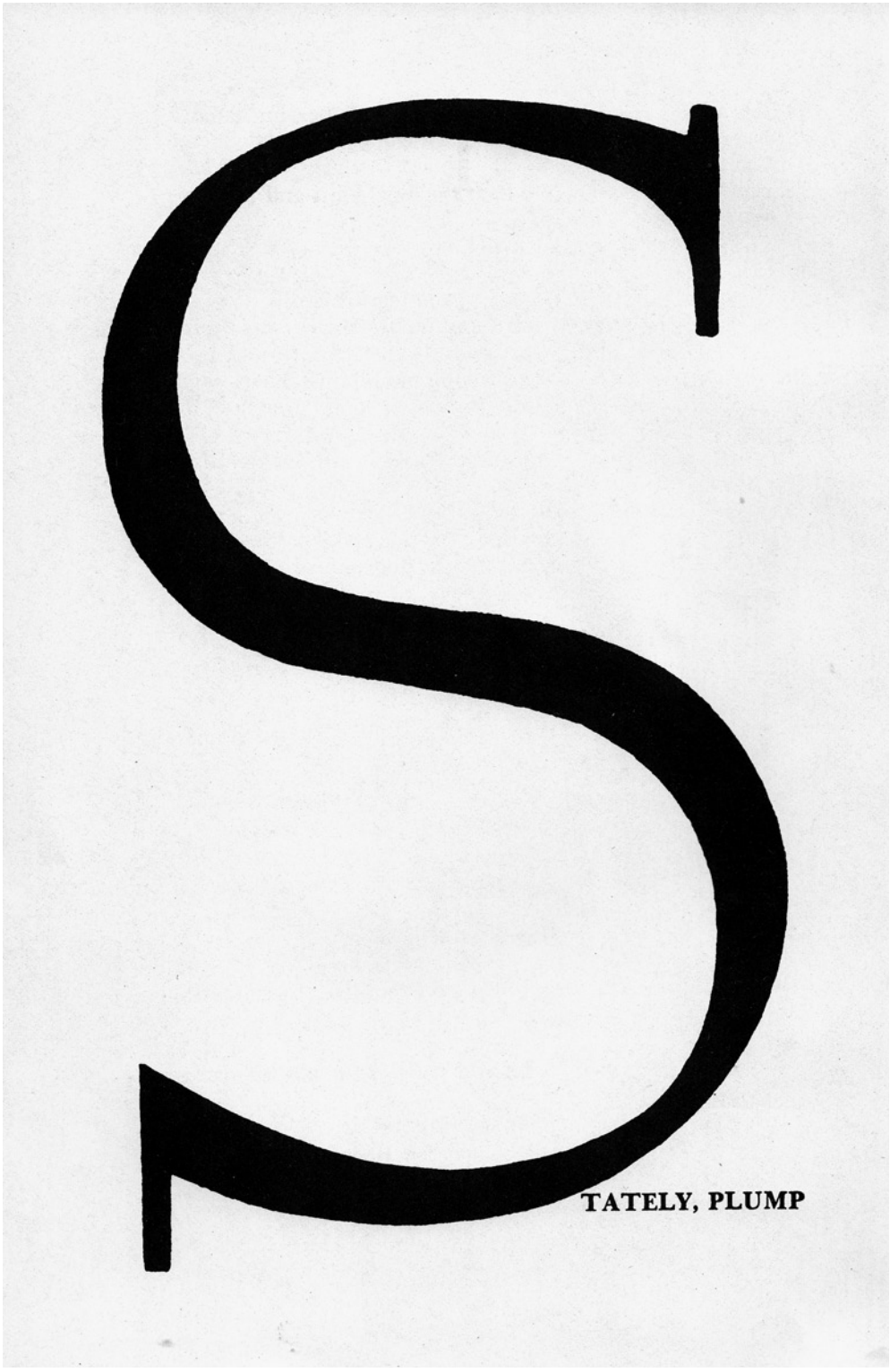

This bulletin borrows (most of) its title from Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers. The line "L'alphabet est un dé à 26 faces" (The alphabet is a die with 26 faces) is drawn from a sketch for a bound version of the first edition of his 1969 graphic translation of French poet Stéphane Mallarmé's 1897 masterpiece *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A cast of the dice will never abolish chance), which Broodthaers subtitled "Image" following Mallarmé's original "Poème."

Cover image: The opening page of the opening chapter of the first U.S. edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, designed by the German-American typographer Ernst Reichl. The use of such significant initials, which occur thoughout the book, might be considered a modernist update of the medieval technique of "illuminated lettering" or a visual analog of what the critic Guy Davenport, in an essay on Joyce, called the "Kells effect."

One Saturday afternoon in the winter of 2009, after visiting Trinity College Library in Dublin, I bought a notebook in a bookstore off College Green. For several years now, I have been collecting alphabet books, that is, books with letters for titles, and in Dublin I decided to start keeping a record or, if you will, a log of these occasional searches. To begin with, I wrote down bibliographic details and cataloged the travels—either my own travels or the shipping history of the book in question—as well as the expenditures involved in finding and acquiring this or that item, but soon my entries became less rigorous. The notebook has a convenient, expandable inner pocket where I keep receipts ("1 H = €8.05," "1 P = $13.50," "1 T = £4.50"), and on the inside cover I've penciled the following inscription:

A, B, C, D, Etc.

The main impulse behind my collection is provided by a passage from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, though there's been an element of chance about it from the outset. The phrases "alphabet books" and "books with letters for titles" are taken from *Ulysses*—from the third chapter, to be precise, during which the poet Stephen Dedalus walks along Sandymount Strand, reflecting on his youth and ambition:

Reading two pages apiece of seven books every night, eh? I was young. You bowed to yourself in the mirror, stepping forward to applause earnestly, striking face. Hurray for the Goddamned idiot! Hray ! No-one saw: tell no-one. Books you were going to write with letters for titles. Have you read his F? O yes, but I prefer Q. Yes, but W is wonderful. O yes, W. Remember your epiphanies on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? Someone was to read them there after a few thousand years, a mahamanvantara. When one reads these strange pages of one long gone one feels that one is at one with one who once …

Shortly afterward, the young writer again mentions these abandoned books, this time in connection with lust: "The virgin at Hodges Figgis' window on Monday looking in for one of the alphabet books you were going to write. Keen glance you gave her." That Stephen derides his youthful ambition to rewrite the alphabet is indicative of both his arrogance and

his sardonic temperament, further evinced by the parables, riddles, and conundrums he fabricates throughout *Ulysses*. Later in the day, we find him in the midst of a tortuous conversation in the National Library, saying to himself: "I, I and I. I.," followed by: "A. E. I. O. U." In his biography of Joyce, Richard Ellman speculates that with the latter remark Stephen acknowledges the author's (monetary) debt to the Irish writer George Russell, whose pen name was Æ. The row of vowels can, therefore, be read as: George Russell, I owe you. It's an awful pun, and one of several instances in the novel when attention is drawn to letters themselves, that is, to the raw material of language. Here, as elsewhere, Stephen's words require some decryption.

In "Joyce's Forest of Symbols," the critic Guy Davenport suggests that words in *Ulysses* can be scrutinized for what is called the "Kells effect," which he defines as "the symbolic content of illuminated lettering serving a larger purpose than its decoration of geometry, imps, and signs." For instance, the original connotations of the first two words of the novel—"stately" is an adjective for kings, and "plump" is for plebeians—encapsulate the conflicts in the opening chapter. At the same time, the last word of the novel, "yes," is contained within the first, "stately." Thus prominent letterforms, such as those at the beginning or at the end of a chapter, can serve a larger thematic and structural purpose within the book. As for the basic structure, there are 18 episodes in *Ulysses*, which is curious in light of Joyce's fastidious attention to symbolic detail, given that *Ulysses* is a modern re-enactment of *The Odyssey*, and Homer's epic poem contains 24. To account for this discrepancy, Davenport argues that an old Irish alphabet underpins *Ulysses*, dictating its number of chapters. Stephen's reference to books with letters for titles signals this alphabet's harmonizing presence.

If we're to believe Roderic O'Flaherty, the author of *Ogygia, or, A Chronological Account of Irish Events*, the Irish alphabet derived from trees and plants with magical properties: (in alphabetical order) the birch, the wild ash, the alder ("of which shields are made"), the willow, the ash ("of which spears are made"), the hawthorn, the scarlet oak, the hazel, the apple tree, the vine, the ivy, the reed, the blackthorn, the elder tree, the fir, the gorse, the heather, the aspen, the yew, the spindle tree, the honeysuckle, and the gooseberry shrub. In part three, chapter 30

of *Ogygia*, he sets out to attribute one tree to each letter of this alphabet, but in three instances admits he cannot provide a satisfactory explanation. He nevertheless insists on direct correspondence between Irish trees and letters, drawing his case in large part from a medieval Gaelic primer in which each letter is glossed in metaphorical terms. What's more, he says, the alphabet's 18 basic elements (five letters are diphthongs and three are superfluous consonants) are "as many Greek letters as were according to the testimony of Pliny from Aristotle." As the title indicates, O'Flaherty's history presents Ireland as Ogygia, the mythical island described by the Greek historian Plutarch as five days' sail to the west of Britain, the very island where the nymph Calypso held Ulysses captive for seven years in a cave sheltered by alders, aspens, and fragrant cypresses.

According to Davenport, the idiosyncratic combination of Irish history and Greek mythology was precisely what attracted Joyce to O'Flaherty's book and to its alphabet in particular. Written in Latin, *Ogygia* was translated into English by one Reverend James Hely in 1793. As it happens, there are five men in *Ulysses* who wander the streets wearing tall white hats that spell out *Hely's*, advertising the name of a Dublin stationers. Letter by letter, Davenport contends that the 18 trees of O'Flaherty's alphabet provide a pattern of correspondences for the 18 chapters of *Ulysses*. "This scheme of alphabetical trees," he writes, "extends an invisible forest over Joyce's cityscape, thereby tenting over the whole novel with Dante's *selva oscura*, Calypso's magically restraining trees, the lost Eden, the forest of Europe from which our culture arose." In this forest, the ash, for example, is a charm against drowning and corresponds to the chapter in which Stephen struggles with the fluidity of thought as he contemplates Irish history and literature against the background of the Irish Sea.

Since 1922, the year *Ulysses* was published, most—perhaps all 26—of the alphabet books alluded to by Stephen have been written. Indeed, some titles are well known: Louis Zukofsky's *"A,"* Andy Warhol's *a*, Tom McCarthy's *C*, John Berger's *G.*, Thomas Pynchon's *V.*, Georges Perec's *W, or the Memory of Childhood*. (And it's easy to imagine a parodic autobiography titled *I*, in which the narrator, by turns mannered and earnest, continually shifts perspective; a serialized crime thriller for adolescents titled *X*; or a science fiction novel titled *Z*, eschatological in tone and substance.)

At present, my collection of alphabet books amounts to 24 volumes, three of which are titled differently in the original language. Two doubles and one triple means I have tracked down 20 letters so far, including the three that Stephen Dedalus mentions by name:

a: A Novel by Andy Warhol, 1968 (New York: Grove Press, 1998)
"A" by Louis Zukofsky, 1978 (New York: New Directions, 2011)
C. by Pier Paolo Pasolini (Paris: Ypsilon éditeur, 2008)
C by Tom McCarthy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010)
C: Honderd notities van een alleslezer by Paul Claes (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2011)
e: A Novel by Matt Beaumont (New York: Plume, 2000)
G.: A Novel by John Berger, 1972 (New York: Vintage, 1991)
H by Philippe Sollers, 1973 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001)
I. by Stephen Dixon (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2002)
J … by Béatrice Machet (Coaraze: L'Amourier éditions, 1999)
K. by Roberto Calasso, 2002 (New York: Vintage, 2005)
M: Writings '67–'72 by John Cage (London: Calder & Boyars, 1973)
N. by Ernesto Ferrero, 2000 (Paris: Gallimard, 2002)
O: A Presidential Novel (anonymous) (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011)
P by Andrew Lewis Conn (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2003)
Q by Luther Blissett, 2000 (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003)
S. by John Updike (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988)
S: A Novel about the Balkans by Slavenka Drakulić, 1999 (New York: Viking, 2000)
T by Sarah Kirsch (London/Saxmundham: Reality Street Editions, 1995)
V. by Thomas Pynchon, 1963 (London: Vintage, 2000)
W, ou le souvenir d'enfance by Georges Perec, 1975 (Paris: Gallimard, 2007)
X: Writings '79–'82 by John Cage (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1983)
Y, ou le chemin des lettres by Didier Bourda (Madrid: Editions Artémis, 2001)
Z by Vassilis Vassilikos, 1966 (Paris: Gallimard, 1967)

Although grouped together here, these books are actually scattered throughout my shelves, immersed in an altogether different system of classification (by author, per language). It's a small library within another library. As such, the collection is inconspicuous, though each new addition is, of course, acknowledged by an entry in my notebook. From time to time, I consider arranging the entries in alphabetical order, but that wouldn't be an accurate reflection of how my collecting and note-taking have progressed. My intention is not only to trace the paths that lead from Joyce's imaginary alphabet books to actual books with letters for titles (with particular attention to the Kells effect), but to trace the connections between these latter books and their authors, who have made prominent use of the isolated letter, thereby engaging with the typographic sign, its materiality, its suggestiveness, and its fundamental obscurity.

. . .

A / M / X / V

Louis Zukofsky began writing a poem called *"A"* after attending a performance of Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at Carnegie Hall in New York on Thursday, April 5th, 1928. According to the poet Ron Silliman, the following day the *New York Times* printed a review of the performance next to an article on the Philadelphia Athletics, who'd replaced their elephant logo with a large Gothic A. It took Zukofsky 46 years to complete his monumental poem, which is divided into 24 movements beginning with a round of fiddles playing Bach at Carnegie Hall and ending with a score composed by his wife, Celia.

Zukofsky designed poetry with an engineer's love of structure, and in *"A,"* the first letter of the alphabet takes various forms: an initial; a word; a sound, such as the musical note to which an orchestra tunes; the shapes of tetrahedrons, gables, and struts. Most of the movements begin with an indefinite article. In the appended "Index of Names & Objects," the letter A is followed by 71 page numbers. The defining force of the Objectivist poets, Zukofsky was not so much interested in the well-made poem as in the process of objectification, a poetics that is playfully exemplified in *"A"*–7. Here, the letter A appears as a sawhorse on a Brooklyn sidewalk. It's 1928, on the way to 1929, and the Great Depression. Diggers are excavating the street, and the poet is sitting on a stoop, observing the cityscape. The sawhorses are painted blood red, the words "Street Closed" are printed on the crosspiece logs, and red lanterns hang at their ends. A kind of uncontrolled horse itself, the human imagination sets objects into motion: words animate the wood. The sawhorses are horses, but ones lacking heads, necks, and manes, which the poet will provide. The printed words, therefore, are seen on their stomachs. As the horses are standing motionless, the words enjoin them to trot. Each sawhorse makes an A, and two together make an M—or a horse, the symbol of animal drive that appears throughout the poem, as throughout Zukofsky's writings.

Zukofsky's sawhorses are an alphabetic objectification of the world and, it seems to me, a distant relation of the sawhorses in Georges Perec's *W, or the Memory of Childhood*. In this autobiography of a sort, Perec alternates two texts that never quite intersect. One is a reconstruction

of a childhood fantasy about a land called W, which is in thrall to the Olympic ideal; the other is the story of his wartime childhood, "made up of scattered oddments, gaps, lapses, doubts, guesses, and meagre anecdotes." At one point, he recalls moving to the Alpine village where he took refuge during the Second World War as an orphan. Although he has no precise memories of his aunt's house there, he remembers vividly an old man who lived nearby, on a farm. The man had a gray beard, wore collarless shirts, and "sawed his wood on a saw-horse made of a pair of up-ended parallel crosses, each in the shape of an X (called a "Saint Andrew's Cross" in French), connected by a perpendicular crossbar, the whole device being called, quite simply, an x." Of all images, this one is tied inextricably to Perec's life story, not as a memory of a scene, but as a memory of a letter that is a word, the only word in French shaped like the object to which it refers. Subsequently, he traces the major symbols of his childhood, each derived from the geometrical form of the old man's sawhorse:

Two Vs joined tip to tip make the shape of an X; by extending the branches of the X by perpendicular segments of equal length, you obtain a swastika (卐), which itself can be easily decomposed, by a rotation of 90 degrees of one of its ϟ segments on its lower arm, into the sign ϟϟ, placing two pairs of Vs head to tail produces a figure (XX) whose branches only need to be joined horizontally to make a star of David (✡). In the same line of thinking, I remember being struck by the fact that Charlie Chaplin, in *The Great Dictator*, replaced the swastika with a figure that was identical, in terms of its segments, having the shape of a pair of overlapping Xs (⨯).

Looking over these two passages on sawhorses from among the first alphabet books I purchased, I see in each an affirmation of the materiality of words, which is, further, always a *social* materiality. In both there is a dance of letters and objects: words are grounded in physical acts. Yet Perec's sawhorse also alerts us to the problematic relationship between words and objects, between writing and memory. In a scene that echoes the author's autobiography, the dying protagonist of Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* holds a jigsaw piece shaped like a W in his hand, while the black hole somewhere in the sky of the puzzle before him is shaped instead like an X. This linguistic space of the unknown, evident

in most of Perec's works, brings to mind yet another sawhorse, from Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*:

I had stolen from Lousse a little silver, oh nothing much, massive teaspoons for the most part, and other small objects whose utility I did not grasp but which seemed as if they might have some value. Among these latter there was one which haunts me still, from time to time. It consisted of two crosses joined, at their points of intersection, by a bar, and resembled a tiny sawing-horse, with this difference however, that the crosses of the true sawing-horse are not perfect crosses, but truncated at the top, whereas the crosses of the little object I am referring to were perfect, that is to say composed of two identical V's, one upper with its opening above, like all V's for that matter, and the other lower with its opening below, or more precisely of four rigorously identical V's, the two I have just named and then two more, one on the right hand, the other on the left, having their openings on the right and the left respectively.

Molloy enjoys puzzling over the miniature sawhorse because its specific function eludes him, so he feels he is beyond knowing anything at all, and this affords him a kind of peace. From time to time, he gazes at the four identical V's in affection and astonishment. Beckett's other listless characters include Moran, Murphy, Malone, and Mercier, not to mention Pim, Krim, Kram, Bom, and Bem—"one syllable m at the end all that matters." Like Perec and Zukofksy, Beckett had a patient concern with a specific letter of the alphabet. In his writing, the initial M transmutes endlessly.

VV, CC

In *W, or the Memory of Childhood*, Perec describes one half of his autobiography as a "geometrical fantasy, whose basic figure is the double V." This figure is emblematic of the book's overall structure: two alternating texts divided into two parts, which overlap at a midpoint hinted at by an ellipsis. In the same line of thinking, in Thomas Pynchon's first novel, *V.*, the single V emblematizes the book's structure, as the wild adventures of the two main characters, Benny Profane and Herbert Stencil, converge at a single point in Valetta, Malta.

Benny is a beer-bellied schlemiel; Stencil, who refers to himself in the third person, is "quite purely He Who Looks For V. (and whatever impersonations that might involve)." By the time they get to Malta, Stencil has tracked down several clues to pieces in the so-called V.-jigsaw. Prompted by the cryptic mention of a woman named V. in his father's journals, his worldwide quest is obsessive and intellectualized, even described using V-shaped images: "As spread legs are to the libertine, flights of migratory birds to the ornithologist, the working part of his tool bit to the production machinist, so was the letter V to young Stencil." Still, early on Stencil suspects that his exhaustive investigations will get him no closer to V. He prefers, therefore, not to think about any end to the search, which would leave him in a state of paralysis. So the letter V, the magic initial that is in some way bound up with major historical events, proliferates: the state of Virginia, Queen Victoria, Victoria Wren, the ideal community of Vheissu, Veronica, Venus, the Virgin, the Vergeltungswaffe Eins and Zwei, Vera Meroving, the V-Note jazz bar, Venezuela, Valetta, wedges, sawteeth, Egyptian pyramids, and streetlights receding into the distance.

In Valetta one night, an exhausted Stencil tells the Maltese poet Fausto Maijstral the entire history of V. The story strengthens the suspicion Stencil has long held, that his search adds up to nothing more than the recurrence of an initial and a few dead objects. Before Stencil abandons Benny in Valetta to seek the next clue, Fausto remarks, "God knows how many Stencils have chased V. about the world …"

V. could also be described as a geometrical fantasy, or a parody thereof, like the list of V-shaped things recited toward the end of the book, each an image of two lines converging at a vanishing point ("sans-serif, clean geometry"). An echo can be heard in the pronouncements of Tom McCarthy, the author of *C*. "Structure is content," he has said, "geometry is everything." *C* is divided into four parts, which describe the arc of the plot as well as that of the third letter of the alphabet: "Caul," "Chute," "Crash," and "Call." In the novel's final chapter, inside an Egyptian tomb, a scientist comments, "The C is everywhere." The reference is to carbon, the chemical element present in all living things, yet the observation applies to the book itself.

The Carrefax family, CQ signals, code, chloroform, crypts, a tutor named Clair, a woman named Cécile, cocaine, the C-Flight division, Chopin, Cairo, the Ministry of Communications: words beginning with the letter C are everywhere in McCarthy's novel. In contrast to Pynchon's V, the initial is not the object of any quest; rather, its ubiquitous presence extends an obscure network over the action, each recurrence charged with potential significance. The main character is Serge Carrefax, a young man with a lack of depth perception and an interest in wireless technology, who sees "all of London's surfaces and happenings as potentially encrypted: street signage, chalk-marks scrawled on walls, phrases on newspaper vendors' stalls and sandwich boards, snatches of conversations heard in passing, the arrangements of flowers on window-sills or clothes on washing lines." He's a cipher, an addict, and a detached witness to the First World War. Just as in *V.*, the stories told by Herbert are said to be Stencilized, so things in McCarthy's book are said to CC themselves —even Serge, who in his death throes feels he is flattening and turning into carbon paper.

Is *C* a duplicate of *V.*? Both make use of shadowy British agents to advance the plot; both end with a death on a ship in the Mediterranean, followed by a description of the flatness of the open sea. Two years ago, I happened to see the writer Geoff Dyer discuss *C* on a television review show. He quipped that it was a cross between *V.* and *G.*, the novel by John Berger (in which we follow the sexual and political adventures of a young man named Giovanni, a Don Juan at the turn of the century), which I took to mean he thought McCarthy had combined the conspiracy theories and fixations of Pynchon's book with the pastoral eroticism of Berger's.

K.

In February of this year, the German edition of McCarthy's *C* was published, its title translated as *K.* Like most readers, when I think of the letter K in connection with literature, especially German literature, Franz Kafka comes to mind. It might be said that K., the main character in *The Castle*, is an extension of Josef K., the main character in *The Trial*, who is a distant relation to Karl Rossman, the main character in *The*

Missing Person. "K. is the shape of what happens," writes Roberto Calasso in *K.*, his study of Kafka. "Compared with all other fictional characters, K. is potentiality itself." The story in *The Trial* and *The Castle* is the same, Calasso says, the terms have simply been reversed. Just as we learn next to nothing about Josef K.'s physical appearance, so we learn nothing about K.'s appearance, directly or indirectly. Elsewhere in the book, Calasso refers to K. as a cardboard cutout stripped of every whiff of power.

After *The Ruin of Kasch*, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, and *Ka*, *K.* is the fourth in a series of books by Calasso, which perhaps accounts for the numerous references he makes to Indian mythology, the subject of *Ka*. The book is in large part an attempt to show that Kafka's intense self-observation, which he considered an unavoidable obligation, was a process bound up with self-construction. This process involved a rigorous reduction to prime elements, Calasso suggests, as if he sought to fix them in a periodic table, which didn't by any means imply a reduction in the complexity of relations. In his notebooks, Kafka alludes to the "investigation and discovery of the smallest possible components." Within this context, Calasso comments on the letter K, quoting from the writer's diaries:

In Kafka's handwriting, the letter K plunged downward with a showy swoop the writer detested: "I find Ks ugly, almost repugnant, and yet I keep writing them; they must be very characteristic of myself." Choosing the name K., Kafka obligated himself to trace hundreds of times in front of his own eyes a mark that vexed him and in which he recognized some part of himself. If he had narrated *The Castle* in the first person, as he started out doing, the story would have been less profoundly immersed in his physiology, in zones liberated from the empire of the will.

That Kafka went back and crossed out all the first person pronouns in his manuscript, replacing each with the initial K., reminds me of an entry from his diaries, "Although I wrote my name clearly at the hotel, and although they themselves have written it correctly twice already, they still have Josef K. written in the register. Should I explain the situation to them, or should I have them explain it to me?" As it happens, it was during his stay at this countryside hotel, in a fruitless attempt to recuperate from tuberculosis, that he started writing *The Castle*. In the course

of examining the handwritten manuscripts and diaries, which contain relatively few corrections, Calasso suspects that whatever Kafka crossed out gave too much evidence of the thought behind the text.

In chapter "K" of a different *C* (this one by Flemish writer and translator Paul Claes, who used the letter to title his hundredth book), the author observes that in Kafka's letters to Milena, the Czech translator of one of his stories, his signature became more concise as time went by, as if his language were atrophying with his ill body. The formal sign-off "Cordially Kafka" soon turned into "Franz K.," which became "Your F," and finally, "F." Kafka was aware of this gradual change, which reflected the development of a largely epistolary relationship. In one letter he writes, "Now I'm even losing my name—it was getting shorter and shorter all the time and is now, Yours." Then, on July 29th, 1920, his signature reads, "~~Franz~~ wrong, ~~F~~ wrong, ~~Yours~~ wrong / nothing more, calm, deep forest."

( )

In the foreword to *M: Writings '67–'72,* John Cage writes:

The title of this book was obtained by subjecting the twenty-six letters of the alphabet to an *I Ching* chance operation. As I see it, any other letter would have served as well, though M is, to be sure, the first letter of many words and names that have concerned me for many years (music, mushrooms, Marcel Duchamp, M.C. Richards, Morris Graves, Mark Tobey, Merce Cunningham, Marshall McLuhan, my dear friends the Daniels—Minna, for twenty-three years the editor of *Modern Music*, and Mell, early in life and now again in later life, the painter), and recently (mesostics, Mao Tse-tung).

Four of the texts in *M* are what Cage called mesostics, that is, acrostics with the row down the middle, not down the edge. There is one about the dancer Merce Cunningham, one about the painter Mark Tobey, and one about Marcel Duchamp. What's more, he wrote one for the inside flap that explains the book's title by listing dictionary definitions of the letter M, along with several clues to the topics that figure among his concerns (on the back cover, the author is seen smiling and holding in his left hand

a basket of mushrooms). "If you think they fit," he writes, "they do." As a form of poetry, Cage associated mesostics with James Joyce's writing, especially the combination of ordinary syntax and unconventional vocabulary in *Finnegans Wake*, and he later composed several using the *Wake* as a source text and Joyce's name as a repeating vertical motif —in other words, he would arrange phrases from the novel so that they vertically spelled out the author's name. At times, he doubted the validity of combing *Finnegans Wake* for A after J, E after M, J after S, Y after O, and E after C, but his interest had been provoked, he said, by a desire to write *empty words.*

This desire was related to the complex chance operations he often used to compose musical and literary works, which made use of found materials, and to obtain titles such as *M*. Cage spoke of his texts in terms of demilitarizing language, and of rendering translation, if not impossible, unnecessary. In this connection, he often quoted a sentence by the philosopher Norman O. Brown, "Syntax is the arrangement of the army." Henry David Thoreau, he would add, had once remarked that there's a march to the sentence as if a body of men were actually making progress step by step. These are not empty words, and although Cage admired both Brown and Thoreau, he felt compelled to articulate a poetics that was at variance to such thinking. Later, in *Empty Words: Writings '73–'78*, he described his own writing as being "a transition from a language without sentences (having only phrases, words, syllables, and letters) to a 'language' having only letters and silence (music)."

It seems to me, as a collector of alphabet books, that Cage's words in the foreword to *X: Writings '79–'82* sum it up best. "The title of this book, like that of *M*, was found by subjecting the alphabet to chance operations. It signifies the unknown, place where poetry lives, tomorrow, I hope, as it does today, where what you see, framed or unframed, is art, where what you hear on or off the record is music."

ALEA IACTA EST

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