WORDS RANGING FORMS

A Reading of Louis Zukofsky's "A":1-12

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ABSTRACT

It is an initial assumption of this paper that the reading of a poem is an experience which the reader undergoes, or in which he participates. The reader is part of the process of the poem. Hence the discussion of "A": 1-12 is focussed on a consideration of what happens in the reading of the poem. The point of view taken is that the poem itself is an exercise in how to read.

In the pursuit of this discussion, the poem is observed as an object, as an ordered device; as Zukofsky's model of the universe he perceives.

Communication theory is used as an initial model for an analysis of the way in which meaning is conveyed to the reader. The subsequent discussion involves a study of Zukofsky's use of analogies and technics, as well as an analysis of the ways in which he uses language.

As a cumulative result, a sense of the subjective experience of the poem is derived through the metaphor of cyclicality. The discussion of movements within the poem become cycles of movement between the reader and the poem, and between the writing and the poem.
In the process of researching analytical or critical writings on Zukofsky's work, it becomes evident that virtually the only people who write about him are other poets. Harriet Monroe, William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov, Gerard Malanga, and Charles Tomlinson are among them. These people respond to Zukofsky in ways that people who are not poets do not. That is, there is something in Zukofsky's work that the reading public resists.

It would seem that the distinction lies in the fact that those who use language, who are sensitive to the movements of words, are themselves moved by what Zukofsky does. They share a common sense of language.

Attempts to work with Zukofsky's poetry without that empathy for his use of language seem to have one of two sorts or results. Jonathan Williams, for instance, responds with ecstatic and effusive, but essentially useless, celebration in "Zoo-cough's Key's Nest of Poultry". He is close enough to the world of poetry to respond, but is not sufficiently involved in a similar use of words to have a vocabulary which is articulate. Ivor Winters has an articulate, albeit clinical, style in "The Objectivists", but completely mis-
understands Zukofsky's play of words.

A workable approach to writing about the poems seems to be that method used by the poets who write about Zukofsky. In part it involves using techniques which Zukofsky himself employs in his ordering process. Metaphors of mechanical processes (communication theory, for example), analogy and etymological analysis all permit a mode of writing which involves an attention to language. In addition a movement from such writing to the poem itself and back again allows the writer to break into the circle of the poem at random, without losing a perspective on the poem as a coherent entity.
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PART ONE

THE POEM AS OBJECT

A Round of fiddles playing Bach.
Come, ye daughters, share my anguish--
Bare arms, black dresses,
See Him! Whom?
Bediamond the passion of our Lord,
See Him! How?
His legs blue, tendons bleeding,
O Lamb of God most holy!
Black full dress of the audience.
Dead century, where are your motley
Country people in Leipzig,
Easter,
Matronly flounces, starched, heaving,
Cheeks of the patrons of Leipzig--
"Going to church: Where's the baby?"
"Ah, there's the Kapellmeister
in a terrible hurry--
Johann Sebastian, twenty-two
Children!

The Passion According to Matthew was performed at Carnegie Hall in April of 1928, almost exactly two hundred years after its composition, and appropriately, at Easter time. In the opening passage of the poem, Zukofsky combines the mood of the 1928 performance of the Passion with comments on the audience of both periods; interspersed are passages from the libretto of the Passion. These three perspectives are interwoven with one another so that they provide contrast and harmony with one another: the agony in the libretto counterpointed by the "matronly flounces" and bare arms, black dresses" of the audience(s).

The original performance of the Passion had two choirs in lofts opposite one another in the church. Each had its own group of instruments, and the performance commenced with a calling and response pattern which is similar to the litany itself...or to the ancient ritual of the Quem Quertis trope, in which the costumed chorus was divided into two antiphonal groups, and chanted the story of the three Marys coming to the tomb of Christ ² ("Come, ye daughters, share my anguish"). The calling and answering in rhythmic chants form a round, a repetitive, cyclic melody, and this characteristic of the Passion is suggested in the juxtaposition

of the contexts in the opening passage of "A"-1. Even in the typography, the physical relationship of the words "A" and "Round" iterate the cycle or the round: the "A" leads, syntactically, to the "Round", supplying at least two contexts—the performance of the Passion (the polyphonic arrangement of the instruments playing Bach), and the poem itself as a round, a melody which frequently cycles back upon itself to create resonances and harmonies.

The italicized lines of the passage are from the libretto of the Passion, and within themselves illustrate the calling and response of the choruses. But within the structure of the poem they also form yet another antiphonal pattern, in that they are only one part of the commentary; they are the counterpoint to the descriptions of the audience. The audience itself is evidently two audiences, one attending the first performance of the Passion in Leipzig in 1729; the country people, "starched, heaving", familiar of Bach ("Johann Sebastian...in a terrible hurry"). The other audience is the one attending the Carnegie Hall performance in 1928: a formal crowd, in "black full dress", "bare arms, black dresses", quite unlike the "matronly flounces" of two

hundred years earlier. This is an audience which arrives in honking automobiles to hear the Passion "rendered" (in which context the "Come, ye daughters, share my anguish" becomes sadly ironical).

The implicit differences between the two audiences allows for the interjection of still another context: comparative social comment. "Dead century, where are your motley/ people..."; an address to the audience of 1928, the people who are referred to throughout the poem as "sleeping", "dead", and "unmoving". They are those people who have not become "enlightened" (awakened) because they have not gotten beyond the narrow confines of their own particular contexts. The women of this audience come to the performance bediamoned; in contrast is the Passion itself, which bediamonds "the passion of our Lord"; makes it brilliant, shining, beautiful. The voice of the poem asks this audience, "where is your motley", where is your heritage, the motley and unsophisticated people such as those who attended Bach's own church---or the trek to the hill at Calvary. There is also the suggestion of the garb of the clown, designed so as to attract attention; an appropriate remonstrance to an audience who, to some extent, attend the performance as a matter of social behaviour, without a sense of the deeper resonances surrounding the Passion
itself. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the reader forms yet another audience: the one attending (to) Zukofsky's performance of the Passion, a performance which itself is a motley of tones and images.⁴

Even in this cursory reading of the first twenty lines of "A":1-12, it is evident that there are many directions to travel at once, and it is not until the reader accepts the constant shiftings of context or focus that the poem becomes readable, or meaningful. The poem becomes, for the reader, a process of expansion.

In fact, a reading of "A":1-12 might well be considered to be an exercise in how to read a poem. In examining "A":1-12 from this point of view, it is useful to consider Zukofsky's statement that poetry "may be defined as an order of words that as movement and tone...approaches in varying degrees the wordless art of music as a kind of

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⁴ An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language, ed. Rev. Walter Skeat (Oxford, 1968). The Etym. Dict., as it will be referred to hereafter, links the word "motley" with the idea of that which is of different colours, and suggests that it might well originate from the Old French, mattelé, which meant "clotted, knotted, curdled or curd-like". The suggestion of a combination of contexts knotted together in a motley becomes particularly relevant in later discussion of "A":1-12 as a collage or weaving.
The poem is a movement in itself, composed of words and silences; a series of harmonies through which the reader moves and is moved by what he perceives.

In his discussion of language, Fenollosa refers to language as action or transaction. Zukofsky also speaks of language as being animated, as possessing power or movement. Yet there are distinctly mechanical orders within his poems, and his definition of poetry is framed in terms which are inherently mechanical: the terminology of mathematics.

It would seem that there is a contradiction between Zukofsky's attitude towards language and his making of poems. However, the making of a poem is a process of ordering, and is mechanical in that sense. Moreover, if


7. "Whoever makes it may well consider a poem as a design or construction. A contemporary American poet says: 'A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words'. The British mathematician George Hardy has envied poetry its fineness of immediate logic. A scientist may envy its bottomless perception of relations which, for all its intricacies, keeps a world of things tangible and whole". "A Statement for Poetry", Prepositions, p.27.
the words themselves are perhaps machines, they are so in the root-sense of the word, *magh*, or "power"; they are contrivances which act as a means for ordering.

The mechanics are a way into the poem, both for Zukofsky and the reader. Zukofsky refers to his use of the formula for a conic section in writing the first half of "A"-9 as a way of releasing himself into the poem; a mechanical approach to be abandoned once it had served as an ordering function. So, in a reading of "A";1-12, it is useful to begin with an examination of the mechanics of the poem, bearing in mind that these patterns are set up in order that they can later be abandoned; that in fact they must be abandoned to prohibit a mistaking of the means for the end. There would be little to be gained by "reading" "A"-9 for its distribution of the letters "n" and "r".


9. Citation from an unpublished letter from Louis Zukofsky to Peter Quartermain, October 18, 1968.

10. The letters "n" and "r" are distributed throughout the first half of "A"-9 in a sequence which corresponds to the formula for a conic section.
Communication theory provides a useful means of examining the ways in which meaning is revealed to the reader; or, perhaps more appropriately, structures in "A":1-12 which permit the reader to perceive the poem as being relevant to himself. In the construction of a message, "bits" (the letters of the alphabet, for example) are strung together in sequences which have a greater or lesser degree of complexity. The more complex the message is, the less likely it is that the message will occur by chance.11 Messages which occur rarely, however, capture the attention of the receiver, and demand a conscious assimilation of the signals being sent.

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York 12

In this message, the probability of these word sequences occurring is very low. The use of metaphor accounts in part for the "unlikeliness" of the message, and limits the number of receivers to those who can relate to the metaphorical contexts. It is a message in which there is an elaborately-executed analogy between peace of mind and the season, and its relevance will depend upon the receptivity of the


receiver.

In order for a message to be completed, it must have a receiver: that is, someone for whom the frames of reference are relevant. For those who cannot perceive a metaphorical connection between moods and season, or who cannot observe the relevance of a pun on "sun", the above statement is merely florid speech. The relevance of a message is determined by the receiver in terms of his own vocabulary (or vocabularies): how many ways can he perceive the world around him? The more complex his modes of perception, the more receptive he will be to combinations of modes: image and metaphor, for instance.

When a message which contains information that appears to be extraneous to the receiver is sent, there is likely to be a disruption in the receiver's assimilation of the message. In communication theory, material which is (or appears to be) irrelevant to the message is referred to as "noise". ¹³ Such interference might be simply static on the radio, a sudden movement which distracts the eye from the material at hand, or the interpolation of a

¹³ "noise" is defined in Webster's Third New International Dictionary as "an unwanted signal in a communications system".
vocabulary which is not within the context in which the receiver is functioning. Meaning, then, is that characteristic of a message which is relevant to the receiver.

The communication process is one of transference of meaning from a→b. The sender, the originator of the message, transmits (orally, visually, tangibly) a sequence of signals (the message) which is intended to be received by another individual. The efficiency of the transmission depends upon the extent to which the receiver accepts and interprets the sequence of signals in a context which is reasonably similar to that intended by the sender. That which is relevant to the receiver will be determined by his own perceptions (the sensitivity of his filters), his past experiences, his social, intellectual and other biases, and his own particular needs. People who share a common frame of reference, as for instance a professional group, are assured that there will be relevance, or meaning, in the messages they transmit amongst themselves, at least insofar as the messages are drawn from the group vocabulary. They will have localized the contexts from which they draw their vocabulary, and the specialized meanings attached to the words in that vocabulary will be without ambiguity—as

14. "b" being the receiver's sensorium.
long as the usage remains within the group parameters.

Ambiguity arises when a word "slips its context"; when the particular frame of reference in which the speaker or sender is using the message is not clearly distinct from other frames of reference. The meaning, or relevance, is not completely indicated by the context. In such a situation, the words may be framed so that they violate the context; so that there are too many possibilities of meaning, none confirmed by the context. But in other instances, the ambiguity can arise from there being a number of contexts which are simultaneously relevant to the word, and therefore to the meaning. The possibilities of meanings, then, are enhanced when each possibility is rendered available by the context.

The limited body
Can form in itself
Only a certain number of images,
If more are formed
The images begin to be confused,
If exceeded, they become entirely confused.
("A"-12, p.208)

The concurrent contexts yield a richness of meaning to the receptive eye or ear---they are many-things-happening-at-once; a collage of distinct areas of reference or expertise. Puns are the most obvious examples of these multiple-context meanings. For the mind which delights in words for
their vitality, the pun is a game, a challenge to locate the various relevant contexts in little more time than it takes for the message to get from the eye or ear to the brain. A game of speed in which the analogical ability of the mind is involved. Meaning, or relevance, will depend, in such a situation, upon the receiver's ability to distinguish the various contexts.

In "A":1-12, there are multiple contexts through which the eye and the ear move. The effect of this movement is both cumulative and simultaneous---matters of time which will be taken up later. The point right now is that there is no single vocabulary or field of expertise which is a satisfactory exploitation of the poem. Since the expertise of the poet is the harmonic ordering of the universe, it would be naive to expect that the language of that expertise, the poem, would be relevant to only one special area of the universe. To be a viable ordering process it must account potentially, at least for all areas, as Zukofsky does in his use of the languages of music, history, politics, philosophy, mathematics and poetics. It is because Zukofsky does not use a single expertise that the poem is difficult to get into. In other words, it is the reader's failure to recognize other vocabularies which makes the poem "difficult". He hears the
noise rather than the polyphonies. "Noise" is simply not-meaning in a given context. However,

Information, we must steadily remember, is a measure of one's freedom in selecting a message. The greater the choice, the greater is the uncertainty that the message actually selected is some particular one. Thus greater freedom of choice, greater uncertainty and greater information all go hand in hand.

If noise is introduced, then the received message contains certain distortions, certain errors, certain extraneous material, that would lead to uncertainty. But if the uncertainty is increased, the information is increased, and this sounds as though noise were beneficial.\textsuperscript{15}

"Noise" is certainly beneficial in poetry. It permits the counterpointing of images, allows for the interweaving of metaphor, and gives rise to those plays on words which illuminate the vitality of the language. "Noise" is that factor in a poem which forces the reader to tangle with the poem; which does not permit a facile passage through the words. The poet can make use of "noise" to create messages which are of low probability and high informational content.

It is interesting to note that communication theory appears to consider meaning as being located in the message: that if the message is not identical, even perhaps simultaneous, in the sender's and receiver's heads, then the communication is imperfect, inefficient. Yet, as Warren Weaver notes, information increases as probability and certainty decrease. A poem is effective partly because it says things in an unlikely fashion (low probability sequences; patterns which are not easily misunderstood). It is, however, an inefficient message, in that it allows for so much suggestibility; so much play between the message sent and the one received. What communication theory does not allow for is the role of the reader in a poem like "A":1-12. There, much of the "meaning" of the message is derived from the reader's ability to relate to what is happening in the poem; to perceive order(s) in the poem, the reader must, as noted earlier, tangle with the poem. The reader thus becomes a subject of the poem16. Unless he responds to the informational value of the "noise" in the poem, he cannot respond to the poem. There is no single melody, theme, image, vocabulary or other touchstone for him to relate to.

16. "The best way to find out about poetry is to read the poems. That way the reader becomes something of a poet himself: not because he 'contributes' to the poetry, but because he finds himself subject of the energy". "A Statement for Poetry", Prepositions, p.31.
The universe in "A":1-12 is observed from constantly shifting perspectives. A reading of the poem is a process of expansion, an extending of awareness.

Aldous Huxley refers to this kind of growth of awareness in *The Doors of Perception*:

Reflecting on my experience, I find myself agreeing with the eminent Cambridge philosopher, Dr. C.D. Broad, 'that we should do well to consider much more seriously than we have hitherto been inclined to do the type of theory which Bergson put forward in connection with the memory and sense perception. The suggestion is that the function of the brain and nervous system and sense organs is in the main eliminative and not productive. Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful.' According to such a theory, each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. But in so far as we are animals, our business is at all costs to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funnelled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a meagre trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet. To formulate and express the contents of this reduced awareness, man has invented and endlessly elaborated those symbol-systems and implicit philosophies which we call languages.
Every individual is at once the beneficiary and the victim of the linguistic tradition into which he or she has been born—the beneficiary inasmuch as language gives access to the accumulated records of other people's experience, the victim in so far as it confirms him in the belief that reduced awareness is the only awareness and as it bedevils his sense of reality, so that he is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things. That which, in the language of religion is called 'this world' is the universe of reduced awareness, expressed and, as it were, petrified by language. The various 'other worlds', with which human beings erratically make contact are so many in the totality of awareness belonging to Mind at Large. Most people, most of the time, know only what comes through the reducing valve and is consecrated as genuinely real by the local language. Certain persons, however, seem to be born with a kind of by-pass that circumvents the reducing valve. In others temporary by-passes may be acquired either spontaneously, or as the result of deliberate 'spiritual exercises', or through hypnosis, or by means of drugs. Through these permanent or temporary by-passes there flows, not indeed the perception 'of everything that is happening everywhere in the universe' (for the by-passes not abolish the reducing valve, which still excludes the total content of Mind at Large), but something more than, and above all something different from, the carefully selected utilitarian material which our narrowed, individual minds regard as a complete, or at least sufficient, picture of reality.¹⁷

It is impossible for us to experience the entire universe and to survive. We are equipped with filters, the senses, through which we are in contact with the environ-

merit. (Language itself is one of these filters, or screens. Gertrude Stein's work, for instance, can be viewed as one attempt on the large scale to break through the linguistic barriers. The same could probably be said of many works of art). Our experience is limited to a narrow range of phenomena within the electromagnetic spectrum. We have created other filters with which we are able to sense areas which were heretofore beyond the range of the sensorium--radio, the telescope, x-ray etc. In addition to these "secondary" sensors, we have developed certain areas of expertise (mathematics, history, physics, etc.) in order to communicate the experiences of the sensorium. There are specialized vocabularies through which "we" communicate what "I" has sensed. Each area of expertise is, like the sensorium, quantitative: each can be measured, catalogued, evaluated, collated. And like the sensorium, an expertise is a measuring device; but the areas of expertise are the means by which we share--through specialized vocabularies, communities of minds, etc.--what we have sensed as individuals.

Poetry is one of these areas of expertise, and the poet is the "I"-voice speaking of an harmonic ordering of a universe. For a poet like Zukofsky, the vocabulary is that of any (or all the) area(s) of expertise,
and as such, provides a reasonable facsimile of a total experience of the universe. It is not surprising, therefore, that Zukofsky refers to his poetics as the integral (the summation of all things that lie within the given limits) between speech and music. The available vocabularies for such a range include dance, language, and musicology; by secondary association they also include mathematics, religion, philosophy, and mythology.

The poet conveys the experience through a series of specialized vocabularies, then. These special languages are identical with what is commonly referred to as abstraction—in that they are disassociated from any specific instance; that they are one remove from the sensation itself. Abstraction becomes, in effect, simply a synonym for the specialized vocabulary, in that it is only a way of talking about things....the language used to communicate the "I" experience to the community of minds. The vocabularies are codes in which the sensual experiences are defined in a particular language whose words are exclusive of other possible areas of meaning.

In the context of what Huxley says, the poet can be viewed as the exponent of the Mind-at-Large; the individual who has the ability to create (or perceive)
order beyond one or two limited areas.

It is significant, then, that Zukofsky speaks of poets as those who "see with their ears, hear with their eyes, move with their noses and speak and breathe with their feet."¹⁸

¹⁸. "An Objective", Prepositions, p.25. Cf. "A"-12, "We live by presuming / infinite nose". (p.213): infinite movement or vitality, perhaps. The poet, Zukofsky says, speaks and breathes with his feet--the suggestion not only of synaesthesia, but also of a pun on the mechanics of the measure (the dance) of the poem as a movement, an orchestration.
Zukofsky states that the "form of the poem is organic---that is, involved in history and a life that has found by contrast to history something like perfection in the music of J.S. Bach....Or to put it in other words, the poet's ofrm is never an imposition of history but the desirability of projecting some order out of history as it is felt and conceived."¹⁹ In "A"-5, he continues the statement of the process of the poem. Melody, the harmony, is one of the functions; "My one voice":

...My other: is
An objective--rays of the object brought to a focus
An objective--nature as creator--desire for what is objectively perfect
Inextricably the direction of historic and contemporary particulars.

(p.30)

"Objective": in the vocabulary of optics, that lens in a telescope which is nearest to the object being viewed (also called the "object glass"), in reference to cameras or projectors, the objective is the lens which makes the image of the object.  

20. In this complex of references to focussing, or illuminating, many of the recurrent images of the poem are recalled: the frequent references to Spinoza ("blest Spinoza"), philosopher and mathematician, who experimented with the grinding of lenses. In connection with these images of seeing clearly, of intensifying the perception, there are numerous references in the poem to "glass", as in that which is seen through, or that which reflects (note the frequent insistence that while objects may justly be mirrored, and that indeed people are a mirror of the heavens, images must not be repeated. Reflection is not repetition. It is, in effect, a turning-about in order to obtain another view. In a different sense, of course, reflection is pausing, thinking, comprehending; understanding.

Tied in with these references to perception are the images of illumination; the references to understanding being synonymous with seeing clearly, with being illuminated, or "awakened". Hence the open eyes mirror the heavens, ("A"-12, p.178), in the sense that the stars and planets are visibly reflected in the surface, of the open eye. But the images the eye perceives are also cast, in reflection, or reversed, upon the retina, and thereby passed through the filtering system into the understanding. The sky is made synonymous with the source of light (understanding or reason: "the face of sky"): that from which light emanates, or radiates. The use of the image of radiation leads into the concept of the circle (the radiates of the web, perhaps), the petals of a flower, the sunflower, for instance, and the etymological familiaris of "radiation": rays, as in light; "array, as in arrangement, an ordering of some kind etc. The use of the images or radiation is discussed in a later chapter; it is worthwhile at this point, however, to take brief note of the related imagery which is not dealt with in the text, and to make at least brief note of these examples of the complexity of the inter-weaving of the imagery.
The goal and the means are thus united; the process is at once the aim and the function. The accomplishment, Zukofsky says, is that intense vision which "resolves the complexity of detail into a single object."

That object may be the poem; it may be a single word which in its entirety "is in itself a relation, an implied metaphor, an arrangement, a harmony or a dissonance."

The movement in the process is the desire to "place everything—everything aptly, perfectly, belonging within, one with, a context." The desire to focus; "out of deep need" ("A"-12, p.132) to perceive order and to establish (or locate) harmony.

The word, "objective" also refers to those things which are "external to or independent of the mind; real: opposed to subjective." The poet, then, deals with the real world; rides beyond the filters. It is his goal to achieve this focus or order.

22. Ibid., p.22. See Appendix I.
23. Ibid., p.23.
The activity of ordering itself is a process in which the definitions or boundaries are arbitrarily selected from amongst a virtually unlimited range of objects or signals. Wallace Stevens, for instance, sees the lights of the harbour as defining its limits;²⁵ having done so, he has extended or projected a pattern from a random sequence of events or occurrences. The process can be described as arbitrary in the sense that the number of patterns which can be derived is limited only by the perceptions of the "viewer". Hamlet creates arbitrary orders in his baiting of Polonius:

Hamlet. Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Polonius. By th' mass and 'tis, like a camel indeed.

Hamlet. Methinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius. It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet. Or like a whale.

Polonius. Very like a whale.

Hamlet. (aside) They fool me to the top of my bent. (Hamlet, III.iii.385-90)

²⁵. "Ramon Fernadez, tell me, if you know, Why, when the singing ended and we turned Toward the town, tell why the glassy lights, The lights in the fishing boats at anchor there, As the night descended, tilting in the air, Mastered the night and portioned out the sea, Fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles, Arranging, deepening, enchanting night."

Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West" 20th Century Poetry and Poetics, ed. Gary Geddes (Toronto, 1969), p.120.
Hamlet "perceives", or labels, in an essentially arbitrary fashion. The point is that he is capable of "seeing" these possibilities, whereas Polonius can only meekly go along with what Hamlet suggests. The fact that he fears Hamlet's 'madness', coupled with his own lack of perceptive imagination, make him a poor match for Hamlet's wit. Polonius can only submit to what already exists. He structures what he sees in terms of a pre-programmed vocabulary (Hamlet's suggestions). His view of the universe is thus a limited one.

"The mind may construct its world--this is hardly philosophy--if the mind does construct its world there is always that world immanent or imminently outside which at least as a term has become an entity." The poet derives his vocabulary from any number of fields, and therefore a potentially infinite number of contexts are relevant to him. His job is to arrange them into a significant pattern, to make order evident.

J.R. Gothe tells the story of a cat with such a job. In a remote jungle village in Brazil, lost somewhere


between the imagination and the lianas, lived the Piranha brothers and their few neighbours. They mostly lay about and did jungly things until the appearance one morning of a self-addressed cat, who explained his presence by inscribing two roads...a cross-road in the centre of the jungle. Having done that, the cat found it necessary to justify the road's existence, and thereby created the traffic light. Since the traffic light implied stoppings, he further was led to the invention of the parking meter, and limited-parking signs. Ultimately he would have had to invent the city. In the meantime, he simply created a utilitarian function for the road by deluging the Piranhas and their friends in self-multiplying radioactive cough-drops, which could only be disposed of by transporting them in great loads through the jungle to a nearby pineapple factory and cliff-edge. Using their wives as wheelbarrows, the Piranhas traversed the road time and again, disposing of cough drops, and creating traffic; hence the stoplight; and hence the parking meters. The cat subsequently disappeared laughing into the wilderness, having identified himself (necessarily) as City By-Law; (we and the piranhas are left with the trappings of the cat's self-justification.

The jungle is all that which is not ordered-- at
least to the cat's perceptions. As a city cat, he sees the jungle as an inchoate universe: primal, without form senseless and speechless. He has no vocabulary with which to relate to the environment, so he creates one. He inscribes the roads, and justifies their existence by creating traffic. He justifies and modifies the traffic by creating the traffic light, which implies stoppings; hence he must create the parking meter and parking regulations. He is forced to intervene in the chaotic structure on the principle that form cannot live without form. He creates meaning by creating a context. He structures arbitrarily, but the point is that he structures within his own range of experience.

There are existent orders in the relationship between the people and the environment, but they are out of the cat's frame of reference, and are therefore not apparent to him. He is forced to justify his own existence within the structure by determining limits which are relevant to himself, and in the process, finds himself forced to re-define his processes so that they become self-explanatory. The process continues until the point at which he simply drops out of the spiralling series of requirements for finer and finer iteration of his ordering. He leaves the Piranhas with the new environment, an implicit require-
ment for them, in turn, to turn the new structures to some sort of intelligible pattern for themselves. They may build a city in extension of the rationale for the parking regulations. On the other hand, they may use the pavement for building blocks, and the parking meters for clubs. It doesn't matter what is done; what matters is why it is done.

Just as the cat found that the invention of the road required the invention of the light, etc., each stage of any ordering process leads necessarily to a further, more finely-delineated step—a further precision of definition, a greater degree of abstraction—until the process is abandoned and a new one is begun. The abstracting is an infinite process in the sense that re-definition can be made at any point, and that each definition can be progressively finer in detail. Hence it is arbitrarily terminated...by the words "The End", by a shrug and a walking away, by a laugh, or by the leap to a new process. 28

The cat was presented with what he reacted to as a cause-effect situation. The nature of the jungle was such that he had to intervene; there was no meaning for him in the environment, and therefore he had no

28. Or, as in "A":1-12, with the word, "continues".
meaning there. The irrelevance led him to impose a structure, and his activities are the effects of his self-justification. It is irrelevant that once he has gone the system becomes meaningless—so is the possibility that the existent order was probably far more appropriate to the people and the demands of the environment. The cat, in fact, observes the jungle with much the same logic as another cat is himself observed in The Book:

Here is someone who has never seen a cat. He is looking through a narrow slit in a fence, and, on the other side, a cat walks by. He sees first the head, then the less distinctly shaped furry trunk, and then the tail. Extraordinary! The cat turns around and walks back, and again he sees the head, and a little later the tail. This sequence begins to look like something regular and reliable. Yet again, the cat turns around and he witnesses the same regular sequence, first the head and later the tail. Therefore he reasons that the event head is the invariable and necessary cause of the event tail, which is the head's effect. This absurd and confusing gobbledygook comes from his failure to see that head and tail go together; they are all one cat. The cat wasn't born as a head which sometime later caused a tail; it was born all of a piece, a head-tailed cat.29

The several possible patterns of relationship (cat to fence, man to cat, man to fence, etc.) provide their own

contexts. The patterns are, then, abstractions: they come entirely from the head. "The product and the process are both important. Without the process there would be no product. Without the product or evidence of action or achievement there might not be more than fantasy...
Creativity is to be regarded as both product and process.
A problem is a state of mind, and since symbols (in the general sense) can exist as symbols only in the minds, the problem cannot exist apart from its symbolic formulation".\(^\text{30}\)

For the cat or for the poet, the problem is not that there is no order; it is rather one of locating a relevant one; of creating an original pattern.

The created product is an original pattern; no more, no less. Let us consider all the things we know—the land and oceans, stars and nebulae, the things that creep or crawl or swim or fly—are patterns made up from less than 100 natural elements, and these in turn are composed of only two phenomena—matter and energy. All the literature that has ever been written in the modern English language consists of patterns of only 26 letters. All the paintings ever made are patterns of only three primary colors. All the music ever written consists of patterns of no more than twelve notes. All the arithmetical expressions we know of consist of only ten symbols, and for the vast computations of digital computers, everything is made up of patterns of only two components, 0 and 1. All pieces of sculpture and mechanical inventions (which are essentially pieces of sculpture) are patterns

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confined to only three spatial dimensions, plus duration.\textsuperscript{31}

Each pattern created is original, and is self-defining. It is an eclectic process, a means of determining cause and effect or relationship through the patterns perceived. But the making of a pattern changes things, makes everything not included in that order chaotic, (hence the Absurd, the existential Void, etc.). So a secondary ordering is necessary to accommodate the revealed chaos; and then a tertiary (or just a third), and so on. The act of ordering is in itself endless, for at each stage the order requires, as the cat discovered, redefinition in terms of those elements still outside the parameters of the ordered world.

It is in this continual iteration of order that complexity arises. The poet can utilize the fact that at any number of points within a given pattern, other patterns will intersect it with their own contexts and relevance. And it is from the use of these simultaneous occurrences of meaning that Zukofsky is able to remain meaningful in many vocabularies at once.

In "A":1-12, as each vocabulary, or context, is

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
revealed in the reading, it becomes an expansion of the relevance of all the contexts which have arisen before it. Each part is interdependent with the others.

In fact, one way of visualizing the ordering of "A":1-12 as a whole is to use the analogy of a web. There are the anchor-lines, the root-lines, which are attached to points out in the void. These lines roughly intersect one another near the centre point of the web, and are bound together by the spiral of connective work which originates near the centre point and unites the whole as it moves out along the lengths of the anchor lines. Thus all the parts of the web are interdependent: the root-lines are held in place by the connective work, which is itself given footing by the root-lines. They are both necessary to the existence of the web, and are therefore simultaneous in the concept of "web".

In "A":1-12, the connective work is the words themselves; more particularly, those words which bridge the spaces between two or more areas of expertise by belonging simultaneously to all of them.32 These are the words which, in the earlier discussion of meaning, were the admitters of

32. "There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love....the only meaning". Thornton Wilder, The Bridge of San Luis Rey (New York, 1963), p.139.
"noise". They belong to more than one specialized vocabulary, and therefore their use in any one context instantly creates a play between that usage and the others.

The various expertise in the poem are analogous to the root-lines. They constitute the gathering together of various means of perceiving the universe, but they do not exist, in a reading of the poem, as isolate themes. The frequency of the connections between the expertise creates a reading situation where the mind is continually "short-circuited": redirected for a time along a different contextual route. Ultimately the reader passes through many expertise, and is thereby exposed to a projection out of all of them which amounts to a harmonic ordering—a perceiving of interrelationships and resonances among the many contexts available for communication experience.

As has been noted, it is impossible to extract a single expertise from the poem without collapsing the whole structure. If one could view one of the expertise as a line lifted from the web structure, it would be a line intersected at many points along its length by what

33. An interesting approach to the poem would be to make a collection of a variety of different "readings" of "A".1-12. See Appendix I.
were cross-references, but once lifted from the poem, are simply meaningless interruptions in the context of the expertise. The many contexts are simultaneous in the poem; they are projections of a history. To approach the poem from the point of view of a linear reading, implies that Idea #2 in the poem is a direct result of Idea #1: a statement of cause and effect that is suggestive of a sequential development of ideas. Any attempt to read "A":1-12 from such an approach will therefore be an unsatisfying reading. The poem simply does not work in a linear form. The analogy of the web is indicative of the non-sequential character of the poem. The superimposing of one time-period upon another, as in the address to the three audiences (Leipzig, 1729; Carnegie Hall, 1928; and the reader, current), creates what, in Carl Jung's terms would be called synchronicity.

(It is)...a concept that forms a point of view diametrically opposed to that of causality. Since the latter is a merely statistical truth and not absolute, it is a sort of working hypothesis of how events evolve one out of another, whereas synchronicity takes the coincidence of events in space and time as meaning more than mere chance, namely, a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers. The ancient Chinese mind contemplates the cosmos in a way comparable to that of the modern physicist, who cannot deny that his model of the world is a decidedly psycho-physical structure.
The micro-physical event includes the observer just as much as the reality underlying the I Ching comprises subjective, i.e. psychic conditions in the totality of the momentary situation. Just as causality describes the sequence of events, so synchronicity deals with the coincidence of events. The causal point of view tells us a dramatic story about how D came into existence: it took its origin from C, which existed before D, and C in its turn had a father, B, etc. The synchronistic view on the other hand tries to produce an equally meaningful picture of coincidence. How does it happen that A', B', C', D', etc., appear all in the same moment and in the same place? It happens in the first place because the physical events A' and B' are of the same quality as the psychic events C' and D', and further because all are the exponents of one and the same momentary situation. The situation is assumed to represent a legible or understandable picture.34

We might regard the two performances of the Passion --1729 and 1928--as C' and D': the psychic events". The respective audiences of the performances would be the "physical events", A' and B'. In each performance, the audience and the performance are dependent upon one another; there is no performance without audience, no audience without some sort of performance. But that particular kind of link carries through time as well, so that the audience of 1729 has something to do with the performance of 1928; it therefore has some relationship to the audience in 1928. And since there is a link between

performance and audience, and indeed between performance and performance, etc., the relationship can be made in either "direction" of time; the 1928 audience shares something in common with the 1729 one, and therefore is an influence upon them from the point of view of psychic event $E'$, the reader, who is encountering all of them in the physical event $E'$, the poem. He is that third audience, and as one who attends, he is bound into the cycle as well.

It is in this particular sense of time that Zukofsky comments in "A"-12 that:

...instances from 'different' cultures, surprisingly inwreathed,
Seem to look back at one another,
Aristotle at Shakespeare (both so fond of blind heroes)
And blest Spinoza at Shakespeare....

(p.181)

In terms of synchronicity, Spinoza, Shakespeare, Aristotle and Zukofsky are concurrent events, mutually interdependent.
There is, as Zukofsky says, a cycle, and "you cannot take out of the circle--what was in it,/ That is and will be--/
...an assemblage of all possible positions--/ The locus..."35

35. "A"-12, p.180. Cf. the difference between Zukofsky's sense of history (concretions of events, "bringing together facts / which appearances separate"). ("A"-8, p.108) and that of Ezra Pound, who makes use of the past as a means of interpreting the present. Pound's view suggests repetition, whereas Zukofsky's implies cyclicality, mirroring or reflection from one era to another - a two-way perspective.
With Zukofsky's particular sense of history, it is impossible to understand the poem in terms of "theme"; such an approach implies linearity—sequence and causality. A linear approach separates items, and ignores synchronous happenings in the poem. It does not allow for the presence of locus, or for the concentricity of images presented in the poem.

The synchronicity in "A":1-12 creates a two-fold use of time. For while ultimately the images and the history are concurrent, a reading of the poem is necessarily sequential: the eye must move across and down the pages. In fact, it can take months to read the poem. Nonetheless, the subjective experience, the subjective time in the reading is finally synchronous. The poem has no beginning and no ending; neither does the experiencing of the poem.

The poem is ordered as a collage. Because its ordering is not linear, does not rely on a cause-effect progression from one passage to the next, the time it takes to read through the poem has nothing to do with the poem itself.

We begin early
And go on with a theme
Hanging and draping
The same texture
....
A collage....

("A"-12, p.245)
The poem is "One song/ Of many voices" ("A"-5, p.24).
The song is begun and continued, the singer "hanging and draping/ The same texture"; the song is woven of words, of languages, but it is not about any of these things.
CHAPTER THREE

THE WEAVING OF MEANING

Zukofsky says that the Hebrew, "In the Beginning" means, literally, "from the head". ("A"-12, p.148). In the beginning was the word. And the word comes from the head, derived from the universe filtered through the senses.

Fact and reason are creations of man's genius to secure a point of view protected against a vision of life where information and intelligence invade us and we become creations, not rulers, of what is. Where, more, we are a part of the creative process, not its goal. 36

Fact and reason are the products of the filtering processes. They take the form of expertise, and are given meaning in those specialized contexts. The vocabularies of these specialized areas are created, as noted earlier, in order to provide a vehicle to communicate the I-experience: to share some common awareness. They are a way of imposing a relevant order, and their medium is the word. The process is initially one of organizing, and finally of harmonizing. The individual senses, orders, and communicates

in patterns which resonate (harmonize) with others who share his vocabulary (or vocabularies). The process is described at the opening of the twelfth movement of "A":l-12.

Out of deep need
....
Before all will be abstracted.
So goes: first, shape
The creation--
A mist from the earth,
The whole face of the ground;
Then rhythm--
And breathed breath of life;
Then style--
That from the eye its function takes--
"Taste" we say---a living soul.
First glyph; then syllabary,
Then letters. Ratio after
Eyes, tale in sound. First, dance. Then Voice. First body, to be seen and to pulse Happening together. (p.132)

The statement is of the ordering process and of the communication itself. It is also a statement of poetics, reiterating the flow of movement in the ordering process. A logopoeia, the dance of the intellect among the glyphs. But essentially the "deep need" to order, to be relevant.

It should be noted that Zukofsky makes a distinction between "glyphs" and "ciphers". In "Poetry", he tells Paul, "definitions of poetry rounding out like ciphers (abstract and like numbers on clocks that read only this century or that century and no other) (would) not satisfy

37. Prepositions, p.11.
either of us. For I hope that you as well as I will never want to live by them". Ciphers belong to the processes of mechanics. Mechanics are functions in the making of the poem, but they are not the poem itself. The poet "may find it right to count syllables, or their relative lengths and stresses, or to be sensitive to all these metrical factors. As a matter of fact, the good poets do all these things, but they do not impose their count on what is said or made—as may be judged from the impact of their poems." 38

Glyphs, however, are the graphic symbols which have become the letters which form the syllables of the living words. "Words grow out of affects of

A. Sight, touch, taste, smell
B. Hearing
C. Thought with respect to other words, the interplay of concepts." 39

Glyphs are active in the making of a poem; ciphers are used for the measuring of what is being made. Hence Creeley says:

...I heard the fact of the poem's statement as well as understood its meaning. Such hearing is immediately necessary in reading Zukofsky's work insofar as meaning is an intimate relation of such sound and sense. It can be as close as -

39. Ibid., p.29.
Crickets' thickets
light delight

(16, 29, Songs)

—or move with an apparent statement, seeming to "say" enough to satisfy that measure; but again it will be that one hears what is said, not merely "deciphers" a meaning.\(^4\)

In "A"-12, Zukofsky describes Gerhardi, who:

'worked for Sir Hugo (of Vladivostock fame) a lover of staff work... besides many ordinary files he had some special files... or he would write a report... once... a very exhaustive report on the local situation... after much though inserted a number of additional commas, read it through once again solely from the point of view of punctuation, most particular about full stops, commas and semicolons... very fond of colons—by way of being more pointed and incisive, by way of proving that the universe was one chain of causes and effects'...

("A"-12, p. 265).

Gerhardi orders by ciphering; he does not deal with language, he deals with measures. The punctuation "fixes" the meanings of the words. The words are used as devices, rather than as "meaningful disclosures";\(^4\) they are "deciphered" by the punctuation.


\(^4\) Duncan, "Some Ideas of the Meaning of Form", p. 66.
In "Poetry", Zukofsky states that:

...in poetry one can sing without stopping and without commas of the redundant commonplace action of the species—

A dog that runs never lies down—and of the dog who if not mythical has rhetorical distinction, having been stopped by commas--

A dog, that runs, never lies down.

All this about dogs may be learned from a study of quantity and from the fact that both prose and poetry, if they are that, are meant to record and elate for all time. 42

Zukofsky, however, uses words as "mordents", 43 a musical term used to describe the rapid "alternation of a tone with the tone immediately below it, ending on the principal tone". 44 The word is also used to describe a musical ornamentation where the subsidiary tone is the tone immediately above the principal tone. Thus the words resonate, signal harmonies of meanings. The homonym, "mordant" might also be applied to Zukofsky's language, in the sense of the material which is used to "fix", or locate, colour or image. In etching, the "mordant" is the acid used to form the matrix, as the words are used to create the "design" of the

42. Prepositions, p.18.


44. Standard College Dictionary.
poem (sound and not-sound are functional as "relief" in poetry, music, etc.).

In The Walls Do Not Fall, H.D. observes

the meaning that words hide;

they are anagrams, cryptograms, little boxes, conditioned
to hide butterflies....

"Anagram": originally (Greek) "to cut" or carve; also a written character. In its present usage it has the further sense of referring to a change in a word "due to a transposition of letters" (as "letters" becomes "settler").

"Cryptogram" is derived from the Greek root-word, "to hide, or conceal": kryptos. Its use is generally in reference to a message written in code or cipher (or both). These codes are "conditioned": from the Latin cum, "together", and dicere, "to say"; an agreement. There is also the sense in this word of the locale in which the activity takes place as having an effect on the activity: environed. The surroundings of the word have an effect on its activity as much as, in psychological terms, the environment of a child can affect its actions. Each word is a little box, a "little case to


46. Etym. Dict.
put things in". It is a place where things (meanings) are stored. The etymology of this word indicates that its root is the Latin, *pyxis*, which occurs in modern English as "pyx", "the sacred box in which the host is kept after consecration"; it also refers to the container in which sample coins are kept at the mint. A special container. ("Box" becomes active in the context of navigation, where it refers to a movement around the compass-box during which the points of the compass are named: in short, the inscribing of a circle and an itemizing of its perimeter.) Thus words are secret containers which hold meanings, which carry relevances which have been agreed upon. And the words can be made to release, suddenly, unexpected relevances: surprise meanings...ambiguities (or butterflies).

A word always contains at least the ghosts of its former meanings, and these shadows of other contexts can be brought out in the particular usage of a word (as the word "conditioned" can summon up the former sense of an agreement). A word carries with it, then all the colours of its other contexts and its former usages. Duncan notes, for instance, a "change from Chaucer's time, when silly

47. Cf. the phylactery, "a small leathern box...worn by Jews during morning prayer...as a reminder to keep the law"; an amulet; a vessel or case containing a holy relic; a charm or a safeguard. OED.
meant happiness, the uncertain good luck of the soul, and could mean too the uncertainty of happiness, a risky euphoria...poor, helpless, exposed...(But) to the rational mind to be silly was to be out of reason, so that in Pope's time it was silly, unlucky, to be over-serious about a soul...."48

This is the living word to which Duncan refers as "the mothering language, in which our spirit is continually reborn, the matrix of meanings, of evolving thought and feeling".49 Zukofsky expresses a similar idea in the essay "Basic", where he discusses the relations between words and objects. Noting the flexibility of language, he concludes by stating that "to give the language a different turn is enough to make it take up a train of thought that we had no idea of before".50

It is the process of putting manes on saw-horses to give them airs; especially when "manes" is kin to the Latin word for spirits or souls (OED). The "horses" are thereby given life (spirits) and "airs", songs. The numerous meanings are carefully unveiled, one context after another, but

all remaining, finally, simultaneously relevant. The "horses" of "A"-7 are the wooden "A-s": "two legs stand A, and four together M". \( A\overline{A}=M \). But also, the combination: \( A+M=AM \) (being; vitality, having spirit as do the horses which have been given "manes"). "Who will do it?...Words / Will do it, out of manes, out of airs, birds / Of words...fellow me, airs! We'll make / Wood horse, and recognize it with our words..."^{51}

Who will do it? Zukofsky will. "A": a poem; two legs of a horse; airs of a song.^{52}

The word, with its secrets, its hidden meaning, is revealed (discovered: enlightened), as Zukofsky shows, in poetry. In "A":1-12 it is the very variety of contexts attached to a given word that initiates revelation in the reader. Something happens, or as Duncan says:

> It is a fanciful philology. To demonstrate that, once words cease to be conventional, customary or taken-for-granted in their meaning, all things begin to move, are set into motion.

51. "A"-7, p.45. "Fellow": "give me character(s); also "follow me" -ie. I conduct, direct, order."

52. In view of the number of references to Ulysses in "A":1-12, it is worth noting that the Trojan horse itself was a wooden box on wheels—a mobile (i.e., "active") horse-metaphor, full of hidden significances.
In the figure of ploughing we see that prose and verse are two necessary movements in one operation of writing. That here what we call the ploughing of the field we also call poetry or our own operation in poetry. Writing that knows in every phase what it is doing.

* * *

Forward and back, prose and verse, the shuttle flies in the loom. 53

The webbing...a weaving. The word "weave" in Sanskrit means "spider". 54 The one who makes the web: Zukofsky; the web: "A":1-12. The poem is an "operation", or that which produces an effect. Duncan draws his vocabulary from the context of agriculture. He finds that the word "prose" is derived from the ploughing term, meaning 'forward in the line', whereas "verse" is drawn in the same context from the Latin versus, meaning to 'turn again to make another row'. 55 The ploughing of the field is the poetic process of "breaking ground", of establishing contexts, and of turning the words to make yet another meaning. It is a metaphor of action, of movement. And it is of movement that Zukofsky speaks in "A Statement for Poetry":

54. OED.
...Poetry may be defined as an order of words that as movement and tone (rhythm and pitch) approaches in varying degrees the wordless art of music as a kind of mathematical limit.\(^{56}\)

That movement is part of the musical quality of the poem; it is the sounded resonances and "turnings-back-to-begin-again" that create the melodic flow in the poem. But, as Zukofsky cautions, this interpretation of movement is "a" context associated with 'musical' shape, musical with quotation marks since it is not of notes as music, but of words more variable than variables, and used outside as well as within the context of communicative reference."\(^{57}\) The movement is also a visual one; the flow of glyphs across and down the page. And it is the combination of both these forms of "movement" that leads to the "enlightening" which occurs for the reader: together they create the play of words and

56. \textit{Prepositions}, p.27.

57. "An Objective", \textit{Prepositions}, p.25. The words, "more variable than variables" presumably refer to the fact that words possess a connotative value, whereas variables (in mathematics, for instance) have only denotative values. The \textit{Etym. Dict.} states that the word, "vary", once bore the sense of "a prickle of conscience"; "conscience" signifying knowledge. In the phrase "more variable than variables", the association of "prickle of conscience" assigns meaning to this description. In other words, it is from the context only that the connotative values of words are determined. They do not bear fixed values. A more complete discussion of the concept of variables as they are used in "A";1-12 is contained in Chapter Five.
contexts that stimulate the intellect. "The test of poetry is range of pleasure it affords as sight, sound and intellection."\textsuperscript{58}

The common air includes
Events listening to their own tremors,
Beings and no more than breath between them,

Histories, differences, walls,
And the words which bind them no more than
"So that", "and"--
The thought in the melody moves--
A line, flash of photoplay.\textsuperscript{59}

The movement is critical: it must exist. So must the synchronicity, however, "because all new subject matter is ineluctably simultaneous with 'what has gone before'. Postulate beings and there is breathing between them and yet maybe no closer relation than the common air which irresistibly includes them. Movements of bodies through history, differences between their ideas, their connections, are often thus no closer knit, no further away than 'So that' and an 'and' which binds them...."\textsuperscript{60}

This sense of connection between things and between ideas is partly what gives the poem movement. It is also

\textsuperscript{58} Louis Zukofsky, \textit{A Test of Poetry} (New York, 1964) p.vii.
\textsuperscript{59} "A"-6, p.33.
\textsuperscript{60} Zukofsky, "Ezra Pound", \textit{Prepositions}, p.71.
the source of the sense of a cyclical, but above all, synchronous history. Through the connections, the reader is moved not only from one context of relevance to another, but also from one chronological span to another.

One of the prime movers in "A":1-12 is the horse: derived from the Latin "currere", to run, and thus connected to the idea of "current", in both the sense of flowing and of continually present. The references to "horse" flow in and out of many different areas of expertise. The horses are also present (and past), on the street, wooden, straddling manholes; or moving "Over six thousand years / Not one of their mouths worrying a bit". 62 The horses are the "singing gut", an ordering image woven throughout the poem. "The image," Zukofsky says of Pound, "is at the basis of poetic form":

In the last ten years Pound has not concerned himself merely with the isolation of the image—a cross-breeding between single words which are absolute symbols for things and textures—

The sand that night like a seal's back
Glossy


--but with the poetic locus produced by the passage from one image to another. His Cantos are, in this sense, one extended image. One cannot pick from them a solitary poetic idea or a dozen variations of it, as out of Eliot's Waste Land, and say this is the substance out of which this single atmosphere emanates. The Cantos cannot be described as a sequence...they are an image of his world, an 'intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'....63

"Mantis" uses this idea of the image extended in both time and space. In "'mantis', An Interpretation", Zukofsky states that, "The mantis, then,/ Is a small incident of one's physical vision/ Which is the poor's helplessness/ The poor's separateness/ Bringing self-disgust".64 He then points out that since the mantis has been around (for hundreds of years), there should be no need for a description of it, but rather for "a 'movement' emphasizing its use". That movement, "the twisting of many and diverse 'thoughts'",65 includes entomology, biology, the rhythm of the subway, "pun, fact, banality", economics, mythology, aeronautics, and

65. Ibid., p.78.
naturally the coda which is the only thing that can sum up the jumble of order in the lines weaving 'thoughts', pulsations, running commentary, one upon the other, itself a jumble of order as far as poetic sequence is concerned..... 66

In "Mantis" too, there is the webbing; the interweaving of the vocabularies of expertise. The "coda" may well be that "empty centre" of the web: in the weaving, the creation of the web defines that central area. The anchor-lines of the web conjoin roughly at the centre, although they do not meet symmetrically. They are united by the first, smallest circuit of connective tissue, and thereby outline the central hollow. "Coda" is defined as a "passage of more or less independent character introduced after the completion of the essential parts of a movement so as to form a more definite and satisfactory conclusion". 67 Like the central portion of

66. Ibid., p. 79.

67. OED. The word "coda" comes from the Latin caudal, or 'tail'; it is 'that-which-inevitably-follows' (and is a defining - and thereby defined - part of) the main body. We are thus re-directed to Watt's 'head-tailed cat', and observe that in "A":1-12 there is a head-tailed horse.
the web, the coda can only be relevant or evident after the construction of the rest of the movement is completed. Once apparent, however, it becomes an area of focus, and implicitly orders the rest of the movement; a symbiotic relationship.

It is within this circuit that the coda of "Mantis" lies, and Zukofsky's interpretation of those lines moves sympathetically in slow, uneven spirals within that hollow centre:

Nor is the coincidence
Of the last four lines
Symbolism,
But the simultaneous,
The diaphanous, historical
In one head.68

In "A":1-12, the coda is more elusive. There cannot be a summing-up of "the jumble of order in the lines", because an additive process is a linear process, and, as the metaphor of the web indicates, the poem is not sequential. The closing movement, the lengthy "A"-12, pauses rather terminates, with the final word, "continues". The last four lines on that same page,

Blest
Ardent
Celia
unhurt and
Happy.69

68. All: 1923-1958, p.80.

spell out an acrostic: BACH. And very simply, very quietly, the poem curls upon itself and meets line one of "A"-1:

A

Round of fiddles playing Bach.70

70. The *Etym. Dict.* indicates that the word "fiddle" comes from the Teutonic *geige*, and is thereby related to the Old French, *gique*, or *giguer*, to hop, or dance. Thus the "round of fiddles" also signifies the dance of the melodic movement in the poem (as well as suggesting the more colloquial, 'fiddling', or playing about).

cf.:  

Better a fiddle than a geiger?  
With either there is so much in I  
And in one....  

("A"-12, p.178)  
Although the words 'fiddle' and 'geiger' are related etymologically, they also each carry significances of their own - hence, "so much in I" (word-root); or, for that matter, so much in "one"!

cf. also:

If Paul loves Bach I need not tell him  
Johann Seb Bach, as he calls him,  
Is present  
His legs in a *gique*  
Old French, *to dance* (giguer) or *hop*  
From *gique* (Teutonic *gique* - a fiddle),  
Half out of his seat at the organ,  
Like his contemporary hopping Chassid  
Who might have shook  
To the Prelude of the Third Partita.  

("A"-12, p.182)
A round, A roundel. A round of music. A round of poetry, Back to the beginning; or, around again to Bach. Bach again. All ways the melody. Zukofsky is meticulous with the slightest detail, even indicating through the sudden focus on those four letters in the acrostic the significance of those glyphs; that they are not just the name of Johann Sebastian. They also represent the German musical notations of b-flat, a, c, and b-natural. (The b-natural was written as "h", to differentiate it from b-flat, which was written as "b". Hence, b-a-c-h, a sequence of notes frequently used by Bach in his composition;71 a coincidence that the notation for the melody should be the letters of his own name). In terms of "A":1-12, then, the last four lines re-turn to, iterate, the melody (as well as the composer). Round and a round: a play-Bach. Round: circular; derived from the same root as "rune", secret, mysterious;72 written characters regarded as secretive because they bore significance for only a few people (a code, or special vocabulary.73 Thus the words of the roundel (or "A":1-12) circle back upon themselves and are secretive in that their


72. The *OED* refers to the Anglo-Saxon, *rūn*.

73. *Etym. Dict.*
relevance is not immediately available to everyone.

The coda of "A":1-12 lies, then, within the rounds, woven somewhere into the web, and "itself a jumble of order/as far as poetic/sequence is concerned". The horses, perhaps: sturdy, ancient, sensitive creatures, manes flowing as they move (in) the poem. Zukofsky comments that the mantis need not be explained because of its familiarity and antiquity. By the same logic, the horses of "A":1-12 are also a "movement" emphasizing their own use. The horse simply is: what it does, what it emphasizes in its various aspects, is what is relevant.74

74. At this point we are considering the horse in its aspects as animal; its usefulness as a metaphor in the poem. In the following discussion, however, "horse" is considered as a word: the focus is on the semantic activity of that sequence of glyphs (the word-horse, or work-horse). Zukofsky's saw-horses of "A":7 come to mind in this context (saw-horse the past tense of see-(or sea-) horse?) - the activity of the word as vital and real as that of the animal identified with the word.

We habitually think of "horse" (as in the animal) as describing a function (the quadruped which... etc.). That is, we recognize an independent existence and autonomy.

Fenollosa would observe "horse" as a verb, with a view to recognizing the activities of the animal.

Zukofsky, however, treats the words themselves as animals (or objects); treats them not 'as if' they were alive, but as alive. Thus in his use of words he gives instructions on how to read the "book" of language.
The OED has listings for some twenty-seven different functions for the word, "horse". Twenty-seven linguistic activities performable by the one word. It occurs as a verb, as a noun, as an attributive word, as an appositive word, etc. And most of these functions have applications in highly specialized contexts (the vocabularies of expertise): astronomy, geology, botany, zoology, mythology and taxonomy. The word also occurs in nautical terminology, military usages, and numerous references to mechanical devices and inanimate objects. "Horse" as word, is active and highly variable. It relates to many contexts, and thereby relates each to the others at all moments. Out of the word spring interweavings, and it is probably not inappropriate to note that the word was originally spelled "hors", which now has the sense of "out" or "out of". ("Who will do it?...Words/ will do it, out of manes, out of airs...". "A"-7). Horse-airs. Horse-hairs: manes and tails. The spirits and songs of the word horse flowing continually current throughout the poem.

In "A":1-12, the horse is thus one of the means through which ordering becomes apparent. Linguistically, it has a remarkable number of specialized functions and contexts to which it is relevant. Etymologically, it allows the development, through Latin roots, of the melodies (the "airs" in the poem), and of the concepts of flow or movement.
and contemporaneity. The word, then, is *useful* 75 because of its ability to bear numerous relevances simultaneously. But there is also the animal itself: the show horse, finely-bred and highly sensitive, adaptable to relatively few uses, but exquisite in its presence; the draught-horse, the beast of endurance, reliable, variable—capable of ploughing fields or bearing burdens. There is the mythological horse, the centaur, the unicorn, magic and intelligent. And for Zukofsky, there is even the saw-horse, or the word-horse, beautiful in its movement, variable in its functions, and magic in its capacities for bearing meaning. *Serviceable*, (complaisant, obliging) perhaps, as once meant the word "common", from which we derive "communication" (Etym. Dict.). The horse is as adaptable, mobile and elegant in its sensitivity to its environment as language is in relationship to its particular vocabularies.

Poetry utilizes language-in-general as the medium of its expertise: that is, it draws upon (potentially) all specialized vocabularies in order to create an harmonic... 

75. "useful" with its connotation of repleteness: full of use—i.e. rather than "usable", which is suggestive of a capacity (ability) for application. Moreover, "useful" bears the sense of that which has been, or already is, in use; "usable" suggests a state of potential activity.
ordering of a universe (it is, after all, the outcome of the I-voice; hence representative of a particular rather than every universe). Zukofsky's trust in words as absolute symbols allows him to treat them as alive and flowing. Each word can be absolute in its relevance to many contexts; moreover, in each context it will have a vitality, a "necessary" existence. It will be made operative "out of deep need", and its use will give it "life" ("airs") as a carrier or meaning.
THE CIRCLE OF ABUSE

It is Zukofsky's particular use of words that makes "A":1-12 a fluid and intricate weaving. As noted earlier in the discussion of the web metaphor, the words are used in such a way that their relevances become interdependent; that it is impossible to extract a single expertise without collapsing the whole structure. The words move within the poem; they are seen with the eye as active bodies; they are heard by the ear as melodic articulations; they are perceived by the mind as a network of necessary inter-relationships. These harmonies are sustained partly by the location of the syllables on the page--the breaking of a phrase to begin a new line, the isolation of a word--and partly by placing words with an ear to the sounds that move around (before and after) them, as well as those that move within them. Jonathan Williams comments that what Zukofsky gives is "wit...in its original sense of 'to see and to know'." It is his fantastic ability... to fix the mind on ... minute particles of language". 76

This minute attention to the ways in which the syllables play among themselves accounts for those passages which are deceptively simple at first reading: such passages as:

Fishy-wishy
Washy-whittle
Little soul
Hadrian's
Hailing itself,
What will
Become of you,
Roman? 77

and:

Already a little ode:
How I had to ford
To Hungerford,
I can't afford
Another word. 78

In each example, the weaving of sounds creates little, dancing songs. The first passage creates a melody of little watery noises, built around the use of sibilants, glides, and shortened, softened vowels. The little ode sets up internal hollows with the lengthened "o" and "or" syllables, and the long, heavy, glides of the "f" and "w" sounds. In both instances, the line breaks expand the meanings available. "Hadrian's" little sole what? In the Ode, the "afford" and

78. "A"-12, p.221.
"Hungerford" suggest poverty and perhaps hunger; but they have the further suggestion of "afford" in the context of supplying, producing or providing, with "ford" then punning on "pass" to make the sense of "yield"; "Hungerford" then relates to the late nineteenth century Irish authoress of the same name (known more colloquially as The Duchess). So instead of a little slightly sad travelling song, we have a concession of words: "I had to pass in favour of The Duchess; I can't produce another word."

Words are activated in a more sedate manner in the hushed movements of passages like:

The fir trees grew round the nunnery,
The grille gate almost as high as the firs,
Two nuns, by day, passed in black, like Hooded cameras, as if photographing the world.  

The flow of the tones in the first line peaks in the pause between "grew" and "round"; a rising up and falling off of the tree shapes. The shape of the gate is inscribed by the movement of syllables in the second line: The solid "grille gate", followed by the straining "al-most-as-high". The sharp, clearly imaged figures, their darkness against the silent flow of the softened fir trees, implied in the chopped

79. "A"-6, p.43.
movement of "Two nuns; by day": the punctuation separating them from one another, and the vision of the two iterated in the crisp plosives of Passed and Black. Secretive women, moving in silence, their mystery and aloofness emphasized by the "hiding" of the description of them (hooded cameras) in an indented niche (a cloister), beneath the preceding line. "The thought in the melody moves/ A line, a flash of photo-play". 80

"Literature is an art based on the abuse of language/ It is based on language as a creator of illusions". 81 "Art": etymologically, "skill" or "fitting". "Abuse": to use amiss, or as it formerly occurred, "to miss-order". 82 Language, the mother-tongue, the purveyor of illusions; the vehicle of abstraction.

Philosophy, one of the areas of expertise, has a vocabulary and structure which rely on language, semantics, and illusion. It is a useful expertise to examine as an example of language as a creator of illusion because its vocabulary, an abstraction in itself, deals with abstractions of other

81. "A"-8, p.100.
82. Etym. Dict.
The song does not think
To say therefore I am,
Has no wit so forked.

Between the simple
And therefore
Is a chasm.
Only our thought
Says, our cave
Was not so simple
Dark once -- a false leap
That our clear art
Moved to diversity
Understands and
Depicts our lives better.
Hope says this
With cave in us sometimes
And art in others
With art in us sometimes
And cave in others --
As thought, extended,
As body, minded
With countless effects of
The same infinite
Not infinite
As affected by
One of us

83. For instance, Spinoza's use of mathematics in his philosophy (and, of course, Zukofsky's use of Spinoza's philosophy: "To perceive a winged horse/ Affirms wings on a horse...". "A".-12, p.241.
Actual as he is  
But only in so far  
As it is affected  
By another  
As actual  
And still another  
And so on  
To infinity --  
This is history  
-- You say.... 84

The language creates illusions: the "miss-ordering" gives the language "a different turn to make it take up a train of thought we had no idea of before". It is the following of this "different turn", the ability to perceive the new relevance, that allows one to leap the chasm, to create a new order within the void.85 It is from this re-ordering (in an infinite procession of orderings) that one can move out of the cave and into the light. "Our clear (lighted) art/ Moved to diversity/ Understands (has a more complete awareness of) and/ Depicts (represents, is an illusion of) our lives better" (better than mere forked wit can do). The mind alone cannot depict our lives (or the universe) for it is equipped only with language, with illusions, like the shadows of Plato's cave. It is the eye which sees, and the ear which hears that


85. "This does not presume that the style will be the man, but rather that the order of his syllables will define his awareness of order". "Poetry", Prepositions, p.16.
sense the universe, and communicate that experience to the mind. There it is translated into an appropriate vocabulary for transmission of the I-experience. As the argument begins to wrap about itself in this passage, the referents of each word become more numerous, and the texture of the passage becomes denser, more muscular, as the mind struggles to locate relevance for the increasing number of available contexts. Finally it becomes apparent that the search for order is an infinite one; one infinite search in a chain of infinite searches for order.  

This, Zukofsky says, is history ("the record of other men's lives"). The inwreathed, cyclical pattern. The web. And as he quietly points out, when there is an infinite potential for relevance, "it is not easy to exceed the circle".

The circle: "a series or process that finishes at its starting point or that repeats itself without end"; a circular path or course: a circuit, or ring. A progression from the "beginning" to the "end" of the circle is impossible. "A":l-12 "ends" by re-turning to its own opening

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86. The poet's first aim is "proper conduct" - to avoid clutter, for instance. His "second and major aim is not to show himself but that order that of itself can speak to all men". Ibid.

87. "A":1-12, p.205.

88. Standard College Dictionary.
lines, "A/ Round...", and thereby continues forever in effect, so the concept of travelling within a circle is a concept of endless movement. Thus, "Once the circle is closed/ It becomes very small/ and very great...". Once the circuit has been inscribed, it contains within it the possibility of everything. The poem, for instance:

A chance word
another song
of
endless song,
Fern -- fruit dot -- sorus,
Sora.90

"A chance word" moves the poem into new contexts. The discovered meanings illuminate the poem, create new songs within the structure. "Fern" itself is a chance-word, being an accidental transposition of letters from the Greek word, pteron, "feathers", to the Greek, pteris, "fern". This transposition subsequently meant that the word had the connotations of winged or feathered.91

"Sora" is the name given to a species of marsh birds which inhabit those areas where ferns are abundant. "Sorus"

89. "A"-12, p.232. This sense of endless motion, the infinite voyage, is also carried throughout the poem in the references to Ulysses.

90. Ibid.

91. OED. Note the connection between the transliterated Greek words and our use of them as prefixes signifying "winged"; hence the winged horse of Spinoza; Zukofsky's "birds of words".
is an obsolete variant of "sora" and refers most commonly to the cases in which the fern spores are stored on the parent plant. The plural form, "sorei", is a homonym for "sorry", which is derived in part from the Frisian word meaning sensitive (connoting the delicacy of both marsh birds and ferns). "Fruit dot" is another term for "spore", and is suggestive of the potential product (the fruition, and the creation of another life) contained within the dot (a small clump: the word, then, perhaps a clump of letters containing the possibility of fruition\(^92\) into meaning(s). "Spore" is an obsolete form of "spur", which carries the sense of an incentive or stimulus; that which incites activity (the horses again connoted in the word "spur").\(^93\)

The cycle of the fern, then: spore – fruit – fern – spore. The spore is the activating or regenerative phase of the cycle. "Fern": from the French, _vironner_, or _viron_, meaning "circuit". Endless song", says Zukofsky. Endless cycle.

The songs of the Sora elicited from chance words: "sorus" to "sora". (Then, "sora" to "saw-A?") And the cycle of _A_1-12 is iterated in the song, in the _viron_ or _environ_

\(^92\) "Fruit" is derived from the Hebrew word for offspring (_OED_).

\(^93\) All references to etymologies in this passage are taken from the _OED_.

the contextual environment of the word "fern".  

The circle contains then, very little and very much. In terms of visible material, the fern-circle song contains few items: 60 letters; 18 syllables detected by the ear. However, the circle "expands" to include all the available contexts for all of the words. The meaning is enriched by the play amongst the words (etymologically, phonically), and thereby the "much" is contained within the "little". The contents are revealed sequentially only in the sense that one word must follow another on  

94. Botanically, a fern is a cryptogam; in the context of the etymological analyses in this passage, it is worth noting the similarity to "cryptogram": a glyph bearing (secret) meanings.

"We know that an idea, a novel or poem, may begin at some point or germ, grow, find its being and necessary form, rhythm and life as the germ evolves in relation to its environment of language and experience in life. This is an art that rises from a deep belief in the universe as a medium of forms, in man's quest as a spiritual evolution". Duncan, "The Day-Book", p.6.

Conrad Aiken also makes a similar statement:

But let us praise the lonely voice  
but let us praise the leaf that is the first  
but let us praise the syllable the only that syllable which is the seed of worlds.

the printed page. The movement of the meanings of the words is at all times synchronous in "A":1-12.95 The contexts are revealed in the manner of peeling the half-formed petals away from the core of a flower bud:

The music is in the flower,
Leaf around leaf ranged around the center;
Profuse but clear outer leaf breaking on space,
There is space to step to the central heart:
The music is in the flower,
It is not the sea but hyaline cushions the flower—
Liveforever, everlasting.
The leaves never topple from each other,
Each leaf a buttress flung for the other.

****

This is my face
This is my form.
Faces and forms, I would write you down
In a style of leaves growing.96

The poem is the flower (or the web); its radiates, the words themselves.97 The flowercell is like the fern

95. Again the distinction between the subjective and objective "times" in a reading of "A":1-12. The verbal meanings (or significances) are part of the physical activity of the reading (the movement of the eye across and down the page assimilating the physical relationships - and hence much of the contexts - of the words. The subjective time discussed earlier is related to the poem as a whole (and thereby to each word in particular).


fruit-dot: the tiny capsule in which is contained the completion and the commencement of the fern. The word and the poem are contiguous; are the flowercell indeed (in deed). That is, there is, on one level (or in one sense) and identification between the poem and the object, and the word and the poem. "Contiguous" because the words possess an autonomy and a vitality which permits them to exist independently of the framework of the poem (or the object). The words are moved (by context) to act with and within the poem; that mobility is their vitality: H.D.'s "little boxes", ready to release significance. The twelve movements of "A":1-12 contain within themselves the potential for all movement, all meaning, all history: the shifts of locii from music to mathematics to philosophy; intensely personal addresses to Paul and Celia; or, crabbed, lustreless passages of everyday banalities:

'It's to laugh
Bust up automobile parts--
I had 'em during the war, Henry didn't--
Just gravy--
Did I care?
I had 'em, kept 'em
Till they wanted 'em. You bet they wanted 'em.

98. the "flower-cell liveforever, / before the eyes, perfecting". "A"-2, p.10.
But in peace times
You've got to use things,
Keep 'em in circulation,
If I ain't got it the other fellow has.—
Yes, I'm retired.'99

Or:

'That's poetry,' he was told.
'It's fiction, too, isn't it,' said Henry,
'I read poetry, and I enjoy it
If it says anything,
But so often it doesn't say anything.'100

Or:

'--Lie down
I'll marry you!'101

Or:

"And that's history, contention,
A cheeseless mousetrap. Fills up spaced paper."
Another kind of particular.
We are after all realists capable of distinctions.102

All these movements from one context to another are motions
contained within the same circle. They are all facets or
radiates of the I-experience. They are all histories.

History: the records of taste and economy of a
civilization.
Particular: Every fall season, every spring, he
needs a new coat
He loses his job.103

100. Ibid. p.32.
103. Ibid. p.32.
A history is a legend, a man's personal mythology. "History" initially had the sense of a romantic story, and is derived from the idea of "wit", to see or know: understanding. "History", then is what Zukofsky sees/knows: his I-experience; his-story. The story is told in particulars, using specific objects in space and time in order for there to be a vocabulary which is potentially relevant to the reader at every point in the poem.

... An objective -- nature as creator -- desire for what is objectively perfect. Inextricably the direction of historic and contemporary particulars.

"Perfect", from the Latin perficere, to carry out, to make, or do; flawless, pure; refined (as the man writing a word chooses that which he thinks "most completely distils him"; the perfected and rarified rendering of his perception). The "perfect" (monoclinous) flower contains both stamens and pistils in the same flower. It is a complete (perfected) and self-contained cycle.

"Direct" bears the sense of unbroken, uninterrupted; a

104. "legend": originally "to gather" or "collect" OED.
105. from the Greek, eidenai, "to know"; idein, "to see". Ibid.
flow of motion from source to end. It is suggestive of "perfect" in the sense that it implies that which is unimpaired by extraneous material (unimpeded in its movement). The word also refers actively to the process of ordering: to cause to do or happen; to direct, or orchestrate. Hence "direction" has both the sense of motion pure and complete, and of the initiation of that activity. It is Zukofsky's "objective" (here used in the particular sense of "goal") to initiate and sustain that pure (and harmonic) movement of particulars.

Natura Naturans --
Nature as creator,
Natura Naturata --
Nature as created.

He who creates
Is a mode of these inertial systems --
The flower -- leaf around leaf wrapped
around the center leaf...

Creation, ordering, bringing together, can only be effected from those things which already exist. Nature creates and thereby is created. Zukofsky, creating "A":1-12 is bringing together (creating) these elements of the I-experience which already exist. As a creator, he is a "mode", a

108. OED.

109. a "particular" is a single item of a series or sequence; it bears the sense of exact, or precise. OED.

110. "A"-6, p.29.
measure, "a particular form or manifestation of an underlying substance".111 the universe / ("these inertial systems"). "Inertial", perhaps a pun on initial (incipient orders), refers to the uniformity of motion along a straight line; the tendency of matter to pursue a constant motion unless acted upon by some external force.112 Thus there is the inherent motion in the systems of the universe, order which is interrupted at random and restructured by the individual in the expression of the I-experience. The poet is he who is a product of, and himself structures, the systems of the Great World about him:

...bringing together facts which appearances separate:
all that is created in a fact is the language that numbers it,
The facts clear,
breath lives
with the image each lights.113

The language itself is a mode, a particular measure of the universe (and Zukofsky). The words illuminate, make things clear. Communication. There is an

111. OED.
112. Ibid.
absoluteness in the identity between the word and the fact
or thing names; the use of the word thus gives the
speaker identity. A chain-form process; a linking of
cycles which:

Becomes more and more penetrating
The simple will be discovered beneath the complex
Then the complex under the simple
Then again the simple under the complex
And, and, the chain without sight of the last term,
etc., Etc....

Zukofsky moves in and out of the simple and the complex,
the historical and the particular, objectifying at random
within the circle of the Great World; being both within
and without its circumference simultaneously (created and
creator). Harmonizer, orderer.

114. "...the combined letters--the words--are absolute
symbols for objects, states, acts, interrelations,
thoughts about them...". From "An Objective",
Prepositions, p.22.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MEASURE OF DEGREES

Those who sing Psalms,
Odes of bright principle
Come from the sky,
Uniting the degrees. 116

Enlightened vision, illumination, understanding,
knowing: "bright". "Principle": a fundamental truth, with
the particular sense of "beginning"; 117 the singer of new
songs, new orders. The bright principle "comes from the
sky" (from the Indogermanic root, skeu, "to cover"). 118

Throughout "A";1-12, the word "light" is used synon­
ymously with understanding; images of illumination, of know­
ing. To see clearly implies that understanding is possible,
that some relevant order can be constructed. The ordering
process is the "uniting of the degrees": "uniting" being

117. OED.
See Appendix I.
derived from the concept of oneness; ° "degrees" the measure of the circumference of the circle. To order is to provide a relevant continuity in the universe; to account for the degrees of experience in some meaningful pattern be it a mathematical formula, a law of physics, or a song.

To unite: to bring diverse elements into conjunction. The process which is defined in *Act of Creation* as the creative activity. The perceptions, moving in two or more dissimilar planes, intersect one another at some point along the planes, and the unifying of the disparate elements becomes the thing created.

"Unity", or concord, internal harmony, is also the name given to the number one. In the additive process in mathematics, "Unity" is zero \((a + (-a) = 0)\); in the multiplicative process, "Unity" is one: \(a \times \frac{1}{a} = 1\). 


122. *OED.*
cal) unity produces no change within the operation. That does not imply that there is no activity, however. Mathematically the function exists, and the unity (whether it be zero or one) encompasses all the operations of real numbers.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
1 \\
\text{being} \\
0 \\
\text{non-being}
\end{array}
\]

"Before the void there was neither/ Being nor non-being". The conceptualizing of the one necessarily implies the existence of the other, just as the concept of 1 must imply the existence of 0. Both 0 and 1 are "unity", in different


124. Ibid., p.132.

cf. "The effacement of Philosophy": "... before the void there was neither being nor non-being; after it came warmth and desire, and sages looked with thought in their hearts for what is in what is not". Prepositions, p.49.
operations. Moreover, because the use of one implies the use of the other, the two are united conceptually; are part of the same idea. One: whole, complete, pure. ("one single number should determine our life: 1./ Greater has no peace or rest"...). Uni-verse.

125. "With either there is so much in 1
   And in one:
\[ \int_{-1}^{1} \int_{-1}^{1} \text{sound, story---eyes: things thought".} \]
   ("A"-12, p.179.)

Compare with this, the following statement from "Poetry".

"To endure it (poetry) would be compelled to integrate these functions: time, and what is seen in time (as held by a song), and an action whose words are actors or, if you will, mimes composing steps as of a dance that at proper instants calls in the vocal cords to transform it into plain speech". (Prepositions, p.16)

One turning. One circuit. One song.\textsuperscript{127}

It is from this idea of one-ness within the constructed order that the concept of the Great World arises.

Appealed in the highest
We speak of heavenly songs. They
are intoned neither by harps or lutes,
Are a noise in the clouds
An echo from earth;
In the stars the skills are arts
All crafts are hidden
All wisdom, all reason
Also all foolishness,
Without Venus, no music would ever be
Without Mars, no crafts
(Planet -- not war)
Man was not born of a nothing
But from a substance
\textit{Limus Terrae} -- extract of stars
And all elements.
Therefore the Great World
Is closed
So nothing can leave it.\textsuperscript{128}

"You cannot take out of the circle--what was in it,/
that is and will be....an assemblage of all possible positions". \textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{127} "We begin early
And go on with a theme
Hanging and draping
The same Texture". \textit{"A"}-12, p.245.

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{A"}-12, p.177.

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Ibid.}, p.180.
Once the circle is conceived (or conceived of), imagined, it contains everything; it is closed, but it is infinite.

Infinite is a meaningless word: except— it states
The mind is capable of performing
an endless process of addition. 130

When Zukofsky states that his poetics is the integral whose lower limit is speech and whose upper limit is music, he is referring to this endless or infinite additive process 131 which is contained within specified limits. In the function of the integral, the summation process can be progressively and infinitely finer and more precise. The integral measures the area bounded by some specific curve (as, perhaps a "degree" of the "circle"), and allows for potentially infinite precision in the taking of that measure. The analogy of the integral suggests that poetry is the summation of all that lies between speech and music, with the possibility of infinite refinement in defining the contents of that

130. "A"-8, p.52. Cf. Williams' reference (in Paterson) to "a complex sum".

131. Keeping in mind that multiplication differs from addition essentially in that it is a different route to the same result: an amassing; the Unity (1 or 0) is conceptually the same for addition and multiplication.
Thus there is the precision implicit in an image lying somehow, but somewhere precisely selected, between music and speech. There are infinite possibilities between the limits, but each of those possibilities can be charted, noted, measured.

Poetry can, then, be the means by which are measured (ordered) the characteristics of that universe which lies between music (the "heavenly songs") and speech (the "noise in the clouds/ An echo from earth"). A measuring: a rhythmic, harmonic ordering. Degrees of order: moving around the circle; "degrees" also the intervals between notes of

The integral is a general form or frame (an expression, perhaps) in which an infinite number of particulars are possible (or, can be located). There are certain fixed values and one or more variables in such a form. In the equation for a circle $\pi r^2$, $\pi$ is the fixed value; the variable is the radius (r) of the circle. Zukofsky's mapping of an integral for his poetics is analogous to the function of the equation for the circle:

$$\int_{\text{speech}}^{\text{music}}$$

$$\pi =$$

$$\text{music}$$

$$\text{speech}$$

The variable(s) in the poem are the words, the history:

$r = \text{history (objectified particulars whose values are determined by the context--the words "more variable than variables")}$. 
music. To order, from the Latin ord-iri, the specific usage meaning to weave, to lay a warp. The making of a pattern, a joining; fitting together: harmony. "Measure" as mode, as metre, musically and mathematically; also, mechanically (as in "bright principle") and creatively; (as in "uniting the degrees"). Measure derived from the Indogermanic root me, an intriguing homonym for the objective form of the first person pronoun, the objective form of the I-experience. (I measure me; I measure the uni-verse: the unique verse, the one cycle: one song—or another).

The melody! The rest is accessory:

My one voice. My other: is
An objective....

133. OED. The intervals of not-sound are also part of the orchestration, part of the total meaning. In "Songs of Degrees", parts One and Two, for instance, twelve words are arranged variously upon the page so that each measure of twelve (there are 6 such measures, five of them in part Two; part One is presumably the overture) expresses different degrees of relationships between (and among) the words. The six movements 'travel' through virtually all possible variations of context available among those twelve words. The significance (or meaning) of the words in each of the six songs or movements is governed in part by the typographical layout, and in part by the punctuation. (cf. the dog stopped by commas in "Poetry", Prepositions, p.18.) These are measures beyond mere ciphering.


The poetics, or "A":1-12 itself, are one mode of observing and participating in the Great World. That world includes, as Zukofsky says, all that lies between being and non-being. The mechanical framework of a graph is used in "A"-12 to suggest the range of the Great World, but the analogy is offered with a warning of the limitations inherent in the mechanical process:

Shall I graph a course,  
Say look at but let not this take you:  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{MAN} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{EARTH} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{WORLDS} \\
\text{His more or less body} \\
\text{less body} \\
\text{Speaking} \\
\text{cutting} \\
\text{his story} \\
\text{At his crafts, a--this's--inanimate or heady and soul ed}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Waters crust heat dispersion} \\
\text{and what's within} \\
\text{Look at animated things} \\
\text{Beneath and beyond color} \\
\text{Their place and places}
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{I AM THAT I AM} \quad \text{and -- or -- Euhius Euan}\]

136. cf. Henry James' dilemma: how to observe and participate?
for tenure
of
"history"
(his story)
and
1
characters
being
and
0
character
non-being
commerce
non-being

Texts: Things

Axiom: He composed -- or
hunted, sowed and
made things --
with hand or bent --
is matter and thinks

"Man": possibly connected with the Sanskrit,
"to think". It is therefore linked to "mind" (under-
standing), for which the root-word is men. "Earth", the
soil; the "ground" which is turned over in prose and verse,
perhaps. "Worlds" is a composite word, coming from the
Germanic were, "man", and ald (sic), meaning "age": hence
age or life of man. It refers also to "the material
universe as an ordered system" of created things, implying

137. "A"-12, pp.169-170. In saying "look at but let not
this take you", Zukofsky is affirming the limitations
of an abstract rendering of the concrete. Cf. p.174:

-- If a dog hunted fleas
    on mathematical principles
He would never catch a flea
    except by accident.
the concepts of the macrocosm and the microcosm.138

"Substance", encircling "being" and "non-being" in
the graph, is appropriately paradoxical in its significance.
It refers in one context to material, corporeal and solid
matter; that which gives weight and texture. Conversely,
however, it can also connote all that which is incorporeal
(especially in philosophical or theological contexts). It
is defined as "essential nature": the very substance of a thing
or idea. And it can be used as not only the content or subject
matter, but also as that which "contrasts with form or ex-
pression". Moreover, substance is described as that which
gives character":139 and therein there is an echoing of the
use of "character" in the left-hand column. There is a
double (iterative?) use of the word; in one context implying
the sense of those people who "inhabit" a story, or a history

138. OED. cf. also the Gothic, man-seth, literally "man-seed",
and meaning "the world"; a similar root to the origin of
the word "seed", signifying the concept of original or
principal (Etym. Dict.). Hence the concept of the world
as contained within the seed (the Fern-dot Song, "A"-12,
p.232). Or, perhaps, the world contained within the
word; or Aiken's "syllable which is the seed of the
worlds" ("Time and the Rock", Preludes, p.113).

139. OED.
"his story"; in another, referring to the portrayal itself, literally, the engraving (or "cutting/ his/ story"). The characters may well be the letters themselves. "Commerce" bears here the sense of communication: a history experience.

The root of the word, "substance", is the Latin substare, to "stand under":\textsuperscript{140} or perhaps, in the reversal of the words, "understanding", knowing, seeing. Thus the whole graph cycles back upon itself to Man-Mind (understanding) and "radiance", light, illumination.

The graph functions simply as an analogy for an experience of the universe. It is not intended to be a total representation ("\textit{Look at} but let not this take you"). The graph remains only a mechanical process, and does not answer for the creative vitality of understanding and ordering in multiple frames of reference simultaneously.

A key-word in the graph analogy is "texts", which comes from the Latin textum, meaning "that which is woven, a fabric, also the style of an author; hence a text".\textsuperscript{141} The relationships between the "columns" of the graph form an intricate web of meaning, the chain of simple-complex-

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Ibid.}  

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Etym. Dict.} (cf. "Hanging and draping/ The same texture").
simple again. The page can be read from left to right (sequentially, line after line), or it can be read in "columns" from top to bottom from "MAN" to "EARTH" to "WORLDS". It is impossible to isolate one vertical chain from the other(s), however, because of the horizontal visual connection established by the arrows in the first line, the man's body is composed of the same elements and serves the same function as the earth's crust and contents: protection, procreation, etc. Radiance and heat dispersion are functions of those vital processes: light from the "sky", and heat attained from both within and without the earth itself.

What we eat actually is radiation
Of various wave-lengths:
The rays of lightening of the shortest wave-length
Synthesize the nitrogen fraction of food;
The sun's rays of the longer wave-lengths,
The carbon fractions;

Heat and calories
Lime, phosphorus and vitamin "A". 142

The interwoven interdependence of lives and things.

From "texts" come "textures", "tissues" and "textiles" (that which can be woven); also, "technical" which has the sense of artificial, "pertaining to the arts". "Art" itself is from the root, ar meaning "to fit"; from which we have "articulate": jointed, fitted; also "distinct, clear" (the concept of illumination, clarity again). The graph depicts a world where there is an inherent concordance of functions and parts, mechanical and technical (or artistic). Man, as artificer, composes, or makes things, but only within the existent structure. He can impose orders out of his own perceptions, but he cannot work with other than what is already contained within the Great World.

I AM THAT I AM

and--or--

Euhius Euan

Euhius and Euan are both Latin synonyms for the name Bacchus, which is derived from the Greek, iacheiv "to shout", a verb apparently formed by onomatopoeia, to express an inter-

143. Etym. Dict. The carpentry; the "necessary craftsmanship" "Technic was everything. Personnel is everything. Having learned technic is everything, And not to be mired in the next step." "A"-8, p.73.

144. artifice is derived from both "art" and "fact", a reality, a deed ("Do": to perform") Etym. Dict.
jection: iach.

The *Etymological Dictionary* suggests a connection between the Greek exclamation and the use of the word, "echo", to mean a repeated sound, a ringing in the ears, or a noise. "I am that I am": a repetition, an iteration of the existentially obvious. But also, "I am (exist) so that I can exist"; or perhaps "I am that which I am, and nothing more, or less". "I am, I am", "Bacchus, Bacchus": an echo, a turning of the words back upon themselves: a reversal or turning again within the same circuit; a working again with that which already exists. The name of Bacchus derived from a shout of exultation which could well be interpreted as the affirmation of Being. (The use of the Am recalls "A"-7 so vividly that Bacchus immediately becomes suggestive of a pun on J.S. Bach, who, after all, had twenty-two children).

145. iach bears the sense of throwing: as, to throw the voice (in shouting). *Etym. Dict.* The *OED* indicates that the bacchanalian celebrations were accompanied by much shouting celebration. Hence Euan carries the meaning both of Bacchus and bacchante, as well as the sense of the activities of the bacchanal.

146. "two legs stand A, four together M" = AM (In Old English, "am", "art" and "are" were alike; there is then the inter-connection of homonyms: art (to be), or thing created; and the connection (in Zukofsky's graph) between Man and Worlds: Am and Are. (*Etym. Dict.*)
The repetition of words and the implied connection with "echo" recall the discussion of the Great World, where the "heavenly songs" are "a noise in the clouds/ An echo from earth". A ringing in the ears. Perhaps a melody, a harmony, ringing (encircling, "rounding") in the ear ("ear" itself derived from the same root as "art", ar, and connoting not only "hearing", but also more specifically, "ploughing": recalling Duncan's discussion of prose and verse).

The echo is a re-versing, much like the man is the reiteration (as the Little World) of the Great World:

Close to it there is the Little World,
That is to say, man,
Enclosed in his skin
That bounds his body,
And with it he sees
Two worlds that must not mingle
(As the Sun shines -- but itself
Does not pass thru glass --
Divested of all but light --
So the stars light one another inside him)
Earth -- seen and touched
Heavens -- unseen and untouched:
Together life.
As herder sees each people,
A living mirror of the stars,
Each with its lot -- a guide
Never to be copied exactly,
Teaching never to repeat:
The body attracts a heaven
That imprints nothing on us
Endowed as we are with complexions,
Qualities, habits, endowed
As we are with life.
The child's mother is its star and planet
Man is the Little World, but woman the Littlest.
And Great, Little, Littlest has each
Its own way but all three are borne.
One single number should determine our life: 1.
Greater has no peace or rest.... 147

Again there is the uniting of the degrees: Great,
Little, Littlest; all integral functions of the universe,
'or the uni-verse, the one song.

CHAPTER SIX

IN THE COILING

148

Each World is inherently in harmony with the others, and is a reflection of others. The Great World reflects all possible things, events and perspectives. The Little World, man, mirrors in his form and function the workings of the Great World. He is composed of the same elements, and is activated by the same principles of heat and light: energy. He perceives the Great World through the filters of his senses and reflects what he does perceive in his works ("He composed—or/ hunted, sowed and/ made things --/ with hand or bent--/ is matter and thinks"). Man makes models of aspects of the Great World. He cannot perceive all of it simultaneously.

148. From Conrad Aiken's "Time in the Rock (or Preludes to Definition)"

and thus beneath the web of mind I saw
under the west and east of web I saw
under the bloodshot spawn of stars I saw
under the water and the inarticulate laughter
the coiling down the coiling in the coiling.

(Preludes, p.81.)

The Etym. Dict. notes that "coil" means a gathering together, a collection, as well as bearing the sense of its doublet, "cull", or harvest. Its use in signifying noise or confusion is derived from these preceding usages.
If what rolls between
My eyelashes
Could receive all of the world
It should indeed,
Be struck blind.¹⁴⁹

When Zukofsky talks of being struck blind, the reference extends beyond the physical loss of vision; it moves into the metaphor of "light" as understanding, and "seeing" as knowing, being illuminated. As in Plato's parable of the cave, complete exposure to (and in Zukofsky's metaphor, awareness of) the light paralyzes perception. The function of the filters is incapacitated,

Man receives the universe in fragments; in bits;¹⁵⁰ in minutes (bits or degrees) of the Great World, the infinite circle. The poet, through order and harmony, unites degrees to provide a facsimile of the Great World. Zukofsky uses mordents and rounds to recreate or reiterate an emotional and melodic compound which, in its cyclic movement, is also a part of the substance of the Great World. "A":¹-¹² has been shown to be a non-sequential, non-thematic cycle.


¹⁵⁰. Subsequent to the discussion of the use of 0 and 1 in "A":¹-¹², it is relevant to note that those two figures represent the range of most computer "bits".
Its movements from one area of relevance to another are not progressively developmental in a semantic or structural sense. They are, rather a collage of the I-experience, a synchronous matrix of events, as the radiates of the flower are concurrent and interdependent in the total pattern of "flower". The events of the poem are an "array" of experience, an irradiating of events. "Radiates in words". The poem is thereby an arrangement (in the sense of "ordered", but also in the musical sense) of items in circular or radiating form. There is no implicit contradiction of terminology, however. The total structure is circular (the round); movement within the structure is at times circular (creating a concentricity of circles within the total framework (microcosms in the context of the Great World analogy); at other times it is radiate, or radiant, in the sense that the individual items cast light, illumination from within themselves as particular events, and evoke understanding in still other frames of reference.

The analogy of the web at this point must be abandoned, for it implies a two-dimensional character that no

cf. "And the veins of the earth and the veins of a leaf,  
And the ribs of the human body are like each other —  
Notice the fluoroscope!"  
"A"-8, p.66.
longer suffices as a way of observing the poem. The process of constructing and subsequently abandoning a structure of relevance is one used by Zukofsky himself ("Look at, but let not this take you"): it is a way into the structure; a means of initial ordering. Once the order is established, it must be abandoned so that those events and particulars made extraneous by the ordering can be assimilated into the pattern.

Thus the analogy of the web can be replaced by one of a sphere. The circle extended into more than two planes. The sphere a compound of circles; a surface, "every point of which is equidistant from the centre." The sphere, in fact, comprises an infinite number of circles: those whose radii diverge from the centre point of the sphere, and those which are revealed when the sphere is cut in any plane which does not pass through the centre point.

In terms of "A":1-12, the sphere accounts for all that material which does not seem to radiate from a central source, as well as all the intersecting lines of expertise which do seem to emanate from a central core. Those "peripheral" contexts are the circles formed by cutting through the sphere of the poem without passing through the centre-point. The central locus is a matrix of core-ideas; the source-point within which the central vocabularies origin-

152. Standard College Dictionary.
ate. What the reader finds relevant in the poem are the dy-
namic relationships between the vocabularies; those qualities
which for the reader unify the circuits of the sphere.153

It would seem feasible to suggest, then, that the
sphere of the Great World is language. As already noted, a
derivation of the word "world" is the Gothic, "man-seed":
the concept of the world originating from man (recalling
here the etymological connection between "man" and "mind").
Moreover, the word, "sphere", connoting the popular concept-
ualization of the world and the universe as globular in struc-
ture,154 stems from weid, "to see". (from the Greek, eidos,
"form, shape, appearance").155 To see is to understand.
Radiance, illumination. In terms of perceiving the universe
as a concurrent, and at times concentric, interweaving of
events, the mind locates circuits of relevance. To recognize
is to give speech to. Speech is the formulation of a vocab-
ulary, an abstraction which may take any one (or more) of
several forms: music, dance, poetry, things written, etc.

153. "I believe that desirable teaching assumes intelligence
that is free to be attracted from any consideration of
every day living to always another phase of existence.
Poetry, as other object matter, is after all for in-
terested people. Zukofsky, "Preface", *A Test of
Poetry*, p.vii.

154. Here bearing min mind the complex of spheres which we
identify in the universe: the ionosphere, strato-
sphere, atmosphere, biosphere, etc.

The characteristic common to all the forms is the harmonic ordering of the parts contained within their expression.

"Language" is discussed in the OED as being a mode of expression; its form may be verbal, visual, auditory, etc. (the "language of flowers" is one example cited). The word itself is derived from langue, or "tongue", and "languid" (from lanquet, "little tongue": significantly, the name given to a portion of the pipe in a pipe organ). Essentially, the word refers to the faculty of speech, without a specific connotation of verbalization (ie. not exclusive of other forms of expression).

"Speech", itself has a particularly interesting history, being derived from the Teutonic base, sprek, meaning

156. "In the map of stars we began to map our selves. Our projection of what we are was also a first poetry. A first making of a thing or image that projected a spiritual form. Well...there must have been another projected spiritual form, not only this but also this, where the adam named their things and kinds of the earth, another network of sticks and stones and names that never hurt one. In our 'literary' listenings and groupings we are doing all of that, nothing more. We make constellations of the works of poetry that are, if they be anything, linked by gender, works of our selves, drawings of our spiritual kinship, of when-and where what we are is happening." Duncan, "The Day-Book", pp.3-4.

cf. Zukofsky's concept of history as an objectification of particulars, the "records of other men's lives", and his comment that in poetry ideas present "themselves sensuously and intelligently and are of no predatory intention". "An Objective", Prepositions, p.26.
"to speak", but in the sense of making a noise; specifically, crackling or bursting. The word, "spark" is connected to the same baseword, and also designates a state of being talkative, crackling, noisy.\textsuperscript{157} The word "speech", then has the connotations of bursting, crackling, sparkling implicit in its overall sense of utterance or expression. The \textit{OED} indicates that "speech" also relates by connection to the word \textit{logos}, which arises from the Latin \textit{legere}, "to gather, collect, select, tell, speak" (as in the earlier discussion of history, in which the root of "story" was seen to be "legend", \textit{legere}).

An old English variant form of "speech" was "spoke", from which we get our past participle, "spoken". With the introduction of "spoke" as a variant of "speech", an entire fabric of interconnections becomes evident in "A":\textsuperscript{1-12}. The spoke is the radius of a circular object (a wheel, a spider-web, a circle). It is also a ray, or beam, of light. That which is \textit{spokeless} is said to be without rays, without support, without light. That which is \textit{spoked} is that which is arranged radially: the petals of the sunflower (radiates)---or the sunflower itself, radiant (in the sense of glowing, as well as in the sense of structural radiation). "To

\textsuperscript{157} Etym. Dict.
"spoke" is to provide rays for (an object... or an idea).

That which is spoken is "pertaining to or connected with spokes".\footnote{The spoke as a radiate: speech as bursting, sparking; an irradiating of light and sound.}{\textsuperscript{158}} Once again the allusions to sight/light as understanding become relevant (to know, \textit{weid}, to see). A diverging of communication from the man-mind in which has converged irradiations of the universe he perceives.

\begin{quote}
Spoke: words, words, we are words, horses, manes, words.\footnote{"Words": the thing spoken; that which originates in the mind and radiates in speech. "Rays of the object brought to a focus". The text of a song. Written characters.\footnote{("For tenure/of/"history/\textit{(his} story)/and characters/\textit{and/} character/\textit{and/commerce}"). The words as instruments (melodic and mechanical) through which the "character" (the I-expereince) is communicated \textit{(commerce)}. The sense is close to that of words, characters, as ideograms. Words are cuttings, engravings; shapings or orderings. "We are words, horses, manes...." (The word, "cut" at one time meant "common horse").}{\textsuperscript{160}}}{\textsuperscript{161}}
\end{quote}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \footnote{OED. "Speech" also refers to the sound produced by a musical instrument (cf. "languet", the tongue of the organ pipe).}{\textsuperscript{158, 159}}
\item \footnote{\textit{A}-7, p.48.}{\textsuperscript{160}}
\item \footnote{OED.}{\textsuperscript{161, 162}}
\end{enumerate}
Thus the words are horses, are alive, have spirit (manes), and are songs.

Voice a voice blown: print
Must not overlap, but the notes of the voices would.

In song, the notes of the voices blend with one another to produce a texture of sound which is totally other than that made by individual voices singing separately. So with "A":1-12. On the page, the words lie still (from "distilled", refined, rarefied, abstracted). The printed characters cannot overlap one another without destroying their particular distinctions (and man is a particular animal):

163. cf. Zukofsky's statement that "there probably is no such absolute dictum as the 'non-poetic' word; any word may be poetic if used in the right order, with the right cadence, with a definite aim in view: whether it be music (i.e. lyricism) of statement; suggestion of an accompanying tune; image; relation of concepts or ideas; or a context which is all of these things at once. Thus it would be ridiculous to say Herrick's words, larder, fat, veals, platter, as used in their context, are 'non-poetic'.

A Test of Poetry, p.81.

In View of Zukofsky's comments, it is interesting to note not only Aiken's description of poetic language, but also his 'poetic' use of seemingly 'unpoetic' (tuneless) words: grammar, syntax and morphology.

What language, this? - The painter's, which is the lover's, which is the poet's; whose black numbers note the infinitesimal tick, the monstrous cry. Grammar and syntax must alike belong not to the song but to morphology, the shape that cannot die.

(from "The Cicada", cited in Poet's Choice, p.19)

The limited body
Can form in itself
Only a certain number of images,
If more are formed
The images begin to be confused,
If exceeded, they become entirely confused.
The mind then imagines
Without any distinction....

When the characters overlap, there are too many images possible; too many potentially relevant contexts for the mind to be able to deal with them clearly. When Zukofsky describes Plato as writing "on double palimpsest", or speaks of his own notes: "Much of it in pencil -- blurred -- other/ notes written over it/ I can't read back through the years", he is affirming the limitations of the words trapped in print.

In song, in "A":1-12, however, the voices do overlap. It is the very substance of the song, the inherent harmony, that the interweaving of voices exist. The various voices of mathematics, industry, music, religion, etc., are essential to the movement of the poem. They are a gathering-together, a legend, a history; and they are ultimately inter-dependent and synchronous.

165. "A":1-12, p.208. See Appendix II.
166. Ibid., p.176.
167. Ibid., p.257. Also the limitations of poetry which is read, but not heard. "Print/ must not overlap but notes of the voices would".
"Voice": utterance, language; to speak. Radiant and radiating. The word, "epic", is allied to "voice" through the Latin, vox, a voice; "epic" itself signifies a song, a narrative, or a word. "Voice a voice": speak (radiate) a song (word, language). "Blown", then, suggests the passage of air through the throat and lips during speech (or the flow of air through an organ pipe). It also has its roots in the same word (bhlo) as do "bloom", "blossom", "blood" and "flower". Thus the song is a radiating or flowering of life (blood taken as the symbol of flourishing life); life, spirit, airs, manes.

* * * * * * * * * * •

The epic, "A":1–12, for instance, can be considered as a lifestyle. It is a song, a gathering-together, words, language; it entails vitality and harmony, seeing and knowing. In the making of an epic, the poet creates a personal mythology: an ordering of particulars.

169. Ibid.
170. Ibid.
He forms a universe of his own, a Little World.  

Zukofsky uses communication as his mythology. He thereby encompasses all languages, all history ("Character and commerce"). A "mythology" is described as a system or science of legends; a word, saying, or simply speech. By definition there is a cycle between the mythology (or Zukofsky) and the poem, then: a legend is a gathering-together; the thing spoken is something radiated, moved outward. The 'science' lies in the use of the words.

The need for standards in poetry is no less than in science. The latter has been a 'subject of poetry' as in Lucretius. No measure of science is so accurate as to not allow a margin of error to both observer and instrument. To the poet acting at once as observer and instrument the scientific standards of physical measurement are only the beginnings of images of poems. Good verse is determined by the poet's susceptibilities involving a precise awareness of differences, forms and possibilities of existence—words with their own attractions included. The poet, no less than the scientist, works on the assumption that inert and live things and relations hold enough interest to keep him alive as part of nature. The fact that he persists with them confirms him.... (F)or if poetry can ever be contented

171. Which is inherently a reflection of the Great World.

it will be content through a specialized sense for every unfolding. But poets measure by means of words, whose effect as an offshoot of nature may (or should) be that their strength of suggestion can never be accounted for completely.\footnote{173}

Hence, "a poet is not at all surprised by science."\footnote{174}

\begin{verbatim}
(Cerebral charges? were discovered
Some time ago thru poetry
Not surprised in the least
By new science)....\footnote{175}
\end{verbatim}

It is this logic (or \textit{logos}) which allows for the inclusion of science, mechanics and technology within the same boundaries (the poem or the mythos) as religion, philosophy and history. The process of ordering is in part a mechanical one of assessing, recognizing, weighing, balancing; it is an additive (infinite) process. To that extent it is a scientific approach. Thus science does not "surprise" ("to take napping"\footnote{176}) the poet. Its processes are the same as his own, but more limited in that science seeks specific frames of reference.

\footnotesize

175. \textit{Ibid.}, p.194.
176. \textit{Etym. Dict.}.\normalsize
To think clearly then about poetry it is necessary to point out that its aims and those of science are not opposed or mutually exclusive; and that only the more complicated, if not finer, tolerances of number, measure and weight that define poetry make it seem imprecise as compared to science, to quick readers of instruments. It should be said rather that the most complicated standards of science--including definitions, laws of nature and theoretic constructions--are poetic, like the motion of Lorentz' single electron and the field produced by it that cannot 'make itself felt in our experiments in which we are always concerned with immense numbers of particles, only the resultant effects produced by them are perceptible to our senses.' Aware of like tolerances, the poet can realize the standards of a scientific definition of poetry. They should embrace at least such action that informs skills and intellect ordering events at once outside and in the head or whatever impinges upon it anatomically. 177

The technics, the mechanical methods, are the 'way into' the poem; they are the means of creating preliminary orders (scaffolds for the final construction of the whole poem. They are those devices and areas through which analogies can be derived; analogies by means of which the leaps between ideas and contexts can be made available or relevant to the reader.

The metaphors of mechanics provide a way of dealing with the Great World. They provide at least the illusion of order or control (in the sense that the naming of a thing is a method of controlling it to some extent). If we consider the Great World to be not only that universe about which Zukofsky writes, but also the language itself, we are returned to Duncan's concept of the mothering-language, the living tongue. The mother-earth, mother-language: images of a fruitfulness which is beyond measure. To conceive even in part of such a vitality is frightening, because of the energy and mutability contained within that scope. The technics are a method for controlling that fear. In Zukofsky's writing the reader does not sense terror, because there is order: order derived through the technics of mathematics, physics, etc. The expertise are not only the communicative modes for the sensorium, then. They are also protective. The filters, linguistic and physiological, prevent us from over-exposure to the environment.

It is because the technics are only devices, and not the poem itself, that the various metaphors or analogies of mechanics can (and must) be abandoned
once they are established as perceptual frameworks or focii.

What can make the difficult disposition easier?
Not to be difficult.

Everything should be as simple as it can be,
Says Einstein,
But not simpler. 178

It is through the simple that we move to the complex, which in turn becomes simple, prompting a further move to the still more complex, and so on, until we approach to stay which Huxley refers to as that of Mind-At-Large. In that state of awareness, there can be an apperception of harmony, and an understanding of the order of the Great World.

That understanding or enlightenment is communicated at times in the form of myth:

Our roots are in the sky. The Milky Way appears, cross-section of our galaxy.


179. "the simple is uncompounded/ or well compounded". Ibid., p.231.

180. "Harmony" is derived from the same root as that of the word "art" (ar, meaning to fit or join together).
In the earliest news out of heaven, what they said, the mythos, was that it was the slain body of the dragon, it was the flow of everlasting mothering milk, it was light, it was rhetoric, river, fluid. A stream of suns.  

For the Zukofsky, the mythology involves language itself: the story (history, legend, gathering-together of) of the words:

"The poet wonders why so many today have raised up the word 'myth', finding the lack of so-called 'myths' in our time a crisis the poet must overcome or die from, as it were, having become too radioactive, when instead a case can be made out for the poet giving some of his life to the use of the words the and a: both of which are weighted with as much epos and historical destiny as one man can perhaps resolve. Those who do not believe this are too sure that the little words mean nothing among so many other words."

Thus Zukofsky has a vocabulary for the myth. It is expressed through the function of the integral, the melody of the lines (their cadence), and the resolution of the images:

Writing occurs which is the detail, not mirage, of seeing, of thinking with the things as they exist, and of directing them along a line of melody. Shapes suggest themselves, and the mind senses and receives awareness.


182. "Poetry", Prepositions, p.18. See Appendix II re the use of "a".
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This rested totality may be called objectification—the apprehension completely satisfied as to the appearance of the art form as an object. That is: distinct from print, which records action and existence and incites the mind to further suggestion, there exists, though it may not be harboured as solidly in the crook of an elbow, writing (audibility in two-dimensional print) which is an object or affects the mind as such. 183

Hence,

The best man learns of himself
To bring rest to others. 184

"Rest": harmony, polyphony, unity. The sense of a totality perceived and ordered. The conclusion of the voyage through the unknown. A resolution. A pause: hence a conclusion is also a commencement. A Round. A return to the beginning (in which there was/is the word).

Once again the cyclical movement. A writing about Zukofsky's poems must inevitably return to the poems themselves. Not only is there a circular motion within and among movements of "A":1-12, there is also a like motion in the experience of reading the poem: an assimilation of the universe and the Great World as they are perceived

through the poem. Thus the poem itself is a filter, a focus, its own particular mode of resolution, words. Words, airs, "one song/ of many voices", spirits (manes):

One horse
Walked off,
The trees showing sunlight
Sunlight trees,
Words ranging forms. 185

The fact that the letter "A" is the first letter of the alphabet, combined with the historical information concerning its past usages (as well as its present ones), make it well worth examining more closely. 186

"A", the title of the poem; Zukofsky comments that one would be wise to consider "a" and "the" as encompassing a great deal of the historical and contemporary.

"A": the first letter of the Roman alphabet, is also the first letter of the Greek alphabet, there called "alpha".

"Alpha" is used to refer to the first of a series in a specific context. In physics, for instance, the alpha ray is the first ray in a series of radiations arranged in order of increasing frequency. This particular application of the relates to the discussion of speech and radiation contained 186. All historical and etymological information in this appendix are from the OED, which cites some sixty-five usages for the word/letter in sixteen different functions. eg. "A" is a letter of the alphabet, but also stands for the letters of the alphabet in particular circumstances. It once was the name used for the number One. It has been used to denote, in different contexts "he", "she", "it" or "the". It can be used to refer to motion or position. It is a note on the musical scale.
in Chapter Six of the preceding text.

"Alpha" itself is derived from the Hebrew "aleph" (the first letter of the Hebraic alphabet). In mathematics, "aleph" refers to the one-to-one correspondence between integers in a sequence, much the way one might view Zukofsky's treatment of words as a one-to-one correspondence with the things and events they identify. It is particularly interesting to note that in Jonathan Williams' effusive essay on Zukofsky, 187 he refers to Zukofsky's wish to have aleph on the cover of the first edition of "A":1-12 (with that in mind, it is interesting to note that the dust jacket of the Cape edition of 1966 bears the rough brush-stroke design of an astral or orbital figure which moves in many planes about a central core from which it originates: a satisfying metaphor for the cyclical and intricate movements of the poem itself).

The word, "alphabet" is composed of the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, "aleph" and "beth". "Aleph" comes from the word meaning "ox", which itself bore the sense of that which was moist or fertile (allied to the Indo-germanic root, *wegw*, meaning to be vigorous, or awake;

hence, perhaps, the origin of some of the references to those unaware, inactive people who are described in terms of sleeping, dreaming, or being dead, in "A":1-12.

"Beth" comes from the word for house, which originally meant the place in which things are concealed, hidden, protected (thereby a return perhaps to H.D.'s metaphor of words as little boxes containing hidden meanings). Etymologically, "house" bears a significance which is not unlike that of "sky", in the sense that both are allied to the root-word, *skeu*, to cover. Thus there is an iteration of the imagery as of the sky as the source of light, reason, understanding; that which covers and reveals simultaneously.

When "aleph" and "beth" are joined to form "alphabet", there is the sense of an organized sequence or series; the glyphs from which are composed the words. "Alphabet" bears the sense of that which is the rudiments of anything; as, for instance, a set of characters which represent the sounds of speech. The rudiments, the basics, the beginnings. In the beginning the was the word. In the beginning, there is "A". There is "A", sequences one through twelve, and thirteen through twenty-four. One wonders what lies in the realms of "P", "M" or "W". In the realms of "Z" lie the origins of "A", evidently!
SPHERES OF LANGUAGES

The function of specialized usages (particular vocabularies, languages of expertise) as instances which at once both enrich and delimit the Language, has been dealt with in the main text. A particular usage is exclusive of other contexts, but the word as object in that usage is not confined to that context alone.

It is worth taking note of two similar approaches to the variability of language, both of them using the image of the sphere (or circles) to visualize the concept they express.

The Oxford English Dictionary comments that:

The vocabulary of a widely-diffused and highly-cultivated living language is not a fixed quantity circumscribed by definite limits. The vast aggregate of words and phrases which constitutes the Vocabulary of English-speaking men presents, to the mind that endeavours to grasp it as a definite whole, the aspect of one of those nebulous masses familiar to the astronomer, in which a clear and unmistakable nucleus shades off on all sides, through zones of decreasing brightness, to a dim marginal film that seems to end nowhere, but to lost itself in the surrounding darkness.

...So the English Vocabulary contains a nucleus or central mass of many thousand words...some of them literary, some of them only colloquial, a great majority at once literary and colloquial, --they are the Common Words of the language.
But they are linked on every side with other words...which pertain...more distinctly to the domain of local dialect, of the slang and cant of 'sets' and classes, of the peculiar technicalities of trades and processes, of the scientific terminology common to all civilized nations. ..And there is absolutely no defining line in any direction; the circle of the English language has a well-defined centre but no discernible circumference. 188

This concept of the nebula of the language (or the Vocabulary, as the OED refers to it; distinct from the use of 'vocabulary' as a specialized usage in the preceding text) is visualized as a series of radiates diverging from, or converging in, the central core, the Common Language.

The diagram is interpreted as follows:

The centre is occupied by the 'common' words, in which literary and colloquial usage meet. 'Scientific' and 'foreign' words enter the common language mainly through literature; 'slang' words ascent through colloquial use; the 'technical' terms of crafts and processes, and the 'dialect' words, blend with the common language in both speech and literature. Slang also touches on one side the technical terminology of trades and occupations, as in 'nautical

188. OED. p.xxvii.
slang'... and on another passes into true dialect. Dialects similarly pass into foreign languages. Scientific terminology passes on one side into purely foreign words, on another it blends with the technical vocabulary of art and manufactures. It is not possible to fix the point at which the 'English Language' stops, along any of these diverging lines. 189

Funk and Wagnall, in the Standard College Dictionary, also make use of the coincidence of vocabularies within the language. They do not apply any restrictive label to "those general purpose words and meanings, usable in any context, which make up the bulk of the English language as it is spoken and written... Words or particular senses of words, however, which have any restriction of use are labeled." 190

There is a distinction made between levels of usage and style. Levels, degrees of acceptance of a specific usage, are regarded as distinct from one another "with a reasonable degree of objectivity". 191 It is in the area of style that subjectivity and aesthetics are accounted for. Hence, the "Circle of Standard English" uses a different set of variables from that of the OED, but the overlapping

189. Ibid.


191. Ibid., p.xx.
characteristic of usages is still clearly evident:

THE CIRCLE OF STANDARD ENGLISH
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