

8 Raw Orality: Sound Poetry and Live Bodies

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I talk a new language. You will understand.

—Brion Gysin, 1960

Shifts in technology bring with them new configurations of embodiment, and in addition, resituate how voicing comes to make incarnate a sense of self. For instance, the analogical fragmentation and doubling of the body initiated with radiophony and telephony set momentum to refiguring the individual in modern times, throwing the voice into frenzied arrangement. From radios to telephones, phonautographs to speaking machines, modernity opened up a space for a range of vocal coordinates defined by the electronic imagination. The specter of transmission was generative of an entire avant-garde poetics, manifest in early sound and concrete poetry. Works by Hugo Ball, F. T. Marinetti, Giacomo Balla, V. Khlebnikov, Arthur Pétronic, Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Tristan Tzara and further paralleled in modernist literature (Gertrude Stein being exemplary) all tussle to reinvent the structures, grammars, typographies, and verbalizations of the word. The productions of sound poetry, continuing into the 1940s and 1950s with movements such as Lettrism and the activities of the Vienna Group and into the 1960s with Ultra-Lettrism and the Text-Sound projects in Sweden, continued to explode and reinvent words and voicing through electronic manipulations that also distend and tear subjectivity. Yet sound poetry also signals an attempt to recover the embodied energies of the voice from modern technologies of reproduction. As sound poet Bob Cobbing writes:

Two lines of development in concrete sound poetry seem to be complementary. One, the attempt to come to terms with scientific and technological development in order to enable man to continue to be at home in his world, the humanisation of

the machine, the marrying of human warmth to the coldness of much electronically generated sound. The other, the return to the primitive, to incantation and ritual, to the coming together again of music and poetry, the amalgamation with movement and dance, the growth of the voice to its full physical powers again as part of the body, the body as language.¹

Sound poetry thus oscillates between these two threads, between an appropriation of electronics and a recuperation of a primal, original voicing. It offers insight into the interlacing of individuals and electronic machines, drawing out the tensions and consequences of their integration. In doing so, sound poetry literally amplifies these embedded tensions through an agitation of words and breaths.

The advent of digital technologies resituates this understanding of embodiment, foreclosing routes toward “original” voicing through intensifications of simulated, virtual presence and the language of coding; the conditions of the digital replace the fantasies of primary beginnings with a dissolution of the original—though the fragmentation and doubling of analog technology may refer to a presumed notion of origin, to the “real” voice, the digital ruptures such a link. In doing so, it stimulates not only other forms of artistic experimentation (which I will explore at the end of this text) but also modes of hearing the voice. The digital voice might be heard not just as a poetical revolution tied to subjectivity, but more as a signaling of its current pluralization and post-human future.

Though an eclectic and heterogeneous practice spanning the twentieth century, at its core sound poetry aims to embody literary and musical forms through an insistence on the materiality of speech.² Following the early avant-garde projects of experimental poetics (Dada, Italian Futurism, Russian *zaum*), sound poetry would emerge in postwar Europe as an interweaving of performance, voice, and electronics. In the early 1940s, the Lettrism movement launched an extension of the Dadaist project by breaking down concrete utterance to an extended minimalism focusing on the letter. Isidore Isou, who founded the movement along with Gabriel Pomerand (later joined by Maurice Lemaitre, Jean-Louis Brau, Gil J. Wolman, and Serge Berna), theorized Lettrism through an understanding of the history of poetry, seeing the movement as the next phase toward revitalizing the poetic tradition. Poetic tradition for Isou held within its center a dynamic relation to vocalicity and the actions of spoken words. With the further introduction of the tape recorder in the 1950s, the question of restoring the letter to the poetical center shifts toward one of breaths

and the construction of brute utterance. The appropriation and incorporation of electronic technology gave new dynamic to the potentiality glimpsed within the letter, granting poets the means for manipulating the phonemic—for literally capturing the granular and tactile intensities found within every movement of the mouth. Importantly, such manipulations extend the vocabulary not only of language but also of the entire vocalic body: electronic manipulation went hand in hand with contortions of the uttering, breathing body. This shift toward the vocalic body as a sounding cavity prior to even the letter resulted in the development of Ultra-Lettrism, with Jean-Louis Brau, François Dufrêne, and Wolman breaking from Isou in 1958. Ultra-Lettrism draws out the single letter as a radical constellation of oral, phonemic, and guttural movements, capturing and prolonging utterance through an extended expressiveness that incorporates all the spit and spasm of the mouth.³

Overlapping with concrete poetry, early multimedia projects, mail art, spoken word, and hypertextual and algorithmic poetics, the legacy of sound poetry unfolds into what Nicholas Zurbrugg would describe as “multimediated hybrids” by integrating avant-garde tendencies into an experimental poetics prescient of cyber-cultural and transverbal conditions.⁴ Sound poetry opens up not only a general itinerary of the performing body within the twentieth century avant-garde project, but also exposes the ongoing intensities and ruptures found in voices and their electronic manipulation.

Voice

The voice comes to us as an expressive signal announcing the presence of a body and an individual—it proceeds by echoing forward away from the body while also granting that body a sense of individuation, marking vocality with a measurable paradox. The voice is the very core of an ontology that balances presence and absence, life and death, upon an unsteady and transformative axis. The voice comes to signify through a slippery and unforgettable semantics the movements of consciousness, desire, presence, while also riveting language with bodily materiality. The voice is sense and substance, mind and body, cohering in a flux of words that imparts more than singular impression or meaning. It carries words through a cavity that in turn resonates with many uncertainties, excesses, and impulses, making communication and vocality distinct yet interlocked categories.

Such a relation might be said to reside at the core of the practice of sound poetry and related poetical projects, for sound poetry recognizes the paradoxical and productive gaps at the base of what it means to speak. As Steve McCaffery proposes, sound poetry's primary goal is "the liberation and promotion of phonetic and sub-phonetic features to language to the state of a *materia prima* for creative, subversive endeavors."⁵ Attempting to free orality from the constraints of linguistic meaning, sound poetry edges against tensions inherent in subjectivity and its related codifications. Because sound poetry may partially be heard as a nonsensical adventure into solipsistic conditions, it poignantly reveals a locatable conflict of the subject in relation to the swirl of language. We might identify sound poetry as a cultural arena granting witness to the movements of certain bodies on the way in and out of communicative acts. It seeks to rivet language with new sonorous materiality and in doing so refashions the self's relation to vocality and processes of signification. Thus, sound poetry stages a curious performative: in seeking other relations to speech, it retools the mouth by incorporating an oral calisthenics, concocting conditions for other linguistic acts, literally seeking to bypass the regular movements of orality for new configurations, and turning the mouth into the site of production for other semantics. That is, sound poetry yearns for language by rupturing the very coherence of it. To cultivate such work, sound poets develop a variety of methods and approaches, such as mounting idiosyncratic language and notational systems for recital, performing spontaneous and improvised poetical oralities, or appropriating electronics and technological devices so as to fragment and montage utterance; sound poets fool with their bodies, rupturing the ordered movements of vocality so as to produce abstracted, viscous and vertiginous oralities.

The voice, in carrying forward notions of self-presence and embodiment, stages a complex performance when such a voice aims to undo or unravel the signifying weave that comes to define its resonating reach. Such voices can be heard to refer back to prelinguistic origins—that primary bond initiated in relation of mother and infant. As Kaja Silverman proposes, "Since the child's economy is organized around incorporation, and since what is incorporated is the auditory field articulated by the maternal voice, the child could be said to hear itself initially through that voice—to first 'recognize' itself in the vocal 'mirror' supplied by the mother."⁶ The voice then retains a primary link to an embedded sonority prior to speech

proper, which surrounds the child in a nurturing and active bath of sound. The rhythmic, the pulsional, the musicalizing of language as performed by sound poets counter the order of speech and might be heard as a ritualistic celebration and restaging of the primal (maternal) scene, making of language a sonorous excess so as to unsettle subjectivity and its reliance on linguistic coding. "In other words, man in the age of writing is relatively unhappy, having renounced a part of his libido in order to subject himself to a series of restrictions which deprive him of the pleasure connected with the vocal act."⁷ Poetical verbalizations seem to attempt to restore this primal happiness.

Investigating the long-standing tension between orality and writing, Adriana Cavarero further examines how the logocentric, metaphysical tradition (inaugurated by Plato) shuns the mouth and the "uniqueness of being" in favor of an all-encompassing eye. Traditionally, metaphysics silenced the *saying* for the *said*, binding speech to the power of the signified and the properties of semantic meaning. In doing so, it relegated the dynamics of the voice, of orality, to a narrow performance, obliging the individual to follow the written word as a directing medium. "In other words, logocentrism radically denies to the voice a meaning of its own that is not always already destined to speech."⁸ Cavarero strives to remind us of the pleasures and potentiality inherent to the voice, as not solely a medium for arriving at an idealized notion of truth, but vitally as a relational, performative, and social sound. As she explores, the work of the voice partially seeks to remember or rediscover the pleasures and power of the uniqueness of being by restaging the voice as a movement toward others. Such could be said for sound poetry, and its legacy throughout the twentieth century. It hinges itself on remembering a lost voice, an origin, defined by Khlebnikov as the "predawn of the soul,"⁹ which, following Cavarero, is precisely an anti-metaphysical and ontological beginning, before the voice and the pleasures of speech were heard to counter the design of meaning.¹⁰ Sound poetry's seeming nostalgia for a primal voice is thus a voyage back to what we might call an "oral imagination"—a sense of how the voice operates *alongside* language without necessarily always arriving at words as the main oral target. Following sound poetry's charge against writing—as Bernhard Heidsieck articulates, against the "written law"¹¹—orality appears as an attempt to return to the live moment, of a personalized and embodied action that returns the voice to language while also nurturing an extended orality for

the future. The poetical is thus a material act occupying the mouth, throat, and internal cavities rather than the page only.¹² Sound poetry reunifies sound and subject by realigning sensorial coordinates toward a sonifying poetics, echoing Bachelard's own sonorous epistemology captured in his statement: "Man is a 'sound chamber.'"¹³

Following such thinking, sound poetry sculpts this future orality by working with language *as* sound, weaving together an experimental vocal praxis with the very linguistic matter by which meaning is made. In doing so, it might also be said to envelope Roland Barthes's call to multiply or pluralize the signified—to stagger on the way to meaning and to prolong that voluptuous gap. Yet for sound poetry, the sonic itself, not only language, carries an array of signifying substance according to the phonological features of voicing—that is to say, one does not leave behind signification simply by speaking nonsense, or by turning the mouth into a noise machine. As Roman Jakobson has shown, the phonemic feature of language—that is, the "system of sounds considered as elements which serve to distinguish the meaning of words"¹⁴—significantly impart meaning to the act of speech and radically feature as generative differences to the comprehension and use of language. Sound poetry attempts to recuperate the embedded phonological and sonorous matter inherent to voicing by unmarking the voice from the coding of a social linguistics. From this perspective, sound poetry disregards the notion of the arbitrariness of the signifier/signified relation, grasping instead the sonic specificity embedded in acts of speech that lace sound with meaning.¹⁵ Rather than dissipate into meaninglessness, much sound poetry then occupies phonological territories by performing on the level of the phonemic, and further to the oral energy of the glottal, multiplying and pluralizing meaning by disintegrating words into sonic gesturing, into a prolongation and amplification of the ruptured sign. It then might be said to give an answer to the dichotomy of meaning/nonmeaning, symbolic/semiotic, or language/body often appearing in Barthes's (and related cultural/literary theory, such as Julia Kristeva's) works by infusing language with sonic materiality, making excessive the already embodied act of speech. Yet sound poetry often does so by unwittingly following such dichotomy, believing in the power of the body and the thrust of word play to fully escape the constraints of linguistic meaning.¹⁶ In doing so, might sound poetry's obsession with the voice then signal a further iteration of the (technological) reworking of the body spanning modern history?

Such performativity is wed to the potential found in electronic machines, marking the history of sound poetry with the appearance of electronic bodies. Its legacy of works since the beginning of the twentieth century offers a glimpse onto predigital manipulations of the voice that point toward a digital future in which the voice is more firmly wed to its surrogate avatars. In doing so, it continues a deeper legacy related to the technological figuring of disembodied voices and their transmogrified presence in the form of speaking machines, robots, and radio voices, where the voice is replicated through the construction of wooden boxes and rubber valves as well as circuits. In staging this bodily tension of self and sound, unfixing and amplifying the dangling coordinates of subjectivity, sound poetry is a vital underground to the ongoing question of language.

Machinic Oralities

The questions of language, the rupturing of self, and modernity's technological future circle in and around information theory and the question of communication mounted in the surge of cybernetics in the 1940s and 1950s. In order to come to grips with the movement of information made possible through electronic networking, the equation "transmission—message—reception" breaks down the act of communication, seeing the importance of the medium by which communication flows. Working at Bell Laboratories in the late 1940s, Claude Shannon defined information through applying mathematical principles, turning the question of communication into a technical one.¹⁷ Information in this sense was not necessarily equated with communication, placing it instead within a larger structure and task of computing. Such theories and subsequent work leads to an understanding that what one ultimately receives as information is contoured by the mechanics at work that make possible the movement of messages.

Against the early cybernetic formulations of communication and information theory, which supply the industrial and military complex of production in the early 1950s with advances in computing and statistics, sound poetry's desire to rupture signifying channels seem to both arise out of this atmosphere of technological coding while pitting itself against its industrial thrust. For instance, François Dufrêne's Ultra-Lettrist works eliminate the remaining particles of language in favor of a corporeal, spasmodic performance, where noise is drawn out of the mouth through an exaggerated

communicational thrust. His *Triptycrirythme* from 1966 consists of a series of superimposed guttural retching bringing forward a body of phlegmatic exuberance. The work is a voyage into the throat, an oral spasmodic cacophony captured on the way in and out of the body. It wheezes, it spits, it moans, it pants, and it chokes, forcing out the many movements of the entire vocalic mechanism into a reverberant noisescap that pushes the body against the listener. Paralleling such approaches, the works of Gil J. Wolman equally leave behind the word and the letter in favor of a hyper expression focused on breath. His “La Mémoire” (under his general concept of *Mégapneumes*) from 1967 captures the artist exhaling and inhaling into a microphone to a point of tactile abrasiveness. The single drawn breath comes to reveal the individual body moving in and out of itself—a wheezing vessel full of animating energies that also exults a primary poetical matter, that of the breath behind every utterance. As Dufrêne would state of Wolman in 1965, “the BREATH alone founds the poem—rhythm and outcry, that cry, content contained, until now, of the poem: of joy, of love, of anguish, of horror, of hate, but a cry.”¹⁸ This essential, anguishing matter of breath exemplifies sound poetry’s return to primary origins, breaking down language to the core of bodily actions. As Bachelard would further iterate, “In its simple, natural, primitive form, far from any aesthetic ambition or any metaphysics, poetry is an exhalation of joy, the outward expression of the joy of breathing.”¹⁹

Such actions find echo in performance practices that would emerge within Fluxus, Actionism, and performance art, charging the live body with social and transformative energy. Seeking to exceed the limits of representation and what we might recognize as the informational apparatus of media theorized by thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hans Magnus Enzensberger as the basis for social control, these practices form a vital and aggressive production for redrawing the lines of embodied presence and social participation.²⁰ Sound poetry’s ongoing appropriation of technical devices, and its breathing, hissing spirit, alongside related actions such as Nam June Paik smashing violins or George Brecht’s conceptual audio-miniatures, may all be heard to supplement information theory by explicitly cultivating noise as vital to communication. Though “transmission—message—reception” sought clear channels, the neo-Dada, phonetic, and sonic agitations of artists and poets at this time were filling such channels with spit, silence, cracked electronics, and broken music.

Against much of the idealism surrounding electronic media and the mechanistic and technical language of information theory, Jean Baudrillard's further critique in the late 1970s aimed to reassert questions of specific forms of exchange. For Baudrillard, "it is not as vehicles of content, but in their form and very operation, that media induce a social relation," turning McLuhan's "medium is the message" into a platform for critical examination. If electronic media contour the shape of messages through their very formal operations, then for Baudrillard they radically shut down the potential for response by relegating meaning to "sign form" which is "articulated into models and administered by the code." The production of social relations through electronic media then shifts the exchange of messages, as forms of "speech," from the symbolic to the orders of the sign and representation.²¹ Baudrillard's counterargument against the strictly mechanistic and technical rhetoric of information theory opens up the question of language, messages, machines, and speech, which can be located throughout literary and oral experimentations occurring alongside these technological advances. We might follow the development of sound poetry—from early Dadaist and Futurist projects that sought to rupture and recapture a primary link to language through embodied oralities, and further, to the works of Lettrism and Ultra-Lettrism that broke wording down to brut performances of breath and glottal movement, and into contemporary work infused with digital tools—parallel to the development of audio technologies and the surge of a general technological milieu. In parallel, the work of William Burroughs prefigures Baudrillard's critique and poignantly shows that the systems of technology are entangled with the transmission of messages, shifting the coordinates of exterior and interior into viral proximity. His work mobilizes the radical potentiality of words to act as raw matter infused with larger apparatuses of control and infection. "He views Western culture as ruled by a system of mass ventriloquy in which disembodied voices invade and occupy each individual."²²

As N. Katherine Hayles has chronicled, Burroughs's work in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s remarkably performs in and against the presence of electronic media. McLuhan would coin the electronic age a form of "global embrace";²³ Burroughs would see it as the confrontation between the Nova Mob and the Nova Police, a science fiction bringing machines and bodies together in difficult union. The global embrace for Burroughs is viral warfare in which language occupies every mind and turns the self

into a host for word parasites. Contagion, language, body, and technology intertwine to form a vertiginous constellation of references and characters, part human and part animal, a medley of organisms awash in a maze of detective stories and orgies of bacteria and word. In doing so, his work signals a futuristic figuring that undoes the coding of fixed identity, and its related languages, extending modernist literary and oral experimentations.

For Burroughs, the tape recorder was to play a significant influence upon his unique writing and related ideas of language. As Hayles proposes, "Burroughs was drawn to both aspects of the technology. The inscription of sound in a durable medium suited his belief that the word is material, while its malleability meant that interventions were possible that could radically change or eradicate the record."²⁴ Such processes are already at work in Burroughs' use of the cutup as a literary operation. Cutting up news stories, literary works, and other texts, and pasting together fragments, the cutup produces a form of Surrealist collage. Yet significantly, for Burroughs, notions of the unconscious were not solely individualized productions of fantastical images, but a complex link between the subject and the disciplinary force of language. The method of the cutup utilized by Burroughs comes to mirror the viral infection of language mobilized by the technological as well as potential to counter the disciplinary function embedded in thought. In short, the cutup is both analysis of the operations of language found in media and a potential short-circuiting of its ability to make psychic inscriptions that draw lines around the imagination. By extension, the tape recorder allows for certain recognition of the workings at play in technology while also granting access to an appropriative conduct.

"Get it out of your head and into the machines," Burroughs writes. "A tape recorder is an externalized section of the human nervous system"²⁵ and can be used to expunge the habitual patterning inscribed by language. If language is already a technology, further mediatized by the advent of radio, television, and related broadcasting operations, then literary mechanisms and strategies are appropriative interventions into such technology—they begin to function as forms of hacking that aim for the mechanics at work. The cutup is one extended series of associative and random links that neither cohere nor totally disjoin but rather signal a prolongation of signification, as with Brion Gysin's *Poem of Poems*, a cutup text recorded on tape in 1958 at the Beat Hotel in Paris. *Poem of Poems* is a hypnotic recital that splinters time and space, with Gysin's reading voice clipped by the start and

stop of the tape machine, a slurping and hiccupping of words that leaves one dangling on the edge of understanding. Incorporating works by T. S. Eliot, Shakespeare, St. John Perse, and Aldous Huxley, *Poem of Poems* is a medley of literature filtered through and amalgamated by the mechanics of the cutup. The gesture creates a form of sonified text in which words are punctuated by the recording process, leaving traces of sound that add to and subtract from the voice and its connection to the related text.

Gysin's and Burroughs's work gives us the text as a concrete, material, and infectious matter brought forward in the act of the cutup—a *voicing over* that introduces another form of iteration and spacing made possible by the electronic machine. This spacing is the space of the cut itself, the jag or hiccup that produces an alternative rhythm to the flow of reading, where "The scriptive warranty of lexical autonomy may then frequently be breached, words rent by jostling divergences, syntax itself unravelled in the slippage of difference."²⁶ The *voicing over* is an act of splicing together—with Shakespeare voiced over St. John Perse, interrupting the flow of the logic of text—forming a textual architecture that allows another mode of inhabiting and of being inhabited by language. One is placed on the periphery through an intertwining of voicing, enabling or enforcing reflection upon how signification comes to bear down on the matter of language and the process of reading. As Robin Lydenberg proposes, "But while the sound poets (such as Chopin) seem to celebrate this language of the body as opposed to the artificial limits of the page, Burroughs perceives the body itself as a prerecorded script, a prewritten 'ticket' to be exploded."²⁷ Burroughs's work stages the mechanics of a subincorporation and infiltration at the level of the cellular and phonemic: word and body are intertwined in a viral relation that disciplines the imagination while also exposing potentiality, turning the modernist question of phonemes into one of code.²⁸

Noise-Praxis

Sound poets' embrace of electronic machines, like Burroughs's, signals attempts to disturb and release the individual body through acts of doubling, decentering, replicating, and transmitting beyond its perceived limits. Wolman's embodied sputtering or Dufrêne's rabid exhalations gain intensity through electronic machines—they are partially conceivable by the promise and provocation of electrification. The artist Henri Chopin in particular was to embrace the potentiality of the tape recorder to push sound poetry

to an extreme form of multiplicity. His “poésie sonore” multiplies the singular voice through performative verbalizations and their superimposition onto tape media. Instances of sputtering, sucking, or snorting are recorded and composed as contortions of the mouth and vocalic cavities, revealing an extensive audible palette. Drawing out these micro-movements, his poésie sonore is a sonic vocality amplifying the elaborate yet generally sublimated oral leftovers of everyday speech.

I started in '55 with sound . . . the date is academic . . . I wrote some poems . . . not like traditional poetry . . . but avant-garde . . . [. . .] I listened to my voice on a tape recorder . . . and my voice is very good . . . the timbre is very good too . . . so I put my finger between the head and the tape on the tape recorder . . . and . . . the sound was different! Distortion! After that I changed with my finger the speed of the tape on a very simple tape recorder and again the sound was different . . . [. . .] And it was absolutely incredible to find a sound like ahgggggg . . . subjected to different speeds . . . it was like an orchestra.²⁹

These initial revelations led Chopin to incorporate the possibilities of audio recording and manipulation into his poetic project. Yet the tape recorder, in allowing new forms of poetical utterance to take shape, also instigates an examination of the very spirit of language as it comes to fill the individual. Pushing the microphone against the lips and into the mouth lays open not only the sonic viscosity of the oral but also the threshold of the individual, amplifying the hole of the mouth and all the linguistic trembling taking place there.

Following his observations of using tape recorders, Chopin envisioned the possibility of multiplying the voice in live performance: “And in 1957 I imagined that it would be possible to produce with one voice ten or fifteen or twenty voices . . . I started with that idea.”³⁰ With extended layers of amplified vocal actions turning into oscillating tones, punctuated chanting, exhalations, and respiratory cacophony split across the stereo channels, Chopin’s work *La Peur* (1958/1969) is an elaborate example. Running at thirty-three minutes, *La Peur* is an elongated clamor of sonic oral matter, with broken whistling cascading into harsh echoing electronic feedback or frictions resulting in distorted yet controlled sheets of noise that fly in and out of audibility. *La Peur* captures “the possibility of going beyond the conventional poetic systems” by turning the body into a “factory for all sounds.”³¹ The artist performed the work in Stockholm at the Text-Sound festival in 1970, appearing on stage naked. As he stated in the program

notes for the event: "This long poem is an incantation against FEAR, that I have come to know between 1942–1950 in camps, prisons, war, etc. I have accepted to liberate myself from this poem, one of the first six I made before 1960, where after I threw my past into the sounding waves. Well, thanks to this trauma poem I again found my laughter and my lightness."³²

Chopin performs as a live pantomime; often pretending to utter sounds heard from audiotapes, he becomes his own ventriloquist, extending and displacing his own presence on stage while punctuating through live additions the prepared materials. As with his colleague Bernard Heidsieck, whose literary practice would lead to the incorporation of recorded spoken texts played as accompaniment to his live "poésie action," Chopin would liberate poetic expression through the use of microphones, tape machines, and loudspeakers. In doing so, the superimpositions of words and voice build up into a physical material, creating a theater of the *body-mouth*. What might this theater ultimately convey if not the attempts to negotiate the territory of signification, as a fooling that unsettles the subject to exalt the fevers of the poetical? Or a radical recuperation of the primary ties between self and sound found at the heart of speech? Chopin's "trauma poem" might extend beyond his personal sounding waves to filter through the cultural arena of sound poetry in general, defining it as a transformative operation onto the very site of language's infective penetration.

The Ultra-Lettristes' works stand out as the culmination of sound poetry's project to usurp and undo the pressures of the semantic in favor of a raw orality. Whether Dufrêne's rough reduction of speech to the glottal and guttural, or Chopin's maximalized tape constructions that amplify the very movements of the jaw and mouth, Ultra-Lettrism abandons the word overall. In its place, we might hear the mechanics of an embodied drive at the base of subjectivity directed by fantasies of a primal oral-aural coupling—seeking the uniqueness of being by turning up the volume on the self's ability to make a noise. Making audible such drives locates sound poetry at the edge of musical and poetical cultures—the sonic actions force the listener to witness the rending and restitching of the relation of body and language. Such emancipatory acts, though, rely upon an existing language that sees in the body a performative means toward release. We might witness in the works of Chopin or Dufrêne in particular then an action that weds a manipulation of vocality with an imaginary center defined by the body *as natural*. In this regard, sound poetry oscillates unevenly between

sound as formal matter and voice as cultural meaning. In doing so, their projects mirror much of modernism's thrust toward an emancipation of the subject as well as an overt formalism that supposed a suspension of direct cultural reference.³³

Digital Expressivity

The incorporation of electronics, machinic oralities, and the analogical doubling of the self come to radically infuse the work of sound poetry with performative energy, echoing the earlier avant-garde's fascination with the phantasmic, ghostly potentialities of radiophony to leave the material plane. This fascination finds articulation not only in Dadaist rituals of noise or Futurists' technological chaos, but also in a larger technological history of voice reproduction found in the legacy of speaking machines and synthetic voice fabrication. The early inventions of Wolfgang von Kempelen in the eighteenth century in Austria is but one instance of trying to recreate the human voice, to channel it away from the body and into other materials. Consisting of bellows that simulated the lungs, a wind-box and a mouth made of rubber all housed in a wooden box, Kempelen's speaking machine is a mechanistic model of the human larynx and vocal instrument duplicating the action of speech. It divests the voice from the human body, recreating words through an alien machine.

The ability to recreate the human body as an artificial mechanism appears as an ontological subtext throughout modernity, prefigured in the haunting tale of Dr. Frankenstein, whose creation turns into a monstrous inhuman body, and further contorted in a variety of Surrealist practices and works, such as Hans Bellmer's disjointed doll constructions. Though Frankenstein begins to give narrative to the darker possibility of modern artificial intelligence, early sound poetry, in redistributing the coordinates of self and voice for poetical ends, suggests new forms of expressivity. For instance, Hugo Ball's "jolifanto bambla o falli bambla" provides a route back to the primary voice, that prelinguistic, primal force of voicing, while Kurt Schwitters's "dll rrrrr beeeee bö / dll rrrrr beeeee bö fümms bö / rrrrr beeeee bö fümms bö wö / beeeee bö fümms bö wö tää / bö fümms bö wö tää zää / fümms bö wö tää zää Uu" of the *Ursonate* operates according to what Renato Barilli terms "electrolysis," in which "the material of expression, freed of semantic adhesives (lexemes and morphemes), is pronounced letter by letter, each of its various minimal components exploding in the

acoustical space."³⁴ These predigital voicings hint at a displacement and ultimate networked condition of the human subject, rerouting the expressive self through an alterity that turns one's own body into a speaking machine.

Modernist notions and experiences of the disembodied voice find a new set of conditions within the digital era. Voice recognition and voice activation programs rely upon our own sense of displacement and duplication, in which the demands of interacting with voices of unknown origin, or placing our own onto various media, is an everyday experience. Speech synthesis extends from the deeper history of speaking machines and gathers momentum with early electrical engineering, resulting in numerous machines that could produce vocal sounds, such as Homer Dudley's "Voder" from 1939 or Frank Cooper's "Pattern Playback" from 1950. Such legacy takes a bold step with the work of Max Matthews in 1961. Rendering the song "Daisy Bell" through computer synthesis at the Bell Labs introduced the digital voice into the fields of radiophony, and has led to the implementation of computerized voice programming to appear within a variety of electronic appliances, vehicles, and other networked systems. With the advent of computer technologies, the synthetic voice brings a twist to the poetical by introducing a voice that has no origin in a given body: the disembodied, radiophonic, and electronically manipulated voice is emptied of psychology, spirit, or granularity with the synthetic voice.³⁵ Leaving both life and death behind, the synthetic voice is a digital shadow, no longer a ghost without a name but a signal circulating among everyday experiences. From ATM machines to voice-activated messenger services, the digital synthetic voice is "enabling audio technology to have further impact on the already vague provenance of the disembodied voice."³⁶

The digital, as both a tool and importantly, what Tiziana Terranova refers to as an "informational milieu,"³⁷ seems to empty out the embedded nostalgia of sound poetry and the attempt to remember or rediscover a primary orality, delineating another form of psychology according to an absence of origin and the potential of connectivity. Sound poetry from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, at times sounds marked by a lingering modernism haunted by a belief in the possibility of unmarking the voice, of dissolving the body so as to arrive at the remembered imaginary plateau of voice as pure action. In attempting to strip the voice from its cultural integration, Chopin and others dramatized the oral cavity as a primary site

of expression. With digital technology, the possibility of remembering or rediscovering shifts in the wake of networked, informational, and immaterial dynamics. The copy and paste culture of the postmodern hears the electronically manipulated voice as one but many already existing within the everyday landscape, where the synthetic voice hovers upon every bus or train, inside each machine or telephone call, as one but a series of informational signals that already sounds misplaced, unsettled, and machinic.

The intensification of network culture has amplified the sense of the self as being made up of extensive input that is not entirely one's own, leading Steven Shaviro to claim: "My selfhood is an information pattern, rather than a material substance"³⁸ echoing Burroughs's earlier statement that "a symbiotic relationship has been established and the virus is now built into the host which sees the virus as a useful part of itself."³⁹ The "terror of the code" observed by Baudrillard is based on recognizing that the conditions of the information society rewire the previous channels of relations so as to turn the material world into a question of computation. With the apparatus of the network in place, "power is no longer faceless and invisible," rather "it operates in plain sight. . . . It does not need to put us under surveillance, because we belong to it, we exist for it, already."⁴⁰ As the digital era has demonstrated, such an entanglement is a kind of co-production of radical individuation *and* mass surveillance.

The legacy of sound poetry as I've been discussing here integrates a handling of electronic machines and articulates a distributed sense of subjectivity. Thus it stands within a larger legacy bent on manufacturing a sonorous body—to harness the body's ability to make noise into the production of an amplified poetics. In following the voice on this course of rupture and rapture, of flayed subjectivity and raw orality, I'm interested in lending an ear to not only the granularity of a broken voice, in all its aesthetic intensity, but to take notice of the specificity of a body seeking a renewed and reinvigorated language. While extending a larger history of voice productions, sound poetry hints at future voices acclimated to media and their refiguring of the self. With sound poetry, we might already hear the digital voice, that voice defined both by intensified hybridity and dynamic dispersal. Such a combination can be glimpsed in a number of contemporary artistic projects that put to use the voice, as medium and as an expressive signaling of new forms of poetical connectivity.

The work *The Giver of Names* (1990 to present) by media-artist David Rokeby melds computer intelligence with the material sphere of objects to generate a series of mediated translations. Essentially, the work functions as a computer system, which includes a video camera, a series of objects, and an empty pedestal. Visitors to the installation are allowed to choose one of the given objects and place it on the empty pedestal. In response, the computer system (via the camera) observes the object and makes a series of calculations as to its color, size, texture, and component parts, resulting in an array of visual analyses that are projected on a screen in the space, turning the objects into a series of mediated images. Finally, the computer attempts to describe in words its analyses, forming a series of expressions metaphorically linked to a database of other objects, information, and ideas. As the artist describes, “the results of the analytical processes are then ‘radiated’ through a metaphorically-linked associative database of known objects, ideas, sensations, etc. The words and ideas stimulated by the object(s) appear in the background of the computer screen, showing what could very loosely be described as a ‘state of mind’. From the words and ideas that resonate most with the perceptions of the object, a phrase or sentence in correct English is constructed and then spoken aloud by the computer.”⁴¹ The computer system is a form of “alien mind” having to interface with the material world, resulting in an associative language that gives voice to another form of subjectivity, for the computer is not simply randomly selecting phrases to produce a jumbled mess of words, but rather actively seeking to impart meaning—the object’s name—and in doing so, as the artist suggests, gives a picture of an expressive state of mind.

Rokeby’s project examines the conditions of a digital mind by also extending the scene as an interface between computer and object, database and digital translation, perception and verbalization. The space of the interface then is an interweaving of multiple perspectives and opportunities, and finds further articulation in Susan Härtig’s project *Marionette* (2002). Presented as an interactive video installation, the work consists of a projection made up of three video sequences each the part of a single body, from the head, torso, and finally, to the legs. In addition, a microphone and computer are presented in front of the projection, and visitors are invited to use their voice to interact with and manipulate the figure. “The visitor controls the movement of the marionette by using the microphone. This happens for each of the three body sections separately, because the parts of

the body react to different frequency domains. While the head reacts rather to higher frequencies, the legs of the marionette move themselves to lower frequencies and the torso to center frequencies," weaving one form of intelligence with another, one body with its digital avatar.⁴² The interfacing of these two planes is choreographed by a visitor's voice, creating a platform of interaction that in turn stimulates an imaginative verbal trajectory—the dancing figure is literally broken and reconfigured by the vocal range, aligning personal sonority with a cyber-figure.

The interaction and integration of bodies and voices, material and immaterial intelligences, flesh and digital expression may open up to a sound poetry occupying the territory defined by the interface. Max Neuhaus's project *Auracle* further elaborates this territory by proposing an extensive global online installation. Currently housed at <http://www.auracle.org>, Neuhaus's project is designed as an instrument for voice. Users access the site and perform with others, forming ensembles and contributing to the ongoing evolution of the system. Importantly, the work does not function through live streaming of vocal expressions in real-time, but rather it collects the voice as information and makes a series of analyses. This information results in synthesized sound responses, turning the voice, as with *Marionette*, into a partner. Transmitting over the Internet then for Neuhaus creates a form of architecture by which users/performers come to communicate, yet generated through a musical, poetical production or language. This in turn stimulates an appreciation for the ongoing feedback between speech and audition, between one's voice and the simultaneous listening that occurs with every utterance. The dynamics of the audible range intrinsic to the voice are given a virtual stage, with the *Auracle* operating as an experimental chorus.

Fissures

In following these works, what stands out is the production of an interface that relies upon or stimulates an integration of body and digital effect—this coupling functions as an instrumental potential, making possible performative actions that in turn retain levels of compositional structure and poetical production. Yet such experience is fully wed to the making of an electronic self that seems to leave behind a sense of uniqueness or primary origins. What such contemporary works may point to is a sense of informational relations, where media open up to conditions of exchange. For

the voice, it may still retain that primary sonorous pleasure Cavarero seeks to unearth, not only through a singular vocal act found at the center of the unique self, but also importantly through its sense of distribution and dispersion. Whereas modernist notions of disembodiment led to a sense of fragmentation or rupture, the digital voice seems to find a new sense of agency (and pleasure) within networked conditions.

As forms of representation fragment under the fluid weight of digitality and unfold into a myriad of potential connections and exchanges, the voice must be heard not only as the direct communication of meaning (even below the line of the semantic) but also as an audible signal that surrounds or demarcates an arena where meaning may be found as well as distorted through forms of live actions or digital manipulation. Such meaning may well be ahead or behind of signification, according to an auditory range that is always already disappearing or being affected by its connection to other signals. As Bruce Andrews proposes, “the challenge . . . is to simultaneously cut the ties that bind sound to traditions of lyric harmony and speech or autonomous, inward-absorbing form *and*, through drastic and emancipated construction, to highlight what we can call its ‘social tone’ or its ‘semantic music’—*in praxis*.”⁴³ This may resound as a pertinent description of sound poetry and the related vocal practices following that search for routes in and out of the signifying self, while also remaining tied to a sense of *making connection*—to cut the ties while remaining in tune with given social relations, even those built from extreme forms of sonic production and listening. What Andrews pinpoints is a recognition of sound poetry’s potential withdrawal into strict formalism or “fetishism,” where vocality becomes just another sonorous matter spinning into amplified internal monologues. His “semantic music” is an attempt to rescue vocal sonority from such a dead end by hanging onto notions of signification yet determined by a “polylogic”—“a free or athematic sound ‘prose’ or permanent transition and motivic fragmentation, a ‘becoming’ of constant subdividing and particularizing where even disruption comes to seem developmental because of the flurry of tangible connection.”⁴⁴ What such polylogic opens onto for Andrews is noise, yet noise as a “manic relationalism” in which an indeterminate, forceful, and propositional matter circulates in and among levels of meaning and sharing. Noise may then stand as a “counter-contagion” or productive supplement to the directive of semantics, giving us an auditory drive that seeks so many possible connections.

What may mark this shift in sound poetry (at least as I am defining here) from a search from primary origins (modernism) to an engagement with noise as a point along so many connections (postmodernity) is a cultural shift in the milieu where the voice, listening, and meaning have altered their location—where a “polylogic” seems already at play. Within the frame of a culture of digitality, Rokeby’s project does not register a subject in the throes of seeking an outside to language, nor do Neuhaus’s virtual architectures aim for an original core of orality. Rather, they enter a space of productions where the voice as sonic matter is fully recuperated while never being obligated to signify. Such performative actions incite the individual body, yet within the expanded field of contemporary audition defined by network cultures, such notions perform alongside a general recognition of the body as masquerade, as hybrid, as marked by so many scripts, making notions of origin or returns unstable.

The continual integration of electronics with vocality marks a history that not only produces an electronic aesthetic but stages electronics as a general social and psychological framework—of fragmentation, multiplication, and dissipation. Sound poetry manifests such interweaving, pitting the voice against or within the ruptures of modernity. This legacy of sound poetry then leads to hearing words *on the run* that also have a destination in mind determined or molded by psychological and metaphysical beliefs in interior states, glossolalic rants, and bodily figurations that nonetheless have signifying bearing. In short, although sound poetry seeks to leave behind or undo semantic meaning, it can be heard to relocate or reorient meaning through a poetical and musical performativity fully wed to electronic machines and conditions. In this sense, it seems important to understand sound poetry not as a free-floating catharsis that steps outside of language, but an attempt to dislocate language and interpretation onto the level of vocalic sonority. Its project *produces* a tension between linguistic and sonorous meaning, and it is my view that sound poetry is best appreciated through such tension, recognizing in what way it manipulates speech so as to generate other itineraries for language, while granting us an unfurled or unsteady picture of subjectivity. Such work integrates the technological, readily incorporating the decentering potential of electronics and laying the groundwork for alternative routes toward “words in freedom” that both announce a postlinguistic future and reinforce existing notions of embodied performance. In short, sound poetry takes pleasure

and generates means for undermining the metaphysical legacy of essences, while also reproducing the notion that freedom lies *through* the body. In doing so, it may be said to choreograph a “relational” body: defining this space between a return to the body and its absolute decentered sonic other, sound poetry figures an unsteady constellation of coordinates for the body to occupy. Attempting to redefine the links and ties that bind one to signification, the excessive agitations enacted onto speaking seems to lay open possibilities for new forms of relating. This work is undertaken by fully investing in the auditory as a means to split the subject from a totalizing semantics, lacing speech through the erotic potentiality of sound and amplifying the tension at the heart of what it means to speak (and to be spoken to). In doing so, it necessarily falls in and out of what Chopin terms “major languages,” producing sonic projects that generate provocative instances of the human body *as* process. Sound poetry might be said to have participated in opening up a space through which we learn to inhabit our current relational and networked geographies by an auditory fissuring and extension of voicing.

Notes

1. Bob Cobbing, quoted in Teddy Hultberg, “A Few Points of Departure,” in *Literally Speaking: Sound Poetry and Text-Sound Composition* (Göteborg: Bo Ejeby Edition, 1993), 10.
2. It is worth noting that Steve McCaffery and others point toward sound poetry’s larger historical sweep, from the “vast, intractable area of archaic and primitive poetics” to a second phase in spanning the turn of the twentieth century, and leading to the third, more contemporary phase, inflected by the use of electronics. In this sense, the project of sound poetry is but an extension of a greater oral and poetical history. See Steve McCaffery’s introduction to *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue*, eds. Steve McCaffery and bpNichol (Toronto: Underwhich Editions, 1978).
3. This historical thread is certainly incomplete, and should include many additional names and projects, such as the important work of the Vienna Group. Surfacing following the devastations of the Second World War, Gerhard Rühm, Konrad Bayer, H. C. Artmann, and others gathered together around a general recuperation of the avant-garde project. This quickly splintered into various groups and developed into a significant array of practitioners leading to an extremely rich and fruitful cultural movement that further evolved into early media work in Austria. The Vienna Group in particular embraced the poetical and the materiality of language, resulting in works of concrete poetry, and what Rühm called “dialect poetry,”

including performances of spoken word, actions, and related visual-sound happenings which were to intersect with Lettrism and Ultra-Lettrism. For further details, see the important publication *Die Wiener Gruppe: A Moment of Modernity, 1954–1960*, ed. Peter Weibel (Vienna: Springer-Verlag, 1997).

4. See Nicholas Zurbrugg, "Programming Paradise: Haraldo de Campos, Concrete Poetry, and the Postmodern Multimedia Avant-Garde," in *Writing Aloud: The Sonics of Language*, eds. Brandon LaBelle and Christof Migone (Los Angeles: Errant Bodies Press, 2001).

5. Steve McCaffery, "Voice in Extremis," in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 163.

6. Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 80.

7. Renato Barilli, liner notes to *Futura: Poesia Sonora* (Milano: Cramps Records, 1989), 4.

8. Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 13.

9. Velimir Khlebnikov locates notions of the essential sound in relation to what he called "beyonsense": "Its strange wisdom may be broken down into the truths contained in separate sounds: *sh, m, v*, etc. We do not yet understand these sounds. We confess that honestly. But there is no doubt that these sound sequences constitute a series of universal truths passing before the predawn of our soul. If we think of the soul as split between the government of intellect and a stormy population of feelings, then incantations and beyonsense language are appeals over the head of the government straight to the population of feelings, a direct cry to the predawn of the soul or a supreme example of the rule of the masses in the life of language and intellect, a lawful device reserved for rare occasions." Velimir Khlebnikov, "On Poetry," in *The King of Time: Selected Writings of the Russian Futurism*, ed. Charlotte Douglas (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 152–153.

10. As Caravero points out, the voice was heard to threaten the ability to behold truth in the mind's eye, often appearing as the embodied, sensual (and often, feminine) material matter.

11. For an insightful source, see the interview with Bernhard Heidsieck in *Stereo Headphones* 8–10 (1982), 20–21.

12. I might point to works of concrete poetry that in employing methods of linguistic game-playing, turn the page into a performative space. For instance, the Brazilian concrete poetry of Augusto de Campos is but one example, with his LUXO poem from 1965, which consists of the single word "Lixo" (meaning "garbage" in Portuguese) made up of tiny images of the word "Luxo" (meaning "luxury"). In mixing these two words and their meanings, literally integrating the one inside the other,

de Campos performs a simple yet effective concrete poetical effect. This method is found in numerous other works, and echoes how I'm positioning Burroughs's work.

13. Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement* (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1988), 240.

14. Roman Jakobson, *Six Lectures on Sound and Meaning* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), 32.

15. For an extremely insightful work on this subject, see Allen S. Weiss, *Varieties of Audio Mimesis: Musical Evocations of Landscape* (Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2008).

16. Although I cannot delve into the following question in depth here, I would like to raise the issue of whether in unsettling the territory around subjectivity sound poetry has particular implications for masculine subjectivity. Is it possible to further query the issues opened up by sound poetry by specifically hearing in many of its works a particularly refined set of actions aimed at unleashing a new condition for male subjectivity? As Kaja Silverman examines in her study of masculinity, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, theories of psychoanalysis underscore the acquisition of language as generally forming the individual around a central lack—language comes to wound subjectivity by removing one from the co-mingling of self and world experienced as a child. Through the acquisition of language subjectivity is essentially inaugurated, fixing identity around a social coding and locating expressions of sexuality and desire onto a gendered body, thereby separating one off from a prelinguistic plenitude. Silverman points out that masculinity forms the site for the perpetuation of a certain “dominant fiction”—patriarchal society rotates around the symbolic and productive assertion of masculinity as bearer of language, and thereby power. Onto the site of masculinity then is placed not only the privileging of maleness, but the pressure to uphold what language defines as masculine. Following Freud and Lacan, Silverman underscores that at the core of male identity, the figure of castration threatens to radically undo not only the single individual male, but the larger, dominant fiction which supplies social values with a repertoire of representations (family, home, etc.). Generally, the dominant fiction comes to “indicate that conventional masculinity can best be understood as the denial of castration.” Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York/London: Routledge, 1992), 46. In light of this, I would ask whether the incorporation of a seeming glossolalic breakdown of subjectivity found within sound poetry might also be understood as performing a particular self-imposed cut onto masculinity.

17. His 1948 article “A Mathematical Theory of Communication” set the stage for the burgeoning of information theory.

18. François Dufréne, “Pragmatic of Crirythme” in *OU—Cinquième Saison*, CD box set, ed. Emanuele Carcano (Milan: Alga Marghen, 2002), 47.

19. Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, 239.

20. See Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 2002), and Herbert Magnus Enzensberger, *The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Politics and the Media* (New York: Continuum, 1974).
21. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (Telos Press, 1981), 169, 175–176.
22. Robin Lydenberg, “Sound Identity Fading Out: William Burroughs’ Tape Experiments,” in *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde*, eds. Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 411.
23. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge, 2001 [1964]).
24. N. Katherine Hayles, “Voices out of Bodies, Bodies out of Voices: Audiotape and the Production of Subjectivity” in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. Adalaide Morris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 91.
25. William S. Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1987 [1967]), 123.
26. Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 106.
27. Robin Lydenberg, “Sound Identity Fading Out: William Burroughs’ Tape Experiments,” 423.
28. Burroughs’s literary project finds interesting parallel in the work of the group Oulipo. Formed around Raymond Queneau in Paris in 1960, Oulipo was an experimental laboratory focused on new forms of writing and text projects that employed specific and strict conceptual methods. For instance, the “lipogram” is the practice of excluding one or more letters from a text, the most pronounced example being Georges Perec’s *A Void* (1969), a novel written without using the letter “e.” As the story unfolds, it becomes apparent that the letter is in fact caught up in the very narrative of detective work to locate a missing person. Or another method is writing the same narrative multiple times yet according to different styles. For example, Queneau’s own *Exercises in Style* (1947) describes a man on a bus witnessing an incident yet written 99 different ways. Their exercises hint at leaving behind aspects of psychology and the unconscious, turning literature into an architectural and algorithmic process, which would find its ultimate expression in the establishment of ALAMO (Atelier de Littérature assistée par la Mathématique et les Ordinateurs/Literature Workshop aided by Mathematics and Computers). Initiated by the Oulipian member Jacques Roubaud in 1981, along with Paul Baffort, the project was based on the use of computers to generate textual works. Their investigations into algorithmic systems would lead to the production of text-generating computer programs (such as the language APL), which comes to figure in Baudrillard’s earlier announcement

that the problem for a leftist, revolutionary critique of media is not in redistributing content but in working on the level of the media's formal apparatus.

29. Henri Chopin, *Stereo Headphones* 8–10 (1982): 12.

30. Ibid.

31. Teddy Hultberg, "Sound Poetry and Text-Sound Composition—the Swedish Story," *Text-Sound Compositions: A Stockholm Festival* CD boxed set (Stockholm: Fylkingen Records, 2005), 6.

32. Ibid., liner notes, trans. by Maria LaBelle.

33. Such productions parallel Clement Greenberg's influential writings and ideas from the 1940s and 1950s. Championing the "essential" features of art objects and their making, Greenberg defined art according to its intrinsic formal elements. For instance, modern painting gave expression—through an abstraction defined by color, movement, pictorial space, and related plasticity—to a set of surface effects. Such reductions enacted by Greenberg sought to embrace what he perceived as art's historical drive away from representational or illusionistic space and toward a material purity, which modernism seemed to promise. Lettrism and Ultra-Lettrism sound poetry seem to unwittingly mirror much of this project by seeking to transcend or overcome the cultural parameters that make one subject to language.

34. Renato Barilli, *Futura* (Milan: Cramps Records), 9.

35. For more on the history of speaking machines, see the exhibition catalog, *Phonorama: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Stimme als Medium* (Karlsruhe: ZKM, 2005).

36. Paul Elliman, "Guided by Voices," *Pages #4: Voice* (July 2005): 104.

37. See Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2004).

38. Steven Shaviro, *Connected, or what it means to live in the network society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 13.

39. William S. Burroughs, *Electronic Revolution* (Bonn: Expanded Media Editions, 2001), 8.

40. Steven Shaviro, *Connected*, 31.

41. See the artist's website: <http://homepage.mac.com/davidrokeby/home.html>.

42. See the artist's website: <http://www.verdaechtig.at>.

43. Bruce Andrews, "Praxis: A Political Economy of Noise and Information," in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 73–74.

44. Ibid. 79.