

After John Cage

'Writing through' Carlyle and Emerson

191 mesostic poems

This collection of 191 mesostic poems was produced as part of a writing project created by Victoria Miguel, a writer and specialist in the work of artist and composer John Cage (1912–1992). Following an online writing workshop led by Victoria as part of CAMPLE LINE's summer 2020 programme, fourteen participants applied Cage's process of 'writing through' – a method of using mesostic poetry to transform existing texts – to letters exchanged between the celebrated Scottish author and essayist Thomas Carlyle and the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. A mesostic is similar to an acrostic except that rather than using a key name or phrase that runs down the left margin, in a mesostic this key name or phrase runs through the middle and follows specific rules. Using the same key, JOHN CAGE, participants created between them 191 eight-line mesostic poems, mirroring the 191 known letters exchanged between the two writers from Boston, London, and Dunscore and Thornhill in Dumfries and Galloway.

Emerson visited the Carlyles at their home in Craigenputtock, Dunscore, Dumfriesshire in August 1833, and his life-long correspondence with Thomas Carlyle influenced fellow writer Henry David Thoreau, who wrote about Carlyle (and briefly about the Dumfriesshire landscape) whilst famously staying on Walden Pond on land owned by Emerson. John Cage returned repeatedly to the writings of Henry David Thoreau as a source for his practice of 'writing through'.

Between June–August 2020 all 191 mesostic poems were released in four volumes as short audiovisual recordings read by CAMPLE LINE Gallery Assistants Lucy Dale, Penny Gonlag, Lydia McMillan and Ines Wood.

Victoria Miguel is a writer. Her work has been published and presented by Triple Canopy, Summerhall, and Glasgow International. She worked for the John Cage Trust (2001–2007) and has been a specialist in Cage's work, creating unique performances, for more than a decade. In 2019, she produced 'Mewantemooseicday' 2019, a day-long celebration of Cage and Merce Cunningham developed in collaboration with the University of Glasgow, The Glasgow School of Art, and Dance Studio Scotland at Clyde College.

Participants

Louise Barrington

Marina Castledine

Lucy Dale

Ailsa Dickson

Tina Fiske

Clare Forsythe

JoAnne McKay

Sophie Midgley

Victoria Miguel

Tabitha Mudaliar

David O

Iris Pitman

Calum Rennie

Carolyn Yates

After John Cage
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J une
fragrant and pOtent
sHame us
iNdemnify and

Cheer
if you shAme us
readinG
all rights of friEndship

J ust and wise
yOur
trutH
iN this

Country so few
scholArs
thouGts to
End

J ust
fOurteen days
He told me
New series too many

their Credit
he writes mAnly
sends toniGht
pastEboard man

maJestically
Our year since
tHese first two
Now so old a fox

Copies, he told me
in the Autumn
cominG
prospErously

Justified
vOyage
witH
loNely

wedloCk
steAdfast
liGht
Evermore

do not see how the subJect
revOlution packages
on pHilosophy
your coNtemporary

unwisely Consented
reference to thAt copy
how Glad I am
but will now bE colder

a subJect dead is
in the cOllege
Happy
divideNd

Crypts ever since
on the pAcket ship
cipherinG
a good dEal

copies of JJuly
hOlidays
we Hope
the faNcy

may well Call
to heAr
God's
advEnture to go

JJanuary
mentiOned
Hope is
preseNtly

Curious enough
April came
its rare liGht
pErfect

Jane Carlyle
take lOng ago
I can only Hope
to seNd you

exCellent
romAnce
but on Giving
my countrymEn

man can reJect
his Own sins
acHieved
preseNtly

Conclude
mAterials
Gifts
accompany this lEtter

honor and Justice
corresponds closely
lessons I Have
be thankful
our City
this season
we shall have more rights
my hope is that you may

Judicial
no man
I am ashamed
my journey
Corresponds
in exhaustible of force
competitor in sight
Earthly life

June
rise and progress
overwhelmed
postponement
Completion
solace and sadden
we're clearing
promise

projects
invitations
the
winds
such
as
starling
repeat

projected
shoemaker's
enthusiasm
Nervous
Lecturing
has
stagnancy
feeling

subject
come
what
score
welcome
And
Go
her

Jesus
love
that
into

Common
diamond
song
simple

James Fraser
rigorous
wheeled it through the sea
convinced me
in excellent
steamship
lasting inspirations
collection is perfect

Jewsbury
Outward
Hospitality
requiriNg

Cherry
miscellAny
smokinG
seEing

January
Our
wHeelers
priNters

reCkoning
hAve
nothinG
prEfer

Justice
such frantic devOtion
How a
repetitioN

to Construct
whAt I have read
and thouGht on
my discoursEs;— but the topics give me room for my guesses

according to your own good Judgement
we dO want
tHem
for the preseNt

silenCe
I will sAy
nothinG
morE

admired by some Judges
nOw
Here
iN the hands

LawrenCe himself
capAble person
miGht
supErintend

Judicial
work On
tHe
atteNded

henCeforth
there is A
clearinG
I am prEtTy sure of

with the Jangle
Of last year's locomotion
perHaps
goNe to John O'Groats

surely right welCome
to rusticAte and hunt
now drawinG nigh
ah mE!

Jingle
Over
Heads
aNd ears

not exaCtly
first And
takinG
mE

June.
I have cOunted
concerned at not Hearing from you
aNd still am anxious
the promise of your Coming
the hAppiest truce with sorrow
I thouGht
spEak to me out of the wide silence

Ab Jure
Speak Out
tHere
From persoNal insight

Courtly
As
somethinG
donE

on your pro Jected visit
summer Or autumn
as Heart
caN wish
without any shaCkles
uncertAin sound
from the fact of standinG
thEre

Jane
Our
good Hope
you caN
yet Come
After sixty days
miGht
provE perfectly agreeable

such a sub Ject
nO
History
caN be written
all this Cold
weAther
I do sometimes think of brinGing out
pErhaps soon!

January
I received frOm you
before CHristmas
the last rich iNstalment

suCh
mAsterly completion
with no equal or approachinG
compEtitor

January
it is tOo late
wHat a
sluggish peN
of Course
A letter
heraldinG
your rEst so well earned

maJestic
tO
amuse you witH this
seNse
instinCts
Apocalyptic
thouGh
my hEart I would stand well

July
eight days ago
inhale its fresh air
and refresh
I behold my failures and shortcomings
I lament
my fumbling
fingers and stammering tongue

I judged it
obstinately still
let my thoughts settle
here I am and remain
so perfectly
alone
going on
in spite of great and peculiar noises

Jeffrey's time
almost
the
only
sentence
say they
nothing
pleasing to know

Jane
now
here
I recognized
friendly presence
first seen at
good
end of much writing

Jane Carlyle
no
other
one
come
to America
again
and read

January
enclosing
Harvard
instead
completed
should hear
again
myself

unconnected and inconsecutive is just
words
I should describe
knowledge
defects
only a
measuring
silence

neither Jeremy
nor
that
stranger
expect
a
pilgrim
friends

June
got to me
rather
stranded forever
once
nAy it seems
followinG
solemnly

the same greetings to Jane
and hopes and loves
I heartily wish
that you would come and see me
it would give me much joy
healed to a
roaring city
and invigorated this cramped hand of mine

July
when I go
in the
Night
little impatience
good Grecian
Going
to see you

Jane
whom
I delight
in
I commend her to you
affectionately
in all good
merits

James
to visit
He
sent
you confided
And
Glad
of the chance

July
New York
Have
Never
Correspondence
A year
ago
I hope you found my letter

object
the roaring flood of life pours on
Hold its peace
to honor
facts
And theory less and less
I have known for long
not dead but asleep

James
full of pity
I have heard
Nothing
I confide
from the past
readings of
whomsoever else

subJect
Of
much
meditation
the Conditions
Are
Good
have one heart and one interest

January
no money
I know not why
but have None
a fact
that all
egotism
a voice in the wilderness

Jack
work and wages
it is a pity they should be
ways and means
unfit for deciding
what an unspeakable
longing
hampers me

I am for some practical subject
none of your pictures
therefore
which you must not mention
may the summer be more productive
A hope is
young
let me gather my heart a little

Jane
full of good news
happiest first
ride, run, leap, sit
the immense benevolence
I am
Glad
of the universe

some in justice
to
His
real knowledge
Corresponding
days
editing
to write

subject
for
autobiography
I adjourn
echoes
of men and
Gods
have not dulled my delight

on the subject
gone
as if there were
No
description of
hearts welcome
there are blessings
like sunbeams in wild weather

ObJect
Of tenderness
wHo
briNgs you this letter
leCtures on the poet
And now
ramblinG
in that quartEr

to J
tO
tHe
statemeNt
inCredulity
of All my blunders
printinG
rEspectively

Judgement
with all lucidity tO
Him
Now
Convenient
exAmination
of the inteGrity
indEed

Jane
need nOt
perHaps
peN in hand
in the next plaCe
eAsily
Glad
Of TEnnyson

proJects
Of social reform
Has
New
Community
I Am
talkinG
gEntley mad

Just
hOme
tHitherward or somewhither swiftly
agaiN
all Confusion and flutter
severAl weeks
in EdinburGh
rEfreshed in health

June
yOur
letter Has
beeN in my hand
Country
very pleAsant
the smiles of brethren awaitinG
onE there!

Jesuitism
fOund
wHy you
thiNk you have
voiCe
perhAps
writinG
rabElais

J une arrived here
bOston
Have
oNly now
enClosing
A
triflinG
Expense

Realism J arred
upOn
Her
piNk
Condensed
pAmphlet
worshippinG
hEartiness

their adJ uncts
fOr
tHis
amoNg one
Creed
pAst
Good old
timE

I J ust received
alsO my
inextinguisHable
doiNg
Could present
Any
Good
dEal

J anuary
Dear EmersOn,
THE sight of my
haNd-writing
WelCome, though I
LiterAlly do not write
anythinG but
Prussian nightmarEs

maJ estic genius
can affOrd to amuse
witH this
homiletic seNse
whose instinCts
Assure them I
could Gratify with any
plEasing news

subJ ect
Out of
tHese follies with glad heart
Lately, I had SterliNg's letter
WhiCh, since I
hAve read his article on you
lovinG you
so wEl

J uly
in its perfect fOrm
is a faitH
aloNe
experienCe
heAvenly
you Got
nEw

have conJ ectured
Of all organs of opinion
tHat
Nothing is presupposed

what sCope
it Allows!
become that Good
dEspot which the virtuous orator is?

Just
nOw
His
PresideNt

Cheerfully
And I
Graciously
believE

James
nOt lost
His
permaNent

hearing direCt
we shAll meet
with a kind thouGht
onE day

had Just
my cOpy
wHich
is iNdeed true and grand

if he aCt
he hAs
extravaGant
rEaders

obJ ect
Ours
tHat roaring Loom of Time
loNg shall we remember that Autumn Sunday

Infinite spaCe
my wife sAys
you shall hear from me aGain
thEre is more to tell

Justice
fOrm
tHis
editioN

it will Come
At last
NothinG
fixEd

June
twO letters
tHe last
writteN

two Copies
As you will
alonG
dEar Emerson

conJ ecture
in variOus ways
tHere is
Nothing else

announCe
romAnce
sayinG
blEssing

Just
and generOus
I Have
writteN

Concord
cAn best
astonishinG
friEndship

Justified
favOred
pHilosopher
his fortuNate temper
steadfast simpliCity
All
liGht
Evermore

entirely reJect
dOst
tHou
Not?
a Cobweb
feAr not that!
I could lauGh
Et tu brute?

Just
nOw
I Hope
eNdeavour
in these spaCe-destroying
dAys
Granting
always of Eternity

Just
clOsing
sHorter
vexatioN

Come
bAck
pilGrim
contEntedly

obJect
that yOur
parliament Houses
theN

eaCh
hAnd
aGain
morE

July
dO
Hope
Not
aChieved
Arcadia
throuGh
CarlylE

I have reJected
miscellaneOus
Here
scattering seed iNto the sea

prinCiples
remAin
tumbliN
on thE salt waves

Justified
ne lOve.
tHat is my
opiNion

It is a faCt
more thAn
enouGh of
thosE

Just
One
in tHat
fortNight

Come
Find thAt
two days aGo
rEprint

subJect
tO
whicH
you aloNe

Control
All
barGain
madE

Jane
dO not
Hear
Now
balanCe
hAppiest
Good
hopE

Jesús
built DunscOre kirk yonder
tHat
thiNkers

and aCtors
lAvish in that spendthrift style
somethinG
solid to say that thEy can afford

remaining Jewels
Of you
deligHt
rejoice iN art and soul
in my nook of this long Continent
A quarter of a year
in Good
grEat delight

James
fOr
His
as aNother
aCcepting
A shadow of
New EnGland
until nExt April

obJect
But hOw seldom
faitH
aNd love
harmonies into whiCh
Always
livinG
mEmorable

Jane
full Of
mysterious ancient earth
iNtervene
faCe
sAt
lonG
by thE swift river Nith

I lately looked into Jesuitism
and fOund
wHy
Rabelais iN 1850
pitCh your tune to suit
I hAve not ceased to think of the warm heart
warm enouGh
its mEltings to-me-ward

sub Jects
the lOss
fartHer
to abaNdon
affliCtion
A
thouGht
farEwell

re Ject
being Old
Here
or give me some geNeral key for knowing
I reCognize
reAdily
it is all Good
and vEry good

from J
in debt tO you
tHis
CaledoNia

Concord
deAr friend
cipherinG
hopE

re Ject
twO letters
Hope
more will be seNt

I Certify
thAt I prize
writinG
your mEssages

Jane
glad tO get
at tHe music hall
I am all teNderness and all but tears
I think you the true inventor of the stereosCope
I Await
Good company
lifE is too short

July
yOu mention
tHe bright
uNknown

Cloud
to pAss
and eveninG
shall comE

Ob J ects
editOrs
tHeir will
their owN

be Content
get A
thorouGh
yEt

J ames
with cOnstant good
Hope
I am your frieNd
his beauty and perfeCtion
hAs
aspirinG
gEnius

volume was J ust
clOsing
life Has
beeN ill fed
existenCe
hAs been
aspirinG
starvEling should be reprieved

it was J esus
built DuncOre kirk
His time
departed thiNkers
and aCtors
hAve paved
your epical sonG
and givE us the simple air

my visit, J ustified
upOn
tHe sea
iN my homeward voyage

the favoured Condition
hAppiest,
Glad
is sElf-centered

though few, an ob J ect
and religiOn
wHo
briNgs you this
out of eight leCtures
reAd
my chaGrin
talkEd

J anuary
and wit, for lOcomotion
tHat
Not to betray
an aCre
to his own breAd
Grain
solvEs

J uly
delectatiOn
faitH
uNiversal
the faCt
hAnds without
Good
charmEd me

a true and maJestic
can affOrd
Homiletic
seNse
whose instinCts
Assure them
thouGh
offEnd

Just
harbOr
High
writteN you
paCketships
hAlf an hour's
Growth
for the sakE of clearance

private proJects
might nOt find
Hearers
aNother winter
the doCtrine
heArt
know enouGh
stimulatE the curiosity of scores

Jesus christ built
that nO poet is sent
into tHe world before his time
your peN yes and

Common goose-quills
hArp and ear are
waitinG
that which is rarEst

July
I turn my face hOmeward
creeping like a turtle with
whEN I am tired
disCiples
my predictions Are
cominG
floodtidE

Judgement and eternity
dialOgue mute
on botH sides
thus iNdifferent
years in Continuous wrestle
not to speAk to others
climbinGs
I am forEver poor without

January
tO my satisfaction
Has arrived
uNder the moon
Corresponds closely with my prophecy
All the trouble
tauGht
not to Embark in the like again

credat J daeus
as fOr me
arrangings waste my time Here
look agaiN

a subjeCt
deAd is
Grain
I havE no appetite

retain the sheets for that obJect
with renOwn
enough
I read last Night an essay on you

Crossing
At the bottom of all
runninG
rEmembrance

Jewel
yOur clear eyes
fine Hope
really you are a daNgerous

Correspondent
A settled purpose
eiGht months
stay at homE

Just
whOm
tHither
abolitioN
soCietY
detAined for
niGht
four copiEs

Just tumbled
cOrn-fields
swasHed about
souNder of body
presCribed some weeks
purple seA-flood
mews and seaGulls
Exclaim

subJects
all vOcal
rusH fiercely
swift river Nith

blaCk brief
fine situAtion
miGhty
plEasant woods

Scotland till the J uly heats
I am bent On
FrenCH
priNting

do Come
Adieu, my friend
our blessinGs
a day's drivE

June
this shOrt
Hearts it holds
did Not sail
Custom-house
slow And
still Gratifying
short human lifE

July
intently in ScOtland
weigHt will be less
books Not yet
little from my College lesson
yesterdAy
be Glad
full of hEalth

poor J ames
say the peOple
melancHolly mass
AmericaN timber-ship

the beaCh
ten miles An hour
Glass
birds of prEy

moblike J udicature
gOdless
even Here
fiNds the love

your faCe
in two plAces
Go without
rEading, and public

ma J estic
affOrd to
you witH
seNse of

instinCts
Assure them
I could Gratify
and plEasing news

latter days of J uly
hOpe
tHey
have Not gone to John

Commons
usuAlly mean
eatinG
Eyes of thine

my visit J ustified
tO
my Homeward
CoNdition

wedloCk
fortunAte temper
liGht thanks
that onE living

ma J estic
affOrd
tHis
sixpeNny

Criticism
becAuse
Gratify
nEws

J ustified
vOyage
witH
CoNdition

expeCt
hAppiness
Glad
cEntred

bringing J ean
yOur full
Here
for doiNg unusual

Consciousness
becAme
loGical
thE other year

In J anuary
bOoks
tHat
priNters

Copy
lAst
niGht
forsEeing

J esus Christ built
DunscOre Kirk, if you love
sucH
sequeNces

Common goose-quills
As well as
waitinG to
hEar your epic song

Delighted, J ustified myself
A time upOn
tHe sea
iN my homeward voyage I remembered with joy

Condition
HAppiest
LiGht
Evermore

I will eJ aculate
the many-sOunding
meditating on mucH
thaNks to the mysterious

propheCy
Ascertain for myself
old hiGhways
to advEnture

J ust
the prOgress
was tHoughtless
doubt Not

Culture
Aspirations
includinG
the gentLE

J une
EmersOn, – glad indeed
Hear of
aNy

subjeCt.
lAst
writinG no
notE

Henry J ames
tO you
He is
fiNe
intelligenCe
vAlor,
ChanninG
whEreof give me, I pray you

J udgement
pOssible
How true
aNd the rider too

vehiCles
on his roAds
the business of writinG
bEcome contemptible to me

July
dO get
wHich I
seNd

Creditors be
glAd
throuGh
donE work

Justified
upOn
my Happiest
meaNs I
expeCt
reheArsed
liGht is
truE

Just and
generOus
witH
Now
proCure good
heAd by
niGhts
promisEd

Just
Of
Happy
maN
Completion
shAll
approachinG
Earn

Judge is
fOrgetfulness
wHat
frieNd
suCh
Around him
God
pErhaps

subJect seeing
cOurse
Has subsided
iNto
publiC
hAtefulest for I
ouGht
absolutE

maJestic
affOrd
Heart
I staNd
Come to
unsAy
doinG
mEnd

January
lOng
Have
Numberless
projeCts of
mAn
thouGh
unproductivE

dis J ectum
sO and
mucH less
straNge

siCk
people tolerAte
thouGhts of
mE

J ust
labOr
Have
beeN

Coming
prAy
throuGh
volumE

J udge
Only from
Here
this veiN

siCk
All the
sprinG, and
havE been

maJ estic genius
can affOrd
tHis year
seveNty thousand

Copies of
A sixpenny
thouGh
with all my hEart

J esus
DunscOre
tHat
No poet is sent

aCtors
hAve
sonG
bE pleased

J ustified
tO myself
tHe sea
iN my homeward voyage

Condition of my lonely philosopher,
hAppiest wedlock,
liGht
Evermore.

J ustified
in my hOmeward voyage
lonely pHilosopher
atteNtive ears

leCture upon these topics
Any parallel
I deliGht in
as if sociEty were not

J une
mOtions
Hastily
peNtrate

into the very Centre of
sAfe over the horizon
cobble up some kind of Gypsy
glEam of summer

this subJect
fOund your book
nevertHeless
there is a coNtroversy whether he is an angel
suCh is the lot of loveliness
At present
a sort of autobioGraphy
of his intEercourse

the Jingle
Of it
over Head
Never to return
by this paCket
whAt are you to
siGnify
stupiditiEs of men

Judgement
the ear and imaginatiOn
botH sides
ardeNt
aCcomplished
spAce to let out
the lenGth of all
thE reins of your eloquence

J anuary
a lOng distance
from tHe shores
aNd still my stony
Could not be broken
of the wAy
aGainst
thE nightmares and the subterranean hydra

J anuary
yOur letter
I sHould have
aNswered
at onCe
I hAve
tidinGs
only onE has come in for many

J ust
tO lie till
it Have
ripeNed
into a Crop of
mAny
thouGhts
an impErtinence more or less the matter

J esus
yOnder
tHat
thiNkers
Common
diAmond
Gravity
plEasing

J uly
Of
leatHer
siNgular
whiCh
finAlly I
Got
horsE

In vain to J ames
withOut any note
I know not wHither
I have your Notes
thankful for any prefaCe
A preface from you
reliGious
with falsE expectations

J ustified
upOn
Homeward
fortuNate
simpliCity
meAns
EnGland
rEad

maJ estic
affOrd
Homiletic
seNse
instinCts
Assure
Gratify
plEasing

J anuary
Only
a montH
New
infanCy
lAdy
Graciously
plEased

since July
friends inquire Of me concerning you
withH great pleasure
aNd good wishes
starlike influenCes
And readiness
a new kinGdom
of virtuE and friendship

J ust
nOw
Had I
iNtention
so much of romanCe
dreAmily
lonG
vaguE folly

15 J une
gOt
ratHer
uNdeserving
seleCtive
certAinly
the riGht
bE so

that it was J esus
built DuncOre
you will tHat
No
aCtors
hAve
your epical sonG
bE pleased

Jewels
tO
sHow
Emerson
the seCond
SArtor is
for EnGland
vEry amiable of you

distant national obJects
editOrs of
parish
maN would
be Content to
A
thorouGh
nativE knowledge

you J ust
nOw
Had I
iN
leCturers
informed me thAt
biG
voyagE which has so much

January
lOng
see if tHe
New year
reCeived
Another
Glad
rEsult

reJ ected
cOrrespondence
sHeet
uNattainable altogether
the faCt is
leAve
Gratis
and Easy to be got

James
is anxiOus
tHat you should
Not
diffiCulty
And
waitinG
nEver mind

of J
munrOe
He
seNds a box
Choose
you cAnnot
devourinG
Eyes

July
in LOndon
and tHere
I called oN him
By half-aCcident
not mAny
days aGo
frEe from any urgent calls or business of any kind.

June
On
the
continent
sincere
And
most entertaining
goes

Jewels
to
show
affectionate regards

Come
And
Go
made the universe look friendlier

Jesuits
your
Hospitable
kind

Correct
I cannot teach
sitting still
shuffle

your subject
What, you scorn all
this?
seen on any other shore

There is a very serious welcome for you here
I too shall wake
that an invitation shall go
from her to you

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The Hollywood Trust

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