The Relational Poetry Reading Series
In Live Performance and Audio Archives, Montreal from the 1960s to the Present: Positing Framed, Open, Self, and Deep Curatorial Modes of Literary Event Organization

Klara du Plessis

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by:

Klara du Plessis

entitled: **The Relational Poetry Reading Series in Live Performance and Audio Archives, Montreal from the 1960s to the Present: Positing Framed, Open, Self, and Deep Curatorial Modes of Literary Event Organization**

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_____Dr. Stephen Yeager, Chair

Stephen Yeager

_____Dr. Erin Wunker, External examiner

Erin Wunker

_____Dr. Andre Furlani, Examiner

Andre Furlani

_____Dr. Katherine McLeod, Examiner

Katherine McLeod

_____Dr. Maya Rae Oppenheimer, Examiner

Maya Rae Oppenheimer

_____Dr. Jason Camlot, Thesis Supervisor

Jason Camlot

Approved by:

_____Dr. Kevin Pask, Graduate Program Director

Kevin Pask

_____Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean

Pascale Sicotte

22 March 2023

Abstract

The Relational Poetry Reading Series in Live Performance and Audio Archives, Montreal from the 1960s to the Present: Positing Framed, Open, Self, and Deep Curatorial Modes of Literary Event Organization

Klara du Plessis, Ph. D.

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Recognizing a gap in audiotextual criticism that focuses on the poetry reading series as subject, my interdisciplinary doctoral research imports vocabulary from curatorial into literary studies through sound archives of poetry performance. I borrow Irit Rogoff's distinction between practical *curating* and *the curatorial* as a dynamic field of critical exchange ("Curating/Curatorial") to schematize and theorize four curatorial modes relating to the formulation of literary events: framed, open, self, and deep curation. Each mode shifts the relational tension between the responsibility of the curator and the creative field activated at the series by featured authors: some curators direct expected outcomes, while some model an open space that invites experimentation; some curators are themselves performers, while some conceptualize curating as artform. My research recognizes the interconnection of innumerable elements active at literary events and calls this network of exchange curatorial relationalities, highlighting the vibrant reciprocity between curator, poets, poetry, audience demographic, venue, technology, historical moment, and more. My research originated in parallel to Beatrice von Bismarck's 2022 monograph *The Curatorial Condition* that contends that "the activity, the subject position, and the resulting product [of curating...are] always already dynamically interrelated in their genesis, articulation, and function" (8-9). It is also indebted to Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* and Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, pivotal studies on art and poetry that rely on sociability, knowledge transfer, and an unstable locus of constant interchange. I apply the terminology of curatorial modes and relationalities to a Montreal-based context, using case studies from the past sixty years with a chapter each on the Sir George Williams poetry series (1966-1974), Véhicule Art Inc. (1973-1983), the Words and Music Show (2000-ongoing), and Deep Curation (2018-ongoing). While Deep Curation is a curatorial mode, it also materializes in a personal research creation project and experimental curatorial practice. I have organized and archived eight Deep Curation events in collaboration with leading Canadian poets, including Oana Avasilichioaei, Liz Howard, Kaie Kellough, among others. My dissertation thus straddles an investigation into contemporary, local poetry in performance equally as it theorizes vocabulary that can be applied and developed in relation to other literary curatorial performative contexts.

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Table of Contents

List of Images

Introduction—Establishing the Literary Event in Curatorial Terms: the Poetry Reading in Live Performance and Audio Archives, Montreal from the 1960s to the Present

My doctoral dissertation research maps out concepts and methods for a formal analysis of the poetry reading, literary event, or reading series, as shaped by the curator, through mediating acts of curation, and as a dynamic construct called the curatorial. It pursues this formal analysis using four Montreal-based cases of literary events and series of the past sixty years to the present, as situated within larger Canadian, North American, and global contexts. By shining the spotlight on curation, I will place the poetry reading as a literary form—and as understood within the socio-cultural conditions that allow the idea of the poetry reading to function—in interdisciplinary conversation with discourses from the visual arts, applying curatorial theory and vocabulary from museum, gallery, and exhibition spaces to it. Initiating a discussion about the structures of curation inherent to the poetry reading allows for historical and critical connections with alternate artforms and enriches the discourses available for understanding the poetry reading as form. In fact, even just by compounding the words *literary* and *curation* into a single construct—literary curation or literary curator—I render discernible a field of study that is deserving of more critical attention. My approach adds a necessary and innovative angle to scholarship at the intersection of literary studies, sound studies, archival studies, oral history, and more, that has long overlooked the poetry reading as a dynamic curatorial form and relegated it as a paratextual cloak, secondary to, or an oral vehicle for, the written word. My research on the curatorial formation of the literary event thus celebrates the poetry reading, in both its minimalism and its expansive potential, as worthy of and ripe for rigorous and sustained analysis.

The speculative nature of this interdisciplinary dialogue results in the schematization of four possible curatorial modes through which to catalogue different priorities manifested in poetry reading curation, and their resulting live events and audio archives. I call these modes framed, open, self, and deep curation, respectively. I will return to full definitions of these modes in Chapter 1, and will apply each to a case study in Chapters 2-5; these case studies include the Sir George Williams poetry series, Véhicule Art Inc., the Words and Music Show, and Deep Curation, the latter being a series of experimental poetry readings and explorative research creation that I developed as part of my dissertation project and which applies the core values of the eponymous curatorial mode in practical terms.[1] In short, however, the four curatorial modes offer varying ratios of shared agency and direction between curators and performing poets over the imaginary of the literary event. Framed curation models the curator as an astute administrator who simultaneously articulates a clear mandate for the poetry reading, one into which guest poets are slotted in order to further propagate the event's vision and goals. Open curation reverses this precision, aiming to offer a space devoid of guidelines, one which counteracts assumptions of literary merit and democratically welcomes poets into the space to design and experiment with what a poetry reading can be. Self-curation heightens the role of the poet as curator, suggesting events organized and imagined by the performer themself, while deep curation posits the curator as artist who authors the poetry reading as a fully-formed artwork in collaboration with the performing poets.

Beyond the key roles of curators, poets, and audiences, these four curatorial modes are further informed by a vast array of possible relationalities, a term I will also define in more depth in Chapter 1. These relationalities, including both human and nonhuman influences, spanning

[1] For clarity's sake, I use *deep curation* lower case to represent the curatorial mode, while *Deep Curation* upper case is the proper name for a series of events I curated since 2018.

audience demographic, community ethos, venue layout, technological mediation, and so much more, create a vibrant, mercurial network of constant interaction and exchange, a "dialectic of interdependencies," to cite Édouard Glissant (*Poetics of Relation* 153). Applying the word *relationality* demands an introduction of Nicolas Bourriaud's formulation of interpersonal networks of reciprocity in art that "consist of a formal arrangement that generates relationships between people, or be born of a social process; I have described this phenomenon as 'relational aesthetics,' whose main feature is to consider interhuman exchange an aesthetic object in and of itself" (*Postproduction* 32-33). That is, certain developments in the arts reject the consolidation as individualized object and reformulate art as a process of congregation, sociability, and interconnection, lending itself to the implicit direction, mediation, and collaboration inherent to the act of curation, especially as manifested in the interpersonal performance of the literary event. As such, my research will implicitly be influenced by shared sources and conceptual modes between the poetry reading and adjacent artforms, such as Happenings, Events, and Situations from the 1950s and 1960s, the development of performance and socially engaged art in the 1970s and 1980s, and recent and contemporary curatorial, delegated, and archival art practices. Here one might think alongside Douglas Kahn or Adelaide Morris, for example, who trace the imbrication of the literary through Futurist, Dadaist, Surrealist, and later John Cage and Fluxus-inspired explorations of sound, image, performance, and technological mediation, tracking twentieth century avant-garde poetics as a practice that pushed back against poetry as a written medium and embraced its oral innovation (*Noise, Water, Meat*, *Wireless Imagination,* and *Sound States*). One might also glean relevant insight from Claire Bishop whose study on sociality in the visual arts resonates with the literary event as a relational congregation of poets, curators, audience members, and other participants. She finds that "using people as a medium [...has] a double ontological status: it is both an event in the world, and at one remove from it" (*Artificial Hells* 284). The simultaneous power disparity and interplay between production, participation, and spectatorship reach out symbolically towards the social formulation of poetry readings as a structural act of curation, oscillating between administration and generative relational exchange.

By recognizing that the poetry reading coexists and crosspollinates with these various experiments, artforms, practices, and their related spaces, I am not equating them to each other, but rather expanding what the poetry reading can be or can do. I am not trying to redefine the poetry reading as anything beyond an entity that is already discernable as distinct from other entities of literary performance, such as slam, talk, lecture, theater, and more. The poetry reading as the function of literary curation remains difficult to define, however, and spans out to encompass an unstable array of different approaches and outputs. It renavigates poetry from a written to an oral and sonic medium, amplifying Charles Bernstein's now almost ubiquitous term, *close listening,* to engage attentively with literature performed at the live event or in the audio archive (*Close Listening*). Peter Middleton further attempts to describe "an ordinary poetry reading" as "[a] person stand[ing] alone in front of an audience, holding a text and speaking in an odd voice, too regular to be conversation, too intimate and too lacking in orotundity to be a speech or a lecture, too rough and personal to be theater" ("The Contemporary Poetry Reading" 262). Lesley Wheeler rephrases this undramatic formulation through the figure of the poet themself, suggesting, "[p]oetry readings as manifestations of authentic authorial presence, rather than as demonstrations of vocal skill, would become the mainstream mode of aural dissemination" in the twentieth century (*Voicing American Poetry* 12-13). Tyler Hoffman focuses on the positionality of the poet, claiming that "what is performed at a poetry reading is necessarily both the poet *and* the poem" (*American Poetry in Performance* 7), while Smaro Kamboureli and Ashok Mathur posit poetry readings as

"social and pedagogical events" ("On Public Readings" 125). Considering the poetry reading as a pedagogical entity is especially pertinent when brought into contact with curation as a dynamic act of knowledge transfer through the gesture of hospitality. As I continue to mention at intervals throughout the dissertation, *to curate* traditionally derives from *to care for* and while this may imply a static task of preservation, it can also expand towards a resistant feminist practice, the deliberate, but also organic, sharing and exchange of knowledge between curators, artists/poets, and audiences. In terms of literary events, the act of presenting selected poetry to audiences by default signals an educational turn, at the very least by immersing everyone present in an experience through literary performance. Even more overtly, curatorial choices can be angled to assert those pedagogical endeavours to advance thematic, conceptual, and political agendas. As will be seen with specific case studies in the following chapters, mobilizing curatorial choices can thus direct pedagogical intentions. The Sir George Williams poetry series, hosted at a university by a committee of professors, is perhaps the most obvious example, but Véhicule Art Inc. equally billed authors through a forward-looking model of curiosity for new literary stimuli. The Words and Music Show can further be understood as a space for self-education through a mentorship stance from the main curator, Ian Ferrier, while Deep Curation is a practice suffused in critical decision-making and juxtaposition akin to the humanities essay. Ideally, this inherent pedagogical drive of the literary event via curation is not a unidirectional, didactic vector from curators through poets towards the audience. Rather, it should be practiced as a mutual forum for acquisition and immersion through the collective entry into a dynamic, shared space. This reduces the false binary of passive/active participation and allows the audience to produce the literary equally as the curators and poets, through their presence, intervention, experience, and attention.

As a vocalization of text, the poetry reading can also be understood as part of the literary industry's distribution apparatus too. So Erín Moure and Karis Shearer emphasize the poetry reading's unidirectional drive for book promotion and sales, access to a larger reading public, in other words, to what they call "a marketing gesture" ("The Public Reading" 273). Recently, audio recordings of literary events are also mobilized as readable raw material for DH methodologies, rendering large amounts of sonic data quantifiable through the "prosthetic extension of the ear, via the machine," as Chris Mustazza would suggest ("Machine-Aided Close Listening" no pag.). What all of these attempted definitions and applications of the poetry reading have in common, though, is an understanding of the poet, performed poetry, and the poetry reading itself as vehicles for the dissemination of the printed word, contained within a tradition of authorship and individual literary creation. The poetry reading as a form, space, event, and congregation of community—that is further formulated in collaboration with the creative and critical labour of the literary curator specifically—is overlooked. The relational potential of shifting the focus to the literary event itself and studying that as an intentional construction of literary, performative, collaborative, and therefore curatorial labour, rather than a representation of the page, deserves further exploration.

There are, of course, always compelling, generative counterexamples, but in my own practical experience as both a Canadian poet—reading at many series in Montreal and across the country—and literary curator—founding and organizing the Resonance Reading Series, 2012-2018, and then experimenting with Deep Curation, 2018-present, as I will discuss at more length in the chapters that follow—event organizers rarely consider the actual content that poets will present. The choice of works, as well as the order in which those poems will be read, is up to the authors themselves to discern. The accretive logic of the event as a whole (whether thematic or conceptual), with the self-curated reading lists of each poet presented side-by-side, is thus most often not considered by the event organizer as part of their curational job description, making for

a poetry reading that follows a variety show model. Similarly, literary curators take for granted the relational engagement of all human and non-human agents in the amalgam of influence, interconnection, and dynamic merging of every element present or activated at the literary event. Any decision relating to the demographic of all people involved, venue, scheduling, technology, promotion, and more, directly affect the cumulative mélange of rhizomic exchange at the event. If the practitioners of literary curation themselves are not engaging critically with decision-making of poetic material presented, it is unsurprising that the formation of the poetry reading through the positioning and juxtaposition of poets and poems into a new, cohesive performative entity is likewise lacking from scholarly approaches to the poetry reading. Within this apparent lack of curatorial deliberation lies the kernel of new research, even if precisely through the initial lens of that lack. A reading series with no clearly articulated curatorial vision, sometimes even including an open mic section, might, for example, implicitly create an uninhibited ethos, one of inclusion, and, by extension, one which reconsiders predefined literary value. To offer more concrete examples, if a curator does not actively choose a certain layout at a poetry reading venue, the spatial formation of audience seating and stage will nonetheless inform the reception of and social engagement possible at the event. Similarly, even if a curator unquestioningly accepts the PA system built into the event venue, this infrastructure will mediate sound, attention, and archival longevity in relation to the live performance. These are only a few of many possible scenarios, but the point is that a lack of choices still equal choices. Whether articulated as a deliberated practice of curation or not, varying degrees of curatorial foresight by default impact the kind of literary work presented, how it is perceived in real time, archived, and possibly studied. A poetry reading curator who has never thought about the extent and potential of their labour, beyond minimal administrative acts of sharing the stage and microphone with a random assembly of authors, offers as much material for critical study as one who debates each decision surrounding the reading series and projects a clear vision for the events that they host.

While it is illuminating to view the poetry reading through an interdisciplinary lens and in dialogue with vocabulary from the visual arts, it is important to understand that literary curation develops in a different tradition from that of the visual arts, exhibition-making, and museology. In a statement that rings true for my interdisciplinary inclusion of curatorial studies into the literary field, Prikko Husemann explains that "the use of the term 'curator' is a very recent phenomenon in performing arts. Accordingly, the discourse on curating performing arts is still at its very beginning and mostly driven by those who come from the visual arts or at least have a strong affinity to them" ("Conditions of Curating Performing Arts" 270). Curatorial studies within a visual arts context has already developed to a point where it is ready to move beyond the agency and authority of the curator in relation to exhibitionary spaces. It rejects the outdated model of the curator as resident scholar, dedicating their life to the preservation and dissemination of a body of work, embodying expertise about a certain collection or exhibition and thereby gaining the authority to define its public representation and consumption. As Sarah Longair writes, there have been "immense shifts in curatorial practice in the last two decades of the twentieth century and since, where museums and galleries worldwide recognize and actively seek diverse interpretations of their collections" ("The Limits of Authority" 2). She finds that there has been a radical destabilization in the role of curators in relation to exhibition space, one which aims to learn from and adjust to audience needs, and continues to actively question goals and practices. In Claire Warrior's terms, museums, galleries, and related curatorial labour are now "sites of negotiated authority" ("What Is a Curator?" no pag.). In contrast, curatorial studies within a literary context is only beginning to be recognized at all. One could argue that the literary event has historically

been disenfranchised from the study of literature and English Literature departments—a symptom of strict theory/practice divisions in the academy—and has thus been systemically excluded from a more rigorous articulation of critical language that would allow for such self-definition in disciplinary terms. A defining feature of the poetry reading is still that it often neglects, dismisses, or fails to articulate the curator's labour in administering, selecting poets, hosting an audience, and creating a dynamic, discursive space of literary exchange—as discussed—and as such, the literary curator is a figure who is still trying to assert themself. The literary curator is pushing against the confines of the job description, and defining themself through experimentation, curiosity, and an exploration of the role of the individual in relation to the performing poets and the audience and community at large. In terms of curating in the visual arts and literary communities, there are different expectations that have emerged out of disciplinary affordances and constraints, not necessarily directly translatable to one another. In the visual arts "curators are more like theatre directors," according to Carolee Thea. "We could say they are translators, movers or creators whose material is the work of others," she continues, "but in any case, the role of mediator is inescapable" (*On Curating* 6). For the most part, words like *directors, translators,* and *mediators* do not ring true in relation to the literary curator. These words are steeped with agency, the ability to lead projects, or to inform their dissemination and reception. As Husemann suggests, "curating performing arts" means "programming, producing" creative work ("Conditions of Curating Performing Arts" 270). Words like *organizer* and *programmer* seem more honest in explicating the traditionally administrative role to which the literary curator is often limited. Extending the meaning of *programming* from its implications of scheduling events to a contemporary practice of writing code for computer programs, one might further define programming in curatorial terms as a process of creating conditions and setting infrastructures in motion in order for events to run smoothly, even with the illusion of functioning independently from the curator's intervention. This distinction of terms, between organizational and critically engaged roles in the making of literary events is an important one which I will return to repeatedly throughout the following chapters.

Curating and the Curatorial

To distinguish between curating as a series of administrative tasks and as a creative and critically engaged practice is embedded in the French language. On the one hand, the word *curator* translates as *conservateur,* a practical role of custodianship, while on the other, it can also be rendered as *commissaire*, a role more conceptually aligned with envisioning the process and scope of an exhibition and the making of its related projects. In terms of curatorial studies, this distinction is formally posited as one between *curating* and *the curatorial,* in a pivotal published dialogue between curators and scholars Irit Rogoff and Beatrice von Bismarck. Here Rogoff asserts that "the differentiation is the distinction of curating as professional practice, which involves a whole set of skills and practices, materials, and institutional and infrastructural conditions. [...] Curating is first and foremost a set of skills and abilities: there are courses that train people to know how to insure, hang, pack, and negotiate work, to think institutionally" ("Curating/Curatorial" 22). In contrast to this set of practical, organizational tasks and skills, "developing the concept of the curatorial," for Rogoff, "has been about getting away from representation [...] and trying to see within this activity a set of possibilities for much larger agendas in the art world. [...T]he curatorial makes it possible for us to affect a shift in emphasis to a very different place, to the trajectory of activity" (22). Heralding, what Paul O'Neill calls "the curatorial turn" ("The Curatorial Turn"), a dynamic understanding of the curatorial centers the process of making itself as a site of investigation and an ongoing sequence of knowledge mobilization. Rather than working towards

a self-contained and static product—that is, an exhibition, or by extension, a poetry reading—one crossed-out organizational task on a to-do list at a time, the curatorial becomes "an area of cultural practice that articulates a critical response to traditional modes of knowledge production," in Carolina Rito's words ("What is the Curatorial Doing?" 45). The curatorial thus models as a resistant practice, one infused with feminist and queering methodologies that work against traditional assumptions and linearized labour. Instead, it offers an unstable arena of decision-making as a productive challenge to the constantly changing status quo, one which demands responsible and responsive questioning of the public sharing of art and literature. Considering the curatorial in literary terms, one might also think alongside Jayne Wark who, in *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art,* offers a careful analysis of a mid-late-twentieth century ethos of the everyday in art being intrinsically political. She sees the coming together of bodies in public art practice and performance "as an instantiation of political change […] because it recognizes the extent to which feminist performance is not strictly based on visual forms but is profoundly engaged with language and discourse" (*Radical Gestures* 87). She emphasizes "language and discourse"—core contributors to the literary event—as dynamic instantiations of transformation on the level of the political. While *political* is not synonymous with *feminist*—and should be expanded to queer, critical race, decolonial, and other productively oppositional ideologies—this litany of activist scaffolding should be understood as inherent to the curatorial. That is, if the curatorial is able to maintain a critical stance, not to take granular elements of its practice for granted, but rather to question, debate, and offer an array of possible outcomes, then the curatorial is in and of itself a radically political construct.

So in other words, curating and the curatorial collaborate so that the discourse, decision-making, and deliberation surrounding hands-on labour is intentionalized as critical dialogue and labour. The unidirectional drive towards an exhibition or poetry reading is multiplied and rerouted to include additional, supporting, and processual outcomes, such as, lectures, pedagogical ventures, catalogues, archival practices, and more. So for Maria Lind, "the curatorial is understood to have a multidimensional role that includes critique, editing, education, fundraising, etc. But even more importantly, the curatorial goes beyond 'roles' and takes the shape of a function and a method, even a methodology" (*Performing the Curatorial* 11-12). The curatorial as methodology implies a constant destabilization of that practice, in the sense that systems of creative and critical labour must always be rediscovered and rearticulated to render them relevant to the making of a particular exhibition, poetry reading, or other curatorial project. While it is important to question the language of care and stewardship built into the etymology of *curating* and *the curatorial,* it is also intriguing to bridge the terms by way of pedagogy. That is, caretaking can be rerouted through the critical apparatus of the curatorial to apply less to the guardianship of art objects and more to the integration and activation of audiences as they are invited into exhibitions or literary events as spaces of knowledge mobilization. Unlike fixed and quantifiable duties of curating, curating as aligned with the curatorial is "no[t] a consensual notion" (Maria Lind, 18), offering instead a dynamic arena for the making, unmaking, and remaking of rules of engagement in collaboration with all human and nonhuman agents involved in that process. While I mostly focus on these agents as producers—curators and poets—a binary of active and passive, or production and reception, can be productively challenged by the more expansive and democratic inclusion of the audience as agential vectors on the literary event, in their own right. Irit Rogoff argues convincingly that the moment that audiences enter the space of spectatorship, whether in visual or performative terms, they activate singular and multiple experiences that reproduce the exhibition or event. Beyond the individuality of each performance of a literary event in Charles Bernstein's

terms (*Close Listening*), "audiences produce themselves as the subject of whatever may have been on view for their edification" (Rogoff, "Looking Away" 122). In future study, I intend to develop more robust analyses surrounding audience relationality in context of the literary event.

In 2022, as the composition of this dissertation was drawing to a close, Beatrice von Bismarck released an important monograph entitled *The Curatorial Condition,* which links strongly, from a visual arts direction, to my own research on literary curation. In this study, von Bismarck defines the curatorial as a domain of practice that produces meaning, "generates a fabric of interrelations among all of the various human and nonhuman participants—the exhibits, artists, and curators, but also critics, designers, architects, institutional staff, various recipients, and publics as well as the display objects, mediating tools, architecture, the spaces, sites, information, and discourses" (9). In other words, the curatorial is a relational site, for von Bismarck, one which consistently engages in the act of making art public as a *constellation* of interconnection (to apply another one of her keywords) among all elements or agents involved. This relational constellation is transformational, a process and practice of "transposition [...] that establish and shape curatorial relations, rendering them dynamic and keeping them in motion" (28). Placing such human and nonhuman agents in relation to one another does not leave them statically in that state forever, but rather depends on an ongoing negotiation of that relationality, to transpose, merge, and enter them into different relations with other itinerant elements in the making of the exhibition. While it has been humbling to read a study that has reached some similar conclusions as my own—although admittedly, von Bismarck works in a different disciplinary arena and takes an array of recent and contemporary art exhibitions as case studies—it is also affirming of my work on the curatorial in literary terms. My own research on literary curation and the poetry reading has similarly discovered that the curatorial is not a single concept, unique action, or easily defined descriptor. Instead the curatorial encompasses a plurality of tasks (also including the administrative labour of curating) and a sequence of dynamic selecting, deliberating, conceding, and intentionalizing that constantly influences, directs, and transforms the reciprocal interconnection of all human and nonhuman agents involved with making the literary event. The gerund grammatical construction of *selecting, deliberating,* and so forth, underscores the processual nature of the curatorial. Even as it is usually consolidated in a public-facing exhibition or literary event, that product is supported and rendered possible by the deliberate and dynamic procedure, method, and additional incremental products that precede, co-exist, and follow it into the archive.

While *the curatorial* has here been theorized as an activation of sociable and interrelated energy exchange in the making-public of art and literature, it can also be applied as a qualifier to related terms. That is, a few compound phrases recur throughout my dissertation that also need brief introduction. These could include an obvious example like *curatorial labour* that harnesses an understanding of the curatorial to an action that aims to fulfil its precepts. *Curatorial agency,* however, is a slightly more elusive term. In an essay which is currently in the process of being readied for publication in the edited collection, *Resistant Practices in Communities of Sound,* I define curatorial agency as "the degree to which the literary curator (or the poets themselves, or any other instigator) is involved in the creation of literary presentation, and the level of responsibility they shoulder as a mediator between literary work and audience within the relational performance space" ("Curatorial Agency at Véhicule Art Inc." no pag.). Later in the dissertation when I return to an investigation of the four curatorial modes, the ratio of shared curatorial agency between curator and performing poets, or their varying degrees of responsibility towards the production of the literary event, become especially pertinent in schematizing slight differences in the productive imaginary of how a poetry reading is articulated and materialized. The word *agency*

also directs an understanding of how important intention is when formulating the curatorial; even when there is a low degree of intentionality in the making of a literary event, that agency informs the outcome and mode of the event in question, as previously discussed. Similarly, the term *curatorial field* crops up from time to time throughout the dissertation, gesturing to a site that exceeds the cartographic coordinates of a venue, and spans out to encompass an overarching understanding of the sum total of all curatorial relations activated during the production and performance of a literary event. It represents the symbolic domain in which these relationalities are represented and engage with one another. So one might think, again, alongside Rogoff who continues to formulate the curatorial as an "expanding field." She writes that "perhaps the necessary links between collectivity, infrastructure, and contemporaneity within our expanding field of art are not performances of resistant engagement, but the ability to locate alternate points of departure, alternate archives, alternate circulations and alternate imageries. And it is the curatorial that has the capacity to bring these together, working simultaneously in several modalities, kidnapping knowledges and sensibilities and insights and melding them into an instantiation of our contemporary conditions" ("The Expanding Field" 48). Applying *field* in a conceptual manner intended to exceed disciplinary limits of the curatorial beyond visual arts categories, Rogoff points exactly to the kind of expansion that thinking through the literary event in curatorial terms allows for. While it is impossible to track the exact margins of the field in question, it is rather the kernel or center of relational togetherness that diffuses discursively through this line of thought. The unstable spatiality of a vibrant, creative, and critical field of process and event—especially as transposed into literary performance—radiates with resonant collaborative practice. Its communal formulation and assembly sounds poetry as a relational and dynamic articulation of the curatorial.

Between Modes, Relationalities, and Case Studies

The curatorial, within the context of my study of reading series, works to juxtapose and intersect two otherwise contradictory methodologies, namely a formalist approach to studying the literary event and a practical conceptualization of the varied labour invested in making those events possible—labour that is concretely illustrated through my research in a historicist inclusion of communities of practice. My doctoral project's aim of indexing curatorial modes and relationalities by way of interventions into archives of literary performance—that is, not self-referential and self-contained textual works of literature—deliberately contextualizes case studies and audio archives in both temporally and scene-specific ways, and simultaneously underscores the impossibility of perfect objectivity in the face of interpretative categories and flexible networks of relational codependence and exchange. Categorization in terms of the humanities and qualitative study is inherently fallible and yet that imperfection does not negate its functionality. Differently phrased, the infinite number of possible relational engagements active at literary events renders schematization porous equally as grounding scholarship in rich, foundational language for future avenues of rigorous debate. Of course traditionally, the institutionalized schism between theory and practice, and an adjacent rift between formalism and historicism—dualities which developed over the past century into a status quo of light New Criticism in most North American English Literature departments—designates "'literature' and 'history' [...as] two radically incommensurate modes of cultural production that require sharply different analytic procedures" (Lee Patterson, "Literary History" 253). Whether taking literature as subjective in contrast to history's supposed objectivity, or positing a formalist "science of literature" (252) in an effort at one-upmanship in relation to narratives of the past, there is a division of terms that creates the illusion that, in Gerald

Graff's understanding, all scholars of "literature are 'theorists' and have a stake in theoretical disputes" (*Professing Literature* 2). The study of literature becomes divorced, then, from the practice of making it, committed only to the "productive role of interpretation" and removed from larger "systems of language and culture" (Thomas McLaughlin, *Critical Terms* 6). Thinking along the lines of curating and the curatorial, however, allows one to reject such fixed methodological codifications as the coexistence of practical and conceptual modes of doing infiltrate the ways in which it is possible to study both the procedures and live and archival outcomes of that exact same set of curating tasks and the relational curatorial field that ensues in both the process and product of literary events. Significantly, this merging of methods is heightened again when introducing contemporary notions of research creation,[2] both to my project and to a more general understanding of its position within a university English department. Folding creative practice back into institutional environments set on furthering theoretical and even scientific modes of research, radically shifts disciplinary rules of engagement, immersing formal methods not only in historicist speculations, but also in the present-day potential of making in the moment. As Sarah E. Truman writes, "[w]hat makes research-creation different from strictly an art practice by itself—which, as we all already know, can instantiate theory perfectly well—is this theoretically informed research component that's occurring as part of a research project. And the art practice is occurring within the academy" (*Feminist Speculations* 152). Perhaps an obvious observation, making art in the same breath as formulating a linear thesis of research results, and within the departmental confines of English Literature as a defined field of study, works to constantly question and redirect itself equally as eroding and then rearticulating what is even possible in disciplinary terms.

Montreal as Method: Local Poetry Readings

While the curatorial field of the case studies investigated in my research remains unstable, transpositional, and dynamic, the selection of four poetry reading series, taking place across the past sixty years and into the present, are uniquely located in the geographic specificity of the city of Montreal (Quebec, Canada), and, primarily, within the English-speaking arts communities of this city. These include:

1. Sir George Williams Poetry Series (1966-1974). This government-funded and university-run series (at what is now Concordia University) was curated as a sequence of lengthy feature readings of one or two poets per event by a committee of tenured faculty and temporary writers-in-residence from the English and Art History departments, including, significantly, George Bowering and Roy Kiyooka. The series featured important poets from both the U.S. and Canada, such as Allen Ginsberg and Robert Duncan, and bpNichol and Gwendolyn MacEwen, respectively. The series has been digitally archived as an open access platform with streamable audio files as part of the SSHRC SpokenWeb Partnership.
2. Véhicule Art Inc. (1973-1983). This government-funded, community-based artists' collective, gallery space, and publishing initiative was curated by the so-called "Véhicule Poets," namely Endre Farkas, Artie Gold, Tom Konyves, Claudia Lapp, John McAuley, Stephen Morrissey, and Ken Norris, in various configurations across the span of the decade. They hosted a variety of feature readings, interdisciplinary performances, and open mic events, and welcomed budding university and high school poets equally as established

[2] The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funding body defines research creation as "an approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression" ("Definition of Terms" no pag.).

local and visiting poets. Véhicule's analogue archive is accessible through Concordia University's Special Collections, with digital files available upon request.

3. The Words and Music Show (2000-present). Partially funded by the Quebec Writers' Federation and curated by poet Ian Ferrier, this monthly series continues to feature five to six authors, spoken word artists, and/or musicians per event, and favours performative, collaborative, and interdisciplinary sets. It is currently in the process of being archived as an open access audio website hosted by SpokenWeb.
4. Deep Curation (2018-present). This ongoing series of eight events, to date, was initiated as a direct response and supplement to my research into historical reading series and manifests as a research creation component of my doctoral research. Funded by SpokenWeb and the Canada Council for the Arts, Deep Curation features groundbreaking and award-winning, contemporary Canadian poets, such as Oana Avasilichioaei, Liz Howard, Kaie Kellough, among many others. Recordings are not currently publicly accessible beyond my personal archive. See Appendix 11 for a full roster of events and participants.

Perhaps ironically, this curation of Montreal-based case studies waver between examples of open and framed approaches. On the one hand, their context as primarily anglophone hubs for the performance of poetry within the bilingual English and French language politics of Quebec is marginalized in my research, pointing to an open mode of decision-making that does not linger on and debate all the rich subsidiary information that works to define a literary event. Clearly, there is an intricate history of language regulation inherent to the province, one which hinges on the Canadian Official Languages Act of 1969 that officiated a bilingual national project. This bilingualism was intensified with Bill 22 in 1974, making French the official language in Quebec, and again with Bill 101 in 1977—and recently with Bill 96 in 2022—that outlined fundamental civic language rights and the sometimes discriminatory prioritization of French in matters of governmental, medical, commercial, and pedagogical centers in the province. As Jason Camlot argues, this sequence of language legislation works to define English-speaking authors living and writing in Quebec as an exclusionary "community identity" based simultaneously on common isolation from the rest of anglophone Canada and francophone Quebec (*Language Acts* 21)—what David Solway has provocatively labeled "a twofold hostage community" ("Double Exile" 81). Endre Farkas and Ken Norris further explain that these regulatory conditions reflect in the literature produced on site: "English poetry in Montreal has always been written under the most unique conditions. Being a member of a minority culture within the bounds of a dominant francophone community has made the English poet in Montreal intensely aware of his own language as well as informing him of the problem inherent in the use of language as an agent of communication" (*Montreal English Poetry* ix). Gail Scott similarly proposes that "[i]n juxtaposing languages, one juxtaposes ways of thinking" that are grounded as integral to literary practice and its outcomes ("My Montréal" 6). Despite the wealth of additional settler and immigrant languages spoken in Quebec, as well as the glaring omission of Indigenous language rights as part of this debate, bilingualism, and English's minority status in Quebec, is still current. At the recent NOTA (Next On The Agenda) symposium, organized by Rachel McCrum on 4 October 2022 to deliberate on contemporary conditions of anglophone writing in the province, novelist Sean Michaels noted, for example, that there is no institution that works to bridge separate English and French literary communities. Both literary communities foster their separate infrastructures (along with occasional links through translation), but do not actively enter into ongoing dialogue about how to sustain an immersive community with mutually beneficial opportunities. This last point helps to

explain the circumstances under which I am able to open curate four English language reading series as case studies for this dissertation, while sidelining the loaded linguistic context to which they are subject. Anglophone reading series exist equally within provincial language debates and as self-contained linguistic constructs in their own right.

On the other hand, however, I selected the four reading series, after some initial archival inquiry, exactly for their relevant exposition of the curatorial terms, and their distinctiveness, that I want to investigate. This suggests that I frame my choice of case studies with a preconceived mandate of how they function in juxtaposition to one another and within the whole project which coheres as this dissertation. While I did consider other series situated in Vancouver, and even in the United States and United Kingdom, as case studies, the four series' common location in Montreal is intended to run a thread through otherwise divergent archives. These selected series also allow for many other latent touchpoints residing beneath the surface of their chronology as they developed out of and supplemented each other, followed or overlapped with one another. Across the duration of sixty years, these four series collaborated, in indirect ways, in the production of literary community in Montreal. They have mobilized, in their own respective styles, the conditions that make this city conducive to the composition, performance, and dissemination of literature. In *Impure: Reinventing the Word*—through a chorus of quotations from a wide variety of poets living and working in Montreal—these conditions are summarized as a cosmopolitan spirit mixed with low cost of living and improvisational tact in terms of creating opportunity for sharing literature. d'bi young offers, for example, that "Montreal, thus far, is a really good place to be for the artists. For the artist who want to work on reaching a couple of people and developing self. Montreal is the only place that I've been able to do all the things that I just mentioned, and been able to *see* myself doing them" (15). Catherine Kidd similarly suggests that "Montreal is...sort of like a primordial ooze. It seems like a lot of people come here to steep in their own creative juices" (12). A site for creative self-discovery and maturation, Montreal is equally one that merges individual vectors of poetic production into community forums of collective gathering and performance. The city's geographic specificity and proximity, even across the span of six decades, thus allow for overlaps in participants across the four case studies in question. Poets such as Daphne Marlatt, bpNichol, Richard Sommer, among others, performed at both the Sir George Williams poetry series and Véhicule Art Inc. Likewise, the Véhicule poets attended the Sir George Williams poetry series and modelled their events in contradistinction to it. Ian Ferrier performed at Véhicule and then continued to curate the Words and Music Show, while Kaie Kellough performed at both the Words and Music Show and later as part of my Deep Curation experiments. Arguably, my own appearances and attendance at Words and Music, among other reading series in Montreal, also informed my drive to articulate different approaches to literary curation, as materialized in the ongoing Deep Curation project.

Beyond the meta-level open and framed curatorial modes illustrated in my choice of case studies all regionally located in my resident city, Montreal also manifests as methodology. This might sound like an exaggeration. Collectively my method for this dissertation is, more traditionally, a mélange of humanities reading, research, and critical thinking, and close listening to audio artifacts, but it also branches out to site-specific labour that hinges on community engagement, interpersonal ethics, and a hands-on investment in growing the scope and expectations of literary culture in Montreal, as situated within expanding, concentric contexts of both provincial, national, and international influence and reach. Montreal, as a curatorial field, seeps through many of the systems I adopted in the compiling of this research project. For one, all four poetry reading series that I study are associated with the SSHRC SpokenWeb Partnership,

founded and directed by my supervisor, Jason Camlot, and primarily administered from Concordia University in Montreal (although it has grown to include a network of tertiary institutions across North America). As a graduate student, I worked as a research assistant for SpokenWeb for almost five years and, among a wide variety of duties, I was hired to close listen to archival recordings and compile metadata—to be entered into the Swallow ingest system—for both Véhicule Art Inc. and some years of the Words and Music Show. The level of intimacy fostered through documenting both quantitative and qualitative data, timestamping and transcribing author names, content keywords, and, what Al Filreis calls, "extrapoetic" commentary—paratextual sound external to the oral performance itself that acts as "specific cues to the listener as to how to respond to a poem" or simply interject noise into the performance soundscape ("Notes" no pag.)—cannot be underestimated. The practice of immersion exceeds aural assimilation to include cognition circuited through absorbed, bodily labour. While the Sir George Williams poetry series had been catalogued previously and is already available online, my work on processing Véhicule Art Inc. and the Words and Music Show—situated in the Concordia University's Special Collections or in my home office (a sense of location amplified by the homebound COVID-19 pandemic years that overlapped substantially with my studies), grounded my research in present-day Montreal, even as it activated historical literary events that also happened in this city. Data collection and aural familiarity is thus rooted and routed through the body, my body as researcher, as it exists in space and time of this city.

This overlaying of Montreal past and present is even more conspicuous in another major methodological approach of oral history practice, as I conducted a series of interviews with Barillaro, Farkas, Ferrier, Kellough, Konyves, Lapp, Morrissey, Norris, and TenBrink—individuals all currently residing, or previously living and writing, in Montreal.[3] (The transcripts can be read in the Appendices). These conversations often serve as raw material for research on reading series that do not already have a robust scholarly bibliography to support them. So on the one hand, these interviews represent a form of generosity and sharing of information between poets, curators, and members of the local literary community, but on the other, they also manifest as recordings of otherwise ephemeral knowledge and experience that now exist as archival documentation. In other words, within this dialogic method is an inherent sense of reciprocity, even hospitality, that animates and establishes community relations that oscillate between giving and receiving, or merge giving and receiving as a communal act. A significant addendum to this community element of my research is a grounding of the individual, even as my larger project veers more towards the overarching narrative of a reading series' curatorial operations than a study of single and canonical authors. With this individualized familiarity comes responsibility, however, and the duty of treating interlocutors and their information with care and respect. Additionally, collecting research materials through interpersonal means implies that close proximity, or shared community identity between interviewer and interviewee, can prevent difficult conversations in favour of feel-good or celebratory ones, as Linda Shopes has pointed out ("Why Are They Talking?"). As such, oral history becomes a practice of learning how to filter possible dissent through kindness and communication. Carrie Hamilton writes, for example, that an important part of feminist oral history process is "an interrogation of the relationship between empathy and solidarity" ("On Being a 'Good' Interviewer" 41), that is, the ability to listen attentively and to try to understand where a difference in opinion is coming from, while

[3] This oral history project has also been reversed with Alexei Perry Cox directing an interview with me as deep curator and curator of this doctoral project. This conversation serves as a component part of the dissertation's conclusion.

simultaneously retaining a sense of integrity of critical thinking, especially as it pertains to the research output. By mentioning this, I do not imply that my interviews were rife with strife, but rather, I want to acknowledge the complexity of this work that can vacillate between poles of research ease and reconciling oneself with contradiction, incompletion, imperfection, and so on, all needing to be approached with superlative care. As Claire Bishop writes, in any work that "uses people as medium, ethics will never retreat entirely" (*Artificial Hells* 39).

This is equally true for the final major methodological approach and research creation project that I developed—with the support and funding from SpokenWeb—namely Deep Curation as theory and practice. While I discuss the deep curatorial mode and Deep Curation as a series of events at much length in both Chapters 1 and 5, it is important to note here that this practice-based research has consistently been conceptualized, developed, scrutinized, and produced in Montreal, even when some performances happened at other geographic locations. The center of this project has been rooted in relation and distinction to, and in engagement with, the local community of adjacent and overlapping authors, readers, audiences, and other literary-minded individuals. In these terms of social exchange and familiarity, the practice of Deep Curation is contingent on the same ethical standards as those required for oral history. As Pablo Helguera writes in his handbook for making collaborative art or art that includes human participants, "collaborative art also requires modes of communication that recognize the limitations and potentials of a collective relationship. [...] For a collaboration to be successful, the distribution of accountability [...] must be articulated" (*Education for Socially Engaged Art* 52-53). Misleadingly simple, words like *communication* and *accountability* can be aspirational rather than achievable. While I am not convinced that I consistently succeeded in nurturing research ties to my utmost capacity—either in my relationships with oral history interviewees or with Deep Curation collaborators—I have always attempted to ground my practice in transparency, care, and respect. Even as occasional fallibility, misunderstanding, and incompletion coexist with productive, "successful" practical experience, this possible aporia resounds too, as the locus of creative making, sharing, remaking, and performing of poetry.

Chapter Overview

As a theoretical definition of terms, the first chapter lays the groundwork for the following analyses of Montreal-based poetry reading series as case studies. As already mentioned in passing, the opening chapter offers a schematization of four possible curatorial modes—framed, open, self, and deep curation—as a changeable ratio of shared authority in relation to the literary event, primarily between curator and performing poet/s. This chapter also articulates an interpretation of a dynamic network of influence, exchange, and transformation based on the relational interconnection of every human, material, and conceptual element (that is, a countless number of curatorial relationalities) that shapes the affordances of a literary event or series, and works to define it as one of the four modes. In short, the notion of framed curation looks to Derrida's *ergon* (artwork) and *parergon* (frame) to conceive of organizational scaffolding that offers directive rhetoric for the structure and values of literary events. In contrast, open curation absorbs the frame in order to reject it, favouring a lack of guidelines and aligning itself with a dynamic improvisational urge akin to both a mid-century counter-cultural ethos and Olsonian open field poetics. Self-curation merges the roles of curator and poet, while deep curation elevates curation as artwork. The qualifier *deep* works against relationality as a horizontal structure of connectivity and towards a more immanent understanding of the curatorial as a method of remaking by means of vibrant, transformational interconnection. My thinking around the relational is informed by Nicolas

Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics,* as cited earlier in the Introduction, as well as Édouard Glissant's noteworthy understanding of relationality as non-static and therefore also unstable, "that-there that cannot be split up into original elements [...or] strings of models infinitely brought into contact and relayed" (*Poetics of Relation* 160). As it is impossible to enumerate the infinitude of possible human, nonhuman, and conceptual relationalities active within the curatorial field of a literary event at any given moment, I limit my study here to the dialogic, institutional, spatial, and durational. The dialogic, or Bahktinian heteroglossic, functions almost as relationality squared, suggesting discursive affect, influence, and interconnection between verbal content, both literary and extrapoetic, deliberated and incidental. The institutional—borrowing language from the institutional theory of art—considers the opportunities offered by resourced, infrastructural networks, and how they formalize literary events. Spatial and durational relationalities reflect upon venue architectonics, and the temporal scope of poetry readings in both chronological and non-linear terms. To my knowledge, this research is the first attempt at indexing practical strategies of literary curation, as affected by the unstable interchange of the relational. While Chapters 2-5 illustrate potential implementations of my curatorial catalogue and vocabulary, this language is also always an invitation for further development and application.

The first case study is the Sir George Williams poetry series as it exemplifies a framed curatorial mode. Embedded into the then Sir George Williams University (now Concordia) and curated by a committee of tenured professors and writers-in-residence, this university-run and government-funded series modelled a clearly articulated mandate in support of established authors or those perceived as making (or about to make) a major contribution to the literary canon, primarily in Canada and the U.S. This framing discourse informed the kinds of poets invited to present their work within a consistent format of lengthy sets devised to illustrate and affirm poets' careers and oeuvres. As such, Chapter 2 close listens to an overview of archival recordings—by poets such as, Margaret Avison, Irving Layton, Al Purdy, and F.R. Scott—in institutional relational terms, and builds a mutually dependent narrative of nationhood, authorship, and authority. Chapter 2 also lingers on a 1968 reading featuring bpNichol and Lionel Kearns. An anomaly within the series, this experimental event verged on a deep curatorial approach as it braided Nichol and Kearns' respective poetries into a dialogically relational performance. Despite this innovative curation, I analyze the event as a microcosm of the larger series, a reading that is self-consciously designed to hold audience attention and is therefore directed by its own unique structure. Even as it pushes back against preconceived models of the poetry reading as presented at the Sir George Williams poetry series, Nichol and Kearns' performance reflect an aspirational space framed with predefined goals and outcomes.

To a degree, open curation is the most slippery mode to define as it insists on articulating itself in the negative space of its own purported lack of guidelines. That said, Chapter 3 suspends disbelief and focuses on open curation as manifested in the variety of feature readings, interdisciplinary and collaborative performances, and open mic marathon events hosted at Véhicule Art Inc. Curated by the seven Véhicule poets—Farkas, Gold, Konyves, Lapp, McAuley, Morrissey, and Norris—this gallery doubling as a literary venue deliberately welcomed experimentation and novelty, suggesting an ethos that valorized heterogeneity even as it set out to value nothing at all. I investigate spatial and durational relationalities at Véhicule by way of three events that took place in the 1970s. The first is a choreographed reading with exhibited poems by Gerry Gilbert. I manipulate his deliberate spatial savvy in the design of his performance to place Véhicule in a lineage of wall-mounted art and to amplify the curatorial's latent presence. Then I home in on durational relationality at both an open mic marathon event with twenty-six poets,

protracted over four hours, and at a lengthy feature reading with Janet Kask and Carole TenBrink. Both durational examples are able to model openness through innovation, by way of the attention deficit of an exhausting lineup of consistently new micro sets, on the one hand, and the concentrated immersion in the political and mystical poetics of Kask and TenBrink, on the other. As previously mentioned, this chapter, as well as the next, relies partially on an oral history methodology as I conducted interviews with curators, poets, participants, and attendees of Véhicule Art Inc. and the Words and Music Show. I am grateful to everyone who shared their knowledge and time with me, to advocate for collaborative thinking, and to advance my personal research pivoting on the curatorial.

Chapter 4 critically disentangles the self-curatorial mode as illustrated with a brief history of the Words and Music Show. This series, officially curated by Ian Ferrier, foregrounds an ethos of generosity and self-discovery as harnessed in support of a wide array of local and traveling performers who are frequently invited to return to the stage and to form their own subsidiary series within the more formalized, overarching series. It is also the only chapter that relies heavily on the work of a single author as it follows Kaie Kellough's seventeen appearances at the series and discovers how he self-curates an unofficial sequence of events beneath the surface of the Words and Music Show. Significantly, Kellough occasionally performs the same works in differential versions of themselves over time. By correlating these variations with one another, I weave dialogic and durational relationalities in non-linear configurations across the series' archive, highlighting how he mobilizes the interconnection of a self-directed series within a series to the benefit of his growth as a poet and performer. Examples of performances from the early 2000s that thematize the act of reading and being read (such as "do you read me?"), as well as experiments with technological mediation that center Kellough's multiple roles as poet, performer, host, and curator (such as, "I wanted to tell you something about myself"), further amplify the self-conscious nature of his self-formulation through performances of the curatorial. This chapter experiments formally with the footnote, offering lengthy juxtapositions and interrelations to the body of the text in order to demonstrate the temporal continuity and crossover activated by studying dialogic relationality among performances across the span of two decades.

The final chapter expands beyond deep curation as mode to an application of its curatorial terms in a narrative and analysis of Deep Curation as a robust research creation component of my doctoral studies and a series of eight poetry performances, to date. Relying more heavily on an autoethnographic approach in this chapter, I record the development of my own curatorial practice, leading from five years of open curation at the Montreal-based Resonance Reading Series to experimentation with a more dialogic approach, one which creates a collaborative relationship of production between curator and performing poets. Providing brief analyses of the sequence of Deep Curation events, and my concomitant growth as a literary curator, I trace a journey from reversing curatorial openness through one of curatorial control and prescription towards a methodology that allows for dialogue, collaboration, and reciprocal making in the more sustained case study of *We've Weave*—a residency and series of Deep Curation performances with Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel, July and August 2022. As such, there is also an important thread of authorship and authority, a questioning of where it resides, and how it is shared. Homing in on institutional, dialogic, spatial, and durational relationalities as they coexist, contradict, and mutually act out upon one another, I navigate both the dynamism and the instability of creative literary curation, and suggest that, by attempting to intentionalize relationality, the curatorial materializes as less of a network and more of a newly articulated work of art.

This final chapter also leads relevantly towards the Conclusion, which reverses the investigative gaze of myself as researcher schematizing different modes of curation to that of research subject and curator, of literary events and of this dissertation. Here Alexei Perry Cox, scholar, poet, and as mentioned, participant in the most recent *We've Weave* Deep Curation production and performance, conducts an oral history interview with me to tease out collaborative resonances and to offer me the opportunity to place them in relation to the dissertation's larger body of work. This experiment is indebted to the project showcased in the final chapter of Dylan Robinson's *Hungry Listening* in which he takes a step back and makes space for Ellen Waterman and Deborah Wong to enter into dialogue with one another as settler scholars, to question their own listening positionality in relation to decolonial practices and Indigenous knowledges. Where Robinson's invitation is an act of hospitality into his research, an astounding gesture of generosity in allowing others to practically illustrate critical self-reflection and self-pedagogy within the larger project of his book, Perry Cox's enthusiastic acceptance of my request inverts the power dynamics as she supports me in tying together a few delicate ribbons of thought. That is, it feels less as if I am inviting Perry Cox to take up space within my research and more like she is doing me a favour by entering my scholarly world, taking the time to immerse herself in it and inform herself about it. The curatorial backbone of my dissertation project, the navigation of forms of authority in relation to the making of sociality in literary events, is both perforated and staged by the inclusion of an interlocutor, someone who can join me as a meta-level embodiment in performing the dialogic, collaborative, relational definitions of what it means to curate, both literary events and this dissertation. I am grateful to conclude this dissertation in dialogue, doubling down on relationality through shared intellectual zeal, verbal exchange, and laughter.

Chapter 1—Curatorial Modes and Relationalities: Language for Analyzing the Curation of Literary Events and Reading Series

Since the primary goal of my research project is to schematize curatorial modes of literary event organization—and to gesture towards the infinity of curatorial relationalities that mutually interconnect with and shape literary events—this chapter works to delimit critical language introduced in and developed throughout the dissertation as a whole. As is already clear from the introduction, I have named the four curatorial modes framed, open, self, and deep curation, respectively. While I will now continue to go into more depth on each one of these modes, it is important to understand framed curation as the base formulation of literary curation from which further variations stem. That is, framed curation offers a foundational articulation of the relationship between individual reading and reading series, as well as the tension between the shared agency of invited poet, series ethos, and series curator. Open, self, and deep curation then each embody a different ratio of this relationship and tension. In particular, open curation shifts the balance and shared responsibility of creating a poetry reading from reliance on the structure of the literary event as articulated by the curator to the poet's agency instead, while self-curation merges the role of curator and poet altogether. If with self-curation, the poet becomes curator, with deep curation, the curator becomes poet. Deep curation aspires to a curatorial process and product—namely, the poetry reading—that is itself a literary work, an artwork. In other words, the event not only *presents* but *becomes* literature as the curator collaborates on the creative production with invited poets and through the medium of the event itself.

The final section of this chapter will focus on curatorial relations or relationalities. These relations are, to a degree, undefinable and infinitely expansive as they include any material, conceptual, creative, critical, human and/or nonhuman factor that works to influence, determine, and steer the shaping of the literary event as unit and the reading series as collective. As Édouard Glissant suggests, "Relation diversifies forms [...] according to infinite strings of models infinitely brought into contact and relayed" (*Poetics of Relation* 160). These relations can be understood as unstable, malleable elements that ultimately define the curatorial as a vibrant, generative, and collaborative event. As Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty write about the "dynamic formulation of place" or act of congregation in a visual arts context equally relevant to the literary event, "the discursive, the processual and the relational [are prioritized] as media in their own right" (*Locating the Producers* 8). Their statement is suggestive of a revision of sociability and participation over the spectacular or seen (à la Guy Debord) and directs an understanding of the event towards the interconnected, dialogic, and relational. The relations that I write about throughout this dissertation are also by no means comprehensive; in fact, it would be impossible to offer a full roster of potential relations in the same way as the four curatorial modes aim to be an inclusive, if also an always adaptable, diagrammatic project. I call those that I have selected to discuss in the following dissertation chapters dialogic, institutional, spatial, and durational relationalities. There could, however, be so many more beyond the scope of this dissertation: for example, gendered relationality, queer relationality, racialized relationality, ideological relationality, audience demographic relationality, technological or media relationality, archival relationality, just to suggest a few for further study. I will return to a discussion of relationality and offer thoughts on specific examples of relationalities towards the end of this chapter, but first, an exploration of four possible curatorial modes.

Framed Curation

As an analogy for the organization of a particular mode of literary events that I call framed curation, the word *frame* in relation to *curation* is indebted to the obvious: a framed artwork displayed in a museum setting; a print adorned by a stark, black, stainless steel, contemporary frame; an oil painting surrounded by a Baroque, ornamental, golden onslaught. This visual arts' disciplinary practice of picture framing is also relevant to this study exactly because of its grounding in curatorial theory and thinking. That is, the transposition of curation as a terminological structure to literary studies by way of the poetry reading is already in place and lends itself to a deeper foray into the practical workings of visual arts display.[4] The two words *frame* and *curation* thus invoke a history of visual arts framing as a mode of elevating, delimiting, and facilitating display. As Brian O'Doherty expresses in superlatively deterministic terms, "the stability of the frame is as necessary as an oxygen tank is to a diver. Its limiting security completely defines the experience within. The border as absolute limit is confirmed [...] in a way that strengthens the edge" (*Inside the White Cube* 18-19). This strict language of structure anchors the framed artwork according to a binary of inside/outside, and while it is much too simplistic a view of the frame's role, it does underscore the notion of frame as scaffolding that supports the more subjective act of viewing and interacting with the artwork itself. In their study of European visual arts framing, Paul Mitchell and Lynn Roberts nuance this inside/outside dichotomy of the frame into a series of functions that impact more than just the edge of the artwork:

> The role of the frame in the presentation of a picture fulfils some or all of the following functions: the protection of the painting; its display and physical attachment to the wall; the enhancement of subject and colour scheme while remaining subordinate to the picture; the definition of the picture's perimeter and the focusing of the spectator's attention on the subject; the provision of an area of transition between the real world and that of the picture; the creation of harmony with the surrounding interior decoration; and the isolation of the picture from a distracting background. (*A History of European Picture Frames* 8)

[4] One might also reach to analogies from the theater to support an understanding of framed curation; after all, the stage, and its construct of the fourth wall, positions itself as a performance-based practice likewise invested in conceptual framing as guided by the director. Arguably, the poetry reading is, similar to the theater, already invested in poets as performers within the literal and conceptual frame of the stage and its traditions. While this is undoubtedly true and excellent studies hinging on the performance of poetry already exist—sometimes by way of more theatrical poetic developments such as Dada cabaret, Happenings, Fluxus, and more (for example, Adalaide Morris' *Sound States*, Lesley Wheeler's *Voicing American Poetry,* Tyler Hoffman's *American Poetry in Performance*)—I am curious to expand the disciplinary strictures of the literary event in relation to the visual arts exactly in order to broaden the way it can be studied. A lot can be learned about the poetry reading as a curatorial structure when placing it in interdisciplinary dialogue with the visual arts field, directly infused with language, practice, and theory of curation. Significantly, the tranzit.hu curatorial dictionary also includes performativity in its definition of curating, suggesting that "[t]he aim of the performative approach to curating is to actively structure and mediate the relationship between art and its audience, as well as reconfiguring the relation between the curator and the artist" (*Curating Research* 250). That is, by broadening an understanding of curating from its traditional meaning of custodianship and material mounting of artworks in physical space, curating becomes a performance of itself in a wider disciplinary field. When curating is linked to acts of sociability, collaborative making and discourse, and so on, it activates a meta-level of its own definition.

While many of these functions could arguably be relegated to the act of curating—protecting the artwork, physically attaching it to the wall, and so on—others already point to the curatorial in terms of defining the artwork as a visual focus, integrating its locus into the larger gallery space, and structuring the experience of how the artwork will be perceived by the viewer. The frame functions as the balancing point between curating and the curatorial, creating the material conditions for art to be experienced, interpreted, and appreciated in a more abstract, conceptual way.

In *The Truth In Painting*, Jacques Derrida develops the frame's binary even further, suggesting that the work (*ergon,* in his terms) is incomplete without its frame (*parergon,* or that which is beside the work), that the one cannot exist without access to the other: "A *parergon* comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon*, the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board [*au bord, à bord*]. It is first of all the one (the) bo(a)rd(er)" (54). With characteristic dexterity, he destabilizes the meaning of frame as either appendage or adornment, suggesting that the frame is not truly external to the work of art at all, does not merely surround or delimit it, does not only facilitate its material and conceptual display on a wall and in a space, but rather constitutes an integral part of it. Without the frame, the artwork is incomplete, for Derrida; it is lacking. In fact, the frame becomes an intrinsic ingredient of the artwork, not necessarily completing it, but acting in constant relation to it so that a symbiotic interconnection of frame and artwork exist; one without the other would constitute a form of lack. "Framing always supports and contains that which, by itself," according to Derrida, "collapses forthwith" (78-79). This view of the frame becomes particularly fascinating when extrapolated beyond the obvious supporting edge of a wall-mounted artwork to three-dimensional or architectural and conceptual modes of art, leading to an endless deferral of where the edge of the frame actually exists. Is the frame of a building, for example, the scaffolding structuring the walls, the outer edge of the walls, or the ornamental columns adorning the building? By understanding the frame as a mobile construct which is not defined solely by a set of rigid, physical lines external to the Cartesian scope of the two-dimensional artwork, the frame becomes a malleable support system—one which might even be multiple, as in a series of interlocking frames—that is indispensable for the dissemination of art, but is also difficult to pin down as a fixed set of governing rules and regulations. Phrased in terms of the analogy of the picture frame again, one can also think of Mitchell and Roberts' statement that "[v]iewers seldom 'see' the frame when contemplating a picture, and yet it occupies a substantial proportion of the picture/frame ensemble and, as such, inevitably has a significant peripheral influence on the painting within" (9). In other words, the structure of the frame is present whether one is aware of it or not. Even when framing discourse is clearly articulated, it is easy, almost customary, to block it out and perceive the artwork—or by extension, the literary event—as existing independently from its apparent strictures. The frame is so embroiled with its artwork that the presence of the former can be overlooked or viewed as integral to the latter.

Building on this understanding of the frame or *parergon* as a constitutive part of the artwork or *ergon*—and expanding from the craft of practical art framing through art history and philosophy to the theorization of literary event curation—one can see that framed curation as a mode of literary event organization is one that articulates a series of expectations that structure the events it hosts. As Johannes Grave, Christiane Holm, Valérie Kobi, and Caroline van Eck write, "*Parerga* [...] frame and thereby deeply influence the act of perceiving. Framing devices are decisive for the processes of viewing and quite often initiate particular performative effects in the

course of perception. Therefore, *parerga* may be understood as a hinge or a threshold between object and subject" (*The Agency of Display* 14). That is, a reading series that follows a framed curatorial mode has a certain style, format, values, and goals that work to undergird the uniformity (within reason) of a sequence of events, all the while featuring a diverse range of authors across a potentially prolonged period of time and placing them in relation to a certain audience. These expectations are sometimes articulated by the series curators, but are also often more implicitly enacted through many different relationalities at work in the hosting space and its institution: the cultural, socio-political climate, the funding body and other available material infrastructure, the demographic of the audience, and much more. Differently put, a framed curatorial mode insists on astute organization (in practical terms of venue, technology, advertising, funding, and more), and it models a clear curatorial vision and deliberated rationale for the poets and poetry presented. It might not dictate the exact work that poets should read at their events (more on Deep Curation as a mode and series soon), but it does valorize certain poetics over others. By inviting poets who exemplify those poetic preferences, the series' selection process and framing discourse are thus latently suggestive of expected outcomes. Stated even more assertively, framed curation works to define what is literary, according to its terms, and to delimit the negative space of what is not, as a result. In other words, by selecting and valorizing certain kinds of poetry at a sequence of individual events, other possible forms of the literary are omitted and positioned as ideologically marginal to that which the series stands for.

There is thus a tension between the series as a collective and the individual event as sparring agencies. This tension might be considered according to sociologist Erving Goffman's theory of *Frame Analysis* which navigates social interactions according to "primary" frameworks (21) as larger cultural constructs and "transformations" of those frameworks by individuals (182). That is, the primary frame of a reading series would be informed by its curational dictates, "rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into [...] a system of entities, postulates, and rules" that govern the series' workings (21). These rules can be inhabited, but also amended by the embodiment of poets and their work as they bring their "intelligence [...and] live agency" to the individual literary event (22). Conveniently, Goffman understands this individual transformation of primary frames as being enacted in play and performance; when a poet steps into the frame of the reading series, the poet again "frames himself [...] he assumes a role [...] What he does is to present a one-man show. He animates" (547). So on the one hand, the curators' vision and the cumulative pattern of past events set primary expectations or framing for how a particular poetry reading should be. These expectations are likewise twofold: there is the material infrastructure of the event itself, how the venue is set up (a podium and microphone for the reader and rows of chairs for the audience, for example); there is also the format of the reading (perhaps starting with an introduction of the poet, followed by a prolonged reading by the poet, an intermission, and concluding audience applause). Apart from the material conditions, there are the conceptual expectations of the event, the scope of poetry presented, the reputation of the poet, the thematic reach of the work, and so on. Both of these sets of expectations—material and conceptual—are projected onto the event by the curators and the legacy of the series as a sequence of events. On the other hand, the invited poets are bringing their own poetics, lineup of works to present, performance styles, and more, to their event, entering the frame of their individual reading into dialogue with the frame of the larger series. What poets bring to their event could either affirm or contradict the series curators' frame. Ideally, for framed curation, however, the primary frame would be strong enough to absorb and shape the secondary frame that poets introduce into it. The

series' primary frame would create a discernible mold which reproduces itself and is inhabited with only slight variations or transformations by the invited poets at individual readings.

A reading series that follows a framed curatorial model shapes its events so that poets who are reading there get interpolated into that series, its format, its *modus operandi*, its prerequisites, and its expectations. The poets also get inserted into the reputation of the series; this could include a prestigious series mostly featuring famed authors, or a series open to experimental, interdisciplinary work, among other variations. Just to push the analogy of picture framing for fun, the highly ornamental *trophy frame* becomes relevant to an understanding of framed curation: "the trophy frame [...] annotates and reveals the subject. Status and interests can be indicated for a portrait; hunting and battle scenes are given importance by appropriate motifs; and religious symbolism can be expanded" (Mitchell and Roberts, *A History of European Picture Frames* 12). Even more significantly, "[o]wnership can also be proclaimed by the trophy frame [...It] proclaims ownership and links the painting as a part of a collection" (12). The trophy frame, as an analogy for the framed curation of a reading series, can endow authors with the reputation of the larger series and create a sense of cohesion among diverse participants. This does not mean that there are no exceptions to the rule or that the series is utterly uniform in character, form, and presented content. It does mean, however, that the series and its curators have a certain, roughly defined preconception of an ideal event, even if it is not consistently—or ever—achieved. The frame, or the trophy frame, is thus, to some degree, a utopian project that exists exactly due to its unachievability. To return to Derrida's thinking about the frame: "The *parergon* inscribes something which comes as an extra, *exterior* to the proper field [...] but whose transcendent exteriority comes to play, abut onto, brush against, rub, press against the limit itself and intervene in the inside only to the extent that the inside is lacking" (*The Truth In Painting* 56). The individual readings and performances by a range of different poets are thus, in a sense, always lacking, never a perfect fit for the dictates of the series' frame. Simultaneously, the series' frame serves to shape, elevate, and become intrinsic to the presentation of the invited poets' work the moment that they enter into the series' curatorial field. The framed curatorial mode aspires to delimit its literary events, but is met by an eternal lack or absence which renders the frame less than determinate, leading to further curatorial modes.

Open Curation

Varying degrees of less articulated framing discourse, or even the intention of framelessness itself, arguably just formulate a less rigid frame for a reading series; however, the *lack* embedded in the conceptualization of the relationship between *ergon* and *parergon,* or event and structure—as laid out in the previous section—creates an inherent gap that allows for the frame to be rendered porous. Derrida writes, "[w]hat constitutes them as *parerga* is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the *ergon.* And this lack would be constitutive of the very unity of the *ergon*" (*The Truth in Painting* 59). In other words, the *parergon* forms part of the *ergon* to the degree that it could dissolve into it and, for argument's sake, becomes so enmeshed that it no longer exists as a definable entity. While this merging could, on the one extreme, signify a frame so strong that it has become one with the work, it could also, on the other extreme, suggest a frame that is no longer a structure at all. This radical lack of the frame—or this awareness that the frame might itself be constructing further frames as an endless deferral of structure—might be one way of articulating what I call an open curatorial mode in terms of the organization of reading series. While it is difficult to be completely absolved of the frame, this open mode of literary event organization is suspicious of it. Of course, even

suspicion can be a frame, yet open curation attempts to create a venue free of preconceived expectations, rules, regulations, value judgements, and preferred performative outcomes. It tries to offer a space without rituals—even down to collective behaviours and temporal structures such as introductory remarks, formalized applause, concluding question and answer periods, and so on. Each individual event, within the structure of the larger series, is free to recreate a new structure for itself, even as the overarching series frame is one that foregrounds the goal of no frame at all.

Differently phrased, frame transforms into field. By field I mean both the material venue of the literary event that provides a forum for a reading to take place and the more conceptual curatorial field of the event, thereby deferring determinate definition, but also including the effects of an array of relationalities that interact with the event without necessarily shaping or structuring it in any one fixed way. The field, the curatorial field, becomes the locus for the active and undirected composition of the literary event in much the same way that the poem is led by the page and the breath in Charles Olson's famous articulation of "OPEN verse," "Projective Verse," or "FIELD COMPOSITION" ("Projective Verse" 239-240). As Olson writes, "[t]his is the problem which any poet who departs from closed form is specially confronted by. And it involves a whole series of new recognitions. From the moment he ventures into FIELD COMPOSITION—puts himself in the open—he can go by no track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself" (240). The poem, or the poetry reading, needs to follow its own stimulus, to formulate itself according to its individual agency rather than a preconceived articulation of what a literary work or event should be. Insofar as the poetry reading is analogous to the poem, then, "closed form" and framed curation go hand-in-hand, and the word *open* from Olson's statement leads to open curation. While I am not trying to posit a direct indexical relation between Olson's language and open curation, I do think that placing them in conceptual relation to one another allows for a relevant thought experiment in terms of understanding the open reading as a curatorial field. Placing open curation in dialogue with Olson's way of theorizing poetic composition, the literary event likewise unfolds according to its own impetus, as "energy transferred" between the poets, the space, the audience, and more; the poetry reading's form is less dictated by the frame of the reading series as a whole, and more by its own demands, by its individual needs and goals, or simply by the improvisational gesture of having no articulated intention at all. In terms of a poetry reading series, the open curatorial mode thus embodies a radical volition towards constant shapeshifting and undefinability that enacts and welcomes deliberately divergent literary performative outcomes.

The paradox of framelessness or undefinability itself becoming a frame may further be resolved in thinking of it—by way of the curatorial field—as a kind of loose score or perforated form of fixity instead. That is, the curatorial field of a series' venue embodies a light set of notational cues that do not function as guidelines, rules, or prerequisites, but as suggestions that poets and performers can accept, reject, transform, develop, and so forth. Discussing the merits of composition by field, Olson claims that "[f]or the first time the poet has the stave and the bar a musician has had. For the first time he can, without the convention of rime and meter, record the listening he has done to his own speech and by that one act indicate how he would want any reader, silently or otherwise, to voice his work" ("Projective Verse" 245). At a first glance, Olson's statement sounds a model that drives towards a fixed or reproduceable form in performance, and by extension a return to a framed literary event, but on further consideration his concept of the poem as notation also serves as an improvisational gesture that leads exactly by offering free rein through the energy of the act of making itself. Here I am returning to Charles Bernstein's important understanding of any work in performance as enjoying a "fundamentally plural existence" (*Close*

Listening 9) through its inability to ever be repeated identically. So also a score, by definition, opens itself to the varying agencies of different performers who must each infuse that score with their own mode of interpretation and be directed but not led through the score by the inherent energy that their individual performances call for. By projecting the idea of a scored performance that always delivers a slightly different output onto the field of the poetry reading series in relation to the individual poetry reading event, I think it is possible to push this idea of the indeterminate score to a conceptual point that formulates itself as open curation. This implies that the curatorial field of the reading series will always have—in abstract, not real terms—the faintest trace of notational prompts—even as it assumes a non-directive stance—but these prompts do not have to be interpreted in order to represent or conform to the series. Rather than a curatorial frame in which poets input their sets according to a pre-articulated set of expectations, open curation offers suggestions that expand the curatorial field towards improvisation and allow poets the freedom to radically transform the series' score at the level of the event. To insist on the difference between a frame and a scored field would be that the former offers an expectation while the latter formulates a suggestion. One could imagine, for example, a reading series in which the room is set up with a podium in front with rows of chairs facing it. The framed assumption would be that every reader would inhabit the podium and any poet opting otherwise would imply a radical intervention in the workings of that space. In contrast, a score would embody the same space and layout, but interpret the podium as an invitation to perform, not a static booth from which to proclaim poetry; the podium can be moved, the room can be set up differently, and the rules of engagement between poet and audience can be altered, and all the while still lead to a similar outcome, namely a performance of poetry. As such, the space offers cues (a podium) towards an outcome (a poetry reading), without dictating the exact route that leads from cause to effect.

While Olson was apparently not a fan of John Cage's work, the two men were active in overlapping and mutually influential literary, sound, and music scenes of mid-century New York City. Critic Mark Byers convincingly argues that both the New York School of music affiliated with Cage and Olson's theorization of "Projective Verse" were "recuperating one material—sound [...] and devising new kinds of spatial notation for them" ("Egocentric Predicaments" 56). Byers means that they were both attempting to score works and events that were likewise liable to change in performance and subject to chance. As Cage explains in conversation with Richard Kostelanetz, he is interested in an alignment of event and indeterminacy: "an indeterminate piece, even though it might sound like a totally determined one, is made essentially without intention, so that, in opposition to music of results, two performances of it will be different [...] the whole idea of things being fixed is a notion that we no longer need" (*John Cage* 10). The unfixed, non-static, open event is one which—like a poem composed according to the energy of page, field, and poet's breath and volition—unfurls according to the particular set of conditions it is placed within. As theoretically speculative as it might be to do so, if one takes Olson's words and exchanges the word *poem* for *event* or *poetry reading*, one can articulate a form of open curated poetry readings that highlights the container or field they take place in, while simultaneously harnessing the spontaneous energy of the affordances of that field: "We now enter, actually, the large area of the whole *event or poetry reading,* into the FIELD [...] It is a matter, finally of OBJECTS, what they are, what they are inside an *event,* how they got there, and, once there, how they are to be used [...] every element in an open *event* [...becomes] participants in the kinetic of the *event*" ("Projective Verse" 243). Considering the relevance of a literary event venue that functions as a curatorial field for the individual creation of different and divergent poetry readings, shaped according to their respective wants, needs, and energy transfers, this articulation of open curation could arguably

favour innovative and experimental literature. As mentioned previously and in terms of the intrinsic lack of the *parergon* losing itself within the *ergon*, there is always the chance that openness becomes its own tradition, and that the so-called avant-garde is rendered stultified in its own constant urge for change. If initially framed and open curatorial modes are in opposition to one another, they can easily merge through the ability of openness to become its own frame. While this kind of contradiction is undeniable, it does not negate the critical value of attempting to disentangle different curatorial modes. Perhaps this awareness of their overlap just demands a heightened alertness to those very same contradictions in order to read them within the tensions of the blurring edges of analysis.

I have linked open curation to a mid-twentieth-century ethos of experimental sound and literary composition and performance because it was a historical moment so self-consciously and deeply invested in rethinking and remaking traditional understandings of art and literature as measured by certain standards, expectations, and outcomes. This is also because open curation is so receptive a form for work that models itself as innovative and experimental, even as it exists as an expression of a curatorial form beyond a particular historical moment. Due to its nominal rejection of the frame, open curation of reading series almost by default lends itself to divergent, non-cohesive work that welcomes novelty, surprise, and shock value (sometimes seen as mockery of religion, highly sexualized content, physical feats, or performance art-style graphic violence) over canonized authors or the reading of literature that has already been proclaimed to be part of validated traditions. Instead, a reading series that follows an open curatorial mode tries to deny value judgments or censorship in favour of complete acceptance of novelty and risk. Due to its inherent unpredictability and welcoming nature, this mode often includes the open mic format, but is not limited to it. As Rachel Zitomer explains, "[t]he open mic [...] enacts 'poetry' as present, ephemeral engagement between people with and within their social context [...] its refusal of hierarchical mediation threatens the very system of sanctioned poetic culture itself" ("Presenting the Open Mic" 48). Whether poets are actually able to experiment and innovate within the often very restricted time slots of open mic events is another question altogether, but the free-for-all, open spirit of the eponymous open mic does ring true when considering the inclusive and democratic invitation to perform. This curatorial mode implies that authors are afforded at least symbolic freedom to retain curatorial agency in terms of shaping their (sometimes diminutive) sets within the larger reading series context. Performing self-defining sets within the frameless frame of attempted openness, poets move in the direction of the next curatorial mode, namely self-curation.

Self-Curation

Whereas the framed and open curatorial modes run on an axis of power distribution and degrees of shared agency between a distinct series curator and invited poet/s of a particular event—as materialized in the *parergon* and *ergon*—the self and deep curatorial modes consider the roles of curator and poet and how they might relate, how they might exist in relationship—and even overlap—towards one another. The self-curatorial mode thus works to break down the rift between curating and the curatorial, and to fuse roles generally enacted by multiple persons into that of an individual agent. To return to Goffman's terms, then, one might consider self-curation as a deliberate overlaying of primary and secondary frames as grafted onto conceptualizations of series and event. The larger social construction of the reading series is rendered transformational as it becomes equated to the secondary framing of each individual event within that series. That which is self-curated—whether a single event or sequence of events—becomes the primary frame, even

if it is not the single primary frame of a reading series. Differently put, the series and its individualized sequence of events, while existing collectively as an archive that takes place at multiple locations and times across a chronology of days, weeks, or years, work together, in a self-curatorial context, in the creation and potential fulfilment of the same curatorial goals.

Here it important to note that self-curation can manifest in three main ways. Firstly, both the individual event and the series as a whole are envisioned by the poet themself. That is, the poet embodies the roles of both curator and performer. They take control of the performance of their work not only by curating the organizational dimensions of a self-contained and self-defined series of poetry readings situated across time and place, but also the curatorial nuances of how and in which conditions they want their work to be performed. Practically, this might insinuate a poet being on tour with a particular book so that they want to share a similar set of their work in geographically diverse places and before different audiences. It might also mean that a poet has an ongoing project that requires both an event-based approach and a durational return to the stage in a sequence of progressing or changing versions of a performance. Secondly—and how I will be approaching and analyzing it in Chapter 4—self-curation can manifest in a more condensed fashion when the same poet recurs as invited reader at fairly consistent intervals within the structure of a larger series. Even though the series then has its own distinct curator, the poet can weave a curatorial strand of their own work, through their recurrent presence, within the larger reading series. This implies a layering of a sub-series within the dominant series. It also implies a refraction of the primary series frame into a subsidiary primary frame that equates itself with the secondary frame of the separate events. For this articulation to ring true, the poet as curator of a series within a series must ideally display an awareness of their development of a personal thread in distinction and relation to the overarching reading series. Thirdly and most pragmatically, self-curation applies at the level of the single event. In existential terms, one might ask for a definition of the smallest unit of a poet's curatorial agency in relation to the formation of their literary performance; while a more robust articulation of self-curation should imply an intentional drive to construct a sequence of events, both in terms of the curation and the curatorial field, the creative and critical labour that goes into designing a single set for a poetry reading likewise functions as a minimalist gesture of self-curation. In these terms, curatorial modes overlap and a poet may self-curate a set within the context of a reading series that follows a framed or open curatorial mode. They might also apply a framed or open curatorial mentality to the larger project of their self-curated series. In fact, a poet may even self-curate an event that follows a deep curatorial way of doing, to move towards a modality that heightens and celebrates intentionality in curatorial decision-making.

Deep Curation

Deep curation varies slightly from the three other curatorial modes in that it is not only a conceptualization of how certain historical, recent, and contemporary reading series are organized, but also the proper name for a personal, ongoing research creation project. As such, I will switch between *deep curation* as a curatorial mode, following framed, open, and self-curatorial modes, and *Deep Curation* as the series of events that applies a deep curatorial approach. In Chapter 5, I will write in more depth about the founding impetus for and narrative of the Deep Curation series of experimental poetry readings—as well as zooming in on concrete case studies illustrating the ways that it functions in practice—but in short, it is a set of events with an inherent, co-existent mode of literary curation that I have both practically developed and theorized since 2018; to date, I have organized and documented eight core events with a couple of additional, tangential readings,

conference papers, and a podcast episode that helped to hone the practice. To return to the curatorial mode, then, deep curation places itself in conscious dialogue with curatorial theory in order to hone an understanding of the relational shaping of the event, distancing itself conceptually from the poetry reading understood as either a promotional entity or a performative, theatrical form. While deep curation by default rubs up against the directorial nature of experimental theater and the energy of Happenings, Events, Fluxus scores, and more (especially when it augments its performative possibilities with movement, lighting, costume, and so forth), it distinguishes itself by its stalwart insistence on foregrounding the minimalist act of reading by the poets themselves—that is, the readers are not actors embodying the performance, but rather authors who are vocalizing their work with the intentional support of critical discussion and creative design surrounding the event's content and structure. Deep curation thus deliberately heightens the curator's role in relation to that of invited poets specifically, but also to that of the audience, while questioning assumptions of who gets to shape the poetry reading, why, and what the implications of those choices are. It centers the act of literary curation as a generative process, production, and performance of literature, rather than a secondary mode of mediating the dissemination of literature. As Beatrice von Bismarck writes about the range of curatorial roles and their development in the visual arts, "[t]he spectrum stretches from administration, organization, and communication on the one hand, and an activity that is equal to the creation of art in terms of status and possibilities" ("In the Space of the Curatorial" 42). The traditional notion of the curator as intermediary, caretaker, and administrator is thus exploded and replaced with the more mature understanding that the curator themself is an artist and author too,[5] sharing agency and responsibility within the larger process and performance of the literary event.

More specifically, in the production of a deep curation poetry reading nothing about the organization of the literary event should be taken for granted (as far as an omission so determinate exists), but ideally every aspect of the event is questioned and deliberated upon instead. Consistently making intentional decisions, the curator then invites two or three poets to participate. In its most basic iteration, the curator—in lieu of the poets themselves—chooses which poems will be performed and in which order, aiming to formulate and direct a thematic, dialogic continuity between works. In a more robust development of the project, the curator gains the poets' consent to excerpt and rearrange parts of poems into a new performance script that uses invited poets' writing as the raw material from which to shape a whole other citational, collaged text that leads to an interwoven, vocal rendition. In Nicolas Bourriaud's terms, the deep curatorial mode would fall into the category of art practice that he calls *postproduction*: "artists interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural products. [...] Notions of originality (being at the origin of) and even of creation (making something from nothing) are slowly blurred in this new cultural landscape marked by the twin figures of the DJ and the programmer" (*Postproduction* 13). The curator creates with found materials; however, what is formed with those materials is novel to the extent that authorship at the level of the event becomes shared between curator and poets.[6] Yet it is always important to remember that in generic terms, deep curation

[5] Interestingly, this recognition of the curator as poet is just being honest, highlighting a fact that is already apparent beyond the scope of deep curation—the vast majority of literary event organizers (at least in a recent to contemporary Canadian literary context) are themselves poets doubling as community builders, curators, and hosts. As such, deep curation notices a reality of the literary world, underscores it, and crafts its potential as conscious practice.

[6] In an earlier, scholarly podcast episode, co-produced with Jason Camlot for the SpokenWeb podcast series, I interpreted deep curation as a complex network of authorship and reauthorship. I implied that as a deep

does not attempt to move beyond the poetry reading; rather, it offers a more exploratory mode that tests the boundaries of what the poetry reading can do. As such, it also has no fixed definition, but is always pressing against earlier versions of itself to develop iteratively towards a poetic space of dynamic, deliberate curatorial relationality. While deep curation can maintain a light approach that foregrounds a deliberate act of reading and some sonic improvisation over more ostentatious possibilities, it can also become more collaborative, developing to incorporate adjacent performance practices to render the traditional stance of the poet reading from a podium at a microphone more urgent through gesture, movement, staging, costume, lightning, and further gentle additions. As such, deep curation is not a recipe, but an aspirational project that aims to offer robust materializations of certain aesthetic and ethical goals. I will attempt to articulate these goals as centering on sociability, collaboration, and artmaking beyond the performance of pre-articulated literary products, on the one hand, and curatorial responsibility, care, and attention on the other, without solidifying these goals into unitary outputs.

Despite the fact that I have personally been evolving Deep Curation as a curatorial project in its own right, deep curation as a mode includes an open invitation for other literary curators to expand upon this practice, to take the core tenets and to make it their own.[7] As an initial attempt at defining these tenets, I will, perhaps obviously, consider the mode's investment in the two words that formulate it, *deep* and *curation.* While I will trouble the notion of depth as existing purely in relation to surface later in this section—and while *depth*, does not have to be associated with opacity, but rather with its surfacing into openness—I will start from this more traditional premise of a methodology that moves beyond the obvious, ordinary, or default ways of doing and experiencing. Hinging on the word *deep,* I am often asked whether deep curation is inspired by Pauline Oliveros' practice of deep listening. Although this overlap was not consciously the case when I started conceptualizing this curatorial mode, a retroactive study of her work does show some significant touchpoints. In her "Foreword" to the book *Deep Listening*, for example, Oliveros describes her own disillusionment with the classical music scene, noticing "that many musicians were not listening to what they were performing. There was good hand-eye coordination in reading music, but [...t]here was disconnection from the environment that included the audience as the music was played" (xvii). She continues to recount how observing a sense of relational disengagement between the mechanical structures of performance and musical technique, and the creative act of sharing music prompted her to develop her exercises in sounding through aural connection and collective listening awareness. While deep curation does not overtly try to be a practice of conscious-raising or meditation in the ways that deep listening does—and perhaps does not consistently include the audience members so dynamically as participants—it stems from a similar disaffection with the lack of attention I observe in much of literary curatorial work. Despite

curator I would reapply poetry authored by invited poets, authoring a performance script that would then be reauthored again in performance by those same poets. Seen in this light, deep curation becomes an invitation for poets to critically re-engage and renegotiate their authority in relation to their creative output and in collaboration with the curator (*Deep Curation: Experimenting with the Poetry Reading as Practice)*.

[7] I would also suggest that other more experimental literary curators have displayed some of deep curation's characteristics without using the same vocabulary to conceptualize their work. In particular, and in a Canadian literary context, I am thinking of Margaret Christakos' literary curatorial work from the 1990s through to the present. In a series of still unarchived Toronto-based events, she has experimented with modes of hospitality in relation to the poetry reading, as well as ways of creating dialogue by structuring and interweaving a series of literary events, such as her project of 8 March 2019, Listen Deep: Poetry, Sound, and Multitudinous Remix.

their differences, both framed and open curation—it seems to me—function, in practice, with a high degree of curatorial oversight that allows curators to attend primarily to administrative duties; poets are brought into a series either with a rough sense of its ethos and expectations (framed curation) or with the assumption of complete carte blanche (open curation leading to self-curation). Neither mode actively asserts a collaborative intention for the series curator to project agency onto the event to work with the poet or poets to shape a reading that optimizes relational exchange between poetries, audience, venue, and more. Neither mode attempts to transcend the binary between poetry and the performance of that poetry as a reproduction of it. Deep curation asserts the literary event as artwork.

Deep curation heightens the curator's agency in relation to the event, and ironically, simultaneously heightens the poet's agency by doing so. That is, by rejecting a laissez-faire attitude towards the poetry reading and its organization, everyone involved in a deep curation event must by default become more intentional in their participation. As Oliveros suggests, "*Deep* has to do with complexity and boundaries, or edges beyond ordinary or habitual understanding [... This] means that one is connected to the whole of the environment and beyond" (xxiii). The word *deep* here animates a more holistic understanding of the literary event and its formation; a poetry reading is no longer the mere act of reading poetry within an arbitrary series structure (whether framed or open), but rather includes the awareness that reading poetry helps to shape that series' structure by being an active and engaged participant in its formation. In Goffman's terms, the primary and secondary frames start to merge so that the curation and actual reading of poetry become aware of their own position within and in dialogue with everyone and everything that is included in, surrounds, engages with, and asserts presence in relation to that literary performance. The paradox is, of course, that despite my insistence on deliberation, awareness, and intent in terms of the deep curatorial mode, intention itself holds the potential for unintentional shifts and progressions to occur. As is the case with any performance—whether musical, theatrical, dance, or otherwise—each rehearsal or performance will by definition vary slightly to the degree that it may be conceptualized as a variation on the original or, even more poignantly, as an individual work. Deep curation will always be organic and changeable because of its live status and even more so because it is aware of its own relationality—because there are so many factors that are understood to be active players in the making of the literary event, that event will always be subject to improvisation, whether scripted or fundamental to the gesture of bringing people together in place and time. As such, deep curation should not be understood as the curator exerting control over the making of the literary event, but rather as deliberate relational inclusion and a responsible recognition of the infinite number of participatory relationalities acting on and in exchange with the creation of a poetry reading. This can be seen, then, as one of the deep curation's aspirations: to activate relationalities to the point of moving beyond those same relationalities as understood on a lateral plane of interconnection, and to fold them over one another into a new and emergent immanent whole.

As gestured towards previously, depth, and the way that Oliveros applies the word *deep*, has an obvious relation to surface with a concomitant dichotomy of something being first hidden and subsequently unearthed. This binary has provocatively been rejected by Toril Moi who suggests in *Revolution of the Ordinary*—a study that reconsiders the humanities' disciplinary method of reading towards a literary critical product—that depth is always present, but not always observed. In terms of scholarly readings of texts, she suggests that it is not the text that has hidden depths that need to be explored by the critic, but rather the critic who has to display elements of themself through the perspective and subjectivity from which they read: "But *we* are the ones who

decide to unmask or not to unmask. Whether we write literary criticism to critique or to admire, to investigate or to explore, is up to us. The politics of literary criticism does not lie in the method, or in the way we picture texts. It lies in the critic" (191). While Moi's thinking has to be expanded from the reading and writing of texts to the making of literary events, this understanding of depth as presence that needs to be rendered intentional is useful in defining deep curation at both a subjective and structural level. That is, by emphasizing the curator's agency in relation to the making of literary events, deep curation underscores the subjectivity behind the articulation of the event, similarly as Moi considers the importance of the scholar in the interpretation of literary texts. Nothing that was previously hidden has been unearthed in the making of the literary event *per se,* but the curator's agency has made certain elements discernible through their acts of attention, noticing, selecting, and directing of the literary event.[8] As the word *deep* begins to transcend its meaning in relation to the word *curation,* it is significant to consider Carolina Rito's understanding of the curatorial as being inherently superficial or *not deep*. She writes:

> The curatorial refuses knowing 'in-depth': instead, it is errant. 'In-depth,' here means gaining access to the core of the subject matter in order to obtain its true value, and suggests both a primordial reading and an impartial approach. [...] Surface *is* the plane of the curatorial—a plane that: enables movement across disciplines; allows seemingly unrelated subjects to meet along their lines of flight; is driven by intellectual and conceptual disquiet; recognizes intuition and contingent encounters and finds new ways of engaging with urgent and current issues and their fugitive acts. ("What Is the Curatorial Doing?" 51)

If "[s]urface *is* the plane of the curatorial" then *deep curation* holds an inherent contradiction that makes for a generative practice of constant, urgent making and remaking of itself as a coherent but mobile form. Moreover, Rito sees *surface* engagement to be a positive renegotiation of relationality. Whereas *depth* implies fixity and rigour for her, *surface* opens up towards connection and possibility. To a degree, then, her *surface* and my articulation of *deep* align. Their apparent oppositional definitions hinge on arbitrary semantic markers that both celebrate exploration beyond strict disciplinary boundaries while simultaneously retaining an ethical investigation of the affordances, or even consequences, of that same critical roaming. In a sense, then, this entire mode might just as well be called *surface curation*—a practice of making apparent the relational symbiosis of poets reading in dialogue with one another. Similar to Moi's understanding of *depth* always being present at the *surface* anyway, the symbolic *depth* of deep curation becomes a meta level of its own *surface*. The interplay of *surface* and *depth* becomes illustrative of the dynamism of this curatorial mode in terms of always oscillating between a clear activation of what is present and the urge towards constant, critical questioning and an ongoing *deepening* investigation of what is being read, performed, experienced, attended to, listened to, related to, and more.

Such a nuanced understanding of the word *deep* further animates c*uration* too, not only extending a definition of deep curation into visual arts terrain, but also suturing *deep* to a vibrant discourse that has flourished in recent years around *the curatorial* as a field of research production

[8] Placed in conversation with Toril Moi's thinking, deep curation moves into fascinating terrain that I have long thought about, but not critically considered in writing. That is, deep curation can be understood as a mode of literary criticism; by placing different poetries side-by-side and formulating an argument for the literary event as a whole, the deep curator is displaying a subjective interpretation of the invited poets' work. A deep curation script and performance can be seen as an experimental, process-based research output. This insight is particularly relevant for further exploration in pedagogical contexts.

and knowledge exchange in both scholarly and practice-based institutions. I have laid out an explanation of the curatorial in the Introduction; however, it is relevant to return to it here in terms of understanding the fundamental role that the act of selecting, shaping, and actuating the curatorial field has on this mode of literary organization. Je Yun Moon—who understands the relationality inherent to the curatorial as a form of "commons," to use her word—suggests that "[w]hat curatorial research highlights is the fact that creative practice produces an organism, not a mechanism. What it produces is contingent and more dynamic than linear models" ("Curatorial Research as the Practice of Commoning" 42). The *depth* paradox of creating a literary event that is simultaneously scripted and subject to change comes to a head in *curation*, then, or in *the curatorial* to be more precise, that is invested in activating a spectrum of tasks ranging from the more linear duties like administration and hospitality to the dynamic, indeterminate acts of shaping, selecting, and making an experimental poetry reading cohere. To quote Moon at more length:

> [T]he commons should be understood in a performative sense. The act of commoning draws on a particular form of exchanges that produce relationships. What this production of relationships brings about is a shared understanding that something belongs to all of us—which is at the heart of the practice of commoning. Curatorial research comes into being when a shared understanding of the curatorial operation becomes materialized. From this perspective, curatorial research can be articulated as the practice of commoning. The curatorial operation necessarily produces relationships and what emerges as the commons is knowledge that materializes curatorial research. ("Curatorial Research as the Practice of Commoning" 34)

The relational nature of the curatorial act is placed at the forefront with the "commons." The "commons" also show how interpersonal exchange, exhibition-making, performance, research creation, and creation period all start to blend in their overlapping, shared, and interdisciplinary roles that together bring about an organic process-based literary or artwork. The making of a poetry reading—and a deep curation poetry reading, specifically—becomes less about binaries between curator and poet, or divisions between a host of different roles, and more about their conflation and collaboration as co-existent and co-dependent participants. Curatorial research, and the making of deep curation poetry readings, never takes place in isolation and can never be claimed as the work of a single author—even as authorship remains a dominant thread weaving equally through the contextual space and history of literary events, the raw poetic material used to create the event, and the act of making and performing that event. To quote Florian Schneider, "[c]ollaboration [...] presumes rhizomatic structures where knowledge grows exuberantly and proliferates in a rather unforeseeable fashion" ("Collaboration" no pag.). As a directive practice that subsumes the organic and generative, deep curation as communal and collaborative is by definition a practice hinging on a complex network of exchange, inherently working against agential and structuring hierarchies.

What this conceptualization of the making of a deep curation poetry reading leads to, then, is the understanding of the curator as creator, artist, and/or author in relation to the poet as creator, artist, and/or author. As Claire Bishop suggests in her study of participatory artforms—and in a statement that is equally relevant to deep curation—one has "the clear impression that the curator is no longer a mediator between artist and public [...] but someone with a clear desire to co-produce a socially relevant art for multiple audiences, and who views the exhibition itself [or the literary

event, by extension] as a total argument" (*Artificial Hells* 200). The curator transcends any traditional role division that places them secondary to the artist or author. Instead the curator is the contributor who holds and formulates the holistic vision for the event as a whole, not eclipsing the author's position as creator, but definitely redefining curating as an additional layer of making. There are, of course, detractors to this conceptualization of the curator as artist. Anton Vidokle, for example, suggests that "[t]he necessity of going 'beyond [...]' should not become a justification for the work of curators to supersede the work of artists, nor a reinforcement of authorial claims that render artists and artworks merely actors and props for illustrating curatorial concepts" ("Art Without Artists?" 219). This is potentially a fair critique, especially in relation to deep curation: is the poet being ousted in favour of the curator? Does the idea of an intentional poetry reading remove agency from the poet and transfer it the artist-curator? Does the *parergon* become the *ergon*, to return to Derrida's mode of thinking? The answers are both yes and no and, in a sense, this tension is the whole point of deep curation and what makes it so innovative. Deep curation does question and even alter the traditional power dynamic between curator and poet, but it does so with the intention of putting more effort into the presentation of that poet's public appearance, of shaping a literary event with deliberate care and generosity. As such, Vidokle's disapproval underscores the important ethical implications of deep curation, and its delicate and consensual renegotiation of authority in the shaping of the literary event. This is clearly the case with all modes of literary curation, but is heightened with deep curation due to the intensified responsibility of the curator's input and even reformulation of poets' work, and the implicitly directive nature of the collaborative dynamic. Deep curation implies a refraction of authority, but also an openness and inclusivity, and an accentuation of collectivity and community. This fostering of decision-making as an intentional practice of attention is another core tenet of the curatorial mode, one also articulated by Bishop when she states, "in any art that uses people as medium, ethics will never retreat entirely" (39). Jean-Paul Martinon further suggests, in *Curating as Ethics,* that each curator needs to define and articulate their personal code of conduct for their practice and in relation to their collaborators. Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro writes with more insistence:

> The only mandate and principle the curator has, which he shouldn't betray, is that of fidelity and respect towards the other. Curatorial ethics therefore comes from an ethical experience of the subject, which is that of responsibility. In a world where responsibility is questioned and has disappeared from the individual sphere, curators have the single duty of being responsible individuals. That is why curating is an ethical profession, because, from the very etymology of the term,[9] its task is to take care and be in charge of things, 'to be responsible for' things. ("The Curator's Demands" 7)

The ethics of collaboration—or what Pablo Helguera calls the "accountability" between collaborators in his handbook on socially engaged modes of art (*Education for Socially Engaged Art* 53)—dictates that the deep curator must (even more so than curators who practice framed, open, and self-curation) communicate, discuss, listen, and exchange, with the poets and all other participants, information about the methodology of excerpting and collective authorship that deep curation implies. Everyone involved with a deep curation poetry reading must agree to the curator's creative role and to the collaborative shaping of this mode of literary event. This immersive, heightened degree of sociability and exchange now lead into a necessary discussion of

[9] From the Latin *curare,* to take care of.

additional relationalities, and their respective affordances, that activate a range of different influences and dynamic interplays within the literary event and reading series.

Curatorial Relations or Relationalities

As orderly as these four modes of curation appear, they cannot exist in isolation. By default, they are formed and defined through their inherent engagement with an infinite number of possible relationalities that, in turn, influence and shape them as interconnected, codependent, and reciprocal entities. The dynamic conceptual and experiential field of literary events that I have previously referred to as *the curatorial* is brought into possible existence by the activation of otherwise latent relations or relationalities as entered into mutual contact with the mode of a particular poetry reading. While curatorial *modes* immediately struck the right chord—and the qualifying terms *framed, open, self,* and *deep* are the words demanding substantiation instead—I rehearsed many different terms before settling on *relationalities.* The first attempt was *forces*, a function borrowed from physics that asserts a strength model of influence through energy exchange and vector-like, directional motion. While the ability to alter through the exertion of variable pressures felt relevant to the exposing of latent affordances at literary events, forces simultaneously felt too forceful, to risk a tautology; forces implied a unidirectional trajectory of causation, dramatically transforming a poetry reading through the exertion of certain conditions onto it. Rendering the same intent less aggressive and firmly ensconced in the disciplinary language of the literary, *influence* suggested itself as an alternative. Influence likewise allows the literary event to adopt and adapt certain variables as affordances; however, influence is also burdened with a heavy, New Critical rhetoric of tradition, and a long history of hierarchizing authorship, especially as synthesized in Harold Bloom's fixation on affect and anxiety (*Anxiety of Influence*). I started to understand that this negative conceptualization of the ability to affect is antithetical to how I wish to theorize the creative and critical locus of the poetry reading. I needed a word that allowed for vibrant and intuitive mutual influence and generative if forceful contact, to reuse the words I just rejected.

As such, I tried a different, more textual analogy: by imagining the literary event not only as a presentation of texts, but as itself embodying a form of enlivened textuality, the poetry reading can be read as an *intertextual* space, one in which contextual cues are in constant, referential correspondence with the materialization of the literary event itself. In Julia Kristeva's terms, then, the poetry reading adopts the formulation of a text, which is in turn "the absorption and transformation" of all other social, historical, political, and contextual intertexts ("Word, Dialogue, and Novel" 85). This allusive interrelationship is compelling in terms of leading to a more relational understanding of interconnection and exchange, rather than one of impact, collision, and vigorous transformation. However, the provisions of the intertext lack agency—a text (or by extension a poetry reading) can, after all, be intertextual without intending to be so—and the more I thought about it, an element of active reciprocity felt pivotal to my curatorial understanding of the literary event. Even as I write this, I am aware of the contradiction in my thinking: clearly it is possible for an intertextual approach to be instrumentalized and rendered intentional, but something about the in-between status of the prefix *inter-* did not muster enough action, felt locked in its own liminality. However faulty my instinct about the intertext may be, it led me to continue searching for a more apt term. So embracing the spirit of inclusion and exchange that I recognized in the word *intertext,* I returned to one of the foundational texts that sparked my research, namely Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics.* In this important art historical text, Bourriaud defines artistic practice and its presentation as "an activity consisting in producing relationships with the

world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects" (107). While the dynamic, sociable nature he describes opens relevantly to the literary event which equally produces relationships among curator, authors, audience, space, time, and more, the "signs, forms, actions, and objects" he lists likewise position themselves as exactly the kind of *forces, influences,* or *intertexts* that I had been grappling with in my attempts to theorize the poetry reading as a literary form. As such, *relations* or *relationalities* offered themselves as more symptomatic terms for the kind of democratic literary space—one that is also constantly susceptible to influence, dialogue, and change—that I aim to articulate.

In *Relational Aesthetics,* Bourriaud presents an understanding of late-twentieth-century visual arts that rejects an object-based, product-driven definition, and predicates itself on sociability and a communal, temporal, experiential formulation instead. Highlighting the creative as an "arena of exchange" (17), he argues that "[t]he contemporary artwork's form is spreading out from its material form: it is a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutination" (20). This "dynamic agglutination" is suggestive of a reciprocal artwork that allows for flux and interchange without stabilizing into a product, on the one hand, or creating forceful power imbalances and assertive, permanent transformations, on the other. As Beatrice von Bismarck writes in a more recent investigation of relationality and the curatorial, in particular, "[f]ocusing on forms of relation makes it possible to view all participants as they develop and mutually form one another, to understand the hierarchies, dependencies, privileges, and procedures [...and] to question, break down, and redefine them" (*The Curatorial Condition* 15). While Bourriaud and von Bismarck understand the magnitude and scope of possible relationalities, they also work within a field of discourse that aims to render them discernible. In contrast, Édouard Glissant's important sociological study, *Poetics of Relation*—formulating a theory for placing global geographies in constantly dynamic, changing historical relation to one another through consistent return to poetics as a model for larger sociohistorical and political structures—rejects any possibility of systematizing, linearizing, or disentangling relations. Glissant writes that "the poetics of Relation remains forever conjectural and presupposes no ideological stability [...] this poetics of Relation interweaves and no longer projects, that it inscribes in a circularity, we are not referring to a circuit, a line of energy curved back onto itself" (32). While it is possible to see the effects of relations on the different elements that enter into relation with one another and to understand their agential roles, it is simultaneously impossible to itemize them in a determinate way or to fully comprehend the extent of their modes of interconnection. As such, Glissant continues to posit a "dialectic of interdependencies" (153) and to suggest that "[p]assivity plays no part in Relation" (137). In other words, he offers an understanding of undefinability in the very act of trying to schematize a network of exchange. Even more so than Bourriaud, and later von Bismarck, Glissant acknowledges the constant ebb and flow of exchange, the fact that bringing different elements into contact with one another is not only unstable and unknowable, but also inherently transformative, with the contradictory twist that "*secreted within this imaginary construct of Relation [...] is the possibility for each one at every moment to be both solidary and solitary there"* (131, italics in original). All elements brought into relation are simultaneously individual agents and changed through their new configurations. As he writes, the work of relationalities "always changes all the elements composing it and, consequently, the resulting relationship, which then changes them all over again" (172). Even as one adopts the scholarly duty of conceptualizing relation, here in curatorial terms, there is an endless deferral of the ability to comprehend relation at all.

Significantly, adopting this language of relationality for my analysis of the poetry reading also connects the literary event to feminist, queer, and critical race debates that apply an

intersectional lens to positionality and identity. Kimberle Crenshaw's foundational understanding of personhood as "the various ways in which race and gender [among other potential identity markers] interact to shape [...] structural, political, and representational aspects of violence" ("Mapping the Margins" 1244), offers a relational articulation of both self-perception and how one is read, received, and discriminated against by the world. Correspondingly, relations hold a kinship metaphor, one that again is reminiscent of feminist, queer, and other marginalized communities of care, exceeding genetic family ties to formulate themselves according to mutual concerns, needs, and networks of safety and support. This is, of course, especially true of Indigenous modes of thinking that foregrounds *relations* and *kinship* as models of rapport through sharing, hospitality, and community. One may think alongside traditions that deliberately positions the individual in constant interrelation to communities, geographies, and more. This includes practices, extended in contemporary terms, to institutional and event-based land acknowledgements. Kanonhsyonne Janice C. Hill writes in a co-authored piece, for example, that "[i]t is customary and respectful that before I address a group I place myself in relation to who I am within my family, clan, and Nation. It is important that I position myself so that you know where I am speaking from, what informs me, and where I am in relation to you and this land we stand on today" ("Rethinking the Practice" 23). Reviewing this embodied relationality in comparison to new materialist scholarship, such as Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter,* Dylan Robinson further underscores the fact that "to inspire a greater sense of kinship between human and nonhuman bodies is of course already quite unexceptional within Indigenous communities [...] this sense of intersubjectivity that recognizes trees, rivers, mountains, and other places, as kin" (*Hungry Listening* 98). Relationality as a key term in my current research thus navigates an expansive range of possible relevance. To return to the more granular subject of this dissertation, future study could develop curatorial relationalities of positionality, productively engaging with feminist, queer, critical race, and decolonial methodologies and theories in order to make the literary event discernible in terms of the individuals, and community networks, curating, performing, and attending literary events, as understood in their dynamic interconnection with other human and nonhuman curatorial agents. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the following brief discussions of dialogic, institutional, spatial, and durational relationalities are just a few among any number of possible creative and critical agents that affect the shaping of literary events and series. They are in no way intended to suggest comprehensiveness, but rather to hint at some possible directions that one may think along in terms of curatorial relationalities. By definition expansive, relationalities are also upheld by their limitations. In the instant of attempted definition, they resist fixity in favour of the instability inherent to liminality and the dynamism of interchange.

Dialogic Relationality

Leaning on Mikhail Bakhtin's classic theorizing of the dialogic, or heteroglossic, as seen in narrative discourse, the poetry reading can likewise be conceptualized as a field in which "[l]anguage—like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives—is never unitary. [...] Literary language—both spoken and written [...is] heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system, that is, in the forms that carry its meanings" ("Discourse in the Novel" 288). In other words, the poetry reading as event and series is understood as a literary form which exists in relation to (and even due to) the performance of both literary and extra-poetic language. The language of a single poem, poet, or event in relation to other poems, poets, and if relevant, to other events from the larger reading series is, in turn, never monologic, but always in conversation with, informed by, and in dynamic exchange with one another. "Everything means,

is understood, as part of a greater whole" (426), Bakhtin writes, and so, phrased in layman's terms, everything affects everything. In a sense, dialogic relationality is a tautology that doubles down on the interactive and interconnected relationality of the literary event, but as contracted into literary and linguistic terms. That is, there is a constant interaction between the collective mélange of words, syntax, grammatical and affective contexts of meaning as they exist within the containers of literary works and spill over into productive exegetic exchange with adjacent embodiments of language. An understanding of all iterations of literature and language—whether proffered as formalized in performance or as marginal introductory remarks, impromptu conversation, and overheard fragments of verbal exchange—as being in dialogic relationality towards one another at a poetry reading is a fundament of the curatorial in event-based terms. As far as the oral performance of literature embodies a key characteristic of the existence of the poetry reading as form, different texts and linguistic forms must enter into dialogue with another in the project of creating a new whole called the literary event. The curatorial field of the literary event is antithetical to the unique text, the self-contained expression, the essentialized grammatical construct, but is rather always in relational flux with regards to the infinite multitude of expansive literary and linguistic contexts constantly participating in the shaping of that event.

Any literary event is by default a dialogically relational one. It is impossible to imagine a poetry reading that is not in some way instigating an exchange through adjacency and coexistence—what von Bismarck calls "curatorial juxtaposition" (*The Curatorial Condition* 17)—between the various works of a single poet performing a sequence of poems, between the consecutive sets of multiple performing poets, and even the presence of host, audience members and the possible extra-poetic commentaries they could be adding to the oral collage of the event. On the larger level of the series, a dialogic relationality also exists between different events across time, especially as events cohere within the umbrella project of a community of practice or reproduces itself as a multi-part unit in the archive. It is thus less about the presence of dialogic relationality or the lack thereof, and more about the degree to which it influences and guides the experience of participating in a literary event, whether as performer or attendee. In an open curatorial event, intentional dialogism is often easier to ignore as the event offers free rein to performers; nonetheless, unintentional dialogism will still occur. At a framed, self, or deep curatorial event, the presence of self-consciously dialogic relationality is heightened due to degrees of intentional framing, structuring, pairing, ordering, and interweaving of poets and their performative work. The omnipresence of dialogic relationality at literary events implies that all of my dissertation chapters and case studies engage with it at least in passing. In Chapter 2, I discuss dialogic relationality in terms of the Sir George Williams poetry series and how Nichol and Kearns mobilize it to amplify audience attention. In Chapter 3, I question the form of the open mic's ability to resist dialogic relationality at the Véhicule Art Inc. marathon readings. In Chapter 4, I trace Kaie Kellough's personal dialogic journey through various performances across the two decade chronology of the Words and Music Show. And in Chapter 5, I posit Deep Curation as a deliberately dialogic curatorial mode, research creation project, and series of events.

Institutional Relationality

"What is art?" is a mostly unanswerable question or one that is consistent only in its ability to change and defer any illusion of stable meaning. The so-called institutional theory of art, often represented by Arthur C. Danto and George Dickie, grapples with this question, especially as it refers to art that presses back against traditional forms and opens to modes of found and conceptual art from the 1960s onwards. In an almost contradictory twist, Danto places these recent and

contemporary developments in the visual arts—developments that deliberately break away from tradition—in relation to tradition, to that which came before and has often already been historically validated and canonized. In other words, he argues that temporally "the history of art has evolved to a point where it was now possible for such [new forms of art] work to exist" (*Unnatural Wonders* 12). The new is therefore predicated on the past and refers back exactly by virtue of verging off while looking forward. A durational relationality is embedded into the institutional as the passing of time and temporal procedures of validation exist in a chronology of novelty that pushes back against tradition even as it exists in constant relation to it. This further implies that what is new relies on an infrastructure of ratification—including multiple and even contradictory institutions, their spaces, and spokespeople—to bring new work into the public view while offering it the stamp of approval by defining it as art. Even while one might actively want to resist this language of access and exclusion, especially as based on systems of lineage, power, and position, one might bear in mind the fact that the institutions in question are in constant flux themselves and not necessarily a static, singular, or retrograde locus that function as the ordering principle of the arts. Iris Dressler acknowledges, for example, that "it is important instead [for institutions] to generate decentral practices, that is, temporary, varying webs of relations that are constantly in need of reconstitution, allow for dalliances in other realms" ("On Limits and Potentials of Institutional Practices" 46). Similarly understood by Elizabeth Povinelli, infrastructures and institutions are inherently mobile structures that are constantly shaping and reshaping themselves, as well as the conditions that they activate in the process ("Aesthetic Analytics #2" lecture). An even more significant rearticulation of the institutional is provided with Nina Möntmann's evocative concept of the "relational institution" ("How to Belong" 55). Channeling philosopher Charles Taylor who understands institutions as places where the public get to belong to a larger social unit, she explains that "progressive institutional practices [...] give space for the social imaginary of new communities. These new communities question the national, religious, or ethnic frame and [...] replace unitary and essentialist models of a community" (56) in favour of inclusive practices that continuously interrogate what an institution can and cannot do, achieve, or aspire to. Communities, scenes, their spaces, structures, and individual players are constantly being made and unmade, and yet still have the ability to ground themselves, however temporarily and informally, as the center which supports a particular new creative development and offers it the symbolic institutional backing to designate itself as art.

Shifting the focus from the visual arts field back to the performance of poetry, one can similarly suggest that institutions, ranging from universities, publishing houses, journals, reading series, and their official and/or ad hoc communities of practice, all work to place poetry as a constantly new and growing field in relation to past traditions and to define it as part of the grand scheme called Literature—that is, in Smaro Kamboureli's words, the "triangulation of culture, literature, and the nation-state" (*Shifting the Ground* 1). Thinking of the literary event both in terms of the individual reading and the larger series, then, embodies it by a default engagement with an institution of some ilk—whether a university with its official apparatus of funding, pedagogical framing, and prestige, an informal local bar that centers a public-facing community of writers and readers, or even an individual's home loft that functions as a private locus for a handful of likeminded writers to hold space. Due to the economics of literary infrastructure at large—a handful of funding bodies, like the Canada Council for the Arts, or institutions with private money, like the Griffin Trust, and an overwhelming majority of underfunded or unfunded initiatives that run on volunteer labour—what constitutes an institution in literary terms can fall flat. However minimally an institution might be defined, though, an institutional relationality in a more

abstracted, conceptual sense affects the literary marketplace and enters into a relational exchange with the literary event and/or reading series, shaping affordances of those events in the process. Differently phrased, the curatorial field of a reading series can be productively affected, guided, and shaped by engaging with an institutional relationality that offers both concrete and conceptual cues for its curation, even as that institution might be a temporary, transmogrifying, informal structure recognized only by the people that form part of its close community. It is perhaps the institutional relationality, and not the institution itself, then, that allows literary scenes to create "new communities," in Möntmann's terms. In fact, it is often the smallest, least official, small press culture literary institution, completely lacking in infrastructure, that may add or withhold financial and locational aid, audiences of sophisticated individuals and their communities (however differently these might be defined over time or by the community articulating itself around a certain series of events), and ideological signifiers of belonging, merit, novelty, and/or canonicity. In Chapter 2, I will delve further into institutional relationality, using the Sir George Williams poetry series as a university-run case study to explore its effects on creating a curatorial frame, while in Chapter 5, I will apply it in practice in the recent administration and curation of a Deep Curation poetry performance entitled *We've Weave*, forming part of my personal archive of curatorial experiments.

Spatial Relationality

"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged," (Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* 7). In many ways, Brook's statement rings true, for the location of a poetry reading as a literary event can reasonably adapt itself to almost any space that fulfils foundational requirements, offering an illuminated spot for a poet to read, adequate audience room to sit or stand, and a signal-to-noise ratio that allows for performed poetry to be heard or engaged with at the desired frequency. As the space in which a literary event takes place is imperative for its ability to exist at all, almost any space, in- or outdoors—or even digital space, as has recently often been the case with the prevalence of Zoom, CrowdCast, Facebook or Instagram Live events since the onset of COVID-19—can create the conditions for the oral sharing of literature. Provocatively articulated by Boris Groys, "the work of art is sick, helpless; in order to see it, viewers must be brought to it as visitors are brought to a bed-ridden patient by hospital staff" ("Politics of Installation" no pag.). Writers, curators, and audience members are brought into the venue of display or performance, engaging relationally with an artwork by virtue of being present in a particular space and then interacting, intentionally or not, with its spatial constraints and adaptabilities. As Mary Anne Staniszewski writes, activating these spatial constraints and adaptabilities as dynamic vectors of exchange, an artwork "never stands alone; it is always an element within [...] staged installation conventions" (*The Power of Display* xxi). Each venue, and the way its layout is designed, creates a set of affordances that enter into relation with the act of performing a literary work in public or with the literary work itself. Some examples of archetypal venues for literary presentation might include: a university hall or classroom with a podium and rows of seats; a bar with a stage, microphone, and spotlight, and bistro tables placed in relation to a point of sale for refreshments; or a bookstore that places armchairs for authors in a clearing between shelves with standing room for the audience. These spatial variations must invariably affect the meaning of performed literature by way of affecting the manner in which oral poetry can be presented, received, and perceived.

In these architectonic terms, poetry readings embody an element of site-specificity. Poets are invited into a very precise locus of performance when they share work according to the parameters of a given venue. This is especially true when an ongoing series develops a relationship with a particular venue, implying that performing at a series reflects in the act of performing in a predefined place with its own spatial rules of engagement as a continuation of past usage or a deliberate resistance to and restructuring of it. This locational predictability implies "an existing, stable (perhaps historically embedded) entity to which artists [a]re invited to respond," to apply Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty's definition of site-specificity (*Locating the Producers* 3). Due to the often uniform nature of a reading series' space, as well as the fact that poets commonly do not shape their reading to accommodate the space in which they are performing—adopting the framing conditions of the venue as the default and unquestionable locus of the event instead—a contradictory tension occurs that models a reading series' space as a fairly stable and static site, on the one hand, and as an integral component to serious analysis of the literary event's structural formation, on the other.[10] So while the spatial formation of a reading does not intentionally need to be engaging dynamically with the contents of that event—in other words, any reading can be input into a given venue without the space or the literature modifying itself site-specifically—this need not imply that the static location does not play an active role in the shaping of the literary event that takes place in it. As Beatrice von Bismarck asserts, "to the extent that vitrines, plinths, or partition walls share their status with exhibits and performers, they, too, are subject to relationally flexible attributions of functions" (*The Curatorial Condition* 15). Similarly, Doreen Massey articulates place in less infrastructural and more abstract terms as "a constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus [...that] is extroverted [...and] includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local" ("A Global Sense of Place" 315-323). What both citations have in common is an understanding that the construction of a physical site is in a constant dialogue of spatial relationality with the poetry presented, shaping how that poetry can be performed and the perception of how it is received, even as neither the space nor the poetry need to physically reconfigure themselves—or only minimally so—to accommodate the performance. The curatorial in relational terms thus becomes "a space of negotiation [...] a space that can be configured socially, temporally, and discursively" (von Bismarck, "In the Space of the Curatorial" 42). In Chapter 3, I study the effects of spatial relationality with a consideration of the walls of the Véhicule Art Inc.'s building as mythologized in the venue's literary curation. In Chapter 5, I also explore the transformative affordances of different venues in the production and performance of the same Deep Curation poetry event.

Durational Relationality

Considering the literary event, time can be understand as both a moment or an ongoing procedure: "Various time-based aspects, including forms of progression and development, timing and dynamics, significantly impact the production, presentation, and reception" of creative work (Frank, Meyer-Krahmer Schafaff, von Bismarck, Weski, *Timing* 8). That is, literature is always and by default situated in relation to time by its production and then performance in the conceptual framework of a particular historical moment, but also the duration of that process of production and performance. That is, the "auditory field" of the literary event, to cite Don Ihde, has sound always moving through time in its creation towards duration (*Listening and Voice*). Sound moves

[10] This statement excludes more experimental approaches to the poetry reading that would take a more adventurous and inclusive stance in relation to how space engages with the literature performed.

through and fills the soundscape of a poetry reading as a dynamic progression of time, embodying both chronological and durational constructs. Time as duration correlates it to technological media, however, as the live event can be recorded and tracked as a temporal archival artifact. The ephemerality of the literary event as situated in a given moment in time is gifted longevity through the mediation of technology, recording practices, and the archive. So while the live event exists in historical time and is characterized by rhythms of scheduling, start and end times, processes of production, and measurable temporal continuities of literature in performance—what Beatrice von Bismarck calls the "specific temporality" of "public curatorial coming-together" (*The Curatorial Condition* 16)—it is also reproduced in the archive as a sonic artifact. This remediation instigates its own relationship to time, what Wolfgang Ernst has described as "sonicity" or the intersection "where time and technology meet" (*Sonic Time Machines* 21). This sonicity generates the imaginary possibility of reliving the past through the aural experience of proximity by means of the recording. Jason Camlot further explains how the audio archive, and the digital archive in particular, "is not to be understood as a preservation medium, but as a circulation and transformation medium that opens texts and material artifacts to new contexts, new interpretations, and new uses, including transformations of our conception of historical research itself" (*Phonopoetics* 175). Gaining access to historical poetry readings across time, even as audio artifacts themselves function durationally in networks that simultaneously exist chronologically and in nonlinear constellations with themselves, opens new avenues for literary analysis, especially as the archive becomes grounded in the contemporary moment, overlaying the past relationally with the present.

Discussing visual artworks that engage temporality, Adrian Heathfield coins the evocative *durational aesthetics* to address the non-linear "confusion of temporal distinctions—between past, present, and future—drawing the spectator into the thick braid of paradoxical times" ("Durational Aesthetics" 142). Experiential, affective time can warp any illusion of linearity. The durational dimension of time—whether live or archivally mediated—relates to the formation of the literary event and its existence as a time-based performance with a beginning and an end point, yes, but also an ongoing temporal process, and an interrelated, non-chronological folding of time across time. The scope of time passing at a literary event or larger reading series—whether short, concise, and consecutive readings at an open mic, the durational challenge of hours of ongoing readings at a marathon event, the carefully crafted set of a single author reading for a substantial period of time as the representation of their literary career, or the interlocking events as they unfold over years of a series' existence—manifests a set of temporal affordances within the creation of its curatorial field. Beyond the timespan of such demarcated, linear time, however, a set within an event, an individual event, or the collective temporal field of a reading series, can warp durationally to enter into relational dialogue, influence, and exchange according to a mobile network of coexistent, nonlinear temporality, also as continuing outside the scope of the literary event, or reading series, itself. "Time, then, as plenitude: heterogenous, informal, multidimensional, and multifaceted" (Heathfield, 143). In Chapter 3, I engage with durational relationality in passing, considering the protracted open mic marathon readings hosted at Véhicule Art Inc. In Chapter 4, I linger on temporal continuity to discuss a few of Kaie Kellough's seventeen interconnecting appearances at the Words and Music Show across the timespan of two decades. In Chapter 5, what counts as time and duration unravels. Time and duration are interwoven into a web of process and product, as a single Deep Curation event takes a month at an artist's residency to produce, while simultaneously manifesting the chronology of the series' larger trajectory of curatorial

experiments, and formulating itself during more than one temporally unfolding, public-facing performance.

Conclusion

In theorizing curatorial vocabulary for the investigation of literary events, I have, on the one hand, had to come to terms with the originality of my project and the lack of related scholarship to engage with, implying that my schematization of curatorial modes and relationalities forges new, interdisciplinary ground for perceiving the literary event in curatorial terms. On the other hand, I repeatedly had to note how nebulous my attempted distinctions can be. While believing that this language will be conducive to the articulation of robust and nuanced scholarship in a growing field of studies circling the literary event, I must likewise, to a degree, acknowledge a failed schematization as the outline of one curatorial mode almost by definition rubs up against and overlaps with another according to the affordances of different curatorial relationalities. Framed curation can, for example, always be perforated by elements of chance and improvisation, while open curation itself adopts a frame of framelessness. Self-curation can be embedded within a framed, open, or deep curated series, and deep curation as a curatorial mode can be framed, open, or self-curated in turn. Constellations of curatorial modes thus exist equally as relations are themselves rhizomic non-structures that flicker in and out of critical discernibility. Nonetheless, the symbolic delimitation of critical language—both in terms of curatorial modes and relationalities—allows for the grounding of a new way of approaching the live event and literary audio archives, and the terms laid out in this chapter may be refined and applied to any number of other archives of literary events and reading series. The foundational status of these terms thus welcome aspirational dialogue with other scholars and their preferred methodologies to develop them beyond the scope of my ways of thinking and my research. While the following chapters will trace these terms along the lines of the Sir George Williams poetry series, Véhicule Art Inc., the Words and Music Show, and my personal research creation project called Deep Curation, these case studies are by no means the definitive control groups for this research as the critical language lends itself to further exploration and use.

Chapter 2—The Framed Curatorial Mode at the Sir George Williams Poetry Series: Institutional and Dialogic Relationalities

This chapter will focus on the Sir George Williams Poetry Series (hereafter referred to as the Poetry Series) that took place between 1966 and 1974 at Montreal's Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) as a case study for an investigation into a reading series that modeled a clearly articulated curatorial mandate—or what I call, a framed curatorial mode. As outlined at more length in Chapter 1, framed curation always remains a utopian project, as seen, in Derrida's terms, through the work or *ergon* becoming one with the frame or *parergon,* while simultaneously never embodying the same, perfectly overlapping sets (*The Truth In Painting*). There is thus an inherent lack or tension between the series' formal intention and its own variability in practice. In terms of the Poetry Series, pragmatic elements of curating were orderly and supported both by university resources and the Canada Council for the Arts. A committee of professors and writers-in-residence presided to make curatorial decisions and to invite authors to the series, maintaining a fixed reading format that featured one and at most two poets per night for forty-five minutes to two-hour-long sets. The committee also selected the featured poets, often favouring poets with long literary careers who had made valid and measurable contributions to North American literary development. The formality and even predictability of the readings' format over the course of just short of a decade arguably attest to the application of framed curation that implicitly outlined the expectations of how a poetry reading should be defined. How the poets performed and which poems were included in their sets were not elements dictated verbatim by the series curators; nonetheless, the implicit expectations of the series served as a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts. By packaging and presenting events in similar terms to the public—and by inviting poets who, for the most part, would almost by default follow the conventions of the series—the Poetry Series and its curators presumed an unarticulated ethos of the kind of events that they supported. This framing discourse, however indirect and undirected, then preceded invited poets as they took the stage and continued to conform to the series' apparent goals: lengthy sets during which poets performed their careers and affirmed their contributions to literature, whether Canadian or American. By listening first to an aggregate of archival audio recordings from the Poetry Series as a whole, I will argue that an institutional relationality engages with the curatorial framing of these poetry readings, one that works to self-define the series as a prestigious space that channels values of literary tradition and canonicity. Then I will listen more specifically to one event featuring bpNichol and Lionel Kearns that took place on 22 November 1968—an event that I consider to be more adjacent than central to the institutional values framing the series as a whole; during this event, Nichol and Kearns interlock their performance, switching back and forth between voices in an intentionally experimental curatorial gesture. By tracing the inherent exchange underlying the Poetry Series with its frequent pairing of poets for a shared event, I emphasize a dialogic relationality already at work throughout the series, but more deliberately harnessed in Nichol and Kearns' joint performance. Designed to amplify audience listening and attention, I analyze this reading as a microcosm of the Poetry Series—a reading framed by its own unique structure, but also reflecting the larger series as a space for literary dissemination bracketed by self-enclosed narratives, goals, and outcomes.

"the Federal Minister of Poetry": An Overview of the Sir George Williams Poetry Series

Taken under the wing of the SpokenWeb research network, the Poetry Series has been preserved, digitized, archived, and studied at least since "the University Archives received a grant in 2010 to

have them digitized and stored as WAV files on archival quality compact discs" (Camlot and Mitchell, "The Poetry Series," no pag.). These digitized recordings were subsequently made available as open access, streamable files and transcripts on the SpokenWeb website for recreational listening, and scholarly and pedagogical purposes. The series has also been purposefully studied and activated through the Approaching the Poetry Series mini-conference, organized by Jason Camlot and Darren Wershler in April 2013, prompting researchers to engage directly with the primary audio materials. Some of the research outputs from this conference were then compiled as a special issue of the online journal *Amodern*, offering sustained analyses of the reading series from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Additionally, other Performing the SpokenWeb Archive sessions were organized in 2012 and 2019, inviting poets—such as George Bowering, David McFadden, Daphne Marlatt, and Robert Hogg—poets who had originally read at the Poetry Series, to now publicly listen to and engage retroactively with their voices from the past. At this same time, a round of oral history interviews were conducted with these poets in order to record individual histories associated with the series. More recently, Katherine McLeod has hosted a similar series of intimate Ghost Reading events, 2018-2019, publicly sharing archival audio on the same date as a particular historical performance, but with the distance of fifty years. Aside from these concerted efforts to keep the Poetry Series alive, individual scholars have continuously been drawn to the rich audio archive that contains some of the most exceptional mid-twentieth century poets and performers from both Canada and the U.S. As a result, there is a budding body of scholarship surrounding this reading series—a much more robust catalogue of essays and conference papers than, for example, the current isolated studies available on the Véhicule Art Inc. reading series, the dearth of analysis based on the Words and Music Show (and even on Kaie Kellough's individual writing and performance), or the self-referential documentation and writing that I create myself surrounding my Deep Curation project. The act of articulating a narrative of the Poetry Series from a curatorial perspective, and more than fifty years after the fact, is thus indebted to the endeavors of previous researchers who have conducted oral history interviews with curators and performers from the series, and documented, studied, and interpreted the series as relevant traces of past literary history and community.

Some of these scholars have already proposed strong arguments to theorize guiding principles based on a mid-twentieth century nationalist narrative of literary development in Canada that informed the general curation of the Poetry Series, both practically and ideologically. Cameron Anstee, for example, follows the development of Canada's central arts' funding body, the Canada Council for the Arts, as it emerged from the Massey Commission in the mid-1950s, "a foundational [conference and subsequent] document in the forging of the nationalist links between the Canadian Government and the production of art in Canada" ("Setting Widespread Precedent" no pag.). Anstee traces the early Canada Council's non-familiarity with the notion of the poetry reading as a mode of literary dissemination, initially funding only a few isolated reading series under the umbrella rubric of "Opera, Theatre, Ballet, etc."; in time, this stance developed into a robust literary funding program that supported the Poetry Series throughout the duration of its existence, among many other series nationwide (and into the present). Arguably, the role of Canada Council funding was formative to the degree that it legitimized the idea of Canadian Literature at a pivotal historical moment: "Canadian Literature emerges in the 1960s and 1970s as a visible cultural formation alongside its establishment as a viable academic discipline. The Canada Council was central to both of these processes, supporting artistic and scholarly work" (Anstee, no pag.). Interestingly, the early Canada Council was amenable to their funding being applied to the promotion of Canadian and American writers equally, allowing for vibrant dialogue between

geographically disparate schools of poetic practice, but also the ability to compare, contrast, and evaluate national literatures in relation to one another. This funding model shifted towards the 1970s, however, to, what Pauline Butling has called, a "centripetal, homogenizing" funding scheme that insisted on only nurturing Canadian writers as a focused project of literary nation-building in competition with its neighbour to the south and still persists with this project into the present (*Writing In Our Time* 41).

Significantly, the Canada Council's stance towards Canadian and American exchange is mirrored or advanced in the Poetry Series' curating choices. Jason Camlot writes that "[o]rganizing committee member Howard Fink has remarked that Canadian and American poets were selected and sometimes paired up in the Poetry Series so that they could be considered in relation to each other, in part because it felt that 'the only way Canadian literature was going to be properly responded to, understood, and evaluated was if comparisons were made with American' literature" ("The Sound of Canadian Modernisms" 31). A competitive spirit thus reigned in the process of trying to practice and theorize a foundational understanding of what it meant for literature to be *Canadian* and therefore distinct from its counterpart in the U.S.[11] From the outset and throughout the run of the Poetry Series, an almost equal number of Canadian and American poets were hosted—with 25 poets from the U.S. in contrast to 33 from Canada, one from the U.K. and one from Argentina, and occasional ambiguity about a poet's dual status as both Canadian and American—suggesting an ambivalent stance of welcoming national exchange and creative stimulation in equal measure as using American counterparts as comparative proof of Canadian poets' maturity in relation to the perception of the U.S.'s longer literary tradition. The partial goal of Canadian literary celebration is made obvious in the Poetry Series' documentary audio recordings with hosts' introductory commentary often steering the audience to acknowledge the great impact that a poet had on the construction of a Canadian literary domain. At Earle Birney's performance on 23 February 1968, for example, he is introduced by George Bowering as "the Dean of Canadian Poetry, [...] as the Federal Minister of Poetry, and at times he has been the semi-official courier of Canadian poetry around the world" (Bowering at Birney Reading 1968, 00:00:23). When Al Purdy is featured on 13 March 1970, he is likewise presented as "the most Canadian of all possible poets" (Bowering at Purdy Reading 1970, 00:00:08). Gregory Betts similarly notes about Gerry Gilbert's 15 January 1971 reading, "Gilbert makes the prophetic joke in the middle of his performance that '[w]e're reading Canadian History'—an aside that is significantly the only extemporaneous comment he makes during his entire eighty-eight-minute set" (*Finding Nothing* 324). Gilbert is aware of his own position within the literary canon by virtue of being interpolated into the Poetry Series' lineup of authors, and eventually, audio archive. These are only three among several similar statements that foreground national pride through literary dissemination.

Yet Camlot has argued for "two discernible phases of the series" ("The Sound of Canadian Modernisms" 39) with the first positing Canadian and American literature in opposition to each other and the second encouraging a creative and critical crosspollination between them: "The first phase, during which contrast and difference are pursued in the programming selection, delivered a less focussed presentation of poetic diversity than the second. When George Bowering joined the Poetry Series committee and took a stronger hand in initiating programming of his own, the purpose of the series shifted [...] to demonstrating and modelling the possibility of a new kind of

[11] This is, of course, roughly the same time that Margaret Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* was written and first published in 1972, a reductive study that attempts to delimit the exact themes and characteristics that constitute Canadian Literature in contrast to all other literatures.

Canadian avant-garde" (39). The switch from the first to the second phase thus takes place, for Camlot, during and following George Bowering's tenure as writer-in-residence at Sir George Williams, and then his stint as short-term yet full-time faculty member, 1967-1971. During this second half of the series, Bowering strove, as curating committee member, "to bring the lessons he and his peers had learned from exposure to certain late American modernists while in Vancouver in the 1960s [...] further east than it had yet travelled" (Camlot, 46). His personal experience as a student of Warren Tallman at the University of British Columbia, attending readings and meeting American poets associated with the San Francisco School, the New York School of Poets, Beat Poets, and Black Mountain Poets convinced him of the urgency of sharing these contemporary stimuli with the Canadian east coast scene. Gregory Betts goes so far as to argue that Bowering mobilizes the scene he was exposed to and formed a part of as a model for the curation he was attempting at the Poetry Series. After all, twenty-one of the series' readers, almost one third of the entire roster, were biographically connected to Vancouver. He also calculates that "four of seven of the featured poets in the VPC [the iconic 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference] also performed at the SGWU reading series [Poetry Series]" (*Finding Nothing* 307). These significant overlaps in scenes and event billing leads Betts to suggest that "it is fair to characterize the SGWU reading series as the first re-presentation of the Vancouver literary community—or what George Bowering calls the 'Vancouver Renaissance' in his introduction to Lionel Kearns in 1968" ("We Stopped At Nothing" no pag.). Betts continues: "The series was organized and hosted by a committee of SGWU English Department professors, two of whom had previously been faculty members at the University of British Columbia. These were George Bowering—in fact, one of the founding editors of *Tish*—and Roy Kiyooka, a collagist and fixture in Vancouver's downtown scene. [...] The space, place, and debates of Vancouver consequently dominated the planning and organization of the series" (no pag.). This is an important angle in revising the binary narrative of the Poetry Series' Canadian/American curation—by foregrounding Vancouver-based poets who had similar influences as Bowering through foundational contact with American poets and their modes of poetic thinking, Bowering is able to expose the Montreal poetry scene to American poetics, not only by inviting the American poets themselves, but also by way of the Canadian West Coast. Nationalist tension is thus both sustained and assimilated as American influence is filtered through poets who have already absorbed that influence into their supposedly Canadian poetic practice.[12]

As a curatorial mandate for a reading series, this structuring narrative of literary nation-building, nationalist rivalry, and/or transnationalist creative and critical exchange is a strong one, heavy-handed even, although it is one also amply substantiated by the archival documentary recordings from the series, retroactive oral history interviews with the series curators and participants, and an overarching understanding of the ethos of the time. Exemplifying a framed curatorial mode, then, the Poetry Series is braced by underlying dominant concerns that are simultaneously quite defined and very expansive in scope, allowing for a diversity of writers to

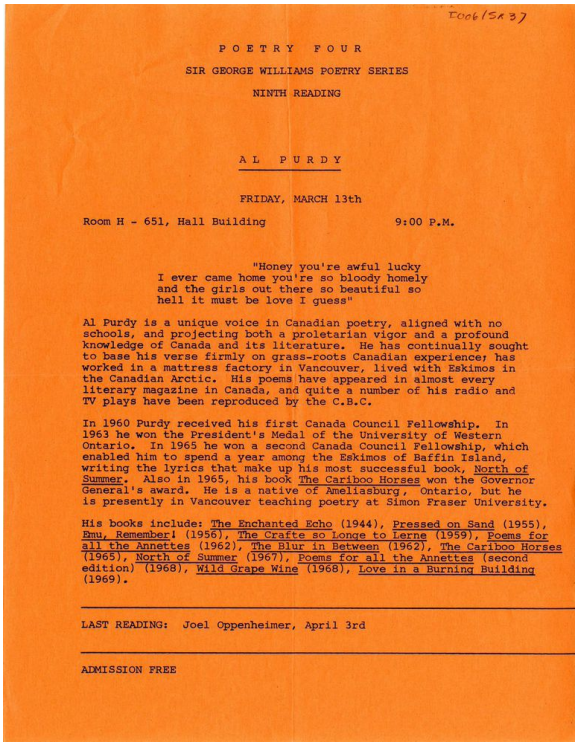
[12] Betts has since nuanced his argument in *Finding Nothing, Being a Treatise on Absence, Neglect, How the Avant-Garde Learned to See Vancouver* to suggest that the narrative of Vancouver—and by way of Vancouver, the rest of Canada—being derelict creatively before the arrival of American influence is a "colonial mentality" (7), one which does not credit "earlier or concurrent avant-gardisms in Canada" (15). This revision places the Vancouver cohort of performers at the Poetry Series in a geographic tradition of literary experiment in relation to itself, while not negating their generational influence by the U.S.-based poets either. If anything, Betts' revision strengthens my argument of an assimilation and development of American-influenced poetics by way of the Canadian west towards the east coast scene.

perform under its rubric while actualizing the project at the same time. Pauline Butling has written about the intriguing mix of literary nation-building coinciding with Modernist literary trends in mid-twentieth century Canada, implying an intersection of tradition and experiment also visible in the Poetry Series' billing (*Writing In Our Time* 42). While the series curators were maintaining a rhetoric of Canadian literary excellence in contrast and relation to the U.S., invited poets ranged widely in their hands-on approaches to poetry in practice and were not instructed to portray themselves and their work in a certain way or to create a determinate or formulaic reading set. To the contrary, poets retained curatorial agency over their presentations, while simultaneously having been selected by the curators to further the narrative that the series aimed to project. The strategic curation of the series towards certain goals could, and did, still result in diverse billing and a wide exhibit of different poetic and performance approaches.

As previously mentioned, the Poetry Series ran from 1966 to 1974 at the then Sir George Williams University, billing readings every two to three weeks that primarily took place in Room H-110, a large lecture hall in the newly renovated Hall Building in downtown Montreal. Readings were formalized to start at 9 p.m. and to run for approximately sixty to ninety minutes in sets of occasionally one and sometimes two poets per event. As a whole, the Poetry Series modeled a clear example of what Lesley Wheeler calls "the academic poetry reading": "Poetry readings based in these spaces partake of the conventions of academic lectures; the poet stands on a stage and speaks from behind a podium to rows of quietly seated students, faculty, and community members. Generally these writers read from books and manuscripts, proffering occasional glosses or background information on the poems in a more extemporaneous manner" (*Voicing American Poetry* 134-135). Not an uncommon reading format, its standardization and even predictability hint at a series that had delimited its expectations for the events promoted under its banner. While poets retained curatorial agency over their sets—not receiving detailed instructions as to what or how to perform—the standard structure of events by default slotted readers into the tradition or ritual, so to speak, of the series itself. This is attested to by the fifty-four archived event recordings that include sixty-seven recorded poets and that all follow approximately the same reading format and temporal duration.[13] Readings were framed with introductions by one of the series curators, someone perceived as knowledgeable and qualified to present the reader's accolades and to contextualize their body of work. Occasionally, the introducer's expertise is underscored by being introduced themselves, as in the case of Roy Kiyooka introducing Louis Dudek who in turn introduces Henry Beissel and Mike Gnarowski who are actually the two featured readers. Readings were further informed by what George Bowering jocularly refers to as "propaganda sheets" (Bowering, Interview, 12 October 2012)—typed up information folios circulated prior to events to provide context to those wishing to attend. These sheets attest to a proactive curatorial attitude that foregrounded its own organizational savvy—time was taken to compile relevant biographical and aesthetic details about a given author, typed up, copied, and circulated. These sheets also embody a clear intention on the part of the series organizers to curate information that they would like their audiences to have at their disposal. This information is often based on facts that demonstrate an author's status as an established personage. In Image 1, for example, one can see Al Purdy's lineup of awards, including numerous Canada Council Fellowships, the President's

[13] Allen Ginsberg's curious 7 November 1969 reading that included a prolonged introductory performance by Hare Krishna singers is a notable exception. While 16:38 minutes of chanting are included in the recording, there is a cut in the tape suggesting that the recordist decided not to include the entirety of this introduction; the event transcript reads "Cut/edit made in tape [...] Unknown amount of time elapsed." Even without the excised chanting, the performance exceeds two hours.

Medal of the University of Western Ontario, and the Governor General's Award, as well as a substantial list of eleven published poetry collection titles. The biography is constructed as a clear narrative of institutionally mandated literary excellence.



POETRY FOUR

SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS POETRY SERIES

NINTH READING

AL PURDY

FRIDAY, MARCH 13th

Room H - 651, Hall Building 9:00 P.M.

"Honey you're awful lucky
I ever came home you're so bloody homely
and the girls out there so beautiful so
hell it must be love I guess"

Al Purdy is a unique voice in Canadian poetry, aligned with no schools, and projecting both a proletarian vigor and a profound knowledge of Canada and its literature. He has continually sought to base his verse firmly on grass-roots Canadian experience; has worked in a mattress factory in Vancouver, lived with Eskimos in the Canadian Arctic. His poems have appeared in almost every literary magazine in Canada, and quite a number of his radio and TV plays have been reproduced by the C.B.C.

In 1960 Purdy received his first Canada Council Fellowship. In 1963 he won the President's Medal of the University of Western Ontario. In 1965 he won a second Canada Council Fellowship, which enabled him to spend a year among the Eskimos of Baffin Island, writing the lyrics that make up his most successful book, North of Summer. Also in 1965, his book The Cariboo Horses won the Governor General's award. He is a native of Amelisburg, Ontario, but he is presently in Vancouver teaching poetry at Simon Fraser University.

His books include: The Enchanted Echo (1944), Pressed on Sand (1955), Emu, Remember! (1956), The Crafte so Longe to Lerne (1959), Poems for all the Annettes (1962), The Blur in Between (1962), The Cariboo Horses (1965), North of Summer (1967), Poems for all the Annettes (second edition) (1968), Wild Grape Wine (1968), Love in a Burning Building (1969).

LAST READING: Joel Oppenheimer, April 3rd

ADMISSION FREE

Image 3: Propaganda sheet circulated prior to Al Purdy's performance on 13 March 1970. Courtesy of archival research conducted by Lee Hannigan and Christine Mitchell.

Interestingly, an experimental performer like Jackson Mac Low receives a more explanatory information sheet, catering to elucidate a less traditional mode of poetic production and perhaps even to prepare the audience for an unusual event. The opening reads: "JACKSON MAC LOW is both a poet and a playwright. His poems are highly experimental, poems in which the unit is the 'event' rather than the foot, syllable, stress, or cadence, and poems which are composed by chance operations, and which incorporate silences, each having the duration of any word, and a degree of indeterminacy in performance" (Propaganda Sheet from Mac Low's Reading 1971, courtesy of archival research conducted by Lee Hannigan and Christine Mitchell). Followed by some biographical facts, such as place of birth, staged plays, and publications, the sheet concludes with a description of what to expect from the night's entertainment: "His reading will involve a large amount of electronic equipment, various performers, elements of change, and a film made by Shirley Clare of a reading by Voznesensky, modified by Mac Low on tape, and accompanied by a live performance of the same poem during the reading here." Less focused on institutional markers of prestige such as awards and recognitions, Mac Low's information sheet is more deeply invested in his actual practice, and arguably better researched than Purdy's list of accomplishments in terms of explaining Mac Low's unique mode of production and technologically-supported, collective performance. It is almost humorous to imagine a similar description of Purdy's appearance as a single gesture of standing before a crowd and grandstanding in a booming voice—his performance

is predicated on an oral reproduction of previously published print-based texts and his information sheet reflects that literary attitude. In the case of both authors, however, the Poetry Series' curators attempted to educate their projected audience and to assure them in writing of the value of attending the event.

To complement the Poetry Series' institutional setting and its academic poetry reading format, and to augment the curatorial project of canonicity and literary value, invited poets were generously remunerated (within the terms of the historical moment) and supported with celebratory hospitality and camaraderie as befitted the prestige of a tertiary hosting institution. Camlot reports:

> Poets were promised an honorarium (usually of $100) plus travel, accommodation at the Ritz Carleton Hotel, and meals. A series committee representative would retrieve the visiting poet from the airport or train station and immediately bring him or her to the Ritz Carleton Hotel bar for drinks. Cocktail hour would be followed by an elaborate dinner involving all committee members at a Chinese restaurant near the downtown reading venue. ("Robert Creeley In Transition" 224)

The lineup of poets fortunate to receive this opportunity to present their work at the Poetry Series were selected by invitation of an official-sounding committee of professors (Howard Fink, Stanton Hoffman, Roy Kiyooka, and Wynne Francis) and institutionally recognized writers-in-residence (Irving Layton and George Bowering). This implies that some curators were immersed in a canonical understanding of literary history and assumptions of merit that would withstand the passing of time, while other curators were more active in the then contemporary, hands-on production of new poetic works. The two-pronged accolades of tertiary erudition and creative expertise make for an arguably authoritative set of curators who are informed about the design of their curatorial choices. Camlot provides a succinct chronology of the curators involved with the series:

> Sponsored by "The Poetry Committee" of the Faculty of Arts, the SGWU English Department, and the Canada Council—and organized primarily by English professors Howard Fink and Stanton Hoffman, fine arts professor Roy Kiyooka (1966-70), and George Bowering (1967-71), with contributions at different times from Wynne Francis and Irving Layton (1966-67), among others—these readings ultimately involved more than 60 poets from across North America. ("The Sound of Canadian Modernisms" 30)

In an oral history interview conducted by Camlot with George Bowering on 12 October 2012, Camlot alludes to curating a reading series as being "like a full-time job" (Bowering, Interview, 12 October 2012). Bowering confirms the amount of work and the diversity of tasks, listing organizational duties such as "[i]nviting [the poets], and paying them, and putting them up and all that stuff, partying, and catering, and cars [...] It took a lot of our hours, and not just us, but other people as well. And so it was really important, and we weren't getting paid extra for it [laughs], right? It was, like, part of our—part of what we did, in addition."[14] Roy Kiyooka similarly

[14] It is telling to compare George Bowering's acknowledgement of the labour intensiveness of curating with Endre Farkas' denial that curating took place at all at Véhicule Art Inc.—see Chapter 3. Bowering's practical, organizational list of duties is a good example of *curating* and shows a commitment to running a

admits—during his introduction to the 27 January 1967 reading by Margaret Avison—that he "spent a considerable amount of time setting out what [...] to say this evening" (Kiyooka at Avison Reading 1967, 00:00:10). Considering that curators were not paid extra to be part of the organizational committee and that the duties were time-consuming, it is not clear whether the committee of curators truly met up *en masse* to debate the planning of a series of invited poets or not. The simple fact that a committee existed, however, shows a commitment to the idea of selecting readers according to a collective agreement about literature that was understood as deserving to present to the students, faculty, and public under the patronage of their series. Differently put, a committee dedicated to selecting readers for the series suggests a latent appreciation of the curatorial, of the ability to deliberately make choices that shape a forum of relational literary engagement, even if not understood in those exact terms at the time. Occasionally, more direct vocalizations of this curatorial premise provide framing for the thinking that contextualized and undergirded a consistent vision for the series. At the 18 November 1966 event, for example, featuring Gwendolyn MacEwen and Phyllis Webb—that is, an event during the first year of the series' existence and thus in its nascent phase—Roy Kiyooka expounds in his public introduction about how the committee made its decisions regarding which poets to invite:

> Now perhaps some of you are wondering what these readings are all about and how the choices made, I have here a slight commentary on that which I would like to read to you. Our answer to this is that we have not attempted to make the series an exhaustive coverage of any particular school or faction of poetry. Nor has our concern been an attempt to seek out the so-called, quote "great poets" unquote. Our choices have been made with the desire to present to you, hopefully, the possibilities of utterance that is more than parochial. In short, this is our attempt to sound just that diversity that so much characterizes the North American poetry scene. (Kiyooka at Webb Reading 1966, 00:00:00)

On the one hand, Kiyooka's statement admits to a certain degree of foresight on the part of the committee's curatorial decisions since his explanation had been formulated in writing prior to the event. Shifting from first person singular to plural, he further highlights consensus and relays information that had been collaboratively resolved upon. On the other hand, this resolution is predicated on diversity and a curatorial assumption of non-partisan literary selection suggestive of a less defined mandate for relevant materials chosen to be presented at the Poetry Series. There is a tension, then, between the series as framed in curatorial discourse and the resulting readings not being uniform and not consistently portraying as a self-declared "school" of poetry. On the contrary, the content of poetry presented varies greatly, as previously mentioned, ranging from the more traditional craftsman-like approach of Irving Layton to the Fluxus-inspired, technologically supported performance of Jackson Mac Low to the sound poetry experiments of bpNichol to the elegant lyrical genius of Gwendolyn MacEwen. Significantly, Kiyooka's claim that billing favours "utterance that is more than parochial" does suggest an exclusionary gesture in decision making. What counts as "parochial" could vary greatly, of course, but the statement harbours a vague preference for experiment—but experiment that has presumably been validated as important to the development of contemporary literature—and writing with an exciting, cosmopolitan edge that promises to broaden the horizons of those in attendance. Parochial could also suggest a certain publication profile, one that has made the poet's work available beyond their immediate locale

series that fulfills certain expectations of communication, hospitality, and framing commentary at the readings themselves.

through distribution in print, reviews, other invitations to appear outside of their hometown, and so on. One can think back to Camlot's assertion of two discernible phases of curation at the Poetry Series: "Eclecticism characterized the selections made in the first year of the series" (Camlot, "The Sound of Canadian Modernisms" 32). In contrast, the second phase, heralded in by George Bowering's tenure as curator, was "aesthetically, pedagogically, and polemically focussed [...] as a 'kind of avant-garde series'" (46-47). Notably, both of these phases are based, in different ways, on diversity and literary experimental ground-breaking. It is perhaps ironic, in retrospect, that despite Kiyooka's denial of literary fame being an overtly curatorial factor, the Poetry Series' lineup of readers across the span of almost a decade now exemplifies a catalogue of many of the "great poets" of its generation, including canonized and internationally renowned authors like Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, Margaret Atwood, among many others.

Famed and Framed: Institutional Curatorial Relationality at the Poetry Series

In league with the narrative of Canadian literary nation-building and nationalist rivalry with the U.S., there is, arguably, an institutional relationality playing itself out in the curatorial field of the Poetry Series. My statement can be interpreted in, at least, two ways. First and more literal in scope, the presentation of the series in a university building, curated by university professors and writers-in-residence, attended by students and faculty members, and funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, all presuppose a high level of institutional framing that subliminally reads as prestige, status, and tradition. Despite Kiyooka's insistence on not billing the "great poets" and Camlot's tracing of "eclecticism" in the series' curation, there is an equally prominent exclusionary gesture inherent to a series that relies so overtly on the spaces, infrastructure, community, and culture of a center for higher education. The intrinsic authority of the university, as an institution where expert knowledge is generated and shared, is also audible in the lengthy reading format, each event featuring one and at most two poets for hour-long sets or longer—this durational performance by default models the poets as experts of their own work. Not only are their bodies of poetic work substantial enough to fill an impressive amount of time, but the poets are also able to articulate themselves at length during extra-poetic commentary on their respective poetic practices. They are able to posture knowledgeability and mastery of their writing as creators, critics, and interpreters of their craft. As Caroline Bayard also writes more generally about the poetry scene in Montreal in relation to other parts of Canada, there was a rooted sense of respectability and tradition that dominated the 1960s: "While developments in Toronto and Vancouver almost exclusively reflected the activities of marginalized groups, their Montreal counterparts during the 1960s were not only well entrenched within their own intellectual culture but were also apt to be the ones who articulated its expectations, goals, and contradictions" (*The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec* 120). The exclusionary or prestigious edge, reflected both in Bayard's statement and in the Poetry Series archives, is particularly obvious when contrasted with Véhicule Art Inc.'s reading format for its marathon readings in the 1970s (as discussed in Chapter 3); these prolonged open readings allowed approximately thirty poets to read for ten minutes each, opening the floor to whoever was present and wanted to share work. Moreover, the same poets routinely read at consecutive events, implying perhaps an inclusionary, club-like status, but even more so a welcoming stance towards poets to continue sharing their work beyond a single dedicated appearance. This attitude is continued at the Words and Music Show in the 2000s with the deliberate invitation of recurring artists to develop their work in relation to the series over time. At the Poetry Series, in contrast, poets only performed once (with the exception of one or two poets, such as Robert Creeley who read both on 24 February 1967 and 1 January 1970, and Margaret Atwood who read both on 13

October 1967 and 18 October 1974). Poets were invited into the framing of the series' institutional prestige, usually deliberately travelled to Montreal for the event, and could not just decide to return on a whim; phrased in terms of an institutional metaphor, the Poetry Series is more overtly indebted to bureaucracy, to curating as organization and decision-making, and to an overarching deliberation about access—that is gatekeeping—than a reading series that follows an open curatorial mode.

Second (and stemming from the first interpretation, although more conceptual in scope), the institutional relationality present within the Poetry Series' curatorial field can be read in relation to the institutional theory of art. Imported from art history, this mode of thinking originated in response to visual art developments from the 1960s-1980s roughly, and hinges on the philosophical question of how to define art which moves beyond traditional, recognizable media of painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, and so on. This theory asks, for example, how one can identify experimental artworks, such as ready-mades, found art, and conceptual art, that are sometimes indistinguishable from a functional object that one could just as easily buy at the store as see in the gallery. Famously discussing Andy Warhol's 1964 work, *Brillo Box*—a sequence of identically reproduced commercial, brand name products exhibited in a prestigious gallery space—Arthur C. Danto suggests that "what in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo box is a certain theory of art" (*Beyond the Brillo Box* 180). George Dickie elaborates, "[a] work of art in the classificatory sense is [...] a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld)" (*Art and the Aesthetic* 34). While this conferment of status by the artworld onto an artwork is supposed to be value neutral—that is, the artwork is not judged to be good or bad, aesthetically pleasing or conceptually appealing—it does allow visual work into the fold of the fine arts infrastructures, its institutions, spaces, audiences, structures of criticism, and more. In other words, what defines a work of art as such is not the material form that it adopts, but rather an arbitrary yet relational structure of power, influence, and insularity as framed by individuals who are in the position to separate art from non-art. However, unlike both Danto and Dickie's statements that relates to the art world and focuses on the question of whether artworks need to be validated as art at all, the pertinent question for the Poetry Series is not whether the poetry performed can be defined as poetry (although perhaps Jackson Mac Low's recording-related performance practice and Allen Ginsberg's inclusion of Hare Krishna singers might have allowed for a faint question mark at the time of the public appearances), but rather whether it is poetry that merits being performed at a university as a projection of the future canon. Despite how this sounds, the inclusion or exclusion of poets at the Poetry Series is thus not necessarily a measure of literary evaluation. Yes, the series curators make the call as to whether a poet is invited to perform within the institutional structures of cultural prestige or not. This is not equivalent to saying, however, that these curators personally enjoy the poetry of every invited poet or consider it to be *good*. Instead, the gesture of inviting poets to perform or not is based on an objective, if utopian, value neutral consideration of the literary guests as worthy of note—as *art,* so to speak.

As further nuanced by Danto, art becomes art not only through the backing of structures of power, but also through an understanding and theorization of historical significance; that is, "one would need to see how the history of art had evolved to a point where it was now possible for such a work to exist" (*Unnatural Wonders* 12).[15] The conceptual, historical backing and understanding

[15] A fascinating contradiction exists within Danto's thinking: On the one hand, the tradition, chronology, and development of art informs a contemporary understanding of experimental modes of production. On

of an artwork, as articulated by well-informed members of the art world, is what endorses a certain approach to art-making in relation to other past and contemporary practices. To return again to the Poetry Series, one can immediately see how the university as a site for literary preservation, longevity, and activation through study imposes a historical foundation on which invited poets could build and into which they were immediately interpolated by definition of presenting their work within the larger frame or context. The hermeneutical effort enacted by both series curators and performing poets to situate individual poets' practices and individual poems with introductory commentaries and contextual glosses—as well as the circulation of biographical and explanatory print materials about visiting poets and their sets, as previously discussed—is uniformly present throughout the archive of readings hosted at the Poetry Series. Beyond the implicit gesture of any creative presentation or performance foregrounding the instructive goal of knowledge transfer, the Poetry Series advocates for a more overt pedagogical gesture, one in which university faculty aim to inform an audience of students and other university faculty about links in the chain of literary tradition, as well as new developments in creative production. The formal reading format, which in Wheeler's terms stems from the university lecture, as previously cited, substantiates the educational optics of poetry in performance, especially as presented alongside impromptu theorizations that assert poets' authority in relation to literary history. In Danto's terms, this institutional structure of higher education and poetry harnessed to a project of learning confirm curators and participants at the Poetry Series as formally validated contemporary ambassadors of the larger critical project called Literature or Art.

The institutional curatorial relationality promotes this narrative of expertise within the Poetry Series context, with many of the invited poets presenting themselves in retrospective terms or as self-styled to adhere to concepts of literary tradition, lineage, and canonicity. That is, rather than highlighting the novelty of their work, perhaps underscoring fresh, experimental approaches (as many poets preferred to do at Véhicule Art Inc.) or thinking of their poetry in terms of process and changeability rather than product (as many poets continue to do at the Words and Music Show), poets tended to concentrate on the scope of their poetry careers, instead lingering on the quantity of published books or the number of decades that they had dedicated to producing work. Many of the performing poets were obviously already key figures within intersecting literary scenes of the time and were introduced as such, but it is telling that the poets themselves also presented their own personae as established and deserving of the prestigious forum provided to them. Many poets (although one cannot generalize the sentiment to all the poets) gestured, for example, towards the long span of their publication histories in their own introductions to readings as a whole or to individual poems. Below is a compilation of a few such statements:

> Ladies and gentleman, the poems I'm going to read stretch over a period, it seems hard to believe, of about 45 years, and the writing of poetry has changed quite as much in that time as the world has changed, and probably for the same reason. [...] And after I'd been three and a half years at Oxford and in Europe, soaking up nothing but human history, the background and fundamentals of our civilization, I came back to Montreal, which seemed

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the other hand, he suggests that "his thesis was liberationist [... Artists and their work were] liberated from the burden of art history. They were no longer constrained by an imperative to carry the narrative forward" (*Unnatural Wonders* 3). In an exciting twist, the first half of this tension aligns itself with framed curation in terms of supporting art that is institutionally acknowledged as stemming from and moving beyond a tradition of artmaking. The second half of the tension gestures to open curation by liberating art from that very same tradition.

> an incredibly ugly, empty, valueless city. The one thing that matched the power of the European tradition was this North land. Its emptiness, its waiting. So I remember poems touching upon that feeling, and I will read first, this poem is really 45 years old, "New Names." (Scott 1969, 00:00:00)
>
> [I will] start off this evening by reading a few poems from my earlier book. (Kiyooka 1966, 00:01:25)
>
> I've been asked to read "The Valiant Vacationist." It was written so many years ago... I think I would be quite right in saying thirty years ago, and probably a little more. And I couldn't write this well now but in a way when you're very young you've got the whole world in one lump without any lump, and you only get bits later on. (Avison 1967, 00:52:53)
>
> When I started to write poems about sixty-eight years ago. (Purdy 1970, 00:00:56)

Purdy's statement is of course not factually accurate, but even satirically, the effect of reading poems from a generalized, exaggerated distant past fits into the model of F. R. Scott, Roy Kiyooka, and Margaret Avison, among others, highlighting their longstanding careers of forty-five or thirty years. They could, after all, have decided to only read from their most recent collections, but instead they deliberately selected poems to span a more holistic, retrospective representation of their output over a lifetime of composition. As Camlot writes about Irving Layton who approached the curation of his set of 18 March 1967 in a similar overarching mode, "[i]f one were to define Layton's reading with reference to a book, that book would be *Selected Works*—a compilation of the 'greatest' poems that have defined him over his entire career" ("The Sound of Canadian Modernisms" 49). Of course, even the concept of a "*Selected Works*" is imbued with the success of a career that warrants its self-reflexive celebration by compiling its perceived highlights over time. Additionally, embedded in these different statements is also a sense of literary transformation over time. Scott feels that his "poetry has changed quite as much in that time as the world has changed," while Avison suggests that she "couldn't write this well now but in a way when you're very young you've got the whole world in one lump." Over the duration of numerous decades, poetic oeuvres have aged into the literary history that Gerry Gilbert refers to when he quips, "[w]e're reading Canadian History" (1971, 00:32:10). This implies that even within the live event—as situated within the context of the Poetry Series and curated according to a frame of institutional prestige and celebration of literary history—that same literary history is already present in narratives of poetic evolution and a retrospective gaze that excavate past output to create a contemporary chronology of a poet's writing within the frame of their life's work.

The projection of a twenty-first century perspective onto a mid-twentieth century series is a reality one always needs to contend with as a critic. Listening to recordings by Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, among so many other major names, it is difficult not to discern the frame of fame bracketing the Poetry Series. It is interesting, however, to note a contrasting interpretation of the Poetry Series in Louis Dudek's lengthy introduction to Henry Beissel and Mike Gnarowski on 13 January 1967. Here Dudek articulates a reading mode—which he deems to be in contrast to the Poetry Series on that particular night—predicated on literary tradition and an author's achievements, quite similar to the one that I have been attempting to posit in relation to the Poetry Series itself. Dudek believes:

> There are two kinds of readings that I like to attend very much, one kind is the sort that they're having tonight at McGill University, where well established poet who has been on the scene for forty or fifty years comes to read. Over there, it's A.J.M. Smith from Michigan State, Canadian anthologist and well-known poet. With a poet like that, it really makes no difference what he reads or how he reads it's just important to see him and even the tottering saint can perform miracles on occasions. The other kinds of poets I do like to hear very much are the sort that we'll hear tonight, Gnarowski and Beissel. (Dudek at Beissel and Gnarowski Reading 1967, 00:00:40)

In Dudek's terms, a kind of pinnacle of the poetry reading exists as a determinate construct and this Platonic ideal takes on the form of a very established author—who again "has been on the scene for forty or fifty years"—representing the "authentic authorial presence," as Lesley Wheeler might say (*Voicing American Poetry* 13), of that author, no matter what they might actually read or how they might read it. Ironically, at such an event, literature is of lesser importance than the perception of literature. As Danto would suggest, the institutionally endowed glow of a poet is of more value than the belief of literary value itself. That is, it is the predetermined knowledge of Smith's worth as a poet or a "tottering saint" that is deemed important—discerning merit and tradition—rather than the quality of the particular performance or an appreciation for the poetry selected for that one event. It is not exactly clear what Dudek means by "other kinds of poets," but it is a fair assumption to make that even if he does not count Gnarowski and Beissel as equivalent to A.J.M. Smith *yet*, he is still willing to project them into a possible future of literary greatness. He introduces Gnarowski, for example, as placed "within the line of modern Canadian poets" and repeats that he is "a meticulous craftsman [...] There's a very strong formal organization in his poetry, a clean speech, straight as the Greeks, as Ezra Pound used to say in the past" (00:02:05). Dudek's praise is based on a foundational past that informs, structures, and validates new literature. Even his focus on craftsmanship hints at a mode of literary production systematically going out of vogue at that time; as Camlot suggests, filtering Roland Barthes, this was a time that "contemporary literary theory and avant-garde poetic practice was at work attempting to loosen the sway of the author over his text" ("The Sound of Canadian Modernisms" 168). Nonetheless, Dudek's commentary implies that even if A.J.M. Smith is the definitively famous author to experience presenting their work across the city at McGill University, Gnarowski is not a strange aberration in relation to Smith, but is situated centrally in a lineage or "line" of literary production, a trope of literary patrilineage and tradition that goes all the way back to ancient Greece. Although slightly more condescending towards Beissel, Dudek does acknowledge some "very, very promising characteristics for a beginning poet" and marks his 1966 debut collection, *New Wings for Icarus,* as "considerable" (00:05:09) Embedded in "other kinds of poets," then, is the promise of future stature. Unlike Véhicule Art Inc. that so deliberately broke away from the entire enterprise of literary evaluation in the 1970s, the Poetry Series frames its curation within the institutional prestige of literary excellence, whether that talent is current or forward-looking and still waiting for the fruition of promise. The series' baseline premise is one of literary worth, featuring authors who will quite literally be studied at the same university department as they performed some decades later—a fact to which the writing of this chapter can self-reflexively attest.

A culminating example of the Poetry Series' curatorial framing as a forum informed by institutional values of fame and literary tradition is Irving Layton's reading of 18 March 1967. Befitting the model of other readings hosted at the Poetry Series, Howard Fink introduces Layton

formally with reference to his "reputation" (00:01:33), his many publications and accolades, immediately positioning him as the highly-esteemed author that he was at the time. Layton then continues to oscillate between short commentaries explicating each poem before reading the poem itself for the duration of the eighty-three minute performance. Camlot argues that this back and forth mode allows Layton to straddle dual figures of the pedagogue and an abstraction of the transcendent poet, embodying his work simultaneously with the institutional backing of literary study and analysis—literalizing the instructional gesture of the literary event—and the series' framing narrative of the author as established, enduring entity.

> In presenting his poetry orally, Layton seems to split himself in two, speaking in his pre-poem speech as an earthbound pedagogue sketching out personal meaning and frames of allusive reference, and in his poetic recitation as a voice delivering patterns of sound that underscore and are integral to the grander meaning embedded in the poem. While this split may be typical of the way many poets read their work, the lesson Layton hopes to convey in his pedagogical, grounded voice is markedly hermeneutical and aims to ensure an appreciation of the transcendent aspects of the poem when delivered in the voice of the poet. (Camlot, "The Sound of Canadian Modernisms" 42-43)

This split is nicely merged back together again in the specific performance of a very brief poem called "Misunderstanding" that Layton introduces and reads at the 00:36:54 timestamp of the performance. During the introduction and reading of this poem, Layton extends his perception of himself into that of a renowned author, distancing himself from a first person authorial persona to self-recognition of his name as a historical figure, or in Camlot's words, "a fully formed, autonomous entity" (41).[16] Layton shifts from first person and addresses himself in the third person, announcing, "[a]nd I suppose no Layton reading would be quite complete without this poem, 'Misunderstanding'" (00:36:44). In one succinct sentence, he canonizes his own poem, gestures towards a definition of what a "Layton reading" should invariably look like, and positions himself as someone who is worthy of stepping into his own/Layton's literary lineage to present that heritage to the public. Not only is he modelling his own status as an established author within the context of the Poetry Series' institutional curatorial framing, but he is also framing the self-curating of his set of poems as predicated on a process of evaluation of works that should or should not be included in a well-crafted container of orally delivered poems.

"Misunderstanding" itself is very short: "I placed / my hand / upon / her thigh. / By the way / she moved / away / I could see / her devotion / to literature / was not / perfect" (00:36:54). Sexually discomforting, and hopefully intended as satire, this poem nonetheless continues and develops the same rhetoric of literary self-aggrandizement as Layton applied to its introduction. Here he fuses "literature" with the poetic speaker's own person, suggesting that the woman who declines his unwanted advances is rebuffing literature as a timeless construct of literary value and removing it from its pedestal of grandeur where it is deserving of "devotion." By adopting the persona of *literature* (one might even say *Literature*)—as a much grander identity than that of even an established individual author—the poetic speaker is also able to assume ownership of the woman and to expect favours in return, despite the poem's decrescendo at the end. The woman's

[16] One might also think here of the narrative that Nick Mount constructs of Layton in *Arrival: The Story of CanLit* as a man who masks himself through constant performance, whether as the suave professor, the disreputable poet, or the aggressive male with an insatiable sexual appetite. His public appearances are always filtered through personae.

repulsion cuts the poetic speaker back down to size so that he ultimately fails to fully impersonate literature. This failure leads, perhaps, to the subversion of the institutional curatorial relationality as a uniform and unchallenged frame for structuring the Poetry Series, especially as other authors opted to challenge this curatorial field, and to deliberately transform and experiment with the event format to best suit their personal poetics. That is, the frame of framed curation is not a static entity (as Derrida would agree [see Chapter 1]), even as it is bound by conceptual underpinnings that aim to articulate that frame in fairly dominant ways; the frame of framed curation can always shift to include varying narratives and counternarratives. One of these counternarratives would be underscoring the lack of women—among readers of colour, Indigenous participants, and other marginalized positionalities—showcased at the Poetry Series. Across a decade, only eleven women are invited to perform, roughly one sixth of the overall billing or statistically one woman per year. In my attempt at following the series' dominant grain to schematize its curatorial mode, I am thus by default directed to case studies of white male poets as the historical embodiment of institutional prestige and the literary canon. The irony is that however slight the diversity of billing, its limited existence already destabilizes the sexist narrative that Layton attempts to project onto his set and through the assumption of male chauvinism and entitlement. In the case of Layton's poem "Misunderstanding," the insistence on an institutional relationality—one which is expected to favour the dominant account of literature as male—is exactly what ends up undermining the project of his performance with the woman's rejection of the Layton figure, and of literature by proxy. Fame and the institutional frame is thus just one angle of the Poetry Series, one which the series itself perhaps expects the archival listener to follow, but which can also be perforated and rewritten. Although also focusing on two male poets—bpNichol and Lionel Kearns—I will show, in the following section on a dialogic curatorial relationality, that there are many different ways of performing within that frame, while also creatively warping and expanding it to great effect.

"in juxtaposed relationships": bpNichol, Lionel Kearns, and Dialogic Curatorial Relationality at the Poetry Series

The Poetry Series is, of course, by no standards constituted of a uniform sequence of readings, all equally framed by a nationalist agenda or the influence of institutional curatorial relations. As Jason Camlot has noted, mostly focusing on Robert Creeley's two contributions to the series, a number of poets performing at the Poetry Series were "challenging the more habitual format of the poetry reading" ("Robert Creeley in Transition" 232). He details:

> To mention just a few examples of other performances that worked to disturb the more static format that focused on 'the single term of the reader's voice and image,' as Creeley described the habit in 1967: On separate occasions—bpNichol/Lionel Kearns (22 November 1968) and David McFadden/Gerry Gilbert (15 January 1971)—two poets paired for an event chose to interweave their readings rather than read in sequence, thus creating a format that hinged on relational rather than solitary performance. And in his 'reading' of 21 March 1971, Jackson Mac Low decentred the occasion of the scheduled event by reading along with tape recordings of readings he had delivered at other times and places and by inviting multiple members of the audience to participate in the reading of some of his poems. Motivated by a similar aim to disturb the static poetry reading format, although deploying alternate techniques of disruption, the Robert Creeley we hear in his second Montreal reading is a wilder, more devil-may-care, more in the moment, more dialogical,

> drunker, slurrier, more foul-mouthed, and shocking performer than the one heard in 1967. (Camlot, "Robert Creeley in Transition" 232)

What these various examples have in common, as readings that try to break away from the series' standard format of two sets divided by an intermission, is a curiosity to connect literatures across time and space or, differently phrased, to place literatures in new dimensional configurations with regards to one another. Mac Low's alternating between live and pre-recorded materials, for example, works to warp chronology, while his participatory prompts activate the audience's perception of the venue in ways they could never achieve by staying stationary and removed from the performance through the technology of the stage. Similarly, David McFadden and Gerry Gilbert, and bpNichol and Lionel Kearns, augment relationality within the curatorial design of their sets, breaking away from the notion of a single, discernible author as an individual writerly ego driving the performance. They consider instead how the work of two authors intertwined can support and illuminate each other as two bodies of work collaborate on shaping the event's curatorial field. As Betts describes, Gilbert was so pleased with the results of their braided performance that he resuscitated this "spontaneous dialogue [...] with Daphne Marlatt years later, demonstrating some satisfaction with the experiment, and a willingness to repurpose a good idea" (*Finding Nothing* 324). Without experiencing these exact dialogic performances at the Poetry Series himself, Creeley picks up on and actually articulates this relational tendency as a phenomenon of the time beyond the constraints of the poetry reading proper and within larger arts communities in his appearance of 24 February 1967, suggesting that "if one does want some kind of statement about [the arts, it would be] that all the arts are moving into a situation where the agency is becoming less and less singular [...] I think that the participation is becoming much more a situation of process and activity, and that it is becoming less and less evident as one singular isolation of person" (00:42:39). With his non-standard insistence on definite articles—"the agency" and "the participation"—Creeley does bring home the determined shift from individual poet performing within the constraints of their own body of work to the collective intention of a reading which invites audience, additional poets, and other performers to participate. This collaborative gesture goes hand-in-hand with the concomitant move towards consciously curating an event to foreground a plural sense of exchange. So doing, the participatory gesture aims to bolster and facilitate a dialogic relationality at work within the performance space, one which is, one might argue, unavoidably present the moment that more than one poet performs on the same bill—in fact, one which is active within the performance of a single poet too—but is not necessarily understood in terms of discourse and exchange, unless augmented by a conscious deployment of the curatorial.

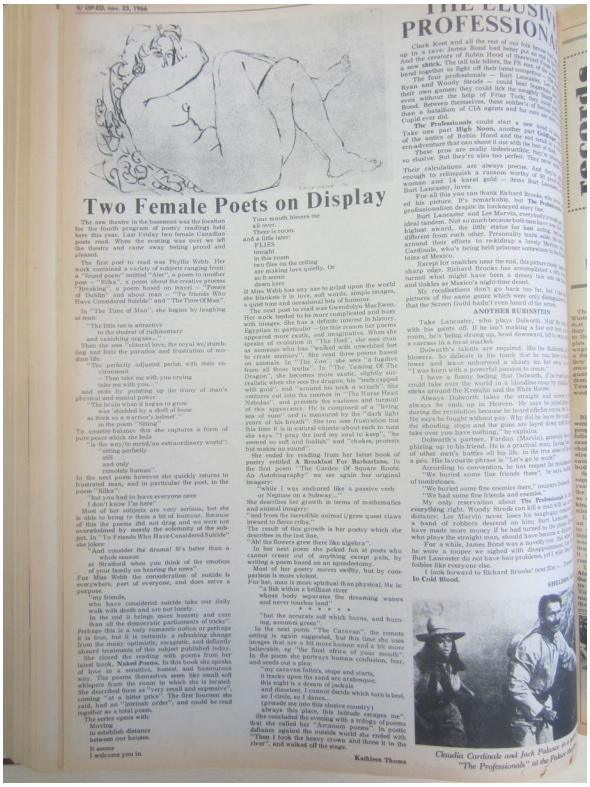
Two poets reading on one bill is one of the core curatorial modalities of the Poetry Series—as contrasted with a single featured reader as the other dominant mode. Among numerous examples, Gladys Hindmarch read on the same night as Stan Persky, Roy Kiyooka on the same night as Richard Sommer, and Gwendolyn MacEwen on the same night as Phyllis Webb. As a format, this coupling of readers operates with inherent relationality by offsetting two bodies of work against each other and assuming a base level of comparison and/or contrasting in terms of the proximity of performing authors. Perhaps more so than when multiple writers read in a consecutive lineup of short sets (as exemplified by the serendipity of the open mic format), two readers form a pair in a way that almost automatically activates a dialogic curatorial relationship of exchange for the event as a whole. That is, two authors presented side-by-side, usually with an intermission dividing the two sets, demands, on a self-reflexive level, a questioning of what brings

those two poets together, what makes their work cohere, how their bodies of work differ, but also how these works enter into conversation with one another on the level of the event. When George Bowering introduces Hindmarch and Persky on 21 November 1969, for example, he emphasizes their mutual commitment to the Vancouver literary scene, thematizing the event as "Another Vancouver Night" (00:00:00), and coupling them amicably as the "Stan and Gladys Evening" (00:01:41). He continues, "[w]e're presenting what I consider to be the center of the Vancouver writing scene. Gladys Hindmarch has been in that scene for ten years, and was associated with all those people who've got all kinds of names over the last few years such as West Coast movement and the Tish movement and the New Wave Canada and that sort of business. And Stan Persky, is as much related if not more because he is also a sort of super star of little magazines in San Francisco [...] and has now become the super star of the Vancouver writing scene" (Bowering at the Hindmarch and Persky reading 1969, 00:00:19). Bowering justifies the choice to present these two poets together through their shared community ties and stylistic literary affiliations. On 2 December 1966, Stanton Hoffman delivers a similar assumption of collegiality based on geographic and scene-based association when introducing Roy Kiyooka and Richard Sommer as partaking in a kind of Sir George Williams University Faculty Showcase: "Tonight there will be readings by two poets living in Montreal, and members of the faculty of this University" (00:00:12). A contextual narrative brackets the two readers together dialogically, despite difference in poetic approaches or performance modalities.

Roy Kiyooka's 18 November 1966 introduction to MacEwen and Webb feels even more arbitrary, hinting at a pairing based on sex alone, a Women's Poetry Night of sorts: "Now tonight it is my very great pleasure to introduce to you two poets whose distinctiveness is more than the fact of their sex. I want to introduce each poet in turn, Phyllis Webb will begin the readings and after the intermission, I shall introduce to you Gwendolyn MacEwen" (00:01:12). By neglecting to elaborate on their "distinctiveness," Kiyooka achieves an emphasis exactly on the second half of his statement, driving home the fact that this is the only reading featuring two women during the entirety of the series, a curatorial anomaly.[17] An assumption of curation based on sex alone is even more prominent in the *Georgian*'s review of the reading with headline, "Two Female Poets on Display," printed underneath an image of a female nude, and emphasizing the spectacular nature, the strangeness, of two women invited to read at the same event (see Image 2). Despite the journalist Kathleen Thoms' attempt to smooth over the voyeuristic headline by insisting that she left the event "feeling proud and pleased," that pride is predicated exactly on an understanding of Webb and MacEwen's achievement as two women performing poetry in a series dominated by men. The article drives home the fact that Webb and MacEwen were coupled as women rather than as poets. However salient or incidental they might be, what all these statements about curatorial pairings have in common, though, is an attempt on the part of the event curator, to bracket together two poets reading on one night through perceived or projected thematic and

[17] In an unpublished undergraduate essay written by a student in my Winter 2022 ENGL 244 class at Concordia University, Jess Marshall schematizes a preliminary study of the kinds of welcome given to men and women respectively at the Poetry Series. Focusing on the "lacklustre introductions" given to Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen at the Poetry Series, she finds that welcome "given to female poets are rife with informality, condescension, and a lack of distinction, as opposed to the introductions given to men" ("Disrespect and Disparity" unpublished term paper). Rather than expounding on MacEwen's publications and prizes—which he does mention, but does not linger upon—Roy Kiyooka emphasizes the fact, for example, that "[s]he left school at eighteen," embellishing it with the derogatory aside, "a high school dropout, as the sociologists would say" (1966, 00:01:04).

contextual touchpoints. There is thus an understanding of intentional and/or implied dialogism at work in the construction of the literary event as an expression of two poets' writing coming together in space and time.



Two Female Poets on Display

Image 4: A review of Phyllis Webb and Gwendolyn MacEwen's reading at the Poetry Series on 18 November 1966, published in the Georgian*. Courtesy of archival research conducted by Lee Hannigan and Christine Mitchell.*

Amplifying this inherent dialogic potential of the curatorial foregrounds interconnection and exchange. Such a restructuring of the poetry reading, not as incidental list of juxtaposed poets, but as coherent event, is especially discernible in the reading of 22 November 1968 featuring bpNichol and Lionel Kearns, an event already alluded to above. Despite their lasting reputations as innovators within Canadian literary history, George Bowering's introduction to their performance does not contain the same, heightened level of institutional veneration as portrayed in the lists of accolades and hyperbolic descriptions of other authors' contributions to literature, as discussed earlier in this chapter.[18] In fact, Bowering appears almost ill at ease—a surprising admission considering his status as the more daring curator at the Poetry Series—humming and hawing throughout the introduction as he apparently searches for the right words to discuss Nichol and Kearns. He opens the event with a statement of uncertainty: "I don't feel very happy tonight that the crowd is nice and big, and also that because I don't quite know what's going to happen,

[18] Significantly, bpNichol won the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1970, only two years after this reading, for *The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid*, a work that he performs in its entirety at the Poetry Series. In a sense, this reading does precede, then, Nichol's notoriety and canonization through public institutions of recognition.

although I've heard rumours" (00:00:05). One would imagine that Bowering is being sarcastic, but his tone of voice sounds matter of fact, even as he stumbles over his syntax and builds a non-standard "and also that because" construction in his awkward attempt to articulate gentle misapprehension. Whether in jest or earnest, Bowering's statement displays a perceived lack of control as curator. The audience has filled up and he has a responsibility to that audience as organizer of the event, but this night—in contrast to the framing of other poetry readings—he does not know exactly what he will be presenting to them by way of the two invited guest readers. Breaking away from the standard format of two sets divided by an intermission, Nichol and Kearns have opted to transform their respective performances into a hybrid, intertwined set, oscillating back and forth between authors in sections of five to ten minutes for the duration of their hour and forty-five minute reading. In Bowering's words:

> We have Lionel Kearns and bpNichol, as you know, and they have elected instead of doing a reading by each poet, with an intermission in the middle or anything like that, a manner of joint reading. And I think, in a sense, that makes a lot of sense, because Lionel Kearns is by one of his professions, a linguist, and also one of his main, one of his main themes is the social care of human beings. bpNichol is a radical therapist, and is known especially for his border-blur poems, and it makes a lot of sense, I think, for that reason that they do read together. (Bowering at Nichol and Kearns' Reading 1968, 00:00:18)

Contrasting Bowering's words to his introduction of McFadden and Gilbert's intertwined reading shows a better understanding of the format of the event, and more confidence in allowing for this openness at the series, but also a similar unfamiliarity surrounding the dialogic potential of what they are trying to achieve by interspersing their poems with one another.

> We have two readers tonight, both Canadian poets, as you know, but in most cases when we have two poets as we did last time, we generally have one poet read for a while, and then have a break, and then have the other poet read for a while, but we're not going to do it that way tonight. We're just going to throw the thing open to both David McFadden and Gerry Gilbert and they will work it out as it seems to work out for them. This makes a lot of sense, although they've never read together before. They're both published by the same publishing house, and published in the same magazines and know each other. [...] So I'm not going to be able to say that somebody's reading first and somebody's reading second but I will be able to say is that the readers will be David McFadden and Gerry Gilbert. (Bowering at McFadden and Gilbert's Reading 1971, 00:00:08)

Despite his insistence, Bowering's reasoning does *not* make "a lot of sense." The fact that McFadden and Kearns frequent the same literary circle, but have never read together before does not serve as a reason for them to intertwine their poems and create "new tensions and sparks in their individual works by the sudden multiplicity and juxtaposition," as Betts writes, being more finely attuned to the project at hand (*Finding Nothing* 324). Similarly, it might be practical for Nichol and Kearns to "read together" as a general curatorial fact of sharing the bill that night, but Bowering's statement does not explain the dialogic potential unleashed by also interconnecting their respective parts into a new whole. Placing a linguist and an experimental poet together could point to some shared concerns with language, and "social care" and "radical therapy" might direct mutual interests, indicating a continuation of Bowering's thinking about literary events as

thematically-unified nights, such as the Vancouver Night, Faculty Night, Women's Night, and so on. The reason behind or functioning of this event's framing as predicated solely on loose subject motifs feels like a stretch, however, and neither of these perceived thematic similarities inform or necessitate an innovative approach to poetry reading curation—this approach itself evidencing a high degree of self-curatorial foresight and a light observation of deep curatorial tenets. Bowering's attempt to justify either McFadden and Gilbert's or Nichol and Kearn's curatorial decisions thus fails to grasp the larger project of envisioning the event as a cohesive entity with the work of two authors deliberately placed in conversation with each other. He also fails to acknowledge the inherent dialogic relationality at work at a poetry reading the moment that two or more poets' works are juxtaposed—a relationality that is already at play to a less heightened degree at the Poetry Series at large. In contrast, McFadden and Gilbert, and Nichol and Kearns see beyond the superficial, thematic suturing of their poetry into a single event and amplify the act of curatorial dialogism itself as the connective thread of their event. They care less about thematic unity and more about the exchange that can happen by placing any poetic materials in relation to one another.

Considering this series-wide acceptance of light dialogism within the default reading format exacerbates Bowering's misconstruing of the two pairs of poets' intention by interlacing their respective contributions to the reading. These poets are more keenly aware of the dialogic relationality implied by their paired billing and work to activate and accentuate it through deliberate curatorial choices. McFadden and Gilbert emphasize their collective performance by switching back and forth between voices every thirty seconds to five minutes, offering rough touchpoints of continuity between works—one might think of the first fifteen minutes that riffs on groceries, foods, and hard living conditions; one might also think of Gilbert reading "I dreamed I was in Vietnam" (00:14:53) followed by McFadden's "[d]reams have become so full of intricate detail" (00:16:14). Their poems interlock according to spontaneous keywords that function as a dialogue that picks up and continues where the other poet left off. With one exception, they never interject with extrapoetic speech, rather allowing the poetry to do the talking. Nichol and Kearns likewise resist dividing their time into self-contained authorial sets, shifting back and forth between each other's work at slightly longer intervals of five to ten minutes. Significantly, the content of these oscillations seem to be functioning in opposition to Bowering's thematic curatorial model and do not seem to be rehearsed for thematic continuity at all, in contrast to McFadden and Gilbert's indexical weave—beyond perhaps a vague overarching, chronological progression from lyric poetry through sound poetry towards a more humorous, narrative-driven conclusion. More intricately, though, the two poets have carefully considered how to sequence the content of their respective readings to maximize audience interest and engagement. Often referencing the volume of their performance throughout the duration of the event, they balance poems read off of the page at a standard speaking pitch with the more raucous sound and concrete poems that explode into singing, chanting, and shouting. Nichol suggests, for example, that he will "read a series of quiet poems. Because we've got some really loud ones to read too" (00:11:27), revealing a desire to equalize vocal extremes as matched with poetic styles (lyrical versus sound poetry) rather than grouping all the "quiet poems" or all the "loud poems" together. Kearns similarly differentiates between "quiet poems, poems of my own measured voice" (00:3354) that need to be amplified by the microphone and those performative variants—such as a concrete poem called "The Woman Who Reminded Him of the Woman Who" which he claims "does work [...] sonically too" (00:51:10)—that allow the voice to carry independent from a technological boost.

Kearns then provides a longer, more detailed perspective about his and Nichol's curatorial deliberations and insight into the conversation between the two poets that shaped their performance: "We thought of reading all of our quiet poems at the beginning, and then getting louder and louder and louder, but we thought this would get you too excited and you'd go out onto the street [laughter.] So we decided to mix them all up and you'll get everything quiet and loud and funny and very serious and that's part of it—you know—getting them all at once all in juxtaposed relationships" (00:41:37). Kearns' statement proposes different strategies for structuring the reading in a dialogic mode, one that crescendos towards the finale, building poetic works on top of one another to gradually trumpet in volume and intensity, and one that deliberately intermingles volumes, styles, and themes into "a strange pastiche" (00:07:04), as Nichol calls the event earlier on. On the one hand, deciding *not* to group similar poetic works together, but rather to intermingle diversity, one could argue, ironically, that Nichol and Kearns have not maximized the dialogic potential of their works in the same way that McFadden and Gilbert achieve. But on the other hand, placing poems "in juxtaposed relationships" to one another despite the deliberate dissimilarity of the works imposes an even more rigorous commitment to the dialogic. The intentional placement of poems side-by-side insists that they engage with each other through proximity with materials that precede and follow them—and to create a whole event through this interlocking construction of sequenced performances—even if the connection between works or between poets' words is often tangential and does not automatically lead the listener to a new understanding of the work as placed in relation to one another.

If the dynamic of juxtaposition between Nichol and Kearns' oeuvres in performance is not necessarily driven by obvious, thematically interlocking poetic concerns, it does model a project of poetic attention—one that was thought out, deliberated upon, and even successfully rehearsed the night before at a performance at Ottawa's Carleton University, according to Bowering's introductory remarks. Moreover, by designing an experimental curatorial structure for the reading, the poets conceive of the form of the poetry reading as a self-contained, whole entity within which the poetic performance progresses, transforms, ebbs, and flows to maintain a kinetic, live quality. The poets aspire to stimulate audience concentration through performance verging on entertainment—one might think of all the audience laughter and the awe that some of the experimental sound works must have inspired—and poetry that demands attention due to fluctuation and change. Following Kearns explanation that the audience will "get everything quiet and loud and funny and very serious [...] getting them all at once all in juxtaposed relationships," Nichol continues to suggest that "[t]his way you can sort of do what you want with which ones you wanna do. It's very hard to listen to a poetry reading all the way through. I can never hack poetry readings myself. What Lionel and I are trying to do is maybe do you a favour so you can listen for a longer time maybe" (00:42:12). In a way, Nichol has perfectly summarized the event: On the one hand, the poets can just "sort of do [...] which ones [they] wanna do," only varying their sets for the purpose of extended attention; despite switching sets more frequently than the default binary division of labour, Nichol and Kearns still maintain curatorial agency of their five or ten minute sets and can share the poems that they wanted to present to the audience, not necessarily compromising their sets to accommodate the other poet's choices. On the other hand, their attention to structuring the event as a whole in a more intentional way aims to keep listeners engrossed for a lengthier period of time, thus framing the reading dialogically with the objective of a sustained, and even contained, curatorial shape.

On the surface, both McFadden and Gilbert's, and Nichol and Kearns' joint performances seems to diverge from the framing of the Poetry Series as a collective project of literary

dissemination through curatorial structures of performance. Their more experimental, dialogic approaches appear to introduce an element of uncertainty to the night—as evidenced in Bowering's awkward introductory remarks—to deviate from other readings at the Poetry Series. Yet in contrast, the curatorial labour that these poets exerted to create their non-standard events—a series of decisions so clearly reflected upon in Nichol and Kearns' extra poetic speech—arguably allows this reading to function as a microcosm for the framed curatorial mode of the Poetry Series as a whole. This does not mean that framed curation is inherently dialogic (although in a sense all readings automatically are), but rather that the poets' transparency in curating their individual event mirrors the labour that the series organizers exerted to shape the collection of literary events as a durational construct in the first place. If the Poetry Series is stabilized across the duration of its existence by the events' predictable curatorial form as framed by organizational consistency and the underlying pressures of an institutional relationality, then these poets' anomaly to that framing serves to heighten the act of framing itself. These poets self-curate their combined reading and frame their own event by intensifying the latent dialogic curatorial relationality and rendering it more acutely present in their performance. As a final twist, and in an accidental, yet eerily relevant reflection of Nichol and Kearns' event, the reel-to-reel recording of this reading loops back on itself as a result of so-called "tape bleed"—an occurrence when one layer of tape slightly magnetizes another and warps the sound, echoing non-consecutive parts of the event across almost the entirety of the chronological audio archive. Occasionally this warping even results in displacements or rearrangements of the primary audio and the insertion of small snippets from different sections of the reading. Technology seems to insist on dialogic relationality too as it creates its own mélange of Nichol and Kearns' voices. Ironically, the chronology of a "correct" recording that would have succeeded in perfectly representing the temporal ordering of the live event would be less accurate in terms of documenting the interwoven curatorial collage that the two poets designed. Conceptually, the "flawed" recording creates a meta-level mix of voices to which the notion of framed curation seems at odds; here technology itself embodies and further activates a dialogic relationality within the sonic vestiges of the event. Yet the warped recording also succeeds in offering a more nuanced understanding of framed curation, emphasizing that it need not be linear in order to be formal or framed.

Conclusion

Thinking through a dominant institutional relationality exerting itself on the curatorial field of the Poetry Series, and considering the occasional surfacing of a more delicately embedded dialogic relationality informing certain performances, this chapter is, of course, by no means a comprehensive exploration of the series' curatorial framing. Among many possible research avenues to follow, another noteworthy direction—one which I have barely hinted at in passing—would be a feminist appraisal of the role that discriminatory gender politics played within the selection process of inviting a handful of women to read among a majority cast of male poets, a kind of alternative dialogic relationality running counter to the official series narrative. Mathieu Aubin has begun to do important (still unpublished) research in this direction with his expansive practice of "Queer Listening" that aims to validate marginalized subjectivities as they support, intersect, and clash with dominant curatorial relationalities of nationhood, canonicity, and institutional status and tradition. In their essay "Playing with Time," Ashley Clarkson and Steven High further underscore a related point of subsidiary narratives and exclusions, revealing "the degree to which the Anglo-Quebec poetry scene was disconnected from Québécois nationalism and the writings of racialized minorities. Their voices cannot be heard in the archived sound

recordings, as they were not invited to speak" (no pag.). Later in the same essay, the authors note that there are also no Indigenous voices invited to read at the Poetry Series. This is a point that Jason Wiens picks up on in his (likewise still unpublished) exploration of the "appropriative poetry" of F.R. Scott performed at the Poetry Series; for Wiens, this is poetry that relies on Indigenous voices as manifested through found materials, but channeled through a disconnected, if not downright dismissive, distorted, and violent white, heteropatriarchal lens. These distortions and exclusions of francophone, racialized, and Indigenous authors trace an important curatorial counternarrative, one which works to define by omission how nationhood, the canon, and related terms, were perceived in the 1960s (and onwards) as predominantly white and male. That is, the curatorial relationality validated by prestige and institutional notions of literary value that I have tried to articulate in this chapter has to contend with an equally prominent relationality that worked to silence authors or to exclude them from structures of notoriety, due to integrated and unarticulated sexist, racist, and language-based systems of prejudice.

On a more progressive note—although still bearing in mind the perpetuation of similar exclusionary curatorial narratives in Montreal a decade later—another relevant relationality to pursue would be one of influence—a dialogic, relational exchange enacted between reading series. The Poetry Series, for example, played a vital role in introducing Montreal to major authors and literary developments throughout the 1960s, greatly impacting budding poets in attendance and informing the curatorial work they would continue throughout the following decade. Case in point—and as this chapter leads into the next—the curators of Véhicule Art Inc., active in Montreal during the 1970s, attended and were deeply influenced by the readings at the Poetry Series. Endre Farkas concedes that it was "actually a good series [...] when George Bowering was writer-in-residence. That was when Canadian writers of his generation—David McFadden, bill bissett, Daphne Marlatt—these people started coming in" (Endre Farkas interview, 22 July 2021). For Stephen Morrisey, the two reading series shared a commitment to literary dissemination through performance as "the readings at Véhicule Art continued a tradition of promoting contemporary poetry similar to that of the SGWU [Poetry] series" (Stephen Morrissey personal correspondence, 12 September 2021). Ken Norris, in contrast, emphasizes that the Poetry Series specialized in "bringing in the Americans, the West Coast people" (Ken Norris interview, 16 August 2021) and that by experiencing a concomitant lack of forums for local authors, the Véhicule curators hoped to rectify this omission by billing more local poets at their series. Norris continues to reflect on how Véhicule chose to differ from its precursor:

> But anyway, in the mid-'70s there was more of a formality to university readings and working at an alternative space we very much thought of ourselves as being alternative. We were going to do it a different way. So it's going to be looser, less formal, no recitation of somebody's CV necessarily at the beginning of a reading, no formal question and answer period necessarily, unless the poet wanted one, and a lot more hanging out. It's like when the reading was over, that's when everything started in a way. (Norris, Interview, 16 August 2021)

A lot of socializing and hospitality is narrativized as part of the Poetry Series too. In fact, much of the dialogue between poets probably happened at informal, unrecorded gatherings, cocktail hours, and dinners preceding and following the formalized readings at Sir George Williams University. Nonetheless, Véhicule definitely moved away from the university series' formal mode of citing a reader's accolades, positioning their work in relation to the past, and framing their work within

literary traditions, movements, and expectations, initiating a move away from a framed curatorial mode to, what I will argue to be, an open one instead.

Chapter 3—The Open Curatorial Mode at Véhicule Art Inc.: Spatial and Durational Relationalities as Experiment and Innovation

This chapter will consider Véhicule Art Inc.—a Montreal-based artists'-run gallery space and reading series active between 1973 and 1983—as a case study for an analysis of an open curatorial mode of literary event organization. Applying a combined methodological approach of archival investigation of paper traces and audio recordings, as well as oral history interviews conducted with Véhicule curators, participants, and attendees,[19] I will show how two distinct curatorial relationalities (among an endless array of other possible relationalities) are activated during the poetry readings, in particular, informing the structural formation of Véhicule events as a result. As previously discussed, curatorial relationalities gesture towards the combination of collective material and conceptual, creative and critical influences shaping any literary event, as reciprocal, dynamic interchange. The spatial and durational curatorial relationalities I focus on in this chapter encompass the conceptual architectonics of the gallery space, and the influence of temporal longevity on the performance of poetry, the dialogue (or lack thereof) that time supports between performed works, all while encouraging innovation as modeled by the reading series and its scene at the level of the event. Irene Calderoni writes convincingly about the fundamental shift occurring in the field of creative production in the late 1960s into the 1970s, one which mobilized space and time by moving from reverence of the art object towards ephemerality and process as situated within a specific experiential setting. Similar to the culture of openness and acceptance I will describe at Véhicule, she argues that the ethos of artmaking within this historical moment insisted on "giving fluidity to something that was typically fixed, making temporary what has always been characterized by its ambition for permanence" ("Creating Shows" 66). While I will provide a brief overview of the Véhicule poets in relation to the reading series, I will also support this history with closer analyses of three particular events that coincidentally all took place in 1978 in order to examine these spatial and durational curatorial relationalities and their affordances. These events include an experimental performance by Gerry Gilbert captured on video; a durational, open mic marathon reading of twenty-six poets; and a feature reading with Carole TenBrink and Janet Kask.

Returning to the curating/curatorial split, I will show that the foundational labour of minimal, non-directive *curating* supported and defined a radical sense of *curatorial* openness to experimentation and innovation by those sharing their work in the space and at the reading series called Véhicule.[20] This openness can be defined in relation to Charles Olson's famous articulation of "open" or "projective verse," which calls for an organic, kinetic mode of literary production, steered by the breath and the expanse of the page, rather than a predetermined form. This

[19] I've been fortunate to supplement and enrich my archival research on Véhicule Art Inc. with a host of oral history interviews conducted with some of the poets who were actively organizing, participating in, and attending the center's poetry reading series throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. I talked to Véhicule poets Endre Farkas, Ken Norris, Tom Konyves, Claudia Lapp, and regular participant and attendee of Véhicule events, Carole TenBrink. I also corresponded with Stephen Morrissey. These conversations have contextualized my understanding of the importance of this series in supporting poets during a particular social, historical, political, and literary moment, while also furnishing me with more quotes than I could ever possibly incorporate to substantiate some of the claims I aim to make about the series' open curatorial ethos. See appendices for transcripts of these conversations.

[20] I am indebted to my earlier research and a similar argument posited in an article, "Curatorial Agency at Véhicule Art Inc.: 'openness was a guiding spirit to VÉHICULE,'" forthcoming 2023 from McGill-Queen's University Press in the collection *Resistant Practices in Communities of Sound* edited by Deanna Fong and Cole Mash.

compositional mode also insinuates that openness "involves a stance towards reality outside a poem as well as a new stance towards the reality of a poem itself" ("Projective Verse" 246). Openness postures as thoroughfare between life and literature, offering a fluid integration between a literary forum that welcomes various articulations of reality and its imaginaries. Stephen Morrissey has confirmed that the scene surrounding Véhicule was "influenced by Charles Olson's projective verse," suggesting that "this new poetry, this new approach to poetry, influenced and manifested itself [...at] Véhicule" (Stephen Morrissey, personal correspondence, 30 August 2021). Olson's influence was also filtered through Véhicule's preoccupation with the New York School, the San Francisco Renaissance, and Canadian movements like Tish, among other near-contemporary approaches to experimental poetics. As such, this turn to experiencing reality itself as organic, spontaneous, and indeterminate is mapped onto Véhicule as a reading series and the curatorial labour it embodies. On the one hand, it is fair to argue that Véhicule limited administrative curation to the provision of four emblematic walls as venue (among other concise organizational duties), tendering informal invitations to writers to step into the temporal locus, that is, events, hosted within those walls. On the other hand, Véhicule did model an ethos and embodied a scene that did not direct the dialogue created through the juxtaposition of poets' work, but rather invited poets to augment their own curatorial agency in the sharing and making of adventurous literary performance.

It is important not to conflate the Véhicule poets as people—Endre Farkas, Artie Gold, Tom Konyves, Claudia Lapp, John McAuley, Stephen Morrissey, and Ken Norris—and Véhicule as an artists'-run gallery and performance venue with its concomitant curatorial characteristics. It is also important to distinguish between Véhicule as this historical artists'-run center (as featured in my research) and the literary press, founded at the Véhicule premises in 1973, but run independently by Simon Dardick and Nancy Marrelli since 1981 and into the present. At the same time, it is key to note how interrelated these various definitions are and how the poets and their work clearly influenced the space they were involved in, the early publishing ventures (and perhaps even to a more limited degree the current publishing catalogues), and the reading series they curated. Bringing this defined sense of who was doing what into dialogue with the openness inherent to the overarching endeavour, one can again argue that the Véhicule poets doubling as series organizers *curated* the reading series, meaning that they ensured the provision of material necessities for the maintenance of the gallery space and the promotional apparatus that kept a reading series running for ten years. Being poets themselves and embodying the core group of authors involved with the series, they also provided a vague, semi-articulated, but still felt *curatorial* sense of what Véhicule as a space, community, and reading series stood for creatively. That is, the non-Véhicule poets who shared their work, either by invitation or at open events, retained curatorial agency over their sets, self-curating their presentations and not receiving obvious directions about what and how to perform, but were nonetheless indirectly affected by the scene that they were being interpolated into. There are many varying shades of grey in the division between curating and the curatorial, rendering it especially difficult to parse the exact mode of curation encouraged as a determinate evaluation of a reading series, especially as the series and its curators also changed over a substantial period of time. A finely nuanced analysis of a reading series might even show a fluctuation between modes as certain events lean towards openness and others embrace a more framed, or even deep, curatorial approach. Maintaining an awareness of how amorphous schematization can be with inevitable counterexamples and gradations, Véhicule as a whole still exemplifies an open curatorial mode within my larger research project of delimiting divergent approaches to literary curatorial practice. In other words, I do not deny the existence of

curation as acts of both administration and decision-making at Véhicule—even as some of the Véhicule poets do—but recognize how the series strove towards an avant-garde spirit of openness and acceptance towards varying literary approaches and poetics, without being able to fully renounce an inevitable preferred aesthetic.

"openness was a guiding spirit to VÉHICULE": An Overview of Véhicule Art Inc.

Narrative histories of Véhicule Art Inc. have already been written by Diana Nemiroff in her thesis *A History of Artist-Run Spaces in Canada*, and in the myriad writings and reminiscences of organizers and participants, some compiled and edited by Ken Norris as *Vehicule Days: An Unorthodox History* and on the *Véhicule Poets* website. To limit another history to broad strokes relevant to an inquiry into poetry reading curation in particular, Véhicule was founded in 1972 by Suzy Lake as a bilingual, interdisciplinary artists'-run center and exhibition space. Initially located at 61 St. Catherine Street West, Montreal, a space that used to be a nightclub, Nemiroff feels that the address itself already "served as a sign of difference, distinguishing Véhicule philosophically from the west-end galleries. In situating itself physically on the margins of downtown Montreal in the underbelly of the city's commercial activity, Véhicule announced its own marginality and made an anti-establishment gesture" (124-125). Despite this apparent countercultural stance, Véhicule started out being financially secure, receiving $103,000 from the Local Initiatives Program, and another $12,000 from the Canada Council for the Arts, in the first year and a half of their existence alone (Nemiroff, 142). Despite an original focus on promoting the visual arts in particular, a document of incorporation from 5 October 1972 suggests that Véhicule was inclusive to other artforms from the outset, aiming to "establish, maintain, and operate a center for the promotion, development, encouragement, and exposition of the arts, and to act as agents and promoters of the arts and artists […] To establish periodicals and publications […] To arrange for exhibitions and performances by artistic groups" (HA 367 – P027 Véhicule Art (Montréal) Inc. fonds). This cross-pollination between the visual arts, literature, publishing, performance, and other art forms, as well as the space's inherent potential as a venue for presenting literary readings, was soon harnessed and the first poetry reading was organized on 24 June 1973 by Stephen Morrissey, Guy Birchard, and Artie Gold. Claudia Lapp formalized this one-off reading into a series that intermittently hosted weekly poetry readings on Sunday afternoons at 2pm and quarterly open mic marathon events in Montreal, from the fall of 1973 to the spring of 1983. The curatorship of the reading series shifted over the course of the decade. According to Ken Norris, this chronology includes Artie Gold and Endre Farkas from 1974-1975, followed by G. C. Ian Burgess from 1975-1976. From 1976-1977, the series was co-organized by Stephen Morrissey, John McAuley, and Robert Galvin. Tom Konyves concluded the series with the longest organizational stint from Fall 1977 to Spring 1983, at which point the gallery had moved its location to "a more trendy space" at 307 St. Catherine Street West (*Vehicule Days* 7), was experiencing financial difficulties, administrative conflicts and factioning, and a conclusive dissolution of the umbrella project, its space, and goals.

The reading series and related literary objectives—both conceptual and the concrete publishing initiatives housed at the Véhicule space—were centered around, curated, and edited by the seven self-styled Véhicule Poets: Endre Farkas, Artie Gold, Tom Konyves, Claudia Lapp, John McAuley, Stephen Morrissey, and Ken Norris. What bound these poets together was less a collectively articulated valorization of literary aims and more of a blanket appreciation for novelty, experimentation, and openness—elements that clearly informed the ethos of the work presented and published at Véhicule. In a recent interview with rob mclennan, Endre Farkas suggests that

"[o]ur manifesto, if you can consider it such, was our experimenting: Tom with his videopoetry, me with my collaboration with dance and music, Stephen in his work with a visual artist, John with concrete poetry, Ken in collaboration with Tom, John, Stephen, and me. Claudia's 'radical' work was eroticism and feminism" ("Mouse Eggs An Interview" no pag.). He underscores an interlocking emphasis, between the poets' various practices, on pushing back against past expressions of literary production in favour of constant innovation. Their individual visions or aesthetic fascinations were not necessarily identical, but an umbrella concern with breaking away from previous traditions, doing things differently, approaching literary themes in new ways, and placing disciplines in conversation with each other, linked their work with a strand of the exploratory. As Farkas continues in the same interview with rob mclennan:

> Peter Van Toorn referred to the Vehicule Poets as "the messies" and to himself, Solway & Harris as "the neats." What he meant by "messy" was that that we didn't focus on craft and form. It was a "fun" and "derogatory" term at the same time. I think he and the other "neats" were wrong. We were probably as, if not more, concerned with craft. We just weren't reproducing / manufacturing the old forms. We were interested in "making it new." ("Mouse Eggs An Interview" no pag.)

The binary between "messies" and "neats" is, as Farkas notes, itself too tidy, but the overall sentiment of the schism is one that aligns Véhicule with a craft deliberately designed to valorize a disorderly, unsystematic mode of making—not necessarily on the individual level, but rather as a collective noun for all the radically divergent work poets associated with Véhicule were doing—and a product that relies on difference, experimentation, and novelty. At its most affirmative, this mode translates to an ethos of superlative support where poets explored new ways of making without being shackled to assessments of value that could inform or even censor those experiments.[21] More critically understood, however, a space defining itself through absolute acceptance and openness to literary diversity and against literary tradition as a concept, also had to contend with the cultural climate inherent to the time and place, which informed the kind of work being performed under the auspices of open and experimental. This climate included a renavigation of structures and a dismantling of disciplinary boundaries, but it also often materialized as a countercultural stance harnessed to misapply sexual liberation for a continued performance of machismo and the concomitant objectification of women within a stifling, sexist environment.[22] As Felicity Tayler convincingly argues about Véhicule as temporally positioned at the political aftermath of the October Crisis, and ongoing federal and provincial language debates in Canada and Quebec, the "material and social relations that produced this free space worked as a countermeasure to the link between language, territory, and social identity in political programs" ("Linguistic Therapy c. 1973" 198). Tayler likewise illustrates examples of ethnic and sexist slurs in personal journaling from Véhicule members, noting that "uncensored thoughts indicate how the linguistic space at Véhicule Art was not so much free from these pervasive cultural restraints" (196). While Véhicule articulated its space around politics of liberation as identified with individual freedom—a creative space where people could do as they pleased—this openness was

[21] Novelty is, of course, a construct, and much of what was understood as newness at the time, existed in resistance to preceding closed form poetics, and perceptions of tradition and canonicity.

[22] It is particularly fascinating and perhaps telling of the epoch that Véhicule as a gallery was founded by Suzy Lake and that Véhicule as a reading series was formalized by Claudia Lapp—both women—but that the dominant narrative about both gallery and reading series is one told mostly by men.

itself informed by a nominal bilingualism predicated on political language debates, and subject to the ventriloquizing of implicit (and sometimes explicit) sexism, racism, and other discriminatory gestures. Informed by the passing of time and different perspectives in relation to the archive, one could say that Véhicule was simultaneously a supportive and a discriminatory space. The tension of this polarity is difficult to resolve, but suffice it to say that due to the overall lack of gatekeeping at Véhicule "[p]eople started to refer to [...] 'Those fucking Véhicule poets, those people hanging around the gallery'" (Ken Norris interview, 16 August 2021), the expletive providing a sardonic or even antagonistic flavour to the group name and the literary work they represented.

Perhaps ironically, considering their named group identity, the Véhicule poets, and the projects initiated at Véhicule as a space and community, were uninterested in directing a unified expression of a certain school or movement or corpus of poetry. They were also indifferent to the notion of regulating or defining literary value. As articulated by Tom Konyves at a reading on 20 November 1978, the series focused more on "what is new than on what is good," purporting to support any literary experiment, disregarding the relevance of its final product (P027-11-0003 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds). In fact, in a series of essays about Véhicule and "Montreal English Poetry in the Seventies" more broadly, initially published in *Contemporary Verse 2* in 1978 and 1980, Ken Norris admits candidly that there was a consciousness among the Véhicule poets doubling as poetry reading curators that "some [work presented] was quite bad" (*Véhicule Days* 15). He continues, "[t]he poet was never meant to create art objects that become 'literature' […] The Véhicule poets have no intention of blunting their own shafts so that the reader [or the listener] can play the part of the happy consumer and have a gay old time, or so that you, as critic, can have that secure feeling of being happily ensconced in the hallowed halls of Art" (34). For Norris, the purpose of Véhicule is to make its audience uncomfortable, to challenge their expectations of what "good literature" is, to present itself as a countercultural space, and to resist the sanctification of literary tradition (which was experienced as "pretty dull and old fashioned" [Stephen Morrissey, personal correspondence, 30 August 2021]), priding itself on an arguably anti-capitalist acceptance of all literary production instead. Differently put, Véhicule—as the combination of poets and artists associated with Véhicule and its larger community, gallery and performance space—was defined through a radical acceptance of varying professionalism, aesthetic difference, experimentation, and novelty. In fact, in the minutes from a meeting held on 15 September 1972, the board members collectively voted that "openness was a guiding spirit to VÉHICULE" (HA 367 – P027 Véhicule Art (Montréal) Inc. fonds). This "openness," again reminiscent of Olson's work, can imply access, welcoming a diverse range of authors to share their work, but openness can also mean a lack of articulated and implemented intention as to the kind of work presented. One might think of Jo Freeman's writing from the 1970s about the dangers of organizational openness or structurelessness in relation to the Women's Liberation Movement. Freeman argues that a fetishization of "a myth of structurelessness [...] becomes capricious" by denying institutional regulation, but not checking the power imbalances formed around charismatic individuals and informal elite groups either ("The Tyranny of Structurelessness" 157). Regarding Véhicule, openness or curatorial structurelessness asserted itself as aesthetic promiscuity, in a way that both reaped the rewards of a superlatively supportive environment for writers to try out new literary approaches and outputs, and led to the unquestioning acceptance of the new.

The events hosted varied widely to include what Caroline Bayard interprets as a compression "within less than a decade [of] the major aesthetic explorations, concretism and post-modernism, which their older counterparts in Toronto and Vancouver had spent twenty years

upon" (*The New Poetics* 111). Case in point, the archive of scheduling rosters, posters, and communication records an array of performative experiments, whether serendipitous or rehearsed. On the accidental end of the spectrum, for example, Ron Benner exhibited an installation of taxidermied goat feet called *Dead Heat*, 1976-1977, that were strategically littered across the gallery floor; Michael Ondaatje, who only happened to be reading during the run of the exhibition, thus found himself comically performing among a landscape of caprine limbs. Otherwise, deliberately performative sets range from a staging of sound poetry by the Four Horsemen, through collaborations of dance, music, and poetry by various practitioners, to videopoetry screenings, and more. More straightforward readings could likewise vary in theme, style, genre, and between in-process and published work. Stephen Morrissey recalls:

> They were readings of randomly chosen texts, poems read simultaneously by several voices, the purposeful inclusion of silence in a performance, and John Cage-like use of randomness in texts and their performance. [...] A performance at Véhicule might include having the whole audience reading texts simultaneously out loud, it was a cacophony of meaningless human voices; the implications of this were open-ended and lent themselves to a variety of interpretations. My first reading for voices, performing my poem "regard as sacred," was with Guy Birchard at the 24 June 1973 reading at Véhicule Art. (Stephen Morrissey, personal correspondence, 30 August 2021)

Felicity Tayler has noted that many of Véhicule's projects "drew inspiration from Fluxus performance scores" (194), and the choral, improvisational acts described above definitely smack of Happenings, Events, and other collective, collaborative experiments taking place in the seventies.[23] These deliberately performative experiments were supported, however, by two dominant reading modes for events at Véhicule, namely two-person features and open mic marathon events. The former hosted numerous established North American authors such as Kenneth Koch, Anne Waldman, Constance DeJong, and even Marina Abramović from the U.S., and names such as bill bissett, Robin Blaser, Daphne Marlatt, among many others, from Canada—manifesting some crossover with the Sir George Williams Poetry Series' billing a decade earlier. Records also show that seemingly indiscriminate scores of undergraduate, Cegep, and high-school students, only beginning to hone their craft, were likewise welcomed to the mic for readings which occasionally exceeded four or five hours, extending well beyond midnight. While this diversity in the kinds of events hosted at Véhicule is directly illustrative of the series' receptivity towards experiment, it likewise embodies a sense of changeability in terms of form aligned with the openness of a poem composed according to the needs of the individual text rather than a fixed structure—an open field reading series of sorts.

As I move from background narrative to a more granular engagement with particular archival events decades after the fact, it is important to take the gaps and lacunae of the archive into account—this archive being the physical repository where I personally spent many days

[23] Consider Susan Sontag's description of Happenings: "To describe a Happening for those who have not seen one [...] They don't take place *on* a stage conventionally understood, but *in* a dense object-clogged setting which may be made, assembled, or found, or all three. In this setting a number of participants, *not* actors, perform movements and handle objects antiphonally and in concert to the accompaniment (sometimes) of words, wordless sounds, music, flashing lights, and odors. The Happening has no plot, though it is an action, or rather a series of actions and events. It also shuns continuous rational discourse, though it may contain words" ("Happenings: an art of radical juxtaposition" 263-264).

immersing myself in historical traces: folders of posters, photographs, typewritten and handwritten administrative notes, applications, and correspondence, as well as the original reel-to-reel audio recordings and their digitized counterparts. Significantly, many events remained undocumented, even as additional recordings, not hosted at the central Véhicule fonds at Concordia University, but rather in individual poets' repositories at McGill University or in private collections, are slowly being uncovered, and might eventually challenge or expand this current research. However that may be, the audio recordings preserved in the Véhicule archive today provide an unsystematic and selective perspective for understanding the range of readings hosted. Documented communication with poets, posters, and other advertisements, as well as recent oral history interviews with some of the Véhicule poets, offer traces of events with authors that are missing from the audio archive itself. Moreover, whether or not an event was recorded seems to have been the result of chance circumstance. Nemiroff confirms that documentation of events was only "supplemented when borrowed equipment was available by videotape recordings" (149) and that once a Portapak video camera was purchased in the mid-1970s, interest had shifted towards the creation of video art over documentary audiovisual reels. This unmethodical approach to audio recordings of Véhicule's complete literary scheduling limits contemporary access to the sound of the events, skews an understanding of Véhicule's curatorial agency, and underlines the porous authority of the archive when viewed as a static window and soundtrack onto the past. I must acknowledge, then, that my analysis of curatorial openness with regards to Véhicule's billing is informed by this partial audio record which is coincidentally slanted towards the large group or marathon events that included predominantly younger, Montreal-based student poets rather than many of the more collaborative performances and the smaller, two-person feature events of more established and visiting Canadian and American poets that I know took place on an almost weekly basis, but cannot retrieve to hear again.

"hanging poems on the wall or poets on the wall": Spatial Relationality at Véhicule Art Inc.

During the process of conducting oral history interviews with a number of the Véhicule poets, the importance of the space itself—the night club-cum-artists'-run centre at 61 St. Catherine Street West—is a repeated point of curatorial concern. Véhicule's status as a gallery intended for the display and dissemination of both material and performance-based visual art positions it architecturally and conceptually within a tradition of exhibition studies, and as indebted to a practice of wall-mounting and venue layout. Simultaneously, Véhicule is a hybrid space, moonlighting as a reading series performance venue, a site for the literary community to congregate, and the eventual headquarters for a printing studio. Importantly, the diversity of activities taking place at Véhicule implies that the rules of engagement within the space are destabilized, absorbing and counteracting a mélange of disciplinary conventions. Since those disciplinary conventions were introduced into the space by artists, writers, and bookmakers who themselves did not want to abide by the traditions from which they were emanating, the interdisciplinarity, or convergence of activities, resulted in an open understanding of the space, influenced but not governed by the strictures of exhibition making, event organization, book publishing, and so forth. Trying to retroactively discern how the reading series, in particular, was shaped in relation to the space—or, how the curation of the reading series was influenced by the walls and the space between the walls—it is important to remember that Véhicule is not a neutral or exclusively literary zone, but rather one inserted into, and therefore existing adjacent to, the practices of visual art display, among other disciplinary procedures on site. In terms of a spatial curatorial relationality, or how literary event curation is understood and practiced between the

Véhicule walls, literary events at Véhicule are predicated on both an understanding of visual art exhibiting as being different to the poetry reading *and* an assimilation of exhibition-making's tenets into the spatial dynamics of Véhicule as a literary venue.

Endre Farkas, for one, understands poetry reading organization as unambiguously distinct from the act of curating a visual arts exhibition, especially as it relates to the spatial dimension of presenting work on gallery walls and the possibility of relational exchange and interconnection hinging on venue affordances. In a conversation of 22 July 2021, he exclaims, "[u]nless you're hanging poems on the wall or poets on the wall, you're not curating. We ran a reading series which means that people came and read. It was a series and we ran it" (Endre Farkas interview, 22 July 2021). The image is an evocative one. One can almost see the poets displayed on the Véhicule gallery walls, acrobatically balancing, limbs asunder, yet still projecting poems into the room with the durational agony of experiment. Farkas' image is intended as a provocation, an impossibility even, and yet compellingly—concretely—west coast poet Gerry Gilbert *did curate* a 1978 reading at Véhicule according to Farkas' definition of the term, embracing the relational spatial dynamics that doing so implies. Gilbert did not literally hang himself on the wall, and he did not hang other poets on the wall either, but he did display his poems in one long line of paper printouts around the edge of the Véhicule space in a performative, installation- or exhibition-like gesture, as can been seen in Images 3 and 4. This suggests that, unlike Farkas, Gilbert was receptive to Véhicule as a gallery space influencing the presentation of his poetic presentation. Tom Konyves recalls:

> When [Gerry Gilbert] came to Véhicule, he put his poems up on the wall, sheets of paper up on the wall. [...] So he just walked and faced the wall, which is kind of funny. The idea, in retrospect, you know, that was quite different, that you didn't have the sheet of paper in front of you reading it... I mean, that's all he had to do was take all those sheets of paper that he put on the wall and read it to his audience, but no, he put them on the wall. Almost like a visual gesture in the end. And I guess maybe he wanted to leave it up there. So when the reading was over, people can go up and see it and read it. But he would go up and he would walk, read one and then walk two feet, read the next one, you know. (Tom Konyves interview, 25 August 2021)

A 13-minute video produced by Konyves shows Gilbert—now blanched out and pixelated with the passing of time and the process of digitization—performing with a row of poems hanging on the wall behind him just below eye level (*The Vehicule Poets* website). He reads first from a notebook facing the audience, a step away from the podium and not using the mic, and then turns away from the audience, walks along the wall, reading directly from the pages he had hung there. Throughout the reading, the microphone is angled at the wall, giving the impression that the exhibition of poems is in fact performing and articulating itself at the audience (see Image 3). Gilbert appears as a mediator of or collaborator with the pages, merging the vocalization of his poems in performance with the more durational stance of the visual arts exhibition, curating the poems onto the walls for audience members to read at their own pace later on. Both in Farkas' statement and in Gilbert's performance, then, the wall as a space for the presentation of poems becomes a metaphor for curatorial intention with regards to the poetry reading: for Farkas, the wall represents exaggerated and affected labour dedicated to the visual arts that should not, in his opinion, be part of running a reading series; for Gilbert, the wall signals his consideration of the structure of his performance in a particular space beyond the default of reading them out loud in front of an audience. By sticking the poems up along the wall, Gilbert shows an awareness of the

space he is performing in. He designs the choreography of his reading, situating props that enable him to move within the space in relation to the position of the poems, and structuring his set with non-standard cues. He has also shifted the role of his poems from vocalized, ephemeral instantiations of literature in performance to durable, visually readable works of art presented on the wall. As scholar Ingrid Schaffner confirms in an essay on the prevalence of wall texts in visual arts gallery spaces, the moment text is presented on the wall, it "is an opportunity to transmit insights, inspire interest, and to point to the fact that choices have been made" ("Wall Text" 156). While Gilbert's work is not wall text in the informative, pedagogical sense, but rather poetry that poses as works of art on the wall, Gilbert has indeed made the choice to take the literal openness afforded him by the spacious gallery setting and its undecorated walls at the time of his event to augment the default mode of poetry in performance and to outline his reading with text as equated to the physical edges of the room. Mobilizing the conceptual openness and lack of guidelines provided by Véhicule's reading series curators, he activated a spatial curatorial relationality, heightening the degree of his own curatorial agency in relation to the room, the audience, and the set he performs at Véhicule. Not only projecting his voice into the space of the room and in relation to the audience, he brings the print versions of his poems into relational exchange with the walls, offering the walls as architectural pages for his work in performance.

In contrast to both Farkas and Gilbert, Véhicule's walls comes to represent, for Konyves, not only the outer limits of horizontal venue space, but also the vertical backdrop of the poetry reading stage—the physical framing of the wall, in a way, *is* the stage which distinguishes the poet from the audience, while simultaneously collectively delimiting the venue space. Konyves suggests that his primary conceptualization of the poetry reading is dominated by the image of a wall: "I remember a brick wall, and reading in front of a brick wall. If image-wise, we're going to explain to someone who has never heard of poetry readings, I would say that it would be reading in front of a brick wall, with or without a microphone to an audience" (Tom Konyves interview, 25 August 2021). The archetype of the literary event becomes a poet reading their work in front of a wall. The poet might not quite be affixed to that surface, but the poet is etched out in relief to the space behind them, and in relation to the space surrounding them, as they project their voice away from the wall towards the audience. If the wall has become the symbol for a poet's curatorial agency in relation to the space and series they are performing at, then the wall (implying also the poet's physical and conceptual position in relation to the wall) as archetype of the poetry reading implies a base level of curatorial foresight, no matter whether that deliberation is founded on trying to be as non-curatorial, as spontaneous, and as open-minded as possible. It is useful to consider Brian O'Doherty's classic analysis of the "white cube" space of recent and contemporary museums in relation to the space created at the Véhicule gallery through the construction of surrounding walls, especially as those walls signal curatorial intention. The utopian project of the white cube gallery "subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is 'art.' The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. This gives the space presence" (*Inside the White Cube* 14). Countering the validity of this kind of space, however, O'Doherty clearly states that the "wall's apparent neutrality is an illusion. It stands for a community with common ideas and assumptions" (79). Whether used to display work or to shape the space in which work is presented, the wall is "a participant in, rather than a passive support for the art [...and] the locus of contending ideologies" (29). In terms of Véhicule, the walls are, of course, the material edges of the space, but they also structure the conceptual assumptions of the community and the work that its members presented. Spatial relationality implicitly actuates an institutional relationality too, confirming the venue in material terms as a vehicle for the

dissemination of art and performance. It is the walls, and the space between the walls, and how poetry in performance relates to that in-between of the walls, that exert spatial curatorial relationality within Véhicule, positioning it within a curatorial tradition not only of wall-hung art, but also of conceptual art, performance art, and more—art that functions spatially and was building currency throughout the 1970s.

Image 3: Video still of Gerry Gilbert's 1978 performance, showing the microphone angled towards poems stuck to the wall (00:01:46).

Image 4: Video still of Gerry Gilbert's 1978 performance, showing him reading directly from the poems stuck to the wall (00:11:50).

As Christiane Paul writes, for example, the "'museum without walls,' [is] a parallel, distributed, living, information space that is open to artistic interference—a space for exchange, collaborative

creation, and presentation that is transparent and flexible" ("Challenges for a Ubiquitous Museum" 53). Art, poetry, and poetry in performance do not need walls as surfaces to exhibit on or as visible edges to a venue. Rather, to the contrary, walls come to mean the deliberate removal of walls as they unfold into the open space which, in turn, allows the poetry reading to exist as a congregation of community for projecting, voicing, and in turn, listening to sound and literature in space.

Taking a step back, I am aware of the risks, playing a speculative game as researcher. Making a point about the omnipresence and inherent agency of curating as a form of labour, I engage with Farkas' dismissal of curation and amplify his deliberately outlandish image of poems and poets hanging on the wall. I then find not only that his image has precedent at Véhicule, but also that it might arguably depict a run-of-the-mill event. Poems literally do hang on the wall at Véhicule. Poets are literally framed against the background of a wall when reading their work. It is a stretch to say that literary curation equates to hanging poems and poets on walls—but is it? My aim in playing this conceptual game is to underscore this stretch or tension, and to illustrate the near impossibility of a reading series, and its organizers, distancing itself completely from some incorporation of curation, however differently and loosely interpreted and applied. Walls aside, the question is not *whether* a reading series is curated, but *how* or *to which extent.* I know that an unsympathetic reaction towards the word *curation* is not uncommon, especially when projecting it back onto the past from its glib contemporary position. It is read as pretentious, a glorified title for an ordinary position. One might think here of celebrity curator Hans Ulrich Obrist who himself mocks the ubiquity of curation, joking that "[a] clothing retailer sells a brightly coloured style of trousers called the 'curator pant,' while a brand called CURATED promises 'a new experience in retail design' [...] The sociologist Mike Davis criticized Barack Obama by describing him as 'the chief curator of the Bush legacy' [...] It's fairly obvious that 'curating' is being used in a greater variety of contexts than ever before" (*Ways of Curating* 22-23). And yet, when Farkas insists, "[w]e ran a reading series [...] It was a series and we ran it," that *running* is inherently athletic. On the one hand, the little verb is embedded with a myriad organizational and promotional tasks, taking for granted the labour of simply being present, hosting events, welcoming guests, communicating with poets before those events, maintaining the gallery space, applying for grants, and so many more incrementally important tasks that together build up to be the brawny project called a reading series. On the other hand, the understated term *running* is a clear assertion of the reading series' curatorial ethos at the time—no frills, no interference, but an open space for sometimes vastly different poets to do their thing, a space inherently enacting a relational exchange with the curatorial decisions made within it, however minimal. Ken Norris, who is much more amenable to the term *curation* in relation to Véhicule, allows for a linguistic assimilation of the visual arts context in which poetry readings were happening, and thereby confirms my reasoning, drawing both the administrative labour and a general sense of openness into his definition of curation. He suggests that curation is not an extravagant addition to the organization of a reading series, but rather the foundational task of selection—the walls of the event, so to speak—when it comes to inviting writers to present their work. He enumerates:

> Let's bring in the Four Horsemen. Let's bring in Michael Ondaatje. Let's bring in bill bissett. Let's bring Robert Kelly and let's bring Terry Stokes in. Let's bring Robin Blaser in. Let's bring Daphne Marlatt in. Let's bring Anne Waldman in. Since we love the New York School of Poets, let's bring one of them in. Let's bring Kenneth Koch in because we can't afford Ashbery, but we can get this guy. I mean, that to me is curation. [...] So I'm here to

> affirm curation taking place in the 1970s in terms of poets who were being selected for the reading series. (Ken Norris interview, 16 August 2021)

This is a particularly noteworthy narrativization of the organization of the Véhicule reading series because it emphasizes a sequence of similar duties revolving around a spirit of decision-making as placed in relation to the very diverse range of poets included as part of the series. Despite aesthetic, practice-based, geographic differences, and more, a decision is made to invite bill bissett equally as a decision is made to invite Kenneth Koch. That is, a decision is repeatedly made to "bring in" each one of these poets, amplifying a site-specific metaphor of entrance into the Véhicule premises. The invitational hospitality of bringing poets in between the physical walls of the space, equally as into the series and its scene, underscores the spatial relationality of contextualizing poets within the architectonic potentials and constraints of the space. Norris continues to explain that these decisions were driven by curiosity among the Véhicule poets to hear particular authors who they had not had the opportunity to engage with before, using their platform—or their set of walls—to absorb new poetic stimulation in the process. This curiosity-driven billing implies that curation was based on a forward-looking expectation of hypothetical inspiration and aesthetic alliance, rather than a predetermined knowledge that Véhicule as a reading series would necessarily support the work that invited readers presented. Although invitations are filtered through the preferences of those involved with the series, poets first enter the walls of Véhicule and then become part of its archive, rather than being framed as ideal candidates for this inclusion from the get-go. There is a gap embedded into this decision-making implying that, although curation was happening at Véhicule, its presence did not negate a spirit of openness residing within the curatorial gesture of invitation. Differently phrased, the act of curatorial invitation was contingent on entering the spatial relationality of the series' venue and that, through physical presence within and engagement with its symbolic walls, poets became active participants in the open curatorial project of Véhicule Art Inc.

"It was a series and we ran it": The First Annual Spring Poetry Marathon and Durational Relationality at Véhicule Art Inc.

Sporadically hosted at the Véhicule premises, or occasionally at the then Sir George Williams University (now Concordia), on a quarterly basis, the open mic events—sometimes billed as "marathon" readings—aimed to include as many poets as possible, particularly welcoming young and early career writers. A signup sheet was circulated preceding events and again during the marathons themselves, and poets were encouraged to share their work in whichever order they arrived in at the actual events. Marathons could exceed four hours and were structured by very short breaks between sets of ten readers. Ken Norris recalls, what he calls, "open readings, often at the end of the Fall reading series; around Christmastime there'd be an open reading and then in May there'd be an open reading. We also started doing this thing called the Spring Poetry Marathon. One of them was held at Véhicule and that had a lot of readers, that was like 50 people. Everybody gets 6 minutes, or something like that" (Ken Norris interview, 16 August 2021). As memory tends to contradict itself, Endre Farkas remembers marathon events with "about 40 people. I don't know how many readers, but there we limited to 3-5 minutes. We had an egg timer, and when the egg timer went off, whether you were in the middle of a poem or not, you had to stop" (Endre Farkas interview, 22 July 2021). In the available audio recordings no egg timer is audible and nobody is stopped halfway through their reading; in contrast, most poets continued reading for about 10 minutes on average, with a lineup of between 25 and 30 readers per event.

Despite these small variations, and perhaps exaggerations, the main sentiment remains the same: the marathon readings were open in the most expansive sense, inviting all poets to share their work, disregarding their aesthetic preferences or degree of professionalism, and unconcerned with reading order, event time limits, or audience stamina. The marathon readings were conceived of as a freeform gathering where curating was limited to ensuring that people showed up, listened, and read. Due to the time restriction placed on individual poets' sets, the possibility of self-curation was also confined to the ordering of a handful of poems, implying an overall audio collage of organic, incremental performances, not conducive to predetermined thematic or structural cohesion. When considering the durational largesse of these marathon events, Endre Farkas' quip about running a reading series is ripe for puns: "We ran a reading series which means that people came and read. It was a series and we ran it" (Endre Farkas interview, 22 July 2021). Were these events *run* by the organizers? Or were the poets themselves *running* a race, a deliberately durational relay of increasingly expanding increments of poetry? Relationally, the temporal expansiveness of a marathon reading exemplified the open curatorial mode, working against deliberate dialogic cohesion between poets and towards an ongoing stream of independent content instead. The marathon as a format favoured quantity, taxing audience attention through the durational prerequisite of listening for hours, but also amplifying the gesture of hospitality inherent to the open invitation to perform.

The First Annual Spring Poetry Marathon, which took place in the Hall Building of what is now Concordia University, Room H-820, 8pm, 4 April 1975, represents the open curatorial mode so characteristic of open mic readings generally and of the durational approach of Véhicule's marathon events in particular. Hosted by Endre Farkas, Farkas' previously quoted dismissal of the curatorial labour involved in organizing and hosting a literary reading coincides with his method of minimal interference in running this long haul event. The marathon unfolded as a sequence of succinct readings by poets, featuring some Véhicule poets—Artie Gold, Ken Norris, Claudia Lapp, and Tom Konyves—and a total of fourteen male and twelve female readers, some named and some anonymous. The audio recording of the event begins with some warping of the sound on the reel, followed by background conversation, and a voice testing out the height of the microphone. This voice, it turns out, belongs to the first, unnamed reader himself, who quickly continues with his set. Farkas as host provides no general introduction to the format and expectations of the event, no words of welcome to the audience, and no biographical statement about the opening reader, duties often accepted as the minimal requirements for presenting an event. Throughout the marathon event, Farkas' hosting style is limited to calling out poets' names when it's their turn to read and occasionally checking that his list of readers is up to date. Thirty minutes into the reading, he halts, for example:

> Before we go on, I just want to find out if any of the people whose name I'm going to call out is here and then if they are, I'll put them in the stack. Bob McGee, no, Pat Ewing, Patricia Ewing, no, Ray Gordy, yeah, I just thought I saw you here. No, ok. Dianne Keating, Richard Sommer, no, Claudia Lapp, no, Tom Konyvyes, no, Carole TenBrink, no, Gertrude Katz, Carol Leckner, no. Ok, the next reader is Robert Morrison. After 10 readers, I think we can call a 2, 3 minute break, ok, and then we'll work it in shifts of 10. (P0027-11-0008.1 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:29:28)

This roll call—which is repeated ten minutes later with slight variations of names and poets who are absent or present—emphasizes the importance of a continuous progression of content. Some

of the poets called, absent at the time, perform towards the end of the night. Who the poets are and the order in which they perform are less relevant than ensuring a flow of voices. The marathon, by definition durational, ensues like a relay race that is contingent on a constant stream of literature. The durational relationality fostered between the lineup of readers negates preconceived dialogic exchange, even as it asserts a temporal interconnection. Readers come together to add up their incremental, short sets into an ongoing temporal scale of perpetual, communal literary performance. And Farkas' job as organizer is to keep passing on the mic and to keep a signal passing through it.

Interestingly, an additional role that Farkas does enact—and that corresponds to his task of ensuring a steady flow of content during the reading—is to solicit submissions for various poetry publications. Introducing Ken Norris, for example, he goes beyond merely calling his name, adding, "Ken is the editor of *Cross Country* and he's preparing an issue on all Montreal poets, both French and English. So if you have material that you want to submit to him, do it here while he's here or better yet, buy a *Cross Country*, look up the address and then send it to him" (P0027-11-0008.3 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:22:39). Farkas reiterates an almost identical call for submissions for a forthcoming fourth issue of *Anthol* magazine when introducing Robert Morrison; an unidentified male voices suggests from the sidelines that the editors would "be appreciative" of the content received (P0027-11-0008.1 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:30:42). A phrase like "all Montreal poets" and the overall welcoming stance of *needing* rather than *accepting* submissions underscore the inclusivity and openness of the promotional endeavour. The attitude is not one of authority, gatekeeping, and literary selection, but rather one of openness and enthusiasm for new work, no matter what that work may be. By soliciting content for local publications and the marathon poetry reading in almost equal measure, Farkas is identifying his role of literary event organizer and host with that of community mediator and literary promoter, aligning himself with the various roles of performance, presentation, publication, and exhibition characteristic of Véhicule as a holistically generative creative project. On the night of the marathon, he is *running* a reading series—that exists adjacent to and in relation with other projects of literary dissemination—providing a platform and infrastructure for poets to share their work, and ensuring the growth and resilience of the local literary community through a preoccupation with the quantity of work being performed and published. In a sense, he projects the durational nature of the event even further into the future, harnessing the amount of people present to prolong the reading across media into publishing terrain too. As host, Farkas opts out of providing context about the poets, asserting opinion about the poetry, or offering any kind of curatorial framing for the lineup of readers. Instead, he fosters an open space in which the host figures only to support the constant process of immersing the community and culture surrounding Véhicule with new poetic output. He sustains the forward-looking durational continuity of the community's literary public-making and exchange.

The poets echo the open curatorial mode modelled by Farkas as host. Or differently phased, the poets inhabit and *run with* the space and attitude constructed for them. Even though the Véhicule organizers never positioned themselves as figures of authority who could impose modes of poetry and performance, openness begets openness. The open curatorial stance typified by Farkas' hosting style, in this particular case study, is arguably perpetuated by the poets who often perform nonchalance regarding the poems they read while insisting on a deliberate lack of foresight in what they decide to share at the mic. Many of the poets favour a rhetoric of spontaneity and novelty—the poems they share are newly written or read for a first time; because they are so new and because the poets themselves allegedly have not yet formed an opinion about their work, the

poems are not necessarily understood to be good and, while deciding to share these new poems, their authors do not bear responsibility for their reception. Similar to the event's hosting style, these newborn poems valorize the act of sharing over the content of what is being shared.

> These are just any old poems. There's nothing particular about them. [audience laughter]. (Peter Cane, P0027-11-0008.2 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:42:28)
>
> This is one I just wrote, so I don't know about it. (Gary Alexander, P0027-11-0008.3 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:33:35)
>
> This is a very recent poem. [...] Another very recent poem. (Tom Konyves, P0027-11-0008.4 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:14:44)
>
> Everything I have is new ok. Hopefully nobody has ever heard this before. (Carol Leckner, P0027-11-0008.4 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:03:53)

To a degree, this valorization of novelty is anti-durational. The status of the new poem, decontextualized from the scene of its production and still unaffirmed by the passing of time, hovers in a poetic ground zero from which it is valorized by virtue of being fresh and untested. Unfettered by expectations of fitting into poets' larger bodies of work or practices, and unmoored from judgements of quality or canonicity, an event conceptualized as an ongoing, ever-expanding sequence of new poems that connects relationally into a marathon helps to direct performing poets' curatorial choices. So Claudia Lapp affirms, for example, that her personal curatorial choices were organic and spontaneous. Without preselecting poems to read, she had signed up to present, and then assumedly shown up with more poems than it was possible to perform during a 5-10-minute set. Audibly paging through her poems, she exclaims, "I'm not going to give any program notes at all. I'm just going to read. God, it's hard to choose, it's really hard to choose. You want to talk to everybody and you have a special poem for everybody, you know, anyway" (P0027-11-0008.4 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds). Despite the difficulty of selecting work to share, Lapp does not do that labour on her own time, but chooses poems on the fly, approaching her set as an impromptu occasion to present work as autonomous pieces of literature with no required preamble. This spontaneity coincides with the openness of the occasion and her desire to include every attendee through personal address, and is jarring at the same time, showing an unformed curiosity about shaping her set to be deliberately amenable to her listeners.

This push and pull between a higher degree of curatorial agency in shaping the reading set and going with the open flow instead, is exemplified in Carol Leckner's similar if even more expansive deliberation on her self-curation in relation to the marathon event lineup towards the end of the night:

> Let's see. Figuring I'll be coming after the next person, I would be rearranging what I'd be reading according to what was coming before and then I gave up about two or three poets ago, so I actually have no idea what I'm going to read. Just give me a second. Well there's been a lot of every different kind of poem and I'm exhausted. It's been very hard for me to keep listening. I've never had to work so hard at a poetry reading. Phew-phew-phew. So I guess you must be too. So here's an easy one. Everything I have is new ok. Hopefully

> nobody has ever heard this before, except for two people I've read this on the phone to. (P0027-11-0008.4 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:03:08)

Significantly, Leckner signals an intention to select relevant poems to enter into conversation with those of the readers preceding her at the mic. This is a gesture almost reminiscent of impromptu deep curation, one which shows Leckner as not merely wanting to present work as an autonomous instantiation of authorship, but also as a dialogic exchange with the poetry surrounding her performance. The curatorial style of the marathon reading, however, renders impossible this desire for a more interconnected reading. Not knowing which order she will be reading in means that she cannot deliberate on her set in relational terms, can only speculate as to when she might be called to the mic, an exhausting task of repeatedly selecting poems to follow a given poet, just to realize she is not performing yet. Moreover, if Leckner tries to create a poetic conversation between the work of readers, the general diversity of billing throughout the night—"a lot of every different kind of poem"—demands a constant and complete renegotiation of what she might read and is simply not conducive to the interconnected curatorial work she attempts to introduce. Repeating Lapp's expression of difficulty, she admits, "I'm exhausted [...] I've never had to work so hard at a poetry reading." As a result, she defaults to what poets before her have done, reading poems with no apparent thematic or conceptual continuity with the reading that precedes hers, and celebrating novelty and difference instead. If she cannot, as one lone poet among many, curate her poetry into a more reciprocal understanding of the event as a whole, then she must announce her own individuality as a poet instead, insisting that "[e]verything I have is new ok."

The durational nature of the marathon, along with the lineup of consistently changing readers, almost by definition projects an open curatorial mode onto the event. As illustrated by Leckner's commentary, the fluid, first-come-first-served style reading order asserts a lack of interdependence between the sets, the sets being, in turn, too short to really allow for autonomous self-curation either. Each reading of 5-10 minutes thus serves as an independent container for presenting poetry, unconnected to what precedes or follows, and yet collectively amassing as a varying medley of poetry with an ultimate goal of sharing as much poetry, and as much new poetry, as possible. The length of the event also has the secondary effect of eroding concentration and immersive listening, and pushing the poets waiting to share their work to the point of physical and mental exhaustion. As Carole TenBrink explains, "[w]hen I came in, I didn't have the kind of energy necessary for poetry and I have even less now, so I'm just going to read two short poems" (P0027-11-0008.4 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:31:18). The general atmosphere of the event has become one of endurance, a mirage, as she continues, "[a]fter 4 hours of reading poetry, maybe the question of what is real [...] has a particular meaning, I don't know" (00:32:36). As the reading ran beyond midnight and the attendees had been locked into the building by security who imagined that everyone had already gone home, Farkas encourages, only "three more to go, so don't worry. I don't think anyone's stayed in this lecture hall this long" (P0027-11-0008.4 Véhicule Art [Montréal] Inc. fonds 00:02:53). Leckner responds, "[i]t's only because you know you'll be reading" (00:03:00). Her response—couched in a joke and received with audience laughter—is telling nonetheless, not only for its acknowledgement of fatigue, but more significantly for admitting that her primary intention for being in attendance is to share her poetry. Even while intended as humour, this attitude reflects Véhicule as a platform for vocalizing a constant flow of new and growing content, but not one that necessarily sustains the capability of an intention to listen to, support, and enter into intentional exchange with others. That is, the marathon open reading is articulated as a platform to build community, to include everybody, to

support aspiring and emerging authors without censorship or expectation, and to share and, as far as possible, to listen to poetry. In contrast to these goals, the curatorial construction of the marathon—the prolonged nature of the event, the variety of content presented, the lack of contextual guidance and intentional reading order—work against the inherent stamina required to listen to poetry at all.

Innovation for Curation's Sake: Carole TenBrink, Janet Kask, and Durational Relationality

In contrast to the version of durational relationality modelled in the prolonged marathon readings—one that mobilized the open curatorial format through the quantity and diversity of performers—an alternative rendering of durational relationality is active at the two-person reading features also prevalent at Véhicule. The double bill of Carole TenBrink and Janet Kask, hosted on the Sunday afternoon of 5 March 1978, exemplifies this centralizing of openness, experimentation, and novelty as based on the substantive time span that the poets inhabit in the self-curation of their work. Outwardly a contradiction, the two-person format would seem to align itself more closely with the traditional curatorial format and ethos of the Sir George Williams poetry series than the freeform, open approach of Véhicule; however, this format is applied here exactly in order to provide time for a durational relational investigation of poetic innovation. The reading in question was organized in two main sets, the first running for just under an hour and dedicated to TenBrink's performance, and the second recorded for 45 minutes, but starting in the middle of a sentence, suggesting that someone forgot to press record and that the full reading might have been a bit longer; the second set focuses on Kask's work, but also includes some collaborative reading with TenBrink of children's poetry. Both poets spend a substantial portion of their respective sets—a ratio nearing the "one third" calculated by Jason Camlot as exemplary of the formal, university expectation ("Robert Creeley in Transition" 223)—to discussing their poetics and their ideological stances in relation to the kind of work produced and performed, especially as relevant to the Véhicule series. The double bill divided into two lengthy solo readings, interspersed with lecture-like exposition, is so reminiscent of the framed and full-length reading structure encouraged at the Sir George Williams poetry series that it becomes necessary to disentangle the curatorial similarities between the kinds of events hosted at the two reading series and to note how the same reading format might function in divergent ways as they exist within different contexts.

That is, a reading format suggested to the poets and therefore imposed by series curators as the default mode must be different from the same format chosen independently by the poets themselves. Although the reading format captured in the recording by TenBrink and Kask appears to mimic the same formal, curatorial structure of an event hosted at the Sir George Williams series, the format itself does not equate to a framed approach. Although their reading approaches an academic reading in Lesley Wheeler's terms, one which is more informed by the lecture than by poetic performance (*Voicing American Poetry*), the purposes of TenBrink and Kask's sets do not align with the university event's canonization and celebration of authorial merit. Housed within the overarching, open curatorial mandate of Véhicule, and contrasted to the variety show model of many of the other open mic, marathon events, the decision to foreground and exercise a durational relationality within an event divided into two sets of combined lecture and literary performance seems almost innovative (especially when the lack of audio recordings in the archive limit an understanding of how many other events followed the same structure). In an oral history interview conducted on 2 August 2021, TenBrink confirms that the Véhicule organizers did not specify what the format of the reading should be, offering up the stage without guidance or expectations for what the reading should encompass. When asked directly whether she remembers receiving any

guidelines about how or what to perform, she responds, "[y]ou mean in terms of what to perform? [...] Or how to perform? No. No, it was completely up to us" (Carole TenBrink interview, 2 August 2021). She repeatedly emphasizes the "open" nature of the invitation to present work, as well as the support this openness entailed; by trusting the poets to present work of their choosing and to format that presentation as they pleased, the Véhicule organizers implicitly encouraged the poets to perform themselves as authentically as possible, to share their poetics in a manner and form that suited their needs, desires, and whims, and to embody their preconceptions of what a poetry reading should or should not be. While TenBrink cannot remember the exact discussion that she and Kask had regarding the format of the event—and while I have unfortunately been unable to locate Kask herself—it is safe to assume that, if the Véhicule organizers were not demanding a given reading format, then at the very least, the two poets must have had a brief discussion deciding to read in two sets, in the order of TenBrink first and Kask second, and including a short selection of collaboratively performed children's poems. In other words, there was a basic intention on the poets' side to present their work in a fairly conventional, but also professional way. They decided to each inhabit a prolonged reading duration to let the audience sink into their respective poetic practices, and to use the freedom afforded them to adapt Véhicule's general encouragement of innovation in the presentation of their own personal poetic experimentation. Significantly, both poets deliberate on their respective understandings of what innovation and experimentation mean to them while discussing their poetics. The time span of their performances inform and support their ability to showcase an awareness of being hosted at Véhicule in particular, as a space celebrating literary novelty and change, even as the event organizers at Véhicule themselves did not actively dictate the terms for participating in their reading series. This implies that while TenBrink and Kask structured their event to resemble a formal, university-style occasion, they were simultaneously conscious of the ethos of the open form series, integrating that knowledge into the lecture portion of their performances, and harnessing durational relationality to an intentionalized curatorial output.

During her performance, TenBrink, for example, makes a direct statement about her personal interpretation of experimental poetry, clearly illustrating its importance within the larger Véhicule context:

> Véhicule professes interest in experimental poetry and I guess experimental poetry can mean many things, concrete poetry, among other things, but to me the only real experiment happens when a poet finds a new language to give an exact shape to what his consciousness needs to say. And one person who was able to innovate with language in that way was Gertrude Stein. I don't claim to have found my own language, but I begin to feel how it should be and it has some affinity to Gertrude Stein. (P0027-11-0009.1 Véhicule Art (Montréal) Inc. fonds 00:26:51)

Using the time at her disposal, TenBrink strategically positions her poetics in relation to what she knows to be important for Véhicule, mirroring Véhicule's own language with keywords like "experimental," "new," and "innovate." Yes, there may be differing ways of experiencing "experimental poetry," and yes, many of these differing ways had been centralized at various events during the Véhicule series, but for TenBrink, true creative inquiry is derived from a Stein-like, independent use of language that gives "an exact shape to what [the poet's] consciousness needs to say." Focusing on language as the material with which to craft creative perception and individual consciousness into verse, TenBrink indirectly distances herself from other versions of

novelty, perhaps including gimmicks of literary presentation, deliberately shocking or confrontational content, and the likes. During my recent oral history interview with TenBrink, we listened together to clips of her performance from 1978. Listening, she returned repeatedly to the sense of professional growth she was experiencing at that time and articulated a sense of being "happily surprised that [her] voice sounds natural, not anxious" (Carole TenBrink interview, 2 August 2021). At the time of her reading, her debut poetry collection, *Thaw and Fire,* had just been released by Bonsecours Editions, allowing her to sell copies, and to promote a future book launch at The Word bookstore for the following month. While this newfound experience of professionalism translates, for TenBrink, to a shift away from previous tentativeness in sharing her creative output and towards a more fully-fledged embodiment of her own identity as a poet, it reflects for me in the decisions she made in the shaping of this literary event. Presented with the opportunity to appear as a feature on a double bill and to share her work for a full hour—in contrast to the five minutes of a group, open mic event—she constructs her reading as a coherent expression of personal poetics, of her "understanding of what poetry is and what writing poetry is" (00:01:56), and follows a recognizably professional event format to do so.

Unlike the hands-off approach of the Véhicule organizers in guiding a structure for the event, TenBrink self-curates her half of the performance according to, what she calls, "four bunches of poems" (00:11:51). These quarters can roughly be categorized as: 1. "experiments in perception" poems (00:12:09) that use free association (among other techniques) to experience the representative world in new and strange ways; 2. "visual preoccupations" (00:29:38), especially with the artworks of Paul Klee; 3. poems from her debut collection, *Thaw and Fire*; and 4. poems that reflect on "personal and cosmic relationships" (00:43:58), engaging with mystical interconnectivity and a heightened sense of consciousness. Significantly, all four groups of poems are motivated by experiment and novelty, a point which again refers back to her attempt to accommodate Véhicule's inferred but non-directive preference within the durational space of her performance. Reading poems from *Thaw and Fire*, for example, is by definition an act of novelty, sharing work from a book that had not even been publicly launched at the time of the event. Similarly, TenBrink refers to Véhicule as a visual arts space, stating, in her preamble, that she deliberately chose to read a sequence of poems inspired by Paul Klee's paintings as a dialogic gesture towards the gallery itself. Again, she expresses allegiance to Véhicule's concerns, while retaining curatorial agency in leading the structural choices of her reading set. More intricately, TenBrink uses the word "experiment" to discuss the surrealism inherent to the first and last sets of poems. These works, which pivot on attempts to expand human perception and consciousness, embody an original approach, a personal poetics articulated at length in her opening remarks: here she clearly stated that she was personally invested in an understanding of "poetry [as] imagination's leap into the fuller human consciousness [...] the poem is not an aesthetic object. What's so important is that it gives an articulation of that leap" (00:08:47). By stating that "the poem is not an aesthetic object" (00:09:14), TenBrink illustrates how devoted she is to the expansion of poetic perception. Despite her expressionist and even surreal approach to poetic imagery, she sees the poem as real or, at least, not external to the ordinary and the everyday that is so important to her, exactly as a jump in consciousness. She is likewise embracing Véhicule's rejection of the aesthetic as a system of literary value and canonicity, as previously discussed. In other words, TenBrink's groupings of poems both highlight their experimental qualities and insist on characterizing TenBrink herself as a poet. These groupings of poems express a commitment to the new and the different, but only as situated within the individual concerns of her personal creative practice. That is, the reading series does not project its preoccupation with innovation onto

her; rather, she absorbs the series' interest in the new and takes the initiative, within Véhicule's open framing, to present poems which are self-determined by their experimental qualities. By harnessing the temporal affordances of a durational curatorial relationality, TenBrink's performance choices allow her the freedom to curate her set according to her own thematic and ideological concerns, yet as angled towards Véhicule's. She further does so in a manner that accentuates the performed professionalism of a confident, upcoming poet, while simultaneously foregrounding the experimentation already articulated as a dynamic and integral part of her poetics at the time.

TenBrink is particularly transparent about how she amplified a durational relationality in her curatorial choices, dividing her performance according to four dominant groupings of interconnected poems. Kask's curation is more implicit than expressed, but she occasionally gestures to "the first group of poems" being about women, another group emanating from concerns with nature, and a concluding set of found poems. The overall formation of the reading as a sequence of poetic works, however, feels more organic than organized, while maintaining a thematic coherence hinging on her political, feminist agenda. In fact, TenBrink's strategy of emphasizing Véhicule's preoccupation with literary innovation is continued to great effect by Kask throughout the closing set of the event, featuring work that embodies a very different expression of novelty in the form of deliberately articulated, feminist, political consciousness. The urgency and immediacy of her involvement with feminism as a movement—in particular, what would now be labelled as second wave feminism—emanate consistently from both her extra-poetic statements and the ideological backing of the poems themselves. During her initial lecture-length preamble describing her work to the audience, Kask explains that "the first group of poems I'm going to read are about women, some of whom I know and some who I've never heard about before. But this is the tenth anniversary, apparently, of the new feminist movement and a lot of what I've written about in the last ten years has been the push for women to achieve some kind of social justice. Personally, a lot of the poetry has also been about women so that the poem about my mother is going to start it off" (P0027-11-0009.2 Véhicule Art (Montréal) Inc. fonds 00:10:01). Referencing "social justice" for women, she continues to share poems revolving around her mother, an anonymous woman who survived a World War II concentration camp, the moon as mythologically female, and a poem that celebrates needlework as metaphor for a less aggressive and more gynocentric form of warfare. Maintaining a very dualistic, and perhaps even outdatedly antagonistic, angle to her understanding of the relationship between men and women, she also celebrates a shift in this binary brought about by "raised consciousnesses" that are able to exceed sexist "conditioning." Introducing a poem, "Imitation to the Waltz," she clarifies:

> The next is about, what I feel, is a new kind of relationship that is going on between men and women at this point in history. Very interesting if not [inaudible] if not profoundly confusing as our raised consciousnesses bump up against our conditioning. But I think men and women are seeing each other, perceiving each other, and talking to one another in a rather different way and it's kind of interesting. (00:25:27)

Kask continues to read a powerful poem that unfolds as a relevant critique of masculinist militarism, and a discussion of feminist practice and gender equality. Entitled "Imitation to the Waltz," this poem revolves around a binary understanding of gender rivalry through a central image of two dancers entering a "battlefield" (00:26:48), their tense relationship to one another "ancient as war, mapped out in Eden" (00:26:40). As the poem's female speaker repeatedly invites

the hyper-masculine "solider, generalissimo, king of hearts" to "waltz with [her]" (00:26:22) Kask attempts to unravel the apparent hostile correlation between men and women and to initiate a kinship between them as they collaborate on making the creative form of the dance together. This dance, functioning as a symbol for a successful renavigation and formal democratization of the relationship between men and women, moves with the agility of "paramilitary turns," but is eventually poeticized to become "civilized as lilies" (00:26:28). The lyrical indeterminacy of the poetic image "civilized as lilies" results in an almost contradictory push and pull between the rigour and structure of *civilization* and the organic freedom of *lilies.* In a sense, this image is able to revoke the rigid gender division set up in both the poem and Kask's discussions surrounding it; it takes a first step towards dissolving the reductive "conditioning" of a hetero-patriarchal social status quo, but also towards a less essentialist, divisive feminist practice.

Due to the duration of her presentation, "Imitation to the Waltz" does not exist in thematic isolation, as a 5-minute set at an open mic marathon, for example, would have necessitated. Instead, the 45-minute time span inherently allows for relational exchange between adjacent poems and Kask's commentary on her own work, contextualizing the feminist statement of a single poem within a broader articulation of activist engagement. Importantly, Kask structures her feminist commitment with a rhetoric of novelty and innovation to align with both Véhicule's focus on "making it new" (Farkas, "Mouse Eggs An Interview" no pag.) and TenBrink's employment of the reading series' stage for a self-empowered focus on personal, poetic experimentation. Kask tactically reverses Véhicule's call for newness by acknowledging that, politically speaking, there is "nothing new really under the sun," but then continues to narrativize the exhilaration of lived experience when it comes to navigating the frontlines of change, attempting to radically reconfigure repressive social conventions and to build a more equitable future that moves beyond gender discrimination. She remembers:

> I used to be a reporter for a news agency and one of the things we had to do every morning as part of our job was to read the reams of stuff that come out of those teletype machines from different news agencies all around the world. And most of the time the stuff that you read was nothing extraordinary. There's nothing new really under the sun. But occasionally you'd get a story that was different and in November of 1972, this was a different and, to me, very exciting image because I was involved in the surfacing of women's consciousness back in 1968 and I think when you've experienced your own revolution, you've experienced a kind of exhilaration that is very exciting. (00:15:39)

Kask's citation of the daily reams of news items being shared between agencies is a superlative expression of novelty within a 1970s, current affairs context. Even at, what now seems like, a slow, diurnal pace, these reams report breaking news, marking the spark that allows for important world events to be shared with local publics. Kask never mentions what the exact piece of news is that she found to be so "different" and a "very exciting image," as she succumbs to the imprecise diction characteristic of the poetic preamble. Nonetheless, she frames the hyper-novelty of politics and world news with the "surfacing of women's consciousnesses"—experiencing that feminist moment as her "own revolution"—creating a synthesis of that which she values and promotes in her writing and the idea of experimentation in poetry. This is especially true in terms of Kask's original and uncommon understanding of how politics and mysticism intersect, suggesting, "I'm just as interested in altered states of consciousness as I am in politics. It said in the papers that my poetry is political and it's true, but I don't really see any real division between right-minded politics

and spirituality" (00:27:44). The "altered states of consciousness"—reminiscent of TenBrink's "leap into the fuller human consciousness"—is here aligned with activism rather than poetics, merging a heightened mode of perception, so often associated with the creation of poetry, with politics instead. This move underscores not only Kask's unique interpretation of politics, but also how that authenticity, as rendered plausible through the durational relationality of a prolonged performance, is interpellated into, what is for her, a close relationship between politics and poetics. The consistently, ever-changing novelty of world news is now mapped onto and subsumed into the innovation of her poetics by way of thematic concerns and ideological commitment, making for work that defines itself through political engagement as constant, incremental newness.

In curatorial terms, both TenBrink and Kask's construction of their individual reading sets, and of their collective shaping of the event as an entirety, is notable in the sense of simultaneously inhabiting a recognizably professional, durational reading format and using it to perform Véhicule's interest in innovation (despite the series organizers' apparent disinterest in dictating the terms of the poets' public appearance). As previously noted, the Véhicule poets repeatedly made multi-media statements—oral expressions during events, written articulations in essays and grant applications, auxiliary statements of purpose for print projects affiliated with the center, and reiterations of all of the above in recent oral history interviews—about the open ethos prevalent not only at the reading series, but at the artists' run center in general, guiding the variety of public-facing and publishing projects that they were heading. By default, the prevalence of these statements, as well as their embodied reality in the community or scene associated with Véhicule, must necessarily have infiltrated and informed the poets invited to present their work as part of the reading series. That is, willed and insistent expressions of interest in novelty and innovation and openness eventually transgress their own non-directive assumptions. In fact, a relevant critique of open curation as a demarcated organizational mode would be that openness dictates itself, framing curatorial choices under the implicit guidance of an expressed preference for experiment. After all, TenBrink and Kask both focus the discursive sections of their appearances almost exclusively on how their writing practices adhere to personal fascinations with examinations of the new. What distinguishes their projects from a unidirectional adherence to and adoption of Véhicule's mandate as an instance of framed curation, however, is the self-contained and defining nature of poetic experimentation within TenBrink and Kask's works and practices. The poets might have emphasized or curated their interest in novelty in order to entertain Véhicule's overarching mood, but this performance is not superficially projected onto their work. Rather, the temporal affordances of durational relationality allowed them to select and group poems according to their integral concern with linguistic, perceptive, and ideological novelty in verse, further clarified and supported by insightful and lengthy reflections on their processes of production. As Kask suggests, "the creative process is as interesting as the product" (00:09:41). Indeed, in terms of both poets' public presentation of their "product," "the creative process" has informed and been manifested in the structuring of the literary event as a representational site for literary innovation.

While innovation for innovation's sake can often come across as a ploy to spark an audience's interest, innovation for curation's sake assumes the deliberate construction of event-based cohesion, highlighting experimental elements integral to the poetry in question as presented in the constructed container of literary performance. The deliberate manipulation or deployment of duration as a dynamic temporal space within which both TenBrink and Kask could self-curate sets that optimized the series' ethos in relation to their own poetics allowed them to embrace the curatorial agency provided to them by the open curatorial context of Véhicule and summon that freedom strategically in the service of their event. TenBrink's set represents an experimental

poetics grounded in the materiality of language and poetic perception as medium. Kask's performance of openness resonates across time—true, the mode of feminism that she was involved in has dated and evolved into intersectional approaches far less fixated on a gender binary, making space for gender fluidity and multiplicity instead; nonetheless, a progressing understanding of feminism, relevant in the 1970s, continues to be relevant today in a changed and changing formulation. The construction of both poets' work within the form of the durationally relational literary event embodies their intended projects of foregrounding an experimental poetics and continuing to do so beyond the constraints and concerns of a single historical, sociological, and political moment.

Conclusion

Viewing the Véhicule Art Inc. archive through the lens of spatial and durational relationalities—space and time—has an almost Cartesian tang to it, a near allusion to a grid-like linearity at odds with the openness that the related center, gallery, performance series, and publishing projects purport to support. What I have endeavoured to show in this chapter, however, is that analyzing relational exchanges that hinge on space and duration at Véhicule resists linear determination or definition, refracting an understanding of the series beyond clear expectations and towards a more malleable ethos that valorizes flexibility, changeability, and openness in curatorial terms. As can be derived from the radically varying styles and approaches of this chapter's three case studies—namely, an experimental performance with wall-mounted poems, an open mic marathon event, and a two-person feature reading—Véhicule's curatorial tolerance of innovation, experiment, and difference as guided by the performer/s' agency results in a shapeshifting literary forum, one that resists formal articulation beyond an anarchic, deliberate lack of consistent structure. There is, of course, less clearly acknowledged, subliminal curatorial messaging embedded in Véhicule's self-identification as an alternative, non-commercial, and interdisciplinary space, layering an implicit if unprescribed outline of the kind of work that would be welcomed. Will Straw's exploration of the "scene" as "particular clusters of social and cultural activity [that do not specify] the nature of the boundaries which circumscribe them" is one way of visualizing an expansive substratum of curatorial savoir faire ("Cultural Scenes" 412). Nonetheless, Nemiroff insists that the "aesthetic direction [...at Véhicule] was pretty much improvised"(151), and Tayler reiterates that "[a]dministrative decisions at Véhicule Art were shaped by aspirations for a free space, just as this ethos encouraged the eclecticism of event programming" (192). In other words, Véhicule's acceptance of poetry and poets uncircumscribed by formal rules of engagement or formulated aesthetical, ethical, or political criteria—along with the overarching cultural and ideological climate of 1970s in North America and Montreal, more specifically—limited the series curators' responsibility to concerns of curating and shifted curatorial agency to the poets themselves. The idealized level of trust placed in the poets' individual preference in shaping not only the presentation of their own work, but also, by extension, the accretive vision for the poetry reading and series as a larger, collective entity, points towards a conceptualization of the autonomy of art or poetry as independent from the interference of secondary direction or framing. Véhicule Art Inc.'s curatorial strategy is thus also suggestive of a space that negated the performance of literary value, as a shared assumption of transcendent evaluation, in favour of a default expression of an individual author's immediate aesthetic and ideological preference.

An alternative way of thinking about Véhicule's open curatorial mode—one that also leads seamlessly into the following chapter—is that this accommodating stance towards what poets wanted to bring to their performances can be reframed as a form of self-curation. As I will elucidate

in the following chapter, self-curation does not necessarily imply taking on the full curatorial labour of running a series of events that features only one's own work; in more minimalist strokes, self-curation can also embed itself within an established series or within events administered by additional curators. In these terms, Gerry Gilbert's manipulation of the venue's spatial capacities, and Carole TenBrink and Janet Kask's harnessing of duration as a vehicle for discussing personal poetics, are both expressions of self-curation within the open curatorial expectations projected by the Véhicule organizers. Although more of a stretch, technically even the short, 5-minute sets of the marathon events can be seen as condensed acts of self-curation, limited to the impromptu decision-making taking place directly before or during the readings themselves. As such, the division of labour that positions the Véhicule curators as administrators and the poets as agents of the curatorial field gains a new function as each performance segment of individualized self-curation contributes to a patchwork of singular curatorial perspectives that collectively make up this series' open curation. On the one hand, understanding Véhicule as a collage of self-curated parts augments its status as an open forum that welcomes in a flow of unwitting guest curators to direct it on its behalf. On the other hand, these parts, as directed by a multitude of self-curators, also open themselves to further study as they generate additional relational strands—that exceed spatial and durational interconnection, tension, and/or coherence—by virtue of the quantity of minds collaborating on the communal vision for Véhicule. Such a web of curatorial relationalities embedded within the dynamic making of Véhicule transform the illusion of a space-times grid into a cubist refraction of curatorial angles that come together in their difference as a series of live and archival events.

Chapter 4—The Self-Curatorial Mode at the Words and Music Show: Dialogic and Durational Relationalities in Kaie Kellough's Series within a Series

This chapter will consider the Montreal-based, Words and Music Show that was founded at a nebulous, undocumented moment in the very early 2000s, survived the COVID-19 pandemic years online, and still continues to be curated by poet and performer Ian Ferrier on a monthly basis twenty years later.[24] Indebted to an oral history methodology—and to the time and generosity of the participants who graciously shared their knowledge with me—my research on the Words and Music Show will serve as a relevant case study for an exploration of the self-curatorial mode. As a basic formulation, this implies studying invited poets' deliberation on the shaping of their personal sets in performance within the structure of the larger series. More robustly understood, this will further mean tracing subsidiary, less clearly delimited series beneath the surface of the overarching Words and Music Show as a series and arguing that certain poets self-curated interspersed programming over time. Just as it is possible to listen to the Words and Music Show audio archive according to the distinct event, as a series of consecutive, curated wholes that happened chronologically across time and space, so too it can be experienced laterally, as a series of interlocking traces that connect according to other sets of less discrete variables. So for example, it is possible to track stylistic or generic concerns—such as Slam performance, monologue-like theatre performance, literary readings, comedy sets, musical sets, interdisciplinary collaborations, and more—across the series as a whole and to understand those single entries as existing equally within their concomitant events as in relation to one another across events. It is possible to do the same for thematic concerns, with some central keywords including, but not being limited to, identity, gender, race, love, sex, and so on. More importantly for this chapter, a key characteristic of the Words and Music Show is the deliberate support and recurring invitation of individual performers, sometimes as frequently as every few months or on an annual basis across the timespan of the show. This singularity—unheard of at the Sir George Williams poetry series or in my Deep Curation poetry reading experiments, and less deliberate at Véhicule Art Inc.—results in multiple entangled subsidiary series, dependent on individual identity and the recognition and growth of particular performers' personal bodies of work as they cohere over time. Many local performers—like Moe Clark, Nisha Coleman, Kaie Kellough, and Cat Kidd, among many others—returned consistently to perform versions of the same work and to try out new compositions. As Ferrier recounts in conversation with Vincent Tinguely, "[a]s far as performance poetry or oral poetry or spoken word goes, it's as strong here [both at the Words and Music Show and in Montreal] as anywhere I've ever seen [...] So that breeds a lot more room to grow up in the scene and learn how to do it, and continue doing it" (*Impure: Reinventing the Word* 10). In other words, Ferrier conceptualizes his series as a space where poets and performers can learn from each other, but also from themselves as they are invited to return to the stage, "to grow up," and to "continue doing" the craft they are working to hone. The Words and Music Show as a series thus functions as a relational and durational procedural forum that nurtures self-editing, self-pedagogy, self-growth, and as I will argue in this chapter, self-curation.

Delineating an even more specific case study among a wealth of possible angles for analysis, I will follow Griffin Poetry Prize-winning poet and performer Kaie Kellough's appearances at the Words and Music Show in this chapter. I will suggest that by being recorded on stage at least seventeen times (and probably more frequently if one considers archival gaps and

[24] Even as I write this chapter, Ferrier has suffered serious health complications, which has forced him to take a step back and for guest editors to temporarily direct the series' organizational labour.

inconsistencies) over the course of twenty years, he inhabits an additional, individualized series beneath the more official series' surface. As Ali Barillaro—one of the SpokenWeb research assistants who catalogued the metadata for the Words and Music Show—explains from the perspective of someone listening to the series almost in its entirety, "when you first encounter someone, and you're cataloging them, you're looking up their name, you're trying to look up their information online, then you're like, 'Okay, this is this person, this is a new character in the archive.' Then you come across them again, and again, and again. It solidifies them as an important figure in your mind, in terms of that series, that they're a key player. They have their niche of what they do [...and] they want to show their progress" (Ali Barillaro interview, 31 May 2022). What Barillaro's statement intimates is that scheduled, curated recurrence—whether based on genres, themes, or the work of individual performers with growing name recognition over time—raises awareness of dominant threads running through the series, creating non-linear subsidiary series that complement and shift the overall structure and programming of the Words and Music Show, to loop back, to fold back on itself. Phrased in terms of the relational exchange happening within the curatorial field of this ancillary series, Kellough's multiple performances explore an interplay of dialogic and durational relationalities. That is, his performances from various events are in dialogue with one another across the duration of the series—alluding to Mikhail Bakhtin's articulation that "[e]verything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 426). Kellough's performances also bridge temporal gaps with the language of continuity, process, and creative and critical development, albeit not necessarily as a chronological progression. Channeling what Marjorie Perloff calls "differential texts"—"texts that exist in different material forms, with no single version being the definitive one" ("Screening the Page" 146)—one can further understand these multiple performances as resisting the illusion of stability that often accompanies the finalized or printed text. In the archive, Kellough's performances exist as audio artifacts or audiotexts that occasionally appear in print version, but more frequently voice themselves in altered repetition to celebrate their "fundamentally plural existence" (Charles Bernstein, *Close Listening* 9) and to offer multiple iterations of the same work that counter a vector of trial, improvement, and publication. To delve into this archival recurrence of versioned works, I will use the network that exists between Kellough's first recorded performances in 2003 and 2005 as a case study, both featuring a poem entitled "do you read me?" While this work later appears as a handwritten scan called "Word Sound System 1, Part A and Part B" in Kellough's 2010 poetry collection *Maple Leaf Rag*—see Image 5—even this print version relies on its status as score and its potential embodiment as differential audiotextual versions, rather than as a stable, or at least legible, typeset product.

In a formal move to replicate the binaural listening required to engage with the non-linear—or, at least, with the interconnected—dialogue of Kellough's self-curated series, I have augmented the role of the footnote in the next sections of this essay. While this essay can be read from start to finish, I recommend looping back to the footnotes for a second read as they zigzag non-chronologically forward and backward in time. While these interjections are not intended to evoke a secondary text, the stereo approach enables the innumerable moments of dialogic and durational entanglement that occur across the various recordings and versions of the same work, placing Kellough's poetry in conversation with itself and activating a durational perspective that brackets his performances as a sequence of events as they develop sonically, stylistically, thematically, and conceptually, but also non-linearly, over and across time. To conclude this analysis of self-curation, I will turn to a later recording from 2016—one which has likewise been featured and discussed on two of SpokenWeb's ShortCuts podcast episodes produced by Katherine

McLeod. This recording dramatizes an awareness on Kellough's part of his own role as curator of a series within a series, solidifying his perception of the durational nature of his performances at the Words and Music Show as they relate to one another across two decades.

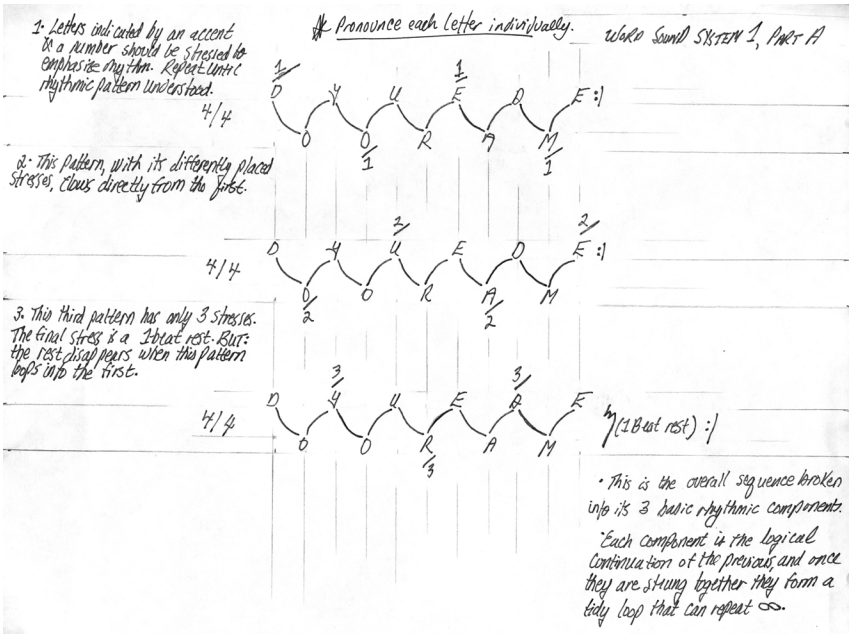


Image 5: Handwritten scan of "do you read me?" included in Kellough's 2010 poetry collection Maple Leaf Rag *as "Word Sound System 1" (73). Rather than embodying an authoritative version of the work performed multiple times at the Words and Music Show, this published version functions as a score with notes on rhythm and vocalization that confuses and even opposes any notion of print as the definitive product.*

"Some people keep coming back": An Overview of the Words and Music Show

The Words and Music Show[25] is Ian Ferrier's reading and performance series, but the Words and Music Show does not always belong to Ian Ferrier. That is, Ferrier has clearly continued to be the organizational backbone of the series since its foundation in the early 2000s and throughout its existence on a consistent basis, starting 9pm on the third Sunday of every month, for over twenty years: he has maintained a relationship with its Casa del Popolo host venue and its owners Mauro Pezzente and Kiva Stimac until its temporary COVID-19 pandemic closure in 2020 and then permanent dissolution in 2021[26]; he advertises each event on posters, on Facebook, and for many years, with uniquely produced radio commercials broadcast on the CKUT station; he applies for federal grants and has negotiated relationships with provincial literary organizations, such as the

[25] The Words and Music Show was first called Wired On Words. The latter name developed into Wired On Words Productions, a venture that recorded compact disc records of poetry read out loud. The Words and Music Show is the current proper noun for this series and the one that I will use to signify the entirety of the series and not only the events following the name change.

[26] With the support of Jason Camlot, the series went online using Zoom conferencing technology during the COVID-19 pandemic years. When Casa del Popolo threatened closure, Ferrier fostered a relationship with Kawalees—a new Montreal-based performance venue that moved into the premises of earlier jazz bar, Café Resonance. With the restoration of Casa del Popolo, it appears that the Words and Music Show has its original premises back.

Quebec Writers' Federation, in a move to secure resources to pay performers beyond the scope of the token door fee; he arranges for Steve Godin to record every event in order to build a personal audio archive of the series as a whole (recordings that are now in the process of being formalized as a digital repository with the help of SpokenWeb at Concordia University, with metadata collected and input into the Swallow ingest system by Ali Barillaro and Andrew Roberge, and a visually vibrant, interactive public-facing website created by Manami Izawa); and he performs the ongoing labour of inviting an average of five artists per event, every month, for twenty plus years. The level of dedication and the intensity of this organizational endeavour in durational terms is astounding.

Nevertheless, when I conducted a recent oral history interview with Ferrier, he refused to position himself as the agent of much of this mountain of ongoing work. When I asked him about his curatorial goals for the Words and Music Show, he responded, for example, that "I honestly don't know the answer to that completely" (Ian Ferrier interview, 3 June 2022), and when I queried the organizational roles he maintains for the series, he insisted that "I don't know the whole answer to that." The closest he commits to a curatorial statement is one of openness and inclusion, a forum that welcomes many if not all, resulting in an inherent driving force of its own that allows for intriguing literature and music to present itself. He explains, the Words and Music Show "just became a really interesting venue, that you could have voice, you could have music, and you could have dance, and they would all be different. And everyone would be interested and nobody would feel like something was taken away from them." Similarly, in terms of organizational duties, he displays a superlatively casual attitude as to how he decides to invite individual artists to showcase their work at the series. He suggests, "[o]ften, it's more who I run into, who I haven't seen in a long time. People in the poetry scene come and go, and some people do really well. And some people forget that they do it or forget what they were doing. And then they start to remember, and hopefully they come back." People show themselves to him in chance encounters, more than him actively seeking them out, and while these coincidental run-ins could be beneficial to the series and its audience, Ferrier frames them as helping the performers rediscover their creative impulses instead. For Ferrier it is important to notice and then elicit potential. He likes giving space either when someone is "going to do something interesting, or maybe the next time they will, one of the two [...] anybody who seems like they could do something interesting, and maybe will and maybe won't, but probably will somewhere." Without any guarantee of success or literary value, the series consistently puts the performers first, the emphasis being on their curiosity to perform and their ability to challenge their own practice, to find interesting work to share in public, rather than being led by a larger, discursive curatorial project or strategic invitations to the stage. In other words, Ferrier positions Words and Music as another example of an open curated series, one which (similar to Véhicule Art Inc.) denies the administrative and creative work of curating, values a free-ranging series of events that welcomes a variety of different styles and genres, and positions itself "loosely like a community stage" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022) that offers a home for local and traveling performers alike as they congregate to share literature, music, and interdisciplinary work to a Montreal audience. In Ferrier's own conceptualization of the Words and Music Show, he is not the dominant force, despite clearly embodying the primary constant that has held the series together in spirit and in administration for such a long period of time.

It is significant to reiterate that Ferrier places deliberate emphasis on the performers themselves as the movers and shakers of the Words and Music Show, allowing for an incisive understanding of the series as curated less by him and more by the invited guests as representatives of their own sets. While this generosity towards the performers—this gesture of trust in their vision

and freedom to manifest it—is again a core tenet of open curation, Ferrier takes this recognizable curatorial mode one step further, arguably formulating the series as a space for intentional self-curation too. Rather than thinking about the invitations to perform as critical decision-making on his part, he reverses the direction of agential flow to prioritize the performers' own resolution to present at the Words and Music Show. Throughout the hour that I spoke to him, he repeated, for example: "Some people keep coming back," "I guess there are people who keep coming back," "hopefully they come back," among many similar statements in answer to a variety of different questions (Ian Ferrier interview, 3 June 2022). This reiteration of the performers' own desire to return to the Words and Music Show is suggestive of a space that not only seeks to create community, but also fully understands the impossibility of literary events without that very same community. Events and series simply do not exist without people returning to it to showcase new and intriguing work, and to populate the audience. Of even more consequence, however, is the inherently recurrent, serial nature of "coming back." As mentioned previously, Ferrier fostered relationships with certain artists—starting with musicians and spoken word artists Stefan Christoff, Kaie Kellough, and Cat Kidd at the inception of the series, then making space for the multidisciplinary performer Moe Clark, and recently presenting the storyteller Nisha Coleman at frequent intervals, among many others. Ferrier offered, and continues to offer, these performers an almost open invitation to return to the series whenever they saw fit. In fact, he offered them the stage even when they did not. Kellough recalls:

> Ian would always invite, right. And one of the things that I realized was that Ian was going to invite me and he did invite me. An invitation might come. There was a way that Ian would deliver the invitations which was very casual. It was like, "Hey, do you want to come to Words and Music and maybe perform something?" And I would think, "Man, I was just there two months ago." A couple of times, I was like, "No, I don't have any new work." I felt so pretentious and so such like a prima donna for approaching it that way: I don't have any new work, therefore I can't perform. The invitation was delivered in such a casual way, like there's a stage and opportunity to practice and do what it is that you do and to learn, and you're just going to turn it down because you have no new work! [...] Ian's reaction would always be, "Well, you know, you don't really need all kinds of new work. Just come." (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022)

Kellough's anecdote of casual invitation replicates Ferrier's run-ins with performers. Ferrier is offering Kellough, and many others, a low stakes, near to unconditional space to try new work, to perform old work again, and either way, to inhabit the series in a way that feels constructive to their practice. As symbolic curator of the Words and Music Show, Ferrier tenders these casual, run-in invitations with the intention for performers to feel at home, to "keep coming back," and to adopt the series as their own. In this way, the invitation reaches beyond the single set at one event and towards an ongoing relationship with the series, a generative provocation to think about oneself in agential relation to the series. The ability to add on, to transform, and to activate the Words and Music Show according to one's own creative preoccupations—a reality that is usually latent and not directly legible at any given reading series by virtue of someone performing at all—is rendered visible with the implicit invitation to self-curate an unarticulated series beneath the surface of the formalized one. Such a series hinges on an auto-exploration of personal practice and development, and can even explore, conceptualize, and showcase an ongoing vision of what could be achieved at the Words and Music Show over time. Importantly, these subsidiary series are not

necessarily secondary—after all, by offering certain performers almost unlimited stage time, Ferrier is placing them in the spotlight as the poster people of the larger series—but by popping up periodically in the Words and Music Show archive, these recurring artists syncopate the veneer of the series, creating cohesive performance series that can trace seventeen appearances by Kellough, nine by Kidd, eleven by Clark, and so on.

Unlike Véhicule Art Inc. that was so patently about the new, or the Sir George Williams poetry series that sought to create their own articulation of literary value, the Words and Music Show prioritizes process over either innovation or tradition. At the latter series, an artist is not expected to entertain with a constant train of new work, but encouraged to present the same work a second and even a third time, then to learn from the process, to change the work, to improve it, to fail and/or succeed at that attempt. One might even go so far as to suggest that the Words and Music Show formulates itself as a space to workshop the relationship between text and audiotext, to foreground and embody the processual learning of literature in performance. Kellough, for one, overtly conceptualizes performance as part of his creative process, especially as manifested at the Words and Music Show. He reflects, "[h]ow to think of the oral presentation as part of the editorial process, part of the process of developing the work. You get to those lines that you've written—when you're reading in front of an audience—and you're going to read it and you get to a couple of lines, and you're like, 'Oh, I'm going to change it.' That's really instructive" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). While Kellough here emphasizes the illuminating moment during performance when a spontaneous edit clarifies itself in real time, the durational nature of returning to the series again and again is likewise conducive to this processual understanding of the Words and Music Show. Frequenting the same stage creates opportunity for transformation in performance, yes, but equally important are the blocks of time in between, producing the conditions for composition to be challenged, to develop, and to transform in the lead up to another public appearance. The Words and Music Show thus functions as a self-directed workshop over an indefinite period of time during which feedback is not provided by a cast of experts (apart from minimal audience response perhaps), but relies on the performers' self-reflection both during and between events as they embody the series not only as artists, but also with the critical edge of curators deliberating on their work over time and in dialogue with itself.

To conclude this section with a brief tangent from my conversation with Ferrier, while also situating myself in relation to this research, I mentioned to him that I also appear three times in the Words and Music Show archive between 2013 and 2018 (with a couple more appearances on Zoom during the still unarchived pandemic years). The affect of hearing myself read unpublished work that I later discarded and cut from my then book-in-progress, *Ekke*, was unsettling, a reminder that poems that I deem as incomplete or insufficient continue to exist as an accessible audio record. Ferrier disagrees, "I don't know about that. I think you were always working through what and where you were going to end up with it. We were always working through stuff all the way through that time" (Ian Ferrier interview, 3 June 2022). Again, he foregrounds an editorial project for the series, one which values my writing that was still in the process of cohering, of figuring out what it was intending to accomplish in both oral performance and print. He continues, "[i]t's hard to tell how that stuff's going to hold up. But I think we're always finding people who say, 'Well, that was really interesting. I wonder what they're going do with that next, or, gee, you just blew me away, because you already know how to do that.'" In this generous spirit of isolating the kernel of potential in unfinished work, and celebrating the act of making over the product as precious, perfected, and finalized, Ferrier has again casually invited me to perform at the Words and Music Show in the future, even now as I write this chapter. While my five readings, in-person and online,

make for a more slimly defined series beneath the surface of a series, I also "keep coming back," always with the potential for additional, forwarding-looking events. Perhaps the scripting of this chapter—the close listening, the note taking, the analysis, and linearization into argument—is another version of that return, carrying the experiential knowledge of participation along with the heft of dialogue, research, and curatorial hypothesis.

"my own language, in my own rhythm, and in my own way": Kaie Kellough In Performance

Currently Kaie Kellough is the author of three poetry collections (*Lettricity* [2005], *Maple Leaf Rag* [2010], *Magnetic Equator* [2019]), a novel (*Accordéon* [2016]) and an anthology of short stories (*Dominoes at the Crossroads* [2020])—and the producer of two sound albums (*Vox: Versus* [2011], *Creole Continuum* [2014])—of which *Magnetic Equator* won the 2020 Griffin Poetry Prize and *Dominoes at the Crossroads* was longlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize that same year. As a biographical narrative of dedication and resilience, this is a successful one according to Canada's national literary apparatus of publication, prize culture, and institutional prestige. Due to Kellough's robust performance practice, this is a particularly significant trajectory when spoken word poetry, sound poetry, and other iterations of the oral tradition have historically been marginalized from these structures of recognition. Born in Vancouver and raised in Calgary, Kellough moved to Montreal in 1998 with ambitions to become a poet and performer. In its pre-gentrification state, the city was a hub for artists of every ilk and Kellough was soon immersed in a number of performance scenes, most specifically Ian Ferrier's monthly Words and Music Show and JahSun's Kalmunity Vibe Collective that congregated privately on Monday nights and then performed publicly on Tuesdays (and later also on Sundays) on a weekly basis. While he attended and performed almost weekly as part of Kalmunity for close to five years, he returned to the Words and Music Show at regular interviews over the course of twenty, implying consistent and durational engagement with both performance communities in question and the development of his own practice in dialogue with them, as a result. In an oral history interview of 27 May 2022, Kellough braids the respective influence that Words and Music and Kalmunity had on his performance during the foundational creative period of his early 20s into his 30s. He states, "Kalmunity opened me up to working in the oral tradition, but with the forcefulness that the work of a singer or musician or rapper would have. I couldn't think of it in a more intimate sense. I could experiment with that at Words and Music [...] with Words and Music you had the opportunity to perform solo work and to take your full 15 minutes [and sometimes half an hour] on stage and to do things as you wanted to do them without really compromising" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). Whereas Kalmunity trained him in collaborative, often improvisational practice with musicians and a vocal economy of concision and sonic exchange, always existing in interplay with the community on stage, the Words and Music Show allowed him to turn his performance practice inwards, to articulate his personal goals and critical tenets as an individual artist, and to experiment with those objectives over time and in relation to his past, present, and future personal creative development in performance and on the page.

Conceptually, these objectives are synthesized in the ability to express authentic identity through poetry and performance at the intersection of Canadian citizenship, diasporic heritage from Guyana and the Caribbean, and contemporary Black personhood in relation to violent, racialized histories and presents.[27] As Kellough writes in an essay on the Sir George Williams Computer Center Occupation—an underrepresented student protest that he experiences as a sense

[27] Significantly, both *Magnetic Equator* and *Dominoes at the Crossroads* foreground and thematize this critical, sociopolitical preoccupation.

of "historical [...] inheritance" ("Fire in the Mainframe" 31)—"the concern that has always lingered with me, as a person born of Caribbean and Canadian heritage, is how to rework narrative in a ways that is reflective of the Caribbean diaspora but also imbued with the realities, sights, sounds, experiences, and (in)humanity of this place" ("Fire in the Mainframe" 28). Phrased even more clearly in relation to the Words and Music Show, Kellough states that "[w]hat the [series'] solo environment allowed was for me to think more about how those different kinds of diasporic elements could fuse together and be held together with a Canadian, a Black Canadian voice in their own kind of native articulation" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). As Karina Vernon argues, comparing the present to past generations of Black Canadian authors, "contemporary Black Canadian poets have the benefit of a well-mapped and lengthy Canadian literary tradition [...and] are also more aware of their deep national, regional, and diasporic Black histor[y...] that conditions and underwrites them" (*The Great Black North* 13-14). This articulation relates to Kellough who consistently seeks out an ethical formulation of selfhood through creative expression that is simultaneously an honest and authentic representation of his contemporary positionality, and a responsible, responsive investigation into and recognition of heritage and how it informs the present and future. He is less invested in a nostalgic revisioning of past geographies, and more inclined towards the diaspora's relationship towards the present, how it might grasp backwards, while remaining rooted in the now.

Formally, Kellough's objectives as an artist are further reflected in a drive towards experimentation, both vocally in terms of the potential of live sound, and in a continuous, self-aware exploration of rejecting stasis and always pushing his practice further into new terrain, whether on the page or in performance. He affirms, for example, that "[o]ne of the things that Words and Music allowed me to work through was that question of where I should position myself creatively and what kind of work I should be able to do. It allowed me to experiment with different techniques, and different artistic genres and find points of likeness between them where I could fuse them" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). He offers an iterative practice that hinges on self-questioning, trial and error, and a temporal journey of technical skill and creative maturation. In conversation with Alysha Mohamed, he nuances his definition of "formal experiment" suggesting that he has always been "experimenting with different kinds of uses of language, different types of structures in poetry that are used to shape the movement of language, different techniques for writing poetry and fiction as well" ("Writer-In-Residence" no pag.). As a poet so heavily invested in vocality and the live event, "formal experiment," in Kellough's terms, necessarily also gestures towards "uses," "structures," "movements," and "techniques" of sound, in particular, in its relation to the sharing of literature in performance.

Discussing his preoccupation with sound in poetry—and his appreciation for Canadian sound poets like Paul Dutton and bpNichol—Kellough acknowledges a complex fascination with dub poetics, both as heard in its Jamaican roots and its Canadian proponents through artists like Clifton Joseph and Lillian Allen. He states, "[m]y entry into sound poetry was not through them [Dutton and Nichol] or through Dada sound poetry. It was through some of the dub poets who had sound as part of their practice" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). Dub poetry is, of course, a form of performance poetry, coined by Oku Onoura, that "emerged from the psyche/life experience of conscious ghetto youth in Jamaica and England in the late 1970s, early 1980s," and articulates itself as creative and critical political resistance (d'bi young, *art on black* 5). Initially the impetus was to merge and overlay, or to allow for a collaboration between, word, sound, and Reggae rhythm, with "rhythm [...as] *the* essential structural characteristic" (Habekost, *Verbal Riddim* 91). As Mervyn Morris clarifies about the movement's development, however, the poet

Oku Onoura "took the position that the music rhythms need not be reggae: so 'dub poetry' would be poetry into which music rhythms have been dubbed, so to speak [...] Oku now 'sees dub poetry as a form of poetry that can absorb and incorporate any kind of Black musical rhythm'" ("'Dub Poetry'?" 2). This openness to different rhythms and different verbal-musical interstices as they relate to diverse traditions, heritages, and forms aligns itself with Phanuel Antwi's understanding of dub as an intersectional space, dedicated to the opposition of discriminatory and oppressive status quos. He writes, "[t]o fall into the archives of dub poetry is to be possessed by a flow of rhythm that cuts across poetic alliances and artistic disciplines, allowing us to chart political and cultural connections while simultaneously compelling us to refuse a commitment to a life oriented to the order of things" ("Dub Poetry as a Black Atlantic Body-Archive" 65). As Morris underscores, the word "dub" is quite literally "borrowed from recording technology where it refers to the activity of adding and/or removing sound" ("'Dub Poetry'?" 1), and so Antwi's articulation of dub as a hybrid artistic medium, one which exists at the crossroads of "poetic," "artistic," "political," and "cultural" alliances rings true as change, exchange, and interchange are generically built into the root definition of the performance style. The ability to *dub* sound in or out, to copy, to insert, or to remove, exemplifies a performance of absorption and inclusion that is open to its own renewal. As Antwi continues, there is a "logic of incompletion" at play (66), one which is constantly aware of its own malleability, simultaneously rhythmically coherent and, according to Afua Cooper, a form indebted to "open-endedness, flexibility, vast potential and possibilities" (*Utterances and Incantations* 1).

Morris, Antwi, and Cooper's statements on the inclusive logic of dub poetry makes for a relevant return to Kellough's poetics and to his conceptual and formal objectives outlined earlier in this section. Their expressions of open form poetics are especially apropos as Kellough learns from, but never replicates dub poetics, always foregrounding his own experiments and formulations in sound. Despite his keen curiosity in relation to this oral poetry tradition, his study of dub poetics never equates to its uncritical absorption or to a linear cloaking of who he is as an individual with the labour, skill, and goals of a movement that is adjacent to his own as a poet and performer. As previously mentioned, his practice continuously deliberates upon poetic form and technique while consciously nurturing an exploration of cultural access and an avoidance of extraction through appropriation. In a lengthy quote from my conversation with him, he summarizes his relationship towards dub poetry as follows:

> Dub is such a culturally specific art form. It's always been really difficult for me to claim it as my own. I want to and I do and I relate to it and I feel it deeply, but at the same time, I understand that it might also not be mine to claim. I grew up middle class, a child of pure oil and gas extraction in Western Canada. Dub is a voice of the working class and poor in Jamaica. It also uses the Nation Language of Jamaica. I can understand it, but it's not my language. It would be comedic and maybe even insulting for me to go up there and try to speak and perform exactly in the traditional way. So what I was working out as well, with the assistance of Words and Music, was how to approach dub and how to think about my relationship to it and how to learn from it and incorporate some of its techniques into my practice, without overstepping culturally, politically, without taking something that didn't belong to me. I've always liked the visceral nature of some of the dub poets' work. Emotionally, it's very strong and strident. But beyond that, I need to think about how it actually functions and what it's doing, and if I can do those similar things in my own language, in my own rhythm, and in my own way. (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022)

While thinking through what can be learned from dub poetics in terms of its mode of oral performance, its reliance on musical rhythm through vocal rendition, and its ability to angle poetry as political engagement and active resistance, Kellough is clearly aware of the risk of extracting creative impetus from a tradition that he is not a part of. Placing significance on the ability to perform an honest version of oneself, he continues to suggest that "if I'm suppressing my voice in order to articulate somebody else's version of authenticity, then it can't be authentic to me because I have to suppress my voice to do it, my accent, the way I speak, my mannerisms. I'm not going to put on somebody else's mannerisms because they're not mine" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). The challenge, for him, is to note that a certain kind of literary production is possible—for example, dub and sound poetries—and then to explore how he can embody those conceptual and formal goals in a way that is true to his own practice, to create, as he says, "my own language, in my own rhythm, and in my own way."

Of course, Kellough does achieve his "own language," "own rhythm," and "own way," much more intensely so than most poets performing their work in the "monotonous incantation" style parodied by Marit MacArthur ("Monotony, the Churches of Poetry Reading" 44). Karina Vernon describes Kellough's style as "synesthetic poems that work with jazz syncopation, dub-influenced rhyme, as well as concrete visual elements in order to inscribe Canada as a kind of remixed 'Babylon.' As he [Kellough] puts it, 'the aim was to lift a concept out of its cultural niche and 'remix' it in my own secular, Canadian way'" (Karina Vernon, *The Black Prairies Archive* 409). Similar to dub, the notion of "remix" follows a logic of transformation through versioning—learning from other poetic modes in order to build on, reconstruct, and reshape an individual, authentic creative language. Likewise, the allusion to synesthesia and an integration of music, rhythm, and sound into poetry casts a compositional spin onto the way Vernon perceives Kellough's application of language both on the page and in performance. While I agree with Vernon's understanding of a musical influence on his work—especially as the collaborative spirit already seen in his participation at the Kalmunity Vibe Collective is now sustained with the ensemble FYEAR, including percussionist JahSun, bass saxophist Jason Sharp, vocalist and author Tawhida Tanya Evanson, among others—Kellough's "own" mode of performance is, for me, based more on a sonic intervention into language, a dismantling of language, and the structures of orthography, syntax, and grammar that, to varying degrees, intensify affect over semantics without ever allowing meaning to recede into subtext either. One may also think here of Christian Habekost whose definition of dub poetry aligns the musical with the verbal, stating, "[o]n all occasions the SOUND of the spoken WORD gives rise to a musical 'riddim,' the central formative aspect of the genre" (*Verbal Riddim* 1). As Kellough further states in conversation with Faith Paré, "[o]ne of the limitations that comes up when writing—but perhaps it's not a limitation—is that you can't actually make a sound. You can suggest sound very forcefully to the mind's ear, but you can't *actually* make a sound. What you can do is import compositional structures and musical structures into the poem or the text, whether it's prose or poetry" ("Dubbing it into the Earth" no pag.). Kellough obviously also uses print and publishing traditions to great effect, but focusing on his oral work as heard in the Words and Music Show archive, he is able to move away from the page as the primary container for poetry, and to sound "compositional [...] and musical structures" through the atomization of language into sound. This intricate merging of sound, affect, and meaning is then further grounded in rhythm, sometimes at the level of the letter, syllable, or word, and other times more organic and singular to the structure of a particular work of performance. Understanding how recognizable Kellough's performance work is as his own, and how deliberately he has sought to foster his style as ethically grounded and uniquely personal sound

and rhythm, is central to the next section of this chapter where I will listen more closely to some concrete examples of his performances at the Words and Music Show. I will continue to track a dialogic relationality through links between poems presented at different events, likewise acknowledging a durational relationality at work in terms of performances changing, developing, but also cohering across twenty years. My critical engagement with these audio archives will lead to the formulation of an unofficial, yet distinctly self-curated series based on Kellough as author, and constructed by Kellough as a poet and performer, arguably existing below the surface of the more clearly discernible Words and Music Show series itself.

"do you read me?": Interweaving Dialogic and Durational Relationalities 1

Kaie Kellough is first noted as participating in Words and Music on 19 August 2001 during the series' third event on record. The first audio recording of him is available in the archive for 17 August 2003. He then reappears almost every year till 2018, with the future possibility of returning again since the series itself is still ongoing. Kellough's current seventeen documented performances thus make for a compelling and substantial self-curated series that exists beneath the surface of the Words and Music Show, especially since Kellough is aware of his multiple performances and how they connect to one another to form a coherent project. When I asked him[28] whether he was aware of the sequential nature of his recurrence on the stage, he replied that "[a]t a certain point, I was. At a certain point when I had performed already a number of times, and I was continuing to perform there, I started to understand that I had some leeway" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). By "leeway" he means a level of control over his performances in relation to one another, that he was making strategic, curatorial decisions about what he would present to always ensure a subjective standard to which he held himself and his work, as he continues to describe. He explains, "a concern was making sure to always have something different for each invitation and each time going up there and trying to present things in a different way. If

[28] For this research, I am indebted to an oral history methodology—and to the time and generosity of Kaie Kellough and Ian Ferrier, in particular, who graciously shared their knowledge with me. I rely on them as poet and self-curator, and series curator, respectively, to fill in factual gaps about the Words and Music Show that have not yet been recorded in the archive or documented by other scholars. Arguably, my dependence on Kellough is fraught with authorial discourse, though—like I am resuscitating the dead Barthesian author and positioning him as an expert of Kellough's work, using his statements as support for my analysis. I would counter this assumption, however, by establishing Kellough's contextualizing and interpretative statements about his own presence at the Words and Music Show as a continuation of the work he performed there, rather than a distinct performance of himself as author. More often than not, extrapoetic commentary is recorded as part of the audiotext and performers employ the preamble to situate their work. Kellough, in particular, experiments with the merging of these roles in performances, allowing them to bleed into one another deliberately, as I discuss later in this chapter. "The Voice that Is the Poem," a SpokenWeb Shortcuts podcast episode produced by Katherine McLeod, focuses on exactly this critical, creative blending at the Words and Music Show. Especially in the context of this essay that foregrounds the multiplicity and versions of a work, Kellough's *function* as an authorial agent in my oral history interview with him, to allude to Michel Foucault, is to prolong the oral liner notes that frame his performances. As with the versions of Kellough's performances discussed in this essay, performances that resist being formulated into a singular, coherent work, "[t]he word *work* and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality" (Foucault, "What is an Author?" 282). The edges of Kellough's authorship, of his work in performances, and of the two as overlapping entities are unstable as subject positions, while simultaneously serving as the partial foundation of this essay.

I hadn't done a straight ahead reading[29] in a while then I might do that. If it wasn't necessarily brand new work that I had recently written then it might be older work that was in collaboration with somebody else[30] where I try a narrative or something with electronics[31].” The poetry presented at each event did not exist simply in isolation as an opportunity to present a single set to the public, but rather in conversation with every past and future set that he had performed or would still perform on the same stage. Kellough’s personal curatorial mandate can thus be summarized as an expression of variation and an effort to consistently display the versatility of his output and his ability to transform even the same work into different renditions of itself—these are objectives which are clearly audible in the archive with the performance of the same work in different styles and modes over time, as I will soon discuss.

Considering this observation in terms of curatorial relationalities, I will argue that Kellough’s self-awareness about the serial nature of his presence at Words and Music activates both dialogic and durational relationalities as they co-exist and become interwoven with one another. While the sociability inherent to Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics is fundamental to an understanding of Kellough’s public-facing curation of his own performances, it is also relevant, in temporal terms, to return to Édouard Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* and how, with the reading series, the transformational energy of relation places multiplicity in correspondence with itself, creating a dynamic interplay of parts within an accelerating array of possible exchange. Glissant writes, “poetics of Relation interweaves and no longer projects, that it inscribes itself in a circularity, we are not referring to a circuit, a line of energy curved back on itself [...] Each of its parts patterns activity implicated in the activity of each other” (32-33). It is difficult, impossible even, to iron out the infinitude of ways in which, dialogically and durationally, Kellough’s performances could refer back to themselves, but one could say, with Glissant, that these curatorial relationalities are circuitous without being a circuit and that patterns of parts exist in non-systematic entanglement. In an attempt to linearize this interrelation, one might suggest, however, that the self-curated series at the Words and Music Show is constructed temporally across twenty years, allowing for a narrative of growth and development, as well as a relevant expression of the poetic concerns that linger and define Kellough’s work exactly because of their prevalence across so many years. Similarly, a dialogic relationality is discernible in the effort to understand each performance as rubbing up against one another, and influencing the events preceding and following it. This dialogism is further present through repetition as much as through dissimilarity, in the reiteration of the same works in varying styles and in the deliberate formulation of each performance as contrastive and distinct from the others. A dialogue by conscious difference thus exists, one which constructs itself not chronologically, but through the overlaying of durational

[29] On 21 August 2011, for example, Kellough reads a descriptive prose work about Montreal as “a distillation of some stereotypes,” as he calls it (Recording 3 00:25:40). It chronicles the process of walking the same route between home and metro station over the course of many years, and collects scenes and characters along the way and across time.

[30] On 21 November 2004, percussionists Zibz Ng, Karl Perralt, and Chimwemwe Miller and saxophonist Jason Selman perform in collaboration with all vocal performers present that night at the Words and Music Show. Rather than one prolonged set, Kellough performs three times over the course of the evening, always in rhythmic conversation with the musicians.

[31] On 20 November 2016, Kellough intertwines pre-recorded audio with live voice and a real-time recording that replays itself with warped sound, creating a triple-layered, technologically-mediated vocal performance. I will return with an analysis of this performance at more length in the next section of this chapter.

time across the temporal span of this self-curated series. That is, consecutive recordings from August and September 2003 are in dialogue with one another to the same extent as recordings from 2003 and 2018.[32] Time is folded to create lateral curatorial connections that emphasize the creative and critical project that unfolds at Kellough's self-curated series. While the attempt to systematize relational elements within this series simultaneously coheres and resists its own rationalization, as Glissant might suggest, it is possible to trace a rough trajectory of performance style and development throughout Kellough's series. Bearing in mind the constant caveat of not being fully able to linearize relationalities that keep looping back on themselves, a track is discernible nonetheless, one that starts by dismantling language into its smallest units (namely letters of the alphabet), then continues to rebuild them through the dub-influenced rhythmic deployment of syllables and parts of words, and eventually reconstitutes language on the more continuous level of sentence and poetic line.

[32] In fact, the recordings from 21 September 2003 and 25 November 2018 are in direct conversation with one another in terms of their performance styles and techniques, and as a comparison of transformation and development over time. Dialogically, it is clear how the kernel of the earlier presentation's rhythmic, linguistic dismantling has become a vocal flavour that is varied with more linear and narrative modes in the later performance. Durationally, the two performances loop back over fifteen years to harness past experiments in language and sound, and to place them in relation to the ability of a more mature poet and performer.

The 2018 performance begins with the rhythmic enunciation and repetition of the letter "P," leading to the eventual spelling of the phrase "people arrived." Initially, the P sounds like the more fully voiced B, while the subsequent "E" and "O" letters are sounded as "eh" and "ah," alongside the syllable "le," creating a period of uncertainty in the listener about what is being spelled out; almost humorously, this initial sounding of letters offers a word closely aligned to "apple." As I will elucidate later in this chapter, this aural disorientation through the dismantling of language into orthography is a method that Kellough has developed over time, and applies frequently and to great effect in both the 21 September 2003 and 25 January 2005 performances of "do you read me?" In 2018, however, the incremental process of building language into meaning grows beyond the introductory phrase into historical statements of arrival to the Americas: "people arrived from Portugal / people arrived from Africa / people arrived from India / people arrived from China / people predated arrival" (01:42:21). This list of people continues with anaphoric repetition till it deliberately breaks down into gibberish again—suggestive of the vast and unenumerable moments of mobility that syncopate human history due to desire, lifestyle, necessity, or violent displacement—before ironing out into the clearly articulated recitation of a long, fifteen-minute poem about historical migrancy, settler colonialism, diasporic descendance, and racist and racialized narratives that often result from these histories of mobility. As the poem reaches its volume peak with a series of explosive "boo" sounds emphasizing the words "boom" and "boost" (01:53:59), it also systematically stutters to a halt with a series of letters which could either sound "B" as an alliteration of the preceding words or "P" to mark a return to the poem's opening.

While this piece thus looks back to performance techniques developed almost two decades earlier and offers moments of aural ambiguity similar to that of the earlier poem "do you read me?," it has equally pushed itself into new ground that relies on a rhythmic performance style at the level of the syllable and word rather than the letter or sound. The ability to perform continuously according to the syllable and word further gestures towards a practice that experiments narratively with the sentence and lyrically with the poetic line. Kellough's decision to frame the longer syntactical and semantically stable (as far as that is possible) poem with first the granular construction of words and finally the dissolution into single letters replicates his own trajectory of performance experiments over time in the more condensed environment of a single work. As such, the dialogic relationality activated in the link between the 2003 and 2018 shows is synthesized durationally from a journey of fifteen years within a fifteen-minute piece.

Image 6: Poster for Words and Music Show, 21 September 2003. Courtesy of archival research conducted by Ali Barillaro and Andrew Roberge.

To illustrate the warp and weft of these relationalities playing out in Kellough's self-curated series and to consider, first, this dissolution or atomization of language into its raw materials in more concrete detail, I will now turn to his initial recorded performance that takes place on 21 September 2003 as a case study. This event features Canadian dub poet extraordinaire Lillian Allen alongside Montreal-based spoken word artists, including Kellough, Cat Kidd, and Alexis O'Hara, as shown in the poster marked Image 6. The poster mentions names of people who do not perform, but omits additional performances by Vince Baxter, Paula Belina, Brian Highbloom, Erin May, and Padraic Scanlon. Unwittingly, Allen sets the tone for Kellough's work as she presents poems entitled "Language" and "Grammar," stating that one should understand the "English language as metaphor," that language is not only functional, but affective and malleable to the needs and desires of self-expression (Words and Music 21 September 2003, Recording 2 00:21:35). Independently from Allen, Kellough performs a poem—"do you read me?"—that also centers on language, illegibility as resistance, and identity. During this performance, he rhythmically spells out the question "do you read me?" but in such a way that renders the content of the poem unreadable and almost impossible to comprehend aurally. During our conversation, Kellough recounts, "Ian [Ferrier] invited me to do a performance for children at the Westmount library. I thought, 'What do children like? I don't know. They like spelling, I guess.' So I thought, I'll spell for them. That's where the poem came from" (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022). Whereas the children soon lost interest, their parents continued deciphering the words. Like the adults, I too tried to spell out the poem, but despite listening to this poem a myriad times with numerous dedicated attempts at transcribing it, I have never achieved a full written copy. I have only been able to isolate words like "letter shapes," "translate," and "language"—words which

clearly resonate with Allen's "metaphors of language"—while also resisting a comprehensive sense of the words building this poem. Differently phrased, a full understanding of this poem relies exactly on that sense of partial understanding. This partial understanding resonates with Antwi's articulation of dub poetics as embodying a "logic of incompletion," as previously discussed ("Dub Poetry as a Black Atlantic Body-Archive" 66). Although the listener is quickly aware that Kellough's poem functions as an exercise in dictation, the inability to complete the task at hand transforms the representative value of the alphabet into sounds that do not consistently need to cohere. As he states in "Words Sound System #2," a poem performed at Words and Music on 25 October 2009, "you don't have to say the words, you just have to make the sounds" (02:23:29). Similarly on 25 January 2005, he explains that "At a certain point all our language becomes sound and you can organize sound in patterns and it becomes another language when it becomes musical" (Words and Music, 00:52:18).

Words are sounds that carry a different, affective vocabulary of meaning, but can also work against semantics through sonic methodologies of repetition, rhythm, and elision. During the 21 September 2003 performance of "do you read me?" for example, single letters are repeated to the point of isolating them as singular, material agents—individually and metrically enunciated—rather than the collaborative building blocks of spelling: "D / D D D / D." The three middle Ds are repeated in quick succession, while the two outer Ds are slow and drawn out, creating a rhythmic pattern. This pattern deliberately reiterates presence through repetition rather than breaking down into parts; however, it also works to focus attention on the single letter for long enough to disorient the listener from the spelling task at hand and the question of how all those Ds might relate to adjacent letters. Letters are also rhythmically misaligned from the words they are intended to spell out: "U / R" have sonic proximity to one another, for instance, even though they are the last and first letters of the respective words "you" and "read." Blurring the boundaries between orthographic units works to disorient the listener, but also to suggest different meanings as "U / R" could also (as homophones or internet-age abbreviations) be read as "you / are." This shift of signification relevantly emphasizes the ontology inherent to the poem's project and its speaker's consistent questioning of the ability to be read at all. Every letter has ambiguity built into it. Each letter could belong to one word, equally as it could belong to another word. It could belong to both words equally. It could even be a self-sufficient sound opposing the commodification of tone into linguistic meaning.

"do you read me?" is performed again[33] at Ferrier's series, placing it in both dialogic and durational relationality with itself. The 2005 Words and Music Show is singularly hosted at Champlain College, and Kellough appears alongside Ferrier, Alexis O'Hara, and Jill Tanoja. He performs a lengthy 25-minute set and presents himself as confident and charismatic, offering expansive, narrative preambles to the audience, interjecting even during the performance of his poems to provide more chatty context. He introduces "do you read me?" almost provocatively by telling the audience that "I've got a question for you actually" (00:58:37), immediately giving listeners a clue as to what they are about to hear. He then launches directly into an a cappella, semi-

[33] Other poems that recur across the Words and Music series include, but are not limited to, "isery" and "Word Sound System #2"—both performed on 25 October 2009 and again on 24 January 2010. Similar to my analysis of "do you read me?" as it transforms over time, these sets of poems could also be interpreted dialogically and durationally as processes of change and development in relation to themselves. They can likewise be understood differently due to the poems surrounding them in contrasting sets as they enter into conversation not only with their own versions across time, but also with adjacent poems and the context of the larger events.

sung, condensed variation on the earlier version of the work, cutting the second half of the poem (mostly illegible in the 2003 performance) and limiting the text to the central, titular question instead. Significantly, the answer to the question "do you read me?" is in the affirmative this time, at least in terms of understanding the words spoken. Rather than breaking the words into letters designed to be aurally disorienting, Kellough now syncopates them as syllables.[34] The poem thus begins: "do you re / do you re / do you read me" (00:58:48). This version does not begin with fragments that need to be rebuilt into or deciphered as words, but offers the whole phrase from the start and only then, once the semantic foundation of the piece has been laid, continues to dismantle it into letters. The effect of this shift from sentence to spelling is not so much to confuse the listener as to illustrate the complexity and hidden nuances of language. So, for example, he manipulates the spelling of the word "you" through repetition so that "o" precedes "y," creating the additional question, "o / y" or, homophonically, "oh why?" Adding the letter "u" expands this existential invocation to a second person: "oh why you?" The question "do you read me?" thus echoes itself with an emphasis on the pronoun, developing by extension into "oh why do *you* read me?" This version of the poem is much more interpolative than the first one in which the "you" barely seems to apply to the audience at all. Yes, the listeners are included through literal participation as they try to decipher the dictation, but they do not embody the addressee of the poem in the same way

[34] Kellough's development across time as an individual, rhythmic performer is audible during the 25 October 2009 performance where he experiments not only with breaking words down into their alphabetic roots, but both protracting syllables into sounds and contracting words into syllables. He introduces "Word Sound System #2" by suggesting that this piece is "hard to represent orally because it's actually a diagram" (02:23:11). He then proceeds to perform this diagram with the statement, functioning like a guideline for the piece, and a manifesto for sound poetry at large, "you don't have to say the word, you just have to make the sound" (02:22:29). This sentence immediately transforms itself into syllable-sized vowel sounds which, the listener soon realizes, is supposed to represent, transform, but also reproduce the recognizable words. For example, "you don't have to say the word" is abstracted to "ooh / oh / ah / uh / eh / uh / ah." A serial, vocalized beat, this semi-recognizable phrase—shimmering like a sonic shadow of the coherent syntax—is a clear dialogic and durational expansion on both performances of "do you read me?" with its project of dismantling language into letters. In this new piece, letters or, more precisely, vowels, stand in for entire words, before developing convexly from sounds back into pithy, shrunken words: "ooh / oh / ah / uh / eh / uh / ah" becomes "ye / dint / hiv / t / say / th / wird," before scrambling itself into varying configurations of the full words: "sound / don't / say // don't / say / sound // make / word // don't / say / word // don't / say / sound // make / word / sound" and so on. Words, sounds, silence, and the omission of words and sounds all collaborate in the construction of a performance style that formalizes a percussive, embodied manipulation of voice as poetic instrument.

Transcribing from the audio recording, I have added the line and stanza breaks according to the rhythm and as they feel discernible. By doing so, I hope to illustrate the rhythmic nature of the performance which keep the words as metrical as the vowel and contracted versions do. As Kellough quips at a performance of 19 September 2010, "it's kind of an exercise in remixing the poem on the spot, so like, putting the words in different places. It's just not that much fun to read the poem from beginning to end" (Recording 2 00:09:47). By incorporating the introductory sentence and building the sounds back into full words, at the 25 October 2009 performance, however, Kellough is flirting with the linearity of reading from "beginning to end." He might be destabilizing a more traditional linguistic project and confronting the ubiquity of language that functions according to self-contained units and syntactical structures, but he is also moving beyond "gibberish" (00:29:57), as he mocks his own performance of 21 November 2004, towards the narrative and/or lyrical sentence and line, as in my analysis of his 20 November 2016 performance in the next section of this chapter.

that the second version seems to challenge the listeners to expose who they are and how they read and interpret the speaker of the poem.

It seems facile, when placing the 2003 and 2005 performances in dialogic relationality with one another, to suggest that the second version is the more mature one. This poem does not only exist in its newest iteration, but in every version that precedes it and might follow it in the future. The newest version does not mean that it is *the* version, only that it offers the poet's more recent thinking about that work. In fact, in some ways, the earlier version is the more developed—it is a substantially longer work running for 4 minutes 2 seconds rather than the much contracted second version of 1 minute 19 seconds; it has a longer script, delving beyond the initial title question to an exploration of language and translation, aligning theme and concept by translating how the dismantling of language itself becomes a language which communicates in a different way from syntactical and semantic linguistic comprehension; it pushes the limits of spelling as performance method, displaying impressive technical skill in the speed and dexterity of the recital, but also wearing the audience out as they realize at a certain point that they do not have the stamina to continue transcribing against the odds of sonic fragmentation and aural difficulty. That said, the 2005 version of "do you read me?" learns from the limitations of the earlier version, reconsiders the implications of the title questions, and shifts the poem's focus to a politically engaged motif. As Kellough acknowledges to me:

> Later I realized that it ["do you read me?"] became its own political statement. I'd often thought that sound poetry, at least in Canada, is this thing that predominantly white men do. Where's the political content in it? I think it's a political statement because it's me who's doing it. I feel like that "do you read me?" poem is a poem that I could perform for the rest of my life, in a sense, and the statement would always be there, given who I am performing that kind of work. (Kaie Kellough interview, 27 May 2022)

In contrast to the linguistic project of the 2003 iteration that hinges on the act of aural reading and decipherment of dismantled language, the later version gives way for a conceptual reading practice that relates to the speaker, in this case Kellough himself. Directly alluding to his positionality as a Black Canadian man of Guyanese decent, centralized in the literal spotlight of performance, his question could then be reframed as: how do *you* read *me* as performer? How does the audience read Kaie Kellough? Is he being read according to positionality, as sound poetry performer, or as author? The insistence on *reading* places the audience in a lineage of print in relation to the aural piece, but Kellough's embodiment of reading through the poetry reading or performance as form reinstates the act of reading as oral, directing his own performance while resisting the status of creator and expert as linked to the fixity of print tradition. Even in the print version of this poem—as shown in Image 5—the work functions as an audiotext, remains indeterminate, and offers notes for future performances rather than an understanding of a text as preceding vocalization.

"How do you read me as performer?" dramatizes the encounter between performer and audience—in the physical terms of the face-to-face placement of stage in relation to audience seating—but even more so in the words' provocation for the audience to attempt to interpret the positionality of the person standing before them. Here one might think along with Sara Ahmed in terms of the relational space of the "encounter," one which might animate complex and often violent sociohistorical networks that reify difference. As such, she urges a mode of encounter that notices "not *the* other, but the mode of encounter in which I am faced with *an* other" (*Strange Encounters* 145, emphasis added). Admitting the individuality of the encounter between performer

and audience heightens the pitch of Kellough's "read[ing]" as the invitation to read him extends beyond generalizations of gender and race to the particularities of how those larger traits articulate themselves into his specific personhood. As the audience erupts into applause, Kellough reminds them, "[t]hat's a question—I haven't received an answer" (01:00:28). It is, of course, impossible to provide him with an answer. Even if the second performance of this poem has strayed from the earlier poem's project and has transformed itself over time, it remains true to the original idea in terms of prompting interpretation from the audience while the act of interpretation itself is one that can, by definition, never be achieved—the horizon of what can be gleaned from the act of reading is always one step beyond what the reader infers. And so, in "do you read me?" Kellough literalizes a Judith Butleresque identity performance, asking the audience to read him, but simultaneously withstanding and defying definability. He embodies performance as he himself becomes the illegibility featured in the 2003 version of the poem. In its 2005 transformation the poem is stripped of much of its earlier poetic excess and down to a single question that prompts the audience to decipher the fragments that constitute identity.

Equally compellingly in relation to the curatorial project of this essay and of the broader scope of my research, "do you read me?" dares Kellough to reach beyond his roles as poet, performer, and curator of the series within a series, and conceptually-speaking, to relate directly and personally to the form of the poetry reading itself. In these terms, one might think alongside Irit Rogoff's understanding of "becoming research" as experimental process- and practice-based modes of knowledge production reverberate into scholarly contexts, and lived experience and critical positionality undergird, amplify, and *become* the work created. She writes, for example, that research as constructed through the curatorial field—that is, work that is similar to Kellough's dialogic and durational self-curation of literary performance—"is now the arena in which we negotiate knowledge we have inherited with the conditions of our lives [...I]t is here, in the immersion of conditions, that research transforms from an investigative impulse to the constitution of new realities" ("Becoming Research" 50). If there is an emergent sense of being inherent to the making-of performance over time, the reflexive grammar inherent to *self*-curating allows Kellough to become a representative of the work presented, not through his function as an author, but as the structuring referent that makes the performances possible in curatorial terms. He is not only embodying a series within the larger series of the Words and Music Show and accepting the labour of constructing his various performances in relation to both the larger series and to one another as individual events. He is not only entering the sequence of events into dialogic and durational relationalities with itself, allowing the performances to unfold intentionally across time with discernible reference to one another through repetition and similarity, equally as through deliberate difference and transformation. He is also unraveling the genre of the poetry reading with this piece—taking apart the words of the poem themselves and personally entering the fragments of those words through their vocalization, his physical presence in performance, and in the attempt to perform himself as readable. He offers the poetry reading to the audience as a self-referential form that embeds the practice of interpretation and critical il/legibility into the structured performance sequence of oral poems in a public-facing venue. "do you read me?" activates the audience from listeners to readers—or complicates listening as reading (or complicates listening as writing even, alluding again to Barthes' ubiquitous active, *writerly* mode of interpretation)—so that the action at stake is shared among everyone present in the room. With this heightened level of social engagement from everyone involved in the Words and Music Show, the poetry reading as form animates Bourriaud's understanding of relational aesthetics as a critical space that relies on experiential reciprocity and exchange. The fact that this sociability hinges on Kellough's self-

curatorial embodiment of poetry in performance points to a dynamic field of curatorial relationality that is simultaneously directed by Kellough's creative decision-making and shaping of literary events over time, and symbolic of those events' lineage as an activation and interrelation of literary community as an unstable, but continuous process of becoming. Kellough reads, or rather recites, at a poetry reading series while constantly prefiguring the question of readability inherent both to the genre of literary event and to that performance itself. He thus simultaneously strengthens and destabilizes the project and genre of the poetry reading, as well as the acts of reading and being read, in the process.

"I wanted to tell you something about myself": Interweaving Dialogic and Durational Relationalities 2

Pushing my own argument to the critical brink, I need to retreat to continue thinking of Kellough's role as curator, in particular, within the context of self-curation at the Words and Music Show. Just as an examination of his performances over time illuminates the development of his work durationally and in dialogic relationality towards itself, so also reading Kellough as a curatorial agent of his own performances, especially as they engage with one another over time, underscores the scope of his roles beyond poet and spoken word artist. He is, at least partially, the producer of the relational interconnections between his different appearances over time. Embodying this role of the curator, shaping his individual sets and the network of those sets over the years, he is equally a host introducing his sets up on stage, and a critical and creative administrator who prepares his sets and considers them in relation to what he presented at other events. At his performance of "I wanted to tell you something about myself" on 20 November 2016[35], featuring also Stefan Christoff, Paul Dutton, Tawhida Tanya Evanson, Eve Nixen, and Nina Segalowitz—embedding his practice on that particular night in a gathering of music and collaboration, sound poetry, and Inuit throat singing—he makes apparent his self-awareness of the various roles he inhabits at the Words and Music Show. That is, his performance optimizes the potential of technologically mediated and pre-recorded sound to multiply voices that then enact various configurations of Kellough as poet, Kellough as performer, Kellough as host, and Kellough as curator. As he has also told Faith Paré, "I like the idea of trying to be able to multiply and layer voice, to bring language and text into conversation [...] I've been pursuing those practices together, simultaneously, for a long time" ("Dubbing it into the Earth" no pag.). While multiplying his voice from one into many, and dividing those voices according to different roles, he also reverses plurality back to unification, letting the various voices and roles bind together—yes, one person performs a number of tasks, but the many voices simultaneously exist as one voice. In other words, he dramatizes himself and renders audible his various roles, but he simultaneously legitimizes a study of his work through the lens of self-curation. He activates a self-conscious curatorial field that emphasizes and experiments with the possibilities of dialogic and durational relationalities within a performance series context that itself allows artists the scope to return, to experiment, and to steer the development of their public-facing practice.

As a result of this 20 November 2016 performance being "a memorable recording in which Kellough's introduction to a poem becomes the poem," as Katherine McLeod elucidates ("The Voice that Is the Poem" 00:01:29), Kellough's performance from this show has been featured

[35] Since this work remains unnamed, I will refer to it as "I wanted to tell you something about myself." It includes text from the poem "high school fever: *nowhere, prairie*" published in *Magnetic Equator.* The printed poem does not function as a score for the performance work; instead, recognizable sections emerge in performance and were presumably reworked into the later published version.

twice on the SpokenWeb Shortcuts podcast series produced by McLeod herself. Initially, a clip appears on 16 March 2020 as a very brief episode "Where Does the Reading Begin?" Here McLeod lets the title question do most of the talking, but remarks that "[d]uring the digitization process, student research assistant Ali Barillaro noticed that this performance by Kellough stood out from the rest" (00:01:08). McLeod then returns to this clip for a more sustained episode on 21 February 2022, inviting Kellough to listen to part of the performance and to talk to her about the experience of doing so ("The Voice that Is the Poem"). Listening to himself six years after the fact, Kellough describes his performance as a sonic and technologically mediated experiment that mixes live voice with pre-recorded audio. This creates a sense of surprise and ambiguity in listeners (especially archival listeners who do not have a video recording to see the equipment set up in front of him on stage) as to the construction and layering of voices in the piece. As he explains in conversation with McLeod, there are three interwoven voices at play, "there's my voice, introducing the poem. There's a second voice that's going through a mixer and out to the house, and that's a recorded voice. And then there's a third recorded voice that's going back into an effects pedal and then out" (00:08:15). Significantly, these triplicate voices adopt different roles. They are semi-aligned with that of poet and performer, as well as with host and curator, splitting into divergent vocalities, while also swapping roles and realigning again in an organic enactment of tasks assigned to the poet. Kellough describes:

> sometimes in live oral performance, the poet, or the presenter, plays these dual roles and sort of toggles between them. There's the role of the poet—the, how can I put [it]?—the MC, the master of ceremonies where you, you say, "okay, so now this next poem that I'm going to present is about..." and, and it's you, right? The human being. You crack a couple of jokes, you present the poem, or you say something important about it, and then you present the poem. But when you read the poem, you shift into another persona. That's the performer. That kind of movement back and forth—I've always liked to kind of try to subvert that and not to emphasize that too much, or find ways of blending it. So the introduction becomes the poem, or the introduction, in this case, winds up entering into dialogue with the poem. ("The Voice that Is the Poem" 00:05:34)

This division of labour is something that most authors do spontaneously at poetry readings as part of the unspoken rules of engagement of presenting literary works in public. Poets usually provide brief contextualizing comments before sharing their actual piece and perpetuate the same format as links between each poem. This formula takes places with varying degrees of smooth transition from introduction to poetry, occasionally resulting in a jarring clash between conversing as a cheery host and presenting poetic materials in a different tonal register and on challenging topics. To offer one minimalist example among many such pithy, punctuated introductory notes, one might turn to a performance from the Words and Music Show of 27 June 2010 where Kellough intersperses his poems with especially concise oral footnotes, simply informing the audience, "[s]o this poem is called 'Boyhood Dub'" before reciting "Boyhood Dub" (Recording 2 00:04:46). He opens his performance to this event with exactly the kind of witty, informative opening notes that he outlines in the podcast transcript above:

> Good evening everyone, nice to see everybody. Hallo League [of Canadian Poets]! I have a couple of poems for you. The first one was written several years ago. Does anyone know where Campbell Park is? It's in Little Burgundy [...] There are some basketball courts next

> to it. I was in the park because I used to play with a musical ensemble and we were doing an outdoors concert there and for a while I was sitting next to the basketball courts. I have no interest in basketball, but the rhythm of the basketball creates this kind of polyrhythmic, sonic backdrop. So this is called "Block Rock, Campbell Park, Little Burgundy, Mont-Real." (Recording 2 00:00:45)

Beyond the obvious contextualization and biographical narrative that inspired the composition of this work, Kellough also adopts hosting and administrative roles, however slight in scope, graciously acknowledging the audience and gesturing towards the League of Canadian Poets as the sponsoring organization of the event. Even more significantly, though, he angles this introductory narrative towards his personal performance style, experiencing the sound of basketballs on the courts as "this kind of polyrhythmic, sonic backdrop." Dialogically and durationally, one can immediately think back to the dub-influenced rhythmic linguistic dismantling, the metrical syllabic elision, and the percussive performance style that Kellough consistently tried out, adjusted, and honed over the course of the Words and Music Show series and as seen in some of the works previously discussed. When Kellough introduces this 2010 set in an anecdotal mode, but then gestures towards his own conceptual preoccupations with rhythm in language and sound, a significant slippage occurs between his roles as host, or as he calls it "MC," and that of artist and performer. His opening remarks—extra-poetic text traditionally a genre distinct from the presentation of the literary works more specifically—have shifted in register with the word "polyrhythmic." The informal introductory remarks have now opened towards a self-referential, editorial engagement with the complexity of his compositional experimentation that gestures inadvertently to past works and merges with the beat-focused, metrical performance that follows. The preamble to his set thus adopts a polyrhythm of its own as it shifts and morphs from the introductory to the curatorial and performative. The multiplicity of this rhythm works together in the production of a networked performance that engages a durational understanding of its existence in relation to itself, equally as to previous experiments.

This modular slippage between curator, host, and performer is heightened tenfold in the 20 November 2016 performance of "I wanted to tell you something about myself," where Kellough deliberately composes the work "to subvert that [distinction between poet as MC and performer] and not to emphasize that too much, or find ways of blending it," as he tells McLeod ("The Voice that Is the Poem" 00:05:34). Topically, this work features the angst of teenage experience, growing up in the Canadian prairies, overcome with heteronormative, conservative ideals, violent white supremacist ideologies, and the effects of "alcohol and racism," as the poem itself paraphrases (01:19:15). This work might be an example of what Karina Vernon has in mind when she labels Kellough's writing as "poetry [that] imagines the prairie as a dub 'remix'" (*The Great Black North* 27). With the project of merging MC and performing roles in mind, Kellough opens the work with archetypal niceties, "[t]hanks Ian [Ferrier] for that introduction. Thanks to all the other artists. It's been a very nice night" (01:09:01). As he continues to talk about the poetic narrative that he will perform, the word "adolescence" collides with the word "sober" as presented by the sudden and startling presence of another, pre-recorded voice. Faced with this vocal intrusion, the live voice starts repeating anxiously, "in in in" (01:10:53), while the recorded voice breaks apart into a distorted rendition of a poem that will soon be repeated more clearly by the live voice. As Kellough tells McLeod, "having the introduction to the poem be sort of halting and... failing to progress fluidly. I wanted to have the work come up under that. So to give the impression that I didn't know exactly what I might be doing and then have the poem take over in a moment of uncertainty"

(00:10:10). The two competing voices "come up under" each other and "take over" from one another so that they remain audibly distinct and yet also intertwine into a choral symbiosis. If the live voice initially represents the host or MC, then the droning distortion of the recorded voice stands in for the performer—this rings true in dialogic relation to Kellough's earlier experiments in warping sound and rendering it illegible (one might think back to "do you read me?"). Through repetition of the same poetic material, though, the two vocal personae are swapped as the live voice's version of the poem becomes dominant and semantically easier to follow. Now the self-conscious status of the recorded voice as document underscores the archival nature of the performance in real time, enacting a preconfigured, administrative urge to hold the poem accountable for its own record. The recorded voice implicitly adopts the role of curator, while the live voice loops back to recite the poem once again. As Kellough continues to explain about the intersecting voices, "I was trying to, trying to play with the idea that... the sense that maybe the person who was presenting the poems was not fully competent. Their confidence was wavering. And those are not things that you're supposed to perform" ("The Voice that Is the Poem" 00:11:47). The multiplicity of roles that a poet is expected to perform—charismatic host, engaging performer, insightful curator, and more—is here inversed to show the performer as a dilettante, "not fully competent." The irony is, of course, that the seemingly destabilizing repetition and distortion of words into sounds is skillfully implemented, and the interchanging of roles offers an expertly rendered twist of introductory comments as poem and poem as a state of constant renewal and introduction.

Approximately 15 minutes into the piece, Kellough expands the curatorial field to place the work in direct dialogic and durational relation to the performance style heard in "do you read me?" More specifically, he emphasizes the sentence "I wanted to tell you something about myself" and repeats it frantically, over and over again, in an almost anguished tone, allowing the words to break open, to merge into one another, and to become opaque and inaudible in the process (01:23:59). The reason for this affective performance, as he continues to narrate, is that "the story does not come out straight / the identity does not come out straight / being does not come out straight / straight does not come out straight" (01:24:29). An existential statement, the inability of the speaker's "story," "identity," and "being" to be articulated in any one linear manner is reflected in the multiple voices used to perform the work in the first place. The speaker's attempt at sharing his narrative fails as the live and recorded, clear and distorted, voices adopt different projects, one trying to introduce the piece, one ingratiating itself with the audience, one narrating a teenager's anxiety, one blurring its own sonic edges, and so on. Furthermore, the pronouns "I" and "you"—"*I* wanted to tell *you* something about myself" (emphasis added)—place the literary speaker in dialogue with the audience, magnifying the speaker's desire to be heard as a performer by the public, but also hinting at the tacit understanding of that "I" being Kellough as host and curator too. Much in the same way that "do you read me?" is inherently illegible as a question, while also working against its own readability through aural fragmentation, so also the statement "I wanted to tell you something about myself" implies the inability to do so through the past tense assumption that the desire was never achieved. There is a sense of incompletion at play, one which signals the inherent openings that dub poetics calls for and one which asks, perhaps, for the speaker's voice to take on a different role in order to fill in its own gaps. As Kellough quips in a recording from 24 January 2010, "[t]here was a point that I discovered that if you didn't have to say the entire word, the poem was much more interesting" (00:11:48). This mode of performance that favours the unfinished and fragmented relies on the voice to divide itself so that its parts can fill out the poem. As "I wanted to tell you something about myself" opens itself to be in stylistic, critical, and

performative dialogic, durational relation to previous recitations, it becomes clear that these curatorial correlations between poems and across time likewise do "not come out straight," queering itself conceptually in a constant micro-flux or oscillation of past, present, and future creative concerns. The speaker's struggle to express himself and the voices that are engaged in the process of articulating the different curatorial duties observed by a poet on stage become "the straits that we navigate / [...] the stammers that we hate" as the piece bursts into an even more chaotic, non-verbal melange of sound (01:24:38). Through the din, a clear vocal signal becomes audible and the words "I repeat myself" (01:25:46) lead, not into repetition, but into continuation, progression, and literary expansion. As Glissant might suggest, "*Repetition, moreover, is an acknowledged form of consciousness both here and elsewhere*" (*Poetics of Relation* 45, original emphasis). Within the repetition of himself across differing roles of host, poet, and curator, Kellough amplifies his own presence even as he simultaneously dilutes it through the constant refraction from self into selves. In durational terms, the ongoing relational dialogue of Kellough's performances at the Words and Music Show coheres not only across different events, but also within the same voice as its cords stretch to accommodate the various curatorial roles it aims to enunciate.

Conclusion

Considering Kellough's performances at the Words and Music Show self-referentially across a duration of two decades is, of course, only one single scholarly avenue among many to follow in an attempt to disentangle the different self-curated strands co-existing at the series across such a long time span. As mentioned repeatedly, a number of different artists recurred and continue to recur at the Words and Music Show as a welcoming, workshopping forum, allowing for an array of similar interventions into the audio archives that center on possibly dissimilar approaches to a self-curatorial practice. A braid of self-curated series beneath the surface of the more comprehensive series—comparing and contrasting the effects of Kellough's series of events alongside, for example, Cat Kidd or Moe Clark's series of events—could also be a relevant continuation of this research angle, developing towards a multi-tiered and interconnected study with dialogic, durational relationalities affecting both individual authors' appearances and their respective, multiple appearances as co-existent curatorial entities. Furthermore, Kellough's performances in relation to the larger series constitute only two layers in an ever expanding potential sequence of community strata. That is, just as much as his work is shaped by Ferrier's larger series, as well as the artists performing adjacent to him, so also does the Words and Music Show exist within even larger structures, such as relationships with other reading series and the creative communities of Montreal, the broader provincial cultural forums, the national touring networks of mobility and exchange, and so on. Currents and sub-currents of performance and their reciprocal curatorial relations are thus constantly interconnecting, diverging, and transforming in each other's purviews and in overarching dialogues that can, in theory, continue growing infinitely beyond the immediate scope of either Kellough's appearances or the Words and Music Show's reach as a local performance series.

Another important addendum to note, as I conclude this chapter, is that Kellough's performances at the Words and Music Show primarily form part of his earlier experiments in poetry, sound, collaboration, and technological mediation, and are specific to his geographic move to Montreal. By recognizing the work from his 20s into his 30s as early iterations of his work is in no way intended to diminish its literary value, but rather to emphasize the ongoing compositions that he continues to produce and perform as both a solo artist and in mature collaborative

configurations. He has led and/or contributed to mergers of oral poetry, sound, and visuals, such as the SpokenWeb commissioned video piece *small stones,* with saxophonist Jason Sharp and artist-designer Kevin Yuen Kit Lo. The even larger-scale band FYEAR—adding Tawhida Tanya Evanson, JahSun, percussionists, and violinists to the names already mentioned—is another robust example of a recent performance collaboration that survived the COVID-19 pandemic to harness the power of poetry and voice to an expansive practice of sound and image. FYEAR is also an example of work that moves beyond the single set within a larger reading series and towards a fully-fledged, contemporary symphonic and politically, ecologically engaged curatorial project in its own, self-reflexive right. While FYEAR is not currently taking place within the context of the Words and Music Show, it is a perpetuation of Kellough's performance practice that, arguably learns from, sustains, and builds upon much of the vocal virtuosity, musical and metrical attunement, and embodied sonic-linguistic methods that he developed in his earlier experiments, as seen in works like "do you read me?" and "I wanted to tell you something about myself." In both dialogic and durational terms, then, Kellough's self-curation continues beyond the scope of his final recorded event at the Words and Music Show in 2018, looping back to amplify and refine foundational performance techniques articulated at the series, while simultaneously stretching into new present and future territories that still continue to evolve. As such, I intend to continue my research on Kellough's self-curation outside of this chapter's scope by focusing on some of these more recent projects in the future. Such research on Kellough's self-curation beyond the scope of the Words and Music Show will amplify his status as a poet and performer who deliberately rallies the curatorial structures and strictures of the literary event to place various iterations of his oral presentations in dialogue with one another over time. As one of the first prolonged scholarly investigations into both Kellough's performance practice and the Words and Music Show as a series, this chapter aims to contribute to a forward-looking and budding body of research in its own right, while also applying my own curatorial vocabulary and relational structure to the enquiry. In other words, I hope to posit a reciprocal analysis that reduces neither self-curation and its curatorial relationalities nor poet and performance series to case study for the sake of explanation alone, but one that rather expands both through its contact with the other.

Chapter 5—Deep Curation as Curatorial Mode and as Series of Events: *We've Weav*[ing] Durational, Institutional, Dialogic, and Spatial Relationalities

As discussed in Chapter 1, deep curation—in its lower case variation—is one of the four curatorial modes or methodologies schematized in my research and emanating from an understanding of the limitations of framed, open, and self-curation. Deep Curation—upper case—is also the proper name for a research creation project and a series of literary events that form part of my doctoral studies, as an offshoot or development out of my previous curatorial work. As such, it is simultaneously a more personal vision and exploration of what literary event curation could be, an articulation of an aspirational ethos of more intentional, responsible curation, and an invitation for other curators and poets to adopt the mode's core tenets and to continue experimenting with the poetry reading as form in their own individualized ways. As with the framed, open, and self-curatorial modes, deep curation does not have to be a new, contemporary concept, or one related to the events that I have personally organized, but can equally be applied to relevant historical archives of literary events as a lens of critical vocabulary with which to engage with the relational structure of poetry reading audio documentation. In other words, Deep Curation's status as an ongoing series of contemporary poetry readings that I personally founded, developed, and continue to curate does not preclude it from also generating significant discussion in terms of unassociated, historical or contemporary, experimental literary events that were or are likewise created with an emphasis on dialogue and an intentional heightening of decision-making in the form and content of poetry presented in performance.

The introductory section on deep curation in Chapter 1 is dedicated to a theoretical understanding of the curatorial mode. This chapter applies that theory to my personal curatorial experience and archive of the Deep Curation series of events. Deep Curation serves as signposts for a more objective definition of its aspirations as a curatorial mode. This chapter thus uses the narrative of my Deep Curation practice to first illustrate what deep curation could look like and then to unsettle it as a finite manifestation. The first section of this chapter will relate the origin, development, and durational transformation of my Deep Curation practice linearly across the eight events that I have curated and collaborated on to date—starting in August 2018 and still ongoing as a series of events happening at uneven intervals. The second section will delve into the most recent iteration of this project, namely *We've Weave*, produced in collaboration with and performed by Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel, July and August 2022, to frame the practice in more depth and in terms of curatorial relationalities and their effects. As the title suggests with its first person plural pronoun and actively relational verb, there is an inherent consciousness of collectivity and interconnection activated throughout this work. For this second section of this chapter, I will diverge slightly from the structure of previous dissertation chapters, to an extent integrating this gesture of collaborative weaving into the formal structure of my analysis. To do so, I will construct a series of shorter interventions into the work by way of the four curatorial relationalities already discussed in this dissertation. More specifically, I will consider institutional, dialogic, and spatial, relationalities—threading durational relationality as an additional weft to the other three—as they are animated within the scope of the production and performances of *We've Weave.* Rather than fixating on one or two, as I have done with case studies in preceding chapters, I will aim to illustrate the coexistence and interrelation of the curatorial relationalities themselves. Isolating these relationalities is, by default, an artificial scholarly move towards tidy schematization that supports a linearized thesis, and the reality of literary events is that *everything* happens at once, that the event is a huge melting pot of sociability, an intermixing

of people, literatures, place, historical moment, influence, and constant, innumerable energy exchanges. My decision to attempt writing smaller glimpses into this dynamic, relational interaction is thus based on an awareness of their coexistence and interconnection, both in live and archival terms. I also deliberately harness the same curatorial relationalities that I previously discussed, hoping to offer a microcosm of the dissertation with familiar concepts already discussed and to fuse these within the final case study. The result is, perhaps, a chapter that is less finely wrought, less delineated and delimited in its terms, and yet is also more closely aligned with the empirical reality of engaging with the process, with the live and archival product of any poetry reading, and with the purposefully heightened relationality of Deep Curation, in particular. This approach of anatomizing my analysis in an attempt at relational realism in the final chapter serves at once as a self-referential gesture to the making of *We've Weave* as a distinct case study and a synthesis of what my dissertation as a more holistic project is trying to achieve.

An Overview of Deep Curation as Series of Events

As discussed in Chapter 1, deep curation as a curatorial mode is a theoretical approach to literary event organization that posits the literary event, not as a presentation of poetry, but as an artwork that is constituted of poetry in performance. The word *deep* here works to highlight a sense of intentionality and deliberation in terms of decisions made in relation to all aspects of the organization, conceptualization, process, and performance of the literary event. It also works to activate and render discernible the curatorial relationalities always present at poetry readings, but not always consciously mobilized. This relational attention allows for the lateral network of an infinity of active agents to lose their juxtapositional status and to merge, to engage on a depth axis as a new creative and critical formulation, a whole and independent artwork. While deep curation does not presume to offer a recipe for recreating such relational literary artworks, it does support certain core principles that can be interpreted and applied in the making of a wide range of different versions of potential deep curated poetry readings. Deep curation is, for example, a theory and practice that heightens the literary curator's agency in their role as mediator between poets or poetic content and the public. It is a more intentionally engaged mode of literary event organization that highlights the curator's responsibility to intimately know the work disseminated, both in terms of their relationship with the authors and with the larger literary community, helping to select the poetry for performance and to shape the literary event. This implies a constant negotiation of authorship and authority between curator and poets, a sense of social plasticity that productively destabilizes unquestioning promotional and consumerist approaches to literary event organization. Constantly shifting the power balance between curator and poets further implies a strong emphasis on the dialogic, both in terms of productive and informative collaboration between all participants, but also a heightened attempt to place divergent poetries in intentional thematic and conceptual exchange with each other in the formulation of a new and cohesive literary work in performance. The amount of time and attention intrinsic to these first two core goals of deep curation thus leads to a third important characteristic: deep curation as an ethical, care-centered mode of literary event creation that posits curation itself as critical medium of inherent literary analysis and embodied art practice. Here one might think alongside Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro who purports that "[the only mandate and principle the curator has, which he shouldn't betray, is that of fidelity and respect towards the other. Curatorial ethics therefore comes from an ethical experience of the subject, which is that of responsibility" ("The Curator's Demands" 7). One might also deliberate with Jean-Paul Martinon, in his study *Curating as Ethics,* on how each curator must establish their own rules of engagement so that ethics, especially in interpersonal and collaborative terms, must always

remain open to interrogation, never stultified, but always adaptable to a curator's vision of how a safe, mutually beneficial, and open space of communication manifests itself.

Considering performance, participatory, or socially engaged art, curator and critic Okwui Enwezor contends that art production veers towards collective, collaborative practice in moments of social upheaval and critical public backlash. He argues that "crises often force reappraisals of conditions of production, revaluation of the nature of artistic work, and reconfiguration of the position of the artist in relation to economic, social, and political institutions" ("The Production of Social Space as Artwork" 225). Transposed into the wide-sweeping context of contemporary Canadian literature, as a community and as a discipline—in particular, the past decade's ongoing scrutiny of sexual misconduct, and feminist, critical racial, decolonial, and queer critiques of hegemonic narratives of Canadian literature—Enwezor's hypothesis rings true. His statement resonates with the slow, incremental reassessment of the literary institutional infrastructure that historically privileged certain demographics along sexist, racist, ableist, and other discriminatory lines, as well as allowing for structures of abuse to exist silently beneath a veneer of respectability. One might think here of Alicia Elliott's much-cited critique of the Canadian literary scene in her essay "CanLit Is a Raging Dumpster Fire," querying in exasperation, "How is CanLit continually making the same mistakes? Or, to put it more frankly, how do the writers, editors, publishers, and agents that make up CanLit live through those mistakes, hear them pointed out, do nothing to address them [...] And why are we suddenly—finally—willing to actually see these mistakes now?" (95). One might also think alongside Hannah McGregor, Julie Rak, and Erin Wunker who synthesize Canadian literary history as a "reflect[ion of] the nation to itself, and within itself" (*ReFuse* 21). They understand the country's literary infrastructure to be resonant of national narratives of "Indigenous genocide, anti-Blackness, anglophone dominance, racist immigration policies, eugenicist attitudes towards disabled people, and deep-rooted misogyny" (21). To change takes large-scale structural reformation, equally as small incremental amendments at ground level. To a much scaled down degree, then, the climate described by Elliott, McGregor, and others—and Enwezor's statement on the impetus towards change in moments of crisis—also reflects the development of my personal literary curatorial work, hopefully not in discriminatory terms per se, but as a smaller cog in the larger literary cultural shift towards ethical reassessment and resultant intentional decision-making as synthesized in the collaborative performance space and dynamic, curatorial project that I call deep curation as a methodological mode and Deep Curation as an applied series of literary events.

In brief, my curatorial practice started with the Montreal-based Resonance Reading Series, organized between December 2012 and August 2018, at the vegan jazz bar Resonance Café, 9pm on the first Tuesday night of every month. Following a fairly rote curating strategy, this series invited four to six poets and fiction writers to present 10-15 minutes of work each in a sequential lineup. In some cases, I was familiar with an author's work and excited to disseminate it to a local audience, but in other cases, the rapid-fire nature of this organizational endeavour and the fact that I was never remunerated for my time and labour meant that I also hosted authors who came by recommendation or even request. In other words, I did not have the resources to consider how every reader would complement and enter into dialogue with one another. This mode of, what I may now call, open curation functioned well, creating a vibrant scene for local and visiting authors to share their work to a consistently present and engaged audience that also expanded in number over the years. The series flourished with the exception of one or two isolated events of inappropriate content couched within an author's larger body of work and which I, as curator, was not aware of prior to the performance. Even as the exception to the rule, these atypical events of

inflammatory and unfiltered content exposed the necessity for a higher degree of curatorial agency when presenting, and implicitly vouching for, creative content in a public setting. On the one hand, I was responsible as curator for the poets performing under the banner of the Resonance Reading Series, and on the other hand, I was equally responsible for the creation of a safe environment that both aesthetically and ethically reflected the literary space and ethos that I wanted to foster. In both cases, there were no clear rules of engagement that structured the ways I was supposed to act in the face of perceived dissent on my series' stage. Jean-Paul Martinon discusses this exact lack of professional standards in visual arts contexts, remarking that an ethical guidebook for curating would enforce conservative curatorial tendencies from traditional modalities of curatorship as guardianship. In *Curating as Ethics,* he ultimately suggests that curators need to put forward "their own private ethical codes" (ix), that they need to "work by intuitive moves, by contemplative moves" (210). As I already mentioned earlier in this chapter, he articulates ethics as a practice of thinking through, of doing the labour to analyze, formulate, and understand[36] that which one is publicly presenting as a curator in a manner that allows one to stand by one's choices. This intuitive process of navigating responsible curatorial production resonates, for me, with a deep curatorial approach.

The inherent tension that I experienced in my role as Resonance's curator—feeling energized by making space for writers to share their work and simultaneously wanting to resist the rote mode of curating that a lack of resources implied—led me to seek out and read curatorial theory (ahead of actually starting my doctoral studies as a theoretical intervention into this subject). I started questioning the validity of the way I was organizing events at Resonance, "*[t]his-is-where-it-came-from readings*," as Smaro Kamboureli would put it, "i.e. when a poet spends ten minutes explaining a poem that takes less than a minute to read" ("On Public Readings" 128). This kind of event assumes that a literary work cannot speak for itself and that authorial anecdote is the performative core. This mode of reading is about explicating the work for a passive audience, not about finding ways to share it that could amplify and energize the work through the performance itself. Erín Moure and Karis Shearer have likewise written a compelling study of how institutional infrastructures of publication, book launches, distribution, and deliverable sales numbers have impacted the default mode of literary events ("The Public Reading"). As impossible as it is to articulate a one-size-fit-all definition of the poetry reading, as outlined in the Introduction, and as much as there will always be exhilarating counterexamples, the expected literary event, within contemporary, Canadian terms, allows invited authors to perform work of their choosing for a pre-considered duration of time. If there are multiple authors, they read in a consecutive lineup with little, light, or coincidental interconnection between their sets. Similar to my own insight that this mode of literary event needs to be revised, Moure and Shearer are likewise "calling for change." They contend that "the best poetry readings to see and hear are self-reflexive performances that deliberately disrupt the notion of the author as definitive interpreters of their own work. [...U]ntil critics and professors of poetry approach readings as creative productions worthy of critical

[36] The dilemma is always to react without previous deliberation. That is, if a literary curator organizes twenty smooth events and is then suddenly presented with an isolated case of inflammatory speech on stage, they cannot know how to respond in the millisecond of comprehension that the literary content has gone awry. Removing the reader forcibly from the stage is as problematic as allowing the work space to be presented and received. Ideally, the private formulation of curatorial rules of engagement would happen in advance of a crisis moment and allow for the curator to explain them to all series participants. This extra organizational step would probably bypass the presentation of inappropriate work, but it would also set into motion a series of prearranged and mutually consensual actions if a situation were to arise.

response in the form of scholarship, discussion, and review rather than as interesting supplements to poetry collections, we are complicit in the same old paradigm" ("The Public Reading" 282-283). Even though I had not read their essay at the time when I started thinking about issues of intentional, ethical literary curation, deep curation, and my Deep Curation series of events, is one possible corrective to Moure and Shearer's call for change, formulating the poetry reading as independent artform and redirecting the role of the author to be in dialogue with both adjacent authors, the event curator, the audience, venue, and the infinitude of omnipresent relationalities, as previously discussed.

Image 7: The first Deep Curation poetry reading, hosted at Knife Fork Book in Toronto, 24 August 2018. Credit: Kirby.

CURATED POETRY READING with CANISIA LUBRIN, AARON BOOTHBY and KLARA DU PLESSIS

Intro	**Silence**
Aaron	"(Authority)"
Canisia	"Final prayer in the cathedral of the immaculate conception II"
Klara	excerpt from "Someone other than else"
1	**Water / Mountain / Archipelago**
Aaron	"Deluges"
Canisia	"Unofficial biography of the sea"
	"Let the gods do their work"
Klara	"Santa Cova Muscles"
Canisia	"Children of the archipelago"
2	**Names**
Klara	excerpt from "Hunter-Gatherer Criminals"
Canisia	"Polite uncertainty"
Klara	excerpt from "First of all we no longer write in black"
Aaron	"(Country)"

Image 8: Screen shot of the script outline for the 24 August 2018 Deep Curation poetry reading, featuring Aaron Boothby, Klara du Plessis, and Canisia Lubrin.

My application of deep curation as a curatorial mode[37] is not intended as the definitive one; however, I have spent the past five years experimenting substantially with the affordances of the mode in the series of events that I call Deep Curation. In the most basic formulation of my usage of this curatorial mode, I choose the set list of poems performed by invited poets, structuring the event according to thematic and conceptual concerns. In Deep Curation's more robust expansion over time, I collaboratively articulate a new script in dialogue with invited poets that consensually excerpts, combines, intertwines, and places the work of two or three poets in deliberate dialogue with one another, elaborating the event with polyvocality, cacophony, a range of collective reading techniques, as well as possible gesture, movement and choreography. Significantly, the process of now working closely with selected poets to collaboratively script exactly what authors will present during a Deep Curation poetry reading transforms it into a practice that narrowly rubs up against performance, participatory, socially engaged artforms, and even modes of abstract theatre production. Deep Curation continues to define itself as an "emergent category," to cite Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuck's definition of research creation ("Research creation" 5), "a methodological and epistemological challenge to the argumentative form(s) that have typified much academic scholarship" (6). That is, Deep Curation models as a means towards a theory of experimental event organization, one which is hands-on and exploratory as much as its definition is evasive, always deferring to the next version of itself. Deep Curation's iterative nature does not equate a narrative of progress, but rather a dynamic, unstable locus of critical and creative activity, that is, in Irit Rogoff's terms, "research as it is being enacted, being enacted through contemporary creative practice" ("Becoming Research" lecture).

The very first, tentative Deep Curation experiment took place on 24 August 2018 at the Knife Fork Bookstore, at its then 244 Augusta Street, Dark Side Studio, location in Toronto. It featured Aaron Boothby reading unpublished work, Canisia Lubrin reading from *Voodoo Hypothesis*, and myself sharing material from *Ekke* and a chapbook only released in 2022 as *Skin and Meat Sky.* As a speculative attempt at selecting, detailing, and ordering poems as a set for others to follow in performance, I maintained the more traditional format of prolonged sections of individual poets reading from their work in isolation. I also chose mostly complete poems, respecting the integrity of works as they had been published or shared with me by the authors. At most, I directed the arc of the reading by ordering the poems, prompting some thematic cohesion through the juxtaposition of works on similar or adjacent subject matter, but allowing for individual poems to necessarily run their own tangents. The aspect of Deep Curation that prompted me as curator to take control of what was being presented was amplified over the aspect that could also experiment deftly with the form and content of the event. As can be seen from the direction "excerpt from" in the set list in Image 8, I felt more comfortable using parts of my own poems than those of my collaborators, clear evidence of the early nature of this event that had not yet

[37] At this point, the deep curator has always been me, although a few scholars have taken up the term in the creation of experimental research outputs. Mathieu Aubin and Stéphanie Ricci co-produced a podcast episode for the SpokenWeb series called "Listening, Sound, Agency: A Retrospective Listening to the 2021 SpokenWeb Symposium" that braided together audio traces of a conference in order to highlight touchpoints between modes of scholarly thinking. Similarly, I collaborated with Emma Telaro on an experimental conference proceedings called *Quotes: Transcriptions on Listening, Sound, Agency* in which we placed excerpts of scholars' research in imaginary dialogue with each other. In the making of this book project, Telaro truly ran with the methodology of deep curation, developing it to include renditions of transcribed audio, cut up and collaged into new visual materializations of the otherwise performative practice.

articulated itself as a practice that foregrounds the fragment as a way to initiate dialogue and emphasize similarity between discreet bodies of work. Even more direct evidence of the foundational status of this event is the sparseness of my personal archive. There is no audio documentation of the reading and only a handful of visual moments are captured in impromptu snapshots taken by the audience. The script itself is limited to Image 8—there is no collective, printed manuscript of the poems intended for performance, but rather an assumption that poets could and would follow my cryptic event outline and read from their personal books or manuscripts instead. The format was so linear that we never even rehearsed or sat down together to discuss proceedings prior to the event. The Knife Fork Book independent bookstore venue (housed within an active dance studio) made for an informal space in which the three poets stood or sat in a roughly centralized space within a circle of audience members who were, in turn, standing, seated, or lying down on a range of couches, cushions, and polished hardwood floor, shoes removed at the entrance.

I revised and expanded this event outline to include Erin Robinsong, reading from *Rag Cosmology,* for a second performance on 24 November 2018 as part of Ian Ferrier's Mile End Poets' Festival hosted at Resonance Café, Montreal. Although the script still relied on the poets reading from their own print copies of poems, this version of the event attempted small instances of excerpting and intertwining of lines from the four poets' work in a more stylized, active dialogue. Thinking retrospectively in terms of the vocabulary of this dissertation, I was making obvious a dialogic relationality between the poets, a dynamic field already activated by virtue of the poets' collective presence and performance on stage. This dialogism was rendered intentional by framing the reading with carefully selected lines that linked the readers into a single, collaged poem, as can be seen in Image 9. This strategy grounded the reading in an understanding of dialogue and connection between the four poets, highlighting the surprising similarity between four disparate excerpts, and providing a gentle thesis or justification for placing the poets on the same lineup. Standing in a row on the small Resonance Café stage (as can been seen in Image 10), sharing two microphones among four poets, I am always grateful that I included myself in this early Deep Curation experiment—it provided me with the embodied experience of reading in such intimate proximity to other poets, to feel my voice and sounded pacing modulate in response to the performance styles of those around me. It helped me to understand that reading as an interwoven constellation—even if not vocally in tandem—is a totally different kind of performance than reading consecutively, separated from other invited readers and with constant anecdotal asides explicating the literary materials. As Édouard Glissant writes, "[w]hen we ask the question of what is brought into play by Relation, we arrive at that there that cannot be split up into original elements. We are scarcely at liberty to approach the complete interaction, as much for the elements set in relation" (*Poetics of Relation* 160). Deep Curation's premise allows poets' respective works to merge into a new whole in performance, to foreground and thematize their own relationality, and the process of achieving that unity in real-time includes a finely tuned practice of listening, reacting, and collective presence.

Weight

Klara First of all, we no longer write in black
but in white
stones

Aaron Even solidity mineral stone in hand

Erin my mother bade me
not bring any more stones home

Canisia Let me see you
leave with your
posture of stones.

Image 9: Screen shot of the opening lines for the 24 November 2018 Deep Curation poetry reading, featuring Aaron Boothby, Klara du Plessis, Canisia Lubrin, and Erin Robinsong.

Image 10: [from left to right] Erin Robinsong, Canisia Lubrin, Aaron Boothby, and Klara du Plessis performing a Deep Curation poetry reading during the Mile End Poets' Festival on 24 November 2018. Credit: Michael Kovacs.

As the kernel of an idea, these first two Deep Curation events, or versions, were a success. The readings offered a coherent atmosphere of poetry resonating without interruption to attentive and appreciative audiences. I was enthused to keep experimenting. I produced three more events in quick succession, continuing to try out new techniques and to place poetries in progressively more interconnected relation to each other. I started experimenting with form, borrowing the concept of movements and refrains from musical composition in order to structure reading sections not by author, but by tone, theme, progression, and other variables. Although valuable experiments that exist as distinctly contrastive to most contemporary poetry readings, these Deep Curation events arguably suffered from insufficient production timelines, and rushed, intense labour on my

part as curator. They did not enjoy the financial resources that would allow me to expect poets to be invested in the creation process—this resulted in works that showcased my experimentation as a trajectory from curator to poets, delivering a completed set list for them to follow without mutual intervention or collaboration. The first was a mixture of poetry, scholarship, and archival audio documentation with Jason Camlot, Deanna Fong, and Katherine McLeod, 14 February 2019. The second featured Oana Avasilichioaei, Liz Howard, and Tess Liem as part of the International Blue Metropolis Literary Festival, 3 May 2019. The third was billed at the Vrystaat Kunstefees, a literary and arts festival in Bloemfontein, South Africa, that I had been invited to in my capacity as poet; here I curated a multilingual event with a combination of Canadian and South African poets, and one Nigerian poet, namely Kayla Czaga, Daniel Hugo, Samuel Osaze, and Jolyn Phillips, 2 July 2019. Featuring a phenomenal range of contemporary poets, these three events were formative in terms of proving to me that Deep Curation could not be approached as a unilateral shift from the hands-off, administrative labour of a curator in an open context to the directive scripting of a Deep Curation performance. The move to intentional, responsible curating simultaneously requires a complete revisioning of the conditions of production. That is, the curator needs substantially more time to read, absorb, design, and revise a script. If produced collaboratively with the authors, that time needs to extend to all participants. Time goes hand-in-hand with money, however, and so in order to take the necessary time, the curator and poets also need financial resources to dedicate themselves to the production of a literary event for at least a month and ideally longer. In turn, obtaining these resources change the literary event's relationship to institutions, leaning on partnerships with funded organizations or buying into the granting system—for both options, the networking, negotiation, and application processes likewise take time and particular social, diplomatic, and/or writing skillsets. This difficulty of securing sufficient funding circles back to Cameron Anstee's historical study of Canada Council for the Arts funding for reading series and his discovery that it was initially slotted into "the category 'Opera, Theatre, Ballet, etc.'," as I cite in Chapter 2 at more length ("Setting Widespread Precedent" no pag.). Today, perhaps more than ever, the disciplinary boundaries of funding for reading series remain difficult to define. Narratives that reduce curatorial labour—as evidenced by the Sir George Williams poetry series' organizers volunteering their time, and the Véhicule poets' denial of curation being labour at all—infiltrate funding models so that even resourced reading series are usually unable to pay the curator and only a nominal honourarium between $125 and $250 for the poet. While a welcome gesture, such payment does not allow for sustained dedication to the collaborative making of a coherent literary performance. Ironically, Deep Curation would need exactly the scale of funding that the keywords *Opera, Theatre,* or *Ballet* evoke, much larger budgets that revise how poetry readings are understood and the role they are perceived to play within and beyond the broader infrastructure of book publishing, dissemination, and promotion.

I would like to linger on the Deep Curation poetry reading of 7 November 2019 at Concordia University's 4th Space, one that marked a departure in my narrative of process on this research creation project, allowing for more sustained work on my part and the first, minimal forays into collaborative production. Featuring Margaret Christakos, Kaie Kellough, and Deanna Radford—poets who have all developed robust performative, musical, and collaborative practices in their own right[38]—this event was also conceptualized as the final evaluation for a directed study I had engaged in during the Fall 2019 semester with Maya Rae Oppenheimer from the Department of Art History at Concordia. The performance was the culminating event in a full afternoon of proceedings that started with a conversation on literary curation—with Jason Camlot, Margaret

[38] See, for example, Chapter 4 on Kellough's performance practice in more detail.

Christakos, Deanna Radford, and Danielle St. Amour—and was followed by a practical activity on deep curation that provided participants with poems by Christakos, Kellough, and Radford and invited them to design their own dialogic readings in miniature.

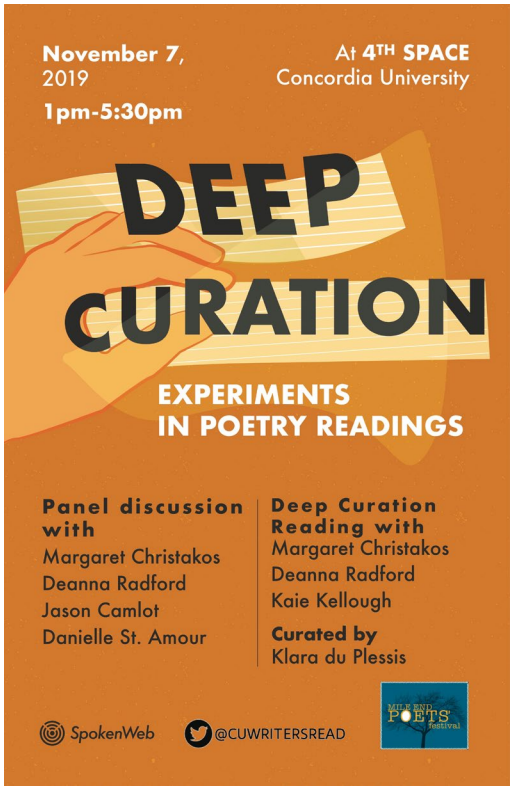


Image 11: Deep Curation poster designed by Manami Izawa, as sponsored by SpokenWeb.

Christakos' presence was sponsored by Concordia's Writers Read project, while this series of events as a whole was hosted in partnership with SpokenWeb, allowing for professional poster design by Manami Izawa (see Image 11), hospitality in the form of coffee and treats, and honouraria for the formal participants. While previous Deep Curation events had also partnered with literary festivals to enjoy an official veneer and to humbly pay poets, this one boasted the still modest $150 per poet, alongside a well-organized, technologically equipped venue, and an intentional mindset spurred on by Oppenheimer's deliberate questioning of both my practical and conceptual decisions. Throughout my organizational and creative process, she consistently requested rationales for every choice; some of these questions included: who is the audience and why? what is the seating arrangement and why? what are the curatorial goals of the event and why? Within the directed study context, I had a semester of three months (that is, more time than ever before) to agonize over these questions. In a final report and course evaluation about the live events, I documented, for example, that, although the audience was small, totaling a varying range of 20 persons, "the majority of the audience was constituted by literary event curators, poets, literary scholars, and students" (unpublished, "Event Reflection and Analysis" 3). The events were thus self-referential in terms of the audience's investment in both the scholarly and practical investigations that I was aiming to launch. In the same report, I summarized the day's goals:

> A defining intention of the series of Deep Curation events [...] was to make visible the intellectual and creative links inherent to this curatorial practice. On the one hand, the Deep Curation poetry reading [...] embodies a directive extreme in an attempted theorization of literary event organization, heightening the agency of the curator in the collaboration between organizer and performing poets [...] On the other hand, Deep Curation is a poetic, authorial practice. (unpublished, "Event Reflection and Analysis" 1)

The fact that this fairly general encapsulation of intent was a gamechanger in the way that I approached literary curation up to that point is symptomatic of the rote nature of the event organization I had done to date, as well as the tradition of event organization I was previously inhabiting. Setting a critical purpose for an event and articulating it in order to evaluate how successfully the event had managed to fulfill that objective set Deep Curation on a different track, one which was more directly engaging with exhibition making and the visual arts practice side of curatorial studies, and one which rejected passivity in favour of actively steering the relationality inherent to the literary event.

This critical heightening of Deep Curation's goals translated into the creative construction of the performance script too. At this point of the project's development, I felt more comfortable excerpting, recombining, and reordering poets' work[39] into a new whole that actively placed respective lines, parts of poems, and larger projects in dialogue with one another. This renegotiation of their work always happened consensually—as far as one is able to consent to a process that has an undefined outcome—and with the clear understanding that the manuscript could be edited to accommodate the poets' opinions at any time. Here Deep Curation staged a continuum of authorship in which the function of the poets was to provide the raw material, to discuss and consult about it, and then perform a manuscript as constructed by the curator also functioning as author of the particular performance. Deep Curation thus illustrated the instability of terms as authorship and authority of textual output was rendered malleable and shared. As a project, this collaging or remixing required a delicate balance of considering, at the same time, the integrity of individual writers' outputs and how these could best be showcased, and the design of the overarching form and content of a new, collective work. This intricate process also necessitated extreme familiarity with a large number of texts, and a system for remembering lines and sections that would work well in close proximity to other lines. For me, this process relied on searchable PDF documents, highlighting lines in digital files or marking up print copies, and then copy/pasting or transcribing lines into a rough document that would later again be moved around towards a final realignment as performable script. Image 13 provides a clear example as the opening words read during this Deep Curation performance, an intertwined refrain foregrounding quippy discourse and a back-and-forth exchange in three voices, poets strategically passing keywords among themselves to reinforce the thematic structure of the piece. Titled "Ears," related words like "voice," "listening," "sound," and so forth form a unified train of thought centered self-referentially on the listening happening between poets, between poets and audience, and, in Radford's words, to the room's "sound unfolding." Opening with Kellough's self-conscious grounding in sound as "the author's voice / fuses with the electric zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz amplified

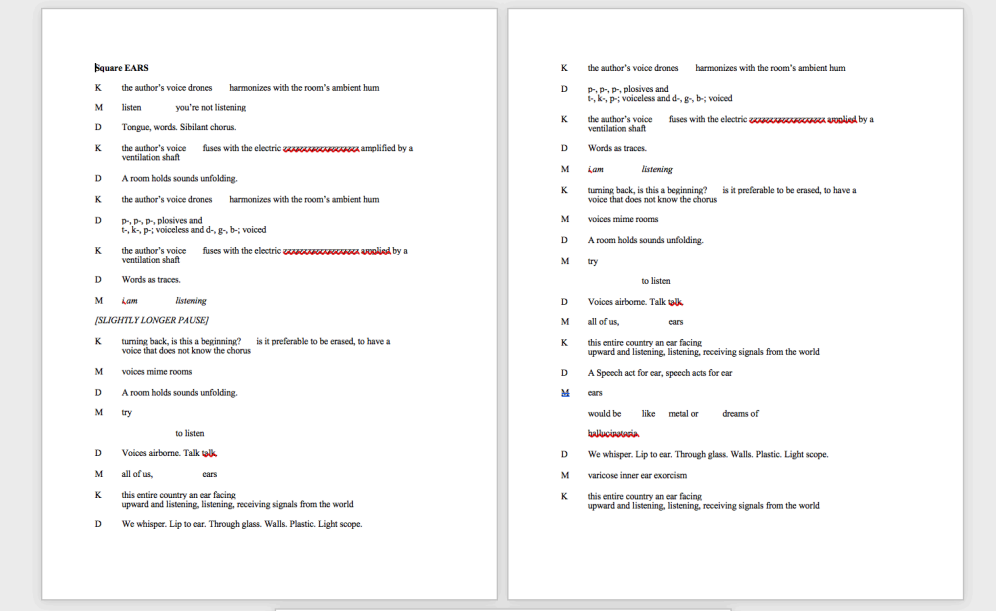
[39] In my scholarly podcast episode, "Deep Curation: Experimenting with the Poetry Reading as Practice," co-produced with Jason Camlot, I use the term "reauthorship" to explain the process of gleaning existing poetic materials and collaging them into a new whole that allows for poets to retain authorship over their work, while simultaneously engaging in the curation and creation of a new text as performed in dialogue with other poets.

by a ventilation shaft," Christakos tries on different states of listening, ranging from "not listening" through "try[ing] / to listen" to the definitive, italicized statement "*i am / listening.*" The three poets collectively articulate a scene in which poetry is sounded, "[l]ip to ear. Through glass. Walls. Plastic. Light scope" (Radford), and in which listening is a radical act of aural proximity to others and openness to the world at large. In Kellough's concluding line of this section, place becomes an act of listening, or listening expands to embody a universal resonance of aural reciprocity: "this entire country an ear facing / upward and listening, listening, receiving signals from the world." This opening also invites the audience to refine their own listening skills for what is to come.

Image 12: Margaret Christakos, Kaie Kellough, and Deanna Radford seated at cardinal points of a circle with audience members interspersed at a Deep Curation poetry reading, 4th Space, Concordia University, 7 November 2019. Credit: Bindu Reddy.

The form of the script—which was now also compiled as a photocopied, scanned, and/or printed collective document from which to read along in performance—opened, concluded, and was interspersed with four interludes of sound works, including tracks from Kellough and Radford's albums *Creole Continuum* and *Bur sting brea k'r,* respectively (the latter a collaborative output from Radford's ensemble, Cloud Circuit). It further included three scripted, interconnected sections, similar to "Ears," in which the three poets' voices were pre-arranged in fast-paced dialogue. Finally, these various parts were tied together with longer sections that showcased the work of individual authors and aimed to give space for the fully formed poems of the participants. The role of these latter, individual sections was productively challenged, however, during a discussion and rehearsal of the work. Surprisingly (from my present-day vantage point), this was the first Deep Curation event that made time for the poets and curator to meet prior to the performance at all, despite being the sixth experiment in the series. Kellough hosted the participants at his home for morning coffee and a discussion unfolded about the thematic goals of the event and Deep Curation as a larger project. During this discussion, Christakos, who has a long history of developing poetic, performative experiments herself, was adamant about "opening the script," in my recollection of her words. She wanted the work to be less static and predefined, and to allow for improvisation and organic exchange between the performers in real-time. It is

interesting to consider the inherent judgement against a static script implied by this request, in contrast to one open to change and chance during performance. Objectively, it is not as if an open script is better than a closed one; they just form part of different aesthetic traditions, model different comfort levels within the public-facing performance context, and offer different ratios of authority and even control over the outcome of the event. Significantly, though, my initial closed script is suggestive of a superlatively framed curatorial mode, one tied together by directive outcomes. In contrast, opening the script implies the obvious shift to a more open curatorial mode, but as filtered through the dialogic and ethical goals of deep curation, an overlaying of the frame of intention with the dynamic potential of following inspiration in the moment of performance. However that may be, we embraced Christakos' suggestion and collectively went through the text that I had compiled and further noted sections that would lend themselves to single keywords being multiplied by additional voices, to simultaneous choral reading, to vocal intervention and deliberate cacophony, among other sonic performance techniques. Conversely, we also accented poems that needed to be read solo, without any distraction from fellow performers. The ability to open the script for improvisation relied, of course, on these specific three poets' level of ease to play within performance, and to listen to each other with a heightened, creative level of attention in order to react and engage with each other's words in real-time. In performance, this playfulness translated to a sense of deep integration between the poets' various bodies of work. Not only were they voicing and supporting each other's poetry, they were also transforming their own work in the moment, exchanging words with key words, lines, or phrased gleaned from adjacent poems to perpetuate glimpses of separate poetries into a new, collaborative sounding.



Square EARS

K the author's voice drones harmonizes with the room's ambient hum

M listen you're not listening

D Tongue, words. Sibilant chorus.

K the author's voice fuses with the electric ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ amplified by a ventilation shaft

D A room holds sounds unfolding.

K the author's voice drones harmonizes with the room's ambient hum

D p-, p-, p-, plosives and
t-, k-, p-; voiceless and d-, g-, b-; voiced

K the author's voice fuses with the electric ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ amplified by a ventilation shaft

D Words as traces.

M *i.am listening*

[SLIGHTLY LONGER PAUSE]

K turning back, is this a beginning? is it preferable to be erased, to have a voice that does not know the chorus

M voices mime rooms

D A room holds sounds unfolding.

M try

to listen

D Voices airborne. Talk ~~talk~~.

M all of us, ears

K this entire country an ear facing
upward and listening, listening, receiving signals from the world

D We whisper. Lip to ear. Through glass. Walls. Plastic. Light scope.

K the author's voice drones harmonizes with the room's ambient hum

D p-, p-, p-, plosives and
t-, k-, p-; voiceless and d-, g-, b-; voiced

K the author's voice fuses with the electric ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ amplified by a ventilation shaft

D Words as traces.

M *i.am listening*

K turning back, is this a beginning? is it preferable to be erased, to have a voice that does not know the chorus

M voices mime rooms

D A room holds sounds unfolding.

M try

to listen

D Voices airborne. Talk ~~talk~~.

M all of us, ears

K this entire country an ear facing
upward and listening, listening, receiving signals from the world

D A Speech act for ear, speech acts for ear

M ears

would be like metal or dreams of

~~hallucinatoria~~.

D We whisper. Lip to ear. Through glass. Walls. Plastic. Light scope.

M varicose inner ear exorcism

K this entire country an ear facing
upward and listening, listening, receiving signals from the world

Image 13: Screen shot of a refrain from the script of the 7 November 2019 Deep Curation reading. This text excerpts and recombines lines from a variety of poetic works by M or Margaret Christakos, K or Kaie Kellough, and D or Deanna Radford.

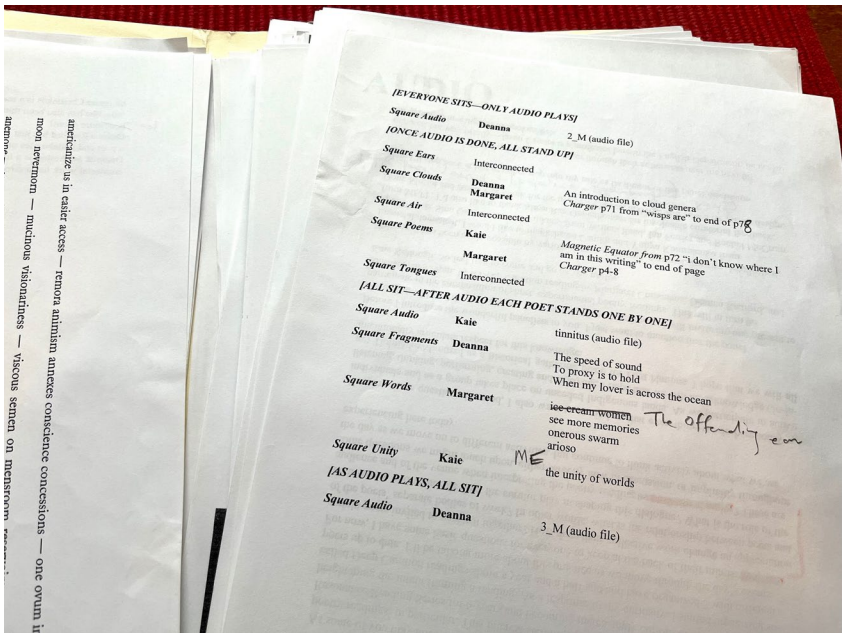


Image 14: Outline and script of the 7 November 2019 Deep Curation reading, featuring Margaret Christakos, Kaie Kellough, and Deanna Radford. Credit: Klara du Plessis.

Although tentative and minimal in scope, the collaborative gesture of discussing, expanding, and opening the script as a group, as well as a burgeoning understanding that Deep Curation can include performative cues beyond the individualized act of reading, greatly impacted the project's future momentum. The next event with Lee Ann Brown, Fanny Howe, and Sawako Nakayasu at Boston University's Boston Playwrights Theatre, 30 January 2020, by invitation of Sophie Seita, replicated the format of a curated script that included signals that could lead to improvisation and intervention during performance. Similarly for this event, the authors and I met to discuss and run through the work prior to its performance, offering at least limited opportunity for feedback and a growing sense of familiarity with the script before hitting the stage. The event was a resounding success, but Deep Curation's progress was cut short by the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The sudden closure of all physical locations due to COVID-19 led to a mass migration online through Zoom, CrowdCast, Instagram Live, and other digital conferencing and streaming platforms. This overnight shift also had the significant outcome of demanding an immediate renegotiation of curatorial terms that had been taken for granted for so long. Everywhere, literary curators had to ask themselves how best to shift from in-person to online events: which digital platform afforded the best visual space for featuring poets? Which platform allowed for the easiest audience engagement? What was the ideal duration for a reading mediated by the screen? How could one work against so-called *Zoom fatigue*? When was the best time to allow for poets and audiences from different time zones to inhabit the now geographically dispersed venue? Did poets need to acquire external microphones and webcams, and design their own lighting to mediate their performances? Should events be pre-recorded or live? These, and many other questions, were suddenly circulating and being actively deliberated upon. While online events were able to maintain a sense of community during a moment of collective crisis, they also had felt limitations. The frame of the screen made for very static modes of poets' showing only their heads as they sat reading in front of their laptops. Poet Rachel McCrum's attempt to circumvent the affordances of

the screen during a reading at the Words and Music Show of 20 September 2020 offers one of the few more embodied counterexamples, as she stood up and performed, showing her full figure as captured from the distance of camera angle and perspective. Similarly, a general sense of disconnection reigned over online events that did not allow for informal discussion and invariably led to a forlorn sense of solitude once the event came to an abrupt end, leaving everyone involved isolated in their respective homes. When my second poetry collection, *Hell Light Flesh,* was released, September 2020, I was thus resistant to relying solely on the restrictions of online events and designed a series of three in-person book launches in Montreal's Jarry Park, the outdoor venue allowing for social distancing measures in place at the time. Limiting attendance to six persons per event, the default expectation of aiming for as large an audience as possible was replaced with intimate, small numbers and the outcome of discussion and sustained audience engagement. While a full analysis of COVID-19 literary curation is still pending, I mention these few examples in passing just to highlight the active curatorial revisioning that was happening as a result of the restrictions placed on previous models of poetry reading organization due to the global pandemic. While I did not develop a new Deep Curation poetry reading online during these pandemic years, the overall climate of the time foregrounded thinking about the curatorial in literary terms as never before. After a two year hiatus, bolstered by community deliberation about online events and alternatives to the pre-COVID-19 status quo, I had time to rebuild my own curatorial stamina that had been depleted by the rapid accumulation of solo-curated events preceding the pandemic. I emerged from the period of social isolation ready to push Deep Curation to an even more immersive experience, both in the process of shaping and performing it and to question my own directive stance in order to make space for the poets to create their own performances.

The latest example of Deep Curation, entitled *We've Weave* (in fact, the only Deep Curation reading with a title at all), was produced and performed July and August 2022, in collaboration with Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel, that is, less than two months ago from the date that I am currently writing the first draft of this chapter. What this implies is that the scope of Deep Curation as an ongoing project has not reached any kind of completion. I have ambitious plans to keep forging ahead with new collaborations and a hopeful return to and redevelopment of some of the scripts created in the project's earlier phases. In the following section of this chapter, however, I will spend more analytical space thinking through the relational construction and performances of *We've Weave.* As mentioned, it is a work that is temporally very close to me so that, on the one hand, my memory of the events is conveniently clear, but on the other, I have to work harder to gain critical, interpretative distance from the experience and its documented materials. Writing about this process, and the performative events that resulted from it, relies heavily on my presence and memory of the month spent together with the poets in residence at Studio303, as well as the two subsequent performances. My sense of what the work is depends on narrativized experience, description, and attention to detail, rather than a selection from all to some, in favour of a more directed interpretation or argument. By virtue of the research creation format of this material, studying it here inherently activates an autoethnographic approach, validating my perception and perspective of events as critical source. I will, however, attempt to formulate four brief angles of engagement with the process and performances hinging on the four curatorial relationalities already approached in this dissertation. The following sections thus deliberately attempt to illustrate the inherent entanglement of durational, institutional, dialogic, and spatial relationalities and to weave them collectively as an understanding of their coexistence and mutual support of the creative, conceptual field, which defines itself as the curatorial.

Durational Relationality and Deep Curation: *We've Weave*

In Chapter 1, I define time as a constant deferral of itself. Both a moment in an ongoing chronology and a continuity bracketed as durational unit, time can also defy linearity to loop back on itself, especially as materialized in the replay function of sound archives of literary events. As such, an understanding of durational relationality splinters to include the timeframe spent producing a literary event (also as it relates to resources and the time it takes to administer these), the duration of the work in performance, and a temporal interconnection between serial events as all events cohere as one prolonged event, conceptually speaking. In order to illustrate these different applications of durational relationality—as well as to underscore the difficulty of disentangling different relationalities from one another—I have interwoven cameo appearances of durational relationality into my discussions of institutional, dialogic, and spatial relationalities as they play out in my Deep Curation case study, *We've Weave*, featuring poets Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel. As I explain in more detail in the following sections, prolonged administrative time of applying for resources that precede the creative production and performance of *We've Weave*, materializing the conditions that made it possible, enters into dialogue with institutional relationality. Similarly, dialogic relationality—the weaving together of poetries into a new discursive literary performance—is activated within *We've Weave*'s production and performance; both this process and product are durational constructs, but even beyond these brackets of time, expansive, experiential time of Perry Cox and La Mackerel's biographies and positionalities, as well as the composition of their poetry collections employed within the Deep Curation process and event, inform deep curation as a dialogic curatorial mode and a practical instantiation in performance. Finally, space and time interrelate. Spatial relationality, and the different affordances that venue layouts bring to *We've Weave,* as manifested in the two performance at two different theaters, explicitly fuses with the durational unfolding of the literary work according to both the temporal predictability of its script and the improvisational, affective fluctuation of time during each event as singular, independent versions of a literary work in performance.

Institutional Relationality and Deep Curation: *We've Weave*

Circling back to the discussion, in Chapter 1, of the institutional theory of art's aim of endorsing art as art through structural recognition, the ability to obtain financial and material support for a Deep Curation project implies its validation as being worthy of production and dissemination. While the institutional may imply a reliance on exclusionary models of access, these can also be productively navigated exactly in service of the exploration of the generative and creative. In a sense, this mobilization of support "creat[es] institutions as verbs," to quote Edy Fung, Simina Neagu, and Erik Sandberg (*Curating beyond the Mainstream* 176), and not as static, gatekeeping edifices. Thinking of the institution as "not a noun [...but] a place of doing, of activity [...is] a way of undermining some of the norms and value structures" (176). Definitely utopian, the institution as support system can be envisioned as a proxy site of doing and of questioning, not through its direct collaboration in production, but in its resourcing of Deep Curation as deserving work. So, for example, I drafted and submitted two applications, in the summer and fall of 2021, one for a month-long residency at Studio303, a dance and performance venue in Montreal's downtown Belgo Building, and the other for an Explore and Create: Research and Creation project grant through the Canada Council for the Arts.[40] Both applications were successful, providing me with

[40] In retrospect, I should have applied for an Explore and Create: Concept to Realization grant instead. Whereas the Research and Creation grant is supposed to only support the production of a project, the Concept to Realization grant would pay for both the production and its dissemination. Realizing my error

a dedicated studio space for the month of July 2022 (with pre-scheduled 3-hour time slots) and a total budget of $10,740 ($500 from Studio303 and $10,240 from the Canada Council). I further partnered with the Concordia University contingent of the SSHRC-funded SpokenWeb project for in-kind support, including poster design by Leila Gillespie-Cloutier and social media promotion by Alexandra Sweny. Compared with previous Deep Curation budgets of at best a total of $800 that went almost exclusively to honouraria for the performers, this wealth of funding and concomitant concentrated time felt like a dream. The abundance of resources allowed me to invite poets and performers Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel to collaborate on the production and performance of a Deep Curation poetry reading during July and early-August 2022, including a professional payment rate of $2000 each and childcare benefits for Perry Cox. As Nina Möntmann emphasizes, "[a]s with all institutional models [...] the question is posed concerning adequate financing" ("How to Belong" 57). Considering the general state of precarity in the arts, offering professional remuneration and conditions for creation thus implied an endorsement of the project as one of the few with a budget at all, but also a reciprocal commitment from the poets to prioritize this month-long collaboration, to be present, involved, and dedicated to the making of this Deep Curation event. The residency further culminated in a poetic performance of approximately 40 minutes entitled *We've Weave* and showed at two different Montreal venues, first at White Wall Studio on 28 July 2022 and again at Théâtre aux Écuries on 9 August 2022, both at 7pm, as can be seen in the two posters in Images 15 and 16. In other words, the institutional support relationally affected the durational potential of the production of this work and its event performances.

Supported by Studio303, the Canada Council for the Arts, and SpokenWeb, and showing *We've Weave* at two professional, public-facing venues with good lighting, sound, and hospitality—namely White Wall Studio and Théâtre aux Écuries—implies that I as curator had activated an institutional relationality regarding the production and performance of this Deep Curation project. In order to do so, I had also utilized the durational relationality of a protracted timeline, starting the project's administration more than a year ahead of schedule and reaping the rewards of this foresight and ongoing labour through the eventual professional conditions made available for collaboration. Not only had I created the conditions for the realization and dissemination of this work, but I had done so in a way that successfully navigated a professional arts organization, government arts funding, a university research network, and two well-regarded theatres. I printed a small number of posters and displayed them at Studio303, university English departments, and independent bookstores, and advertised the performances online through *Cult MTL,* the Quebec Writers' Federation, the *Where Poets Read* blog, and social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), collaborating with official local organizations equally as employing free methods of promotion aligned with the poetry community's economy of mutual support and word

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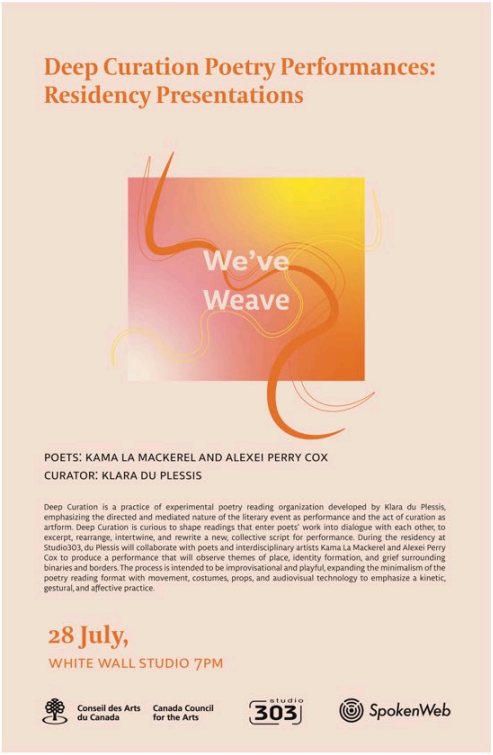
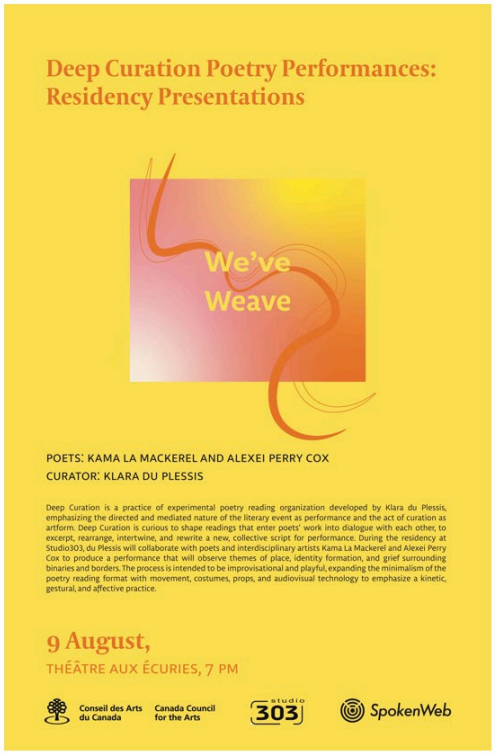
too late, I somewhat illicitly moved funds around so that money intended for vague categories such as "experimentation," "props," and "costumes" were rerouted to pay for video documentation by Kaaria Quash and venue rental at White Wall Studio and Théâtre aux Écuries. In other words, while I had a larger budget than I had ever enjoyed for a single event in the past, working on a professional scale meant that I could have accounted for double or triple the amount and still used it all. I balanced the budget by relying on props, costumes, and microphones that Perry Cox and La Mackerel already owned or had access to; while we each got a $2000 payment for the month of work, I likewise did not pay the three of us the additional administrative fee that had originally been allocated in the application as 40 hours to myself, and 25 hours each to Perry Cox and La Mackerel, at a rate of $20/hour. As such, even with the support of such a generous grant, the poetry economy of (partial) volunteer labour and DIY-ethos remained intact.

of mouth. In other words, I had confirmed institutional backing for my project in a way that secured the material possibility for it to exist at all.[41] Beyond securing the physical and financial backing for this work, however, this multi-pronged approach to concrete support for the project and the network of institutional interconnection that made it feasible also added a veneer of respectability and cultural prestige to the project. The nonchalant attitude towards the poetry reading as needing negligible labour to organize and formulating itself as a deliberately informal forum that makes use of a free venue and free online promotion, and relies on unpaid labour from the curator and performing poets, is reversed in order to position itself as a professionalized practice and form. The literary event, in terms of this Deep Curation project, intentionalized organizational decisions to offer a production process that led towards a polished performative product, was highly regarded by institutions in the field, and resulted in the enthusiastic reception from audiences and a commitment from participating parties—such as the poets themselves and organizational collaborators like employees at Théâtre aux Écuries—to continue developing and supporting this project in order to return the work to the stage in the future.





Images 15 and 16: Posters for two performances of Deep Curation: We've Weave, *designed by Leila Gillespie-Cloutier, as sponsored by SpokenWeb.*

Deep Curation assumes a continuum of agency and authority that flows back and forth between curator as poet and poet as curator. The curator adopts a generative role, yes, but so also

[41] Kama La Mackerel makes a living exclusively off of their art practice, for example, and in order to do so they do not take on projects that do not pay a sustainable, realistic rate. That is, the project would quite literally not have been able to exist in its configuration of creative dialogue between La Mackerel and Perry Cox had I not received the institutional backing that made it possible to offer professional working conditions and remuneration.

the poet becomes curator through their interpolation into deep curation as a methodology. As Elena Filipovic writes about the implications of merging these historically distinct roles, "[t]hings *are* slippery [...] a gauntlet thrown down to the idea of the exhibition as a neutral arrangement of artworks" (*The Artist as Curator* 13). So also the poetry reading, and Deep Curation as a more exploratory form of poetry reading creation and performance, is fraught with the power dynamics of negotiating the curator's say in the production of a new work and the poet-performer's vision for making it cohere. Significantly, by inflecting my role of curator towards the securing of conditions for production and dissemination, in this particular case study of Deep Curation, I arguably reverted to an embodiment of *curatin*g rather than the dynamic, critical, and creative process of *the curatorial*—to return to Irit Rogoff's pivotal distinction between organizational and conceptual labour, as previously discussed ("Curating / Curatorial"). Differently phrased, I re-established the division of labour between curator and poets, offering poets the opportunity to adopt directorship over the curatorial development of their creative output. By taking on the administrative, durational labour myself, I was thus able to foster the luxury for them to inhabit generative, authorial roles in relation to the creation of *We've Weave.* Initially, this shift bothered me. Deep Curation is built, after all, on the assumption of heightening the curator's role in the formulation of the literary event. Probably due to the fact that I am myself a poet and have ambitions beyond the organizational, Deep Curation was founded with the goal of constructively blurring the division of labour between curator and performers, and keeping the literary curator informed of the creative work being presented in order to ensure a responsible and ethical support system between everyone involved with the literary event. Instead, as Beatrice von Bismarck explains—in terms of exhibitionary dynamics directly applicable to *We've Weave*—when moving beyond the selection of completed works for show to rather inviting artists to produce new work for the context of a particular theme or concept, "curators become viewers and accomplices of the artists. They act as witnesses to a presentation situation that they have facilitated (in organizational, financial, and institutional terms) but without a knowledge of the specific artworks, based instead on an appreciation of each artist's development to date. Further aspects of the defining power traditionally granted to the profession are relinquished by the curators" (*The Curatorial Condition* 59-60). Von Bismarck's description rings true in relation to my experience. In the making and performing of *We've Weave,* I was supporting, witnessing, and at most commenting on the work that Perry Cox and La Mackerel were actively shaping. This felt especially accurate because these poets had their own robust performance practices that they were importing into the context. La Mackerel, for example, started every work session with stretching, breathing, and chanting, leading themself and Perry Cox in a meditative, concentrated ritual within the studio and work environment. They also brought substantial experience in collaborative production to the table, offering guidelines for an incremental, trial and error construction of the script and its choreography. Similarly, Perry Cox has a long musical performance background and a history of collaborative sound, performance, and video projects with artists such as Radwan Ghazi Moumneh, Jacob Wren, and others. To a degree, then, it felt like Deep Curation was a context that I was inviting Perry Cox and La Mackerel into, while really the poets were doing nothing differently from what they would have done without the constraints of my project. Deep Curation became the frame into which they imported their own modes of doing and making. Rather than being directed by the uniform or consistent vision of myself as sole curator, Deep Curation as a project was being informed by what the poets were bringing to it, what they could add to it, and how they could shape and make it their own.

Understood in institutional relational terms, this misrecognition of Deep Curation does not hold ground. In fact, the level of institutional support that *We've Weave* enjoyed made it possible for my labour of *curating* to exist in a particularly productive relational dynamic towards *the curatorial.* Even though I was taking a step back in terms of creatively shaping this performance—especially in comparison to my highly invested authorial role in the making of previous Deep Curation events—the material support, and its concomitant prestige, allowed me to equate the act of retreat with trust in the poets' vision and capacity to formulate the event themselves. Despite this radical shift towards a communal, process-based, incremental, and affective mode of production, this Deep Curation process and performance retained its goals as a care-centered mode of literary event creation that posits curation itself as critical medium of inherent literary analysis and embodied artform. By nurturing a professional and intentional context within which Perry Cox and La Mackerel could collaborate, I could withdraw as curator-creator towards a position of support and observation, and still have confidence in the validity of their imaginary, producing, presenting, and performing their poetries through a self-reflexive curation, interweaving a poetic dialogue through juxtaposition and proximity. Activating an institutional relationality of professional conditions and competent perception of the Deep Curation project, as made possible through the durational relationality of ongoing administrative labour on my part, created the ripple effect of affirming a reliant interdependence between curator and poets. Perry Cox, La Mackerel, and myself collaborated not only towards the public-facing performance itself, but also within the holistic understanding of an integrated work environment that bolstered curating and administration as an equally vital component as *We've Weave*'s creative, curatorial design. As such, this Deep Curation project focused itself on making space for the invited poets to express themselves. Despite mobilizing their personal experience and performance techniques—or perhaps exactly because they felt confident to bring their own work into a new frame of reference—poets were able to simultaneously rebrand themselves as curators by virtue of inhabiting the institutional context of Deep Curation. As a final twist, then, deep curation as a curatorial mode—its goals, history, and resources (even as harnessed from partner sources)—itself becomes the institutional relationality that it relies upon in order to make the process and product of *We've Weave* cohere.

Dialogic Relationality and Deep Curation: *We've Weave*

Dialogic relationality is an articulation of the inherent interconnection of all language and literature presented at an event, whether poetry in performance, introductory remarks and extrapoetic commentary, or incidental phrases and noises overheard from audience members or passersby. Since Deep Curation takes as one of its core goals the intentional manipulation and development of this latent heteroglossic attitude (to think alongside Bakhtin) towards the linguistic parts that reside side-by-side and make up a literary performance—cohering as a new thematic and conceptual artwork—dialogic relationality is especially heightened in its practice. To take *We've Weave* as case study, its title itself is a dialogic synthesis of the relationality inherent to Deep Curation. Agreeing on the title *We've Weave*—coined by Alexei Perry Cox—marks one of the first collective decisions that steered the course of this performance's durationally relational process of production. As homonyms, ungrammatically formulated, the two words synthesize the intention to foreground a collaborative practice, to reject the singular subject position of the individual curator (so far me, in terms of Deep Curation as a series of events) and to embrace a participatory approach of trial and error in favour of the first person plural pronoun *we.* Whether interpreted as a verb or a noun, the second title word *weave* further implicates the action and product of placing

parts of separate poetries into deliberate dialogic relationality, to interlace and meld strands of distinct poems into a communal, integrated new body of work. The almost playful sonic similarity of the two title words, *We've Weave*, thus illustrates the intention of threading two oeuvres together, while the non-standard construction of subject, verb, and object (or verb that doubles as object) heightens the disjunct of individual practices as they simultaneously relate to, chafe against, and fuse into one. Preceding the process of designing the performance itself, the title functions as a blueprint for the intentions it hopes to embody.

Importantly, then, and in stark contrast to all previous iterations of Deep Curation poetry readings, *We've Weave* was produced entirely collaboratively—across the enduring temporal field of a month—by the two poets, Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel. My role as curator was limited to facilitating the conditions for the two poets to come together, as I arranged for and administrated the necessary resources, and set the rough expectations to work towards a 40-minute performance of poetry. With the pre-articulated intention of studying the collaborative process of production and writing this dissertation chapter about it, I observed and documented all work sessions at my home, at La Mackerel's studio, and at Studio303, and partook in discussions, suggesting, consulting, and only very occasionally directing the work. The poets were leading the project's development—as a continuation of their authorial status—bringing their dedicated presence, enthusiasm, insight, and a generous readiness to share their own practices, skill, and personal experience to the studio in ways that the near-voluntary circumstances of previous Deep Curation performances had not accommodated. Whereas my analyses of the dynamic relationality of Kaie Kellough's dialogic performances at the Words and Music Show across time, for example, or my brief descriptions of earlier Deep Curation poetry readings, relied on close listening to archival recordings as audio products of literary events that modelled dialogic relationality, *We've Weave* uniquely imports this dialogism into the process of production itself, asserting a durational relationality within the ongoing collaborative process of the residency context. Perry Cox and La Mackerel's version of Deep Curation methodology, working over the course of a month and in tandem to design the structure and content of this literary event, likewise activates a dialogic curatorial relationality in the temporally marked making of the work itself: we weaving a weave of we-ness.

Featuring most prominently Perry Cox's 2020 Gap Riot Press chapbook, *Revolution Re:Evolution,* and La Mackerel's 2020 debut poetry collection, *Zom-Fam,* published by Metonymy Press, the two poets' process-based creation of *We've Weave* arguably exemplifies both a self-curatorial approach, as they engage with their own poetries, and a deep curation methodology that brings them into reciprocal proximity and exchange. In fact, a multi-tiered fusion of subjectivity based on levels of authorship—embodying simultaneously their positions as authors of books and authors as curators of a Deep Curation script—is also narrativized within their texts themselves, allowing for a dialogic relationality, based on the real or imagined figure of the author, to play itself out within the Deep Curation script too. That is, in *Revolution Re:Evolution* as integrated into the Deep Curation performance*,* Perry Cox offers a character called the *escritora*. This word or alter ego, meaning "writer" in Spanish, places a magnifying glass against Perry Cox's supposed real life as it relates to and bleeds into her poetry. Perry Cox writes, "I abandoned myself to some imperfect sense of the *escritora*'s meaning / of my life: / because language relies on our individual experience / of each word" (no pag.). Perry Cox understands her application of language as a vehicle for writing to be individualized, to rely on "experience" in a way that both infuses the text with practical knowledge and yet will always remain an "imperfect" representation or rearrangement or rewriting of that experience. When "[t]he *escritora* pored

laboriously over a text trying to equate it / with my own life: / in trying to answer my own question" (no pag.), there is a nimble blurring of boundaries between the first person pronoun that intrinsically queries whether the *escritora* is Perry Cox, a version of her, or at a theoretical remove. Whose life is "my own life"? Whose question is "my own question"? While any attempt at an answer automatically destabilizes itself, the overlay of Perry Cox as author, authorial curator, and poeticized *escritora* creates an oscillating mirage of writerly identities. This fluctuation of identities is perpetuated in La Mackerel's poetic speaker who is conceptualized as moving in and out of poetry. They write, "i enter poetry / like stepping inside / the temple / of a glorious body" ("Wet Tongues" 00:00:35). Mystically inflected, the first person of this poem, whether understood to be La Mackerel as author or the lyrical speaker, offers an embodied experience of poetics, one which allows for thoroughfare between real-life experience and the world as manifested on the page.

As materialized within the process of creating *We've Weave,* this immersion of multiple writerly selves benefit Perry Cox and La Mackerel in the intimate and embodied knowledge of working with their own writing as they negotiated the strategic placement of parts of their poetic works in dialogic relationality towards each other. Their familiarity with their poetry, as authors, practically implied a much quicker ability to excerpt and bring disparate sections of poems into relation. Their standing as individual authorial subjects significantly enabled and supported their collaborative labour. Observing their durationally relational progress at Studio303, I recall, for example, an incremental process of Perry Cox reading sections from *Revolution Re:Evolution* out loud, interspersed with La Mackerel alluding to poems that could follow relevantly and proceeding to recite them from memory. Image 17 offers one such instance from the script, as an excerpt from *Zom-Fam* is intuitively applied in response to Perry Cox's lines. La Mackerel's rendition of Perry Cox's weighty words (a translated citation from Fidel)—"Let's not deceive ourselves believing that from now on everything will be easy. Perhaps everything from now on will be more difficult"—is first absorbed by their voice and then resolved into a ritual of care—"so make friends with your bones / soak them overnight in coconut oil [...] polish them under the moonlight" (*Zom-Fam* 74). The ocean which is a vehicle of destruction and death in Perry Cox's work ("people throw themselves into the sea") is reconfigured as a balm in La Mackerel's ("rub salt inside of your pores [...] for preservation"). This ebb and flow of poetic discourse graft Perry Cox and La Mackerel's poetries into a unit of performance, even as the text occasionally prevaricates in oppositional strands of thought; sentiments always weave back together in order to answer, expand upon, or reconcile poetic hypotheses. The organic and fast-paced nature of this dialogic construction of a performance script that I witnessed—often happening at a literal conversational tempo—contrasts starkly with the weeks or months of labour that a similar formulation would take me, or another external curator, to familiarize oneself so closely with poets' writing in order to markup printed texts, highlight keywords, actively remember relevant passages, and stitch them together in a way that relates and coheres. Differently phrased, the durational relationality of a month of ongoing collaborative labour—as couched within the life-long, embodied and experiential durational familiarity of poets with their poetries—facilitated an immersive approach that, in turn, benefited the dialogic construction of the performance script.

Even if I were able to engage with Perry Cox and La Mackerel's work with an equal level of intimacy as they harness as authors, it would verge on inappropriate and invasive for me to do so. The two poets instrumentalized their inherent familiarity with their writing and foregrounded their positions as authors in a generous and unconstrained manner as they navigated their texts towards the dialogic construction of a new, interwoven script. Significantly, this sharing exceeded

written works as they voluntarily gleaned from their island heritage and respective relationships to Cuba and Mauritius, and activated their various languages, including Spanish and Creole, beyond their mutual English. They tapped into personal narratives, that I could never have been privy too, and which both became part of the new performance and strengthened the work as subtext. Here one might think alongside Beatrice von Bismarck again who, using a 1969 Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition, "Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials," as case study, refers to art created especially for a particular show as a form of processual revelation. She writes that "the act of production is an act of showing and self-showing" (*The Curatorial Condition* 58). Creating *We've Weave* in residence thus offers insight into the two poets that goes far beyond an objective analysis of their publicly available publications, but is also an act of "self-showing," of baring aspects of who they are as people through personal information that they are willing to share and incorporate into the new work, and the decisions they make during the collaborative process of shaping the event.

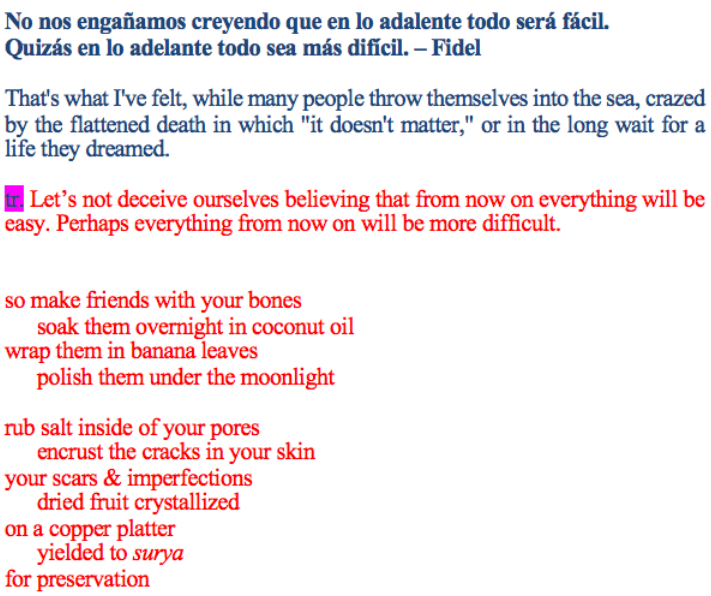


Image 17: Screen shot of part of the script from Deep Curation: We've Weave*, featuring Alexei Perry Cox in blue, Kama La Mackerel in red, and their voices combined in pink highlight.*

Transcending print, the performance begins, for example, with a ritual pouring of salt, offering a prolonged, meditative, and non-verbal space for the audience to hone their attention to the soothing sound of flowing salt, in preparation for the act of listening to poetry. This ritual also created a visual act of weaving, centring the poets in their collective presence and physically materializing the salt, so prevalent as symbol in their performed poetry, a metaphor of ocean water, grief, and ancient wisdom. As can be seen in Images 18 and 19, this ritual created a concrete rendition of the conceptual weaving of words, interlacing a stream of salt through one poet's hands to the other. Referencing the "copper platter" from La Mackerel's poem (cited in Image 17 and *Zom-Fom* 74), the salt was scooped up from and poured back onto a large copper tray, one of Perry Cox's family heirlooms, again heightening the level of personal reference active during the performance. Mentioned in La Mackerel's poetry and literally present in Perry Cox's home, the overlap of personal reference between poets is astounding. Both poets also brought their own set of copper cups with which to scoop and pour the salt, marking heritage, aesthetic, and ritual

sensibility at least partially in common. What leaps to the fore, then, is an enacted and materialized dialogic relationality that exists beyond the signification of text in publicly disseminated books. Yes, the resonance between the poets was constructed through their texts into a performance script, but also, and even more potently, prefaced beyond the boundaries of the shared Studio303 residency and the subsequent public-facing events. Perry Cox and La Mackerel's lived experiences—and the touchpoints between those experiences—resound through the process and product of this Deep Curation literary event.

The same remarkable overlap of reference, as integrated bodily into *We've Weave,* can further be observed in a brief, freeform dance to Madonna's 1986 pop song "La Isla Bonita" that structurally divides the performance into its two main parts. Central to the content of Perry Cox's *Revolution Re:Evolution*, "La Isla Bonita" represents, on the one hand, a carefree island vacation filled with romance and self-fulfillment, while, on the other, exemplifying colonial co-option and commodification of a certain lifestyle and culture, and a negation of complex layers of proprietorship, access, and belonging. In her chapbook, Perry Cox offers a close reading of the song that inverts the insouciant, joyful optics to a work that centers mourning and death. She writes, for example, that "[i]n *La Isla Bonita*, the song operates from a place that is living with grief internalized to familiarize the persistence of longing" (no pag.). The lighthearted tone of the song is a shield, for Perry Cox, for the assimilation of Madonna's extractive seizing of that same sense of openness. During a process discusson at Studio303, Perry Cox was at first apologetic and even embarassed about her inclusion of Madonna's song—"but it is 'La Isla Bonita' / by Madonna / that hums through my blood," she writes (no pag.)—but then acknowledged that she was obsessed with it as a child, felt empowered by it, and still knew all of the lyrics by heart. Touchingly, La Mackerel conceded that they had likewise experienced their first major understanding of themself as transgender through a similar childhood obsession with this song, having danced joyfully to it, and luxuriated in the flowing garments and overt feminity and sexuality of Madonna as represented in the song's music video.

I immediately found the song on YouTube and played it. It was clear that the music needed to be incorporated into the performance, that it served to animate the three pages of Perry Cox's fairly dense and intellectual poetry about the song, but also to bridge her thematic preoccupation with island living with that same reality found in so much of La Mackerel's work.[42] During the dance segment, Perry Cox tried to portray a sense of empowerment, while La Mackerel revisited an affective re-embodiment of their childhood self, acting out a more youthful demeanor and intuitive engagement with the content of the song. This stance changed to an adult interpretation of the song in the 9 August 2022 performance at Théâtre aux Écuries. After seeing video footage of themself dancing to "La Isla Bonita" on my Instagram account, La Mackerel disliked the artifice of their childlike persona, commenting "omg, is that what i look like in this segment?!?!" (@kmdup, "Deep Curation meets Madonna!!" 3 August 2022). They then attempted to dance to the song as an adult thinking back to their prior love of the music instead. This shift resulted in a

[42] Working across different media, La Mackerel has also produced a series of photographs, in collaboration with Nedine Moonsamy, for example, entitled "Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness: Trans Subjectivity in the Postcard" (2019). In this series of portraits, La Mackerel poses in postcard-like scenes, inhabiting island landscapes that are usually left void with their presence, troubling the commodified gaze of the tourist industry. Their 2017 exhibition, performance, and series of poems, "My Body Is the Ocean," similarly brings into relief "new languages of love with which to repair the severed relationships of their family and their ancestries [o]scillating like waves between ocean & island" (*Kama La Mackerel* personal website).

more confident demeanour and provocative dance moves, and led seamlessly into their next celebratory words: “i enter poetry / like stepping inside / the temple / of a glorious body” (“Wet Tongues” 00:00:35). This physical interrelationship between their inhabiting of poetry and of the human body further connects their role as author and individual, as both subject positions merge in the agential shaping of poetic and experiential dialogue in performance. Responding to Perry Cox’s importing of “La Isla Bonita” into the context of *We’ve Weave*, La Mackerel recites:

> archipelagos
> along the lustre
> of my back
>
> i plunge in words
> my thick hair
> soaked in ocean water
>
> i bathe in trust
> in knowingness
>
> embodied poems
> lyrical islands
>
> i am
> taken care of (“Wet Tongues” 00:02:19)

In an elongated braid of poetry, that continues for three more pages in the Deep Curation script, La Mackerel reinscribes joy, care, and belonging, dialogically reverting Perry Cox’s inversion of Madonna’s lyrics into a conceptual palindrome of itself. The speaker of La Mackerel’s poem basks “in trust” and “in knowingness,” as poetry, body, and island become one. Their body traces “archipelagos” on themself, symbolically metamorphosing into an island. In their words, “embodied poems” reside in relation to “lyrical islands,” so that poetry becomes personalized, and the lyrical I or poetic speaker morphs gently with both the geopolitical context and the beauty and belonging of island heritage.

This brightening of Perry Cox’s interpretation of the song, and of a more cynical appropriation of island identity by extension, highlights the writerly ability to make and remake through inscription. It propagates a creative and critical dialogic relationality that bridges the written word with the personalized, felt experience inhabiting the authors’ individual poetries and the newly fused Deep Curation body of work. Through the personal scope of what they were able to bring to the making-of *We’ve Weave* and the heightened mindset of sharing and collaboration that they harness in this creative process, Perry Cox and La Mackerel embody their roles as authors, not only of their respective published works, but also of their compositional roles towards the Deep Curation script and its performance.

Image 18: A ritual and visual weave during We've Weave*, featuring Kama La Mackerel and Alexei Perry Cox. Photo credit: Kimura Byol.*

Image 19: A ritual pouring of salt during We've Weave*, featuring Kama La Mackerel. Photo credit: Kimura Byol.*

Their self-curation becomes a curation of self, or even of selves, as positioned within the framing of Deep Curation as both methodology and live, performed event. Conceptually, there is a cyclicality inherent to this dialogism of selves as the honesty and openness of these two poets overlap and blur with the work they write, even as that work and its contents remain at a theoretical

remove from the authors' subject positions. One might say, with Perry Cox—citing a line from the opening poem of *We've Weave* that is also repeated and thus sonically inhabited by La Mackerel—"The day I complete the book, I arrive at its beginning" (no pag.). Refusing a linear delimitation of personhoods, the dialogic relationality, as cast within the durational relational process of producing this Deep Curation performance, proposes a constant making and remaking of authorship, one which simultaneously makes and remakes their poetries as they exist in new configurations towards each other, bringing the work to an end and reopening it again towards a new beginning.

Spatial Relationality and Deep Curation: *We've Weave*

To return to a quote from Beatrice von Bismarck, the curatorial in relational terms can be understood as "a space of negotiation [...] a space that can be configured socially, temporally, and discursively" ("In the Space of the Curatorial" 42). The repetition of the word *space* further links to physical location, a venue that can likewise engage "socially, temporally, and discursively" with the materials displayed or performed within it. Whether the literary event attempts to adapt itself site-specifically to the architectonic potential of a particular venue or, less deliberately, slots itself into a space as a pre-articulated form, the venue's layout, infrastructure, institutional associations, and more must enter into spatial relationality with the work presented in its purview. In contrast to the sections on institutional and dialogic relationalities that depend on the durational process of curating *We've Weave* at Studio303 with Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel, I will focus here on the work's performance in two different public-facing venues to investigate how spatial relationality plays out within the creative product or temporal culmination of the work (as far as the concept of a definitive *product* and its documentation holds ground at all). Durationally, one might also argue that the ongoing process of production as temporally contracted into the eventful nature of the two performances likewise continued to evolve in relation to the two spatial terrains of the distinct venues.[43] *We've Weave* was first performed at White Wall Studio on 28 July 2022 and subsequently at Théâtre aux Écuries on 9 August 2022. Despite the necessary and inherent shifts that these different venues enacted, these events were envisioned as equal or as two temporally removed opportunities for audiences to attend the work. Rather than hosting two performances at the same location, shifting between these two distinct venues was a deliberate choice on my part. I wanted to investigate how the same work—as far as different performative editions remain the same work and are not conceptualized as unique instantiations of themselves, as Charles Bernstein might argue (*Close Listening*)—is affected by the varying spatial constraints and assets of the two theatres. Despite observing a very limited focus group of two venues (three, if also counting Studio303 as the space in which the work was produced),[44] the shift in location evidenced a pronounced experiential difference in the work. Interestingly, the two venues resulted in different durations of the work itself. *We've Weave* as performed at White Wall Studio clocked

[43] I know, for example, that Kaie Kellough, in attendance at the first performance, offered feedback to La Mackerel on the speed, intensity, and duration with which a certain section was repeated. La Mackerel implemented this edit into the following performance. Similarly, the dance sequence in *We've Weave* was slightly shortened during the second performance, La Mackerel adapted the approach to their persona, and Perry Cox changed some of her dance moves to a more active rendition of previous choreography.

[44] I had also initially envisioned doing a readthrough of the *We've Weave* Deep Curation script at a bookstore in order to inhabit the tradition of poetry readings as hosted in commercial venues. Perry Cox was in communication with a new Montreal-based bookstore, Maktaba Bookshop, but the timeframe of the residency and production conflicted with the bookstore's scheduling and it did not work out in the end.

in at 38:34, in comparison to the version at Théâtre aux Écuries that ran for 42:03. This is a substantial variation in duration for performances based on the same script. An analysis of this durational fluctuation would be purely speculative—straddling an affective graph of performers' nerves, their ability to improvise and expand the script, their perception of the venue's hospitality and welcoming stance towards their presence, and so forth. That said, even an autoethnographic comparison of the two performances based solely on my perception (as one of a very limited number of individuals who attended both events[45]), and not qualitative data collection from performers and audience members, underscores, at the very least, that the varying affordances of the space actuate a ripple of relational exchange also in durational, and even institutional, terms. Such a partial understanding of the correlation between relationalities embrace the non-definability of relationality itself. Conjecture might not lead to answers, but it does foster processual questioning and an intentionality of practice.

As the name might suggest and as can be seen in Image 20, White Wall Studio has an all-white interior with large mirrors on two walls and windows on the two adjoining ones. It is marketed mainly as a dance venue, offering a malleable space that can be reconfigured according to the requirements of the project and vinyl matting that necessitates audience members to remove their shoes at the entrance. The architectonic plasticity of the venue implies a less formal setup, one which allowed me to arrange the limited number of chairs in a large semi-circle around the center of the room doubling as a non-elevated arena for the performance. Some audience members sat on the floor, and Perry Cox's children ran around the room, amplifying the casual nature of the space. To a degree, the natural light and room clutter interfered with the performance or, more generously phrased, entered into relationality with it, creating an atmosphere that did not necessarily highlight the performance itself, but emphasized its location within the hospitality and decor of the venue instead. A rooftop terrace invited attendees to enjoy a BYOB-style drink after the event, leading to a sunset vista for people to mingle and debrief. The venue's central locale in Montreal's Plateau neighbourhood, at 4532 Laval Avenue, meant that people living in the immediate vicinity opted for this walking-distance venue over Théâtre aux Écuries that required a commute to north-east Rosemont, or Fabre metro station.[46] Théâtre aux Écuries is located at 7285 Chabot Street in a large, institutional-looking building. Although the theatre is occasionally rented out, it usually hosts the company's own seasonal productions, implying an overarching curatorial project for their billing into which *We've Weave* was only temporarily slotted. As can be seen in Image 21, this large space with 140 red, plush seats fixed in their facing configuration in relation to the stage offers a more traditional black box experience. Strategic spotlighting and an otherwise darkened, windowless space allows for undistracted optical focus on the stage action. A cash bar in the foyer invites patrons to socialize after the event, while a large green room, intended for an entire troop of actors, offers a separate space for performers to change, prepare, and enjoy a moment of silence alone before and after the show. In contrast to the processual, malleable character of White Wall Studio, the formality, fixity, and heightened infrastructure of Théâtre aux

[45] In fact, only myself, Perry Cox, La Mackerel, and one other audience member attended both performances.

[46] When looking for appropriate venues, La Mackerel felt strongly about booking a theatre not located in the predictable urban centre of the city. They felt that a venue further north in Montreal might welcome and attract audiences often geographically marginalized. While I cannot vouch for a more inclusive demographic in attendance due to the theatre's location, it was walking distance from my home and biking distance from La Mackerel's, and thus served as an indirect act of hospitality inviting people to a performance in our part of the city.

Écuries represents a more traditional approach to theatre-making, one which magnifies the divide between audience and performers through the face-off between seating and stage and offers the illusion of a dramatic reality or imaginary by virtue of the darkened, sensory deprivation of the hall that directs focus onto the action on stage. Notably, this model of performance venue is also one from which poetry readings are usually generically excluded due to economics and smaller event scale.[47]

Placing *We've Weave* within the varying spatially relational contexts of White Wall Studio and Théâtre aux Écuries—with their contrasting infrastructures and layouts—shifts the affordances for shaping of the performances themselves, while also directing the perception of the work as presented within those divergent spaces. One might argue, for example, that the informal character of White Wall Studio, with its shoes-off policy and natural lighting, perpetuates the work's status as the culminating showcase of the Studio303 residency. The durational process of creating the work might temporarily have solidified into a performable entity, but the work is still presented as being subject to change as it could be refined, expanded, and then accepted into more prestigious structures of performance, such as annual arts festivals and/or theaters' seasonal billing. In contrast, the institutional veneer of Théâtre aux Écuries already offers the illusion of exactly that prestige through recognizable markers of tradition in the theater's public-facing status as a venue of cultural dissemination. The theater exists, then, as a larger-scale, more official venue that extrapolates *We've Weave* as a work beyond the minimalism of a poetry reading to highlight also its gesture, dance, props, dramatic lighting, cohesively integrated poetic script, and more, as discernible elements in a dramatic lineage. As such, spatial relationality becomes a continuation of or intertwined with institutional relationality as venue doubles as infrastructure and infrastructure offers an analytic for the dynamic experience of performance in space. In a lecture at the Bergen Assembly curatorial conference, Elizabeth Povinelli highlights the relational overlap of space and infrastructure, enumerating that the latter "1. connect[s] artistic space such that certain things can move across the connected space and others can't; 2. those forms of connections that include and exclude condition and shape the connections themselves; 3. they condition and shape the things moving through these conditions ("Aesthetic Analytics #2" lecture). In other words, for Povinelli, infrastructure as informed by the spatial affordances of a venue generate potent energy fields of interrelation and exchange that exceed an institutional theory-based acknowledgement of art as art, and circulate relational dynamism through facilities and resources equally as through a venue's architectonics and the creative performance it houses. In a sense, the durational production of and remove between the two performances, the two venues and their spatial relationalities, the institutional and infrastructural correlations, and more, all intertwine into a relational dialogism even beyond the performance's dialogic relationality itself. That is, various articulations of relationality—artificially separated into categories for the sake of analysis—click back into a coexistent, mutually reciprocal and relational continuous exchange. Deep Curation, with *We've Weave* as case study, amplifies the conditions to study individual curatorial relationalities even as it denies those same conditions through the critical remoulding of relationalities into their collective interconnection. Durational relationality informs institutional relationality becomes spatial relationality, and all of these relationalities merge dialogically into the vibrant curatorial artform which is d/Deep c/Curation as method, theory, and practice.

[47] While I paid $300 to rent White Wall Studio, Théâtre aux Écuries cost more than double the price at $688.70, even after I negotiated a special deal based on small budget and limited needs for technical support. Some other downtown Montreal theaters that I queried, sent me quotes of up to $7000 for a single day of venue rental.

Image 20: We've Weave *performed at White Wall Studio, 28 July 2022. Photo credit: Klara du Plessis.*

Image 21: We've Weave *setup at Théâtre aux Écuries, 9 August 2022. Photo credit: Klara du Plessis.*

Conclusion

As a research creation project that steered the theorization of deep curation as a curatorial mode and that started at the outset of my doctoral studies, Deep Curation does not conclude as my dissertation draws to an end. In fact, Deep Curation has consistently been a practice existent at the interstice between my scholarly and creative literary engagement, and a way to bring those respective academic and literary communities and their discourses into closer overlap with one another. My thinking about literary curation, and Deep Curation as a series of more experimental,

critically attuned literary events in particular, has ongoing resonance in resisting unquestioning community practices of poetry reading organization, performance, promotion, and dissemination, fostering a curatorial mindset that demands dialogue and intention from every person involved in the making of literary events instead. As narrativized in this chapter, the past five years of developing Deep Curation first taught me how to embolden the curator's role in the production of poetry readings, while simultaneously opening the creative space to collaboration and trust in the authors' own visions. Ethical or responsible curating does not have to mean directive curating—in fact, the opposite is probably true—but it has taken me a move away from hands-off towards hands-on curating to embody this knowledge. Thinking through the truly brilliant roster of contemporary poets who have participated in Deep Curation events over the years, I recognize that they were subject to the experimental nature of the project and for this I am grateful to them. Harnessing what I have learned across the various production processes and performances, I thus hope to revisit and re-invest in the groupings of poets at a more sustainable phase of the project. Ambitiously, I am working towards a large scale Canada Council for the Arts Explore and Create: Concept to Realization grant that would allow me to re-invite poets who had assisted in previous Deep Curation events, allowing them to revise and reshape the original scripts collaboratively and durationally, and providing them with the resources to do so. Too often projects are only supported up until a first draft formulation of itself. It would be productive to push Deep Curation forward, not only by continuing to forge new relationships with different poets, but also to cycle back to reimagine and foster work already produced in new ways, and to see these versions performed as a series in closer temporal proximity to one another.

Conclusion—Destabilizing Terms: Curating a Dissertation

As a project of generating language with which to analyze the curation of literary events and reading series, the interdisciplinary scope of my doctoral project leads to original contributions in the fields of curatorial studies, literary studies, and the hands-on making of poetry in performance. Integrating these various disciplines, in particular, is unprecedented and, as previously cited, "the use of the term 'curator' is a very recent phenomenon in performing arts" (Prikko Husemann, "Conditions of Curating Performing Arts" 270). Angled both at curation's innovative inclusion in the lexicon of literary studies and at the discourse surrounding the curatorial in visual terms, my research thus broadens how and in which contexts it is possible to discern curatorial labour. On the one hand, curatorial studies is traditionally shaped disciplinarily by the fine arts, but its critical terrain is now expanded to apply to the sounding of literature in live performance and its archive, illustrating Beatrice von Bismarck's point that "in recent times key input in how curatorial relations are understood, discussed, and modified has come from performing arts," as more overtly interpersonal media (*The Curatorial Condition* 20). Although not a new occurrence, the current prevalence, not only of performance art, but also of the performance of poetry itself in visual arts' gallery spaces, necessitates nuanced attention to its curation in literary terms from loci of visual arts. Even as recently as 25 January 2023, for example, Mo Balduc, David Bradford, Kaie Kellough, and Tawhida Tanya Evanson performed poetry at Montreal's Museum of Fine Arts, offering sets inspired by the Jean-Michel Basquiat exhibition, "Seeing Loud," showing at that time. On the other hand, moving from a reductive understanding of the poetry reading as a representation of the primary, text-based materialization of literature in print, and the ongoing omission of the curatorial in literary debates on the poetry reading, to the more robust inclusion and conceptualization of curation as the relational making of literary events as an independent form or artform, instigates a whole new area for continued investigation. As such, my doctoral output invites future scholars to add their varied insights and approaches to further study of the curatorial in literary terms. By the same token, practitioners of literary curation—that is, both poets performing at literary events and the curators making those events cohere—will benefit from my research that validates labour that is frequently rendered invisible and challenges literary curators to invest more time in articulating their aims when organizing events. As mentioned in passing in Chapter 5, one of the more intriguing outcomes of COVID-19, at least within the Montreal literary scene at the given moment, is to have disarranged assumptions of literary events, closing venues, changing audiences, heightening accessibility issues, and appending question marks to many curatorial elements that were taken for granted prior to the pandemic. While these disruptions have permanently altered the landscape of local literary programming, they also offer the ideal conditions for a community revisioning of how literary events are collectively made, performed, attended, and archived, a moment to work collaboratively in the field through some of the questions I ask in scholarly terms. Practically, of course, I already add some of my own thinking around curatorial questions in the organization and theorization of Deep Curation as a research creation component of my doctoral degree.

Enumerating the major contributions put forward in my dissertation, especially as contextualized within an English Department setting, it is important to note the work done in specifically literary terms too, even as what is constituted as *literary* leans towards the sounded rather than book-bound. This approach is what Jason Camlot calls "audiotextual criticism" or "an expansion of the sociology of texts, introduced by textual critics and book historians, into the realms of media history, sound studies, performance studies, format theory, and other related

approaches to the production and circulation of audible literary works" (*Phonopoetics* 6). Aligned with such recent research developments that lend attention to the listening of literature in performance, I present sustained investigations into the archives of the Sir George Williams Poetry Series, Véhicule Art Inc., the Words and Music Show, and Deep Curation as research creation. These sound archives are only beginning to attract curiosity from critics, implying that my work adds to foundational or emerging disciplinary niches. Invoking close listening, oral history, and auto/ethnographic methodologies, my research furthers draws out a collective—but not comprehensive—vision of a local, historical scene, one not discernible through print records, but rendered more transparent through an investigation of poetry as performance and the networks of curatorial relationalities that those performances structure and augment. While my work tends to stray from the individual author and their body of writing as transcendent formulations of literature or as case studies of fame and canonicity, my overarching investigation of congregations of writers within series contexts also centers on some individual authors, while rejecting any notion of these analyses as definitive or more important than other case studies that I could have chosen. These include brief forays into readings by Lionel Kearns, Irving Layton, and bpNichol at the Poetry Series, and Carole TenBrink and Janet Kask at Véhicule. I spend an entire chapter discussing Kaie Kellough's early performance poetics as heard at the Words and Music Show, and likewise linger on Alexei Perry Cox and Kama La Mackerel's contemporary contributions as seen through the lens of Deep Curation. My sound-focused and curatorial approach to the archives in questions thus has the important consequence of conceptualizing the literary as centered less on the individual and more on the community circuits that uphold, develop, circulate, and collaborate on its production, spiraling out from the local to national and international narratives.

Curating a Dissertation

When I defended the prospectus of this doctoral project, one of my committee members, Maya Rae Oppenheimer, suggested that I curate my dissertation. Although a compelling idea, it felt unclear to me at the time how to achieve this within the more linear process of composition. The structural prerequisites of the dissertation as genre seemed to preclude the ability to creatively rearrange materials or sections in ways that did not build a progressive, argumentative narrative. Yet, as the writing process developed, I began to internalize the conceptual shift that allowed for critical reasoning to function as a series of decisions, juxtapositions, and strategic placements, and then to understand the dissertation writing process itself as a form of curation. The cycle of interlocking parts that encompass this dissertation—chapters, chapter sections, reading series, curators, authors, audiences, audio archives, poetry collections, research sources, and so much more—creates a network of curatorial relationalities equally potent as those discussed as informing each of the case studies. Once this dissertation is envisioned as a curatorial project, one can impose the same language of the larger study onto it, not in terms of the content that it houses, but in its formal composition. That is, as an official research output and genre connected to the fulfilment of a doctoral degree, the dissertation, in all its component parts, probably slots into a framed curatorial mode. It has an articulated overarching goal of creating original vocabulary with which to distinguish different approaches to the making of literary events and reading series. It is arranged in chapters that roughly mirror one another in structure and in their shared aims of elucidating a range of case studies. In contrast, one could argue that it follows an open curatorial mode exactly because of its inclusion of widely divergent case studies. At the same time, the dissertation could be an example of self-curation, one which works to structure my personal research, especially in the final chapter on Deep Curation as a project that I have been practically invested in over the

past five years. The intricate selection of quotations that make up an argumentative thesis—both transcribed from audio files and marked up in essays and books—could be understood as its own form of deep curation. Similarly, a doctoral dissertation is by definition imbricated in institutional traditions and expectations, and durational strategies. It is a dialogic tour de force, constructed according to the spatial constraints of the page and document. Relationally, a dissertation is a riot.

If the dissertation is a curatorial output, then as its resident scholar, I am a curator—even beyond my role as literary curator for the Deep Curation series. It is with this in mind that I asked Alexei Perry Cox whether she would be willing to interview me. My idea was to reverse the gaze from myself as scholar interrogating curatorial modes in different poetry reading series, and even conducting a sequence of oral history interviews with the curators of these series, and to position myself as the curator or interview subject instead. This shift would briefly unsettle the unidirectional vector of authority that positions me as the author or curator of this dissertation, exerting interpretative power over the materials I am studying. Especially in terms of Deep Curation, in fact, the current non-public status of the archival materials, places me in the position of spokesperson and lone interpreter, augmenting the importance of Perry Cox's voice as a recent participant in a Deep Curation performance. By way of our conversation, my decisions and selections and arguments in this dissertation are then rendered equally open to perforation and inquiry. We would perform the dialogic and the relational. This foregrounding of the dialogical was informed by and indebted to the final chapter of Dylan Robinson's *Hungry Listening,* in which he invites Ellen Waterman and Deborah Wong to discuss their positionalities as settler scholars within an ongoing process of understanding decolonial listening practices in their fields. Within the book's larger project of directing Indigenous listening practices, the transcript of their conversation serves as space for "settlers [...to] 'work things out among themselves'" (Robinson citing David Garneau, 239), not only to look towards Indigenous communities in the articulation of change, but to take on the difficulty of that labour themselves. Whereas the goals of my conversation with Perry Cox do not have the same political activist foundations, they are based on a similar shift in authorial voice, one which lightly questions myself as the lead speaker of this dissertation and aims to redirect that authority with the Socratic method or with the understanding that I always think and write in relation to others, to other poets, other archives, and other communities. I can thus say with Robinson that "[m]y hope was that the[...] conversation might activate and modify ideas from previous chapters and consider new forms for [...] listening and [...] action" (239), equally as new forms of curatorial relationality and exchange. Perry Cox, as a poet, scholar, and recent participant in the Deep Curation *We've Weave* residency and performances, was an ideal candidate for entering into dialogue with me. Already on friendly terms, and with a sense of mutual respect for each other's poetry, she read sections of my dissertation to familiarize herself with my research, too. The full conversation transcript is available as Appendix 10. I will now continue to non-chronologically excerpt parts of our discussion and to expand upon them in order for this conclusion to cohere as an informal and even playful relational staging of some tangents adjacent to the dissertation's larger project. Neither the conversation itself nor my extracts from and reflections on them are nearly comprehensive—I also cannot pretend to always have answers to the questions that arise—and yet they both direct what follows and lead into a productive openness for this research to continue.

Destabilizing Custodianship

Curatorial labour is as closely embedded with care as its Latin etymological root form, *curare,* meaning *to take care of*. Usually that which is taken care of is works of art, but as the understanding

of what constitutes those artworks morphs from the stand-alone object to the interpersonal relational—and as the definition of the curatorial itself expands—so responsibility also adapts to foster community networks with artists or, by extension, poets. In terms of this dissertation being a curatorial project, responsibility and care relate equally to the conditions of my own writing process, to the archival repositories of work, and to the persons represented in them—those persons whose performances have been recorded and integrated into the repertories of literary history, and have been perhaps personally reincorporated into the research through the dialogic dimension of oral history interviews. While a supple attitude of attentiveness and empathy is clearly key to a collaborative and relational research alliance, both in terms of human engagement and even more abstractly with reference to material subjects, it can be challenged by the inherent limits and flawed nature of scholarly research, on the one hand, and ossify into a determinate role of guardianship, on the other. Care itself thus necessitates a constant revisioning of its own definition and an awareness that its progressive intentions can circle back to a role of supervision and control.

> KdP: I wanted to say something else in terms of care. I have increasingly been thinking about the dissertation itself as a form of curation, in terms of the larger case studies that I've been working with. There are four. The first is the Sir George Williams poetry series, from the '60s, then Véhicule Art Inc., from the '70s, and then a bit of a jump towards the Words and Music Show, from the early 2000s, and then Deep Curation. They're all Montreal-based series and there's a lot of overlap that happens in terms of key agents performing at the various series and how they interrelate and how they also function differently in different series. My choice of series is also a form of curation. The labour of care within that larger scale, macro curation has been a huge learning curve on my end. As a scholar, as a curator, you come in with so many preconceptions and value judgments of your own. Then working with these archives, and working with people, most of whom are still around, you have to think through how much of the work of that scholarly care is creating lineage or creating analyses that narrativize a given series. How much of that is celebratory work? How much of that is critical work, in both senses? Where does my responsibility lie? Especially when I have personal relationships with people involved in these series.
>
> APC: What role do you have in terms of caring for their work?
>
> KdP: Exactly. Expectations are also placed on me as curator in the sense that I am going to create posterity for people just because I'm doing this little bit of scholarly work for them, or not for them, for me, but by working on their materials. I feel like there's some interesting meta essay waiting to be written about working with other people's materials.
>
> APC: Yeah, it is weird. You talked about it a little bit before, like in terms of also needing to prioritize your own self-care. I don't mean it in a trite way. Creating prosperity for your own work or for someone else's work in a creative or productive way is too much for one person.
>
> KdP: Even in terms of legitimizing the archives of Deep Curation, it's too much for one person. I can just do this tiny little bit. (Alexei Perry Cox interview, 12 January 2023)

Curatorial labour adopts asides. By selecting the four reading series as case studies for this research, I have accomplished more than that single curatorial act. Choice amplifies the curatorial, and as noted in the Introduction's attempt at defining *the curatorial*, this dynamic field of process is one that defies singularized roles and invariably multiplies itself to follow adjacencies, supplements, and tangents. In such terms, another one of the many possible implications of the selection process is to bolster the series through scholarly attention, to reinforce access to its archives, and to create a veneer of institutional veneration through critical intervention. This is especially true because my dissertation focuses on recent and contemporary literature and works with curators and poets who do not have huge bodies of scholarship dedicated to their projects yet. Significantly, this role of safeguarding information and legacy, and offering first directions in knowledge creation surrounding the case studies ties into the function of curator as custodian, an outdated model, which curators in a variety of disciplines have actively been attempting to counteract. Whether this role is one that is inherent to scholarship, is projected onto the work by the aspirations of people who I am writing about, or whether I am glorifying my own research beyond its proportional insignificance, it is ironic that my own perception of the case studies are actually as variables within a larger structure of curatorial research. That is, the intention of this dissertation, from my perspective, is to theorize vocabulary with which to read literary events and so, to a degree, the critical dimension takes precedence over its application, while simultaneously being dependent on that application to render the discursive discernible. Rather than offering a hierarchy of analytic activities to this project, what this favouring of terms over illustrations implies, for me, is a destabilization of exactly the kind of authority I just posited. If the act of writing a dissertation that relies on certain case studies by default engages in a certain amplification of the latter, then the simultaneous significance of the former offers a productive tension that works against either. This critical traction allows for a reversal of the assumption of custodianship and a reintroduction of the dynamism associated with the curatorial.

Two Curators Versus Two Poets

As I draft this conclusion, I listen to a recorded conversation that I commissioned for *Glyphoria* magazine from Nadia Chaney, Katherine McLeod, and Erin Robinsong, a debriefing of a poetry and flamenco dance experiment they collaborated on called "Disaster Is a Healing Knell," performed 25 September 2022. As the recording draws to a close, Chaney suggests that there is a difference between "working in collaboration versus working together" ("Hyper-Present Time" 00:43:08). The statement shakes me. Here Chaney allows for a dynamic division based on these synonyms that angle towards integration, immersion, and creative entanglement as emergent communal method, on the one hand, and a more perfunctory grind of toiling side-by-side, on the other. When listening to Chaney's statement about the difference between *collaboration* and *working together*, I pick up on an undertow that is almost mystical, based on a productive imaginary that points to universal interrelation. And yet, when Perry Cox directs her questioning towards collaboration, I reply that it "doesn't have to mean everyone does the same thing."

> APC: Using the example of Deep Curation, are you able to envision it as something that you would be able to co-curate, to work with other collaborators right from the outset? I love what you said about reauthorship before, the lines of writerly ability, remaking through inscription—that stuck out to me. There's this line that you have that's about there being a tiny distantiation for Kama [La Mackerel] and me in the self and selves that we create, [in *We've Weave*] but also in the dialogic curatorial role with you. I wonder if the

> work will move differently, will thrive or flourish in ways that then also take care of you. Do you feel like you want partnership or collaboration from the very outset? And if so, how? Would it feel like an immersion into something quicker?
>
> KdP: I feel like the work that the three of us did is a pretty good example, from my perspective, of a collaboration that made things easier for me because you two were so involved, and you were so committed, and you were so present. That made my work a lot easier than other Deep Curation events. As I talk about in the dissertation, I was even questioning that ease. I think we are so socialized into difficulty. [...] In terms of your question about collaboration, it's really compelling to think what the different roles would be in terms of having, say, two curators versus having two poets. What would that mean? How would it be different if, instead of seeing me as the curator and you and Kama as the poets, we'd all have been curator-poets? It might be a technicality. Maybe to a degree, we were already curator-poets, but there was a delimitation within our collaboration. We had delimited the roles that we were going to play.

If Deep Curation purports to be a series that amplifies the curatorial itself as artwork, then why had I not previously thought to rearrange labels so that poets attempted to understand themselves as curators, and curators to understand themselves as poets? The combination of roles would imply that everyone involved would simultaneously be a poet and a curator. What this shift in perception offers is that all tasks in the overall making of a literary event suddenly becomes creative practice—grant writing, emails querying venue rental, scheduling, and more, are all positioned in the light of art. Similarly, composing poetry, creating dialogues between divergent poetries, designing stage choreography, and more, would become akin to administrative tasks. This speculation on role division is not a new idea in terms of socially engaged artmaking practices, but by importing this thinking into literary curation generally and Deep Curation specifically it not only dramatically reconfigures how everyone involved relates to a variety of tasks, but, more importantly, it reconfigures what can be understood under the rubric of literary production and dissemination at all. Is the curator the creator of a literary event? Are the performing poets the creators of a literary event? Does creation manifest as organizational or conceptualizing labour? And is it even possible to parse such practical, creative, and critical tasks from one another? By blurring the boundaries between roles, the function of both the author and the curator as either mediating or creative agents of texts breaks down to expose a radical sharing of authorship and a collaborative scaffolding to the literary event that allows different kinds of labour to rely on and be supported by one another. The administrative notion of *curating* thus reverts to being synonymous to *the curatorial*—a shift back to their conceptual combination, but bolstered by the knowledge of their possible division and productive collusion—while also subverting a hierarchy in which the curatorial is somehow always more meaningful, more generative, and more intellectually arresting than the act of curating.

What Comes Next?

> APC: I want to start with the question that I usually ask people at the end of a conversation.

The question is framed as centering on Deep Curation and I answer as such.

> KdP: I have ambitious plans for Deep Curation. [...] We would use the Deep Curation scripts that were performed previously as first drafts, and ask people to go back into them and bring themselves into it—maybe there's been new work produced during the interim that could be included. So expanding the work that way. I would really like to do it well. I think that's the other thing I learned from working with you and Kama. I would like to be able to do these reworkings with a similar level of investment. Then I need to figure out where and how to perform the results. That's something I haven't figured out yet. It would make sense to perform them all as a kind of festival, but I think there are limitations to doing everything yourself. I have to think ahead to potential collaborations, potential alliances that one could create to have a bigger or a different audience that's maybe built into an existing festival or series. So that's my immediate, big goal with Deep Curation.

Answers proliferate. In the conversation with Perry Cox, I intimate that I need to find, eventually, an archival repository to host the Deep Curation materials that have already been created over the past five years. As hinted at previously in Chapter 1, I also suggest developing the deep curatorial mode as a pedagogical practice that activates key features of the term paper through the articulation of an argument and the strategic selection of poetic passages placed in relation to one another to substantiate a thesis. I am currently in the process of organizing a conversation with poets from the first Deep Curation experiment—hopefully hosting Aaron Boothby, Canisia Lubrin, and Erin Robinsong—at the Knife Fork Book FERTILE Festival in Toronto, August 2023, with the goal of expanding the original script from 2018 to include new poetry and more collaborative approaches to the making of the event for a revised draft of the original performance.

And yet, the question about what comes next could also be directed towards the dissertation itself. As I write the final pages of this project, it feels restrictive to imagine it as a self-contained end product, one that will eventually be uploaded to Spectrum and reside there in an unchangeable archival PDF format. For this research to continue living, it needs to be rewritten. This revision as continuation manifests in the aspirational publicly accessible remaking of the manuscript into a series of essays or even a monograph. In a sense, then, this understanding of reauthorship and reappraisal adopts a deep curatorial program. The dissertation becomes the existing work that needs to be strategically rewritten and rearranged towards a more expansive curatorial field, in relation to further insight and exploration. As such, the manuscript of my doctoral project also opens itself for future directions of study. Both building on and departing from the relational schematization of curatorial modes, the practical and conceptual labour of organizing literary events can be elaborated to include the subjective act of listening relationally to the durational media associated with that curation—a tangent I am currently calling *curatorial listening*. My PhD research applies an original, interdisciplinary lens to the live literary event and audio archive, excavating the often neglected or dismissed labour of curating literary events to structure the creative and critical dissemination of poetry in performance. Curatorial listening, as a disciplinary practice of audition, remediates itself across a threefold act of listening: 1. as collaborative method in the production of a poetry reading, 2. as creative performance during the poetry reading, and 3. retroactively as archival practice in attending to traces of the event. With this in mind, the next phase of my research can be summarized as an innovative investigation into and theorization of the transformative and transforming act of listening necessary to comprehend poetry performance in formative terms—a practice that takes into account both the public-facing and internalized relational responses to how, where, when, and with whom the literary event is organized: that is, the curatorial. I even imagine arguing more speculatively that listening is itself a curatorial process

that hinges on aural selection, an activity that is not a one-to-one vector between sound and understanding, but always perforated by an elaborate series of wandering thoughts, acousmatic sound, sounds that are not the primary sonic object, interpretation, and an active, creative engagement with what is heard.

Concluding a Conclusion

How to conclude a conclusion? How to curate curation? Curating a dissertation that is about curating, curators, and the curatorial creates a self-referential weave of theory, practice, and language that is applicable for productive further qualification—as is the case with the hypothesis of *curatorial* listening. It also results in a redundancy of terms, however, that can lead, in one direction, to a cynical sense that everything can be reframed as curation, that a resingularization of terms has taken place to merge the interdisciplinary—of literary studies, curatorial studies, performance, and more—back into the strictly disciplinary boundaries of a single unit of study—the curatorial. And yet following the shimmering omnipresence of curation into a more constructive direction, a generative meta-layering of method and critical content establishes itself. If the dissertation is about curation and is itself also a curatorial construct, then the writing of the dissertation becomes a formulation of practice-based research or research creation, what Sarah E. Truman calls "a mode of scholarly activity [...that] operates through the tripartite expression of an artistic practice, theory, and research" (*Feminist Speculations* 152). Conceptualizing aspects of the doctoral writing process as curation places that scholarly labour into a lineage of making, especially as that making is infused with curatorial intention, responsibility, and care, as previously discussed. Here one might also think alongside Natalie Loveless who understands research creation as the "logical extension of post-1968 interdisciplinary and theoretical interventions into the academy, but as specifically indebted to feminist, queer, decolonial, and other social justice movements, as they have worked to remake the academy from within" (*How to Make Art at the End of the World* 57). That is, disciplinary strictures are loosened by way of an internal assimilation of creative practice into the critical doing of scholarly processes. Art and the curatorial dissemination of art is embedded into the academy so that the coagulation of making, method, and theory destabilize traditional expectations towards an integrated interdisciplinarity or "hyphenation," to cite Truman again, "hyphenation mean[ing] taking both the research and creation seriously, and what's generated through their mutual implication seriously" (158). Beyond the truism of form and content, then, the multiplicity of roles, embodiments, discourses, and applications inherent to curating and the curatorial—as well as the dynamic relational field of constant circulation and exchange that lingering on different literary case studies permits—refract even the potential conditioning of this dissertation from summary to multiplicity. The instability of curation, the impossibility of defining it in satisfactory terms, is equal to the instability of the poetry readings or literary events that are being curated in this dissertation, and the difficulty of precisely grasping their delimitations. So even within the inward-facing, mise-en-abyme of research terms, the vibrancy of those very same terms shakes loose contradictions, tensions, arcs, and dimensions for further nuance and disturbance. This Conclusion thus offers the invocation of its own extension.

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Introduction to Appendices

The following series of transcribed oral history interviews were conducted as part of my doctoral research, 2021 to 2023, with an array of literary curators, performers, and archivists involved with the formation of the case studies featured in the body of my dissertation chapters. The majority of interviews involve poets, curators, participants, and attendees of the Véhicule Art Inc. literary events—Endre Farkas, Tom Konyves, Claudia Lapp, Stephen Morrissey, Ken Norris, and Carole TenBrink. The second grouping of interviews prioritize the Words and Music Show—curator Ian Ferrier, performer Kaie Kellough, and student archivist Ali Barillaro. The final interview reverses the gaze and is conducted with me, Klara du Plessis, by Alexei Perry Cox, with a focus on Deep Curation. Future research would allow me to continue conducting similar interviews, especially among participants and attendees of Deep Curation events.

Due to COVID-19 circumstances, the existing interviews took place and were recorded over Zoom. The formal interviews were preceded by introductory emails and sometimes phone calls, explaining my research, the necessity for the conversations, and the process of recording, transcribing, and verifying each session. Following SpokenWeb oral history protocols—and covered by SpokenWeb's oral history ethics clearance—participants signed an agreement allowing me to cite from and/or publish the interviews. I stressed to each participant that they need not answer all questions, that we could collaborate on revising and even redacting sections of the public-facing transcriptions, and that they could lead the discussion according to their comfort level. In this sense, an editorial project was embedded into the methodology, but perhaps not a curatorial one—to add a fine distinction. That is, although some answers were nuanced after the conversations proper, the interviews in their entirety serve as raw material that model the interviewee's viewpoints. Those viewpoints occasionally differ from my personal opinions or scholarly logic, but are left to resonate within the space of the self-contained, full interviews. While I prepared questions and had some directed concerns relating to curation that I consistently aimed to discuss, I followed the participants' lead and memory of events, in practice. That is, some participants arrived ready to relay information to me. They had already constructed narratives that they wished to impart. Others were more aware of the porosity of their own authority and I had to work harder to establish trust, not necessarily towards myself, but within the participants' own perception of what they could contribute. Arguably, the most successful interviews were the conversational ones, interviews that shared authority within the space of the dialogue itself.

Significantly, the varying interview styles are more visibly discernible on the transcribed page than in the audio recordings, showing large blocks of monologue as contrasted with concise, back-and-forth dialogue. Even as the act of transcription itself helped me as researcher to internalize the dialogue beyond the fast-paced temporality of the conversations themselves, the textual products of transcription also render the interviews more accessible as they admit investigation through visual, legible cues, and digital searchability and annotation features. Here one might think alongside Kelly Cubbon and Katherine McLeod who, in their podcast-related research, argue that transcription "has come to mean a written copy, but really it is a creative process," "a visual written version" ("Talking Transcription" 00:03:45). Transcription conceptualized as a sequence of intricate decisions, and therefore also a generative medium, further doubles as a manifestation of respect and care that consistently creates the conditions for the ethical sharing, collecting, and collating of knowledge.

These interviews inform and support my doctoral research by complicating where authority resides in its investigation, production, and articulation. As Michael Frisch suggests in his classic

study of oral history as theory and practice, oral history "alter[s the] relationship between historian and 'source,' between scholarship and public discourse, and between dominant cultural forms, assumptions, and institutions and the alternatives that practitioners of these methods so often hope to empower" (*A Shared Authority* xvi). In other words, these interviews perforate any false assumptions of static expertise as situated either within the archives and other mediated, scholarly literary histories, or the guiding site of my own analyses. So, the interviews work to multiply the singular vision of my own autoethnographic approach in relation to the community practice of literary curation towards a plurality of singular visions. To a degree, each interview models a subjective case study of individual experience during a certain time period and as guided by my questions regarding certain labour, scenes, and communities. In utopian terms, all these singular visions can work together to build a more nuanced, and sometimes even productively contradictory, understanding of the time in question. Realistically, however, memory erodes and the different viewpoints may hold kernels of past lived experience as warped by ongoing experience and the passing of time. Many of the Véhicule poets, for example, suggested during their interviews that they had talked to Ken Norris prior to talking to me. The assumption was that they were trying to sharpen their own memories by receiving information from Norris as the self-styled Véhicule historian and scholar. These communications worked, however, to negotiate singular visions through Norris' memory. Even first-hand accounts are thus subject to influence and transformation, and cannot be approached as fixed and transcendent. As such, these interviews further function to share authority not only with myself as scholar, but also among the research participants themselves. Especially in the case of Véhicule, and the larger number of participants (in comparison to the Words and Music Show, for example), the interviews position themselves as a community microcosm, one which formulates itself through an aggregate vision with lead narratives and, occasionally, counternarratives.

As I write in the dissertation Introduction, I am aware of my own limits as interviewer. Although I always approached the participants with intended sensitivity, the notion of a perfect or successful interview—both in terms of the interpersonal dynamics and the gleaning of information—is an aspirational construct that will necessarily defer its own goals. However that may be, I am grateful for the time and generosity of the people with whom I had the opportunity to talk. Without them, this research would not have been possible.

Appendix 1—Oral History Interview: Endre Farkas and Klara du Plessis, 22 July 2021

KdP: I've listened to the archival recordings that are available at Concordia and I am very aware that they aren't comprehensive. There were quite a lot of the marathon readings recorded, but then not so many of the ones with two people on one bill. I noticed that there are also some other readings recorded at McGill, but I haven't been able to access them due to COVID-19. Being aware of the gaps, I'm trying to gather a better understanding of the kinds of events that were hosted at Véhicule. I was wondering, in your recollection, what were the different kinds of events that made up the reading series?

EF: Well, to put it in context, most of the readings up to the point that Véhicule got started were done in universities. The universities hosted writers and it was a university environment, which is a whole other area. Véhicule Art gallery along with A-Space in Toronto and Western Front in Vancouver were new ideas that came along. These spaces were created by young visual artists who were coming out of various universities and were finding galleries not welcoming to their work yet. They were young, they were doing some things differently, so they decided—and it was part of the late-'60s communal approach—that "ok, they won't have us, let's make our own space." This also fits in with Louis Dudek's, "you must own the means of production," which is a Marxist ideology. Claudia Lapp started the readings at Véhicule. Her partner was Francois Déry, one of the visual artists part of creating Véhicule Art space. I know from talking with her that she was asked whether she would host the reading series and that was in '73. And she did it for a year. And then she asked me if I would take over. And I said yes, on the condition that I could find someone else, that I didn't feel qualified or up to or willing to do it all on my own. So I convinced Artie Gold, another Véhicule poet, to join me. He was much more versed in the poetry scene than I was. The two of us took it on and just decided that we would have anybody and everybody who had a poem on, as opposed to the highly vetted and competitive academic environment. We were interested in a local community to start with, the younger writers who we didn't know. Véhicule Art, the visual artists, said, "ok, you want to do it, here's the space, you can have it Sunday afternoons at 2 o'clock." So it became Véhicule Sunday afternoons. From what I remember, we had a reading almost every week. We put the word out and people started asking us to read and we started asking people to do it. Then the Véhicule Art people wanted to incorporate us into their collective. At this point, we had just been using the space. We wanted to be part of that because it was interesting to present readings in what used to be an old night club above a clothing store that closed on Sundays so we could make any kind of noise we wanted. The disadvantage of that was that in the winter there was no heating, so we had readings with people with their parkas on [chuckles]. Anyway, so that was the beginning of the readings.

KdP: I'm interested to hear that it was so frequent and that it was an afternoon reading. How long were those readings generally?

EF: Usually we tried to have two readers, each about a half hour. At that time we didn't believe in the 3-5 minute version of reality. We usually had a half hour per person, dependent on what that person wanted to do. But we also had a 4 or 5 hour reading by one person—Opal L. Nations who was a writer, painter, visual artist, he was into pushing the limits, like even your attention limits. So we had readings where he went on and on till finally I was the only one left. That was the whole idea. We also had one person, Alan Bealey, who's a visual artist, but also a writer, and he had a

magazine called *DaVinci*, and he asked us for a reading and we said, "sure." He came and put a sign up at the door saying, "Reading Cancelled," and that was his reading. In a way, this was not unusual. Once or twice we had a marathon. We had about 40 people. I don't know how many readers, but there we limited to 3-5 minutes, 3 minutes. We had an egg timer, and when the egg timer went off, whether you were in the middle of a poem or not, you had to stop. As part of that, Stephen Morrissey wrote a one-line poem called "Regard as sacred the disorder of my mind" which he had the whole gallery, which was about 80, 90 people, reading or saying those lines in whatever order or speed. There was a marathon reading and 5 of us Véhicule poets read different poems at the same time. One of them read a telephone book, I think. So we had events, early happenings. The time range was usually a half hour generally, but we were not adverse to experimenting. I was into the idea of the space influencing the organizing that Artie and I did, to say, "ok let it go, let's see what happens."

KdP: When you were hosting two people for half an hour each, was that usually by invitation? Were the marathon events open mic?

EF: Right. We asked people who we knew. Occasionally, as I said, we had people asking us if they could read. I don't think we turned anybody down. Even if they had just written one poem. Actually, I remember one guy from the States who was hitchhiking through. He came in and had some poems and asked if he could read them. We said, "sure," and he whipped out a manuscript and read from it and some of it was really, really good and others, I don't remember. Then he went out and hitchhiked out of town. That was the attitude. It was an open space.

KdP: Yeah the word "openness" comes up a lot in all kinds of different documents and writings and memories about Véhicule.

So during the year that you and Artie Gold were organizing the literary events, did you have any sense of what you were trying to achieve or was it very organic in the way that you were approaching the organization?

EF: No, two things. Like the painters or visual artists at the gallery, we felt that we weren't going to be invited to read at universities at this point in our careers and nor were we necessarily wanting to. I don't know whether that stance was out of necessity or out of choice. We attended readings ourselves at the university and honestly most of the time we came away bored because in a way the university readings that I remember (except for the Allen Ginsberg one where the opening act was the Hari Krishna people chanting) were mainly academic kinds of poets and second rate US poets coming out of connections with the English Department or whatever. When we came along the scene was pretty dead outside of the academic world. Just before us, Leonard Cohen and Irving Layton were the scene and then they left and there was a dead time as far as a transition to what's next. And we, the Véhicule poets—later it factionalized with other people opening up—our attitude was more liberal. We're not going to make judgements. You came, it was free, and you made up your mind about them [the readers] and we didn't say, "this is the elite." So more organic.

[Listen to audio clip]

EF: That voice is Tom Konyves. He was the host at that time. First of all, he was the one who recorded them, video. At that time, we had developed and we had people coming in from across

the country, some who came from the States who were more performative. Some of the performative things were like the Four Horsemen. Others were accidental where we had Michael Ondaatje at Véhicule and there was an installation that took up the floor with sheep legs. Just all over the floor, the legs of sheep. Some visual artist had put that in as an installation. So there was Michael Ondaatje reading among the sheep legs. I think Tom recorded that, I'm not sure. But he lost some video in a fire. You might get in touch with him. He was really pushing the limits there with the readings he wanted. So there were performative elements that were later more conscious.

KdP: I would definitely enjoy talking to him about that.

EF: It wasn't at Véhicule Art gallery, but at the parallel gallery that started up after that. It was called Powerhouse. He got us, the 7 poets who were collaborating [inaudible] It was a seven voice piece. It included playing some bongos and somebody dancing. He was the one who wanted to push through.

KdP: Was that kind of performance improvisational or were you rehearsing it beforehand?

EF: It was both in the sense of the Surrealist exquisite corpse. Somebody writes a line and it was a variation on that where Tom was the one who started it, I think, and he sent that to someone else, one of the other Véhicule poets, who inserted their piece. They took out other pieces, rearranged Tom's pieces, and so on. Artie and Claudia weren't in it. So that would have been five poets. Tom was a poet, but he was also playing bongos and there was a person who was a flautist, and Vivian [?] who danced or moved around, I wouldn't call it dance. We didn't rehearse the reading. We just showed up and we had the sheets, the final go-arounds, and then there it went.

KdP: I'm really interested in the space that the organizers created with Powerhouse or Véhicule as artists' run centers, the agency that those organizers had in shaping the space. You're saying there was a lot of freedom, but there's also the agency of the performers in that space. It's interesting if even the performances themselves were improvisational.

EF: Most of the readings were text. People brought their poems. At that time, I really liked working with dancers, contact improvisation, which is a dance form that evolved in the '70s. I knew some of the people who were doing it and I myself was doing it, not performatively, but taking workshops. So I worked with dancers and then I was commissioned by this dance company to write a piece for them and that got performed at Powerhouse. It was text and movement.

We were shaped by the space, but we were also shaped by an art aesthetic, by who was in that space. The visual artists were doing things that were off the wall in all sorts of ways. On the simplest level, canvases that weren't stretched onto frames and were just pinned to the walls or they were on the floor. People were coming in and they were spending a week in the space as performers. One particular person was living there. So you could come in and watch them have breakfast or go to the bathroom or whatever. The original Véhicule space, as I said, was a night club, so there was the main floor and then there was a balcony and sometimes somebody went up there and read from there or underneath it. But most of the time, people generally stood up and read their poems. The poems themselves tended to be the experiment as opposed to the space.

KdP: So usually the poets read on the same floor as the audience was sitting? Was there some kind of podium?

EF: There was one step up because it used to be a night club, I think the band played there. There were folding chairs. There was a folding table. We had an urn with coffee. Styrofoam. You could give a quarter or not give a quarter for the coffee. Whatever chapbooks were available or whatever was on the table. And some poor friend of the poet or poets or organizers sat at it. We did an interview with rob mclennan—

KdP: You and Ken Norris?

EF: Yes. One of the things that rob asked about *Mouse Eggs* was about careers and marketing and so forth, and for us those were foreign language words—marketing, professionalism, career, these were not how we looked at ourselves or how we looked at the readings. We looked at the readings as community events, making an English language community. We did later on try a few mixed, French and English, but at that time there was a lot of tension between the French and English, in the '70s and I remember going to ask a francophone poet if they would want to cohost with us a bilingual series and they said, "no, we're independent, if you give us the whole space, we'll take over." And we said, "we need our space." Anyway, but there were a few crossovers. We didn't think in those terms or on that professional level. I think that happened in Toronto later.

KdP: Véhicule did have some good grants and that kind of financial support to make it possible.

EF: In those days, there weren't as many readings, there weren't as many presses, and there weren't uptight asses in Ottawa about grant giving. The first year [of Véhicule] was free, everybody did it for free, including the readers. Then actually, I think we got a Council officer calling me, saying, "we have money, you want some?" "Sure!" So we started getting— And the application was filling out a one page form saying we're going to have readings and we would like some money. The locals weren't paid. It was the people coming in. That was at the beginning. We agreed to that, but later we tried to get everybody paid. Actually I think the amount that they paid has not changed since then, like $125 per person in a double reading. We could pay a month's rent with that. There was money available for alterative spaces. And at the time there were only those three I mentioned and then Powerhouse came along and then Articule came on. There was a proliferation. But it was definitely not business oriented. In some ways, I think the granting ruined it because then you got people who were actually—what do you call them?—art organizers, who got salaries. So it wasn't the artists themselves. In one way it was good that there was money for it, but then it became organized to the point that now, from what I know, you have to ask readers a year or two in advance. Whereas then it was like a month, ok, call up Ottawa, "we want to have so-and-so, they're coming through." "Sure, ok." That made for much healthier events where people were constantly coming through and in some ways you knew and in some ways you didn't know who would be reading next. We did later on plan for the year, like we put up one big poster, usually mimeographed, whoever was reading. The second or third year we started making posters for the series and we did 6 months. I was talking to Ken last night. He said we had a reading every week for the first year or so, that's almost 52 readings. Basically the work was, "you want to come and read?" "Ok, 2 o'clock, be there." That was it. My Sunday afternoons were just sort of booked.

KdP: So after you and Artie Gold were organizing for a year, can you remember who took over?

EF: Another Montreal poet called Ian Burgess. He ran it for a year. He wasn't a Véhicule poet, he was in fact quite the opposite, but we were friendly. Then Stephen Morrissey and John McAuley took over. And then Tom took over and Tom ran it for the longest time, I think 4 years, 5 years. Stephen and John were the ones who brought in some of the American poets, like Anne Waldman and a couple of others. Then Tom took over and he ended up running it for 3, 4 years.

KdP: Yeah there were a number of American poets who came in. There was Constance De Jong.

EF: Robert Kelly.

KdP: Kenneth Koch.

EF: By that time we were respectable enough that the university people even offered to share some of the people so that the readers would have two readings and two different audiences. The academics— Actually a good series at Concordia was when George Bowering was writer-in-residence. That was when Canadian writers of his generation—David McFadden, bill bissett, Daphne Marlatt—these people started coming in.

KdP: That's the same series that Allen Ginsberg read at.

EF: My remembrance of dates are terrible. We did have the Véhicule second marathon at Concordia because we couldn't get Véhicule for some reason. The Hall Building, but one of the smaller venues. That's when it was winding down, I think. But again, Tom and Ken would be the people who are good with dates.

KdP: I've also reached out to Carole TenBrink who read with Janet Kask in 1978.

EF: Then it's probably Tom who organized that. As we went along, we tried to be open to everybody's reading, but by that time there was a kind of factionalization. We were called the Véhicule poets not only as a name, but as a curse. Those f-ing Véhicule poets again. Peter Van Toorn nicknamed us the "messies" because of our approach, what he thought was more a casual approach to the work. And they were the "neats." They angsted over a comma for years. This is a false description because in our own way, we were as dedicated to writing a great poem as they were, but our approach was totally different. Something that I particularly felt was that readings were performances whereas they thought of it as a lecture. Often we would get—David Solway is a prime example of it, he would spend half an hour talking about a poem and then maybe read it—whereas we read the poems or performed it or danced it or videoed it or whatever. A reading is a performance because it is part of that oral tradition that poetry comes from. So therefore, for me, there were some people who had very good poems and bored the shit of out me. It was a very boring presentation—mmmm, mmmm, mmmm. Ok, give me the book, I'll enjoy it there. If you want to do a reading, you have an audience and you have to recognize them. We might have been forerunners of spoken word kind of stuff, the Véhicule poets, although not all the readers.

KdP: How would you say, being one of the organizers at Véhicule, impacted your own poetics?

EF: One way is that, having to sit through many readings made me realize, do I want to bore the people the way that some of these people do? And so it made me aware—that's when I started connecting the oral tradition of poetry which was originally often accompanied by some kind of instrument, singing or movement. I'm talking about pre-literate societies where it was performative, it was part of community, part of religious events. That was one. Then some of the people I heard, like bissett, like the Four Horsemen, gave me ideas that oral presentation can stretch into sound. Collaborative, two voices, three voices, which I've done. Then working with artists from different disciplines, like dancers, actors, musicians, and I don't mean someone playing guitar while you read a poem. I worked with a composer who placed electrodes on my head and on my wrists. He wanted to drill into my head, but I stopped it there. He wired me up to a computer which was at that point a real primitive thing. He programmed it so that alternately sound would come in from my muscle or breathing. These kind of things wouldn't have happened in a straight venue. But these people doing things—Attending things and meeting people and saying, "hey I'd like to work with you, let's see what we could do." I was more like that. Tom was more into video. He came to the same realization that readings can be boring and static, terrible things to inflict on people. So he started experimenting with video. Ken wasn't into that. He was more a straight reader, but he was a willing participant in some of Tom's videos. Dressing up in costumes and shouting from the balcony and whatever. I think Tom still has some of these videos. Quite interesting. In some ways, it was political. Stephen Morrissey worked with Pat Walsh who's a visual artist and they would bring in concrete boulders as haiku. So I think that the space and the kind of people who were drawn to that space influenced me to the point where I still, when I read, I think of it as a performance and that brings in other elements to the events. The art gallery was essential for that kind of thing to happen. It wouldn't have happened if it had been a straight venue. At that point, cafés weren't happening as reading venues really. Once in a while, but not really.

KdP: Considering the elements of event organization, the word *curation*—which is more a projection of the present back onto the past—but thinking of curation as a way of shaping both organizational and the creative materials that are being presented, was there anything else that you wanted to talk about?

EF: Well I have a bugaboo about curating. I think it's pretentious. I think it was stolen or borrowed from the visual arts world. Unless you're hanging poems on the wall or poets on the wall, you're not curating. I don't know why it came in, why organizers of readings took that on, but really a poetry reading or a reading series is what was happening, performances, maybe once performances happen, some people thought about curating, I don't know, but I find that most of what is happening now is not performative or spoken word, so it's a reading. People read their poems. So it's false advertisement to say curating, in my view.

KdP: What kind of language would you prefer around how those events were shaped? Would you think of the act more as organization or programming or invitation?

EF: We ran a reading series which means that people came and read. It was a series and we ran it. It wasn't a business model. I would say, to put it into context, it was running a reading series and at Véhicule it became hosting poetry events. Now I leave it up to the present to figure out if they want to call it curating.

KdP: That's very helpful. I like that. I really appreciate your time. Thank you.

EF: As I was telling Carolyn Souaid my partner, when you invited me for this and rob asked me about *Mouse Eggs,* I'm no longer the present, I'm not the future, but I'm the past where people are now researching and footnoting us. I don't appreciate being the past, but it's the reality. I think it's important to document these events and I'm glad Jason [Camlot] is doing a good job in moving this spirit. I appreciate people like you who are putting things into context, 40, 50 years behind. In the '60s and '70s things opened up and it seemed like everything was possible for two minutes. The alternative approach. We could draw up to 100 people to a reading. We could draw as little as 5. Poetry was still—I think Layton and Cohen nurtured that environment. So that was a good time, in that sense. Everything came together, the baby boomer generation, economic good times, that allowed a lot of this to happen. And the willingness of people to be more spontaneous and collective.

KdP: Open to that experiment together.

EF: That's my story and I'm almost sticking to it.

Appendix 2—Oral History Interview:
Carole TenBrink and Klara du Plessis, 2 August 2021

CTB: Ok, maybe I'll keep a little scrap of paper here, in case something does come to my mind—I can jot it down.

KdP: I just wanted to start by talking about your recollections of the kinds of literary events that were being hosted at Véhicule at the time that you were both attending and participating in events. I'm just trying to get a sense of what it was like, or how you remember it as being.

CTB: As I think I mentioned, the first time we spoke, I was just finding myself as a writer and a poet, and was very shy. I'm quite the opposite now, but I was very shy, and I was very unsure of myself. I'm pretty sure the first times I read poetry, I was like [mumbling] like that. All that to say, I didn't have a really central role and participation in the Véhicule poets. I more or less responded to anything they would invite me to. So really, all I remember is readings and then they started putting out books. My book was not published with them. They put out at least one anthology, they might have put out more, but I just remember being in one anthology. So I'm not a great person to ask about their activities. Because again, I wasn't that central in what they were doing.

KdP: That's totally fine. When we talked a bit last week, you were suggesting that you participated in some open mic events? Is that correct?

CTB: I honestly don't remember if it was an open mic, or if it was a scheduled evening, like, you know, "this evening, three poets are going to perform dah-dah-dah-dah." It could have been either or both of that kind of event.

KdP: I have a suspicion that it was both. There are a number of recordings that are now housed in the archives at Concordia University. Those are the ones that I've primarily been listening to and a lot of the events that were organized were, what they called, marathon events that sometimes went on for four hours or so. These events had a list of people reading for 5-10 minutes each. When I was talking to Endre Farkas recently, he confirmed that they were organizing weekly poetry readings on Sunday afternoons, and that very often they would have two poets reading during these times. Not many of those readings were recorded unfortunately, but I do have a recording of you and Janet Kask reading.

CTB: Ok. I can't bring up a face at the moment.

KdP: We can listen to a few clips if you're in the mood?

CTB: I would love to!

KdP: I've isolated a few clips and I thought that we could maybe start by just listening to the beginning of the recording, listening to you being introduced, and the first minute or so of you introducing yourself. It happened on 5 March 1978.

CTB: March 5, 1978.

KdP: Can you hear that?

[Listen to audio clip]

CTB: It's helping me remember that that's where my launch was [at The Word bookstore]. I wouldn't have been able to tell you that. So this was 1978?

[Listen to audio clip]

CTB: Is that my voice?!

KdP: You continue talking actually for 20 minutes.

CTB: What?! And I was supposed to be reading poetry!

KdP: Before you start reading poetry.

[Laughter]

CTB: I'm just thinking, this was at The Word in 1978. I got separated and divorced in 1976. So when I say a lot's been going on in my life in the last few years, that's what I'm referring to. I was all over the place, just totally all over the place, being desperate at the end of my marriage, being totally excited and flying because I'm free. I remember having a short affair. I remember reading somewhere. It's a time when I was just all over the place.

KdP: At some point during the event, you also reference entering your 30s and that that was a big shift for you.

CTB: Let's see I born in 1940. So in 1978, I would have 38.

I'm happily surprised that my voice sounds natural, not anxious, easy to talk to the audience.

KdP: You come across as very confident.

CTB: I am very surprised. When did my book come out, in '78?

KdP: Your book also came out in 1978.

CTB: So that was probably a big boost to my confidence and my sense of myself as a poet. But whenever I would have started—I think I mentioned this when we first talked—whenever I would have started, the very first time reading through this group, I remember just being terrified. So I don't know what the year that was, what year I first connected to Endre Farkas in the group. It would have been two or maybe more years earlier. I have to think more about that. It must have '75, '76, '77? I don't know around there.

KdP: When did you start writing more generally? Did you have an ongoing practice? Or did it happen later?

CTB: I wrote since I was a child. I wrote poetry. But I never thought of myself as a poet. In eighth grade—like way back then, grade school went through eighth grade and there wasn't junior high—I remember in eighth grade being elected the class poet. And I thought, "What? What, what's that all about?" Anyway, then I got to Montreal in 1970. I grew up in Michigan. I came to Montreal in 1970 to marry a Vietnamese guy. And we got settled here. And soon I met another couple, ex-American, also married a Vietnamese out of university in Wisconsin, and we met each other in Montreal through the Vietnamese Community, I expect, and I came to find out she's a poet. And she said to me, "Carole, you're a poet, you have to start showing your writing." And I was like, "What? What do you mean?" But she kept encouraging me. That would have been about 1971, '72. My son was born in '73 and I remember I started writing then. A baby takes naps in the beginning, twice a day, and later on once a day. And those became my religious times to write. In that period, for a while there, I was very prolific because I religiously followed naptimes.

KdP: From your introduction to this reading—which we haven't listened to yet— you talk in a very articulate way about how you see poetry and how you see perception of poetry.

CTB: Wow I would love to hear what I thought. I would love to have access to that somehow. That would be amazing to listen to what I said way back about poetry. It might be instructive to me now. I'm retired. Somehow you lose your confidence because of this. The attitude of society and old age just, "Oh, well, you know, I'm just kind of crawling along." Although I do perform. I can't wait until things open up again. I've switched, partly due to what's available, but I've switched a lot to storytelling. There's an event here called *Confabulation* and I can't wait for it to start up again.

KdP: Well, you'll have to invite me when the in-person events start happening.

CTB: I'm very happy to do that.

KdP: This is a bit of a leading question. My research is trying to understand how Véhicule organized events. I'm looking less at the content of the events and more at how they how they've been structured. Part of my argument is suggesting that Véhicule was an extremely open space. They provided a venue, they provided a microphone, they advertise their events, and that kind of thing. But they didn't really dictate the kind of works that were being performed. And then they were very excited about experimentation. And so in the clips that I want to play to you, you actually also hint at this sense of Véhicule being excited by novelty and experimentation.

CTB**:** I just want to second that, that they were very open. They were very inclusive. They were very encouraging. Like I say, I had zero self-confidence as a writer or a poet when I started and they were really very important to me. I don't think I performed there that many times, but just their attitude was really, really a support to me.

KdP: That's really great to hear. I hadn't really thought about it in that way. I have noticed that there were a lot of younger poets who were reading, and that Véhicule had this attitude of being

open to experimentation, but I hadn't really thought about it, in the sense of "Oh, yeah, that's really supportive of people trying new things." So that's actually a really nice angle to add to my thinking.

CTB: I really would emphasize that, yeah.

KdP: I want to play a clip that you're talking about this.

[Listen to audio clip]

KdP: So it seems like Claudia Lapp liked it.

CTB: I'm amazed to hear it. I mean, as I hear it, I remember the lines. I don't even know if I have that poem. I have print copies of a lot of my work, but back then I don't know if or where I might have that poem, but it was fun to hear it.

KdP: Returning to your comment about experimental work being related to Véhicule, can you remember why you thought that?

CTB: I'd have to think about it. But when I hear that piece that I'd written, what comes to my mind is free association. I forget what poets I was reading at the time that advocated free association, but I remember that I loved it. And it meant somehow, the whole circle reminds you of a mushroom and the mushroom reminds you of a fish and the fish reminds you... It was thinking like that. And it was a lot of fun and I think I should try it again.

KdP: Can you remember getting any guidelines from the poets at Véhicule who are organizing the events?

CTB: You mean as in terms of what to perform? Or what to write? Or how to perform? No, it was completely up to us. And I think it was just the warm, accepting free atmosphere that supported, you know, my coming out more into myself as a poet. Now that we're talking about it, I can see, after the fact, that was very important to my development.

KdP: That's so nice to hear. So it really did feel like a community that was gathering at Véhicule.

CTB: I don't think I felt myself to be a central part of a community, just because of how shy and hesitant I was, although I sound very confident in what I'm saying right there, so I must have been starting to get over the shyness. It was the permission to just be myself and perform that was so, so important.

KdP: That makes a lot of sense to me, too. Your reading continues for almost an hour, and you touch on many different kinds of poems. You read from your collection, *Thaw and Fire*, and you also read a lot of new poems.

CTB: Wow I went on for an hour. Oh my god.

KdP: Well, why don't we listen to the title poem of *Thaw and Fire*?

[Listen to audio clip]

CTB: I had no idea I could even go on like that. I don't know if I was overtaking the show or what These would be group events. There would be a bunch of us reading.

KdP: As I understand it, this particular event was only the two of you. So I think it was that you were going to read at least for 30 minutes to an hour. Janet's set goes on for 45 minutes, but I'm not sure that the recording starts at the beginning. It seems to start in the middle of nowhere, so there's a good chance that some of it was cut off, which implies, of course, that it could have been longer too.

So this is maybe a question that you can't answer, but reading for an hour does take a lot of planning. So do you have any memory of trying to put together such a long set, or how you would have considered building it with your different works?

CTB: I have no recollection of how I put it together, but being 1978 I think my book was not out very long. And the book coming out was a huge boost to my confidence or my sense of myself as a poet and a writer. So I probably was in an enthusiastic frame of mind. So all of that would have helped me put together such a, quote unquote, long performance. I mean, usually poets have 10 minute slots, or something like that, to share whatever work they choose.

KdP: I personally really like the long set. I find that it's really nice to be able to listen to a poet really get into their work, you know, rather than shifting quickly between a lot of different poets.

CTB: Yeah. I go to an event now. Well, not during COVID-19. But there's a performance event these days called the Lawn Chair Soirée. Typically, the pattern is that Jan Jorgensen sets up a guest reader who has, I don't know, 20 minutes or something in that range, to share their work, and then an open mic where the rest of us can read. I think she says three or four minutes, something like that. So that's the place I've performed in the last while.

KdP: Why don't we listen to just the opening few minutes of the second half of this reading, which is Janet's part. The two of you actually read together and you read poems written by children who I think you might have been teaching, or at least Janet was teaching. So I'll just play here. The second recording kind of starts out of nowhere, so there's not much of an introduction or anything.

[Listen to audio clip]

KdP: I'll just stop it there. I guess I was curious whether hearing Janet's voice would jog some kind of memory of the event.

CTB: I'm sorry, not really. It makes the voice sound familiar, but I'm not bringing up a face. I have a feeling for that moment, how fun it was reading the kids' poetry. How imaginative and free I remember feeling the kids were.

KdP: It's amazing work actually.

CTB: Yeah, it really is and I feel the same thing now and that she was able to bring that out of the kids. Kids are naturally creative. I hope people are doing that kind of thing now in schools.

KdP: I haven't been able to find Janet. I've traced one or two poems that were published by her in the ‘70s in literary journals. And that's about it. I was just noticing that she had been performing at literary events at Véhicule, both in the one that you're reading in together and other group events. With you, for example, I googled you and found your website and there was a contact, but with her there's no presence online.

CTB: I wish I could bring up face or any memory I have with her.

You probably heard this from Endre, but there was some kind of a reunion within the last three years or some years ago. It was a wonderful event. I was so glad that Endre did that. It was very heartfelt. I think Claudia Lapp came and she lives out west now.

But no, I have no other recollection of Janet Kask. I guess what I was going to say is she must have dropped out of this world quite a long time ago and went in another direction.

KdP: She was and is a good poet.

Do you remember that this event was recorded? I'm assuming not?

CTB: No! I can't even say I remember the event, which is awful. And it happened in 1978, when my book came out. Oh, that's terrible.

Well, I might think of things as I reflect on this. The main thing is just overall that it's reminding me how important that was, Véhicule Art. Artie Gold keeps coming into my mind. I don't know if Endre Farkas talked about him. I don't remember his story, except that he was such a poet, that was his life. Something tragic happened to him. I don't remember how he died. He committed suicide? He had a bad illness? He had a book I loved. It was something about sunflowers? Oh, gosh. I would love to talk to Endre now and ask some questions. Anyway, it's mainly just bringing back that time period and how committed I felt to poetry and alive. So I thank you very, very much for now.

KdP: Thank you. It's been really so nice to talk with you.

CTB: This might turn out to be very important to me, this connection. In the last year, since just before and at the beginning of COVID, I've been having this sense come to me and at first I was hearing it as a voice saying to me, “Carole, Carole, it's time to go to the bigger land.” In my consciousness, the *bigger land* was meaning to go to a larger sense of consciousness than our everyday consciousness. Now that I'm listening to this today, I remember that's where I was in 1978. I didn't use that term, *larger consciousness*, but I remember that's where I was. Poetry can take you to a larger consciousness. So anyway, it's all very exciting. I appreciate it so much.

Appendix 3—Oral History Interview: Ken Norris and Klara du Plessis, 16 August 2021

KN: I come into Véhicule as it's already happening because I arrive back in Montreal in January of 1975. Endre Farkas and Artie Gold were running the reading series that year. What I remember is that there was a reading every week, something like 34 readings that year.

The first thing I should say about Véhicule is that the reading series jumped years. The 1974-1975 year that I walked into started in September and ran to May. That year I walked into the middle of it. I can't tell you anything that happened from September to December.

As you probably know, the Véhicule press was in the back room of the gallery and that was my first contact point with Véhicule Art because they were publishing my first book. I went to go talk to them and in the course of talking to them, Simon Dardick said to me, "There's a reading series going on here on Sunday afternoons at 2 o'clock. You should come check out the other Montreal poets since you're now going to be one." So I thought, "That made sense." I started showing up, probably late in January and I probably went to 3 or 4 readings. I remember being at a reading by Robert Flanagan, a Toronto poet who published with House of Anansi. That's the one I remember from that year.

By now you know about the parallel galleries, right? Montreal had Véhicule, Toronto had A-Space, Vancouver had Western Front. These were the alternative art spaces and so they also became the alternative reading spaces. I remember once getting into a horrible argument with Henry Beissel at a League of Canadian Poets meeting because he was talking up what was going on at Concordia and I was talking up what was going on at Véhicule and we got into an argument because there's the way you do readings at a university space and the way you do readings at a parallel gallery space.

KdP: Can you talk a little bit about what that difference is?

KN: You're working on a PhD and I wrote mine and completed it in 1980 and then spent 33 years being a university prof and doing university-based readings at the University of Maine which was a pretty interesting place to be because they had the National Poetry Foundation there. But anyway, in the mid-'70s there was more of a formality to university readings and working at an alternative space we very much thought of ourselves as being alternative. We were going to do it a different way. So it's going to be looser, less formal, no recitation of somebody's CV necessarily at the beginning of a reading, no formal question and answer period necessarily, unless the poet wanted one, and a lot more hanging out. It's like when the reading was over, that's when everything started in a way.

The other thing with Véhicule is that it was very much, who's local and who's being brought in. A big part of that reading series that Artie Gold and Endre Farkas were running is that it was mostly local readers and I would even argue that the anthology that eventually came out, *Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies*, kind of started with the Véhicule reading series because everyone was being given an airing. It was fairly democratic. My understanding is that you had to pass an audition, which was submitting work, but then readings would be awarded. A big bone of contention between Endre and Tom Konyves for a number of years was that they didn't give him a reading that year.

KdP: Oh funny! So it was sought after, people really wanted to read at Véhicule.

KN: Sure. Again, Montreal as a literary scene was dead in the early ‘70s. It had been really lively in the early ‘60s with Leonard Cohen and his crew and it just kind of died the death in the late ‘60s, locally. Concordia was bringing in all the out of town poets from everywhere, they were bringing in the Americans, the West Coast people. But locally, nothing was going on. And that’s what Véhicule was important for because suddenly you had 34 readings and 30 of them were local.

KdP: It was about community.

KN: Yeah, the local poets now have a venue. Véhicule press is starting to cook in the back room there. You got the space, you got the readings, you got the poets, you got the press. Community starts to happen.

KdP: Endre made me think that you never turned anyone away, in terms of reading. But you’re saying that he denied Tom a reading?

KN: Yes he did! I didn’t audition that year because I was late, but my understanding is that there was some kind of preliminary screening that took place and maybe not that many people were screened out, but some were.

KdP: Ok. Do you have any sense of what that screening was?

KN: I think they read manuscripts. You can talk to Tom about this because he probably still remembers. In his case, they read his first book, which they weren’t a fan of, and quite frankly, I wasn’t a big fan of it either, but his work changed quite a bit between ’74 and ’77. He went from being a Véhicule outcast to being a Véhicule poet to being the guy who ran the Véhicule reading series from 1978 to 1983!

KdP: He ran the series for the longest period of time?

KN: That’s right.

KdP: That’s the first I’ve heard of the screening or the reading of manuscripts actually. The sense I’ve been getting otherwise is more one of this inclusive space that gave a lot of people chances to experiment with new work.

KN: Well, offering readings to 30 poets, that’s pretty inclusive!

KdP: I totally agree. I’m just pushing a point.

KN: It is interesting to find out that there was an audition and somebody didn’t pass the audition and one of the people who didn’t pass the audition was one of the Véhicule poets and wound up being the guy who ran the reading series for the longest amount of time!

KdP: That’s fascinating! I feel like you just broke my dissertation here! How am I going to reconcile this piece of news with what I have so far?

[Laughter]

KN: It's nice to have contradictions.

KdP: For sure. Just to go back to the readings. They were happening almost every week, at least for that one year. What kinds of readings were those, in your memory? One-person, two-persons, open mic events?

KN: Hold onto that for a second. Someone's probably given this to you already, but '74-'75, the reading series was run by Artie Gold and Endre. '75-'76, it was run by G. C. Ian Burgess. '76-'77, it was run by Stephen Morrissey, John McAuley, and Robert Galvin. So then '77 is when Tom took it over. He would have run it from September '77 to Spring 1983. That's my recollection of who ran the reading series.

KdP: That's amazing. That's the most precise chronology that I've gotten so far.

KN: Somebody's going to contradict it, but I've given you that and my memory's pretty good and I'm sort of the Véhicule historian and the scholar who went over some of this stuff.

Ok so, there were two-person readings. I remember going to two-person readings. There were, what these days we would call, open mics, open readings. There were open readings, often at the end of the Fall reading series, around Christmas time there'd be an open reading, and then in May there'd be an open reading. We also started doing this thing called the Spring Poetry Marathon. One of those was held at Véhicule and that had a lot of readers, that was like 50 people. Everybody gets 6 minutes or something like that.

There was an original group of visual artists who ran the gallery and then there was an insurrection inside the visual artists' stream—it's probably there somewhere in somebody's thesis on Véhicule or something—but that's when we got pulled in. We got pulled in by the second generation of artists who were like, "Why don't you ally yourself with us? We'll give you money for poetry readings. You can bring in Americans." And we said, "Ok!" So that was one of the breaking points of Véhicule. Véhicule press allied itself with the original group of artists—Simon and Guy Lavoie basically—and the poets allied themselves with the second generation of artists who ended up inheriting the gallery. I was the treasurer of Véhicule Art for a couple of years. I was down there a couple of times a week signing cheques. The second group of artists—Trevor Goring and Chris Richmond and Françoise Sullivan—they started giving us money to bring in Americans.

KdP: In particular?

KN: We had access to the Canada Council for the Arts if we wanted Canadians. If we wanted poets from Toronto or Vancouver you went to the Canada Council. But if you wanted to bring Kenneth Koch in from New York... The year that Stephen and John and Bob were running the series was when we got the first batch of money. So I think Anne Waldman came in, and Kenneth Koch came in, Robert Kelly, and Terry Stokes, another American poet, was brought in, and I think we also had Robin Blaser and Daphne Marlatt come in from the West Coast.

KdP: That's a nice lineup of readers.

KN: Oh yeah! It started off really being community-based and then we started bringing in poets we were interested in hearing. It was really, "Who do the Véhicule poets want to hear? Ok, let's bring them in!" And we now had the money to do it.

KdP: So you already told me about this potential audition that happened—and I know you didn't organize the events yourself—but do you know of guidelines that the various organizers would give readers? What was the kind of conversation or communication that would happen between someone who wanted to read there and actually ended up performing?

KN: I don't think poets coming in from anywhere were ever told anything about what to do. If it was a two-person reading, people were probably given a time limit and that was probably about it. I think I did my first reading at Véhicule in '76 and I think I was given a ballpark time limit, but it was really loose. It might have been, "Read for 45 minutes, but if you read an hour and 15 minutes, nobody cares."

KdP: So you said you arrived slightly later than some of the other poets who were already running the series, how did you become involved?

KN: I was living in New York. I was collaborating on my first book with Jill Smith who is an illustrator. She brought the manuscript in to Véhicule press. They decided they were going to do it. The book came out in March. By then I was talking to some of the Montreal poets. I think Artie said to me, "Don't get your hopes up about getting reviewed in the *Montreal Star* because the book pages were run by John Richmond and he never reviews anything local. He won't touch it with a barge pole." He reviewed my book and he gave it a really good review. My first book was called *Vegetables*. It had a packet of vegetable seeds pasted to the front cover. It was somewhere between tactile and commercial. Richmond reviewed it and suddenly the book was everywhere. Suddenly I was getting all these phone calls from the CBC. Peter Gzowski wanted me on, Barbara Frum wanted me on. I went from being nobody to being the most visible poet in Montreal in a week. I was already hanging out at the gallery. My book was out and my book was everywhere. I don't know, I probably seemed like an interesting person to talk to at that point. The conversations I had started with Endre and Artie and Claudia Lapp and Stephen Morrissey and Tom Konyves, they continued.

I was the print guy. I was one of the editors at Véhicule press. I was running a magazine called *Cross Country.* With Endre, I started doing this mimeograph magazine, *Mouse Eggs.* I was the print guy, that's why I never ran the reading series. But we were all working on things together. People were always asking me, "Hey Ken, who would you like?" Terry Stokes came to read because I was publishing him with *Cross Country* press. "Hey Ken, who should we bring in?" "Robert Kelly would be nice." "Ok!" So the Véhicules were constantly in dialogue with one another and that's how things got generated. I strayed from your original question. What was your original question?

KdP: I've forgotten my original question! Oh, I guess I was asking how you became a Véhicule poet.

KN: I was hanging out when *Vegetables* came out. In August, Endre was putting together an editorial board for Véhicule press. He asked me if I wanted to be an editor. I said, "Sure." We

weren't handing out membership cards yet. Véhicule poets were really kind of defined by other people in a way. People started to refer to us as "Those fucking Véhicule poets, those people hanging around the gallery." We knew it. "Oh, they're out there talking about us and talking about us all together. Maybe we are all together." We didn't officially become the Véhicule poets till 1979 when we did an anthology together. Before we did the anthology, we had a meeting at Artie's house where everybody showed up, and we talked about whether or not we were a group. We decided we were.

KdP: And was that based on shared aesthetics or shared community values? What brought you together in that way?

KN: Good question. Loosely defined, shared aesthetics. We were the avant-garde people in Montreal. There were a lot of people who were disciples of Leonard or copying him. There's also a pretty strong academic slash conservative tradition in the Montreal poetry scene that emerged post-Layton and Dudek. We weren't those guys. We weren't Michael Harris or David Soloway, or Peter Van Toorn. We weren't those guys. We were the other people. We were the other people working out of the alternative space. In a lot of ways we were being shaped by Véhicule Art as we were coming in and seeing all this experimental art, all the time, and holding readings in the middle of this stuff. More than once you're going to hear about the goat feet. Somebody did this installation, which was goat feet nailed to the floor. You'd come in and try to figure out where you're putting the podium for the reading and the chairs in the middle of all of this. I think we were being radicalized and expanded by the gallery.

KdP: Right. I have heard about the goat feel, which sounds amazing. I think I heard that Michael Ondaatje read among them at one point.

KN: Entirely possible.

KdP: Would you say that your personal poetics were also shaped by Véhicule?

KN: Sure. I think I started out with fairly conservative poetic tastes and that really got transformed by what I was reading, and it got transformed by the people I was associating with, and it got transformed by hearing bill bissett shake his rattle and bpNichol do his thing and the Four Horsemen come in and do their thing. And going, "Yeah! Yes, yes, to all this." It's like, "Yes, this is what I want to be a part of." I wound up with the academic job. Artie was always worried about me associating too much with Louis Dudek because he thought I was going to turn into an academic in the bad sense of the word. Louis was always worried about me hanging around with Artie because he figured I was going to become too much of a bohemian. I ended up becoming a bohemian academic. It's possible, it's doable, it can be done. Reading Michael Ondaatje, reading *Coming Through Slaughter* and *Rat Jelly*, completely transformed what I wanted to do as a writer. Becoming friends with bpNichol, having him be my editor at Coach House completely transformed me as a writer. Associating with Endre and Artie and Tom, all that stuff changed me, absolutely. We were all in our 20s. I was the youngest. I was 24 when I arrived in Montreal and soaking up stuff like a sponge.

KdP: Yeah, it's such a formative time.

So far, I've really only spoken to Endre and then I actually also spoke to Carole TenBrink. I don't know if you remember her.

KN: I remember her well.

KdP: She did a reading with Janet Kask who I haven't been able to find, but that's one of the few readings recorded and available at Concordia Special Collections that are not the marathon events.
KN: Yeah, Janet was good friends with Richard Sommer. Sommer was a teacher to a number of us, not necessarily me, but we used to jog together. We did a sound poetry album called *Sounds Like* and Janet's on that reading with Richard. Endre's got copies of that. Vinyl is in again. Janet was not one of us proper, but part of the same gang.

KdP: From the little bit of digging that I'm doing, it seems like both Kask and TenBrink were being published in *Mouse Eggs*, for example, and both of them were reading at the open events, and then they did this featured reading together. It was a two-person reading in 1978. When I talked to Carole, she really underscored how deeply foundational it was to be part of that series, to be part of Véhicule. So it's been really beautiful getting these kind of testaments. From what you're saying, from what Endre is saying, everyone who was involved with Véhicule is still deeply touched by what happened there.

KN: I think Carole's in *Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies*. That's got 22 poets in it. I don't think Janet's in that anthology.

KdP: Do you know what happened to Janet?

KN: She was still living in Montreal in the mid-'80s. That's probably when I lost track of her. She and Claudia Lapp were good friends. Claudia probably knows where Janet is or what the story is.
The original Véhicule reading series was run by Claudia and Michael Harris. Claudia was there because one of her boyfriends was one of the original artists.

KdP: The last question I really have for you is maybe the most contentious one because I want to throw the word *curation* onto the table. I just want to hear what your reaction is to the word and I realize that it's a glib, hip, contemporary term that people have been using for organizing events, but that doesn't necessarily ring true for the 1970s. It is part of the language that I will be using to talk about the series.

KN: Let's bring in the Four Horsemen. Let's bring in Michael Ondaatje. Let's bring in bill bissett. Let's bring Robert Kelly and let's bring Terry Stokes in. Let's bring Robin Blaser in. Let's bring Daphne Marlatt in. Let's bring Anne Waldman in. Since we love the New York School of Poets, let's bring one of them in. Let's bring Kenneth Koch in because we can't afford Ashbery, but we can get this guy. I mean, that to me is curation.

KdP: It is, it is. Yeah. That's so fascinating. Endre's response to this question was, "No, there was no curation. I hate the word. We just ran a series." And your response is more, "We were excited about these particular poets and we brought them in, so therefore, that is a form of curation." I agree with that.

KN: This is our reading series. This is what we stand for. You can never get seven Véhicule poets to agree about anything. With me and Endre you can get us to agree about 50% and then we disagree about 50%. We're going to disagree here. You got 50%, that's not bad. It isn't just a great democracy. Democracy is important. I'm referring you again to *Montreal English Poetry in the Seventies* because Endre and I edited it. It has 22 poets who all have two poems each, three poems each. There's up and down and going on all over the place. There are featured poets amongst the 22 poets and there are poets who only get two poems and that caused bad blood for 30 years. That's curation too. Artie Gold is a star. Peter van Toorn is a star and he's getting 13 pages. Someone else is only getting 2 pages. That's not democracy. That's curation.

KdP: For sure. It's editorial choice.

KN: Yeah. So I'm here to affirm curation taking place in the 1970s in terms of poets who were being selected for the reading series, and in terms of how many pages people got in anthologies. There's raising and lowering the spotlights and there's no spotlights going on. That being said, at Véhicule, there is a greater tendency towards a greater democratic spirit. But I don't know if we do democracy in poetry ever. So there was curation going on in the 1970s and a lot of it was curating it for us. Never mind even thinking about an audience. Let's bring in Michael Ondaatje to read because Ken loves Michael Ondaatje. Now let's bring in Robert Kelly because we know he has something to tell us. Let's bring in Robin Blaser because we know he has something to tell us.

I remember one time we gave Louis Dudek a reading. He came and did the one thing that he probably shouldn't have done, which was, he talked down to us. He came in like the master poet or like the professor and he lectured us on what we should be taking away from his poetry. We were like, "No, no, no, just read the stuff. We'll figure out what we're going to make of it."

KdP: Which again is more the academic approach, right? You have a lecture about the work embedded in the reading.

KN: That's a real difference from the way that the readings were going down at Véhicule. He brought in an academic reading to Véhicule. Everybody went, "No, no, no, this isn't right. We don't like this." We just liked experiencing the work for ourselves and seeing what we make of it. We didn't like being told what we were supposed to make of it.

KdP: A lot of what you're telling me is going to be extremely useful for writing this chapter. There was curation happening, but there was an openness to the series. There was an attempt at a democratic spirit, but at the same time, there was also a certain aesthetic that you were curious about, that people organizing events were curious about and which, to a degree, ended up informing who was invited, even though a big variety of people were reading.

KN: What drives curation? Why were we doing this to begin with? In a lot of ways we were interested in feeding ourselves. We were young writers. If we could bring in the poet's we admired, then let's do it. That produces huge impact craters.

KdP: Yeah. Huge excitement. Even talking to you, and talking to Carole, and so on, brings huge impact to my ability to write this chapter. It's way more fun to return to my writing after I talked to one of you because there's that kind of energy.

KN: When I did my dissertation, which was called *The Role of Little Magazine in the Development of Modernism and Post-Modernism in Canadian Poetry*, when I had to write my chapters about concrete and sound poetry, I jumped on a train and went down to Toronto and I hung out with bpNichol for three days. I basically said, "Ok, tell me all of it." That was a very easy chapter too because it's the same thing, there's so much energy there.

KdP: I can make assumptions from archival traces and from reading some of the chapters or articles that are already in the world, you know, or articles, but talking to people really just makes more sense in the end.

KN: Do you have a copy of *Vehicule Days*? There's posters in there.

KdP: I do and here's *Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies.* Here's *Vegetables*.

KN: Wow!

KdP: With a packet of seeds still intact in here.

KN: That's great.

KdP: I couldn't because it's a library book, but I wonder if I could still plant them?

KN: I don't think so. I don't think the seeds are valid anymore.

KdP: I see what you mean about the tactility of it. You can feel the plants in there.

KN: The funny thing was, when the book was out, I was working at Classics Bookstore. Once the book started selling, they put a display area in there. So if people weren't calling me to put books away, I used to stand there and watch people come in and have their first experience with the book. There were four different kinds of seed packets. They would come in and look at it and then pick it up and switch around the seed packets. If they were going to get one, they would wonder, "Which one do I want? Do I want tomatoes? Do I want turnips?" That was fun.

Endre probably introduced you to that word. A big part of what Véhicule gallery was about and Véhicule Art and poetry Véhicule is *fun*. We were out to have as much fun as possible.

Let me tell you a couple of things. I'm just putting emphasis on things. Definitely talk to Claudia because she was there at the start. Definitely talk to Tom because he was there at the end. Definitely talk to Stephen and John who were there when we get the first splash of money. So they can talk to you a lot about bringing in the Americans, you know, why and who. Stephen's the one who's got the journals. If there's ever a fact you need to confirm, ask him first because he's got the journals.

KdP: So here is a funny story. The journals have been deposited at the McGill Special Collections and they are closed due to the pandemic or they're not open for in-person visits. However, they're also not digitizing things because Stephen's journals are still under copyright. Stephen says he doesn't care about copyright. But McGill does. So I haven't been able to see them yet, but I have a feeling that in September things will reopen.

[Laughter]

KN: Stephen's papers are there. Endre's papers are there. My papers are there. And Artie's papers are there. I've been down this road. No, a version of this road. I mean, writing a dissertation is really a wonderful, crazy thing to do with your life. I did my dissertation at McGill. The dropout rate at McGill, when I did my dissertation, was 85%. Dissertations would kill people. So it's good if you've got a certain kind of commitment to the project, which I think you do and that's going to see you through from the beginning to the end. What you're doing is very specific, so you just stick with that specific thing, and you won't go wrong. Along the way, there are going to be other things. "Wow, that's interesting!" Those are distractions. So you just stay true to your mission.

KdP: I'm using the Véhicule reading series as an example of one kind of organizational mode or curatorial mode. There's going to be one chapter on it among numerous chapters.

KN: The Concordia reading series [Sir George Williams reading series] is talked about over and over and over again by poets who read in it, by people who went to readings, but I don't think anything's ever been done with it. I think that would be a really good one to look at if you're looking for a choice academic reading series.

KdP: I am planning on it. That would be the other one that I'll be looking at. Like we gestured towards a couple of times, the Concordia series has a very different approach to Véhicule and so it ends up being a nice contrasting case study. I might jump ahead and look at M. NourbeSe Philip who self-curated a bunch of events. She organized numerous readings of *Zong!*—durational readings, collaborative readings, and multi-disciplinary readings. The idea is to see how one person self-organizes and self-presents a work. Then I have one more chapter, which is actually a project that I've been running called Deep Curation. I've been trying to be as experimental as possible and as directive as possible with organizing poetry readings. I'm trying to push it to the other extreme, where I'm like, "Ok, I'm the curator, I'm going to tell people what to read and I'm going to tell people how to do it." I try to create a theme and so that'll probably be the final part of the dissertation. A totally different beast.

KN: Well, Louis Dudek made me include a chapter on the Véhicule poets in my dissertation. He liked the idea of flipping it. It's like, "Ok, you've been looking at the history of all this stuff. Now what are you guys doing? You're in there as a participant and that sheds a whole other light on things."

KdP: That would actually be interesting to read.

KN: It's *The Role of Little Magazine in the Development of Modernism and Post-Modernism in Canadian Poetry 1925 to 1980*. You can see what Ken did with his own folks. Yours will be more interesting. I basically just took the system I was applying to everything else and applied it to that. It doesn't jump out of that. It stays in the academic fold. You could do something really interesting.

KdP: Concordia is also quite open when it comes to allowing people to do less academic things.

KN: Scholarship has changed in 40 years.

KdP: It has changed. My main supervisor is Jason Camlot, but one of the people on my committee, Maya Rae Oppenheimer, is actually in Art History and she's really keen on the idea that I should somehow curate my dissertation. I don't know how to do that! The assumption being that it would be somehow different from just having a certain number of chapters, that it would be more interconnected.

KN: You could curate your curation

KdP: Sometimes the freedom makes it harder.

KN: Exactly, it's great if it works, but if it becomes a backbreaker, you don't want to go there.
I had 10 chapters.

KdP: Oh, wow, that's a lot.

KN: Yeah, there was a lot of stuff to cover. I was doing little magazines from 1925 to 1980. There was the McGill group, the social realists, lots of stuff.

KdP: Thanks again so much! I'll be in touch.

KN: Terrific. Have a great evening.

Appendix 4—Oral History Interview: Claudia Lapp and Klara du Plessis, 24 August 2021

KdP: I'm really happy to be talking to you. I know that you actually founded the reading series at Véhicule. Maybe that's a place to start.

CL: Well, I was one of the founders. I moved to Montreal after I graduated from Bennington College and I didn't really get to know the Véhicule poets until the early '70s. I was a poet, but I didn't have any connections really. I met these people at a small poetry reading with Ken Norris. This was before anything was organized. It was in a dress shop. It was really quite wonderful. We had our first Véhicule opening in October, October 13th of 1972. It hadn't been done before. It was just an opening, a reading. It was kind of haphazard because the gallery space was large. Everyone that we poets knew were invited. And so that was the opening.

KdP: So that was the first poetry event, but that wasn't the first visual arts exhibition happening at Véhicule, right?

CL: Well, I remember we had a work of art by Francois Déry who was a well-known painter and muralist. I can't remember what he had. It was kind of a sculpture, I think, a light thing, which is still somewhere in Montreal, not in a public way, though, I think it's in a collection. The first reading happened in December, on December 10th. That was a very interesting event. I read. I was one of the first readers with Michael Harris. He did not become a Véhicule poet. He was of a very different ilk. In that time, poets just mixed together. So that reading was very cold because it was a Sunday and the heat was turned off. It was December. I remember just trembling with the cold, but it was funny that it was packed with people. So that helped. It's what started things off. We realized that this was a great venue, but we needed to have heat.

We would invite. It was very open. It was not like you have to be a famous poet. It was something to learn, to meet poets that we didn't know, to encourage young poets. I was a young poet by then. We were all young poets. I taught at John Abbott College. I was teaching English. Not only poetry, but English literature. We would invite our students to participate. You'd have a cavalcade of people who would be reading at any given time. We also looked to get really well-known poets, and I knew a lot of poets in Vancouver, including Roy Kiyooka and Daphne Marlatt, and just a lot of names that we still keep hearing. They came and participated in readings. We had bpNichol once. I'm not sure, maybe that was after I left. I ended up leaving Montreal after thinking, "I've lived there forever." I fell in love with the city and I became a citizen. I became a landed immigrant. I pledged allegiance to the queen. Alright, this is all very personal. Just to give you the context. When I left, I had fallen in love with someone, and I went back to the US. Okay, you don't really need to know that.

KdP: I mean, it's very interesting context!

To go back to the origins of the reading series. What sparked your decision? Or what was the kind of conversation going on to spark the beginning of the series?

CL: We were just starting to publish, but we had published quite a few things already by that time. So we wanted to create a market for that. Endre Farkas and Ken Norris and Tom Konyves were really the leaders of that. They were very savvy in terms of publishing or they got themselves to

be savvy about it. They were the ones that were making it happen. I was there. I was along for the ride. I was able to get my books out.

It was an effort to expand the space for people to experience poetry and for us to bring in very well-known readers from all over the country. I also had some friends in the US and poet friends back in the US, you know, like Anne Waldman and she'd gotten to come once from New York City. So there were always special events like that. Roy Kiyooka was at, what they used to call, the Sir George Williams, the Concordia, series. That's where Roy Kiyooka would show up and it was big for us, even though he wasn't a Véhicule poet. So it was a mixture of people who weren't Véhicule poets, or weren't even poets, but they were interested in art as well. It started that way. We had a lot of publicity. We had lots of pictures of us. Artie Gold was a really big part of it too because he was extremely brilliant and extremely prolific and extremely in his own world.

KdP: He seems very charismatic from the recordings that I've heard.

CL: Oh yeah, he was.

KdP: So you said you were inviting your students from John Abbott, and then you were also inviting friends who were well established poets from both the US and Canada. So I'm just wondering, were the readings by invitation only, or were people asking you to read? What was the process involved in reading at Véhicule?

CL: It was the grapevine, partly. We did a lot of posts during and with each reading. More and more people found out about it. There was a lot of interest in poetry and the arts. There were plenty of artists to come. I don't remember all the artists that showed up, but there was an interest in it. It happened. We would do it differently now. I remember it always being well attended. It was always on a weekend, at least in the beginning. Sometimes there were special events that were held that were specific to a theme. I remember participating in many of them that were mostly for women. That was a nice change. That's about all I can say about that.

KdP: That's great. I'm wondering if you can remember the kinds of events that you were organizing right at the beginning. So you've talked about the kinds of people: Anne Waldman would come and she would read for an entire event, or was it Anne Waldman would arrive and there would also be an open mic section?

CL: There was definitely open mic. I think it depended on the readers. There might have been as many as three or four featured readers. It's a long time ago. We were all spreading the word. We actually had a lot of fans. I had people come up to me and I wasn't that wonderful of a poet in those days, comparatively. You think you know a lot when you're that young. I had a young woman come up to me who wanted my autograph and I gave it to her. But I said, “you know, I'm just a person.”

KdP: I was just listening to one of the later open mic, marathon events earlier today, and you are one of the final readers. It doesn't say exactly which year this was in, but sometime in the 1970s. You have an absolutely wonderful rhythmic reading style that sometimes verges on song. Totally compelling.

CL: I actually worked with other people making recordings of those songs, some of which were translations from German. My mother was German, and I like to sing in German and French. It was a very rich environment.

It was right after the—what was it called? The big event. I can't remember. Like a fair.

KdP: Expo?

CL: Expo. Right. We had the art museum, and that drew a lot of people because they were interested in poetry. I knew all those people. Henri Leroy, and Francois Déry who became a friend of mine, was there. They would bring people in as well. That's how people started to mingle together. It's great. Certain groups formed, and then there were poets that were French Canadians. We didn't have this as an anglophone place. It's not that French Canadians weren't welcome, but it was not focused on them. There were also people having readings that were strictly French Canadian, which was also great.

KdP: It's even still difficult to get the anglophone and francophone literary scenes to merge.

CL: There were lots of events that happened in the Eastern Townships that involved not only some of us Véhicule poets, but other people that we wouldn't have heard of before. I have tons and tons of documents. As I was preparing for this, I was overwhelmed by the pieces of paper I have that I needed to sift through because I just kept everything. I kept all the programs. You might want to have documents of these, just to look at. There are some things that I could certainly send you.

KdP: Yes! If anything looks particularly interesting, especially program notes or any kind of decisions around programming that will be really fascinating.

CL: Let's see, I'm just looking here. So the last reading series that I was involved with—I wasn't necessarily the host—was 1978-79. And then in '79, I went back to the States.

Well, this doesn't really fit with what you're trying to do. Just another example of activity that was happening at the same time. Matthew Von Baeyer. Have you heard of him? Matthew Von Baeyer was a very good teacher, an English teacher, a very good friend of all the poets and he worked on a CD in 1998 called *Melopoiesis.* He worked with a man who set poems to music, *Love, Death, and Reverie*. And his name is David Gossage. Gossage still lives in Montreal. I tried to get in touch with him last time I was there in 2018, but we didn't have the time to. This is an amazing, a very interesting recording. His daughter, Sarah Von Baeyer, still has copies of it somewhere. The reason I'm telling you this is that Matthew had a very rich speaking voice or reading voice. We read poetry in an opera house in, where was it, Vermont? Anyway, he had one of my poems called "On a Black Horse" set to music by Gossage, a dream poem. It's one of many poems in here. All of which are very different. Some of them are very humorous. If you look it up—*Melopoiesis*—you'll find lots of material about it. He was a really important figure. He was a friend of many people, including me.

KdP: That's really good to know. I will look it up. Thank you.

CL: Oh, you're welcome.

KdP: So I just want to double check. When I was talking to Ken, he suggested that the reading series started in 1972. You were the one who was running it at the time. Following that, Endre and Artie Gold took over. You're suggesting that you were organizing the series again later in the '70s?

CL: Actually, I don't remember that I was organizing, but I was still part of the community. I would read. We had many, many group events. Also Endre did a lot of theatrical stuff, very theatrical work. This is another part of the culture. There were so many magazines and journals that were coming out or just being published by individual poets or groups of poets and you could hardly keep up with that. It wasn't just *Mouse Eggs*. Some were very academic and others were very proletarian.

KdP: Can you remember any of them that you found to be very particularly interesting or useful at the time?

CL: Well, I have lots of them, I just don't remember what they're all called. You know, there was one called *CV*, which was not Véhicule. It was newsletters. Stephen Morrissey, he had one. He was teaching at Champlain and it would come out on a regular basis and I got interviewed for it at one time and you could send poems or your opinions on things. There were lots of little anthologies that women put together. That's what I'm recalling about that. I have piles of those things.

KdP: From everyone that I've talked to, it just seems like such an extremely vibrant time and such a supportive time.

CL: Well, it was supportive, except that when you got poets who had very different views on poetry, there could be a lot of clashes going on, I can tell you that.

KdP: Especially with a space as open as Véhicule, I imagine.

CL: Yeah, that's why Michael Harris, who was the first reader with me— We were just poets and we read in that cold space, but as the time went by it was recognized that, that was not my brand and he had his own brand and so on.

Let's see here. You probably didn't get a chance to read what I sent just now this morning?

KdP: I don't think I received anything. You mean the Artie Gold interview?

CL: You didn't get it? I thought that it was sent as an attachment. My husband was going to do that.

KdP: That's no problem. I can read it later.

CL: I'll have him make sure that you get the attachment. We had a lot of things going on today already, but this was the first page of a review that I did of his work and I did a lot of reviewing. That's another thing, I spent a lot of time doing reviewing. My review of *Floating Up to Zero* by Ken Norris said it's one of his best books. And I did the one for Artie. The reason I sent it is that we were celebrating his birthday recently. There were a lot of deaths among the Véhicule poets. Artie died on Valentine's Day in 2007. He had this bronchial problem. That was a loss. Then

[unclear] died. She always read his work after he had passed away, but then she passed away and that was really heartrending to lose those poets.

KdP: Yeah. I'm so sorry.
Do you remember Carole TenBrink?

CL: Yeah, very much!

KdP: I have talked to her and there's a nice recording of her work in the archives. Someone told me that you were friends.

CL: We were definitely friends. She came to the event in 2018 at McGill and I remember having a little chat with her after we'd read.

KdP: Yeah, you read at McGill.

CL: That was our second big reunion. Everyone was there except Artie. I mean Artie was alive, Ken wasn't able to be there. He had some health problems. So we read for him. Anyway, talking to Carole, I always loved her energy. There were lots of students I had had in my classes and they remembered me, which was really touching. We had very big displays of our books. Endre can talk about that. I really love Tom and one of the things that we love most is "No Parking." That's just a great poem.

We had also gotten together in 2004. That was our first big reunion that we got to participate in at the— My brain is not as sharp as it used to be. It was at the theater of poetry, at the cabaret Véhicule, which was at the Musée d'Art Contemporain. It was very cold. It was sold out and about 100 people showed up. It was a very wonderful experience. Everybody was there at that point except Artie. He couldn't be there in person, but we met with him. It was not only poetry. There were dance performances, videos, chanting. I mean this is something you should ask Tom about and there's definitely videos of these. This is worth looking at. Even though it's not the beginnings of Véhicule, it's still an important piece of it.

KdP: Yeah that's interesting because I think the Véhicule poets were interested in performance and dance and video anyway, so having all of that be part of the reunion event is also telling.

CL: Yeah. Tom is very skilled in video work. That's his thing. That's where he stands out in that regard. The two Hungarians.

KdP: Just to return to the series for a moment. So you were organizing and then different curators or different organizers were working over the decade. In your mind, do you feel there was a shift in the kinds of events that were being organized? There's no right or wrong answer. I'm just curious.

CL: Artie and Endre are very strong personalities. I think they were both very good. I recall them both being very good at hosting because it's their lifeblood. Artie liked to be a little outlandish sometimes and it's okay because he earned it. He was brilliant. He was a very smart person. But he had this respiratory problem that made it made it hard for him. It wasn't a handicap in the early

years, but it was difficult. He loved cats, meant he couldn't have cats, but he still had them anyway. There's going to be a different quality and I think that's a good thing.

I do remember that we had lots and lots of readings, like not just a weekend reading. There were readings happening at different times of the week. One important aspect is people were trying to get grants too. By having these series, they could get Canada Council grants. The people who were in the Véhicule series were going to schools all the time and teaching classes for which they were paid. It was very, very rich and exciting. Endre was always urging us to do that.

KdP: I don't want to take up too much of your time, but I wanted to ask, or I've been asking everyone, about the word *curation*, which is obviously more of a contemporary word that might not have been used in the '70s. It is a word that I'm using in my research as a result of thinking through some art historical art theory in considering how events are organized. I'm just wondering what your reaction is to the word *curation*.

CL: Yes, I'm very, very interested in it. I taught and worked at the art museum here at the University of Oregon for 13 years as a docent, or as we call them, exhibit interpreters, and it's all over curation. It's all about the way that things are organized, selected, it makes all the difference in the world. I'm prejudiced, but we have a very excellent, world class museum in a relatively small town, and it makes all the difference to have. The curators are so good at what they do. Then there's other great staff that's able to support requests, people who are refined in their manner of how to set things up. There's also lots of technology available. I think it's a really important word, and it makes the difference between going to an art event or a listening event that is mediocre or one that really just grabs you, that is like, wow, this is getting to the heart of the matter.

KdP: Every selection, every selective choice that is made is a form of curation. So the choice of putting certain poets on stage is an act of curation.

CL: I hadn't really thought of it that way, but I like that. Yeah, it is an act of curation.

KdP: If you weren't using the word *curation* at the time, what role were you using for the work you were doing when you organized events? Organizer or programmer? Did you think of yourself as having a job? Was this just something that you were doing as a poet?

CL: I hadn't given it that much thought. I'm someone who is very enthusiastic and so I spread the word. I like to create publicity. I've done that all my life and everything I do is about getting people together to do something worthwhile or to learn something.

KdP: That's a great answer.

If there's anything else you wanted to add that we didn't touch upon, any important memories that you have about Véhicule...

CL: This is not really related or only in the sense that it's contemporary. Do you know Carolyn Marie Souaid? You know her? They printed a book of her poems called *The Eleventh Hour*. Can you see this? I am in love with her work. It's so honest. It's so unique. She writes about writing, but also about her life in such a fine way. She's one of the main people who participates in the Mouse Eggs Readings now. She's more technologically adept. And Endre is too.

I've heard her recently. It wasn't it wasn't a Mouse Eggs event. Where was it? I forget which reading series it was, but I've heard her read recently and I think it was from *The Eleventh Hour* and it was a very delightful event, as I remember.

KdP: You've been extremely helpful and it's been really great talking to you.

CL: What I wanted to say is that I have a few small books that are basically little pamphlets that I'd like to send to you just in an envelope.

KdP: So nice!

CL: It would be good to have a mailing address.
KdP: Definitely. And then one last thing. In order to use our conversation in my research, I will need you to sign a permission slip. I'll also email that to you if that's okay.

CL: I mean I don't really feel uncomfortable about anything except, you know, that I said I was going back because I fell in love.

KdP: That's the only personal detail.

CL: I'm not going to worry about it.

KdP: Thank you for giving me your time, for talking to me and sharing! It's really great.

CL: It's very warming to feel like you can provide some information about a time that is long gone but not really.

Appendix 5—Oral History Interview: Tom Konyves and Klara du Plessis, 25 August 2021

[Tom Konyves does not want his interview to be publicly accessible.]

Appendix 6.1—Oral History Questions:
Klara du Plessis for Stephen Morrissey, Email, 14 August 2021

My dissertation research is looking at poetry reading series from the past 70 years within a Canadian literary context—my aim is to focus on the practice of curation and to schematize four different modes of approaching the deliberate shaping of literary events. The degree of agency that the organizer, programmer, or curator brings to the creation of literary events, and how the decisions that are made, impact, in turn, the degree of agency that the performing poets have in shaping the sets that they present to a public.

I've spent a lot of time in the Véhicule Art Inc. archives housed at Concordia, looking through the paper documentation, posters, photographs, and listening to the audio recordings. I've recently also reached out to McGill where different materials are housed, but they aren't currently allowing in-person visitors—as we've discussed via email.

The audio archive of literary events hosted at Véhicule (now at Concordia) has been particularly helpful in recreating traces of what the Véhicule reading series and scene would have been like in the 1970s and '80s. It is, however, not comprehensive. There are gaps between the recorded items that one can now listen to, and the items weren't systematically documented. The materials that are recorded, though, have the effect of dominating a contemporary understanding of what the series was about.

1. So in your recollection, what kinds of literary events were being organized at Véhicule? Can you describe the structure of the most characteristic Véhicule event? How many people were reading? How long was each person reading? How were they chosen to be there? How was the audience reacting?

2. Can you describe the physical set-up at Vehicule's premises? Where was the microphone? How were the audience positioned in relation to the readers?

3. How involved were you with the organization of the reading series? What kinds of decisions were you making? What kinds of conversations were you having with the readers leading up to the events?

4. In your recollection, what was the decision-making process about events like? Who made the decisions? Did one person step up? Was it a collaborative debate? How far in advance was billing solidified? How were events advertised?

5. What was the impetus behind the marathon events, in particular? Why the young crowd? Why the durational structure? What kinds of writers were you hoping would participate?

6. I'm using a more contemporary understanding of the word "curation" to apply to making, organizing, and shaping of literary events. Theoretically, I see curation as a combination of organizational and creative concerns. Knowing this is a new term in relation to the 1970s, are you comfortable with the word "curation"? What other word would you prefer?

7. Is there anything else that you'd like to add? Anyone else I should talk to in particular?

Appendix 6.2—Oral History Essay:
Stephen Morrissey for Klara du Plessis, Email, 12 September 2021

Starting out from Véhicule Art

With thanks to Klara du Plessis who got me thinking about the old days at Véhicule Art Gallery

1.
The mission of Véhicule Art Gallery was primarily the exhibition of contemporary visual art, including conceptual art, installations, photographs, drawings and paintings, and the artists that exhibited there came from across Canada, the United States, and other countries. That was the gallery's main focus: exhibiting avant-garde contemporary and experimental visual art

My impression, even at the time, was that the people who founded and then ran the gallery, a collective of mostly English-speaking Montreal artists, were surprised that poetry could be as popular as it turned out to be; every Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. the gallery was full of people there to hear poetry being read or performed, and this was good for the gallery. Poetry readings increased the number of events they held and the number of people who came to the gallery. This also greatly benefitted poets who had a space in downtown Montreal where they could hold poetry readings.

Somehow, out of the poets who visited the gallery, whether by propinquity or chance, a group of us became friends and this group became known as the Véhicule Poets; we are still friends over forty years later. The Véhicule Poets are a direct result of Véhicule Art Gallery; Véhicule Art Gallery was the institution and the physical location that gave us the opportunity to meet each other, publish together, and to organize poetry readings at the gallery. The gallery wasn't our beginning as poets but it was the hub, the place that brought us together; that time at the gallery has become an essential part of our individual history as poets.

The Véhicule poetry reading series came into existence after the reading series at Sir George Williams University had ended; however, the readings at Véhicule Art continued a tradition of promoting contemporary poetry similar to that of the SGWU series. I remember Al Purdy's reading, some black and white photographs I took of Purdy reading at Véhicule are in my literary papers at Rare Books and Special Collections at McGill University. I remember Robert Kelly's reading, with his wife recording the reading sitting in the front row of the audience. I brought in Clayton Eshleman, he read at Véhicule Art and at Champlain Regional College where I was teaching, I think that was in early May 1978. I also brought in The Four Horsemen, to Véhicule and to Champlain Regional College; there are many slides I took of bpNichol and The Four Horsemen in performance in my McGill papers; anyone interested in The Four Horsemen would benefit by checking out these many slides of the group performing. I remember Kenneth Koch's reading and speaking on the phone with Anne Waldman about her reading at Véhicule; Anne Waldman had known Claudia Lapp at Bennington College in Vermont.

Along with the others, I was at the gallery every Sunday afternoon for the readings and for other events. I remember when the whole group of us, that would be Artie Gold, Ken Norris, Claudia Lapp, John McAuley, Endre Farkas, Tom Konyves, and myself, met one afternoon at Bob Galvin's apartment on St. Mathieu Street (Bob Galvin was a friend of Ken Norris). We read a few poems and I remember Artie correcting someone, it was me, on my pronunciation of "Orion". But there was another more important meeting, it was to discuss if we wanted to be considered a group, an umbrella for the seven of us who had similar ideas about poetry and who shared a common history at Véhicule Art Gallery.

We met on the evening of 1 February 1979 at Artie's home; I guess we were all in attendance. Ken wanted us to accept what was already a fact, that we were a group called the Véhicule Poets. Ken was writing his dissertation at McGill on Canadian modernist literature, more specifically on little magazine publishing in Canada, several groups of poets came out of the publishing of little magazines, the Contact poets, the First Statement poets, and others. Ken could see the advantage of being in a group over being individual poets; that is, the historical context of seven poets who shared a common bond. But three of us didn't agree; Artie, Claudia, and I opposed the idea of the group. All we did, I said, was organize poetry readings at Véhicule Art Gallery. Ken, Endre, Tom, and John agreed to the name. Dissension continued as to "what & who & why & wherefore" regarding the group and the name; Tom Konyves assured me that Ken would work to justify accepting the group name. I am not sure if this was the meeting when we decided to publish our first anthology, *The Véhicule Poets* (1979), edited by John McAuley. Then came Artie's condition for accepting Ken's proposal, it was contingent on allowing him to write the introduction of the anthology, "saying just what & if we are or exist." I was very skeptical, I thought "so the 'Véhicule Poets' will make their appearance even tho no such creature exists—& Artie and Claudia and I know so—". Looking back on it I see that Ken was right, I am glad he persisted in defining us as the Véhicule Poets, it was prescient.

2.

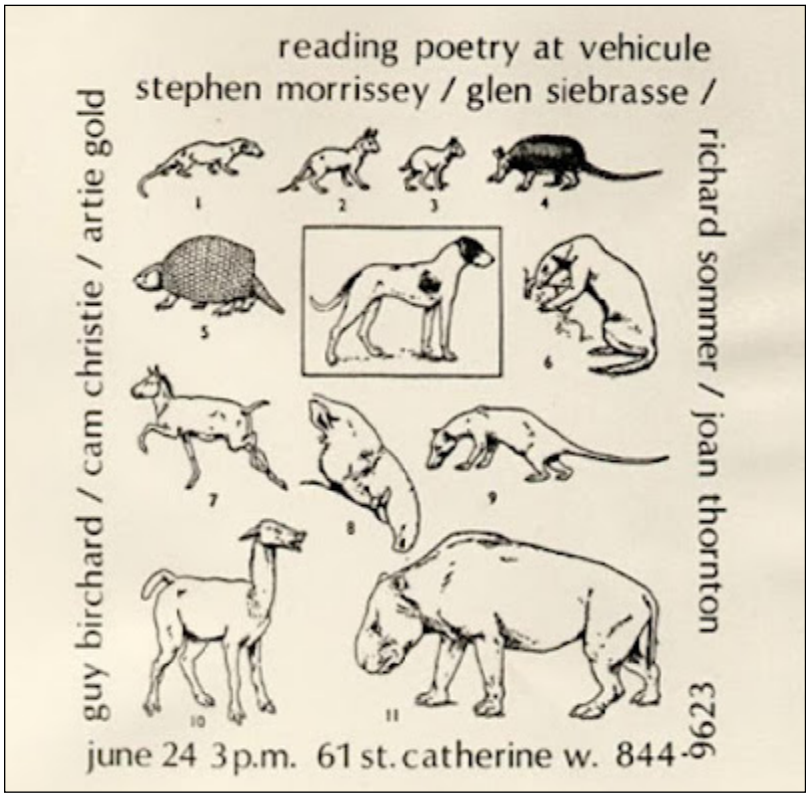
Véhicule Art Gallery opened on 13 October 1972. As far as I know, Guy Birchard, Artie Gold, and I organized the first reading at the gallery and it occurred eight months after the gallery opened, on 24 June 1973; the readings organized by Claudia Lapp and Michael Harris came a few months later, in the fall of 1973. Guy Birchard introduced me to Artie Gold and I often visited Artie on Lorne Crescent in the spring and summer of 1973. I remember putting up posters with Guy for the 24 June reading. I invited Richard Sommer; Guy Birchard invited Cam Christie; Artie Gold invited Glen Siebrasse and Joan Thornton; and the three of us also read. Joan Thornton was a talented poet and it is unfortunate that she decided not to attend the reading.

Here is my diary entry, the writing of a young poet at the beginning of things, for Sunday, 24 June 1973:

> Sunday/June 24th/'73—
>
> (20:25) about 30 to 40 people showed up—not many but a nice feeling to it—Joan Thornton phoned Artie earlier to say she wldnt/ show, one guesses she was too nervous—so Artie read and he was really good, he had one poem which really knockt me out—("my mother's cunt is a fork, she picks yams out of bottles" with the idea of her marrying men she puts up in bottles)—then I read and it was a few poems I collected last nite & didn't bother to rehearse or even read them over too much before I read (not in this order), "meditation 1", "oldman oldman oldman" then in the middle of the reading "regard as sacred" with Guy, I began with "Shaman on the back of a grizzly", I threw in my "Van Gogh" poem—so that went well & as I sat down Artie wrote a poem about my reading which I cldn't make out because of his handwriting and Anne [Heany] askt for a copy of "meditation 1"—

The reading on 24 June at Véhicule was only my second reading; the first time I read my poems in public was two months earlier, in April 1973, at Karma Coffee House, located in the

basement of the SGWU Student Union building on the south-west corner of de Maisonneuve Blvd West and Crescent Street. Again, it was Guy Birchard who invited me to read on that occasion and both Artie and Guy were in the audience. The first reading I gave at Véhicule was in 1973; I gave readings every year at Véhicule Art, and my last reading there was in 1980. In fact, I am surprised at how many readings I gave in those years, at Véhicule Art, Powerhouse Gallery, and other venues, for the most part these were solo readings which are rare today, group readings bring in an audience. Louis Dudek told me that in the old days it was only prominent poets—W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, and others— who gave readings, most poets never gave readings unless they achieved something substantial in their literary work. In the late 1970s, I was part of a group reading at the Unitarian Church on Sherbrooke Street West, the beautiful church that burned down, invited by Louis to read with him and several other poets. It was hosted by the owner of Mansfield Book Mart.



Allan Bealy's poster for the 24 June reading

3.

One of my English professors at SGWU was Richard Sommer; Richard told me that he and his wife had driven to Vancouver in their van around 1969-1970, where they met and were impressed by West Coast poets and artists. I know he participated at the Charles Olson Memorial Poetry Reading in Vancouver, in March 1970, just three months after Olson's passing. Previous to this Richard was probably fairly conservative; he was an academic, his Ph.D. was from Harvard (he gave me a monograph, *The Odyssey and Primitive Religion* (1962), that he published and which I still have), and he spoke of meeting Robert Frost at a reception at Harvard. In August 1963, ten years before our first Véhicule reading, Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Robert

Creeley, Robert Duncan, and other American poets attended the Vancouver Poetry Conference; these were poets Don Allen included in his anthology, *The New American Poetry, 1945 - 1960* (1965). A lot of other poets, not included in Don Allen's anthology, had a similar approach to poetry as the poets Don Allen anthologized; some were Beat poets, others were influenced by Charles Olson's projective verse or by Black Mountain poets, there were confessional poets, concrete/visual/sound poets, poets influenced by Jerome Rothenberg's *Technicians of the Sacred* (1968), and others. There were also important voices in Canada; these included Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, Earle Birney, and Al Purdy; not to forget Phyllis Webb, George Bowering, Gerry Gilbert, bpNichol and bill bissett and the TISH poets. And others, for instance Pat Lowther and Alden Nowlan, two of our best poets... No doubt I have left out poets who should be a part of this list. But, still, what a great time for Canadian poetry! The SGWU poetry series recognized the importance of this cohort of Canadian and American poets by inviting some of them to read in Montreal; ongoing and continued recognition of the importance of these poets is evident in who read at Véhicule Art Gallery; as well, this new poetry, this new approach to poetry, influenced and encouraged the creative work of the Véhicule Poets. Of course, the formalist poets in Montreal disliked everything about new American poetry, West Coast poetry, the Véhicule Poets, and the readings at Véhicule Art Gallery; they disliked us personally; but formalistic poetry seemed pretty dull and old fashioned when compared to what was happening on the West Coast and at Véhicule Art in the 1970s.

It must have been that summer of 1973 when I used to visit Richard Sommer at his Draper Avenue home; I was 23 years old, fairly naive, and would graduate from SGWU in the fall of 1973. I remember meeting Roy Kiyooka at Richard's home which had formerly been Roy Kiyooka's home when he lived in Montreal and taught at SGWU. Sitting together in his second floor office-library Richard helped me compile a mailing list for *what is*, a concrete poetry newsletter of experimental poetry that I sent out, for free, to poets. I edited and published fourteen issues of *what is* from 1973-1975; later still, I published *The Montreal Journal of Poetics*, a free mail-out magazine on poetics that I edited and published from 1978-1985. Why was it free and mailed out? Because this was the best way to communicate with specific poets and I was more interested in publishing a limited number of copies of *what is* than in making it self-financing. Whether *what is* was a newsletter or a magazine was something Wynn Francis discussed with me at her home in Montreal West. I also published my own concrete poetry in *what is* and other periodicals; that is how I first came into contact with Vancouver poets like Gerry Gilbert and Ed Varney.

The gallery welcomed and even encouraged an avant-garde approach to poetry. I learned of John Cage from Richard and the readings I gave with my first wife, Pat Walsh, were events, not readings with one person standing up and reading their poems. By 1976 or 1977 Pat Walsh and I began to call ourselves, for performances, Cold Mountain Review, after Han-Shan (from Burton Watson's translation, *Cold Mountain: 100 Poems by the T'ang Poet Han-Shan*, 1970), and we did readings together at Véhicule Art, Powerhouse Gallery, high-schools, and other venues; I still remember these reading-performances, especially those given at Véhicule. They were readings of randomly chosen texts, poems read simultaneously by several voices, the purposeful inclusion of silence in a performance, and the use of randomness in texts and their performance; this also included the influence of William Burroughs and Brion Gysin's cut-up technique. A performance at Véhicule might include having the whole audience reading texts simultaneously out loud, it was a cacophony of meaningless human voices; the implications of these readings were open-ended

and lent themselves to a variety of interpretations. My first reading for voices, performing my poem “regard as sacred,” was with Guy Birchard at the 24 June 1973 reading at Véhicule Art.

One of the most memorable poetry performances I attended at Véhicule was by Tom Konyves who joined the gallery in 1977, it was his long poem, *No Parking*, Tom read this poem accompanied by a cellist; it was brilliant! He also had a poem entitled "Véhicule R"; see his book, *Performances* (1980). I met Tom at Vicky Tansey's dance studio, Vicky was Richard's wife and the dance studio was located behind their home on Draper Avenue; it had been a garage and was converted into a studio by Roy Kiyooka. The occasion was the launch of Bob Morrison's *Anthol* magazine, probably issue #2, published in 1973; Tom had some work in this issue. It seems to me that it was Endre Farkas who was the impetus behind us working collectively, Endre was always interested in doing collaborations with other artists, including poets, dancers, and actors. I met Endre, very briefly, at the McKay Street location of Explorations One, a two year experimental programme in which I was a student at SGWU beginning in 1969-70. I doubt I made any impression on either Tom or Endre but they made an impression on me, I tend to keep a low profile; however, I do have a good episodic memory and I am a diarist. Ken Norris arrived at the gallery around 1975 and attended the readings. For a while Pat Walsh had been one of the roommates of Ken's girlfriend, Jill, and I heard about Ken from her. Most of my relationship with Ken has been in the form of letters and e-mails, because of this I have probably had more to do with Ken than any of the others. John McAuley and I organized the reading series in 1976-1977; John was also the gallery administrator in the late 1970s. My mother worked at the Norris Building library of SGWU and some people involved or peripherally involved in literary things also worked there, for instance John's first wife, Diana Brewer; by the way, Diana Brewer's parents lived next door to Richard Sommer on Draper Avenue and Diana's mother was a good friend of Pat Walsh before I met Pat, it really is a small world; Nancy Marrelli, Simon Dardick's wife, also worked at the Norris Building. In 1974-76 I worked at the SGWU library, in the Shuchat Building and the Hall Building library. The First Annual Spring Marathon reading was a joint Véhicule - Concordia literary society production, held on 16 May 1975 in H-820 of the Hall Building; the Marathon readings moved to Véhicule Art Gallery for the second annual spring reading, on 21 March 1976. These readings could go on for many hours which was the intention of the reading. I think it was Tom Konyves who was behind the marathon readings; one of the last marathon readings that I attended was held in the Hall Building at Concordia/SGWU, possibly in 1980.

I graduated from Sir George Williams University in the fall of 1973; then, a year later, I was a graduate student at McGill University, studying that first year with Louis Dudek, and at McGill until November 1976; only two weeks after graduating from McGill I began teaching at Champlain Regional College. I invited poets, including Artie, Tom, Endre, and Claudia to read before my classes. In addition to poetry I was interested in the writings of J. Krishnamurti and I attended his series of annual lectures in Saanen, Switzerland, in July 1973; in Ojai, California, in 1976; and in New York City in the early '80s. I got married in August 1976 and my son was born in January 1979; later in 1979 we moved to a country home near Huntingdon, Quebec, and I only returned to live full-time in Montreal in 1997. I met Carolyn Zonailo for the first time in 1991, she had published my book *Family Album* (1987) and I offered to meet her at the airport and drive her to where she was staying on the campus of John Abbott College for The Writers' Union of Canada AGM; Carolyn is from Vancouver and founded and ran Caitlin Press as well as being one of the founders of the Federation of BC Writers'; six months after the AGM she moved to Montreal and we have been together since then. Carolyn and Cathy Ford were in Montreal in the late 1970s for

a League of Canadian Poets AGM and met Artie Gold and possibly Ken Norris at Artie's Lorne Crescent flat.

While living near Huntingdon I became good friends with George Johnston who moved to his country home in south-west Quebec when he retired from teaching at Carleton University; George was a meticulous poet and translator, he was friends with George Bowering, Jay McPherson, Northrop Frye, Cid Corman, and George Whalley, and he had travelled in the UK giving readings with bill bissett and Susan Musgrave. Louis Dudek became a friend and, like George Johnston, he is one of my poetry mentors. Dudek published a book with us, *A Real Good Goosin', Talking Poetics, Louis Dudek and the Véhicule Poets* (published by John McAuley's Maker Press, 1981); he also wrote the introduction to my first book of poems, *The Trees of Unknowing* (1978). I want to say that Louis and George were not simpatico as poets but they were two of the loveliest people you could meet; I still miss them. As well, Carolyn and I spent a lot of time in Vancouver and I got to know many poets there because they were friends of my wife's; we also gave readings, at UBC, SFU, The Kootenay School of Writing at Artspeak Gallery, an art gallery in Deep Cove, and book stores and art galleries in the lower mainland including reading on Gerry Gilbert's radiofreerainforest. Other good friends were Ed Varney, Marya Fiamengo, Ralph Maud, Jean Mallinson, Nellie McClung, and Trevor Carolan. I used to have more poet-friends in Vancouver than in Montreal. I first visited Vancouver in April 1976, passing through on my way home from California and Mexico; I was between flights and walked outside of the airport, it took me no time at all to fall in love with that beautiful city.

4.

Poetry readings were the main literary event held at the gallery, but I would like to include other Véhicule events that were of a literary nature; other than Véhicule Press there was Allan Bealy's *Davinci* poetry magazine and then the offshoot of *Davinci* which was the Eldorado Editions chapbook series published in 1974; Eldorado Editions was named after a restaurant near the gallery. I think there were four chapbooks in all, Claudia Lapp's *Dakini*, Andre (Endre) Farkas's *Szerbusz*, and titles by Ian Ferrier and Tom Ezzy. Ian Ferrier was this young kid who aspired to be a poet, and he is now one of the most original and prominent spoken word poets in Canada. I included a flyer for these chapbooks in an issue of *what is*.

Another event held at Véhicule Art, a literary-dance-performance event, was presented by Vicky Tansey; she gave other performances at the gallery but one that I participated in was a dance interpretation of Gertrude Stein's novel *Ida*; I narrated Stein's text during the performance. I don't remember the date for this, maybe 1976 or 1977. Vicky Tansey also performed at Roy Kiyooka's *Poetry/Video/Text* event at Véhicule Art in December 1973, an event I attended.

This was a time of creativity, a time of meeting people and forming friendships, of hearing new poems and poets at the readings, a time of being in a milieu of openness in the arts. This was an exciting time for some of us; it was when we were young and just starting out from Véhicule Art Gallery.

Stephen Morrissey
12 September 2021
Montreal, Canada

Addendum

The following items can be found in the first accrual of my literary papers at Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University. Memory and anecdote are interesting but often not reliable for writing history, only documentation is reliable:

Box Fifteen

Contains two video tapes of readings Morrissey gave at Vehicule Art on 27 March 1977 and an unopened LP album, "Sounds Like" of sound poetry by Montreal poets.

The following thirty-eight audio cassettes of poetry readings are also included. These are recordings of readings, mostly from the 1970s and 1980s in Montreal; however, there are several tapes from the 1990s in Montreal and Vancouver.

Also included are photographs—black and white, colour, and colour slides—taken by Stephen Morrissey. These photographs are mostly of poets, taken at poetry readings, or less formal settings, in Quebec and in the 1990s in British Columbia.

Sound Recordings:

Vehicule Art Gallery, Montreal:

- Anne Waldman, Drummer Boy Raga, Steve McCaffery, 1976-1977.

- Clayton Eshleman, 3 May 1978.

- Stephen Morrissey, 2 December 1979, 15 January 1975 and 19 January 1975.

- Robert Kelly, 20 March 1977.

Powerhouse Gallery, Montreal:

- Stephen Morrissey, 24 April 1975.

Concordia University, Montreal:

- Steve McCaffery, 22 September 1978.

Champlain Regional College-St. Lambert, Quebec:

- Artie Gold, 20 March 1979, 13 February 1979, 27 March 1980, 19 October 1981, 19 October 1981.

- David McFadden (two tapes each reading), 28 February 1978, 14 October 1990.

- Claudia Lapp, 11 April 1978, 15 October 1978, 17 April 1980.

- Endre Farkas, 24 October 1978.

- Clayton Eshleman, 3 May 1978.

- bpNichol, 13 February 1978.

- The Four Horsemen, 27 March 1978.

- George Johnston, 27 October 1981.

- Carolyn Zonailo, (two tapes), 25 February 1992.

Readings in Vancouver:

- Black Sheep Books, Carolyn Zonailo, Stephen Morrissey, Ed Varney, 16 October 1996.

- Radiofreerainforest (Vancouver co-op radio) hosted by Gerry Gilbert, Vancouver community radio station, on-air readings by Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey, 14 August 1996.

Miscellaneous sound recordings:

- Radio Canada (French), "English Poets of Quebec" hosted by Tom Konyves, early-1980s.

- Louis Dudek reviewing *Divisions* on CBC-radio, 26 October 1983.

- Sound Poetry, John Abbott College, Ken Norris on CBC-radio.

- CINQ-FM (co-op radio station in Montreal), "Arts and Eggs", on-air interview with Stephen Morrissey, 2 June 1979.

- Clayton Eshleman, interview and reading, 1976.

- Interview with Tom Konyves, 14 March 1978.

Photographs by Stephen Morrissey:

Includes the following colour slides in three slide boxes and separately in three plastic slide envelopes, and black and white photographs on contact sheets (including the respective black and white negatives), of poets at poetry readings in Montreal. These photographs were taken by Stephen Morrissey. They contain the following:

Colour slides by Stephen Morrissey:

Slide box one:

- Thirteen slides of bpNichol and the other members of "The Four Horsemen", in performance at Champlain Regional College on 29 March 1978.

- One slide of Ken Norris at a Vehicule Art book launch, 30 September 1977.

- Slides of the poet Guy Birchard, taken between March and May 1977.

- Three slides of Clarke Blaise at Champlain Regional College on 29 September 1977.

- Two slides of Stephen Morrissey, taken around 1977.

Slide box two:

- Thirty-seven slides of bpNichol and the other members of "The Four Horsemen," in performance at Champlain Regional College on 29 March 1978.

Slide box three:

- Thirteen slides of Clayton Eshleman at Champlain Regional College on 3 May 1978.

- One slide of Artie Gold, outside of Vehicule Art, in July 1975.

There are three slide envelopes:

Slide envelope # one:

- Ten slides of "The Four Horsemen" in performance at Vehicule Art, Montreal, 29 March 1978.

Slide envelope # two:

- Slides taken during the book launch of *Divisions* (Toronto, Coach House Press, 1983) at the Double Hook Bookstore in Westmount, Quebec on 12 October 1983. Included are two photographs of Louis Dudek, a single photograph of George Johnston, Ken Norris, Artie Gold, and Judy Mappin the owner of The Double Hook Bookstore.

Slide envelope # three:

- Four slides of Anne Waldman reading at Vehicule Art, around 1978.

- One slide of Claudia Lapp (introducing Anne Waldman) at Vehicule Art, 1978.

- Several slides taken during the book launch of *The Trees of Unknowing* (Vehicule Press, 1978) at Powerhouse Gallery, Montreal on 6 March 1978. Included are slides of John Glassco, Artie Gold.

- Four slides of Clayton Eshleman reading at Vehicule Art on 3 May 1978.

Black and white photographs by Stephen Morrissey:

- Three contact sheets, black and white negatives for the contact sheets are included. Photographs of Al Purdy reading at Vehicule Art, bpNichol at Vehicule Art, Tom Konyves and Carol Leckner at Vehicule Art. Between 1977 - 1978.

Colour photographs by Stephen Morrissey:

This manila envelope contains seven separate envelopes of photographs, seventy-nine colour photographs in all.

Envelope # 1: Three photographs of Ken Norris, his wife Sue, and Stephen Morrissey at the Powerscourt Bridge near Huntingdon, Quebec, in the spring of 1990.

Envelope # 2: Four photographs of David McFadden with Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey at the restaurant of the Holiday Inn near the Toronto City Hall, in August 1992.

Envelope # 3: Four photographs of Vancouver poet Beth Jankola with Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey, in Huntingdon, Quebec, August 1992.

Envelope # 4: Seven photographs of Professor Ralph Maud with Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey, at the Powerscourt Bridge near Huntingdon, Quebec in the spring of 1996. Ralph Maud is Emeritus Professor of English at Simon Fraser University and a leading authority on the poetry of Dylan Thomas and Charles Olson.

Envelope # 5: Nineteen photographs of American-born poet Norm Sibum, Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey at The Cedars, Huntingdon, Quebec, and other photographs, spring 1996.

Envelope # 6: Twenty-eight photographs of Vancouver poet Nellie McClung, Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey, at Nellie McClung's Vancouver home, and other related photographs, taken in July-August 1996.

Envelope # 7: Fourteen photographs of Vancouver-poet Gerry Gilbert and Carolyn Zonailo at Co-op radio in Vancouver, during the broadcast of Gilbert's radiofreerainforest programme, in January 1996.

Envelope # 8: Thirteen photographs of Vancouver poet Marya Fiamengo at her home in West Vancouver, with Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey, in January 1995.

Appendix 7—Oral History Interview: Kaie Kellough and Klara du Plessis, 27 May 2022

KdP: I'm working on Ian Ferrier's Words and Music series and focusing mostly on your performances within that series because there are 17 recordings of your work that span 20 years. I have a sense that there might even be more, that some recordings have been lost or haven't been found yet. Even those 17 recordings that do exist, though, really create a series within a series or a series beneath the surface. Maybe I will start by asking why you performed so frequently at Words and Music? I can reframe the question: I was rereading your recent interview with Faith Paré and there you talk with a lot of warmth about Words and Music and your relationship with Ian. My question can also be, what about the series provided a space that made you want to or able to return on more or less an annual basis?

KK: Part of it has to do with the venue. Casa del Popolo was a familiar venue. A lot of the Words and Music stuff went on at Casa before it was renovated. So before it was both sides—you know how it had those two sides with the stage at opposite ends—it was just the one, the initial side, and I think the Words and Music Show really started to take off there. Casa was being developed and becoming a kind of hub of the music and arts communities. So a lot of it had to do with the venue. One of the characteristics of that venue was that it had a warm sound to it. The sound was just well-embraced by the room. The room sounded good. It was also a place where a lot of artists went, not just for the purposes of performance, but to hang out. So there was a sense of the arts community circulating around and through that venue. That meant, of course—this being the Plateau—not just writers, but musicians, painters, dancers, the whole gamut. So when you were there, you weren't just there for your event, you were part of a scene in a way. You were also in an environment where opportunities to talk with people who worked in different disciplines would arise and maybe later opportunities for collaboration. So it was a vibrant place and it sounded good.

There was also the fact that Ian was so generous in providing the stage and doing the administrative work for the series. I can talk about it in terms of being a performer as well, which means that there are really practical things, basic things that I'm talking about now. In terms of being a performer, I've always had a horror of repeating work too often. If it's the same work that I'm going to present, then I like to present it in a different way and maybe with different collaborators. Ian would always invite, right. And one of the things that I realized was that Ian was going to invite me and he did invite me. An invitation might come. There was a way that Ian would deliver the invitations which was very casual. It was like, "Hey, do you want to come to Words and Music and maybe perform something?" And I would think, "Man, I was just there two months ago." A couple of times, I was like, "No, I don't have any new work." I felt so pretentious and so such like a prima donna for approaching it that way: I don't have any new work, therefore I can't perform. The invitation was delivered in such a casual way, like there's a stage and opportunity to practice and do what it is that you do and to learn, and you're just going to turn it down because you have no new work! Realizing that, I adjusted myself. Ian's reaction would always be, "Well, you know, you don't really need all kinds of new work. Just come." Ian would treat it loosely like a community stage. I think it was important to get the message from Ian and to understand how he thought about the series. His approach to it. How it was casual.

As an artist, I could be casual about it too, provided that I was also respecting my own needs, but it was a place to go up and try things and understand how to be and perform in front of an audience and how to be at ease in front of an audience. How to deal with things like nervousness.

How to function in different kinds of collaborative settings. How to improvise when needed. How to think of my own work, perhaps, in a way that wasn't terribly precious. How to think of the oral presentation as part of the editorial process, part of the process of developing the work. You get to those lines that you've written—when you're reading in front of an audience—and you're going to read it and you get to a couple of lines, and you're like, "Oh, I'm going to change it." That's really instructive. I would think about it in a way where the poem has to meet the public at some point. Those opportunities to perform would be like a form of publication It would be an opportunity for the poem to meet the public, while still being a work in progress. Print can sometimes feel like it's fixed, like, "This is the poem. This is how it is and this is how it shall be." If it's not fully formed, when it appears in print, then someone might assume that it's an inferior poem. Whereas with performance, it doesn't work in the same way. So you can take that opportunity to present the poem to the public, and learn from that experience, and then go back and work on the poem without having to worry about how people really will perceive your poem because they're also receiving the performance of it.

KdP: I'm glad that you talked about Ian's casual invitations. I had wanted to ask you about that. Did Ian ever give any directions beyond the very open-ended invitations? Did he ever ask you to perform in a certain away?

KK: There were always invitations to sit in with musicians. "Oh, such and such? Would you like to play with this person? This person is going to come to the show. Would you be interested in working with them? Do you want to do something with Stefan Christoff? Do you want to something with Sam Shalabi?" Ian was always offering scenarios for collaboration. His openness was sometimes a suggestion. He's like, "Do you want to come do the show? You can do whatever you want. You could collaborate with such and such." He would point in certain directions and say, "You know, you can do whatever you want, bring your creativity. We're interested in that." At the same time that there was a laissez-faire approach. There was also a kind of encouragement and an interest in seeing the participants expand.

KdP: It sounds like while Ian was being very open, there's also a culture to Words and Music itself and to the kind of space that was being fostered. I'm wondering how you, as a performer and writer who was and is always developing, were listening and responding to that culture of the series? Or not? What is the status quo of the series and what are you doing at the series that might be different from performing in another venue?

KK: I can say a couple of things, but just to double back for a moment. One of the things that I have thought about in the past is that Ian is a musician as well, and a poet who works in the oral tradition. As long as I've known him, he's been very much interested in collaborating with dancers. So he likes that dance, word, and music interface. I've always wondered to what degree that has informed the way he approaches Words and Music. I've often thought that maybe for him it's a space for potential collaboration.

What I would see at Words and Music was all kinds of stuff. Actually, in the earlier years, it was a lot heavier on spoken word, and you know, spoken word can move in different directions: there are the dramatic monologues and theater performers. There are a lot of performers whose main domain is theater who were also working in spoken word. There are a number of comedy and theater performers who would come to some of the earlier shows. I met some people like

Alexis O'Hara and a few others. Ian would be open to young and new performers. So he would be open to people who were having their first experiences and just getting their feet wet. He was also open to literary people who would come in and read. It wouldn't be a performance, it would be a reading. Then there might be a musician. And then maybe a couple of spoken word poets as well. So there would be this variety, while there would always be an emphasis on the literary and on the voice, and then there would be music. Ian was aware of that. There would be an interesting variation in terms of the intensity of the show. For instance, you have a musician opening the show, and then someone reading for 20 minutes. That can be soporific after the music show. There would be ups and downs in terms of the mood of the show and the quality of the different presenters. I don't say this to detract from what was going on in the show. I felt that I had a bit of a responsibility to myself and to Ian to deliver a decent performance, and to present something in a way that was invested and energetic. You very quickly discover what your responsibilities are in a setting like that. So mine, I think, might have been to wake people up from time to time and maybe some degree of quality control. After a certain point, Ian understood that he could ask me, and I would come and I would prepare. I know a lot of poets who wouldn't really prepare or do the bare minimum and they treated the show very casually. I would prepare something. That doesn't mean that I didn't do poor performances on occasion or experiments that flopped.

KdP: There is this kind of performance of unpreparedness that one often sees where someone comes onto the stage and they say, "Oh, I only just wrote this piece five minutes ago. What should I read?" That nonchalance is often staged or seen as somehow part of the entertainment.

I've definitely also had those invitations from Ian when I was very young and just starting to do anything at all. I have a lot of admiration for him for giving that space. While I was listening to these series archives, though, I did find some recordings of myself and they were not amazing. It's funny that they're out there.

In conversation with you informally, and also in the SpokenWeb ShortCuts podcast episode that you recently did with Katherine McLeod, you've spoken about Words and Music as a venue for experimentation. Could you talk about that again a little bit for the record too?

KK: Well, if you want to become an artist, when you're young, you have to play at it. It's make believe. You have to cast yourself in the role and you have to play the role until it becomes comfortable, and you understand how to do it. Growing up in the family that I did, I didn't have any precedents for that. I didn't know how to be an artist. I didn't know how to dress as one and present myself as one or how to act as one. As a young guy, you take in a lot of bullshit and bad examples of that like Miles Davis and Henry Miller. Those are two of the worst. You need to know how to be as an artist. What helps with that is when other people take it seriously, take you seriously, take you and your pretense seriously, because you're not an artist yet. Ian did. He did for a lot of us. Ian was older than us, and so for him as an older guy who had a home, was in a relationship, had kids, a stable life, for him to take a 20 or 22 year old's aspirations to be an artist seriously, not to mock it, and to say, "Okay, well, why don't we record you? Why don't you come on stage and perform? Here's the opportunity. You can develop. Why don't you join the QWF board?" Things like that. It really allowed you to be the role. It allowed space for the fantasy to be played out, to assume shape in the real world. That was the most important thing that it did, beyond any sort of experimentation that was possible. It was a space where you were able to take that sense of yourself as an artist seriously.

KdP: Ian created a space where you were able to perform yourself as an artist. That performance augments itself over time. Not only are you doing that once, but you're doing it many times. How did that feel? Did you perceive the connection between the different performances you were doing?

KK: At a certain point, I was. At a certain point when I had performed already a number of times, and I was continuing to perform there, I started to understand that I had some leeway. This was an opportunity to try out different things and to experiment. At a certain point, I wanted to ensure that there was some degree of decent quality to what I was doing, some set standard of quality, but also to not get too invested in distinguishing whether something is good or not. Just not being too precious about things. That was a concern of mine and then another concern was making sure to always have something different for each invitation and each time going up there and trying to present things in a different way. If I hadn't done a straight ahead reading in a while then I might do that. If it wasn't necessarily brand new work that I had recently written then it might be older work that was in collaboration with somebody else where I try a narrative or something with electronics.

[5 minute coffee break]

KdP: I'd like to keep us on this idea that there are two strands at Words and Music, the one being the culture or the tradition that Ian was creating in the series as a whole and the other being... Actually there are three strands. There's Ian's series and he's the curator, he's organizing, and he's making space. Then there's you as a performer who recurs over time and who is self-curating a smaller series within a larger series. Then there's also the strands of other traditions that that you're bringing into Words and Music with your work. I know, for example, that you were also performing a lot with Kalmunity and that you were thinking about other traditions like dub poetry, and so on and so forth. Bringing these strands together, I wonder if this interweaving of traditions makes sense to you as layers of series within a series?

KK: I just want to comment on that for a second before going forward. Casa and Sala Rossa are these spaces where they had event programming almost every night right.

KdP. That's even another series?

KK: Yeah. So there's the bigger community that the venue curates with its monthly calendar. When you want to book Casa or Sala, you have to book well in advance. You have to be careful to book in advance.

KdP: Even more broadly speaking, the city is a place where all of these people come through. You're right to say that Words and Music was curating a space in that larger community, and then there's the self-curated series too.

KK: This was the Plateau neighborhood pre- and during the early phases of gentrification. There were a lot of artists living in the Plateau and the neighborhood itself was a point of convergence for all of these people from different parts of Canada and elsewhere who worked in different artistic disciplines. There still are a lot of artists living in this area, but back then it was semi-derelict and super cheap.

KdP: I'm really glad you brought that up because it makes it even more intriguing to think not only of Words and Music and your work within the series, but Words and Music, your work, Casa, the city, the country, and all these intersecting scenes, along with the kind of work that you're doing and all the literary and otherwise influences that you then bring to your work and that could maybe start characterizing the work that you were performing within all these series and communities.

Maybe we can listen to an audio clip now to think a little bit about the kind of work that you are performing. The recording we're going to listen to is from September 2003. It's a work that is called "Do you read me?" You perform it a few times.

[Listen to audio clip]

KdP: That was one of the earliest recordings that I could find of you performing at Words and Music. You perform that same work again in January 2005.

[Listen to audio clip]

KdP: It's the same work that sounds practically like a different work in the way that you perform it in in the space of two years.

KK: I think I had a lot more control over it in the second version, and control over my own voice and what it was doing and breath. I think that I had probably spent a little bit more time working with musicians, Martin Heslop being one of them. I actually wound up recording that piece with Martin and Devin Brahja Waldman.

I remember some of the stuff that I was thinking about at that time. I remember having always been attracted to sound poetry. Is this off topic totally, or can I talk? I've always been very much attracted to sound poetry, in the vein of what Paul Dutton and bpNichol would do. I pulled out an album called *Mouth Pieces*. Dutton's got these poems that are just letters like M's and N's, and they're incredible sound poems. I always liked what they did. My entry into sound poetry was not through them or through Dada sound poetry. It was through some of the dub poets who had sound as part of their practice. So there were some dub poets in Jamaica who did that. There was one poet named Oku Onoura who would do these growls and yelps. He would say something like a bomb exploding and he'd growl afterwards. He would bring in these non-linguistic, expressive vocal gestures, which were the kinds of vocal gestures that you would hear in a singer like James Brown. To say the same thing than those vocal gestures would require so many words, but just to have those gestures in there was so moving. There were also the Toronto Dub poets, to come a bit closer to home. They would do that as well. Clifton Joseph would do it. Lillian Allen would do it too. She would include sound in her work. There was a really conscious overlap with the world of sound poetry because they were in Toronto and they performed with Paul Dutton and they knew bp and that kind of thing.

One of the things that I was worried about around this time that the "do you read me?" poem originated was... I'd been at a bit of a creative dead end, because I thought to myself that, in terms of oral performance, I don't want to just give up if I'm going to do this for a long time. I don't want to wake up one day when I'm 50 and older and be performing in the exact same way that I was when I was 23. Your practice can't stall like that. So what are the alternatives? I was worried about sound poetry being a dead end because it didn't have the more direct political content, addressing things like culture and race, and the inequalities in the world. If it wasn't a poetry that

bore witness, if it wasn't a poetry that identified the different intersections at which a person resides in in terms of their positionality and of politics, then, you know, would that mean that I would alienate people who might have been supportive of me, like audiences of colour? That was something that I was really worried about. That poem came out of that thinking. Actually, Ian invited me to do a performance for children at the Westmount library. I thought, "What do children like? I don't know. They like spelling, I guess." So. I thought, I'll spell for them. That's where the poem came from. Later I realized that it became its own political statement. I'd often thought that sound poetry, at least in Canada, is this thing that predominantly white men do. Where's the political content in it? I think it's a political statement because it's me who's doing it. I feel like that "do you read me?" poem is a poem that I could perform for the rest of my life, in a sense, and the statement would always be there, given who I am performing that kind of work.

It did occur to me that the sound work might wind up being a creative dead end if it didn't intersect with politics and the realities of everyday life. One of the things that Words and Music allowed me to work through was that question of where I should position myself creatively and what kind of work I should be able to do. It allowed me to experiment with different techniques, and different artistic genres and find points of likeness between them where I could fuse them. Because of Words and Music, I started to think, "Oh, right. Just because you're dabbling in sound poetry doesn't mean that that's your destination, your terminal point, your point of arrival." It's part of the continuum. I'm not interested in being a sound poet for the sake of just being a sound poet. That's just a stop on the journey. Yeah. Like I said, that's something that Words and Music allowed me to really work through: the politics of performance.

KdP: Good to hear that "do you read me?" was initially intended for children because actually, when I listened to it the first time, I couldn't spell it. I was listening, and I had to bring a piece of paper out till I eventually got it. Maybe that says something about the way I listen, but it was a pretty dexterous thing to spell out because of the way that you perform and align the words. You don't spell it out word for word. Listening to some of the other experiments that you did at the series that play with a similar kind of dismantling of language and grammar, I was thinking over the past days, that your work (forgive me!) has, on the one hand, this preoccupation with dub and sound poetics. Mervyn Morris defines dub as being about removing and replacing sound. You're definitely playing with how you can take out and remove sound in the way you use language. So that made a lot of sense to me listening to these particular kind of works. But then on the other hand, you bring in a preoccupation with L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, which is again about the dismantling of how you use language and grammar as part of the construction of poetry. I don't know where I'm going with this, but I guess that it really excites me to see how you are embedding so many different modes of composition into these sound works.

KK: The relationship with dub poetry is a complex one. But one or two things about your reading of the "do you read me?" poem. That was actually the experience of most people the first time I performed it. I thought it was going to be a hit with the children. These kids are going to go crazy for this poem. At first, the children totally perked up, but then within about 30 seconds, they were like, "Oh, he's just spelling." And they lost interest. And I lost my audience. But I didn't lose their parents. Their parents were reaching into purses and taking out wallets and taking up bits of paper and trying to figure out, "What is he saying? What is he spelling?" I realized, "Oh, maybe the poem wasn't a complete failure because it found an unexpected sort of resonance."

You brought up dub poetry, and for me, dub is such a culturally specific art form. It's always been really difficult for me to claim it as my own. I want to and I do and I relate to it and I feel it deeply, but at the same time, I understand that it might also not be mine to claim. I grew up middle class, a child of pure oil and gas extraction in Western Canada. Dub is a voice of the working class and poor in Jamaica. It also uses the Nation Language of Jamaica. I can understand it, but it's not my language. It would be comedic and maybe even insulting for me to go up there and try to speak and perform exactly in the traditional way. So what I was working out as well, with the assistance of Words and Music, was how to approach dub and how to think about my relationship to it and how to learn from it and incorporate some of its techniques into my practice, without overstepping culturally, politically, without taking something that didn't belong to me. I've always liked the visceral nature of some of the dub poets' work. Emotionally, it's very strong and strident. But beyond that, I need to think about how it actually functions and what it's doing, and if I can do those similar things in my own language, in my own rhythm, and in my own way.

KdP: And you do. You have created your own style. I've been immersing myself in audio recordings of your work from the past 20 years. Your work has its own language. I'm looking at this stuff now with this weird, retrospective, analytical gaze or ear. There's a very fascinating development starting in the early 2000s with the kind of performance we just listened to where you break words down into letters. You're thinking about rhythm at the level of the alphabet or the smallest unit of writing. At some point towards the late 2000s, there's a different kind of rhythm that comes out of your work that is more based on the syllable or even the word. The word becomes aligned with a single beat. That's where I sense a very characteristic mode of your performance... No one else performs like you. You have a very particular way of enunciating according to a rhythm that feels organic to the work, but also moves from the letter to the to the word or syllable, and then develops into the more contemporary work like *small stones* or *UBGNLSWRE.* You can correct me, but these recent works seem more based on the line, but still carry this rhythm that you have developed over a certain amount of time.

KK: During that time, at Words and Music, there was also the Kalmunity Collective going on in Little Italy. There's a nice contrast between the two because with Words and Music you had the opportunity to perform solo work and to take your full 15 minutes on stage and to do things as you wanted to do them without really compromising. With Kalmunity you had to perform in the format that Jahsun had structured and it was a very compressed format. You had to learn it and internalize it to be able to succeed in that venue. Each piece would begin with a riff that one of the musicians would play. A different musician would start each piece. The riff would have to be something that was coherent so that everybody else could pick it up and add to it, but it also had to be in a different key and in a different genre from the previous one. So if the previous one was a Soul song, the next one would be an Afrobeat or whatever. Once it was established and the whole band had come in—it would be built instrument by instrument—then Jahsun would nod to the vocalists and be like, "Now it's your turn." You had to be ready with something. The challenge was not just that, but you couldn't take too long. You had to be on for 8 or 16 bars and then boom, you're off and then someone else would come and take your place. The challenge was not just fitting into that format, but it was doing what you had to do with a sense of compression and brevity. It was very competitive. The person who might precede you might be a great singer and the next person would be a rapper who had all sorts of abilities and gimmicks and here you were just a poet. How are you going to shine on that rhythm? You also had to be loud, so you had to have some degree of vocal

control because the PA system was shitty and Jahsun would just mix it off of the floor. There might be two saxophones, keyboards, bass percussion... It was loud and you had to really project to be heard.

What was interesting about Jahsun and Kalmunity was that they're playing music from the African diaspora. You would have to find your voice and place within those forms. At least as I interpreted it, you have forms of music that were developed in Jamaica, forms that came from the States, forms that came from Nigeria, and here we were as Canadians and we didn't have our form. So we're experimenting with all of these other forms. The way I personally thought of it was that, although I am related to those forms, and I can play in those genres, to a degree they are not mine, because they didn't develop here, I didn't have a hand in developing them, I didn't directly inherit them. The purpose of playing around with all of those forms is to create a fusion that simmers down into our own unique form. That was what I was often thinking about at Kalmunity. It spilled over into what I could enact in a solo way. It was very hard to enact that in a group way at Kalmunity because people were interested in different ways about those matters, because there were some people who were more interested in playing Funk. For a while, I just wanted Reggae. Other people wanted a particular genre. What the solo environment allowed was for me to think more about how those different kinds of diasporic elements could fuse together and be held together with a Canadian, a Black Canadian voice in their own kind of native articulation. Who knows whether anything succeeded, but that was the aim.

One other thing that I can say is that I remember the world of spoken word, when Hip Hop was in a period of ascendancy in popular culture, so the late 90s and early 2000s. It was really reaching a point of pop culture ubiquity and influencing everything from fashion to design to choices of alcohol to choices of automobile to everything, right. One of the things that I recall is how deeply it influenced poets who worked in the oral tradition. There were a lot of poets who assumed, just defaulted, to a cadence and an accent that resembled something out of Brooklyn even though they might not have had any connection to the cultures that produced Hip Hop. Questions of legitimacy and authenticity and what you can actually have access to were really, really important to me throughout those years at Words and Music, those early 2000s years. I felt that people would put on voices and performances and sounds that referenced a particular presentation of authenticity or performance of authenticity in order to seem authentic, but then forming somebody else's version of authenticity. I didn't want to do that because I felt that if I'm suppressing my voice in order to articulate somebody else's version of authenticity, then it can't be authentic to me because I have to suppress my voice to do it, my accent, the way I speak, my mannerisms. I'm not going to put on somebody else's mannerisms because they're not mine. Words and Music was a place where a lot of those questions were very difficult to resolve and to navigate. Even though Words and Music was not a Black community setting at all, it was a place where I could really think about those questions and work on them in solo performance.

KdP: When Kalmunity moved to Resonance Café, I probably worked—I'm not even exaggerating—a hundred of their shows. This was the mid- to late-20teens, but when you talk about the formulae or modes of doing that they developed, I can still relate to them, having listened to so many of those performances.

KK: I was at Kalmunity for a period of probably about four and a half years, every Monday and Tuesday night. It was rare that I missed a session. On Mondays, we would go into the basement of this cafe in Little Italy, and Jahsun just refused to call it a rehearsal. You could not call it a

rehearsal. It's not the rehearsal. We're not rehearsing because it's not going to be the same on show. So we would get together, we would share ideas, and burn incense and other things. And then on Tuesday, it would be the show. I was there both nights for five years. I mean, every night. That's probably a few 100 shows. If I wasn't performing, then I was listening. Most nights that I went there, I was performing. So yeah, I hear you about internalizing the formulae and knowing how it goes.

KdP: What you're also saying is that Kalmunity influenced your style of performance, but then you kept transforming it through the performances at Words and Music?

KK: Yeah, more solo work. Kalmunity opened me up to working in the oral tradition, but with the forcefulness that the work of a singer or musician or rapper would have. I couldn't think of it in a more intimate sense. I could experiment with that at Words and Music. It's interesting to talk about. I don't often get the opportunity to reflect on this and to think about my own development.

KdP: This is the chapter that I'm the most excited to work on, probably because I know you and because I really admire your work, but also because there's more proximity to it than some of the other archives that I have worked on. At this point, I have also written a couple of chapters of my dissertation, so I feel more confident in knowing what a chapter is. There's a lot of joy going into it.

KK: You know, it's nice to hear that because when I was younger, being a writer was like playing a game very seriously, but it still felt like a game. Just developing as an artist and tinkering with your own work, whether it's on the page or in performance, and it's always remarkable when someone takes it seriously.

KdP: Totally. I've only started thinking about academia as a career path this week and I think that the slowness of that process for me is because it is such a game. Poetry is already a game and so the idea of having two games... It's just so much!

KK: When you think about the literary world, the world of publishers and awards and all that kind of stuff, I never even thought about that stuff. I didn't think about it at all. I thought I was totally about the oral tradition and performance. I just made the assumption that people who did that kind of performance were on the fringe of the literary world. I wasn't interested in being disgruntled or discouraged or maybe I was too young for that phase. It was a strange time. It is a strange game to reflect upon, but it's a sophisticated game and a difficult game.

Just as a side note, Kalmunity was highly structured, whereas Words and Music... If you took too long, Jahsun bashed the cymbal. Like, "You hear the cymbal?" That's the cue. Or he would start on this endless drum roll, really loudly and you knew that you had been up there too long and it was time to go.

KdP: That sounds very much in distinction to Ian's series which is probably a form of what I described to you as open curation, right? He's creating a space, but he's very much giving the floor to you as the performer to decide what you want to do with that space.

KK: Words and Music also tapped into the national spoken word poetry scene. At the time, there was a lot of funding for festivals and there were a few big ones. There was Voix D'Ameriques. And then there was one in Calgary and one on Gabriola Island. Hilary Peach had a festival out there. There were those three and I think that there might have been some competition among them for who could program the biggest, most comprehensive festival. Ian's Words and Music was part of the circuit that some of those performers were on. Some of the people who would be the mainstays of those festivals would also be at Ian's.

KdP: Yeah that makes sense. I've listened to enough of the recordings and attended enough of events to have a sense of those community connections that allowed for spoken word people to come through Words and Music as an available thoroughfare.

KK: Can I say one last thing? There was a certain period in the mid-2000s when the Slam scene took over. I feel that Tanya Evanson and I are the last cohort of spoken word poets who were able to make the decision of whether we wanted to develop our practice within the venue of Slam or outside of it. Words and Music continued as a non-Slam oriented oral performance venue when Slam was dominant. The thing was too that Slam was very youth driven. A lot of the older performers who didn't have a style that would work well in the Slam scene or weren't interested in it didn't have places to perform. Words and Music definitely went through a period of diminishment because Slam was just so dominant.

It seems counterintuitive, but because it's competitive, Slam nurtures community. It's almost like a sport. It nurtures people who are interested in it and it's very structured and very orderly. The rewards are immediate. The way that it creates community creates a very vibrant revival atmosphere sometimes. It can also turn insular in that people want to perform at the Slams and be part of the Slams, but to perform outside doesn't come with the rewards of performing within that community. People would take invitations, but suddenly be outside of that familiar structure. Instead of having three minutes to perform a poem, they would have 20.

KdP: It's going back to what we were talking about before with Words and Music being a space that was this nexus of different kinds of poetry. Like you were saying, people were reading poetry, they were performing poetry, they were doing sound poetry, they were doing musical collaborations, and they were doing dance collaborations, they were doing Slam, and everything came together. A variety show, but also not because there's always going to be the part where Ian is the person making the invitations. Even if he's open to so much diversity, there's always going to be the fact that he's the one putting them there or providing that stage.

KK: Ian could have easily had people come in and run a Slam through Words and Music. He was always, at certain points, looking for ways to reduce a little bit of the burden of curation.

KdP: I get that, especially over 20 years.

KK: He would ask people to come and curate shows, but he never really asked people to come in and produce Slams. So it was almost like an alternative to that.

KdP: Did you ever curate whole events?

KK: I don't remember. Maybe. I’m not sure if I remember doing that.

KdP: There was one event that the way that you talked sounded like you were in a more of an MC role, but it also wasn't consistent. It might just have been that you felt comfortable in the crowd or that kind of thing.

Well, thank you so much. It’s been really nice chatting and I look forward to transcribing our conversation over the weekend.

KK: Yeah, yeah, it's been nice chatting, and thanks for the questions. It's taken me on a bit of a trip.

Appendix 8—Oral History Interview: Ali Barillaro and Klara du Plessis, 31 May 2022

KdP: You and Andrew Roberge spent a lot of time really starting from the ground up, archiving the Words and Music Show. I just want to talk briefly about the process and the milestones along the way.

AB: The first thing to think about, working on that project initially with Andrew was figuring out who was going to cover what. What were our responsibilities going to be? It ended up being kind of random like, "Oh, just take this half, you take the other half." Since it was roughly 20 years, we each had about 10 years of content to cover. Andrew ended up with the earlier first 10 years of the show, so he was using the mini discs convertor and had to do this whole other process of working with that collection as digitization, which I didn't really do. I was dealing with a very chaotic, hard drive of digital files, and finding out what was a duplicate of what, what were different mixes, from the soundboard, from the room, things like that. I was trying to find the best quality for transcribing full versions of the shows as uninterrupted as possible. Sometimes you'd have one long file of the entire show, like two hours-worth of stuff, and then you'd have smaller, cut up versions of the same event labeled differently. So it was a lot of sorting through what was there and trying to make sense of all of those digital files, trying to come up with a fairly simple way to do a very rough cataloging of what was there before going into the more complex SpokenWeb schema-related things. There was a lot of revisiting over and over and over again to make sure that you weren't missing something, that you didn't document something incorrectly, that you weren't confused because the dates or the file names were incorrect. You would realize by just listening to the content and matching it up with a poster somewhere. For some of my dates I would line them up with Facebook events, also archived online, which was very useful, since Ian Ferrier has been making Facebook events for the show. It's a lot of trying to match different pieces of data together to understand what is it you're actually listening to. There was a lot of that from the logistics side of things. And then from the just interesting side of things, we were discovering, "Okay, what was this? What is this show currently?" and finding out about something that, as someone who's lived here their whole life, I didn't know existed at all before doing this project. I didn't know a lot of the people who were performing consistently—that sense of discovery of something new and exciting.

KdP: How complete do you think the audio archive is? I was spending a lot of time on the beautiful website that Manami Izawa created, but sometimes there are eleven shows or twelve shows in the year, and sometimes there are only five.

AB: I'm not entirely sure. Honestly, it's really hard to know. There are times that are easier to check and there are times where we have different modes going on within one particular event. We have audio files, we have pictures, we have a poster, we have something else to fact check. I know that Ian was quite consistent with making sure that there was some sort of document or record of all of the shows. But it's been over 20 years. Something is bound to come up where either it didn't get recorded, or it just lives on a different hard drive somewhere. Although I don't fully know how complete it is, I think it's pretty substantial. I think Andrew had the same experience with the earlier years, but there were some times during the later years where there's big chunks of the year missing. There's definitely content there that might exist somewhere that we didn't have access to when we were working on it.

KdP: It's funny—talking to Kaie Kellough too—how memory works. He would say things like he performed at Words and Music every two months and then looking at the archive I'd find that, no, he actually performed there every year. It's not always clear whether this is a case where he's aligning his memory into a more compact timeframe, or is it that a lot of audio recordings are actually missing? I think probably maybe a bit of both.

AB: Probably, but I'm wondering too... One of the things that's most interesting to think about with that series is that you can tell that there's a community within the people who are recurring guests. They all know each other and they seem to do work with each other outside of that series as well. So who knows, there might be some memory being assigned from other projects that were ongoing at the same time. People might think, "Oh yeah, we were doing this stuff all the time," but it might have been adjacent to the series.

KdP: That's really interesting. I want to take you up on this thread because the whole idea of recurring readers is really interesting to me. It's maybe a bit of a leading nudge. As I said, I want to think about Kaie's multiple performances. I think he performed seventeen times in the span of the series, according to the current archive. There are other people who are similar, like Moe Clark, or Cat Kidd. There are people who form different eras within the series. I'm curious how did it feel when you were working on this stuff and it was like, "Oh, here's Kaie again!"

AB: Yeah, well, one of the things that it did, I think, was help to solidify their status in my mind. Like I said, a lot of these people I had never personally heard of, even though they were maybe well known in certain circles. When you first encounter someone, and you're cataloging them, you're looking up their name, you're trying to look up their information online, then you're like, "Okay, this is this person, this is a new character in the archive." And then you come across them again, and again, and again. It solidifies them as an important figure in your mind, in terms of that series, that they're a key player. They have their niche of what they do. Obviously other people see them in a particular light and they want them there. They're working through new content, they're creating new things, and they want to show their progress. Especially the times where you could hear people like Kaie, this was definitely the case for him, but for other people as well, where they would sometimes perform the same piece more than once. I've definitely heard the same piece performed by Kaie, for example, a few times and that'll be reflected in the transcriptions in the archive. I also noticed differences from time to time, whether that was just the performance aspect of it, or whether he was actually rewriting parts of it, it was really interesting to get a sense of the process behind the work. One person that you didn't reference, but that I have become familiar with and like is Gillian Sze.

KdP: Oh, interesting.

AB: She has one poem in particular that I used it one of my classes so it's fresh in my brain. It's between two readings that she was present at. I think a pretty good chunk of time had passed and she did a very rough version of a piece that eventually got called "Seven Tales." It was published in *Panicle*. They're all reimaginings of different fairy tales. She had published them initially and at the first reading she read, I think, three of them that had previously appeared in different newspapers or journals. And then she came back when she was promoting *Panicle* and it had become this different and complete piece.

KdP: That's fascinating. That's a really good example.

AB: Certain characters or certain fairy tales that she had referenced in the first reading got cut. They weren't present in the final version. Things like that. When you had a recurring poet or performer, it's the same source material or the same original idea that had been workshopped and now maybe it's become something new and different. The intention behind it is different. With Kaie that happened as well. I can't remember the name of it, but there's one of his pieces that I think he performed at least two or three times.

KdP: Maybe "do you read me?"

AB: Maybe. I can't remember for the life of me. But it was very interesting to hear it again because you also become familiar with the piece itself, not just the person. It was an interesting phenomenon to become familiar with the person, but also certain pieces that they were presenting more than once.

KdP: That's really good for me to hear you experience it that way too. I'm coming at the series with a certain agenda, you know, and so I'm imposing it onto the series, but to hear that you're also seeing the series as this kind of editorial space where people can work on a piece, return and try out a different version, that's really helpful. Now, Kaie in particular, performs multiple works multiple times. He starts performing in 2003, so he's so young, early 20s, and you can hear how he's still learning to be a performer. It's amazing to hear that growth process, especially when it's the same piece. You're like, "Whoa, this is dramatically more mature."

AB: We've both become familiar with Kaie's work. Outside of the series, there's *small stones*, seeing that progress from what was in his book *Magnetic Equator* on the page versus what happened in the studio, working with other people and transforming that piece. It's super interesting to see what gets kept, what words are the most important to the piece, what sounds are the most important to the piece. When you read it just on the page to yourself versus hearing him vocalize it in different ways, the pauses that he makes, even within words, and how he can change that so much was kind of wild. To witness the process in a way. Thinking about Kaie for that series makes sense. He was there so often because of his particular kind of openness to change.

KdP: What you're gesturing towards is the work that became *small stones*. He did perform a couple of versions of work that appeared in *Magnetic Equator* at Words and Music. One of those versions is the work that you told Katherine McLeod about, a reading from November 2016, and she made a Shortcuts podcast episode about it. I actually wanted to ask, what drew you to that clip?

AB: Yeah, that was a wild experience. When you're undertaking the process of listening to an entire series, to transcribe it, I wouldn't just do one event per day. You get into a certain mode, where you're like, "Okay, focus, focus, focus," but then that one performance really caught me off guard. I was in the act of trying to accurately reflect what is happening, what I'm hearing, into the transcription, and then all of a sudden there was this layering of sound and voice. I wasn't sure what was live in the room and what was a recording anymore. So I had to stop and rewind several times to try to see if there was any verbal hint being given as to what was actually occurring and what was going to be. When I realized what was happening, it was less shocking, because there's

other people at the Words and Music Show that have done things with looping pedals or prerecorded tracks using video and speaking or performing over that. It wasn't unique in that way, necessarily, but it was unique in that there wasn't really a setup that you could hear. Perhaps being there, you would notice something on the stage, you could see that "Okay, this is what this is going to be," but just listening, there was no cue that I picked up on. It was very bewildering.

KdP: Yeah.

AB: I didn't know what to do with this as a transcriber. I just thought it was really interesting because from the pieces that I had come to know of Kaie it felt like an outlier. It felt like something different for him.

KdP: I think that's the second to last of his performances in the Words and Music archive and it's also moving towards *Magnetic Equator* materials. So it really stands out. It seems to be making a break from his previous more sound poetry-style stuff and developing into the more *small stones*-style stuff. So it does definitely stand out in his trajectory. What else did I want to say? Oh, just that I'm probably going to also be focusing on that episode, and I'll credit you and I'll credit Katherine's podcast. I think I'm going to be looking at it more as this moment where Kaie merges the role of the MC with the role of the poet. Among other things, that's what's happening there. His voice is like, "Hey, I'm going to be performing tonight," and then as you listen, you're like, "Oh, wait, this is a prerecorded voice." He's playing with those roles, which obviously, for someone thinking about curation and how you host an event, is really fascinating. I'll probably culminate with that episode in this chapter as I'm envisioning it currently.

So maybe it's time for a final question or a semi-final question. Listening to more raw recordings that hadn't been made into metadata yet, and working with all the extra materials, here is maybe a qualitative question. How do you think the experience of listening to it as I have, with all of this information that you've already provided, translates? Manami created this whole website, which is a curatorial project, you and Andrew created metadata, and all of those elements are structuring my experience.

AB: That's an interesting question. And I guess that's something that you as a user of that website will understand. I don't want to say this is a bad thing, but it somewhat took away that sense of discovery, a little bit of the new and the unknown. There were times when the file names that Ian had originally written on things were very informative. There was a list with people's names and who the performers for that particular event were. But sometimes you're going in completely without any context, without any sense of who will be there, what will they be doing? Like nothing, nothing extra to go with it. So it's relying heavily on your ear to create the whole event in your mind. Whereas other times, we had the luxury of, "Okay, some of that work is being done for us through the data that is there or through extra materials." So I'm assuming that when all of that is laid out for you in a presentation on a website, you know what to expect to a certain extent, going into it. It reminds me of doing stuff with science students at work and looking at scientific articles and how they're set up with an abstract. All the context is given to you so that you have a summary. If you have some of that context given to you, it will frame your listening in a particular way and you will have certain expectations for what you're about to hear. Which can be great. Or it can be, like I said, taking away from that sense of the unknown and the mystery sound you might be hearing.

KdP: It's very useful as a researcher, for sure. Not every event has the timestamps, but those that do, it's like, “Oh, yeah, I don't even have to search in this file to find the timestamp.” It’s so much easier.

AB: Not just having the names or a description, but having the full transcript. “Okay, I can jump if I'm particularly focused on that.” Within the transcript we can jump to and from when someone's speaking or performing. Yeah, I imagine that's incredibly useful.

KdP: Definitely mediated. It also creates these shortcuts where you can do that, and you don't have to listen to everything. That creates its own problems as a researcher, so you have to force yourself to be more diligent.

You actually performed at Words and Music, right?

AB: Technically, I mean, not in person. But technically, I guess, yeah, I'm part of it now myself, which is kind of wild.

KdP: How does that feel, being part of the archive that you worked on?

AB: It's pretty cool. I think I might have been featured twice. I don't remember. But the first time was related to the [SpokenWeb] symposium, I'm pretty sure. I think it was a SpokenWeb-specific show. It was also within the context of the pandemic, so one of the online shows that Ian's been doing. I think my experience aligns with how you've categorized the series in terms of having the decision-making power yourself to choose what you want to present, which for me was really nice, to not have to be prescribed a particular type of performance or to be expected to fit within the greater picture. I think that Ian has a sense of who are the people who are participating and an overall sense of “What do I think that they're going to offer?” Sometimes there were themed shows, but other times it was very varied, the styles, the content, even the types of performances—there was a lot of fluctuation even within one event. So I had the sense that, “Okay, whatever you're choosing to do, it's going to be fine. Like you can do that. We welcome that.” So from my personal perspective that was pretty great to not feel limited.

KdP: I actually attended an in-person Words and Music event at Café Kawalees. It's a cafe that used to be Resonance. That was actually this past weekend, and it was pretty wild being there in-person. So hopefully you can perform there in the next months. I'm sure Ian would be open to that if you'd like to.

AB: I mean, it seems like Ian’s pretty open to people's suggestions.

KdP: Yeah, exactly. As we’ve been talking about, he likes to nurture relationships with certain performers. The fact that you performed online—it does make sense that you would now perform in-person, if that's something you want to do.

AB: It's just been a long time since I've done something like that. I'm sure I would be a nervous wreck, but it would be fun at the same time.

KdP: I would like to attend!

Is there anything else that you wanted to say about the series that maybe I didn't give you space to talk about?

AB: I don't know. Overall, I just think it was a really cool experience. I'm glad that that's the project that I got time on. I was a little bit overwhelmed at the beginning, just because of the amount of material, but once I got into it, it became quite enjoyable and exciting. I did really enjoy it. It's given me so much material to use myself in the classroom. Three quarters of the poetry section that I do with my students is from that series.

KdP: You've been using the archives in your teaching?

AB: Yeah. My foundational knowledge on the poetry side of things was not strong, so it's good having something that feels contemporary, feels relevant, feels interesting and different. It also feels familiar to me. It's very, very useful to have access to that stuff. Overall, my students have responded quite well to some of those pieces. I'm just grateful that I have access to that. That's a different mode than going through your anthologies of books and trying to find relevant pieces to teach.

KdP: In my teaching experience, I also find that students really respond to both reading and listening to stuff. I still need to figure out exactly how to frame it and I can get even better at helping students to learn how to listen. I think it's because I never did that in school. I don't have personal experience to draw from, but I've been thinking about SpokenWeb's Listening Practices and that it would be really cool in the classroom as a way of honing that listening skill.

AB: Yeah, it's not a bad idea. I had a class this semester that was English for science students specifically. At one point, I stopped doing print-based texts and we moved into other forms of media. We did a whole week that was podcasts and to get them ready to be like, "Okay, we're focusing on listening now" I did a close listening activity with them where I gave them this very abstract experimental piece of music and had them see if they could come up with what they thought they were hearing, like what was making sounds, if there was any sort of emotional spark, if there was some kind of story that they could string together based on what they were hearing. I was so worried that they were going to be not into that at all and be like, "What are we doing?" But they came up with such interesting things that were very elaborate stories that they were hearing as they were listening, and I was like, "That's amazing!"

KdP: I think it's always worth trying those kind of things.

AB: You never know. You're able to do things even if they seem a little strange, listening-based. It's something different than what they're used to. I think they'll be open to it.

KdP: Maybe we can, at some point in the future, compare notes about what we've done with listening in the classroom that actually works.
AB: I think that would be good. Honestly, that's been one of the things that's gotten me through this year. My colleagues have told me, "This is what I did for this. What do you think?" and then sharing materials so that I can try it out myself and see how it goes.

KdP: That's very generous, especially being thrown into new courses all the time.

AB: I'm all for sharing ideas and materials.

KdP: Awesome. Thanks again for your time and for chatting with me, Ali. It's been really great and so nice to see you too.

Appendix 9—Oral History Interview: Ian Ferrier and Klara du Plessis, 3 June 2022

KdP: I want to start with a very basic question: When did the Words and Music Show start?

IF: There was a thing happening before, in the exact same place. There was a person selling drinks in tea cups from the basement. At the same time, he was putting most of the profits up his nose in cocaine. And then poof, all of a sudden, Mauro Pezzente and Kiva Stimac showed up and changed the whole place within a month.

KdP: Is this Casa del Popolo?

IF: Yeah, that's right, Casa del Popolo, the original one. They must have had a dozen different things going, out of which I think two of them lasted for the next 18 years. One of them being mine, and one of them being... I forget what the other one was. They opened it up for anybody who wanted to perform and they were really interested in poetry for a long time. Poetry and music and performance were all good. They did great work there. They weren't charging us to use that venue. People were enjoying it. We got good people for a long, long time. It was only until just recently that it's chilled out a bit. You know, it was a great place.

KdP: So Words and Music really started and ran at Casa for almost the entirety of its existence?

IF: Pretty much. I mean, Sala Rossa still exists now.

KdP: Wow. That's impressive. Can you remember the date that it started? Was it early 2000s?

IF: I couldn't tell you exactly. I'd have to look it up. It was 2000s.

KdP: Your decision to start the series, was it deliberate, like, “I'm starting a series,” or did you have access to this venue that then created life for the series?

IF: There had been a lot of series going on. The one at Casa del Popolo was nothing solid like that. There was a lot. There was Todd Swift doing some stuff and a couple of other people were regularly doing work in the 1990s. We released stuff in spoken word in the 1990s. Vince Tinguely and Victoria Stanton started working on their book, but I don't think they put it out until later.

KdP: This one? [Holds up *Impure: Reinventing the Word.*]

IF: Yeah, that's the one. Yeah. Yeah. What does it say? On the date on the front page?

KdP: It says 2001.

IF: Yeah. So they just started with that. We released it at the Sala Rossa that year. And it was great. It was a great moment. All the people who were involved in it came. It was like a high school reunion for all the people in spoken word. That lasted from then on, you know, and the series just worked every single month for the next 20 years. We had an amazing time there. Yeah.

KdP: So the series had a life and an energy of its own.

IF: Yeah, and it started to accept other new people who were interested all the time. I think there were maybe a couple of years when it was quieter, but there were still people. And now there's people that I'm still interested in each time. It still works. Yeah, yeah.

KdP: It's incredible. If you see the series as growing out of itself, what were some things that you were thinking about in terms of your organizational, curatorial role? You are the backbone of the series. What are some of the questions that you're thinking about? Especially over time and in terms of keeping it going?

IF: I honestly don't know the answer to that completely. In the early 2000s, Vince and Victoria were doing great stuff, but they barely survived that book. That was a tough book on them. They spent a long time looking into the roots and the antecedents of the spoken word scene here, before we even started. We felt that we wanted to continue that. And we wanted to keep on finding people who are doing good work, whether it was work as poets, as spoken word artists, as narrators, as fiction writers, as performers, we had people. I mean, I remember a woman climbing with ribbons up to the top of the ceiling one night, and a magician! Some really different work, you know, some really good work and crazy work. I‘ve forgotten the guy's name, but there was a guy who just yelled for the entire show. The fact that he could do it. Wow, kind of blew my mind. He just did that for a good 25 minutes. Katherine McLeod, she started to work with Alvaro Echánove about three or four years ago, I guess now, and that’s become a relationship. A lot of our work also came out of the fact that I started working with dance so much.

KdP: You've always had this interest in dance collaboration, as long as I've known you.

IF: Yeah, yeah, that lasted a long time. That started off with early work, just trying to put it together, you know, and see how it works. Working with Marlene Millar. She's in Berlin now, I think, she and Philip Szporer. They introduced me to Peter Trosztmer, who was a fantastic, fantastic dancer from here. So it's just seeing those things that woke me up. All of a sudden you had dance. How does dance work? How would voice work at the same time as dance? Dance was doing something, but they weren't yakking all the time. It just became a really interesting venue that you could have voice, you could have music, and you could have dance, and they would all be different. And everyone would be interested and nobody would feel like something was taken away from them. So that was a good five, six years, we did that and then started to tour all over the country, which meant, I don't know what we did in the summer times here when we were away. But we must have done something. I'm going to have to go back and see if we did anything until August or September.

KdP: To a degree, your own practice as a writer, and as a performer, and as a collaborator is also very wrapped up in the Words and Music Show.

IF: Well, it definitely keeps me awake for that kind of work. I still love it when people assemble dance, when people assemble performance, when people assemble music of any sort. We saw great musicians in the course of that time. And they're coming back. Hopefully this summer we'll have Nomad, who you may have heard. Fantastic band. Isis Giraldo who you met with Martin Heslop.

KdP: Yes, I know her well.

IF: I'm trying to drag her back in. If she'll come. These were all people who, every time I saw them, they were initiating things that resonated with all the people around them. It was like, “Oh, wow, that's the most amazing thing. I would really like to do things with them.” If I was going to do something like that, what would I do? And how would I do it? How would it feel? And what would happen? How would it happen for me? And that stuck with a lot of people and that's still what I like about it, about that series. In the series, I mean, each time, you're not going to find the exact five people that you want to see. But you might find one person or two people who are going to keep you interested, occupied, and you're going, “Hey, I wonder if I did that? What would I do? How would my practice work? What was interesting about that? How come?” And that's what I still love about it. I still like the discovery part. Yeah. Yeah.

KdP: You're creating opportunity for people to try things and that's something that really stands out at Words and Music. People are able to collaborate with other people, they are able to experiment and try things. As you're saying, there's always an element of discovery, because you don't always quite know what you're going to get and then you can be amazed, as a result of that surprise factor.

IF: It’s changed over the years. The people we started with were Kaie Kellough and Catherine Kidd, and I'm trying to think of who else from that time. Those are the first two that popped into my head. And it's like, “Oh, these are people who are doing this work all the time. And this is how they do it.” So they came up really strongly in the beginning years and then it sort of multiplied and changed over the years.

KdP: I have two questions leading out of that. How do you choose people? There are five people performing at an event, for example. Maybe two of them really resonate, two of them less so, but you gave them that opportunity, and they can grow in the process. Often there is a bit of a variety. You often have a musician, you often have spoken word performance, and maybe someone reading. Do you choose people like that deliberately? Or is it more coincidental?

IF: Some of them get terrified right at the beginning because they're just about to do poetry in front of a whole bunch of people, and they don't know how they're going to manage. I don't know who that could be: maybe Klara du Plessis at one point? Each time they do, they're saying, “Oh, that was interesting. I’m going to do that again. Well, what am I going to do? What was it?” I found that people who've continued to perform, they're always learning something. Some people keep coming back. Like John Arthur Sweet was doing fantastic performance, even in the middle of our online pandemic, which was incredible. Here's a guy talking with all his hands directly to you, and doing a great job. I guess there are people who keep coming back. Often, it's more who I run into, who I haven't seen in a long time. People in the poetry scene come and go, and some people do really well. And some people forget that they do it or forget what they were doing. And then they start to remember, and hopefully they come back.

KdP: What I'm finding interesting is how, rather than saying, “I'm organizing events, I'm inviting people,” you're suggesting that people “come back.” You’ve created this space, which is so welcoming and open that people almost don't need an invitation. People like Kaie and Cat Kidd

and Moe Clark and John Arthur Sweet, people who really do perform many times over almost 20 years and that they have an open license to return.

IF: Yeah, some of them. I think they're there. They've become comfortable in their own right and they're pretty much busy with their own work now. Yeah. The people who you just talked about, all those people performed at one time or another until such time as they were getting work across the country and across the world. Apart from COVID-19. I have a list of two or three couple of 1000 people on my Facebook page who I've either heard or they've performed before or I know their work. And I haven't even seen them all in the course of COVID. So it's a matter of writing back and saying, “Hey, how are you? What's happening with you? The last thing I saw from you was really great. Are you interested in doing something new?” And some people aren't now, but some people still are, there's always something coming out like that. It’s so nice meeting people. You met people at Resonance Café and so did I. Yeah, that was a big, big impetus for our work, as it traveled through the next while, through Casa del Popolo, through Sala Rossa and through Resonance as well.

KdP: For sure. I just want to linger a little bit on this idea of having people return to your series. You know, can you talk a little bit more about what you like about that recurrence? Let’s take Kaie as a case study. He performed 17 times, according to the data that's SpokenWeb put together. He performed 17 times in 20 years.

IF: I'm going have to go yell at him and say, “I owe you 10 bucks.” He owes me 10 bucks!

KdP: Yeah, I think he owes you 10 bucks! I think it's a wonderful thing that he was able develop so consistently through that space. If you listen to all those recordings, you really get a sense of how he did develop as a performer and as a poet over time. I'm curious if you've thought about that, or if you have thoughts about that relationship with poets over time, with performers over time.

IF: Well, he came in with Stefan Christoff who I met a little bit earlier. Stefan just arrived in town, and he was trying to figure out how to do his life out of British Columbia, which I thought he did really well, because he went directly to the places where poetry and music and activism were all happening. That was his thing. He told me about this guy Kellough he'd met from Alberta who just moved into town and that I should go meet him. And so we did meet and Kaie was living in a freak-out space, doing some crappy job in some part of eastern Montreal, trying to figure out how to be there. The first work that he did was all interesting work, the sound of his voice and the sound of words and how those mix together. That was something that kept him going for the next years. He would always have something happening somewhere. Now he's quite accomplished at it. His next show is with Jason Sharp and a bunch of musicians. Yeah. Yeah. I think that's happening with quite a few people. Deanna Radford is another one. She's started to work with music now too and to figure out how voice and music can go together. There are a few people who've done that well over the years. So I'm always interested in what it is that they'll bring in. Yeah.

KdP: I actually just bought a ticket to Kaie’s show on 14 June. He's playing as part of the Suoni Festival, with Jason Sharp and Tanya Evanson.

IF: Yeah, yeah, that sounds like fun. I want to see what Jason Selman is up to and what Deanna Smith is up to also. Jason, I've learned a lot over the years about just the kind of serenity that he can bring. I don't know how to put it. It's almost like an eerie night voice telling you from the music what he's actually thinking, what he's actually feeling.

We've seen a bunch of different venues happen. There was the Kalmunity Vibe Collective and all the people who went through there. A lot of those people came and performed in our shows just as individuals or with other people. That was a really strong thing in the Black community coming through in spoken word, through Kaie, through Jason, through Kalmunity Vibe Collective and all the people who were involved with that.

KdP: That's obviously another big influence on Kaie, the Kalmunity Collective.

IF: Yeah, we would go up the road to see them when they first appeared on St-Dominque Street. We had a huge big event that happened, where we managed to get the Kalmunity Vibe Collective to meet the Dub Collective from Toronto, and do a piece together and have all these amazing performers. Afua Cooper and Klyde Broox from Toronto, and some of the people from here and Kaie being one of them. I think Alexis O'Hara was taking pictures of that. She was doing amazing stuff too. She's not in town very much now, but she was always thoughtful and always interesting, and one of the fastest thinkers. I remember sitting and talking with her at a restaurant before a show we were supposed to do and she took whatever we said in that talk and turned it into the performance. Perfect. I've seen her do that multiple times. I don't know how she manages that. She was great to have around.

KdP: You also really invite young people to perform. I speak from experience here too. You gave me space when I was just starting to read in public. You often give younger people space. You gave Kaie space as a young men and so on. This gives people space to develop their work. Is that something you do deliberately?

IF: Whenever there's something where it seems like, either they're going do something interesting, or maybe the next time they will, one of the two... Like Kevin Heslop's work. He wrote a thing saying, "Oh, by the way, I am working on some new stuff. Can I talk about coming to Montreal and doing it some time?" And I said, "Okay, well send me some work of yours." And he sent me some work and he just blew me away. All of a sudden, this guy is doing some amazing stuff with just the way he manages his words and how he presents them. So there's two things. One of them is anybody who seems like they could do something interesting, and maybe will and maybe won't, but probably will somewhere. Or somebody who already has and we can expect that they'll come show up with something the next time even if we don't know what it's going to be.

KdP: You're very generous in sharing the stage and making space for people who haven't necessarily proven themselves yet.

IF: I would take a look at the last couple of shows. I can't remember who we had in those shows. We had Alasdair Reese, Riley Palanca. I got to do some of the work with Louise Campbell, who's always fantastic. She's so great to work with. Yeah. I'm trying to think who else was there that night? I'm beginning to lose track. I can't even remember all their names.

When did you start?

KdP: You mean performing at Words and Music? I think probably late in 2012 or early 2013 would be the first time that I read there. I've listened to a couple of recordings in the archive in which I just sound so nervous. Now I wish I hadn't performed some works.

IF: I don't know about that. I think you were always working through what and where you were going to end up with it. We were always working through stuff all the way through that time.

KdP: That's definitely true. That was the time that I was writing *Ekke,* my first published book. It was definitely helping me to articulate that stuff as it was getting written out. But I definitely performed a couple of the poems that were cut from the book. It's interesting to see that that was the work that I later deemed not good enough. But then it's like, "Oh, wait a minute. They're still out there."

IF: It's hard to tell how that stuff's going to hold up. But I think we're always finding people who say, "Well, that was really interesting. I wonder what they're going do with that next, or, gee, you just blew me away, because you already know how to do that." I really do want to go through the online community now and see, of all those poets who performed over the years, what are they doing? And are they still doing it? Usually, if they come back, they're pretty interesting.

KdP: Honestly, that's what I've been enjoying the most going to readings again. I've gone to a bunch of readings in the past couple of weeks even. Suddenly I'm able to see "Oh, all these people I've always known, they've been writing during the pandemic, work that I haven't heard." They're reading and sharing. It's been pretty amazing.

IF: Yeah, yeah. Are you going to the spoken word thing tonight?

KdP: No, I can't make that one, unfortunately, but it looks amazing, with Deanna Radford too.

IF: Yeah, I'll be curious to see how that goes.

KdP: Enjoy that! Maybe we can just talk a little bit about the practical things that you do or didn't do for Words and Music. I know, for example, that you, at some point, made radio ads through CKUT. What are the kinds of work that you think goes into organization? You obviously invite people, but you also maintain the relationship with a venue that you're using, and the people whose venue it is, and you advertise the event and you host the event? I'm kind of answering it for you.

IF: We had a choice from a lot of different places. Casa del Popolo, Sala Rossa and Café Resonance and Cagibi and other places. We did a fantastic amount of things there too. And I still remember some of those pieces. I don't even remember the name. I have to go back and remember, who did what, when. But I mean, in the practice of it, each of those people was doing stuff. I don't think I felt that we were missing anything. I just thought, "Oh, that's something new, that's something interesting, or this person. They did something a year and a half ago, what are they doing now? What's new in the town?" I don't know the whole answer to that.

If someone asks you, "Hey, do you want to do this?" And you start thinking about it, then you usually come up with something. Some of those poets did beautiful work, and would still do beautiful work.

KdP: So in your opinion, why or how were you able to maintain the series for so long? What is your recipe for stamina?

IF: A fair question, and one that has been much on my mind. How does this keep going? I'm thinking of all different parts of my life. My children were born in 1993 and 1996. So they were seven and four when we started. My partner at that time was helping me a lot to put the events together. Kiva and Mauro seem to have broken up quite intensively now, but at the time they were doing those things. We're meeting new people and hearing new people and continuously accepting and inviting people to perform there. I never saw them stop doing that. I came in once when I had the wrong date. They managed it, nevertheless, even though there was nobody there that night because they weren't supposed to be there. I had mentioned that date. So Mauro came in, and did the bar and Steve Godin came and did the sound, which was just remarkable that they would help us so much.

KdP: They had the personal touch, like Resonance too where you get to know the actual owners and you have that relationship with them. It's very interpersonal with an individual touch to the whole administration of it.

IF: Martin blew my mind in that place, how much work he had to do at any given point to create that place. That went on for the longest time. It was a huge effort on his part. Every single person who presented there and performed there thinks about it. I remember talking to Kate Wyatt who's a fantastic piano player two weeks ago, because I said, "Hey, Kate, there's this amazing thing going on in jazz and on Notre Dame street. Have you ever heard about that?" And she said, "Oh, yeah, I'm playing there tomorrow night." And so there's something about great places and the people that they get and the people who become part of those places. It keeps everybody interested for a long period of time. By the way, Kate is releasing a new record, *Artifact*, this month at Diese Onze.

KdP: For sure. I really miss having Martin and Isis around.

IF: Me too. Isis, I heard her once and she was just on the Resonance sound one afternoon, and she was singing something. There were tears in my eyes listening to her. She was so beautiful with the beginnings of that work. I have no idea what she's doing now, but I'd like to find out. She's been all over Colombia.

KdP: She's touring a new album, pretty intensively. I think she's back in Toronto right now, but she's been touring for a couple of months.

IF: Yeah. Yeah. I'm trying to grab her back here somehow.

KdP: I would love that. If you achieve that, I'd be so happy.

IF: We could both work on it.

KdP: I noticed that she's performing at Jazz Fest on the 30th of June, so she is coming to Montreal.

IF: Oh, gee. So I'm going to start writing and bugging her to come. I wonder if we could maybe get something around the same time?

KdP: That would be fantastic.

IF: Yeah. The 30th. When is that in the in the month? Thursday. So we can maybe get her on the 3rd of July? Yeah. A couple of days later. Yeah. Yeah.

KdP: That'd be awesome. You've answered a lot of my questions. A small point of clarification: What is the difference between Wired on Words and Words and Music?

IF: Wired on Words was the original idea. It started off on CKUT because we went to them with the idea of recording poets live. We wanted to see how recording poets works in the same way that they used to work with musicians. Our musicians hit the top 10 each week from the dozens that you hear, from all the alternative music coming out of Canada. Now a poet started to hit the same place. They started to find places for us and eventually gave us an award for recording poets and presenting them all over the place.

KdP: Who gave you that award?

IF: Gee, it was some company, Canadian Broadcasting Company, I forget which one it is. I'll find it for you [The Standard Broadcasting Award]. Yeah, yeah. They gave us a couple of 1000 bucks for doing this and all of a sudden we thought, “Gee, now we have a couple of 1000 bucks, let's go and record a whole bunch of poets and put it out on CD.” Which is what we did. They were wide open to the work we did. We kept doing radio ads for all those shows, the Casa del Popolo shows and shows around. They were charging us very little money to present work by writers. I was doing a lot of music, so I was stealing a lot of leftover music, so I wouldn't have to buy music from somebody. I used our leftover music as the background for ads. There was room for work to happen and for people to do things here and that never changed.

KdP: Absolutely. So Wired on Words was the initial name for the series and for the recording project, and then at some point, it shifted to the Words and Music Show.

IF: Yeah, I remember we had a thing called Wired on Words Productions. We've put out a bunch of things on compact disc. Kaie has got a piece on CD, and so does Catherine Kidd and a bunch of other people. Yeah.

KdP: SpokenWeb has obviously been cataloging and archiving the recordings that you made from the various events over the past years. You've seen that beautiful website that they made.

IF: That's mind blowing, mind blowing,

KdP: I feel like a shrink here, but how does it make you feel to see to see the series in that more official capacity of an online archive?

IF: I think it's really, really exciting. “Remember, in 2008, what this guy was doing?” Well, yeah, he was doing something and then beginning to think about wanting to find out about it, and then pulling it out. I'm finding out what it was and whether it made any sense. “Oh, that didn't make any sense at all, or...” Each time, there were people doing things month after month after month after month. The fact that we got pretty much quality recording of everyone, that’s great. Steve Godin worked on that for free, pretty much. I’d throw $25 at him once in a while to make him happy. He did every single recording for us.

KdP: Wow. Yeah. That's amazing. I've been really enjoying listening to a lot of the archives online.

IF: I'm really curious now and I get more curious all the time. I really want to look through the online archives of what's been happening, who's shows are up there, and just asking them and saying, “Hey, you want to come and do something, I don't know, return in two years, or three years?”

KdP: You can use the archives as a directory for people to return and perform again.

IF: That’s very true. Also the fact that they presented it somewhere and became part of that, not just in the archive, but in my own mind. Oh, this person is writing and they've written a book. They've got two books. They've written three books sometimes. Let's hear what they're up to. Words and Music is still going strong, and it's going to be happening again, later this month or early in July. I guess early July. I'm going to try to work on Isis and see what we can get her to do. Also the Nomad people want to come back in August at some point, if I can find a place for them.

KdP: Perfect. Do you like the new relationship with Café Kawalees?

IF: I hope so. So they were okay the last time so we'll find out. Nice people. Yeah. Yeah. I don't know them that well, but I thought Nazeer Salama did fantastic work there. He works there. He knows Alvaro Echánove. So let's get those people doing something. Yeah.

KdP: So there's another collaboration.

IF: I forget who it was, it was in the year that Leonard Cohen died. In the middle of that winter, there was a fantastic show at Dépanneur Café, on Bernard street one night, where Ted Crosby and Liz Lima, and a dozen other people performed work. It showed how Leonard Cohen connected with them, wow.

KdP: I have a vague recollection of that.

IF: Oh, yeah. It was so beautiful. Just to hear that one person had made that much of an effect on this scene here. I'd like to see some of that again. So I'm going to try and get Alvaro involved in that because he's a wonderful singer. People think he's great.

KdP: Any final thoughts about Words and Music? Any direction that we didn't touch upon?

IF: I really feel it's coming back now. The hardest thing was that crazy COVID thing. We were very lucky to find Jason Camlot to do 16 shows in a row with us [on Zoom], he and I and all the people who performed it16 times. That was remarkable that he did that. That we have that, that it even existed. I liked that part of it. I would really like to see live come back.

KdP: It's incomparable.

IF: Yeah. Yeah.

KdP: I've really noticed that in the past couple of weeks of going to so many events and just being like, “We made the best of what we could with a pandemic and putting performance online, but it's just not comparable.”

IF: I don't think it is. Yeah. Yeah. The social aspect of this, seeing people and being present and feeling the music and talking with each other. So that's what I want to see happen again. I had a really rough time when that Omicron hit again. That’s when Resonance went away. All that stuff went away within a month.

KdP: It was a tough time for a lot of people.

Well, thanks so much for talking to me! It’s been a pleasure and it's been really helpful.

IF: Okay. Take care Klara! Yeah, yeah, talk to you soon. Bye for now.

Appendix 10—Oral History Interview:
Klara du Plessis and Alexei Perry Cox, 12 January 2022

APC: I want to start with the question that I usually ask people at the end of a conversation: What's next? Deep Curation continues, it doesn't conclude, or doesn't conclude with the completion of your dissertation. Have you drawn any conclusions on what you'll do next with it?

KdP: I have ambitious plans for Deep Curation. We talked about this a little bit before. I would love to revisit the eight events that I've been working on, collaborating on over the past five years with different poets. I really learned a lot working with you and Kama [La Mackerel], and having the durational space that we had at the Studio303 residency, and also learning to let go and be like, "this is your project," as much as I could. I've been learning from the freedom of creating conditions. So this is something about our project that I would like to channel back to some of the previous work that I was doing, work that was way more directive, for various reasons: because of financial constraints, because of time management, or because of availability of the poet's involved, and so on. I think it would be really fantastic to get a fairly substantial grant, and to create the conditions for everyone to revisit the earlier work. We would use the Deep Curation scripts that were performed previously as first drafts, and ask people to go back into them and bring themselves into it—maybe there's been new work produced during the interim that could be included. So expanding the work that way. I would really like to do it well. I think that's the other thing I learned from working with you and Kama. I would like to be able to do these reworkings with a similar level of investment. Then I need to figure out where and how to perform the results. That's something I haven't figured out yet. It would make sense to perform them all as a kind of festival, but I think there are limitations to doing everything yourself. I have to think ahead to potential collaborations, potential alliances that one could create to have a bigger or a different audience that's maybe built into an existing festival or series. So that's my immediate, big goal with Deep Curation.

And then I would really like to develop tangents of Deep Curation. I'm quite excited by seeing what it could do pedagogically, bringing it into a classroom setting.

APC: Wow

KdP: This is something I haven't experimented with before, so it would require a class with students who are willing to try this kind of thing, or have it imposed upon them. Instead of writing a final term paper, they would work with the deep curatorial mode, curating poetry that they read for a course and seeing that work as a form of argument-building, by virtue of the kinds of selections that are made.

APC: I like that. That's great. That's amazing. You were touching on something that was going to be one of my next questions actually. It has to do with transcriptions. I am curious—and perhaps you mention this in other chapters or at other points in the dissertation that I haven't had the opportunity to read yet, but that with Deep Curation you create an original script for the performance—and I am curious if you've done transcription of the works, following any changes, or improvisational things happening in them during performance? And how those transcriptions might be applied when you revisit those performances? In the case of Kama and I, you talked about the changes of minutes in our two performances, and what it means that one was longer than the

other, what was added or removed or transformed through the performance and multiple performances. If you were to curate subsequent events of the same piece, would you use the original script or transcriptions of the changes? Are you or aren't you attached to the original source text or the original performance script?

KdP: Fantastic question. Katherine McLeod and Kelly Cubbon just produced this wonderful podcast episode on transcription, "Talking Transcription: Accessibility, Collaboration, and Creativity," in which they talk about transcription as a genre. It's not something that's additional to or a trace of an archival event, but a genre in and of itself. It's creative work in and of itself because there are so many decisions being made as to how one transcribes and what is left out. My mind immediately went there because my short answer to your question is, "no, I have not transcribed these events." I could imagine doing so and I could imagine how generative that would be exactly because of improvisational elements that happened during performance. With you and Kama, I remember that there were sections in the second performance where Kama expanded on the script.

APC: Exactly.

KdP: They even changed some of the poetry that they performed. That would be a good example. When I was working with Sawako Nakayasu and Leanne Brown, they were very, very open to improvisation, and really expanded the script in the moment, like a lot. They were playful. In that example, there would be a huge divergence between the so-called script and the performance transcript.

APC: So you're asking whether Kama, or these folks, feel comfortable improvising? Did you feel comfortable?

KdP: I love it, but I wasn't performing. It's going to be dependent on who's performing. Personally, I love listening to poets who take that kind of initiative in the moment, but I think that if I was the performer, I might have felt more anxiety around that, depending on who I'm performing with, or how interactive that improvisation is. Am I supposed to respond with equal improvisation?

APC: Right. That could be terrifying for some of the participants and not for others.

KdP: In terms of you and Kama, I imagine it was okay? The improvisation was contained in Kama's performance.

APC: Yeah, definitely. There are so many various curatorial roles. The question I'm about to ask has less to do with financial transparency and stuff like that, but more in terms of Deep Curation's care-centered approach, the responsibility that you take.

KdP: I think what you're touching upon is really exciting through this idea that we could go back and use the first performance as the script. It would work really well with the core elements of Deep Curation. With some of the earlier versions I created the script as curator and gave it to the poets. So the performance is already a kind of reauthorship by way of that script. If the performance includes these improvisational elements, then the embodiment of the script moves beyond the

static towards something more dynamic. There is a negotiation of authority. First of all, there's a text authored by the poets that I've used to create a script. And then second, there's a performance that's been reinterpreted or has retaken authority over that script. It would amazing to use all of that process again, and to be like, “okay, how can we make this even more collaborative?

APC: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's cool.

KdP: Just to double down, it's limiting to always think about first drafts. Both of us are writers, and we know how many drafts one goes through in terms of writing a book. With the resources available for performance, we often get only one chance. Even with the two performances that you and Kama did, they were roughly the same. There wasn't really time in between to rework the script substantially. I want to know, how can we keep moving through these performances in a way that doesn't feel like end products.

APC: Do you have recordings of all these events?

KdP: All of them except one.

APC: If it all comes to be, when you revisit these works with these folks, what different choices would they want to make? It’ll be interesting to see.

KdP: Yeah. The poets who have been part of this project are just so phenomenal. If I were able to work in a more sustained way with, for example, another trio like Kaie Kellough, Margaret Christakos, and Deanna Radford, what would come out of that? Asking those three people to work together for a month—I get goosebumps thinking about the potential of the project. They all have super robust performance practices and musical practices and improvisational practices.

APC: Yeah, absolutely. I don’t know if this is a two part question or if it's any kind of question, but I was really touched by so many things in the chapters of yours that I’ve now read and just the work that you're doing in general. I read the Karis Shearer and Erín Moure article, “The Public Reading,” and then more recently, Sarah Truman's *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research Creation*. Beautiful. It's really amazing stuff. In your work, I felt rewarded, as I did with the works I just mentioned, by the transparency of the dynamics of funding and all of that. It feels really rare. I was reading your work and it was great that this is all so explicit. For a creative writer or someone like me, you would think those could be boring details, but they're not. It's all fascinating. I was so happy partly because I had no idea what your thesis was going to look like, at all. While I had a lot of love and familiarity with your creative work and some of your essays and reviews, I didn’t wholly know what this book was going to look and feel like. I also just had the experience of working with you for this, and yeah, we were talking transparently about the budget and all those things, you know. Thinking about how performances get stuck in that first draft stage of things, or that one should have applied for creation or production grants, the should-have-could-have-would-haves. You end up doing things within these constraints or limitations. Reading this brought me back into—I'm using this term, which is a really funny one—but *magical room,* instead of *safe spaces*.

[Laughter]

KdP: Amazing.

APC: Hilarious. It's kind of a joke. I'm reading this really quite hilarious book, *Ecstasy Is Necessary,* by Barbara Carrellas.

KdP: Is that a sexy image on the front?

APC: I know, right? It started as a joke because a friend was talking about how she had grown up in Saudi Arabia and she was disclosing all of these sort of intimate things that she can't handle sexually and how this book is helping. And I always go at things with a research brain and so I was approaching it, asking to borrow it because, well, in one of the courses I teach, I teach erotic material. So I started reaching but quickly realized, "no, this is actually useful for *me.* Like me personally." I was like, "oh, okay, this is actually a set of interesting terms." Which brings me to my question and how you refer to Deep Curation as a care centered mode of literary event, and I was thinking that, in a way, this book is doing that. It's creating a *magic room* not a safe one but one where the magic can happen only because of the trust and responsibility and transparency and all of that.

KdP: Which book?

APC: The *Ecstasy* book, but also your dissertation. For all of us, the participants and readers of this work, you are centering care, also with the transparency about finances, the full disclosure of all those kinds of things. I felt really cared for even by the mentions of childcare. These details are there and they will help other people.

KdP: That's lovely to hear. I have a couple of directions for response, when you talking about all those details around transparency. To a degree, I feel like there isn't enough transparency. I think it's partially the private nature of the archive right now. Deep Curation isn't currently accessible in any way. It's on my computer, and there are a bunch of papers in a ridiculously messy style over here, but in certain ways the information that I put into the chapter is my vision of the project. No one can fact check it because I have the information.

APC: Yeah. You feel you need to do something with that.

KdP: Cycling back to your opening question, one other thing that would be great is at some point to have an actual publicly accessible website or archive for Deep Curation. Maybe it could be part of SpokenWeb. Some kind of repository for the materials that I have. Of course, not everything goes into those archives either. So that becomes a curatorial project in and of itself. I was having an interesting conversation with a DH scholar recently, whose name I unfortunately can't remember, and he was basically saying, one could create a really cool interface that tries to mirror what Deep Curation is doing, as a digital platform. I don't know how to do that yet.

APC: Right. What is that? What would that be? How does it look?

KdP: I don't know. It would have to be somehow interactive? I wanted to say something else in terms of care. I have increasingly been thinking about the dissertation itself as a form of curation,

in terms of the larger case studies that I've been working with. There are four. The first is the Sir George Williams poetry series, from the ‘60s, then Véhicule Art Inc., from the ‘70s, and then a bit of a jump towards the Words and Music Show, from the early 2000s, and then Deep Curation. They're all Montreal-based series and there's a lot of overlap that happens in terms of key agents performing at the various series and how they interrelate and how they also function differently in different series. My choice of series is also a form of curation. The labour of care within that larger scale, macro curation has been a huge learning curve on my end. As a scholar, as a curator, you come in with so many preconceptions and value judgments of your own. Then working with these archives, and working with people, most of whom are still around, you have to think through how much of the work of that scholarly care is creating lineage or creating analyses that narrativize a given series. How much of that is celebratory work? How much of that is critical work in, in both senses? Where does my responsibility lie? Especially when I have personal relationships with people involved in these series.

APC: What role do you have in terms of caring for their work?

KdP: Exactly. Expectations are also placed on me as curator in the sense that I am going to create posterity for people just because I'm doing this little bit of scholarly work for them, or not for them, for me, but by working on their materials. I feel like there's some interesting meta essay waiting to be written about working with other people’s materials.

APC: Yeah, it is weird. You talked about it a little bit before, like in terms of also needing to prioritize your own self-care. I don't mean it in a trite way. Creating prosperity for your own work or for someone else’s work in a creative or productive way is too much for one person.

KdP: Even in terms of legitimizing the archives of Deep Curation, it’s too much for one person. I can just do this tiny little bit.

APC: Definitely. And so what does that mean? Using the example of Deep Curation, are you able to envision it as something that you would be able to co-curate, to work with other collaborators right from the outset? I love what you said about re-authorship before, the lines of writerly ability, remaking through inscription—that stuck out to me. There's this line that you have that’s about there being a tiny distantiation for Kama and me in the self and selves that we create, but also in the dialogic curatorial role with you. I wonder if the work will move differently, will thrive or flourish in ways that then also take care of you. Do you feel like you want partnership or collaboration from the very outset? And if so, how? Would it feel like an immersion into something quicker?

KdP: I feel like the work that the three of us did is a pretty good example, from my perspective, of a collaboration that made things easier for me because you two were so involved, and you were so committed, and you were so present. That made my work a lot easier than other Deep Curation events. As I talk about in the dissertation, I was even questioning that ease. I think we are so socialized into difficulty. A bit of an aside, but recently I’ve been doing this guest editorship for Metatron’s new publication, *Glyphoria,* and I'm getting paid really well. I feel so much guilt around it. I'm like, “why am I being paid so much? Am I doing enough work?” It's because we've been socialized, especially as poets, do think about labour as volunteering.

APC: This is a no-brainer, but there's the singular vision of being a poet and artist who invites contributors rather than the other way around.

KdP: In terms of your question about collaboration, it's really compelling to think what the different roles would be in terms of having, say, two curators versus having two poets. What would that mean? How would it be different if, instead of seeing me as the curator and you and Kama as the poets, we'd all have been curator-poets? It might be a technicality. Maybe to a degree, we were already curator-poets, but there was a delimitation within our collaboration. We had delimited the roles that we were going to play.

APC: Do you think this is because of the durational way that we worked?

KdP: I'm also thinking of Jacob Wren's book on PME-ART, *Authenticity Is a Feeling*, where he talks at length about how difficult it is to collaborate.

APC: I was just thinking, "is that going to make things easier?"

[Laughter]

KdP: What if I have three curators and it's a nightmare?

APC: Too many cooks in the kitchen. From my music background, it depends on what kind of project you are doing. It's a different thing in terms of all of my academic work, and in terms of all of my work as a writer.

KdP: What you're asking is making me think productively about the delimitation of roles, in the sense that collaboration doesn't have to mean everyone does the same thing. Take, for example, what I was talking about initially with a kind of festival of reworkings, having someone else who's part of it who organizes venues and creates links and alliances with places would mean that I don't have to do all of that. It would mean building the project as shared labour. It would mean shared *curating* versus shared *curatorial* labour, to use that distinction between administration and creative process.

APC: Yeah, totally. How do you choose your collaborators? Sometimes it's role-based, in terms of what we do. I'm just joking and teasing this out. Let's say, we're co-curatorial poets doing it from A – Z, would it be possible? Certainly not necessarily amongst most of the poets that I know. They wouldn't necessarily be good at doing those other tasks or those other roles or those other jobs. I'm using the analogy of music. The expectations for our band are that one person is a synth player and someone's a sax player. That's what the project is. But what does it mean in terms of producing the project? There are the technical things. Sometimes you have a sound engineer in your band, but not always.

KdP: You and I would be a really good curatorial poet team. I can imagine the two of us working together to create a Deep Curation performance of our respective works, and both curating and performing it, and being good with administration and good with time management. So like everything, I guess, it's a case-to-case thing. I can imagine a situation where two people have totally

different skillsets and they need to clearly say, “you're doing admin, you're organizing this grant, you're thinking through the conceptual arc of this event, you're performing,” and so on. Other partnerships could be more about coexisting in the same spaces or productively merging roles.

APC: Yeah. I feel increasingly excited about that. A lot of the work that we do is pretty lonely, heady stuff. I'm trying to think, are there ways we can, from the beginning, make these sort of responsibilities shared? In any project coming into fruition, one that has to circulate in the world in general, there are going to be other people involved. What if I involve the closer ones, the ones closest to me from the get go?

KdP: There are quite a lot of people around us right now who are thinking about this in terms of scholarship, thinking about collaboration. It’s a very different book, obviously, but when I invited you to do this conversation with me...

APC: Right! That's true.

KdP: When I asked you to do that, I was also thinking about the final chapter of Dylan Robinson’s *Hungry Listening.* It ends with this very generous invitation to Deborah Wong and Ellen Waterman to consider themselves as settler listeners, in the larger project of Robinson's book. Obviously, our conversation is a very different kind of invitation, but it is about creating space for other people within your scholarship. I'm also thinking of a recent plenary talk with Deanna Fong and Felicity Tayler in which they called their lecture a *conversationalist method*. They did this pretty much ad lib plenary, instead of having this super scripted, thought-out, written-out, individualized talk that preceded the actual performance of it. They had a couple of talking points and then they just talked about it.

APC: Oh, wow.

KdP: Yeah. Not only in creative sphere, but also in universities, people are starting to think about how one can think more collectively, collaboratively, and conversationally. Oral history protocols are also one step of that.

APC: Do you know the author, Ather Zia, *Resisting Disappearance*? She's actually a poet ethnographer, writing about women's activism under military occupation in Kashmir. I really like her work. She's really cool. You should check her out. In terms of the methodology of that book, it goes beyond just naming your research partners, but naming them as everybody that is in the book, like all the people you talked to. Showing through, what you're talking about, the conversational method, that these people became your research partners because you met a woman holding a protest sign.

KdP: This is going back to the ethics of care we were talking about previously. Another example I'm thinking of is actually another plenary at the same conference, *The Sound of Literature in Time*, by T.L. Cowan. They were talking about doing oral history interviews, like this one we're doing right now, then transcribing it, but only quoting two sentences from it in a research essay. It’s almost like my example of only me having access to my own Deep Curation archives. People can only hear what you have to say—*you* being Alexei—through me. I take ownership of what you

said, even though I did that research collectively with you. T.L. always tries to publish the interviews in some way, so that they can cite the interview as the interviewee's intellectual property.

APC: Right. Wow. Interesting. That's very cool. That's exactly like that book I just mentioned. Yeah. I mean, to catalogue all those conversations there have to be pretty well-designed websites, an archive. All should be there.

[Laughter]

KdP: Everything should be there. It's like working against the illusion of research comprehensibility. Any kind of research is going to be a selection. There's no way we can put all of it into the world.

Yeah, I don't know how many more questions you have. But that's actually a good place to stop.

Thank you for being present for this and that I could trust you. We can continue this conversation indefinitely.

APC: I'm so impressed and in awe. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your many beautiful projects and this one this week.

Appendix 11—List of Deep Curation poetry readings,
Curated by Klara du Plessis, 2018-2022

1. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Aaron Boothby, Klara du Plessis, Canisia Lubrin. 24 August 2018. Knife Fork Bookstore, Toronto.
2. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Aaron Boothby, Klara du Plessis, Canisia Lubrin, Erin Robinsong. 24 November 2018, Mile End Poets' Festival, Resonance Café, Montreal.
3. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Jason Camlot, Klara du Plessis, Deanna Fong, Katherine McLeod. 14 February 2019, 4th Space, Concordia University, Montreal.
4. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Oana Avasilichioaei, Liz Howard, Tess Liem. 3 May 2019, Hôtel 10, International Blue Metropolis Literary Festival, Montreal.
5. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Kayla Czaga, Klara du Plessis, Daniel Hugo, Samuel Osaze, Jolyn Phillips. 2 July 2019, Centenary Complex Gallery, Vrystaat Kunstefees, Bloemfontein, South Africa.
6. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Margaret Christakos, Kaie Kellough, Deanna Radford. 7 November 2019, 4th Space, Concordia University, Montreal.
7. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Lee Ann Brown Fanny Howe, Sawako Nakayasu. 30 January 2020, Playwrights Theatre, Boston University, Boston, U.S.A.
8. Deep Curation poetry reading featuring Kama La Mackerel, Alexei Perry Cox. 28 July 2022, White Wall Studio, Montreal, and 9 August 2022, Théâtre aux Écuries, Montreal.