Typography on the other side of the world is calligraphy – bilingualism and counterpoint in today’s China and yesterday’s Portugal

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The feeling of self is only the feeling of the particular being affected. Under the exclusive domination of this feeling, every being is its own universe. The winds blow and the sun shines for it and it alone. It is not the feeling of self, but the idea of self that carries man out beyond his own individuality, and places him on a level with all other human beings. He is now invested with a new set of emotions and passions. From being selfish, he has become social.
(James Frederick Ferrier)

Il me semble que je serais toujours bien là où je ne suis pas et cette question de déménagement en est une que je discute sans cesse avec mon âme
(Charles Baudelaire)

The language, with its own words and phrases, is the translation of something else, is not a conversion of images that represents linguistic entities, events, relationships and inferences. If language functions in relation to each other and to consciousness in the same way that works for everything else, that is symbolized in words and phrases that begins to exist under a non-verbal, so there should be a self nonverbal and knowledge nonverbal for which the words ‘I’ and ‘me’ or the phrase ‘I know’ are the appropriate translations in any language. I think it is entirely legitimate to take the phrase ‘I know’ and deduce from it, the presence of a nonverbal image of a self-centered knowledge that precedes and motivates the verb phrase.
(Antônio Damásio)

1. The insularity of the Letter

Our relationship with the letter involves several factors associated with it: the stain of the book, its multifaceted presence in everyday life, and the white space that it requires. It is crucial to observe the shape and the ways in our daily life and functions we relate to it. How do we gain and add to typographic skills? To explain our typographical relationship I have chosen a paradigmatic case study, markedly, this relatively unknown aspect presents itself: the territory of Macau. This analysis, accompanied by photographic records, will help us to realize the experienced and well-differentiated Portuguese way of confronting us with letters.
In Macau we have a meeting of two cultures. The Chinese living in a territory where many displays are in Portuguese and from where they cannot derive meaning. The Portuguese, who once administered the territory, when in parts of the Chinese area feel like tourists at home. The bilingual constant in the signage and graphic organization of the city creates a situation of a mutual double secrecy in relation to the letter. This bilingualism is a paradigmatic case in the world despite not being the only one. With the graphic intensity of Macau is certainly unique and incomparable to any other part of the globe.

2 The Bilingual Typography of Macau

Chinese calligraphy is the art of brush written Chinese Characters, expressive lines and dots made possible by a soft and supple brush in the hands of a skilled user. It is an art form that goes far beyond the mere act of putting words on paper and has been called ‘ink dancing’ for the lively and beautiful rhythms that can be put into simple lines and dots of black ink on white paper. It is music without sound. The practice of Chinese calligraphy requires a keen eye for composition and balance. A master calligrapher possesses an intimate knowledge of the possibilities offered by brushes that respond to the movements of the writer’s hand as sensitively as wind chimes to a breeze. They have an intuitive understanding of Chinese philosophy and literature grounded in many years of study and they are able to attain a quiet, meditative frame of mind before writing in order to open themselves to their inner voices and emotions.

(Khoo Seow Hwa & Nancy L. Penrose)

Utter jet lag. The night becomes day. The ultra modern airport in Hong Kong gives rise to a hybrid territory where the conquest of land and portions of the bridges and tunnels between islands in the archipelago undo this idea. The taxi hops from island to island as a fly fleeing the typhoon that threatens an approach in the coming days. Hong Kong’s central architectural needles are tossed into the sky, all so close to each other, slipping on the lack of space. At night, light spots dot the darkness when the turbojet arrives at Macau. Land that is said to be loyal. Land of two languages and two cultures. The exterior bilingual signage, Portuguese in association with Cantonese. Strange as it
may seem, there is between these two languages an invisible barrier, a wall of cardboard. Actually, this study never felt like a tourist trip between typography and calligraphy. The Portuguese is but a mirror in which we read but where we do not see. Beyond the mirror is our world in pretty colonial writing Chinese characters. The writing transforms architecture and the Chinese win the space that the Portuguese planned, by characterizing it.

Observed from the formal point of view “what seemed scribbles, was compared to traces of insects, the unconscious traces of bird feet in the sand this record chart” continues to contain an unchanged, always readable, understandable, effective, Chinese language, the oldest language in the world. (Michaux, 1999, p. 8) This graphical complexity has been one of the most characterizing aspects of China. Constitute a language barrier Westward and even within China itself since

these garbled characters for hundreds of millions of Chinese were not yet dead letters for them. Held outside the circle of literati, it is true that the peasants watched them without understanding them, but not without feeling that it was a family thing, those signs were relatives of agile curved roofs, dragons and characters in theatre, cartoon clouds also, and usually the landscapes of flowering branches and bamboo leaves they had seen in pictures and enjoyed.

(Michaux, 1999, p. 8)

That’s how Henry Michaux refers sensitively to the complexity of Chinese characters (present in Macau and in the Cantonese dialect spoken here). This graphic presence is markedly bi-linguistic: urban signage and signboards of shops that we are going to analyze carefully.

3. Conceptual Framework and multilingual experience in the territory of Macau

Some words are so interesting, they need no embellishment. However, in other cases, it’s useful to know that letterforms can do more that just spell words. A word or even a letterform can also be an image. For example, original problem:
booklet cover for a company offering 20% off its service. Problem redefined: take 20% off its name. Original problem: masthead for an anti-apartheid newspaper. Problem redefined: communicate the emotion associated with the word. Original problem: logo for John Page, sound recordist. Problem redefined: spell the client's name phonetically. (...) Take a statement like, 'we cure cancer for a nickel.' It isn't necessary to make a statement like that look interesting. It is interesting. If you are fortunate enough to work with interesting words, then let the words speak for themselves with the absolute minimum distraction from typography or colour or layout. If you try to make interesting words look interesting, the way they look competes with the statement. There are thousands of images competing with your design for the audience's attention. If and when they get around to your design, make sure that elements within your job don't compete with each other.

(Bob Gill)

Macau, located in Southeast Asia, consists of a peninsula and two islands. The peninsula called Macau is where the urban fabric is denser and where the important public and private institutions are situated. The two islands, Taipa and Coloane are connected together. Macau communicates with Taipa by two bridges.

Macau has a multiethnic population of over 400,000 inhabitants, with the Chinese community clearly the largest group. The Chinese residents in Macau are mostly Cantonese in origin, with roots in Guangdong Province and other areas of southern China. The Portuguese residents, excluding the Macanese (born in the territory), mainly work in Macau's administration and public services. Other groups namely the Thai and Filipino communities are also significant.

We can consider Macau to be an urban society in which one ethnic majority lives side-by-side several much smaller minorities. The inter-ethnic contact is rare and solely at the institutional or historical level.

For centuries the territory's sovereignty was shared, but with The treaty of Beijing, which lasted about a century, the Portuguese took over its government. With the 25th of April Revolution in Portugal, imperial control in Macau started to be reviewed. There follows a period of renegotiation and sovereignty which would come to an end with the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration. It was accepted by both parties that Portuguese sovereignty would continue until December 1999 in order to ensure the successful transition of Macau to China.
Little research explores multilingualism as an expanded approach to this territory. One of the reasons for this gap may be the constant fluctuation of linguistic groups and the fact that some communities are not based in this geographic space. It is important to note that it wasn’t until 1989 that Chinese became the official language, and thus it prospectively opened a gap between the Portuguese and Chinese communities.

Referencing Trudgill, Rouillé Correia assigns the concept of multilingualism in opposition to monolingualism. The first

is commonly used to refer to sociolinguistic situations in which it engages to more than one a language. Although the term may apply either to society or individuals, it is applied in general, multilingualism and multilingual in relation to social contexts, and bilingualism and bilingual for individuals, even if they dominate not just two, but three, four or more languages.

(Correia, 1999, p. 23)

Within this approach, that meets the sociolinguistics, lies the overlap of tipolinguistics since the spellings overlap in the same bracket. It thus performs a dynamic relationship between the two languages assuming multilingual skills within the community concerned.

Throughout this analysis we also engage with the concept of diglossia, since it is related to a situation of bilingualism. Charles Ferguson makes a similar observation “two languages live side by side in the same community though each have defined roles to play”, (Fergusson, 1996, p. 21) It is now important to focus on the linguistic contextual exemplarity of Macau where the Portuguese language once played the most important function (in policy, law, education, religion, etc.) and the Chinese, particularly Cantonese, existed in a context of community relations, being clearly the ethnic majority in this territory (family, neighbourhood, religion, education, etc.). With Macau’s handover to the People's Republic of China Ferguson’s commentary will certainly have a tendency to disappear, even if the context of bilingualism continues to be safeguarded.
4. Characterization of the multilingual graphic identity (typographic and calligraphic) of Macau

The reassuring evidence within which Western tradition had to organize itself and must continue to live would therefore be as follows: the order of the signified is never contemporary, is at best the subtly discrepant inverse or parallel – discrepant by the time of a breath – from the order of the signifier. And the sign must be the unity of heterogeneity, since the signified (sense or thing, noeme or reality) is not in itself a signifier, a trace: in any case is not constituted in its sense by its relationship with a possible trace. The formal essence of the signified is presence and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as phone is the privilege of presence. This is the inevitable response as soon as one asks: ‘what is the sign?’ that is to say, when one submits the sign to the question of essence, to the ‘ti esti.’ The ‘formal essence’ of the sign can only be determined in terms of presence.

(Jacques Derrida)

 Asserting themselves as mediators in the territory, the experience of the Portuguese in Macau has always been characterized by a notion of transculturality. The privileged access to cultural and markedly different linguistic universes distinguishes the people and their attitude as linguistic and cultural mediators; given its historical uniqueness, an aspect that will always be an asset even after the handover of Macau to the People's Republic of China. In this respect it should be noted that Creole dialect, Patuá, was for a long time the language of Macau. As João de Pina Cabral explains, Patuá, was close to the rough “port creole spoken during the seventeenth century throughout the Portuguese commercial empire, from Cape Verde to Timor”. (Cabral, 1999, p. 161) As Cabral continues, Patuá’s disappearance lead to an ever-greater linguistic mastery of the Cantonese dialect:

When I met the city, in the early 90's, there was a Macanese administrative elite, formed in Portugal in the 70s, which spoke both fluent Portuguese and Cantonese. Most Macanese also had a command of English. But the native language was Cantonese and most Macanese, who did not know Chinese writing, were comfortable in Cantonese. Those overhearing a conversation between strangers, family
or friends, for example, during one of these festive gatherings so important in Macanese culture, would be surprised by the linguistic patchwork that made up whole sentences in each of the three languages, creating a linguistic fabric that varied according to the socio-educational status: conversations between better educated wealthier families, were predominantly held in Portuguese and the less affluent families were mostly in Cantonese.

(Cabral, 1999, p. 162)

This author’s observation is important for an effective understanding of the linguistic richness of Macau and the lexicons of its early translation. Portuguese-Chinese dictionaries were once fundamental artefacts of both languages. Suffice to say, that the first dictionary was published in 1580: a Portuguese-Chinese dictionary with more than 2000 words, with the entries followed by two columns, with the corresponding phonetics and word in Chinese characters.

This linguistic diversity results in a very specific identity to the territory that has always been a space for migrants of different origins and backgrounds: Chinese and many others around the world. Since the population is mostly Chinese, Cantonese is the language that solidifies the relationships among this community. This is how we frame the key question and the main focus of analysis in this paper: the interaction and communication between the linguistic communities of Macau, namely the Portuguese and the Chinese.

Those who live in Macau do not use the various languages that coexist within this geographic territory. Besides English, which is spoken by all, both languages are enclosed within the ethnic communities that practice them. Mentioning Lyovin, Maria José Reis Grosso, refers to the quantitative data on Cantonese language: spoken by 53.9 million people of which “46305000 belong to People’s Republic of China; 5.292.000 to Hong Kong and 498.000 to Macau; others are distributed between Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and New Zealand”. (Grosso, 1999, p. 97) Grosso also notes that “In Macau, Cantonese is the privileged language of family relationships, social relationships (...) and all situations that aim to meet needs for communication and survival”. (Grosso, 1999, p. 97) In addition, following the rise
of Chinese as the official language and its elevated status, that “although the Chinese is the referred official language in state documents (...) it is understood that Chinese is Mandarin (the official language of China) and not Cantonese (although for the majority of Macau’s population it’s the mother tongue). This is a difficult issue, because despite being a language it is traditionally understood as a dialect”. (Grosso, 1999, p. 98) Standard Mandarin is China’s official language.

The Portuguese language always had less of a social presence in Macau. The whole typographic experience in the territory is misused and totally replaced by messages in Chinese characters. Apart from the civil service buildings and the courts and legal administration offices of law, everything else takes us through a calligraphic spiral, into a semiotic context of urban calligraphy – a conductor of the calligraphic secret messages to the Portuguese citizen, the non-Chinese speaker.

Thus, in this territory, the world of the Western typeface is purely institutional and governmental. Meanwhile, calligraphy, the Chinese writing, is part of the community at a level of interaction and social communication – hence the problems of dialogue and communication between the public service (health and education) and their Chinese speakers, who do not speak Portuguese, were at that time a serious matter of reflection and study. The names of streets, signs and legal documents of the civil services and the billboards of shops were all bilingual until Macau’s handover to China. Outside these areas, the Portuguese-Chinese bilingualism did not exist, which is something that makes us think.

The entire urban landscape is characterized by a bilingualistic graphic design, very particular to Macau, as is seen in the images that accompany and attest this text; paradigmatic urban images, the result of four hundred and fifty years of coexistence between East and West, in this context, the plurality of languages as an expression of cultural and ethnic diversity, is also a strong trace of the identity of Macau; because of its cosmopolitan and multicultural vocation, its linguistic situation would be a natural multilingualism in the sense that the resident population of this territory understood and accepted more than one culture and speak at least three languages. (Grosso, 1999, p. 101)
5. Typography, calligraphy and letterpress as departure points for visual fieldwork and graphic exploration in the territory of Macau – The typographic background research and conceptual framework

This study is situated, between disciplinary platforms of calligraphy and typography. Letterpress typography was the personal starting point for this research in Macau. The practice of this old-fashioned technology, connected with wood and metal type, brought tactility onto paper and a clear sense of a voice that speaks through the characters – close to calligraphy – a widely practiced art form in China. The sonorous dimension of the letterpress technique is present at the beginning of the project when the designer touches the letters, getting direct contact with the materials. Letterpress is a three dimensional experience where fingers can feel the calligraphic “voice” of each character, making compositional options, containing such basic typographic elements as scale, contrast, balance, and alignment, aspects that also exist in calligraphy. When handling and positioning metal and wood type the designer makes decisions concerning fonts, type size, measure, and character spacing and leading. These options are parallel to the calligrapher’s decisions when working on a piece of calligraphic art, while “writing”.

Printing in letterpress is the result of a personal inking and printing process that can produce letters and words with different weights thanks to an informal use of ink. This can be regarded as a second tool of notation in the letterpress process, after the composing room. The designer can control the amount of ink, working graphically with one single colour, creating plain shapes next to almost unprinted letters, producing shades and different levels of pressure. These aspects bring out the intensity of the text and of the speech represented visually, creating places where the writer and the typographer are speaking aloud or just whispering, working and composing prosody and phonetics. David Jury writes about this compositional dimension present in letterpress:
During the letterpress printing process, the designer/printer is constantly judging the pressure and amount of ink, to maintain the chosen standard. The process requires constant reappraisal, suggesting improvisations, deviations, even irregularities, and continually offering fresh and unexpected alternatives to form a pattern, colour and texture. Such variations are, in fact, slight and subtle. There is the ever-present risk that they will be overplayed, but they will ensure that every sheet, despite all the printer’s endeavours, will be different. It is part of the unavoidable contrast and tension — between regulation and freedom, uniformity and divergence — that is at the heart of letterpress. How these characteristics are exploited will reflect the printer’s own concerns and preferences.

(Jury, 2004, p. 20)

Another important element present in letterpress and in the design process that can contribute to the individual voice of characters is the specific aesthetic of wood type. The function of “wood type has always been to attract, through its size and its flamboyant design, (...) characteristic that are unique and, therefore, attractive”. (Jury, 2004, p. 17) The wood type changes its shape with age and the surface shows damage that contribute to visual characteristics of the word and of the sonorous qualities of the text, relying on the incidental nature of letterpress. Again, David Jury gives an idealintroductory reflection:

The effects of age and wear are incorrigible, as every letterpress printer knows; they will leave their mark at every opportunity. These marks might be beneficial, but the decision as to whether such incidental damage should be displayed is fraught with dangers. Normally, when an unobserved mistake is made during the process of printing it is irreparable. But damaged, worn type (like anything else) can be employed if it’s capable of endorsing the message. Distressed surfaces of one sort or another have been prized since ancient times, as have accidental (uncontrollable) modifications such as crackle glazes, and the weathering of stone and wood.

(Jury, 2004, p. 17)

Taking the argument that letterpress is a privileged way to represent speech, I must refer to Alan Kitching’s poster of the 1940s Winston Churchill Address to Parliament, where this British letterpress
typographer produced a typographic representation of this speech using wood type and an informal inking. Kitching uses the incidental damages on the wood type to represent the old and dark voice of Churchill, and a very irregular inking; fixing the tension and the power of the spoken word and the human voice to change hearts and minds. Kitching explains his own sonorous raw material:

Churchill's short, powerful words, expressed with gravitas, passion and pace, in his unique voice, exhorted all who heard to 'wage war against a monstrous tyranny' and aim for 'victory at all costs'. This magical speech united the government and gave hope and new resolve to millions around the world.  
(Kitching, 2006, p. 76)

This strong textual material then turns into letterpress where Kitching produced a piece of typography that can be regarded as a letter notation of the previous sonorous recording, one which contained an enormous amount of emotion, as he explains:

The challenge of this project for me was to translate, typographically, the magic and passion of this great orator's speech. It is not just the intensity of his words, but his pauses, stresses, tone and strength that make both visual and tangible something which originated in the mind and was expressed in air: an unseen, verbal text, a series of sounds. The composition was printed letterpress from wood-letter.  
(Kitching, 2006, p.76)

This piece of work by Kitching is a clear example of the connection between typography, sound and notation in the context of communication and design. Angharad Lewis explains that “typography embodies the unification of word and image, and to make a visual interpretation of a speech reinforces this relationship between the verbal and the visual further still”. (Lewis, 2006, p. 11) This example of letterpress by Kitching was included in a paradigmatic project and collective exhibition, called Public Address System, where the brief was to design an A2 poster that was a typographic interpretation of a speech, including such designers as Alan Fletcher, Margaret Calvert, Malcolm Frost, David Hillman, David Quay and Erik Spiekerman among others. The
Fig. 8

Address to Parliament,
1940, Winston Churchill
Alan Kitching
2006
typographer’s response to the project brief engenders deep thought about the very nature of speech, typography and poster, expressing the sonorous power of type. Kitching’s project makes us think about the connection between the abstract forms of the alphabet and their possibility of carrying sound, Lewis again:

> When you first learn about the alphabet as a child it’s about forging the mental leap between the sounds you make with your lungs, tongue and mouth and the shape of letters. Then you put those together to make language and communicate with others through speech, reading and writing. Speech is forever grafted to the shape of letters and words on the page and in the same way that a person’s voice invests speech with emotion and meaning, so the way letters look invigorates the meaning of written and printed words.

(Lewis, 2006, p. 11)

Kitching’s approach to poster design for the Public Address System exhibition endorses the importance of speech in typographic expression, in visual culture and its power in everyday life. What emerged from his letterpress piece, above all else, was that far from being dry or retiring, typography arouses a phonetic voice.

The use of the old methods of letterpress to produce structures of sound and speech takes us now to off-set typography where the shape of letter forms and the configuration of visual form given to a text and the meaning of those words is a dominating theme. Far beyond the above-mentioned tactility and the informal inking and printing of letterpress, the visual qualities of a typographic font can add a voice. Robin Kinross in his major research on the figure of the typographer and printer, Antony Froshaug (1920–1984) – a former lecturer at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm and the Royal College of Art – produced two voices in his book, using two different typefaces:

> There are two voices in this work. Anthony Froshaug’s words are set in a serifed typeface (Monotype Plantin), and those of his editor are set in a sans serif (Monotype Grotesque 215). In Documents of a Life, the words of AF’s correspondents and contemporaries are set in the same serifed typeface. Both these typefaces were current in AF’s time (they are anonymously designed ‘company
typefaces' of the early twentieth century); and though, I think, he was not averse to them, they were not among the few typefaces that he used persistently. Here, as in the rest of the design of the book, I have endeavoured to follow his spirit, without pastiche or adherence to some imagined doctrine.
(Kinross, 2000, p. 11)

In fact, the sans serif typeface tends to give a more silent voice to the text, thanks to its linear expression and a certain kind of neutrality. The visual expression of the serif typefaces is closer to handwriting and calligraphy and, in this sense, is more personal in bringing an individual voice to the text. While choosing a serif typeface for Froshaug’s words and his contemporaries Kinross put an emphasis on the real author of this editorial project where he, as editor, appears with a silent voice.

Froshaug, of his own accord, designed the paradigmatic Gloria in excelsis Deo, a still a little known piece of typography that can be regarded as a musical chanting score, a true piece of typographic notation. The lines of text run horizontally until the end of the voice, expressing the length of the singing text. Froshaug designed a double object, with it being a score and a piece of pure typography. The inspiration for this project came with the contact he had, in 1937, with the writer and experimental filmmaker, Stefan Themerson, and the development of “semantic typography”. (Kinross, 2000, p. 144) In his own words, quoted by Kinross, Froshaug explains how typography works in the case of a typographic score:

you may read horizontally the melody, but you may also take each of its words and score it vertically for your whole intellectual orchestra, you may give each of them the flesh of exact definition; instead of allowing them to evoke the clichés stored in your mind, you may try to find the true reality to which every word points.
(Kinross, 2000, p. 144)

This visual structure is connected with the modernism at the beginning of the 20th century, which rejected the centred design of text, associated with the old classical order and "unresponsive to particular meanings – apart from the one big meaning of classical formality, in favour of asymmetrical configuration, denoting informality and able to articulate meanings within a whole". (Kinross, 2000, p. 46) Unjustified
text emerges as a graphic design practice right at the end of the war, becoming a pervasive "and now almost unnoticed instance of the alignment principle. But more obviously, alignment may be used in many precise ways: for example, to relate a heading to the text that follows, or a page number to the edge of the picture". (Kinross, 2000, p. 46)

To work typographically with speech and sound, as Froshaug did, the designer must be an "intruder" – a very vigorous one, in contrast with the doctrine of the invisible designer, an idea built by Stanley Morison and Beatrice Warde. Morison explains it in the important book, First Principles on Typography:

Typography is the efficient means to an essentially utilitarian and only accidental aesthetic end, for enjoyment of patterns is rarely the reader's chief aim. Therefore, any disposition of printing material which, whatever the intention, has the effect of coming between the author and the reader is wrong. It follows that in the printing of books meant to be read there is little room for 'bright typography'. Even dullness and monotony in the typesetting are far less vicious to a reader than typographical eccentricity or pleasantness.
(Morison, 1967, p. 5)

Confirming Morison, Warde built the concept of "the crystal goblet", which turned the idea of the clean design defined by Morison into a more popular expression. In a lecture, in 1932, printed in 1955, called "Printing should be invisible", Warde's idea "is that typography should lend distinction to its materials, as a cut glass vessel may do to wine: invisible, but nevertheless detectable by the connoisseur". (Warde, 1955, p. 34) While producing typographic notation and semantic typography, Froshaug considered himself as an "anti Morison", as Kinross writes:

It is clear that he rejected the doctrine of the invisibility. (...) He thought that the Morisonian view of typography gave no idea of the work of interfering with, shaping, transforming and physically retyping the text or 'copy', before it was set and printed. (...) By contrast with others who have opposed 'the crystal goblet' (the idea has become a straw-target for would-be semantic typographers); Froshaug attempted both interference for meaning and self-critical reticence. In 1970, quarrelling with the idea that modern typography meant dislocation of rectangularity,
Fig. 9
Macau Field trip Diary
Jorge dos Reis
1999

Typography on the other side of the world is calligraphy -
Bilingualism and counterpoint in today's China and yesterday's Portugal.
he wrote: 'modern typography is not a mode; it consists in a reasoned assessment of what is needed, and of what some how then is done, under certain constraints. When typographic and social constraints change, the important thing is not to spray a random pattern on the page but to assess the new with the old, requirements of a text'.
(Kinross, 2000, p. 47-48)

While working with music and poetry, Froshaug's typography can be a reference for designers who want to become authors, or "entrepreneurs, (...) conceiving design projects that might be seen as a form of authorship". (Poynor, 2003, p. 145)

In the universe of contemporary type design, fonts can have a voice based on bold, light, extended, condensed, roman or italic variations. Eric Spiekermann argues that it is possible to make a music/type comparison in terms of intensity, since there is "loud music and quiet music, dulcet tones and heavy tones, and there is a typographic parallel. Some typefaces are loud by design, some are rather fine and sweet. A good family of words will cater to all these worlds". (Spiekermann, 1993, p. 103)

If we look to the Universe typeface we can see the light version that illustrates "the tones of a flute", since "very delicate typefaces are for those messages we want to look delicate and elegant". (Spiekermann, 1993, p. 103) In a very simple, straightforward and pedagogical discourse this German graphic designer suggests the notational possibilities of the basic shapes of a font. If a flute can be represented by the light version, a double bass can, at the other end of the musical spectrum and at the other end of the typographic notational characteristics, be represented by a black typeface: "like writing music (...) the best thing for bold typefaces is to use them where you need to accentuate rhythm and lend emphasis to the other instruments and voices". (Spiekermann, 1993, p. 105)

Rhythm is another aspect that can be notated by typography on a letter score. Changing the typographic rhythm by using condensed or expanded typefaces can work together with kerning, spacing the letters to slow down the rhythm of speech:
Fig. 10

*Univers* typeface
Rhythm and contrast keep coming up when discussing good music and good typographic design. They are concepts that also apply to spoken language, as anyone who has had to sit through a monotonous lecture will attest; the same tone, volume, and speed of speech will put even the most interested listener into dreamland. Every now and again the audience needs to be shaken, either by a change in voice or pitch, by a question being posed, or by the speaker talking very quietly and then suddenly shouting. An occasional joke also works, just as the use of a funny typeface can liven up a page.

(Spieckermann, 1993, p. 107)

Post-modern and deconstructivist theories that have been around since the 1980s largely influenced the design of typefaces, freeing them from the restraints of functionality. “Coupled with new methods of creating type facilitated by the personal computer, a renaissance in typeface design has taken place that has no precedence in its 500-years of history”. (VanderLands, 2001, p. 224) This aspect is relevant for the curator, Ellen Lupton, who, in the 1996 show Mixing Messages, Graphic Design and Contemporary Culture at the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt, paid attention to the field of type design. Lupton refers to the concept of “typography as discourse” (Lupton, 1996, p. 51) as developed by Katherine McCoy and her students at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. They argued that by “layering and juxtaposing words and pictures, designers construct compositions that demand to be interpreted on their own terms, beyond their objective content”. (Lupton, 1996, p. 51) The parallel to speech and sound is made through the “interpretation” where the reader acts like a chanter who makes a personal reading of the text as a notation device, present in the typographic structure.

The references exposed through this introduction build a context for typography as a tool to work as a notation device and carry sound or speech. The visual qualities of typography make the alphabet increase the power to represent sound.

Taking these elements from graphic design as a starting point, I will look ahead to the specific typographic qualities of primitive notation, which just uses letters to represent the chant, and to how these scores influenced the vowel notation system of this research.
We also have to consider the fact that Dadaists and Futurists have used the visual and the acoustic channels to produce their experimental performances, in the context of the “voicimage” concept developed by Minarelli (2001, p. 5). The avant-gardes designed beautiful visual poems where aspects like vowels duration, dynamics and pitch are notated; after the poem of Stéphane Mallarmé, A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance, where auditory and emotional sensations are preset, avoiding the conventional layout of the text. Other authors like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Hugo Ball, Raoul Hausmann and Kurt Schwitters produced and developed typographic scores for aural performances where the use of design had a fundamental role in the notation process.

This is a reflection of acoustic and visible language presentation as mediated by letterpress and typographic techniques with the possibility of simultaneously using the visual and acoustic channels. These visual objects can be identified in the field of concrete poetry or even sound poetry, on an interdisciplinary perspective of analysis. These typographic artefacts can also be regarded in the context of the “voicimage” concept developed by Enzo Minarelli:

**Voicimage is a symbiotic union of two parts (voice and image) that have suffered from great attraction, as well as from great rejection. The ideas and typical practices of the historical avant-gardes (Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism) necessarily attempted a reconciliation, which has never been completely fulfilled due more to a technological gap than for lack of creative will. Today, as we seem capable of almost any achievement, we can reach for aesthetic utopias, since we have technology for all purposes.**

(Minarelli, 2001, p. 5)

The 20th century avant-gardes produced a large amount of typographical pieces, beautiful visual poems from the Futurist and Dadaist movements where we can find vowel length representation, visualisation of different dynamics, pitch and intensified prosody. The visual area as space in word composition started in the Middle Ages, however examples, like Lewis Carroll’s mouse’s tail in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1985), was written and typeset to appear like the tail described in the text (the end of the paragraph is curved).
The anti-traditional use of typographic design in text messages can produce a visual effect of expression because it includes clear acoustic qualities. The message is transformed into a visual piece and a musical score and the frontier between music and fine arts collapses.

The poem by Stéphane Mallarmé, *A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance*, was composed to evoke both auditory and emotional sensations. Rather than producing a poem in a classical format the words in this poem make a visual composition and the white space has an important role since words are spaced apart. The geography of words deliberately emphasizes the expression and the emotion of the message.

Marinetti (1876–1944) is a radical figure who founded the Futurist Movement in Italy. He was a real man of action multiplying activities in several places; organizing exhibitions, theatre, cinema, musical performances, and declamations. Most of the Futurists' activities were pure manifestos, where aesthetics and politics were superimposed. The movement was an instrument of social intervention using literature, painting, sculpture, music, drama, dance, cinema, and cooking. R. W. Flint, in his *Introduction to Marinetti selected writings*, mentions that Marinetti was the “caffeine of Europe, Marinetti was a dramatic break in the smooth evolution of Italian elegiac pessimism (...). Marinetti became one of the great intuitive sleepwalking impresarios of Europe". (Flint, 1971, p. 6)

Marinetti, through *Les Mots en Liberté* (Marinetti, 1987) and *Zang Tumb Tumb* (Marinetti, 1914) was the first to avoid the complexity of syntax, liberating words and dragging them out of their prison. The first use of the idea of the deconstruction of syntax appeared in his *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature*. In this text, Marinetti assumed a totally radical attitude against, what he called the old syntax. His ideas where of a new literature or a contrast literature towards simplification:

One must destroy syntax and scatter one's nouns at random, just as they are born. One should use infinitives because they adapt themselves elastically to nouns and don't subordinate them to the writer's I that observes or imagines (...). The perception of analogy becomes even more natural for man. One must suppress the like, the as, the so, the similar to. Still better, one should deliberately confound the object with the image that it evokes, foreshortening the image to a single essential word. Abolish even the punctuation. After adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions have
been suppressed, punctuation is naturally annulled (...). To accentuate certain movements and indicate their directions, mathematical symbols will be used and musical symbols.
(Marinetti, 1912, p. 84–89)

After observing some of the postulates of Marinetti, it is important to think how a free expressive orthography and typography can represent sound values and lyric features. The proportion of characters can represent epidermis exuberance, the repetition of sound and individual letters can form an onomatopoeic score, all existing in the Futurist performance, which continues to have its own place as Michael Kirby puts it:

*It is something of a paradox, then that certain Futurist developments in performance seem to retain a more pronounced quality of striking innovation for the very reason that they apparently had little direct influence on later work. They are still somewhat outside the limits of contemporary avant-garde production, and they seem more provocative because they were not surpassed or simplified by any aesthetic offspring.*
(Kirby, 1971, p. 87)

In the manifesto, *Geometric and Mechanical Splendour and the Numerical Sensibility* (Marinetti, 1914, p. 158) Marinetti takes onomatopoeia as a very serious matter, using typography and the repetition of characters to express the length of the vowels (it is possible to consider that as a theory of onomatopoeia applied to typographic notation and performance). Through the noise produced by the performer and the notational structure of typography it is possible to conjure up visualisations of physical objects. Therefore, the author divides onomatopoeia into five kinds.

The first is the “Direct, imitative, elementary, realistic onomatopoeia” where he selects a sequence of sounds that represents reality: “ffiiiiii fiiiiii” expresses the sound of a boat. (Marinetti, 1914, p. 158)

The “Indirect, complex, and analogical onomatopoeia” represents sensations like weight, heat, colour, smell, and noise. In this case, the onomatopoeias “dum-dum-dum-dum” express the “circling sound of the African sun”. The onomatopoeia “stridionla stridionla stridionla” that repeats itself in the first canto of Marinetti’s poem *The Conquest of*
*The Stars* is an analogy “between the clashing of the great sword and the furious action of the waves, just before a great battle of stormy waters”. (Marinetti, 1914, p. 158)

The third onomatopoeia is the “Abstract onomatopoeia” and means unconscious expressions related to sensibility. In his poem *Dunes*, the abstract “rnn rnn rnn” expresses a state of mind. (Marinetti, 1914, p. 158) Finally, the “Psychic onomatopoeic harmony” corresponds to the “fusion of two or three abstract onomatopoeias”. (Marinetti, 1914, p. 158)

Marinetti transforms into theory all the qualities of onomatopoeia. However, I have to admit that he did not abolish the narcissism detail; it is Marinetti whom the audience remembered, he is the reader of the onomatopoeically typographic structures and his solutions may lead to a “mechanization of the performer”. (Kirby, 1971, p. 32) To address his objectives, Marinetti also developed a theory on the use of typography for his letterpress compositions, based on the use of several typefaces on the same page:

> My revolution is aimed at the so-called typographical harmony of the page, which is contrary to the flux and reflux, the leaps and bursts of style that run through the page. On the same page, therefore, we will use three or four colours of ink, or even twenty different typefaces if necessary. For example: italics for a series of similar or swift sensations, boldface for violent onomatopoeias, and so on. With this typographical revolution and this multicoloured variety in the letters I mean to redouble the expressive force of words. (Marinetti, 1913, p. 104–105)

This non-traditional use of letterpress and page design was fundamental for the production of typographic scores that immediately included acoustic qualities, “the text is approaching the picture and the musical score thus transcending the borders of music and pictorial and fine arts”. (Scholz, 2001, p. 94)

Sound poetry can be a declamation of a written poem and this visual typographic score may be the basis for a specific way of reading aloud through the observation and interpretation of the visual qualities of the letters, their shape and scale. The work of the Dadaist artist, Hugo Ball can help us in understanding this notion of dependence from a written typographic notational object.
Hugo Ball performed his *Karavane* (Caravane), also called *Elefantenkaravane* (Elephant Caravan) on July 23, 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. In the seventeen lines of the sound poem he uses different types: italic and roman in lower case; serif and sans serif typefaces. Ball made different versions of the poem where typefaces changed. The motion of the text is directly connected with the richness of fonts. In his extraordinary diary *Flight Out of Time* (Ball, 1974, p. 12), the poet describes his performance:

_I was carried onto the stage in the dark and began slowly and solemnly: ‘gadji beri baimba / glandridi laudi lonni cadori / gadjama bim beri glassala / glandridi glassala tuffm i zimbrabim / blasa galassasa tuffm i zimbrabim...’ Then I noticed that my voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic churches of East and West (...) For a moment it seemed as if there were a pale, bewildered face in my cubist mask, that half-frightened, half curious face of a ten-year-old-boy, trembling and hanging avidly on the priest’s words in requiems and high masses in his home parish. Bathed in sweat, I was carried down off the stage like a magical bishop._

(Ball, 1974, p. 21)

During the performance of the poem, Ball embraces different roles, he “is part shaman, part priest, but he is also a child once again entranced by ritual magic: less pope and blasphemer in one, then, than exorcist and possessed. Such pandemonium is one aim of the Dadaists” (Foster, 2003, p. 167), represented by a previous pandemonium of different typefaces visualized on the page. The typographic version of the poem uses seventeen lines of text with each one using a different typeface. Christian Sholz quotes Jeremy Adler and Ulrich Ernst when those authors refer to the changing of typefaces of the poem:
The visual version of the sound poem ‘Karawane’ is characterized by its headline, which seems to be in motion, and the use of different types of writing in the seventeen lines of the text. According to Jeremy Adler and Ulrich Ernst a sort of undulatory motion is produced by the alternative use of italics and roman type, while the left column produces a soothing effect by using a homogeneous type and small letters, thus bringing about a classical balance in the whole composition. But the visual arrangement (for instance concerning the dynamic process) is not a good start for the interpretation of this sound poem. Any interpretation must start with the title which alludes to the recipient’s imagination, thus giving him the impulse for the onomatopoeic effects.

(Scholz, 2001, p. 94)

The vast and undetermined oral expression of this poem that exists on a written platform flies through different interpretations of contemporary performers, even if we know the poem on paper and its typographic changes.
Bibliography


