score for the *frog pond plop overture & phonata* (Fig. 51).[66]

On the second occasion, I invited the artist John Boursnell to interpret the score and he did so in a very different way in his performance at the pop-up exhibition and study day *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter,* South London Galley, 2012. (Fig. 52 and Fig. 53 and Appendix 2). Boursnell's interpretation of the score engages with a post-cagean aesthetics, as outlined by Liz Kotz, who identifies the "chains of substitutions" that enable Fluxus event scores to be realized as language, object and performance.[67] In his performance Boursnell gave each of the 17 different syllables a sound and an action - the lighting of a candle, a jar of marbles rolling onto the floor, a box of upturned ping-pong balls hopping like spherical frogs, the opening of pack of playing cards, the flipping and tearing out of pages from a book - until his final act of taking a Polaroid photograph and reading Houédard's haiku from its still undeveloped blank white surface. Boursnell's performance acknowledges the legacy of

Cage's *4'33''* a score that kotz describes as "a kind of temporal container, one that can potentially be filled with any material" and presents us with a staging of *frog pond plop* that creates a temporal interpenetration with readymade sounds and readymade everyday actions.[68] Such a sequential presentation of sound objects to the audience without commentary or explanation suggests, I argue, precisely Houédard's intended teaching, "frOg- paradOx-plOp". Each object was presented to the audience and left to "impinge on our minds & vibrate them."[69]





Figs. 52 & 53 John Boursnell performing *frog pond plop overture & phonata,* South London Gallery, 2012. Images courtesy of Christopher Daniels.

4.4 *c-dagesh*

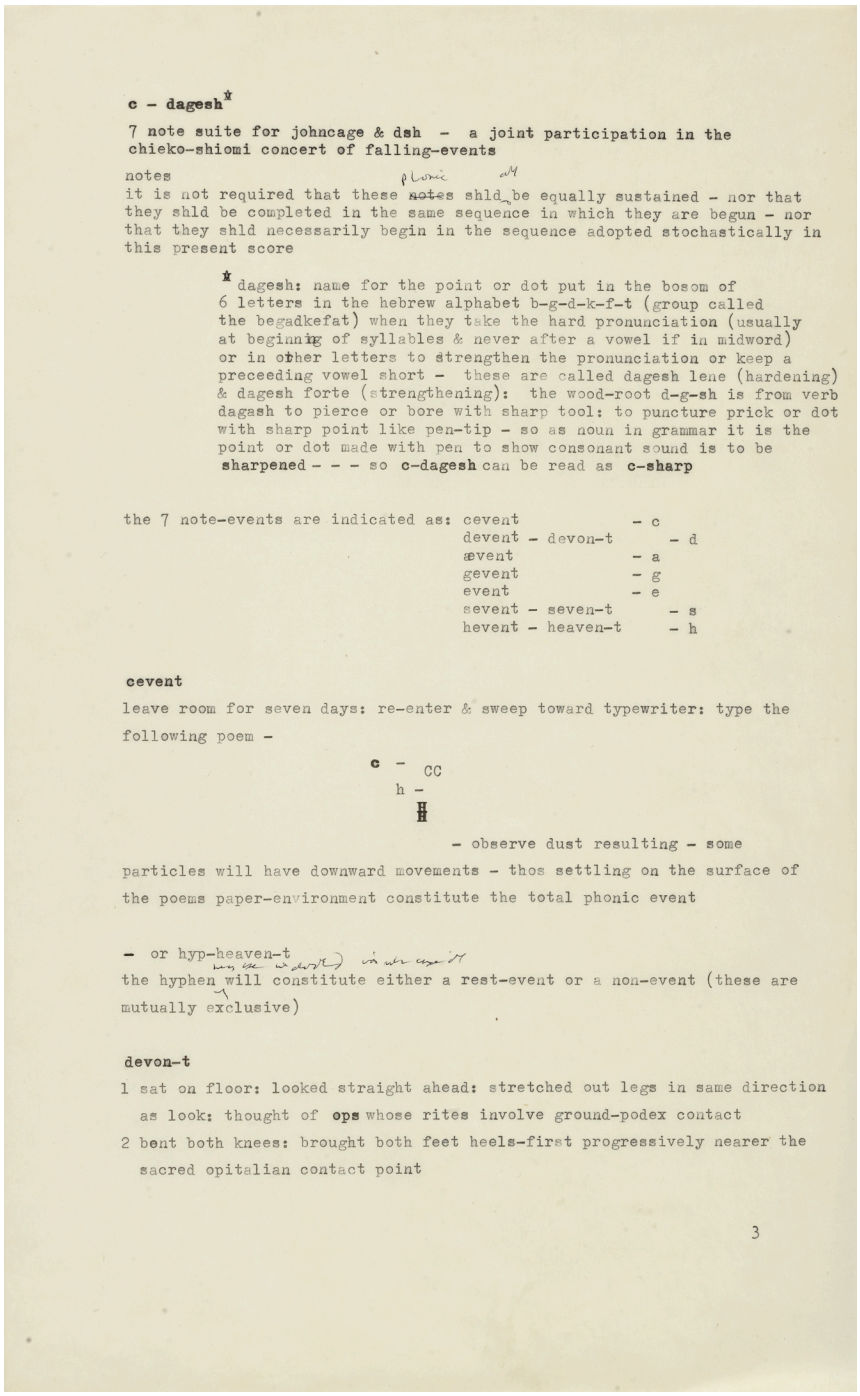
In August 1966 Houédard participated in "Falling Event" at the invitation of the Japanese artist and Fluxus member Cheiko Shiomi. "Falling Event", to take place anytime between 24th June and 31st August, was the third in a series of nine events that she called Spatial Poems. Each one began with an invitation to a large number of her Fluxus friends and Mail Art colleagues to respond to a simple instruction, which often took the form of an intimate action poem to be performed. The responses she received in the mail would then constitute the work.[70]

> SPATIAL POEM NO.3
> The phenomenon of a fall could be described as a segment of a movement towards the center of the earth. This very moment countless objects on the earth are taking part in this centripetal event.

Nam June Paik, La Monte Young, Allen Ginsberg, John Cage, Robert Filliou and Ian Hamilton Finlay were amongst the two hundred artist and poets that contributed to the event.

> SPATIAL POEM NO. 3 will be the record of your intentional effort to make something fall, occurring as it would simultaneously with all the countless and incessant falling events
> Please write to me how and when you performed it, as we are going to edit them chronologically.
> You could participate as many times as you want until August 31, 1966.

Houédard responded to Shiomi's instructions by writing a score for a "joint participation" with John Cage. His contribution, *c-dagesh,* is a 7-note suite that engages theologically with the instructions for the "centripetal" movement as outlined by Shiomi. Characteristic of Houédard's concrete poetry, the suite explores the potential metaphors and meanings revealed in an etymological contemplation of the words of the instructions themselves, seeing each word as having a zip that could be undone to reveal itself. Houédard is particularly drawn to Shiomi's use of the word centripetal, from the Latin *centrum "*center" and *petere* "to seek".



c – dagesh[*]

7 note suite for johncage & dsh – a joint participation in the chieko-shiomi concert of falling-events

notes

it is not required that these notes shld be equally sustained – nor that they shld be completed in the same sequence in which they are begun – nor that they shld necessarily begin in the sequence adopted stochastically in this present score

[*] dagesh: name for the point or dot put in the bosom of 6 letters in the hebrew alphabet b-g-d-k-f-t (group called the begadkefat) when they take the hard pronunciation (usually at beginning of syllables & never after a vowel if in midword) or in other letters to strengthen the pronunciation or keep a preceeding vowel short – these are called dagesh lene (hardening) & dagesh forte (strengthening): the wood-root d-g-sh is from verb dagash to pierce or bore with sharp tool: to puncture prick or dot with sharp point like pen-tip – so as noun in grammar it is the point or dot made with pen to show consonant sound is to be **sharpened** – – – so **c-dagesh** can be read as **c-sharp**

the 7 note-events are indicated as: cevent – c
devent – devon-t – d
ævent – a
gevent – g
event – e
sevent – seven-t – s
hevent – heaven-t – h

cevent

leave room for seven days: re-enter & sweep toward typewriter: type the following poem –

c –
CC
h –
H

– observe dust resulting – some particles will have downward movements – thos settling on the surface of the poems paper-environment constitute the total phonic event

– or hyp-heaven-t
the hyphen will constitute either a rest-event or a non-event (these are mutually exclusive)

devon-t

1 sat on floor: looked straight ahead: stretched out legs in same direction as look: thought of **ops** whose rites involve ground-podex contact

2 bent both knees: brought both feet heels-first progressively nearer the sacred opitalian contact point

3

Fig. 54 Original typestact *c-dagesh.* Image courtesy of John Rylands University Library.

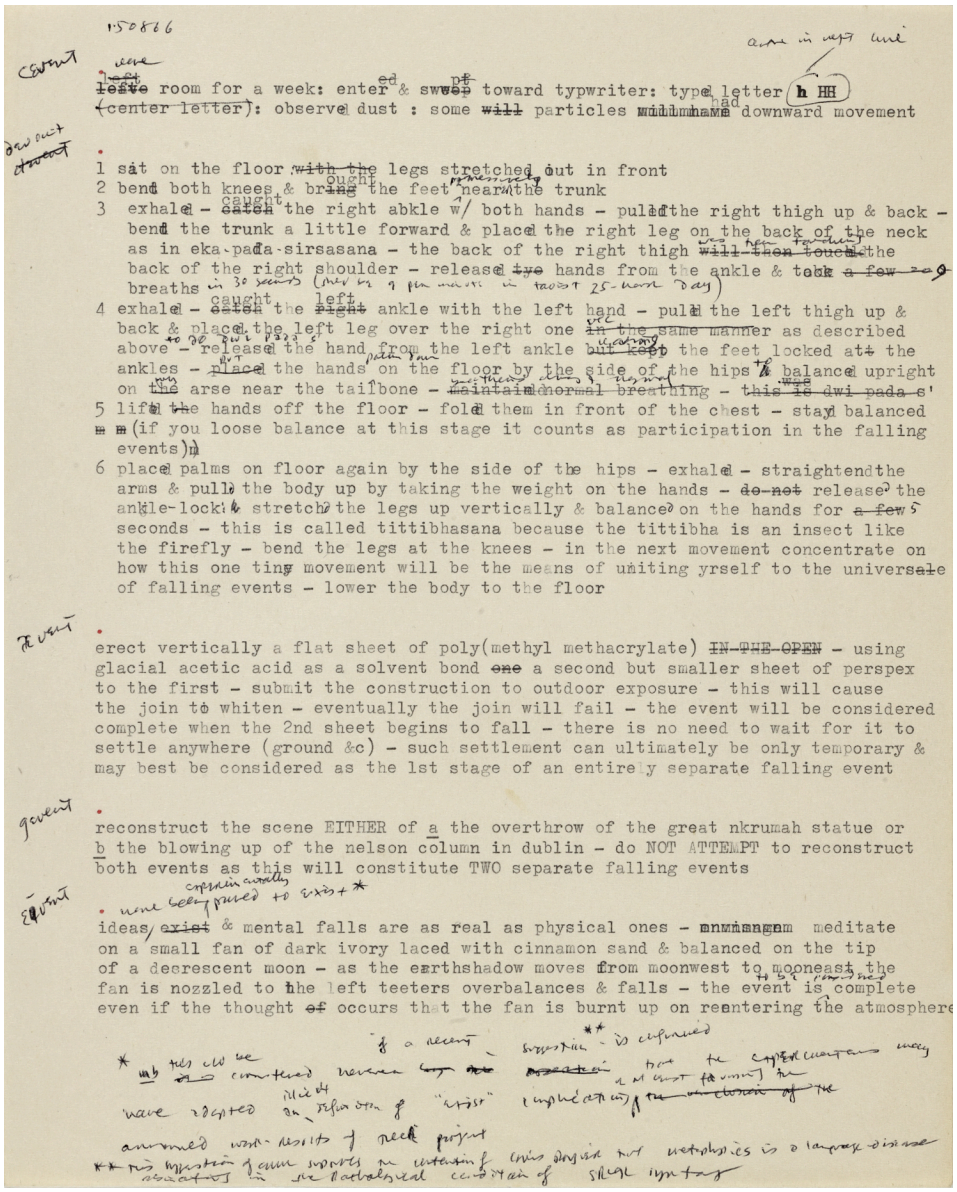


Fig.55 Original typestact *c-dagesh.* Image courtesy of John Rylands University Library

The title of the piece *c-dagesh* is composed of the letters d,s,h. as Houédard signed all his poems and art work, and the letters that spell out c,a,g,e. Again the context of names and the emptiness of the 'I' are invoked by the title, as are the ideas about interpenetration, as found in Buddhist ontology with the blending together of the two artists' names. But these letters have another meaning too. As Houédard outlines in his notes to this piece, "dagesh: name for the point or dot in the bosom of 6 letters in the Hebrew alphabet b-g-d-k-f. […] Also "the wood-root d-g-sh is from the verb dagesh to pierce with a sharp point like a pen-tip" (Fig. 54). Therefore implicit in these instructions is the suggestion that the suite will somehow pierce our expectations, our understanding of

things, or complacency of seeing. It will unzip our expectations of reality to enable us to seek the centre of things.

Each of the seven notes: cevent, devent, avent, gevent, event, sevent and hevent are about contemplation, distraction and the propulsion of an inner journey towards an inner nothingness. Throughout the suite, various bodies - particles of dust, a flat sheet of poly(methyl methacrylate), the great Nkrumah statue, Nelson's column in Dublin, a small fan of dark ivory laced with cinnamon sand, a single bead of quicksilver, pieces of paper - are "consciously" and "musically" united "to the universal pluritotality of falling events" that draw all these bodies along a circular path towards the centre of things (Fig. 54). "pluritotality", a coinage by Houédard himself, is an apt word that attempts to name what he describes as the "actual-links & even possible-links between the eastern and western"[71] spiritual and philosophical traditions that the movements in these notes tease out. These ideas can be explored further in "cevent", the first note in the suite.

The first instruction, to leave the room for seven days, has both subtle and obvious connotations. Seven, of course, references the biblical seven-day creation, seven days in the week and the seven notes of a heptatonic scale. Like Houédard's interest in the root of the word "dagesh", here we are directed to the root of the scale, C, which very deliberately roots us firmly in traditional Western music. But then we leave Western tradition behind as the instrument that plays notes from this C scale is a typewriter. The typewriter transforms into an instrument that produces an alternative scale of 7 notes in the use of the keys c, C, h, H,-, shift and the space bar.

Who plays the typewriter? Initially Houédard perhaps, or Houédard and Cage simultaneously at an appointed time during the month of August. But this is also a score readily available to anyone with a typewriter and in 1966 this was of course an everyday object found in most places or works and many homes. The notes of the typewriter keys would be a mundane, familiar, almost background noise to many people's lives. However here, in "cevent", we, the audience are being directed to listen to this noise with the attentiveness with which we would approach a traditional Western orchestral composition: the c key, the space bar key, the space bar key…

The artist Allen Kaprow asserted that *4'33"* was Cage's most radically *instrumental* piece in that it made available, not just all the sounds in the world, but all phenomena.[72] Irving Sandler expands on this idea:

> John's seminal work, titled 4' 33", exemplified his life-as-art aesthetics. In it's first performance David Tudor walked onto a stage, sat down at a piano, opened it, sat there for four minutes and thirty three seconds, occasionally

> opening and closing the piano, then closed it, got up, and walked off stage. But there were sounds in the hall, of chairs creaking, people shuffling programs and coughing, the scuffling shoes of people leaving and their angry mutterings, airplane, traffic, and insect noises, and so on.[73]

The spatial notation of *c-dagesh* recalls the notation evident in Cage's writing practice (not only in relatively early examples such as *Composition as process*, a text which graphs each line for a one-second performance duration). Here Houédard's notation in "cevent" seems to anticipate Cage's later work, i.e. what Jaeger describes as "the Zen-inflected *Empty Words* of 1975". Jaeger continues, "without a conventional time-signature or performance direction to indicate the exact duration of silences and sounds, this composition leaves space for the reader/performer to linger on silence, before moving on to the next semantically indeterminate group of phonemes."[74] Here I am suggesting that Houédard's notation, can be considered, (as Jaeger writes on Cage), as a "spatialized nothing" that performs "the impossibility of representing Zen awareness in language […] a nothing [that] bypasses the communicative conventions of 'ordinary' language altogether." It is a nothing that "extends the semiotics of the void towards the social, the reader who learns about and experiences the void through non-semantic and performative indeterminacy".[75] In Houédard's *c-dagesh,* language performs the impossibility of representing the void through the symbolism of any typewriter key. Instead, as I shall argue below, we are drawn beyond language to dust falling.

> Early Buddhist philosophy recognized the impossibility of communicating 'truth' in language and developed the so-/ called 'two truth' doctrine in order to articulate the difference between relative, every day language and the language used to express the ultimate truth of emptiness.[76]

In the work of Houédard (and Cage) a distinction can be made between the essays, explanatory talks and texts which discuss ideas of emptiness in a conventional way, and those texts and talks and performances which instead perform non-duality. There is the direct performance of the thing itself, linguistic materiality or spatialized silence. This is a crucial distinction from texts that dualistically present the themes of Buddhism or conceptual reality.

> "What I do," writes Cage in the 1961 foreword to *Silence,* "I do not wish to blame Zen, though without my engagement with Zen […] I doubt whether I would have done what I have done" Why Zen and silence? Instead of considering silence/ as the expressive or emphatic time lapse between sounds (or words), silence for Cage is variable and impermanent. The world "teems" with sounds he writes, and 'is in fact, at/no point free of/ them". Sound for Cage is all pervasive, and in his work the notion of silence becomes a/ sign for something other than the absence of sound.[77]

Returning to the instructions in "cevent", before we even hear or play this composition on the typewriter, we re-enter the space where it has been left untouched for seven days and sweep towards the instrument in situ. The very act of sweeping recalls the Zen phrase, before enlightenment sweeping and chopping wood, after enlightenment sweeping and chopping wood, and also the tale of Lam Chung, the Tibetan Monk who, according to the Lam rim teachings, gained profound insight and realisations into the true nature of existence through the simple daily devotional act of sweeping the temple. Characteristic of many of the Fluxus scores, these acts of sweeping (and then typing) negotiate the intermedia between daily life and art. Here we can consider Cage's own words:

> '*Art is a way of life.* It is for all the world like taking a bus, picking flowers, making love, sweeping the floor, getting bitten by a monkey, reading a book, etc., as infinitum. [78]

After the sweeping and the typing in "cevent" we are alerted to the fact that it is not just the sound of the typewriter keys being struck that we should listen to, it is also the observation and attendant listening to the particles of dust as they fall onto the paper- environment that "constitute the total phonic event". Again, Cage's own words, about environmental sounds, provide a context:

> I think perhaps my own best piece, at least the one I like the most, is the silent piece. It has three movements and in all of the movements it has no sounds. I wanted my work to be free of my own likes and dislikes, because I think music should be free of the feelings and ideas of the composer. I have felt and hoped to have led other people to feel that the sounds of their environment constitute a music which is more interesting than the music which they would hear if they went into a concert hall.[79]

How do we hear the inaudible sound of dust falling? It requires a very special kind of listening. It is the listening that Cage intended from experiencing *4'33".*

> If you want to know the truth of the matter, the music I prefer, even to my own or anybody else's is what we are hearing if we are just quiet. And now we come back to my silent piece. I really prefer that to anything else, but I don't think of it as "my piece".[80]

What do we hear when we are just quiet? Do we hear the dust, which our recent movements have disturbed, falling? Houédard's direction to the audience to listen to dust falling is significant. D. T. Suzuki describes a particle of dust as a shimmering image of interpenetration. "Existentially viewed, every particular object, technically called "particles of dust" (*anuraja*), contains in it the whole Dharmadhatu [pure Mind Realm]".[81] Within the

teachings of Zen Buddhism, contemplating a particle of dust can reveal the whole universe. Contemplating a single particle of dust can lead to a direct perception of emptiness.

In ending with the audience listening to dust falling, "cevent", I argue, seems very close to Cage's original intentions for *4'33"*

> […] a piece of uninterrupted silence […] It will be 3 or 4 ½ minutes long […] and its title will be *Silent Prayer.* It will open with a single idea, which I will attempt to make as seductive as the color and shape and fragrance of a flower. The ending will approach imperceptibly.[82]

The ending of "cevent" approaches such imperceptibility.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that most of the falls in each of the notes of the suite end in a destruction of sorts: dust settles and is disturbed on typewriter keys; the yogic practitioner of the tittibhasana pose totters and falls; the joints of polymethylmethacrylate whiten and fail due to outdoor exposure; nelson's column in Dublin is blown up etc. As we read this score, imaginary phenomena are created but also destroyed into nothingness, an emptiness. Houédard writes:

> […] the […] journey is back to the world where, as St Augustine says, words have beginnings and endings again. And on this journey, as the Tibetans put it rather neatly, we see all things without exception as mirrors of our own emptiness or perpetual becoming or nothingness. We see that all things, because it is only one creation, have this state of "emptiness' that is empty of self-being; all being is given and is not owned.[83]

c-dagesh was written in August 1966, in the midst of Houédard's involvement with DIAS, the month of the publication of his article "The Aesthetics of the Death Wish" and in between his participation in May at the Ravensbourne symposium on auto-destructive and auto-creative art and the scheduled presentation of his paper/ performance "Apophatic Art'' in September. This centre in *c-dagesh*, to which all these destroyed objects return is as much the centre of the mandala as in any of the works discussed in chapter *mandala.*

During the exhibition *the yoga of concrete*, I invited the poet Matt Welton to perform "cevent". A typewriter was left in situ for precisely seven days from the evening of the private view to the evening of his performance. He entered the gallery, took hold of a sweeping brush and swept the floor as he made his way towards the typewriter. There he typed out Houédard's instructional notation then sat motionless. He listened to the dust falling. The audience in the gallery listened to the dust falling. (See Appendix 1c).

In the adjacent gallery space, throughout Welton's performance Houédard's instructions for the other six notes in *c-dagesh* were projected onto the gallery wall in a

repetitious sequence. Seven blue meditation cushions were scattered around the gallery inviting the audience to sit down and participate in *c-dagesh.* (Fig. 56) (See Appendix 1b).

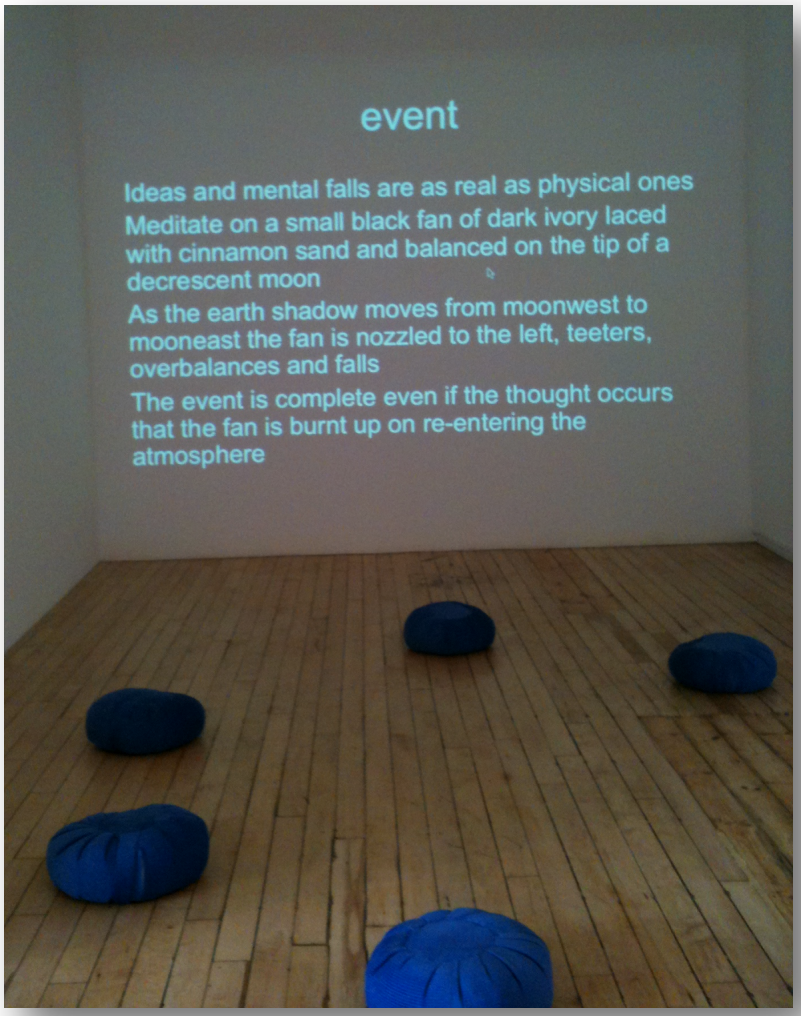


Fig.56 Installation image for "event", *c-daesh, the yoga of concrete,* The Gallery, 2010.

There is not space in this thesis to examine each of the seven notes in *c-dagesh* but this section will conclude with a brief consideration of the fourth note, "event" which takes us further into the meditative centre of this suite than any other note. To perform "event" we began by sitting crossed legged on a blue cushion [Fig.58], closing our eyes to reduce distractions and attempting to meditate, as directed by Houédard, "on a small black fan of ivory laced with cinnamon sand and balanced on the tip of a decrescent moon." Even just thinking of this image creates a sound according to Hindu Tantra:

> […] every thought or every idea originates in Sound (Nada). The moment we think, an unheard sound is formed. As an idea appears in one's mind, the sound that concurrently occurs is the ground for all forms.[84]

Within the context of Vajrayana Buddhism, the imaginary mental fan, cinnamon sand and moon are all as real as actual ones we could experience with our senses. As John Blofeld writes, "Vajrayana adepts, being dedicated to the perception within their own minds of absolute truth" hold "what is imagined and therefore mind-born to be no less real than the material world – also conceived of as mind-born".[85] According to Houédard's instructions, in our visualization the fan balances precariously as the earth's shadow passes from moonwest to mooneast until it teeters slightly to the left and falls. Where does it fall to? Does it indeed burn up on reentry into the earth's atmosphere, as Houédard suggests? Does it continue falling? Does it fall out of our mind? What sound does this mental fall make? Here again, we can place this mental sound in the context of Hindu Tantra:

> All the objects that we see and feel in this universe from thought or idea to matter, are sounds of particular concentration. Every object consists of a certain density of sound […][86]

The imagined sound of the fan falling is movement four of the suite *c-dagesh* and therefore engages directly with Cagean poetics as outlined by Jaeger.

> […] Zen does not rely on words alone, because words convey ideas about an experience rather than the experience itself. Paradoxically, this form on non/ linguistic practice is precisely the experience that Cage's poetics seek to encounter. But instead of meditation and the disciplined study of scriptures, Cage used writing, music, visual art and other forms of cultural production to form a type of meditative engagement with 'silence' [87]

The work guides the audience in a meditative engagement with the interdependence between the sound of the mental object as it falls through space and time and the silence when it is burnt away on re-entering the earth's atmosphere; neither of which can be experienced by the ear.

When I invited sound artist David Toop to perform *c-dagesh* he chose to work with a selection of his students from the London College of Communication on an improvised performance that would play all seven notes together [Appendix].[88] In this performance, works by Houédard and Cage interpenetrate, in particular Cage's *Theatre Piece#1* and *HPSCHD.* Commenting on *Theatre Piece#1,* Cage scholar Kay Larson writes how "each performer serves as his/her own center. Each takes responsibility for his/ her part in the whole". [89] Such words are insightful and applicable to the students from LCC, who similarly

took “responsibility for his/her part in the whole”, performing one of the seven notes and unaware of what the other performers were going to do until the night of the performance (Figs. 57 and 58). Again Larson’s comments on *Theatre Piece#1* provide a useful framework for interpreting this performance of *c-dagesh.*

> Lacking a narrative, the event has no plot and no denouement […] Each performer’s action, since it doesn’t support a narrative, is clearly a process. Each and every being in all of that time and space is related to every other being – penetrating and being penetrated by all others – in an interval totally free of dualistic terminology such as “success and failure’ or “beautiful and ugly”.[90]

Some of the instruments, the stepladder and projector screen from Cage’s initial performance of *Theatre Piece#,1* are here found in the performance of *c-dagesh.* Yet they are now re-imagined in a sound-piece that is directly engaging with Shiomi’s Falling Event. A student stands on the top of the stepladder, whirling holes into a bag of white rice around the tip of a drill, clockwise, scattering small grains across the gallery floor. The projector screen shows images of a decrescent moon from, “event”, or a yoga practitioner holding the tittibhasana pose from “devent”. One student holds long notes of “c” on the electric violin, interplaying sound with silence. Another note is held through the pouring of red wine into seven wine glasses. One student is blindfolded and makes her way, sightless, around the gallery, vulnerable to a fall at any moment.

Toop’s use of computer-generated sound could be said to interpenetrate with Cage’s *HPSCHD,* described by Larson as an “epitome” of “Cagean homage to interpenetration”.[91] Larson continues:

> When this sound spectacle was staged, visitors wandered from sound island to sound island. They would occasionally pass one of the seven harpsichord “islands” where a pianist played Mozart fragments on an electronically amplified harpsichord sitting on a plant-covered platform. The walls flashed thousands of slides […] and several films. Stitched through the aural atmosphere of this event, the fifty-one computer-generated tape compositions, distributed around the room, created hot spots of sound. [92]

In listening to a performance of *Theatre Piece#1, HPSCHD* or Toop’s interpretation of *c-dagesh,* it is not just the performers who are centres. The audience members too are a ”centre”, “totally unique yet totally interpenetrating”.





Figs. 57 and 58 David Toop and students from the London College of Communication improvised performance of *c-dagesh,* The South London Gallery, 2012. Images courtesy of Christopher Daniels.

4.5 *pee stroke queue*

Having discussed a number of examples of Houédard's poemscores and the interplay between language and silence, the final section of this chapter will consider a work by Houédard which has no words beyond the title but, as I shall argue, is a crucial dialogue on the saying of nothing and the un-saying of nothing.

p|q or *pee stroke queue* is the title of a play Houédard wrote for the French Fluxus Artist Ben Vautier.[93] Houédard wrote this play in 1969 or early 1970, perhaps to be in conversation with two rather more well-known pieces by Vautier: *Two mirrors facing each other in a closed black box* and *Sit in front of a mirror and observe for 4 hours.*

Houédard's play is enigmatic. There is no script. No documented performance. No audience accounts and only very recently have I been able to find what I think is "the concrete typestract version" that Houédard thought was "ok"[94] [95](Fig. 59).



Fig. 59 Installation image from *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* Lisson Gallery, New York, 2nd May – 16th June. I have interpreted this work, dated 040367 and with the lexical key "scrupulous objectivity", as stage instructions for two looking glasses facing directly opposite each other.

I have found what could be interpreted as stage directions in a passing reference to the play in his article "parameters & paramitas".

> […] like in my play 'pee-stroke-queue' where actors are two looking glasses placed on stage & dialog is them looking at each other-[96]

What happens when two mirrors are placed on stage and just look at each other? Mirror *pee* reflects mirror *queue* reflecting mirror *pee* or is it now mirror *queue'* or mirror *pee'*? Houédard writes:

> Infinite regresses open vistas to each sacred direction - to mental -sickness commonsense art mysterium doodles elation & fear.

This is the intended dialogue of inner looking or right mind-minding, what Houédard describes as an "analysis" on reflection and reflexivity that "opens up one of the most frightening self-replicative exercises there is in mental selfawareness".[97] If not a "frightening" sensation, it certainly is an intriguing one, familiar to anyone who has sat as a young child at their (grand) mother's dressing table and with that quiet mind of boredom and Sunday-afternoon-lull you slowly turn the vanity triple mirrors inwards to the just-so angle that begins to reflect your profile infinitely at either side…Or perhaps we have experienced something analogous when we have glanced in the mirror at the hairdresser's. In fact Houédard references this very act of looking in mirrors as a way to think about "our nothingness in front of the Nothingness" in an early letter to Ginsberg:

> […]Bhakti yoga & love & humility & our nothingness in front of the Nothingness & Compassion karuna empathy & tenderness we all need to have […] is-are the interwovenness (tantra is wovenness by the way) of you-me: us-them: inside-outside: creation-creator: real-Real: atman+ Atman: […] (that I called looking up 2 hairdressers looking glass tunnels […][98]

For Houédard, this everyday yet profound experience of self-replication and that giddy self-questioning; "which one is the real ME?", is a useful analogy for approaching the yoga of "fix[ing] mind on MIND".[99] Houédard writes about his experience, "[…] aware that the mirror that reflects the mirror is the mirror that reflects & that the mirror reflected in the mirror is totally other".[100]

There is another interesting reference to the play, around about the same year, 1970, in a talk Houédard gave called "words with zips":

> The sole action for my concept play for Ben Vautier is two looking glasses on the stage – looking at each other. It's not thought so much as reflective thought that characterizes humans & what does the looking glass see when it looks at its own reflection?
> How can a looking glass reflect itself?[101]

To hear the dialogue of the two mirrors p and q looking at each other requires physical silence. It requires concentration. It requires an inner silence that may well lead to outer silence too. Here, Houédard, in posing a couple of questions, again draws attention to the self-reflexive dialogue between these two looking glasses.

And lastly there is another more general, but rather insightful reference, to "pee" and "queue" in an article, written in 1963 and presumably much earlier than the *pee stroke queue* typestract. It is a review of three books, published by Stefan and Franceskia Themersen's small press Gaberbocchus. On the surface he is considering where the Gaberbocchus Press may situate itself in the trajectory of the contemporary avant-garde and makes the statement "the Themersens entirely are un anything unthemersen" as a precursor to diverging into a wider ecumenical sermon:

> that systematic ambiguity that allows no two things to be alike unless they are in at least 1 way different. p & q (or q & q') coexsisting oecumenically will never […] quite merge their dissolving outlines into a mutual identity & will always be the bulwark of the word invaded world against both fusion & fission: against the tyrannies of ubiquitist social monolithism & against the fragmentations of mind world & god. The outline of p has to be the inline of q. The archetypes of these yin-yang yab-yum ambiguities, this symbiosis or oecumenical coexistence are eg hypostatic union, matter & form, the two slopes of a valley (or ridge) the circuminsessions of the trinity & of the 2 virgins, a thing & its reflection, the eschatological tao or ultimate harmony of one & many, our participation in divinity, the je & moi, the parables of our Lord, a thought & its content, what we think of when somethingelse is named, midrash, & the 2 things we often must be to be one & in balance."[102]

Houédard covers a lot of philosophical & theological ground in this statement, using his expanded version of the "wider ecumenical", here termed "coexisting oecumenically" and "oecumenical coexistence" respectively, to encompass a variety of different delineations of where one phenomena ends and another begins. He piles up, clause by clause, a far-reaching range of binary oppositions. These comments in the *Gaberbocchus* article could provide insight into the "dialogue" Houédard had in mind for his play. By naming this play *pee stroke queue* Houédard connects the two. Like an equation balancing truth statements on reality, *pee stroke queue* is a play with the intention to literally "reflect" many coexisting theories and positions on duality. The looking glass or mirror p/pee can stand for the word or mental concept: fusion, world, God, yin, one slope of the valley, matter, a thing, je. The looking glass or mirror q/queue can stand for the word or mental concept: fission, mind, god, yang, the other side of the valley, form, a reflection, moi. These ideas are communicated much more effectively if we can refer back to the typikon

discussed above with Stefan and Franciszka facing each other, made around the same time the article was written.

Certainly, in this article, Houédard's embracing of oecumenity is a visionary one. He sees such an attitude of expanding theological inclusivity as offering an alternative destiny to humanity. Instead of a world that is "only too glad to end itself in the triumphalism of a world explosion" this attitude can help earth "face space, other solar systems & even other mega galaxies & the whole unwordable problem of the non & the non-non".[103] In this article, "Gaberbocchus", there exists a beginning for the silent (unwordable) dialogue of *pee stroke queue*. This review becomes a much wider plea for a conversation on peace and tolerance: "a shalom or pax of eirenic dialogue karuna & the openness that is the natural equivalent of faith".[104]

When I first staged a performance of *pee stroke queue* at Norwich University of the Arts, in November 2013, the room fell silent, as I announced a beginning to the play and then remained "silent" until, after a period of two minutes, the end of the performance was announced. The length of the performance was arbitrary. On this occasion, for practical reasons, (I had to give a talk on my research too within a twenty-minute timeslot) I controlled the time with a stopwatch but it would have been better to stage a performance in a place where quiet contemplation could continue. A place where the audience could sit, reflect, fidget, meditate, yawn, grow restless, leave or stay.

In performance it is not difficult to acknowledge *pee stroke queue*'s debt to John Cage's *4'33".* The audience become the performers, in that their internal monologues become the only discernible dialogue. The real activity of the play becomes the audience's fleeting recognition of or deeper meditative understanding of the progress of reflective thought. This is further exemplified by what Houédard says about mirrors and looking glasses in "words with zips", comments that certainly lend credence to an interpretation of *pee stroke queue* in line with a very traditional self-reflective meditation found in all Mahayana Buddhisms, especially Zen:

> Like a good Buddhist I find something central in the analogy between mind & looking glass. Practically everybody in the West heard two poems the moment they heard the word Zen […] In the 17th Century Shen Tzu, the prior of Yellow Plum Mountain wrote:
>
> Body tree
> Bodhi Tree
> Mind
> Mirror
> So Dust It
>
> The cook […] Hui Neng replied:
>
> No Bodhi
> No Mirror

No Dust
So no dusting.

Such comments link the contemplative dust falling of *c-dagesh* with the repeated analogy within Buddhisms of the mind as a mirror.

Turning now to the title of play, it is important to ask how it could relate to the actors, the mirrors, and the dialogue of reflection. *pee stroke queue* written as an equation "p| q" contains all the 16 possible truth functions of Boolean Algebra, where there are two imputs: p and q. After a conversation, Houédard's friend Lawrence Pedersen sent me the following email.

> Just a quick afterthought on logic. […] though as dsh was at the Vatican one period in his career, you can be sure he was aware of the Scholastic logic tradition. Not least because it is the anti-type or complement to the Mystics he was so fond of, & there's a curious reciprocity between the logical & the mystical traditions. Classical scepticism feeds directly into both, & they overlap in figures such as Nicholas of Cusa. Before winding up in the Tractatus! The recent trend in Wittgenstein scholarship is to 'take him at his word', so they've been obliged to take the famous pronouncements on mysticism in the Tractatus seriously too. Should please Houédard, for whom the Tractatus was a key text.[105]

In the 1950s Houédard kept a series of black notebooks throughout his theological training. These notebooks support Pedersen's claim that Houédard was aware of the Scholastic Logic tradition. There are notes on Wittgenstein and evidence of engagement with propositional calculus & truth tables. However, for the purpose of this discussion, it is in the marginalia where a series of seemingly thoughtless doodles hold significance (Fig. 60). Just for a moment the letter shapes of p and q are played with. P and Q change shape and size, moving from lower case to upper case and back again. It looks like Houédard is exploring their calligraphic potential to suggest, enclose, or open out a circular void; the morphing ink line on the once blank margin shaping a passing, but perhaps not insignificant thought about the interiority and exteriority of their symbolic function.

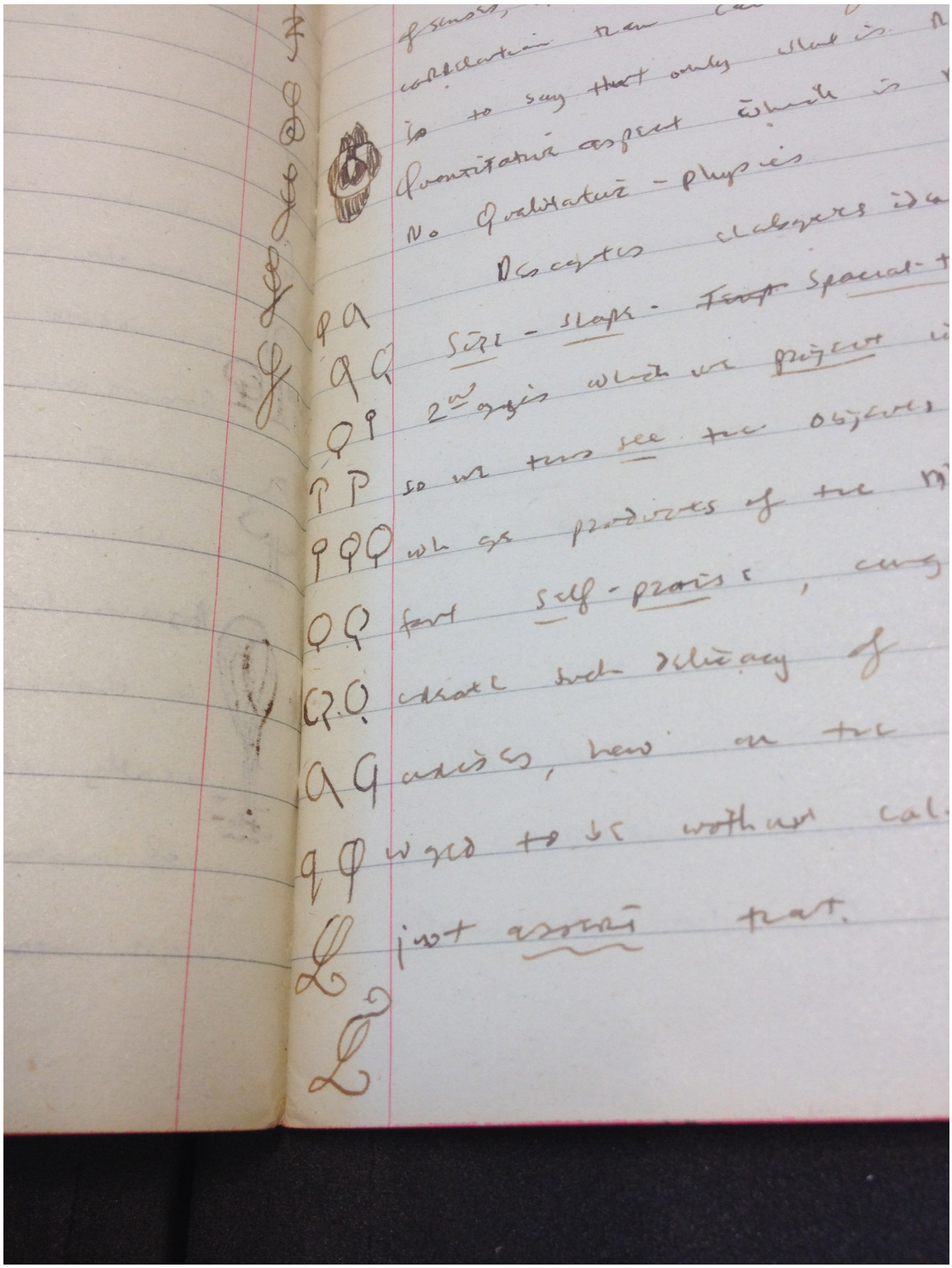


Fig. 60 References to ps and qs in the 1950s notebooks, Dom Sylvester Houedard archive, John Rylands University Library, Special Collections.

Indisputedly Houédard had read and studied Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* as a young curate in Rome. *pee stroke queue* incorporates both the early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* & the later Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations.* It is only within the language "game" (*Philosophical Investigations)* established by the two mirrors looking at each other that *pee* (p) and *queue* (q) can

be referents to the "mind" or consciousness. As Wittgenstein asked in the *Tractatus,* can a consciousness exist without language?

> (**logic**) a function of two sentences, equivalent to the negation of their conjunction, and written *p*|*q* (*p* and *q* are both not true) where *p,q,* are the arguments: *p*|*q* is false only when *p,q* are both true. It is possible to construct all truth functions out of this one alone[106]

p and q can stand for an infinite number of different mentally conceived phenomena or a finite combination of linguistic statements. But there is the "stroke" – their conjunction. How does this exist?

In another staging of this play at the ICA in February 2014 I carefully placed two identical shaving mirrors opposite each other, at an appropriately close distance, to ensure that they each could only reflect what the other one was reflecting.[107] Which mirror was "pee"? Which mirror was "queue"? Complete interchangeabilty. But where or what is the "stroke" in performance? As noted above, in an equation of propositional calculus the stroke is a conjunction. Is it the space between the two mirrors, the light bouncing from one to the other or is the stroke the conceptual mind of the perceiver?

By giving this play a proposition as a title, p|q, we are particularly put in mind of a number of propositions (about propositions) such as Wittgenstein's proposition 4.01 in his *Tractatus*:

> A proposition is a picture of reality.
> A proposition is a model of the reality as we imagine it.[108]

pee stroke queue can be both a picture of reality - a looking glass reflects back to the perceiver a reversed "picture" of reality and a model of reality - as discussed above, the play can be a model about dualistic thinking. Again, in the words of Wittgenstein's proposition 4.011:

> At first sight a proposition—one set out on the printed page, for example-does not seem to be a picture of the reality with which it is concerned. But neither do written notes seem at first to be a picture of a piece of music, nor our phonetic notation (the alphabet) to be a picture of our speech. And yet these sign-languages prove to be pictures, even in the ordinary sense, of what they represent.[109]

At first glance two mirrors do not seem to be a performance of the reality we understand. But the very fact that Houédard called them "looking glasses" not mirrors moves the equation of the title closer to a "model of reality". Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. The mirrors are "looking". It is activity. Therefore the question can be asked, in calling the play *pee stroke queue* is Houédard deliberately referencing, disputing, playing with the binary variables that make up so much of mathematical and philosophical logic in the west? In one of Houédard's early notebooks we can see his handwritten jottings about p|q. Alongside the equation he has written "alternative denial

Not both P and Q". Then towards the margin he had drawn a 0. Further down the page he clarifies the meaning of 0. Contradictory function. Paradox? Does *pee stroke queue* have a dialogue with Western logic's attempts (particularly in the 20th Century) to deal with paradox? Is Houédard suggesting that Western logic has within it "systematic ambiguity" that refutes or acts as a bulwark against a Buddhist logic which, although it acknowledges the binary variables of p and q, ying and yang, matter and form, a thing and its reflection, goes further in its acknowledgement that these binary variables are the appearances of a Conventional Reality that can be dissolved into an Ultimate Reality of emptiness, the lack of inherent existence? Pedersen writes:

> There are many allusions to negation in his texts, & I'd imagine he'd be interested in logical systems where double negation doesn't necessarily get you back to where you started (where ~~p isn't automatically equivalent to p).

Or as Houédard writes: "the whole unwordable problem of the non and the non-non". We can turn to Houédard's words in "parameters & paramitas":

> zen is mind & zen is also training the mind to take up that stance of mind aware of mind – aware that the mirror that reflects the mirror is the mirror that reflects & that the mirror reflected is totally other.

Mind aware of mind, is an experience that Houédard, in the same article, defines as a paradox that one can either "try to solve when it presents itself at the centre" or be content that the paradox itself is the solution. In the closing words of *Tractatus,* "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."[110]

Within the framework of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* something sayable must have content that is fully intelligible to a person without that person knowing if it is true or false. In the case of somethings inability to be said, such as the logical structure of language (or as I am suggesting here – the apprehension of the true nature of mind and ultimate reality in accordance with Buddhist thought) it can only be shown. As I have attempted to establish *pee stroke queue* has a silent dialogue, about paradox, not of what can be said about paradox, but of what can only be shown. Wittgenstein writes: "There are, indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest.* They are what is mystical." Or in the words of Buddhist scholar John Blofeld:

> The inconceivable is conceived by embodying it conceptually up to the moment when the need for concepts ceases […] The point is that mere *understanding* is worthless; the experience has to unfold at a level deeper than the intellect.[111]

To illustrate in more detail how *pee stroke queue* ecumenically reflects Buddhist logic alongside Western logic it is helpful to return to the conceptual framework I established in **1.5 *4 stages of spiritual typewriting*** where Mahayana Buddhist syllogistic reasoning can be applied to

each of the "4 stages" to refute the inherent existence of self, and thereby any other phenomena. In contemplating the je/moi or ./. Western logical binary variables, such as p (pee) or q (queue) could replace these dots thereby opening themselves up to the same syllogistic reasoning that Mahayana Buddhist teachings use to first prove the non-existence of the self – then the non–existence of all other phenomena: *p, q* and all the other variables in the universe. According to Mahayana Buddhist Logic all phenomena do not have independent inherent existence, instead existing as mere imputation of name. This perhaps explains why *pee stroke queue* is written out in words rather than as an equation? p|q? In other words, they are just imputed discriminations. This activity of imputation, so inconceivably subtle in our everyday perceptions, is made very obvious when we (the audience) observe two identical looking glasses on the stage and impute *pee* on one and *queue* on the other one. The Zen transmission is immediate. No language is required. There is nothing to say: only to show.

> Ch'an (Zen) and Vajrayana methods, seemingly so different, really have much in common. Both are known as short-path methods on account of their common aim- Enlightenment in this very life. Though their starting points are different, once the realm of conceptual thought is left behind, the paths converge.[112]

If I could end this chapter with an unsayable conclusion, I would simply hold the letter p against a mirror and demonstrate its reflection: q.

Or tip a jar of marbles onto the floor.

Or spill a cup of rice.

Or listen to the sound of dust falling.

[1] Dom Sylvester Houedard, "EYEAR," unpublished manuscript for a talk given at the Royal College of Art, March 2nd 1964 and the Institute of Contemporary Art, May 12th 1964, Private Collection.
[2] Alexandra Munroe, "Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde: Cage Zen, Beat Zen, and Zen," *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989,* ed. Alexandra Munroe (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 208.
[3] Peter Jaeger, *John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 43.
[4] Munroe, "Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde," 208.
[5] Jaeger, *John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics,* 11.
[6] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Between Poetry and Painting Chronology," *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 143.
[7] Dom Sylvester Houédard, postcard to John Cage, 1970, John Cage Archive, Music Library, Northwestern University Library, Northwestern University.
[8] Dom Sylvester Houédard, postcard to John Cage, June 1st 1972, John Cage Archive, Music Library, Northwestern University Library, Northwestern University.
[9] Minna Lederman Daniel (1896 –1995) was a music writer and editor of the magazine *Modern Music* for more than 20 years. *HPSCHD* could be pronounced as an acronym or "Harpsichord", as Cage himself pronounced it. It is a composition for harpsichord and computer-generated sounds by Cage (1912–1992) and Lejaren Hiller (1924–1994). It was written between 1967 and 1969 and was premiered on May 16, 1969, at the Experimental Music Studios at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.
[10] John Cage letter to Minna Lederman Daniel, photocopy of original letter provided by Laura Kuhn, The John Cage Trust. Reprinted in *The Selected Letters of John Cage,* ed. Laura Kuhn (Middletown CT: The University of Wesleyen Press, 2016), 421-422.
[11] The current inaccessibility of Houédard's archives at Prinknash Abbey has prevented me researching Cage's visit to the Abbey. I have not been able to access the correspondence Houédard kept form Cage either.
[12] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "cage/ nega," John Cage Archive, Special Collections and Archives, Olin Library, Wesleyan University.
[13] Dom Sylvester Houédard, postcard to John Cage, undated, John Cage Archive, Music Library, Northwestern University Library, Northwestern University.
[14] Dom Sylvester Houédard, postcard to John Cage, June 27th 1980, John Cage Archive, Music Library, Northwestern University Library, Northwestern University.
[15] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to John Cage, June 27th 1977, John Cage Archive, Music Library, Northwestern University Library, Northwestern University.
[16] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "d-r-a-w-n-i-n-w-a-r-d," *Christian Mysticism* (The Octagon Press: London, 1981), 142.
[17] Charles Cameron, "When I was a very young poet," zenpundit.com, accessed June 29th 2017http://zenpundit.com/?p=18273.
[18] John Cage, "Where do we go from here?," *A Year From Monday: New Lectures and Writings by John Cage,* Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT, 1967, p. x. As cited in "Companion to Cage", *Every Day is a Good Day, The Visual Art of John Cage,* eds. Kathan Brown, Irving Sandler and Jeremy Miller (London: Hayward Publishing, 2010), 62.
[19] Jaeger,*John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics,* 35.
[20] Ibid., 48-9.
[21] Ibid., 34.
[22] Houédard's *book of onomasticons* remains unpublished in the archives of South Street Publications. I borrowed and exhibited a selection of the poems from this manuscript for *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, 2016 and Charles Verey made the decision to "refloat" South Street and publish a pamphlet as a companion-imprint for the exhibition. See *Notes ONE, onos & nonos, an introduction to the book of onomasticons by dsh* (South Street Publications, 2016).
[23] Houédard letter to Alain Arias Misson, October 21st 1968, South Street Publications Archive.
[24] The word "onomasticon" means a vocabulary of names or a list of people. Houédard frequently spelt it as 'onomasti*k*on' to emphasize the *k*inetic in these poemscores [my italics].

[25] To date Charles Verey and the refloated South Street Publications still intend to publish this work.

[26] Charles Verey, "Notes on *the book of onomasticons*", *Notes ONE, onos & nonos, an introduction to the book of onomasticons by dsh* (South Street Publications, 2016), 10-11.

[27] Verey, "Notes on *the book of onomasticons,*" 10.

[28] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to Camilla Gray,May 1st 1968, South Street Publications Archive.

[29] Dom Sylvester Houédard "introductionancestryandchronology," Writers Forum Poets, 15, September 1965.

[30] Agit Mookerjee, *Tantra Art: its Philosophy & Physics* (New Delhi: Ravi Kumar, 1971), 18.

[31] Mookerjee, *Tantra Art,* 16.

[32] Ibid., 16-17.

[33] André Padoux, "Of Images & Beauty," *Tantra Song,* (Los Angeles: siglio, 2011), 10.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to Camilla Gray, May 1st 1968.

[36] Kay Larson, *Where the Heart Beats: John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and the Inner Life of Artist* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 185.

[37] Jaeger, *John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics,* 43.

[38] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "iconophonic portrait of sps j," *book of onomasticons,* South Street Publications Archive.

[39] Dom Sylvester Houédard letter to Camilla Gray, dated 1st May 1968.

[40] For further explanation of the emptiness of persons see Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Tantric Grounds and Paths* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1994), 14 and *Mahamudra Tantra: The Supreme Heart Jewel Nectar* (London: Tharpa Publications, 2005), 130-155.

[41] Dom Sylvester Houédard, letter to John and Astrid Furnival, June 20th 1968, South Street Publications Archive

[42] Ibid.

[43] Munroe, "Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde," 202.

[44] See Fraser Muggeridge's talk on his reprinting of *sun-cheese wheel-ode* at the *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* symposium, South London Gallery, December 4th 2012, Appendix 2.

[45] See the performance and talk "Suncheese and Other No Things" by Nicola Simpson, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN53059R2ys.

[46] D. T Suzuki, *One Hundred Frogs,* ed. Hiroaki Sato (New York: Weatherhill, 1995), 9.

[47] Houédard, *Op and kinkon poems: and some non-kinkon* (London: Writer's Forum, 1965).

[48] Houédard, "concrete poetry & ian hamiltion finlay," 46.

[49] Ibid.

[50] See the many translations of this poem complied in *One Hundred Frogs,* ed. Hiroaki Sato (New York: Weatherhill, 1995).

[51] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "concrete poetry & ian hamilton finlay," *Typographica,* new series no. 8, December 1963. This chapter quotes from its reprinting in *Ceolfrith 15: Dom Sylvester Houédard,* Sunderland: Ceolfrith Arts Centre, 1972: 47.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Houédard, "intro to the catalogue of arlington-une," 1966, reprinted in *Ceolfrith 15: Dom Sylvester Houédard,* (Sunderland: Ceolfrith Arts Centre, 1972), 56.

52 Ibid.

[55] Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 2011), 71.

[56] Houédard, "concrete poetry & ian hamilton finlay," 46.

[57] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *Between Poetry & Painting, A Chronology,* London: ICA, Exhibition Catalogue, 1965, reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012), 143.

[58] Ibid., 147.

[59] Houédard, "parameters & paramitas," *Pages,* issue 1, 1970, reprinted in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017), 133.

[60] Houédard, "concrete poetry & ian hamilton finlay," 47.

[61] D.T Suzuki, "Zen and Haiku," *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 228.

[62] Houedard, "EYEAR."
[63] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *frog pond plop overture and phonate in 3 movements, Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 109.
[64] Houédard, "introductionancestryandchronology," Writers Forum Poets, Fifteen, September 1965, reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 166.
[65] Ibid.
[66] The performers were Nicola Simpson, Sam Epps, Lawrence Bradby, Mark Wilscher, Anna Patterson, Paul MacNeil, Kaavoos Clayton.
[67] Liz Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," October, 95, MIT Press, 2001: 55-89.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Houédard, "parameters & paramitas," 133.
[70] See "Spatial Poems by Shiomi Mieko," July 11th 2013, accessed February 17th 2016, http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/195-spatial-poems-by-shiomi-mieko/media_collection_items/4703.
[71] See Houédard's notes and instructions for the performance of this piece in Fig. 54.
[72] Allen Kaprow, quoted in George J. Leonard, *Into the Light of Things: The Art of the Commonplace from Wordsworth to John Cage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): 189, as cited by Munroe, "Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde": 208.
[73] Irving Sandler, "To Open Our Eyes," *Every Day is a Good Day, The Visual Art of John Cage,* Hayward Publishing, London, 2010, 48. This extract, an account of a 1966 interview Sandler conducted with John Cage, is taken from Sandler's memoir, *A Sweeper-Up After Artists* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003): 254-58.
[74] Jaeger, *John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics,* 26-7.
[75] Ibid., 28-9.
[76] Ibid., 62.
[77] John Cage, "Foreword' and 'Silence", *Silence,* Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, 1961, p. xi and p.23, as cited by Peter Jaeger, *John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 10.
[78] John Cage, "More Satie," in *Musical America,* April 1951. Reproduced in Richard Kostelantez (ed.), *John Cage* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), 93 and here cited in "Companion to Cage," *Every Day is a Good Day, The Visual Art of John Cage* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2010): 56.
[79] John Cage, interview with Jeff Goldberg, in *Soho Weekly News,* 12 September, 1974. As cited in "Companion to Cage," *Every Day is a Good Day, The Visual Art of John Cage* (London: Hayward Publishing, London, 2010): 63.
[80] John Cage, "More Satie," in *Musical America,* April 1951. Reproduced in Richard Kostelantez (ed.), *John Cage,* (London: Allen Lane,1971), 93 and here cited in "Companion to Cage," *Every Day is a Good Day, The Visual Art of John Cage* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2010): 63.
[81] D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism: Third Series,* ed. Christopher Humphreys (New York: Samuel Weiser: 1953, 1971), 83.
[82] Peter Dickenson, *Cage Talk, Dialogues with & about John Cage* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 41.
[83] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *Commentaries on Meister Eckhart Sermons* (Beshara Publications: Roxburgh, 2000), 12.
[84] Mookerjee, *Tantra Art,* 15.
[85] John Blofeld, *The Way of Power: A Practical Guide to the Tantric Mysticism of Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970), 44.
[86] Mookerjee, *Tantra Art,* 17.
[87] Jaeger, *John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics,* 53.
[88] The performers were David Toop, Tansy Spinks, Alastair Brown, Lina Lapelyte, Geoff Howse, Anna Raimondo, Jack Harris, Daichi Yoshikawa, Artur Matamoro Vidal
[89] Larson, *Where the Heart Beats,* 254.
[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 258.
[92] Ibid.
[93] It seems probable that Houédard first met Ben Vautier in 1962, when he participated in an exhibition at Gallery One, run by the poet and art dealer Victor Musgrave. Certainly Vautier and Houedard were corresponding in the mid-1960s. And there is certainly a knowledge of Vautier's work, and an understanding of the zen playfulness, as exemplified in his early fluxus films: *Je me vois rien, Je n'entends rien, Je ne dis rien* (I don't see anything, I can't hear anything, I don't say anything) and *Regardez-moi, cela suffit* (Look at me, it's enough) in Houédard's understanding of Vautier, when he says of *pee stroke queue,* that it "simply *is* it's own statement." In one letter from Houedard, dated 30/07/66, he begins: "bien cher zen". To which Vautier replies, *Ich werde die Wahrheit sagen* (I will speak the Truth). As I have argued so far, *pee stroke queue* is a play that reflects upon how one can know and speak of the truth. Is this statement from Vautier therefore another beginning for the play? Or, alternatively, is the playa reply of sorts to Vautier's letter?
[94] Houédard, "parameters & paramitas," 134.
[95] In June this year I was sent installation images from the Lisson Gallery of the typestracts that they had exhibited in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* Lisson Gallery, New York, 2nd May – 16th June. I have interpreted this work, dated 040367 and with the lexical key "scrupulous objectivity", as stage instructions for two looking glasses facing directly opposite each other.
[96] Houédard, "parameters & paramitas," 134.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Allen Ginsberg, letter to Houédard, March 27th 1963 and sent from Benares, India, John Rylands University Library Manchester Special Collections.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Houedard, "parameters & paramitas," 134.
[101] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "words with zips," October 27th 1971, British Council Recording, British Library Sound Archive.
[102] Dom Sylvester Houedard, "Gaberbocchus," *The Aylesford Review,* v.5, n.3: 113-4.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Lawrence Pedersen, email to Nicola Simpson, dated June 10th 2015.
[106] See http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sheffer's+stroke-accessed May 13th 2015
[107] For the duration of my lunchtime talk with Charles Verey on Dom Sylvester Houédard I staged a performance of Houédard's *pee stroke queue* at the ICA, January 30th 2015.
[108] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* translated by D.F. Pears and B.F McGuinness with an Introduction by Bertrand Russell (London: Routledge, 2001), 23.
[109] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus,* 23.
[110] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus,* 89.
[111] Blofeld, *The Way of Power,* 64.
[112] Ibid., 63.

Chapter 5 mudra

> […] if sound poems are mantras & typestracts yantras these are kinetic extensions of my Nottingham mudra sculptures.[1]

This chapter explores the idea of kinetic extension in Houédard's poemobjects, examining how Houédard's practice - the movement of the paper in the typewriter, the constant readjustment of the rollers, the pressing of the typewriter keys, the realigning of stencils - became a ritual. I consider how he began to view the almost daily ritual at the typewriter as a mudra, an integral part of Tantric methods.

> The aim of Tantric ritual is to heighten forms of human power to their full expression […] To achieve this aim; one utilizes the Tantric *yoga-asanas,* configurations of certain forces and moods. […] The *mudras* (yogic postures and gestures) specifically produce physiological diagrams, which fulfill the same functions as *mantras* and *yantras,* releasing particular forces and energies of the mind.[2]

Writing about mudras, Tibetan scholar Richard Beer states, "in Buddhist terminology the word is mainly used to refer to the hand configurations or gestures that Buddhas and deities make".[3] As previously discussed in *yantra,* the process of constructing each typestract was consciously performative and derived in part from Houédard's knowledge and understanding of Tantric ritual. Therefore *mudra* will discuss how his artistic practice, which foregrounded the yogic in a physiological diagram that included monk, poem and viewer, extended his kinetic Koncrete poems (or "kinkon" as he coined them) into poemmachines, poemsculptures and poemenvironments (some realized, other not). These works moved words from off the typewritten page and into the air. I demonstrate that Houédard used the term mudra not only to articulate his own artistic processes, but also to encompass the increasingly mechanized kinetic calligraphy of the British concrete poetry scene. Mudra becomes a term to express the relationship between the gestures of a monk and his union with his Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter machine and then, by extension, a term to critically frame what the Noigandres group outlined in their *Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry 1958*, as the "cybernetic", the movements, gestures and postures of the "poem as a mechanism".[4] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate in detail the cybernetic context of the poetry machines discussed or explore fully the cybernetic paradigm that, in the words of Cristiana Iuli, shifted "the concept of art" and "the

notion of artwork from object to process, from static to performative, and from closed to open system".[5] Neither is there space to investigate the interactivity of cybernetic art within the framework of interdependent transmission that this thesis presents. Instead the discussion here focuses on how mudras performed by the poet are imitated by the poemmachine or the viewer in performance. This enables mudra to become a critical term with which to look at the gestural in poetry-machines during the process of their making and their later operation by the audience.

The overall structure of this chapter takes the form of three main sections. The first section, **5.1 GLOUP and the gloucestershire machines,** begins with Houédard's role in the establishment of GLOUP, the GLOucesterhire groUP of concrete and kinetic poets and their shared interest in kinetic poetry. Their early "poetry machines" were exhibited at the first concrete poetry exhibitions in Britain. **5.1.i frog-pond-plop as mudra** discusses Houédard's opening poems and his first concrete poems that were not made on the typewriter. It places his well-known work *frog pond plop,* a work he described as a poemmachine, within the context of the kinetic poem as mudra and considers the importance of the audience as a co-creator in manipulating this work into performance. **5.1.ii the poetry machines & the wider concrete** discusses the potential problems that arise when such co-creation between artist and audience, poet and reader becomes an act of over-participation by the audience.

Section two **5.2 Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: the clockword letter** takes a letter Houédard wrote to GLOUP member Kenelm Cox, "instructions for clockword poems", as a pivotal document with which to examine the transmission of ideas between the two artists. In particular I explore Cox's influence in encouraging Houédard's ideas for kinetically extending his concrete poems from beyond the page into landscapes and onto city walls.

The final section **5.3 *Performing No Thingness*** is in six parts and presents my methodological approach of "exhibition as research". This section focuses on my curatorial methodology of presenting archive documents, not as objects but as events that can reveal interdependent relationships and entangled art histories between people and practices in an ongoing Matrix of Transmission. The intention of *Performing No Thingness* was to situate Houédard's conceptual kinetic poems within the context of his close friendships with Ken Cox and Li Yuan-chia, and place unmade, unexhibited and unperformed work by Houédard, alongside the micro-environments of Cox's *5 Elemental Balloons Poem* and Li Yuan-chia's Cosmic Multiples and reliefs. As a redress perhaps to the over-participation in the 1960s, I consider the contemporary curatorial problem of non-participation in works that initially

were moved, touched and played with. This section explores a selection of objects I included in the show and the interdependent and entangled ideas that these objects reveal. For example, the “clockword letter” was a key archive document in the exhibition and **5.3.ii** presents my research into how this letter also played a key and previously unknown role in shaping the work students from the Royal College of Art made for Houédard’s *Visual Poetries Exhibition* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1971.

5.1 GLOUP and the gloucestershire machines

> In 1963, at The New Inn in Gloucester, the Benedictine monk Dom Sylvester Houédard (dsh) first met the artist John Furnival. In a small back room, serendipitously named 'The Monk's Retreat', they discussed the phenomenon of concrete poetry and how they might publish it.[6]

As John Furnival was to tell the art critic Elizabeth Glazebrook a few years later, in an oft repeated anecdote, "I was surprised to receive a letter one day in 1962 from a monk I didn't know asking me if I was concrete".[7]

Furnival, a draughtsman at the time, aligned the inclusion of words in his work to that of pop art rather than concrete, David Hockney rather than the Noigandres, yet the meeting with Houédard was to change everything.

> Over the course of their conversation, they initiated their publishing collaboration Openings Press, effectively starting the Gloucestershire concrete poetry scene, subsequently known as GLOUP (GLOucesterhire groUP of concrete and kinetic poets).[8]

Surprisingly "GLOUP" was a term not coined at the time by Houédard, but later, by Jonathon Williams, for "the literary nucleus of Kineticists and Concretists in the Cotswolds".[9] Alongside Furnival and Houédard,

> GLOUP'S other main figure was Ken Cox, who had returned with his wife and children to the village of Kingscot from London in 1960. Kingscot, and Rooksmoor House in Woodchester – the home of John and Astrid Furnival – became important meeting places for artists and poets such as Charles Verey, Thomas A Clark and Neil Mills, as well as others from further afield.[10]

If GLOUP had been initiated from an informal conversation in a pub between Furnival and Houédard, it continued in the "untidy, friendly" home of the Furnivals', perhaps whilst playing a game or two of ping-pong on the bright green table that dominated their living roomor around the kitchen table strewn with the daily detritus left by the small children of the Cox family.[11] Ken Cox's own practice did not initially include language but he was, however, moving away from the flat canvas of a landscape painter into a more sculptural concern with "lowrelief and kinetic-lowrelief".[12] As Elizabeth Glazebrook states, in the only recorded interview with Cox, "[t]he possibilities of kinetic poetry dawned on Ken Cox quite late in life".[13] Cox explained to Glazebrook how he came to sculpture through poetry, and concrete poetry in particular, initiated, as with Furnival through a meeting with Houédard: "And it was an extraordinary break, due to meeting poets who were interested in Concrete – initially Sylvester and through him lots of other people".[14]

Initially a focus for poets and artists of the region, GLOUP soon attracted the interest of the London avant-garde. As Cox reflected:

> I have discovered that it only requires a small group of people, perhaps five, working, to make a considerable impact in the visual arts […] Looking back, DSH, Furnival and myself, have made some sort of impact on the national scene, and even on the international.[15]

This impact on the national and later international scene came through a series of exhibitions in which they participated: the *First International Exhibition of Concrete & Kinetic Poetry* at Cambridge University in 1964, the *Second International Exhibition of Experimental Poetry* at St Catherine's College, Oxford in June 1965, *Between Poetry and Painting* at the ICA in November 1965 and *Arlington-Une*[16], organised by the GLOUP poets themselves and held at Arlington Mill, in the grounds of the family estate of the Verey family, near Cirencester in 1966 (Fig. 61).

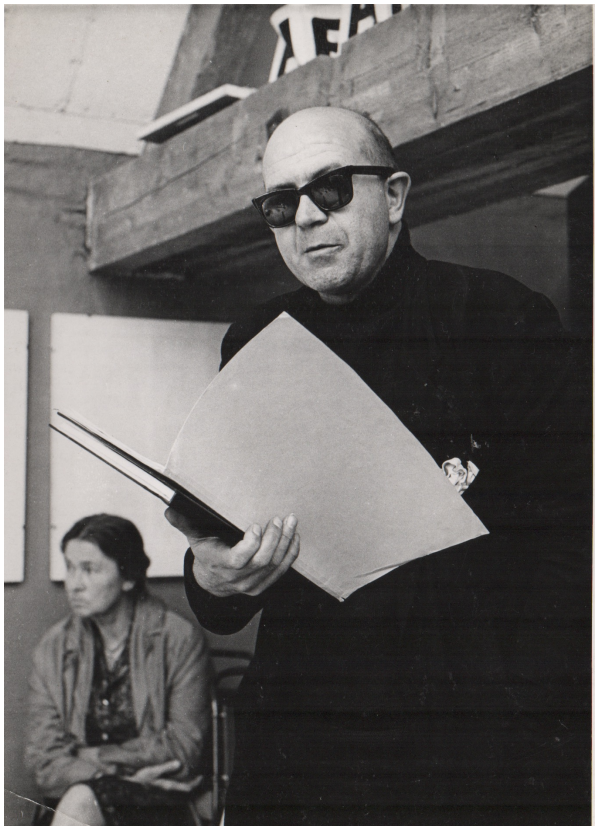


Fig. 61 Dom Sylvester Houédard performing at Arlington-Une, 1966. Image courtesy of Hayden Murphy.

The Cox family home in particular was a centre for the avant-garde. As Margot Cox, daughter of Ken Cox, remembers, she and her brother and sisters, would creep downstairs to see who was keeping their Dad awake and talking into the small hours; David Medalla, the

hippie ingénues of the Exploding Galaxy and on one occasion Yoko Ono and John Lennon.[17] "Dom Sylvester" was always in the centre of this activity, needing a lift from the monastery, sitting in the front seat of the car, opening up his battered leather briefcase crammed with typestracts to find his cigarettes, requesting a light and putting on his black sunglasses, whatever the weather.

From their very first meeting, Furnival and Houédard had indentified a shared need to foreground the kinetic. Houédard confirmed:

> Gloucestershire machines seem to have begun w/ the need Furnival & I felt in 1963 for poem objects in which words wld move thru the air […] he created his labelpoems & priestholes – I did a series of unfolding poems deriving from munaris foldingsculpture & rots bok 56-9 *& my own movement of paper in the typewriter* [my italics].[18]

If, as discussed in *yantra,* the early poems of the international concrete poetry movement had been created by the eye, traversing the constellations and collages of letters on the page or through the inter-relationships of letters and words from the turning of the page itself, in artist's books, then the physicality of words and reader was soon incorporated into work as a visible structural device. As early as his 1964 essay "Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay", Houédard had emphasised that concrete poetry, with its "relation of new typography & new poetry", was to be considered "in new kinetic/ spatial dimensions of art today […] Like cybernetics: the poem as self-regulating machine".[19] The background of "pure concrete" was, for Houédard, from the outset, one of "interart invasions, interpenetrations, coexistentialisms, mutual time-space interventions" of "motorised painting & sculptures, mobile frescoes, sculptures sonores, pyromagnétiques, hydrauliques".[20] As E.M. de Melo e Castro declared, "If something prevails in this new creative world, it is the notion of the space and the machine as extensions of the sense, limbs and the scope of human action. It is therefore a cybernetic machine and a humanist machine".[21]

For Houédard the poem-machine as a humanist extension of the limbs and the action of the poet could potentially extend the scope of the human action of contemplation. He envisaged a machine that could maintain the action of "right mind-minding" continually,

> That man, made in the image of God, should be able to make self-centered machines in the image of man is not alarming, even if they happen to destroy us. That man should make altruistic machines in the image of God, able to maintain perpetual […] awareness of God through perpetual awareness of their own emptiness, and able through the virtue of humility, to practice the perfections of charity – that would be very alarming indeed.[22]

Houédard's speculation here is intriguing and the extent to which his own poetry-machines perform their own emptiness is examined in the next section.

5.1.i frog-pond-plop as mudra

> I did a series of unfolding poems deriving from munaris foldingsculpture & rots bok 56-9 **& my own movement of paper in the typewriter** [23]

As discussed in *yantra,* Houédard engaged with the depiction of three-dimensionality as he constructed his geometrical typestracts, using the space of the page itself as a structural agent in the composition. But the repetitive manoeuvring of the paper in the typewriter, necessary to achieve these works, was not itself part of the viewer's experience. The words were only moving "thru the air" at the stage of making, not in the act of reading. For a complete co-existential creation between poet and reader, the reader had to manipulate the work when holding the page in their own hands in order to move this new physiognomic typography closer to a cybernetic poem.

> Concrete poem: dynamic structures –exist in tension between poem-object & space-time: motorised semantic-poetry not around yet but concrete *is* mobile, kinetic-spatial, by its typographic life.[24]

In 1963 Houédard had not yet met Cox and could only hypothesize about a future "motorised semantic-poetry", therefore he began to work on a series of "unfolding poems", literally folding the page into a three-dimensional graphic space.[25] In *frog pond plop*, as discussed in chapter *mantra* the page is no longer a flat surface to be looked at. It is folded and manipulated by the reader. The page now turns through the space of "the cosmos in which it moves".[26] To locate the precise way this work inhabits the shared "space-time spatial-kinetic concern of all forward-moving art", he references Bruno Munari's "folding sculptures" and we can "unfold" many of the Italian artist's work that may have influenced Houédard, not just the travel sculptures. We are put in mind of Munari's 1950s *Unreadable Books, Useless Machines* and the photographs and subsequent book *Supplemento al Dizionario Italiano* (1958), on how to understand and "read" common Italian hand-gestures. Similarly, a passing reference to Dieter Roth puts the Swiss artist's radical book experiments of the period 1958-64 at the forefront of influence. Containing no text, narrative, images, logical sequence or binding, these books are utterly dependent on the reader's actions, particularly the movement of their hands. With Munari and Roth in his mind, Houédard, with Furnival's assistance, "went on to kineticise *frog pond plop"* through a dependence entirely on hand-gestures.[27]

But how can this unfolding poem fit with the definition of a "machine" beyond its reliance on the energy of the human body (hands and fingers in particular) to operate its parts? Houédard situates his unfolding poems, in the context of machine poems and poetry

machines, in his essay "Between Poetry and Painting". He states, "the art critic's duty is to help create the syntax semantics and pragmatics of the signs communicating aesthetic information – to help create the game rules".[28] Houédard is creating the game rules by which his kinetic poems may be understood, just as he did with his visual poems and yantras. In the "the wider concrete", Houédard references Furnival's *Babacus,* poemmachine with visible letter blocks, rods, handles, in the same breath as his *frog pond plop* poem. Similarly, with Cox's *Shadow Box* or *Letter Board,* there are electric motors and driving trains in evidence, an obvious "poetrymachine". But with *frog pond plop*, as discussed in chapter *mantra,* there is only a piece of square paper, folded neatly inwards to form the fortune-teller. *frog pond plop* is not an apparatus using mechanical power, yet, in the sense that a machine is a device that transmits a force or directs its application, it is a machine. The centrality of the hand gesture in the composition of this unfolding poem, and Houédard's "own movement of paper in the typewriter" through to "origami", is paramount to an understanding of this piece. Houédard, as critic, in "Between Poetry and Painting" writes:

> […] the poet can compose an abstract nonsemantic/ nonfigurative semiotic poetry which will become the exact centre where ikon and logos identify […] I designed 2 of these for the Cambridge kinkon (Ist international kinetic concrete) EXPO – these were conceived as poem gestures or mudras […].[29]

The force of the reader's own hand movements to connect the words in *frog pond plop* together but this time the words are covered and uncovered, repeatedly coming into being. The viewer is repeatedly re/co-creating, learning the rules imposed by Houédard, "The semiotic poet as language designer makes new signs (visible audible audiovisual) and also makes syntactical and semantic rules to the new signs".[30]

The syntax and order of the words can be disrupted from frog-pond-plop to frog-plop-pond or plop-pond-plop etc, but the game is finite. The game rules of opening and closing the origami fortune-teller only enable a few possible combinations even allowing for the unfolding of the blank page behind each letter.

5.1.ii the poetry machines & the wider concrete

In his 1965 article "the wider concrete" Houédard, by his own admission, is helping to "FRAME THE RULES" by which the "gloucestershire machines" made by GLOUP members Loncraine, Cox, Furnival and Houédard himself, are to be received and understood. These "semiotic poetry machines" are "extremely significant British contributions to world concrete", one of "two most notable recent extensions of concrete", the other being the "brazillian [*sic*] semiotic manifesto".[31]

This is an ambitious statement to make about these works, as too is the intentionality of the artists and the projected effect on the audience: "the audience/viewer is to USE these signs & turn them into a language & help human race live together". He continues, "the ultimate function of every painting or poem is then to help turn human race into critics & co-creators – to help create human language – to help society grasp the ch'i or spirituality of materialism". This expectation, wish, prayer perhaps, for "poetry/ painting" to "be seen as a language –as a worldview – as a way to live together" is as much a reflection of Houédard's own "wider ecumenicalism" (there is no coincidence in the title) as any group statement from GLOUP.[32]

The first public reception of these works, at the *Second International Exhibition of Concrete, Kinetic & Experimental Poetry,* is telling. On the evening of the 10th June, the night before the "Wholly Communion" at the Albert Hall, potent with similar visionary intentionality, these "gloucestershire machines" were vandalised. In an article by John Furnival, "The Oxford Exhibition"*,* published in the same magazine in which Houédard's article appeared, the details of this destruction are given:

> Oxford hit back: during the night of June 10, vandals broke up ken cox's kinetic poem, richard loncraines flippoemmachine and john furnival's two kinetic poems, sending part of the devil trap floating down stream and scattering the small blocks of his abacus in a field…[33]

In concluding his review of the exhibition, Furnival emphasises his dismay: "but it is disheartening to think that we have not yet escaped the age in which the latest work of the avant-garde brings out the active fury of those who see it." Houédard (maybe because his work was not selected for defacement) is more sanguine, naming the perpetrators as "drunk" "undergraduates" rather than "fascists", who "only" damaged the "gloucestershire machines".[34]

Whether the show "was a fair success" or "the most exciting and inspired project to have hit oxford for years"[35], the significant point is that Houédard contextualised this work

and outlined how it was to be used by the co-creator. He is very clear. Participation in this post-Wittgenstein language game is prescribed by the "rules imposed by the artist". The audience must learn the "lexical keys supplied" by this artist. In the case of John Furnival and his *Babacus* this obviously does not mean broadcasting the small letter blocks across a field. Houédard calls on the "audience/ viewer" to also help "FRAME THE RULES". He quotes the painter Jasper Johns: "the MEANING of the painting is what YOU do w/it",[36] but this is problematic. Is the 'MEANING" of Furnival's *Devil Trap* then to float in the midsummer waters of the River Cherwell? Unmistakably, that is certainly what the "YOU" of a small cohort of undergraduates from St Catherine's College did with it.

Such an open invitation therefore becomes problematic and ambiguous. What better way to respond to Houédard's incitement to "grasp the ch'i or spirituality of materialism" than to throw a work of art entitled *Devil Trap* into the nearest river? After all, it is not incongruent to dispose of any incumbent demons caught within it, in a similar way to the mediaeval drowning of a witch. Similarly, to raze an abacus of Babel to the ground is surely an instruction implicit in its own sculptural metaphor.

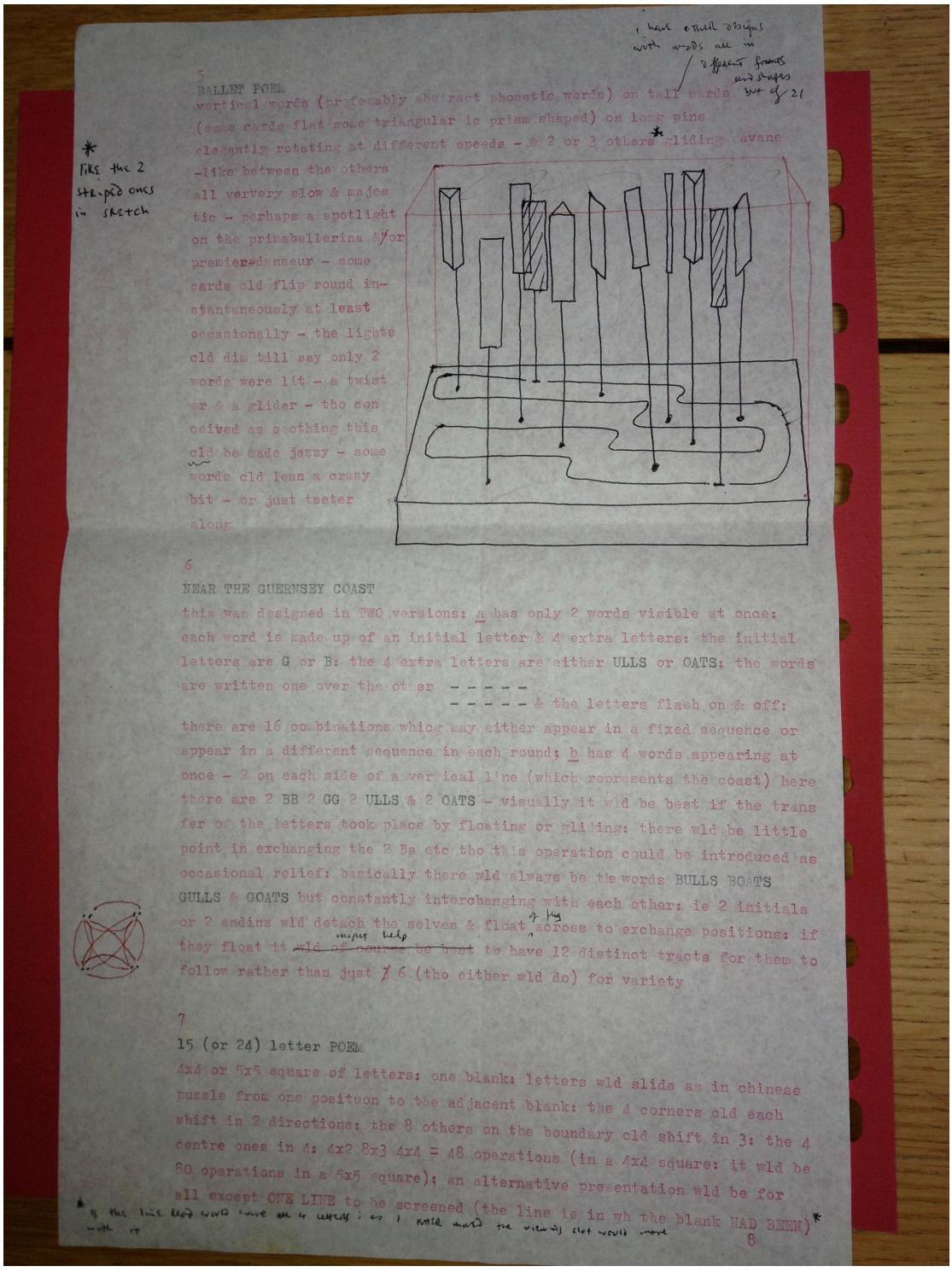
It would be surprising if Houédard were not aware of the inherent irony in his article. He certainly would be aware of the ambiguity of advocating receptivity to ch'i: the breath, the life force, the flow of energy of the world and any prescriptiveness to delimit this spontaneity and openness. As someone well versed in the mind of Zen Buddhism it would be equally surprising if he did not see a koan-like absurdity in the response of the undergraduates to these poemmachines placed in an exhibition space in the Junior Common Room at St Catherine's College. Although concentrating on three exhibitions which openly invited audience participation, Hilary Throe in "'Everything Was Getting Smashed': Three Case Studies of Play and Participation, 1965–71" discusses this very issue of "over-participation".[37] Throe's research is focused on events where the participation had clearly delineated temporal and spatial restraints, but it is nevertheless worth considering in relation to the undergraduates' action in Oxford and Houédard's subsequent and problematizing attempt to "FRAME THE RULES". In discussing Robert Morris's exhibition at the Tate in 1971, Throe notes the discrepancy between the artist's intentions for

> […] the exhibition to incite a sedate, even 'ruminative' form of visitor play. Days before the opening Morris made a short 16 mm film of the installation featuring three visitors, a nude woman and two clothed men, whose slow, meditative actions present the exhibition as an idealized arena of quiet phenomenological self-discovery.[38]

and the reality of what one critic "described politely as 'exceptionally exuberant or energetic participation' and the *Daily Express* more salaciously termed a 'five-day orgy of destruction'".[39] So five days after opening, a plethora of injuries and the complete destruction of most of the parts, Tate closed the exhibition. I am not, of course, suggesting that in Oxford "all the poems were blown up by the british fascists",[40] only that it is very problematic to trust that the audience will help "FRAME THE RULES" in a way sympathetic to Houédard's intention.

5.2 Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: the clockword letter

Houédard states that in 1964, alongside the unfolding poems he was making, "I do 28 machine projects".[41] When I first began my research there was no evidence of these poetry machines. There are no installation photographs from the *First International Exhibition of Concrete & Kinetic Poetry* held at Cambridge University in 1964, the *Second International Exhibition of Experimental Poetry* at St Catherine's College, Oxford in June 1965 or *Between Poetry and Painting* at the ICA in November 1965, and there was no suggestion that beyond his unfolding poems, Houédard had made poetrymachines. The first evidence of what these "28 machine projects" might be came to light in 2012, when I was preparing *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* pop-up exhibition at the South London Gallery. The archive of Ken Cox, in trust with the family, was being made available to researchers for the first time in nearly fifty years and William Allen, one of the trustees of the archive, informed me of a letter Houédard has written to Cox, in which he gives instructions for twenty-one "clockword poems" (Figs. 61, 62 and 63). [42]



5

BALLET POEM

vertical words (preferably abstract phonetic words) on tall cards (some cards flat some triangular ie prism shaped) on long pins elegantly rotating at different speeds - & 2 or 3 others* gliding avant-like between the others all ververy slow & majestic - perhaps a spotlight on the primaballerina &/or premierdanseur - some cards cld flip round instantaneously at least occasionally - the lights cld dim till say only 2 words were lit - a twist er & a glider - tho conceived as soothing this cld be made jazzy - some words cld lean a crazy bit - or just teeter along

* like the 2 striped ones in sketch

6

NEAR THE GUERNSEY COAST

this was designed in TWO versions: a has only 2 words visible at once: each word is made up of an initial letter & 4 extra letters: the initial letters are G or B: the 4 extra letters are either ULLS or OATS: the words are written one over the other - - - - -
- - - - - & the letters flash on & off: there are 16 combinations which may either appear in a fixed sequence or appear in a different sequence in each round; b has 4 words appearing at once - 2 on each side of a vertical line (which represents the coast) here there are 2 BB 2 GG 2 ULLS & 2 OATS - visually it wld be best if the transfer of the letters took place by floating or gliding: there wld be little point in exchanging the 2 Bs etc tho this operation could be introduced as occasional relief: basically there wld always be the words BULLS BOATS GULLS & GOATS but constantly interchanging with each other: ie 2 initials or 2 endins wld detach themselves & float across to exchange positions: if they float it ~~wld of course be best~~ might help to have 12 distinct tracts for them to follow rather than just 6 (tho either wld do) for variety

7

15 (or 24) letter POEM

4x4 or 5x5 square of letters: one blank: letters wld slide as in chinese puzzle from one posituon to the adjacent blank: the 4 corners cld each shift in 2 directions: the 8 others on the boundary cld shift in 3: the 4 centre ones in 4: 4x2 8x3 4x4 = 48 operations (in a 4x4 square: it wld be 80 operations in a 5x5 square); an alternative presentation wld be for all except ONE LINE to be screened (the line ie in wh the blank HAD BEEN)*

* the line each word have all 4 letters; as I think would the viewing slot would move with it

8

Fig. 61 Page 8 of the “clockword letter” from Houédard to Kenelm Cox, 29th April 1966, Ken Cox Estate, Author’s image.

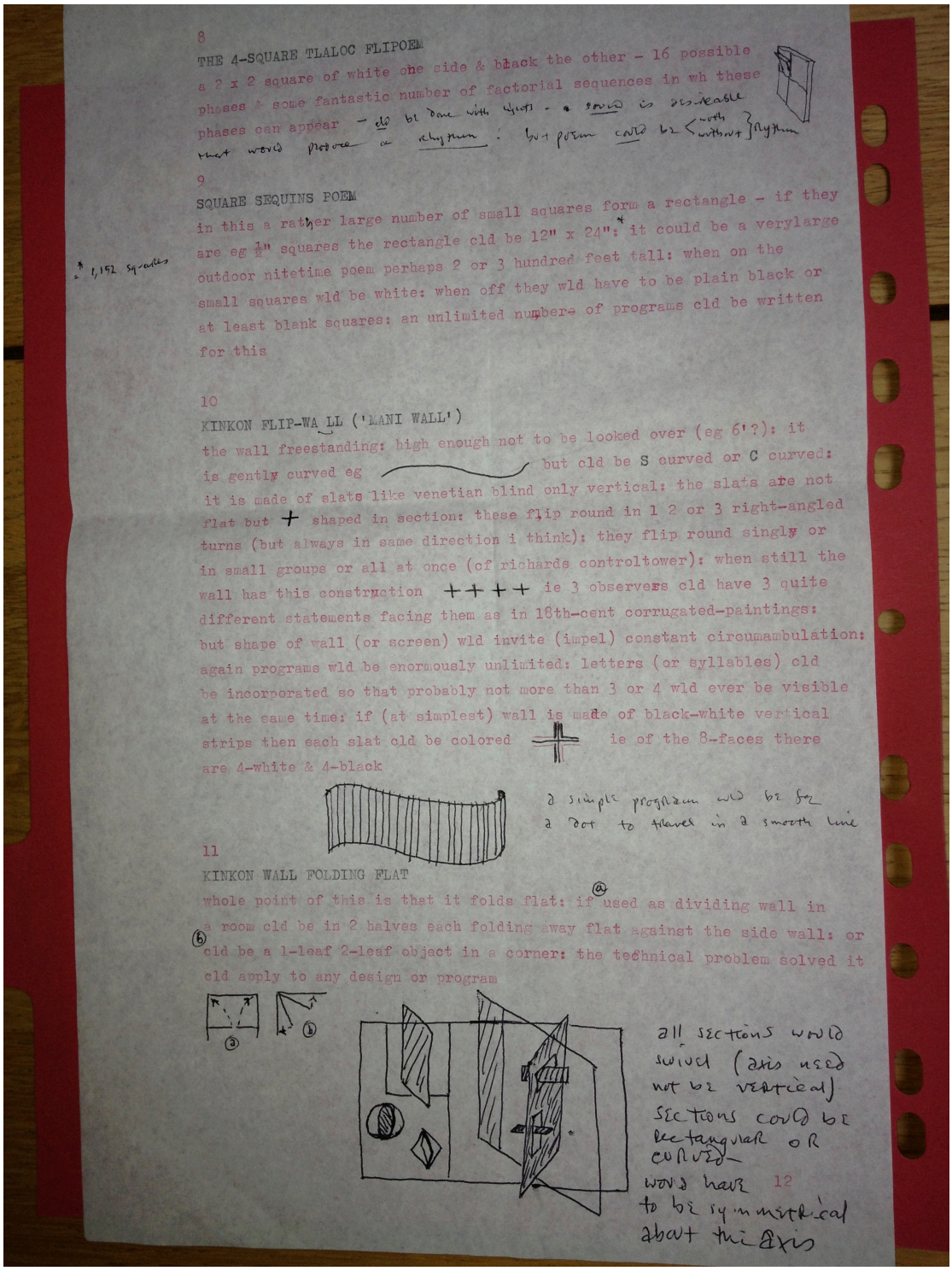


Fig. 62 Page 12 of the “clockword letter” from Houédard to Kenelm Cox, 29th April 1966, Ken Cox Estate. Author’s image.

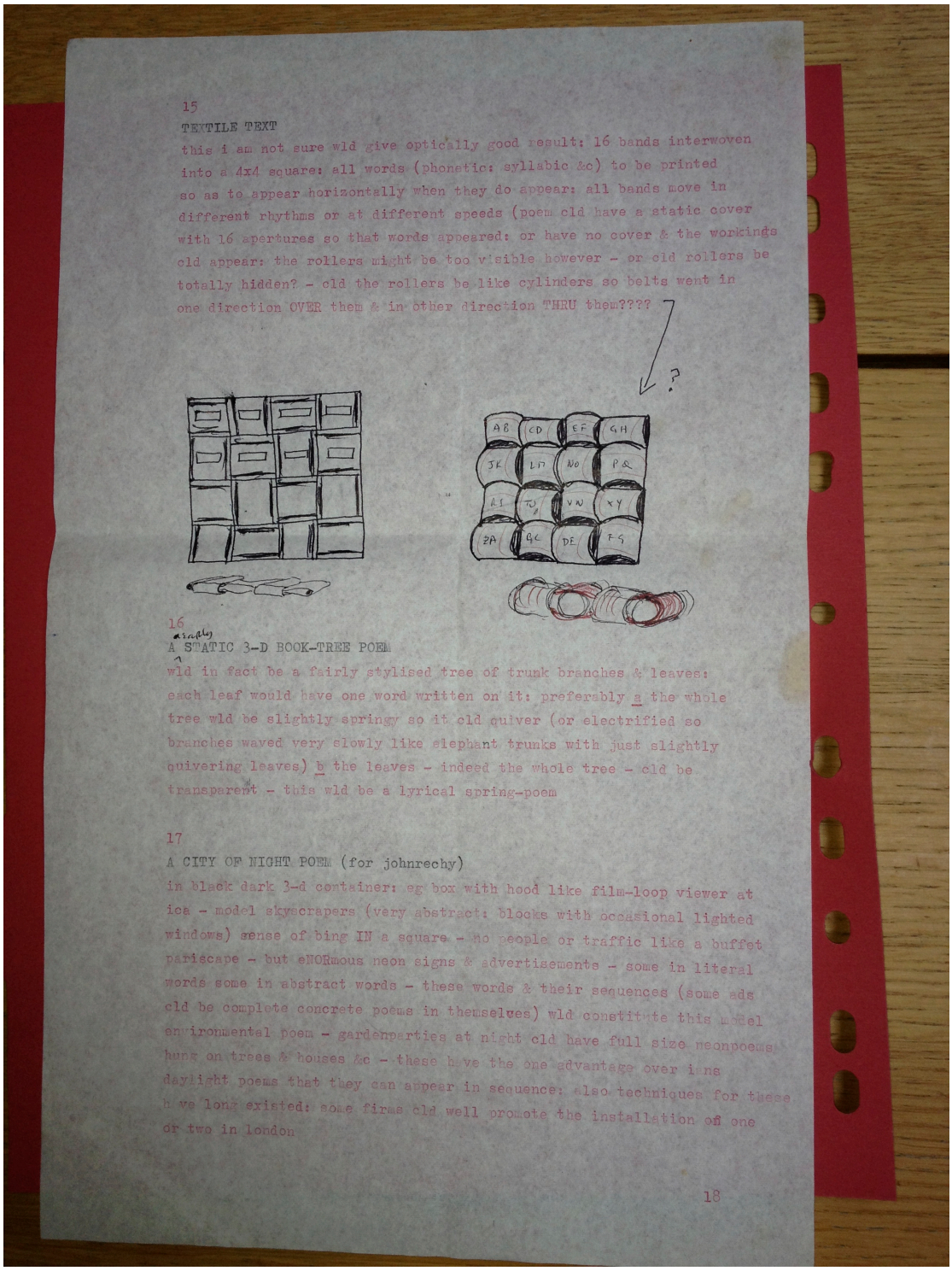


Fig. 63 Page 18 of the “clockword letter” from Houédard to Kenelm Cox, 29th April 1966, Ken Cox Estate. Author’s image.

The letter, dated 29th April 1966, runs to several pages, typed in red ink, with black and red biro sketches by Houédard drafting out how he thought some of his poems might look. It is not surprising that these ideas were sent to Cox. As de Melo e Castro noted, "Ken Cox was an art teacher. He was a poet. He was a sculptor. That is what they say. But Ken Cox had been constructing cybernetic machines since 1963. This was his real occupation".[43]



Fig. 64 William Allen demonstrating *mind trip* at The Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter Symposium, South London Gallery, 2012. Image courtesy of Christopher Daniels.

In actuality, in spite of a list of these twenty or so poems, Cox only ever made one of Houédard's intended machine projects and that was not even included in the letter. *mind trip* is the most significant sculpture known to have survived from the 1960s by the Benedictine monk (Fig. 64). This sculpture was rediscovered in the Ken Cox Estate, at the same time as the clockword letter in 2012. Made by Cox in his studio, the work consists of a series of painted wooden panels, each with a single stencilled letter, which are connected by a nylon tape pulley system. When the top board is rotated 180 degrees all of the other boards flip to their reverse so that the words "mind" and "trip" become interchangeable, creating a type of Jacob's ladder. The top board has bolts and a metal insert that would have originally connected to a rotating mechanical device.

Perhaps surprisingly, considering the detail of the sketches and ideas for the other poemsculptures that can be found in the clockword letter, I haven't found any preliminary

thoughts or sketches for *mind trip*. However there are hints at the thoughts behind the construction of *mind trip,* in Houédard's memorial essay for Ken Cox, "The Singing of Feeling":

> […] the model of the Jacob-ziggurat constructed on the principle of a well known toy & using the text mind trip/mind trap – here of course the form was largely given by the construction & the materials were limited by its functioning […].[44]

Houédard then indicates that the artists once had further ambitions for this piece, perhaps on the scale of Cox's own work, *The Three Graces*, where the words "Beauty", "Passion" and "Love" floated thirty foot high out at sea, a little way from Brighton Beach:[45]

> […] On one of the most memorable drives I had back from London with ken we discussed the possibility of building the trip-trap on a huge scale – 100 feet high on a glostershire hill- perhaps phosphorescent – but ideally seen making its great serene clapping noises against the storm flash & gale of wild mud & night [...].[46]

Although written in Houédard's characteristic be-bop beat style, the scale of this vision, a concrete poem reaching over one hundred feet high, is attributable to Cox rather than Houédard. *mind trip* is the only surviving work from what Houédard called the "tantric-staircases series"[47] and, while it is not on the same scale as *The Three Graces*, it still stands as the largest surviving sculptural work by Houédard. The rest of the series were lost "en route to the stedlijk museum" in 1968.[48] As a "tantric staircase," the work animates the spiritual ladders that characterise so many of the typestracts, as discussed in chapter *yantra.* The letters m, i, n and d flip over to the letters t, r, i and p downwards, continually, but they cannot be made to reverse and flip upwards. There can be no ascent upwards on this staircase and as such the "trip" is very clearly one-way: to the centre of the mind.

I can only speculate that the reason Cox did not manage to make more of Houédard's poemmachines was due to the time restraints placed upon him by his teaching job, being a father to four young children and making time for his own work and, not least, his premature and tragic death in the winter of 1968.

> Ken and I were able to share work & problems very closely – but Ken had too this immense sense of craftsmanship plus of course an access to materials & to the possibility of creating workshops at kingscot hardly possible at Prinknash & for this reason he was very keen on doing something with my early mechanical poem projects tho for me a poem will only incarnate itself willingly while it is in fieri – in the actual making & as it was difficult to get often to his studios their rather fluid & permissive openness made it difficult for more than one ever to get done […][49]

In particular Cox discusses using words as material and, in his words, the "difficult

problem" of unifying the "broad spectrum" of what we would now refer to as the "inter-mediality" of the rapidly developing international concrete poetry movement.

> It is a question of coming to terms with words and refurbishing my education in this direction and feeling confident about using certain materials. In this area there are certain individuals who are conscious of the sort of things that must happen – to bring together a unity in such a broad spectrum is a very difficult problem. I remember when talking to Ian [Ian Hamilton Finlay] about this he said 'Well, of course, we should all have been apprenticed to shipyards and jewellers' – we should have done a 30-year apprenticeship.[50]

The words of Finlay, remembered by Cox, capture the very real problem poets had in suddenly confronting their own short-comings in terms of training in printmaking, screen-printing, letterset, welding, sewing, soldering… if their ideas for visual, aural and kinetic poems were to be realized. Houédard continually had a problem in getting things made.

Cox continues, "We all have our blank areas, as it were, and I think we are quite conscious of this. In the case of Sylvester he moved in the direction of Concrete poetry from being a historian, scholar – and his sense of form is sometimes deficient".[51] Cox makes a very important point: Houédard had had no formal art training and aside from the sketch books full of watercolour paintings which he did in the 1950s, did not practice any sort of draughtmanship, drawing or making. The monk emphasized there were no workshops at Prinknash Abbey, no access to materials, no possibility of getting things done. Houédard's machines had to be primarily made out of what was to hand - folded paper and the typewriter - or they had to exist in the mind.

A consideration of the transmission of ideas between Cox and Houédard in the making of *mind trip* gets us closer to what Houédard might have envisaged when he attributed the word mudra to his own poems, because he uses the word to describe the work of Cox too. Reflecting on Cox's poetry machines, he wrote that they are "parts & extensions of himself: they are gestures […] they are mudras that constitute the communication of dancer & contemplative of the east".[52]

Houédard's use of the word is very much in keeping with its Sanskrit origins. Mudra is a term originating in Hindu classical dance for the stylized and symbolic hand and finger gestures used by the dancer. These *hastamudras* form a consistent and separate coded language to the other parts of the dance, such as the facial expressions or the movement of the feet, and, as such, these ritual hand gestures form a prominent part of the dancer's vocabulary. The ambition for the meaning of these mudras is extensive, for it is believed that so vast are the subtleties expressed in the hand gestures of hasta that the vastness of what being human entails, and perhaps even what the entire universe contains, might be expressed by the dancer.[53]

It is from this etymological beginning in the performing arts and the ritualised performance of Hindu dance that the word mudra came also to mean the hand gestures made by the different Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, as depicted in the Buddhist iconography of statues and Tanka paintings: the gesture of meditation, the gesture of teaching, the gesture of perfection, the gesture of giving, for example. One explanation as to why Houédard chose to appropriate the Sanskrit term mudra can be found in Cox's words to Elizabeth Glazebrook:

> The task I set myself was to bring some kind of unity between movement as such & the meaning or hints of something that are buried in the words I choose to use – it is also important to me to have the materials themselves expressive of the whole thing so that at every stage one had to consider the movement the materials the form & all the time try to tie them together in a close way.[54]

In the unity of movement, materials and form, the words of Cox here serve as an apt description for a mudra, this symbolic ritual gesture of the hands (or even the whole body) employed in the iconography and spiritual practices of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Cox's poetry machines can be considered "extensions of himself" in that they are a calligraphic gesture, mechanized and motorized, and unified with the kinetics of the words themselves.

> In Chinese writing one of the things which most impresses me is the sense of continuity for thousands of years. That there is no easily seen division between a calligrapher and a poet and a graphic artist – no recognized distinction is appropriate to our situation in Concrete field.[55]

The method practices of the ancient Chinese poet and the awareness and control of his hands, as they shape and form the calligram are extended by Cox through space and time in the cyclic motion of his poetry clocks or the elliptical movement of a sculpture like *Suncycle* (Fig. 65) as it turns first clockwise then counterclockwise in the breezes and currents that surround it. The hand gestures of the artist become the mechanical motions of his poems. Cox continues, "the importance they attach to calligraphy – that this comes first as the greatest art form, and then afterwards one's ability as a poet which is almost taken as a matter of course".[56] It's the repetition of this gesture, and its symbolic, mainly cyclic movement that ritualizes it into a sacred mudra. As Houédard states, Cox found "the balance between self & nonself & very much in the line of taoist Mahayana tantric & shamanic art".[57]



Fig. 65 Ken Cox with his work *Suncycle,* Image available at https://www.lissongallery.com/50years/suncycle

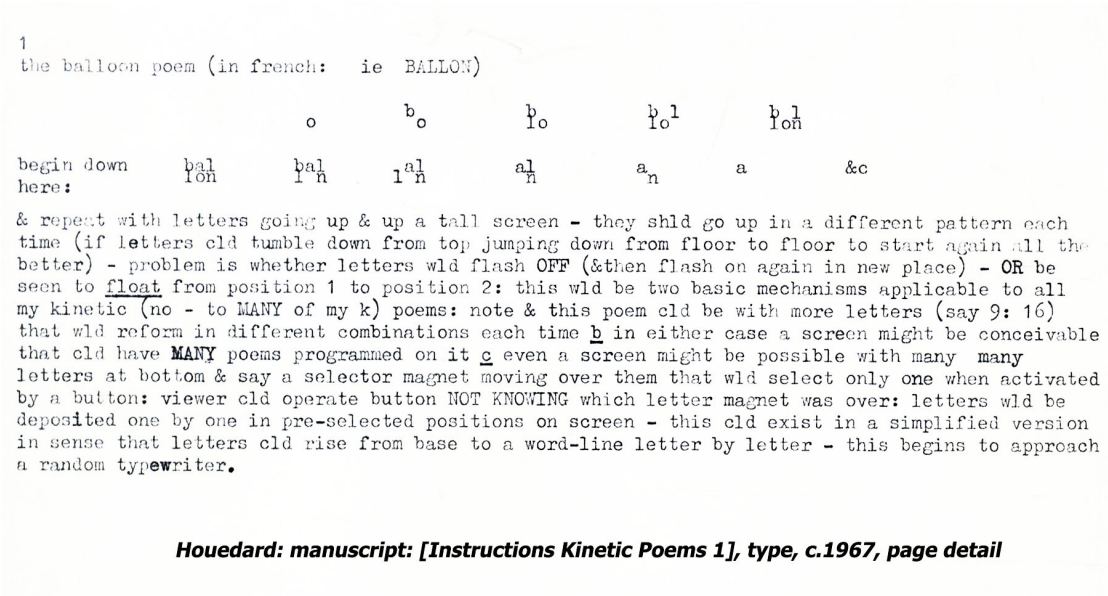
5.3 *Performing No Thingness*

> kens delight however I think released more by his investigations into poemsculpture languages that create their own environment (even if only a microclimate)[58]

It was these ideas about how a poemsculpture, a poemmachine or a poemmudra can create their own environment that I had in mind when I began formulating an exhibition thesis for a show that would become *Performing No Thingness.* My intention for the exhibition was to not only evidence the scholarly research I had done so far in locating the archive documents that could foreground the friendship between Houédard and Cox but also select works that would demonstrate both artists' investigations into poemscultpture languages that create their own environment, and in doing so enact a contemplative gesture – mudra. The work of Houédard, Yuan-chia and Cox had not been exhibited together since group shows at the Lisson Gallery in the 1960s and, in reconnecting their work in the same space for the first time in almost fifty years, I wanted to show their shared interest in Kinetic Art, language and Eastern thought. It is beyond the scope of any exhibition to deconstruct and investigate the many concepts that artists have meant by the terms *void, nothing* and *emptiness.* However it was the intention of this exhibition to revisit the ways in which the concept of nothingness informs the kinetic in Houédard, Cox and Li Yuan-chia, showing works that demonstrated each artist's interest in how the art object is dependent on performance to come into being.

As the critic Jonathan Stalling writes, unlike "Western philosophy and metaphysics, largely grounded in ontological 'being' not 'nothingness, the conceptual frameworks of the Mahayana Zen and Vajrayana Buddhisms and Daoism do not make use of the concept of 'nothing'. Instead the primary philosophical argument is the rejection of the very category of 'somethingness (and therefore its binary supplement). They each aim at 'emptying' all 'somethings' of their assumed autonomous 'thingness' through admitting some degree of contingency".[59] In other words, all objects have no inherent autonomous existence. They exist through a mere imputation of name on constantly changing dependently-related phenomena. All phenomena lack self-nature or a findable autonomous essence but are contingent – dependent upon their causes and conditions. I wanted the exhibition to engage with historical Western art criticism and the curation of 'the void' (or nothing or emptiness) which has invariably presented it as no more than a conceptual supplement to the somethingness of the calligraphic mark/ typed letter/ performative gesture. The exhibition presented instead an argument for dependent origination as the phenomenological

underpinning of a new interrogation of objectivity, suggesting that it is this very refutation of the inherently existent object, and the resultant emphasis on the dependence of all phenomena on each other, that led to the dependence on "other", the viewer, the participant, the audience, in each of these artists' work. The exhibition foregrounded this thesis's argument of a complicated Matrix of Interdependent Transmission of an alternative phenomenological insight, which can be found in the artwork, group exhibitions, performances, letters and conversations of these artists.



1
the balloon poem (in french: ie BALLON)

o b o b lo b lo l b lon l

begin down here: bal lon bal l n al l n al n a n a &c

& repeat with letters going up & up a tall screen - they shld go up in a different pattern each time (if letters cld tumble down from top jumping down from floor to floor to start again all the better) - problem is whether letters wld flash OFF (&then flash on again in new place) - OR be seen to float from position 1 to position 2: this wld be two basic mechanisms applicable to all my kinetic (no - to MANY of my k) poems: note & this poem cld be with more letters (say 9: 16) that wld reform in different combinations each time b in either case a screen might be conceivable that cld have MANY poems programmed on it c even a screen might be possible with many many letters at bottom & say a selector magnet moving over them that wld select only one when activated by a button: viewer cld operate button NOT KNOWING which letter magnet was over: letters wld be deposited one by one in pre-selected positions on screen - this cld exist in a simplified version in sense that letters cld rise from base to a word-line letter by letter - this begins to approach a random typewriter.

Houedard: manuscript: [Instructions Kinetic Poems 1], type, c.1967, page detail

Fig. 66 "the balloon poem", Image courtesy of Ruth and Marvin Sackner archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

5.3.i balloons

The exhibition began with the clockword letter, as an event from which the dependent origination of Houédard's kinetic poems and Cox's own poemsculpture environments could be located. The first instructions in the letter for kinetic poems are for a *balloon poem* (Fig. 66). Houédard chooses to kineticise the original French word *ballon*, not the English word "balloon". In these instructions Houédard was seeking a mechanical solution from Cox which would allow each individual letter of the word ballon to rise and rise, mimicking the motion of a balloon filled with gas or air, before tumbling back down to earth and beginning their ascent again. The letters would move simultaneously in a way that "begins to approach a random typewriter". Houédard hoped that Cox, looking at this letter full of instructions for machine poems, with his knowledge of "clockword [clockwork] & acutronics &c […] could see which are the obviously more realisable ones and those which would cost $1m and the resources of Cape Canaveral".[60] However this poem was never

motorised or made into a gloucester-machine. This was a good thing, for it is hard to see how the letters could have achieved the graceful combinations and positions they do on the typescript. What is interesting, though, is Houédard's inclusion of the viewer and the element of chance: with 720 possible combinations of the six letters in *ballon*. It has the sense of permutational possibility implicit in Houédard's *onomastikons* (as discussed in chapter *mantra)* and in *the ramon llull creative memory machine* (see below) yet also the typographical elegance of a spatialist constellation. The viewer is placed in the position of the poet at his typewriter, performing the action of composing a poem. The viewer performs the mudra of the *ballon* poem.



Fig. 67 Installation photograph of *5 Elemental Balloons Poem*, Ken Cox, *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016. Author's image.

Ken Cox's own balloons were made the following year, in 1967 (Fig. 67). Given the title *5 Elemental Balloons Poems*, these brightly coloured rip-stop nylon balloons, slowly and continually inflate with warm air, rotating around and around in a perpetual motion. The white balloon named "BRIGHT ENVELOPE" for air, the red one, "FIRE", the green balloon, "OCEAN", the blue balloon "heaven" and the orange balloon, "EARTH". Cox himself elaborates on the choice of colours:

> Different colours based on a Chinese concept of the four elements plus heaven. In one of these canons of symbolism, there are five colours. Red for fire, yellow for earth, green for eater, blue for heaven and white for air. So I am having five balloons in these colours and there will be little poems, elemental arrangements of words, suggestive of the five elements, silkscreened onto those, and should be seen as a group.[61]

These balloons were first exhibited in 1968 at Cox's solo exhibition at the Lisson gallery but there had been a precedent for this work a year before in the hundred glowing tissue paper balloons he had sent floating across the Falmouth estuary one night during the International Festival of Concrete Poetry.

> The first balloons were paper and then I switched to nylon. My wife machines them. Swells up with air, revolves, reflector light in it. By closing slits – can change it. I can make them smaller and issue them as a multiple – sort of sculptural lights. Beautiful at night.[62]

The words on Cox's balloons are screen printed onto the nylon. They obviously spin around when the balloons are inflated, but they are deliberately placed. On the orange balloon, for example, the word earth is repeated without a space, forming an equatorial circumference of letters that suggest the word earth, but also heart, hearth and the art: EARTHEARTHEARTH… (Fig. 68).



Fig. 68 Installation photograph of “EARTH”, *5 Elemental Balloons Poem*, Ken Cox, *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016.

The green balloon has a similar latitudinal line of language, but this time the word ocean is repeated in a vertical formation to suggest a longitudinal line of watery depth too (Fig. 69). Therefore on this balloon each O, C, E, A and N appears to float on their own individual geographical coordinate.



Fig. 69 Installation photograph of "OCEAN", *5 Elemental Balloons Poem,* Ken Cox, *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016.

It is the red balloon, Fire that seems closest to the kinetic constellations of Houédard's instructional poems (Fig. 70). On one of the six panels, of which each balloon is constructed, the word fire is playfully deconstructed into ire and re and fir and individual letters that suggest the erratic movements of flames and sparks. The word has a movement, suggesting the gaseous nature of fire, far lighter, quicker and unpredictable than the liquidity of the ocean or the solidity of the earth.



Fig. 70 Installation photograph of "FIRE", *5 Elemental Balloon Poem*, Ken Cox, *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016.

The white balloon has just two words on it, equidistant apart, "BRIGHT' and "ENVELOPE". An enveloping luminosity is suggested, perhaps the move towards the spiritual clarity of the blue balloon, heaven. There is nothing written on this balloon: a non-linguistic and perhaps non-conceptual clarity and cognition of Nirvana. I am not suggesting that Houédard's *ballon* poem is anything other than an indirect influence on Cox's later *5 Elemental Balloons Poem* and it is certainly the latter's work that most successfully achieves the aim of the GLOUP poets to "move language thru air". The Art Critic Elizabeth Glazebrook, writing about the balloons, commented:

> His five balloon sculptures – man-sized balloons made of spinnaker cloth with a few words silkscreened on to them – light up, swell with air and revolve on their turntables in a slow corpulent dance. They earned a characteristic tribute from Houédard in his catalogue introduction to Cox's recent exhibition. "They are", he wrote, "the nearest thing so far to the rocket poems I am still looking for".[63]

There is however another one of Houédard's posterpoems, *areearthsseastears*, which may also be a typographical influence on both Cox's orange balloon poem "EARTH" and his green balloon "OCEAN" (Fig. 71). In Houédard's poem a phrase is cut up and rearranged on each line to make both interrogative statements; are earths seas tears (?) and declarative statements; earths tears are seas. But the continuum of language to create a straight coastline (lines 1 and 7) containing a wavy sea (lines 2,3,4,5 and 6) resembles the straight equatorial line of "EARTH" on Cox's orange balloon poem and the wavy circumnavigation of "OCEAN" on the green balloon.

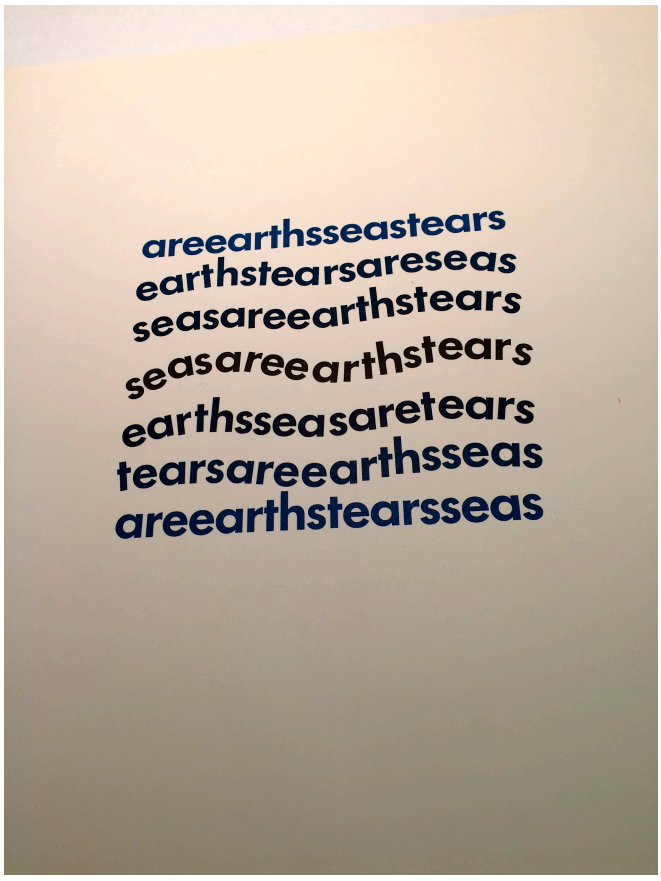


Fig. 71 "areearthsseastears", Poster Poem, Dom Sylvester Houédard, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, Author's image.

They should be seen as a group in order to perform their own no thingness too, as the arrangement of these elements, within Chinese cosmology, demonstrates the inter-dependence of all phenomena on each other. All things are dependent on other things to come into existence. What made Cox's works so unique in the context of British Concrete Poetry was the experimentation with programmed kinetic sculpture and his visions for this sculpture to integrate into the landscape. Like Li, whom he met in 1966, Cox, initially a landscape painter, was interested in creating installations that place the audience into the centre of the piece. Cox envisioned:

> sometimes I have had the feeling that some of the huge blank walls which glower at us in the cities are screaming out for concrete poems in very big letters and making the most beautiful pattern of light and shade in abstract terms.[64]

Cox seemed to have further plans for his balloon poems. Alongside the poemsculpture I exhibited a letter that Cox wrote to Nicholas Logsdail at the Lisson Gallery, inviting him to

> imagine 300 balloons – or 3000 for that matter – hell they're cheap enough & I expect we could do a small reduction for quantity – set out in
> large courtyard, perhaps
> of a chateau
> or
> a big space roofed by a dome and with a gallery
> high up
> St Pauls? The roundhouse?
> The balloons are different colours – they're programmed – a kind of kinetic painting ambience sculpture: from above – a painting – from below – walking about in it – a sculptural environmental maze –
> Waves of colour would sweep across the fields, flow, spiral, burst, chase,
> Anything
> henri chopin would do the sound.[65]

As de Melo e Castro was to reflect:

> The most important works by Ken Cox reveal, therefore, a sense of collective communication and of a thorough participation of the work of art in everyday life.[66]



Fig. 72 Ken Cox, Sketch for *5 Elemental Balloons Poem*, Ken Cox Archive, Installation Photograph *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016.

5.3.ii Polaroid Poem

The clockword letter is a pivotal archive document in locating the interdependent transmission of ideas that enabled Houédard's poems to become poemobjects. My research into the coming into being of two more poemmachines; *Polaroid Poem* and *the ramon llull creative memory machine* exemplifies this further.

In the autumn of 2015 William Allen showed me a letter, a few documents and a number of photographs that had recently come into his possession relating to Houédard's 1971 Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition *Visual Poetries*, which, aside from the exhibition catalogue, had left little archive material behind.[67] One document was significant in that it included a comprehensive list of the typestracts and "kinkon" that had featured in the show, along with the names of the four artists from the Royal Academy of Arts who had made poemobjects for Houédard's exhibition, Malcolm Winter, the Graphic Design tutor there, and three of his students, Barry Jackson, Douglas Wilson and Ivan Bullock.



Fig. 73 Barry Jackson's "Polaroid Poem", Installation photograph from *Visual Poetries* exhibition, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1971. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

One piece was of particular interest, *Polaroid Poem*, described as an "illuminated box accompanied by a pair of sunglasses''.[68] The description seemed to relate to a work I had just seen in amongst the installation photographs of the exhibition (Fig. 73). As I have outlined, this thesis intends to provide a critical framework with which to interrogate

Houédard's understanding and practice of Zen and Tantric Buddhism as artistic methodology. One re-occurring motive in his work is that of the empty box, which I argue is a conceptual notion that can transmit non- conceptual Buddhist teachings on emptiness and dependent related phenomena. (See **1.6** ***4 stages of spiritual typewriting****).* This work appeared to fit neatly into this argument, literally an empty box, filled only with light, with an invitation to the audience member to put on a pair of sunglasses (like the iconic pair Houédard was frequently photographed wearing) and inhabit the co-creative space of the poem. I began to hypothesise that this poem was a self-less portrait, moon-pointing to the emptiness of persons.

However, when I got in contact with Barry Jackson this was not an interpretation that particularly resonated with how he remembered things from when he was a young student in 1971. Over lunch at the Whitechapel he began to tell be about the circumstances of making the work:

> I started studying Graphic Design at Hornsea College and one of the things that excited me about design was typography […] it was only when I went to the Royal College in 1970 […] we used to get projects come into the department at the Royal College and they would get offered up and this [dsh at V & A] was a project that came in, it was an exhibition that I think was going to be at the V & A […] all I knew about it was that I recognized this name dsh – so I said "yeah" – I'll have a go at that […].[69]

And any other ideas I had about a spiritual transmission between monk and student over the work, quickly evaporated too…

> I don't have a memory of whether we met Houédard. I would expect that if I had met him I would have remembered the meeting – my guess is I didn't meet him. I do have a memory of seeing the work on show. […] at that time the Royal College was at the back of the V & A. We had a private door to the museum.[70]

Jackson could not be certain that he had actually met Houédard. This non-meeting is clarified in a letter Houédard wrote to Guy Brett about the upcoming Visual Poetries exhibition, in which Brett was to write the catalogue essay:

> […] catalogue very much better than I had anticipated – I only hope the show comes off well – this last minute changing of decisions is so nerve piercing – the changing of the season then of the month then of the day – refusing any new works that hadn't been in the 50 frames on tour after promising the london end wld be augmented then relenting & allowing at the last moment extra 3-d things – & then less than a month to get things made – & that old old letter to ken cox mentioning some ideas back in 1966 suddenly sent to the RCA etc so these ideas could be realized – spent two days in London at V & A hoping to see the students working on them but saw no one – I had been asked on their day-off – in what sense I shall be able to call them 'mine' I cant begin to think.[71]

So, despite Houédard hanging around the V & A for two days, he never met the students or got a chance to discuss the project with them. What this letter also gives is the prompt for the work the RCA students made, "that old old letter to ken cox mentioning some ideas", which evidence indicates is the thirteen-page clockword letter.

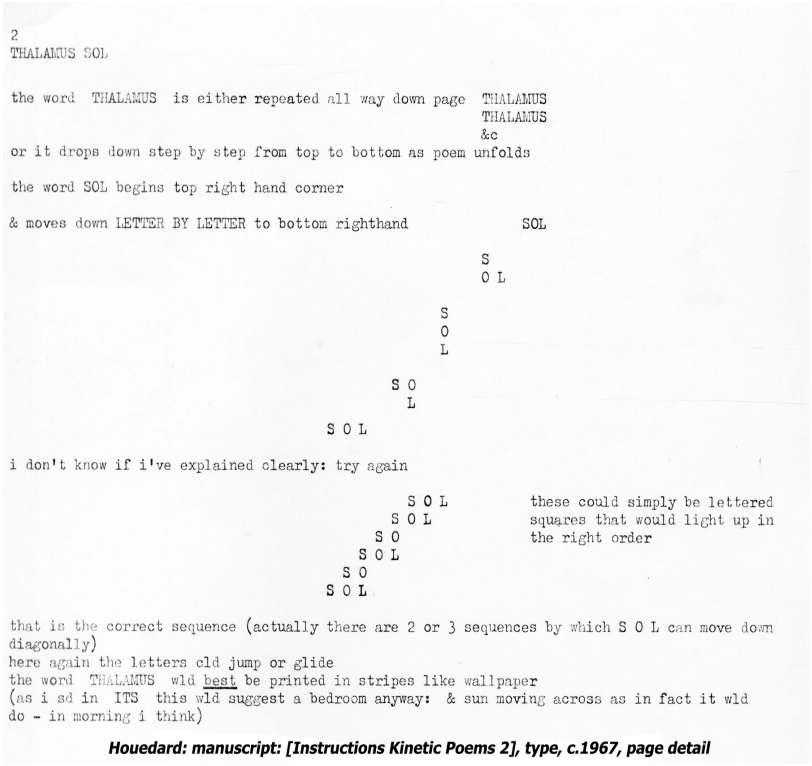
So which text from "the old old letter" had Jackson used as starting point for his *Polaroid Poem*?

> I had been playing around with Polaroid film & filters. Essentially Polaroid film will cut out all the light rays except those that are aligned in a certain direction […]
> One of the weird things is that cellophane – ordinary cellophane is partially polarizing – so if you look at a sheet of cellophane – with light coming through the cellophane with a pair of Polaroid glasses – it has a colour […] as you turn the orientation of the cellophane the colour changes. So I had been messing around at the time with a self-portrait built upon layers of Polaroid film: each segment at a different orientation and therefore a different colour.[72]

This conformed my initial intuition that a self-portrait did form the basis of the work, but it was Jackson's, not Houédard's. Does this matter in a piece that potentially may be interpreted about the inter-dependence of persons? These experiments with Polaroid film informed Jackson's choice of text.

> In front of the light box I had the word 'SOL' in different sizes, each letter cut out of Polaroid film, and orientated at a different angle to appear a different colour – coming down to a big central O. Which kind of makes sense when you put the sunglasses on - you see the word SOL.
> It was a coming together of the word SOL & my experiments at the time with polarizing film and messing about with a light box.[73]

This is the "SOL" text from the Ken Cox letter (Fig. 74).



2
THALAMUS SOL

the word THALAMUS is either repeated all way down page THALAMUS
THALAMUS
&c
or it drops down step by step from top to bottom as poem unfolds

the word SOL begins top right hand corner

& moves down LETTER BY LETTER to bottom righthand SOL

S
O L

S
O
L

S O
L

S O L

i don't know if i've explained clearly: try again

S O L
S O L
S O
S O L
S O
S O L

these could simply be lettered
squares that would light up in
the right order

that is the correct sequence (actually there are 2 or 3 sequences by which S O L can move down diagonally)
here again the letters cld jump or glide
the word THALAMUS wld best be printed in stripes like wallpaper
(as i sd in ITS this wld suggest a bedroom anyway: & sun moving across as in fact it wld do - in morning i think)

Houedard: manuscript: [Instructions Kinetic Poems 2], type, c.1967, page detail

Fig. 74 “Thalmus Sol” poem. Image courtesy of Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

In fact this text of Houédard’s goes back two years earlier to a version made in 1964, when he used it on a Christmas Card, later exhibited in Cambridge in 1964 and one of the unfolding poems as discussed above (Fig. 75). In a letter to the artist Franciszka Themersen, Houédard refers to this poem and sends her his explanation of “Kinkon” and “Thalamus Sol”:

> This poem is concrete as it exists on paper but it is designed to be kinetic – to move as well. So in the example, the word Thalamus could be stationary and the word sol move through it. That is, the poem would just be the eleven letters – three of them S O & L, moving from right to left.
>
> OR.
>
> The Thalamus could be stationary and repeated as in a concrete fashion. The letters SOL would then appear and disappear one by one so the word SOL alternatively vertical and horizontal would move step by step in a diagonal line. The poem is Latin. Thalamus is bridegroom. Sol is Sun. The sun is shining through the room. It is also moving from East to West and the space created the shape of the letter ‘O’.[74]

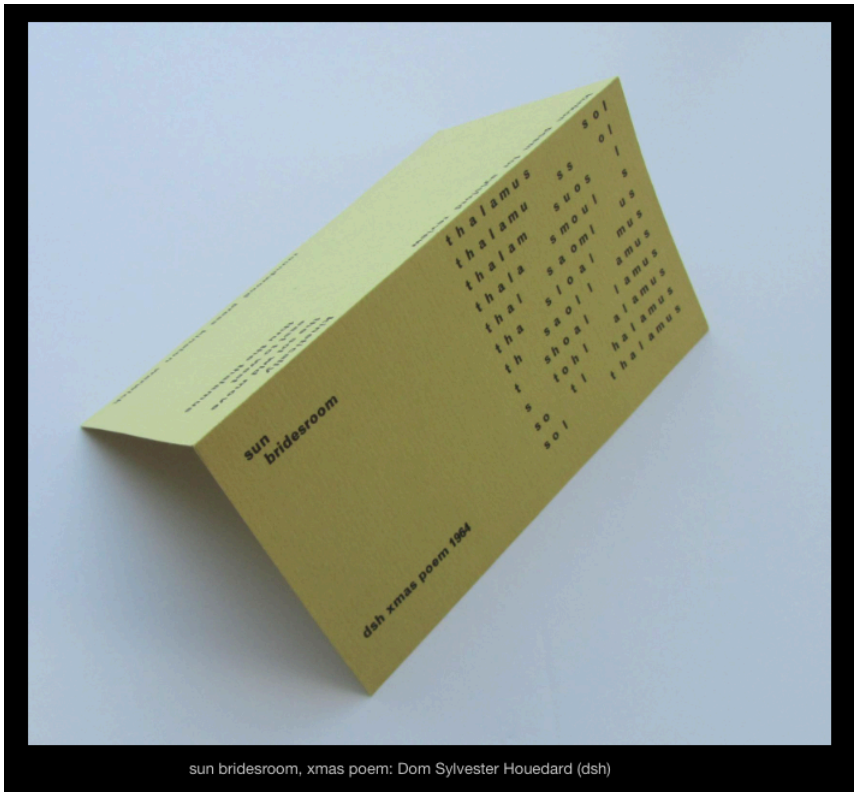
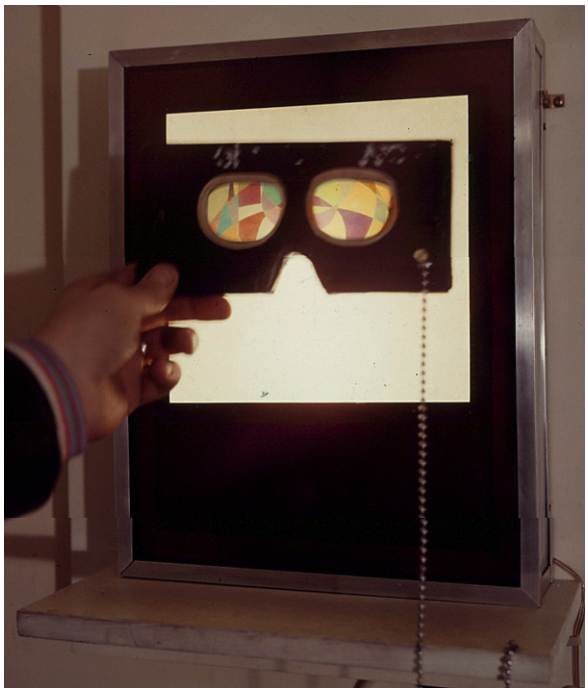


Fig. 75 *sun bridesroom,* published by Roundwood Press, Warwick, 1964. 148 x 81 mm (folded). Folding card printed black on yellow. A 'kinkon poem for *Aylesford Review'*.
Verso reads: 'kinetically/the sol wld move/ east to west / thru the thalamus', with recto concrete poem showing the 'sol' moving through 'thalamus.' Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

When I met Jackson he could only describe what it was like to see the multi-coloured word "SOL" through the sunglasses. He had recalled that he had had a few surviving slides of the work but, apologizing, he thought that they had all been damaged. They had been stored in his garage and even if he could locate them, he was pretty sure they were damp and covered in mould. That is how we left it until in June 2017 I unexpectedly got an email with the attachments reproduced here as Figs. 76 and 77. Jackson had not only found the slides but had managed to restore them and scan them for me. The word "SOL", just as Jackson had described it, is visible in different sizes coming down to that big central "O".





Figs. 76 and Fig. 77 Original slide of “Polaroid Poem”. Images courtesy of Barry Jackson.

Although Jackson’s poem is still far more of a “free interpretation” than I had originally envisaged, the act of putting on Polaroid glasses, I would argue, is still a gesture, a posture, a mudra that puts the viewer in the same co-existential and ecumenical space as Houédard. By donning glasses, we do not see a light filled empty box, as I had originally guessed, but instead the invisible is transformed into the visible: the three letters S, O and L overlapping in a psychedelic typography that centres on the ënso of the letter O. Again, though there

was a non-meeting between Jackson and Houédard, there is still a tangible transmission of ideas from Houédard's first sketch for the work, through to its development into a folding poem for the Cambridge Exhibition, to its final realization as a three-dimensional interactive poemobject, *Polaroid Poem*.

5.3.iii the ramon llull creative memory machine



Fig. 78 Installation shot from *Visual Poetries* Exhibition, Victoria and Albert Museum 1971. Image courtesy of William Allen Word & Image.

Another photograph of Houédard's *Visual Poetries* exhibition which was of particular interest in locating any possible poetrymachines was the black and white image of three fruit machines (See Fig. 78). In a recording from The Cambridge Poetry Festival, 1971,[75] the same year as the photograph was taken, Houédard, in his distinctive theatrical tones of received pronunciation introduces one performance as follows: "These are some of the 8000 three-word Haiku that are possible on the *raymond llull creative memory machine"*.[76] He then begins to recite the following words, "slow snow pattern…fear flesh sea…". Bob Cobbing's idiosyncratic deeper resonances then continue the poem, "slow grass night…naked crack oracle…" before Houédard responds with "electric truth pattern…mind truth skin", an alternation of voices between monk and sound poet.[77] What was the *ramon llull creative memory machine* and did it link to the photograph? The connection comes from a talk Houédard gave, "words with zips", recorded at the same 1971 poetry festival:

> When the Victoria & Albert managed to get hold of a fruit machine for me – to adapt it – it was inevitable I should dedicate it to the blessed Ramon. He was a Catholic, A poet, a Sufi & a Franciscan Tertiary.[78]

In “words with zips” he also confirms that the origins for the machine went back to the clockword letter:

> The blessed Ramon Llull Fruit Machine- this began with some ideas that went with my earliest permutation poems. Among the various ways for mechanizing them that I suggested to Ken Cox, the simplest was a series of concentric discs with words showing in the slot aperture. It could have either been plugged in or operated manually.[79]

He continues, “Then I discovered the blessed Ramon Llull had devised a number of similar machines for the combination of ideas.”[80]

In June 2017 I also managed to make contact with Douglas Wilson, the second of the three RCA students to be involved with the Houédard’s *Visual Poetries* exhibition project. He confirmed his participation and explained that he was the student who replaced each of the fruits on Houédard’s fruit-machine piece, the *ramon llull creative memory machine*, sharing his own photograph of the fruit machines as evidence (Fig. 79). He elaborated that these three specially adapted fruit machines worked as follows. On two of the fruit machines, each revolving disc had, instead of a fruit, a syllable made up of two letters. When the lever was pulled and the discs sent spinning they would finally settle on a new three-syllable word. On the third machine, each revolving disc had on it a monosyllabic word – like moon or sea or sky. When the lever was pulled down and the discs had finished spinning a new jackpot three-word haiku would be formed. It is from this machine that the recording of some of the 8000 three-word haikus is made. As well as the recording of Bob Cobbing and Houédard reading out of some of the possible three words haikus made by pulling the lever of one machine, there is also another untitled performance where Houédard and Cobbing perform a poem that is made up of the syllables generated by another machines which spun around the possible combinations and permutations of letters found in the name “blessed ramon lull”.[81]



Fig. 79 Installation shot from *Visual Poetries* Exhibition, Victoria and Albert Museum 1971. Image courtesy of Douglas Wilson.

As far as I am aware these poetrymachines only ever existed for the duration of the 1971 V & A exhibition and their operation was completely dependent upon the viewer pulling the lever of the fruit machine, enacting a repetitious mudra to create a poem.
Houédard, in "words with zips", further explains the intended outcome of this process, stating that "[…] the practice of meditating on combinations of letters was before Llull, an exclusively Jewish phenomenon & had been developed in the Spanish Kabbala- which detects in the sacred alphabet the entire universe & all the names of God". A comment to which he adds, "actually this sort of Alphabet meditation, that produces a sort of visual poetry, is possibly older than the Kabbala, since it forms part of normal Tantric practice, both Buddhist & Hindu, as well as being used outside the Tantra, in Tibet & India".[82]

The repetitive action of pulling the lever of the fruit machine to generate combinations of either three-syllable words or three-word poems places the viewer/ participant at the centre of the event, in a coexistential relationship with the poetry machine. A physiological diagram of the visual alphabet meditation exists only momentarily for the duration of the event, as one combination is replaced by another.

5.3.iv reflections & reversals

> when poems stopped doing things to you & slipped off the page in space so you cld do things to them […] Some read down up or palindrome why not upside-down **deus/snap** […] it had taoist insight.[83]

If time and funding had permitted I would have loved to build a replica of *the ramon llull creative memory machine* for the exhibition *Performing No Thingness*, and present a curatorial narrative that could situate the permutational possibilities of the *onomastikons* alongside a performative mudra with which the audience could physically engage. The fruit machine exemplifies effectively how the participant not only provides his "own mind-gum-syntax", but also a body-gum-syntax too, as it is only through performative mudra that the yantra or mantra are created. The gestures of the body, the cogs of the machine and "the mind cogs" all interlock cohesively to create the poem.[84]

Displaying the poetry machines, kinetic poemobjects and poetry environments is a problem in contemporary curatorial practice. As previously stated I intended the transmission of ideas between Houédard and Cox to be communicated through the archive objects and the *5 Elemental Balloons Poem*. Due to their age and fragility Cox's balloons could only be switched on for three fifteen-minute periods each day. Any audience for this performance had to plan their attendance at the gallery, or they would only see the deflated balloons. How would Cox have responded to only have had the balloons inflated with air for such a short period of time? Would he have even permitted them to be presented in this way? In the question and answer session I held in East gallery, after my talk "sun-cheese and other no-things" and the performance with the Cox family of *sun-cheese wheel-ode*, there was a general discussion about this curatorial conundrum of exhibiting moving sculptures which, for multiple reasons (including conservation issues and insurance purposes), could no longer be permitted to move. Margaret Cox, Ken's elderly widow asked to speak, and holding the microphone, announced to the gallery "Ken would have HATED this…" She elaborated. In her opinion Cox would have disliked a gallery setting where the audience was not permitted to move in and amongst the *5 Elemental Balloons Poem*, It was an environment. The deliberately chosen vibrant rip-stock nylon was to be touched, smoothed by fingers. It may lack Cox's grander vision of 300 balloons at the Roundhouse but it was, nonetheless, a sculpture requiring the tactile participation of the audience.

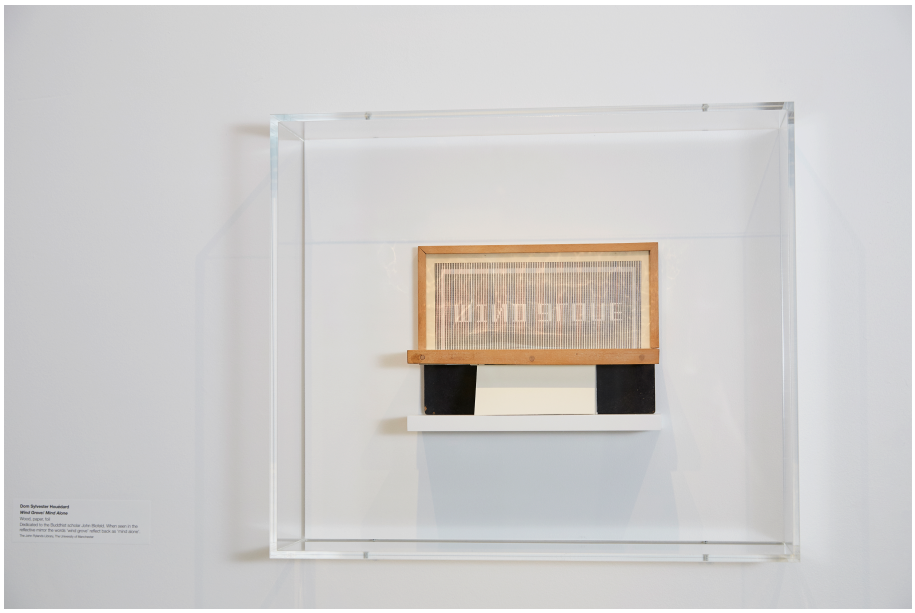
In his talk "words with zips", Houédard referenced concrete poetry exhibitions where words are "calligraphed, taped & pinned to museum walls – displayed in these holy glass boxes"[85] rather than allowed to be played with and used like toys and games. In discussion

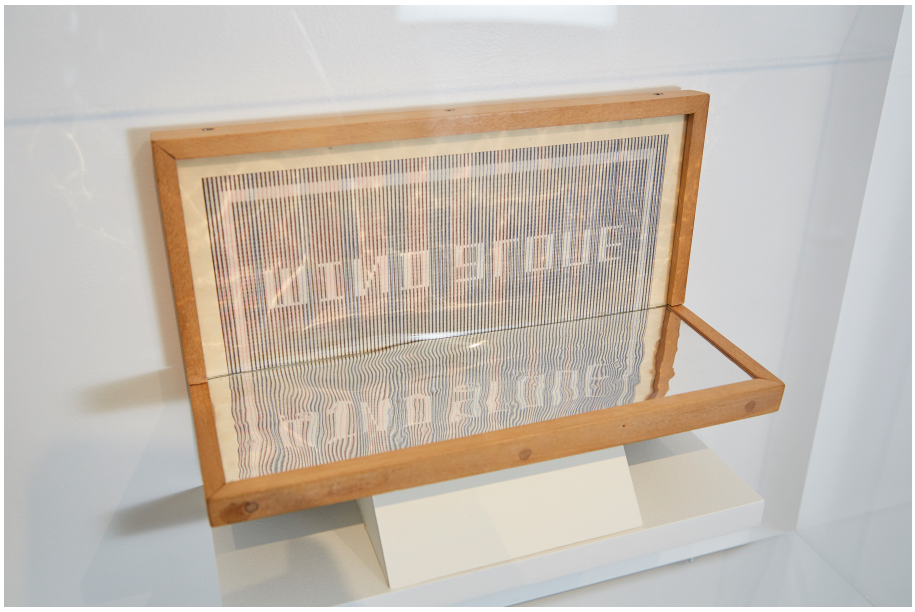
with the archivists and conservationists at John Rylands University and the gallery staff at East, “holy glass boxes” seemed to offer the only solution to exhibiting Houédard’s *zen box with moving arts* and *wind grove/ mind alone* for the first time. Despite both poemobjects requiring manipulation by hand to be read, they had to be displayed in Perspex boxes (Figs. 80 and 81).





Figs 80 and 81. Installation photographs of Houédard’s *zen box*, c.1966, *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016.





Figs. 82 and 83 Installation photograph of Houedard's *wind grove*, c.1971, *Performing No Thingness,* East Gallery, NUA, 2016.

Placing these poems behind Perspex seemed to be denying the viewer an essential participation in a poetic and spiritual transmission. Houédard stated:

> The analogy between poet creating poems & creator creating creation. Creativeness a part of the created. The creation only reflecting its creator – when it itself is created – the poem then as creative – creating its environment for instance – the space in which the viewer has happened to wander - & creating its own space inside the viewer – the word, the poem, the play, the mantra, the image, the object, - not just traces of the poet but extensions of himself.[86]

How can a contemporary viewer wander into “the space” and “environment” of such poems? Can the poem still create “its own space inside the viewer”? Can the mudra be experienced?

By the late 1960s Houédard was put under increasing pressure by his monastery to stop making typestracts. Typing may have become a central mudra in Houédard’s own spiritual practice however it was disrupting the contemplative practice of his fellow monks. The reverberations from the continual pressing of the typewriter keys echoed noisily around the sparsely furnished building.[87] Observing the new time restriction on his typewriter-based activities, Houédard began to experiment with alternative ways of making poems with the limited resources available to him at Prinknash Abbey. He developed a typographical alphabet that could form words which, when rotated or reflected, revealed an alternative word hidden inside. These poems were executed very simply in thick felt-tip pen, predominantly in the colors to hand - orange, green, red and purple - initially on paper, and later on thin Perspex sheets. Houédard states:

> Making these two-sided poems […] it’s the simple coherency of two magics in a single word that startles me each time I find one - & that does something quite moving each time I look at it again & it does this to me I think because it is so objective – it isn’t something that I have put there – it’s part of the word itself – or at any rate convention has agreed a spelling of it – There is a lot to be said for the equivalence between a shamans & Monks. So like a good Shaman I find magic & meaning in transformations – all poetry is a transforming of data – a recycling of the recyclable – but some transformations are more TRANCEformations than others. So these reversibles here I find – have a strong element of the ability to form trances – as they pivot from one formation – to its TRANCEFORMATION. [My capitals].[88]

wind grove/ mind alone began as one such reversal poem (Figs. 82 and 83). It is one of a number of these poems to have been made into a three-dimensional poem object. In *the yoga of concrete* I exhibited another such gestural mudra, *a love sings river a song* (Fig. 84)

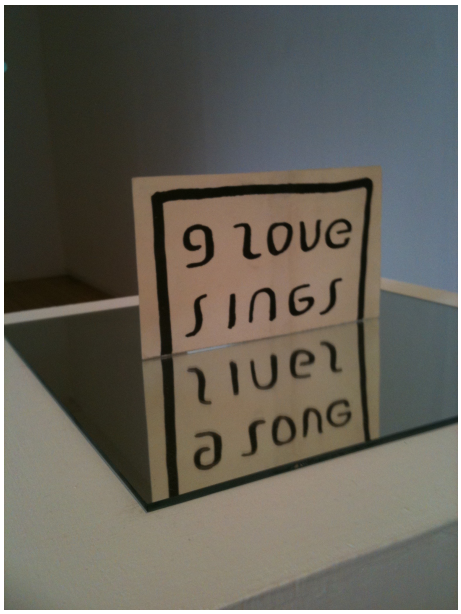


Fig. 84 Installation photograph of *a love sings river a song*, *frog pond plop: the yoga of concrete in the work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* The Gallery, NUA, 2010. Author's image.

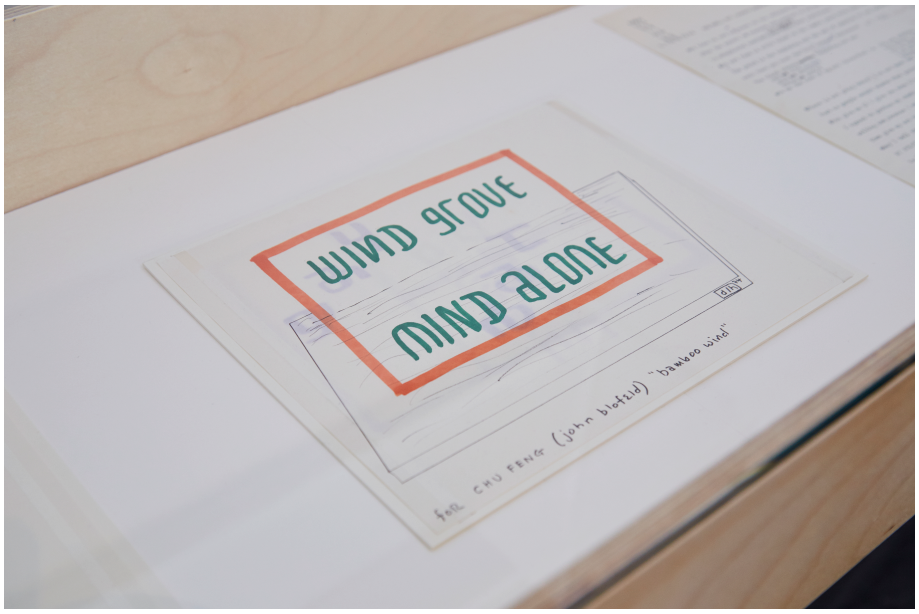


Fig. 85 *wind grove/ mind alone,* for CHU FENG (john blofeld) "bamboo wind". Author's image.

The words "wind grove", when reflected in a mirror, spell the phrase "mind alone", "two magics in a single word" or perhaps two two-word haikus interdependent on each other. In discussing this process of reflection, Houédard states, if "poems had been mirrors of reality what did real poems look like to themselves thru the looking glass? […] self reflective & contemplative with the je/moi flicker […]".[89] Houédard dedicates the poem to John Blofeld, or "Chu Feng" as he is known within his Taoist tradition, a name meaning "bamboo wind".

Blofeld gives an account of this name and its significance to him, recounting how one of the ancient Taoist masters viewed his choice:

> When you chose 'Chu-Feng' (Bamboo Wind) as one of your Chinese names, you did well, for the bamboo, green even in old age, very strong and yet pliant, soft within and un-ashamed of bending, is symbolic of Taoist wisdom; and the wind, so free in its movement, so unexpected in its immediate action and yet predictable in terms of cycle, is the very breath of the Tao. Your having selected such a name marks you as being some-thing of a Taoist, whether by choice or in spite of yourself.[90]

As I established in *mantra,* Houédard knew Blofeld and corresponded with him, therefore it is very likely that he knew of the account and the significance held by the image of the bamboo plant in the wind. Blofeld continues:

> The remedy is to find your own truth and live by it. In that way, you will save yourself trouble and perhaps draw a few others away from their senseless clawing at the slippery precipices of dualistic thought by convincing them that the sound of bamboos creaking in the wind is a wholesome substitute for concepts. When the wind blows, the bamboos creak, when it dies away, they grow silent without giving a moment's thought to the relative virtues of creaking or silence. Bamboos just respond to circumstances. If the wind becomes a gale, they readily bow their heads and thus avoid being broken.[91]

As stated earlier, Houédard considered his reversible poems as having a "taoist' insight". In considering Blofeld's words "the sound of bamboos creaking in the wind" is the "wind grove" which, when reflected in the mirror of dharma, reveals nothing more than "mind alone", a "wholesome substitute for concepts". There is no inherently existent "wind grove". Blofeld again:

> Acceptance requires that we regard this universe not as illusory in the sense of not existing, but as a reality which filtered through our faulty senses is apprehended as other than it is, with the result that we falsely assume each entity to have its own being, instead of recognizing all of them as interdependent, transitory semblances with true being abiding in the Tao.[92]

When a version of *wind grove/ mind alone* was published in *Stereo Headphones* Houedard included an accompanying text in which he suggested that the poem be interpreted as an inverted trigram:

> **wind grove –** catholic apathies & epektasy cittramatram in mahayana & sufi hu
>
> Q. What percentage of all trigrams are inverts?
> A. thunder mountains & windlakes[93]

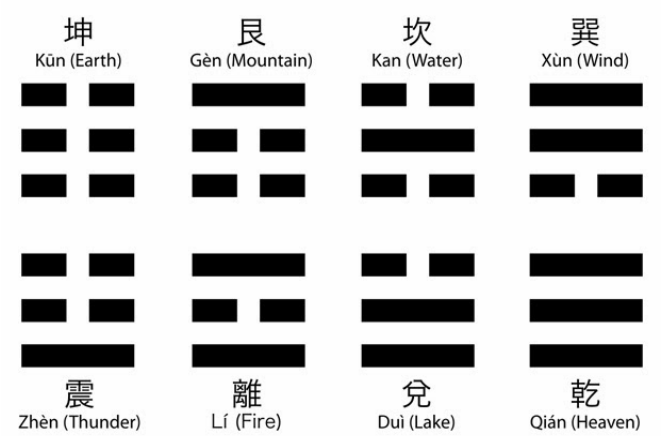


Fig. 86 *The Eight Trigrams*. Image accessed https://leadershipbyvirtue.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/17503-iching_trigrams.jpg

The *I Ching* is composed of sixty-four sets of hexagrams. Each hexagram is made up from a combination of any two, from a selection of eight trigrams (Fig. 86). Every line of the hexagram is either broken or unbroken. The unbroken or solid line represents yang, the "creative" principle. The broken or open line with a gap in the centre represents yin, the "receptive" principle. These principles are also represented in a circular symbol known as Tai Chi Tú, more commonly known in the West as the yin-yang symbol, expressing the idea of wholeness of constantly undergoing change.

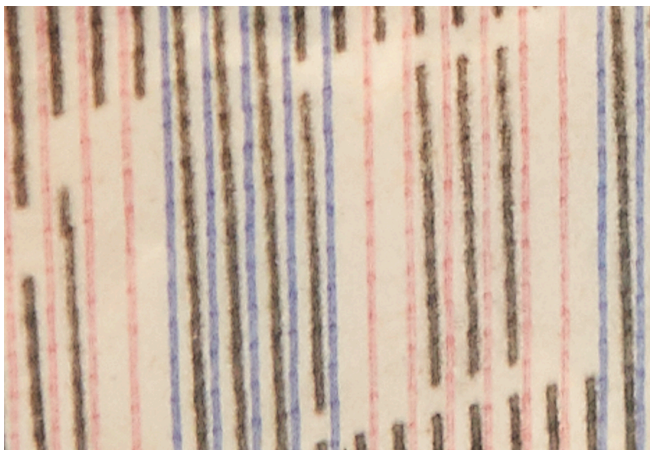


Fig. 87 Close up photograph of Houedard's *wind grove/ mind alone.* Author's image.

A closer look at how Houédard's poemsculpture is composed demonstrates that *wind grove* is a typestract made up of a series of carefully constructed broken and unbroken lines (Fig. 87). Here too, it can be suggested that these long unbroken lines represent "yang" and the broken lines, out of which the letter shapes are formed, represent "yin" (See Fig. 83).The eight trigrams, in their total combinations, are understood to be images of all that happens in Heaven and Earth. Yet they are not as static as their graphic forms would suggest. They

are held to be in a state of continual transition, one changing into another. Each trigram is composed of one of the five elements deeply rooted in Chinese tradition: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Therefore, although throughout the exhibition *Performing No Thingness* the work *wind grove* remained unmoving in its perspex box, conceptually this wider ecumenical hexagram, made from two inverted concrete trigrams, was linked to the performances of Cox's *5 Elemental Balloons Poem*, with their interaction of change, transformation, TRANCEformation and mudra.

5.3.v *Totems*

In *Performing No Thingness*, alongside *wind grove/ mind alone* I exhibited further examples of Houédard's experimentation with reversible alphabets, Taoism and the trigrams of the I-Ching.



Figs. 88 and 99 *Totems*, 1968, The Victoria and Albert Museum archives. Author's images.

In 1968, after the death of Kenelm Cox, Houédard designed a series of works "in memoriam" to his deceased friend. The most noted one is the poster-print *sun-cheese wheel-ode a double-rolling-gloster memorial for kencox*, printed by South Seas Publications in 1968 (See chapter *mantra).* As I argue in *mantra,* the poem is intended to be read out loud and a "machine reference" of instructions for such a performance is included on the back of the poster.

Houédard made other commemorative poemobjects. The three xylographs, which perhaps could be called "a mobile totem memorial for kencox" are best understood contextually as the complementary piece to the *sun-cheese wheel-ode* (Figs. 88 and 89). Each work was to be suspended as a hanging vertical mobile and each totem is made up from the letters in Ken Cox's name, and only these letters. However, as in the *sun-cheese*

wheel-ode, the name, Ken Cox, is again silent. Each totem moves through the air as slow or as fast as the flow of air around them. The totemic column of letters is a direct reference to the form of Cox's piece *Suncycle* discussed above. But unlike Cox's piece where the letters are always visible in some degree of completeness, like the sun's permanent visibility somewhere on earth at all times, here the mobiles are only printed on one side. The presence of "KEN COX" spins around in the impermanent and transitory wind moving from presence to absence then presence again. The letters are both static and momentary. The shining foil, out of which the mobiles are constructed, catches the light rendering the text almost invisible, and again the choice of thin metallic sheet/page/paper is an intuitive material to evoke how the light catches the cast-brass of Cox's *Suncycle*. These totems put in mind again Cox's words: "one of my chief concerns has been to unite movement with words – to try to bring some kind of indivisible unity between the words & movement".

Each column of letters is also an example of mirror-typography with a line of symmetry passing between the shapes. Letters are either reversed or reflected. It feels that Houédard's text has found a thoughtful and playful way to reflect unity and dualism in the two stressed syllables "ken" and "cox". Across the three totems in this collection, each letter appears with its inversion or its reflection. One effect of this is to have the two semi-circles of the letter C gradually move into a complete cyclic union with the interlocking letter Os. But careful attention reveals the pattern made by each of the letters create central empty spaces: the rhombuses shaped by the inverted letters K and X, the rectangles held within the letter Es and the triangles residing inside the Ns. Here, I argue, Houédard encloses a very deliberate spiritual geometry within the abstraction of these letters, that references the kinetic calligraphy in Cox's own work, Cox's interest in Chinese and Taoist philosophy and also Houédard's own interest in these ideas, as elaborated, at length, in the three essays he writes in dedication to Ken Cox. In the third of these essays, "ken cox keeping still in the book of changes", Houédard makes the paronomasic connection between "the glostershire ken & the i-ching ken" (as ken is the name for the fifth of the eight trigrams in the I-Ching) before making the link more fully in Cox's work between order and chance, symmetry and asymmetry. So when we look again at the totems we can see that there is more than a simple repetitive geometry at play here. The typography creates shapes that transform each letter into what, perhaps, I can term a "concrete trigram".

It is also important to consider the form of the totem. As discussed above, in his essay "the singing of feeling", Houédard makes the connection between Cox and the shamanic. However these works are best understood within Houédard's own interest in the

shamanic. As argued in *yantra,* this was at its height in the period 1967-8 (as is evidenced by typestracts of this period such as *shaman with 5 chakras*) and further references to the shamanic in his prose and his collaborations with the Exploding Galaxy are considered in *mandala.* As these silver totems revolve and spin in their own "micro gales" it is difficult not to sense their relationship with the language and paralanguage of the sacred. These poemsculptures also create their own microenvironment rooted in the particular friendship between Houédard and Cox. They spin first one way then the other, east/west, Cox/ dsh, a moving impermanent duality of "our innerhumanlife an interhumanlife- a mantrayana or word path leading out to what can be only the wordless".[94]

Houédard made several hundred reversible poems, giving instructions in the corner of each one, with small directional arrows, as to which way the poem needed to be turned for the alternative reading to be found. Some are inverted, like *wind grove*, in a north-south direction, others like the *Totems* are conceptually related to the east and west. But the directional combinations are numerous.[95]

5.3.vi The Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: dsh and Li Yuan-chia

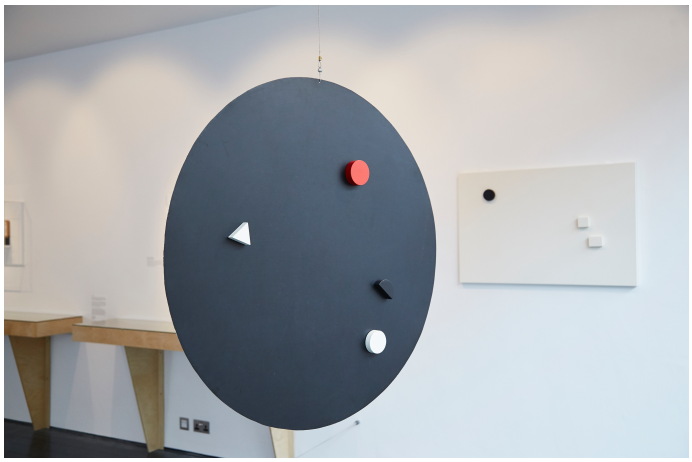
Dom Sylvester first heard of the Chinese artist Li Yuan-chia, from his inclusion in the exhibition *Soundings Two* at the Signals Gallery in 1965.[96] A year or so later, when Li had moved to London permanently, they met again at the Lisson Gallery and became friends. When Li established the *LYC Museum and Art Gallery*, in 1972, Houédard began to donate prose and poems to the Museum, culminating in a solo show *begin again* and an accompanying book, published by LYC Press Publications, *begin again – a book of reflections and reversals.*[97] In *Performing No Thingness*, this book, alongside correspondence between Houédard and Li and works such as Li's *The White Book,* were exhibited to illustrate the friendship between the two artists and also their shared vision of poem-environments and trans-historical trans-national spiritual transmission.

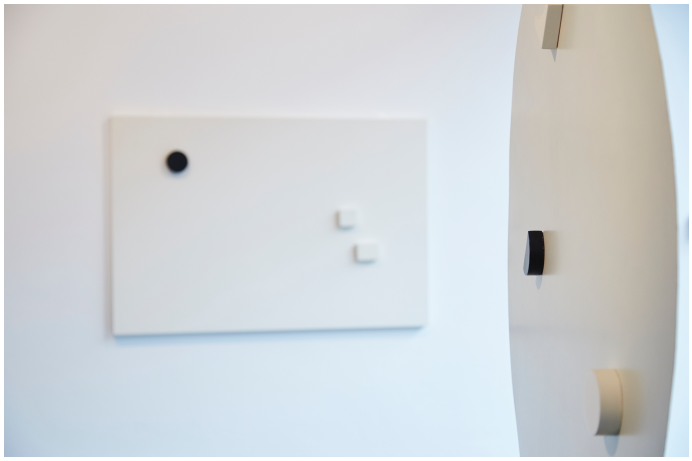
It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine Li's work within the context of Zen and Tantric Buddhist method practices. The sacred geometry of the "cosmic points" that he made to be placed and replaced by the audience on his reliefs and hanging multiples, are I argue, part of an intentional Tantric language. The spatial geometry of these pieces are a participatory yantra that place an individual at the centre of a mandala. As Guy Brett states:

> The 'tiny dot' was Li's great visual invention. It was the physical and metaphysical emblem of his art. He called it the Cosmic Point, the mark, which conjures up infinite space, the beginning and end of all things. At the same time it was the 'me', Li Yuan-chia, on my individual life journey. It was also 'you', the viewer who brings to it your subjective charge.[98]

In moving one of Li's Cosmic Points, the viewer performs a mudra that takes him to the beginning and end of all things. It is a mudra which also takes the self to other, the me to you.

The two large works by Li that I chose to illustrate these ideas in the exhibition were *Cosmic Point Multiple* and *Double-sided Black and White Magnetic Relief* (Figs. 90 and 91).





Figs. 90 and 91 Installation photographs of Li Yuan-chia *Multiples, Performing No Thingness*, East, NUA, 2016.

However, although these works did not have to be placed inside a Perspex box, the conditions of the loan from the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts ensured they were out of reach behind a metal barrier. Today, these cosmic points can only be placed onto the work by the museum's own curator or conservator, thus about as far away from the play Li envisaged as possible. Like, Cox, would Li have been horrified by this curatorial decision? If, as I have discussed above (see in 6:1.ii), there was a surfeit of *over*-participation in the exhibitions of the 1960s, to what extent are the transmission of ideas compromised by the contemporary experience of *under*-participation. I feel this is not an issue that I, or others have resolved when curating such work. Before I included these pieces by Li, I consulted Guy Brett and Nick Saywer, trustees from the Li Yuan-chia Foundation, and co-curators of the recent retrospective of Li's work, *Viewpoint* at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and discussed the museological framing of participatory environments.

A few months later, 13th February 2017, Iniva and BAM (Black Artists & Modernism) co-hosted a study day in the Stuart Hall Library focused on the work of Li. As someone who had recently curated Li's work I was invited to attend. Over fifteen years had passed since

Iniva organized the retrospective on Li's work at Camden Arts Centre in 2001, the most comprehensive exhibition of his work in this country to date. Therefore the aim of the day was to begin conversations about how the critical reception for Li's work had changed and how Li could be situated within current dialogues about Modernism. One significant reoccurring topic of conversation was that in all recent presentations of his work there remains the curatorial and conservational reality that toy art can no longer be toyed with – it is strictly forbidden, or as Marlene Smith stated, "the museum forecloses all interaction with the work". Nick Sawyer, drew attention to the 2015 retrospective of Li's work at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the 2001 exhibition at Camden Arts Centre, where a room of replica Cosmagnetic Multiples were installed and where the audience could place and replace the cosmic points continually through the day. Notably this room usually held the highest concentration of visitors. This led to study-group questions: Do we need a different museum for this kind of work? To what extent is the messiness of the original lost in any restaging? Is looking at the work enough of a compensatory strategy for not touching? To what extent was Li consciously subverting the very word 'museum' in the act of naming the LYC Museum? As Andrew Wilson concluded, "thinking about the LYC Museum is a different kind of thinking to that of thinking about the Tate as a museum […] Li was giving a frame to his own activity". These questions are, of course, relevant to the work of both Houédard and Cox too.[99]

In summary this chapter has attempted to contextualize "mudra" as a term that reimagines the points of intersection between artist and poemmachine, poemmachine and audience. Houédard's ambition to create poemsculptures and poemenvironments and the difficulty he had in getting these ideas realized, are also discussed. Houédard's term "mudra" can also be used to contain the viewer moving cosmic points on a work by Li Yuan-chia, an audience's dance through the Cox's *Balloons* poem, even the *Manupensive* (as in the *thinking hand*) sculptures of John Dugger.

To date there has been no previous study that has explored the transmission of ideas between Cox and Houédard and this research has demonstrated the primary importance of key archive documents, such as the clockword letter, in tracing the influence and transmission of ideas within the British concrete poetry movement. This chapter therefore offers some important insights into how poemmachines and poemobjects were made or not made and opens up a wider discussion about the role graphic design students had in making work for concrete poets who had neither the skills nor the facilities to realize their ideas. My research into Houédard's collaborations with students from the Royal

College of Art for the *Visual Poetries* Exhibition is far from complete and highlights the need for further research into his projects with Chelsea School of Art, Watford School of Art and Bath School of Art, for example.

This chapter has explored Houédard's sustained intention of placing the viewer at the centre of his work and the centre of the spiritual rituals that informed his artistic practice. However this intention is difficult to realize and my research demonstrates that kinetic and performative practices, such as those discussed here and in the next chapter *mandala,* cannot easily reconstructed, if at all.

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[1] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "wind grove mind alone," *Stereo Headphones,* n.6, 1974.
[2] Agit Mookerjee, *Tantra Art: its Philosophy & Physics* (New Delhi: Ravi Kumar, 1971): 33.
[3] Robert Beer, *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols* (Boston: Shambala Publications, 2003): 221.
[4] "The Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry," a manifesto written and signed by the Brazilians poets Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari, collectively known as the *Noigandres* group and formed in 1952, accessed February 19th, 2018, <http://avant.org/event/noigandres/.html>.
[5] Cristina Iuli, *"*Information, Communication, Systems: Cybernetic Aesthetics in 1960s Cultures,*" The Transatlantic Sixties: Europe and the United States in the Counterculture Decade*, ed. Grzegorz Kosc, Clara Juncker, Sharon Monteith and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson (Bielefeld: Verlag, 2013): 228.
[6] William Allen, "The Concrete Programs of Ken Cox," *Ken Cox: Poetry Machines,* monograph published to coincide with the exhibition at Chelsea Space, London, 29th April – 5th June, 2015, 1.
[7] John Furnival, as quoted by Elizabeth Glazebrook, "The Last Word in Poetry," *The Daily Telegraph Magazine,* August 16th, 1968: 20-23.
[8] Allen, "The Concrete Programs of Ken Cox," 1.
[9] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Obituary for Ken Cox," *The Times,* November 1968, republished in *Ken Cox, Celebrating A Life's Work, 1927-1968,* exhibition catalogue published on the occasion of *Ken Cox, Celebrating A Life's Work, 1927-1968,* Retrospective Exhibition, Wotton-under-Edge, 2007. Although Houédard himself used "gloucestershire" and "glostershire" interchangeably, this thesis will use the former spelling.
[10] Allen, "The Concrete Programs of Ken Cox," 1.
[11]Glazebrook, "The Last Word in Poetry," 20-23. This is confirmed by Margot Cox in conversation with Nicola Simpson, Friday 21st October, 2016.
[12] Houédard, *Ken Cox, Celebrating A Life's Work, 1927-1968,* monograph published to coincide with the exhibition *Ken Cox: Celebrating A Life's Work, 1927-1968,* 2007, Wotton-Under-Edge, 2007.
[13] Glazebrook, "The Last Word in Poetry," 20-23.
[14] Interview Ken Cox gave to the journalist Elizabeth Glazebrook, recorded at the end of the Arlington 2 exhibition, June 1st 1968. Original typescript is part of the Ken Cox Family archive currently curated by William Allen, Word and Image.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Charles Verey writes: "In the Summer of 1966, an international concrete poetry exhibition was held in a converted mill in the heart of the Cotswolds. It would not have happened without the energy of Kenelm Cox, or without John Furnival's technical support and hospitality. Dom Sylvester Houédard, at 42, just three years older than Ken, was no less than a godfather to the event […]" See Charles Verey, "A godfather to the event: Arlington UNE, 1966 & South Street Publications, 1967-70", *Notes One – onos and nons an introduction to the book of onomasticons by dsh,* ed. Charles Verey (South Street Publications, 2016): 2-3.
[17] Margot Cox in conversation with Nicola Simpson, October 2016.
[18] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "The Wider Concrete," *Link*, October/November, 1965, republished in *Dom Sylvester Houédard* (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 78.
[19] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay", *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 160.

[20] Ibid., 161.
[21] E.M. de Melo e Castro, "Ken Cox – a Cyberneticist", *Lisboa Diary: Literary Supplement,* No. 549, 6th February, 1969, Translated and reprinted in *Ken Cox: Poetry Machines,* 20.
[22] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "triadologies," talk to be included in *The Kiss: the Beshara Talks of Dom Sylvester Houédard, 1986-1991,* ed. Jane Clark and Charles Verey, Beshara Publications, scheduled publication 2018, quoted by Charles Verey in "Editor's Note,*" Notes One – onos and nons an introduction to the book of onomasticons by dsh,* ed. Charles Verey, (South Street Publications, 2016): 5.
[23] Houédard, "The Wider Concrete," 78.
[24] Houédard, "Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay," 160.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Houédard, "The Wider Concrete," 78.
[28] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Between Poetry and Painting Chronology," *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 155.
[29] Ibid., 148
[30] Ibid.
[31] Houédard, "The Wider Concrete," 77.
[32] Ibid.
[33] John Furnival, "The Oxford Exhibition," *Link,* October/ November, 1965.
[34] Houédard, "The Wider Concrete," 77.
[35] Furnival, "The Oxford Exhibition."
[36] Houédard, "The Wider Concrete," 77.
[37] Hilary Floe, '"Everything Was Getting Smashed': Three Case Studies of Play and Participation, 1965–71," *Performance at Tate: Into the Space of Art*, 2015, accessed September 9th 2015, http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/everything-was-getting-smashed-three-case-studies-play-and.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Houédard, "The Wider Concrete," 77.
[41] Houédard, "Between Poetry and Painting Chronology," 154.
[42] In the letter to Ken Cox, dated 29th April 1966, Houédard mistypes "clockwork" as "clockword" adding "clockword was pleasant invention of this clever twr". Throughout this chapter I refer to the letter as "the clockword" letter in recognition of this apt typo. At the time of research this letter was part of the Kenelm Cox Archive. It has now been sold to Tate Modern.
[43] E.M. de Melo e Castro, "Ken Cox – a Cyberneticist", 20.
[44] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "The Singing of Feeling," *Dom Sylvester Houédard*, Ceolfrith 15, ed. Charles Verey (Sunderland: Ceolfrith Arts Centre, 1972): 62.
[45] Kenelm Cox Exhibit *The Three Graces* was made for the first Brighton Arts Festival, 1967. Unfortunately *Beauty Passion a*nd *Love* were destroyed in a storm a few days into their installation.
[46] Houédard, "The Singing of Feeling," 62.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Houedard, "The Singing of Feeling," 62.
[50] Ken Cox in conversation with Elizabeth Glazebrook, June 1968, unpublished typescript of the interview, William Allen Word & Image archive.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Houédard, "The Singing of Feeling," 61.
[53] See Glossary: *mudra*
[54] Cox, unpublished Glazebrook Interview.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Houédard, "Singing of Feeling," 62.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Jonathan Stalling, "Introduction," *Poetics of Emptiness, Transformations of Asian Thought in American Poetry* (U.S.A: Fordham University Press, 2010): 11. For further discussion of Stalling's argument see chapter 6 mandala.

[60] Houédard letter to Cox, 29th April, 1966.
[61] Cox, unpublished Glazebrook Interview.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Glazebrook, "The Last Word in Poetry," 22.
[64] Cox, unpublished Glazebrook Interview.
[65] Kenelm Cox letter to Nicholas Logsdail,1968, The Lisson Gallery Archive.
[66] E.M. de Melo e Castro, "Ken Cox – a Cyberneticist," 21.
[67] I'd had a few rather futile visits to the Victoria and Albert Museum Archives looking for documents relating to this show but only some of the included works themselves were stored there.
[68] Details about this piece are included in the list of works on loan for *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* exhibition at Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, July 19th – August 9th, 1972, William Allen Word & Image Archive.
[69] Barry Jackson in conversation with Nicola Simpson, The White Chapel gallery, November 2015.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Dom Sylvester Houédard letter to Guy Brett, November 2nd 1971, Private Archive.
[72] Barry Jackson in conversation with Nicola Simpson.
[73] Ibid.
[74] The text of this letter was read out by Jasia Reichardt at the symposium *The Cosmic Typewriter,* The South London Gallery, 4th December, 2012.
[75] Houédard and Bob Cobbing read a selection of Houédard's poetry for his up-coming exhibition *Visual Poetries,* recorded 27th October 1971, British Library Sound Archive. The intention was to have this recording playing on a jukebox at the show. Commenting on this recording in a letter to Guy Brett, just days after it was made, Houedard writes: "a whole afternoon at the britishcouncil recording proses & talks & poems for the jukebox […] what I wanted was just short haiku & aphorisms occasion all floating in the air".
[76] Ibid.
[77] The recording continues: "Mind truth skin/ Tantra flow cone/ Earth snow acid/ Suck fuel acid Earth drip lips/ Bright flash bird/ Star blue rain…"
[78] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "words with zips," British Council Recording, 1971, British Library Sound Archive.
[79] Houédard, "words with zips."
[80] Houédard elaborates: "Ramon was a Catholic who was born in 1233 on the island of Majorca, where his father had settled. When he was stoned to death in the streets of Tunis at the age of eight-two he left behind over three hundred words written in Latin, in Catalan & in Arabic. Not all of which have yet been printed".
[81]Houédard and Cobbing, British Council Recording.
[82] Houedard, "words with zips".
[83] Houédard, "wind grove mind alone".
[84] Houédard, "words with zips".
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] This is corroborated by several people that I have interviewed: Charles Verey, Nicholas Sawyer, David Medalla, John Gale and Nicholas Logsdail.
[88] Houédard, "words with zips".
[89] Ibid.
[90] John Blofeld, "Secret and Sublime Taoist Magic", accessed February 24th 2018, <https. wuchifoundation.org/documents/TRA29_Secret_&_Sublime_Taoist_Magic.pdf>.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Houédard, "wind grove mind alone".
[94] Houédard, "words with zips".
[95] These directional mudras are captured in the specially commissioned film by Cameron Irving made for "Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter" symposium and exhibition, South London Gallery, December 2nd 2012. See Appendix 2a for further details.
[96] Li Yuan-chia (1929 -1994) was a founding member of the *Ton Fan Group.* He was spent time in Italy with the *Il Punto* group and was invited by David Medalla, in 1965 to show at Signals Gallery. Staying in London, Li was for a time associated with the Lisson Gallery, before settling in Cumbria, in 1968

where he converted a hundred-year-old farmhouse near Hadrian's Wall into the "LYC Museum and Art Gallery". The gallery was open from 1972 to 1982, during which time over 330 artists were exhibited.

[97] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *begin again – a book of reflections and reversals,* with an introduction by Stefan Themerson (Brampton: LYC Press, 1975).

[98] Guy Brett, "Space-Time-Life," *Li Yuan-chia: tell me what is not yet said* (London: inIVA, 2000): 31-4.

[99] These curatorial restrictions were discussed at length in a study day I was invited to attend, by BAM, Black Artist's in Modernism, at inIVA, 13th February 2017. See my post as guest blogger for inIVA http://www.iniva.org/blog/2017/03/10/li-yuan-chia-study-day-stuart-hall-library-13-february-2017/.

Chapter 6 mandala

It is an afternoon in the last week of May 1965. Through the large plate-glass windows of the four-storey Signals Gallery on Wigmore Street in London, Paul Keeler and David Medalla can be seen sitting on the floor surrounded by the sculptures of the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark. It is the first British solo exhibition of Clark, and Keeler and Medalla are preoccupied with assembling two series of her work: *Bichos,* translated by Clark in the Signals Bulletin as "Animals" and the *Trepantes* or Climbing, translated as "Grubs".[1] Medalla remembers:

> Many years ago I used to run a thing called Signals Gallery in London. I was putting up an exhibition of Lygia Clark and one day in came two men to see the show. One was a person called Sir Francis Rose and he was with Dom Sylvester Houédard […] They were two of the most eccentric people that you can ever imagine.[2]

Houédard and Rose immediately engage with Clark's geometric metal sculptures, which can be moved in a limitless way, dependent on manipulation by the hands of the viewer. Their enthusiastic participation in an endless open interpretation (perhaps *over*-participation, as Keeler has to ask them to "calm down") is precisely what Clark had intended. She envisaged such a scenario, stating that although the idea of the work belongs to the artist, the expression is wholly owned by the spectator and depends on the total fusion between work and viewer. Medalla recounts the scene:

> And this monk, he was wearing his Benedictine robe you know – and he was very – the two were very hyperactive – doing some kind of fandango in this gallery – and they were playing with all these sculptures.[3]

Medalla and Houédard easily fall into conversation and it is not long before they establish that they have mutual friends in the Brazilian Concrete poets Augusto and Haroldo de Campos. The topic of conversation quickly turns to concrete poetry and the visual, aural and kinetic experiments with language that are beginning to be shared amongst a global network of artist and poets. "*What do you do?"* Medalla asks Houédard. *"I write poetry"* the Benedictine monk replies and, opening up a rather battered brown leather briefcase that he has brought with him, he proceeds to fill the remaining space on the gallery floor with piles of typewriter poems that he has constructed on his Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter, back in his monastic cell at Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire. Medalla reflects:

> I said that I wanted to see his work and told him I was doing this Signals show [*Towards the Invisible*] and another artist was coming over from San

> Paolo, not a concrete poet though, called Mira Schendel and I asked him whether he would like to contribute something. He said yes and brought out this set, really very beautiful, done on the typewriter, called the 'gestures of the buddha'.[4]

Such an anecdote typifies and consolidates the importance of both David Medalla and the Signals Gallery in helping to establish Houédard as a central figure in the countercultural avant-garde of London in the 1960s.

> Signals was different. If you went there, you were welcomed, introduced to artists and invited to participate in discussions. What came across above anything else was the passion in that gallery for the works they were showing. It was welcoming and unpretentious.[5]

This story also exemplifies what Houédard's ideas about "the wider concrete" meant in practice. This chapter explores how such a simple act of welcome to the fandango-dancing Benedictine monk and artist Dom Sylvester Houédard was to mark a significant moment when the embryonic British concrete poetry movement collided with international kinetic art and enabled Houédard to make influential friendships with Gustav Metzger, Guy Brett, Mira Schendel, and Li Yuan-chia, to name a few. The story of that afternoon in the late spring of 1965, when Houédard's typestracts literally occupied the same gallery space as Lygia Clark's kinetic works, is a way of framing, within a personal narrative, the entangled histories and territories that Houédard's works traverse. He deliberately brings his typestracts right into the middle of what he called "the global kinkon", into a space where viewers can participate and provide their own "games rules" and where the work depends on performative contexts to be fully understood.[6] It is a reminiscence which reconfirms the role friendship played in Houédard's practice and how he became such an influential figure in linking up the British and international networks of concrete poetry, kinetic art, kinkon, cyberkinetic art, beat literature, performance poetry and mail art.

As he left Medalla that afternoon, sifting through a pile of typestracts, it is also an indication of how Houédard never personally selected work for an exhibition. How he was happy to give most of his work away, in fact making pieces for specific individuals and sending it to them directly, ensuring his work today is as much in the possession of private archives as it is in any institutional collection. Perhaps justification for his actions can be found in his suggestion that his work and correspondence can be considered "peace-offerings love-tokens & human stimuli that improve our mental ecology".[7] Put simply, his works were gifts.

This chapter, divided into four sections, is a focused discussion presenting aspects of Houédard's artistic and spiritual practice within the conceptual framework of the Buddhist practice of the mandala. As I have argued in previous chapters, through his early contacts with Tibetan Lamas such as Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong Tulku Rinpoche, Houédard was instrumental in acting as a conduit for the first transmission of the Vajrayana doctrine in Britain. Taking two co-ordinates in this matrix of transmission: the Destruction in Art Symposium, held throughout the month of September 1966 DIAS, and the open performances of The Exploding Galaxy theatre group on Parliament Hill during the Summer of Love in 1967, this chapter will examine the performance rituals of Vajrayana Buddhism, in particular the ritual practice of offering, creating and destroying the mandala, as an alternative phenomenological approach with which artists could contest the threat of nuclear annihilation and dominant political and social territories. Such analysis asserts how an understanding of Vajrayana is relevant to the growing interest in this period.

In the early 1960s, as Vajrayana Buddhism migrated to the West with the first exiled Tibetan Lamas, it became of interest to a particular group of international artists through its presentation of the emptiness teachings. As explored in *mudra* emptiness is not nothingness but a No thing-ness. It is the absence of inherent existence. To impute on objects a permanent inherent somethingness is illusory. This is far from easy to understand and a reiteration of Stalling's argument is useful here.

> […] the Buddhist concept of "emptiness" […] is difficult if not impossible to understand vis-à- vis binary (or dualistic/dichotomous) constructs like being/ non- being, existence/ nonexistence, or even the more intuitive binary of fullness/emptiness.[8]

There are many different ways of presenting this concept in Buddhism and a variety of teachings, meditations and practices associated with developing an understanding of it. Vajrayana Buddhism utilises a series of performative rituals to transform the practitioner's mind towards an understanding and permanent awareness of emptiness.[9] As George writes:

> Once again it is crucial to understand Buddhism as a process, a practice, one whereby every position is vacated as soon as it is occupied […] It is also thus that the performative paradigm again reasserts itself, for this emptying of phenomena of all substantialism means what is left are acts, events, not objects.[10]

Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, in particular, contains an extensive repertoire of performative method practices, rituals and symbols; as previous chapters have articulated,

these are translated into the imaginative, symbolic instructions and sculptures found in the poem-scores of Houédard.

One such ritual, the making and unmaking of the mandala, the symbolic diagram that is believed to concentrate all the energies and phenomena of the whole cosmos, is of particular interest here. It informs Houédard's talk at DIAS, his poemscore *the cosmic ballet* and many of his other works. Both Houédard and Medalla were interested in the mandala ritual as a structural corollary for the making (and un-making) of (art) environments. The academic David E.R George provides a useful analysis of Buddhism both as a performing art and the interrelationship between the epistemology of performance and Buddhist epistemology. When considering the constructions & destructions in the Tantric ritual of making a mandala, he writes:

> […] it is not too fanciful to argue that a *mandala* is itself an allegorical 'playscript': it has characters, frozen in dynamic poses and postures with symbolic gestures, masked; there is a 'set'. An inscribed 'plot' or at least a journey, and the whole are enacted in the mind of the meditator.[11]

Through this ritualised creation and destruction of an imagined pure cosmos the Tantric practitioner comes to familiarise their mind with how the concept of the mandala is dependently established, how it depends both on its bases of imputation and the mind that imputes it.[12]

> in tantra we systematically create image after image (mental bodies) of buddha to similarly reject dissolve or 'de-mythologise' them.[13]

Through an understanding of how this imagined pure microcosm is created the Tantric practitioner understands how their real impure macrocosm exists. Similarly, all phenomena that exist in their "real" world are dependent on their bases of imputation and that mind that imputes them. The Vajrayana teachings on emptiness enable the practitioner to interrogate and contest all his mental constructs and created worlds. As I shall discuss below, Houédard and Medalla both utilise mandalas in precisely the way George outlines, creating instructional and "allegorical playscripts" that dramatise how an awareness of dependently-related phenomena and dependently-related self and other can created a "plot" of universal peace and compassion.

In the practice of the mandala there is a profound movement between these constructed universes and the microcosm of the individual's body at the centre of the mandala. Everything is generated and dissolved from this central cosmic point.

> All this is directed to a single goal: to reproduce in oneself the process of emanation and reabsorbtion, and in this way to divest all appearances of their pretense of reality.[14]

Within the teachings of the Vajrayana this understanding of the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena, their emptiness, is said to generate a profound and lasting mental peace. By visualizing pure lands, the Tantric practitioner learns to understand experience itself as pure, and as the abode of enlightenment, "[t]o the Vajrayana Buddhist, creating a visualized world through and in the contemplative imagination is not creating an ontologically different world but one the same as the 'real' world – except that this one is created under one's total control and is semiotically meaningful".[15] In effect the initially imaginary created territory of the mandala, a place of world peace and self-lessness, becomes the actual created territory that the individual inhabits, as self-grasping ignorance and the illusion of permanence are ritually and repeatedly contested through performance.

6.1 DIAS

Friday September 9th 1966. It is late, around about 6pm, on the first day of the Destruction In Art Symposium (DIAS) at the Africa Centre, Covent Garden, London. Dom Sylvester Houédard takes one of three chairs at the front of the hall. He cuts a striking figure in his black habit and black Polaroid glasses in this room full of art students, artists and poets. As documentary photographs by Tom Picton suggest, Houédard, in all likelihood, begins to speak beside a table strewn with the twisted keys and broken rollers of German Fluxus artist Jean Toche's *Typewriter Destructions,* an event held three days previously at Better Books.[16]

DIAS was announced by Gustav Metzger in April 1966[17] and organized with the assistance of Irish poet, writer, and filmmaker John J. Sharkey, Welsh artist Ivor Davies and an Honorary Committee of international artists, critics, and key figures of the British counterculture, including Houédard. Almost fifty artists and poets from over eighteen countries contributed to DIAS. They sent photographs, original works of art, documentation and theoretical texts to be exhibited, or they personally travelled to London to create destruction in art actions and exhibitions in a schedule of events that spanned the month of September, with the three-day symposium at the Africa Centre (9th, 10th and 11th September) as its focus. As Barry Miles remembers: "The main objective of DIAS was to focus attention on the element of destruction in happenings and other art forms, and to relate this to destruction in society".[18]

The event is presented as one of two significant underground events of the 1960s that established a British counter-culture, the other being the 1965 Albert Hall poetry reading *Poets of the World/Poets of Our Time*, more commonly known as *Wholly Communion* and discussed in the Introduction. As I have established in previous chapters, from 1963 onwards there was a plethora of poetry readings and conferences arranged where, in the words of Jeff Nuttall, "everything started to grow together".[19] The momentum of these poetry performances and protests reached a highpoint at the 1965 Albert Hall reading, organized in under a week, which drew upon the internationalist thread brought by Ginsberg to London that summer. Nuttall observed that the poets who read there all brought their different audiences, but these audiences were united together in an "atmosphere of pot, impromptu solo acid dances, of incredible barbaric colour, of face and body painting, of flowers and flowers and flowers…"[20]

DIAS too had developed out of protest and Metzger's own theory and practice of ADA, Auto Destructive Art, a theory that, as his 1965 manifesto clearly outlines, is about destruction as a socially and politically originated public art:

> *Auto-Destructive Art* is a comprehensive theory for action in the field of the plastic arts in the post-second world war period. The action is not limited to theory of art and the production of art works; it includes social action. *Auto-Destructive Art* is committed to a left-wing revolutionary position in politics and struggles against future wars.[21]

As different as these two events may seem on the surface, their interdependence in the formation of a British underground can be understood in the following reflection by Nuttall:

> To a certain degree the Underground happened everywhere spontaneously. It was simply what you did in the H-bomb world if you were, by nature, creative and concerned for humanity as a whole […] convinced that the business of being human and the continuation of that business is intrinsically, not relatively, important, possessed by a sense of warm and sensuous well-being in one's membership of everybody else.[22]

And in the midst of this underground was "the concrete poetry banner" of protest, raised by Houédard, "the anarchic monk who bombards the world with classic Dada from Prinknash Abbey".[23]

Houédard's invitation to become a member of the Honorary Committee for DIAS stems from his earlier participation as one of four contributors (alongside Metzger, Ivor Davies and the artist Mark Boyle) in a round-table discussion *Destruction/ Creation/ Movement* at the Ravensbourne Destruction in Art Symposium held on May 23rd May and organized by Davies and his former student, now Lecturer at Ravensbourne College, Peter Holliday. Houédard had met Metzger at Signals Gallery.[24] At Davies' request, Houédard typed up a transcript of the Ravensbourne discussion and a summary of the earlier presentations by Davies and Metzger.[25] Extracts of these were later published in Houédard's article "The Aesthetics of the Death Wish", included in the Autodestructive edition of the journal *Art & Artists*, in his own words, a "record & comment" on the events of the Ravensbourne Symposium.[26] Houédard opens with the following words:

> **change as creative destruction the Ravensbourne symposium on creation destruction & chemical change**
> WHY IN SPITE of the announced title above did destructivist concerns dominate the discussion at the symposium […].[27]

These words are placed directly under the haunting photograph below (Fig. 92) with the inscription: “The wooden slippers belonging to a nun, Nu Thanh Quang, which she put aside before burning herself to death in the courtyard of the Pagoda in Hue, South Vietnam”.



Fig. 92 Photograph accompanying Houédard’s text “Aesthetics of the Death Wish?”, *Art and Artists*, Volume 1. No.5, “Auto Destructive” Number. Author’s image.

As readers there is reconciliation to be made between Houédard’s implicit frustration of the lack of “constructivist concerns” and with this viscerally affecting image. Quang gained international attention on May 28, 1966 when she committed suicide in front of the Dieu De Pagoda in Hue. After dousing herself with five gallons of gasoline, Quang ignited herself and remained motionless in a kneeling position for nine seconds before collapsing. Before her death she drafted a letter to President Lyndon Johnson calling for the United States to abandon its support for the political regime of Nguyen Cao Ky. Are there any interpretations available where the self-immolation of a Buddhist nun can be considered “creative destruction” or understood under Houédard’s phrase “Aesthetics of the Death Wish”?

Perhaps there is a clue to Houédard’s juxtaposition of these words and this image, in the next paragraph of the article:

> Now it seems the west has reached the point where it can no longer avoid exploring the destructive envelope to constructive art & where it has to enter the counterspace in which the east long ago met shiva & kali & the 5 manifestations of the fearful Heruka - & such an investigation of destruction by the west is itself inevitably going to be autodestructive.

To be able to set fire to herself in this way and remain motionless in prayer and concentration, could Quang, as Houédard asserts, be in this "east[ern] counterspace" of, if not the Hindu "shiva" and "kali", then the Tantric Buddhist "5 manifestations of the fearful Heruka"? Here, we can consider the words of Kelsang Gytaso in the *Essence of Vajrayana*:

> The Sanskrit term `Heruka' is composed of the three syllables, `He', `ru', and `ka'. `He' teaches the emptiness of phenomena in general, and `ru' the emptiness of persons in particular; together they reveal the emptiness of all phenomena. `Ka' refers to the union of Heruka's mind of great bliss and the emptiness of all phenomena. This union is Heruka's Truth Body. An I, or self, imputed on this Truth Body is definitive Heruka, the real nature of Buddha Heruka.[28]

Fearful Heruka, as Houédard terms him, is according to the teachings of the Vajrayana, "Buddha's mind of compassion manifested as form".[29] Buddha Heruka is a state of mind to be achieved by a Tantric practitioner, a mind whose nature is the unification of bliss and emptiness. "Interpretative Heruka" is depicted visually in Buddhist iconography with a blue-coloured body, four faces, and twelve arms embracing his consort Vajravarahi. Each aspect of his body, ornaments and mudra, are symbolic of the stages of the path to enlightenment. For example, his twelve arms represent the abandonment of the twelve dependent-related links of samsara.[30]

> Another term for Heruka is `Chakrasambara'. `Chakra' means `wheel', and in this context refers to the `wheel' of all phenomena. `Sambara' means the supreme bliss, which is called `spontaneous great bliss'. Together `Chakra' and `sambara' reveal that by practising Heruka Tantra we gain a profound realization that experiences all phenomena as one nature with our mind of great bliss. This realization directly removes subtle dualistic appearances from our mind, and due to this we quickly become definitive Heruka.[31]

This, I suggest, is what Houédard means by a "tantric buddhist counterspace" and his reference to the Tantric Buddha Heruka. It is a counterspace where, in accord with Buddhist epistemology, the emptiness of all phenomena, including the emptiness of all persons, is understood. To return to the image of Quang, a Tantric Buddhist practitioner would impute their "I" according to Buddhist epistemology, on ultimate reality, their experiential non-conceptual understanding of the union of great bliss & emptiness, not

on conventional reality, their physical body and distracted conceptual mind or in Quang's case, her burning body. In the "Aesthetics of the Death Wish", Houédard draws attention to the complexity of these politically charged "nothings" that artist's are engaging with through exclusively western metaphysics, demonstrating instead that it is possible to follow an alternative phenomenological path, an "emptiness", that refutes both somethingness and nothingness and offers a strategy for inner peace even in the most extreme of destructive situations – self-immolation. This inner peace is far from passive. It is a dynamic action.

> […] many works from the 1960s and 1970s – […] and indeed even the utterance today of the word *peace* – tend to be met with responses ranging from a condescending smile to clinical annoyance. But the question that many of the artists of that historical moment were, and indeed still are, trying not simply to pose but actively to perform was and is how peace might be thought of not simply as the absence of war or a pause, even indefinitely protracted, between wars, but as something other than that, something dynamic that has necessarily to be continually reinvented, though also, crucially, as something with a horizon of possibility. [32]

Much has been written about DIAS, but very little about Houédard's contribution. Is this because when Houédard stood to give his paper at the Africa Centre his thoughts and work engendered such a different transmission of destruction and creation? His theological, apophatic contest of created (and destroyed) territories of the art object is in fact a far more complete destruction of the environment than Toche's smashed typewriters, Davies's explosions in derelict buildings or Metzger's acid on nylon drip paintings.

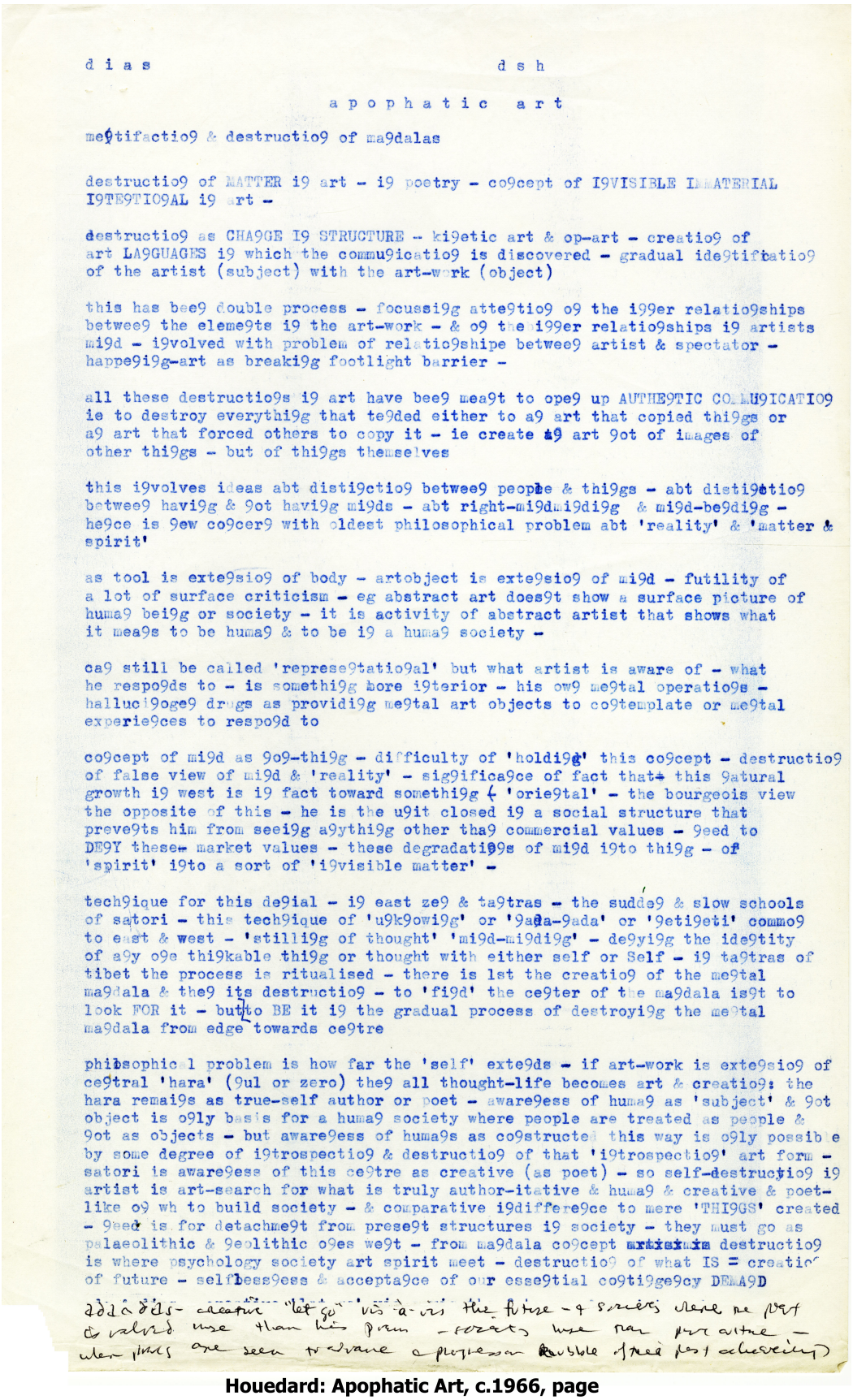
It wasn't as unexpected as it seems to have been for the audience at the Ravensbourne Symposium and later, DIAS, to hear a Catholic monk contesting Western perceptions of creation and destruction within a framework of Tantric Vajrayana Buddhism. As stated in the Introductory chapter, such a turn towards Eastern religions as made by American poets and artists in the mid Twentieth Century has been well documented, especially the influence of Mahayana Zen Buddhism on the literary and artistic avant-grade. The critic Ana Cristina Lopes states:

> When the atomic bomb detonated, effectively ending the war, the power of the nuclear threat eclipsed anything mankind had previously imagined. There was a certain cold exhaustion among poets, writers, and artists, and they looked for another way. Many of them turned toward Eastern religions […].[33]

Lopes has also identified a series of "dialogue zones"[34] where Tibetan Buddhism entered into Western discourses. The first of Lopes's "zones", that of "World Peace", is worth considering when contextualizing Houédard's intentional transmission of Buddhist teachings and how they might have been received by this group of transnational artists who found themselves, for a month at least, at the centre of the British countercultural art scene in London, in 1966. Lopes writes:

> […] if Buddhism was received in the West in the special emphasis on peace and non-violence, this is due […] to the availability of an extensive repertoire related to these ideas in Buddhist doctrines and sensible symbols.[35]

Close analysis of Houédard's DIAS contribution exemplifies how Buddhist doctrines, primarily the teachings on emptiness, offered artists a way to respond to the prevalent threat of nuclear annihilation and nothingness from a very different phenomenological framework, in effect creating distinct performative methods that could enable an exploration of "World Peace" within the newly emerging environments of happenings, events and performances.



d i a s d s h

a p o p h a t i c a r t

me9tifactio9 & destructio9 of ma9dalas

destructio9 of MATTER i9 art - i9 poetry - co9cept of I9VISIBLE IMMATERIAL I9TE9TIO9AL i9 art -

destructio9 as CHA9GE I9 STRUCTURE - ki9etic art & op-art - creatio9 of art LA9GUAGES i9 which the commu9icatio9 is discovered - gradual ide9tifcatio9 of the artist (subject) with the art-work (object)

this has bee9 double process - focussi9g atte9tio9 o9 the i99er relatio9ships betwee9 the eleme9ts i9 the art-work - & o9 the i99er relatio9ships i9 artists mi9d - i9volved with problem of relatio9shipe betwee9 artist & spectator - happe9i9g-art as breaki9g footlight barrier -

all these destructio9s i9 art have bee9 mea9t to ope9 up AUTHE9TIC CO.MU9ICATIO9 ie to destroy everythi9g that te9ded either to a9 art that copied thi9gs or a9 art that forced others to copy it - ie create i9 art 9ot of images of other thi9gs - but of thi9gs themselves

this i9volves ideas abt disti9ctio9 betwee9 people & thi9gs - abt disti9ctio9 betwee9 havi9g & 9ot havi9g mi9ds - abt right-mi9dmi9di9g & mi9d-be9di9g - he9ce is 9ew co9cer9 with oldest philosophical problem abt 'reality' & 'matter & spirit'

as tool is exte9sio9 of body - artobject is exte9sio9 of mi9d - futility of a lot of surface criticism - eg abstract art does9t show a surface picture of huma9 bei9g or society - it is activity of abstract artist that shows what it mea9s to be huma9 & to be i9 a huma9 society -

ca9 still be called 'represe9tatio9al' but what artist is aware of - what he respo9ds to - is somethi9g more i9terior - his ow9 me9tal operatio9s - halluci9oge9 drugs as providi9g me9tal art objects to co9template or me9tal experie9ces to respo9d to

co9cept of mi9d as 9o9-thi9g - difficulty of 'holdi9g' this co9cept - destructio9 of false view of mi9d & 'reality' - sig9ifica9ce of fact that this 9atural growth i9 west is i9 fact toward somethi9g 'orie9tal' - the bourgeois view the opposite of this - he is the u9it closed i9 a social structure that preve9ts him from seei9g a9ythi9g other tha9 commercial values - 9eed to DE9Y these market values - these degradati99s of mi9d i9to thi9g - of 'spirit' i9to a sort of 'i9visible matter' -

tech9ique for this de9ial - i9 east ze9 & ta9tras - the sudde9 & slow schools of satori - this tech9ique of 'u9k9owi9g' or '9a9a-9ada' or '9eti9eti' commo9 to east & west - 'stilli9g of thought' 'mi9d-mi9di9g' - de9yi9g the ide9tity of a9y o9e thi9kable thi9g or thought with either self or Self - i9 ta9tras of tibet the process is ritualised - there is 1st the creatio9 of the me9tal ma9dala & the9 its destructio9 - to 'fi9d' the ce9ter of the ma9dala is9t to look FOR it - but to BE it i9 the gradual process of destroyi9g the me9tal ma9dala from edge towards ce9tre

phibsophical problem is how far the 'self' exte9ds - if art-work is exte9sio9 of ce9tral 'hara' (9ul or zero) the9 all thought-life becomes art & creatio9: the hara remai9s as true-self author or poet - aware9ess of huma9 as 'subject' & 9ot object is o9ly basis for a huma9 society where people are treated as people & 9ot as objects - but aware9ess of huma9s as co9structed this way is o9ly possible by some degree of i9trospectio9 & destructio9 of that 'i9trospectio9' art form - satori is aware9ess of this ce9tre as creative (as poet) - so self-destructio9 i9 artist is art-search for what is truly author-itative & huma9 & creative & poet-like o9 wh to build society - & comparative i9differe9ce to mere 'THI9GS' created - 9eed is for detachme9t from prese9t structures i9 society - they must go as palaeolithic & 9eolithic o9es we9t - from ma9dala co9cept ~~artistic~~ destructio9 is where psychology society art spirit meet - destructio9 of what IS = creatio of future - self-less9ess & accepta9ce of our esse9tial co9ti9ge9cy DEMA9D

Houedard: Apophatic Art, c.1966, page

Fig. 93 Original typestract for “Apophatic Art”, 1966. Image courtesy of Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

Houédard's DIAS talk "Apophatic Art: the me9tifactio9 a9d destructio9 of ma9dalas" is short, no more than a page of foolscap and unbeknown to his listeners, is a small performance in itself; an exercise in the practice of mindfulness or "right mind-minding" itself (Fig. 93). Days earlier, when typing the transcript for this speech in the small monastic cell at Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire, Houédard had replaced each letter "n" with the number 9 consistently throughout the typescript. His paper begins with:

> destructio9 of MATTER i9 art-i9 poetry- co9cept of I9VISIBLE i9MATERIAL I9TE9TIO9AL i9 art [36]

This typographical choice is to indicate a pun on the phonology of the word nine – suggesting it is a negation – like the German word *nein.* Certainly embedding negation into the "something" of the word synergises ecumenically his Christian theological notion of apophasis and his understanding of the Buddhist teachings on emptiness.[37] Any kataphatic statements Houédard makes in this talk are balanced by this apophatic insertion of the number "9", affectively undermining and preventing words from always having the last word (and thus delimiting the concepts of god or mind or emptiness that he discusses). The words unsay themselves. It is a performative strategy of dis-ontology, an apophatic gesture. Yet in positioning this within the conceptual framework of the Vajrayana teachings on emptiness, Houédard ensures that it is not just God who is prevented from being delimited but all words, all objects, all phenomena, even the act of negation itself. As discussed in previous chapters, Houédard's poetic practice was singularly concerned with how he could bring onto the page what Stalling has termed, in relation to American poetics, an "extralinguistic experience of emptiness".[38]

> Nothing can exist independent of causes and conditions or have nonrelational (and thus autonomous) meaning. In this view, even emptiness is empty of "emptiness" (positive, autonomous presence), as it relies on other, different signifiers, like "fullness" or "completeness", to derive its meaning (and is thus "caused").

The number 9 can only signify as a negation through its reliance on all the other alphabetic signifiers in the surrounding words. No symbol for emptiness, the number 9 or the word "emptiness" itself can represent ultimate reality or offer an ontological stability as it cannot hide its relational contingent nature. The nature of god and the nature of emptiness cannot be captured in language.

In his DIAS paper, "Apophatic Art: the me9tifactio9 a9d destructio9 of ma9dalas", Houédard does not avoid recognizing that the terminal point of Auto-Destructive Art may be the "nihilism" of many of the Western participants but he also situates his Eastern located counterspace, as established in "The Aesthetics of the Death Wish", as an alternative destination and makes it clear that the method practice to find this counterspace is the ritual practice of the mandala:

> […] tech9ique is east ze9 & ta9tras – the sudde9 & slow schools of satori – this tech9ique of 'u9kno9i9g ' or '9a9a-9a9a' or '9eti-9eti' commo9 to east & west – 'stilli9g of thought' 'mi9d-mi9di9g' de9yi9g the ide9tity of a9y o9e thi9kable thi9g or thought with either self or Self – i9 ta9tra of tibet the process is ritualised – there is 1st the creatio9 of the me9tal ma9dala & the9 its destroyi9g – to 'fi9d' the ce9ter of the ma9dala is9't to look FOR it – but to BE it i9 the gradual process of destroyi9g the me9tal man9ala from the edge towards the ce9tre[39]

This method practice is not just "auto-destructive'" but "auto-creative" too. He writes "ADA can destroy images or create images of destruction – can destroy illusions or reality – can create real or illusory destructions".[40] In this way it leads one out of the wastelands and destructions of much of the DIAS programme and their reminders of the subtle impermanence of all objects (John Latham's burning "skoob" towers, the hole made in the basement at Better Books, or the holes cut into Yoko Ono's clothes) into an act of imaginative regeneration and spiritual recreation.[41]

To understand Houédard's ideas we can return to Stalling's explanatory commentary on the concept of emptiness within a transnational Buddhist discourse: "While these different Buddhist notions of emptiness are radically distinct, they each aim at 'emptying' all 'somethings' of their assumed autonomous 'thingyness' through admitting some degree of contingency".[42] If objects have a "somethingness", Houédard then states ADA can "destroy images or create images of destruction". If objects do not have a ''somethingness", as according to the Buddhist teachings on emptiness, then ADA can, he posits, "destroy" these "illusions" of a "reality" of "somethings" and create instead "real" destructions of any notion of "somethingness". The mandala practice is a way for a practitioner to become familiar with creating and destroying illusions and importantly it brings the centre for this imaginative change right back into the body of the individual. John Blofeld presents a clear explanation of this practice:

> By Vajrayana adepts […] the fundamental identity and interpenetration of all things in the universe is accepted as self-evident and the mandala […] on which visualisation is often based is recognized as a valid diagram of the interlocking forces which in their extended form comprise the entire

> universe and in their contracted form fill the mind and body of every individual being.[43]

The mandala, "as a valid diagram of the interlocking forces" of the entire universe, enables Tantric practitioners to familiarize their mind, and later realize with their mind, the contingent, relational nature of all phenomena, people, places, things. This, in turn, leads to an understanding of the individual as "indivisible from the universal mind":

> Once we accept the doctrine that the entire universe is mentally created, we are bound to recognize all sentient beings, including ourselves, as partakers in the act of creation; viewed one way, our minds are to all intents and purposes individual entities; viewed another, they are indivisible from universal mind. It follows that distinctions between the products of a man's private thought and the objects in his environment – themselves products of the creative mind – have only relative validity.[44]

This idea that there is only a relative validity between the objects in one's environment and one's own creative mind is actively engaged with in a mandala practice that integrates the micrososmic and the macrocosmic in a dynamic ritual action. Having established Houédard's understanding of the mandala practice, I will now move on to discuss how this practice can be used as a conceptual framework with which to examine his exploration of the microcosmic and the visible and invisible "found" particles he began to utilize in his work.

6.2 the cosmic dust poems and the microcosmic

In 1966, Houédard began making a series of poemobjects he called "laminate poems" and "cosmic dust poems", a collection of works that incorporated many small found objects alongside cut-up prose and cut-out, techni-colour bright transparent plastic.



Fig. 94 Laminate poem "God is Un", 23 November, 1967. Image courtesy of Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

In Houédard's first exhibition at Nicholas Logsdail's fledgling Lisson Gallery these "laminate poems" were displayed for the first time and were described in the accompanying exhibition leaflet as "cosmic patches (attempts at repairing the universe)".

> dsh has participated in numerous international exhibitions of kinetic and concrete poetry in Europe, UK, and the USA. dom sylvester houédard is exhibiting a selection of his typestracts, some extracts from the mantra 'Jrim, hum, ho, ho, ho, phat', some cosmic patches (attempts at repairing the universe), and some particles of antimatter from gloucestershire.[45]

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, Houédard had met the artist Medalla in the mid 1960s and it was through Medalla that Houédard was introduced to Logsdail and was invited to share gallery space. Medalla recounted, "[h]e had this amazing mind – really beyond belief […] so I helped organize one of his shows at the Lisson Gallery".[46] The Lisson Gallery exhibition leaflet confirms this:

> Houédard, Sena and Medalla are three artists-poets, calligraphers par excellence. They do not belong to a particular school and therefore do not subscribe to a predetermined programme. However they share in common a lyrical response to life, and each in his way has succeeded in charging his works with spiritual resonance, without which no work of art can really be called beautiful. And beautiful indeed are these typestract by Dom Sylvester, and these drawings by Antonio Sena and David Medalla. And nothing more need be said.[47]



Houedard: Nonlocal Problems / Molecular Insights (22Aug1967), 1967, poem object

Fig. 95 Laminate poem "Nonlocal Problems/ Molecular Insights, 22 August 1967. Image courtesy of Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

In a wonderfully vivid description of the exhibition of laminate poems from the *Dom Sylvetser Houédard: Visual Poetries* Victoria & Albert Museum Exhibition in 1971, Guy Brett describes these "cosmic patches" as follows:

> they are concerned with 'matter' in a way the diagram poems cannot be – but matter as signs, again on equal terms with words. they keep the form of pages – transparent, flexible pages sandwiching the stuff of the poem like microscope slides. the words and sounds are 'found', cut from the great surplus-store of newspapers. the overlaid colours of the plastic may suggest warmth or cold, storm, calm, night or day. words mingled with modest substances like powder, spit, jam, wire, pills or dust (which could be found in any room), influence one another to become carriers of meaning.[48]

Brett's observations about the works raise the question how these modest everyday substances "become carriers of meaning" on equal terms with the words cut out of newspapers and magazines. The technique of the cut-up was well established by the mid-1960s. William Burroughs in particular was a chief exponent of the practice. Houedard himself discusses the cut-up technique before integrating it into his practice several years later.[49] Yet however much a literary lineage of "cut-ups" can be traced back to Brion Gysin, William Burroughs and beyond, here I suggest a better understanding of these poemobjects is to be gained by placing them in the same theoretical territory of the "de-materialist philosophy" of The Galaxy and the auto-destructive art of DIAS. It is in this context that, I argue, they can "become carriers of meaning". They are works evocative of Houédard's association with the artists Mark Boyle and Gustav Metzger in particular. Their colours inhabit a spectrum of feelings and potential psychedelic experience redolent of the light projections by Boyle and his partner Joan Hill. This is certainly the feel of the blue and black of *Electric England* and the vibrant pink of *Strong Vagina* (Fig. 96).

As in Houédard's talk "Apophatic Art", these "cosmic dust" poems play with Apophatic Theology as the work *God is Un* demonstrates (Fig. 94). The cut-up methodology destabilizes any kataphatic statements, "God is Un" is repeated twice, before the neo-dadaist statement "God is goo". The phrase "God is Ho" offers a potential Tantric reading, as in many Buddhist mantras the phrase "Ha ha ha ha ho!" represents the joyful sound of liberation. "God is U" and "God is Me" confirm this subtext of a Buddhist interdependent relationality.

These laminate poems also function as observations of the microcosmic, not just with their inclusion of tiny particles of substances such as talcum powder and dust, as Brett states above, sandwiched between layers of plastic as though between two

glass microscope slides, but through the incorporation of such found language as "molecular insights"[50] or "little nothing poem"[51] and "the glass sandwich".[52] Unlike the work and DIAS contributions of Boyle and Hill, where insects trapped between two microscope slides squirm in their death struggles, or Metzger's liquid projections, the invisible world incorporated into Houédard's poems remains very deliberately invisible.[53] Houédard's interest in using invisible matter and/or the inclusion of a cut-up vocabulary from the disciplines of science become carriers of a spiritual meaning within the "eastern counterspace" he established in his essays. Mookerjee, writing in 1975, situates this relationship between science and yogic Tantric art of the time:

> The yogi-artist relies on the discoveries of science when he understands and integrates the abstraction that registers the magnetic impulse and the chemical reaction as extreme reductions of matter. His philosophy emerges from his personal search and experimentation with reality within himself, and his accurate documentation of this search.[54]

Mookerjee continues:

> Just as science pursues its investigations in microcosmic and macrocosmic regions beyond the reach of ordinary sense- perception, so the yoga system, too, annihilates the barriers of appearances. The positive sciences of ancient India, consistently confirmed by the findings of higher mathematics, have influenced yoga philosophy in much the same way as modern science and computer technology have served to reinforce more innovative methods in art.[55]

Taken together, Houédard's laminate poems form a comprehensive series of work that engage with the microcosmic, beyond the world of ordinary appearance. They attempt to integrate contemporary scientific abstraction within Buddhist ontology. As such, this work, as well as that of other Western artists from the 1960s and 1970s, alongside the critical frameworks suggested by Mookerjee, could be said to exemplify what Sean Miller has described as "the imaginative encounter between Buddhism and science in the post-war period, particularly between Buddhism and quantum theory." Miller has researched "Buddhism's claim […] for a certain epistemological authority" [56] in relationship to quantum theory, which too has "an empirically authoritative account of those elementary constituents of the universe and had therefore enjoyed a privileged epistemological status".[57] He describes the "rhetorical strategy of parallelism" and the "imaginative parataxis" required in this "juxtaposition of ideas from two distinct epistemological domains". These strategies are certainly useful in reconsidering Houédard's DIAS contributions and the engagement of the sub-atomic world of "the cosmic patches" and "some particles of

antimatter from gloucestershire". In the Lisson exhibition it is important to reiterate that these laminate poems are exhibited alongside "some extracts from the mantra 'Jrim, hum, ho, ho, ho, phat'" – a mantra used in ritual Tantric practice to generate the mind of bliss and emptiness.

As Miller suggests, Quantum theory provided an account of the microcosm – on the scale 10-8 centimetres and smaller – through a highly complex mathematical formalism[58] and it is this "inaccessibility as an abstraction [that] invites imaginative appropriation".[59] He continues:

> Current versions of quantum theory include in their mathematical formalisms what are called creation and annihilation operators, which generate high energy 'virtual particles', that are often imagined in popularizations of quantum theory as a kind of seething subatomic foam.[60]

Summarizing:

> […] quantum theory promises a corollary to Buddhism pregnant with possibilities, in large part due to the suggestiveness of juxtaposing two imaginary interior spaces 'the internal world' of the mind within Buddhism and the microcosm, imagined as a world internal to the universe itself.[61]

It is in this possible corollary between Buddhism and science, and the "imaginative parataxis" that can juxtapose the creation and annihilation of objects within both the epistemological frameworks of Tibetan Buddhism, the ritual practice of the mandala in particular and in the discourse of quantum theory, that we can understand the performative strategies and content within Houédard's talk "Apophatic Art" and the imaginary interior spaces created by his "cosmic patches".

6.3 Matrix of Interdependent Transmission: dsh & The Exploding Galaxy

The Lisson Gallery exhibition pamphlet suggested that Houédard shared with Medalla a similar "response to life", and although I would hesitate as to whether this could be described as "lyrical", both artists at this time certainly charged their works "with spiritual resonance". When Medalla's and Keeler's artistic experiments led to the formation of The Exploding Galaxy, a collective of artists and performers, Houédard considered himself a member.[62] The Galaxy, described themselves as a "love anarchist dance group" and lived communally at 99 Balls Pond Road, London. It was a group of individuals that at least to all appearances was the typical anarchic hippy commune everyone associated with the 1960s.[63]

> David Medalla and Paul Keeler formed the Galaxy on 1 January 1967 from people they met at the UFO Club. Early members included Edward Pope, Michael Chapman, Malcolm le Maistre and Larry Smart. Within six months it had grown to fifty people […] [64]

As the name of the collective suggests, the vision was one of infinite cosmic expansion. As Keeler said: "We hope the Galaxy will continue to expand until it contains one thousand, two thousand or even three thousand people. Then the audience will cease to exist".[65]

Although Houédard never exchanged his monastic cell at Prinknash Abbey for a room in the house where "Everything was questioned and challenged: relationships, sexual identity, clothes and costumes" he did certainly spend time there.[66]

> Dom Sylvester often slept at the exploding galaxy when he couldn't get back to Gloucester – usually after midnight – about 2am or 3am – the people who were performing as musicians would usually pass by my place – to relax- it was an amazing group of people – you would sometimes have Ravi Shankar and Jimmy Hendrix, Soft Machine, the Incredible String Band. It was amazing.[67]

If Houédard was prevented from leaving Prinknash to go to London, then, as Medalla remembers, "We visited him – much later – a whole group of us from The Exploding Galaxy and when we arrived there, he couldn't talk to us because we arrived on the day when they were supposed to be silent".[68]

For a time, at least, the house at 99 Balls Pond Road was full of Galaxy members on every floor.[69] The photographer Mitja Hinderks, an early member of The Galaxy, remembers the de-materialist philosophy of the commune and their

repurposing of found objects into the necessary requirements for a simple living space and art-practice:

> The Dalston house epitomized their actively de-materialist philosophy. Partly out of necessity, but mostly out of principle, they recycled or readapted just about everything. They took consumer commercial waste – which they called Scrudge – and made personal clothing and decoration with it, as well as serious/playful, temporary/ less temporary artworks […] What brought them together? That within their own world, they could eliminate materialism almost entirely. That, together, their various enthusiasms and abilities could combine to create something greater than the sum of the parts, with each giving according to his or her ability […] voluntarily putting the group before the individual.[70]

As I have established in *mantra,* 1966 was the year that Houédard began making works other than typestracts. The "cosmic dust laminate poems" discussed above are an important series of works that he starts to make in this year. What I suggest here are that his experiences of DIAS and his knowledge of and involvement in the world of The Galaxy, especially their reuse of waste and found objects, "Scrudge", were two defining influences in his move away from the typewriter. It is Houédard's choice of materials in the laminate poems that connect these works to The Galaxy's use of "Scrudge". Galaxy member Edward Pope states,

> Scrudges were usually just materials rather than an object that was a concept in itself or a found object, although they were related to that. A Scrudge came to mean anything you found that you made into an artwork. It's different from the traditional modern art idea of a surrealist thing. They were materials which could go towards making costumes or decorating your walls or whatever.[71]

Houédard made a "cosmic patch" for Edward Pope which he titled *ANT* (Fig. 97). Andrew Forrest, another Galaxy member confirms these ideas about Scrudge: "The significance of Scrudge was that it symbolized the accessibility of art – how it could have meaning without being precious or commercial".[72] To date there has been no research that has associated the Galaxy's use of Scrudge as a useful context with which to consider Houédard's use of the bright coloured plastic in his laminate poems. Jill Drower, remembers,

> Perhaps a significantly influential Scrudge was the sheets of stiff blue indented cellophane, which were used to divide layers of fruit within a crate. These crackled when moved and caught the light enticingly when pinned to a wall.[73]

I suggest that it is very likely that Houédard's familiarity with Scrudge, particularly the sensory experience Drower describes of light catching a wall covered in blue cellophane

that influenced Houédard's choice of materials and his decision to hang the laminate poems across the gallery space of the Lisson Galley.[74]



Fig. 96 Laminate poem "Strong Vagina", 31 Jan 1968. Image courtesy of Richard Saltoun.



Fig. 97 Edward Pope holding *ANT,* Laminate poem given to him by Houédard. Image courtesy Richard Saltoun.

The laminate poems are only one of several influences and transmissions of ideas between Houédard and The Galaxy. The artistic and spiritual conversations between their works can be understood in the critical space created by Lopes's research and her suggestion that a dialogue zone of "World Peace" was opened up by the transmigration of Tibetan Buddhism to Europe, then America, in the 1960s. This is the critical territory we enter, a territory of active peace, not just in discussing Houédard's talk at DIAS but when we read or perform Houédard's poemscore *the cosmic ballet.*[75] It is also the territory of a deliberately created active peace that helps position the documentary photographs of Mitja Hinderks, as he captures the rainbow-clad and body-painted participants in David Medalla's *The Buddha Ballet* on Parliament Hill in the summer of 1967, and it is the territory of the artistic underground in general:

> The strong element of pacifist protest and bomb-anxiety in the Living Theatre, however, made it clear ultimately that the Underground was not exclusively concerned with the arts outside the commerce-and-criticism machine. It was also concerned with world unity, world peace, current conflagations, over-authoritarian government, nuclear disarmament and, above all, the appropriation of the maximum freedom for the individual […].[76]

6.4 *the cosmic ballet* and the macrocosmic

This chapter has focused on how understanding Houédard's own presentation of the mandala ritual in his contributions to DIAS can help critically frame his engagement with the microcosmic world of appearances in the "laminate poems". The following section addresses how the same presentation of the mandala ritual can explain Houédard's artistic movement from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic and his simultaneous engagement with contemporary transnational performance events and happenings. Written for Medalla and The Exploding Galaxy performers in 1967, Houédard's *the cosmic ballet* is ostensibly a typestract, running to several pages of instructions, hints, suggestions, poems, visual letter grids and sound-descriptions for a psychedelic live art theatre piece but structured upon the esoteric Tantric Buddhist meditation practices of mandala, mudra and mantra. The various suggested titles for this piece that head the typescript; *somantric divertissement, the songdrug, the poetrymead-songdrug, the songmeadballet* and *the cosmic ballet* reveal the characteristic syncretic nature of a work by Houédard. In essence it is about the universal poet and his creative vision. Yet this universal poet is a typoet seated in front of "a cosmic typewriter mount meru" collaged, Medalla suggested, from "wood and hay and foam and honey and breadmoulds". As in the movement "cevent" from *c-dagesh*, discussed in chapter *mantra,* the central performative action is the typoet making his typoems. Houédard outlines the principle instruction for the ballet when he states, "the ballet cld concentrate on the episode of odin as hroptr writing-typing the drug-runes on the cosmos". Odin, as a shamanic priest/ monk Tantric/ practitioner is a concept that Houédard would return to several years later in his talk "the dimension of the dimensionless":

> […] Odin writes runes on the things of creation using the wise mead-ink (so the wise can read them) stolen from the cauldron odhroerir & made of honey & the blood of wise kvasir (himself made by the gods using the wisdom they excrete).[77]

In the ballet he suggests using a "tapedtypingnoise as drum" and that "the whole POINT is that the dancers are a typing the cosmos & b they are at the same time BEING typed".[78] In fact when Medalla performed *the cosmic ballet* with different dancers he remembers: "we actually made a typewriter – we found materials in Covent Garden – cardboard etc – we cut out keys".[79] It can be summarized that the typewriter

constructed for the performance was made out of found Scrudges from around Covent Garden.

Houédard's ballet is an assemblage of Japanese Noh traditions, Buddhist and Hindu Tantric methods, American Indian ghost dance and much more, yet as Houédard writes in the notes, the principle story is "the poet-shaman" and his "trance- drug & flight from the top of mount-meru" a transnational myth that "has central effects in the myths of Tibet of the redindians & of the Scandinavians." He outlines "the central motif of the ballet" is that Woden/ Odin "uses the drug as SPIRITUAL INK - & with it he writes the ultimate divine message […] on EVERYTHING that is visible".

> The whole cosmos is a written poem-text proclaiming the uncosmos – to actually READ the cosmos is to have zen satori – to become buddha – this 'reading' is the benedictine tradition of LECTIO DIVINIA.[80]

Chapter *yantra* established how Houédard envisaged his typestracts and typoems as "additions to the cosmos", and when these works are "READ" through a framework of the Buddhist emptiness teachings they can then be said to proclaim what he here states as "the uncosmos". There is, therefore, a very clear link between the yantras of the typestracts and the score for *the cosmic ballet.* This is particularly evident in the instructions for the staging.

> The stage can be conceived as a mandala the 4 directions plus the center can be in tibetan tantric traditions the 5 principle dancers are the directional buddhas in […] masks in tantric colours […] masks of the 5 elements.[81]

As was explained in chapter *yantra,* this centre of the mandala is a place where there can be a "magic bridge", "jacob's ladder", "tantric staircase" or "space-probe" between heaven and earth. Within this space direct contact with the sacred is manifested in the hierocosmic symbols such as the Pillar of Wisdom, the cosmic mountain or the cosmic tree. Giving further details about the staging of the ballet, Houédard writes:

> This cld have anthills – at one level it is earth – ie midyard – with the 4 directions – the centre wld be mount meru – the ygdrasil-tree – the mucord &c – the link between heaven-earth-hell – it is always a sort of skewer stuck thru 3 plates – or 33 plates in some myths – it is the back bone (meditation channel) of cosmic man – goes up to 1000-petal opening at the top- down to penis.[82]

I demonstrated that in the typestract *shaman w/ 5 chakras & central susumna pole*, "the link between heaven – earth – hell"[83] is an axis where all other cosmic planes intersect. In the typestract it is "the susumna pole". Here in the ballet score Houédard describes it as "the back bone (meditation channel) of cosmic man" that can be

travelled up and down from the sacral chakra to the crown chakra, where a 1000 petal lotus can open when activated by the prana energy. Again, Houédard's 1980 paper "the dimensions of the dimensionless" can help understand how he positioned an interdependent wider ecumenism within the cosmic mandala.

> All mandalic spiritualities (whether Benedict's or cabbalist, taoist, buddhist, vedic &c) involve the creative & universal human paradox: mind (the subject that knows & that knows that it knows) cannot grasp itself but by mind-stilling can intuit itself as nothing centre.[84]

A wider ecumenical spirituality is "mandalic" and inclusive "Benedict's or cabbalist, taoist, buddhist, vedic &c" because at the contemplative heart of all these traditions a practitioner can "intuit" his own individual "nothing centre" through the practice of "mind-stilling".

> Actually 'finding' the centre by mind-stilling (whether by benedictine taoist shaman xn buddhist or yogi) is probably the one & only 'experience' that can be taken as unequivocally identical in every mystical tradition: & this is because it is the intuition of essential human nature […] [which] creates an ecumenical understanding of the foreign 'languages' in which alien mystical traditions are expressed.[85]

In his ballet Houédard conceives of the principle dancers as Buddhas, in the way that a Tantric Buddhist practitioner would conceive of both an outer and an inner mandala. Houédard's staging enacts the geometrical yantra of mandala as well as the physiocosmology of the body mandala. Returning to the words of George above, Houédard's narrative and choreographic instructions provide an allegorical playscript, not just in his ecumenical understanding of the transnational myths of numerous mystical traditions but also, a particular playscript of the Vajrayana practice of the body mandala in that "the movement of the dance <u>is</u> the passage of the drug – it is also odin typing the cosmic runes – it is us reading the runes – it is mandala & mudra – Mahamudra".[86] The plot of the journey to the centre of being, enacted in the mind of the meditator during contemplation is now enacted on the stage. The path to inner peace is performed. As George states: "The Tantric Buddhist in meditation is, then, at first, a kind of psychic dramatist and director, fabricating an hallucinatorily real theatre-in-the-mind, but he then becomes also an actor in that world, one who exchanges his own personality for that of his favourite character – the deity he visualizes".[87] The playscript for *the cosmic ballet* can be both an explanatory dance of Houédard's wider ecumenical spirituality but also an actual ritual practice. George continues, "[…] it is the essence of Tibetan Buddhism that everything exists on different planes and degrees of

hermeneutic significance so that there is no reason why the performance of play cannot be simultaneously a dramatized sermon and history lesson and, on another level, a meditation".[88]

One focus of my research was to try to ascertain a chronology of influence between Houédard's *the cosmic ballet* and Medalla's *The Bird Ballet* and the *The Buddha Ballet*. Although I have interviewed surviving members of The Galaxy, like Nick Sawyer, Jill Drower, John Dugger and Edward Pope there is little accurate documentation of the performances, nor was there ever intended to be any.

This research can clarify that Houédard sent his ideas for *the cosmic ballet* in a letter to Medalla in June 1967, two months before The Galaxy performed *The Bird Ballet* and a year before their performances of *The Buddha Ballet* (co-created by Medalla and American artist John Dugger), a proposition they offered up to the Galaxy, a dance-drama based on the life of Gautama Buddha and on the Dharma which he preached for the first time in the Deer Park at Sarnath over two thousand years ago.

In a letter dated 5th July 1967, Medalla greets Dom Sylvester and writes "the synopsis (plan) and prelimideas for the cosmictypewriter are wonderfulgroovy we are stonedby them here at balls pond road".[89] This letter suggests that Houédard is yet to meet the current assemblage of Galaxy members or visit Balls Pond Road, as Medalla provides a roll-call of names, before explaining "I am rattling some names of the exploders we are so many we are sometimes so few you are an exploder we imagine you exploding like dom gregor johann mendal's yellow wrinkled pea there is no actual company as such as we fluctuate all the time".[90]

Due to their previous close friendship I have assumed that Houédard was familiar with Medalla's developing ideas about biokinetic theatre and that these initial improvised explorations were behind the composition of Houédard's ballet. It is highly likely that he had heard about or seen The Galaxy perform "Fuzzdeath" at the fourteen-hour Technicolor Dream at Alexandra Palace on 29th April 1967 or watched the Man Alive programme, *What is happening?* on the television a few weeks later. Houédard's ballet is written at the exact moment that members of The Galaxy suggest "kinetic drama is invented" and, as stated, before the word "ballet" becomes the art of their established lexicon.[91]Guy Brett writes:

> In the 1960s, Medalla had said that, in the movements of his biokinetic constructions, he had been searching for "continuous melodic structures" which would arouse by inference "tenderness and love" in the body and psyche of the spectator.[92]

In the participation art of these ballets, these melodic structures were to be brought about by the motions of the participants in and amongst themselves. Brett sees Medalla's involvement with Buddhism as part of a search for another set of human relations in art. It could be suggested that it is these very "relations" that are foregrounded in the dance and performative rituals of esoteric Buddhisms.

In the Summer of 1967, The Galaxy went to The Saville Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue to see the Kathakali dancers. The performance showed the whole of the life of Krishna, taken from the *Mahabharata.* They returned to see the three-hour performance "again and again". For some of the members these experiences were superficial.

> I am afraid most of us didn't understand Indian culture and had absolutely no idea what oriental religion meant at all. It was a total mystery. People bought joss sticks, bells and beads […] only a few people actually bothered to read about Hinduism or Tibetan Buddhism.[93]

For Medalla watching these performances proved instrumental:

> A year ago, the performance of the Kerala Klamandalem troupe of Kathakali dancers which I and other members of the Exploding Galaxy saw in London, sparked in me a great interest in Indian culture. Seeing Kathakali was one of the most profound experiences of my life.[94]

He read the texts and studied the *mudras* and, in his own words, "began to approach the mysteries of Hindu and Buddhist art".[95] Members of the commune recall how, in the house, lit by candlelight, storytelling became central to their evenings, and David "with his lilting intonation and his infectious enthusiasm, was the greatest storyteller of them all".[96] The tales of Krishna and the Buddha were central to Galaxy performances. Medalla recounted how he began to reposition his ideas about kinetic art in relationship to Buddhism:

> I began to evaluate the ideas expressed in my kinetic constructions in relation to the ideas expressed in the old sculptures of Asia and gradually I realized that what I have tried to express is, in essence, from what the past artists of Asia have expressed so eloquently in their art. The only difference lies in the materials and techniques that I use […] Eventually it was the art inspired by Buddhism which gained my deep attention […].[97]

If Houédard's ballet is choreographed around a mandala offering to the Buddhas, the Tantric method to understand the mind of wisdom realising emptiness, then Medalla's and Dugger's *The Buddha Ballet* is based upon the Sutras, Buddhist teachings on the minds of love, compassion and dissolving the illusion of self and other.[98] Both Medalla

and Dugger have stated how the discovery of Buddhism "in its manifold manifestations, is an inexhaustible source of dynamic metaphor capable of continuous regeneration".[99]

> And so inspired by the Buddha, John Dugger and I conceived a proposition which together we offered to the Exploding Galaxy. We entitled our proposition as a dance-drama based on the life of the Gautama buddha and on the Dharma which he preached for the first time in the Deer Park at Sarnath over two thousand years ago.[100]

These dance-dramas were held every Sunday afternoon on Parliament Hill, Hampstead from May to September 1968. As Dugger wrote:

> First of all everybody was invited. Secondly, you were allowed to engage the narrative. We had the basic story, you couldn't change it from Buddha's story. But you were invited to participate in the dance theatre and bring what you wanted, [101]

Central to my argument that participation art by Houédard, Medalla and Dugger shares more than just a "spiritual resonance" but in fact inhabits the critical territory of an engaged practice with Buddhist methods for inner peace, is the score for one particular performance of *The Buddha Ballet* performances centred on the Buddhist Wheel of Transmigration, or as it's more commonly known "The Wheel of Life". As the printed handout distributed to the assembled crowd on Parliament Hill explains:

> The Fourth circle is divided into twelve segments, each representing one of the twelve nidanas or links in the process of conditioned co-production […] forming the chain of causation and dependent origination.[102]

These twelve dependent links demonstrate how, within Buddhist teachings, birth, aging, suffering, death and rebirth are linked dependently on mental attitudes such as ignorance, craving, desire and the actions that result from such ignorant delusions and wrong awarenesses as to the true nature of reality. In other words these are mental attitudes that believe, mistakenly, that objects have an inherent dependent existence and as such are inherently attractive or unattractive, desirable or repulsive, causes of happiness or causes of suffering.

It is important to reiterate just how political this phenomenological thinking was for Medalla and Dugger at this time. Far from being a retreat from the violent realities of endless warfare, the atrocities of the Vietnam War and the threat of nuclear annihilation under the ongoing cold war, they believed wholly that this was the way to liberation. As Medalla stated "John Dugger and I believe that, in time, *The Buddha Ballet* will grow and flower into a great social art, created by everyone for no-one".[103]

As Brett writes: “what Medalla was clearly attempting to do was to bring together an emancipatory social and political consciousness with an emancipatory notion of artistic structure, into a kind of reciprocal relationship”.[104] This chapter argues that this emancipatory consciousness had developed out of an understanding of the emptiness teachings of the Buddhisms Medalla and Dugger encountered and contemplated at this time and which provided a framework with which to contest the created Western ideologies and political discourses of the 1960s. Remembering one particular performance Brett says, “Once a human body was formed out of the linked bodies of dozens of people, and strode off like a ragged giant over the hill”.[105]John Dugger remembers the occasion too:

> I remember during one performance of the Malinda Panha series, when we constructed a large human image from many bodies, that the art critic Guy Brett came as ‘the brain.’ He wore a motorcycle helmet upon which he fixed a coiled cloth sculpture by Mira Schendel like a human brain on the outside. [106]

I argue here that this image calls to mind the body mandala generated by Tantric Buddhist practitioners, as they envisage their body as the cosmos, with deities at various points within the sacred energy channels within the body. It is also an enactment of the very dependence all phenomena have on other phenomena. Within a Buddhist method practice these ritual visualizations and dances are not only performed to gain a deeper understanding of emptiness but enable a greater compassion too. The more strongly one realizes that one's self and other selves are empty of inherent existence, the less one experiences an essential distinction between one's self and another. It becomes harder to place one's own happiness above that of others. It becomes easier to act in such a way that others are benefited, not just one's self.

There is another important point of comparison between Houédard’s ballet and Medalla’s ballet: the language. As I stated above the monk sent *the cosmic ballet,* enclosed with a letter, to Medalla in July 1967. Three months later Medalla performed *The Bird Ballet* at the Round House, Chalk Farm.[107] In the score for the piece Medalla wrote:

> Mudimasks, mudras, mantras, dance-movements, sound-costumes, kinetic-props, motikalasam, music for The Bird Ballet were evolved individually by the exploding explorers. The sneeumaticman was made by Lionels Miskin. Ken Cox made the bright envelopes […].[108]

Medalla uses a syncretic style which, if not directly influenced by Houédard, occupies the same experimental, coexistential territory. *The Bird Ballet* is described as a "biokrishnakineticalballet" – a "freakouta" featuring "snailmantras", "necta yantras", "grassmudras" and "super shimmering scrudge".[109] There is detailed commentary and plot outline for each of the 24 circumsequences including inclusive participatory events mid-performances such as "Cs 7 GENERAL FREAK-OUT Pop group. Audiencedensities".[110] Compound words such as "Transzenascension" and "zoom-zens" exemplify how such experiential and experimental writing offered for Medalla possibilities of east-west conceptual fusion.[111]

As in the performance of Medalla's *The Bird Ballet*, a list of "circumsequences" could provide a story line to be loosely followed or not.[112]

> The Bird Ballet has 24 circumsequences of which two (Cs 7. Storm Freakout, and Cs 13, The Underworld) will feature pop groups and kinetic dramas. The pop groups and kinetic dramas will change in every performance […].[113]

Houédard's *the cosmic ballet* also follows this format of including circumsequences but whether they could or should be followed in a contemporary performance is as debatable now as it was in the 1960s. Jill Drower, a member of the Exploding Galaxy and performer in *The Bird Ballet* and *The Buddha Ballet*, recounts:

> The thing you need to remember is that it didn't matter at all how long anything took or what happened.

Drower remembers that "the fact that the storyline is printed in a programme" did not stop some of the performers only "loosely" following its trajectory. Within the group there were divisions as to how they should interpret the script.

> […] There was two camps – the ones that wanted anything to happen in any way at all […] and there were people like me who were terribly straight and wanted it to be a proper performance - because it was the first theatrical performance at the Round House. So there was conflict about whether it was to be a totally spiritual experience without reference to an audience and those that wanted a storyline.[114]

I have not found any documentary evidence that can indicate how Houédard envisaged a performance of *the cosmic ballet.* But it seems likely to assume that he intended it to be, as in Drower's words, "a totally spiritual experience". Such a spiritual experience was grounded firmly in an understanding or contemplation of how things really are, not

as they appear to be, a continuation of the practice behind the concrete poems he was making:

> I wld like best to have a purely CONCRETE ballet where you don't look THRU the dance to ideas & statements & emotions & relations &c that are conveyed THRU the dance – but dance where the dance is pure dance – meaning itself – not a mirror of other & nondance things – but tru addition to THINGS in the cosmos […].[115]

A ballet that was a "tru addition to THINGS", in the same way as he thought about his typestracts and typoems; like daffodils and sunsets, cloud-tracks, tide-ripples, bracken-patterns and gull-flights. For Houédard, in just four years, poetry had moved from lyric on the page neo-beat free verse to typopoems, typestracts, poemscores and now ballet scores. Poetry was truly moving "thru the air" in the dance moves envisioned for the ballet. Galaxy member Edward Pope summarised the ideas of the time:

> So poetry today is moving to forms such as SONG, DANCE, DRAMA, COSTUME AND ARCHITECTURE. One day soon this poetry will spread and become the language of all people […].[116]

In 2012, as part of the pop-up exhibition and symposium *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter,* I invited the sound artist and improvisatory musician Max Eastley to direct and choreograph a performance of 'the cosmic ballet' with students from the Camberwell College of Art and a number of performance poets (see Appendix 2a).[117] Reflecting on how he approached the score, he said:

> I read the pages through a couple of times really and thought they were less about specific images and more about a process of sorts. It seemed the pages of the score were connected with shamanism, which means contacting something else. Or being inside something. Just the image of the cosmic typewriter and the cosmic ballet – I just kept the titles really […].[118]



Fig. 98 Performance of *the cosmic ballet*, with Max Eastley, The South London Galley, 2012. Image courtesy of Christopher Daniels.

He continued:

> […] so how do you perform something like that? – so you have the elements of things that he was involved in – […] because I am an improvisatory musician I do not have any problem with creating music completely spontaneously – but I thought that this performance should not be just improvisation – so much about dsh's work – the typestracts – was about structure – circles and squares – orientation – North South East and West – the cross – so I wanted to deal with really simple images. Like the round table – the cross – the four points – the directional points – North South East and West […] but it couldn't be possibly completely improvised by saying: "let's just do something". I felt that there were these strange shamanistic structures and diagrams and circles, squares, words, cut-up words – shredding, typing…[119]

What is really evident when you watch Eastley's interpretation is the effective simplification of the sacred geometry in the piece. Although the stage-directions do primarily coordinate the dancers and the scenes around a mandala, this simplification by Eastley enables the participants and the audience to navigate a geographical and psycho-geometric space which is emblematic of the cross, Chinese cosmology and Taoism as well as the layers of Northern European Myth and South American shamanism that were included. The layers of wider ecumenical theology, myth and poetry are transformed into an effective relational geometry in performance. It is very much the concrete ballet that Houédard intended – to be looked at not thru.



Fig 99 Performance of *the cosmic ballet*, with Max Eastley, The South London Galley, 2012. Image courtesy of Christopher Daniels

As Eastley reflects, "[…] I want to express something about this man – this priest – this anarchist – this Dadaist. It was all in one kind of person".

> I wasn't the director – I felt like an instigator – but I didn't feel like I was telling anyone what to do. Their eye contact was really quite frightening they were really intense – […] and the more intense they got the more intense I got and we were drawn into the madness of particle physics as there was actually nothing there at all – we had made something there – And I would get into the humour of the thing and all the wonderful movements they were making and all the people collecting the pages from the wastepaper bins and delivering it to the poets in the corners to be read out – it was a machine – it was a typewriter – and someone somewhere was putting out orders for something [Eastley makes nonsensical sounds] – they were really listening and it was a kind of machine.[120]

Through Eastley's choreography it is the language itself that moves to the corners and spaces, from the central arrangement of artist/ poet and the machine operators/ dancers. As the papers are picked up, written upon and moved the quiet footsteps of the dancers are incidental, almost invisible. It is fragments of language and communication that travel to the corners of the mandala, are shaped into sound, silhouetted against a white screen, read out loud, repeated or discarded onto the floor. Language is performing the ballet, moving outwards from the centre of the mandala

and back again, reused, recycled and ritualised. Phonemes move across the gallery space in the way that they do on the page of typestracts, “moving words thru the air”. This is the typoet and his typoems, to be looked at and not “thru”.

When Houédard wrote the score in 1967 he had been to Middle Earth and The Round House and seen Mark Boyles’s light show. He had watched improvisations by Medalla and the Galaxy in their Scrudge outfits and all that is there in this score. However, take away the masks, the “wig-pieces”, the strobe lighting effects and the “catscradle dances”, the “psychedelicstrobeflashflickereffect” and all the theatrical things that are crammed into the score and beyond all of that there still is the “permanent creation” he hoped would remain, “psychedelic effects wld of course be terribly appropriate to a drug ballet – I think it cld be topical as well as permanent”.[121] As much as Houédard’s instruction for the “ballet finale” is a “festival of all poets raving up” and “freaking out on odrerir the groovy songmeaddrug” in Eastley’s interpretation the audience did not join in or participate.[122] Considering this, Eastley comments:

> That would not happen now – There is a very different way to listen to improvised music nowadays – the audience stays incredibly quiet – they see this surface and they don’t want to push into this surface whereas previously in the 1960s everyone would have thought “oh well it doesn’t matter” – which I liked – but it is another time. It’s another form of anarchy.[123]



Fig.s 100 and 101 *mmmmm* performing typestracts at the exhibition *Dom Sylvester Houedard: Typestracts* (26th May-14 July 2017), Richard Saltoun Gallery, 2017. Image courtesy of Richard Saltoun.



Fig.101

This chapter has engaged directly with the mandala practice and the interrelationship between the visible and the invisible worlds, inner and outer reality, with a close reading of Houédard's DIAS talk "Apophatic Art" and reframed his ideas about creative destruction within the conceptual framework of the mandala ritual. It has explored Houédard's laminate poems and his interest in using both visible and invisible matter to engage with contemporary scientific ideas about cosmology and Buddhist ontology. It has also investigated Houédard's *the cosmic ballet* and its relationship to the Buddhist ballets choreographed by David Medalla and John Dugger.

Developing the analysis of sacred geometry, I established in chapter *yantra,* the analysis has focused on how the staging for Houédard's ballet enacts the geometrical yantras of a mandala, as well as the physiocosmology of the body mandala. Houédard's narrative and choreographic instructions offer a dramatization, not just of his ecumenical understanding of transnational myths of numerous mystical traditions but also specifically his understanding of this Tantric practice.

Performing Houédard's typestracts and poemscores today ensures that any exhibition of his work can still partake in the "anarchy" from which they were made. Before the name "typestracts" was settled upon, Houédard called his work "typikons", "typiconograph", "typographicon" and "icongrammes" but his essential and preliminary ideas that the work would communicate, through this mechanical

calligraphy, a very human message never varied. Each work is about the auto-destruction of the Kataphatic cosmos; an apophatic claim of "not this" and "not this" for what he called the "non-non", the non-conceptual experience of god or God or the emptiness at the heart of the contemplative experience. It is "non-non" because, although there is negation, a no thing-ness, there is still non-conceptual experience. There is not nothingness.

Contemporary performances of Houédard's work, such as those choreographed by the collective *mmmmm* can include elements of biography, ritual, prayer, mantra, mudra, repetition, permutation, trance, translation, abstraction, the burning of Prinknash Abbey incense, a short film about the sound-scape of the monastery gardens, his glasses, his typewriter, anybody's typewriter, because Houédard's works are about the interdependence of all these objects (Figs.100 and 101).[124] This is not a substitution of inherently existent objects but an understanding of each object's real nature and its connection to everything else. As Geshe Kelsang Gyatso states: "The differences we see are just appearances to mistaken minds; from the point of view of ultimate truth all phenomena are equal in emptiness".[125] The mandala ritual is a territory of continual destruction and creation of the experienced universe from the central position of each practitioner. The mandala contains all phenomena: past, present, future. Within the conceptual and critical framework this thesis presents, the poemobjects Houédard made between 1960-1975 are events that are ongoing, repeatable, conventionally different but ultimately the same. They are also events created and experienced from our own individual centre.

To begin again with Houédard's instructions for his very first poemobject:

> each typoem may be performed repeatedly
> each performance will be different

[1] See Anna Dezeuze, "At the point of imperceptibility," *Almost Nothing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016): 98 Dezeuze writes how Clark sought to counter Western nothingness through her vision of the empty-full (*vaszio*-pleno) void. This void is activated and understood when a participant is fully open to the infinite possibilities of their actions. The performative action has an infinite unfolding of doing.

[2] David Medalla in conversation with Nicola Simpson, at the London Biennale August 2010 and in email and social media correspondence 2010 to 2018.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Nick Sawyer, member of The Exploding Galaxy, quoted in Jill Drower's *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014): 8.

[6] There is however evidence to entangle Medalla's memories into a more problematic histography. An iconic and much published photograph, taken by Signals' in-house photographer at that time, Clay Perry, shows Houédard in his characteristic black cape and black beret at the opening of Takis's *Of the Magnetic* exhibition, held at Signals in 1964 (see Fig.2). Medalla however remembers the Lygia Clark exhibition as the time he first spoke to Houédard. In the Perry photograph, Houédard is holding up one of his own works, the opening-poem "frog pond plop", based on an origami fortuneteller. The significance is in the detail. In both the anecdote and the photograph Houédard is placing his own work in a direct relationship to the experimental dialogues and new internationalism that was occurring at Signals.

[7] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "Architypestructures?" first published in *Art Without Boundaries: 1950-70,* Eds. Gerald Woods, Philips Thompson and John Williams (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 134-35, reprinted in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 171.

[8] Ibid.

[9] This understanding that the practitioner's mind is "transformed" by the teachings rather than made receptive to them is based on my understanding of the commentaries presented by Geshe Gyatso Rinpoche. See *Transform Your Life: A Blissful Journey* (London: Tharpa, 2001).

[10] David E. R George, *Buddhism as/in Performance: Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practice* (New Delhi: D.K.Printworld (P) Ltd, 1999): 144-5.

[11] George, *Buddhism as/in Performance,* 116.

[12] See glossary: *Imputation*.

[13] George, *Buddhism as/in Performance,* 116.

[14] Guiseppe Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980): 96, quoted in David E. R George, *Buddhism as/in Performance: Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practice* (New Delhi: D.K.Printworld (P) Ltd, 1999): 103.

[15] George, *Buddhism as/in Peformance,* 103.

[16] Tom Picton took a series of photographs of the events of DIAS. One particular photograph, depicting Jean Toche's destroyed typewriters in the foreground has captured Houédard sitting at a table with Gustav Metzger, most likely at the moment he was giving his paper, though Houédard has remained unidentified. This photograph is included in "Silent Explosion 1966", *Silent Explosion, Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art,* (London: Occasional Papers, 2016): 44.

[17] DIAS, press release, dated 27th April 1966: "The Destruction in Art Symposium taking place in London in September of this year will bring together artists from various countries who have used new techniques that involve destruction of materials. Also taking part will be writers, psychologists and other scientists. The main objective of DIAS is to focus attention on the element of destruction in Happenings, auto-destructive art, and other new art forms, and to relate this to destruction in society." See *Silent Explosion, Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art,* (London: Occasional Papers, 2016).

[18] Barry Miles, "The Albert Hall Reading", *London Calling, A Countercultural History of London Since 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010): 153.

[19] Nuttall, "Part V: The Underground," *Bomb Culture* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd, 1968): 192.

[20] Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture,* 192.

[21] As quoted in Barry Miles, "The Albert Hall Reading," *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London Since 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010): 155.

[22] Nuttall, *Bomb Culture,* 170.
[23] Ibid., 187 and 159.
[24] Gustav Metzger in conversation with Nicola Simpson, July 2005.

[25] The original transcript is currently part of the archive of Ivor Davis and was exhibited, alongside correspondence between Houédard and Davies in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff in 2015. I was invited to give a paper on Houédard's contribution to DIAS, entitled*,* "d-r-a-w-n-w-a-r-d Houédard, DIAS and the Vajrayana" at the *Burnt Poetries* Conference, The University of Cardiff, February 26th- 28th, 2016.
[26] A copy of Houédard's transcript and summary of the Ravensbourne Symposium was later published independently by DIAS, though in a limited print run. I made the editorial decision to republish this transcript in full, alongside Houédard's later DIAS talk, "Apophatic Art", published for the first time, in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 86-102.
[27] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "The Aesthetics of the Death Wish," republished in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 88-90.
[28] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Essence of Vajrayana, The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala,* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1997): 3.
[29] Ibid., 5.
[30] See glossary: *Dependent-related phenomenon* and *Twelve dependent-related links*.
[31] Gyatso, *Essence of Vajrayana,* 3-4.
[32] Chris Thompson, *felt: FLUXUS, JOSEPH BEUYS, AND THE DALAI LAMA* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 53.
[33] Ana Cristina Lopes, *Tibetan Buddhism in Diaspora: Cultural Re-signification in Practice and Institutions* (London: Routledge, 2014): 88.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Houédard's early work "apophatic apopthegmata", written in 1950, establishes this as a primary concern of his poetry. Titled *apophatic apopthegmata or fragments of an alphabet for bitty contemplatives part 1 (a-m*) (part 1 composed December 1950) and *part 2 (n-z) of the apophatic apophthegmata or the bitty contemplative's alphabetic fragments continued* (part 2 composed 1956), it contains such statements as "eluate with thou the I & see/ how you are apophatic we" and "cutest little twister of apophatic prayer/ is negation of the knowledge that there's nothing that's there". Unpublished typescript,Tate Archive.
[38] Stalling uses the phrase to discuss the poetic strategies of Gary Snyder and Wai-lim Yip, but it is a way to articulate what I see as the correlative practice of Houédard. See Stalling, *Poetics of Emptiness, Transformations of Asian Thought in American Poetry* (U.S.A: Fordham University Press, 2010): 115.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Houédard, "Aesthetics of the Death Wish," 88.
[41]For further description of these events see Barry Miles, "The Albert Hall Reading," *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London Since 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010): 144-158.
[42] Stalling, *Poetics of Emptiness,* 17.
[43] John Blofeld, *The Way of Power: A Practical Guide to the Tantric Mysticism of Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970): 85.
[44] Blofeld, *The Way of Power,* 96.
[45] *Antonio Sena, Dom Sylvester Houédard and David Medalla*, Lisson Gallery, June 1st- July 1st, 1967, Leaflet for group show at the Lisson Gallery, Tate Archive.
[46] Medalla, Interview with Nicola Simpson, 2010.
[47] *Antonio Sena, Dom Sylvester Houédard and David Medalla*, Lisson Gallery, June 1st- July 1st, 1967, Leaflet for group show at the Lisson Gallery, Tate Archive.
[48] Guy Brett's Introduction for "Visual Poetries" exhibition, republished in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 47.

[49] Dom Sylvester Houedard, "paradada," republished in *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 65.
[50] As found in a laminated plastic poem by Dom Sylvester Houédard. Private Archive.
[51] As found in the laminated plastic poem made by Dom Sylvester Houédard for the Chinese artist Li Yuan Chia. See the archives of Li Yuan Chia at the John Rylands University Library Manchester Special Collections Archive.
[52] As found in the laminated plastic object made by Dom Sylvester Houédard for Bob Cobbing and Jennifer Pike. See *BOOOOOK, The Life and Work of Bob Cobbing*, ed. William Cobbing and Rosie Cooper (London: Occasional Papers, 2015): 131.
[53] For a description of Boyle and Hill's DIAS contribution see Barry Miles, "The Summer of Love," *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London Since 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010): 154.
[54] Mookerjee, *YOGA ART,* 42.
[55] Ibid., 42.
[56] Sean Miller, "Strange Entanglements: Buddhism and Quantum Theory in Contemporary Nonfiction," *Encountering Buddhism in Twentieth-Century British and American Literature,* ed. Lawrence Normand and Alison Winch (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 194.
[57] Miller, "Strange Entanglements", 195.
[58] Ibid., 195.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 194.
[61] Ibid., 196.
[62] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "chronobiography/autozoography," *Dom Sylvester Houedard,* Ceolfrith 15 (Sunderland: The Ceolfrith Arts Centre, 1972): 26.
[63] See Guy Brett, *Exploding Galaxies: The Art of David Medalla* (London: Kala Press, 1995).
[64] Miles, *London Calling,* 249.
[65] Paul Keeler, *Planted: A report of the events leading up to and surrounding the arrest and committal to be tried before a judge and jury of 3 members of the Exploding Galaxy charged with being in possession of dangerous drugs* (London: 1968) Private Collection.
[66] Miles, *London Calling,* 249.
[67] Medalla Interview 2010.
[68] Ibid.
[69] For a full account of The Exploding Galaxy see Jill Drower's *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014).
[70] Mitja Hinderks, as quoted in Jill Drower's *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014): 354.
[71] Edward Pope, as quoted in Jill Drower's *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014): 79.
[72] Andrew Forrest, as quoted in Jill Drower's *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014): 353.
[73] Jill Drower, *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014): 81.
[74] In a recent conversation, Nicholas Logsdail gave details about the curation of the laminate poems in The Lisson Gallery in 1968. The transcript of this conversation between Nicholas Logsdail, Charles Verey and me has been edited and reprinted in *dsh* the exhibition catalogue published on the occasion of *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* Lisson Gallery, New York, 2 May- 16 June 2018.
[75] The typestract for Houédard's *the cosmic ballet* can be found in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012), 27-28. This manuscript is not complete and pages still make an unexpected appearance in private collections.
[76] Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture,* 73-4.
[77] Dom Sylvester Houédard, "the dimension of the dimensionless," paper given at *The Spiritual Aspects of the Rule of St Benedict (RSB)',* Ampleforth Symposium, 1980. Unpublished, John Rylands University Library Manchester Special Collections Archive.
[78] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *the cosmic ballet* in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter, The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 115.

[79] Medalla Interview, 2010.
[80] Houédard, *the cosmic ballet,* 113.
[81] Ibid., 112.
[82] Ibid., 111.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Houédard, "the dimension of the dimensionless".
[85] Ibid.
[86] Houédard, *the cosmic ballet,* 113.
[87] George, *Buddhism as/in Performance,* 104.
[88] Ibid., 119.
[89] David Medella in a letter Houédard, 5th July 1967, reprinted in *The Cosmic Typewriter, 12 Dance Poems from the Nahuatl,* South Street Publications, 1969.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Jill Drower in her "Chronology of Exploding Galaxy Events," cites 21st May 1967 as the date kinetic drama was invented when Galaxy member Edward Pope takes Gerry Fitzgerald to 99 Balls Pond Road, *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014): 495.
[92] Guy Brett, *Exploding Galaxies, The Art of David Medalla* (London: inIVA, 1995): 95.
[93] Josephine as quoted in Jill Drower's *99 Balls Pond Road: The Story of The Exploding Galaxy* (London: Scrudge Books, 2014): 165.
[94] David Medalla, *Planted,* 121.
[95] Ibid., 123.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Medalla writes: "In the first stages of our collaboration John and I paid frequent visits to the Oriental art collections of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. John's ideas was to adapt 'Oriental perspective' with its multiple views in illustrating the different plans and inter-penetrating structures of the Biokinetic Theatre. […] It was exhilarating to look at Indian miniatures, Tibetan Thankas and Chinese scrolls at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum. Of course, we did not confine our almost daily visits at these two museums to the perusal only of paintings; we examined the artefacts, textiles, statuary, ceremonial paraphernalia and manuscripts of the different cultures of Asia. We were especially attracted to those Oriental schools of art which were originally nourished by Indian thought." *Planted* (London: 1968): 121.
[99] David Medalla, *Planted,* 123.
[100] Ibid.
[101] John Dugger in conversation with Nicholas James, *John Dugger, Ergonic Sculpture and Other Works* (Surrey: Cv/ Visual Arts Research, 2010): 24-5.
[102] Hand-out to the participants, Galaxy member Nick Sawyer's personal copy.
[103] David Medalla
[104] Brett, *Exploding Galaxies,* 95
[105] Ibid.,
[106] Dugger, *Ergonic Sculpture* 24-5.
[107] The Bird Ballet, was performed at The Round House, Chalk Farm, On October 20th, 22nd, 26th, 27th and 29th 1967, each evening at 8pm. It was 10 Shillings to attend, half price for children.
[108] The Exploding Galaxy, *Planted,* 112.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 114.
[111] Ibid., 115.
[112] In the instructions for *The Bird Ballet* Medalla calls each different narrative situation a "circumsequence", see The Exploding Galaxy, *Planted,* 119.
[113] Ibid., 112.
[114] Jill Drower Interview with Nicola Simpson, December 2014.
[115] Dom Sylvester Houédard, *The Cosmic Typewriter, 12 Dance Poems from the Natuatl,* South Street Publications, 1969.
[116] Edward Pope, "New Forms of Poetry," *Planted,* 138.

[117] Performers were: Max Eastley, Oliver Boulton, Luna Joulia École, Alexander Lewis Fisk, Mark El-khatib, Flaminia Adele Rossi, Holly Rumble, Nicola Simpson, Greg Thomas, Jamie Wilkes.
[118] Max Eastley Interview with Nicola Simpson, December 2015.
[119] Eastley Interview, 2015.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Houédard, *the cosmic ballet*, 111.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Eastley Interview, 2015.
[124] *mmmmm* are the performance group with members Adrian Fisher and Luna Montenegro. Their name is taken from David Medalla's MMMMMMM… manifesto, published in *Signals NewsBulletin,* Vol 1 no 8, June-July 1965. On June 29th 2017 I collaborated with them on a series of performances "partial circle within a circle" with reference to Houédard's typestracts on the occasion of *DOM SYLVESTER HOUÉDARD, Typestracts,* Richard Saltoun Gallery, 26 May-14 July 2017.
[125] Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Mahamudra Tantra: The supreme heart jewel nectar* (London: Tharpa Publications, 2005): 165.

Conclusion

It was the intention of this thesis to establish the centrality of Zen and Tantric Buddhist method practices in the production and transmission of the poemobjects Houédard made between 1960 – 1975. It was my aim to demonstrate Houédard's assimilation of the Tantric ritual practices of yantra, mantra, mudra and mandala in the production of these poemobjects and to investigate these rituals as territories of interdependence that perform his understanding and vision for a wider ecumenism and wider concrete.

Houédard's openness to Buddhist teachings, particularly the teachings on the doctrine of emptiness informed his literary essays for *The Aylesford Review* in the early 1960s, his critical and contextual writings on the British concrete poetry movement, his experiential and experimental artistic practice in the1960s and continued to have a prominence in his talks and writings until his death in 1992.

Therefore this research has positioned Houédard's artistic practice between 1960 – 1975 as an engagement with the Mahayana Buddhist doctrinal discourses on the philosophy of Emptiness as found within both Zen and Vajrayana Buddhisms and Taoisms. Through a close reading in chapter 1 of his *Aylesford Review* essays I have established how he experimented with a Zen inspired beat-style syncretic prose to embody his vision for a "wider ecumenism". This thesis demonstrates, in chapter 2 and 3, that Houédard's attempt to conceptually synthesize the Buddhist practices of Zen and Tantra with his wider spirituality was explored in a poetic method that began to use the space on the page as a structural agent. Houédard began embracing the textual strategies of concrete poetry to embody the interdependence of all phenomena as it presented in Buddhist epistemology.

yantra is the first of four chapters which position Houédard's work as that of a significant Western Tantric artist. The research considers the typestracts as sacred and spiritual diagrams of cosmic power that demonstrate Houédard's own intimate knowledge of Buddhist Tantric method practices and rituals such as deity yoga and acknowledges the central importance of this intentional Tantric language in the transmission of this new trans-migratory Buddhism.

mantra demonstrates Houédard's continued interest in the method practices of Tantric Buddhism as a way to interrogate the relationship between form and sound. This interrogation of sound, silence and interpenetration led to an important friendship with John Cage and an engagement with the avant-garde aesthetics now termed, Cagean-Zen.

mudra established that an understanding of the Eastern phenomenological concept of No Thingness, with its emphasis on the interdependence of all phenomena, underpins the dependence on the "other", the participant, in the performative and textual strategies in Houédard's kinetic poems. In the unlimited interpersonal dimension of these poemenvironments, spaces of alterity and spaces of experience, the poet, Houédard and then the participants are placed at the centre of creating. Each gesture, each mudra, creates the world anew: again and again in a series of moments all dependently related and continuous. *mudra* demonstrates that as much as it is about our individual experience of language as event and object as events through a participation in Houédard's concrete poems, it is also about our experience *with* others – the experience of *other* as event.

The centrality of this experience of "other" and interdependence is explored in *mandala*, a chapter which establishes the intertextuality between David Medalla's and John Drugger's *The Buddha Ballet* and Houédard's *the cosmic ballet.* There is much further research to be done as to how these artists can be placed within a socially engaged participatory practice, but a starting point is this acknowledgment of the interdisciplinary influence of their socially engaged Buddhisms and Taoisms. Of particular significance is Houédard's positing of an alternative phenomenological space of peace in his DIAS contributions and the Buddhist method practice of the mandala as both auto-creative and auto destructive art.

Through my close reading and analyses of Houédard's correspondences and friendships with Allen Ginsberg, John Cage, Ken Cox, David Medalla, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Li Yuan-chia this thesis suggests a focus on dependently related-phenomena, provides a conceptual paradigm with which to envisage this network of influence, friendship and transmission between Houédard other artists of the transnational, even transhistorical, avant-garde. It is a conceptual model that can visualise and understand the *interdependent* art histories, spiritual practices and artistic practices that acknowledge the Buddhist epistemological teachings on emptiness and the *interdependent* existence of people and objects. This conceptual model, which I have termed a Matrix of Interdependent Transmission, has wider implications as a way for re-imagining global entangled art histories and the findable and unfindable connections between objects and people. It refutes the independent inherently existent artist and acknowledges instead complicated, entangled influences within art practice and production. This methodology has enabled Houédard's work to be considered in relationship to his own autodidact reading, his encounters with a transmigratory oral Tibetan Buddhism and the way in which his poemobjects may offer a

direct transmission of spiritual truths to the artists and poets he knew and who were receptive to this transmission.

Dom Sylvester Houédard was an important British artist of the 1960s. Since I began this research project there has been an increasing interest in his work, particularly in the last five years, as demonstrated by two recent solo exhibitions: *DOM SYLVESTER HOUÉDARD, Typestracts,* Richard Saltoun Gallery, 26 May-14 July 2017 and *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* Lisson Gallery, New York, 2 May- 16 June 2018. This is to be considered alongside his prominent inclusion in the recent group exhibitions: *from the truer world of the other*, Perez Art Museum, Miami, 17 November 2017- 29 April 2018; *Speech Acts: Reflection, Imagination, Repetition,* Manchester City Art Gallery, 25 May 2018 - 22 April 2019; *Astro-poems and Vertical Group Exercises: Concrete Poetry at CSA,* Chelsea Space, 13 June -13 July 2018; *Signals: If You Like I Shall Grow,* Thomas Dane Gallery, 8 June - 21 July, 2018; *Concrete Poetries*, LOWER.GREEN gallery, 4 - 24 August, 2018.

The resurgence in interest is, in part, due to the success of the publication of the monograph *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard* (Occasional Papers, 2012) (which was not only the first monograph on the artist for over 40 years but also collected together a breadth of previously unseen work) and the more recent monograph *Dom Sylvester Houédard* (Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017). These monograph's have enabled me to achieve my aim to improve the accessibility of Houédard's work through publication.

Having the opportunity to publish in these monographs a selection of the writings, typestracts and poemobjects that I have located in public institutions and private collections has made a noteworthy contribution to the field of concrete poetry and extends our knowledge of Houedard's poemobjects beyond the typestracts. In particular the publication of Houédard's typewritten instructions for *c-dagesh, frog pond plop overture & phonata* and *the cosmic ballet* in *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* locates his work firmly in the artistic territories of the event score, happenings and kinetic theatre of the transnational post-war avant-garde, an argument I present through close readings of these scores in chapters *mantra* and *mandala.*

Equally significant is my collation and publication of Houédard's DIAS contributions in *Dom Sylvester Houédard.* DIAS has been the focus of much recent critical and scholarly attention; Houédard's involvement is contextualized in chapter *mandala.*[i]

A number of important limitations need to be considered. Firstly, when I was introduced to the work of Dom Sylvester Houédard I had good access to the uncatalogued archive held at the John Rylands University Library in Manchester. However by the time I began this research thesis in 2009 this access had been removed and most of the archive documentation had been returned to Prinknash Abbey. The Trustees of Prinknash Abbey have continually provided their support to enable me to perform, exhibit and publish the artwork and poetry of Houédard but these private papers, in particular the correspondence, remains inaccessible at the time of writing.

I was fortunate to have transcribed the letters from Allen Ginsberg to Houédard before all the correspondence was returned to Prinknash Abbey, however the lack of access to Houédard's personal papers has been an issue for the research in other chapters. For example, the correspondence between Houédard and John Cage in chapter *mantra* is one-sided. My close reading centres on the communication found in Houédard's letters to Cage. The opportunity to develop a close reading of Cage's letters to Houédard is an important area for future research in the transmission of ideas between the artists. Similarly, although I have had an opportunity to see and study the letters from Houédard to Kenelm Cox and Li Yuan-chia, I have not had access to the letters from these artists to him.

Other archives have proved inaccessible due to personal financial circumstances. I could not get to Miami to visit the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Collection of Concrete Poetry, though I have relied on the images and the documentation of William Allen and Richard Saltoun who visited the archive, also the Sackners' attendance at *The Cosmic Typewriter* event at the South London Gallery in 2012, to which they generously brought a suitcase bulging with the work I had requested to see. The Lisson Gallery's "Dom Sylvester Houédard archive" is another key resource that has not been available for a number of reasons. I did however have access to the Kenelm Cox and the Li Yuan-chia archives and borrowed extensively from the Lisson Gallery for *Performing No Thingness*.

Following on from my recent conversation with Nicholas Logsdail, the transcript of which has been published in the Lisson gallery catalogue *dsh* that accompanied the recent Lisson Gallery exhibition in New York, I have been invited to visit the Lisson gallery archives in the autumn 2018. This new access will provide an exciting opportunity for future research on Houédard. In particular it will provide an opportunity to see a number of important typestracts and laminate poems, alongside personal papers and notebooks.

Secondly, this thesis only engages with work Houédard made between 1960 – 1975. Little artwork was made after this date but there is substantial archival documentation that

establishes that Houédard did continue studying, writing and talking about the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism until his death in 1992. The essays and talks Houédard wrote in the 1980s, such as "d-r-a-w-n-i-n-w-a-r-d,", "the dimensions of the dimensionless" and "prayer as a way of life", achieve a clarity of thought about his wider ecumenical spiritual vision lacking in the *Aylesford* articles that I discuss in chapter two, and research that follows the trajectory of his changing understanding of Buddhisms and Taoisms is a necessary follow-up project to fully contextualize Houédard's engagement with Eastern spiritualities and to map out his wider ecumenical thinking from the 1950s until his death.

It is intended that this study will serve as the foundation for future research projects, some of which are already in development. I am currently working with Luke Thompson from the Guillemot Press to edit and publish a selection of Houédard's correspondence with and poems for the American beat poets, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso and William Burroughs. The research I have undertaken on Houédard and Ginsberg underpins the discussion in chapter 2 but it is beyond the scope of this study to include my research on Houédard's friendships with other beat writers.

Due to practical constraints this thesis has not been able to provide a comprehensive presentation of my research into the collaborations and friendship between Houédard and Li Yuan-chia and chapter *mudra* only begins this discussion. Some of this additional research was used to inform the curator Hammad Nassar for his current exhibition *Speech Acts: Reflection, Imagination, Repetition,* Manchester City Art Gallery, 2018. My contribution will be published in an article I have written for the journal *British Art Studies,* summer 2019.

In *mudra* due to the constraints of space I only present some of the research I have undertaken in tracing the students who made work for Houédard's 1971 exhibition *Visual Poetries,* and the significant role art school departments and art students played in the making of concrete poems in the 1960s and 1970s is only now being considered.[ii] As I establish in *mantra,* Houédard had many ideas for poemsculptures and poemmachines that were not realized, and many of his printed works and multiples that were made were designed and manufactured by students at the Chelsea School of Art, Bath Academy of Art, Watford School of Art and Brighton School of Art. Far too little attention has been paid to the relationship between the graphic design art school departments and the British concrete poetry movement and this is an important area for future investigation.

Finally, considerably more research needs to be done on the transmission of Vajrayana Buddhism to Great Britain. This study has only been able to focus on a small

number of artists that Houédard knew, influenced and worked with. For example, a future study considering the wider impact on a number of countercultural artists such as Ivor Davies, Thomas A. Clark, individual members of The Exploding Galaxy, such as Edward Pope, Paul Keeler and The Incredible String Band would extend our knowledge of the expanding territory of influences of Chögyam Trungpa and British countercultural activity of the 1960s. Without this further research to establish a broader context it is not possible to definitively position Houédard's influence as a conduit for Tantric Buddhism.

Particular areas for future research might usefully focus on the talks Houédard gave at the Samye-Ling Buddhist Centre in the 1980s, his incorporation of Vajrayana Buddhist teachings into the commentaries on Meister Eckhart that he gave at the Beshara in 1980s and his currently uncollected and unpublished later talks on Catholicism and Mahayana Buddhism.

In recent years I have had some excellent opportunities to make Houédard's essays, typestracts, poemobjects and poemscores available to a wider, non-academic audience through publication, exhibition and performance. I feel these are the most successful research outcomes so far, with the direct participation in an on-going transmission of a wider ecumenical spirituality. The research presented in this thesis is just one possible co-ordinate in a Matrix of Interdependent Transmission of Zen and Vajrayana Buddhism to the West. It is also just one aspect of my own spiritual practice of "right mind-minding".

[i] See the recent exhibition, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff in 2015. I was invited to give a paper on Houédard's contribution to DIAS, entitled*,* "d-r-a-w-n-w-a-r-d Houédard, DIAS and the Vajrayana" at the *Burnt Poetries* Conference, The University of Cardiff, February 26th- 28th, 2016. For further context to DIAS see *Silent Explosion, Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art,* (London: Occasional Papers, 2016).

[ii] Two recent conferences and exhibitions have focused on the link between British Concrete Poetry and the art Schools of 1960s. "Making Beyond Words," Symposium, Corsham Court, 16th-17th June 2017. I was invited to give a paper "'free interpretations of ideas suggested by Dom Silvester Houédard': Dom Sylvester Houédard and the poemobjects and prints made by Graphic Design Art School students in the 1960s." and *Astro-poems and Vertical Group Exercises: Concrete Poetry at CSA,* Chelsea Space, 13 June -13 July 2018, curated by Gustavo Grandal Montereo.

Appendices 1-5 on USB flash drive.

Exhibitions:

1.a Invitation Card *frog pond plop the yoga of concrete* The Gallery, NUA 2010.

1.b *frog pond plop* exhibition photographs. Author's images.

1.c *c-dagesh* Performance by Matthew Welton. Camera Tom Simmons.

2.a *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* symposium and performances, South London Gallery 2012. Camera Tom Simmons and Josh

2.b *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter* exhibition photographs. Courtesy of Christopher Daniels.

3.a Invitation Card *Performing No Thingness* East Gallery, NUA, 2016.

3.b *Performing No Thingness* Exhibition photographs. Courtesy of East Gallery, NUA.

Publications:

4. *Notes from the Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson (London: Occasional Papers, 2012) PDF.

5. *Dom Sylvester Houédard* ed. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2016) PDF.

Miscellany:

6a. Dom Sylvester Houédard "the you poem for allen g".

6b. Dom Sylvester Houédard "poetry words/ poetry worlds".

6c. Dom Sylvester Houédard "the woveness of tantra on its tripod".

7. monk-maker.

Appendix 6

6a. the you poem for allen g.

this poem
when you've
read it
will be
you
(230363)

6b. poetry words/ poetry worlds.

me too
like you
i'm me &
all my inside me
the world inside me
i'm all the world
& all the shit inside the world
this lovely world
that god & you & me
have spent our lives
to make & hominize
to get it man enough
to tunefy
& father poems
in our minds
but you & me know
weve never made it
any vary much
aside a smart efficient
clinic
we
can have our
poems in
(for allen 210363)

6c the woveness of tantra on its tripod

the woveness of tantra on its tripod
(the tantra)
its woof of my mind & all my innerness
its weft the universal world
my loved one
all the anti-me
& god
this, a magic loom, that never stops

(mudra)
my one hand gesture
is all my innerness expressed

(mantra)
an even one word poem

OM
to both reduce
& reinduce
that innerness

(yantra)
making
in painted or in living mandalas
the magic pattern
woven
on the tantric loom

THE GREAT MANTRA
“OM MANI PADME HUM”

OM
perfect poem
triple highest & most sacred sound
symbol of every universality
of yehweh the blessed trinity
& Christ who is brahma made flesh
of perfection
catholic & mahayana
lived for other beings
&
for us
the path to active acceptance
of the total indiscriminate reality
of “THAT”

MANI
the mind jewel centre of enlightenment
the realization of the real
& the dewdrop centre into which the ocean slipped
to let us know things now
with inside knowledge
& every rich connatural participation
of nongod mind in god

PADME
the mudfed filthfed lovely lotus
growing up & thru & out with mind
away from dirt & depth
& turning souldark powers

into mindflower jewel centre nectar
the antisin of sex
& yabyum contemplation

HUM
the band at the end of journey
back from the outer skin of our cosmos balloon
to pinpoint heartprick centre
& the silence of mystic unwordability
when the needle reaches the middle of the mandala record

Appendix 7

monk-maker

> Dom Sylvester Houédard, a Benedictine monk who spent most of his working life at Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire [was] one of the great unsung intellects and playful creative spirits of twentieth-century Britain.[1]

In the twenty-five years since his death, the reputation of Dom Sylvester Houédard (1924-1992), a Benedictine monk within the community at Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire, still rests on the typestracts he meticulously made on his Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter (Fig. 6). Writing in the 1970s, Alan Riddell described him as the "leading theorist as well as an outstanding practitioner" of concrete poetry in his anthology *Typewriter Art.*[2] This legacy has remained virtually unchanged for almost forty years, with Barrie Tullett recently confirming Houédard's place as "a theorist and practitioner of both visual poetry and theology" who "created some of the most fascinating works of the period – 'typestracts' as the Scottish poet Edwin Morgan called them".[3]

Pierre-Thomas-Paul Joseph Houédard (16th February 1924 – 15th January 1992) was born on the Channel Island of Guernsey. Over the course of his sixty-eight years he would come to be known as Dom Sylvester, the Dom, Syl, Sylvia, Sil, Pierre, S and P, by his many friends and acquaintances, but he consistently signed off his poemobjects and writings with the acronym dsh. As he wrote in a letter to the editor of The Daily Mirror in 1967, "[…] dsh which is 23 letters shorter than my full & (to many people) unpronounceable name happens to be the ordinary signature I use as poet or critic […]", going on to state that Houédard was "pronounced 'wed-are': from 'gouët', 'gwaed' in Welsh – meaning 'blood' the name of a river in Brittany".[4]

In two articles, "bits of autobiography" and "chronobiography/ autozoography" he outlines significant life events that shaped his development as a poet and artist. One was his almost-death from meningitis in his first year which probably "accounts for inability to recollect shapes & noises (people &c)" and which led to his life-long prosopagnosia and the other being the solar eclipse of 29th June 1927, when he was three years old, which he described as "the indelible experience of cosmic poetry".[5] A childhood, "memorable" he recalled, "for impossibility (survives) of catching up w/all my interests", including Tibetan music, heraldry, cats, movement, autumn, time travel and eastern contemplation, was brought to an abrupt end with his mother's death in 1936 when he was just twelve years old, followed by his father's death in 1939 and the evacuation to England as the Nazis invaded the Channel Islands.[6]

Houédard also recalled a memorable occasion in 1931; when seven years old he insisted on staying up late to hear recordings of Tibetan music broadcast on the BBC. This "fascination" with "east contemplation" spanned his childhood until the "german invasion".[7] It is certainly a compelling image: a small boy listening intently to the transmission of sacred Tibetan Buddhist music through a radio that was very soon to broadcast the German occupation of his birthplace and home, Guernsey. Houédard notes the contemplative awareness that he experienced as a young child, stating he had a "strangely permanent awareness from 8 – eg past gone future notyet present unextended so what is? – if I have a body mind ideas &c what is it?"[8] Following this interest in the East further, he cites the 1940s as the time of "discovery of void thru cloud.sufi.chasids.hesychasts.zen".[9]

His MA in Modern History at Jesus College, Oxford 1942-49 was interrupted by military service. He was posted to Bangalore in India from 1944-45, and then Sri Lanka and Singapore in the years 1946-47. Perhaps most significantly he writes about how his encounter with Hinduism whilst in the intelligence corps in India coincided with "inner releases at development of typewriter arabesques (that led direct to typestracts)". I have found no evidence that any of these survive.

Houédard joined Prinknash Abbey as a postulant in 1949. As Verey states, "Pierre arrived at Prinknash with baggage, not all of it being books". He had been a rather flamboyant character at Oxford University and on entering the priesthood he gifted his "elegant ebony walking stick with an up-turned ivory handle that once belonged to the Emperor of Abyssinia"[10] to Christopher Tolkien and shared out his fancy waistcoats amongst his friends.

> When he joined Prinknash, he was never quite able to confine his attention to a simple obedience to the rule of St Benedict. Before he had even taken his first vows, he wrote to his friend, Brian Miller, in Oxford, with a list of books on Zen, asking him to buy them for him.[11]

That an interest in Zen Buddhism should loom so large in the life of a novice Benedictine monk is not as surprising as it may first appear. Aelred Graham, an English Benedictine monk who joined Ampleforth Abbey in Yorkshire in 1930, published his book *Zen Catholicism: A Suggestion* in 1963, "which first brought the encounter of Christianity and Zen to the attention of many Westerners".[12] Graham was one of many twentieth-century Catholic monks who "all saw the monastic ideal as a vital link between Eastern and Western spirituality".[13] Another important figure was Dom Bede Griffiths, who was guest master at Prinknash Abbey when Houédard first visited in 1944. As Charles Verey states, "Sylvester and Bede's paths crossed only occasionally […] They had the opportunity to talk about

Bede's study of the Vedanta and Sylvester's reading on Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism".[14] This occasional crossing of paths did last a lifetime and in an introductory speech to a film made to celebrate Dom Bede Griffiths's 80th year, [15] Houédard comments on how Abbot Aelred Carlyle, the founder of the community at Prinknash Abbey, "was a pioneer of monastic ecumenicalism". He continues:

> Our founder was also aware that Western monks need to see exactly how far these contemplative values are reflected in the tradition – not only of the Hindus and the Buddhas, but also the red Indians (sic), with whom he worked with during his retirement in America. […].[16]

Dom Bede Griffiths had joined Prinknash a decade prior to Houédard.

> As guest master, after his ordination in 1940 he became rather well known to a large number of people, including myself, who visited Prinknash during the war. As well as being friends of C.S. Lewis at Oxford, Dom Bede and I shared interest in what Benedictine and Indian Monasticism have in common. The concern for the contemplative side of the wider ecumenicalism is part of something that goes back to our foundation, nearly one hundred years ago.[17]

Houédard elaborates that Dom Bede Griffiths, "was keenly aware that monks, prophets and shaman are equivalent terms". Establishing that it was the "metro climate" of Prinknash that enabled a "serious interest in the far Eastern […] traditions of monastic theology" to develop, Houédard adds that, "[…] whereas my own field has tended to be that of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, Dom Bede had already been able to devote many years to the study of the Vedanta before he left for India in 1955".[18]

Houédard's day at Prinknash Abbey began early, 4am or 5am, with the night office or Vigil. The monastic day, virtually unchanged today, is divided into periods of three hours, commencing at 6am with the office of *Prime,* at 9am *Terce* is said, *Sext* at midday, *None* at 3pm, *Vespers* at 6pm and finally *Compline* at around 9pm in the evening. These "offices" or services of prayer are principally formed of the Psalms and take place to consecrate the next period of the day to the service of God. This framework of prayer dates back to the early Church and was adopted by St Benedict. It absorbs several hours of the day and forms a structure into which all the domestic work of running of a monastery, reading, study and other work of the day have to be fitted. As Bede Griffiths reflected:

> From the first hour of the day to the last hour at night there is a continual movement from the choir to work or study or meals or recreation, and back again to choir. It sets up a kind of rhythm or pattern by which all the different actions of the day are related to one another, and to their source in God. [19]

Houédard's poemobjects can be situated directly in relation to these interdependent actions of the monastic day: the framework of prayer, the singing of the psalms in plainchant, the

pittance, dinner and supper taken in the refectory in silence, the readings that would accompany the main meals, the toil in the garden, laundry or kitchen. Griffiths again:

> It was a governing principle of the life that nothing was profane. One was serving God just as much when taking a meal or working or studying as when chanting the office in choir […] Each day from before dawn till after dark was thus set within a round of prayer which determined the character of the whole life. In this way the whole day was given a sacred character, which influenced every activity.[20]

It was a rhythm of life that had remained virtually unchanged for centuries.
In the years when Houédard started his life at Prinknash, the monks planted potatoes, tilled the soil or harvested the hay and corn wearing blue hooded cotton smocks, garments which turned back the minutes, hours, years and centuries to an illustration from a medieval manuscript. The monks worked with their hands, putting their prayers into their work, whether out in the fields or making pots on the wheel or weaving on the loom. In this community it was the hand-spun beauty of the medieval craftsman that was valued - not the twentieth century machine. Writing in 1954, Griffiths ruminated, "tending a machine could never give the same scope to prayer as working with the hands".[21] Into this monastic life, in 1949, Houédard does bring a machine, arriving with his typewriter, using a machine but putting his prayer into his work as much as if he was manipulating clay into the Prinknash Pottery jugs and plates that were sold in the monastery's shop.

In the years that followed the Second Vatican Council, an office was established by the papacy to set in motion a programme of monastic interfaith dialogue. Houédard was enrolled as a committee member in Britain, and it was through this work that he was introduced to the Tibetan Buddhist monks, Chögyam Trungpa, Akong Rinpoche, Jingpa Thupten Geshe and the Dalai Lama.[22]

By the later 1970s, when he produced little in the way of concrete poetry or literary criticism, it wass these interfaith conversations that occupied his full attention. Whether his new role as Infirmarian at Prinknash Abbey or a request from the Abbot to prioritize his work is the reason for this, is open to conjecture. What is certain is that his "wider ecumenical" monastic concerns became his focus. His work and dialogues with Tibetan Buddhism continued through his connections with Akong Rinpoche and the Samye Ling Monastery in Scotland and from 1977 onwards he worked closely with the Beshara School and the Oxford-based Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society. Although he intermittently participated in poetry readings throughout this period, most notably the Cambridge Poetry Festivals in the 1970s and again a decade later in 1987, his talks and papers were addressed to faith groups and religious organizations rather than a countercultural audience in an art school.

However, as these later talks and papers demonstrate, his contemplative concerns remained the same, even if the focus of his physical activities changed (Fig. 7). These essays consolidate many of the ideas that the poems and prose of the 1960s and early 1970s explore. In particular they underscore his debt to the enlightening ideas he found within the Tibetan Buddhist Madhyamaka Prasangika School and in doing so provide a coda to the concepts and conceptualization found in the art he made between 1960-1979.[23]

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[1] Guy Brett, "The Sixties Art Scene in London," *Third Text,* 1993, 7:23: 121-123, accessed May 7th 2014, DOI 10.1080/09528829308576423.
[2] Alan Riddell, *Typewriter Art* (London: London Magazine Editions, 1975): 151.
[3] Barrie Tullett, *Typewriter Art: A Modern Anthology* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2014), 48
[4] Dom Sylvester Houédard, Letter to The Daily Mirror, *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 26.
[5] For "bits of biography," see *Dom Sylvester Houédard*, 27 and for "chronobiography/ autozoography," see *Dom Sylvester Houédard*, Ceolfrith 15, ed. Charles Verey (Sunderland: Ceolfrith Arts Centre, 1972): 26.
[6] Houédard "bits of biography," *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* 27 and "chronobiography/ autozoography," Ceolfrith: 26.
[7] Houédard, "chronobiography/autozoography," 26.
[8] Houédard, "bits of biography."
[9] Ibid.
[10] Charles Verey, "Dom Sylvester Houédard: to widen the context," *Dom Sylvester Houédard,* eds. Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson (London: Richard Saltoun | Riding House, 2017): 37.
[11] Charles Verey," Wider Ecumenism', Considered Words Explosive Meanings," *Notes From The Cosmic Typewriter: The Life and Work of Dom Sylvester Houédard,* ed. Nicola Simpson, (London: Occasional Papers, 2012): 28.
[12] Harry Oldmeadow, *Journeys East,20th Century Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions,* (Indiana: World Wisdoms, 2004), 431. See also chapter 9, "Christian Missionaries, Monks and Mystics in India," 215-244, for further context.
[13] Ibid., 244.
[14] Charles Verey,"'Wider Ecumenism,'" 27-28.
[15] Houédard is filmed walking around the grounds of Prinknash Abbey for this film, *The Space in the Heart of the Lotus: Bede Griffiths and the Hindu-Christian Contemplative Experience*, made to celebrate the 80th Birthday of Dom Bede Griffiths, Inner Directions, 1986.
[16] Ibid.
[17] ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Dom Bede Griffiths, *The Golden String: an autobiography* (Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1954): 149.
[20] Ibid., 151.
[21] Ibid., 155.
[22] Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939-1987) was a Tibetan Buddhist Monk and teacher, founder of the influential Naropa University, Boulder Colorado (where both Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs were hired to teach literature.) in the U.S.A. He translated a large number of Tibetan texts and introduced many of the Vajrayana Buddhist teachings to the West. The controversial nature of many of his teaching methods and actions led many lamas and disciples to see him as embodying the "yeshe chölwa", the crazy wisdom lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. See chapter 3 *new beat/ monknik wind* for further discussion. Akong Rinpoche (1939-2013) is a Tibetan Buddhist Monk and teacher of the Kagyu School and founder of the Samye Ling Monastery, near Riwoq in Scotland. Geshe Thupten Jingpa (1958-) has been a principal English translator to the Dalai Lama since 1985.Tenzin Gyatso is

the 14th and current Dalai Lama (dates?) and head of the monks of the Gelugpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Since the 5th Dalai Lama, the position is one that also holds the political authority over Tibet.

[23] See works such as Houédard's essay "d-r-a-w-n-i-n-w-a-r-d," *Christian Mysticism* (The Octagon Press: London, 1981) and talk "the dimension of the dimensionless," paper given at *The Spiritual Aspects of the Rule of St Benedict (RSB)',* Ampleforth Symposium, 1980. Unpublished, John Rylands University Library Manchester Special Collections Archive.

Glossary

Wherever possible I have used definitions derived from the commentaries to the Sutras and Tantras from the Lineage Transmission of the New Kadampa Tradition.

Aggregates:

In general, all functioning things are aggregates because they are an aggregation of their parts. In particular, a person of the desire realm or form realm has five aggregates: the aggregates of form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness. A person's form aggregate is his or her body. The remaining four aggregates are aspects of his mind. "Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Buddhist Terms," accessed May 23rd 2017, http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika

Apophatic/ Kataphatic (negative theology):

Apophatic writing in Christian traditions is a way of talking and thinking about God that seeks to revere him by not delimiting him to tangible concepts. Apophasis is negation and Kataphasis is affirmation.
The balance of Kataphatic affirmation and Apophatic negation is sometimes called "negative theology". See *Kataphatic.*

Buddha families:

Buddha family: There are five main Buddha families: the families of Vairochana, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, and Akshobya. They are the five purified aggregates – the aggregates of form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness, respectively; and the five exalted wisdoms – the exalted mirror-like wisdom, the exalted wisdom of equality, the exalted wisdom of individual realization, the exalted wisdom of accomplishing activities, and the exalted wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, respectively. "Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Buddhist Terms," accessed May 23rd 2017, http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika.

Completion Stage:

A stage of Highest Yoga Tantra, completion stage is a non fabricated yoga as the objects as the objects of meditation (winds, drops, channels and chakras of the subtle body) are not imagined. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in detail the nuances of this Vajrayana Tantric Practice. See Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Tantric Grounds and Paths* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1994).

Conventional Truth:

Conventional truth is relative truth or "deceptive" truth, which is the way we experience the phenomenal world through our senses. It is the mistaken view that all phenomena have independent inherent existence. See *Ultimate Truth.*

Dependent related phenomena:

"A dependent-related phenomenon is a phenomenon that exists in dependence upon its parts. Since all phenomena have parts, and since all phenomena exist in dependence upon their parts, all phenomena are dependent-related phenomena". Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Joyful Path of Good Fortune: The complete guide to the Buddhist path to enlightenment* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1990): 348.
Any phenomenon that exists in dependence upon other phenomena. All phenomena are dependent related because all phenomena depend upon their parts. Sometimes "dependent related" (Tib. ten drel) is distinguished from "dependent arising" (Tib. ten jung), with the

latter meaning arising in dependence upon causes and conditions. However, the two terms are often used interchangeably. “Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Buddhist Terms,” accessed 23 May 2017 http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika

Twelve dependent-related links:

The twelve dependent-related links are called links because they interrelated without any break, like a circular chain of twelve links that binds us within Samsara, the experience world of suffering. They are depicted iconographically in The Buddhist Wheel of Life and depict the actions, causes and effects that keep an individual in Samsara. See Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Joyful Path of Good Fortune: The complete guide to the Buddhist path to enlightenment* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1990)

Emptiness:

Emptiness, Nothingness, the Void: there is one essential phenomenological agreement in the conceptual frameworks presented within the Mahayana Zen and Vajrayana Buddhisms, Taoisms and their later trans-national and transplanted traditions. They each aim at emptying all somethings, all phenomena, all persons, of their assumed autonomous thingness through admitting some degree of contingency. Contingency is paramount in understanding this idea. The philosophical and methodological reasoning behind emptiness states that objects and subjects have no inherent autonomous existence. They exist instead through a mere imputation of name on ever-changing-dependently-related phenomena. All phenomena lack self-nature or a findable autonomous essence. They are contingent, dependent upon their causes and conditions.

Generation Stage:

A stage of Highest Yoga Tantra, generation stage is defined as a realization of a creative yoga that purifies the three basic bodies (divine body, form body and truth body) and causes the three bodies of the path to ripen. It is called a creative yoga because its object is generated or created by a meditative mind of pure concentration

I Ching

Believed to have originated in China over 3000 years ago, before Taoism and Confucianism emerged as separate belief systems, the *I Ching: The Book of Changes* is not the work of one single author but many throughout its history. This book of ancient wisdom places all its emphasis and methodology on the understanding of change as the true meaning of life. It purports to offer a way for an individual to analyse the patterns of transcience governed by the eternal Law of Change. These patterns are divided into sixty-four constituent processes, each one represented by a hexagram. The sixty-four hexagrams upon which the forecasts are based are each composed of two trigrams making a total of six lines. There are eight trigrams made from three lines, which are either broken (Yin) or unbroken (Yang). Divination of the furture is made through the casting of yarrow stalks or coins.

Imputation:

“All phenomena are imputed upon their parts; therefore any of the individual parts, or the entire collection of the parts, of any phenomenon is its basis of imputation. A phenomenon is its basis of imputation. A phenomenon is imputed by mind in dependence upon its basis of imputation appearing to that mind.” Geshe Gelsang Gyatso, Mahamudra Tantra: The supreme heart jewel of nectar (London: Tharpa Publications, 2005): 247.

Inferential Cognizer:

The definition of inferential cognizer is a completely reliable cognizer whose object is realized in direct dependence upon a conclusive reason.
Inferential cognizers are very important in a spiritual practice, as many spiritual realizations, such as that of emptiness, can only be realized initially through an inferential cognizer. Inferential cognizers are generated in dependence upon conclusive syllogistic reasoning. The aim of a spiritual practice is to know the object of emptiness with the non conceptual mind of a yogic direct perceiver.

Karma:

In Buddhist teachings, the law of Karma refers to action and is a special instance of the law of cause and effect, to which our actions of body, speech and mind are causes and all our experiences are effects. Our Karmic effects are said to be experienced across our many lives. See Geshe Kelsang Gyatso *Joyful Path of Good Fortune* (London: Tharpa Publications,1995): 227. Therefore Buddhists do not accept the view that life begins with birth and ends with death. Every action made by an individual sets in motion very powerful forces, whose effects may only be felt in future lives and the experiences of this present life are believed to be the results of actions in past lives. Virtuous actions lead to positive experiences and non-virtuous actions lead to negative experiences.

Kataphatic:

Kataphasis is revelation – what God reveals about himself in Christian teachings. Yet since God is beyond all that can be affirmed about him, Kataphatic description must be balanced by Apophatic negation. See *Apophatic.*

Madhyamika Prasangika:

A Sanskrit term, literally meaning "Middle Way", the higher of the two schools of Mahayana tenets. The Madhyamika view was taught by Buddha in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras during the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma and was subsequently elucidated by Nagarjuna and his followers. There are two divisions of this school, Madhyamika-Svatantrika and Madhyamika-Prasangika, of which the latter is Buddha's final view. See "Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Terms," accessed May 17th 2017, http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika.

Mahayana Buddhism:

Mahayana is the Sanskrit word for "Great Vehicle", the spiritual path to enlightenment. The Mahayana goal is to attain Buddhahood or Enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings as opposed to Hinayana Buddhism, where the goal is to attain Enlightenment just for one's self.

Mandala:

A Mandala is a schematized visual geometrical image that depicts the entire universe in one diagram.
In Buddhist Tantric practice a Mandala is usually the Celestial palace in which a Tantric Deity abides, or the environment or Deities of a Buddha's Pure Land. See "Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Terms," accessed May 23rd 2017, http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika

Mantra:
A Sanskrit word, literally meaning “mind protection”. They are believed to be sacred words of power. Mantra protects the mind from ordinary (conventional and mistaken) appearances and conceptions. Mantras can be both sound and form. They can be recited verbally or mentally.

Method practices:
The practices of method or skilful means refer to the accumulation of merit through actions of the five perfections: giving, effort, meditative concentration, patience and moral conduct.

Mudra:
In the *Natya Shastra,* the ancient two thousand year old Indian treatise on performing arts, there is a chapter devoted to “hand gestures” and their profound significance in communicating not only the nature and truth of the human condition but also the nature of ultimate reality.
In Buddhist terminology the word is mainly used to refer to the hand gestures that Buddhas and deities make and that Tantric practitioners emulate in their practice.

New Kadampa Tradition:
To provide a vehicle for promoting Kadampa Buddhism throughout the world, in 1991 Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso founded the New Kadampa Tradition, the International Kadampa Buddhist Union (NKT–IKBU). It is an international association of study and meditation centers that follow the pure tradition of Mahayana Buddhism derived from the Buddhist meditators and scholars Atisha and Je Tsongkhapa and introduced into the West by the Buddhist Teacher Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso.
The purpose of the NKT–IKBU is to increase the Buddhist Faith throughout the world. The New Kadampa Tradition is an entirely independent Buddhist tradition and the NKT–IKBU has no political affiliations. The NKT–IKBU is an international nonprofit organization registered in England as a charitable company. Kadampa Buddhism is a Mahayana Buddhist school founded by the great Indian Buddhist Master Atisha (AD 982-1054). In the word, “Kadampa”, “Ka” refers to Buddha’s teachings, and “dam” to Atisha’s special Lamrim instructions. Kadampas, then, are practitioners who regard Buddha’s teachings as personal instructions and put them into practice by following the instructions of Lamrim. By integrating their understanding of all Buddha’s teachings into their practice of Lamrim, and by integrating their experience of Lamrim into their everyday lives, Kadampas use Buddha’s teachings as practical methods for transforming daily activities into the path to enlightenment. See “Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Terms,” accessed May 17th 2017, http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika.

Sangha:
Sangha is a term used to describe any Buddhist community of four or more fully ordained monks or nuns. In general, ordained or lay people who take Bodhisattva vows or Tantric vows can also be said to be Sangha. See “Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Buddhist Terms”, accessed May 17th 2017, http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika.

Satori:
A word used in Zen Buddhism to describe the sudden and complete experience of Buddhist enlightenment.

Sutra:
The teachings of Buddha that are open to everyone to practice without the need for an empowerment.

Tantra:
Buddhist Tantra is divided into four types: Action, Performance, Yoga and Highest Yoga. Each type has numerous methods and ritual practices to guide a practitioner to the state of Enlightenment.
All four classes of Tantra emphasize a union of manifestation and emptiness – the union of the imputation of one's 'I' on the appearance of the deity in cognition with the realization of emptiness.
See *Vajrayana.*

Taoism:
The Tao is literally translated as "the way" but is also understood to be the nameless, the source, the journey and the goal. Taoists believe that the sublime Tao is that which lies directly in front of you and in you, that the holy creative principle is not a being but a state of being. This ancient Chinese wisdom is found written down in the *Tao Te Ching,* written by Lao-tzu, two and a half millennia ago. The principle teachings state the intangible unity of the Tao is manifested in the universe through a principle of polarity and the constant impermanent flux of the two polar forces of yin and yang. These forces of yin and yang are found in all phenomena but they are not separate. Pure yin contains the seed of yang. Pure yang contains the seed of yin.

Ultimate Reality:
The ultimate nature of reality is emptiness, the total absence of an inherently existent and independent object.

Vajrayana:
Vajrayana is synonymous with Tantra and Secret Mantra. Secret Mantra teachings are distinguished from Sutra teachings in that they reveal methods for training the mind by bringing the future result, or Buddhahood, into the present path. Secret Mantra is the supreme path to full enlightenment. The term `Mantra' indicates that it is Buddha's special instruction for protecting our mind from ordinary appearances and conceptions. Practitioners of Secret Mantra overcome ordinary appearances and conceptions by visualizing their body, environment, enjoyments, and deeds as those of a Buddha. The term "Secret" indicates that the practices are to be done in private, and that they can be practiced only by those who have received a Tantric empowerment". "Kadampa Buddhism Glossary of Buddhist Terms," accessed May 17th 2017, http://kadampa.org/reference/glossary-of-buddhist-terms-k-o#Madhyamika

Yantra:
A geometrical diagram found in the Indian Hindu and Tantric traditions. They are used an aid to meditation.

Zen Buddhism:
Zen is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism prevailing in China and North Asia. Zen Buddhists believe that their tradition alone preserves the highest teachings of Buddhism – the transmission of mind that took place between Guatama Buddha and his disciple Mahākāsyapa. This transmission of mind cannot be made through words. Mind is transmitted directly to Mind and these two Minds, whether they are "teacher" or "disciple"

are not different. Of course a Zen Buddhist also knows that Mind is not Mind and that transmission is not transmission either. Understanding lies beyond concepts.

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