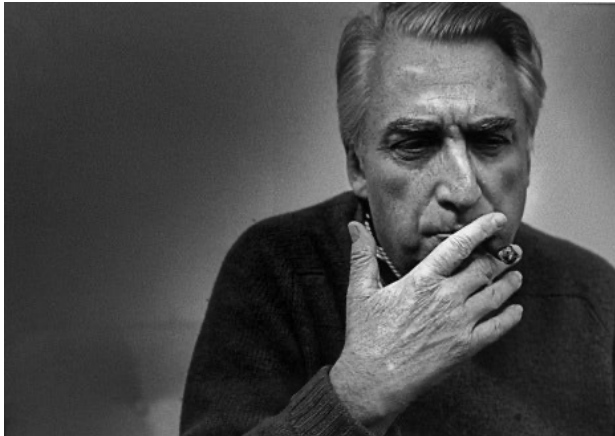**Roland Barthes** (1915-1980)

Mythologies (1957)
S/Z (1970)
The Pleasure of the Text (1970)
Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes (1975)
A Lover's Discourse: Fragments (1977)
Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography (1980)
Mourning Diary (2009)
How to Live Together (Collège de France lecture notes) (2013).

1. From *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*:
"Each figure explodes, vibrates in and of itself like a sound severed from any tune--or is repeated to satiety, like the motif of a hovering music. No logic links the figures, determines their contiguity: the figures are non-syntagmatic, non-narrative; they are Erinyes; they stir, collide, subside, return, vanish with no more order than the flight of mosquitoes. . . .
His is a horizontal discourse: no transcendence, no deliverance, no novel (though a great deal of the fictive). . . . this is the love story . . . [it] is the tribute the lover must pay to the world in order to be reconciled with it . . . . Very different is the discourse, the soliloquy, the *aside* which accompanies this story (and this history), *without ever knowing it*. It is the very principle of this discourse (and of the text which represents it) that its figures cannot be classified: organized, hierarchized, arranged with a view to an end (a settlement): there are no first figures, no last figures. To let it be understood that there was no question here of a love story (or of the history of a love), to discourage the temptation of meaning, it was necessary to choose an *absolutely insignificant* order: [...] the age-old convention which decides the order of our alphabet. Hence we avoided the wiles of pure chance, which might indeed have produced logical sequences; for we must not, one mathematician tells us, "underestimate the power of chance to engender monsters;" the monster, in this case, would have been, emerging from a certain order of the figures, a 'philosophy of love' where we must look for no more than its affirmation" (pp. 6-8).

2. Abecedary: an inscription consisting of letters of the alphabet, almost always in order. Typically they are practical exercises (see, for example, childrens' ABC books).

Here is an early Christian example (6th century AD) known as the Alphabet Stone, now used as a gravestone in Kilmalkedar, Ireland

**Here is an example from a contemporary children's book**

Each *Animal Abecedary* image depicts **one** animal and **two** objects that begin with that letter of the alphabet. Some images also have bonus objects, adding to their story. Enjoy exploring and discovering all the details every image has to offer.
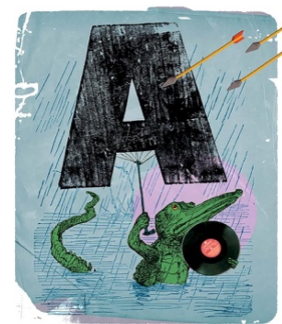
3. Many poets use the ABCs.
One of my favorites is **Harryette Mullen, *Sleeping with the Dictionary* (2002).**

"I beg to dicker with my silver-tongued companion, whose lips are ready to read my shining gloss. A versatile partner, conversant and well-versed in the verbal art, the dictionary is not averse to the solitary habits of the curiously wide-awake reader. In the dark night's insomnia, the book is a stimulating sedative, awakening my tired imagination to the hypnagogic trance of language. Retiring to the canopy of the bedroom, turning on the bedside light, taking the big dictionary to bed, clutching the unabridged bulk, heavy with the weight of all the meanings between these covers, smoothing the thin sheets, thick with accented syllables—all are exercises in the conscious regimen of dreamers, who toss words on their tongues while turning illuminated pages. To go through all these motions and procedures, groping in the dark for an alluring word, is the poet's nocturnal mission. Aroused by myriad possibilities, we try out the most perverse positions in the practice of our nightly act, the penetration of the denotative body of the work. Any exit from the logic of language might be an entry in a symptomatic dictionary. The alphabetical order of this ample block of knowledge might render a dense lexicon of lucid hallucinations. Beside the bed, a pad lies open to record the meandering of migratory words. In the rapid eye movement of the poet's night vision, this dictum can be decoded, like the secret acrostic of a lover's name."
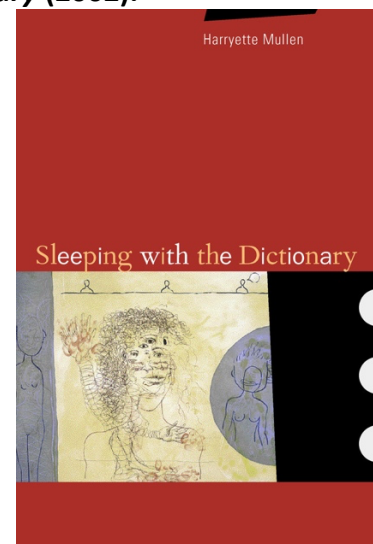
Can you locate the puns in this passage? Who is the silver-tongued companion here? Why is the poet "aroused"? What point is being made here about the poet's relationship to the dictionary?