

CONCRETE POETICS // A LINE IN THE CONSTELLATION // Michael Nardone // OPEN SPACE // January 2014 // How sounds sound.

How sounds resound. Though no sound resounds. The sounds object. A sound object. An object resounding sound. The sounds objecting shape.

How sound objects shape. How space shapes sound. How sounds resound space. What space can a page shape? What shapes can a mouth sound?

A space that shapes how sounds resound how sounds object. What sound objects. How silence sounds. A sound object. A page resounding space.

A shape objecting sound. How a page resounds what a mouth projects. How a mouth resounds what a page objects. How sounds mouth a shape.

How silence sounds. A sound given shape. How sound escapes a page object. How silence surrounds what a mouth projects. How sound sounds.

How sound resounds. A space takes shape. It sounds its sounds. How it sounds silence. How sounds object. A sound object. How silence sounds.

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silencio	silencio	silencio	schweigen	schweigen	schweigen	silence	silence	silence
silencio	silencio	silencio	schweigen	schweigen	schweigen	silence	silence	silence
silencio		silencio	schweigen		schweigen	silence		silence
silencio	silencio	silencio	schweigen	schweigen	schweigen	silence	silence	silence
silencio	silencio	silencio	schweigen	schweigen	schweigen	silence	silence	silence

-Eugen Gomringer

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ALWAYS IT IS A QUESTION OF MAKING NEW FORM OF THE MATERIAL AND NOT OF BEING FORMED BY IT. THIS FUNDAMENTAL CONCRETE PRINCIPAL IS MOST BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED BY PIERRE SCHAEFFER'S KEY EXPERIENCE DURING HIS SEARCH FOR CONCRETE MUSIC: HE HAD ON TAPES SECONDS OF LOCOMOTIVE SOUNDS BUT HE WAS NOT SATISFIED ONLY TO CONNECT ONE SOUND TO ANOTHER EVEN IF THE CONNECTION ITSELF WAS UNUSUAL. INSTEAD HE EXTRACTED A SMALL FRAGMENT OF THE LOCOMOTIVE SOUND AND REPEATED IT WITH A CHANGE OF MUSICAL PITCH. HE THEN WENT BACK TO THE FIRST AGAIN AND SO TO THE SECOND ETC. SO THERE WAS A CHANGE. HE HAD CREATED AN INTERFERENCE WITH THE MATERIAL ITSELF BY MEANS OF SEPARATION. THE ELEMENTS WERE NOT NEW. THE NEWLY FORMED CONTEXT YIELDED A NEW MATERIAL. –Öyvind Fahlström

READ THIS LINE AS SCATTER SHOT // In his 1954 manifesto, Eugen Gomringer imagined a new kind of poem, an object of thought to be both seen and used, one that could create a space of ludic engagement between poet and perceiver. The foundation for this new poetic was not metre or the line of traditional poetics but, instead, *the constellation*. “The constellation is an arrangement, a play-area of fixed dimensions. The poet determines the play-area, the field or force, and suggests its possibilities. The reader grasps the idea of play and joins in. In the constellation something is brought into the world. It is a reality in and of itself and not a poem about something or other. The constellation is an invitation.” There are lineages of concrete poetics that stress an architectural element of verbal design and ones that emphasize the text as a score for vocalic or instrumentalized performance. These divergent practices hold in common the constellation as organizing principle. The constellation is there, too, at the level of the work: in its various material states as text on a page or gallery wall, in the ever-shifting context of that work’s performance.

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Concrete poetry represents polemically the search for a new metric pattern. Committed to an aesthetic favoring material-construction rather than self-expression, it seeks a meter which will produce measure. If quantities can be structured in new ways, according to a “meter” consistent with the scientific spirit of an epoch, the sensibility of the individual poet will make qualities of them. In this way he will arrive at a “measure” consistent with himself and with his time.

-Mike Weaver, UK, 1966

Concrete Poetry aims at the lowest common denominator of language.

Concrete Poetry: total responsibility before language. Through realism. Against a poetry of expression, subjective and hedonistic. To create precise problems and to solve them in terms of sensible language. A general art of the word. The poem-product: useful object.

Concrete Poetry: tension of word-things in space-time.

- The Noigandres Poets, Brazil, 1958

Generally speaking, the material of the concrete poem is language: words reduced to their elements of letters (to see) and syllables (to hear). The concrete poet is concerned with establishing his linguistic materials in a new relationship to space (the page or its equivalent) and/or time (abandoning the old linear measure).

The visual poem as a functional design can humanize the materials and techniques of the mass media of communication

-Mary Ellen Solt, USA, 1968

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WHAT IS SOUNDED, WHAT IS MADE OBJECT // To take the sound from some thing and shape its noise into object, or, alternatively, to take some thing that has been objectified, that has had no noise, no voice, and create some way for it to sound out: here is a line in the constellation to consider. The site of the poem opens a space to give breath, a body, to language forced silent, to a language controlled, so that it might resonate beyond that which contains it. There, too, is the opportunity to arrest those winged words—of politics, of commerce, of power—and occupy them, shift them toward some new context, resituate their intention. One could look to the vast archives of concrete poetics—to the dynamic structures of its contemporaneous movements in places as diverse as Brazil, Sweden, Russia, New Zealand—for verbal tactics that might reverberate today. Here, in Canada, in a time of much erasure—from the government’s muzzling of its scientists to the industrialization of our wilds, the obliteration of our commons to the continued colonial decimation of Indigenous lands, languages and traditions—a diverse array of techniques to vocalize those utterances that continue to be silenced and to objectify those utterances that deserve intensive scrutiny is essential for our moment’s poetic.