

American Literature: The Twentieth Century: "Poetry"
by JAMES GIFFORD, MARGARET KONKOL
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Charles Bernstein's *Pitch of Poetry* continues in his conversational and provocative tone not with the notes or sounds of poetry but seemingly with its pigments and resins. That is, his free-ranging associative readings and thoughts follow synonyms, homonyms, and false friends down deliberately impulsive interpretative ventures, beginning with his 'pitch' that poetry is all about its ink and its sale, pitching the idea and the idea itself being nothing more than sticky pitch. The pieces in the collection range across a pragmatism teased out from Barack Obama's 2008 speech on a more perfect union, and hence a politics and poetics without an ambition or goal but with a method or system that gives it direction and impulse without the conscious ideology of a known outcome. This fits the collection itself, drawing together a wide range of occasional pieces from Bernstein's writings or presentations over the past decade without a single intention for the project as a whole, again giving it direction and an impulse without a consciously anticipated outcome, that is, without a prefigurative politics or teleology. The first section focuses on L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E across seven chapters, ending in a coda written eight years prior to all the preceding chapters. The second section, on 'Pitch', covers individual writers, largely contributions to collections of their works or occasional pieces, including Jackson Mac Low, Louis Zukofsky, Stein, Robin Blaser, Robert Creeley, John Ashbery, Hannah Weiner, and Johanna Drucker—in this section, Bernstein freely enters into the autobiographical through seemingly casual asides to his reader that give much appeal. The next eleven chapters relate to echopoetics.