

## Frühere Englisch-Sprachklausuren

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## 22. November 1999 – [Florian Cramer](#)

**John Barth:** „The Future of Literature and the Literature of the Future“. (Auszug).

in: **John Barth:** *The Friday Book. Essays and Other Nonfiction*. New York (G.P. Putnam's Sons) 1984, S. 164f.

Written literature, most especially prose fiction, is ineluctably anesthetic because it is essentially *semiotic*. It transpires in the mind. It can't deal directly with qualities, sensations, emotions, actions, things; it can't even deal directly, as theater can, with imitations of actions and emotions. It can deal only with their signs, their names: *pain, blue, courage, Venezuela, walking around, once upon a time*. Writers who are also philosophers, like William H. Gass, have explored the metaphysical implications of this state of affairs. As a professional writer who is only an interested amateur of metaphysics, indeed of reality, I find the chief implication to be that written literature can deal most appropriately – at least more effectively than any other art – with just those aspects of our experience that are at some remove from direct sensation: not only the whole silent life of the mind – cognition, reflection, speculation, recollection, calculation, and the rest – but even the registration of sensation, so to speak: what perception is *like*.

That's the famous fact about metaphor, of course, a main property of language and mainly a property of literature (nonverbal metaphors, like the ones film makers sometimes attempt, seem to me to be metaphors for metaphors): to call the sea „wine-dark“ and the dawn „rosy-fingered“ is to say something about the sea and the dawn (and about wine, roses, and fingers) that can't really be photographed, just as photographs and paintings show us things that can't finally be said. As long as the private, verbal registration of experience has a future – and, just as important, the registration of *verbal experience*, the experience of language, which can take us beyond the possibilities of reality – literature has a future.

„Sun so hot I froze to death; Susanna don't you cry.“ „'Twas brilliant, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimble on the wabe. / All mimsy were the borogoves, / And the mome raths outgrabe.“ Try making a movie out of those.

**Hinweis:** Die rot hervorgehobene und unterstrichene Passage bitte **nicht** übersetzen!