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Language as line. Reading linguistic signs as visual art.

The second tome of Casanova's *History of my life* begins with two incendiary paragraphs against a servant. She is culpable of throwing away the manuscript which contained the first chapters of the tome. "She pleaded as an excuse that the sheets of paper were old, written upon, covered with scribbling and erasures." What Casanova's servant did in judging the manuscript on the handwriting and not on its content is precisely what I set out to do in this project. In other words, I will consider the written text not for its linguistic content or meaning, but for its non-linguistic meaning, its surface, its materiality: Reading linguistic signs as visual art.

I organize this project around a single guiding question: can written language be approached as a "non-linguistic" means of communication? In my contribution, I will define some key concepts, such as the idea of non-linguistic means of communication and how it is related with writing and signs. Secondly, I will expound upon some examples of non-linguistic meaning in written text (with texts ranging from the Chinese *Materia Medica* to Marinetti to Joyce Carol Oates). Finally, I will use a chapter of Italo Calvino's *Marcovaldo* to underscore how the mechanism of non-linguistic meaning-formation can take place in absentia, that is, in the space in between text and reader. I will contend that the written text is a sign which goes beyond its linguistic meaning and it touches the figurative realm: language as a line.