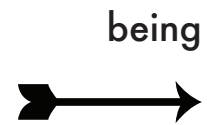


# The Book of Hours and Constellations

# The Book of Hours and Constellations



Poems of Eugen GOMRINGER

Presented BY

Jerome ROTHENBERG

1968  
Something Else Press, Inc.  
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## GOMRINGER'S PRE-FACE

("from verse to constellation: aim & form of a new poetry")

*rien n'aura en lieu  
excepté  
peut-être  
une constellation (mallarmé)*

our languages today are in a process of formal simplification. a reduced number of minimal forms are developing. the content of a sentence is often carried by a single word, while longer statements may be broken down to groups of letters. instead of many languages we are learning to work with a handful that are more or less universal. does this reduction & simplification of language & writing signal the end of poetry? certainly not. reduction in the best sense—as simplicity & compression—has always been a force in poetry. it follows from this that language & poetry today have enough in common to begin to feed each other both in form & substance. some such relationship (still largely unrecognized) is apparent all around us. headlines, advertisements & other groupings of sounds & letters that could serve as patterns for a new poetry, are only waiting to be discovered & meaningfully applied. aim of this new poetry is again to give the poem an organize function in society, & by so doing to redefine the position-of-the-poet, given the formal simplification of language (including its written or printed form), it's only possible to speak of that organic function in terms of where our languages really are. thus the new poem will be simple & perceivable both as a whole & in its parts. it will be something to be seen & used but also

something to be thought of: object of thought in a play of ideas. it will work through brevity & compression. it will be memorable & (as image) easy-to-remember. it will serve man through its objective play elements, as the poet will serve him through his special knack for just this kind of play & language, the inventor of their future formulations. finally the new poem (as model of verbal play in action) may itself effect our ordinary language.



of all poetic structures based upon the word, the constellation is the simplest. It disposes its groups of words as if they were clusters of stars.

the constellation is a system, it is also a playground with definite boundaries. the poet sets it all up. he designs the play-ground as a field-of-force & suggests its possible workings. the reader, the new reader, accepts it in the spirit of play, then plays with it.

with each constellation something new comes into the world. each constellation is a reality in itself & not a poem about some other thing.

the constellation is a challenge, it is also an invitation.

## ROTHENBERG'S PRE-FACE

(From a letter to Eugen Gomringer 9th November 1967)

...As a poet (but not a "concrete"-poet) part of the interest of concrete poetry for me is the clear light it throws on the nature of all poetry. You speak of constellations, Finlay speaks of corners, I speak elsewhere of combinations—but always it's a question of making the words cohere in a given space, the poem's force or strength related to the weight & value of the words within it, the way they pull & act on each other. The poetry shows this beautifully; the problem of translation is related to it also & throws its own clear light on how & why we translate.

So I'm trying to get a variety of work into the book, & this involves the following approaches to translation. (1) Poems that present the "normal" problems of translation, & which I handle as I would any poem; for example, "you green" or "hang & swinging hang."

(2) Poems with a limited number of word forms in a fixed relationship & with enough translatable meanings to allow the possibility of multiple translations into English; for example, "gleichmässig gleich gleichmässig ungleich ungleichmässig," which I can do (keeping the close relationship & adjustment of prefix or suffix) as "alike like alike unlike unlike" or (distorting slightly but here the suffix is clearer) as "straightforward straight," etc., & present two or more such versions as the translation. (3) Translations involving minimal choices (for example, the 24 nouns of *stundenbuch* ["the book of hours"] & the decision to make dein "your" or thy") after which the poem, however long, is more or less self-generating & translator's interference should be almost nothing. (4) Other poems in which vocabulary is very restricted & precise English translations can't possibly meet all the formal requirements; there I sometimes keep the form intact & bring in an unrelated vocabulary series—thus, in "blüte blatt zweig," I translate as "moon mist rain" or "shadow showers clouds" rather than distorting the simple vocabulary into "frond fruit bough"—though I'll probably reserve that last for a kind of footnote. (5) Poems where the preceding would be pointless or impossible & that only need a gloss for the reader with no German vocabulary at all; for example "fisch schif" = "fish ship." (6) Poems where the English & German readings are identical; for example, "ping pong" or "lo zen le zen el cid," which isn't German anyway. (7) Poems previously translated by Gomringer in English. (9) Instances of the latter where (why not?) I translate English into German. All of which makes the book, as "translation," a very interesting & curious document. For me certainly.

*homage to gomringer*

g o g o g o g o g o  
o g o g o g o g o g  
g o n o n o n o n o  
o m g m g m g m g g  
g r r r r r r r r r o  
o i i i i i i i i i g  
g n n n n n n n n o  
o g g g g g g g g g  
g e e e e e e e e e o  
o r r r r r r r r r g

(j. r.)

27 CONSTELLATIONS

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

silence silence silence  
silence silence silence  
silence silence silence  
silence silence silence  
silence silence silence

das schwarze geheimnis  
ist hier  
hier ist  
das schwarze geheimnis

le mistère noir  
est ici  
ici est  
le mistère nior

fog fog fog fog  
fog all fog fog  
fog fog oer fog  
fog fog fog fog

el misterio negro  
está aquí  
aquí está  
el misterio negro

the black mystery  
is here  
here is  
the black mystery



blüte blüte blüte  
zweigblatt blüte  
blüte zweigblatt  
blatt blüte zweig  
zweig blatt blüte

(1)

mist mist mist  
rain moon mist  
mist rain moon  
moon mist rain  
rain moon mist

ping pong  
ping pong ping  
pong ping pong  
ping pong

(2)

shadow shadow shadow  
clouds shower shadow  
shadow clouds shower  
shower shadow clouds  
clouds shower shadow

<i>literal key</i>	<i>alternate poeticized translation</i>
<i>blüte = blossom</i>	<i>(fruit)</i>
<i>blatt = leaf</i>	<i>(frond)</i>
<i>zweig = branch</i>	<i>(bough)</i>

frühling sommer winter winter  
frühling sommer winter winter  
sommer herbst winter herbst winter  
sommer herbst winter herbst winter  
herbst winter winter frühling sommer  
frühling sommer winter winter

frühling =spring  
sommer =summer  
herbst =autmn  
winter =winter

o  
go  
grow  
grow grow  
grow grow grow o show show show  
grow grow show show  
grow show  
go so  
o  
lo  
flow  
flow flow  
flow flow flow  
flow flow  
flow  
lo  
o  
o  
bo  
blow  
blow blow  
blow blow blow  
blow blow  
blow  
bo  
o  
so  
show  
show show  
show show show  
show show  
show  
so  
o

w  
i n d i d  
n n n  
w w

gleichmässig gleich gleichmässig ungleich ungleichmässig  
gleich ungleichmässig ungleich gleichmässig  
gleich  
gleichmässig ungleich ungleichmässig gleich  
ungleichmässig ungleich gleichmässig gleich gleichmässig

alike like alike unlike unlike  
like unlike unlike alike  
like  
alike unlike unlike like  
unlike unlike alike like alike

straightforward straight straightforward unstraight unstraightforward  
straight unstraightforward unstraight straightforward  
straight  
straightforward unstraight unstraightforward straight  
unstraightforward unstraight straightforward straight straightforward

schif schif schif schif schif schif  
fihcs fihcs fihcs fihcs fihcs fihcs  
hcsif hcsif hcsif hcsif hcsif hcsif  
fisch fisch fisch fisch fisch fisch  
hcsif hcsif hcsif hcsif hcsif hcsif  
fisch fisch fisch fisch fisch fisch  
schif schif schif schif schif schif  
fihcs fihcs fihcs fihcs fihcs fihcs

lo zen  
le zen  
el cid

fisch = fish  
schif(f) = boat

white and small  
grows  
a little  
but becomes black  
so  
stops  
suddenly

to lock oneself in and  
to fence oneself off

to construct a center and  
to grow in it

to spit the center up and  
to grow in the segments

to stay in one's segment and  
to become transparent

to lock oneself in and  
to fence oneself off

small and yellow  
unfinished  
disappears  
where slowly  
spreading  
large and green  
but shining through  
achieves  
its figure  
remains  
in mind  
losing ground

words are shadows  
shadows become words

words are games  
games become words

are shadows words  
do words become games

are games words  
do words become shadows

are words shadows  
do games become words

are words games  
do shadows become words

comes along and  
looks around

calls aside and  
straightens out

pulls together and  
oversees

goes away and  
leaves behind

hang and swinging hang and swinging  
hand and grow and swinging hang  
and grow downwards and swinging hang and  
grow downwards and touch the ground and  
swinging hang and grow downwards and  
touch the ground and then off and search  
and swinging hang and grow downwards  
and touch the ground and then off and  
search and not find a place and swinging  
hang and grow downwards and touch  
the ground and then off and search and not  
find a place and grow and swinging  
hang and grow downwards and touch  
the ground and then off an search and not  
find a place and grow upwards and swinging  
hang and grow downwards and touch  
the ground and then off and search and not  
find a place and grow upwards and force  
a new growth and swinging hang and  
grow downwards and touch the ground and  
then off and search and not find a place  
and grow upwards and force a new growth  
and hang and swinging hang and  
grow downwards and touch the ground and  
then off and search and not find a place  
and grow upwards and force a new growth and  
swinging hang

cars and cars  
cars and elevators  
cars and men  
elevators and elevators  
elevators and men  
men and cars and elevators  
men and men

trains and trains  
trains and men and elevators  
trains and elevators  
men and trains  
men and men

cars and trains  
cars and men and trains  
men and men

men and men

auto  
moto  
homo

meta  
soma  
gana

aero  
euro  
nato

foto  
tipo  
tele

mono  
homo  
novo

from deep  
to deep  
from near  
to near  
from grey  
to grey  
from deep  
to near  
from near  
to grey  
from grey  
to deep

from two  
to four  
from three  
to one  
from one  
to four

from deep  
to two  
from four  
to near  
from grey  
to one



snow is english  
snow is international  
snow is secret  
snow is small  
snow is literary  
snow is translatable  
snow is everywhere  
snow is ridiculous  
snow is difficult  
snow is modern  
snow is hindering  
snow is senseless  
snow is musical  
snow is gorgeous  
snow is sedimentary  
snow is meaningless  
snow is elemental  
snow is fantastic  
snow is curved  
snow is unauthorized  
snow is disgusting  
snow is ignorant  
snow is irresistible  
snow is rare  
snow is exhausting  
snow is civil  
snow is smooth  
snow is amusing  
snow is epidemic  
snow is hereditary  
snow is risky  
snow is analyzable  
snow is satisfactory  
snow is catholic

snow is tasteless  
snow is elegant  
snow is absolute  
snow is experimental  
snow is neurotic  
snow is instructive  
snow is selfish  
snow is unique  
snow is prepared  
snow is expensive  
snow is alphabetical  
snow is unsocial  
snow is sexless  
snow is political  
snow is provisional  
snow is predominant  
snow is reasonable  
snow is violet  
snow is distracting  
snow is looking  
snow is utopian  
snow is evangelical  
snow is inevitable  
snow is cheap  
snow is comprehensible  
snow is delicious  
snow is relative  
snow is norwegian  
snow is military  
snow is comfortable  
snow is light  
snow is salutary  
snow is harmful  
snow is cold

snow is offensive  
snow is brute  
snow is scientific  
snow is irregular  
snow is indefensible  
snow is independent  
snow is annoying  
snow is sad  
snow is enormous  
snow is pale  
snow is bare-footed  
snow is corrupt  
snow is cordial  
snow is converse  
snow is libidinous  
snow is permitted  
snow is sublime  
snow is tawdry  
snow is imaginable  
snow is abstinent  
snow is exact  
snow is etymological  
snow is fragmentary  
snow is honourable  
snow is immortal  
snow is ancient  
snow is illustrative  
snow is aristotelian  
snow is outside  
snow is abstract  
snow is divine  
snow is white  
snow is contradictory

PAGE RIPPED OUT

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you shimmer  
you metal  
you swath  
you country  
you leaf  
you light  
you reflection  
you eye  
you mouth  
you ear  
you hair  
you nose  
you neck  
you shoulder  
you arm  
you hand  
you finger  
you breast  
you spine  
you belly  
you navel  
you sex  
you thigh  
you leg  
you knee  
you calf  
you foot  
you arch  
you toe  
you body  
you skin

man  
woman

mann  
frau

möv  
möv möv  
möv möv möv  
möv

woman  
sea

frau  
see

möv luv  
möv lee  
möv möv möv  
luv möv möw  
lee

sea  
sun

see  
sonne

mews  
mews mews  
mews mews mews  
mews

sun  
moon

sonne  
mond

möv möv möw  
möv möv  
möv

mews luff  
mews lee  
mews mews mews  
luff mews muse  
lee

moon  
land

mond  
land

land  
man

land  
mann

mews mews muse  
mews mews  
mews

americans and apricots  
american apricots  
apricot americans  
apricots and americans

mist  
mountain  
butterfly

mountain  
butterfly  
missed

butterfly  
meets  
mountain

## THE BOOK OF HOURS

spring daisy  
daisy spring

spring fly  
fly spring

daisy fly  
fly daisy

your mind  
my mind

your word  
my word

your question  
my question

your answer  
my answer

your song  
my song

your poem  
my poem

your body  
my body

your source  
my source

your sight  
my sight

your inception  
my inception

your strength  
my strength

your way  
my way

your joy  
my joy

your goal  
my goal

your sorrow  
my sorrow

your death  
my death

your silence  
my silence

your dream  
my dream



your tree  
my tree

your blossoms  
my blossoms

your gift  
my gift

your house  
my house

your year  
my year

your hour  
my hour

your mind  
my word

your mind  
my question

your mind  
my answer

your mind  
my song

your mind  
my poem

(Set Two)  
1-24

your word  
my mind

your question  
my mind

your word  
my question

your question  
my word

your word  
my answer

you question  
my answer

your word  
my song

your question  
my song

your word  
my poem

your question  
my poem

your answer  
my mind

your answer  
my word

your answer  
my question

your answer  
my song

your answer  
my poem

your song  
my mind

your song  
my word

your song  
my question

your song  
my answer

your song  
my poem

your poem  
my mind

your poem  
my word

your poem  
my question

your poem  
my answer

your poem  
my song

your body  
my sight

your body  
my strength

your body  
my joy

your body  
my sorrow

your body  
my silence

your sight  
my body

your sight  
my strength

your sight  
my joy

your sight  
my sorrow

your sight  
my silence

your strength  
my body

your strength  
my sight

your strength  
my joy

your strength  
my sorrow

your strength  
my silence

your joy  
my body

your sorrow  
my body

your joy  
my sight

your sorrow  
my sight

your joy  
my strength

your sorrow  
my strength

your joy  
my sorrow

your sorrow  
my joy

your joy  
my silence

your sorrow  
my silence

your silence  
my body

your source  
my inception

your silence  
my sight

your source  
my way

your silence  
my strength

your source  
my goal

your silence  
my joy

your source  
my death

your silence  
my sorrow

your source  
my dream

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your inception  
my source

your inception  
my way

your inception  
my goal

your inception  
my death

your inception  
my dream



PAGE RIPPED OUT

your death  
my source

your death  
my inception

your death  
my way

your death  
my goal

your death  
my dream

your dream  
my source

your dream  
my inception

your dream  
my way

your dream  
my goal

your dream  
my death

your tree  
my blossoms

your tree  
my gift

your tree  
my house

your tree  
my year

your tree  
my hour

your blossoms  
my tree

your blossoms  
my gift

your blossoms  
my house

your blossoms  
my year

your blossoms  
my hour

your gift  
my tree

your gift  
my blossoms

your gift  
my house

your gift  
my year

your gift  
my hour

your house  
my tree

your house  
my blossoms

your house  
my gift

your house  
my year

your house  
my hour

your year  
my tree

your year  
my blossoms

your year  
my gift

your year  
my house

your year  
my hour

your hour  
my tree

(Set Three)  
1-4

your hour  
my blossoms

your hour  
my gift

yours my mind  
yours my word  
yours my question  
yours my answer  
yours my song  
yours my poem

your hour  
my house

yours my body  
yours my sight  
yours my strength  
yours my joy  
yours my sorrow  
yours my silence

your hour  
my year

yours my source  
yours my inception  
yours my way  
yours my goal  
yours my death  
yours my dream

yours my tree  
yours my blossoms  
yours my gift  
yours my house  
yours my year  
yours my hour

your mind  
my body

your mind  
my source

your mind  
my tree

(Set Four)  
1-24

your body  
my mind

your body  
my source

your body  
my tree

your source  
my mind

your source  
my body

your source  
my tree

your word  
my sight

your word  
my inception

your word  
my blossoms

your tree  
my mind

your tree  
my body

your tree  
my source



your sight  
my word

your inception  
my word

your sight  
my inception

your inception  
my sight

your sight  
my blossoms

your inception  
my blossoms

your blossoms  
my word

your blossoms  
my sight

your blossoms  
my inception

your question  
my strength

your question  
my way

your question  
my gift

your way  
my question

your way  
my strength

your way  
my gift

your strength  
my question

your strength  
my way

your strength  
my gift

your gift  
my question

your answer  
my joy

your gift  
my strength

your answer  
my goal

your gift  
my way

your answer  
my house

your joy  
my answer

your joy  
my goal

your joy  
my house

your goal  
my answer

your goal  
my joy

your goal  
my house

your house  
my answer

your song  
my sorrow

your house  
my joy

your song  
my death

your house  
my goal

your song  
my year

your death  
my song

your death  
my sorrow

your death  
my year

your sorrow  
my song

your sorrow  
my death

your sorrow  
my year

your year  
my song

your year  
my sorrow

your year  
my death

your poem  
my silence

your poem  
my dream

your poem  
my hour



your silence  
my poem

your dream  
my poem

your silence  
my dream

your dream  
my silence

your silence  
my hour

your dream  
my hour

(Post-Face)

town that i heard at night  
woods in which i slept

country that i flew across  
city where i lived

house that was my friend's house  
woman whom i knew

image keeping me awake  
sound that i liked

your hour  
my poem

your hour  
my silence

your hour  
my dream

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

book that i was reading  
stone that i found

man whom i understood  
child whom i taught

tree that i saw blossoming  
animal that i feared

language that i spoke in  
script in which i wrote

*Eugen Gomringer*

Born January 20, 1925 in Cachuela Esperanza (Bolivia)

Educated in Switzerland, art studies in Berne & Rome.

Called by Emmett Williams "the acknowledged father of Concrete Poetry."

1952 Founded *Spirale* magazine, Berne

1953 First book of poems: *Konstellationen*, Spiral Press, Berne.

1954 - Secretary to Max Bill at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, Ger-  
1958 many

1958 Editor of *Max Bill*, a volume of tributes to the artist, Verlag Niggli,  
Teufen.

1960 *33 Konstellationen*, Tschudy Verlag, St. Gallen.

1960 Founded the Eugen Gomringer Press for concrete poetry in Frauen-  
feld, Switzerland

1960 *5 mal 1 konstellation*, Gomringer Press.

1964 *Die Konstellationen*, complete edition, Gomringer Press.

1965 *das stundenbuch*, Max Huber Verlag, Munich, 1965.

1966 *Manifeste und Darstellungen der Konkreten Poesie*, Galerie Press,  
St. Gallen.

1968 *Josef Albers*, a biography, Josef Keller Verlag, Starberg, Germany.

*Jerome Rothenberg*

Born December 11, 1931, in New York City.

Education through N.Y. Public School System, City College (N.Y.) & the University of Michigan.

Early proponent of "deep" or "open" image as one of several powers of poetry.

1958 Founded Hawk's Well Press, N.Y.

1959 *New Young German Poets*, City Lights, San Francisco.

1959 Began publication of *Poems from the Floating World*, a series anthology of the "deep image."

1960 *White Sun Black Sun*, Hawk's Well Press.

1962 *The Seven Hells of the Jigoku Zoshi*, Trobar, N.Y.

1964 *Sightings I-IX*, Hawk's Well Press.

1964 American playing version of Hochhuth's *The Deputy*.

1965 Co-founder with David Antin of *some/thing* magazine.

1966 *The Gorky Poems*, El Corno Emplumado, Mexico.

1966 *Ritual: A Book of Primitive Rites & Events*, Something Else Press, N.Y.

1967 *Between: Poems 1960-1963*, Fulcrum Press, London.

1968 *Conversations*, Black Sparrow Press, Los Angeles.

1968 *Technicians of the Sacred*, large anthology of primitive & archaic poetry with modern analogues, etc., Doubleday, N.Y.

Credits:

Mr. Rothenberg's translations include the following, in order of appearance: silence, the black mystery, mist mist mist, shadow shadow shadow, alike, straightforward, to lock oneself in, comes along and, words are shadows, hang and swinging, from deep, you green, mann frau, mews, the book of hours. Except for mann frau, all Mr. Rothenberg's translations are into English, and the various other languages represented and other English texts are all Mr. Gomringer's originals.

Rarely does a publisher find original materials set in type by the poet, and our design department felt that wherever Mr. Gomringer's originals could be used, they should be, in spite of the fact that the Helvetica typeface employed could not be matched in the United States accurately. The materials which are new to this edition were therefore set in Futura.

Typesetting was done by Atlantic Linotype of Brooklyn, New York and by Charles A. Benson, Inc., of New York City. Printing was done at the New York

Lithographic Corporation, of New York City, and binding at Book Press in Brattleboro, Vermont. Jackets and paper covers were printed by the Longacre Press at Mount Vernon, New York, and feature a photograph by Dick Higgins on the front panel.