

“*Experimental Literature with a Feminist Thread;
English and German Languages*”

Jennifer Lamb

Bibliography List

Abish, W. (1974). *Alphabetical Africa*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Walter Abish's systematic usage of language, building from A through Z and back again, allows for the narrative of *Alphabetical Africa* to take unconventional twists and turns. After attempting his structural style in my own thesis, I marveled at Abish's keen ability to actually convey any message using only words beginning with certain letters (depending on the pattern).

Acker, K. (1986). *Don Quixote*. New York: Grove Press.

Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote*, unlike the Spanish epic, employs a female protagonist working her way through the modern perils a hero[ine] might face, including issues of drugs, abortion, and sexuality.

Acker, K. (1996). *Pussy, King of the Pirates*. New York: Grove Press.

The dreamlike quality of Kathy Acker's narrative simultaneously pulls readers in while pushing readers away. One hypothesis I created for help in understanding the text is that colors delineate what "world" Acker wants the reader to be in.

Barry, L. (1999). *The Freddie Stories*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books.

Lynda Barry's graphic novel depicts father and familial relationships through the eyes of Freddie. Barry's work helps to redefine the graphic novel as more than "just" a comic and is on par with *Maus* in content and depth.

Bataille, G. (1995). *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*. London: Atlas Press.

Berstein, C. (1992). *A Poetics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Blackledge, C. (2003). *The Story of V*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

A redefinition of the vagina through thorough consideration of its representation throughout the ages. Catherine Blackledge considers both mythology and scientific research to give the vagina a modern definition.

Carson, A. (1998). *The Autobiography of Red*. New York: Random House.

Anne Carson plays on Greek mythology and provides a modernized version of Geryon through verse. Our main discussion in class centered around the red-skinned wings of the main character and their relative existence versus non.

Castillo, A. (1993). *So Far From God*. New York: Plume.

A blend of cultures and religious aspects surround the story of one woman's three year-old daughter's resurrection after death. Eerily well-written and often reminding me of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

Cha, T. (1995). *Dictee*. Berkeley: Third Woman Press.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha considers the relationship between language and identity in *Dictee*. Many can see the relationships between language and cultural identity; however, I also identified the relationship between language and gender identity using Dale Spender's theories.

Dürrenmatt, F. (1998). *Die Besuch der alten Dame*. Zürich: Diogenes.

By studying the German-language version of *The Visit* in conjunction with the English translation, I found discrepancies in the meanings and interpretation of the play. In the German version, characters purchase items "auf Kredit" or, in a sense, on a "tab" while in the English version, there is less of a personal connection with the borrower and loaner (as in a credit card).

Dürrenmatt, F. (1962). *The Physicists*. New York: Grove Press, Inc.

Frederich Dürrenmatt's English version of *Die Physiker*. His basic principle within the play is to run the narrative line to the worst possible scenario, again and again, until all possibilities are exhausted and the storyline must end. I spent hours arguing against his principle in my thesis.

Dürrenmatt, F. (1965). *Die Physiker*. New York: Oxford University Press.

The German-language version of Dürrenmatt's *The Physicists* provides the readers with a greater sense for Dürrenmatt's "everything but the kitchen sink" method for plot construction. He puts everything into the story, even the most unbelievable aspects, before allowing the plot to sputter off and die.

Dürrenmatt, F. (1956). *The Visit*. New York: Grove Press, Inc.

The English-language version of *Die Besuch der alten Dame*. Studied in conjunction with the German-language version, one gets the sense for meanings lost in translation.

Fitzgerald, P. (1995). *The Blue Flower*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Read in conjunction with German-language texts for Herr Belgardt's German 340 course. In places, Penelope Fitzgerald's story reminded me of Jane Austen's complicated love triangles, while other portions of Fitzgerald's work felt identical to Lenz's *The German Lesson*.

Friedman, E. and Fuchs, M. (1989). *Breaking the Sequence; Women's Experimental Fiction*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gass, W. (1976). *On Being Blue*. Boston: David R. Godine Nonpareil Books.

William Gass strikes nearly every permutation of blueness with the same passion as the Marquis de Sade's permutations, but none of the sexuality. Gass plays with the reader's consciousness and ability to discern dreams from reality, similar to his work *The Tunnel*.

Gladman, R. (2000). *Juice*. Berkeley: Kelsey St. Press.

Juice embodies moments in time indelible to the age they were present. Renee Gladman's work in some chapters maps out the sleeping mind and stages of sleep, while others map out the thoughts in society. Gladman is often compared with Pamela Lu since they are both from San Francisco, yet the topics and depth of discussion of these differs for each.

Grass, G. (1961). *The Tin Drum*. New York: Random House.

Grass provides a sneaky coming-of-age story that can be compared to *Peter Pan* but with Nazis. The passages are funnily realistic, yet still fantastical fiction.

Gray, N. (1992). *Language Unbound; On Experimental Writing By Women*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Haring-Smith, T. (1994). *Monologues for Women by Women*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hejinian, L. (2000). *The Language of Inquiry*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lyn Hejinian's collection of essays spans several emphases, including Gertrude Stein's work, and is not limited to Hejinian's scholarly texts but also embodies her poetry and prose in places as well.

Hejinian, L. (2002). *My Life*. Los Angeles: Green Integer.

Numbers were key to my understanding of *My Life*. It's worth the time to count the words, pages, lines, syllables, and the like in order to determine the pattern and what it is that Hejinian means to say about her life.

Howe, S. (1985). *My Emily Dickinson*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Jelinek, E. (1992). *Lust*. London: Serpent's Tail.

An emotionally-charged, and in places, disgusting look at what constitutes "lust" and is confused for "love." Elfriede Jelinek plays on age-old metaphors of women's love in marketplace terms, while also creating a new space and spin for the meanings behind sexual encounters.

Jelinek, E. (2002). *The Piano Teacher*. London: Serpent's Tail.

Jelinek, E. (1994). *Women as Lovers*. London: Serpent's Tail.

Though it did poorly in reviews, a critical reader sees much more in *Women as Lovers* than meets the average eye. Elfriede Jelinek's "bleak" descriptions of women and their roles in the world, relationships, and society betray a deeper yearning for something more. If one reads this book and goes away simply angry, or finding it "pointless," then one should think further on its message.

Jelinek, E. (1990). *Wonderful, Wonderful Times*. London: Serpent's Tail.

Kaprow, A. (2003). *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lenz, S. (1968). *The German Lesson*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Siegfried Lenz' *The German Lesson* is more a compulsion for telling rather than showing than it is the story of a boy compelled to truly finish his German lesson. The storyline can be agonizingly slow-moving and the lack of detail can be descriptively cruel.

Lu, P. (1998). *Pamela: A Novel*. Berkeley: Atelos.

Pamela Lu considers her cultural, social, and personal identity all at once within *A Novel*. Never have single letters, such as "I," had so much significance as with Lu.

Marcus, B. (1995). *The Age of Wire and String*. Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press.

Maso, Carole. (1994). *The American Woman in the Chinese Hat*. New York: Plume.

Mullen, H. (2002). *Sleeping with the Dictionary*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Mullen, H. (1992). *S*PeRM**K*T*. Philadelphia: Singing Horse Press.

I argued in my honors thesis that the missing letters in Harryette Mullen's title (u are) were symbolic of her message to society and the meaning within her poetic *S*PeRM**K*T*. Such letters speak both of inception and creation (as in the book's title nick name "sperm kit") as well as a larger longing for what each human already is.

Queneau, R. (1947). *Exercises in Style*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Robbe-Grillet, A. (1958). *The Voyeur*. New York: Grove Press, Inc.

The Voyeur is a recursive story of one man's journey to an island on a day when an inhabitant goes missing. As the story progresses, there is a shift from the

main character being a voyeur of the island's inhabitants to the reader being a voyeur of the main character. Looping and loop-like imagery (such as the infinity sign) also reoccur frequently.

Sapphire. (1996). *PUSH*. New York: Random House.

PUSH tells the story of an abused, illiterate, inner-city girl twice impregnated by her father and her struggle to control and create her own feelings of self worth. It is unbelievable in places only because of the strength of the narrative in comparison with the relative weakness of the narrator's literacy abilities.

Sebald, W. (2001). *Austerlitz*. New York: The Modern Library.

For me, the slow narrative in *Austerlitz* unfolds the lifelong friendship between the unnamed narrator and the old, professor-like Austerlitz character. I find it similar in symbolism to F. Scott Fitzgerald's work in *The Great Gatsby* and many reviewers have made references to *Austerlitz* being a classic in its own right.

Spahr, J. (2001). *Everybody's Autonomy*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Stein, G. (1990). *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. New York: Random House.

Probably one of Gertrude Stein's most famous works, *The Autobiography* is written from her long-time lover's point of view. In places where world events are out of control, the narration also appears somewhat out of control and the reader learns of events and conversations out of order. *The Autobiography* is possibly one of Stein's most accessible pieces though.

Stein, G. (1993). *Everybody's Autobiography*. Cambridge: Exact Change, Random House.

Stein, G. (2002). *Tender Buttons*. Los Angeles: Green Integer.

One of Gertrude Stein's more sexually-charged pieces, which uses the sounds of letters, words, and phrases to produce meaning while the actual words and phrases may or may not relate to the intended message. *Tender Buttons* is a harder piece to read and negotiate meaning.

Stein, G. (1990). *Three Lives*. New York: Penguin Books.

Wallace, M. and Marks, S. (2002). *Telling it Slant; Avant-Garde Poetics of the 1990s*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Wolf, C. (1989). *Accident; A Day's News*. New York: Noonday Press.

Christa Wolf's *Accident: A Day's News* tells the events of the Chernobyl disaster through the thoughts of the narrator. The running emotions of the narrator provide inside into human tendencies in the face of large and small emergencies,

personal and global emergencies.

Wolf, C. (1984). *Cassandra*. New York: Noonday Press.

Christa Wolf's *Cassandra* uses a female's point of view to retell the famous tale of the fall of Troy. She also places emphasis on the ability to "see" in several capacities.

Wolf, C. (1986). *Kassandra*. Berlin: Luchterhand.

Wolf, C. (2001). *Störfall; Nachrichten eines Tages*. Berlin: Luchterhand.

Christa Wolf's German-language version of *Accident: A Day's News* provides for comparison in meanings between translations. While the English-language version appears to have extra emphasis and focus on the "I" and active verbs, the German-language version is written nearly entirely in passive.