

# **BIRTH CAGE**

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Writing  
Interdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Creativity  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

By

CAMILLA ISA MARIA LAUSAS

## PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an MFA in Writing degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this university may make its Preliminary Pages freely available for inspection as outlined in the MFA in Writing Thesis License/Access Agreement accepted by the College of Graduate Studies and Research in June, 2013.

Request for permission to make use of the material beyond the Preliminary Pages of this thesis should be addressed to the author of thesis, or:

Coordinator, MFA in Writing  
University of Saskatchewan  
Interdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Creativity  
Division of Humanities and Fine Arts  
Room 509  
9 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7N 5A5

## ABSTRACT

*Birth Cage* is a trilingual and genre-bending approach to poetry. It is a postmodernist blend of visual and concrete poetry inspired by Deconstructivist architecture. Through different languages and voices, *Birth Cage* investigates the evolution of an individual. The transformation of a body, the search for home and the need to communicate are themes in the journey of a fragmented self towards unity. With a visual and linguistic emphasis on the idea of borders and access, various possible reading paths are related to the immigrant experience of a new culture. Language is treated as a cultural construct shaping the self as it defines the experience of space, on pages or in material space surrounding us. The idea of the self as architecture is a poetic reflection on living space, whether that is body, building or city. Architecture's double-coding is present as a metaphor and followed in the visual formats which further question the graphic possibilities of words. The different languages and shifting visual elements allow a multifaceted reading experience that is a playful challenge for the reader. As a hybrid book, *Birth Cage* is a multidisciplinary approach to poetry and a blueprint for a cognitive architecture.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the University of Saskatchewan's Interdisciplinary Center for Culture and Creativity, my program coordinator Dr. Jeanette Lynes, my supervisor Dr. Hilary Clark, and Dr. Jon Bath for their continuous support.

I would like to specially acknowledge and thank Matthew Hall for his support and insight through my thesis project.

Finally, I would also like to thank my peers for their valuable insight, and Tyson John Atkings for encouraging me to undertake my most ambitious writing project and being patient and present through it.

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

*Birth Cage* is a poetic text comprised primarily of visual and concrete poetry. As a writer and a visual artist I am concerned with the physical materiality of text. My thesis investigates the graphic possibilities of text to offer an alternate reading experience instead of a linear left to right margin page layout.

My thesis is written in three languages: English, French and Finnish. Although I offer some explanations and I am concerned with the question of translation, I have chosen not to translate any of the poems directly. It is not necessary for the reader to be able to read all three languages to understand the whole. I believe that being exposed to the foreign and inaccessible advances the reading experience of poetry. Many multilingual writers have integrated elements and words from another language into their pieces. The simple explanation for this is the impossibility or extreme complexity of providing an exact translation, as Nicole Brossard, Anne-Marie Wheeler and Susan Rudy discuss in *words looking for another possibility: Dialogue sur la traduction à propos d'Écrivaine*. When a person lives in several languages her thought-processes are related to all of them.

*Birth Cage* grew from a passion for literature and visual arts - specifically, the curiosity around what kind of reading experience combinations of media and genres could generate. The impulse to create a book with an alternate reading experience grew from my elective in the first year of the MFA in Writing program, in Dr. Jon Bath's course, "The Book as Object." I had the opportunity to study in detail the impact of typography and the alternate definitions that can be attributed to a book as a textual object. The discovery of Johanna Drucker's and Mark Danielewski's work had an influence on the way I view the book and made me question all the varied capacities of text and language as they exist on the printed page. As a poet and visual artist I have always been interested in the way text is laid out on a page and the impact of typography on a piece of writing. This course led me to experiment with the possibilities emerging from the shift between media and to discover how moving from paper and pen to digital media offers various possibilities for a printed book. My final project in Dr. Bath's course developed into a manuscript of my third book, called *Exi[s]t*. It was a considerable step from my previous writing into the field of visual poetry. A digital chapbook version was featured by *Poetry is Dead* at the Vancouver Art & Book Fair in 2014 and was also published as a part of a collaborative book project *I/Exi[s]t – Exit/I* by JackPine Press in November 2014. Encouraged by these opportunities I decided to explore further alternate media and of the intersection of genres, in order to create a hybrid book of poetry that would be simultaneously playful and challenging for the reader.

The relation between form and content has always been a concern of artists and writers, with modernist writing being defined by Charles Olson's statement: "Form is never more than an ex-

tension of content” (15). Generally prose writers are more focused on content, which has a more methodological level of operation. Poetry characteristically places more emphasis on the form of the text, which brings in another level of reading, with an emphasis on the visual, similar to visual arts. John Ciardi notes that “the difference between poetry and any other form of writing is that every line ends not at the right hand margin of the page but against white space” (10). Poets have the ability to transform abstract ideas into visual ideas by an exploration of the physical properties of language and the page.

My approach to words and writing can be placed in the continuity of visual and concrete poetry. The second section in *Birth Cage* combines these two genres. The third section, “Grey Room,” is composed of poems that I would classify as concrete poetry. I define visual poetry as poetry that is meant to be seen; in which the visual aspect of the composition is as important as the words in the poem. Willard Bohn writes in *Reading Visual Poetry*, that visual poetry “assumes many forms but inevitably possesses a pictorial and a verbal aspect” (13). One element that distinguishes works of visual or concrete poetry from other fields of literary endeavor is that if they were read aloud, a substantial amount of their effect would be lost.

Concrete poetry could fall in the category of visual poetry, but there is some controversy on how it is to be classified. Concrete poetry is a genre that seems complex to define, as many concrete poets are often working in several mediums and genres. The line between visual art and concrete poetry is also very fine, as Stephen Bann says: “Representation by words can only lead to confusion in the evaluation of concrete poetry” (27). Personally, I would say concrete poetry is connected to visual poetry, but not a subgenre of it. This is because visual poetry has existed since the ancient Greece where it was known as “Technopaigeia” and the times of the Roman Empire, when it was called “Carmina Figurata” (Bohn 13). It has been going in and out of fashion ever since, and encountered the most significant rebirths in the Renaissance and again in the 20th Century with poets such as Guillaume Apollinaire and Stéphane Mallarmé. The surrealists and Dadaists contributed to the continuous visibility of the field, and to its theoretical exposition.

Concrete Poetry is a much more modern genre. Although it has roots in visual poetry and the work of groups such as the Parnassian poets in France in the 19th Century lead by Théophile Gautier, it emerged internationally in the 1950’s and was simultaneously defined by the poet Eugene Gomringer in Germany and the Noigandres group in Brazil, founded by Augusto and Haroldo de Campos. In 1956 an exhibition of Concrete Art took place at the Museum of Modern Art in Sao Paulo, after which the literary movement was officially called “Poesia Concreta,” Concrete Poetry (Bann 7). The development of concrete poetry around the world is wide: from UK with Ian Hamilton Finlay and Stephen Bann, to Brazil with the Noigandres group, to the United States with Robert Lax and Emmett Williams to Canada with poets such as bpNichol, bill bissett and derek beaulieu. These poets establish a rich lineage of concrete poetry that remains definitively Canadian, yet international in scope and aspiration. It is in the continuity of their work that I locate my practice today, acknowledging many international influences.

Concrete poets seek a parallel development of structure and content in their work. For them, form is content and content is form; a poem communicates its own structure and vice-versa. The Noigandres group defined their practice as related to a phenomenon of metacommunication:

coincidence and simultaneity of verbal and non-verbal communications. (Bann 15). In this approach the meaning of the piece of work is not implicit in the form, but the form can be designed to give the most effective expression of the content without falling into illustration. Bohn notes regarding concrete poetry: “The form of a poem should ideally reflect the poem’s subject without limiting its appearance” (124).

Poetry of any kind is always concerned by the space it occupies on a page. In both visual and concrete poetry, poems often follow more of an artistic model than literary conventions. This brings them closer to visual arts; by engaging both the visual and the verbal, they engage more senses, which creates a different reading experience than does a more conventional piece of writing. A concrete poem is the most aware of both the visual and verbal aspect. As the Scottish poet Ian Hamilton Finlay declared, a concrete poem is “a model of order, even if set in a space which is full of doubt” (qtd in Bann 9). According to Bohn, “Fully integrated verbal and visual elements multiply the possibilities of meaning” (160). Bordering literature and visual art, concrete poetry can be read as both, according to what it is designed for: a page in a book or a wall in a gallery. For example, poems such as “Olho por Olho,” 1964, by Augusto de Campos, “Poetic Syntax in Relation to Prose,” 1959, by Carlfriedrich Claus, “Type is Honey,” 1962, by Ferdinand Kriwet, Arrigo Lora Totino’s poems from 1966 or any of derek beaulieu’s poems in *Fractal Economies*, 2006, could be seen in an art gallery. Similarly, the works of visual artists David Shrigley or Anatol Knotek, who both make use of words, have as much impact both on a page of a book or as in a three-dimensional gallery installment. This crossing between media may also be seen in the influence of Cy Twombly on the genre of asemic writing which straddles written and visual boundaries.

It is obvious that a main concern of any poet is language, as Bann remarks: “Certainly this sphere of activity is, before all else, concerned with language. Yet the extent to which it forms a genre distinct from traditional poetry is a question which is difficult to resolve” (27). What makes a concrete poem is the fact that it is designed for a page. Eugen Grominger defines the page as “a play area of fixed dimensions” (Bann 9), meaning a place for visual and verbal experimentation perhaps making an unexpected use of the space. A concrete poem is composed of words as signs and symbols; therefore, the page and the book form are the restricting elements that also allow it to be defined as poetry. Hansjörg Mayer argues that “concrete poetry must fully accept the rigid, non-sensuous character of the printed word, and that only by striking a balance between letter-form and overall form can he achieve a coherent work of art” (qtd in Bann 11).

Both, concrete poetry and visual poetry, as Bohn affirms, are “wedded both to literature and to art” and “produce insight and aesthetic experiences that few other genres can equal” (162). It is a conscious decision by the writer to combine literature and visual art. Through the Renaissance and beyond, poets would quote Horace: “Ut pictura poesis” (1.361), which translates to “as is painting, so is poetry,” implying that the principles of one can serve the other. According to David W. Seaman, “the emphasis here is on the work of art itself, which shows often a tension in the form” (23). He explains that with these genres of poetry (concrete and visual) it is not question of a “transposition of art” where one art form absorbs elements of the other, but rather a case of “synthesis of the arts” where both forms, here visual and verbal, declare themselves openly (23). Therefore “when a writer treats his or her creation not only as a verbal communication to be

received by the intellect, but also as a visually perceived object, it adds to the level of expression of the work; the look of the poem on the page can become attractive and significant for itself” (Seaman 23).

After all, it is the hybridity of concrete poetry that makes it an unique and outstanding genre, as Bann notes: “We would do well to apply to concrete poetry the criteria which are all too readily waived in poetic criticism, and to ask, not whether the abandonment of discursive speech qualifies it to be classed as poetry or painting, but under what terms and according to what inherent principles it may be classed as art” (27). Concrete poetry is thus certainly a form of *both* art and literature. These poems are as much pieces of visual art made with words, as they are poems. They liberate themselves from the conventions of the published book, turning the book into a two-dimensional gallery space. Jonathan Williams acknowledges “if there is such a thing as a worldwide movement in art and poetry, Concrete is it” (qtd in Emmett Williams vii).

Visual and concrete poetry are unique genres as Willard Bohn points out, they “appeal to both sides of the brain, integrating intellectual and intuitive experience into a complex whole” (162). These international literary movements have deep roots in many cultures, acknowledged by writers, artists and critics; as Seaman notes they are “the most interesting possibility of the synthesis of the arts” (23). In visual and concrete poetry, the form participates in the construction of the whole composition. Johanna Drucker argues that these genres call attention to the visual attribute of words, which become associated with being rather than representing (10). Bohn agrees with this, as “fully integrated verbal and visual elements multiply the possibilities of meaning” (160). Therefore the impact of the visual aspect in writing cannot be denied, for if the form is designed to serve the content, it can only add a new level to the reading experience.

Today’s digital media allow a much wider approach to the interests and concerns in combining the visual and the verbal. derek beaulieu’s poems in *Fractal Economies*, 2006, and John Riddell’s *How to grow your own lightbulbs*, 1996, or Mark Z. Danielewski’s *The House of Leaves*, 2000, are examples of recent results that can be obtained by this practice. *Birth Cage* partakes in the history with which these writers are engaged, sharing the same approach to literature as an art form. In this project, I apply the principle of concrete poetry, where form determines content, and content determines form. I focus on the metaphor of a building as a body, the self as architecture, aspects which can be read through postmodern theory as well as gender theory. Every aspect that I explore with words is also treated visually.

*Birth Cage* is a book designed as a building. Architecture’s double coding is present as a metaphor and in the structure, the form of the book. Mark Z. Danielewski’s *The House of Leaves* is one of my main influences amongst contemporary writers. He has approached the book form in different ways, challenging the reader with unconventional and striking reading experiences. His novel allowed me to further develop my concerns about form and content. In it, Daniliewski tells a story from several points of view simultaneously by the use of different literary styles, demarcated on the same page by typography. The whole book is a labyrinth offering alternate ways of reading. A central metaphor in it is related to a house that becomes a labyrinth. The visual aspect and the form of the text follow this idea. Eventually the reader gets lost, but manages to navigate her way through. Because of the different storylines, the different fonts, color-coded words and



shifts in the layout, one finds that its form already communicates a labyrinth.

Writers have always experimented with typography although the acknowledgement of typography as an important part of the art and the writing worlds can be linked to the Dadaist Poets and Surrealists. André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924 dedicates several pages to the 'genre' of typographical effects. It was the experiments of Amédée Ozenfant that managed to transform typography into an art form that he called "Psychotype." Williard Bohn explains that this is "an art that consists in making the typographical characters participate in the expression of thoughts and the painting of various moods, no longer as conventional signs but as signs having significance in themselves" (Bohn 80). Current poets can be thankful for that recognition of typographical elements as tools for visual poetry and writing. A typewriter can seem like a limited instrument compared to a computer keyboard matrix as far as a varied typography is concerned, but it is stunning to see all the different experiments that it can create. Some incredible examples are the work of concrete poets such as Claus Bremer, Ilse and Pierre Garnier or Bengt Emil Johnson. Writing tools such as a typewriter define the process of a writer, imposing limitations on the finished work.

Today, writers have access not only to paper, pen and typewriters, but to the computer, with all the programs specifically designed for unlimited text editing - this means unlimited possibilities for a writer. Where drawing was once at the origins of visual poetry and typewriters originally shaped concrete poetry, now computers have a considerable impact on these genres. Computers allow writers and especially poets to extend their practice far beyond the domain of aesthetics. This has led to the development of new genres such as digital poetry, which tends towards abstraction. This is also a new approach to language, as Bohn explains, it almost results from "a dream of creating a translinguistic language" (157).

Digital media has to be acknowledged in the conception of the form of *Birth Cage*, even if from the start my goal has always been to create a physical object. Adobe InDesign is only one of the multiple tools available for writers today that offer possibilities in experimenting with typography and creating new relations between form and content. This program allowed me to conceive of a book where the reader can navigate the work as a guest in a house; the structure created by means of digital media allows for a different type of experience to be created on a printed page. *Birth Cage* invites the reader to wander around, with suggestive instructions and multiple paths of reading, instead of following the conventional linearity of 'start to end.'

In fact, this same concept of the reader as a pedestrian is altered through an idea similar to that of "psychogeography" defined in the 1950's by Guy Debord. This is a concept that has existed through centuries under different names. The walker poets such as Arthur Rimbaud or Charles Baudelaire in France would have used the term "flâneur" while the English would use the term "wanderer." However, the result of experiencing space remains the same. Psychogeography provides an alternative way of apprehending surroundings, and transforms the everyday experience of walking into something new and unexpected. One may choose the usual linear path, but can also make a different choice. Applied to writing, this alternative way of approaching walking leads to a reading experience with an alternate approach to a printed book. The

creation of a non-linear evolution in a book is facilitated by the means of digital media, as it allows multiple possibilities in the process of writing. A computer eases the crafting of a book by writing fragments that can be edited and shuffled around multiple times. The non-linear process of writing was particularly important in *Birth Cage* as my goal was to have various reading patterns. Previously I experienced the efficiency of how digital technology can affect the structure of a book when I wrote *Exi[s]t*. Written during my first year in the MFA in Writing it was my first time exploring the capacities of Adobe InDesign in the process of editing poetry. This experience resulted in an awareness of digital media's faculty to create singular layouts with multiple languages, which offer a reader diverse and non-linear approaches to a piece of writing.

Digital media brings us to consider the question of language. Williard Bohn makes an interesting note to anyone with an interest in its different capacities: "Language comprises not just marks on the page, or sounds in the mouth, but the process of signification itself. Words inhabit a whole spectrum of possibilities from the moment they are conceived and the moment they cease to exist. Even then, they are preserved as virtual constructs in our memory. Thus language resembles a living organism whose traces remain with us indefinitely" (157).

Language occupies an important part in *Birth Cage*, where I explore its aspects and capacities, but also its boundaries and limits through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction. I use the term deconstruction as an application of post-structuralist thought, which emerged as a philosophical theory in the late 1960's in France. It is based on the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's statement that the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. According to this theory, language constitutes our world and doesn't simply record or label it: reality is textual and we are not in control of language, which is fundamentally contradictory. Post-structuralism is a reaction to the limitations of structuralism based on semiotics, the studies of the structure and meaning of language.

The structure of *Birth Cage* is closely based on the architectural movement of Deconstructivism that emerged in the 1980's. Deconstructivist architecture is inherently tied to post-modernism and post-structuralism; it is characterized by fragmentation, an interest in manipulating a structure and a surface to create shapes that appear to distort and dislocate visual elements of constructions. Deconstructivism takes an argumentative stance towards architecture, wanting to disassemble it; the visual appearance of these buildings can be described by unpredictability and a controlled chaos. In *Birth Cage*, my intention has been to apply the theory behind this architectural movement to text and words. By the use of fragments, visually almost unreadable fonts and symbols such as braille, I draw on the philosophical and literary theories of post-structuralism and architectural movement of deconstructivism to create an alternate reading experience, foregrounding structure and language (communication, signs, symbols, meaning). My concern with the structure of words on the page is similar to an architect's with a building in a cosmopolitan cityscape. Language as a cultural construct is a major part of the composition of both a book and a city.

I am often asked the question, 'In which language do you think?' For a completely multilingual person this is almost impossible to answer. A multilingual person thinks in all her languages, separately or sometimes in a totally mixed way. The thought process of a multilingual person

differs from someone who is unilingual; the mind, and therefore the self, is built on distinct fragments, often linked to diverse cultures. The mind exists differently in different languages. This can be observed with immigrants or people who have grown up between two or more cultures and languages. They express themselves differently according to the language they use. This suggests a self built of multiple selves, one for each language. They are the same but they can't be transposed totally, either. In *Birth Cage* this is dealt with the presence of different voices in different languages. The self is split into three voices that deal with the same concerns through different metaphors.

Language defines a person. It anchors one in a culture and is the essential tool for communication within a society and within oneself. An awareness of language and what it does, how it works, can be intensified through immigration. The process of redefinition of the self within a culture and a society is relevant to immigrants as they are forced to become extremely aware of the impact of languages. The shift between languages affects the thought pattern of a person so it inevitably affects the way one writes. For example, the Canadian poet Peter Midgley, who writes in English and Afrikaans, notes that writing is about tension and conflict, which is almost always experienced through immigration or multiculturalism: "When you live with the conflict of belonging in more than one place, and yet constantly on the periphery, it can feed your writing in fruitful ways" (9). Midgley consciously includes other languages in his poems to force the reader out of her linguistic and cultural comfort zones, in order to consider the weight and the meaning of words. He tries to push the boundaries of language and normalize foreignness: "I want readers to confront their own discomfort at the sight of the 'foreign' words and to work through the underlying prejudices and assumptions that characterize that discomfort" (11). He encourages readers to be open to engaging in language beyond what they already know and what they are comfortable with, and simply make an effort: "I'm not asking for perfection, I'm asking for effort" (10). The Canadian context is already bilingual and for the most part multicultural, which should make the readership more open to languages they don't necessarily understand, as those are already part of the cultural background. As Midgley notes, "We have to be open to shifts and cultural values. Poetry attunes to that" (11).

Writers want their work to be understood by a wide range of readers, regardless of their origins, language and culture, which is why translation is important and an art in itself. This is inevitably one of my concerns as a writer. When the work includes substantial parts in several languages as in *Birth Cage*, I feel the need to explain some aspects to the reader, for her to get the right feeling from it. I do this by the use of definitions, an appendix or a reference to another poem treating similar themes in another language. I also voluntarily leave some parts unexplained when this doesn't affect the understanding of the whole. Therefore, the book is organized assuming the possibility of incomprehension.

In the first section, "White Room," I chose a different way of dealing with the issue of translation by writing pieces that visually look like translations and that treat the same ideas or feelings, but are written from a different perspective; each language, presented simultaneously as columns of architecture, has its voice, and treats subjects in unique ways. The English part is focused on architecture and space, the French on the body, and the Finnish on a body inhabiting a space. All three languages - English, French and Finnish - engage with reality on their own terms; each

forming an incomplete picture of an ultimately unknowable reality. Peter Midgley offers explanations to assist the reader, but the controversy is as he says, that “offering explanations makes readers lazy. They begin to expect it, then gloss over the language and look instead at the note, at the explanation. So offering these explanations ends up negating the purpose of including the phrases in the first instance” (12-13). I share with Midgley the desire to ask for effort from the reader. When confronted with something they can’t understand, I would hope that instead of the first reaction of “I don’t understand this, I want it translated,” the reader would consider the questions: ‘Why do I assume a work has to be translated (into English)? What privileges attend me as a native speaker (of English)? What as a reader do I take for granted?’

Many writers, artists and musicians create multilingual works because of the specific capacities of a language and the way it relates to a culture. For example, the music group Positive Black Soul from Senegal, a multilingual country, write their lyrics in English, French and Wolof. The languages are mixed in their texts, as each translates a different aspect of the culture. Multilingualism and cultural pluralism are values that should be embraced and cherished, as they enrich the whole society.

The reading experience is always different in the original version; however good the translation is, some of the feeling or message always gets lost on the way. Language is the main tool for communication between people and within oneself. It represents the self’s experience of a culture and physical space. Having been an immigrant in several countries in my life, I have found it relevant for my work and my interest in language to link my writing to this experience. One of the aspects explored in *Birth Cage* is the evolution of language through form and content. The first section starts with a more clear narrative constituted of three separate voices in three different languages, which start to dissolve. The form starts to deconstruct – until at the end of the second section, “Black Room,” the visual and verbal fragmentation is complete. When the voices and the form have ultimately disappeared, the reconstruction begins in the third section, “Grey Room,” visually by the exploration of fonts, verbally through a voice that slowly rebuilds to represent only ‘one self’ instead of multiple. This process is related to how immigrants experience a new culture. First a person makes a distinction between the different languages and cultures she is part of, where she comes from and where she is. This creates a contradictory feeling of being part of all of them and also excluded from them.

In *Birth Cage*, for a reader who can’t understand all three languages the immigrant experience of language barriers and cultural unbelonging becomes part of the reading experience: the reader can see what is happening in the parts written in other languages, get a visual experience from them, but can’t fully enter those fragments. This is related to the idea of borders and access; a unilingual reader has a limited access to reading some elements, which is linked to my interest in space on the page and as physical reality surrounding us. When an immigrant overcomes the language barrier, communication with others becomes possible. However, a person often feels that there are elements of the culture and their person that can’t be expressed in the same way through the new language. This is why it is important for them to find a unity through compromises. In *Birth Cage*, language achieves its version of an optimally functional state through the reconstruction of language and a fusion of the three voices into one.

As I suggested earlier, a multilingual person has a thought pattern composed of fragments. These all come together to create one new inner language. First one has the experience of their personality becoming blurred after which the self is reconstructed including all the elements forming a new different whole. Personally, I have experienced this in every culture and country I've lived. There are always aspects of the culture that are impossible to understand in the beginning, whether dialect, product names or elements of popular culture. For me it is impossible to know all these elements of one culture, but I have become a person who can relate to pieces of multiple cultures. The fragments of cultures that I relate to shape my language and thus the person I am. In *Birth Cage* this dismantling and reconstruction can be observed through the visual aspect and in the words: at the end the three voices fuse, using elements from all. One notices, seemingly out of necessity, visual aspects of culture that surface in the aid of the speaker, almost as bodily language.

The themes explored in *Birth Cage* are closely related to the form and possibilities of a book as object. It is a book to be treated as a textual object but also as a body, a map, a house, enclosing as many patterns as a building. Crossing genres in applying a theory related to another art form has been explored in many different media before; for example, when the architect Daniel Libesky designs his buildings, he often works as if he were writing a poem or making a piece of visual art. My aim was to do the opposite: write and conceive a book as if I was designing a building. Architecture is an important part of the society in any city, and our daily lives. I am interested in exploring architecture as a metaphor relating to the self.

As the layout of *Birth Cage* got its inspiration from architecture, my purpose was to reflect it in the reading experience. The reader is considered as a visitor in a building. The introduction invites her to read as if she is moving between different rooms or reading different sections, exploring different fragments in the order that seems appropriate for her. Concrete poets have a special interest in the reading experience their work offers. As Haroldo de Campos argues, the reading process is open, and “you may depart from wherever you wish” (William 60). The visual elements complement the path a reader takes. To quote Seaman, “the ideal reader of such work must take into account both the poetic and the visual aspects” (23). The ‘footer cues’ are guidelines to assist this experience especially when other languages come into account. It is the responsibility of the author to facilitate the experience of the reader, particularly when several reading patterns are possible. I help the reader to avoid hitting a wall when confronted with another language by providing an alternative path. The different languages represent the idea of borders in physical space; they can be crossed, but other paths exist as well. The access is never completely denied. Ultimately the personal choices of the reader make the reading experience unique.

*Birth Cage* investigates the evolution of an individual. Through the different languages and voices, it represents the multitudes that construct the self. Language is an architecture defining the self's experience of space, on pages or in material space surrounding us. *Birth Cage* is a poetic exploration of the development of the self, the transformation of a body, the search for home and the need to communicate. The co-existence of a visual and verbal exploration along with the hybridity of genres in *Birth Cage* creates a multidimensional piece, simultaneously a book of poetry and a piece of cognitive architecture.

## WORKS CITED

- Bann, Stephen. *Concrete Poetry: An International Anthology*. London, UK: London Magazine Editions, 1967. Print.
- beaulieu, derek. *Fractal Economies*. Vancouver : Talonbooks, 2006. Print.
- Bohn, Willard. *Reading Visual Poetry*. Plymouth, UK: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2011. Print.
- Brossard, Nicole, Wheeler, Anne-Mary, and Rudy, Susan. “words looking for another possibility”: *Dialogue sur la traduction à propos d’Écrivaine*. Montreal : How2 2.3 (Spring 2005) Web. 25 Feb. 2015.
- Caseburg, Sharon. “Interview with Peter Midgley”. *CV2* 36.3 (Winter2014): 9-18. Print.
- Ciardi, John. “Manner of Speaking.” *Saturday Review* 17 Sept. 1966: 10-11. Print.
- Drucker, Johanna. *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909 – 1923*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994. Print.
- Horace. *Ars Poetica. (Letter to Piso). Q Horatii Flacci Carminum Libri IV: Epodon Liber*. Ed T.E. Page. London: McMillan & Co, 1959. Print.
- Daniliewski, Mark Z. *The House of Leaves*. Toronto: Random House, 2000. Print.
- Olson, Charles. *Selected Writings*. New York: New Directions, 1966. Print.
- Riddell, John. *How to Grow Your Own Light Bulbs*. Ontario: The Mercury Press, 1996. Print.
- Saussure, De Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Print.
- Seaman, David W. *Concrete Poetry in France*. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1981. Print.
- Williams, Emmett, ed. *An Anthology of Concrete Poetry*. New York: Something Else Press, 1967. Print.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate *Birth Cage* to pedestrians, travellers, guests and [g]hosts worldwide.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ARTIST’S STATEMENT.....	iv
WORKS CITED.....	xiii
DEDICATION.....	xiv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	xv
BIRTH CAGE.....	1
MAILBOX.....	3
BLUEPRINT.....	7
WHITE ROOM.....	23
(H)ALL-WAY.....	79
BLACK ROOM.....	83
(A)-WAY.....	119
GREY ROOM.....	123
BACK DOOR (APPENDIX) .....	189
MAILBOX.....	197
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	203