# Universality and the Zero Hour: Interrelationship Between the Avant-Garde, Denazification, and German-Language Literatures

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**Abstract**: Concern regarding linguistic nationalism and the need for a modern universal language preoccupied many European writers, artists and philosophers throughout the inter- and postwar years. This article looks at a peculiar overlap in the activities of two notable persons involved in this matter: Eugen Gomringer and Eugene Jolas. Their respective projects for poetry aimed to offer solutions for a modern problem. But while Jolas's interwar approach to deprivilege national languages was done by mixing languages and vocabularies, Gomringer's postwar efforts for universality involved the extreme reduction of language. By tracing Jolas's efforts to decouple language from nationality to his later activities as editor-in-chief for the German News Agency, an interconnectivity between the avant-garde and postwar programs for objective language and writing is revealed. Included among these is Gomringer's concretist program for a universalizing aesthetic. The moment in which Jolas and Gomringer's activities intersect is one at which objectivity became an aesthetic and moral focal point for German-language concretists, early Gruppe 47 poets, and Allied efforts to denazify the German language.

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In response to the isolation Switzerland experienced during World War II, the Bolivian-Swiss poet Eugen Gomringer and fellow artists Dieter Roth and Marcel Wyss founded *spirale*—an art journal dedicated to concretism (Bucher 9). The journal ran from 1953–1964 and invited international engagement with the aesthetic movement. With its goal to deliver information by way of art, *spirale* featured original graphic art and design, poetry, sculpture, photography, and architecture by avant-garde artists and authors from around the globe. Gomringer oversaw the literary content in *spirale*, which he took on as part of the task of creating a new language that would accurately reflect modern conditions of postwar reality. *Spirale* was not the first European journal that published works with the

quest to find a new language for intercontinental expression, however. More than two decades before *spirale*'s first issue appeared, Eugene Jolas founded *transition*, a multilingual journal based in Paris, dedicated to internationalizing literature. *Transition* published experimental texts and visual art from many countries and was arguably the leading avant-garde journal from 1927–1938.

The quest to establish a universalizing expression is one Jolas and Gomringer both shared, even as they employed different methods. Just as *transition* focused on the need to "break down intellectual barriers that exist between nations" (Jolas et al. 168), *spirale* too focused on modern art's supranational and unifying potential. There are easily identifiable parallels between these two projects, but the position Jolas took after the Second World War as editor-in-chief for the German News Agency is equally important to the discussion of aesthetics at the Zero Hour. His postwar activities offer an important bridge within the moment of modernism—a moment that intersects between the avant-garde, the denazification of the German language, and the goals of German-language literatures, pursued in the immediate postwar period by artists and intellectuals. That Jolas and Gomringer published some of the same artists and poets is particularly noteworthy. This essay begins with Jolas's story, serving as a thread to better illustrate the interconnectivity and transition between the avant-garde and programs for objective language and writing taken up after the defeat of Hitler's empire. Jolas is a peculiar figure at the center of this moment, and here his activities are investigated in order to 1) bring to the fore the problem experimental literature was trying to solve; 2) show how those goals were negotiated amidst with the denazification efforts of the victorious Allies; 3) reintroduce the position Switzerland and Swiss-German Concrete Poetry took up in relationship to these activities, vis-a-vis multilingualism.

## Eugene Jolas

Eugene Jolas (1894–1952) was a writer and translator born in the United States to immigrant parents from the area of Alsace-Lorraine, the Rhine borderland between France and Germany. The family returned to that same area a few years later, where Jolas grew up and, as a result, he obtained fluency in three languages. Jolas lived and worked in both Europe and the United States, and mostly wrote in English. In 1925, he began working as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* in Paris, where he was put in charge of the literary page. Jolas notes that "reporting became a real adventure of the intellect, for many contemporary French writers began to come within my purview." This work, he explained, "renewed my contact with linguistic life and sharpened my awareness of the bilingual spirit of my childhood" (72). Two years later, in 1927, he founded *transition*, which became the leading international avant-garde journal from 1927–1938. About Jolas it has been written that his "advocacy of a multilingual merger in the realm of poetry as well as in social spaces makes him one of the most important members and critics of the avant-garde, with special relevance to current debates on multilingual creativity" (Kiefer and Rumold xvii ). *Transition* was for Jolas an adventure in language. Sensitive to the interrelationship of three languages in crisis (German, French, and English), he solicited writers who were similarly conscious of language. He also sought work from multiple European literatures and languages that would contribute to his "desire for a renewed logos." Jolas encouraged "word innovations to the point of absurdity" as well as word associations that went

beyond the musical to create, as he understood it, a "different universe" (107). This interest in a new vocabulary developed into "*transition*'s Revolution of the Word Dictionary," which appeared in the spring issue of 1932, listing "neologisms taken from modernist authors" (Watten, *Constructivist Moment* 11). In addition, Jolas himself experimented with trilingual poetry and in 1933 he published a small collection entitled *Mots-Deluge* (Jolas 112).

By creating a magazine that supported modernist writers working in various languages, Jolas and his collaborators—who were "concerned with the problem of reshaping the post–World War I world and discovering a new notion of man" (McMillan 35)—aimed to construct in their work a universalizing modernity. To be sure, the problem of language was at this time seen as urgently political. Jolas shared with his contemporaries a concern for what role, if any, language could play in a turn toward universality, after a world war that saw national identity—premised on linguistic and nativist peculiarities—take the place of dynastic fiat. *Transition* published expressionist, surrealist, and dada art and texts, dismantling boundaries between national literatures and artistic movements. There was a great diversity of content; contributions came from French, Russian, Serbian, and German writers and artists. The journal also included works by civil rights activists as well as cartoonists. Recognizable names appearing in *transition* include: Gertrude Stein, Anaïs Nin, Samuel Beckett, William Carlos Williams, André Breton, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Günter Eich, Theo van Doesburg, and Kay Boyle. James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* was first published in segments in the journal, and the reprinting of Stein's *Tender Buttons* established her early importance for the journal's project—both artists radically focusing on language.

Indeed, foreign content and international exchange were the hallmarks of *transition*. The first dozen issues published translations from Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish, Yiddish, and Native American texts. Translation was a large part of the project—comprising one third to half of the space. But in his practice, Jolas became frustrated with the limitations of the language. Issues concerning the effectiveness of translating French and German texts into English eventually drove him to "search for a 'new' universal language"—one single yet flexible language, rich with varied speech, "a fantasia of many tongued words" (Monk 18, 28). He wrote how those years for him involved "a long pilgrimage through language, a journey of exploration through the titanic forest of words, many thousands of words, a columbiad through empires of three languages in search of a new language in which I envisioned as the synthesis of a future tongue" (Jolas 65). Jolas's project for linguistic unity involved the creation of an "intercontinental English" that used techniques of collage common to the visual and poetic experimentations of Dada and Surrealism (qtd. in Monk 28).

But Jolas's story also involves a radical break with his interwar avant-garde work, leading ultimately to a later, very different project that stressed objectivity, not the insufficiency of language. His activities with multilingual poetry through *transition* celebrate the multiplicity and particularity of many languages. But like most avant-garde projects later branded degenerate by National Socialism, Jolas's *transition* was fated to end. As will be shown in this essay, the polyphonic aspect of his early work appears stunningly at odds with Jolas's later participation in a call for clarity and, seemingly, monolingualism. Yet, precisely because Jolas was forever troubled by "the malady of language" (108), a connecting line can be drawn between his pre–1939 and post–1945 activities towards universality.

## Eugen Gomringer and Concrete Poetry

Eugen Gomringer (born 1925) is a Bolivian-born Swiss/German concrete poet. Gomringer is recognized as one of the earliest practitioners of Concrete Poetry and contributed manifestos and several critical essays about the form's theory, method, and social purposes. In 1972, he published the first anthology of German-language Concrete Poetry, *konkrete poesie*, with a recently updated volume in 2018. Gomringer was also a founder of *spirale*, an international magazine for concrete art that he produced and edited with Dieter Roth and Marcell Wyss in Bern, Switzerland. *Spirale* was started in 1953 with a goal to foster international conversation on the intended universal and supranational qualities of Concrete aesthetics. While this project aimed for universality, its methods did not involve the creative and innovating mixing of many vernaculars and grammars as had Jolas's work, but rather took a poetic approach that comes close to emptying language of itself and privileging its concrete, material form (i.e., its typographical aspects).

Coinciding with his work on *spirale*, Gomringer experimented in the early postwar years with a new kind of poetry—one whose objectives grew from an inclination to eschew language's subjective and emotive aspects for its material and universal dimensions. Responding to economic developments and modernization after a period of destruction, Gomringer's vision for this new style of poetry involved placing language in analogous relationship with industrial disciplines so that it might participate in communicative and restorative processes active in the immediate postwar years. Inspired by then-modern technological innovations (the speed of transportation and automation, advertising and mass media, and so on), Gomringer announced it was time that poetry be revived and establish a greater visual impact in society by delivering information quickly through the fewest words possible. What he decided on was "clusters of words coming together in response to a particular creative impulse" (*theorie* 16). Gomringer identified these clusters of words as "constellations"—a term drawn from Stéphane Mallarmé's revolutionary poem "Un Coup de dés."[1] At various points within Mallarmé's text, single and grouped words are printed in large capital letters. Others are printed in a set of smaller capitals. When the reader visually relates the different typefaces and connects the words together in their mind, it becomes clear that the special typography works to create full sentences from an otherwise fragmented text. The visual game happening in this irregular typographical play creates sentences from a constellation of words spread over multiple pages. The words printed in the largest typeface, for example, construct a constellation that jumps from the first to the fourth, then to the eighth spread to repeat the title within the body of the poem. Another smaller textual thread forms the line "nothing will happen except perhaps a constellation." This line inspired Gomringer's new poetic form and he placed it as an epigraph to his manifesto *vom vers zur konstellation*:[2]

rien n'aura lieu
excepté
peut-être
une constellation (Mallarmé n.p.)

die konstellation ist die einfachste gestaltungsmöglichkeit der auf dem wort beruhenden

> dichtung. sie umfasst eine gruppe von wörtern – so wie ein sternbild eine gruppe von sternen umfasst. in ihr ist zwei, drei oder mehreren neben oder untereinandergesetzten wörtern—es werden nicht zu viele sein—eine gedanklich-stoffliche beziehung gegeben. (Gomringer, *theorie* 12, 16)
>
> the constellation is the simplest way to design poetry that is based on the word. it encompasses a group of words—just like a constellation encompasses a group of stars. in the constellation are two, three, or more words arranged along or among each other—as long as there are not too many—composed of a conceptual-material relationship.[3]

His first published constellation poem, "avenidas," appeared in the premier issue of *spirale* (1953).[4] Composed of a mere four substantives (avenues/flowers/women/admirer), an article, and a conjunction, the poem is linguistically sparse. Breaking away from conventional grammar, Gomringer capitalizes on density, a principal compositional element of *Dichtung* (poetry).[5] This severe reduction of language grants considerable, if not equal, import to the text and the white space of the page. In addition to the Mallarméan "blancs" (the distribution of space), which isolate words, gaps in the language provoke an incomplete image—one open to interpretation and to be completed by the reader (fig. 1).

avenidas

avenidas y flores

flores

flores y mujeres

avenidas

avenidas y mujeres

avenidas y flores y mujeres y

un admirador

Fig. 1. Eugen Gomringer, "avenidas." After original in *konstellationen constellations constelaciones*, 1953.

New poetic form was the core interest for early Concrete poets. This directly relates to political and social changes that occurred at mid-century and which forced many countries, especially Germany, to adjust to living in an occupied and restructured space (Hilder 83). Motivated to create a new language that would accurately reflect modern conditions, Gomringer experimented with constellations, but he also embraced the ideogram as a structural model. His poetic ideograms first appeared in 1953, both in *spirale* as well as in his book *konstellationen constellations constelaciones*. These unorthodox, geometric shaped poems imagine the integration of both ideogrammatic and logographic systems of writing. A source of inspiration for Gomringer's understanding of the ideogram was Ernest Fenollosa's theory about the nature of the Chinese language, which adheres to an outdated idea that Chinese characters do, in fact, have ideographic components. (Gomringer even translated Ezra Pound's 1919 edited presentation of Fenollosa's text into German in 1972.)[6] Fenollosa describes Chinese characters as "shorthand pictures of actions or processes" (9), but his claim that meaning can still today be drawn from both the conceptual and pictorial qualities of the language is disputed by scholars like Yale linguist George A. Kennedy, who opposes the notion that such qualities survive in modern Mandarin.[7] Fenollosa's misunderstandings have been, nonetheless, productive for the development of experimental writing—foundational, in fact—as Fenollosa was deeply interested in a three-dimensionality of meaning (as opposed to a flat meaning, the pure definition of a word). For him, ideogrammatic systems made possible a return to language as a medium—that is, they made possible reading a poem to *experience language* rather than simply fixating on uncovering the meaning.[8]

Gomringer shared with these theorists an interest in the how the language material in this system is assembled to create meaning. Gomringer's creative use of its structural nature toward the construction of a universal poetic object focused primarily on how each isolated character in the language is afforded its own autonomy. The most famous of his ideograms is "silencio." The German translation of this fourteen-word poem first appeared in a 1960 collection entitled 33 *konstellationen*. It is a canonical work that deftly embodies the playful tension between linguistic and visual modes of communication (fig. 2).The theme here is clear. Whether the repeated word refers to the subject or the action of silence is not decidable. *Schweigen* can be interpreted as either a noun, as in silence; a verb, as in to keep silent; or an imperative, as in "be silent!" In any case, repetition intensifies the signifier's function while the shape of the poem produces an image that is diagrammatic. The relationship between the poem's individual parts and its whole is clear, and its iconicity is easy to identify: the absence of the word *Schweigen* in the center articulates visually what the poem communicates linguistically. The sign "  " is a literal denoted or noncoded image where the signified and the signifier are essentially the same.

First-generation Concrete Poetry described itself as communicative, not expressive. It was imagined as a universally accessible mode of communication, a purified utilitarian object, and it claimed to employ blank space as a formal, objective, aesthetic element. In addition, there is a clear relationship of reciprocal influence between postwar mass media advertising and Concrete Poetry. Such techniques bring the formal and visual aspects of printed text into focus and allow semantic dimensions to occur through visual connections. Stripped of subjectivity, concretism

schweigen schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen schweigen
schweigen schweigen schweigen

Fig. 2. Eugen Gomringer, "schweigen." After original in 33 *konstellationen*, 1960.

is a straightforward and rational aesthetic, one whose functional use of material offers a visual articulation counter to the unstable and illusory expressions of figurative art. Concrete artists insisted that such rationality allowed the beholder to relate directly with reality, and this made possible the notion that Concrete Art was "ethically superior" to other forms—one that could "ground the object on impersonal, a priori laws" (Rider 343). By avoiding "poetic" language, metaphors, and complex expressions, and relying instead on the visual layout of a few words or even a single word, Concrete Poetry strove to serve as a "universal language" comprehensible across cultures.

Concrete Poetry is a distinctly postwar phenomenon, including various language experiments that took place independently around the globe following World War II. In his comprehensive examination of its development, Jamie Hilder explains how Concrete Poetry was situated in a global context, focusing on "the way concrete poems signify across forms, nations, languages, and disciplines" (236). Hilder also details how new and innovative technologies influenced the ways in which information became shared and consumed, as well as the ways in which postwar political realities propelled interest in programs for rapid modernization and the creation of polylingual global environments. Early postwar Concrete Poets "were thinking about language through communication technologies," and "by trying to escape national language by reducing it to a visual, easily comprehendible format, [they] conscientiously attempted to produce a global (cosmopolitan) subject through an international poetic style" (58, 79).

## Language Goals: Internationalism and Denazification

As mentioned, Gomringer's new poetry made its debut in 1953 in the first volume of *spirale*. The journal's aim was to foster international conversation on the universal qualities of modern art. This was reflected foremost by the journal's multilingualism (*spirale* was written in German, English, French, and Spanish) and its multi-language mission statement:

> die *spirale* arbeitet in der entwicklung, die in europa zu beginn des jahrhunderts mit der absoluten abstrakten einsetzte, um sich deutlicher in der nichtabbildenden, neues, konkretes erschaffenden kunst zu finden. *Spirale* sammelt beiträge bekannter und unbekannter autoren verschiedenster individualität, deren ausdruck modern, universal-künstlerische anforderungen erfüllt.
>
> *spirale* works toward the growth of an absolute abstract, which began in europe at the beginning of the century as a way to establish itself in a non-representational, new, concretely re-invented art. *spirale* collects contributions of known and unknown authors of various uniqueness, whose expression meets modern, universal artistic requirements.[9]

Gomringer's program for universality has a striking resemblance to Jolas's objectives for a new language. Their respective projects for poetry aimed to offer (utopian) solutions for a modern problem. Jolas's was a pursuit for connectivity and integration through the mixing of languages and vocabularies. Gomringer's was an antidote to nationalism. Specifically, by stripping language of subjectivity and cultural nuance, a multiplicity of interpretation is permitted. In other words, the reader makes their own sense of the poem and gives meaning to an otherwise objective object. While their methods were at odds with each other, it is notable that both journals published several of the same artists and poets: Sophie Täuber-Arp, Hans Arp, William Carlos Williams, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Paul Celan, Frederic García Lorca, Max Bill, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Alexander Calder, and Piet Mondrian. It is, then, curious how notions of universality and linguistic unity transitioned from a poetry of linguistic multiplicity to a poetry almost emptied of language. By examining Jolas's post–1945 activities, we begin to see how the drastic change in response to the problem of national languages happened, and why. One important influence guiding the interrelationship between Jolas's interwar and postwar work with language was the Allied-enforced endeavor to denazify Germany after 1945.

*Transition* was shuttered the year before the outbreak of WWII, the last issue appearing in spring of 1938. In the late 1930s, Jolas's transnational project was strongly identified with antifascism, at a time when literature had become a political tool for the Nazi government that was encouraged and controlled under a hypernationalist, racialist program. After the atrocities of the Second World War, Jolas joined with the Allied forces to begin the work of dismantling the industry of the Third Reich and purging German society, culture, politics and press of Nazi ideology. Jolas's greatest contributions were in the denazification of the German press and intelligentsia (Kiefer and Rumold xvi). The position Jolas took after the war offers an important transition itself, within the moment of modernism—a moment of intersection between the interwar and postwar avant-garde, and the various goals German-language literatures pursued in the immediate postwar period. What is more, tracing

Jolas's early efforts to decouple language from nationality to his later activities as editor-in-chief for the German News Agency illustrates an interconnectivity between the avant-garde and postwar programs for objective language and writing—a stress on clarity, transparency, and accessibility for modern audiences. By examining in detail Jolas's activities and his move away from the project of multilingualism, the influence of the Zero Hour to Gomringer's slightly later concretist program for a universalizing aesthetic will be made clear.

Following the conclusion of *transition*, Jolas returned to a career in journalism, serving as a press officer of the U.S Department of the Army's Information Services and reporting from the Nuremburg Trials (Kiefer and Rumold xvi). In 1945, Jolas helped launch the denazification and reconstruction of the German press, founding a news agency that eventually became the *Deutsche Allgemeine Nachrichtenagentur* (DANA). This was the chief news agency of the Information Control Division under the American occupation; it was assigned with sanitizing the German media and removing nationalist content. As editor-in-chief for DANA, Jolas worked to replace German journalistic style with an objective one, fostering the "democratic evolution of German newspapers" (Jolas 228). The first memorandum for the new press agency underscores the importance objectivity held in reporting, as it advocated for the elimination of all Nazi terms as the prime task (fig. 3):

September 20, 1945

To: Staff German Desk
From: Eugene Jolas
Subject: News Style

1. DANA will henceforth adopt the American style of news-writing.
2. Essential facts should be given in the lead, that is, in the introductory paragraphs, to be followed by paragraphs dealing accumulatively with the chronological enumeration of details.
3. All editorial comment must be rigorously excluded from our stories and only objective facts should be presented.
4. Great care should be exercised in making accurate translations. The German style must be grammatically flawless. Too literal translations, however, should be avoided.
5. Elimination of all Nazi terms must be steadily kept in mind, and denazification of the vocabulary should be one of the prime tasks of every news-writer.
6. Members of the staff are advised to consult the files of American newspapers and to study the American style of news presentation.
7. Factual accuracy and ethical integrity in news-writing will be the hall-marks of the new democratic press we are seeking to create in Germany.

Fig. 3. Eugene Jolas, first memorandum for the Deutsche Allgemeine Nachkriegsagentur, 1945. *Man from Babel*, p. 229.

The priorities detailed in the memorandum fuse contingent needs of the then current postwar order with a specific American perspective on rehabilitation. Objectivity offered an alternative to the gigantic and dramatic gestures of the Third Reich; the stress on avoiding "editorial comment," for example, aimed at the use of the *Feuilleton*, which the *Propagandaministerium* under Joseph Goebbels had used to insert shrill hyperpartisanship on the front pages. Jolas's biographers make an important point in suggesting he was "able to unite his vision of the liberating artistic revolt of the international avant-garde with the pragmatic ethos of the American journalist" (Kiefer and Rumold xxiii). We see, however, in the memorandum Jolas lays specific emphasis on dispassionate assessment of the content of reporting, a premise very much at odds with *transition*'s ambition to revolutionize the word (surely Joyce and Stein are not examples of transparency in language, but rather opacity). Yet we might still compare Jolas's quest as an interwar avant-garde editor in favor of utopian globality to his separate efforts to standardize journalism. Barrett Watten argues the relationship between universality and objectivity in Jolas's activities reveals "the deployment of a modern arts as technic of democratization, an entailment of the consequences of denazification and Americanization in Germany," as a key component to this particular "moment of the politics of modernism" ("Dark Night" 3). Crucially, Jolas's dicta about journalism are *modernizing* but not classically *modernist*. But they appear at the same time as the return of modernism to post-fascist Germany, and thus can be seen as working together to denazify language.

Expanding the scope of DANA, Jolas introduced *Die Wandlung* (November 1945), a monthly literary review focused on navigating through the consciousness of German guilt. The existential philosopher Karl Jaspers served as a member of the editorial board and Dolf Sternberger served as its editor-in-chief (Kiefer and Rumold xvi). It is important to note that Jolas invited Sternberger to submit to the journal his first list of "barbaric" words that would eventually contribute to *Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen* (From the Dictionary of Inhumanity), a lexicon of nazified terms and phrases as well as essays on debates on *Sprachkritik* (language criticism) published in 1957. Sternberger, Storz, and Süskind's dictionary highlighted an insecurity about the German language, and while it is unclear what connections, if any, can be made between it and *transition*'s "Revolution of the Word Dictionary," one is compelled to recognize a shared sensitivity to the "malady of language." Indeed this sensitivity was part of the *Zeitgeist*. In 1947, Victor Klemperer put forth in *LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii: Notizbuch eines Philologen* (LTI—Language of The Third Reich: Notebook of a Philologist) the notion that Nazi appropriation of culturally significant words was a crucial component of National Socialist ideology. More to the point, Nazism not only (mis)appropriated words (perhaps the most recognizable being Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, misused to signify "master race"), but as well made up new ones, such as *Hitlerwetter* or "Hitler weather" (an expression referring to the often fair weather that accompanied Hitler's public speeches) and *Blumenkrieg* or "flower war" (a word Goebbels used to describe how German soldiers were pelted with flowers rather than bullets after the successful annexation of Austria). The language of the Third Reich, as Klemperer describes it, "forced everyone to conform to the same pattern and… in a measure of self-imposed constraint it only ever gave expression to one side of human existence" (20).

Another postwar institution connected to the denazification of language—and one that developed concurrent to Jolas's postwar activities with DANA and Gomringer's own program for

a new objective poetry—is the Gruppe 47 movement, established by Hans Werner Richter and his colleagues, which essentially defined West Germany's postwar literary culture after "Stunde Null" (Zero Hour).[10] Striving to break free from the Nazi past and renew German literature meant writing progressive works willing to confront the darkness of the war.[11] The members of Gruppe 47 believed that language was the basis for nationalist movements used by past European empires to destroy one another and, in Germany in particular, this form of rhetoric became a *Vernichtungssprache* (a language of genocide). Thus, much of the work composed by Gruppe 47 responded to this perceived problem of language. German literary critic Ernestine Schlant rightly explains, however, that Gruppe 47's works "focused predominantly not on the Nazi atrocities but on the wartime and postwar travails of the German population" (21-22). Varying forms of silence—the emptying out and elimination of language—are throughout a defining characteristic of this postwar fiction, poetry, and narratives, showing that Germans perceived themselves as "deceived and victimized by the Nazis" (Bosmajian 157). Given the hyper-awareness of the deformed National Socialist language, silence was a major concern for these writers (and postwar culture overall). To be sure, the Austrian-born philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous dictum provided particular inspiration for several Gruppe 47 members: "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen" (Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent; *Tractatus* 111).

But the notion of silence, specifically in terms of language elimination in Gruppe 47 literature, must be clarified. Schlant offers that silence is not simply a semantic void: "Like in language, silence is infused with narrative strategies that carry ideologies and reveal unstated assumptions. Silence is constituted by the absence of words but is therefore and simultaneously the presence of their absence." Schlant also distinguishes between the "silence *of* the Holocaust," which is prompted by trauma, and the "silence *about* the Holocaust," which is a silence of the perpetrators (7). Her critical investigation is a defining contribution not only to the field of Holocaust Studies but also to literary criticism, as previously the notion of postwar silence was not necessarily well-defined or even stable. Silence is traced quite differently, for example, in George Steiner's work on the relationship between language, literature, and the Holocaust. In *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Steiner theorizes that "the sober recognition that the finalities of lunacy and barbarism which occurred during 1914–1918 and the Nazi Holocaust could neither be adequately grasped nor described in words reinforced the temptations of silence" (185). Still, historians like Saul Friedländer argue that the inability or rejection to speak about the Holocaust is a part of erasing it from history.[12] Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's psychoanalytical assessment of the *NS-Zeit* likewise ties aspects of postwar silence to Germany's inability to mourn the loss of their emotional investment in the Third Reich.[13] Postwar German-language literature's response to National Socialism's misuse of language involved, as did Jolas's work in the democratization the media, the elimination of nazified language and "barbaric" words. All the same, I contend it is useful to consider silence as a method in literature at the Zero Hour in conversation with Jolas's and Gomringer's respective programs for objectivity.

Broadly thematized in "Stunde Null" literature, the subject of silence is *about* the Holocaust. It is manifested in various forms, perhaps most notably in the acutely objective, sober, and impoverished language in Günter Eich's poetry (*Inventur*, 1945); the critical and self-portrait-like work by Martin

Walser (*Ehen in Phillippsburg*, 1957); and in magical realistic experiments by Günter Grass (*Die Blechtrommel*, 1959)—the latter a novel that centers on themes of speechlessness, identity, the travails of the German population, and the process towards innocence. While these works explore the issue of postwar silence, they avoid confronting or processing the horrific reality of the Shoah. Grass's protagonist Oskar Matzerath, for example, is a troubled young boy who fantasizes about rewriting his history. Preoccupied by a desire for *unschuldiges Papier* (innocent paper), Oskar experiences a sense of innocence and comfort in the idea of silent, blank pages.

This notion of a path to innocence—along with the desire for restoration—is explored through further creative forms of silence. In Heinrich Böll's short story *Doktor Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen* (*Dr. Murkes's Collected Silences*, 1955) for example, the protagonist Dr. Murke, who works as a radio editor for the program "Kulturwort" (Culture Word), collects discarded tapes, splices together the pauses and silences between words, and plays the recordings back to himself in the evenings. Other blanks in "Stunde Null" literature manifest as the elimination of not only barbaric words but as well objectively historical ones, such as "Jew" and "concentration camp" (Schlant 22). In addition to this action of erasure, much of the literature depicts an idealized image and role of the writer, thereby presenting a postwar desire to use the power of writing for cultural change, a very early twentieth-century notion. The inability to communicate, and specifically the fear of this inability—which is a leitmotif in Walser's *Ehen in Phillippsburg* (Marriages in Phillippsburg)—suggests that an author's failed attempt would compromise necessary social change. Conversely, Walser's heroic writer refuses to adapt to a damaged society and his writing is therefore leaden with this burden of silence Steiner describes.

The other kind of silence Schlant identifies in her criticism is the silence *of* the Holocaust—one expressed by those who suffered, and which permeates through the bereft and grieving landscape of postwar Europe. Perhaps the most poignant expression of this silence is in the poetry of Paul Celan, who was only briefly associated with Gruppe 47 and whose work is widely recognized for its singular articulation of the unutterable—both by his peculiar and specifically German word creation and his use of space: "The blanks, stops, and pauses are constitutive of a 'nonverbal rigor' that substitutes a void for meaning, a void that is not a lack but a saturation, a saturation of emptiness" (Franke 137-138). As an expression of silence, Celan's use of space is performative, as fragmentation signifies the concreteness of annihilation.

A brief and perhaps interesting side note to include here is that Celan and Gomringer crossed paths as poets in 1955 in *alpha*, *NEUE DICHTUNG*, a Viennese magazine for new poetry and visual art. In her brilliant article uncovering a manifold of compelling connections between Celan and the Concrete Poets (a subject critical literature has sorely overlooked), Bronac Ferran makes note of Celan's poem "Hier," published in *alpha* in May 1955, as exhibiting "curious echoes" of Concrete Poetry's material aesthetics, namely "repetition," "typographic rigor," and "precise measurement of graphic space" (122-123). Ferran demonstrates numerous important relationships between Celan and Concrete Poetry, but she also brings attention to Celan's "alienation from universalizing tendencies" like those employed by Gomringer (124). In the early 1960s, when Gomringer was stating the poem object should be useful and as easily understood airport and traffic signs, Celan flat out rejected the notion of bilingual poetry:

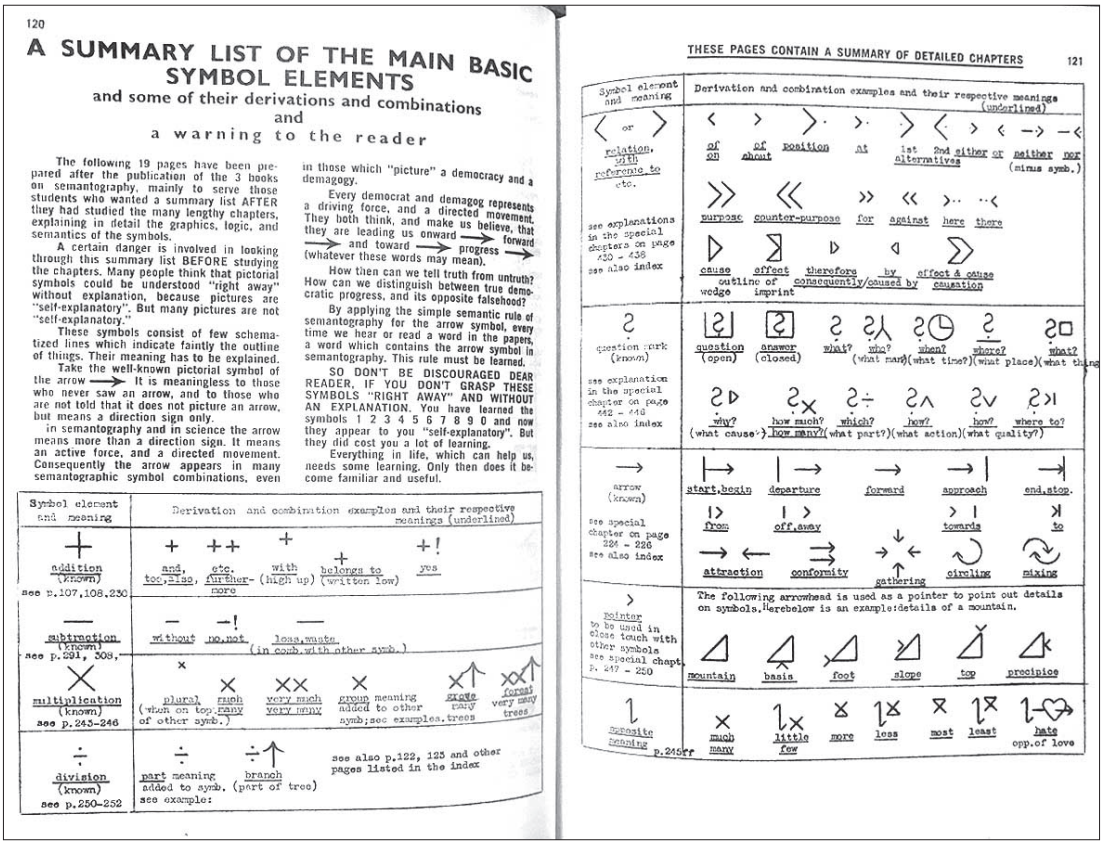
> An Zweisprachigkeit in der Dichtung glaube ich nicht. Doppelzüngigkeit—ja, das gibt es auch in diversen zeitgenössischen Wortkünsten bzw.—kunststücken, zumal in solchen, die sich in freudiger Übereinstimmung mit dem jeweiligen Kulturkostüm, genauso polyglott wie polychrome zu etablieren wissen.
>
> I do not believe there is such a thing as bilingual poetry. Double-talk, yes, this you may find among our various contemporary arts and acrobatics of the word, especially those which manage to establish themselves in blissful harmony with each fashion of consumer culture, being as polyglot as they are polychrome. Poetry is by necessity a unique instance of language. (23)[14]

Celan's sentiment echoes the socialist ethoi of a prior generation, not easily reckoned within the postwar global order envisioned by the Americans through their Marshall Plan. He, like many of his contemporaries, understood artistry as the vehicle to communicate the heart. On this measure, then, poetry, unlike product, is a forum instantiated through language. Language, in turn, is not so much proof of hierarchy or racial power but rather a happenstance that must be utilized, if ever commercialism is to be avoided in favor of community.

Returning to Steiner's assertion that because the horrors of the Shoah exist outside of reason they are literally unspeakable (*Language and Silence* 123), I want to underscore how this suggestion chimes with postwar positivism and the Wittgensteinian notion that language responds to and also constructs social reality, though it must be stressed that this line of argument plainly avoids the fact that silence can also be a form of denial or repression. While much of the Gruppe 47 literature under examination failed to adequately represent the horrors of the Holocaust, its response to Nazi misuse of language also channeled an overwhelming shame, denial, self-pity, and repression through the burden of silence (Schlant 22). And, as noted earlier, current discourse on postwar silence pushes against claims like Steiner's that rationalize literature's failures or avoided engagement with Germany's political realities. Still, linguistic skepticism certainly influenced the literary climate in which Gomringer began to undertake work in a universalizing poetry. It also motivated Jolas's work with DANA to cleanse German media of Nazi ideology and meet the demands of the postwar global order. This was a climate in which Theodor W. Adorno famously speculated whether poetry should still be written, and one in which romantic notions about reviving the German language by way of eliminating barbaric words and insistence on the need for silence (*Schweigen*) in order to restore the humane were put forward in works by Gruppe 47 authors.[15]

An interesting amalgam of the two motives for the need for silence—Gomringer's quest for objectivity and Adorno's prohibition of false testimony—is found in another, lesser-known visual language project called Semantography (fig. 4). This ideographic writing system was developed between 1942 and 1949 by a Jewish refugee named Charles Bliss. His project is worth delving into because it emerged concurrently with the philosophical and literary responses to the problem of language mentioned above. Semantography, or Blissymbolics, is a communication system constructed of pictorial symbols that can be produced with a modified typewriter by combining characters.

The project imagined a "logical writing for an illogical world" and was created for the purpose of



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A SUMMARY LIST OF THE MAIN BASIC SYMBOL ELEMENTS
and some of their derivations and combinations
and
a warning to the reader

The following 19 pages have been prepared after the publication of the 3 books on semantography, mainly to serve those students who wanted a summary list AFTER they had studied the many lengthy chapters, explaining in detail the graphics, logic, and semantics of the symbols.

A certain danger is involved in looking through this summary list BEFORE studying the chapters. Many people think that pictorial symbols could be understood "right away" without explanation, because pictures are "self-explanatory". But many pictures are not "self-explanatory."

These symbols consist of few schematized lines which indicate faintly the outline of things. Their meaning has to be explained.

Take the well-known pictorial symbol of the arrow → It is meaningless to those who never saw an arrow, and to those who are not told that it does not picture an arrow, but means a direction sign only.

In semantography and in science the arrow means more than a direction sign. It means an active force, and a directed movement. Consequently the arrow appears in many semantographic symbol combinations, even in those which "picture" a democracy and a demagogy.

Every democrat and demagog represents a driving force, and a directed movement. They both think, and make us believe, that they are leading us onward → forward → and toward → progress → (whatever these words may mean).

How then can we tell truth from untruth? How can we distinguish between true democratic progress, and its opposite falsehood?

By applying the simple semantic rule of semantography for the arrow symbol, every time we hear or read a word in the papers, a word which contains the arrow symbol in semantography. This rule must be learned.

SO DON'T BE DISCOURAGED DEAR READER, IF YOU DON'T GRASP THESE SYMBOLS "RIGHT AWAY" AND WITHOUT AN EXPLANATION. You have learned the symbols 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 and now they appear to you "self-explanatory". But they did cost you a lot of learning.

Everything in life, which can help us, needs some learning. Only then does it become familiar and useful.

| Symbol element and meaning | Derivation and combination examples and their respective meanings (underlined) |
|---|---|
| + addition (known) see p.107,108,230 | + and, too, also, ++ etc. further-more, + with (high up), + belongs to (written low), +! yes |
| — subtraction (known) see p.291, 308, | — without, —! no, not, — loss, waste (in comb. with other symb.) |
| × multiplication (known) see p.243-246 | × plural (when on top of other symb.), × much many, ×× very much very many, × group meaning added to other symb; see examples, trees, × grove many, × forest very many trees |
| ÷ division (known) see p.250-252 | ÷ part meaning added to symb. see example:, ÷ branch (part of tree) see also p.122, 123 and other pages listed in the index |

THESE PAGES CONTAIN A SUMMARY OF DETAILED CHAPTERS 121

| Symbol element and meaning | Derivation and combination examples and their respective meanings (underlined) |
|---|---|
| < or > relation, with reference to etc. see explanations in the special chapters on page 430 - 438 see also index | < of on, > of about, > position, > at, > 1st alternatives, < 2nd either or, > neither nor (minus symb.), > purpose, < counter-purpose, > for, < against, > here, < there, > cause, > effect, > therefore consequently, > by caused by, > effect & cause causation, outline of wedge, imprint |
| ? question mark (known) see explanation in the special chapter on page 442 - 446 see also index | ? question (open), ? answer (closed), ? what?, ? who? (what man?), ? when? (what time?), ? where? (what place), ? what? (what thing), ? why? (what cause?), ? how much? how many?, ? which? (what part?), ? how? (what action), ? how? (what quality?), ? where to? |
| → arrow (known) see special chapter on page 224 - 226 see also index | start, begin, departure, forward, approach, end, stop, from, off, away, towards, to, attraction, conformity, gathering, circling, mixing |
| > pointer to be used in close touch with other symbols see special chapt. p. 247 - 250 | The following arrowhead is used as a pointer to point out details on symbols. Herebelow is an example: details of a mountain. mountain, basis, foot, slope, top, precipice |
| opposite meaning p.245ff | much many, little few, more, less, most, least, hate opp. of love |

Fig. 4. Charles K. Bliss, from *Semantography (Blissymbolics)* (1965), pp. 120-121.

universality.[16] Following the trauma he experienced from anti-Semitic hate and persecution, including imprisonment in Dachau and Buchenwald death camps, Bliss began the project while in Shanghai, where he and his wife sought political asylum. It is no coincidence that he, like Gomringer, was inspired by the ideogrammatic system of the Chinese language. What is unique about Semantography is that there is no oral correspondence to the system. Bliss's aspiration for universality was a direct response to Hitler's demagogic language—his ability to emotionally manipulate the masses with vagueness and lies and by verbally repeating propaganda slogans (11). Bliss believed a speechless language would "enable people of different nations to communicate easily with each other" and would "free their minds from the awful power of words." Semantography's form of silence and goals for objectivity and universality figures into language quite differently than Concrete Poetry's. Nevertheless, both visual systems share the aim to communicate globally, with greater clarity. Bliss determined that a purely visual logical system of symbols, absent any corresponding spoken form, would better represent "natural truths" and ensure that language would not be misused as it had during the Third Reich (Okrent 162).

## Switzerland and a Polyglottal Poetry

Concrete Poetry is situated between art and literature, but Gomringer's project is likewise positioned between the avant-garde's quest for a universalizing modernity, the aim to standardize language in journalism, and the postwar generation's aspiration to renew the German spirit and literature by starting from ground zero (Andersch 24). Not only was it conceived in the same historical moment as those postwar activities, it was guided by the same democratic optimism and hope for progress. In that sense, this postwar milieu was unlike the pure negativity and nihilism of the historical avant-garde. Additionally, Concrete Poetry's severe reduction of language and method of communication occur in contrast to Steiner and Wittgenstein's theories on the limits of language. The notion that ideas are limited to a logical grammar, or that an idea is not rational (or "grammatical") if it cannot be articulated (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 149), runs counter to postwar avant-garde explorations of reduced language and semiotic nothingness. Hilder touches on this matter in his analysis when he explains that Concrete Poetry tried to show how "barriers of nuanced semantic meaning crumble under a reduced, and therefore more accessible, sign system that aimed for a basic understanding across geographies" (53).

It seems almost odd, though, that this particular endeavor for universality would originate in an area of the world that remained politically isolated during World War II. Hitler envisioned absorbing all German-speaking countries into his empire, but Switzerland managed to avert German occupation and remain "neutral" by maintaining bank and trade relations with its neighboring countries. It also mobilized its troops in preparation for a possible attack from the German army. Gomringer himself was militarized from age fourteen to twenty and even trained as a grenadier officer.[17] Due to unease about the country's precarious geographic and tactical situation, German-speaking cantons of Switzerland considered becoming an independent state and creating their own Swiss-German written language (Marti 88). As a way to "counter imperialistic threats from Nazi Germany, the value of *Schwyzerdütsch* (Schweizerdeutsch) as a patriotic symbol was stressed" (Pap 129).

In his essay "To Eugen Gomringer's 'Constellations,'" Swiss theologian and poet Kurt Marti details how this deliberation over linguistic autarky was a precursor to the situation that set the stage for Gomringer's pursuit for an international language:

> The symbol of Switzerland in the last world war was the curled-up hedgehog. The hedgehog's position corresponded to the need to cling mentally and literarily to one's own roots. In the thirties, the proposal was launched to make German-speaking Switzerland culturally self-sufficient by creating a Swiss-German written language. "Alemannic, the salvation of the Swiss people's soul"—that was the slogan, and just a few years ago Kurt Guggenheim mused: "All our cultural problems would be easier if we had our own language." (88)[18]

German-speaking Switzerland's decision to cling tightly to their *Schwyzerdütsch* was not only an expression of commitment to the diverse Swiss identity, it was also a form of political resistance against the NSDAP's foreign policy goal of "der Zusammenschluß aller Deutschen" or the union or

coalition of all Germans (Ammon 27-30). Marti goes on to note that the neurosis of defense ("man könnte auch von Igel-Neurose [hedgehog neurosis] sprechen") continued after the threat of Nazi absorption was no longer possible (88). But alongside the residual distrust and a desire for self-preservation, postwar realities began to change the Swiss relationship to the world. The re-opening of borders, the rapid increase of mobility in the 1940s and 1950s, transnationality—each of these factors aided in defining the modern, postwar condition. It is then possible, Marti explains, that Switzerland's unique political and multilingual situation served as a particularly favorable realm in which Gomringer's conception of a polysemic poetry was able to develop:

> It may be that Gomringer's conception of a poetry demonstrating polyglot behavior was able to develop particularly well within Switzerland's multilingual region. The commonality of political and social structures that exists despite language diversity, may also in fact be the Swiss indication that it is possible and permissible to consider multilingual spaces and eventually the multilingual world as a unified entity. (92)[19]

One can then argue that Gomringer's motivation for a universal language relates well to Switzerland's postwar situation. Unified and multilingual, Switzerland reopened its borders and business to participate in free market economies. Correspondingly, Gomringer's new poetry could potentially "break down the resultant linguistic national borders by transcending the local dialects associated with *Heimatstil*, the endemic Swiss nativism" (Perloff 64).

Gomringer's desire to create functional poetic objects that could be understood by everyone was therefore in specific motivated by mobility, transnationality, modern design, and a utopian intention to advance an aesthetic restructuring of society (*theorie* 61-75). Using basic vocabulary and avoiding the local, the regional, or as Marti writes, *das Schweizerische* at first appears to defer the issue of translation, and again, we do well to remember that Gomringer's own conception of the ideal meeting place of a polyglot society was the airport:

> der flughafen, wo verbindungen zur ganzen runden welt hergestellt werden, wo es nur wichtige und relative wenig, dafür unzweideutige, klare beschriftungen, signale und zeichen gibt, die jedermann , gleich welcher muttersprache, verständlich sein müssen, war für mich der idealfall eines neuzeitlichen strukturmodells. (63)

> the airport—where connections to the whole world are constructed, where only a limited number of necessary and unambiguous instructions, signals, and signs exist, and which must be made understandable to everyone, regardless of his mother tongue—played the role of an ideal structural model for me.

Thus he imagined the concrete poem a useful object for a new, modern society—useful and intelligible to people all over the world. Much like an airport sign conveys information quickly and efficiently to people traveling between and across various boarders, the concrete poem seeks to be an equivalent,

an object able to facilitate interconnection and enact global relationships. But if the poetic means of the form Gomringer modeled after the airport sign are put to use for commercial ends, one wonders if Concrete Poetry's function as a *brauchbares Ding* (useful thing)—aimed to help shape (then) modern society—merely begins and end there. Indeed, Concrete Poetry's "commercial and communicative" activity here is conveniently commodified. It is interesting to note too, that Gomringer also worked for a Swiss engineering company as the "Propagandachef" (head of advertisement) during this time, and served as director for the Schweizerischer Werkbund—a group of artists, architects, and design experts who, during the postwar years, initiated *Die gute Form*, a campaign based on aesthetic functionalism aimed at producers and consumers (Spitz 14). In these positions, Gomringer employed principles from his poetry in his advertising work and provided texts for a hat company and a series of real-estate advertisements. Kurt Beals concludes that in his treatment of these texts, "Gomringer makes little distinction between these explicitly commercial texts and his poetic work, emphasizing instead how the formal devices of poetry can serve the ends of advertising" (65). Of course, this move from pure aesthetics to advertising also happened with the historical avant-garde, in De Stijl, Bauhaus, constuctivism, and so on. And the functionalism of design in Gomringer's poetry does evoke Bauhaus and El Lissitzky especially. But here the confusion between signs of commerce and signs of life enables us to get at what precisely objectivity implied for the universality Gomringer set out to codify in his body of work. The global order, as American military presence in Europe and cultural hegemony throughout the world stressed, was antithetical to the bourgeois sentiment of the past. Too much of the *NS-Zeit* echoed throughout those memories of a time gone by, a time that figures like Celan were quite able to recall yet were not, like Gomringer or even Jolas, rewarded for. Instead, one could perceive such poetical objects of the postwar as devoid of content, capable of sustaining whatever affirmation Allied power granted those under its control and whatever logic would fuel the social market economy of the foreseeable future.

## Conclusion

As far as Gomringer is concerned, the concrete poem is an aesthetic, whole material object that exists in a context: its purpose is to serve modern society as a visual and utilitarian object capable of influencing everyday language (*theorie* 15). Mary Ellen Solt contends that Gomringer's poem-object can best be understood as "an icon of the linguistic process of its time," one "constructed from the living language." Solt further points out that the "reciprocal relationship between poetry and everyday language can only be possible if they are like each other" (202). When the poems are isolated within their moment, as Hilder suggests, and consideration is placed on the poem's relationship to mass media in the 1950s, we may recall Gomringer's regard for *Schlagwörter*—the speedy and potent effect of slogans and headlines, not to mention their easy repeatability (13). In fact, Gomringer came to understand that the meaning of a sentence can oftentimes be grasped in the tenor of a single word.[20] The word, he asserts, is neither good nor evil, neither true nor false, though it loses its individuality in certain connection to other words. For that reason, Concrete Poetry aims to find the word's singular character and let it connect in new ways through the poem-object, through the

*konstellation* (*theorie* 12). Gomringer describes the evolution of this aim as a process of rediscovering the word as a structural element to a whole, poetic object (14). He compares this process to similar activities that led to earlier poetic innovations by Mallarmé and Apollinaire (as well as experiments by Kandinsky, Klee, and Mondrian in the visual arts), and describes the course that heralds such new forms as a "Reinigungsprozess" (14). This "purification process," if we are to follow Gomringer, apparently works to free the word from syntax, giving it its own individuality and independence (14). It is not concerned so much with the niceties of cultural and political circumstances of a multilingual avant-garde as much as the question of semantic adequacy after the Holocaust. This is, to be sure, a contrast to the broad strokes of Jolas's life's work—his move from the multilingual avant-garde to the objectivity of reportage. However, as I have shown throughout, the axis along which concern for linguistic unity and clarity ran throughout concretism depends upon a mutually reinforcing conception of postwar art and aesthetics that Jolas and Gomringer found influence in and profited by in their respective endeavors.

Because Gomringer's project seeks to emancipate the word and give it a new role as a structural building block for a visual poetry, there seems a clear correlation between this severe reduction of language and the project to denazify the German language—in other words, to purify the language of the ideology that corrupted it. Here we find Gomringer simpatico with Jolas. Moreover, the efforts to physically reconstruct a devastated country are metaphorically and actually reflected in both Jolas's and Gomringer's process of purification. This is one way of understanding how Gomringer talks about the object-poem as useful for society. In addition to his regard for *Schlagwörter* and this notion of a *Reinigungsprozess*, we must take into account how the political and economic reconstruction of Western Europe was being worked over by American-led propaganda and advertisement; a culture of capitalism was taking root through mass media, stimulating a consumer-oriented society, with haute bourgeois, multicultural chic and sensibility to back it up.[21] Advertisement had formidable influence on the living language of the time and Gomringer, a product himself of an industry that Jolas championed throughout the cataclysmic era of the *NS-Zeit*, understood that the mechanisms employed to strengthen capitalism would inevitably change modern communication.

If Gomringer's poem-object is an icon of the linguistic process of its time, it responded to and served as a reinforcing instrument for a postwar language—a language that neatly sidestepped the devastating realities resultant of the deadliest war in human history. As well, it served modern society in German-speaking Europe by looking forward toward democratic capitalism and global communication. This again illustrates how the postwar avant-garde was not an extension of the historical avant-garde. Instead, the postwar avant-garde imagined a new form of universality, its activities working in tandem with others to reinforce a language that served to assist in the economic miracle of the American-assisted West German recovery and other formerly Axis-reliant nation-states.

## Notes

1. For a detailed analysis of *Un Coup de Dés*, see Henry Weinfield's commentary in *Collected Poems*, pp. 264-275.
2. Gomringer's published works, including titles, are written in lowercase—a technique he employed to disrupt hierarchical

structures of grammar and syntax. For the purpose of staying consistent to the poet's typographical choices, excerpts of his work I use here remain in their original format.

3. Translations mine unless otherwise noted.
4. The first version of this poem was published under the title "ciudad" in *spirale: international zeitschrift für junde Kunst* (Bern), vol. 1, 1953, p. 12. However, today the poem is referred to as simply "avenidas," as subsequent versions were printed without the original title.
5. The German word for poetry, *Dichtung*, derives from *dicht*, meaning thick, dense, and concrete.
6. See Ernest Fenollosa, *Das chinesische Schriftzeichen als poetisches Medium,* translated by Gomringer.
7. For an extensive critical analysis of Fenollosa's work and Pound's presentation of it, see Haun Saussy, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: A Critical Edition*, Fordham UP, 2008.
8. See Fenollosa, *Chinese Written Character*: "Poetry must render what is said, not what is merely meant. Abstract meaning gives little vividness, and fullness of imagination gives all. Chinese poetry demands that we abandon our narrow grammatical categories, that we follow the original text with a wealth of concrete verbs" (21).
9. *Spirale*'s magazine's multi-language mission statement was printed on an insert added in its second volume, which appeared in August 1953.
10. See the introduction to Stephen Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour*, Camden House, 2004.
11. Gruppe 47 authors became key voices of postwar literature from 1947–1968. Well-known members include Ilse Aichinger, Alfred Andersch, Ingeborg Bachmann, Heinrich Böll, Günter Eich, Hans Magnus Enzenberger, Günter Grass, Erich Kästner, Walter Jens, Alexander Kluge, Siegfried Lenz, Martin Walser, and Peter Weiss.
12. See Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, Indiana UP, 1993.
13. See Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, Piper, 1967.
14. Celan's response to a Flinker's Bookstore questionnaire about bilingual poetry, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop.
15. In his 1951 essay "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft," Adorno declared: "Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch" (To write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric; 30). Translated by Samuel and Sherry Weber, "Cultural Criticism and Society." *Prisms*, MIT Press, 1981, pp. 17-34.
16. "A Logical Writing for an Illogical World" is the subtitle to the later editions of *Semantography (Blissymbolics)*.
17. See Eugen Gomringer's interview with Annabel Dilling and Patrick Bauer, "Wir sind viel still miteinander," *Süddeutschezeitung*, 12 Apr. 2018.
18. Marti, "Zu Eugen Gomringers 'Konstellationen'": "Sinnbild der Schweiz im letzten Weltkrieg war der eingerollte Igel. Dieser Igelhaltung entsprach das Bedürfnis, sich auch geistig und literarisch an die eigenen Wurzeln zu klammern. In der dreißiger Jahren wurde der Vorschlag lanciert, die deutsche Schweiz kulturell autark zu machen durch die Schaffung einer schweizerdeutschen Schriftsprache. »Alemannisch, die Rettung der schweizerischen Volksseele« - so lautete die Parole, und noch vor ein paar Jahren sinnierte Kurt Guggenheim: »Alle unsere kulturellen Probleme wären einfacher, wenn wir eine eigene Sprache hätten«" (88).
19. Marti, "Zu Eugen Gomringers 'Konstellationen'": Es mag sein, daß Gomringers Konzeption einer Dichtung, die polyglottes Verhalten demonstriert, sich im Bereich der mehrsprachigen Schweiz besonders günstig hat entwickelt können. Die Gemeinsamkeit politischer und gesellschaftlicher Strukturen bei aller Verschiedenheit der Sprachen mag in der Tat der schweizerische Hinweis darauf sein, dass es möglich und statthaft ist, vielsprachige Räume und schließlich die vielsprachige Welt überhaupt als potentielle Einheit zu nehmen" (92).
20. Gomringer, *theorie*: "unsere sprache befinden sich auf dem weg der formalen vereinfachung. es bilden sich reduzierte, knappe formen. oft geht der inhalt eines satzes in einen einwort-begriff über" (12). (Our language is on its way to formal simplification. It is establishing a reduced, terse form. Often, the content of a sentence descends from the concept of a single word.)
21. For a study on postwar capitalism and the American cultural imperialism that took place in Western Europe after the war, see Reinhold Wagnleitner's *Coca-colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, U of North Carolina P, 1994.

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