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# Ernst Jandl

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## Brief orientation

Ernst Jandl is widely considered to be one of the most influential experimental poets in the German-speaking world as well as being counted among the most important international representatives of sound and concrete poetry. In dialogue with these movements, however, he followed an idiosyncratic trajectory which was closely linked to his political concerns: namely, coming to terms with the abuse of German art and language by National Socialism. As a co-founder of the Graz Authors' Assembly – which positioned itself against the aesthetically conservative politics of the Austrian PEN Club – he also made a leading contribution to a reformation of the Austrian literary field towards more innovative and experimental trends.

Jandl was born in Vienna in 1925 and was conscripted for military service in 1943, followed by a year as a prisoner of war in America. After completing his studies in German and English he became a teacher in a Viennese academic high school. Jandl's first publications appeared in 1952 and his lifelong partnership and collaboration with the Austrian writer Friederike Mayröcker began in 1954. In the same year Jandl made the acquaintance of representatives of the Vienna Group, which marked the start of a phase of intensive literary experimentation lasting more than two decades. Jandl experienced his international breakthrough in 1965 with a performance at London's Royal Albert Hall and the release of the volume *Laut und Luise* (*Loud/ Sound and Luise*, 1966) the following year. During that time his first records with sound poems started to appear, partly in cooperation with other international writers, and partly in collaboration with jazz musicians. Moreover, Jandl contributed significantly to the establishment of the experimental art of the New Radio Play. With his contributions to a theory of acoustic literature as well as his concept of *oberflächenübersetzung* (*surface translation*, 1957) he remains a point of reference in discussions of the international, literary neo-avant-gardes. Jandl died in Vienna in May 2000.

## Developments

Jandl's work extends from the use of traditional, realistic techniques to some of the most varied strategies of literary experimentation, exploring the borderlands between literature, performance, visual art, music and new media. This contrast between traditional and experimental devices also seems to shape the development of his work. There is, however, a common thread across Jandl's writing that puts this explanatory model into perspective. This thread is predicated on an idiosyncratic poetic orientation, a "gründliche Simplizität" ("thorough simplicity"; Jandl, 1985e: 570) as Jandl calls it. Namely, that the constant search for a new language – in different and constantly evolving ways – begins with the ennoblement of that which is simple. In his entire oeuvre, Jandl seizes on the low, banal and quotidian, the defective and the inadequate, which – in those particular forms – were previously excluded from art.

This thread is already central to his first volume of poems *Andere Augen* (*Other Eyes*, 1956). At first glance the collection seems conventional, but its lyrical realism is in fact consistently written in everyday language. Jandl foregoes metaphors and directs his gaze towards trivial situations. The form and contents of this poetry are characterized by equalizing, anti-elitist tendencies towards the profane. It is a process of struggling through and against the traditions of German poetry, in which the complex labor of the poet comes to stand at the same level as the allegedly "simple" labor of road workers (*strassenbau*, 1956).

At the time of the publication of *Andere Augen* (1956), Jandl was already linked to the Vienna Group, which consisted of Friedrich Achleitner, H.C. Artmann, Konrad Bayer, Gerhard Rühm, and Oswald Wiener. This group of young Austrian writers first came together in 1954 and Rühm and Artmann in particular had a defining impact on Jandl. Through the Vienna Group, Jandl came into contact with the works of the historical avant-garde and the contemporary trends of the literary neo-avant-gardes. Among the latter the tradition of concrete poetry in particular was a decisive influence. In retrospect, Jandl also emphasised the literature of Dadaism and Expressionism as central stimuli, including texts by August Stramm, Kurt Schwitters and Hans Arp. Indeed, with Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and E. E. Cummings, John Cage and Bob Cobbing, developments in the English-speaking world always remained a central point of reference for him as well (Jandl 1985h: 489).

Jandl's first performance of his so-called speech poems took place at a reading in autumn 1957, in which, among others, authors of the Vienna Group, Friederike Mayröcker and Andreas Okopenko took part. Some months before, these poems appeared with a preface (*das sprechgedicht/ the speech poem*) in an issue of the magazine *neue wege*, which was thereby opened up to experimental literature for the first time. This resulted in fierce criticism from the readership, which was directed with particular vehemence against Jandl himself. As a high-school German teacher, he was less easily forgiven for his degradation of language and art into something perceived as gobbledygook than the other authors who were presented in the same issue (Siblewski 2000; Schweiger 2010).

Jandl's speech poems differentiate themselves from the sound poems of the historical avant-garde. Unlike those poems, but similar to Rühm's poetry, the word and its semantic potential remain the point of departure. As can be inferred from the renown of one of his most famous texts, *schtzngrmm* (1957), the adherence to the sound material of a recognizable "foundational word" (Jandl 1985d: 444) reduces the demands on the audience's understanding. Hence Jandl's speech poems also made the efforts of neo-avant-gardist literature comprehensible for an audience that was not initiated in the discussions of lettrist, concrete or sound poets.

In 1966 Jandl experienced his breakthrough as an experimental poet with his poetry volume *Laut und Luise*. The volume includes sound and speech poems, visual and concrete poetry, image poems and typograms, montages and permutations, lyrical prose in the Dadaist tradition, drawings, dialectal passages, and a game of grotesque neologisms. At the same time, a new form of “complicated simplicity” (Fetz 2010: 21) comes to the fore in Jandl’s handling of the devices of experimental poetry. It is a playful moment that derives its wit, its punchlines, and its complex, semantic openness from the defective and the flawed (Riha 1996: 15). This process typifies some of Jandl’s most renowned texts. In Jandl’s *etüde in f*, for example, the construction and effect are based on the principle of false pronunciation or misspeaking (“eile mit feile”/ “haste in file”). The poem *lichtung*, meanwhile, works with the mixing up of two letters: “manche meinen/ lechts und rinks/ kann man nicht/ velwechsern./ werch ein illtum!” (“some think/ reft and light/ cannot be/ muddled up./ what a farracy!”). In a simultaneously serious and satirical reference to reality, the falsity (or rather, the “farracy”) regarding the consonants “l” and “r” refers to a confusion of political orientations in the first half of the twentieth century, which was fraught with consequences. Anything but harmless, this error enabled the emergence of fascist movements and it is no accident that it is accompanied in Jandl’s text by the transformation from “richtung” (direction/ orientation) to “lichtung” (clearing).

The volumes *sprechblasen* (*speech bubbles*, 1968) and *der künstliche baum* (*the artificial tree*, 1970), published in the following years, maintain the program set out in *Laut und Luise* (1966). In these years of intensive literary experimentation Jandl is also preoccupied with the possibilities offered by the new medium of radio. In the course of 1967 he composed several radio plays – sometimes alone, sometimes with Friederike Mayröcker – of which *Fünf Mann Menschen* (*Five Man People*, 1968) and *Das Röcheln der Mona Lisa* (*The Rasp of the Mona Lisa*, 1970) in particular can be considered among the most important examples of the New Radio Play in the German-speaking world.

In *Fünf Mann Menschen* it becomes especially apparent that Jandl (here with Mayröcker) also follows a program of “thorough” simplification (Jandl 1985e: 570) in this new medium. Applied to a group of numbered, male figures and their typified stages of life, this principle begins – in accordance with the genre – with the greatest possible contraction of *dramatic* elements (characters, plot, speech, etc.). The ideal borrowed from concrete poetry of the greatest possible reduction of the arranged materials – the rationalization of aesthetic production – is brought by the two authors into a complex state of tension with the rationalization of the human, with its ultimate dehumanization. Regarding this aim, Jandl and Mayröcker’s transmission of techniques from concrete poetry to the medium of the radio play consequently responds to the performed, violent reduction of the human with an acoustic event: the characters’ loss of speech – “k.o./ o.k./ Koks (coke)/ o.k./ k.o.” – casts light on the potential for freedom through literary-experimental perceptions of the world.

Jandl explores the possibility of transferring these aesthetic strategies into the medium of film through his work on the television film *Die Traube* (*The Grape*, 1971), realized together with Friederike Mayröcker and the radio play director Heinz von Cramer. With its serial techniques of rhythmic montage and the permutation of radically reduced source material (motifs, camera angles, etc.), the piece places itself within the tradition of the Viennese Formal Film (Marc Adrian, Kurt Kren, Peter Kubelka, and others). With the choice of motifs, meanwhile, it also transfers foundational elements of Jandl’s poetological programme into the medium of film.

In *der künstliche baum* (1970) Jandl already hints at how much it displeased him to have his work reduced to existing artistic trends: “i love concrete/ i love pottery/ but i’m not/ a concrete pot.” (Jandl 1985l: 454) In the following years, he reorients himself as an artist. With the volume *dingfest* (*Thingsure*, 1973) and its very telling title, Jandl returns to the ambitions of his debut *Andere Augen* (1956), by tapping into the register of everyday language. In that way, he distances himself from the radical concretism that was typical of concrete poetry at the time. Instead, he takes on the lyrical tradition in a new way by re-appropriating traditional forms, themes and oppositions through a lyrical subject that foregoes pathos, inwardness and its own privileged status. At the same time, this lyrical subject is granted a legitimate place in the midst of the celebrated festival of simple things (the second reading of “dingfest”) in return. This negotiation clings to the materialist concept of concrete poetry. Through the inclusion of topics that had so far not been deemed appropriate for poetry, Jandl’s work recodes experimental poetry and displays two materialistic thrusts.

The second element in the way Jandl reorients himself in the 1970s was the poetic play with the “language of people who are compelled to speak german without ever having learned it systematically. some called it ‘guest-worker german’, but i, with regard to poetry, call it a ‘rundown language’” (Jandl 1985i: 351). Through his work with this so-called “degenerate” language of the infinitive, of restricted codes and of grammatical and syntactical errors, Jandl opened up a field of formal experimentation that was able to recapture lyrically negotiable reality in new ways. This is applied comprehensively for the first time in the poetry volume *die bearbeitung der mütze* (*the processing of the cap*) published in 1978. With this additional “grasp towards the bottom” (Riha 1996: 16), Jandl established a new aesthetic technique that made socially branded linguistic irregularities “light up as the language of our poetry” (Jandl 1985c: 42).

The following volumes, *der gelbe hund* (*the yellow dog*, 1980) and *selbstportät des schachspielers als trinkende uhr* (*self-portrait of the chess player as drinking clock*, 1983), supplement the aforementioned strategies with new experiments focused on children’s language. In addition, the theme of the poet’s daily life being as torturous as it is banal, the fictional self-portrait, comes increasingly into the fore. The growing significance of auto-fiction goes hand in hand with an accumulation of poetological poems. Precisely this interconnection underlies his most successful theatre play, the spoken opera *Aus der Fremde* (*Out of a Foreign Place*, premiered in 1979), as well as shaping his late works such as *idyllen* (*idylls*, 1989) and *peter und die kuh* (*peter and the cow*, 1996).

Jandl takes a final, major step toward a “thorough simplicity” with *stanzen* (*stanzas*, 1992), which is written in Lower Austrian dialect. Here, the poems’ strophic form does not come from the well-known, Italian originals (Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso), but is rather drawn from local, popular culture. Jandl himself described the collection of poems as “a book of uplifting and devastating linguistic study” (Jandl 1999a: 284). He does not thus take a step back, as though he were paralleling H.C. Artmann’s famous surrealist dialect poetry. Rather, *stanzen* performatively displays alienated and reduced epigrammatic worldviews. The volume stages site- and subject-less talking, which can be understood as the logical complement to the auto-fictional and metaliterary strands of Jandl’s later work.

## Avant-Garde Strategies

The stylistic devices that shape Jandl's work are diverse and are themselves shaped by his own examination of various movements within the literary neo-avant-gardes, as well as by the different media and the aesthetic genres they establish. From the outset, Jandl sought to supplement his artistic production with explanatory reflections, which – be they autonomous texts or elements of a lyrical or dramatic work – reveal a consistent literary program. The central tenets of this program are brought into particularly stark relief when it is compared with the positions commonly held by the representatives of the Vienna Group. The latter – like many of their international colleagues – aimed first and foremost to counter human determination through language, understood as an act of violence, with aesthetically-formed, radical language *scepticism*. Jandl, however, added something more decisive to this objective. Jandl did not take language as a static, given structure, but rather made speech as a performative act the foundation of his poetics. In that respect, he was also concerned with what speaker and listener, writer and reader *did with* language. In his view, it was precisely through its determining mechanisms that language opened up space for free play. To this extent Jandl understood art as the “drama of executing freedom”, an execution in the course of which each person – poet as well as recipient – must realize “their own model of freedom” (Jandl 1985h: 480).

Accordingly, Jandl rejected terms like language skepticism or “doubts about language” as inherently illogical constructs. There can be no doubts about language, only doubts about the use of the respective language by people (Jandl 1985j). Jandl openly remarked that he gave his poems “societal tasks”: “Language is made by us, and we can, may, must do everything with it that is to be done [...]. What we need is words that point in one direction; whether we follow this one or select another, we are in each case required to be active” (Jandl 1985a: 491).

The stylistic consequences that Jandl drew from his linguistic premises are most clearly illustrated in a text, the effect of which is owed to a still distinctly recognizable lexeme. This is the poem *schtzngrmm* written in 1957: “schtzngrmm/ schtzngrmm/ t-t-t-t/ t-t-t-t/ grrmmmmmm/ s-----c-----h/ tzngrrmm/ tzngrrmm/ tzngrrmm/grrmmmmmm/ schtzn/ schtzn/ t-t-t-t/- t-t-t-t/ [...] scht/ scht/ scht/ grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr/ t-tt” (Jandl 1985k: 125). The material at the basis of the text is the word “Schützengraben” (“trench”), but the vowels have been taken away, because, as Jandl reflects on the role of vowels and consonants in human singing: “War does not sing!” (Jandl 1985h: 486). Jandl connects this “hardening” of the “basic word” with its “dissection” and a “reassembly of its elements into new, expressive groups of sounds” (Jandl 1985d: 444). This new grouping of sounds and sound sequences thereby pursues “imitatory” purposes. The arrangement of sounds is brought into line with the “battle noise” of the trenches and in doing so brings war onto the stage as a linguistic experience (Jandl 1985h: 487). In this way, the speech poem demonstrates in its physical realization what it is about. In the foundational word, which remains recognizable (“Schützengraben”) as well as in the final sound sequence (“t-tt”), which evokes the association with “tot” (“dead”), Jandl's credo is made manifest. He believes that experimental, acoustic poetry must “not renounce meaning completely” – a credo that is undoubtedly directed against the dogma of “pure” sound poetry (Jandl 1985c: 28).

Also in other genres, Jandl's theoretical premises led to stylistic solutions that deviated from the trajectory of his writer colleagues. The title of his five-part poetry lectures in Frankfurt *Vom Öffnen und Schließen des Mundes* (*On the Opening and Closing of the Mouth*, 1985) formulates his views succinctly. According to Jandl, it is not language but rather speech that offers the departure point for a new poetic materialism. Still, he also regards the body of the speaking person – their mouth, lips, jaw, the breath, spitting noises, etc. – as material with which to conduct *state of the art* experiments. The normal, conforming use of healthy, human tools of speech, represented an important goal of literature teaching in the National Socialist education for speech hygiene. In Jandl's work, however, it becomes the material to which the tried and tested instruments of dissection, isolation and rearrangement could be applied.



As a consequence, lip movements and facial expressions in speech as well as the “opening and closing of the mouth” became parts of Jandl’s field of exploration. This brought forth the so-called lip poems, but also text passages that are to be spoken in their entirety either with an open mouth or with the mouth closed – almost completely eliminating the communicative power of language. It is precisely in these paradoxical speech guidelines – guidelines that cannot be (correctly) met – that it becomes clear how Jandl’s notion of “language as bodily sounds” (Jandl 1985b: 174) goes beyond the acoustic literature of Dadaism or Lettrism (e.g. Isidore Isou’s codification of bodily sounds) towards its own objective. It led to an experimentation with the human as material and with its “profanation” (Mikhail M. Bakhtin 1984) and somatization of the artistic concept, with its semiotics of the damaged human organs, pointed towards the radical performance art of Viennese Actionism.

Jandl grounds literature in the physicality of the speaking person. As a corollary, Jandl’s work often provides strict instructions for bodily posture, spatial position or even the tempo of speech, for example in his radio plays. By these directives, Jandl works through the structural violence of the unequal social allocation of the rules of speech and silence, of listening and being heard, of looking and being seen – in short, the social “distribution of the sensible” (Jacques Rancière 2004). This also brings with it a concept of inwardness, modified accordingly, which can be most precisely expressed in Jandl’s own language with his poem *innerlich* (*inward*, 1975), in which Jandl integrates the concluding remark, “contribution to a new inwardness”. It consists of instructions for a performance, which are based on a graphical notation system. The poem is, according to the arrangement, to be realized “with a closed mouth”, which is why the guidelines refer to the use of body parts that – like the nose, oral cavity and cheeks – at least offer some hope for the achievement of an utterance. The result is a score of attempts at articulation, in which – as is to be seen in the recording of Jandl’s own performance – hiccoughs, suppressed sneezing, cheeks puffed out to the point of bursting are rhythmically staged to result in sounds and movements that give the impression of trying to “keep the vomit from being released” (Jandl 1985c: 13).

Beyond the lyrical short form, his radio play *Das Röcheln der Mona Lisa: Ein akustisches Geschehen für eine Stimme und Apparaturen* (*The Rasp of the Mona Lisa: An Acoustic Event for Voice and Apparatuses*, 1970) positions itself ostensibly in the tradition of the just-sketched poetics of bodily sounds, with a title that transforms the famous “Lächeln” (“smile”) into a “Röcheln” (“rasp”). In this piece, however, the satirically implied downfall of fine art is not realized through the dramatic death of a voice in the play itself. The “ideal condition of the speaker” is rather taken to be a general “sickening of the speech and respiratory organs, i.e. the malfunctioning of the speech centre” (Jandl 1985b: 175). Instead of depicting a processual damaging, this “ideal condition” raises the state of damage to the status of normality. Jandl himself described this radio play as “poetry that leads up to silence” (Jandl 1985b: 173). In this interstice – just as in Jandl’s lyrical performances – audible strangling, groaning, swallowing or breathing; in other words, bodily sounds of *individuals* can be located. As *Das Röcheln der Mona Lisa* shows, this concept of poetry can however refer to a *collective* apparatus, to a societal power structure, the mechanics of which are made tangible in the field of tension between the aural and visual senses.

## Contents

Jandl's political attitude was strongly influenced by his experiences of National Socialism and the Second World War. For decades he was a member of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and was described by his colleagues – not without reason – as a “committed concrete poet” (Kolleritsch 1966: 35). Jandl's willingness to take a political position through literary means, though, was precisely what drew criticism among his neo-avant-garde colleagues such as those within the Vienna Group. They stated that his approach was not sufficiently radical. This accusation was explicitly turned against, among others, Jandl's *deutsches gedicht* (*german poem*, 1957), which employed devices of concrete poetry to address National Socialism and the Holocaust.

In one of his most famous pieces, Jandl pursued an opposite formal path. The poem *wien : heldenplatz* (1962/66) takes as its theme the celebrations of the Austrian people in the titular imperial square in the center of Vienna, following the “Anschluss” to Hitler's Germany in May 1938. Noticeable in this text is that the syntax remains “unscathed”, while the word-level is marked by a “damaged” language (Jandl 1985f: 471), which in turn performatively carries out that of which it speaks. What is interesting about the political critique, conveyed through content *and* form, is also the notion of damage, as it circumvents the contrast contrived by National Socialism between healthy and sick and has been part of the standard vocabulary of the Frankfurt School-influenced, left-wing intellectual scene in the German-speaking world, at least since the publication of Theodor W. Adorno's *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (1951). At the same time, however, Jandl turned *against* Adorno and against his renowned formulation from the same year (1951) that, “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”. Also in 1951, Gottfried Benn's efficaciously postulated decree that loud and public recitals of poetry should be renounced may have provoked Jandl to demonstrate the opposite (von Ammon 2010: 34). Benn stated that poems “went better inward” (Benn 1954: 44) in quiet, solitary reading. This view can undoubtedly be regarded as an implicit reference point for Jandl's (theoretically reflected) parody of a “new inwardness”.

Jandl's own biographical experiences came together with discourses of the contemporary, intellectual public. This not only contributed to the fact that war, fascism and violence became a constantly recurring content in Jandl's work. This thematic field also motivated his work on the lyrical form, which was at the basis of an experimental play with “control” (Fetz 2010: 24) over one's own speech organs and with the political dimensions of the use of the human voice. Thus Jandl practiced the performances of his speech poems with what might seem to be a militant passion for precision, aided by a metronome. As Jörg Laederach recalls, Jandl was indeed “the only person on the planet who could convincingly tell a joke in a commanding tone and to whom it would occur to do such a thing” (Laederach 1995: 10). This specific politics of the voice turned against totalitarian ideologies and practices in a way that clearly came to the fore in Jandl's collaboration with numerous jazz musicians and orchestras (including the Vienna Art Orchestra, the Bigband of the Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Ernst Kölz and Dieter Glawischnig). In these collaborations, too, he was oriented towards rhythm: speaking to the beat, knowingly deviating from the beat or interacting with musical improvisations. Across all of these variants, the metronome oscillated in a double role that became exemplary for Jandl's poetics, as an instrument of collective discipline on the one hand, and as a means of subverting incorporated artistic and social norms on the other.

Secondly, Jandl engages with typical themes of the lyrical tradition. The intention of works in this vein can be read according to a time in which “a discussion about trees almost [constituted] a crime” (Brecht [1939] 1988: 85): to take back woods and meadows, love and war as legitimate objects of art, instead of leaving them to one's (political) opponents – the enemies of the avant-garde and the moderns.

The third important thematic field in Jandl's work is the self-reflexive reference to his own existence as a poet. Though there is an autobiographical dimension to this theme, this emphasis in the content of his work can also be understood as a specific politics of form. It is in such a way that Jandl's speech opera *Aus der Fremde* (*Out of a Foreign Place*, 1979/80) deals with a poet couple, clearly referring to Jandl and his life partner Friederike Mayröcker. At the same time, however, the piece, which is to be performed as speech song, follows the same principle as Jandl's speech poems, as it presents what precedes the artwork as signified, as *histoire*: writing exactly this "verse drama" that in the same moment is being performed – or re-presented. The three characters "narrate" in the third person and in the subjunctive what they do, think and say. This strategy formally presents the self in its own epic, a redundant, pathetic entrapment in a self-narration based on a split ego as self-objectification. In contrast with the numerous pieces that Jandl composed as so-called "autonomous" dramas, "only for print" (Jandl 1985g: 343), his speech opera is therefore performable because it plays poetry, drama, epic and even opera as *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Richard Wagner) off one another. Their systems of rules become identifiable as vulnerable, insufficient and banal, social material, like the bodies of the protagonist – an ageing writer with neo-avant-garde ambitions.

## Conclusion

The effect Ernst Jandl and his work had and still have is in the first instance interwoven with his connection to the Stuttgart Group of Concrete Poetry (Max Bense, Helmut Heißenbüttel, Reinhard Döhl, Franz Mon and others). Also significant is that Jandl was active as a translator of texts by important authors of the international avant-garde and the moderns (Gertrude Stein, John Cage, Pete Brown, Michael Horowitz, Leo Lionni and others, see Stuckatz 2016: 66-69). He coined the term "oberflächenübersetzung" ("surface translation"; Weissmann 2013; Broqua/Weissman 2019) in the course of his experiments with homophonic translation. Conversely, the volume *Reft and Light: Poems by Ernst Jandl with Multiple Versions by American Poets* (2000), edited by Rosmarie Waldrop, contains translations of Jandl by numerous eminent colleagues such as Waldrop and Charles Bernstein. This illustrates the international reception and significance of the Austrian author. Jandl's place among the international avant-garde was also reinforced through his collaborations with numerous internationally active musicians (see above), with representatives from visual art (such as John Furnival, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Jiří Kolář?) and, from 1965, the release of records with international representatives of sound poetry and concrete poetry such as Bob Cobbing, Franz Mon, Eugen Gomringer, Reinhard Döhl, Paul de Vree, Lily Greenham, and Haroldo de Campos (Döhl 1994: 117).

Just how firmly Jandl's idiosyncratic speech and word artistry had its finger on the pulse of the poetic movements with which he engaged is illustrated by his legendary performance at the Royal Albert Hall on 11th June 1965. There, a group reading known as "International Poetry Incarnation" took place in front of an audience of 7,000, with numerous celebrated representatives of Beat Poetry and new political poetry. Among them were Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gregory Corso, Adrian Mitchell as well as 13 other authors and a tape-recording of William S. Burroughs. The evening became an "historic moment in sixties British culture" (Donnelly 2011: 128), in which, as is seen in Peter Whitehead's film *Wholly Communion* (1965), Jandl's performance became the high point of the event. The audience, spurred on by Jandl's highly disciplined and artificial speech rhythms reminiscent of totalitarian rhetoric, joined in by clapping, crying and chanting (see Lykiard 1966: 4). For the then still unknown Austrian high school teacher Ernst Jandl, the poems succeeded in transforming a poetry reading temporarily into a pop concert, bringing the house down on the violent history of the last two centuries.

For a **more detailed version** of the present essay see [here](#).



## Further reading

Jandl's extensive, well-reviewed estate is held in the Literature Archive of the Austrian National Library. With a multimedia DVD (Schweiger 2010) and a website, it provides the central foundations for research as well as a bibliography of secondary literature organized according to primary texts (see: <https://jandl.onb.ac.at/>).

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