



## ORBIT - Online Repository of Birkbeck Institutional Theses

---

Enabling Open Access to Birkbecks Research Degree output

# Making Speech-Matter: Recurring Mediations in Sound Poetics and its Contemporary Practice

<http://bbktheses.da.ulcc.ac.uk/35/>

Version: Full Version

**Citation: Pester, Holly (2013) Making Speech-Matter: Recurring Mediations in Sound Poetics and its Contemporary Practice. PhD thesis, Birkbeck, University of London.**

©2013 The Author(s)

---

All material available through ORBIT is protected by intellectual property law, including copyright law.

Any use made of the contents should comply with the relevant law.

---

[Deposit guide](#)  
Contact: [email](#)

**Making Speech-Matter:  
Recurring Mediations in Sound Poetics and its Contemporary Practice**

Holly Pester  
Birkbeck, University of London  
PhD  
2013

I, Holly Pester, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

-----

## Abstract

This thesis produces a critical and creative space for new forms of sound poetics. Through a reflective process combining theoretical research and poetic practice – performances, text-scores and installations – the thesis tests the contemporary terms of intermedial poetics and sound poetry, establishing a conceptual terminology for *speech-matter*. Beginning with a study of 1960s sound poet Henri Chopin and his relation to the tape machine, I argue that this technological mediation was based on a poetics of analogue sound hinged on bodily engagement. Social and physical properties of the tape machine contribute to a mode of practice that negotiates the body, machine, and effort. Exploring Michel Serres’s concept of *parasitic noise* and the relation of interference to lyric appeal, via the work of Denise Riley and Hannah Weiner, I understand sound poetics as a product of lyrically active noise. Through an analysis of radio address, a conceptual link is drawn between lyric poetry and technological mediation, which posits the *radiophonic* as a material effect of transmission and also a mode of hailing. This is tested through sound poems that are investigative of distortion and echo. Addressing the conceptual limits of Intermedia, a new critical model is established for a poetics of sound operating in present-day media technologies. This alternative model, based on a concept of *milieu*, is a means of negotiating a poem’s materiality and context, in order to posit a work’s multiple connections and transmissions. This model is tested through the text and installation work of Caroline Bergvall, and subsequently realised in my own gallery installation that investigates links between sound, milieu and archive. Through this research into mediated speech, new platforms for intermedial sound poetics are produced. This project offers a model for practice-based research that produces knowledge of speech-matter by way of the ‘black box’ of poetic practice.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Carol Watts for her support and guidance throughout this project. I am also grateful to my friends and colleagues in the English Department at Birkbeck for their counsel and motivation. Much of the practice work in this thesis was developed through commissions, invitations and opportunities from the international art and poetry community including, Text Festival, Serpentine Gallery, Documenta, Maintenant and London poetry readings. This research project was funded by the AHRC. Thank you to my family and friends, especially Daniel Rourke.

## Contents

### **Introduction**

Making Speech-Matter and the Apparatus of Practice-Based Research **7**

### **Chapter One**

The Media Object of Sound Poetry and the Performative Body **24**

**Image Page** (author's own photographs of Henri Chopin journals) **66**

### **Portfolio Remarks One**

The Feedback Loop of Effort and Song **67**

### **Chapter Two**

The Transmission of Sound Poetry:  
Sonic Hailing, Noise and the Radiophonic Turn **86**

### **Portfolio Remarks Two**

‘avert our ears as we do’ as Poetic Practice **122**

### **Chapter Three**

Contemporary Intermedialities in Poetics and a Conception of Milieu:  
Reflections on the Work of Caroline Bergvall **1400**

### **Portfolio Remarks Three**

Announce, Amazement, a Mess **174**

**Image Page** (author's own photographs of art installation by Holly Pester) **192**

### **Chapter Four**

‘I did not know till afterwards’: Reporting on the Practice of Archive Artwork **193**

**Image Page** (author's own photographs of art installation by Holly Pester) **227**

### **Conclusion**

Making Speech-Matter as Practice-Knowledge **228**

### **Portfolio**

Description of Performances and Publications **234**

From this Swam **236**

Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine **237**

Effort Noise, a Space Shanty	241
Majel Barrett, a Space Shanty	246
News Pieces	248
Danger Scale	260
Katrina Sequence (description)	267
All Shook Up	268
This is Papa	269
He's in Texas	272
Shadow was amazed... (loose script)	274
The Squid's Poem, To Draw a Blank	276
Juggle Fish, a black box shanty	281
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>285</b>

#### **Audio CD x 2**

1. From this Swam (from recording of Third Annual Sussex Poetry Festival, Nightingale Theatre, Brighton, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2012)
2. Buddy Holly is on My Answer Machine
3. Effort Noise, a space shanty
4. Majel Barrett, a space shanty
5. News Pieces
6. News Piece (extract of sound installation for *StAnza* Poetry Festival, 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> March, 2012)
7. Danger Scale (from recording of *Icelandic and British Poets*, Maintenant reading series, Icelandic Embassy, London, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2010)
  1. (Katrina Sequence) All Shook Up
  2. (Katrina Sequence) This is Papa
  3. (Katrina Sequence) He's in Texas
  4. Shadow was amazed... sound installation for *Word of Mouth* exhibition, Cartel Gallery, London, 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 (extract)
  5. Shadow was amazed... sound piece for *Radeq*, temporary arts radio station, V22 Summer Club, London, 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2012 (extract)
  6. The Squid's Poem, To Draw a Blank
  7. Juggle Fish, a black box shanty (from recording of *if p then q* Press reading, The Betsy Trotwood, London, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2012)

## Introduction

### Making Speech-Matter and the Apparatus of Practice-Based Research

This thesis seeks to claim a critical and creative space for the production of sound poetry. It develops a language and methodology through which to build a practice of experimental poetry that analyses speech and its materiality. Through an initial investigation into the works of sound poet and tape machine pioneer, Henri Chopin (1922-2008), this project moves towards a consideration of contemporary practitioners of the intermedial. In doing so this thesis understands the role of technological media as key to the theorisation of sound poetics. My research locates 1960s European sound poetry, such as Chopin's *audio-poésie*, as a technological moment in which enthusiasm for newly developed tape machines provided an analytical response to the mechanics of analogue sound. From this historical starting point this thesis continues to probe the poetics of transmission and communicative signalling as a broader, politically problematised area, in which contexts of speech-exchange are sites of disharmony. It should be noted here that my use of the terms signal and signalling is somewhat informed by Information Theory. Therefore, I am interested in the Physics, the materiality, the semiotics, the audio theories and the personal politics of the verb to signal as much as signal as a noun relating to signs. Where I use such phrasing it should be understood that communication sciences are a backdrop to my understanding and experimentation with the terms. I am deliberately evoking the various interpretations of 'signal'; material signal such as a radio wave, a sound, a sign and a signifying gesture.<sup>12</sup> An ongoing question in this project is the effect of modes of transmission on a 'signal', and how these transmission effects are inflected back into poetry. My questioning therefore relates to both the wider procedures of practice and the specific mechanisms of poetry works. How does poetry move across media? How does mediation alter the fluency of poetry's sound and text?

---

<sup>1</sup> My research throughout this thesis maintained an active interest in expanded theory relating to the communication of information and plays on the broad definitions and contexts of signalling. Whether this be mathematical theory relating to the measurable amount of distortion in a signal's information (see, Claude Shannon, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communication', *The Bell Systems Technical Journal*, 27 (1948), 379–423, 623–656), telephony or any act of communicating a sign (see, James Gleick, *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood* (HarperCollins UK, 2011)).



The ultimate product of this research is the conception of ‘speech-matter’. This term, which invokes speech, mediation, distortion and materiality, launched this project and provided the foundation through which to secure a productive dynamic between practice and research. Speech-matter is at once a terminology, an apparatus for practice, and a critical modality through which this project engenders a poetics.

### **The Format and Construction of this Thesis**

This thesis is comprised of four chapters of research and critical reflection, a portfolio of poetic practice work with a CD of audio versions, and three shorter chapters of portfolio remarks. I see these various components operating in distinct cycles, yet also working together as a connected machine. The points at which the components connect are what make this thesis a product of practice-based research. I engage with the historical category of sound poetry focusing on the 1960s poetry, composed through the tape machine, and develop a practice that responds to this while experimenting in new forms of sound poetics.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the format of this thesis, there is an alternation between the conceptual models drawn from the field of my theoretical research and the processes in my portfolio. The physical body of the thesis alternates between theoretical chapters and the portfolio remarks, with various threads of argument developing across each cycle. This is to ensure that the respective perspectives from which I conducted research are given equal status, and also to support the process of feedback between practice and theory. In other words, a key dynamic to this thesis is the feedback loop that exists between the body of research into sound poetics, my portfolio and my critical reflections on my poetry.

The construction of this thesis was ordered according to the analysis of my material and does not reflect the timeline of my research and practice activities (though these are dated in the portfolio). The non-chronological order of the chapters and portfolio sections serves to highlight the themes and theoretical models I have built up through my participation in the field of sound poetry. These activities occurred between autumn 2009 and summer 2012 and include involvement with the

---

<sup>3</sup> Here I am using the term, sound *poetry* to designate the tradition of sound poetry and to signify it as a realised body of work, whether historical or contemporary work by other practitioners, while I use the term sound *poetics* to signify the ongoing processes and computations being made in poetic investigations into the sound of the voice. Therefore, ‘sound poetics’ refers to the praxis of sound poetry.

international scene of experimental poetry in the form of performances, exhibitions and publications, as well as archival research and engagement with sound poetry and art colloquia. The feedback mechanism that I mentioned in relation to the theory and portfolio chapters is also of significance to these participations. My performances in particular have been instrumental to my work and therefore I highlight the events through which key formulations of my work took place.<sup>4</sup> I feel that my performances at small-scale poetry readings and international events are the fertile ground through which my practice takes shape. It is in the live event of my practice that I realise a text's mechanisms and how it relates to the wider investigation of my poetics. Through these instances of observation and the reactive space of the audience, a poem becomes part of the circuitry of my practice and enables to me to theorise it in terms of research.

In addition to these investigations through performance, I have also sited my work as installations for gallery exhibitions. While I do not view these durational works as more fully realised or significant to my portfolio than the evanescent moment of live performance or page texts, they feature in this thesis as examples of sustained practice-based research, providing opportunities to examine ideas on transmission and the poetics of broadcast. For example Chapter Four focuses on an art installation at an exhibition in Bury, Lancashire, thus tying together the threads of my academic research and practice 'fieldwork'. Despite the exhibition in question happening at the midpoint of my research my reflection on it is situated at the end of the thesis to complete the feedback circuitry instigated by the cycles of reflective chapters and portfolio remarks. The installation was at the Text Festival, 2011. This festival also included several live events at which I premiered a key piece in my portfolio, which initiated a phase of research into sea shanties.<sup>5</sup> The installation and the performance were in many ways unrelated, in terms of research topic, medium and audience activation. Yet the nature of this research project and the manner in which it has been constructed, allow common threads as much as deviations to echo through the overall body of work.

In conjunction with my work into performance and exhibition I have also conducted investigative research work into archive collections and specialist libraries.

---

<sup>4</sup> See 'Details of Performance Events and Publications', p. 233.

<sup>5</sup> See the poem, 'Effort Noise, a space shanty', in portfolio p. 240, Portfolio Remarks Two, p.67, and hear audio disk one, Track Three.

I visited the SUNY Buffalo in September 2011 on a funded trip to research their audio library of poetry readings and observe the Poetry Library's transition from analogue to digital recordings. Whilst in Buffalo I also gave a reading, which was then recorded and added to the collection I was there to research. Therefore, in my movements through forms of active research there is always a process of speaking through and via my practice. I have attended events that combine academic conference and poetry festival, such as the London Cross-Genre Festival, in July 2009, featuring poets, critics and theorists from the contemporary community of innovative writing; and the Literature and Music conference in Sibiu, Romania, May 2011. At both events I offered academic papers and live readings of my poetry work, emphasising that the conversation of my research is consistently informed by practice.

All of these research activities that make up this thesis have proceeded through a pursuit of a conceptualisation and realisation of what I have termed *speech-matter*. In this introduction I will deconstruct the term and how it has driven my research, for now I will stress that speech-matter is the main object of this project. It is a model for poetry that engages with the sounds of the voice, systems of communication that reference vocality, and speech as a material, embodied property. I use speech-matter as a terminology and process for practice, and as a means to interact with the 1960s movement of sonic-based poetics. Speech-matter is a tool to build a new platform from which to generate praxis in sound poetics, as well as to analyse historical and contemporary sound and voice-based poetry. Speech-matter is a concept, a mode for analysis and also a creative space to work in. Therefore the rationale for constructing my thesis on the basis of a feedback loop between practice and research was aimed at developing this experimental term into a productive energy. By allowing my performances and archival investigations to occupy the same status within my research, the discoveries I have made and the questions I have allowed to emerge have been receptive and intuitive. To maintain this reflexive approach I have been constantly aware of how my practice and critical reflection respond directly to each other, or deviate in a way that creates new areas for investigation, thereby invigorating my research.

For the advancement of my practice, and for the sake of productive research, it has been important to maintain a measured interaction between these two strands throughout this project. A primary concern has been to ask how my poetry and practice-work produce knowledge, or, how the poetry demonstrated here enacts the

concepts developed by the thesis overall. These questions are potentially awkward, for though the works in my portfolio embody and enact critical thought, they also often willfully divert distinct theoretical argument. My poetry consistently works towards the production of speech-matter, and the activities of communication are continuously reflected on by the poems' materials. Yet while the works presented here in this portfolio justifiably qualify as 'research', they struggle against pinning down an idea or argument and resist any research questions hanging too heavily over them; they are allowed to track their own probing.

Rather than my poetry being demonstrative of theoretical material I have researched, or reductively explained by it, there is an exchange of information between my research into the schemes of sound poetics and my developing of poetry works. The aim of this method is for the critical work carried out in the three theoretical chapters not to subsume my portfolio. The poems and works stand in their own right, performing a conceptual gesture, devising poetic operations, and embodying critical thought, without the camber of humanities research. In order to secure this dynamic I've allowed for unpredictability and given my practice the freedom to meander from the prescriptive questions of theoretical investigations. In the construction of the thesis the accidents have hung together to create a cosmos of my practice. Such accidents coincide, or one thought can lead to another through unpredictable routes. For example an initial study into the analogue medium of late 1950s and 1960s sound poetry and the tape machine, hangs together with my work into sea shanties and work songs, not just conceptually (as will be discussed) but *physically* and by way of gestic (types of bodily movement). In other words, a gesture in a poem can link to a dissimilar piece of research, or a gesture in another poem. Vocal shapes echo through the portfolio while similar shapes in my archival research into media – divulging horns, wires and loops – all oscillate and set up a network of relations, visual, sonic and gestural. By mostly giving my practice the reigns of control I believe I have broadened the field for research into sound poetry and the praxis of sound poetics in a way that I couldn't have projected without this practice element.

### **Explaining the Key Terms of my Research and Thesis Title**

I have briefly mentioned the term that has been central to the methodology for this project, that is, speech-matter. I will first draw out the implications of the word,

‘matter’, and then explain how its conjunction with ‘speech’ orientates my research and practice. My intuitive use and understanding of ‘matter’ is to refer to a material substance, without a necessarily realised exterior form, either fluid or stiff but always somehow pliable. Matter, rather than being one distinct thing in itself, is formed of particles that are in active relation to each other. In other words, within matter there are forces at work creating a network of elements. Matter is therefore always directed by the medium of energy. How then can this relate to language? The relation of particle physics to linguistic theory has its roots in Lucretius and the endeavour to discover the atomic components of the physical world as much as the spoken word. To relate this area of physics – the motions of matter and energy – to language therefore potentially initiates an investigation concerning the science of language. However, mine is not a quest to locate the essential constituents of verbal language, to break up speech into measureable elements and use linguistics to observe speech patterns and the nature of signification. I use matter to refer to the particles of speech that contribute to its sound, its meaning, its communicative force, its comedy, its capacity for interference, its audio shape. Matter here is not used in conjunction with the broader understanding of ‘materialism’, which denotes both the philosophical field of ‘physicalism’ or Marxist and cultural materialism. Matter is used in this thesis in conjunction with the term ‘materiality’ to the point where the distinction between the two words becomes blurred. There are times when it may seem I use the two words interchangeably, yet I am consistently aware that ‘matter’ refers to a substance and material quality, as explained in the above paragraph. While ‘materiality’ refers to what is tangible and physical, it also indicates towards the basis on which a material thing is interacted with. ‘Materiality’ in other words, is how a thing exists in the physical world in relation to exterior elements, other things and indeed, users.<sup>6</sup>

As practice-based research my project is focused on gathering materials for making work, for enabling praxis and for engendering a poetics. Speech as matter therefore is not an issue of linguistics but a poetic investigation into a field of

---

<sup>6</sup> N. Katherine Hayles usefully explains, ‘Materiality, as I use the term, does not simply mean all the physical, tangible aspects of the construction, delivery, and reading apparatus. Rather, materiality is a selective focus on certain physical aspects of an instantiated text that are foregrounded by a work’s construction, operation, and content. These properties cannot be determined in advance of the work by the critic or even the writer. Rather, they emerge from the interplay between the apparatus, the work, the writer, and the reader/user.’ See Claude Shannon, ‘A Mathematical Theory of Communication’, *The Bell Systems Technical Journal*, 27 (1948), 379–423, 623–656.

mechanisms, operating across macro and micro scales. Speech-matter refers to the social aspect of speech, the bodily and the sonic gestures of speech. It refers to the political implications of voiced communication and its many unwieldy channels. Speech-matter is a description of both the materiality of speech and the media through which it communicates. The technological mediation of speech and how this impacts on its materiality is explored in terms of the tape machine, radio and instances of mediated sound in art exhibition and archive contexts. In each of these explorations, the idea of ‘speech-matter’ is a central line of enquiry.

The phrase – ‘making speech-matter’ – of my thesis title should be primarily interpreted as the imperative to initiate a practice from this concept. ‘Making speech-matter’ literally describes my work, where I produce texts and performances that experiment in vocal and everyday verbal activities. This assertion of ‘making speech-matter’ as an experimental approach is key to this project where workshopping and play are a primary drive. Within this phrase there is also an element of wordplay, with the obscured meaning of ‘making speech matter’: to give speech a platform or a way to be the fundamental element of a poem, or, to make speech relevant to a mode of analysis. This covert meaning in the phrase therefore references experimental poetry’s historical relationship with speech as a base material. In particular this interpretation points to Robert Grenier’s famous 1971 dictum ‘I HATE SPEECH’ from an essay in which he denounced poetry’s idealisation of speech, where the implementation of speech rhythms into a poem was perversely regarded as giving it an authentic voice.<sup>7</sup> Grenier’s declaration was echoed in Kenneth Goldsmith’s 2007 paper, ‘I LOVE SPEECH’ where he considered re-appropriating large chunks of ‘valueless’, everyday speech as data for poetry texts.<sup>8</sup> Goldsmith’s interest lies in the act of reframing messy and inarticulate speech as flattened matter, or ‘content’ for a text, Grenier’s sentiment invoked the supposed naturalism of speech. Whereas, I experiment in both speech as an artifice, or opaque material, and also in forms of ‘natural speech’. My experiments are not within the clean ‘uncreative’ conceptualism of Goldsmith. My speech-mattering is also a conscious plotting of the lyric, where the lyric pertains to a poem’s mechanisms of appeal, of hailing and of signalling. The speech material in my

---

<sup>7</sup> Robert Grenier, ‘On Speech’, in *In the American Tree*, ed. by Ron Silliman (Orono: University of Maine, 1986), pp. 496–7.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Goldsmith, ‘I Love Speech’, *Poetry Foundation*, 2006  
<<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/article/179027>> [accessed 13 November 2012].

work seems to debate with both of Grenier and Goldsmith's positions, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. I experiment in the lyric, testing how it implicates identities at the point of the poem's hailing processes. Yet I also frame speech as data, or indeed, matter, to be reconstituted and re-signaled. My project examines what echoes through re-appropriations of speech and how echo alters the sound of the lyric.

The next key phrase in my title is, 'recurring mediations'. This phrase has already been somewhat described indirectly in my explanation of the feedback loop inherent to the construction of my thesis, as I will elaborate. Recursion is a process when one of the procedural steps invokes the procedure itself.<sup>9</sup> Within the content of my research I have found instances of texts or sound poems that enact the procedural operation of their own medium, for instance, the looping mechanism of a tape machine reflects the materiality of the recording back onto the sound poem. This is also a question of feedback where the crunches of the tape player are folded back into the sound poem's premise. I also theorise the physical effort of the fragile human body as existing in a recursive relationship with the work of the sound poem, its media and the voice that weaves them together. These ideas are the points of analysis regarding the tape-machined poetry of Chopin where I frame the actions of the human body and the tape machine as being held together in an analogous, recurring circuit.

The procedures in my research are likewise recursive by way of the dialogue between my portfolio works, my reflection on them, and my research into the theoretical field. Concepts, figures or objects loop through this project, coming in and out of focus but always remaining part of the mechanics of the whole. As an example, the 'black box' appears first in this thesis as a theoretical concept, explored in Chapter Two as a conceit made by Michel Serres about the impossibilities of successful communication. The 'black box' returns in Portfolio Remarks Three as a literal object, from which 'black box' becomes a kind of method to be reconceptualised and absorbed back into theory. Another example is 'echo' which appears variously in the thesis as a technical description of analogue distortion, the mythical character in a Denise Riley poem, and then a mode of practice. The metaphors or literal objects of 'echo' or 'black box' do not appear in this thesis in the chronological order of my

---

<sup>9</sup> "Recursion", *Oxford English Dictionary*, OED Online  
 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/160103?redirectedFrom=recursive#eid>> [accessed 20 September 2012].

research. I bring them into the conversation in line with the recursive loop between idea, thing and methodology.

To introduce my practice and its processing of speech-matter in recursivity I will take the instance of a single work from the portfolio. ‘From this Swam’ is a recursive poem; it has a looping sonic and performative logic to it.<sup>10</sup> It sits well as a foreword to many of the turns in my work in that the processes of its composition emerge through the performance of the text. The poem is composed from looping mutations of a found passage from Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. The sourced lines are, ‘He slid a knife under my clothes and slit them quickly from top to toe. Then he slipped them off me, while I swam for the two of us. I did the same for him, and we went on swimming.’<sup>11</sup> My initial interest in the lines was the reciprocal acts of stripping and swimming. In this reciprocation one man projects a physical action onto another man (his manservant), and the other is struggling through water as the agent of transmission. The exchange is one of having agency, being stripped, surrendering to the act of another as both bodies are mediated through water. There is also a certain bathetic comedy inherent in the transaction of swimming and having your clothes removed, and the endearing swapping over. For my text I simplified the lines into a series of what are essentially couplets. Starting with,

I swam he took my clothes off  
Then he swam while I took his clothes off  
He took my clothes off as I swam  
He swam and I took his clothes off

The text continues in variations of these lines. In doing so it sets up a circuitry, or a recursive chamber for the same sentiment to chime within. There is a switching back and forth of pronouns, becoming subject and object of the action. The two characters in the line, ‘I’ and ‘He’, are engaged in a form of communication, passing a material message back and forth. The text itself, as a line of information, seems to progress but is in fact caught in a loop, looping back on itself. It’s not an algorithmic text, neither is it procedurally clean. The alterations are somewhat messy and in the last leg of the poem much of the formula is undone, where phrases like, ‘So then’ and ‘Then as’ break open the focus. This meandering outside a neat line of procedural writing issues

---

<sup>10</sup> See portfolio, p. 235 and hear audio disk one, Track One.

<sup>11</sup> Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (London: Vintage, 2011), p. 21.



towards an idea that will be discussed in Portfolio Remarks One, on the logic of falling short, where the work and its performance operate at the fault lines of a conceptual premise of a poem.

The recursions around this narrative ‘I’ means that while there is a subject-space for a reader or listener of the text to identify with, the reiteration of ‘I’ means that the materiality of the text takes over the space for recognition. In other words, there is a shade of lyric in the poem, and of the lyric ‘I’, but a material resistance to the lyric. This complex of resistance to the lyric is most apparent in the live performance of the work. In a reading of ‘From this Swam’ the listeners cannot help but recognise me as ‘I’, in which case there is a series of conceptions and distortions about the piece. Indeed where ‘I’ is perceived to be a female then the interaction of stripping and swimming with ‘He’ has a different kind of charge. (Not that there isn’t a kind of homoeroticism in the original text.) It is through these points of confused identities that the lyric operates in my work. There is always a sense that the voice, whether subjected or not, is caught in a looping circuit.

This sense of the voice and therefore an identity being caught out is a key point in my practice of rearticulated voices. The performance of such works gives a framework where the performer-persona steps into the way of the voice. The circuitry of the poem builds up excess matter as it loops its sequence. Crucially, when performed live these excesses are mapped by vocalisations. The repeated utterance is, in every iteration, germinating exponentially. These excesses are heard as the voice varies and travels around registers, and also understood in the consistently returning proposition. The performance of ‘From this Swam’ is a process of speech *mattering*.<sup>12</sup>

### **How Does this Thesis Engage with Henri Chopin and What Does this Research Contribute to the Field of Sound Poetics?**

Both my theoretical chapters and portfolio remarks participate in the field of sound poetry as one body of research, and one single line of enquiry. While I name my longer chapters, ‘theoretical’ this should not diminish the creative engagement these chapters undergo, neither should it restrict the critical work done in my portfolio remarks. My theoretical chapters are also part of the mechanics of my practice in that

---

<sup>12</sup> Here the punning of speech *mattering*, as in, becoming increasingly important, and also as becoming more material, is fully intended.

they conceptualise philosophical models in the mode of practice. A key critical and practice-based area, for instance, is Michel Serres's notion of *parasitic noise*. I use his terminology and theoretical model to both analyse and create works. Media theorists such as N. Katherine Hayle and Friedrich Kittler also provide terminology and criticality with which to engage with the technological and intermedial aspects of practice. On the other hand texts by Theodor W. Adorno have provided material with which to conflict, and re-contextualise for my own means. All of these participatory practices with theory contribute to my methodologies and thus to the work of this thesis.

Sound poetry as a distinct theoretical field and discipline, today feels both prevalent and elusive. Now somewhat detached from the self-assertive project of its 1960s heyday, it has become a kind of generic approach to making poetry. I do not view this as a negative shift, rather I view the term and indeed the space of sound poetry to be now 'up for grabs'. Indeed much contemporary writing on sound poetry is packaged as a litany of questions: what does sound poetry mean today? Who is doing it? Are there any women doing it?<sup>13</sup> Yet any practitioner declaring him or herself to be a sound poet will find their work freighted with historical figures and manifestos. The main texts that formulate a discourse for sound poetry, or at least poetics that emerge through the sonic are Charles Bernstein's 'Close Listening',<sup>14</sup> Adalaide Morris's 'Sound States',<sup>15</sup> and more recently, Marjorie Perloff and Craig Dworkin's 'The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound'.<sup>16</sup> These primarily North American texts analyse sound poetry through the social dynamics of the poetry reading, media history and links to classic (early twentieth-century) European avant-gardes, semantics and the politics of the referent, or the wider role of sound in the arts.

Steve McCaffery has arguably contributed more than any poet or theorist to map the field of sound poetry and offer a critical language for sound poetics. His 1978 'survey' of sound poetry traces it from Lewis Carroll to Dada, from folk song and

---

<sup>13</sup> Angela Rawlings, 'Sound, Poetry: The Feature', *Jacket 2*, 2011 <<http://jacket2.org/feature/sound-poetry-feature>> [accessed 29 December 2012].

<sup>14</sup> Charles Bernstein (ed.), *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Adalaide Morris (ed.), *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Marjorie Perloff and Craig Dworkin, *The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

nursery rhyme to the 1960s European avant-garde of Henri Chopin, Sten Hanson and Bernard Heidsieck, then to the 1970s Canadian school of sound poets of which McCaffery was a key member.<sup>17</sup> In this survey McCaffery demarcates phases of sound poetry according to the levels of non-semantic experimentation and the type of technology or performance strategies the various schools employed. This survey, although diligently executed is only one of many accounts McCaffery has given of the field yet it remains one of the few comprehensive studies of the genre.<sup>18</sup> However, it is my contention that the extensiveness of McCaffery's survey has left the project of sound poetry feeling *complete*. Indeed sound poetry is now an historical category and its key contemporary practitioners, those who categorically identify their work as 'sound poetry', seem to desire to root their work in its perceived tradition that McCaffery lays out. For instance Jaap Blonk, the leading international sound poet, executes his practice through an expertise in historic sonic poetry, regularly re-performing Kurt Schwitters's 1922-1932 work, *Ursonate* and Antonin Artaud's 1947 radio artwork *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*. In the UK specifically conversations on sound poetry are usually framed as reflecting on the career of Bob Cobbing (1920-2002), the foremost artist of visual, concrete and sound poetry, genres that peaked in the 1960s and continue to define the types of innovative poetics developed in the UK.

Cobbing remained prolific throughout his life through organised workshops, live events and publication, advancing the field of experimental poetry in this country. Therefore there is a justifiable amount of contemporary research and dialogue surrounding the value of the inheritance from Cobbing's practice.<sup>19</sup> However, the heritage of Cobbing's practice, the absoluteness of McCaffery's historicising of sound poetry, and the retrospective stance of much contemporary sound poetry (based on skill and expertise), could leave the field somewhat inaccessible to an emerging practitioner such as myself. I do not consider myself to be directly following the

---

<sup>17</sup> Steve McCaffery, 'Sound Poetry: A Survey', in *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue*, ed. by B. P. Nichol and Steve McCaffery (Toronto: Underwhich Editions, 1978), pp. 6–16.

<sup>18</sup> McCaffery, 'From Phonic to Sonic: The Emergence of the Audio-Poem', in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. by Adalaide Kirby Morris (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 149–169. And 'Voices in Extremis', in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Chapel Hill and London: New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 162–178.

<sup>19</sup> For example, 'Special Issue on Bob Cobbing', *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, ed. by Robert Sheppard and Scott Thurston, 3 (Forthcoming).

tradition of poets such as Cobbing, McCaffery, Cris Cheek, or even the few women practitioners that open out potential identification with my work. For instance Lily Greenham (1924-2001) whose ‘lingual music’ was based in tape loop techniques, electronics and multi-tracking to bring out the musicality in words.<sup>20</sup> The theory and research of my work participates in this arena of sound poetry without relinquishing my practice to it. In other words I want to use the term sound poetry and therefore test it as an artform, without feeling that I belong in that lineage, which itself inherits from Dada. My aim is to create a new scene for my work to exist in, without positioning myself in an existing one. Perhaps contradictorily in order to do this I proceed through the aesthetics and discourse of an established form. However, this contradictory position will I feel, provide me with the friction necessary to secure a creative space.

I realise that the product of my practice *sounds* very different to the above mentioned poets, with dissimilar concerns. Said simply, my poetry is not typically sound poetry. While my thesis here is educated by McCaffery’s definitive version of sound poetry, by the practices of 1960s tape experiments and in particular by Chopin, my project is about reclaiming the label ‘sound poetry’ for my own, liberating its terminology and expanding what it means. My work is about speech, not words or the referent, print or music composition. My poetics frames speech as a flawed, non-sensible, unwieldy form of communication and seeks to test how performance expresses its apparatuses. Therefore my practice is located in a new space of poetics, informed by new media technologies and methods for communication and textual dispersion, while my theoretical framing is initiated by the experiments and philosophies of Chopin and his 1960s sound poetry laboratory. A key question then is: why do I use Chopin to initiate my project, and why not for instance, Lily Greenham who likewise worked with the tape loops that I am interested in, or Cobbing who remains so prominent in my UK poetry community?

Firstly I will address the question of what Chopin means to the field of sound poetics and theory. As my thesis will argue, Chopin’s project for sound poetry was exemplary in its engagement with the newly domesticated tape machine. Starting in the late 1950s and consistently using tape reel equipment until his death in 2008, Chopin was arguably responsible for emancipating poetry through electronic

---

<sup>20</sup> Lily Greenham, *Lingual Music* (London: Paradigm Discs, 2007) <<http://www.discogs.com/Lily-Greenham-Lingual-Music/release/1355529>> [accessed 18 January 2013].

technology. As McCaffery puts it in his survey: ‘Chopin's art is an art entirely dependent on the tape recorder. Chopin's “vocal micro-particulars” are only realisable through the agency of modern tape technology.’<sup>21</sup> The relationship between Chopin’s poetry and his tape machine, was an ‘irrevocable marriage’. Chopin is in this manner commonly cited as the pioneer of tape-machined poetics, but it is his own exegesis of his poetics and the sonic qualities of the tape player that have granted this project with the theoretical knowledge to learn from, and debate with. His written theories on his *audio-poésie* and the international project for sound poetry, as he saw it, include: ‘Why I am the Author of Sound Poetry and Free Poetry’,<sup>22</sup> ‘The Word is no Longer the Beginning’,<sup>23</sup> and ‘Open Letter to Aphonic Musicians’.<sup>24</sup> His publications and audio productions in his journals *Revue OU* and *Cinquième Saison* coalesced concrete and typewriter poetry, poster art, sound poetry and asemantic texts. As I shall explore, the journals had a heightened sense of their materiality, with foldout sheets, postcards, loose pages, and were influenced by crucial avant-garde movements such as Dada and the Letterist International. *Revue OU* commissioned original works and re-published key historical works by artists of Chopin’s previous generation, such as Raoul Hausmann, Stefan Themerson and François Dufrêne.

As my thesis will argue Chopin’s publishing endeavours, his praxis and his poetic theories, were all combined into a methodology for sound poetry. In this way he is an exemplary figure in the endeavours of practice-based research. In terms of what Chopin means to the process of my project specifically, the collapsing of his publishing and research, his praxis and his poetics is significant. His sound poetry investigated the audio aesthetics of both analogue media and the human body, and the merging of the two. Through this merging of body and machine he explored how poetry becomes embodied by organic and electronic operations. Chopin’s sound aesthetic of this bodily mediation, as my thesis explores, was a performance of parasitic noise. Noise, as shall be argued in terms of Chopin’s and my own poetry, is a sonic effect but is also revealing of the politics of communication, and the consequences of altered transmission. As far as Chopin was concerned, the practice of

---

<sup>21</sup> McCaffery, ‘Sound Poetry: A Survey’, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Henri Chopin, ‘Why I Am the Author of Sound Poetry and Free Poetry’, *Hispanic Arts*, 1 (1968), 80–81.

<sup>23</sup> Chopin, ‘The Word is no Longer the Beginning’, *Revue OU*, No. 40-41 (1972).

<sup>24</sup> Chopin, ‘Open Letter to Aphonic Musicians’, trans. by Jean Ratcliffe-Chopin, *Revue OU No. 33*, 1968, 11.

sound poetry was the enactment of a politics that saw the coherent word as corrupting and entangled with economics as well as Christian doctrine. From these theorisations of his own work I explore how political positions come into play in a wordless, or even, *noisy* poetry. Lastly, in the current field of sound poetry research that is occupied with Cobbing and the British school of sound poetics, Chopin is positioned in the UK at least, outside the point of focus. There is still relatively little written in English about Chopin directly, with a few dedicated commentators on his work, including McCaffery and also poet and academic, Nicholas Zurbrugg. As a consequence I have been able to have a more personal encounter with Chopin's work and engage with it on my own terms. My research into Chopin is rarely spoken through words of another theorist, and so my engagement with Chopin has been an open, breathable space to work in.

### **Chapter Summary and the Narrative of my Project**

My thesis begins with a study of Chopin's sound poetics and his relationship with the tape machine. I take as a starting point Chopin's 1961 exhibition of sound poetry in a Paris gallery, with the written announcement: 'here is the present, electronic poetry, by Chopin'. By drawing out how this electrification of poetry characterised Chopin's work, I use this critical moment in sound poetry to consider how tape mediation affected the materiality and the perception of speech. In doing so I open up questions regarding the poetics of analogue sound and the corporeality of the media object. Where Chopin and his contemporary William Burroughs endowed the tape machine with social power, I argue that the truly radical function of taped sound poetry was how it implicated the human body, transfiguring the voice and human into technology. Using N. Katherine Hayle's contemporary reflection on technology manipulation, Marshal McLuhan's 1960s critique of new media, and the philosophies of Daphne Oram concerning sound and circuits, I argue that the somatic interaction of the analogue media linked speech, the body and the machine in an entropic cycle of effort and dissipating energy.

From these areas of questioning pertaining to the somatic qualities of analogue sound, bodily effort and its translation into speech sounds, I locate areas of feedback within my own practice. In my practice work researching sea shanties and work songs, as well as the vocal hiccups of Buddy Holly's pop songs, I reveal a process of

circuitry that incorporates physical exertion, analogous vocals and the dubious ‘craft’ of performance. Debating with Chopin’s supposedly neutral body I allow my practice to detour from the anchor of sound poetry and explore the qualities of my performance-persona. Speech-matter in relation to these works concerns itself with the physical aspects of the voice, where gender identity and the voice’s fallibility come into play.

The intention of Chapter Two is to build a critical discourse for sound poetics that links the politics of transmission to the materiality of signalling. Here sound poetry is framed as a sonic hailing, through which I test the processes of interpellation and lyric address. Mediation is examined specifically through acts of radio broadcast, asking how the radiophonic voice appeals to its listener and in what ways poetry has engaged with this process on a material and virtual level. I link these areas of research to examples of my practice work where I situate myself as *a listener* in the execution of sound poetry. This area of my research highlights the voice of the poet as operating within a wider communication system, a position from which the poet can make noise and reveal poetry as distorted echo. In this practice the types of interference I play with are comedic and female, the implications of which I address in terms of performance.

In Chapter Three I shift attention away from the predominantly retrospective study of sound poetics to the contemporary field. However, I use the 1960s terminology of Intermedia as a catalyst through which to build a new critical discourse for the technological, textual and even biological mediations of poetry. After a critique of Dick Higgins’s theorisation of Fluxus intermediary practices, I analyse recent works by poet and artist, Caroline Bergvall, locating speech-matter in her work as material environments that blur boundaries between ideas of process, medium and context. By comparing her works to the DNA poetry of Christian Bök I draw out a terminology for Bergvall’s translational poetry that replaces ‘intermedia’ with ‘milieu’ and ‘mingling’. The aim of this chapter is to equip my practice-based research with new critical tools that diversify the conceptual potential of sound poetics. Much of the critical language from this and the previous chapter comes into play in the following portfolio remarks where a key poem is explored in terms of its milieu of obscured communication, humour and nonsense.

Chapter Four is decisive in that it addresses the active loop between the practice and theoretical strands of my project. This chapter is constructed as an in-

depth report on an installation work I made for an exhibition at the 2011 Text Festival. My installation was itself a research space, compiling transmission-related objects from the Bury Museum stores and audio documents from previous Text Festival events into an archive display. The report gives me the opportunity to reflect on the mechanisms of the archive within sound poetry, media and speech. The installation therefore embodies the overall feedback loop of this project; the loop of corporeal media objects, transmission, mediation, and archive, thus looping back again.

My portfolio texts sit at the back of the thesis while a CD of audio versions of the poems is placed at the front, and in this way my portfolio circulates the critical work done by the chapters and remarks. To navigate this thesis, each poem should be heard and read at the point at which it is discussed in the remarks. The CD contains considered recordings and audio documentation from live events, to reveal the dynamism of performance as well as the intricate mechanisms within various works. It is hard to say which versions, live recordings or composed sound pieces, scripts or drafts, are *the* definitive poem. All versions seem to me to be documentation and score, and I am satisfied that an ultimate version of a poem is continuously displaced by re-siting, re-performing and re-recording. In bringing this poetry together in this thesis it is my intention to gather together a cosmos of my practice that behaves as one conversation, computing ideas about the nature of speech and sound as negotiated by poetics. In order to initiate this process of poetic practice and research, I begin with an examination of Henri Chopin.



## Chapter One

### The Media Object of Sound Poetry and the Performative Body

#### The History of the 'Electronic Poetry' of the Future

In 1961 the sound poetry artist Henri Chopin exhibited one of his earliest *audio-poèmes* in the Galerie Mesure in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The recording of *Espace et Gestes*, dated 1959, was presented on a tape machine alongside a record player playing a loaned 78rpm record of Kurt Schwitters performing his composition, *Die Ursonate*, dated between 1922 and 1932. Accompanying the media was a prophetic introduction written by Chopin reading, 'Here's the past, Schwitters, which is purely phonetic, and here's the present, electronic poetry, by Chopin.'<sup>1</sup> This historical gesture, or at least its anecdote, is the starting point for this thesis for the following reasons. Firstly and most significantly it introduces us to Chopin. His poetics and artistic practice are foregrounded here in terms of the epochal move he determined them by, and also as being key to the constellation of questions and themes at work in this research. The body of work left by Chopin, and its historical relationship with media technologies, is the spring-board for this investigation into the voice as a material for poetry. Chopin's archive, mode of practice and his theoretical literature provides this thesis with its formative substance, as well as a surface for friction and debate in the conceptual development of speech-matter.

Again we begin at the Galerie Mesure. Chopin's act of presenting side-by-side his own work and the late Dada masterpiece was typical of his drive to draw out his project for *audio-poésie* as a continuation of a Dadaist experiment in language and the early twentieth-century avant-garde. Chopin was making the distinction, within a reading of his own practice, between the two forms of sound-based poetry. One form, an inheritor of the early twentieth-century avant-garde tradition, is presented as a poetics firmly anchored in language. The 'pure' phonetics as he names it is an expression of language, an imitation of speech. While Chopin admits a debt to this turning away from semantic sense within poetic meaning, he positions the 'electronic' media used to compose his work as an integral part of the text. The newness of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Zurbrugg, 'Henri Chopin Interview', *Art & Design: The Multimedia Text*, 10 (1995), 23–30 (p. 23).

electronic media itself, and its use as a writing mechanism, is what made *Espace et Gestes* contemporary, rooted in modernity.

Chopin's call to directly compare the two texts is a prompt to compare their relationship with technology. It asks how the body, language and performer are to be figured in the dynamic that addresses the role of technology in art and modern life.

*Ursonate* can be read as a somewhat nightmarish score featuring vocal impressions of weapon machinery and between-war paranoia, with a primal resistance to language (the translation is literally the 'primal sonata'), whereas Chopin's piece is a gleeful indulgence in technology. The audio shape of the work sensualises the tape machine used to create it, and draws a spatial plane of sound where the gestures of the text are built through sound editing rather than a writerly score. Chopin's piece relates the duration of its playing to the spaces of the lungs, the ears, and the room its sound is dispersed into. To listen to *Espace* is to be aware of lungs being exhausted into the machine, as the sound of the recording is exhausted into the room. The piece consists of low bassy machine growls, with spatialised breaths and air sounds. There are occasional recognisable vocal shapes and chanting but it holds a consistent ambiguity between distorted vocals and the clunks, hisses and squeals of the tape machine itself. Layered over that of course, you hear the fuzzy tape quality typical of the time.

In neither Schwitters's nor Chopin's piece is there a complete retreat from recognisable language. One can easily pick out the native languages, German and French, of the artists in both scores. It is the reduction of language to a sound technology that is performed in the works. The *Ursonate*, consisting of German-sounding phonemes, does at times sound like authentic speech, at other points during its process the performer (particularly in Schwitters's own voice) of the text spills into chanting, singing and at times (in the middle section of the sonata) mimics machines and rat-a-tat-tat noises of weapons, evoking World War I soundscapes, and the ascendance of military Germany. It can also be argued that Schwitters is using nonsemantic language as a weapon in itself. The sonata is an attack on imposed language, and in the spirit of modernity the attack is mechanic. It's a machined mimesis, reducing the performing body into a technology. In this work, the sound of the voice follows the code of the score, in an input-output, kinetic mechanism. Technology is embedded into the *Ursonate*'s performing voice as much as the text. In the instance of Chopin's exhibiting of the piece on a record player in Paris, the three strata of Schwitters' sonata – the record player, the performer's voice, the score –

would have been definable and clearly distinguishable. The record player was stationed only to re-play a document of a performance. Visitors in the gallery would have known to listen past the media, and to focus on the sonata. For Chopin's piece the poetry itself had become 'electric'. Where the body begins and tape machine ends was to become inseparable, and the score melted into the processes of sound manipulation and analogue tape cutting. The tape technology is fused with voice at the point of the vocalising mouth. The materiality of sound, the speech-matter, is electrified.

This chapter will examine what this 'electrification' of speech does to the material of poetry. In relation to this I will ask in what ways the media object's corporeality replaces, signifies and implicates the artist's body. Chopin's bodily strategies will be measured against the differing philosophies and practices of 1960s artists whose work existed through sound or in relation to sound theory, namely William Burroughs and Daphne Oram, and in relation to wider historical theories of the body in relation to technology. Through this study of the field of creative sound manipulation, this chapter will argue that the new tape machine contributed to a notion of the poetic sensibility of analogue media. I will consider the social context of the tape machine through a consideration of work by theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Marshall McLuhan, who made significant statements on new media as such. Furthermore this chapter will argue that the tape machine's new availability was used as a means to take ownership of personal speech, transforming it into material. A key question will be to what extent did manipulated speech, where the speaker had the new ability to technologically interfere with their own voice, represent something essentially egalitarian or empowering. In view of these questions therefore, can we begin to regard Chopin's declaration, 'here is electronic poetry' as a revolutionary statement?

### **Tape Playing: Chopin's Uses and Interaction with Tape**

In the exhibition at the Galerie Mesure, Chopin was demonstrating that the genealogy of his *audiopoésie* lay in the early twentieth-century and Dadaist performance scores, composed of nonsemantic, nonrepresentational speech. But he imposed a reading of his works that privileged the method of composition, through electro-acoustic arrangement. It is now part of Chopin's mythology that the commercial availability of

the tape recorder, and the development of electronic recording technology in general, were the medial vehicle for his burgeoning poetics.<sup>2</sup> His work couldn't have existed as it did without the tape machine as Chopin freely admitted. The new magnetised tape machines, developed in the early 1930s but not widely available until the late 1950s, are often simply historicised as an appendix to the story of phonography and gramophones before the leap into digital.<sup>3</sup> But the differences between the two mediums, as Chopin may have only incidentally highlighted by placing a record player next to a tape player, are crucial to the 1960s re-conception of 'sound poetry' as a distinct art form. One distinctive feature of the tape medium is the 'poetic' by-product of sound and voice becoming increasingly storable and editable. The analogous loops of magnetised acetate strips were easily manipulated through their very form, and invited manual meddling. The participatory act of merely playing a reel of tape, the hands-on, already intrusive nature of loading and threading a reel, makes the operator's hand itself technologised. Steven Connor describes it thus:

Gramophone disks are fascinating, but tape is intriguing – remembering the relation of that word to knitting (*tricoter*), trickery, intricacy, which connects to the wholes tangled thematics of thread in the human imagination. . . . The problem, but also the performative opportunity and provocation, of the tape player lay in the fact that one was required to do so much in relation to it – most particularly in the ticklish ritual of threading the tape into the machine, and then the even more exquisitely satisfying task of securing it on the empty or receiving spool.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore the act of recording, or transcribing one's voice onto the entrail-esque slithers, then feeding it, looping it, tugging it and even severing it, frames the operation of 'writing a text' as haptic, sensual, even violent. It reconfigures a sense of speech as a physical material. The ontology of the voice therefore comes into play through this new media. It was after all through tape rather than gramophone that the common domestic family heard their voices as a recorded product for the first time. The process of the tape player's domestication, as we will see later, is as slippery as

---

<sup>2</sup> See Steve McCaffery, 'From Phonic to Sonic: The Emergence of the Audio-Poem', in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. by Adalaide Morris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 149–169.

<sup>3</sup> Steven Connor, 'Looping the Loop: Tape-Time in Burroughs and Beckett' (presented at the Taping the World, University of Iowa, 2010) <<http://www.stevenconnor.com/looping/>> [accessed 10 December 2011].

<sup>4</sup> Connor, para. 5 of 33.

its playing mechanisms. Its awkwardness in the domestic setting, resisting the easy integration enjoyed by radio, phonograph and TV is certainly relevant to tape's adoption by the experimental art scene.

The tape recorder, according to Chopin, did for the human voice, what the microscope did for knowledge of blood cells; revealing the intricate particles, details and finite variations of the vocal complex.<sup>5</sup> His experiments in recorded speech noises and 'buccal' sounds (relating to the cheeks and mouth cavity) revealed a world of energetic material. This exploration begins with works like *Pêche de Nuit*, from 1957, one of his earliest examples of *poésie sonore* (only later did he adopt the phrase *audiopoésie* when his work became more technically advanced.) In this work one can hear Chopin figuring the audio atmosphere of night-fishing through the voice. The sea, the boat engine and the fish are all demonstrated through vocal textures. It's an exploration of the voice and its ranges, told through the pitches and wavelengths of the abstracted scene. For Chopin this new engagement with the voice at a micro-particle level, re-connected his poetry with orality and rhetorical traditions, within a radical new structure of electro-acoustics.<sup>6</sup> He saw his experiments with the microphone and tape machine as *research* into the voice, one that re-awakened its viscerality. Claiming the heritage of early Dada phonetic-poetry innovators and Lettrism, Chopin saw his project as re-discovering oral traditions through new media.

By giving sound flesh, it became a material tool for poetry and art, one of re-forgetting the rules and structures of the page. This new technology enabled the stripping down of research into the voice. In Chopin's case, performances and exercises in sound no longer needed to rely on theatrical ensembles or choirs, as the Dada Cabaret shows had done. Therefore it was perhaps a purer, more focused investigation into the individual's physical access to speech, and thereby investigation into systems of power in language. It is questionable in the material that unfolded during his life's work, whether Chopin re-discovered the Dada project for oral, raw experience of language, or whether Chopin initiated a poetics that saw the 'primal' community of vocalising collectives completely undone, and instead contributed to a new, *tape-machined* subject. While this is in conflict with Chopin's own utopian claims for sound poetics as accessing 'primitive' speech, one can't help but recognise his tape machine experiments as something distinctly apart from the improvisatory

---

<sup>5</sup> Zurbrugg, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Zurbrugg, p. 23.

sound poetics contemporary to him. This will be discussed later in reference to UK schools of sound poetics that promoted ideas of returning to oral communities through poetry. It also warrants a close interrogation of the link between Chopin's tape machine work and his political ideals for poetry. For now a picture is building of a subject mode devised by Chopin's poetry that rather than celebrate primordial culture, places an emphasis on a dynamic between the human and the machine. In other words, the poetics seems to be more about the human being made compatible with technology, rather than each other.

This claim that Chopin's work focused the link between the human and the machine is in agreement with Michael Davidson's writing about the role of the tape player in this era of poetry. Davidson makes the point that American practitioners and poets such as Charles Olson and Jerome Rothenberg were also promoting a new kind of vocal authenticity while underplaying the role of the enabling technology. Davidson notes that other artists however, allowed the tape recorder to have a presence. He names Burroughs, who will be discussed here, David Antin and Laurie Anderson, as artists who allowed the sound of the technology to come through.<sup>7</sup> The argument in this chapter will go further than suggesting the tape player had a significant, yet mainly aesthetic presence. It will be proposed here that the tape player in Chopin's work was not merely used as equipment, and presented as such, but incorporated into the bodily technology. In other words the mechanics of the body and those of the medium were integrated at the molecular level of the work, thus developing an embodied analogue poetics.

The essential storage capacity of the tape recorder, and the vinyl records used for distribution, is significant to the poetic operation within the texts and their transmission. It was the analogue storage mediums that gave the excesses of speech a presence in the sound of sound poetry. The earlier instances of Chopin's *audio-poèmes* used the semiotics of tone and pitch to create durational voice-scapes such as *Vibrespace*, 1963 or *Sol Air*, 1962-64. Abstracted utterances, breaths or whispered 'figures' of speech perform a heightened acoustic viability as an analogous audio wave. This style is sustained in later pieces where the voice is manipulated and prolonged until it transcends the common experience of human speech, such as in *Le*

---

<sup>7</sup> Michael Davidson, 'Technologies of Presence: Orality and the Tapevoice of Contemporary Poetics', in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. by Adalaide Morris (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p.100.

*Rire est Debout*, 1969, and the plane of the voice becomes pure sound. At the same time the length, sonic style, and characteristic motion of the scores seem to follow the circular physicality of the sound wave. This further implicates the body in the recording device, where the subject is pushed through the sound technology, layering the body over the sound file. For now these are provisional ideas about the inherent analogue nature of the sound poetry produced by Chopin. Indeed the notion of an analogue *character* of sound is only possible from this privileged position of contemporary digital culture. I will now address what the poetics of analogue sound and the 1960s tape machine can and should mean in terms of sound poetry.

### **Analogue Myths and Realities**

What is it about the dynamics of Chopin's poetry that is essential to analogue sound media? Later I will consider the haptic, clunky physique of the 1950s and 1960s tape machine, where to interact with it was to put your body in relation to it. The emotive response to analogue technology as a bodily force is also rooted in the notion of the properties of a tape or phonograph being seamlessly analogous to the sound wave. The somewhat romanticised notion of analogue sound insists that the body of the equipment and the reverberation through space are corresponding.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, where the physicality of the wave and the circular shape of the media object relate, there is something inherently somatic about analogue sound. This may be true, broadly speaking, but contemporary sound theorists are now working to limit the extent to which this conception of analogue is used to regard it as *authentic* and *essential* compared to digital information. Media theorist Derek Robinson describes this mis/conception as owing to the linguistic metaphor, rooted in the term analogue, that is in fact a relic of a 'blip' in technology history. That the term 'analogue' has come to define something smoothly varying with 'seamless and inviolable veracity of time and space', has its origins in the early analogue electric computers developed in the 1930s and 1940s. These were developed to test science and engineering models, in simulation to electronic currents, 'A model is something standing in analogical

---

<sup>8</sup> Media theorist, Friedrich Kittler has arguably contributed to this myth by equating digitisation with standardisation, a move that Kittler argues amounts to a 'loss of soul' from data. See Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

relationship to the thing being modeled. The medium of the analogue was voltage, the electromotive force flowing variously and continuously through a circuit.’<sup>9</sup>

It is from this discourse on computer ‘systems’ and ‘circuits’, developed to test the analogies of electricity against information models, that we get this notion of a force of sound energy, travelling through media, translated into airwaves. Sound synthesising technology was developed from these electric analogue computers, but while these were quickly replaced by digital technology after the war, the mainstream sound media were to remain analogue until the advent of the CD in the 1980s. One reason for this is suggested by Robinson to be the usage of analogue synthesisers by the musical avant-garde. Therefore, those musicians contributed to the notion that sound is something inherently physical, and analogue tape or vinyl performs a truer version of the sound wave.

Our physical, almost spiritual relationship with analogue helped fix the idea that the media traces the shape of sound itself, in a continuous, faltering flow, are part of an aesthetic and esthetic ideal. This fixation contributes to an illusion that lingers today, where analogue sound is regarded as real sound, and digital sound is an abstracted symbol of sound generated through binary digits.<sup>10</sup> It can also be said that the authentic immanence of analogue sound is by virtue of this faltering line. In the myth of analogue the link between space and time is unbroken, the loop of the inscription is continuous and is subject to decay and excessive removal. Within this reading a digital error is a break in the system, but in analogue the error is incorporated into the sound. The dirtier the sound the more integrity the medium has. Feedback is one such error that highlights the core processes of analogue. Without loops, energy fields, and systematised circuits, feedback wouldn’t occur. Feedback reveals something about sound in and of itself, therefore has been imbued with a poetic reverence. Feedback, and a system’s capacity for self-responsiveness, gives an audio medium’s set-up the ability to spill over into excess. The equilibrium can easily be disrupted and the ‘force’ of energy escapes control. For Robinson this way of regarding analogue-echo was, and is, similar to the early modern notion of energy as elemental:

---

<sup>9</sup> Derek Robinson, ‘Analog’, in *Software Studies: A Lexicon*, ed. by Mathew Fuller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Aden Evens, *Sound Ideas: Music, Machines, and Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).



This picture of circulatory dependent systems, bound together in dynamic feedback loops, in many ways marked a return to ideas current two centuries before. The image of electricity as a strangely sexed fluid circulating endlessly in closed loops had been advanced by Volta, Franklin, Amper, and other late-eighteenth-century philosophers. A hydraulic or pneumatic analogy was already present in Descartes's diagrams of fiery ethers conveying sensation and volition by nerves going to and from the brain.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore instilled in our foundational knowledge of analogue sound systems and feedback loops is this sensory ideal that our bodies fit into the elemental circulations. Without wanting to suggest that a poet like Chopin was playing Frankenstein with his tape machines, installing his bodily fluids in a network with the flowing elements within the machine, there is something techno-organic being aimed at in these works. This seems compatible with the mythology of analogue sound being elemental and linked to the body as Robinson describes. This is especially the case in the performances where Chopin swallowed, sucked and spat into the microphone, as will be discussed. Here the body is placed in the position of conductor, its noises and organic systems are in feedback loop with the mechanics of the medium. Chopin creates a kind of speech noise that enacts fusions between man and machine, placing the body before the written language.

I will question how and why this performative body that was co-joined with the medium served as a social function for Chopin. Was the freeing of speech from language by way of the machine a means of provoking ideas of *free speech* and confused identities? At this stage it is useful to consider how Chopin *internalised* the analogue media; how he used the recording operation in conjunction with the technical movements of his mouth in order to compose a work. What is not clear in Chopin's exegesis for his poetics is whether he credits human proficiency with the technology or the media itself. In this following statement we can see Chopin's emphasis on the human: 'Vocal and buccal power must be taken more and more into consideration if human power is to be explained and proclaimed.'<sup>12</sup> Something to consider therefore is how, in Chopin's poetics, technology endows the human with artistic and social 'power', and the extent to which this claimed empowerment was

---

<sup>11</sup> Robinson, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Henri Chopin, *Oh* (London: Balsam Flex, no date).

made explicit in his work. I will evaluate this claim for power in terms of the social promise of the newly available technology.

### **Freed Speech: Sound Poetry and Empowerment**

With the tape recorder as the main dynamic of his sound poetry experiments, Chopin believed he was engendering a democratic heart in his sound aesthetics. He articulated the social need for this alternative poetics in his 1967 manifesto ‘Why I am the Author of Sound Poetry and Free Poetry’ where he argues against the ‘abusiveness’ of the word, which benefits regimes, and decreases freedoms. ‘The Word today’, as Chopin said, ‘serves no one except to say to the grocer: give me a pound of lentils’.<sup>13</sup> This critique of legible language suggests that there is a specificity of desire and need imposed onto the individual by the word. If the word is bound up in economy, it threatens to negate choice and limit freedom of expression. Significantly Chopin chose to combat the word by emphasising the vocals and sounds of the body. This is political in that, if you voice sounds that gesture towards that of ‘ordinary’ language, but by-pass it, exceed it, intervene in it and make a nonsense of it, you undermine language’s use. This is was a battle for a subjectivity gained through accessing the internal voice of the human rather than social language. Chopin’s poetics of bodily sound and buccal ambience was a drive to elevate the ‘mimetic sound of man’. This was to go further than the seemingly similar aims of Futurists, Dadaists & Lettrists, which still relied on the ‘support of syllables & letters’ and therefore represented a subjectivity that relied on language.<sup>14</sup>

In this way the sound poetry practiced by Chopin post-1953 revealed the empowered, a-socialised body as a phonic, ‘complex factory’ in and of itself. The auditory event of human speech was the point of departure for Chopin’s scores. His method was based on improvising a sequence onto tape, developing it through recording-listening-re-recording until it had formed itself into a durational shape, and the score would be ‘transcribed’ or learned from that. Therefore there is a process of interlocution between the poet and the tape recorder, not at the level of language, but at the level of compatible sound. For Chopin this was a two-way exchange between the human mouth and the recording technology. It was a part of a political ideology

---

<sup>13</sup> Chopin, ‘Why I Am the Author of Sound Poetry and Free Poetry’, p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Chopin, ‘Why I Am the Author of Sound Poetry and Free Poetry’, p. 81.

that resisted the pen and paper, and the language based-articulation. Any recognisable words that surfaced during the process serve to highlight the ‘pure’ sound of the rest of the composition.

Chopin was politically committed to untangling the primacy of the voice from the imposing ties of language, which would bind it to the institutions he opposed. The drive to depose rigid structures of language and economy on the human subject was the impetus in Chopin’s own work but also in his publishing. Between 1958 and 1974 Chopin's prolific publishing practice was as decisive to his project for the avant-garde as his own sound poetry compositions. *Cinquième Saison* (nineteen issues from 1958 to 1961, published in France), and *Revue OU* (thirteen issues between 1964 to 1972, published in Britain with international availability) were, in theory, review magazines of the sound and visual poetry scene. In practice they were boxed assemblages of audio-visual documents and items. Each publication comprised of loose sheets of concrete/typewriter poems; manifestos; text fragments; fold out poster art; record artwork; and one vinyl record per issue of electronic poetry recordings.<sup>15</sup> Much of fluently readable text contained political satire or rebellious musings on art history. The 'reading' experience is an encounter with a heteroglossia of voices, typographies, diagrams, images, folds and textures. The indexes are fluid, even contents pages are incorporated into the anarchically, scattered typeset on the front covers. Each work is infrequently labelled by the corresponding artist and any description is simple if included.

Every item resists classification, or is presented purely on the grounds of its objecthood. This resistance to classification is related to Chopin's revolt against the word, the dominance of the page, and therefore the operation of the book. The reviews, as a collection of artefacts, are playing a game with semiotics, in the same way as Chopin's *audio-poèmes* or typewriter poems emphasise the materiality of vocal/textual fragments over the linguistic faculty. The loose leafs and lack of indexing suggests a positioning against the regimentation of language-classification: ‘The word is no longer the beginning’, says a pullout sheet in *Revue OU* No. 40-41.<sup>16</sup>

Encountering Chopin’s collection (as far as is possible from access to the personal archive as exhibited at Cubitt Gallery 2009, small collections held in libraries, and various personal compilations of material made by independent

---

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter One Image Page at the end of this chapter.

<sup>16</sup> Chopin, ‘The Word is no Longer the Beginning’, *Revue OU*, No. 40-41, 1972.

collectors and fans) one is presented with a distinctive model of archive as a concept. The engagement is with a solid collection of physical objects, but the paper works are only one aspect of the material that Chopin brought together. The sound works that were just as significant in being published and re-distributed in the *Revue OU* journals, now occupy a different place in the archive. The audio works that were published on vinyl records are now mainly accessed separately in digital format. The vinyl records originally distributed with the journals and the illusive original tape reels are not made available to play and interact with in the same way the poster and visual poetry documents are. They are too perishable and too loud to engage in a library context. How these now fit within the archive is problematic, in terms of what archival strategies a researcher can employ to ‘experience’ the sound pieces in their home media.<sup>17</sup>

The archival experience of Chopin’s reviews is now related to the obsolete and outmoded media to which the texts are bound: typewriter, screen print and locked-in archives of the tapes and records. However, this archival experience is in some ways already inbuilt into the composition and arrangement of the publications by Chopin himself. Apart from the seeming discursiveness in the look of the *OU* publications, reveal a certain type of organising: Chopin’s bringing together of irregular voices, textualities within the ethos of a non-fixed, nonconformist poetics. Publishing text-works and sound recordings of key figure of the Berlin Dada, Raoul Hausmann, is not only a way of citing Dada as part of *Revue OU’s* lineage, it also locates these publications as archive-assemblages, which connect with historic events. The journals’ unbound leaves physically prevent the published works being literarily anthologised, yet appropriated into a specific archive. *OU* No. 26/27 (published in 1965-67) features a recording of one of Hausmann’s 1918 phonetic poems along with one of Chopin’s *audio-poèmes* from 1963.<sup>18</sup> Later editions similarly feature idiosyncratically matched artists: Hausmann alongside a William Burroughs recording; Bob Cobbing of the British Poetry Revival with Lettrist and European contemporaries of Chopin; British book artist Tom Phillips, and similarly disparate

---

<sup>17</sup> My own access to the appropriate listening of Chopin sound pieces and publications, on vinyl or original analogue format, has been owing to the good will of private collectors willing to loan copies. This, and the ‘one-off’ opportunity granted by the ‘Three Minute’ exhibition of Chopin’s daughter’s archive at Cubitt Gallery, London, 2008. Otherwise listening to Chopin in archives, such as that in the Poetry Library at SUNY Buffalo is restricted to digitised versions, which are tantamount to listening to Chopin’s work online through databases such as Ubuweb.

<sup>18</sup> *Revue OU*, No. 26-27, 1966.

practitioners. The consequences of this model for organising and publishing are that the bodies of Chopin's archive retroactively link with various archaeologies. In the journals Chopin exhumes Dada, to play against American Beat poetry, and contextualises the European 1960's avant-garde against pre-war political writing. It was a way of creating a network of sound poetics that was analogous to Chopin's manifesto; the economy of the word must be displaced, and to paraphrase, 'there is power in shouting alone'. What did he foresee would happen to the sound objects in the archive? Did he foresee that the obsolete media employed to produce it would eventually silence the 'shout'? It's worth now considering in depth what Chopin's aspirations for the tape machine and his media output were.

### **Riot, Rebellion and Mistrust of the Word: Sound Poetry Emerges as Form**

Chopin's positioning of himself in opposition to the 'word', was a common point of ethical and stylistic concern between him and radical writer and textual experimentalist, William Burroughs. While Chopin pronounces the word to be a social strain on the individual, limiting a subject's freedom, Burroughs positioned the word as an organism that was the 'other half of man'. Man's relationship with the word for Burroughs was a bodily counterpoint, his project was to separate the body (or highlight the impossibility of its separation) from the word's invasion, and the constant internal monologue. The points of comparison between the two writers, the crossover ideals and divergences, are therefore relevant. Burroughs offers a way to combine the two threads of inquiry into Chopin's work presented here: the political dynamics of the recorded voice, and the body as a technologised entity producing sound matter.

Burroughs was significant to Chopin's publishing project and ethos. His essay, 'The Electronic Revolution', was first published by Chopin for his *Collection OU*, in 1971. It was both a contribution to the discourse on sound and societal emancipation. It is suggested from comments from both Chopin and Burroughs that Burroughs neither felt nor wished to be directly 'in league' with the sound poetry movement, nor did Chopin feel Burroughs contributed to it in a dedicated fashion, something Chopin

found typical with American writers.<sup>19</sup> Yet he realised Burroughs' importance in terms of thinking out the potential role of the tape player in the shift away from word-dominated poetry, or indeed society, as he said 'we must quote Burroughs though we owe him nothing directly.'<sup>20</sup>

'The Electronic Revolution' was published by the time tape players had become somewhat more portable, but still not the neat cassette tapes of the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> In the text Burroughs determines the tape machine as a potentially 'revolutionary weapon'. Burroughs calls forth a public use of tape recordings, as *interference* in establishment communication signals. In an act of audio 'riot', tape players should be noised by people lining up in the street like 'signal drums', cutting into public officials' speech with animal cries, sex noises, coughs and audio excesses. This is perhaps something like a primal sonata evoked by Schwitters, but for Burroughs it is a direct interaction with contemporary media. Sonic attack is proposed to act as a repelling of the mass media barrage. The deluge depicted by Burroughs was to disrupt, or unveil what he called the 'mutter line', the stream of oppressive sound burdening the public through media and establishment political channels.<sup>22</sup> Working on the principle that riot sounds would cause a riot, he continues making bodily links between the tape recording and the body; that sounds of vomit would induce sickness, sex noises can prompt an orgasm and that the nervous system is in itself a (de)scrambling device. In accordance with Burroughs' polemic statement running throughout his writing, that language is a virus, parasitic like a tape worm, he says, 'It will be seen that scrambled speech already has the many characteristics of virus. When the speech takes and unscrambles, this occurs compulsively against the will of the subject. A virus must remind you of its presence.'<sup>23</sup>

This is a reminder that for Burroughs the word is a continuous presence and the other half to man. The reflective, combative capacity of the tape machine was a means to corrupt this presence. For Burroughs the tape recording is 'continuous' with sound reality and the cut-up or scrambling of recorded speech enacts an exposure of

---

<sup>19</sup> In *La Poesie Sonore Internationale*, Chopin seems to lament to the lack of 'coming togetherness' among the European and American artists working in 'sonore' works. See Henri Chopin, 'Poetry & Sound', *Ear Magazine: Sound Text Issue*, 1981, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Chopin, 'Open Letter to Aphonic Musicians'.

<sup>21</sup> The Sony Walkman was launched in Japan and USA in 1979, and the UK in 1980. See, Paul du Gay, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London, California: Sage, 1997), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> William Burroughs, *The Electronic Revolution* (Cambridge: Blackmoor Head Press, 1971), p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Burroughs, p. 19.

sound reality and the mutter-line.<sup>24</sup> For Burroughs the societal potential of the tape player is always linked to its capacity to activate bodily impulses, and to act as a body itself. To scramble and to be scrambled is always a battle for subjectivity in the world of Burroughs, a sadomasochistic battle that can never be lost or won. The subject who speaks is infected with the virus of language, with which they have the power to spread the disease. Both language and speaker are parasite to each other.

This notion of language as a parasite is the Burroughsian mode of thinking, yet it can tie in with Chopin's praxis as foregrounded here. Both approaches state that the noise of the body can be harnessed and used to undermine the institutions of language. Both signify the tape machine as a utilitarian device that could somehow become conceptually compatible with human biology. Yet for Burroughs the riotous sounds, the interference and the sonorous violence was a project for chaos. He desired unintelligibility. Chopin's compositions suggest an *articulation* of a-signifying vocal sounds. There is an order and a considered design. As an artist he does not crave violence and chaos, but comprehensibility by other means. In Chopin's praxis the tape player functioned to electrify the sounds and give them form, and the possibility for interaction. While for Burroughs the word was a sickness, deployed on citizens, for Chopin the word was corrupt and 'abusive' but its affects could be diverted. While Burroughs wanted to scramble and destroy, Chopin aimed for a kind of synaesthesia to displace the prominence of the word. He says,

I'm fond of my noises and of my sounds, I admire the immense complex factory of a body... But I do not have to have the benediction of the written idea. I do not have to have my life derived from the intelligible. I do not want to be subject to the true word which is forever misleading or lying.<sup>25</sup>

For Chopin the '*sonore*' of '*Le Poesie Sonore International*' (his 1980 survey of sound poetry) was inextricably linked to the electrification of sound. Taking the name 'sound poetry' from Brion Gysin in 1963 he deemed the *sonore* of sound as electrified vibrations originated in the mouth. Chopin envisioned this breed of poetry as one that no longer belonged to the conventional book 'unlike Lettrism which remains in the

---

<sup>24</sup> Connor, para. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Chopin, 'Why I Am the Author of Sound Poetry and Free Poetry', p. 81.

book'.<sup>26</sup> These, below, are the characteristics of poetry, equally generative and destructive, necessary for the 'birth' of sound poetry, something that still in 1981 seemed like a fantasy:

1) the end of the written word, 2) the end of the book, 3) the end of the Judo-Christian civilization, 4) the challenging of national poetry, 5) the acceptance of inter-stellar communication, 6) assuming completely the re-cycling (sorry for this word) of the poet, who is no longer alone with his ego but is communicating as an extrovert and 7) a complete break with the historic heritage with poetry, etc.<sup>27</sup>

What can we say about this rebellion against the archaic logos? In this list of necessities there is a significant association between the written word as such, Biblical dominance and the heritage of page-based poetry. Any society based on the institution of the book, the Bible to the poetry book, is for Chopin a dominance that needs breaking apart. It's a system that doesn't recognise an outside, or an Other. So when Chopin names the need to 'communicate as an extrovert' he is claiming that the excesses and 'extra versions' of speech *as* sound have the potential to rupture logocentrism. In other words, using speech as pure sound-material *extroverts* its meaning beyond linguistics. His 'new' version of poetry has an ethical imperative to perform the secular, subjective, artistic combat against the word. Can we say then, that Chopin is also acting to attack and scramble the mutter line? For Chopin its reach doesn't begin with the whine of the TV or radio as it does for Burroughs, but with the history of the printed word. The mutter-line is a history caught in the doctrine of Judeo-Christianity, the release from which is possible owing to the tape machine, and more importantly, the subject's vocalisation through it.

Theorists of sound poetry's technologies, Larry Wendt (a sound poet himself), has discussed how the 1960s socialisation of accessible media, shaped the art form. It's no coincidence that the first international sound poetry festival, the artform's peak year, was held in 1968. This was a year of 'accentuated awareness of the inconsistencies of established national policies brought about by new media forms'.<sup>28</sup> This references the Vietnam War and the discrepancies between governmental

---

<sup>26</sup> Chopin, 'Poetry & Sound', *Ear Magazine: Sound Text Issue*, 1981, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Chopin, 'Poetry & Sound', p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Larry Wendt, 'Sound Poems for an Era of Reduced Expectations', *Ear Magazine: Sound Text Issue*, 1981, 8–9.



information, media coverage of military atrocities and the public desired transparency. Therefore sound poetry's disillusionment with the spoken word and newfound faith in new media, could be framed as a distinctly 1960s trait. It is within this milieu that Bob Cobbing saw himself and Chopin returning to oral authenticity through the machine:

But both he and I are attempting to use a new means of communication which I believe is an old method re-established, which is more natural more direct and more honest than, for example, the present day voice of politics and religion.<sup>29</sup>

The aesthetic ideals of a release from 'conventional' poetics were tied up therefore with the political ideals of emancipation. This is another link to Dada and Futurism, which showed that when sensible language fails to make logical or truthful statements, the people retreat to noise. When technology is used against people and language used to manipulate and control, or the 'industrial bombardment of noises and the fragmented cries of people concentrated within urban areas became a new model for an ecology of noise' then we need a 'system quite unlike music or writing' one 'simultaneously acoustical and semantical'.<sup>30</sup>

It's recognised that in the mid to late 1960s sound poetry enjoyed a period of unified development, constituted for the first time as a coherent, distinct discipline.<sup>31</sup> This is exemplified by the establishing of long running International Sound Poetry festivals, models of criticism and specific fields of discourse developing in conjunction with its widening schools of practice. Yet while sound poetry's development hinges on the freedom to express a poetics as a physical acoustic event via electronics, there is a margin of distinction in the various approaches to the contemporary technology and to the political ethos behind them. The distinction seems to lie in the acceptance of the tape machine, the extent to which the machine is incorporated into the performance and therefore the text, and the degree to which the notion of oral community and the human is privileged. Some theorists like Wendt seem to lament the fading out of the sound poets using this electronic technology during the 1970s, in favour of a 'return to nature', the tribal idealisms and

---

<sup>29</sup> Bob Cobbing, 'Some Statements on Sound Poetry', in *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue*, ed. by Steve McCaffery and B. P. Nichol (Toronto: Underwhich Editions, 1978), p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Wendt, 'Sound Poems for an Era of Reduced Expectations', pp. 8–9.

<sup>31</sup> McCaffery, 'From Phonic to Sonic', pp. 149–169.

fetishisation of so-called ‘primitive’ oral cultures which can be found in Cobbing’s work and contemporaneous British sound poets. Electronic modulation was replaced with choral chanting, or rather, highly devised, group performances based on chance improvisation and free interpretations of a score. Poet, artist and theoriser of sound poetry, Cris Cheek describes the mid 1970s British scene he encountered thus:

Writing was frequently read by more than voice [sic], two or three voices (or more), reading in close interaction, with syncopation, with overlapping stresses, with partial erasure, foreground and background scripting, staccato narrative assemblages and dialogistic interjection. Texts were sometimes arranged across the floor or cascading from the ceiling or fluttering loose in the hand. Listening with attentive vision was at a premium. Spatial placement of sound became an area of investigation and spatiality of paginated notations, both placement of pages in the room and spatialisation of writings on the page, were consequent.<sup>32</sup>

The room, the space, the performer/s and the score took on the performance, and the dynamic interaction with the sound equipment became mostly outmoded. This shift can be put down, as Wendt does, to the sheer practicality and expense of a whole wave of poets working with costly, back-breakingly heavy machines.<sup>33</sup> At one point it was so common to see the machine on stage with the performance the body of ‘the machine became synonymous with the performer’.<sup>34</sup> Indeed this physical fact of these machines shouldn’t be underestimated, particularly the beastly presence an old-fashioned reel-to-reel tape recorder had in a room. It’s worth considering how much the ‘physical burden’ of the tape machine enhanced, added to or ‘scrambled’ the text and performance. Did the obstacle physiologically alter the speech event? Did the cumbersome machine represent a physical counterpart for the person?

In contrast sound poetics more typical to the British Poetry Revival and Cobbing’s project can be said to have focused on an aligning of nature and culture, creating a communal subjectivity. Their work operated in a mode where humans faced each other and the machine sits at the back, amplifying the spectacle. It was

---

<sup>32</sup> cris cheek, ‘Essay on Bob Cobbing’, *British Electronic Poetry Centre*, 2006  
<[http://www.southampton.ac.uk/~bepc/forum/cheek\\_cobbing.htm](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/~bepc/forum/cheek_cobbing.htm)> [accessed 4 October 2012].

<sup>33</sup> Wendt, ‘I. History of Electro-Acoustic Approaches II. Connections to Advanced Electronic Technologies’, *Leonardo*, 18 (1985), 11–23.

<sup>34</sup> Davidson, p. 107.

presented as ‘the return to the primitive, to incantation and ritual... the growth of the voice to its full physical powers again as part of the body, the body as language’.<sup>35</sup> The poetics in this modality expresses a utopia that deposes language of its uses and abusiveness, but maintains the forms of words and fully formulated vocal shapes in a positive affirmation of articulation. It is positive, because the rhythms have a choral, collectivity, suggesting optimism for the functions of communication within human groups. In Cobbing’s 1964 book, *ABC in Sound*, groupings of words accumulate into a shoring of rhyming and auditory sensations. For example, ‘Bombast Bombast | Bomb bomb bomb bast | Bombast | Emphase | Em- em- em- phase | Bombast emphase’.<sup>36</sup> A somewhat dated press review described a performance as a, ‘complex set of permutations set with an echo like a Tibetan monk chanting in some exotic eastern temple’.<sup>37</sup> The performance notes on the back of Cobbing’s book loosely dictate a means to extract the best of the sound from each section of the alphabet, ‘Y – Slower flowing / Z – Conversational but metrical’.<sup>38</sup> This notational directive to use purely vocal techniques to achieve various registers of sound reveals optimism in human language, and in the human voice’s ability to operate and manipulate in its own acoustics.<sup>39</sup>

In a poetics like Chopin’s, the human faces the machine, and is alone with it. The figure on the stage is removed from the audience. Indeed the only dialogue is between him and the tape machine, which the audience enjoys as a spectacle rather than something they can imagine being potentially incorporated into. It’s a gesture that can be said to negate the potentiality of speech and communication between humans, yet rejoices in technologised interaction. This is something that marks Chopin’s distinct use of the tape machine. That the technology was so incorporated into the text of the *audio-poème* and his body was incorporated into the dynamic of the technology goes some way to shut out collectivity beyond technological

---

<sup>35</sup> Cobbing, *Bob Cobbing & Writers Forum* (Sunderland: Ceolfrith Press, 1974), p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> Cobbing, *A B C in Sound* (London: Writers Forum, 1964), p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> An extract from a press cutting from the Listener in 1967 in, Cobbing, *Bob Cobbing & Writers Forum*, p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> Cobbing, *A B C in Sound*, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> It must be stressed that this is not to claim that Cobbing was averse to electronic modulation or tape-machined poetry, or that he did not engage with media. Indeed Cobbing had a very close engagement with tape and technologically mediated texts. He composed many sound poems for tape and had significant enterprises with the BBC Radiophonic workshop for which *ABC in Sound* was performed and edited with sound design and speed manipulations. Cobbing here serves as a counterpoint to the manner in which Chopin used the tape medium.

engagement. This thread will be picked up on later in reference to the body augmentation that the tape machine represents in Chopin's sound poetry. What can be summarised for now is that there is in sound poetry a somewhat confused social agenda. In contrast to Burroughs it was noted that Chopin represented form and graspable mechanisms drawn out of chaos. The body is an object worthy of emancipation through a disposal of language, whereas Burroughs proclaimed the body and language in a parasitic, destructive relationship, which could be used to wreak havoc on societal structures. In comparison to elements of Cobbing's sound poetry, Chopin's poetics can be seen to represent something much less utopian, without a notion of collectivity. How the tape machine, and its lineage in sound media, came to inhabit these tense and diverging places in social thought and cultural production will be further explored.

### **Expanded Use of the Tape Player in the History of Sound Poetry**

From the tape player's initial introduction as a domestic item, different schools of sound-based poetics have reacted to its different phases of technical proficiency and portability. The rise in generating poetry with the tape player as a means for execution and dispersion is as much a historical fact of diversifying modes of publishing than of composition. A good example of the way the tape was incorporated into poetry practice and publishing is the many various and fleeting poetry labels that put out the taped poetry. From the late 1970s *Balsam Flex*, a British cassette tape sound poetry label run by Erik Vonna-Michell, reveals the extent to which the tape machine and the now very portable cassette player became the mainstay of experimental poetry. The 'product' of the *Balsam Flex* poetry recordings and workshop experiments vary from devised sound pieces to recordings of improvised vocalisations. They feature figures remembered as the leading UK male sound poets, including Vonna-Michell, Lawrence Upton, Bob Cobbing, Cris Cheek, and Eric Mottram, a critic, editor and poet who was one of the central figures in the British Poetry Revival. Apart from the in-house experiments the label's published artists range from seemingly forgotten poets to established leading poets such as Allen Fisher. It is a skeletal archive, barely represented by institutions or official libraries. However, it provides an additional insight into methods of tape-machined poetry, and also into another model of sound poetics archeology as discussed in reference to Chopin's publications. When I

engaged with this archive I was often thrown by the lack of indexing or sense of the works' future existence. Listening through the tapes one has to make assumptions as to whether a recording is a composed sound piece, or documentation of an improvisation. Suggesting that the tapes were, for the majority of the output, part of a process of experimentation, processing practice and making work exist.

It can be argued that the drive behind the production of the *Balsam Flex* label was to develop sounded poetry as an object of tape recording. In the context of 1970s sound art production and aesthetics the *Balsam Flex* gritty, workshop values can be regarded as a DIY reaction to the high polished audio art their contemporary musicians were making in expensive studio settings.<sup>40</sup> This was an anti-art statement made possible through lo-fi makeshift properties of the newly portable tape machine. Within the tape archive much of the work reflects a Fluxus sentiment, using the tape to record an instance of a performed act. One tape consists of the sound of cris cheek washing his hair in a work named, *stereo hairwash*. In this case the work seems to represent an aspiration to capture everyday life as art, an objective made possible by the new portability of the medium. This represents a different attitude to generating taped poetry than that held by Chopin. The indistinctions between audio documentation and composed tape-works reveals a use of the medium that hinges on its capacity for instant results. The *Balsam Flex* ethos seems to be mostly a fast transferal of paradigms of live sounds into audio documents.

The gritty-ness of the *Balsam Flex* output and the label's projects for instant reflections of live sound can be compared to the Chopin's contemporary Bernard Heidsieck. Heidsieck also used tape players as a methodology for his sound poetry performances. However, unlike Chopin he did not use skillfully crafted sound recordings to interact with. Heidsieck interacted live with recordings but 'found sounds' of city life: train stations and urban scenes, crowd noises and even audience applause (used to both mirror and distort the live audience reaction). The real life sounds were sometimes deliberately impaired by 'tape echo' or feedback. This is caused by the inscription on the other side of the tape bleeding through, like a double exposure on a photograph. This use of the tape machine's capacity for error and phonic excesses will be discussed later. It's tempting to call this kind of erring a specifically analogue trait, but any medium has the potential for fault, and this has the

---

<sup>40</sup> Will Montgomery, "Balsam Flex': Sound, Poetry, and the Culture of the Cassette' (presented at the Legacies of Modernism, The State of British Poetry Today, Université Paris-Diderot, 2011).

potential to be used to generate productive artistic meaning. What we can learn from the *Balsam Flex* archive, Chopin's contemporary Heidsieck and Chopin's work also, is that the domestic tape medium is an imprecise recording object and artists have played on this very roughness to support their aesthetic and ethos for artistic production.

### Barbarian Objects

Sound poetry's DIY approach to tape, which evolved into the lo-fi practices like *Balsam Flex*, was a kind of folk art.<sup>41</sup> In the initial wave of 1960s electronic sound poetry, broken or hybrid machines were often hashed together, and their flaws or audio rawness was the point of creativity. The fact that Chopin developed his style of sound poetry using outmoded tape recorders is certainly significant to his poetics. Rather than using complex machines with multiple tape heads, complex paths revolving heads and other special devices, that were certainly available at a cost by the early 1960s, Chopin used a self-adjusted, *kludged* machine. He manually manipulated the tape path, stuck matchsticks in the eraser heads and generally molested his worn out secondhand equipment.<sup>42</sup> Chopin preferred the 'acoustical parasites', which gave a richer colour to the vocal micro particles, compared to the cleaner sound of up-to-date equipment. From this one gets a mental picture of a sprawling, organic machine with drooping tape innards and appendixes, perhaps like a Burroughsian technologised creature. In other words, like an object that expressed itself through the excesses of its errors and faults.

It can be argued that Chopin used these acoustic parasites as a way of drawing out the base qualities of the voice. A quality that is compatible with the fantasy of scratchy, 'authentic' analogue sound discussed above. In terms of a Chopin *audio-poème* like *Rouge* 1956, where the repetition of the word becomes an abstracted, animal growl, we can see a link between this rough sound and sound poetry. In *Rouge* the rolled 'r' and the reverberating 'rouge' is both a poetic gesture of a word repeated into obscurity, and also a way of making the growl of the voice and the murmur of the machine cohere. When describing the DIY, dirty sound equipment made by artists

---

<sup>41</sup> Wendt, 'I. History of Electro-Acoustic Approaches II. Connections to Advanced Electronic Technologies'.

<sup>42</sup> Wendt, 'I. History of Electro-Acoustic Approaches II. Connections to Advanced Electronic Technologies', p. 16.

such as Chopin, Wendt says, ‘What we have in sound poetry is the *barbarian* approach to art.’ By which he means the nineteenth-century metaphor used by Matthew Arnold for people with a staunch individualistic approach to life and commitment to personal liberty. He continues, ‘In this approach, language is treated in a highly individual and brutal manner to release it from the centuries of complacency and aesthetics which the written word has placed upon it.’<sup>43</sup>

What are we to do with this notion of brutality in poetry? Was it, for the sound poets, a necessary approach for an art taking risks? There is arguably a certain amount of aggression in sound poetry, or at least in its performance, though admittedly not so much in Chopin’s ambient scores. Therefore the link made between brutal barbarianism and utopian ideas of authentic cultures is potentially problematic, at least when the reformation of language sounds aggressive. This can be connected to Walter Ong’s suggestion that behind the spoken word, or in absence of speech in unison with writing, there is always and only violence.<sup>44</sup> Or with Bataille’s assertion that the mouth, at its base output, is the site of rage and bestiality.<sup>45</sup> All of Chopin’s talk of ‘power’ through reclamation of the word is therefore potentially synonymous with violence. The kind of aggression that is coming into focus, through rhetoric of power, violence and revolution, is arguably a kind of masculine aggression. Perhaps we can link this masculine aggression to the performance style of the 1960s, male-dominated, sound poetics, where the sound they made in their poetry was an aggressive sound (deliberately loud, forceful, and bellicose). It can be noted therefore that an anti-semantic drive behind poetry comes at the price of asserting a violent, admittedly masculine force in its social manifestations. The role of the body in relation to this is implicitly located as a masculine one. The route of this critique will now be explored in a further investigation of the social politics of sound media and its history.

---

<sup>43</sup> Wendt, ‘I. History of Electro-Acoustic Approaches II. Connections to Advanced Electronic Technologies’, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Walter J. Ong, ‘Word as Sound’, in *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Binghamton, NY: Global Academic Publishing, 2000), pp. 111–176.

<sup>45</sup> Georges Bataille, *Visions Of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 59.

### **The Domestication of the Tape Machine and the Personality of Sound Recording**

It maybe useful to compare Burroughs' and Chopin's sense of the tape machine being a symbol of societal empowerment with a historical moment of new media intervening in society via its negotiations of the human voice. The comparison here will be with Theodor Adorno's critique of the phonograph player, as an item of bourgeois refinement in 'The Curve of the Needle', penned in 1928. This is to re-evaluate a moment in history when recorded sound, and specifically music, was first mass-produced, entering some homes as a domestic item. Adorno's anxiety is typically focused on the degradation of classical music this industrialised mediation brings, and through this he makes some radical assertions about the shifts in listening identities. His first point is regarding the phase of phonographs coming in the late 1920s that privilege the machine as ornament over its facility to do justice to the recorded instruments and voice, 'as if the singer were being distanced more and more from the apparatus.'<sup>46</sup> He goes on to argue that the obsession with fidelity is with the concrete operating machine, rather than the moment of sound recording. This issue of sound 'fidelity' is present with us today, and our notion of the high fidelity speakers is one that reveals purity, even unrealistically pure recorded sound, rather than a true representation of the live event. Adorno posits this fidelity as an 'illusion' of the technology that makes the listener focus on it, rather than the concert or song. This is due to the need of the privileged class who own these machines, to reconcile the ornate item against with the altered subjectivity upon hearing the recorded voice: 'The positive tendency of consolidated technology to present objects themselves in as unadorned fashion as possible is, however, traversed by the ideological need of the ruling society, which demands subjective reconciliation with these objects – with the reproduced voice as such'.<sup>47</sup>

In some ways Adorno is treating the phonograph in the same way Chopin regarded his clunky tape machine, the higher fidelity the recorded copy was specified to, the further away from the authenticity of music it was. Adorno makes this a class issue, claiming that the bourgeoisie who play phonographs have no musical talents themselves, and are just listening to the whirr of the needle. For Adorno listening became frivolous 'hearing' for a fractured society. He says 'In the functioning salon,

---

<sup>46</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Curves of the Needle', *October*, trans. by Thomas Y. Levin, 55 (1990), 48–55 (p. 48).

<sup>47</sup> Adorno, 'The Curves of the Needle', p. 49.



the gramophone stands innocuously as a little mahogany cabinet on the little rococo legs. Its cover provides a space for the artistic photograph of the divorced wife with the baby.<sup>48</sup> Adorno's indignation seems to be mainly at the re-identification gramophone listeners undergo, as public listeners, grouped through a shared fixation with popular songs. Phonographs and gramophones 'flatter' their ideologies. The media's facility for reproduction gets absorbed into the listener consciousness. The faculty of reproduction is key to their fixation and the alignment of subjectivity with multiple false realities.

Part of the impact of the gramophone was its compatibility with the domestic home and the integration of the object with the furniture. Engaging with the new technology was instantly an everyday performed act. Like radio and then a generation later television, the object became as ambient as the voices projected from them. Tape players on the other hand had a much rockier integration into any homely scene. To begin with they didn't have an obvious role in the home in the everyday way radio or the gramophone did. Lacking in kitsch design or ornament the unwieldy, wired and reeled object did not initially fit, visually or practically, with the media routines of the 1950s family. The tape machine's use value was obscure until a marketing swerve to promote it as a family sound album, initiating the notion of the voice as something to be deposited into a personal archive. But even this, while enlightening to sound theorists now, wasn't enough to move the tape recorder from novelty to the prevalence of the family camera.

The tape player's marketing had to be multifaceted, meaning different things to different social groups, while simultaneously attempting to limit the amount to which it was used to tape songs from the radio (a use that became its only sustained and mainstream mode of interaction). The next strategy was to promote the machine as a playable instrument, primarily aimed at men as a creative tool.<sup>49</sup> It's not difficult to see how this aspect of the marketing campaign can be traced through to the history of sound poetry, and the majority male enthusiasm for sound editing. The machines were sold through a marketing device that flattered men's creativity and their need to retreat from the family space to tinker with this technology that was incompatible

---

<sup>48</sup> Adorno, 'the Curves of the Needle', p. 52.

<sup>49</sup> Karin Bijsterveld and Annelies Jacobs, 'Storing Sound Souvenirs: The Multi-Sited Domestication of the Tape Recorder', in *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), pp. 25–43.

with the living room, their wife's domain. The advertising stressed that maximum satisfaction with the machine required creativity and *effort*. By emphasising the tape recorder's 'hands-on' engagement, marketers seduced users with the opportunity to interfere with the operating system, creating their own sonic inventions. Threaded through this seemingly innocent approach to noise making is the DIY attitude as being something inherently democratic. The ability to (seemingly) subvert the suggested uses for the machine and corrupt its operating system was empowering and inclined a new kind of ownership over the required input and vocal material to work with. Another significant consideration is that the tape medium was one of the first mainstream utensils to celebrate the requirement of effort rather than ease and convenience. Packaged as an intellectual and physical exercise this medium seems to have as much to do with the body as with sound.

### **Disembodied Voice/Bodied Object**

The corporeality of the tape player means that the imparted voice is embodied by the machine. The recorded copy, the supposedly disembodied voice, acquires a new physicality that no longer reflects genuine human emotions or feelings. Returning to the advent of the gramophone and to Adorno, there was a registering that the disembodied copy of the voice had become object. As Adorno stated, 'What is best reproduced gramophonically is the singing voice. Here, "best" means most faithful to the natural ur-image and not at all most appropriate to the mechanical from the outset.'<sup>50</sup> Here Adorno is adamant that a reproduction of the voice must be faithful to a primal ('ur'), authentic version of the perceived voice. The copy must reflect a natural experience of the voice coming from the human's mouth and not from the machine. This is not the development he sees happening, rather what occurs is a singing voice driven by the gramophone, with an audio quality heard through the gramophone alone. Here Adorno is critiquing the copy of the voice. Before its copy, the voice was a human subjective thing, but now its reproduction it is an entity in itself that in turn makes subjectivity artificial and bland.

Adorno was writing this only two decades on since the turn of the twentieth century, during the relatively early days of the gramophone's mass marketing. This

---

<sup>50</sup> Adorno, 'The Curves of the Needle', p. 54.

was a time of newly technologised optical and audio recording. Friedrich Kittler views the invention of radicalising new media as a decisive shift into modernism, which established links between this technological development and artistic output. In concurrence with Adorno's position, Kittler has argued that the previous mediums of sensually experienced language, such as poetry, were replaced by technologised mediations of the voice. The gramophone for instance draws attention away from the symbolic, poetic nature of words, to the sound material the word is conveyed through. Kittler states: 'Circa 1900 the ersatz sensuality of Poetry could be replaced, not by Nature, but by technologies. The gramophone empties out words by bypassing their imaginary aspect (signifieds) for their real aspects (the physiology of the voice)'.<sup>51</sup> For Kittler the gramophone instigated and/or coincided with a substantial shift in thinking around subject identity and psychology of the voice. This shift is evident in Adorno's critique of the singing voice, which as he sees it, has lost its musicality to the operations of the record player. In this historical turn, the new media object was deemed to re-embodiment the voice in a way unlike poetry or music, into what was then a new form of technologically-driven psychology of human sound.

At the point of the sound poets' interaction with the tape machine in the mid-twentieth century, we can assume this new relationship with media had been integrated into their understanding of the voice, where the copy was becoming as normal as the live instance. The tape machine therefore does not represent the cosmic shift that the gramophone did, rather a further development towards sound reproduction media being fully immersed in everyday, bodily activity. In other words the voice as mechanically reproducible data was a comfortable notion, and the media object this is processed through had a corporeal relation to its user. In terms of a 1960s agenda for theorising new media we can link the sound poet's endeavors with the new media praxis that accepted reproduction as norm and was now considering the continuous daily routines of media engagement.

Writing in 1964, Marshal McLuhan developed a concept of 'Narcissus as narcosis'. McLuhan argued that as every new technology or media becomes integrated into common interaction, the processes of that technology become like an extension of a human sense. In other words the object becomes like an exteriorization, or augmentation of the human body. This level of interaction with media however

---

<sup>51</sup> Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 245.

brings about what he terms a Narcissus-like ‘numbness’.<sup>52</sup> McLuhan goes back to myth of Narcissus to allegorise this condition, which for him is a dual state of extension and *amputation*. Media, such as television, extends and exteriorizes the experience, but also amputates this sense. The medial extension numbs the relevant sense like trauma numbs experience. The stilled fixation with the sound of radio for instance is an ‘autoamputation’ of listening. The ‘trance’ is induced by the numbed sense creating a lack of self-awareness, just as Narcissus’s beloved image numbs him, yet the image is an extension of him and brings about an amputation of the self. Like prosthesis, extension and the amputation of the self are simultaneous.<sup>53</sup> For McLuhan the sound of radio is compelling because it is a sensory reminder of tribal drums and callings. Radio causes an extension/amputation of sound-sense and self-sense. The media at the forefront of McLuhan’s thinking is then broadcast orientated, radio and television, and also satellites emitting signals to Earth. However, engagement with the tape machine certainly corresponds with this ‘trance’ state. It can be argued that the user is necessarily fixated by the recognition of their own voice and the to-hand means to save it. In McLuhan’s logic, the voice is extended by the sonic manipulation, exteriorised by the amplification and play-back, also amputated from the body. But while every utterance requires sending one’s voice into excorporeality, the tape machine allows a prosthetic rekindling of the body and voice. In a multi-media sound poetry performance the artist is enjoying this very reconnection with the newly alienated sound of their pre-recorded, amputated voice.

For Adorno in the 1920s this amputation, is primarily a question of aesthetics. He argued that without their physical body, female voices in particular sound ‘shrill’ and of impossibly poor quality in reproduction. He says the gramophone ‘eliminates’ the body, making the female singer sound ‘needy and incomplete’.<sup>54</sup> This assertion reads very strikingly now and is often used as starting point from which to critique the gender issues within sonic arts.<sup>55</sup> To single out the effects of sound reproduction on a female voice is to make an assertion about the very persuasiveness of female performative communication. The statement infers a split in gender distinction

---

<sup>52</sup> Marshall McLuhan, ‘The Gadget Lover’, in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Ark Press, 1987), pp. 41–48.

<sup>53</sup> McLuhan, ‘The Gadget Lover’, p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> Adorno, ‘The Curves of the Needle’, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup> A recent critique of this Adorno quote was seen at a panel exploring women’s varied uses and abuses of technology. Kaffe Matthews, Nina Power, Tara Rodgers and Anne Hilde Neset (Chair), presented at the Her Noise Symposium, Tate Modern, 2012.

between mediated voices, where a male voice retains its meaning, coherence and integrity once detached from the flesh, while the female voice falls into lack and non-conviction. Therefore (within this strange logic) the disembodied voice is eternally related to an absent female body.

This investigation isn't going to merit Adorno's distinction,<sup>56</sup> but the suggested privileging of the male voice as becoming its own entity once filtered through media, concurs with an underlying drive in much of the sound poetics discussed here. The hankering for a primal 'ur' voice, the grasping for empowerment through non-linguistic calls and the 'barbaric' technologies used to facilitate this new sound are arguably, chiefly masculine. This male voice that retains its embodiment is free to relocate in the media object, and locate that as a site of fleshy objecthood. Therefore once the voice and body have been severed through mediation, it can be said that Chopin frames the media object as a body. It is equally organic and machinic. Therefore it is necessary now to more closely examine how the human body relates itself to analogue sound media, particularly in the live performances of sound poetry. How are the biology of the body and the technology of the machine interrelated by Chopin's sound poetics? And how is the fragility of the human body put at stake by this exchange?

### **Man Machine**

There is now a kind of mythology surrounding the performances of Chopin, from the late 1960s to 1980s and his propensity to swallow (or at least push back into his throat) a microphone on stage, and 'play' the internal noises in conjunction with the taped backing track.<sup>57</sup> Many of Chopin's *audio-poèmes* make a feature of the

---

<sup>56</sup> This issue of the 'incomplete' female voice and the notion's pervasiveness will be fully explored in Portfolio Remarks One where it will be teased apart in relation to my own practice regarding women's sound and noise.

<sup>57</sup> There is a great deal of witness accounts of this and casual references to Chopin's mic swallowing, but it's difficult to find a concrete reference to it taking place, a date or specific performance. A recent email exchange with poet and original member of the Writer's Forum, Adrian Clarke, has been helpful in sharing personal recollections of a Chopin performance at a sound poetry festival organised by Bob Cobbing at the London Musicians' Collective in 1984. Of the event Clarke says, 'I recall, Anne Tardos and Jackson Mac Low also performed. My memory of the Chopin piece, which lasted around 20-25 mins, is that he had a prepared tape with a variably pitched hum – fairly low to shrill – and an occasional echo. He worked with hand-held microphone, starting with registering the breath, then progressing through tonguings in fragmentary rhythmic patterns, to full voice and a couple of recognisable words even, before working the mic deep into his mouth. I expect I felt momentary alarm at the sight of the open-mesh head of a large microphone disappearing - which I took to be

vibration of nasal hairs and eyelids, sounds that make the biology of the human explicit. These are imperfect, uncomfortably close realisations of the body that infer it as a messy, unruly organism. These moments of bodily ‘truth’ are its moments of excess. This is where the relationship between the body and analogue media, as exhibited in Chopin’s sound poetry becomes tangible. The flaws reveal a materiality and the medium becomes transparent due to its operations and mechanisms being laid bare. This warrants a comparison to Adorno’s critique of the gramophone, and the 1960s and 1970s avant-garde’s love of the tape machine, and something that has been touched on throughout this chapter, this being a respect for the medium’s capacity to *error*. For Adorno when the machine breaks, and the needle simply scratches against a surface, this is when the medium truly reveals itself and is its only valid moment.<sup>58</sup> This fissure between the media itself and its task, is compatible with Chopin’s noisy tape aesthetic.

In terms of the human body, as represented by Chopin, we have the noises that the body is actually making, the messy faltering noises of its mechanics and activity, as opposed to the sensible sounds it is supposed to be making in spoken language. The systems of the body and the systems of the medium are revealed by the excessive noises of its error or imperfections. In Chopin’s *audio-poème* these noises of bodily and technological error are in dialogue with each other. Chopin’s contemporary Heidsieck as discussed above made an aesthetic asset of a tape’s capacity for feedback echo. It’s tempting to call this a specifically analogue trait, but any medium has the potential for error, and this has the potential to be used to generate productive artistic meaning.

In Chopin’s *audio-poème*, *Les Mandibules Du “déjeuner sur l’herbes”*, the listener is confronted with a typically ‘close’ encounter with the poet’s vocal apparatus and mouth textures.<sup>59</sup> The title of the poem does, as many Chopin works do, reference an aspect of oral, vocal or breathing structures. Here ‘mandibles’ initiates an idea of the human jaw, chewing that iconic French picnic under the trees, a shorthand for the leisurely pastime of the middle classes. But what the poem consists of is not so much munching or slurping noises of human mastication, but

---

dangerous, though it didn’t appear painful - in combination with some of the resultant unearthly sounds which modulated in and out of the more predictable guttural variety.’ Adrian Clarke, ‘E-mail Conversation with Adrian Clarke About Chopin Performance at London Musicians’ Collective’, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Adorno, p. 55.

<sup>59</sup> Chopin, *Revue OU*, No. 42-43-44, 1974.

devilish little clicks, squeaks and bites. It's more like the insect notion of mandibles, with rapidly gnawing pincers. Chopin uses the analogue editing process of high-speed dubbing, over layering and tape echo, to create alien noises that are at times unnerving and at other times ambient. Whenever a more serene tone is foregrounded, an ugly insect noise takes over. The multi-dynamic sound scape, with prolonged monotonous and layered 'bitty' sounds are primarily vocal, with mechanised sound-design. But within Chopin's poetics we might read these manipulations and technologised distortions as revealing a truer voice, rather than transforming it into something else. The sound mutations relate the biological to the machine. Chopin is therefore revealing the animal/insect nature of the human at its base desire to feed. He is also revealing the mechanical processes within the human mouth, and reciprocally the strange organic material of human and machine combined. What is also at work in this text is Chopin unleashing a swarm of insects onto the idyllic scene. He is 'ruining' the picnic with the parasitic feeding frenzy, the enjoyers of which were perhaps the bourgeois gramophone listeners of Adorno's critique. The parasitic relationship might be termed, multi-way, between human and machine, and the flawed sound that reveals the non-human, non-machine noise. Chopin is like Burroughs, treating the tape machine as a semi-animal-organism, attacking privileged society through noise. He is becoming a bug in the system by injecting bugs into his sound system.

In a magazine that accompanied *Revue OU* No. 38-39, Chopin makes some idiosyncratic notes about this scene of consumption and mastication,

No influence from Eduard Manet's painting where the naked women are only objects. On the contrary, it is once again the body in play, after the meeting in my gardens, following rendez-vous given since 1969. With the big party, I used by ears to receive the rich bellies in tweet-tweet, the bronchial areas enriched by more or less discreet bumps, the noises in facetious swallowings, the gurglings accompanying beer or cider, some bellies themselves obliged to throw up by following their joyous mandibles (i.e. jaws) that the fish and chips work on. The influence could not come from that island, vast it is true, island that I much appreciate. Smutty party at the same time cultured, bodily glory giving itself over with a joyous heart.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Chopin, 'No Influence from Eduard Manet...', *Revue OU*, No. 38-39 1971.

This is not the issue that published *Les Mandible* but an earlier one that clearly saw the burgeoning of these ideas and also significantly contained a visual artwork by Burroughs and Chopin collaboratively called *Is a Virus Perhaps Simple Very Small Units Of Sound and Image*

This mix of ‘facetious swallowings’ is neatly captured in the *audio-poème* described above. But this isn’t a heady mash of ingestion and random noises, Chopin’s work is neatly crafted to highlight the common materiality between mouths and technology.

Chopin’s poetics conceive of the body that holds it to be a concrete, tangible system of textures. It is not symbolic or abstract, it is communicative on its own terms and not within the immaterial, figurative structures of language. When Chopin declared *The Body is a Sound Factory* he does not imbue the body with a spiritual significance but a grounded force.<sup>61</sup> This vision of the body as something mechanical seems fundamental to much of Chopin’s poetics. For example the three-part piece, *Le Corps*, is made-up of escalating engine breath, chugging factory noises and high-pitched whistles; a continuation of placing the human body in metaphorical relation to technology.<sup>62</sup>

What notions are revealed after a deeper engagement with this perceptual interchange between the human body and the machine, as practiced by Chopin? In order to open up this idea of the mechanical man, a consideration of a more deeply embedded notion of human anatomy and technology will help elaborate on the operations within Chopin’s work. For example, going back much further in history to the eighteenth century, theories of anatomy were beginning to be informed by new knowledge of technology. To compensate for this perceptual shift away from the human as a spiritual creature, philosophy, having newly perceived the body as machine, had to reintroduce the presence of the soul. The radical 1748 proclamation, *L’homme machine* by French physician and philosopher, La Mettrie, made the conclusion that men, like animals, were in turn mechanical entities. He determined that humans are a network of self-regulating, interconnected operating systems. Working after Descartes he said, ‘the human body is a self-winding machine, a living representation of perpetual motion’.<sup>63</sup> This realisation required the consolation of a material presence of the soul, and much of La Mettrie’s text explains how the organic material of the body and the soul co-exist. His theory for this is a metaphysical process of conceptualising the body as without soul, then reuniting it

---

<sup>61</sup> Chopin, *The Body Is a Sound Factory* (Italy: Alga Marghen, 2007).

<sup>62</sup> Chopin, ‘*Revue OU*, 30-31’, 1967.

<sup>63</sup> Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Man a Machine; and, Man a Plant* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994).



with a material aspect of spirit that indeed exists within the body in its own terms and laws of behaviour.

The soul and the body fall asleep together. As the blood's movement is calmed, a sweet feeling of peace spreads through the whole machine. The soul feels itself gently, becoming heavy along with the eyelids, relaxing along with the brain's fibers, and thus gradually becoming paralysed, as it were, along with all the body's muscles.<sup>64</sup>

From this point on in the West there is a cultural oscillation between perceiving human as human alone, human as animal, and human as machine plus spirit.

Another defining conceiving of human in a negotiation of existence with machine is the birth of cybernetics – which is perhaps what we have been talking about all along. Cybernetics, subtitled by Norbert Wiener in his seminal 1948 text as ‘Control and Communication in Animals and the Machine’, is the analysis of information flow within mechanical and biological systems, and the analogies between them.<sup>65</sup> The true focus of cybernetics emerged in the 1970s onwards, which saw systems of control as dependent on feedback loops. The mechanisms of human physiology in La Mettrie's man-machine was certainly seen to be founded on feedback, this being what kept the perpetual motion in play, he said, ‘organic matter is endowed with a motive principal’.<sup>66</sup> Wiener's cybernetics saw the conceptualisation of man as a mechanized system of control. Again this seems to be a case of the human becoming dislocated from the ‘spirit’ and reallocated with spirit as something prosthetic. The human body is continually displaced from the ghost in the machine and reunited with it via new relationships with technology. Or put another way, whenever technology catches up with us, with qualities deemed to be uniquely human, often via understanding of animal behavior and anatomy, we have to re-theorise what it is to be human.

This is not to claim that we should determine Chopin's ‘electronic poetry’ on the precise conditions of these historical markers, which point to new abstracts of the human body or mind. But as a context for his representations of the body as something ‘earthed’ in technology, these logics concerning biology and technological

---

<sup>64</sup> La Mettrie, p. 31.

<sup>65</sup> Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965).

<sup>66</sup> La Mettrie, p. 65.

matter, concepts and fields of thought such as man-machine and cybernetics, offer a framework that moves us on from worrying about sound poetry as an absence of words. These are however theories that are admittedly inconsistent with Chopin's own propositions for his art. Chopin, like many of the sound poets of his generation, was happy to credit the machine as a useful tool, but ultimately privileged the human as bringing forth a new sound, as the lines from a text in *Cinquième Saison* 20-21 proclaim:

The important is the have defeated the machine. [sic] That is to have found infinite possibilities of orchestration, timbre, and sound by the voice of being alone and due to one man alone (...) The important is to have given the primacy to man and to creation which has dominated the machine.<sup>67</sup>

This glance at the history of human technology, from La Mettrie to Wiener to McLuhan, shows the human being shaped by our media technology, rather than it being shaped by us. Therefore this is the dynamic from which to view Chopin's poetics, where the machine medium is impacting on the body. How the body is impacted, specifically in performance, by Chopin's medial equipment, will now be examined.

### **Bodily Incorporation: Effort and Skill**

By way of the textual and technological moves in Chopin's work, his body was in a feedback loop with the machine. He was indeed joined to the machine, mouth-to-mouth at the point of the microphone, as if feeding something into the tape recorder. Through his mouth, the facilitator of speech and therefore the object of spirit or human transcendence from the body, there is a transferential sound and energy. This is again an amputation and then a reconnection. In performances when Chopin is reunited with his voice through the recording the body is qualified by an engagement with technology. We can also argue that, as in any circuit of energy exchange, there is a gradual loss of motion, and the bodies in play gradually degrade. Within the exchange between mouth to microphone, some sort of effort is being made. It is the celebrated effort located in the general operation of the analogue machine, as

---

<sup>67</sup> Chopin, 'Machine Poem', *Cinquième Saison*, No. 20-21, 1964.

discussed above, but also something more routed in the cybernetics between Chopin, the man as machine, the sounds and the tape player. It is necessary now to tease out what is at stake within this exchange, in terms of the entropic degradation that the body and the analogue system have in common when engaged in effort. First I will ask how the body becomes so connected with the machine.

Describing the 1964 piece, *Vibrespace*, on the cover notes of its *Balsam Flex* re-edition, Chopin says that by the time he made this he had been working with tape recording for many years and had become very ‘agile’ in working the tape recorder, and composed the piece very quickly. This agility may seem of little significance but when considered in terms of the man-machine and cybernetics, it presents an interesting theoretical model for reading Chopin’s process. In an account that echoes McLuhan’s *Narcissus Trance*, theorist N. Katherine Hayle talks about actions being encoded into bodily memory through repetition and habituation as ‘incorporated practices’.<sup>68</sup> An act or skill, like typing or driving, can become like an extension of a person’s physicality. Hayle goes further than McLuhan and states that, rather than numbing the corresponding sense, the action brings about a complete integration between the human and the technology. In other words, incorporated practices signify a mutual assimilation of human and technology: ‘When changing incorporating practices take place, they are often linked with new technologies that affect how people use their bodies and experience space and time.’<sup>69</sup> The body is therefore *inscribed* by technology in as much as it creates technology. Chopin’s incorporated practices of breathing in tune with the whirl of the machine, manipulating the reels of tape and switching speeds are learnt interactions that become encoded onto his physicality.<sup>70</sup> The craft, skill and technique of recording-editing-performing are part of Chopin’s feeding his biology into the machine, whilst simultaneously becoming

---

<sup>68</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 199.

<sup>69</sup> Hayles, p. 199.

<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to consider how analogue editing, the cutting and sticking strips of acetate, compares with the processes of editing digital sound. What kind of corporeality is brought into play in the rearranging of data and information manipulation? Often the principals of analogue editing and layering are mimicked in digital editing, where a linear strip of sound is represented on the screen. It is my contention that as digital sound software develops the simulated haptic of a liner strip will be replaced by methods that better suit digital material and have their own corresponding relationship to the human body. It is not fair to say that the relationality of the body becomes redundant in digital editing. More that, compared to the act of slicing and joining tape, digital manipulation relates to the body in different terms (binary code or digits, viral dispersion, glitch), but there is still a physicality involved.

machine himself. He encodes the tape with sound data, while the machine encodes his body with inherited mechanisms. Perhaps, in La Mettrie's terms, the code represents the abstract prosthesis that reconnects the body with the amputated spirit.

However, within this transference network of bodily energy and abstract code, there has to be a level of entropic degradation. The biological body and the very nature of analogue media are founded on the principle of degrading materials. In an interview with Chopin the artist Nicholas Zurbrugg makes observations about his live performances that draw on this notion of 'give and take' in a performance-audience dynamic. Zurbrugg highlights that during one of Chopin's performances the audience experiences the voice as a recording primarily, even when live vocals are threaded through it. He says to Chopin that while the voice seems dislocated the audience engages with the physical presence of Chopin interacting with the tape machines in what he calls the 'theatre of your body'. He continues the observation by suggesting that, while the *audio-poèmes* on their own sound controlled and structured, the live performances 'painful' and an 'extreme effort'.<sup>71</sup> This 'effort' in the performance, not just as a simple tiring of a man on stage, but a draining of energy that indicates a feedback loop between the body, the machine, and the text. As the body wastes the physical ache becomes a mechanism, analogous to the looping, eroding tape. In response to Zurbrugg, Chopin said:

Well what you heard on tape yesterday is the pure work. But at the same time, I can recompose this work in performance, in order to present it directly, not so much in terms of its composition but in terms of its existence as something emerging between the tape recorder, the loudspeakers and the dimension of physical presence.<sup>72</sup>

So for Chopin the performances and live interaction with the recordings were about precisely this idea of putting his body at stake. Putting it in the way of the sound system to create a cybernetic feedback loop. As the text reveals itself through the media his physical effort creates noise within the circuit, analogous to the wavering sound wave. The expenditure of breath, and exhaustion of energy into the machine is an incorporated bodily act that inhabits the work. The 'work' therefore encapsulates ideas of physical 'painful' effort, a devised art piece and the expenditure of energy

---

<sup>71</sup> Zurbrugg, p. 29.

<sup>72</sup> Zurbrugg, p. 29.

that typifies all circuits of information flow. Pain distinguishes human from machine, but in this case it seems that it has been transferred into code and fed into the equipment to become part of the text. In the poetics defined here, human excesses, such as pain, bodily expenditure (sweat and breath) and extraneous sounds, are filtered through in a model that frames them as poetry. The extra-ness of the body and the analogue media, elements that can't be pinned down or harnessed, are shown to be resonant with each other. How is this extraneous matter, or spiritual element, theorised in Chopin's terms, and how can we reflect on that now, in this reading of his work?

### **Spirited Sound**

So far in this chapter Chopin's work and processes have been theorised from the privileged viewpoint of contemporary media. Analogue sound now represents a genre and an aesthetic separate to the mainstream media. The mythologies carried through into our current notion of analogue have been discussed but it is worth contextualising them in terms of sound poetry and how that artform in particular theorised sound. The theoretical analysis of relationships between sound and the body being authored in the 1950s and carried into the 1960s owed a great deal to new quasi-scientific music theory. Chopin shared an understanding of new audio media and communication technology that linked mediated sound transmission with spiritual signalling. The significance of new technologies for man-made satellites and stellar communications filtered into the avant-garde, who, ever since the first radio broadcasts, had linked ethereal transmission with liminal transcendence. Sound frequencies and signalling of the scientific nature were instinctively related to folk mythologies on sound and spirituality. Remembering the cover notes for *Vibrespace* on the *Balsam Flex* cassette Chopin says the title 'suggests what it is; we are in space and vibrating with space'.<sup>73</sup> It's also worth recalling that his manifesto list for the project, as mentioned above, asserts that sound poetry can't exist without 'the acceptance of inter-stellar communication'.

Chopin's qualifying of sound matter as potentially extraordinarily communicative, is to be taken in the context of mid-twentieth century sound philosophies. A useful point of comparison for this somewhat spiritual theorisation of

---

<sup>73</sup> Chopin, *Oh*, Notes from cassette album cover.

sound and music is to be found in the work of Daphne Oram, who was working contemporaneously to Chopin though in different fields. Oram was not an avant-gardist *per se* but a pioneer of synthesised sound, starting in the BBC's radiophonic workshop, and eventually inventing her Oramics Machine, publicly presented in 1962. It was an enterprise that had a distinctive sound aesthetics as well as a personal philosophy. The Oramics Machine was like a sound-producing loom, functioning like a tape machine and a film projector. Oram would operate it by feeding in strips of hand-painted acetate to be translated by the machine into sound, with pitch and tone controlled by exterior dials. The look of the machine was perhaps similar to Chopin's tape recorder, with rough modular elements expanding outwards, and modifications being added over years. Indeed when the Oramics machine was finally complete it was outmoded by the latest synthesizer technologies.

As well as the machine, Oramics was a philosophy that located Oram's development in engineered sound production with alternative belief systems relating to ancient, properties of sound. Her published and unpublished books, *An Individual Note* and *The Sounds of the Past* team technical expertise of sound frequencies and music synthesising circuitry with somewhat 'magical thinking' about the sonic qualities of our biologies, and primordial uses of vibrations resonators.

In terms of this chapter what is pertinent is Oram's theorising of generated synthetic sounds and music with bodily material and spiritual activity. In what is now flippantly classified as eccentric 'New Age' thinking, Oram applied Eastern philosophy to the processes of sound production, posing questions such as 'Can we tune our guts?', 'Is blood circulation similar to the feedback loop in an auditory circuit?'<sup>74</sup> In *An Individual Note*, her treatises on music production, we can see how her theories on electronic music corresponded to 'New Age' theories of exceeding bodily or physical existence, and experiencing transcendence through the medium of sound. She spoke of a 'beyondness' between musical notes, elaborating that as each note formed into a sequence along a piece of music, a beyondness would come into being.<sup>75</sup> She merges ideas of creative energy, or the drive within a piece of music, with the expenditure of energy in an electric circuit. The proposition is that a circuit is

---

<sup>74</sup> Daphne Oram, "Thoughts", 1972, Correspondence and 'Sounds of the Past' Notes, Oram Archive, Goldsmiths, University of London.

<sup>75</sup> Oram, *An Individual Note: Of Music, Sound and Electronics* (Great Yarmouth: Galliard Ltd, 1972), p. 12.

created by an initial spark, a capacitor. Acting in a pendulum effect the capacitor gradually slows to equilibrium, in an entropic dispersal of energy. She called this rule ‘ELEC’, denoting the decrease of energy over the increase of time. Merging this notion of electrical circuit with musical creativity in the production of music is key to her thesis, where the initial spark of inspiration is diluted by the work as it unfolds.

We see certain parallels here with the above exploration of Chopin’s bodily integration with the mechanisms of the tape machine. The dispersal of energy in the circuit gradually decreasing in strength or power seems to be an aesthetic, mechanic, and phenomenological principle of analogue sound production. This is particularly so since the ELEC rule has a counterpoint. The reverse ‘CELE’ rule determines that as the energy of the circuit diminishes the somewhat more abstract energy between the notes, the beyondness, swells. CELE denotes ‘the coming into being, over a period of time, of that which is intangible – the gradual re-creating of the *essence* of the initial spark’.<sup>76</sup> Therefore as physical power deteriorates, creative energy and production increases. There is a point for comparison here with Oramics and Henri Chopin’s mode of performance where the expenditure of bodily energy feeds back into the work and draws out something between the elements of tape machine, amplifiers and physical presence. Yet again this points to the analogue-centred ideal that effort and the deteriorating effects of effort have a poetic, authentic sensibility.

Oram was heavily influenced by Eastern philosophies surrounding channels of energy in the body, and bodily processes having electric analogies. She saw the human body as an intricate system of electrical energy stores, ‘as if each human being is an instrument of concord and discord consisting of thousands upon thousands of finely tuned circuits’.<sup>77</sup> In a less subversive but similar mode of thought to Burroughs, Oram believed the body had a unique wave pattern that could be engaged by external sounds; certain frequencies could calm a violent criminal or stir an artist to create a masterpiece. These innate sound senses, caused by the unique wave patterns within our internal energy channels were for Oram what defined us as individuals. They determine our behaviour, social contracts and even gender roles. The theory of Oramics, as the encompassing philosophy and musical practice came to be known, extended to a belief that the world and its inhabitants were constantly subjected to inter-planetary vibrations. As the vibrations correspond to all bodily wave patterns it

---

<sup>76</sup> Oram, *An Individual Note*, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> Oram, *An Individual Note*, p. 12.

is possible for sound to communicate across species, objects and the cosmos. This somewhat spiritualist notion of sound energy and electricity harks back to the use of electricity and radio frequencies by clairvoyants, thus reminding us that within the 1960s understanding of sound, resonated a metaphor based on spiritualist thinking.

Oram's project for tapping into ancient comprehension of sound and signalling, is comparable to poetry projects based on orality, which centred on reviving supposed origins, or lost 'oral tradition'.<sup>78</sup> This was a project for recovering lost knowledge and experiences of language. The sound poets like Chopin, and also Cobbing, viewed it as a retrieval, or to use Oram's phrase, of 'old thought' by means of new technology. It was a returning as opposed to a leap into a new mode of rational, technologically enhanced poetic production. Sound poetry was consistently theorised as a *return* rather than a futurist pioneering step, a utopian rebirth of primal language. This seems to be the case across the board in sound poetry practice. In the 1978 Sound Poetry Festival catalogue Heidsieck talks about the 'primordial' quality of sound, while contemporaneous sound poet, Sten Hanson, talks about orality and the 'homecoming for poetry'. As we have seen Chopin believed electric media served to break sound poetry from the tradition of written, page-based poetry.

It is clear that overall Chopin was aiming towards an innate sound-sense, as were many of the sound poets of the 1960s and 1970s. Ideas of stripped back oral cultures preside in much of the sound poetics discourse. For Chopin his job was to recover orality through the tape mechanisms that are unrestricted by the word. Similarly the drive to reverberate in tune with space, rocks, each other, as a technologised folk ideal, is a distinctly 1960s ambition, no doubt inspired by the tide of interplanetary transmissions and non-Earth sounds. It also seems like an anxious desire to be in tune with the newly developing machines and media that positioned pure (non-linguistic) sound as communication. From the discourse we can see that the tape machine and creative media were used as folk tools that supposedly put man in touch with a truer version of himself. The poetics that this engagement engendered was an attempt to earnestly comment on man's ability to manufacture a more distinct and empowered voice. The question is, what sort of poetics are you left with once this particular wave of optimistic idealism for reverberating sound is passed? Is it

---

<sup>78</sup> Davidson, p. 97.



optimistic and empowered, and doesn't it say more about the human impacted on by technology than about man communicating with himself?

## **Conclusion**

The opening section for this chapter illustrated a scenario where Henri Chopin's new form of sound poetry was showcased under the banner, 'the present, electronic poetry'. In this gesture Chopin was claiming both the moment and technological media. This scene invited the close analysis of that historical moment's relationship with sound recording objects and the electrified poetry it produced. In other words, the 1960s development of the tape machine and the artistic practices the operations of that machine engendered. The extent to which this headline turned out to be a revolutionary statement remains problematic given the incongruities between the ambitions for sound poetry as a political drive and its characteristics as an artform. This is evident in the clash between sound poetry's privileging of idealist human culture and its technological realities. In terms of progress in poetic practice the gesture of announcing his poetry as formed through electric technology was revolutionary indeed, but perhaps in terms of the way Chopin redefined the relationship between speech, the body and media, and not in terms of the social advancement he envisaged.

What this chapter has harvested from Chopin's poetics as significant to sound poetry practice today, is the centering of the body and its sounds, put in direct relation to the sound media. The technologised hand used to compose and produce works of sound poetry on the 'ticklish' tape machine, was symbolic of a new positioning of the self in relation to the media object. The body and the tape recorder were put into a feedback loop that was connected by manual, physical acts, and also by oral channels of speech noise. This chapter has explored a process of communication between the human and the machine that created a distinct sound energy. Communicative vocalisations therefore were to become a procedure of reciprocal emission between the poet and the medium, as opposed to a linguistic exchange. This argument was theorised through notions of media becoming bodily prostheses that at once extended and separated human senses and mechanics. The practice of internalised machined gestures was also theorised in terms of 'incorporated acts', where Hayle deemed the integration of a human facility for operating external equipment as a turn away from

human-to-human interaction, and gesture towards human body in dialogue with technological media. These ideas were posited in terms of Chopin's somatic engagement with media as crucially cybernetic.

While bodily integration with media, via sound, is a key mode of analysis for sound poetics, the works were conceived at the time to be incidental to the larger project for recovering essential, bodily language and returning to utopian oral communities. This was deemed to be the empowering aspect of the newly developed sound poetry. This leaves us with a discrepancy between what today seems a particularly idealised notion of oral collectivity and a somewhat masculine desire to achieve power from behind the structures of the word, rather than what is a technologically revolutionary use of media in poetry.

We have also seen how the essentialist idea of analogue sound was written through the use of tape for poetic composition, where the flow of sound and motions of the media object create an authentic audio object. This notion of analogue was useful however in developing a theory of the oscillations of energy, skill and effort in Chopin's texts and performances. The notion of 'effort' and the entropic dissipation of energy presented a useful model for theorizing the link between Chopin's poetry and the media. Based on the functions of the analogue object, and the 1960s realisation of sound and energy, I built a conceptual model that gave each of Chopin's moves in creating, performing and distributing his poetry, a significance that drives understandings of his work forward. This model of effort, expenditure and mediated sound will now be developed and tested within a contemporary poetic practice.

## Chapter One Image Page

Issue of *Revue OU* No.42-43-44 from private collection, showing works by Tom Phillips and Henri Chopin (author's own photos)



## Portfolio Remarks 1

### The Feedback Loop of Effort and Song

#### Feedback

In the following remarks I will reflect on aspects of my practice and conceptual processes central to works documented in my portfolio. The works focused on here exemplify certain moves I have made in my poetics over the years between 2009 and 2013 that have advanced my practice. Chapter One introduced the work of Chopin, and located his poetics as a model for exploring the relationship between sound poetry and its media. Through Chopin I located a correlation between the physical acts of producing and performing sound poetry, and the operations of the tape machine. This correlation was explored as a synthesis of bodily effort, voice and analogue technology. Sound poetry, as it was argued, inhabits these junctions of bodily exertion and media function. Through exploring the DIY aesthetic of the tape machine, and the human body's capacity to become machinic and tire, a tension was revealed between the sonic effects of Chopin's machined voice and the technological impact on his body. What became key in this theorisation of Chopin's sound poetics was the concept and practice of feedback loops. Models of feedback between the body, the media and the text were cited as occurring by way of effort, voicings, error and excess. The tape machine was then seen as the site of materialised expenditure and sound. Through the faltering mechanics of both the tape player and body, voice is understood as something physical and objectified. To integrate the research of Chapter One into the wider work of this project, we can view these key moves in determining the processes of the machined voice, as a move towards a theoretical model for speech-matter. Speech-matter can now be developed from this notion of the voice becoming material owing to feedback between the bodily machine and machinic body.

Speech-matter for now can be seen as a kind of methodology of my practice, that is, an approach to generating sound poetry that explores physical aspects of the voice which has undergone some process of mediation. How these processes in my work reflect or emerge from my theorisation of Chopin's work will be now be questioned. Indeed there are certain aspects of Chopin's poetics that I intended to test,

and others that I may retroactively view as a feedback from my investigation into 1960s sound poetics. One recursion that has emerged between my research into Chopin and my practice is the concept of the efforted voice, or speech produced at the point of bodily effort. The process of *labouring* the voice as a conjunction of technology and poetry has become key research area in my poetics. This can be seen in devised texts that see me using my voice as an instrument for embodying circulations of exertion, sound technologies and performance. The works in question manifest ideas about media as an erring object, which reveals its materiality through malfunction, and how machined noise impacts on the status of the voice. The body becomes like a technology and the voice takes on the burden of the body's efforts.

A central poem to my praxis is called 'Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine'. It is primarily a text for live performance, however there is a recording of it which emphasises the effort of performance. (As will be detailed later, this home recording was done while playing with a hula hoop.) The poem is based on the classic turntable era Buddy Holly song, 'Peggy Sue' and characterises an approach to vocalising a poem via song, including: textual repetitions and loops, vocal ticks, comedy (which I determine as nonsensical, inane combinations, absurdities, suspended delivery) and textual manifestations of analogue sound. This work also marked an interest in singing as a performance strategy. I will reflect on what this move led to and what it signifies within the composition of a sound-based poem. For instance, when singing potential vocal movements are increased, as are the directions for the work. Singing adds an extra layer of meaning, where the tune has its own 'resonances' and semantics. I will consider how excess sound material is added to a poem in its sung reading and how such delivery, puts the body to work.

Also emerging from my research into the feedback of physical exertion into voice is a diptych of 'space shanties'. These are works based on sea shanties transmuted through thematics of science-fiction and sound poetics. The first installment is called 'Effort Noise, a space shanty'. The song-poem takes the structure of several types of sea shanty, ranging from long voyage verses, to short haul call-and-response chants, to landing songs. These structures were tracked onto a route map of the 1969 Apollo 11 lunar landing, fitting the appropriate type of shanty to the element of the trajectory; take off, long haul, dock, orbit, land, take off, splash down. This work was a concentrated analysis of sea shanties and how they work. The next

poem elaborated on the theme and figured a TV character, the female computer voice from the series, *Star Trek*, as a sea shanty persona.

All of the works from this section of the portfolio will be discussed in detail, but it is worth mentioning that the path through them is not necessarily in chronological order of production. Revisions and edits have been made throughout the process and often the works' live existences have been re-imagined for certain events. Most poems in the portfolio have a sprawling existence in a way that, I feel, qualifies my work as the 'extrovert' practice Chopin called for.<sup>1</sup> In the portfolio the poems exist as both scripts, 'stable' audio files and recordings of live readings. As will be the case throughout my portfolio the accumulative and shifting poetics that occur between their different versions is key to my praxis.

### **Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine**

Chopin's use of the tape machine, and my theoretical work on this process is reverberated in my practice, without being directly imitated. For instance, the tape machine has appeared in my work in the distorted echo of an answer machine. The answer machine here can be seen as a metaphor for the taping processes learned from Chopin. Here I am referring to the title, and to some extent the process for writing, my sound poem, 'Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine'.<sup>2</sup>

This Buddy Holly inspired poem marked my move from my use of a reading to a sung voice. This strategy of 'singing out' was admittedly a creative release, allowing me to import more than text into the poem. This aspect of my practice has learned from trained and technical artists such as Meredith Monk, whose crafted vocal innovations provide structures of skilled re-wiring of song noise.<sup>3</sup> I have also been motivated by the 'amateur' singing works of contemporary American poet Lee Ann Brown in her reclaiming songs. Brown's work ranges from folk ballads about contemporary news, 'Ballad of Susan Smith',<sup>4</sup> and restorative recuperative rewritings

---

<sup>1</sup> Henri Chopin, 'Poetry & Sound', *Ear Magazine: Sound Text Issue*, 1981, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Go to portfolio, p. 236 and Track Two of audio disk one.

<sup>3</sup> Monk's song, 'Boat Man' was influential on the works detailed in this section of the portfolio, particularly the shanty inspired sound poems. See Meredith Monk, 'Boat Man' (ECM, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Lee Ann Brown, *The Sleep That Changed Everything* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), p. 90.

of patriotic hymns, the ‘Transformation Hymn’.<sup>5</sup> From these works I understand sung performance of a text and the shift from talking to singing, as a *courting* of sonorous excess through volume, pitch, melody. These things replace my somewhat limited vocal palate of accent, prosody, personality and significantly the level of physical exertion is heightened. But when I enter this mode I am not singing like a singer sings, I am imitating. I am generating a performance persona in the form of singing. It is more accurately described as ‘reading singing’, representing a singing voice and generating a paradigmatic singing. It is more about the fallibility of the voice and straining to sing beyond actual skill or technique. This is what I call ‘non-expert knowledge’ of the voice.<sup>6</sup> It is more about intuitive understanding and experimenting in the noises of singing using knowledge based on my everyday practice of speaking. I use general vocal sounds from unremarkable situations of voicing to provide knowledge of sung words. It is the attempt to sing, rather than polished ability, that reveals the poetics. The unreliability of my sung voice, and this gesture towards singing are as I view it, evidence of Chopin’s parasitic, tape-machined noise influencing my practice. This is albeit a discursive link, but Chopin’s courting of machinic noise via faltering equipment, and his extended techniques in vocalising and editing sounds can be seen as analogous to my favouring non-expertise qualities of my voice.

This focus on the attempt rather than expert fluency in poetry performance is also where comedy comes into play in my practice. This is not necessarily in terms of the clichéd notion of British comedy being a poetics of failure. For me comedy is evoked by giving the act of singing a conceptual importance it can’t live up to. This notion of non-expert singing therefore comes into play when the logic of the piece relies on the shortcomings of the delivery, or at least the heard attempt. There is a proposition introduced by the gesture of singing. The technology is missing on stage but it has in a way been swallowed and is being attempted in the throat.

This ‘swallowing’ is characteristic of how my practice relates to its theoretical research; learning from Chopin’s process (his microphone swallowing), which in turn

---

<sup>5</sup> A recording can be heard here, Lee Ann Brown, ‘Lee Ann Brown on Penn Sound’, *Penn Sound* <<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Brown.php>> [accessed 20 September 2011].

<sup>6</sup> The phrase, ‘non-expert knowledge’ has come out of conversations with friend and performance artist, Emma Bennett. The term was discussed in a recent panel interview between us both. Emma Bennett and Holly Pester, ‘In Conversation’ (presented at the Voice Symposium, Dana Centre, London, 2012).

get incorporated into my work as bodily and conceptual gesture. The body and its vocalisations, the nuances of the Buddy Holly poem's repetitions and textually embedded feedback are embodied aspects of the analogue mediums studied in Chapter One. However I am not making work about operating a machine or a turntable or a jukebox, the operations are all internalised, vocalised. Technological mediation is part of the process but not an object in the recitation. My aim was for a work that sounded like a broken record player with distortions made present via the recognition of the tune of 'Peggy Sue'. In the audio version I am hula hooping while reciting the poem, as may be audibly evident. The extra effort of gyrating is coupled with the antagonistic breathing rhythms of rotating the hoop and keeping in the beat of the poem. The hula-hoop is like a mimetic turntable, the body becomes it, and the voice carries the inflections of the activity. A rhythm is placed onto the poem by the action. This is in reference to the whirl of the turntable that can be heard when playing the Buddy Holly record.<sup>7</sup> Buddy Holly's music epitomises the turntable and was made for jukeboxes. The song's audio character constantly point towards its medium; the two minutes and 29 second duration of the song is analogous to the 7" single; Buddy Holly's vocals hiccup and jump like a skipping record; his little intakes of breath are machinically embedded into the song; the percussion keeps the song within a fixed parameters; the permutating guitar riff slots into and travels the record's grooves; you get a sense that rotation is built into the song.

My poem version of the song is 'broken' distorted and slowed down to about five minutes. The raw and earnest pleas within the lyrics are shortcircuited. '*I love you*' becomes '*I luft you*' or '*I left you*', and '*Well I love you gal and I want you...*' becomes '*Wella left ja girl and I want to see you sew*'. The '*I*'s and '*you*'s get flipped about so the direction of the song's hail loses laterality. These switches contribute to an overall sense of abstract communication. While 'Peggy Sue' has the elegantly simple message, a lover signalling to his love, this poem complicates that transaction of words into absurdity. The call of the song is distorted along with its lyrics. The title, 'Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine' evokes a lingering message waiting for a response; a personal, vocal deposit of sentiment spoken directly to a machine rather than a listener. It also references the work's composition. I developed the initial

---

<sup>7</sup> The hula-hoop can also be seen a perversion of Chopin's tape playing in performances, but here it is distilled into an emblematic gesture.



version by phoning one phone with another (landline to mobile) and leaving a message. In doing so recording sung improvisations, adlibbing around the lyrics. Using the phone as a recording device helps with improvisation as it makes the recording feel at once throwaway and intimate. Buddy Holly the vocal figure is therefore fixed in the phone and within the process of writing. But an answer machine is archaic and nostalgic, inferring magnetic tape. Buddy Holly is located there in a sealed, personalised audio archive.

A second level of composition took place by making a sound piece out of samples from the actual song, picking out Holly's excessive vocal eruptions and '*hu hoo*'s, elements that made the voice feel like textured matter. This process was about getting used to deconstructing the song, examining its constituent pieces, seeing it as a collection of sounds, rather than an impenetrable pop song. With these two sound files as a base I focused on short circuiting the lyrics and generating my own. One process for this was to read a line like, '*well I love you girl*' into a voice-to-text application, again on my phone, then repeating the process. This inevitably led to a scrambled translation of the utterance. Lines like '*with a love so rare and true*' became '*with a lump so rare it flew*'. From this I accumulated distorted lyrics. This process was akin to creating deliberate 'mondegreens', or near-homonymic mishearings of song lyrics that create a very different ethos behind the lyric (a famous ones being '*Scuse me while I kiss this guy*').<sup>8</sup> This is a useful concept for me as it formulises a process of auditory malfunctions and encoding via mishearings. Implanted mondegreens are like the inception of a bug in the operations, like germinating texts. In my poem 'eggs', 'sewing' and 'spewing' are the new vocal items encoded into the song, alien items that make new inferences and meanings, but themselves based on mishearings and letter switching.

When I perform the poem, that first utterance of '*Peggy Sue*' has a notable impact in the room. It announces the whole institution and culture surrounding the song. It acknowledges that there is a myth of Peggy Sue, as a character. But I want to question whether when the name is heard, is there an image of a woman or of the words, the material sounds of 'puh-egg-gee-sew'. For me *she* is a verbal space, a shape to get my mouth around. She is a verbal problem and a puzzle that I have to

---

<sup>8</sup> Sylvia Wright coined the term in 1954 from her mishearing, '*They hae slain the Earl O' Moray | And Lady Mondegreen*' rather than '*And laid him on the green*'. See Sylvia Wright, 'The Death of Lady Mondegreen', *Harper's Magazine*, 209 (1954), 48–51.

work on. '*Pretty pretty pretty pretty Peggy Sue*' is satisfying to articulate, and in speaking it you can have a kind of love affair with the name, which is what Buddy Holly seems to be doing in the song. In some ways Buddy Holly's song is actually a love song to the name, Peggy Sue. Yet, for me to revoice this love affair is to enact some gender alternation, and reclaim the girl as the object of pop songs and ballads, the object of the lyric.

The verbal and physical undulation in both the original song and my re-interpretation of it is prevalent to this flitting between agencies of desirer and desired. The line, '*my heart yearns*' gets isolated and warped, after a few '*clunks*' it becomes, '*My shivering quivering heart yearns*'. It remains a romantic plea, and a declaration, but is now faltering. Towards the end I get stuck on the articulation of the letter, 'p', like a jumping record. At this point a bit of 'Please Please Me' juts in, as if the Beatles are popping their head over the fence as a reminder that analogue sound is always open to interference. The last leg of the poem has a crescendo like progress, which the babble lines seem to be resisting. Yet there is a sense of exertion and tiring. By the end '*puffin eggs*' are '*puffing eggs*', while I, the reader am huffing and puffing from the work. As I embody the vocal sound, 'peggy soo', I embody sound as effort and error.

### **Space Shanties and Effort Noise**

It wouldn't be accurate to say that thinking about sound poetry and its labour of the voice directly led me to consider sea shanties and sailing songs. It would be more useful to say that there was a coincidence in my thinking, that the direction of my research and the swerves of my practice brought them together. What is clear to me is that my practice-engagement with sea shanties provided me with a new resource of thinking with which to imagine a progressive theoretical understanding for sound poetry. As a rudimentary description, sea shanties are traditional work songs, sung in time to the physical tasks of rigging by the crews of merchant ships. The song's rhythms are in time to coordinate with heaving, pulling, turning and tightening. The call and response between the crew and the shanty man is a communication channel that systematises breath, strain, song and body. The jointly sung '*HAUL!*' in the line '*haul on the bowline on the bowline HAUL!*' from the song 'Haul on the Bowline' is the moment at which the crew would pull hard on the cordage, tightening the sail for a

short haul voyage. The meaning of the words or individual lyrics are subordinate to the physical ‘pressure’ put on them and this pressure is sounded. In short there is a sounded effort incorporated into the texture of the song.

My first space shanty is called ‘Effort Noise’ and attempts to embody this process of pressured words, with each section having its own tune structure that put different weight on the vocalisations.<sup>9</sup> It draws heavily on key shanty songs, which I picked for being good examples of revealing the analogous act they were sung to. Although there are many complex divisions and categories of shanty songs I am mostly interested in how the physical task is represented in the song, and particularly in the distinctions between *heaving* and *hauling* songs. Heaving songs are longer more melodious for continuous processes and commonly have a few single-man sung verses and then the collective sing-out. For example a ‘Capstan’ shanty like ‘Rio Grande’ is sung in the task of winding the capstan and pulling up the anchor. These songs have a twisting, rhythmical pattern, which I emulated for the ‘lift-off’ phase of ‘Effort Noise’. Heaving songs are for short intermittent tasks and have short, sharp call-and-response shouts.<sup>10</sup> ‘Sheet’ shanties were sung for the final ‘jag’ of tightening the ropes. In ‘Haul Away, Joe’ the chorus line, ‘*A-way haul away, we’ll haul away, Joe*’ you get a sense of a collective of hands rhythmically pulling and then sharply tugging on the last ‘*Joe!*’. In my work I wanted to create a distinction between intense moments of hard strenuous activity and drifting moments, similarly to sea shanties, which create an interplay between a projected narrative and present action. To aid this sense in the composition I improvised bits of texts while lifting objects, trying to *incorporate* the vocal gestures of a sea shanty in my bodily movements and breath rhythms. I took these fragments and coordinated them to a diagram of the Apollo 11 route map, which came with a vintage audio documentary on a 7” vinyl.<sup>11</sup>

This diagram gave me specific moments in the Apollo mission path, such as mid-space docking, lunar orbiting circuits and stages of landing (perfect for a ‘stamp-and-go’ style of shanty emulating songs like ‘Drunken Sailor’). The audio documentary on the record had lots of sound material and dialogue for me to weave into the text such as communications between NASA and the crew. The repeated line

---

<sup>9</sup> Go to portfolio, p. 240 and audio disk one, Track Three.

<sup>10</sup> Stan Hugill, *Shanties from the Seven Seas: Shipboard Work-songs and Songs Used as Work-songs from the Great Days of Sail* (New York: Routledge, 1979), p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Various, *Man On The Moon* (London: Philips, 1969).

‘*Can you feel my love Buzz?*’ is a play on the communications between NASA and Buzz Aldrin, mixed with key refrain from the aptly dated 1969 pop song ‘Love Buzz’.<sup>12</sup> (This is also the point in the poem that most explicitly echoes David Bowie’s ‘Space Oddity’, which is a restrained presence throughout). In this weaving process of transmuted nautical terminology, folk mythology and 1960s moon age fervour for technologies, the poem attempts to embody a prism of sounded effort. By which I mean, following on from the work done in the Buddy Holly poem, that this turns effort, into a vocal artifice. The song here is representative of work, whilst sonically embodying effort through the act of singing and exclaiming.

At the risk of diverting I think it’s worth mentioning a piece of experience I had in relation to this. In October 2010 I visited the BBC at the Mailbox in Birmingham. I had written with an unsuccessful proposal to record a poem in the BBC radio drama studio. As consolation I was invited to a recording for an episode of *The Archers*, with a guided tour of the studio. During the episode two characters, a father and son were having a conversation stood at a microphone while supposedly loading hay bales onto a tractor in an imaginary field. The suggestion of lifting had to be embodied in the voice while the actors stood still in line with the microphone. At one point the director interrupted the recording from the booth and requested that the father put much more ‘effort noise’ into his speech. By putting the sound of strain into his voice, the speech took on aspects of the speaker’s body, and became a substitute for actual body movements. A strained physique was sounded, cohered by the recording medium into a *scene*. Through the notion ‘effort noise’ I have since investigated this continuum of speech, effort, movement, recorded sound, the microphone, and the imaginary field.

In my shanty poems there is likewise a continuum of body and the voice and the mediation of effort. Also at work is an exchange of energy. Owing to the process of shanty singing, where the act of singing incorporates the physical task, there is a cycle of activity and sound. This point resonates with Daphne Oram’s notion of circuits as discussed in Chapter One. Within Oram’s discourse we can view the dual act of singing and working, or the representational act of voicing effort, as a circuitry of bodily expenditure, picked up by the voice, which is then fed back into the body as energy. In this case is the song the capacitor? And what about the inevitable

---

<sup>12</sup> Shocking Blue, *Love Buzz* (Pink Elephant, 1969).

dissipation in Oram's rationale? The dissipation of energy can be said to be counteracted by the work that gets done and the product of the poem, as Oram would call it, 'beyondness'.

In sea shanties there is a rational link between the strain on the body in rigging and hauling, the vocal task of singing, and the counteracting motion of sea. In a sea shanty the coordinated breathing of the body is spent on the effort of the work. The motions of the body and breath rhythm are representative of the motion of the sea. The movement of the sea and the movement of the work are allegorically and physically linked by the breathing body. Therefore the sea is the *mise-en-scène* that governs the motions and motion-driven sounds. Sea is background to the activity yet also the conveyor of motion and sound. We can draw parallels between the sea, the imaginary field in the radio play, the radio medium and Henri Chopin's tape recorder. They are the media and *mise-en-scène* of the performance; they are what draws out the effort sounds.

### **The Work of Sound Poetry**

I consider my space shanties to be sound poems. I realise that there are a number of elements missing from my incarnations (a single female singing vocal actions from a sheet of paper) for it to correspond to either a traditional shanty song, or a 'conventional' sound poetry performance in the tradition discussed in Chapter One. There is no explicit object or task at stake, no group of singers, no sea, no space ship, no tape machine, and no genuine processes of labour. But there is perhaps something more like the 'imaginary field' as discussed in reference to the radio play; a discursive surreal space that puts the frictions I am outlining between effort and body-sound into a circuitry. In other words in my shanty poems, sound and body are sketched as a network of processes within imaginary and absurdist backgrounds. It is sound poetry because it has this mediating space that processes materials of vocal sounds. In the work's live performance this 'imaginary field' can be located as a number of things: outerspace, the *fantasy* of a worksong, the relational space of the body and voice, the performance persona required by the work. This repositioning of the body against technology signals a departure from Chopin's tradition of sound poetry. The dynamic between the performer and the relevant technology has been abstracted and absorbed

by the text. The performance navigates the conceptual operations of media, it signals towards technology rather than explicitly showcases it.

The performance-persona drawn by my practice is its own technology. 'Effort Noise' draws the shape of physical movement, and technologises the act of singing. Positioning myself in the performance dynamic, with no media object to hide behind, foregrounds my physical and social identity. In *Field Notes* J.H. Prynne talks about the worker in Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper' in terms of her body language as performance. In the encounter the body language of the reaper's movements are like a 'rich code' that reveals her to be in a performance of herself. The body language 'represents vividly the social figure of her agency, as instrument within this occasion and its structure of motives and also as a personal actor whose gestures and comportment shew her to be what she does, to be the performer of who she is: for this moment she is all reaper.'<sup>13</sup> Here we have the idea of bodily movements determining agency. The body is in a performance of itself, revealing a persona, in coordination with its effort, resulting in work, as governed by the song. Prynne, on Wordsworth's encounter, is concerned with recuperating the self-reflexivity of the reaper's song from Wordsworth's ethnographic differencing of himself from the singing subject. In my shanty poem there is also a personhood as a result of coordinated effort and song, yet this persona is based on a fictional act of labour, in a routine of artifice and sound thus throwing shade on the notion of authentic identities through noble acts of labour.

Prynne's practical critique of 'The Solitary Reaper' also highlights what I have previously referred to as 'pressured words' in shanties, vocal sounds with no semantic meaning apart from the force of their utterance, 'heave', 'ho', 'hup', 'woo'. In the shanties I've been focusing on, sound and song are outside language and in doing so indicate the bodied person via the action rather than language. Sub-textual vocalisations are for Prynne, necessary for maintaining the rhythm of the song in conjunction with the physical action. This returns me to a key notion of sound poetry, where sub-textual vocalisations are a crucial force in engendering a liberated poetic. On Wordsworth's encounter and non-meaning sounds Prynne says,

even at a distance he can intuit her body rhythms from his own  
physical and motor self-experience, the exertion of repeated work

---

<sup>13</sup> J. H. Prynne, *Field Notes: 'The Solitary Reaper' and Others* (Cambridge: J. H. Prynne (privately published), 2007), p. 12.

movements: the effect of rhythm in shaping and regulating the sequence of a muscular effort to make for balance and smoothness of transition and a certain trance-like suspension of anything that would distract from persistence towards completion of the task. Within this intimate connection of voice sound and body movement it is not unusual for the popular oral tradition to include vocalisation that is sub-textual, not containing fully formed word elements, as in whistling or humming or keening. In repeated song structures like burdens or refrains there are frequently syllabic routines that by convention do not carry full lexical or syntactic sense: they are sound-words whose function is as carrier to rhythm and melody.<sup>14</sup>

This is for me a pertinent description of how a work song puts the muscular, limbed physique and the voice into a relational complex. What strikes me here is that the job of the song is to organise the body, and this is most effective through non-meaningful ‘sound-words’. My interpretation of a sound-word within a shanty, is one where to vocalise it you have to put your body into it, the sound-word such as ‘ho’, ‘hup’, ‘woo’ is a physical task. My space shanty, ‘Effort Noise’, is structured around these breath or pressure-driven words whilst also subordinating many of the semantic-driven words or phrases that push the narrative into loose articulation. This is a condition of the performance and again within the persona character that requires an utterance to be sounded as movements rather than spoken as words. This can be heard in the lines ‘*heave her up and away whup go*’ or ‘*hoist your arm over a belt o’ wavy*’, lines which I’m well aware of how benign they seem as stand alone lines in a poem. That is often half the point, and often irrelevant anyway.

Prynne’s description of the sound-words as a function of both the task of the song and the body can be contrasted with Steve McCaffery’s position on sound poetry and expenditure. The meaningless sound words in the reaper’s song, for Prynne, perform a combination of the person and the act, with the task of the labour being the direct result of the song (particularly these moments of unmeaning vocal expression). As a counterpoint to this McCaffery has determined sound poetry’s non-semantic material as deliberately having no use value, in what can be seen as contrary to the measureable productivity of a work song. In his essay ‘Writing as a General Economy’ McCaffery uses Bataille’s notion of expenditure, or nonproductive activities of consumption, to theorise the linguistic character of sound poetry. He says that sound poetry is ‘a poetry of complete expenditure in which nothing is recoverable

---

<sup>14</sup> Prynne, *Field Notes*, p. 12.

and useable as “meaning””.<sup>15</sup> This poetics therefore conforms to Bataille’s notion of the principle of waste expenditure, where activities such as war, perverse sex, cult sacrifice and jewels, acquire their significance from an accent on loss and expenditure within the act.<sup>16</sup> In McCaffery’s application of this idea to sound poetry, he stresses sound poetry’s positioning against placing value on the utility of language that conveys a singular meaning. Sound poetics of waste and expenditure represents a non-utilitarian, anti-capitalist economy which ruptures of meaning and linguistic matter have no semantic use.

For my part in this counterpoint of Prynne and McCaffery, which goes far further than is possible here for me to navigate, I am comfortable in the realisation that there are contradictions in my work when measured against either of these positions on phonic centred speech-matter and expenditures of work and waste.<sup>17</sup> However, this is precisely why it was interesting for me to tackle worksongs as a sound poetry. My work can only fall short of the genuine production of a worker persona that Prynne admires in the work song, by quite literally wasting linguistic meaning and bodily effort on non-meaning speech-matter. While on the other hand my work does not site the mitigation of linguistic meaning as a semiotic exchange. My work, in other words, contrasts with McCaffery’s semiology of the fragmented grapheme as an anti-utilitarian struggle. Overall I am simply interested in the cross-overs reflected here, in terms of materialised and bodied speech-matter, and how it informs my practice.

A further point for contrast between Prynne’s figure of the worksong singer and McCaffery’s sound poet (an indeed my own work) is McCaffery’s description of the sound poetics of Chopin himself, and his ‘non-semantic body language’. The contrast to be made here is with Prynne’s ‘meaningful’ worker’s body, and as McCaffery determines, a deliberately antisocial body. McCaffery describes Chopin’s performed body as a non-signifying, un-meaning space. His body does not extend to

---

<sup>15</sup> Steve McCaffery, ‘Writing as a General Economy’, in *North of Intention: Critical Writings 1973-1986: Critical Writings 1973-1986* (New York: Roof Books, 2000), p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> Georges Bataille, *Visions Of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 118.

<sup>17</sup> I am aware that the comparisons made here between Prynne and McCaffery evokes the historical dialogue between the two poets and theorists. Indeed Prynne commented directly on McCaffery’s critical essays in ‘North of Intention’ in his ‘Letter to Steve McCaffery’. In this Prynne rejects the proposition that language-centered poetry is itself a rejection of the elitist communication of the lyric, by setting up a new kind of text-reader interaction. See Prynne, ‘Letter on Language Poetry (A Letter to Steve McCaffery)’, *The Gig*, 40-46 (2000).



anything outside of the performance. This positioning of the body is for McCaffery linked to Chopin's rebellion against the word and literary language, and the right of man to signify nothing, thereby rebelling against the socio-cultural denial of the body to be 'a blank, meaningless space'. McCaffery sees Chopin as positing that 'the body is nothing when trapped within a system of representations but becomes everything when posited outside of meaning'.<sup>18</sup> For Chopin this nonrepresentational state is achievable through technology, and his duality with the tape machine is when meaning comes into play. Chopin does not mean anything beyond the space of the sound poem. This contrasts with the female reaper, where her embodiment of sound and work signals in every direction to her status and identity beyond the song. The oscillation between these realities is a potential space for me to inhabit. Unlike Chopin (within McCaffery's reading) my gender in performance presents an automatic meaning. I can never make sound or movement in performance that is gender-neutral. So I resist the gestures towards authentic identity as proposed by Prynne's reading of the reaper. My instances of action and song are to complicate meaning and obscure identity.

In my case of shanty singing, there's a conceit, a mischievous mix of the noble work song with the romanticised space era frivolity. For me there has to be this obscurity and a supplanted, inane *mise-en-scène* within which to grapple with the purity of effort, breath and song. It is also the science-fiction milieu that again links to Chopin's tape player, putting the authentic primal folk culture, into an object of modernity. In relation to this, I am always aware that my first and main experience of listening to sea shanties was in my dad's car. I find the memory striking, a bearded man singing along to sailors' work songs, while he crunches gears, rolls the window down to flick out his fag, pushes the horn. Lugging and hauling an old car, one body and machine converging amid rhythmic strains, bringing new meaning to the 'stress' on words. I think of this cross-wired scenario as the kind of tangled reality, and reformed 'normal' situation that I aim to draw out in my poetries. The collective call has been dissolved into one abstract voice, and the burden of the work has been technologised.

---

<sup>18</sup> McCaffery, *Prior to Meaning: The Protosemantic and Poetics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. 178.

### Majel Barrett's Bodied Voice

The scenario of my dad's car was coincidental to some research I undertook into historic science fictions of journeys to the moon. Pre-enlightenment fantasies about space travel are full of strange objects rationalised as appropriate means for reaching the moon. The flock of geese (*gansas*) used to convey the proto-astronaut in Francis Godwin's extraordinary story *The Man in the Moone, or the Discoverse of a Voyage thither by Domingo Gonsales* is an appealing image, for its disorderly and tangible noisiness.<sup>19</sup> I was intuitively drawn to this triad; a trajectory; a sense of mass; a song. Flights across sea or space in a sounded vehicle, whose mass and mechanics must be performed through song, strikes me as neither utopian nor dystopian. In imagining and parodying the fantasy of space flight in my own work I am playing within a field of joke futurisms and figured sound. Ron Silliman blogged on my performance of 'Effort Noise' at the Text Festival 2011, in what he saw as a 'post-avant' gesture: 'she winks at the whole idea of the future within futurism by adapting a sea shanty for spaceships'.<sup>20</sup> I agree that the work performs the futuristic as a pastiche and uses masculine futurisms and masculine work songs as a space to joke in. Gender distinction is indeed a key aspect of shanty rhetoric and work songs. Gendering is a fierce practice in shanty naming. Operations and glossia, objects and tasks are gendered making the processes of hard and exhausting acts an infliction on *her*, the ship. Phrases like 'Oh break her out bullies',<sup>21</sup> and 'rap her to the bank',<sup>22</sup> give my interaction with shanty singing an angle with which to unpick, undermine and play with pronouns and gendered actions. In other words, bending the 'traditional' reckoning of pronouns in shanties through my own voice became the focus of the next shanty.

My sound poem, 'Majel Barrett, a space shanty' is a gesture to give name, body and age to these sites of 'she' and 'her' on a ship.<sup>23</sup> *She* is Majel Barret, wife of Gene Rodenberry, science fiction writer for television, and she played the voice of the star ship's computer in most of the televisions series of *Star Trek*. Over the decades of

---

<sup>19</sup> Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moon*, trans. by John Anthony Butler (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Ron Silliman, 'Monday, May 09, 2011: After a Long, Intense Day of Events', *Silliman's Blog* <<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/after-long-intense-day-of-events-at.html>> [accessed 14 June 2011].

<sup>21</sup> Hugill, *Sea Shanties* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1977).

<sup>22</sup> John Wilkinson, 'Heigh Ho: A Partial Gloss of Word Order', *Glossator*, 2 (2010), 295–326 (p. 304).

<sup>23</sup> Go to portfolio, p. 245 and audio disk one, Track Four.

playing a futuristic synthetic speech programme, Barrett gave herself away as a human actor by ageing, her voice deepening and croaking through the series. For me this is resonant with my thinking about the embodied crackles and faltering of analogue mediated sound as discussed in reference to 1960s sound poetry. My sound poem figures Barrett as a template working song character, in this case an aged woman and also the sexualized object of the ship itself. Some sea shanties feature famous prostitutes or ‘Judies’ and intermingle these pronouns with descriptions of the ship; ‘The Whores of Sailor Town’, ‘A Matlow Told Me’, and ‘Serafina’ are instances of the deeply misogynistic and sexually aggressive songs that I researched.

Unlike ‘Effort Noise’ this space shanty has a single tune and song structure. It is set to ‘The Island Lass’, which is a windlass shanty, sung for working the brake levers. This is an action with an ‘up and down’ binary form, a motion embodied by the call and response structure:

Our packet is the Island Lass  
*Lowlands, lowlands, lowlands, low*  
 There's a laddie howlin' at the main topmast  
*Lowlands, lowlands, lowlands, low*  
 We'll haul 'em high and let 'em dry  
*Lowlands, lowlands, lowlands, low*<sup>24</sup>

This extract shows the repetitive, ‘up and down’ motion of the song. My poem had to reflect this protracted structure with a tiring of the voice, like Barrett’s computer voice aging through the *Star Trek* generations. When I perform my version I beat my chest on the ‘response’ lines to get the effect of percussive air. This is also a bodily strain that highlights that there is no actual labour being done, just expended energy, for nothing but sound.

Individual lines tell the story of my fictional character, sometimes referencing made-up nautical terminology, ‘*load and load and wreck*’ and sometimes historical information gleaned from Maritime museums, like ‘*her mother ran away with a foofoo band*’.<sup>25</sup> The ‘response’ lines are mainly composed of self-styled sound-words, put in for their sonic pressure as much as any meaning, ‘*LOW-lack link inside yur low*

---

<sup>24</sup> Hugill and X-Seamen’s Insitute, *Sea Songs: Newport, Rhode Island- Songs from the Age of Sail* (Washington, DC: Folkways Records, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Foo Foo bands were makeshift music bands formed on long voyage ships to pass the time. Unlike the delicate craft of scrimshaw, they were bawdy and crude, wearing fancy dress to play their instruments deliberately badly and noisily. I like this idea of organised cacophony.

*LAND*'. These lines had to roughly scan with the syllabic shape of '*Lowlands Lowlands lowlands low*', and are antagonistic to the 'feed-line'. Some of the phrases are taken directly from sound clips from *Star Trek*, phrases that the ship computer said, such as '*warning*', '*working*', '*outer hull breach*' and '*The captain is not aboard the ship*'. (For a performance of the piece in Liverpool I included these sound clips as a prologue, setting the scenario of the character.) The phrase, '*Working*', is repeated in and out of meaning, as a crude reference to the work song, as computer being operational, and as a statement of fact, a self-referential remark on the 'work' of singing.

For thinking through this poem I returned to Adorno's reproachful remarks in the 'The Curves of the Needle' as discussed in Chapter One, that a recorded woman's voice, when played on a gramophone, sounds 'incomplete' and 'needy'.<sup>26</sup> This poem gave me the opportunity to dig into this proposition. As a generalisation the passage in question states that at the point of experiencing recorded voices, detached from their bodies on the new media, a line was drawn between the male and female sound. The very split of the sonic and the somatic was gendered. For Adorno as new listening identities were being forged through the frivolous media, the sounded woman's song and her acousmatic call becomes aligned with noise owing to the 'shrill' of dislocation. It is the feminine as fragmentary and perpetually in lack, caught in the irrevocable lag of bodily and linguistic sense. The corporeal prosthesis of the gramophone fails to cybernetically endorse the call and thereby any coherence is obscured in a way that is supposedly distinctly feminine.

Adorno exclusively links the flaws of a woman's singing voice to analogue media. He conceptualises analogue distortion as female. The displacing screech of electric pitch and the scratch and creak of the record player is akin to the banshee scream of white noise. In our imposed cultural experience of poeticised sound signalling, communication is male, interference is feminine. If we connect this to McCaffery on Chopin as stepping outside meaning and becoming just body we can say that my character of the ship has lost the anonymity of the computer voice, flaunting the impossibility of the neutral. It is a foregrounded persona that figures the disembodied female voice as efforted song, and the body as an erring medium, all framed within a joke.

---

<sup>26</sup> Adorno, 'The Curves of the Needle', p. 54.

### **Recursions of Voiced Effort**

The 'line of enquiry' through these works could not be described as smooth or congruent. Accidents of research required my thinking to follow my practice up many unplanned avenues. However, this is the negotiation between practice and research that I aim to develop. My intention is to allow my practice to throw-up things like sea shanties, materials and ideas that problematise a developing thread in my theory, disrupt and divert it, and then offer a line through it. The song 'Peggy Sue' gave me the perfect frame to consider proprioceptive aspects of singing and embodying fields of sonic loops, and technologies. Shanties prompted me to think about effort and operating rhythms, about the voice in action. Both areas led to a broader consideration of the logics of making vocal noise as a performative act. In some ways they elucidate ideas uncovered in the research chapter, in others they complicate the theorisation.

The theme of shanty and the song 'Peggy Sue' are both obstacle and channel for my work in the broader area of audio technology. In turn this direction in my research has made certain interventions in these modalities of practice. Often the interruption and the following need to reconcile the disparate themes becomes the moment at which the practice and the research make sense to each other, at the point of their discrepancies. For instance the radio medium in the radio play moves the circulation of 'effort noise', on into a form, and the realisation that the radio and the 'imaginary field' are enablers of my developing the idea of laboured voice. These moments are not only incidental, but also points of learning from research into Chopin's practice. The process of audio technology moving the sounded effort into a poetic form is a direct exemplification from Chopin's poetics formed of bodily expulsions and expenditure - laughs, farts, breathing, snoring - acoustic waste products, which are stretched out and analysed by the recording. The noise that is exhausted out of the body, channeled by speech, is recovered by the media object. The recording makes the excessive sounds become analytic.

Because of these twists of deviation and reconciliation, it's difficult at this point to make conclusions about what my practice is doing, yet I can observe a process of discovery regarding sound poetry. I have been talking about the non-expert, DIY use of the voice, where to 'sing' is to set up a conceptual remit for the poem that it can't really live up to. In this logic of attempt, there is a gap between

what the text is gesturing towards and what the sung voice is actually doing. This gap is on one hand a sonic space, where you can hear the limits. It is also a creative space to be claimed by me as a sound poet where voice and speech lead and mislead to aspects of my performance persona. I am in effect, 'communicating as an extrovert'.

## Chapter 2

### The Transmission of Sound Poetry: Sonic Hailing, Noise and the Radiophonic Turn

‘Every voice in itself is an orchestra of infinite variety.’<sup>1</sup>

#### An Expanded Field for Sound Poetics

Between Chapter One, and the next moves of this thesis, there is a necessary shift in the research landscape and theoretical concerns. While Chapter One dealt with concrete, material processes in sound poetry, this chapter will develop ideas through a more conceptual and abstract terrain of poetics. To further elucidate this shift: Chapter One addressed the material production of sound poetry and the relation of the corporeal tape machine to the human body. Chapter One analysed archival material and direct engagement with documents and sound files. This following chapter is concerned with the intangible operation in the processes of a sound poem. Rather than focussing on the point of production of noise and sound, here I am concerned with the listener’s reception of a signal. In other words, I want to test how being a listener within a system of communication can be framed as a point for engendering a poem. The shift can be seen in the discussion of feedback loops. In Chapter One feedback was analysed as material effects of tape recording, and then conceived as the relationship between the body and the machine. Here the notion of a feedback loop pertains to a subject being caught in an abstract system of communication. The emphasis is on emission and transmission, rather than recording and performing. The investigation moves from Chopin’s figuring dynamic into an expanded framing of sound poetics, where transmission, reception, and the politics of these encounters, are encoded into the logic of a poem.

I will now investigate sound poetry as a sonic hailing, considering sound poetry as a call within the apparatus of broadcast and transmission, where transmission is understood as instances of a signal travelling through media to a listener. I will explore an aesthetic of noise within sound poetry, which is a

---

<sup>1</sup> Chopin, 'The Word is no Longer the Beginning', *Revue OU*, No. 40-41, 1972.

continuation of the parasitic noise discussed in the previous chapter, but here I will question the politics of noise within a line of communication or a hailing. By qualifying noise as a property of sound poetry this chapter will ask how the excesses, interference or partiality of a call position or displace a listening identity. This is also a question of how we understand the lyric identities within the poem, where the lyric is a form of personal, individualising address. I will question the effects on the lyric as a form, asking what shifts occur in the agency of the call when the signal is an unformed, unintelligible message? The medium in question here is not the tape machine necessarily, but broadcasting technology, and in particular, radio. Through an investigation into radio broadcasting, its history and ideologies, this chapter will ascertain what happens to the voice of the poem in the process of transmission. In this way the argument moves from considering the bodily object of tape machine, discussed in Chapter One, to broadcasting technologies and the transmitting properties of sound media. I will make use of both current and historical discourses on radio as a means to theorise the voice and its dispersal. To explore this is to explore the paradigm of radiophonics as a tool for deconstructing the mechanisms and matter of sound poetics.

### **Coenesthesia and Noise**

A key theoretical move in the previous chapter assessed sound poetry's relationship to the body, asking how the human body is implicated in its engagement with analogue sound media and how the medium's corporeality informs the poetic. This performed oscillation between technological and biological bodies was sited as a key process within Henri Chopin's tape-machined sound poetry and as a conceptual framework within which to practice sound poetry. Chapter Two now considers the non-tangible objects involved in sound poetry and the ephemeral operations within a sound poetics network. Therefore, we shift from the physical body to *drifting* identities and positions of listening and transmitting. The shift from bodily sound to transient sounding bodies will show how subjectification occurs through the reception of transmission, and how the role of listening is determined in this exchange.

A useful stepping stone for this shift between chapters is the concept of *coenesthesia*, understood as a process of signals and sensations that lead to an awareness of one's own body and internal organs. It's a combination of bodily



impressions that add to a general sense of, not necessarily conscious, physical existence. Within auditory terms, as it will be used here, coenesthesia can be defined as the stimuli impressing on organic bodily material via the ear. In other words, an external auditory source impacts on the resonating subject by way of the physical experience of listening. Therefore, in coenesthetic terms, the body is brought into physical awareness with the additional sensation of becoming a ‘listening body’. Michel Serres describes it thus: ‘When a body will not remain silent, what voice do we hear? Neither voice, nor language; coenaesthesia emits and receives thousands of messages: comfort, pleasure, pain, sickness relief, tension, release – noise whispered or wailing.’<sup>2</sup> This criss-crossing between listening as a physical experience and as promoting a self-conceptualisation as listener, precisely informs the apparatus of sound poetry to be explored here. In recognition of this listening process, we can ask, when listening to a (sound) poem, what is prompted in the hearer that brings the body and the person into an association? What is the coenesthetic experience? In what ways do the external sound stimuli of the poem impact on the person? What of ‘you’ is brought to the surface and what gets transfigured?

In his conversations with Bruno Latour, Michel Serres uses an example in Verlaine’s sonnet, ‘Hope Shines’, to describe a coenesthetic experience of sound. The sonnet talks about a man falling asleep in the heat and hearing the buzzing of a wasp:

Hope shines—as in a stable a wisp of straw.  
 Fear not the wasp drunk with his crazy flight!  
 Through some chink always, see, the moted light!  
 Propped on your hand, you dozed<sup>3</sup>

In Serres’s interpretation the sleeper’s body is incorporated into the buzzing in a coenesthetic experience. The sound of the buzzing is ‘perceived by the body itself’ by which the ‘the wandering sound, the noise perceived, comes both from the external world and from the organism itself.’<sup>4</sup> Here, the body receiving the sound becomes entangled with it and perceives itself as co-creator of the sound, in a variously connected, sensorial dynamic. It is, in short, a form of communication. It is a type of communication that doesn’t rely on an attentive listener, but on the continuous

---

<sup>2</sup> Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: a Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Verlaine, *Poems*, trans. by Gertrude Hall Brownell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). p. 78.

connecting processes of background noise and passively responsive ears. This is precisely the logic of listening we take from Serres, where the numerous associations of *entendre* (hearing, making meaning and understanding) all involve a *transformation*. Stimuli are transformed into sensation.<sup>5</sup> Therefore perceiving noise is always a coenesthetic experience as it involves the whole body, putting itself into relation with the noise. The ear, therefore, is not a blank receptor, absorbing information, but a recursive space that both receives and broadcasts signals. For Serres the background noise of the buzzing wasp, and the responsive yet sleeping man, addresses the relational interconnections between objects, subjects, things, social orders and environments. Significantly Serres does not talk about the poem itself as a sound, one that both exhibits and inhabits background noise (this task will be taken up by this chapter). The poem simply serves as an allegory for Serres, with Verlaine positioned as a figure who is intuiting a ‘contemporary’ condition of listening and noise.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter will use this Serresian notion of noise, a conceptual framework that aims to reveal the relational dichotomies within any ‘set’, whether this be two speakers, society or a local group. The *bruit parasite* or background noise in the Serresian model denotes both interference and also the matter that makes any communication possible. The parasitic attribute is therefore the effect of materiality, and is what gives us, meaningful noise. In French the term ‘parasite’ carries a range of connotations, all of which are at play in Serres’ writing, which lingers on bifurcations and multilateral relationships. Sharing the English definitions of the biological infester, the infection that both drains and maintains the life of the host, the social leech or freeloader, and the uninvited guest, the French word also carries the dual meaning of a guest feeding from the table and the host itself. This two-way parasitic relationship is the key to the determining of noise, and not necessarily attached to one agent or the other. In French it also has the intertextual meaning of static noise, interference within a system, giving *bruit parasite* the necessary translation, background noise. The parasitic noise therefore is what is generated by a line of communication, it is already present but situated as noise depending on the encounter. For Serres the multiple meanings emitting from the word *parasite* are not simple

<sup>5</sup> Steven Connor, ‘Les Cinq Sens’, in *Mapping Michel Serres*, ed. by Niran Abbas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 153–170.

<sup>6</sup> Marjorie Perloff, “‘Multiple Pleats’, Some Applications of Michels Serres’s Poetics’, in Abbas, pp. 99–113 (p. 101).

semantic coincidences, but significant to the nature of human institutions and relations, and demonstrative of the interconnected structures of association within a group. Serres uses the cross-definitions to mediate the social and scientific worlds, so as to relate spheres of human interaction and social positioning, communication between economics, politics and histories.

In this theory of communication, the host and the parasitic guest make something new together; they generate a new system. The static noise within the system is not merely interruptive but creative; therefore, noise is what instigates change. *Noise* is the productive, generative counterpart of the message, in a truly parasitic sense. One practical example of this is the radio alphabet, commonly recognised as being used by police on radio communication. Extending letters into words, alpha, bravo, tango, prolongs the word unit, protecting the information from the obscuring interference. The noise stimulates more information and produces a new system.<sup>7</sup> This informs our idea of indeterminate sound, or the extraneous matter of any process of communication as a figure within the system. In this model of interchangeable relationships, the direction of the message and the interference can be flipped from any perspective. What is a common discourse to one group is potentially a discordant noise to another. The interruption of one radio frequency over the listening of another is uninvited noise. This interference is again the domain of the parasite, where a new relational flow of information is created at the site of the interruption. As Serres says of two interlocutors and the channel that attaches them to one another:

The parasite, nesting on the flow of relation, is the third position. Up to now, this model was adequate; it was the elementary link of the system. But now, the positions change. The guest becomes the interrupter; the noise becomes the interlocutor; part of the channel becomes the obstacle, and vice versa.<sup>8</sup>

The task here is to consider poetry as sound, as communication and as noise. The question of bodily resonators, impelled by an engagement with sound poetry, can be broadened to question how the listener is provoked into an identity. This is to acknowledge (as is indeed a dynamic at stake in Serresian discourse) that

---

<sup>7</sup> Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> Serres, *The Parasite*, p. 53.

listening/speaking is both a physical reaction and also a social contract. Sound poetry plays on this double aspect of listening and speaking. It takes the coenesthetic experience of technologised vocal material and speech-matter, and seeks to undermine, displace, objectify, abstract and aestheticise processes of communication. Henri Chopin's sound poetics is a type of coenesthesia. It gives the listener the raw experience of hearing their own body through the soundscape of Chopin's corporeal noises. As we learned from the previous chapter, in Chopin's sound poetics technology is internalised as body, and media takes on an organic property where indistinct moments of voice and breath are fused with technology. The body is called up into participation, and the listener's social contract as listener is instated.

Chopin's *L'énergie de sommeil*, (*The Energy of Sleep*) is a sound composition made of frequencies of breath, minute details of nasal inhalation, the spatialised chasm of the nostril, and an anterior layer of electronic manipulation.<sup>9</sup> All of its textures can be understood as markers of a coenesthetic poem. Body is both heard and experienced in this poem. As before in 'Hope Springs' in *L'énergie de sommeil* we have a sleeping man. He is again in an active slumber, during which there is a process of energy exchange in a sound conduit. Sound is being transformed into energy and then into communication. Only here, unlike Verlaine's description of a dreamer hearing and sounding the wasp, we have the sound itself. Chopin is stating, like Serres, that there is a continuous *background noise* that the human (body) is in constant dialogue with. Communication and the transformation, transference, of information operate outside formalised social language. Sleeping bodies communicate with each other, and partake in a noisy harmony that takes place around the breathing entities. Sound poetry combines the sensations of the physical body within sound signalling that prompts subjective identification via embodied listening. It appeals to the body's impulse and the subject's recognition. The energy described in *L'énergie de sommeil* concerns both the complex bodily operations of breathing and digesting, and the interplay between sounding and listening. The key thing here is that the poem was made in sound, it describes and performs sound, and through this it tells us about the interchanges of signals. The body or the person represented in the poem may be asleep, but they are still in the processes of communication, telling us about the fundamentals of transmission. Therefore there is a transmission in action, as there is a

---

<sup>9</sup> Chopin, *L'énergie De Sommeil*, *Cinquième Saison*, No. 23-24, 1965.

response in our coenesthetic hearing, altogether there is a call and a reaction.

Sound poetry forces language to be redundant, yet it inhabits redundancy. Here I would define redundancy as those elements of a message that signify it as message, and provide the material for the message to cling onto, yet are extraneous to it. In the case of the sound poem such as the one discussed above, we have a performing of the vocal aspect of communication or speech as redundancy. By which I mean, sound poetry performs the speech material that indicates a mouth. It harnesses the speech-matter that reveals a fleshy speaker, the audible mouth sounds that are extraneous to spoken language (the clicks, grunts and fizzes an audio book editor would have to mostly edit out, leaving just enough to give it the character of alive speech). In a simplified characterisation, sound poetry turns the bare building blocks of speaking and speeching, into poetry. For example in François Dufrêne's *Lettrist* and proto-sound poetry, the sounds of the mouth and breath catch on the vocal line, something that can make the listening experience feel uncomfortably close. For example, in Dufrêne's 'Triptycrirythme', the technology of the mouth makes sonic gestures towards a moment before speech in language.<sup>10</sup> Yet, whilst remaining in bodily and spasmodic sounds, the vocals infer a kind of communication beyond normal language. It's a much more desperate kind communication based on the extra noises of speech-matter such as splutters, grunts, cries and gurgles, that is different to the kind made in an 'ordinary' linguistic address. In which case this understanding of sound poetry equates to the proposition that it is the materiality of the sound, the parasitic noisiness that determines a sound poem as a signal to a listener. In other words sound poetry communicates on a subverted level, based purely on a current of redundancy.

### **The Sonic Hail**

An investigation into sound poetry requires a fundamental navigation of its sonic properties and aesthetics. Here, for the purposes of this research I would suggest that this in turn entails an investigation into the politics of the signalling to a listener, and therefore the poethics of the call as a hailing.<sup>11</sup> The call as both a literal and, as we

---

<sup>10</sup> Chopin, *Revue Ou*, No. 28-29, 1967.

<sup>11</sup> 'Poethics' is used here to mean the ethics of poetry, or ethics as poetry. My use of it is from Joan Retallack's writing on art as a model for life and engagement with everyday media. The term also necessarily points to the reader's interaction with the work and how they are implicated by it.

have begun to explore above, abstract sounding is a sonic signalling that makes an appeal to a listener. There is encoded into the signal, a plea for communication. The poethic question, and the one I intend to test here, is what is at stake in the appeal of a call that bases itself on ‘extrovert’ noise.<sup>12</sup> To begin this enquiry I would like to consider the processes of signalling that impact on the persons caught in the direction of the call. This impact is result of a call that positions the listener as agent in relation to the ideology of that address. This process of hailing a listener, who in turn responds and therefore adopts the identity of the hailing, is a process of interpellation. The theory of interpellation, which is central to Louis Althusser’s work on ideology, suggests that, to be hailed by a system, or an ideology, is to be *subjected*, transformed from individual into a subject. In these terms an individual is therefore incorporated into a system of a given ideology and agented with an identity. Althusser states that:

ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals ... or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects ... by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing.<sup>13</sup>

The ideologies examined in Althusser’s critique relate to systems of law, religion and education, which perform the most inbuilt operations of subject-recruitment, based on an organisation of material enactments and signifiers. Crucially the transformation doesn’t proceed over time; subjectification is *simultaneous* with the existence of the ideology and its call. Just as an appeal and a response are one and the same, the recruiting addresses and the positioning of identity are immediate to each other.

Through its history the nature of interpellation has come to be understood as potentially interrupting and interrogative.<sup>14</sup> However Denise Riley notes how this scene of self-recognition within an other’s address can happen outside sites of official authority. It has the potential to occur at any moment that a person is called up into a provisional identity at the point of being addressed. Riley states that:

---

Therefore in my use of it here I am concerned with the ethics of addressing a listener on the basis of noise. See Joan Retallack, *The Poethical Wager* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> In Chapter One I discuss Chopin’s demand for the sound poet to communicate as an ‘extrovert’, where this means to pervert the uses of spoken language and rebel against the word.

<sup>13</sup> Louis Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)’, in *Essays on Ideology*, trans. by New Left Review, (London: Verso, 1984), pp. 1–60 (p. 48).

<sup>14</sup> Denise Riley, *The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 77.

one can experience interpellation from all ideological quarters, not merely from the conservative enemy, as in Althusser's account; the dictates of so-called identity politics may be equally interpellative and equally demanding. So may the dictates of linguistic love. The margin between being recognised and being interpellated is apt to get perilously blurred.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore within this 'demanding' process of identification there is often the tragic comedy of not recognising yourself as the subject role you have been called into. Where an individual is interpellated to respond to an address, an identity is born out of their recognition and this therefore becomes a scene of identification, doomed to remain provisional. Yet, as Riley describes above, this can occur within the language of identity politics, for example recognising oneself as a 'woman' within the constancy that the term entails,<sup>16</sup> and also in the loving (rather than aggressive) words of another that place an identity on an individual that they cannot recognise.<sup>17</sup> From this we can say that the potentiality for misrecognition at the point of interpellation, coupled with the process's multi-layered frequency, characterises hailing as persistent and as continual as speech, or to loop back to the earlier discussion, as noise.

To link this to the Serresian model for noise we have set up, however, risks jarring two incompatible theories. While the theoretical model of parasitic noise gives us the system of transferrals and soundings that is beyond human interlocution, interpellation is a system where individuals get caught in a process of subjectification. In one model, returning to the earlier depiction, the sleeping man, a wasp and a table are all in a network of communicative noise together, without hierarchy or intentionality. In the Althusserian model, the *channels* of information have the inbuilt systems of authority and inferiority. The channels have a direction from one point in a scale to another. Yet it is certainly true to say that there is a *background noise* of interpellation. Everyday navigation through public spaces is proof of this. Obscure spaces of hailing are constantly sounding towards obscured listening identities. Poet Ron Silliman considers this continuous drone of voices, insisting on your engagement, in an essay that links the 'Thank You' printed on an office bin, to the

---

<sup>15</sup> Jean-Jacques Lecercle and Denise Riley, *The Force of Language* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Riley, *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 61.

confessional voice in a poem.<sup>18</sup> The question ‘Who Speaks?’ and to whom, indicates that interpellation may have lost its explicit links with concrete authoritative ideologies. Being called, called out and caught out is now a constant process brought on by encountering grateful bins, deterring signposts and informative lifts delivering subjects through a building. It is an aural or sub-aural experience that sees a transmission from an obscure unknowable identity signal to an obscured listener position.

This moment of being thanked by a bin is a more contingent and more complex instance of interpellation than the interrogative ‘Hey you!’. The ‘Thank you’, is in fact a stand in for ‘put your rubbish in here’, or the whole routine of ‘put your rubbish in here’, ‘OK’, ‘Thank you’. As Silliman points out the subject of the ‘thank you’ is absented, or repressed in Silliman’s reading, from the bizarre exchange. The person with the rubbish is called into a polite dialogue within the acts of waste disposal, by an absent voice. This results in the kind of subject-identity displacement that it could be argued is common to all interpellation. Here the scene of identity recognition is taken away from peopled interaction, the ‘Thank you’ comes from nowhere and everywhere. Therefore we can say that there is a drone of calls that complicates and deviates a listener from a knowable, self-asserted personhood. As a provisional question, then, can we associate the incoherence of subjectifying signalling with noise?

### **The Interpellative Apparatus of Radio Broadcasts and Transmissions**

To put this complex process of hailing I have been exploring above into ‘practical’ terms, by which to examine this process of the production of discordant identities at the point of a signalling address, we can turn to the functions of the radio broadcast. This is the most straightforward and recognisable process of a subject being called to the attention of a signal that disposes a particular character of identity: ‘the listener’. In which case we are speaking about radio not just as a technology but as a social apparatus, and a machinery of listening techniques. Walter Benjamin observed during the early years of the radio medium that the listener immediately becomes detached

---

<sup>18</sup> Ron Silliman, ‘Afterword: Who Speaks? Ventriloquism and the Self in the Poetry Reading’, in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 360–379.



from the active 'I', he or she understood for himself or herself when listening to a broadcast. The conversations that 'you' hear are unswervingly directed at you, but the necessary passivity puts you in the position of an eavesdropper, causing a separation in which you bear witness to an 'I'. While the wireless broadcast makes an address to thousands of listeners perform like a personalised message to the individual, there is a mismatch between the addressed 'you' and the actual listener. This new dimension of speech was characterised by Benjamin in his 1930's essay 'Reflections on Radio', in which he states that radio has turned the public into 'the witness' of interviews and conversations 'in which now this person talks and now that person has the opportunity to make themselves heard'.<sup>19</sup> To bear witness is to be within and outside an event, as a third party, therefore the subject-hood behind a silenced voice that bears witness to conversation, is impeded by their being hailed without being granted a position from which to respond. The conversation becomes a sonic event that relies on an inactive listener. The radio broadcast is therefore a sonic event that delivers an agency that is to a certain extent unobtainable. The sound of the signal demands your attention and imposes on you a listening identity, but that remains a displaced position. Radio demands that you listen to voices that 'sound' aimed at you but you can't answer to. This is a property of the radio medium but it has become incorporated as a listening technique and social affect. What needs considering here is how the materiality of the sound signal and the experience of being hailed are intertwined.

The combination of the hailing properties coupled with the material properties of radio can be said to be encompassed by the term, *radiophonic*, which is used here in this expanded meaning, beyond the characteristic of synthesised sound. Perhaps we can say that the radiophonic is the importing of a mode of address into a transmission that recognises the listener's status as hailed and witness to the call. In other words, a transmission that through stylistics and sonic effect, embodies its own status as message. The history of sound poetics is testimony to a recognition of this as a characteristic of the radiophonic, where transmission is a playing out of the drama of listening identities displaced by noisy messages. A subject is caught out within the experience of being hailed while the materiality of the signal draws attention to its apparatus. We have learned from the previous chapter that the history of sound poetry

---

<sup>19</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Reflections on Radio', in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, And Other Writings on Media*, ed. by Michael William Jennings and Brigid Doherty, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 391.

tracks the narratives of new technologies and the ideologies attached to them. The ideologies and anxieties about transmission technologies and radio are focused on precisely this capacity for a signal to disorientate a listener's self-awareness, combined with the seduction of the signal's materials.

For Benjamin radio has a simultaneously disaffecting and also infectious presence in the home, where some broadcasts full of irrelevant information can hold attention, others prompt immediate termination. Benjamin proffers the reason for this then new style of voice incurred by radio thus: 'It is the voice, the diction, and the language – in a word, the formal and the technical side of the broadcast – that frequently make the most desirable programs undesirable'.<sup>20</sup> This is because, as Benjamin puts it, the voice enters the home like 'a visitor' and it is judged as instantly as it arrived. Benjamin does not detail what the voice is judged on or whether the voice-sound relates to, or distracts from, the 'language' of the broadcast, yet this quote suggests that the material presence of the radiovoice affects the listener/witness, and this is inextricably linked to its technology.

Theodor Adorno also observed and commentated on the social effects of radio. Indeed he was a key researcher for Paul Lazarsfeld, researching the social effects of radio broadcast music for the Rockefeller funded Radio Project. During this time between 1937 and 1941 Adorno became an expert in the social mechanisms of radio in mass audience platforms. As Chief of the Music Division, Adorno researched listener-response data with regards to the effects of commercialisation and popularised music in radio broadcasts.<sup>21</sup> Adorno left the project in 1941, and four years later in 'A Social Critique of Radio' he is still cautious of the effects of radio on classical music. In the text he asks: 'Does a symphony played on the air remain a symphony? Are the changes it undergoes by wireless transmission merely slight and negligible modifications or do those changes affect the very essence of the music?'<sup>22</sup> It is clear from this and Adorno's original research paper that he saw, for better or worse, a correlation between social unity and the technology of radio. In other words the social function of radio is determined by the technical structure of the medium. As Steven Helming says in his review of the relatively recently published paper by Adorno, radio is both a technology, and a 'cascade of social effects'.<sup>23</sup> Adorno gives

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin, p. 392.

<sup>21</sup> Steven Helmling, 'American Adorno?', *symplike*, 15 (2007), 353–358 (p. 353).

<sup>22</sup> T. W. Adorno, 'A Social Critique of Radio Music', *The Kenyon Review*, 18 (1996), 229–235 (p. 230).

<sup>23</sup> Helmling, p. 354.

an example of such a social effect in a prophetic determining of the authority attached to the radiovoice:

When a private person in a private room is subjected to a public utility mediated by a loudspeaker, his response takes on aspects of a response to an authoritarian voice even if the content of that voice or the speaker to whom the individual is listening has no authoritarian features whatsoever.<sup>24</sup>

He goes on to say that, ‘paradoxical as it sounds, the authority of radio becomes greater the more it addresses the listener in his privacy’.<sup>25</sup> Here we have an acknowledgement of the effects of the radio as being specific to the individual listening experience in an emphasis on the private space. As we shall see later on, Adorno’s stress on the private space as a site for being affected by an address is a repeated nuance in his theorisation of language materiality. This emphasis here can be interpreted as a concern for what’s at stake in the transition of a listener from an individual into a member of ‘the audience’, when this appeal is experienced as authoritarian. For Adorno, the private listener experiences the demand of the radio broadcast as a heightened process of interpellation. He or she is doggedly called to recognise themselves in the address and therefore as participants in the transmission.

What can we take from Adorno’s notion of the private listener’s experience of the radio signal as an authoritative demand to listen? In this logic we can say that listening represents a transition from individual to group identification. From this notion we are building a picture of radio’s capacity to assemble a group around its signal. From Adorno’s emphasis on the private experience of radio, we can also say that this process of installing a group, is a simultaneous dismantling of a community at the point of the radio signal. By which I mean, within this theoretical framework, the individual is co-opted into a group, but one that hinges on a paradox of private listeners. Radio, or more specifically the radio broadcast, on the basis of this paradox complicates how an individual realises him/her self in relation to society. To expand this argument we can turn to an exploration of subjectification through the call of the radio address that was taken up by Jean-Paul Sartre. In this further historical reflection on radio we see comparison made between radio’s questionable ‘collectivities’ and a scenario of people waiting for a bus. The argument follows that ‘something, some

---

<sup>24</sup> Adorno, *Current of Music: Elements of a Radio Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), p. 70.

<sup>25</sup> Adorno, *Current of Music*, p. 70.

agency, external to the riders organises them as a unity in isolation from each other'.<sup>26</sup> They are linked spatially (the bus stop), ideologically (the bus route) and economically (the ticket) but it is unison through alterity. The radio broadcast (specifically here of a political speech) for Sartre presents the same paradox as Adorno's. It is an intimate-yet-authoritarian voice, appealing to the private listener, co-opting a group, yet forming an otherness based on that very familiarity. Sartre also analyses the consequences of banishing the voice from your home and enacting the one form of direct response open to a radio listener:

Yes I can, if I wish, turn the knob, and switch off the set or change stations. But here the gathering at a distance emerges. For this purely individual activity changes absolutely nothing in the real work of this voice. It will continue to echo [*résonner*] through millions of rooms and to be heard by millions of listeners; I will merely have rushed into the ineffective abstract isolation [*solitude*] of private life, objectively changing nothing. I will not have negated the voice; I will have negated myself as an individual member of the gathering.<sup>27</sup>

Sartre continues that this self-negation through switching-off is 'especially in the case of ideological broadcasts'. This specification of 'ideological' broadcasts will be key to this argument as we go on but for now it is significant to the so far understood notion of interpellation. Here the individual is recruited into an ideology by the literal, material signal of the radio, the individual is thereby incited to recognise him or herself within that ideology, as is the basic Althusserian model for interpellation. Yet here we have the added dimension of the attempt to turn away from this hailing, which results, not in the negation of the ideology or the cancellation of self-recognition within it, but with an invalidation of the self as a member of the group. However, the individual remains contracted to the ideology in question, and continues to recognise him or herself within that system.

From this assertion we can begin to make links between the material signalling of radio and the ideological address of its call. To follow on from the above points regarding Sartre, Adorno and Benjamin, I could claim that there is an intertextuality, an immaterial exchange, between the material technology of the radio and the content of its address. By which I mean, that the listener's experience of the address is shaped

---

<sup>26</sup> John Mowitt, *Radio: Essays in Bad Reception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume One*, trans. by Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Verso, 1982), p. 272.

and contextualised by the technology of the radio. It is this relationship between the form and content of a broadcast that means that radio is regarded as both a communication device and a cultural apparatus. On this duality John Mowitt says that ‘the radiophonic enunciation of philosophy raises urgent questions about the very nature of the political as articulated in the cultural sphere’.<sup>28</sup> Here Mowitt echoes Sartre in saying that the public addressing of private listeners that the radio broadcast insists on, is already politically charged by the complex relationship the individual has to the radiovoice, the transmitted idea and the group they are recruited into. Here Mowitt is specifically suggesting that once a given philosophy is filtered through the cultural and technological effect of radio, it becomes a political articulation by the nature of this complex system of relations. We can determine this as the effect of hailing, or interpellation. In other words, a philosophic proposition becomes a demand to attend to the call, and therefore an identity is instigated. The ‘radiophonic enunciation’, as Mowitt usefully phrases it, will be investigated later in reference to the lyric in poetry, through which this chapter will argue that the ideological plea within a radio address interrelates with the subjectification processes within the lyric. For now the argument will focus on the radiophonic enunciation as an aesthetic device in itself, and explore how the politics of an authoritarian summons to private listeners versus the sound aesthetic of radio, was used as a ground for formal experimentation by the avant-garde. In doing so it is my aim to scaffold a means for interpreting sound poetics, whereby the transmission of a mediated signal and its reception are determined as part of the operation for sound poetics.

### **The Radiovoice in Sound Poetry**

While avant-garde audio art has a rich and well-documented history from the development of sonic reproducibility,<sup>29</sup> this chapter remains focussed on the phonic experimentalist and sound poets after the 1950s, namely poets and artists connected to Henri Chopin’s publishing and creative output. What I intend to test now in such artists is how their work concerned itself, intentionally or unintentionally, with the

---

<sup>28</sup> Mowitt, p. 49.

<sup>29</sup> For a sense of the history of avant-garde audio art experimentations focussing on the first half of the twentieth-century see *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde*, ed. by Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

interaction between the form and content of a radio broadcast. For example, how was the conceptual and material exchange of radio signalling translated into an aesthetic? And how did this sound aesthetic perform the seductive nature of wireless communication? To begin with it is worth questioning in what way Chopin himself was engaged with the processes of radio, in order to infer how radiophonic effects informed his project for sound poetry. A key example of Chopin's consideration of radio comes in the 1970 edition of *Revue OU* No. 36-37. Here Chopin included a reprinting of an essay by Polish born filmmaker Stefan Themerson, 'The Potentialities of Radio' first published in 1928 in Warsaw.<sup>30</sup> Also featured in the publication is a delicately produced copy of a letter to Chopin from Themerson in response to the request to republish the essay, amongst other statements, thanking Chopin for referring to Themerson as a 'precursor' to Chopin's project for art. Below is an extract from the letter where Themerson is recalling the first years he listened to radio as a youth and the effect it had on him:

what fascinated me still more than the fact of hearing a girl's singing voice coming to my earphones from such strange places as Hilversum, was the noise, to me the Noise of the Celestial Spheres, and the divine interference – whistling when tuning. My handmade wireless-set became something more than a 'receiver', without losing the magic of the receiver. It became an instrument for producing new, hitherto unheard sounds, which at the time no person would have thought had anything to do with music.<sup>31</sup>

It's clear that Themerson's testimony to the experience of radio is significant to the sound poetics that Chopin was profiling in his reviews (as discussed in Chapter One); that he felt that radio and an artist such as Themerson's interpretation of it, were of relevance to an experimental approach to language where the technology for recording and broadcasting is integral to the text. The unworldly whistling and the crackling hisses of Themerson's detuned receiver at once displaced the human voice,

---

<sup>30</sup> In the essay 'The Potentialities of Radio' Themerson compares the relatively young media of cinema and radio, describing how plot or story comes in and out of focus in radio, via vocal and instrumental music, yet in cinema the 'optical music' and images all contribute to the narrative. However, both mediums share a capacity for 'abstract approaches to Reality' through acoustic and optical sensations, and therefore this aspect should be developed similarly (in radio and *Kinematograph*), thus preventing each media simply producing a 'carbon-copy' of theatrical representations of everyday life. Published in Chopin, *Revue OU*, No. 36-37, 1970.

<sup>31</sup> Chopin, 'Revue OU, No. 36-37', 1970.

setting it in the domain of the stars, where it was disembodied into layers of frequency and sound. The flattened spectrum of frequencies that compose white noise, when heard as a parasite of song or speech, dehumanise the sound, creating a new kind of voice entering into body, without body. A frequent property of sound poetry (where words and common language haven't been abandoned completely) is to layer tracks of speech over each other, again and again, until the diction becomes ambiguous, augmented into a sequence of pitch and stucco textures with a spectra of speech running through it. On the compilation disc that accompanied that same edition of *OU*, Henri Chopin's own audio-poem, '2500, Les Grenouilles d'Aristophanes' ('2500, The Frogs of Aristophanes') is featured. The score lays distortion effects over the voice, emphasising high-pitched modulation. These effects point to the onomatopoeic frogs of the original Aristophanes play, and also to the idea of a de-tuned, incoherent, voice.

Chopin's stylised audio poems illustrate how historical sound poetry has engaged with the sonic properties of noise and interference within radio frequencies. What is also in question here is the figuration of the radiovoice in the sound poetry of Chopin and his contemporaries (those whom he categorised as sound poets, or sympathetic to sound poetry). This figuration of the radiovoice is to be understood here as harnessing the authoritative and intrusive nature of the speaking signal, that was critiqued by such theorists as Benjamin, Adorno and Sartre. To address this question of how the hailing voice of radio was used by sound artists I turn to Brion Gysin and his key audio work, 'Recalling All Active Agents' from 1960. The piece is a permuting (repeated, layering loops) audio work that seems to parody the paranoid voices of Cold War police states. This bears a relation to the notion of a stylisation of a radiovoice as appealing to the individual who might be recruited into a collective subjectivity. Gysin was a collaborator of William Burroughs, whose poems, painting, scripts, sculptures and sound pieces were influential among 1960s-1970s avant-gardists such as Chopin. His work saw a reduction of language into an 'abominable' matter that could be scrambled and re-calibrated. 'Recalling All Active Agents' consists of a male voice enacting 'an assembly call'.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the poem performs a call to a unified group. For the duration of under two-minutes the voice

---

<sup>32</sup> Tom McCarthy and International Necronautical Society, 'Calling All Agents: Transmission, Death, Technology: General Secretary's Report to the International Necronautical Society' (Vargas Organisation, 2010), p. 17.

repeats evolving versions of the title: ‘Calling all reactive agents: Recalling all agents active: All agents recalling active.’ These switches in imperatives, nouns, pronouns and actions, reveal a simultaneous calling up of an identity and naming of an identity. The sonic environment is one of being called to the demand of a hailing, being named by it and being misnamed by it. It is a performative address that requires ‘reactive’ agents, who are ready and participatory, and incorporated into the call. In the performative enunciations agency is imposed, quickly removed and then installed again. The recursive composition starkly reveals the tape medium it was composed on, where the materiality of tape and the voice are fused into one audio signal. However, the property of the sound aesthetic is certainly borrowing from broadcast media. It plays on the secretive domains of the radiovoice and wartime signalling, as is referenced in the lifeless ‘automaton’ voice. This is referred to in the text where ‘recalling’ sets up the hail as a repeating scenario where the listener and the signal are bound into the conditions of the call before it is sounded. The coexistence of agented identification and the signal resonates with Althusser’s notion of interpellation, where subjectification is simultaneous with the hail.

Gysin’s audio work could also be interpreted as a depiction of the radiophonic aesthetic, framed as a call-to-arms. By which I mean, here the radiovoice is positioned as something mobilising. Like a rally cry, Gysin determines the radiovoice as the performance of a signal activating the receiver. This scenario is parallel to the drama of interpellation, where there is an active force in the address. The radiophonic voice, in spite (or perhaps because) of the robotic repetition, recruits multiple listeners into an assembly subjectivity. However, the call-to-arms is fictional. It is parodying a ‘genuine’ process of subjection through the mediasphere of 1960s Eastern Europe. In doing so the work shows the apostrophic tendency (the direct address of an absent or imaginary person or of a personified abstraction) in any sound signal. It follows from this that anything that sounds like a call, is a call.

To further question the call-to-arms force in a fictional appeal, or in the sonic hail of an audio poem, I turn to Sten Hanson, the Swedish composer, experimental poet, and contemporary of Gysin and Chopin. Hanson similarly produced text-sound compositions relative to the new forms of tape media. Hanson’s audio poem, ‘Revolution’, was published in Chopin’s *Revue OU* No. 38-39, 1970.<sup>33</sup> This audio

---

<sup>33</sup> Chopin, *Revue OU*, No. 38/39, 1971.



work has an auditory aesthetic of the radiovoice and also seems to represent sonic hailing as a call-to-arms; as a mobilising rallying cry. It is composed of authoritative assertions and address that dramatise the intrusive nature of the radiovoice: 'I'm calling you', 'You can hear me', 'do something!'. Hanson's vocals are edited to resemble radio interference with breathing and glottal noises manipulated to sound mechanical, like the audible fizz in-between radio frequencies. White noise is composed entirely of human of breathing and buccal sounds. In this manner the audio poem figures the voice as distortion.

The voice in this audio poem has supposedly degraded through the effects of transmission. It is on this very supposition of signal interference that the hailing rests its authority. In other words, this sound poem's imposing rhetoric and emphasis is conditioned by its display of noise and interference. To elaborate, the voice is a material signal, and its materiality is revealed through the parasitic noisiness. The disruption of the voice presented here brings the two models of noise and interpellation discussed above into play; there is a signal predicated on noise and interference, this signal is posited as an address to a listener, who is recruited into a listener identity, precisely through the phonics of interference. The apocalyptic robotic voice, when eventually 'tuned' in, says, '*The revolution must come. The revolution must come now.*' The call-to-arms in Hanson's poem is therefore a call to a revolution that implores the listeners to break from a listening solipsism that it is itself playing on. In contrast, Gysin's piece plays along with the precise strategies of the sonic signal address; calling for the individual to attend to the call, and therefore the collective. In this way we can say that Gysin's audio work operates as something more like satire. It plays along with mechanics of interpellation and draws attention to the displacing effects on identity. Whereas Hanson's audio work has a more earnest plea. Overall both works utilise a compelling tone that equates attending to the call with a need to embrace noise.

### **The Distorted Lyric**

The two audio works discussed above, Gysin's 'Recalling all Active Agents' and Hanson's 'Revolution', both have within their fictional rally cry, a radiophonic enunciation that is intended to mobilise its listeners. Both works and their radiophonic enunciation call forth a community of listeners with the inbuilt instruction to assemble

around the signal for the sake of some cause. However the cause – the agents’ assigned mission or the cause of the revolution – remains oblique compared to the explicit drama of signalling. Listeners, or eavesdroppers (after all it is possible we feel hailed by the calls without feeling they are aimed at us) hearing the call *is* a response. What the actual appeal is we do not know, unless the engaged listening to media is the activation that is required. There is something lost or deliberately buried in these signals that would make the call complete. What we are left with is a distortion; a distortion of sound and of the lyric appeal.

Before I fully explore what this correlation between distorted sound and lyric means within sound poetics, I will associate this distortion for now with the already ascertained project for sound poetry as a turning away from the word and conventionally legible language. In Chapter One Chopin’s decree against the word was discussed as a key political drive. He proclaimed, (to paraphrase) that the word no longer serves except to say, ‘can I have a pound of lentils?’ The distortions within the radiophonic enunciation as discussed here, present a new context for the negation at work in Chopin’s turning away from the word. Chapter One discussed how this reproving of the word was on account of it being too intertwined with economy and abusive institutions of modern society. Within the context of the Althusserian hailing, this phrase ‘can I have a pound of lentils?’ not only entangles the individual in the systems of economy at the point of language, it also enlists the individual into an ideology that displaces their ‘true’ self-identity. It might be said therefore that where sound poetry avoided worded language it was attempting to avoid these strategies of interpellation. A refusal of interpellation, and therefore, a refusal of poetry’s function as a call, might also be seen as a refusal of the lyric voice of poetry and its capacity to name an ‘I’. What will be explored here is to what extent sound poetry inhabits the lyric, or breaks with it. Can it be that as sound poetry functions as a sonic hailing, it does indeed allow a space for an ‘I’ that implicates a ‘you’? Or does it, as with the sound poetry that Chopin was apparently aiming for, negate the lyric?

It is necessary to consider what this ideal of sound poetry, the completely wordless form, stood to lose by taking this stance. It can be likened to Sartre’s paradox of switching off the radio, where the linguistic call has been switched off. This potentially isolates the individual who still remains a member of the collective, but cut off from the group in an act of self-negation rather than liberation. Sound poetry’s negation of the lyric also seems in conflict with the apparently utopian aims

for sound poetry as a project for bringing together a community based on the oral existence of man. However, where switching off the signal supposedly leads to silence, sound poetry seems to court the *noise* of between frequencies. Related to this, Serres would say that background noise is an anterior to speech, it creates an obstruction but also facilitates an extension. Interference is considered to be part of the 'call', part of its hearing and what abstracts it from the original utterance and therefore what makes it last. This is noise as understood in the model learned from Serres; it is a productive interruption in the smooth flow of communication. Sound poetry determines itself as a call on the basis of its discursive deviation from a direct hail. Likewise, sound poetics operates through a mode of the sonic that embraces parasitic interference, where articulation and its disruption are both part of its sound. The call of sound poetry is made by making noise present. Its hailing, as a medium of the sonic, courts the noisy confusion between the notions of identity it creates. Therefore we might argue that sound poetry embodies a distorted lyric, which we can now begin to understand as a noisy hail, in that the frequency of the appeal is open to interference. This interferes with the lyric appeal and the listener's place within the call. The interference therefore is a property of the material signal, and the lyric address.

In the hailing of sound poetry the materiality of words and vocalisations, the speech-matter, remains. But where words operate, as if parasitically, to name, call and impose identities, any echo of a fragment of the word works towards this process of calling as encoding an identity. As Denise Riley says: 'Calling out, calling myself and being called are all intimately related incarnations of the flesh of words.'<sup>34</sup> The flesh of the words, their materiality, encrypted histories and signifying properties are therefore part of the process of interpellation. Sound poetry cannot escape this process altogether, but neither can it claim to enact it directly where it bases itself on noise. Riley again:

The materiality of language is packed through and through with its own historicity. Such a materiality isn't some antiquarian's decorative piecrust of orality or etymology to garnish the real meat of what is being said, its meaning-context. The linguistic materiality lies rather in the reiteration, echos, the reflexivity, the cadences, the automatic self-parodies and the self-monumentalizing which, constituting both being

---

<sup>34</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 11.

called and calling oneself, constitute the formation of categories of persons. There is nowhere beyond interpellation for us.<sup>35</sup>

From this it can be argued that the materiality of language is founded on the excesses and extensions that sound poetry formulates itself through, and it is this matter of language that prefigures identities within exchanges of speech. The materiality of language is its beat, pulse and repetition, and it is around these enactments of matter that an individual recognises him or herself through language. This is what gives sound poetry its distorted lyricism. It still has lyricism, reflexivity, echo and babble, the matter of speech and therefore the capacity to call up, catch out and name a subject. Sound poetry as existing through the phonetic aspects of human speech still instigates a listener and a form of 'self-description', whether this is through body (as discussed above in coenesthetic experience of sound) or through the process of naming that is obligatory to speech-matter.

Riley both critiques the interpellative moves of the lyric address in her critical writing and uses it in her poetry to question the ideas and possibilities of a 'true' naming of self. Through this it becomes apparent that interpellation is itself always already a distortion. In her poem, 'A Shortened Set' a section echoes the discussion from earlier in this chapter in reference to Verlaine's wasp and the sleeping man:

Time has run short and I need company  
to crack my separate stupidity. I'd thought  
to ask around, what's lyric poetry?  
Its bee noise starts before I can<sup>36</sup>

Here the lyric is again like a background noise, a bee's (rather than a wasp's) buzzing. But in this instance the experience is also part of a condition that sees a 'quiet' subject in need of the group to end her isolation. However, once within the set there is a realisation that the lyric, the interpellative process of language, has already written an identity for that subject. This again links with Sartre's self-negation and the hailing processes of radio's signalled ideologies. The subject in the poem can only belong to the set based on their isolation and this isolation is based on the misrecognition between the noise of the lyric 'I' and the subject's preferred self-identification. The lyric as a background noise is instructive, interruptive and 'othering'. The lyric therefore is already a distortion because it pre-determines a subject, before they

<sup>35</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 111.

<sup>36</sup> Riley, *Selected Poems* (London: Reality Street Editions, 2000), p. 36.

themselves can control or speak for themselves. The lyric creates a mis-match between the subject identities speakers and listeners are called into and the one they name themselves as. The set, or the collective, is constituted by the background noise of the call of the lyric, but likewise separated and mismatched in the same gesture.

Riley theorises the mis-match between proclaiming an 'I' for oneself and the supposed reality of individuation, as a so-called sense of 'linguistic unease'. For Riley the 'I' claims to be personal from one place, but it is in fact spoken universally by everyone, all the time, everywhere. Just as radio proposes a personal intimate space to the many. For Riley the 'I' reveals nothing determinate or particular about the individual. Riley frames this not only as a 'con', but as the source of a writerly *guilt*. She says the lyric 'I' 'advertises its simulacrum of control under the guise of its form'.<sup>37</sup> The 'I' only exists as a 'momentary spasmodic site of space-time individuation',<sup>38</sup> it exists to distinguish the event of speaking, or of thinking in an 'I'. Thereby 'its mocking promise of linguistic originality must be, and always is, thwarted in order for language to exist in its proper commonality'.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, the mutual understanding and forgiveness of each other's 'lying' 'I' is a what makes collectivity possible, even if it is based on a false assumption.

As a point of comparison to Riley's notion of mutual effacement of spoken 'I's within a group, I might draw again on Serres to further explore this problematized collectivity. Serres describes the collective, or any group that perceives itself to be harmoniously matched but is in fact related only by distinctions and *partitions*, as a 'black box'. Serres is coining the scientific term that describes a device, system or object where the mechanism between the input and the output is concealed. There is a blind spot between the workings out and the result. Therefore Serres is saying that the collective is like a hidden machine that processes and generates without revealing its mechanics. He says a 'set' does not communicate, it simply makes noise:

Even if each element plays in tune or sounds meaning, the set together produces a false, dangerous, senseless clamour. The collective is a white noise itself; we do not know what an orchestra is or how a chorus harmonises. The collective is not a pre-established harmony, or

---

<sup>37</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 67.

<sup>38</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 58.

to put it another way, it is not the always already there. Noise comes out of the black box.<sup>40</sup>

Serres' black box sites the collective as a network where communication is based on the resistances and clashes of information. There is no sense or known rules to the processes by which the noise occurs, just that it does. The proposition of the set as a black box therefore gives us a useable model to understand a set of identities under the interpellative contract of the lyric as a dis-harmonic cacophony. To further elaborate on this, in her poem, 'Lyric', Riley again describes the lyric as a noise:

Stammering it fights to get  
held and to never get held  
as whatever motors it swells  
to hammer itself out of me

then it can call out high  
and rounded as a night-  
bird's cry falling clean  
down out of a black tree.

...  
It is my burden and subject  
to listen for sweetness in hope  
to hold it in weeping ears though  
each hurt each never so much.<sup>41</sup>

Here the call of the lyric is indeed constant and the listener or subject in attention of it, is caught in the recursive space of being appealed to yet being constantly displaced by the appeal. The recursivity of reception and hailing is described vividly in 'hold it in weeping ears though | each hurt each never so much'. As Linda A. Kinnahan says, the speaker in the poem is attracted to the lyric's 'sweet music' but also in conflict with 'whatever motors it swells/to hammer itself out of me'.<sup>42</sup> This conflict emphasises the impulse to attend to the plea of the lyric, however it leaves a disjunction between the sensations of the call and the experience of stepping into it. From this it is now necessary to further measure this model of the lyric as noise against the forces of interpellation within the social collective, in reference to the radio signal and sonic hailing.

<sup>40</sup> Serres, *The Parasite*, p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> Riley, *Selected Poems*, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> Linda A. Kinnahan, *Lyric Interventions: Feminism, Experimental Poetry, and Contemporary Discourse* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), p. 208.

### The Distorted Lyric, as a Radio Address

In referring to the work of Denise Riley and Michel Serres I have been testing situations for the lyric as a background noise, and a model of interpellation within a poem that hinges on interference. This theorising so far has been based on abstract or hypothetical moments of sonic signalling and lyric address; within the working of a poem or audio work, or within Serres's conceptual model. To broaden this investigation I turn to an instance of radiophonic address where the actual functions of the broadcast and the politics of transmission are brought into one complex of questions.

As discussed above, Adorno was fluent on the nature of radio and the effects the instant of a radio broadcast had on perceived personhood. In spite of or because of his convictions regarding the radiovoice, and because it was common practice by this point, in 1957 Adorno gave one of his adult education radio lectures. The lecture in question was titled, 'Rede über Lyrik and Gesellschaft' and was made on RIAS Berlin (an American sector radio station set up in West Berlin during the Cold War) to become the seminal essay, 'On Lyric Poetry and Society'.<sup>43</sup> The talk outlined Adorno's prolonged thesis for the sociology of art, arguing that lyric poetry is, perhaps paradoxically, a socially engaged form. His basic argument within the speech was that the supposedly inherently individualist nature of the lyric, in fact had the capacity for a social commentary and that the value of aesthetic verse, is its sociological meaning. The talk is a reclaiming of traditional lyric poetry as a legitimate area of investigation for objective, societal understanding. Adorno defends the then unpopular practice of attributing an objective ideology to subjective voicings. Unpopular, considering the 'literary audience used to regarding poetry as a rather personal affair' who were 'firmly in the grip of cold war fears and attitudes'.<sup>44</sup>

This positioned him against the bourgeois ideology that understood the lyric as an expression of individuality, with Adorno instead claiming that the subjective 'I' of the lyric has the potential to be a collective utterance. This was argued on the basis of the objectivity of language (that is, pure, poetic language) by which the 'I' can become an appeal to society as a representation of the collectivity of speech, and

---

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Mayo, 'Introduction to Adorno's "Lyric Poetry and Society"', *Telos*, (1974), 52–55 (p. 52).

<sup>44</sup> Mayo, p. 52.

indeed a form of protest. The address began, ‘The announcement of a lecture on lyric poetry and society will make a good many of you uncomfortable’, which seems to be a classic instant of radio interpellation, where the listener is at once situated as an individual, singled out as a ‘you’, and cohered into the broadcast of the transmission.<sup>45</sup> In this statement the listeners are subjected to the identity of ‘uncomfortable’. This opening is emphasised here, not to critique Adorno’s rhetorical style but to illustrate that Adorno’s proposition for the lyric, which saw it as a referent of the collective and of modernity, was performed through his very mode of a radio address. He continues later in this vein, ‘Let me take your own misgivings as a starting point. You experience lyric poetry as something set opposed to society, something wholly individual. Your feelings insist that it remain so, that lyric expression, having escaped the weight of material existence, evoke the image of a life free from the coercion of reigning practices’.<sup>46</sup> This position that Adorno assumes in his audience, is a kind of social thought. The rejection of lyric as sociologically grounded is a kind of protest against society. It follows that any protest against society or rejection of material modernity, is part of a social condition. Therefore the private, expressive thought of the lyric is in itself a social form.

In the lecture Adorno offers his position as a critique of the bourgeois notion that lyric poetry is inherently individualistic, and that it should stand for a rejection of material modernity. He argues that this positioning undermines the lyric’s true ability to connect with contemporary society and modern technology. It is the seemingly personal expression that realises points of collectivity and shared experience. He argues that ‘Only one who hears the voice of humankind in the poem’s solitude can understand what the poem is saying; indeed, the solitariness of the lyrical language itself is prescribed by an individualistic and, ultimately atomistic society, just as conversely its general cogency depends on the intensity of its individuation.’<sup>47</sup> This notion of the ‘atomistic society’, one of many disparate elements, keys us back into the Serresian notion of the black box, and the conception of harmony played by partitioned and delineated members. The lyric appeal therefore, is like the binding noise that unites a community through the atomised expressions. The ‘lonely’ call of the lyric plays in harmony (or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, disharmony)

<sup>45</sup> Adorno, ‘On Lyric Poetry and Society’, in *Notes to Literature, Volume 1*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 37.

<sup>46</sup> Adorno, ‘On Lyric Poetry and Society’, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> Adorno, ‘On Lyric Poetry and Society’, p. 38.



with society as a whole. The disharmony of the group thus creates the group.

The lyric speaks as other to society and ‘reveals itself to be most grounded in society when it does not chime in with society, when it communicates nothing, when, instead, the subject whose expression is successful reaches an accord with language itself, with the inherent tendency of language’.<sup>48</sup> So it is precisely lyric poetry’s assuming of an expressive private ‘I’ that sees it relate to collective society. This is a question of its form, its linguistic material that the poem exists through. It follows that it is the primary form of poetry, that is, objective, material language, which enables a subjective poem to appeal objectively to others. This centring of form concurs with Riley’s theorising of interpellation, which is based on the materiality of speech, and this chapter’s extension of this to the speech-matter of sound poetry, which likewise is encoded with an appeal to a subject through its very materiality. Therefore Adorno’s negotiations of linguistic materiality in the lecture are useful to this research on speech-matter. I can summarise this for now as: the material of a lyric poem addresses others through its materiality, not through the informative content. The lyric resists information, and resists claiming to speak for others or as others. This is what, in the end, makes it act as communication.

I would like to frame the ideas drawn from Adorno’s talk within its context as a radio address. The oscillations in Adorno’s theorisation of lyric poetry, between individuality and commonality, between spontaneity and technology, between the ‘I’ and the collective, are made reflexive via their delivery over radio. As Adorno’s speech was transmuted into signal, his voice hailed a listener-individual, calling that addressee into a network of communal ‘I’s. Adorno’s address appealed to the listening ear at the same time as making a plea to society for a compatibility with the lyric ‘I’. He thus performed a folding in of hailing subjects; calling forth a community, and installing a particular sense of ‘I’ with the listener. The signalling channel presented an individual voice, which becomes collective and (dis)harmonic through the form of the medium. It is, as Mowitt called it a ‘radiophonic enunciation of philosophy’ and as Sartre described, an ‘ideological broadcast’. Therefore the material of the broadcast is symbolically significant to the poetics Adorno is asserting.

Throughout the address it transpires that Adorno is not so much arguing for lyric poetry as a possible ‘idea of a pure language’. This ‘pure language’ can be seen

---

<sup>48</sup> Adorno, ‘On Lyric Poetry and Society’, in *Notes to Literature*, p. 43.

as a reduction of lyric poetry to pure elements but he can also be seen as saying something about the essential material of language. For Adorno experience and language are separate, the poet however can create a cohesion between the two, by concentrating on the individual. This is by communicating lyric subjectivity by and as language. Paul Fleming describes it thus:

The lyric subject sacrifices itself to the idea of language, so that language can ultimately flow back into the empty subject. Lyric is then at once the extreme of subjective expression - language saturated with the subject - and of objective language, language as pure form.<sup>49</sup>

It is also this primacy of form, or the linguistic medium, which means that lyric poetry is an ally of technology and materiality. In a lyric poem it is not the author's experience but the poem itself that renders an individual experience, and this is what gives it a 'social force'. This notion of the object mediating an essential aspect of culture enables Adorno to negotiate a role for technology in society's identity. The form of the medium (poetic language or radio) is what makes the immersed subject objective, yet subjectively available to the listener. As Adorno says, when a subject enters language, he/she abandons themselves to an object. The very mode of transmission, via modern technology, enforces Adorno's point that one cannot escape the modern world, as a medium saturated in subjective language, it has an essentially social voice. Radio is performing a kind of fracturing that *coheres* a statement or a message. Performing the very cultural work Adorno lays out for poetry.

In an essay on the politics of poetry and Adorno, Kalliopi Nikolopoulou says that the 'I' represents a potentiality of relating to society, 'the lyric I is not collective in the sense of representing the other members of society; it is itself an expression of the possibility of speaking for, of, and to others'.<sup>50</sup> The I-You construction imagines an audience, just as the radio voice does. But as we have seen with Benjamin's listener being rendered witness to the 'I', this construction and sense of imagined audience is problematic. Nikolopoulou says that the lyric audience is 'a discontinuous series of private responses, subjectively forming the poem as a potentially public event'.<sup>51</sup> The lyric audience then, in its rehearsed identity, is like the radio audience; it performs

---

<sup>49</sup> Paul Fleming, 'The Secret Adorno', *Qui Parle*, 15 (2004), 97–114 (p. 98).

<sup>50</sup> Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, 'As If: Kant, Adorno, and the Politics of Poetry', *MLN*, 121 (2006), 757–773 (p. 764).

<sup>51</sup> Nikolopoulou, p. 765.

subjectivity for the sake of the event of the signal. What is made public or collective in the signal and also in the poem is as a result of the static noise of the oscillations between identities.

### Echoed Lyric and Re-Articulations

The scenario of Adorno's radio address provides a framework from which to view the slippages of the lyric call in poetry; swerving between behaving as a personal, communal or abstract hailing. The following section will depart from the specifics of radio and continue to investigate the interaction between the form of a signalling hail and its potential for lyric content. This question is opened up by a consideration of not what occurs in the moment of the hailing, as is the case in Adorno's address, but of what *remains* within the call. This pertains to a consideration of the lyric as residual, and the hailing as an element that remains within the record of a hail. It will be argued here therefore that 'echo' and 're-articulations' emit a similar *distorted lyric* as was discussed earlier in reference to the noise of sound poetry. This question of residual lyricism and the continuing 'beat' within a text (that performs the processes of a sonic hailing) concerns the uses of found text, re-appropriations and what I'll term disarticulated transmissions.

In his 2003 'report', 'Calling All Agents: Transmission, Death, Technology', the Institute of Necronautical Society's General Secretary,<sup>52</sup> Tom McCarthy, discusses the role of poetry in code and encryption. McCarthy's investigation for this mode of poetry as code is the writing of World War Two Special Operations cryptographer and poet, Leo Marks. McCarthy describes Marks's famous poem, 'The Life that I Have',<sup>53</sup> as an *apparatus* for transmitting buried messages. The poem was originally written by Marks, as the story goes, for his deceased lover Ruth. It was subsequently sent as a code-message with special agent Violette Szabo into France (as memorialised in the film, 'Carve Her Name with Pride'). Years later the same poem

---

<sup>52</sup> The INS is a pseudo-bureaucratic collective of artists, historians, philosophers and writers that stage fictional events and 'reports' around the broad theme of technology and death. The society's general secretary is the contemporary novelist and art writer, Tom McCarthy.

<sup>53</sup> 'The life that I have / Is all that I have / And the life that I have / Is yours / The love that I have / Of the life / that I have / Is yours and yours and yours / A sleep I shall have / A rest I shall have / Yet death will be but a pause / For the peace of my years / In the long green grass / Will be yours and yours / And yours Leo Marks, *Life That I Have* (London: Souvenir Press, 1999), pp. 1–34.

was sent to a sick boy as a get-well note. On this multiple reimagining of the poem's addressee McCarthy says,

Marks's repeatedly-displaced poem is [also] apostrophic, addressed to a 'you'... 'Yours and yours and yours': do these words silently repeat Ruth's name three times? Or do they come to signal Ruth's, Violette's and the boy's? Or Marks's future readers? Among the poem's amorous, cryptic displacements, 'you' becomes all of the above, and death becomes a pause, an asignifying break in a long chain of dot-dot-dotage.<sup>54</sup>

Here we have 'you' embodying the pronomial potential to signify every individual that encounters the poem, or having the potential to incorporate all readers into the identity of 'you'. However, the enactment of the call within the poem is continually shifting; the lyric subjectification is displaced, as the identities at either end of the call become diverted, fugitive or deceased. Therefore the potential to incorporate every reader fails at every point. This is because the apostrophic in the poem, signalling to an absence of 'receiver', means that the 'you' stands in place as a substitute for a 'real' identity. It is the very naming of a 'you' that displaces the addressee. The originally expressed 'you' was intended for 'Ruth', yet this was a lyric address that the poem couldn't maintain, or at least a lyric currency pertaining to identities it outlived. In reference to, and as a hailing of a dead person, the 'you' becomes loaded with absence, more open-ended and permanently in substitution.

Marks's poem's translation into code-message homogenises the text. As a piece of communication, the body of words are interpreted according to a new code that reveals it as information. However, despite the body of text now standing in for a radically new set of significances, these instances of lyric appeal and 'I love you', echo through the text. Therefore Special Agent Szabo is on one hand the genuine agent of the wartime message, and on the other hand she is an eavesdropper and accidental addressee of the 'you' that remains. Therefore where this poem is used as wartime message, the addressees undergo a series of different 'self-descriptions'. In other words they are themselves encoded by the poem-as-hail; the encryption is ongoing as the hailing is rearticulated into a network of distortions.

The means by which the poem 'The Life that I Have' became used for military communication was a process of appropriation, perhaps the reverse of the kind found

---

<sup>54</sup> McCarthy and INS, p. 19.

in experimental poetry.<sup>55</sup> What is the interpellative effect of the rearticulation of an address in an appropriated text? The apostrophic within an appropriated text, as in, the residual 'I' speaking to the residual 'you', operates as an echo. As an echo, the rearticulated pronoun differs from the original, and retroactively alters the original utterance. In a recent public talk Brandon LaBelle posited 'Echo' as a figure of 'othering' and 'differentiation'. He said that echoed speech, or any instance of the echo, was a process of returning the speaker to themselves, as other. LaBelle argues that 'Echo is sound becoming other to itself'.<sup>56</sup> But when it is not (only) sound, but an address that is echoed, this 'othering' that LaBelle describes can be seen as the cause of lyric distortions that I have been describing. That is to say, echo is also a form of interference, a sound or event reflecting back on itself and causing both instances to become deformed. A lyric appeal when echoed posits a noisy static around the positions of the addressee, and in the channel of communication through which it is delivered.

To elaborate on echo as 'othering', LaBelle argues that the echo is the 'I's unexpected other half. Echoed speech is the 'I' and the 'Not I'.<sup>57</sup> LaBelle uses Richard Serra's video work 'Boomerang' (1974) to illustrate this point. 'Boomerang' features artist Nancy Holt talking whilst her own, electronic recorded and delayed, speech is played back to her. The video shows Holt attempting to talk and describe her experience while we the viewer hear both her speech and the delayed echo. She describes feelings of distance, alienation and discomfort at the sound of her own voice. It slows her down and makes talking troubling. The echo sees Holt being caught in the feedback of her own voice, and each version of her speech becomes equally different to her listening.<sup>58</sup> The listener is also caught in this loop, as audience, we bear witness to the troubled articulations of Holt's description. The ear gets battered about trying to latch onto a coherent thread of speech. Echo distorts both speaking and listening. It is the sort of productive, generative noise that was discussed

---

<sup>55</sup> See INS art installation that featured a 'black box' flight recorder, transmitting lines of poem-code sourced from weather reports, news items and found texts. McCarthy and INS, *Black Box Transmitter*, 2010 2008, Displayed at the E:vent Gallery in London for the group show, 'Narcissus Trance', 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Brandon LaBelle, 'Echo' (presented at the Acoustic Ambiguities Event, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> LaBelle, 'Echo'.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Serra, *Boomerang*, 1974  
<[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5S3\\_dmj8BU&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5S3_dmj8BU&feature=youtube_gdata_player)> [accessed 24 September 2012].

at the beginning of this chapter. The interference of Holt's echo on her own speech gives her the impetus and the information to drive the dialogue. The process of feedback is a creative system that generates differing voices. The utterance of 'I' becomes multiple and therefore distorted. But as is the case with animals' echolocation, distortion on an echo *is* information; it contains information about a space by echoing back the affected signal, revealing a previously invisible dynamic.

This revealing quality of the echo is active within the re-articulation of texts. Poetry that harnesses this repeated-displacing of subject identities, as seen in the trajectory of the Marks poem, can be said to be performing echo *as a practice*. While this notion of echo as practice can theoretically be applied to any use of found text or re-voicing, Hannah Weiner's *Code Poems* offers an example which highlights acts of signalling. Its full title, *Code Poems: from the international code of signals for the use of all nations*, was published, in book form in 1982 but was the basis of many public performances in the 1960s. It was written using the 'international code of signals', or nautical flag signals and Semaphore alphabet taking from a nineteenth century volume indexing 'above water' signalling systems for ships at sea. Weiner's text is comprised of the letter code for a certain signal, followed by the translation. It is ordered like a series of communicative exchanges. There are moments of distress, declamation and whimsy:

CJD I was plundered by a pirate  
 CJF Describe the pirate  
 CJN She is armed  
 CJP How is she armed?  
 CJS She has long guns  
 CJW I have no long guns  
 BLD I am a complete wreck <sup>59</sup>

As can be seen in the above fragment Weiner uses the coding to weave in and out of meaningful dialogue. She switches between logics of the signalling system and logics of everyday speech, (she instigates a wonderful double meaning around 'I am a complete wreck'). All we have on the page is one list of 'examples' of possible signals but from this we read a set of voices exchanging communications: questions, jokes, pleas, cries in the dark. For Judith Goldman, *Code Poems* illustrates that there

---

<sup>59</sup> Hannah Weiner, *Code Poems* (Barrytown, NY: Open Book Publications, 1982).

are various layers of official and unofficial messages buried within the codes that betray the inevitable digression of messaging. Goldman says the work, ‘makes the compelling case that the official messages encrypted in the code harbor secrets hidden only from themselves as self-identical: within them lie communiqués of an alternate totality, heterogeneous and coherent’.<sup>60</sup> This resonates with LaBelle’s discussion of echo, where echo is the beginning of difference from oneself. The phrases in *Code Poems* in their new context reveal echoes of an alternate signals that are dissimilar and distorting. The subject or the source of the message is then equally distorted and heterogeneously scattered across their communication attempts.

The above fragment from *Code Poems* obliquely installs characters, implies a ‘you’ and names an ‘I’, but within this operates a confused lyric. The text seems to be speaking through multiple voices, yet each voice doesn’t seem to meet its addressee, and the responses are often marginal and discursive. The work overall, which asserts itself as a poem in the title, seeks to undermine the notion of the poem as a call, a direct attempt to confuse and distort lyricism. Other elements of the text have the strange effect of clipped or economic phrasing: lines such as, ‘Distressed for want of food’ and ‘Want food immediately’. The ‘I’ has been erased but we still get the embedded demand to attend to the voice, the lyric plea. The phrases mentioned here accentuate the hail within the line; they are soliciting a listener without directly writing in subject positions. These lines are to some degree, pure call. They signal a base desire, yet with an odd, formal tone. The ‘I’ is erased but the nature of the hail, with the inscribed description of a need, promotes an idea of a subject. Weiner rearticulates distress calls as poetry thereby also rearticulating ghost of subjects. She allows ship’s calls to echo through her text, calls that remain purely in the state of echo; obscure and technical as well as needy and personal. The lines are re-appropriated hails making echo as practice.

In *Code Poems* Weiner is synthesising code and found phrases as personal language. She therefore undermines the possibility of personal language. She complicates any utterance that attempts to communicate as an original expression of a genuine identity. She admitted freely that she wrote as ‘a means of displacing the self’ and her use of re-articulated, found text performs a displacement of self by virtue of

---

<sup>60</sup> Judith Goldman, ‘Hannah=hannaH: Politics, Ethics, and Clairvoyance in the Work of Hannah Weiner’, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 12 (2001), 121–168 (p. 125).

its status as echo.<sup>61</sup> Echo is a deviation from self, and a noisy interference in the line of connection between an identity and its voice. In Riley's re-reading of the myth of Echo, she is pure feedback. She is an 'eardrum' that amounts to mere 'deviation'. Riley describes Echo as destined to 'pick up any sound and flick it back' as noise. As interference in a lucid sound, or in a fluent example of speech, the echo produces extra space for information and also noise. In Riley's poem Echo seems to position herself as noise as a way to eternally defer her fate. She stresses her parasitic quality; that she acts as both an extension and an interruption in speech. Echo says (quoting Lacan), 'To make yourself seen reflects back to you, but to make yourself heard | goes out towards another'.<sup>62</sup> In this line, the character, Echo is highlighting the external dependence of sound, that its very materiality implicates an other. This follows on from earlier discussions of Riley's assertion that it is the material substance of words that delivers the hailing. It is the materiality of speech that means an echo can harbour a call. Speech-matter is the 'flesh of words' that allows for distorted, deviated addresses to echo through re-articulation. Likewise it is echo that reveals the materiality of words. Echo subverts messages and re-presents them as sound-object. Riley says of the poem:

The word, now as thing, is wrenched into a novel sense or a nonsense, made strange by the brute fact of its re-presentation alone or because its context has been lopped off.<sup>63</sup>

In this logic a word becomes a *thing*, when it is re-contextualised. In their new contexts, Marks's poem, Weiner's shipping signals, and Nancy Holt's repeated voice all enter a thingly state, and acquire a novel sense. Their passages into these new states, and the processes of the echo are also significant here. The route of mediation from utterance, lyric or hailing is revealing of the effects of transmission of speech-matter. For 'The Life that I Have', as discussed by McCarthy, the passage was both a physical journey into France, and also a transition from lyric to code. The message embedded in the poem was converted into a thingly representation in order to convey new information. Hannah Weiner took the already thingly codes from the volume of signals and moved them into poetry. In doing so she instigated a cycle of echoing

---

<sup>61</sup> Goldman, p. 124.

<sup>62</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 109.

<sup>63</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 157.



where the architecture of the text, like an echo chamber, betrays the buried and accidental noises of communication. Finally, the route of Nancy Holt's voice occurs through a much more explicit mediation. Indeed Richard Serra's 'Boomerang' piece negotiates echo through technology, where audio media's capacity for erring feedback is deliberately used for interference.

### **Conclusion: A Hail By Any Other Means**

This chapter has attempted to build a theoretical model for sound poetry that on one hand recovers a space for the lyric in sound poetics, and on another maintains that sound poetry operates through a process of parasitic noise, and at times finds a reconciliation of the two. Sound poetics within this discourse therefore negotiates a distorted lyricism: enacting a sonic hailing while delivering its message on the basis of materialised noise. This negotiation enacted by sound poetry, as I am arguing here, is based in its dual processes of interpellation and noise. The sound of sound poetry is on one hand experienced as a bodily sensation, coenesthetically 'heard' and responded to by the relational body. On the other hand the sound of sound poetry instigates a listener based on their self-conceptualisation within the sound signal, which is based on the materiality present in the sound. This chapter has illustrated the complexity of noise present in an address against scenarios of sound poetics and examples in poetry and media history: the sleeping bodies caught in a dialogue with background noise, the slippages in Weiner's signalling poems evoking lost ships and new accidental subject positions, and Adorno's oscillating hailing operating under the apparatus of radio, all served to unpack the notion of *drifting* transmissions that displace calling and listening identities.

The lyric in poetry here has been figured as background noise, something that echoes or sounds itself through the buzzing of words. Sound poetry has therefore been positioned as being in dialogue with the background noise of the lyric, unable to negate it by virtue of its participation in speech-matter. There is always therefore a network attached to a sound poem, or drifting listening and speaking identities. The materiality of speech, speech-matter, the form of media and its technological processes, have been found to both interfere and navigate channels of articulation. For Serres the parasite, or the noise on the line, is what makes communication possible but it is also what interrupts it. The parasite, in this reading, is the substance and the

flesh of transmission, both speech-matter and media. This complies with Riley's statement that it is the materiality of words that makes interpellation possible, their capacity for repetition and fragmentation.

At this point in the overall investigation of this thesis what has been revealed as a characteristic of pre-existing sound poetry and what has been outlined as potential poethics in the practice of sound poetry are beginning to be distinct. I have cited moments of political friction in the radiophonic aesthetic of Chopin's avant-garde and proposed a reading of sound poetry that conceptualises its negotiations with parasitic noise. Moving on from this it was the later works of Denise Riley and Hannah Weiner that proposed a methodology where the lyric, transmission, distortion and echo operate within a network that contributes to a mode of practice. From the research in this chapter then, I have given myself a model and theoretical framework of sound poetics through which I can test the reception of sound signals as a starting point to make poetry; where listening is an act in the practice of sound poetry practice. This chapter has created a theoretical space to test a subject's intelligibility within a communicative system as a poetics. Sound poetry therefore in this thesis can now be understood, not just as a tradition of audio poetry, but as positioning of a practice. The 'sound' of 'sound poetry' is thus interference and an interruption *in* poetry. It is a distortion of the lyric but not an erasure of it. In this positioning of poetic practice, spaces of disharmony within a communicative system are material scenes with which to work, with the voice as a starting point.

## Portfolio Remarks 2

### 'avert our ears as we do' as Poetic Practice

#### The Landscape of Address

As this thesis develops I am beginning to realise speech-matter as the residual instances of the lyric appeal in poetry after a process of distortion, and the material effects of noise in speech transmission. Speech-matter can be seen as the 'flesh of words', in Denise Riley's terms, that allows for a distorted, deviated addresses to echo through re-articulation. The departure of Chapter Two into a more conceptual field of sound transmission developed my critical theorisation and practice of speech-matter. My research is now broadened into an experimental framework, questioning poetry's portrayal of listening identities and the politics of a listening subject caught up in a process of signalling. In this new ground of questions I compared the identity politics of radio broadcasting with lyric poetry's capacity for hailing and then contemplated the fusion of the two. In this comparison the notion of transmission as an auditory event was matched against the effects of the lyric appeal. The concept of the radiophonic, has come to mean in this investigation both the material effects of radio transmission, and also a type of signalling that complicates a listener's self-identification in relation to the message. Through this notion of the radiophonic I developed a way of thinking about sound poetry that broke with the necessary aesthetic of the 1960s experimentalists (Henri Chopin, Brion Gysin and Sten Hanson) and initiated a framing of sound poetry itself, as an *interruption*. In this logic, sound poetry can be seen as the practice of parasitically interrupting fluent channels of speech or communication, or on paths of interpellation and passages of hailing. I therefore understand sound poetry as a practice that *courts* noise; through the materiality of speech and shapes of language, it seeks to perform a *distorted lyric*. The concept of practicing distortion in the lyric implicates working within the fleshy matter of speech, as with the processes of calling out to listening and speaking identities.

As a progression from Chapter One and my first portfolio remarks, I am now exploring how sound poetry, as a poetics of noise, appeals to both the listening subject and also *the body*. Through a process of coenesthesia, as explored in Chapter Two, I

will test in the following commentary how my works make the speech-matter they generate as both a call to subject identities, and also as an appeal to the organs and flesh. A recurring question that I take through into my own poetics is: what is effect of distortion on both auditory material and lyric address, and how do they complicate each other? In this commentary I analyse works in the portfolio that operate within this model of sound poetry as an interruption. The works have emerged through experimenting in the experience of noise in communication, and the politics of a distorted lyric. Through the use of found and re-articulated texts that incorporate noise into their meaning, the works in this section can be said to investigate ideas of echo and hailing. What I now intend to test is how my work animates the concepts of distorted hailing as laid out in Chapter Two.

The works in the previous instalment of my portfolio remarks were figurations of the body grappling with media object, and also situations of the body as an object, in which its physical effort was a productive energy for sound. This grappling was represented through sound, song and voicings. I developed this poetic investigation through a study of the analogue object as a clumsy, physical medium. The following works from my portfolio are an engagement with not only the body but with the frequencies of identity of subjects caught out by the inconsistencies of speech exchange within systems of broadcast and transmission. A key work, which is an ongoing, expansive text, is *News Pieces*. This work is composed from listening to radio news bulletins and notating the newsreaders inhalations of breath. These inhalations are interspersed with key words from the news reports. In this work my position as listener and broadcaster, signaller and receiver is placed into a complex dynamic. Through instances of breath and isolated words the work negotiates the drama of being broadcast to. As a physically enduring performance piece *News Pieces* implicates the body and its labour, as did many of the works in the first portfolio section. *New Pieces* however expands on the appeal to the body by implicating the listeners' subjective role in the reception of the repeated messages.

I locate the poem 'Danger Scale' as playing out this drama of signalling, yet here it is mocked to the level of joke. In this piece I likewise repeat messages from the mediasphere, this time messages regarding terrorism threat levels and healthy eating labelling. In this inane clash, performed through clownish posturing, I am attempting to perform the subverting role of echo. The ethical tension of repeating messages is played out further in *Katrina Sequence*, a group of poems that rearticulate radio

distress calls through a flattened out sequence of texts. In this case the effects of mediation, the noisy radio transmissions and the low-quality video through which I sourced them, contribute to a material and lyric interplay. The work explores the hailing effect of stolen voices and questions what echoes through a voice's rearticulation. In *Katrina Sequence* the drama of being hailed, and the processes of distortion are fused into an ethical and material dynamic. All the works in this section explore a voice, my voice, grappling with its own signalling. The three central text projects here rely on the use of found, heard and gathered text. This section of the portfolio experiments in speech-matter that has been formalised into patterns of mediated vocal communication, performed through material, rhythmical and unruly forms. Here speech-matter is positioned as what gets caught in a tension of interpellation, signalling and echo.

### **News in Pieces**

The poetry project, *News Pieces*, is an on-going poem devised repeatedly using 'found text' sourced from radio news bulletins.<sup>1</sup> The piece has been re-made many times, mostly 'to order' for live events, using the radio headlines from a delimited period around the event of the performance. The text is primarily a breath poem, composed from notating the inhalations made by BBC newsreaders in the morning's first news bulletin of the Radio 4 'Today' programme (at approximately 7am everyday apart from Sunday). In a five-minute news bulletin for example there are around 100 audible inhales from the readers and correspondents. To compose the work I listen to the live bulletins and transcribe the heard intakes of breath along with occasional words, which in the delivery of the poem are the points of exhalation. These words are chosen instinctively on the bases of their activity within the news idioms of the week. To prepare for a live reading of *News Pieces* I gather news bulletins from the three or four days around the live event. This gives the text a sense of the residual noise or echo from the same news stories resonating among the audience and reader, who may have picked up the same news as it circulates through our mediasphere. The words heard that morning whilst half asleep return as a spectral *sense* of the news; a gestural indication of the week's rhetoric and linguistic fetishes. The repetition of a

---

<sup>1</sup> Go to portfolio, p. 248, and audio disk one, Track Five.

current serial killer's surname, the location of the latest natural disaster, or the government's most recent buzzword, chime through the reading. *News Pieces* is a continuing text that demands recomposing at every instance it is read, but it should always be described as one text, one poem. The score is a simple instruction (notate breaths and 'key' words from the radio news) but the material that attends to the score is broad and unwieldy. The act of composition and the exercise in performance connect the discrepancy between the score's neatness and the digressions of the speech-matter. *News Pieces'* textuality and poetic activity also relies on the diction being 'live', that is, contingent on the paranoia, anxieties and fixations of the day.

In a performance of the news piece, the repetition of certain words will gradually open a frequency of interpretation for the audience to tune into. In other words, some people gradually recognise referenced news stories, and become drawn into the text through this channel. The circuit of meaning within the text, incorporates the audience's direct and very recent experience. Therefore the event of the text plays out *a drama of encounter*, where to recognise, or not recognise the message, represents in a wider sense access to or denial from the message. The message within the signal becomes contingent on those with the privileged code. Not that to have access to the code represents a heightened reading of the text, but this bifurcated moment of encounter determines the event of the text specific to experience.

An early reading of *News Pieces* included references to the news story of Raoul Moat that circulated over 10 days in early July, 2010. The story that developed was of a man, recently released from prison, who shot two people and then became caught in a stand-off with the police which resulted in him shooting himself after seriously injuring a policeman.<sup>2</sup> Listening to the unravelling of the story within the composition, one can hear the evolution of terminology and words surrounding the narrative; 'Former Bouncer' was replaced by 'Gunman', soon replaced by 'Moat', as the character was formed in the nation's hearing. 'Moat' became a buzz-word, a repeated sound that occurred like a beating pulse, a beat that was then transposed into my poem. In my reading of the text, the strategies of performing the intakes of breath get incorporated into the textual meaning. Repetitions of words build up, as do the inhalations. Therefore the performance relies on a certain amount of physical effort

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Moat Manhunt Grippled the Nation', *BBC*, 10 July 2010, section UK  
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10584042>> [accessed 17 September 2010].

and sustained vocal labour. The notated inhalations pile up until they become gasps, and the exhaled-words are exhausted out with a full lung of air. Therefore the news words like ‘Moat’ get tied into a bodily battle as I struggle to fulfil the score. The repetition of ‘Moat’ becomes a field of enunciation excess, the body is put at stake, and the straight-faced delivery of the newsreader is replaced by a gasping, waning persona. As the news story builds, the ‘drama’ of the word increases. This eventually gets cut off by another news item and the pace, tone and intensity switches, as is the bathos of news reporting. An audience for a performance of *News Pieces* can then be said to be coenesthetically incorporated into the text. Their bodily mechanisms of in- and exhalation are communicated to and impacted on as mine become increasingly laboured. The text hails both the body and memory, the present experience of listening to a voice and the bodily sensation of breathing.

Also in the portfolio is a fixed version of *News Pieces*. *News Piece* (singular) is a separate audio work made to be a site-specific sound installation for Stanza Festival, 2012, in St. Andrews.<sup>3</sup> It was composed according to the same methodology as the recurring poem but brought a week’s worth of news pieces into a cohered soundscape. This instance of my project on news bulletins is now a set piece. It acts as both a document of the on-going poem, but also a document of that moment of news and listener memory. It has become an example of the act of the poem, the acts within the poem, and a portal into that certain week of 2012. In addition to this sited version of the work, all the scores of *News Pieces* have now become a growing archive, memorialising as opposed to commenting on events in public consciousness. As an archival body the fragments of news have become an architecture of reoccurring echoes.

The noisy inhalations and exhalations of breath in *News Pieces* are particles of speech sounds. Breath is an example of speech-matter by way of the shape of the body and the word that is dually communication through the breath. Breath is the material of speech apparatus and gestures towards the moment of or after saying something. In *News Pieces* the breaths can also be said to reference the medium of radio to which the poem is dedicated. *News Pieces*, is radiophonic piece, it plays on the sound of radio, bringing the transmission media in hybridity with speech. By which I mean, where the traditions of sound poetry like Henri Chopin rely on the

---

<sup>3</sup> Go to audio disk one, Track Six.

recording technology to reveal particles of speech formally and stylistically, the sound poetics in these texts are conceptualising the relationship between speech and media, implementing the effects of media transmission, such as noise, non-speech, and tensions of authority in the voice, at the base point of the poem. The beat of the radio news is like the mutter-line that Burroughs proposed an attack on, as discussed in Chapter One. Indeed the feed of news I take from the radio is treated like a mutter-line, a continuous drone of messages imposing on my listener-identity. My rearticulation of the eminent BBC radio voice is a challenge to the sound of the radio voice's authority, or the authority it claims by way of its sound.

How then do I use my *News Pieces* to figure the drama of being hailed to, and to animate my discussion on the background noise of interpellation? In Chapter Two I used the work of poet Hannah Weiner to consider a poet's role in repeating messages and absorbing the lyric freight into her own work. Weiner's distinctive relationship with signalled messages comes in useful again here as a point of comparison with *News Pieces*. Weiner's 1990 work, *Weeks* was composed as a day-by-day diary in which she wrote lines sourced from the television news over the course of a year in 1986.<sup>4</sup> In the page-based version of this work the streams of text swerve from scales of language and event; for instance women's rights leaks into American foreign policy and warfare into astrophysics. Personal, political and celestial universes are integrated into a flowing, sparsely punctuated body of sentences. In Weiner's live readings of the work, the gear of her voice rarely alters, bringing about the ambient drone of phrases; phrases which may denote world catastrophes or local incidents. This is in contrast to my taking the stream of neatly pronounced BBC voices and reworking them into a dramatic persona. In Weiner's reading all the visuality, emphasis, emotive stresses, and drama of the TV news report becomes her voice.

An excerpt from the text follows:

She's grateful to her new boyfriend for a new lease on life  
 Many other cities broke the record high for the day It's a  
 woman's political issue It is absolutely the woman's right  
 to decide whether she will or whether she will not have an  
 abortion 13 years after abortion was legalized (...) The US  
 Mediterranean fleet The US insists Sidra is international  
 waters (...) Just how long is a day on Uranus (...)

---

<sup>4</sup> Weiner, *Weeks* (La Farge, WI: Xexoxial Editions, 2010).



Including nine thin rings which are barely visible It  
discovered active volcanoes on undiscovered moons <sup>5</sup>

The book, *Weeks*, has images of TV screens, such as a snapshot of a *Fox News* report with a grainy image of people fighting, with the large text, 'STREET FIGHTING' across the bottom of the screen. This phrase in a present tense locates the text in continual present moment, events occurring now in the moment. Every page of the book represents a week of television-watching with a few phrases per day. In my comparison with *Weeks* I might ask, what has Weiner done with the notion of broadcast compared to my intervention in the news items? Weiner's focus on the predominantly visual medium of television is relevant. Her news was *screened* to her; a multi-sensory projection of information which she homogenised into one text. Yet in presenting the text in words and images, she set up an echo chamber that reveals the heterogeneous instances of message and noise. I am setting up a notion of broadcast that promotes the role of the eavesdropper and subversive listening techniques, outlining that there is a multiple space of listening in any hail. In both *Weeks* and *News Pieces*, the duration of composition is parallel with the source broadcast. The experience of listening and of being broadcast too is represented by the text as duration. The texts figure being broadcast to as something approaching assault, therefore signalling back is to perform a dissenting voice.

Weiner wrote *Weeks* in the late stages of her career, after a period described as her clairvoyance work for which she established her poetics. In her clairvoyance mode of writing she claimed she could see words, as she describes, 'Well, I started to see words in August 1972. And I saw them for a year and they were all over the place, coming out of my hair and my toenails, and god-knows what.'<sup>6</sup> At the point of starting to write *Weeks* Weiner was no longer 'seeing words' and turned to the television for a source of material. What's relevant about her clairvoyance is that she was always at the point of being broadcast to; the medium of the television was a prosthesis to replace the signalling that was common to her beyond media. Comparing this kind of gathering text to my so-called intuitive listening to the radio, one can ask how this develops the notion of the found in poetic practice? How is heard text found

---

<sup>5</sup> Weiner, *Weeks*, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Weiner, 'Transcript of Radio Interview for Linebreak Between Hannah Weiner and Charles Bernstein', *Electronic Poetry Centre*, 1995 <[http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/weiner/Weiner-Hannah\\_LINEbreak\\_1995\\_full-transcript.pdf](http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/weiner/Weiner-Hannah_LINEbreak_1995_full-transcript.pdf)> [accessed 17 September 2010].

text? And if it is delivered to you as signal, at what point do the lines between message-receiver and broadcaster become blurred? In his introduction to the book Charles Bernstein describes *Weeks* as world-event narratives becoming like ‘background music’.<sup>7</sup> This sets up a model where re-articulating text from broadcast media is a kind of tuning in, where being caught out by the hail in the act of listening, is turned back in on itself.

### **Danger Scale**

Bernstein’s notion of mediasphere as ‘background music’ can be matched against the concepts of background noise and lyric noise as set up in Chapter Two. Here it was said that within a collective’s hum of communication the necessary material for exchanges of information to take place was the noise of interference. In other words, parasitic noise was the material through which communication could occur. Similarly the lyric call of a poem, signalling to and naming identities, was said to be a continuous static noise that a poem and a listener were required to step into. This is a model that is explored in my poem ‘Danger Scale’.<sup>8</sup> In this text the core of the material is composed from terrorist threat level warnings, issued by the Home Office and updated on account of the level of expectation of a terrorist attack.<sup>9</sup> In the poem each alert is roughly listed for the amount of weeks it remained at that level, starting with the date of the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2005 London bombings to the present day. The threat level descriptions are written into with fragments of text that allude to the traffic light code that appears on ready meals and processed food.

Strong possibility  
 Strong possibility  
 Strong possibility  
 Some fat  
 Saturated fat  
 A sugar  
 A salt  
 Amber fat  
 Amber salt

---

<sup>7</sup> Bernstein, ‘Introduction’, in *Weeks*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Go to portfolio, p. 259 and audio disk one, Track Seven.

<sup>9</sup> Home Office, ‘Current Threat Level of Terrorist Attack’, [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/current-threat-level/)  
 <<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/current-threat-level/>>.

The text measures the linguistic framework of control, against a more meandering, active voice. In other words there is interplay between the controlling voice of ‘warning’, repeating and asserting its information, and the wondering, abstracting lines. The sources for this text *appealed* to me because the terrorism threat levels and the terms relating to the scale of unhealthiness in food, are systems of language that make you feel at once in control of the dangers around you, and also oppressed by them, such is the nature of the mutter-line. The text is both meandering and rigid in its prolonged repetitions. My voice, when reading the text out loud (repeating some phrases up to 20 times), cannot help but travel up and down the audio scale, exploring different pitches and textures. It becomes like a musical scale, while traversing periods of supposed ‘danger’ and fear within society. The poetic operations in ‘Danger Scale’ work by distorting, splicing and recodifying the different sources in relation to each other. The poem flicks back language that is imposed onto the listening citizen with a distortion that undermines it. In this way the poem performs the scenario of a background noise of interpellation whilst also enacting an interference on it. The poem itself is a piece of interference.

In reference to Weiner’s book, *Weeks*, Bernstein asks a question that resonates with the central questioning in Chapter Two and this portfolio commentary. He asks how writers are to reconcile the noise of everyday and media voices, ‘the virus of news’, with the lyric of poetry. In this question he is suggesting that for a poet to *not* confront the materials broadcast to us, or to fail to confront the hailing of media, is to ‘hide behind’ the lyric. He says:

What do we make of our everyday lives: make of them. Make out of them? What do we make of, that is, these materials that we can no where (not anymore) avoid, avert our ears as we do, as in poetic practice, hide behind the suburban laws of laundered lyricism.<sup>10</sup>

This last phrase suggests a lyric voice that has disguised itself by channelling through an intermediate agent. It suggests, the lyric voice is not one’s own anyway, so why not square it with the constant hails of everyday life. To do so is to distort lyricism through every speech materials; it is also to lyricise these everyday materials. One

---

<sup>10</sup> Bernstein, *My Way*, p. 81.

could ask then, what are the ‘poethics’ of confronting and engaging with these materials? What is it to play and meddle in these dichotomies of the lyric voice and media voices? When it comes to the unextraordinary ‘background music’ of news-matter, the poethical consequences of patterning, reiterating and displacing its voice, amounts to a subversion of euphemism and the misleading metaphors of media discourse. This practice of meddling in found media text is an undercutting of ‘narrative strategies’ that write out subject identities and experiences of the world.<sup>11</sup> To lyricise the materials of news is almost a combative approach, like self-defence against the background noise of the mutter-line. This positions the plundering, re-articulatory writer as working within a struggle with authoritative, ‘official’, interpellative voices and their own interpellative lyric ‘I’.

This figuring of the writer as acting out a battle against received information signals, perhaps puts too much emphasis on the writer as an intentional subject. As was discussed in Chapter Two in reference to Serresian background noise and coenesthesia, communicative exchanges occur at the level of unconscious passivity. In which case the re-articulatory act is a *partaking* in noise, it does not seek to triumph over the imposition of the drone of calls but to parasitically occupy the spaces of hailing. The sources of reiteration needn’t be culpable institutions that commit the subject to ideologies. Weiner’s *Code Poems* have shown that the voices of crisis or the residual cries of extraordinary instances of hailing within the archive are equally present in the relationally fricative instances of noise. On this point I will move on to discuss a work that places me in the role of the parasite on a frequency of communication that is not posed as a battleground. The dynamic created in the processes of such as work upsets the somewhat easier to negotiate politics of the previous works which pitted me the poet against the ubiquitous media voice. In the communicative field of this following work the effect of stepping in the way of the signalling messages and lyricising the material comes with an ethical freight.

### **The Katrina Sequence**

*The Katrina Sequence* is composed of three texts, ‘All Shook Up’, ‘This is Papa’ and

---

<sup>11</sup> Jena Osman, ‘Is Poetry the News? The Poethics of the Found Text’, *Jacket 2*, 2007 <<http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-osman.shtml>> [accessed 23 February 2012].

‘Let's Go Texas’.<sup>12</sup> Here the process for composing the texts transposes subjective speech into sound and text objects. By which I mean, the work’s composition involved a process of recomposing person-to-person transmission, as opposed to media broadcast, and turning that material into objective text. This process was as follows: the speech was taken from online mini video documentaries about the role of HAM radio operators during the crisis in New Orleans brought on by Hurricane Katrina. HAM radios are amateur radio network operators, they have licences to broadcast but do so non-professionally. During the storm of 2005 all official emergency communication networks failed and in many parts of the area only HAM radios were left operational. This left large groups of essentially volunteer radio operators fielding and assisting SOS distress calls. The documentaries featured extracted recordings of conversations between people trapped in flooded areas and ‘HAMs’ in outposts around Louisiana.<sup>13</sup> My texts were composed by listening to the audio of the documentaries on *YouTube* with headphones, and reciting the heard speech into a voice recorder. This recording of my speech was then transcribed into a script. The script is the final document of the work, with all my interventions, mishearings, pauses and stutters absorbed into the flattened score. The act of sounding the script in the live event re-sites a sense of multiple voices scrambling for noise-free communication.

This act throws open various questions on the archive and a practitioner’s intervention on it. Who has the right to trespass on these voices? How far can a practitioner mutate the material of the archive and preserve the integrity of its content? Is preservation a directive of the engagement? On one hand the act is purely material; it echoes a subject’s speech into sound, then re-transmits it as figured speech-matter. The work does not seek to solicit an emotive response. On the other hand, as has been argued in Chapter Two there is always background noise of the lyric operating in the materiality of words. The materials’ shoring and reconceptualising does not diminish the call within the words, the rearticulation simply distorts and diverts the call. The actual voices of victims of the flood are not explicit in the text; only the HAMs’ dialogue was heard, recorded and transcribed. However, from the

---

<sup>12</sup> Go to portfolio, pp. 266-242 and audio disk two, Tracks 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> *Katrina Ham, 2007*

<[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pejhtY1pMig&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pejhtY1pMig&feature=youtube_gdata_player)> [accessed 17 June 2010].

interchange between the radio operators a listener can form the sense of the SOS caller; their absent shape is outlined by the dialogue around them, like Dark Matter outlining a body, as seen in this section from ‘This is Papa’:

his name’s David they were in that area and i believe they’ve  
got a list of  
names of people that are ready to go  
as soon as they can go  
ok i just wait for a phone call

In my choice of ‘sensitive’ material such as this natural disaster that killed and displaced so many, the work’s procedure will always carry the freight of their voices. What the work reveals is that the victims remain silent, yet spoken through the voices around them. However, unlike media reports and news broadcast that also so often speak for silent victims of disaster, the HAM’s voices I heard in making this piece mediated the victims experience in a very different way. It was cooperation rather than comment, and aid rather than analysis. My work, in spite of or because of the sensitivity of the situation, is still about mediation and the effect this has on the signallers and receivers of message; it asks how does mediation, through technology or other speakers, displace or engage with the call. My role therefore in further displacing the victims’ voices, and meddling in their emergency calls, needs to be considered in terms of what it contributes to my practice.

Speaking in 2001 on his 1965 poem, ‘Marines Defend Burning of Village’ Jackson Mac Low discusses his composition and somewhat misplaced intentionality for the poem. He discusses his ‘disastic method’ of separating and re-matching sentences and sentence-fragments from a New York Times article about military tactics in the Vietnam War, as this section from the poem reveals,

“Marines do not burn houses  
or villages unless those houses  
or villages are fortified,”  
marines  
sweeping through the village of  
Camne south of Danang,  
marines had first  
considered that the village was  
Communist controlled.

His method created an impersonal written voice that resulted in an ‘overtly political’ and ‘didactic’ poem.<sup>14</sup> Mac Low has commented on the tension in creating a kind of protest poem out of algorithmic and procedural writing:

This 1965 poem is an example of how one can use so-called nonintentional methods (in this case one of my deterministic reading-through text-selection methods) to make an overtly political/didactic poem. It is an interesting example of how an impersonally written poem can function as a strong political work. Because of the fragmentation and repetitions of sentences and sentence fragments in the poem, the horror of the bland description in the NYTimes is borne in on the readers/hearers. All that was required was to choose the news story and “send it through” a noncomputer-automated diastic method that selected sentences and fragments of sentences running from diastic words to punctuation marks.<sup>15</sup>

This is to argue that the voice of the poem, and of the poet, can easily become didactic and interpellative even through rigorous strategies of re-signalling. I am drawn to Mac Low’s detachment from the effect of the incidental didacticism, or political overtone that his procedure led to. His attitude to the altered voice, the resistance protest voice, is that it simply occurred through his method, as if his role of the writer is removed from the effect of the voices that emerge through a composition. This places the role of the writer, experimenting in reforming other voices and messages, into a position of meddler. Any moralising or political position is spoken through the clash of speech-matter. Indeed the ‘argument’ within the original news story of marines burning a village gets dismantled and the ‘truth’ of the story is thrown up in the air. Mac Low’s procedure of splicing and smoothing out of heightened moments of broadcast is another example of homogenised texts revealing a cacophony of accidental hails, and noisy reconfigurations of communication. Mac Low’s work reveals a similar situation in my *Katrina Sequence* where the reconstituting of a broadcast and homogenising it into one voice, reveals a platform of multiple voices. This incidental unleashing of voices, echoing through the work, is what makes *Katrina Sequence* experimental ground through which I can learn things about practice. My role in the procedure is necessarily meddling and investigative, rather than didactic. In other words, to

---

<sup>14</sup> Kristin Prevallet and Jackson Mac Low, “‘Gathering Vs. Collecting’ and ‘the Terminology’ Letters Between Kristin Prevallet and Jackson Mac Low’, *Open Letter*, 11, 3 (2001)

<<http://slought.org/files/downloads/publications/openletter/05b.pdf>> [accessed 25 March 2011].

<sup>15</sup> Prevallet and Mac Low, p. 2.

emphasise the incidental, noisy aspect of re-signalling texts, rather than positioned didacticism, the works in the portfolio are always posited as a site of *play*.

### Disobedient Listening and Dissenting Echo

The practices described above, of archive trespass, subverting official channels of information and hybridizing hails into sabotaging echo, characterise an approach to interpellative processes that relies on *play* and *deviation*. On one hand the twisted, reconstituted instances of language can be viewed as a kind of *verbal irony*. They repeat utterances, with distorted meaning, questioning and complicating, over the top of the original message. This status of ironic speech is however complicated by the assertion that all speech-acts have a necessary irony built into them, or, one can't be linguistically ironic because there is already an immediate irony in using language to express yourself.<sup>16</sup> Since ironic language necessitates a supposed superior handling of the truth than that to which you reiterate, what seems more significant to this practice, is not the ironic but the comic.

Deleuze's comparison of humour and irony, as described by James Williams, is useful here, claiming that while irony is a critique of reason, it does not have the 'affirmative power of humour'. Irony, more like nihilism and cynicism, negates and closes down possibilities. It is closed and intellectual, while humour is *open* and *physical*. 'Irony displaces once, but humour [and Deleuze's writing] perform ongoing and multiple displacements. They refuse the final tragic resting place of irony.'<sup>17</sup> Tragic because, 'it settles on the breathing promise of the wholeness of existence, of nature or of a self-knowing 'I''.<sup>18</sup> The comic therefore resists a self-knowing 'I' and is open to the multiple deviations from that, as I call it, lyric voice. My poetics uses the voice of an 'I', and in the cases of these works those 'I's are mostly rearticulated from another. Such instances of the lyric speak from various positions, playfully complicating the 'I's authenticity. The comic awards the lyric 'I' with multiple possibilities. The effect of humour is to displace the lyric and set it into a buzzing noise. How is this specific to the live instance of my poetry?

---

<sup>16</sup> Riley, *The Words of Selves*, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Williams, pp. 18–19.



In another of Institute of Necronautical Society's fake, bureaucratic documents on the nature of 'inauthenticity', Tom McCarthy and INS philosopher, Simon Critchley address the nature of the comic in relation to both a human condition and a philosophical approach. Their position to art practice is relevant to this notion of the comic in my poetics, in that they determine the process of corrupting, detouring and re-processing information matter, as I have done in my works described here, as an act of negating authenticity. This negation sets up the subject, the artist or writer, as inauthentic and 'dividual' rather than as an individual speaker of originality. Repetition and de-authenticating are a modality of the comic. The INS explicate the condition of the comic through Baudelaire's notion of a splitting of the self, which Baudelaire calls *dédoublement*. It is a self-splitting on account of the subject being repeated and therefore becoming inauthentic.

For Baudelaire, it lies in a twofold fall: the fall from the divine *and* the pratfall. I watch another man trip on the pavement and I laugh in sudden glory. Baudelaire goes on to claim that what distinguishes the poet or the philosopher from others is that he can laugh at himself. That is, he can simultaneously be the one who trips and the one watches the trip: he can split himself in two – what Baudelaire calls *dédoublement*.<sup>19</sup>

For Baudelaire and the INS this very particular kind of self-splitting open to the artist, the poet and the philosopher, means that they inhabit two roles at once; to fall over on the banana peel and to laugh at their own fall. In other words the poet has the capacity to be the clown and person the laughing. How do I relate this 'open' and 'physical' aspect of the comic to my practice? I can start by saying that when information matter, or speech-matter is retransmitted under the premise of de-authenticating therefore, it is open to the rules of the comic. In other words, echoing voices from disparate sources, as seen in my practice, is a modality of the comic, particularly when I am put at stake as the performer of the echo-as-pratfall.

McCarthy's notions of dividuation and *dédoublement* chime with Brandon LaBelle's statements on echo. In relation to the pratfall, LaBelle says that the doubling, differencing acts of a clown are like an echo. The clown shadows a normal gesture and repeats it with a distortion that instigates a difference. The clown splits

---

<sup>19</sup> McCarthy and INS, 'Tate Declaration of Inauthenticity', in *Altermodern: Tate Triennial 2009*, ed. by Nicolas Bourriaud (London: Harry N. Abrams, 2009), pp. 170–180 (p. 177).

and distorts the mimicked act. Therefore for LaBelle the clown is an echo of real life, it repeats and makes it different.<sup>20</sup> Clowning, as a distorting echo of everyday paradigms, returns us to the notion of play. Where to clown is to mimic a gesture, and to demarcate that physical gesture as a type, to re-transmit and transmute messages into speech-matter, is to parody the utterance. But in the mechanics of practice I am carving out, the parody is of the source material and also of the speech-matter echoed back. Both are subject to spoof, play and distortion. This kind of re-articulation of information material treats words and phrases like a toy. Like the way a child reclaims and reimagines a cardboard box as a spaceship, this practice sites echo as play and re-appropriation. Sound objects are located as a paradigm of hails and then ciphered according to altered meanings.

The processes of echo within playing and clowning with information matter, is also why the comic is an agent of sound. The auditory effect of echoing is what performs the doubling. The voice has a physical and auditory clowning capacity where it sounds out the differences between the rearticulation and the ‘original’ utterance. In performance the voice and the body collaborate in this clowning-echo, and their combined effects create a comedic play, such as my inane repetition of the phrase, ‘highly likely’ is a physical and vocal horseplay. Regarding this aspect of performance, what identity characteristics do I rely on in experimenting in this kind of comedy, and what of me is put at stake in act of clowning?

### **The Portfolio’s Gendered Voice**

While the works here explore identity roles as a consequence of interpellation and echo, it could be argued that a certain amount of the comic and distorting productivity of my work rests on expressions of my gender. The sound of my voice, the speech-matter of the performance that determines it as feminine, is significant to my poetic’s qualifying as sound poetry, or to designating a new discourse for sound poetry and distinguishing it from the sound poetics it has learned from and debated with. The interrupting role I play, and the occupation of others’ voices, is arguably granted a freedom on account of gender. Yet this freedom to meddle and play, comes hand-in-hand with a sacrifice of putting aspects of myself at stake in performance. Comedy

---

<sup>20</sup> LaBelle, ‘Echo’.

and clowning always involves a certain amount of sacrifice. When sacrifice involves a play on lyric and gender identity, what then can be said about the playful and disobedient nature of speech-matter? Is the sacrifice a risking of the coherence and authority of the voice?

Speech-matter as noise performs disorderly, aberrant, comic utterances. This de-authentication and distortion of sensical speech in my practice could be described as ‘the cry of the rebellious daughter’,<sup>21</sup> thus playing on the Lacanian notion that language is a symbolic universe that amounts to the ‘law of the father’.<sup>22</sup> Therefore where language is a codification of a patriarch system, a rebellion against this would be to seek communication at the margins of language.<sup>23</sup> However the work in this portfolio is ‘rebellious’ against potentially two universes of the law of the father. There is the language and speech of the everyday, which my work delights in impersonating and complicating. Then there is the ‘language’ or the system of absent language developed by the historical sound poetry such as that of Henri Chopin. In Chapter One I discussed that the practices of sound poetry were themselves attempts to invent a new language, one that privileged the essential noise of the body over the socialised discourse. I suggested that this kind of sound poetry, that situated the ‘primal’ authentic, neutral body as the means to linguistic empowerment, was a masculine and potentially violent project. My project for sound poetry therefore has the complicated role of rebelling against two patriarchal codes. This is a dismantling of oppressions of broadcast speech, as seen in the poems of this essay, and in the recuperating of the ‘primal’ shouts of ‘traditional’ sound poetry’s supposedly neutral yet masculine body.

By putting aspects of my character, my age and my gender, at stake in the excesses of comic performance, and therefore sacrificing coherence and authority in my language, is not only necessary in the process of debating sound poetry and the ‘mutter-line’, but also a key aspect of practice-research. Making something humorous,

---

<sup>21</sup> Seyla Benhabib, ‘On Hegel - Women and Irony’, in *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 242–257 (p. 243).

<sup>22</sup> Benhabib, p. 242.

<sup>23</sup> I am aware that this claim risks an over-simplification of Lacan’s Symbolic Order and that it passes over a key point in Lacan’s theory of symbolic language. This view being that the unconscious is structured like a language, with signifiers and symbols, that the unconscious is a *signifying process*. See, Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 68–69. This argument has implications for non-signifying sound poetry reaching for authentic speech but my aim here is not to carry out a Lacanian analysis of sound poetry, rather I am using this reference to the Law and the Name of the Father in Lacanian theory to make a point about my treatments of models of speech and how this positions my work in the history of sound poetry.

and embodied, and therefore necessarily gendered, are ways of making a space of meaning open to multiple potentialities. Therefore I discover things about speech in my comic-led disarticulations of others' speech. Humour is another way, if not a deviant way, to discovering knowledge in the field of sound and poetry.

### Chapter 3

#### Contemporary Intermedialities in Poetics and the Concept of Milieu: Reflections on the Work of Caroline Bergvall

##### **'no bordas to our mathematikes'**<sup>1</sup>

At this point in my sound poetry practice and research I recognise the need to address the notion of intermediality in poetic practice, and how sound poetry negotiates media and physical space. Though the notion of 'intermedia' has not yet been made explicit in this thesis, it has been a conceptual basis for the areas I have explored, and its articulation is now central to the means of moving my research to the next stage. The implicit intermedialities that have emerged in my research findings in the first two chapters of this thesis are: the merging of body and machine to create a poetics of analogue media, as seen in the poetics of Henri Chopin; the composite of hailing transmission and interrupting noise in the lyric of sound poetry; the ongoing integration of practice and research occurring in the construction of this thesis. These intermedialities represent a merging of states and processes.

In each stage of this thesis my theory and practice has had to go through processes of cross mediality. In other words the theorisation and practice of speech-matter within this thesis has involved a discursive route through media and methodology, thus traversing gestics, embodiment and disembodiment. Speech-matter has often found itself located as a connection between functional objects and conceptual gestures, for example the shift from the tape machine to the embodied logics of analogue sound and feedback, or the intrication of the lyric 'I' in a poem with the activity within a communication network and radio broadcast. The matter of speech-matter has been translated through physical forms into dematerialised drifting identity positions. This tendency for interrelation and cross-meshing in my work and theory now warrants examination within the wider context of contemporary practice, and in contradistinction to the available discourses of art practice. To do this I turn to 'Intermedia', or more accurately, I turn to Intermedia in order to turn, somewhat, away from it. In this following chapter I intend to interrogate this historical and loaded determinations of art discipline, and then draw out a new intermedial field for

---

<sup>1</sup> Caroline Bergvall, *Meddle English: New and Selected Texts* (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2011), p. 41.

a contemporary poetics that operates across media, modalities, spaces and materials, generating multiple versions of the same work.

With regards to the processes of contemporary poetic practice, it can be argued that the term intermedia is limited to serving as a flag for the in-between of disciplines. The complexity of contemporary cross-medial work demands a criticality that addresses the merging of entity and communication, thing and modes of transmission, performances, re-versions, and new circuits of distribution. What kinds of classification for expanded poetics do we need instead of, or as well as, the notion of intermedia? This is not to say that I want to challenge or permanently shelve the term, more that I want to open up potentialities for the conceptual and critical spaces of poetics where intermedia is the haunting dynamic. To do this, this chapter will first negotiate the Fluxus legacy and Dick Higgins's bequest of Intermedia, and then push it towards new meanings that can debate the distributed mechanisms of current poetry.<sup>2</sup> By which I mean the way in which a poem or poetic work takes place across time, space and networks.

I will acknowledge the origins of the notion of Intermedia and link the success of the Fluxus experiment in 'claiming new territory for practice' from the early 1960s onwards, to the work being done within expanded works of poetry now. Like Seth Price's recuperation of 'Conceptual Art' in his account of distribution in digital media, this chapter will recognise that the term intermedia 'can only gesture toward a thirty year-old historical moment. But it can't be rejected entirely, as it has an evident charge for artists working today, even if they aren't necessarily invested in the concerns of the classical moment'.<sup>3</sup> Like Price I am also concerned with an approach to practice that emphasises expansion and mediation, with a consideration for its implication for the archive. For instance this chapter will consider how a poem and its mutations, through a process of ongoing mediation, finds its way into the archive and what status it holds there, in terms of materiality and its expanded field.

To work through these considerations of intermedia and the new possibilities of its determining spatialised and variously transmitted poetics, I will focus on a particular artist, the poet and informer of my practice, Caroline Bergvall. In focussing

---

<sup>2</sup> When referring specifically to Dick Higgins's and Fluxus historical terminology I will spell Intermedia with a capital 'I'. When using the term in a contemporary sense I will spell intermedia with a lowercase 'i'.

<sup>3</sup> Seth Price, 'Dispersion', *distributedhistory.com*, 2008  
<<http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion2008.pdf>>.

on Bergvall's recent works this chapter will offer a strategy for intermedial analysis of speech-matter poetics, in which sites of communication signify political tensions based on materiality and mediation. This is a strategy that re-determines intermediation by what will be argued here is an active *middling*. I share the term used by Bergvall but with different connotations. Bergvall uses middling to talk about the homogenising effect on language of the mass media and globalisation. She is characteristically punning on the phrase 'Middle English' so to reference the state of the English language as it imported outside influences before standardisation. For her middling is like the saturation or levelling of a dominant force (global English). In her use, middling is an 'Obstacle to flux'.<sup>4</sup> Though this chapter learns from much of the theorisation Bergvall employs to analyse her work, I use this term differently for the purpose of my argument. Middling here will be used to describe the processes of what are, potentially, intermedial works. That is to say, middling will be understood as the action of going into the middle, as in actively digging into the matter: of form, of concept, of space, of linguistic tendencies. Where the language of intermedia focuses on gaps in between states, I seek to determine this poetry as a mattered configuration.

Significantly middling is part of a broader theorising this chapter will use, which discusses poetry as a projection into a *milieu*. In drawing out this concept I will suggest the active middling of materials and channels of transmission involves the *seeding of a milieu*. I use this phrase – in reference to seeded clouds, planting and stimulating growth – to denote the combination of material and environment. As with planting seeds, the effect of the combination is somewhat beyond control. I use this term because I see Bergvall's poetics as constructing linguistic milieux, yet she is somewhat removed from the after-effect of the construction. In other words, once the materials are in play, the motions and movements of language take over. This notion of seeding resists heavy-handed authorship, instead pertaining to a poetics that is expressed through connections. I regard Bergvall's speech-mattering poetry projects as operating through connections to wider ideas, ideas and mediation. Her works reach out to the listener's experience and sensation of language. This chapter will open out what intermedialities are at work in Bergvall's poetics, and explore how else to theorise their properties of *connectedness* and *extension*, and their seeding of a milieu.

---

<sup>4</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 13.

The body of work I will address as an example of the transitional practice of intermediality is Bergvall's combined project of *Middling English*, an exhibition at the John Hansard gallery in Southampton in 2010, and *Meddle English*, a book of poetry and critical writing published in 2011. In the most simplistic terms the *Middling English* exhibition is a collection of multi-media writings 'about' the English language. Or rather than 'about' it can be said that the works in the exhibition use English as a milieu to generate ideas about the practice of languaging, by which I mean the material effects of speaking a language. Using her own bilingualism Bergvall has developed a praxis that investigates the pressures experienced by individual speakers at the limits of foreignness, fluency and subjecthood. The exhibition itself consisted of sound, installation, sculpture, posters and image-texts and in this sense might be termed, fully intermedial. However, as this chapter will argue, the term 'intermedial' might be seen to set certain limitations on the various operations and networks put into motion by the work, both at the site of the exhibition, and in the extensions into other formats. The 'extensions' include the book of poetry, *Meddle English*, which shares common texts, reversionings, ideas and conceptual threads with the art show, and also the inexplicit points of mediations instigated by the work's references, materials and reflexes. The book's first sequence of poetry, 'The Shorter Chaucer Tales' will be a key focus for this investigation. This sequence experiments in the 'materials and reflexes' of Chaucerian English, referencing and sourcing from, the *Canterbury Tales*. This initial observation of the Chaucerian stratagem within Bergvall's work shows that the 'Middling' and 'Meddle' of the two projects' titles have extended connotations, and we realise that the *medial* shifts in Bergvall's project are more multiplicitous than can be understood within the mechanics of intermedia.

### **The Historical Premise and Promise of Intermedia**

The object of this thesis is both to debate with and expand what is understood as sound poetry, in order to further the potential of a practice of a poetics composed of and enacting speech-matter. I feel the encounters with the historical legacy of sound poetry and its extended faculties discussed so far requires a more focused testing of the spatialisation, durational, performative and discursive nature of a contemporary poetry practice. In order to do this, this chapter will interrogate the meaning and



execution of intermedial art, returning to the 1960s conception of ‘Intermedia’ as a part of a distinct terminology and approach to art-making. It is a move that parallels Chapter One’s return to the 1960s development of tape-machined sound poetry in order to channel theoretical and executional poetics into a contemporary usage. A parallel between the projects of sound poetry and Fluxus is the perceptive shift regarding ‘new media’, in other words, the new forms of engagement with innovating technologies and their materiality, as was explored regarding the tape machine. The 1960s adapted participation with media – their new modes of incorporated mechanisms – arguably echoes our contemporary moment of adapted mechanisms for communication and information distribution. This thesis has not yet directly cited digital and web-based platforms as an aspect of the contemporary practice at stake in its research. Yet it is implicit in a navigation of the extended mechanisms of sound and performance work now, that digital dispersion and cultural interaction through digital media is crucial. The impact of contemporary communication media on contemporary poetics will be evident in the next sections. Now I would like to focus on the notion of intermedia; the workings of the term and the 1960s experimentation which it names.

One objective of this chapter is to show the extent to which the foundational conception of Intermedia, as a defining framework for many Fluxus experiments from 1965 onwards, as opposed to the now generic term covering mixed-media and transdisciplinary practices, still offers a way to theorise the works in question in this thesis. One main underscoring of the intermedial that I wish to develop, if not challenge, is the importance given to *in-between* states. The heart of the Fluxus intermedial experience rests in locating between states in art and life structures. Fluxus works sought to mediate between art practices and real life, for example between live performance, sculpture, music composition, and various everyday ‘life activities’.<sup>5</sup> A perfect example of this is Alison Knowles’s ‘Make a Salad’, premiered at the ICA in 1962 and re-imagined for the ‘Fluxus Long Weekend’ in 2008 at the Tate Modern.<sup>6</sup> ‘Make a Salad’ is an event score, the instructions for which follow that one simple criteria with no restrictions on performer numbers or duration. The piece relies on empiricist knowledge that comes from direct, primary sensory experience,

---

<sup>5</sup> Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Alison Knowles, ‘Fluxus Long Weekend’, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 31 (2008), 139–148.

and crucially, play.<sup>7</sup> An Event Score such as this, aims at a connectedness with the world and a kind of material knowledge that's gained from making art with what's at hand, allowing what's there – matter, materials or sounds – to just be.

The name 'Intermedia' given to this artistic principle was imagined by key Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, in an essay and newsletter sent out via his Something Else Press in 1965. The 'something else' is we assume a reference to the alchemical result of fusing elemental practices with artistic intention; a 'something else' apart from art and life categories. From the first few statements of the essay it's clear that for Higgins Intermedia is concerned with a democratization of cultural engagement and a de-commodification of art (in contrast to its contemporary Pop Art). For Higgins the divisions and categories of art disciplines are part of the same system that governs hierarchies and social order in 'The Great Chain of Being'.<sup>8</sup> For Higgins Intermedia had the potential to be part of a classlessness and populism in art, and his propagation of the term was as he said, 'part of my campaign to popularise what was known as "avant-garde: for specialists only," to demystify it if you will'.<sup>9</sup> This is reminiscent of the idealism seen in the ideas of Chopin and the British school of sound poetry. It reveals a similar association between innovative distribution networks and democratic art production. There are cross-over platforms between Chopin's sound poetry and Fluxus dispersion – performance, independent publishing, sustained public theorising of the work through letter and article writing – however the Fluxus distribution of intermediality was built into its art practices. The so-called, 'Fluxkits', for example, were limited edition collections of objects, cards and scripts for sale or to be passed on, with the inherent art piece to be re-enacted and engaged with. One well-known edition was artist, Ay-O's 'Finger Box', a box with the hole in it and the instruction to, 'put finger in hole'.<sup>10</sup> Again, this represents a playful, witty approach with a participatory drive. The artwork, via the Fluxkits, were to be distributed and transmitted out into the world, to carry on taking place. Likewise the Event Scores were conceived as being available for reimagining and re-performing, creating an expanded network of Fluxus activity.

---

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Higgins, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> Dick Higgins and Hannah Higgins, 'Intermedia', *Leonardo*, 34 (2001), 49–54 (p. 49).

<sup>9</sup> Dick Higgins and Hannah Higgins, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> 'Thing/Thought: Fluxus Editions/1962-1978', [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)  
<[http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2011/fluxus\\_editions/category\\_works/fluxkit/](http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2011/fluxus_editions/category_works/fluxkit/)>  
[accessed 9 November 2012].

These broadcasting methods supposedly formed connectivity among artists, institutions and participants, creating ‘happening’ (to borrow a Fluxus term) environments. We can take from this then that Intermedia was a proposition that imagined a field of possibilities, through material gestures (such as the Fluxkits) and conceptual structures. It also instigated what we could call a self-archiving process, where the memory of the originary event gets encoded into both the material and intangible products. For instance, all the live performances of a work, all the various performances of ‘Make a Salad’ are archived into the Event Score that continues to transmit. (One might ask whether this includes every time someone who has encountered this piece makes a salad. This would surely secure the Fluxus ideal for an oscillation between ‘real life’ impacting on art and art aestheticizing everyday movements.) The Fluxus archive therefore, while to some extent necessarily resisting the authoritative archives, resides in the at once ongoing and transient moments of live event and artefact, a thing and a thought. This ongoing dissemination represents the successful side of the Fluxus archiving processes. The unsuccessful side is the said institutional, official archive, which situates the Fluxus objects as preserved and inaccessible. Therefore within the institution’s governing tenets of conservation and display, the ‘distributed, object-based aspect of Fluxus performance unfortunately and understandably withers’.<sup>11</sup> Digital databases on the other hand, as argued by Marjorie Perloff, have provided a new way in which the Fluxus intermediations continue and ‘the distinction between materiality and ideation, embodiment and disembodiment breaks down.’<sup>12</sup> This brings about not categorisation and distinction, but interrelational links between Intermedia and other projects. On Ubuweb for example Fluxus documents are side by side with Chopin’s poetry, Minimalist works and Conceptual Art documents. However, what also ‘withers’ in digital archival space, as Gillian Young would argue, is the sensory, tactility of the encounter, and therefore that key aspect of a Fluxus performance imprinting on body memory.<sup>13</sup>

What does this consideration of Intermedia and the Fluxus project’s archive – its limits and unfoldings – tell us about an artwork’s ‘extensions’? The sensory experience of a Fluxus object or event can be considered one such extension. The

---

<sup>11</sup> Gillian Young, ‘The Score: How Does Fluxus Perform?’, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 34 (2012), 37–45 (p. 39).

<sup>12</sup> Marjorie Perloff, ‘Fluxier-than-Thou’, *Modernism/modernity*, 11 (2004), 581–587 (p. 583).

<sup>13</sup> Young, p. 39.

sensory, tangible textures of the objects, the smell and even taste of the engaged matter can be interpreted as a work's extension by way of its mediation. 'Make a Salad' delivers varied heuristic qualities including visual, taste, touch and sound. These can be the incidental as well as specific sonic qualities that emerge through a performance. Fluxus was an auditory and musical form of the avant-garde. That much of the work had a sonic capacity, is due to the engagement with composition and notational forms through John Cage's teaching. Knowles's piece 'Shuffle', which instructs the performer/s to 'shuffle into the performance area and away from it, above, behind, around, or through the audience. They perform as a group or solo: but quietly', is both a visual, choreographed performance, and a sound score.<sup>14</sup> As with other Fluxus works it incorporates joke, play, and participation, it allows for the work to escape outside of itself. In this case we can understand the work's extensions as bodily relation, and embodied connectivity. The piece sees a literal body-to-body linking, with a wink towards a party conga line, and also a somatic and coenesthetic sensation of the sound of bodies.

As intermedial work that reveals disembodied extensions, and distributed networks and dispersal, we can turn to the example of the 'Spatial Poems' of the Intermedia artist and composer, Mieko Shiomi. Through the mid 1960s Shiomi initiated this work by mailing short instructions around the world, requesting responses and interpretations to each score. An example of one score sent out is 'Wind Event' where the instruction involved 'making or disturbing the movement of wind which surrounds this globe'.<sup>15</sup> One realisation of 'Spatial Poems' is an installation of all the replies sent back to Shiomi indicated on a world map. The set of poetic instructions entails a mapped network, which is spatialised on the gallery wall as much as it is out in the everyday communicative systems. It would be easy to say that this piece preempts the distribution mechanisms of web-based information exchange. However, following on from the discussion of transmission in Chapter Two, it could be said that this work is harnessing the everyday planetary 'background noise' of messaging and hailing. The work tumbled out into the world and became literal pieces of communication. The spatialisation of this poem therefore, occurred through mediation (the post), interactive participation (by way of the score or

---

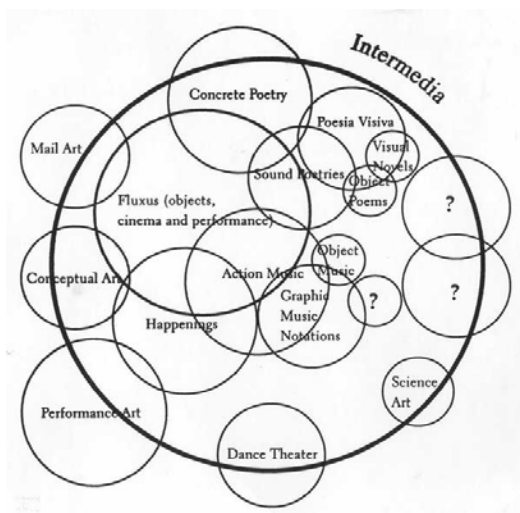
<sup>14</sup> Knowles, 'Event Scores', [www.aknowles.com](http://www.aknowles.com) <<http://www.aknowles.com/eventscore.html>> [accessed 12 November 2012].

<sup>15</sup> Young, p. 38.

instruction) and the event of the performance or re-enactment. Both ‘Spatial Poem’ and ‘Shuffle’ operate through extensions and mediation, and thus are models for the kind of sound poetry this research is building, where the body and subjective identity, the physical and the abstract participation, are all mediated by a simple score.

From this preliminary look at Fluxus works I would like to return to Intermedia specifically, its potential and its limitations for expressing ideas about extensions and mediations as I see them in contemporary practice. To aid this examination of the term we might refer to the graphic representation made by Dick Higgins in reference to the intermedial field. The diagram, or ‘Intermedia Chart’, was drawn up by Higgins to illustrate the process of artwork that probes the in-between spaces of different disciplines. It was also an attempt to demonstrate the extent of the Fluxus project. The Fluxus sphere incorporates the multiple ellipses of ‘happenings’, ‘Actions Music’, ‘Conceptual Art’, ‘Mail Art’, ‘Concrete Poetry’, ‘Sound Poetries’, and ‘graphic notation’. The diagram is therefore also like a guide for a viewer encountering a Fluxus work. For example with an event-score such as Knowles’s ‘Make a Salad’ the viewer must decipher the role and origin of the score, the salad (or readymade) and the performer/audience dynamic.

Dick Higgins, ‘Intermedia Chart’<sup>16</sup>



According to the chart the purer art forms keep a lip outside the organising circle of ‘Intermedia’. It is within this space of the Intermedia circle that the operations and crossovers occur, where the language of one artform is transposed onto the syntax of another. In this diagram, and indeed the thinking out of Intermedia, each circle is its own area of distinction, with boundaries, that indeed overlap, but have clear and

<sup>16</sup> Dick Higgins and Hannah Higgins, appendix, figures page.

necessary parameters. They share components on the basis of their own demarked territories. By the laws of this two-dimensional diagram the localised circles (or modes of working), cross at the point of generic intentions.

Higgins's Intermedia mentality supposedly focused on 'continuity rather than categorisation'.<sup>17</sup> Yet it could be argued that the Intermedia circles seem to rely on the evolution of categories in order to navigate the spaces around and between them.

Hannah Higgins describes the diagram thus:

Higgins's chart depicts intersections between Fluxus and other artistic efforts as overlapping circles that appear to expand and contract in relation to the 'Intermedia' framework that encompasses them. It's an open framework that invites play. Its bubbles hover in space.<sup>18</sup>

The graphic representation, and Intermedia's positive-negation of categories allows us to think on one hand, that there is a dynamic, evolving process at the heart of Intermedia. None of the overlaps are permanently fixed or static. On the other hand, the active probing of between spaces, between media and the creating of intermediums, resists a kind of thinking that allows for intricate networks and mattered configurations, where a work communicates across subjectivities, physical bodies and abstract ideas. Intermedia is a dynamic differentiating, as opposed to a middling form (as will be discussed). Neither chaos nor incoherencies are possible within this framework; a position or gesture is always allocated a logical situation. Communication overall within the Intermedia structure is usually fluent and reaches its receptor without interference. This is not to say that the artist or source of the message, for instance Shiomis's postal scores, is consistently in control of the communicative instance and that it doesn't allow for error or mutation, more that the passages through artforms and out into wider networks of 'real life' are consistently defined and friction free. For Hannah Higgins the chart represents Intermedia's parallel with the 'diversity of human experience' saying that the 'circles are like social groups and culture'.<sup>19</sup> However, this seems like a utopian version of communicative cultures where overlaps are a simple mix and do not inject noise into the wider system.

---

<sup>17</sup> Dick Higgins and Hannah Higgins, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Higgins, pp. 88–89.

<sup>19</sup> Hannah Higgins, p. 89.

From this we can say that vagueness is not a condition of Intermedia, as this chart and as Hannah Higgins see it. For Hannah Higgins Intermedia is like a mathematical expression, it is ‘unstable yet not vague’.<sup>20</sup> For the purpose of this thesis I feel it is necessary to make a space for vagueness, and probe the noises made by fusing, not disciplines, but materials and mechanisms of communication. Indeed there is much about Intermedia that remains relevant to this research that I would like to keep hold of. The notion of a circumscribed paradigm of an everyday life action is useful in terms of speech-matter, where a paradigm of everyday speech can be templated and toyed with. But can we go further than understanding this as an intermedium between art and life structures? What happens when language and the processes of speech exchange are set into a middling process by an artwork? What happens when these artworks conform to the logic of Intermedia, but also offer new ideas, such as the notions of hybridity or milieu? These are the questions that I will be asking as a development from what has been discussed here. In the next section, contemporary poetry and text-based works will be considered in terms of their material interactions in the processes of clashing categories. My theorisation will accommodate ‘ands’ rather than between, connections rather than spaces, ‘into’ rather than ‘inter’. However, the sense of intermedia developed here will maintain a manifest notion of ‘among’, ‘in the midst of’ and reciprocalities.<sup>21</sup>

### **No Sharp Lines: The Heap and Midden**

To begin my development of the intermedial I would first like to re-consider the line; this being the line that Intermedia lays down as framing outlines, albeit to negotiate routes over and in-between. In the case of my enquiry, the line isn’t a cause to simply distinguish between medium and materials; here the line is considered in the more conceptual sense of categorisation in text-based works and poetic practice. In other words the line in question is more of a line as such, and a theory of limits and borders. As mentioned this investigation will take place through a reading of Caroline Bergvall’s practices of so-called ‘middling’ and ‘meddling’ within the processes of language and communication, specifically within the English language. In this case we will see that Bergvall’s work does indeed travel across media and succeeds in

---

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Higgins, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> Hannah Higgins, p. 93.

spatialising text works, whilst also interrogating the nature of lines and borders. In short, the landscape of Bergvall's 'middling English' project promotes a reconsideration of what we term intermedial by way of its questioning of outlines.

The first poem in the book, *Meddle English*, is an image of handwritten text (in pencil) that goes:

heaps of language  
 A heap of language  
 A heap of language  
 A heap of language<sup>22</sup>

This poem, 'Heaps', is homage to Robert Smithson's similar graphic work from 1966, 'A Heap of Language', which consists of a pyramid of pencil written words about or related to language. Smithson's textual drawing features words or phrases such as, 'Language /phraseology speech / tongue' building up into a pile of long meandering phrases. This drawing was for Smithson a means of representing language as a 'material entity', similarly material to his physical realisation of earth substances and elements.<sup>23</sup> Lucy Lippard makes the point that there was a ubiquity of 'piles' in art galleries at the time of 1968, made up of rubble, stones, coal, fabrics, pigments, by Minimal and Conceptual artists such as Smithson (whose choice material was soil and dirt), Beuys, Nauman, Oppenheim and Serra. For Lippard this revealed an artist mentality 'concerned with allowing materials rather than systems to determine the form of their work'. She continues that 'This premise [of piled materials] was soon applied to such ephemeral materials as time itself, space, non-visual items'.<sup>24</sup> Lippard's asserts that the gallery 'heaps' were material entity rather than technique, and this premise of heaping could be applied to a non-physical entity. Therefore, through print, mediation and then heaping up, language becomes matter. Smithson's heap is a pile of self-referential language matter. From Smithson, again from the mid 1960s, we have a step towards the idea of matter, and of speech-matter being a piling up of form, where genres and boundaries are indeed vague and imprecise.

The vagueness of Bergvall's textual heap is propounded by its status as an incomplete fragment, particularly when compared to Smithson's full pile. Bergvall's

<sup>22</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> 'Selected Interviews with Robert Smithson', [www.robertsmithson.com](http://www.robertsmithson.com), 1972  
 <<http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/interviews.htm>> [accessed 14 December 2012].

<sup>24</sup> Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), p. 5.



is a partial pyramid that, rather than referencing or speaking in terms of language as a concept, simply repeats the phrase and the idea of the possibility of a heap of language. From this, still in comparison to Smithson's piece, 'Heaps' likewise gestures toward the material nature of language, its excessive build-up. But here the specificity is removed, references are compiled into one utterance, one all-encapsulating referent. It points to the inconclusiveness of linguistic meaning, yet also to the continual 'little-by-little' piling and tumoring of words.

The English word 'heap' in itself is highly suggestive of semantic flux and indeterminacy. The notion of heap, or the semantic determination, heap, has come to represent the very *vagueness* of language. The classification of something as a 'heap of  $x$ ' is a phrase that reveals the ambiguity that occurs when abstract language is used to describe the physical reality of the world. Within the philosophy of paradoxes and vague language, the predicate 'a heap of' is part of a system of linguistic descriptions that determine a particular state, while the statement fails to cover the continuations and processes within that state of being. The 'paradox of the heap' is a Sorites Paradox that reveals the inconsistency in the statement, 'a heap of sand'. This Sorites Paradox states that when one grain of sand is not a heap of sand, nor is two or three, but there is definitely such thing as a heap of sand, then the distinction between one grain and a heap is indefinable. It is described thus:

Since one grain of sand is not describable as a heap and if one is not then two is not, so two grains of sand is not describable as a heap and if one is not then two is not, so two grains of sand do not constitute a heap. Again, if two is not then three is not, so three grains of sand do not constitute a heap, ... etc. So, for any number of grains or sand  $k$ ,  $k$  grains of sand do not constitute a heap yet we rightly feel that there piles of sand describable as heaps. Similarly, if one is prepared to admit that there are piles of sand describable as heap, then one could prove that one grain of sand counts as a heap since the removal of one grain at any stage cannot make the relevant difference!<sup>25</sup>

The nebulous process of predicates, provides this chapter with a way to analyse the heaps of language that Bergvall is gesturing towards. The concept of a 'heap' is based in a vague predicate; it is suggestive of an indefinable amount of matter, its limits and organising system are blurred. The status of a 'heap of language' is not based on how the language is structured, but on its arrangement as gathered matter. Any meaning or

---

<sup>25</sup> Dominic Hyde, *Vagueness, Logic and Ontology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), p. 10.

information imparted by the language within the heap comes secondary to its material accumulation. Therefore a heap of language, as sketched by Smithson and subsequently Bergvall, is a paradoxical amount and non-amount of language, or of words, as well as an amount and non-amount of meaning. While word meaning alludes to clearly defined parameters around states and spaces, the supposed sharp boundaries are, by this logic of the heap, illusory and inconsistent.

We can build on the creative potential of fluctuating predicates through Deleuze's theorizing of paradoxical language, which he links with Lewis Carroll's '*mise en scène* of paradoxical sense'. Deleuze says a paradox is a 'heaping up' of propositions; predicates accumulate to an extent where a circumstance is shaped out, yet impossible to grasp. The paradox is caused at the point of the slippage between language making meaning and being sensorily material. On Carroll, Deleuze says that, 'everything happens at the boundary between things and propositions', where it is by 'following the border, by skirting the surface, that one passes from bodies to the incorporeal'.<sup>26</sup> We can apply this notion to Bergvall's likewise linguistically mattering texts in question here, where such boundaries for 'skirting' are the suggestive force and sensation of language. For instance in the lines, 'Sgot | a wides lit | down the lily | sgot avide slot | donne a lolly to a head | less cin | dy slots in' from the poem sequence, *Goan Atom*, we can see the slippage between language as a social gesture and language matter.<sup>27</sup>

Working in this theoretical space mapped out by vague predicates and the heap, we can say that a border is not sharp outline, but a *process*. This is a key point for this investigation into poetics of material and immaterial movement and extensions, where a status shift is not simply crossing a line, but a dynamic connection. The theory being drawn out here as a development from intermedia, needs to accommodate this logic and realise that conceptual and material shifts across a border are interrelational; they mutually affect and mutually cross each other. The border is in flux as much as the entity or idea passing through, creating reciprocal alterations between the entity and its passage, or the idea and its material mediation. Bergvall's 'Heaps' introduces us to the notion that a gathering of language, a pile of words, represents a shift across a border; from a single phrase to a heap of language,

---

<sup>26</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Logic Of Sense* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), pp. 11–12.

<sup>27</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 73.

from meaning to matter. In this shift linguistic information becomes abstract, as does the dividing line between form and content. The wider body of textual works investigated by this chapter can be argued to perform this kind of interrogation of status shifts and border crossing. They reveal a poetics concerned with patterns of word meaning in flux, and language migrating across material status, where a single text operates spatially, visually, acoustically and conceptually, and likewise as printed matter. The idea within the work relationally transmits ideas about migration and alterations in meaning. Her work signals the auditory effect of language and speech dispersal, and also the evolutions of semantics that take place over time, space and context.

Material and conceptual mergings of sonic, spatial and textual environments can be seen in Bergvall's digital piece, 'Amper&'. It was sited as a re-versioned installation (in collaboration with artist Ciarán Maher) as part of the 2010 exhibition, *Say Parsley* at the Arnolfini, Bristol. The piece consists of ampersand signs flashing through all the sixty-four versions found in a computer font library. The exhibition notes read:

The ampersand is one of the oldest exclusively visual/graphic signs of the western writing system. In its contemporary sense, it binds elements together and works as an additive device. In its medieval sense, it is a shorthand, used by copyists to speed up the endlines of words, such as aspir&, differ&.<sup>28</sup>

The work is a passage through various material versions of one symbol; the symbol itself standing for conjunctions, connections, ellipses and absences. As a logogram the ampersand is an abstract code with a remote meaning, as a ligature it is a material fusion of printed matter ('e' and 't'). Bergvall's installation, with its accumulation of variously designed and seriffed ampersands, can therefore be read in terms of another material, signifying linguistic shifts caused by a heaping up of language matter. For Bergvall this piece is representative of a language practice that reflects 'mixed cultures' and 'mixed geographic fates'. She declares on this approach to language: 'All of that for me is part of the hybrid, the compound, the ampersandic.'<sup>29</sup> We can take the 'ampersandic' in this instance to support the notion of a build up of matter

---

<sup>28</sup> Bergvall and Ciarán Maher, *Exhibition Notes for 'Amper&'*, 5 August 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Susan Rudy, 'A Conversation with Caroline Bergvall', *Jacket 2*, 2011

<<http://jacket2.org/interviews/conversation-caroline-bergvall>> [accessed 4 October 2011].

and idea, where the printed symbol mutates according to visual styles, as it synthesizes elements of speech, meaning and grammar. The ampersandic therefore is like a heap of language, it stands for a vague amount of information and entity; it is a thing in itself as well as simply being a link to a next thing. This returns us to the idea that every border is a shifting, evolving process of connections and extensions.

In the opening essay to *Meddle English*, Bergvall talks about ‘the midden of language’.<sup>30</sup> A midden is an archeological term for a pile of debris of human activity. A shell midden is a pile of empty mollusk husks that are read as an indicator of a human settlement. Again, a midden is a heap. A heap of ancient oyster shells suggest a camp or a community of eaters. The shells are waste products with an interpretive meaning. A midden of language therefore is the discarded and lost elements; pronunciation sounds, words, letters, accents, characters and symbols that fall away. It signals a history of speaking and language exchange. These middens are sites of decay and loss, yet also ground for digging and retrieving. When Bergvall says, ‘Language is its own midden ground’, she means that the heaps of debris are littered in speech and can be found composting under layers of current language use.<sup>31</sup>

The lines, ‘Her e commaes | (such as heir hair errs airs)’ points to a midden of spelling and language usage, where phonemes, grammar, and the politics of what belongs to who, are organised by language.<sup>32</sup> This figure of the midden highlights the unveiling of both language textures and language usage in Bergvall’s work. The concept of a midden points to both the physical experience of language and its symbolic, political confrontations. A midden of language evokes the pronunciation shifts that take effect on articulators, mouth and teeth. This marker of the sensation of speaking is brought into a topology with the politics of streamlining, which is to say an anglicising, speech. In doing so the boundaries of the language states, the events of speech and the sensation of speaking, become responsive to each other.

The poetics intimated here in this notion of the heap, centres on language as compost and debris. According to Bergvall it is a poetics of ‘what gets revealed in the history and ground’ of language, yet she continues, this is not about arbitrary waste, for Bergvall ‘the midden is method and style’.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the midden heap of

---

<sup>30</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 72.

<sup>33</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 9.

language, in all its paradoxical fluctuations along the borders of material and event, is practice. This is a key point of comparison to Intermedia practice as Higgins mapped it. If the midden is both the method and the site of poetry, then it is not the overlaps of discipline or media that generate the work, but the far broader extensions of properties of language, as well as the interior activity of speech. It is not so much a question of what media are in play in their discrete modes and effects, but what kind of mediation is enacted in the material and what processes bring the material together. Like the paradox of the heap, the boundaries between one state and another are dismantled, as are the boundaries between state and matter.

Declaring that the midden, the heap, is both method and style is to declare that there is an interchange between action and environment. The midden has a topological space that also represents a process. Heaping is an active process, rather than a fixing state as represented by Intermedia, where the artist and artwork arrive at a location point via a face-to-face encounter with a line. To bring this motioning dynamic between state, action and matter into focus, this chapter will further consider the process of going *into* rather than *inter* language, into form and into matter. This entails a question of environment, *milieu* and a further examination of *middling*, as we go further into the practice laid out by Bergvall.

### **Milieu: Middling, Meddling, Mingling Environment**

So far this chapter has attempted to develop and evolve the conceptual remit of historical Intermedia in the light of the contemporary practice of what could be termed, intermedial poetry. I have used figurations of the heap and the midden to draw out notions of language-based works as a material gathering, circulating meaning and matter. As I see it such gathering is the product of individual poetry texts and also of spatialised text-installations, as found in the practice of Caroline Bergvall. On this point, works in the book *Meddle English* seem to have as much sense of their physical texture on the page, as the alternately dimensional versions in the exhibition, *Middling English*. For example, the text, 'Crop' begins with a page of partially erased lines of text. This can be interpreted as a printed gesture that is an analogue of the final poem's critique of national, sexual and subjective identities being negated through language and translation. The following pages from 'Crop' are occupied by large printed splashes of ink. From this we are reminded that the pages of

the book are not simply a static platform for the print, but a tissued network, with an embedded history and similar impositions of standardisation and politics as language. In the essay ‘Material Compounds’ Bergvall talks about paper as substance and matter, before going on to discuss ‘the poet’s’ use of brackets. Bergvall says of the poet (which we can assume to be a self-reference), ‘She uses brackets to stage a connection between text and “papyrus dust”. The brackets want us to imagine the corrosive dust, the holes, the rot, the degradation of the text’s material support.’<sup>34</sup> The bracket then is a surface mark, linked to the material compound of the page’s paper, but also a portal to connotations of incompleteness, the fluctuating boundaries and the entropic nature of language.

These instances of linguistic, print-matter and mingling on and through paper surfaces, recall Michel Serres on ‘skin’. Similarly to Bergvall’s resistance to the idea of paper as a flattened layer, Serres rejects the notion of skin as a membrane or casing. For him skin is an ‘entire environment’.<sup>35</sup> The skin is the organ through which all senses and sensations come together, describing it as ‘hills and dales on which currents from the organs or hearing, sight, taste or smell, ebb and flow, a shimmering skin where touch calls forth sensation’.<sup>36</sup> He goes on to say that far from being the barrier between the body and the external world, skin is the facilitator for a ‘mingling’ between the body and the world. Through ‘touch’, ‘caress’ and ‘intersection’, skin is an environment and a communication channel between the body and the world. ‘Skin intervenes between several things in the world and makes them mingle.’<sup>37</sup> The skin is then a *milieu*, an environment of confluence as well as a border. This notion of skin as both a perimeter and a milieu, represents an shift away from the notion of borders as prescribed by Intermedia. An intermedium, as a point of conjunction between two bodies or mediums, can also be considered an ‘interface’, or as Steven Connor describes ‘an immediate encounter between communicating parties’. The ‘interface’ for Connor, via Serres, supposes that the immediacy of interface supposes an encounter free from context, and that communication through an interface occurs in a passage of neutral space. From this we can regard skin, paper and a poem not as

---

<sup>34</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 130.

<sup>35</sup> Steven Connor, ‘Michel Serres’s Milieux’ (presented at the Mediations, Brazilian Association for Comparative Literature, Belo Horizonte: [www.stevenconnor.com](http://www.stevenconnor.com), 2002) <<http://www.stevenconnor.com/milieux/>> [accessed 10 September 2010].

<sup>36</sup> Serres, *The Five Senses*, p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Serres, *The Five Senses*, p. 80.

interfaces, and therefore having the properties of intermediums, but as milieux or charged environments where things mingle and merge.

I would therefore argue that poetry that at once moves across and creates environments, practises what I term the ‘seeding’ of a milieu. This is a poetics where the materials are allowed to culture (as in the sense of biological cultures) and evolve. The poet locates then induces an environment, allowing the material to develop through its connections. Bergvall contributes to this conceptualisation of a milieu of textual amalgam and mediation in her short critical piece, ‘About Foam’. Here foam is discussed in a way that shares many characteristics with this chapter’s earlier discussion of the heap. Foam is figured as a vague counterpoint between liquid, solid, dry and wet which gives ‘paradoxical pleasure’.<sup>38</sup> She goes on to talk about foam as a mode of energy transfer, and as a network. Characteristic of the work in this body of texts, foam is described by way of its substance as well as its socio-historic trajectory: ‘It has naturally assisted the solidification of soap, the rising of bread, egg whites and soufflés since the 17<sup>th</sup> century’.<sup>39</sup> Foam then becomes a metaphor for persistent build-up of excesses on the routes of trade, travel, language translations and migration. This metaphor then gets applied to the microcosm of spelling and speech: ‘Foams everywhere like the letter e, down to the alveolar structure’.<sup>40</sup> Here Bergvall references the pervasiveness of language systems, residual elements of spelling left over from past printing techniques, that have bodily impact via pronunciation and linguistic conformity. This comparison of language to foam offers another sense of the milieu generated by her poetry works. Here foam is a composite of content, context, event and a consequence of materials coming together.

These two examples, Serres and Connor on skin, and Bergvall on foam, are contributing to a notion of milieu that this chapter can use to navigate specific works by Bergvall, and the wider practice of poetry that operates through the gathering of language textures and processes. To contribute to this understanding of milieu we might also consider Foucault’s writing on the biopolitical. This shift in philosophical field would give us the necessary addition of the ethical implications for understanding societal milieux, something that remains oblique in the writing of Connor and Serres. Foucault’s conception comes out of a discourse on societal power

---

<sup>38</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 126.

<sup>39</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 126.

<sup>40</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 127.

and control. In his key study, *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault argues that, after the eighteenth-century emergence of demography, a population was conceived as a species mass rather than in terms of individuals, and subsequently governed as such. Mechanisms of security and power thence related to the control of population. In this account the milieu is a space of security where security interventions are at work as a circular link between effects and causes. The milieu is a ‘field of interventions’ consisting of ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ givens that materially bind the population.

Foucault uses the space of a town or municipality to outline this causal link between effects and operations in a milieu:

The milieu is a set of natural givens – rivers, marshes, hills – and a set of artificial givens – an agglomeration of individuals, of houses, etcetera. The milieu is a certain number of combined, overall effects bearing on all who live in it. It is an element in which a circular link is produced between effects and causes, since an effect from one point of view will be a cause from another.<sup>41</sup>

This point of the interchangeability of cause and effect, operation and channel, is key to the conception of milieu being drawn out here. It might be seen to parallel Bergvall’s statement above on the foam-like network connecting the persistence of the letter ‘e’, speech apparatus and subject identity forming in relation to language. Therefore there is an aspect of control in the ‘foam’ of language, spelling and pronunciation, where speakers are subjected to codes. Controlling forces on subject identity in this case can be regarded as a linguistic intervention, in that the regimes of pronunciation and spelling that govern orders of communication within a network. Also from Foucault’s milieu then, we can take on the necessary theorisation of political power, or biopower, to elucidate a milieu of language use, providing a means to analyse the inevitable political implications that get played out in a poetry’s performance and representation of language.

So far in this research, milieu might be understood as the conditions for a text or a work, in that the material environment a work is situated in, informs its conceptual operation, which in turn defines its material elements. Foucault argues that the milieu is a space in which a series of uncertain elements unfold. ‘It is what is needed to account for action at a distance of one body on another. It is therefore also

---

<sup>41</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 21.



the medium of an action and the element in which it circulates.’<sup>42</sup> The milieu is what interrelates a work’s various processes and what binds it to its materiality. Furthermore mechanisms of control and political power are at work within a milieu. This is relevant to an analysis of Bergvall’s work, which sees language, and specifically English as a milieu of regulation and subject codification.

My intention then is to theorise milieu as a cluster of effects, an agglomeration of events that both intervene in, and circulate the processes of, a work. A milieu in this sense is ground in which to introduce texts that will react with the environment and its relational sets (a collection of elements that all bear a relative effect on each other). This is a point through which I can use this concept of milieu to address what Intermedia cannot; it determines not an interface but an environment. This creates a theory of milieu within a methodology or practice that allows for a wider set of extensions and consequences.

To support this idea of extended consequence I would like to consider the following description of a work and a documented experience of it. In an interview with Bergvall, Susan Rudy reflects on viewing a particular work in the exhibition, ‘Say Parsley’. The work consisted of vinyl lettering on a wall reading, ‘say lang wedge keels’. Rudy explains how she did not realise until later, when pronouncing it to herself, that the phrase can read, ‘language kills’. In the interview Bergvall prompts Rudy to remember the following letters, ‘ova’, obscured by being the same colour as the wall. With a snap of recognition Rudy realises the alternate phrase, ‘language keels over’.<sup>43</sup> In this case the poetic operation comes through at the point of pronunciation. We can analyse this through the logic of the milieu by considering the environmental space of the gallery walls as it mingles with the visual sensation of language, mingling with the bodily reflex of pronunciation. These elements are in a compound with the doubled ‘joke’ of ‘language kills’; language is dominant, aggressive and dangerous, and ‘language keels over’; language is benign, flexible, a pushover. This instance of the double-take is likewise part of the milieu; there is a series of possibilities skirting the edge between matter and meaning.

In the interview Bergvall considers this instance of double-take as an example of hybridity, and the *hyphen*, that is seeded through so much of her work:

---

<sup>42</sup> Foucault, p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Rudy, ‘Conversation’.

One notion of the hyphen, of the hybrid too, to some extent, has so much to do with contemporary politics, with ideas of collective or singular migration, or migrancy, willed or unwilled — when you move to another country, the sense that you have to change your language, change your being.<sup>44</sup>

The hybridity, which can be taken as part of the theorisation of milieu, denotes the multiple possibilities of one line, conjoined by a material fusion. This is analogous to multiple instances of identity experienced by a subject through multiple languages. The hyphen then can be taken as a movement *into* the next element. It is a dynamic mingling at the point of text, print and meaning. The hyphen and hybridity are in this instance an example of ‘middling’. They denote an ongoing processing of boundaries. In her series of short critical writings in the book *Meddle English*, we have a slightly different version of ‘middling’ where it is outlined as a smoothing over and homogenising, like ‘turf’. It has a negative slant in this proposition, where diversity in speech and language is spatialised into a flattened surface: ‘A middling is a smoothing over, a tense flattening, an artificial erosion, as surface stiffening.’<sup>45</sup> However, to continue the argument for a poetics of process and materials, middling here will be considered in terms of milieu and *practice*, as a pursuit towards the middle and as a mingling of bodies and matter.

In normative language there two kinds of conceptual models for ‘the middle’. One is an imaginary, abstract place that is immaterial and does not form part of the thing it is the middle of. The other is more of an action, ‘a middling thing’ that is a mattered from the interior. This can be described as a ‘dynamic kind of middling or mediation, which consists in a movement towards a middle, which never comes to reside there’.<sup>46</sup> We are reminded that the Latin idiom, ‘in medias res’ which in English we translate as ‘in the middle of things’, or ‘in the thick of it’, is an accusative, signalling a motion towards, therefore better translated as ‘into the middle of things’.<sup>47</sup> This mobile mediation, the continual process of going into the middle but never reaching it, brings to light much of the activities in Bergvall’s *Middling English* exhibition and related works. It is a mixed-media show but the thread never settles in any object or element. Its textual extensions write themselves through the gallery

---

<sup>44</sup> Rudy, ‘Conversation’.

<sup>45</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Connor, para. 5 of 27.

<sup>47</sup> Connor, para. 4 of 27.

space, revealing media as such to be unstable and shifting. The show is itself a process of going into media, pushing form through structures that then bleed out, revealing the entropic nature of language, spilling away from form. Bergvall uses media as a way of getting into the midst of things, to go into language and speech, putting their material and immaterial elements into a state of mobile mediation.

### **Spatialised Middling**

From this chapter's formulations of milieu through the conceptual framings of Bergvall's poetics, I would like to move to more applicable spatialisations of her text works, addressing their literary associations and literal, physical spaces. From this development I aim to advance a sense of the wider topology of the poetic research into Middle English that is at the centre of the works in question. Developing a sense of the topology of the works requires analysing a text's continuity through its media, its references and its textual extensions. To do this I will begin by focussing on the exhibition, *Middling English* at the John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.

The exhibition is cohered by a central sculptural structure. The sculpture is made up of lengths of wire weighted by bright orange dumbbells. The piece is described in the exhibition catalogue as 'a site specific mobile structure flowing along the dynamic lines of the gallery space itself'.<sup>48</sup> The wire structure is both a form of navigating and obstacle, orientating and disorientating. It is somehow linguistic with the expanses of lengths halted by weights like punctuation marks. (Or like the missing 'o's erased from text on the adjoining wall.) This piece of wired sculpture yields significance for the whole project as it illustrates a mobile sense of projective space. The wires reference behind and in front, before and after. It is a topological design that is concerned with relationality, giving architectural momentum to the gallery visitor and conveying a line of thought from one work to the next. The lengths of weighted wire are a set of invariant materials that go *into* the gallery space, as well as going *into* a sense of language. How the sculpture both mediates and defines the space contributes to the sense of extension that this chapter has been formulating. This sense of space can be expounded by Foucault's 1967 re-definition of spaces as

---

<sup>48</sup> Bergvall, Vincent Broqua and Imogen Stidworthy, *Middling English: Caroline Bergvall* (Southampton: John Hansard Gallery, 2011).

‘heterotopias’, where a space of otherness implicates both physical and mental extensions through symbolic, ideological and material instances:

Today the site has been substituted for extension which itself had replaced emplacement. The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements <sup>49</sup>

The site of the gallery space therefore, and the abstract space of language are both wired together on the axis of the sculpture. It’s a work that instigates connectivity as opposed to defined, static location.

The other dominant work in this first exhibition room was an audio piece, *Wired Madeleine* (also named, *IDJ2MANY*). It is a text-sound composition made from lines of seminal pop, funk and indie songs. All the songs were listed on the wall, with such examples as, Sonic Youth’s ‘Star Power’, Kate Bush’s ‘Hounds of Love’, Anita Ward’s ‘Ring my Bell’ and Diana Ross’s ‘Upside Down’. The verbal consequence of these lines was a sound piece scattered with lots of ‘baby do this’, ‘baby do that’ imperatives, as well as declarations, confessions and innuendo (‘pull up to the bumper baby’). How a visitor might experience this leading sound in the ambience of metal wire is a question of the connectivity that defines this exhibition room as a space of extensions and continuity. In her foregrounding essay, ‘Middling English’ Bergvall talks about a ‘tissue of lines’ that converge throughout this body of work and cultural experience as such,

There are lines that draw from one node to another, one bell to the next, towards the architectonic structure, spatial resonant membranes of interconnections and tendencies. There are the obvious ones, the official line, the family line. The power lines, wired electrical, electromagnetic landscapes, fibrous and spun. There are lines of travel, trade routes, blood routes. Intense seasonal species’ traffic, migratory paths. Fields of uproots, departure knots, severance of the connects... Dissenting lines or lines of flight that sustain or dissolve under lines of fire, buzz lines, rumours. Songlines, memory structure, great pick-up lines. <sup>50</sup>

This long quote offers many points of resonance with the discussion so far on middling and milieu and process-based boundaries of gathered matter. The thought of

---

<sup>49</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias’, in *The Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 229–237 (p. 230).

<sup>50</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 5.

‘spatial resonant membranes of interconnections and tendencies’ brings us back to the notion of skin as an environment as opposed to an interface. Now we can see this framework enacted by the wired lines that key into the sonic and textual environments within the exhibition. In addition the provoking phrase, ‘species traffic’, opens up this theoretical field. It suggests a circulation of integrated variants. In terms of a poetry project ‘species traffic’ suggests a system or environment that texts are then injected into. Furthermore ‘species traffic’ alludes to a network of information, where matter and idea are bound in the operation of transmission. In terms of this rationale what this first exhibition room represents is a virtual and physical continuum of experience and memory, as figured by language. The nostalgia of the pop lyrics directed experience in and out of the room, while the wire structure navigates a visitor’s body in and out of the space. Language was therefore spatialised according to the exhibition space and the internal experience of language.

As a visitor to the exhibition I was followed round the corner by the wire sculptures and the leaking audio of song lines into the next room. Here the main element was a feature wall covered in pinned sheets of paper. The *Wall of Pins* was a covering of broadsides or ‘broadsides’, emulating the single sided sheets of printed-paper, common in the fifteenth and sixteenth century just after the introduction of printing. The historic tradition for broadsides saw it as a popular form of ballad, rhyme, or news report, often with woodcut illustrations. In other words, broadsides represented a ‘low’ form of information transmission; popular, gossip and hack writing and reminiscent of the kind of sing-song bawdiness we associate with characters from the *Canterbury Tales*.<sup>51</sup> One might ask, in the context of the contemporary art gallery, what is it to step-into this medieval medium?

The broadside template is not just a formalistic move, Bergvall’s creates a convincing milieu of the rhetoric, prosody and energetic broadcasting of the broadside. One broadside, ‘O SIS!’ is a sequence of statements that through font and expression feel ‘yelled’. The statements are formed of contemporary textual mutations, such as mobile phone, ‘text speak’ and wordplay, with a reading instruction at the top sheet saying, ‘To an old marching chant’. The sequence therefore is also a marching song for protest and group chanting. The lines build up in

---

<sup>51</sup> David Ellis Morgan, ‘Pulp Literature: A Re-evaluation’ (unpublished doctor thesis, Murdoch University, 2002) <<http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/208/2/02Whole.pdf>> [accessed 25 December 2012].

a formation similar to the heap: ‘O SIS! | O SISIS! | YO SISISBRO!’.<sup>52</sup> The instances of neologisms and partial words made up of fragments conform to the notion of the midden of language, ‘2mne DEAL | nt nuf DARING!’.

This shows bits of left over language composting into phrasing, as well as marking the site of a group utterance. Again the text, ‘O SIS!’ , presents a topos surveying speech as matter and the politics of expressing language. The poetry in this project seems to emerge from the perpetual melting pots of ground-level speech-exchange as the site of language deformation and spawning. As in much of Bergvall’s work letters and symbols are spores that germinate and evolve. The linguistic milieu determined by the work is almost biological in its treatment of language as cellular mutations.



Caroline Bergvall, *Wall of Pins*, John Hansard Gallery<sup>53</sup>

Another broadside pinned up is a long ballad called ‘Fried Tale’. It is a sequence sourced from various literary texts and mass media channels. It takes ‘spelling and syntactical

usages’ from Russell Hoban’s novel *Riddley Walker*, Anthony Burgess’s *Clockwork Orange* as well as the 1999 film, *The Matrix*. Added to this mix is a selection of tabloid headlines, Derek Brewer’s *Medieval Comic Tales* and ‘The Friar’s’ Tale’ from the *Canterbury Tales*. Like Chaucer’s foundational text, this is a tale of bribery, corruption and extortion. It can be viewed as a very current narrative in that it follows hedge funders gloating to each other about extorted money but in a soupy mix of corrupted and parasitic Chaucerian language.

All juicit with an arseful of moola, wonga, clams & squids  
 doks stasht in identikl blakases hanging from ther hans  
 2 Suits, a mega pair of Smith, Blupils no dout,  
 viddyng how they trading outa goodness welth stuporifik,  
 shake hands, hug n abuse ech other on the bak.

<sup>52</sup> Caroline Bergvall, *O SIS!*, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Bergvall, *Wall of Pins*, John Hansard Gallery, 2010. This is my own photography taken at the exhibition.

It's a total blowout! We tawking millions a squilyons,  
 zilyons a nanilyons, bilyons a teramilyons  
 jus 4 kreaming the topping, o my brother.  
 Both tawk loudly in blinking err pieces  
 strap in a same fashion Xaktly greyly a lykly  
 like goldnobs wanton be drest 2 a T like a G&G <sup>54</sup>

Here we have a contemporary scene played out of as a historical satire in a muddy mix of old language mediated by new, new language figuring old English, fictional slang and jargon becoming re-mediated. Bergvall creates a milieu that is also a medium, an environment that is also a channel. The texts behave like spatial relations in that they swerve from each node or point to another; in each swerve a subjectivity, a voice or a history is pricked. The broadside text here is an extract from a longer piece that is part of a sequence in the book *Meddle English*, called *The Shorter Chaucer Tales*. The five poems in the sequence adopt much of the language and style of the *Canterbury Tales*, variously mixed with contemporary narratives, 'current affairs' and sourced texts. The first in the sequence is 'The Host Tale'. This is the only poem constructed entirely of found text, plundered from select lines of the *Canterbury Tales* that refer to food or drink.

And of youre softe breed nat but a shyvere,  
 And after that a roasted pigges heed  
 Milk and broun breed,  
 many a muscle and many an oyster,  
 A cake of half a bushel fynde  
 many a paste  
 And eek the wyn,<sup>55</sup>

Despite the combination of an algorithmic sorting with intuitive ordering, we still get a narrative route through the Chaucerian feasting, a sense of different stages of gorging, swallowing and digesting the various matters and substances. The poem has an atmosphere of drunkenness and consumption. Its title and status as the 'Host Tale' is significant in that it provides the food and the context for the following poems to exist through, creating a milieu of Chaucerian sounds and idiomatic matter to indulge on. Bergvall is feeding on Chaucer and letting it feed the texts that spawn from it. Serres's commentary on his concept of the parasite is useful here. He says, 'I feed myself endlessly at the buffet of my language; I shall never be able to give it what it

---

<sup>54</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 38.

<sup>55</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 25.

gave me...I would die of not taking my feast of words with a few friends, from whom, somehow, I get my language. I shall never be weaned from it.’<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the *Middling English* exhibition and the ‘Shorter Chaucer Tales’ there is an accumulation of extensions and substance. The works orientate to create a space. Not a static space but a dynamic topos where agents and things go into media; middling and meddling. Space is given linguistic meaning, becoming place. The coded gallery space spills out into the texts and the lineages of English. But the creation of a spatial experience of language is a means to show how forms of English displace and fix its speakers within identities. It’s about what language does to personhood; how it infects and deforms it. Bergvall uses the milieu of Middle English as a space of interventions; it represents a phase in the English language in flux, hosting interferences from other languages and new media. The languaging in Bergvall’s Chaucer pieces reflect and perform the heaping up and foaming of language particles from this space, through to our contemporary practices of speech. Therefore Bergvall has offered us a mode of analysis that is further reaching than the conditions of intermedia. The ‘species traffic’ and the re-ignition of language middens in this series of works, means that work is always understood in terms of its extensions and continuums.

### **Cultured Poetics**

Bergvall’s poetry sequence, *Goan Atom* features poems that enact a foaming of graphemes and forms of speech. A working reference for the sequence was the news story of Dolly the cloned sheep. The lines, ‘DOLLY | Tank up! | This is the & of the world’ returns us to the ampersand as a figure of hybridity and fusion, in language and materiality.<sup>57</sup> In this case the textual mingling is associated with biological ‘meddling’, and gathered text-print is likened to cellular conglomeration. This extension moves us to a consideration of the milieu as biology, the biopolitics within a milieu, and how this is expressed through language experimentation. When cross-referenced with the later lines, ‘For the corps of a body body | For the body of a bod | Y bod Y bod’ we see a reference to chromosomes and cells represented as linguistic

---

<sup>56</sup> Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 231.

<sup>57</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 90.



code.<sup>58</sup> Body mass and words merge on a plane of biopolitics, physical and cellular mutations. I would argue that Bergvall is not simply referencing cellular expansion and mutation; she is allowing her works to be sites of germinating, evolving text, where the poem becomes a petri dish. Hers is a practice of culturing language. Her texts mobilise the ‘species traffic’ within particles of language. The page becomes a breeding ground for incidents of speech, while in the gallery space visitors and their experiences of language are incorporated into the species traffic.

To contextualise Bergvall’s processes explored here, a project by sound poet and Conceptual writer Christian Bök, presents a notable contrast. The so-called ‘Xenotext Experiment’ is a literal example of biologically cultured poetics and at first glance seems to be more radically engaging with language as a biological matter. The ongoing ‘Xenotext’ project is a biotechnologised poem, written onto the DNA of an extremophile bacterium. Developed over the past ten years at the Laboratory at the University of Calgary, headed by geneticist Stuart Kauffman, the aim of the project is for the bacteria to continue ‘writing’ the poem based on an encoded protein. Bök posits the work as a new kind of inscription that harnesses biomechanics, the spirit of digital distribution and the Burroughsian ethos, ‘language is a virus’.

Bök says of the project, ‘I am, in effect, engineering a life-form so that it becomes not only a durable archive for storing a poem, but also an operant machine for writing a poem – one that can persist on the planet until the sun itself explodes’.<sup>59</sup> The ‘Xenotext’ poem goes:

any style of life  
is prim

oh stay  
my lyre

with wily plots  
moan the riff

the riff  
of any tune aloud

moan now my fate

---

<sup>58</sup> Bergvall, *Meddle English*, p. 108.

<sup>59</sup> Christian Bök, ‘The Xenotext Works’, *Harriet: The Blog*  
<<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/the-xenotext-works/>> [accessed 5 July 2012].

in fate  
 my rely  
  
 my myth  
 now is the word  
  
 the word of life  
  
  
 the faery is rosy  
 of glow  
  
 in fate  
 we rely  
  
 moan more grief  
 with any loss  
  
 any loss  
 is the achy trick  
  
 with him we stay  
 oh stay  
 my lyre  
  
 we wean  
 him of any milk  
  
 any milk is rost <sup>60</sup>

This unlikely pastoral poem is in Bök's terms a very masculine proposition about creation followed by a 'feminine' response on destruction.<sup>61</sup> (It could be argued that both strands are quite masculine.) Like Bergvall's broadside ballads, the poem cites a tradition that brushes up against the rigorous procedural conceit that instigates it. (It doesn't get more procedural than corresponding protein cyphers.) The relative whimsy of the poem in relation to the strict code to which it was composed is on one hand incidental and on the other telling of the project's aim to elevate poetry to a product of scientific *success*. In contrast the milieu instigated and gestured towards by Bergvall's broadside ballads allow for slippages, cross-contamination of meaning and

---

<sup>60</sup> Bök, 'The Xenotext Works'.

<sup>61</sup> Jamie Condliffe, 'Cryptic Poetry Written in a Microbe's DNA', *New Scientist*, 2011  
 <<http://www.newscientist.com/blogs/culturelab/2011/05/christian-boks-dynamic-dna-poetry.html>>  
 [accessed 5 May 2011].

a spilling out of information. I would argue that the ‘Xenotext’ poem represents containment and a resistance to excess.

To further contrast Bergvall’s poetics with the ‘Xenotext’ I would ask how the laboratory compares with the exhibition gallery as space of mediation, and social complexities. It is my contention that the gallery space of Bergvall’s poetic project allows for the reactive presence of outside materials: people, experiences and sensation. The environment is free to be altered by interference, indeed the spatialisation of speech-matter that the *Middling English* exhibition and poems represent, is entirely based on the given materials mingling with outside influences. This situation would seem markedly different from Bök’s treatment of the laboratory space, which conforms to what Bruno Latour argues is a coded system based on hierarchies of authority and scientific fact. For Latour, laboratory experiments such as vaccine testing, which switch the scenario of bacteria from the field to the laboratory, are essentially a *translation*, both of matter and information. The translation is from the messy outside world to the pristine, closed off environment of the lab; from a macro to a micro scale; from the outside to the inside:

We use a model of analysis that respects the very boundary between micro-and macro scale, between inside and outside, that sciences are designed not to respect. We all see laboratories but we ignore their construction.<sup>62</sup>

We are reminded that there are always prior extensions and connections within the construction of the laboratory; all the objects in it, the discourses and truth-values it exports, the motives and values of those who work there. It is therefore a mistake to consider anything that happens in a laboratory as separate from the rest of the world, or to award it authority on the basis of this separateness.

I would argue that Bök attaches significance to his project on this basis of separation of the laboratory thus disavowing the project’s extensions. He brands it ‘living poetry’ on the basis of the biochemical ‘dialogue’ but not on the basis of the collaboration between scientists, technology used to *culture* the text. For example a break down of the laboratory authority would give the ‘Xenotext’ the potential to mingle, the milieu of the e.coli (used to convey the bacteria), the societal milieu of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Bruno Latour, ‘Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World’, *Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science*, 1983 <<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/articles/article/12-GIVE%20ME%20A%20LAB.pdf>> [accessed 1 July 2012].

team of scientists, the University and the field of Conceptual poetry, all with invested interests in the project. Also significant is that the laboratory used for the ‘Xenotext’ project is made available for use after hours in its between times and that its main use, and Dr. Kauffman’s full-time occupation, is testing for cures for cancer. (Here I am reminded that *Xeno* stems from the Greek for ‘alien’ and ‘strange guest’.) The model for the project traverses an inside-outside boundary by virtue of it taking place in the non-hours of the science lab, and by somehow being in oscillation with ‘real’ science. This ‘Xenotext’ negates a notion of milieu that I read in Bergvall’s work, in which subjective intent is replaced by relational actions and events.

When asked in an interview with *New Scientist*, ‘Is there scope for your poem to evolve?’ Bök replied,

my poem always produces the same result. The organism doesn't get to do whatever it wants. In some sense, I don't want the text to evolve: part of the project is to produce an enduring artefact<sup>63</sup>

Therefore the work is to remain unchanging as life as we know it shifts, mutates, disintegrates and gives way to entropy. The authority of the laboratory and the authorship of Christian Bök the poet will remain with it, making the ‘Xenotext’ now seem like a very traditional pursuit, to create a thing of ‘beauty that lasts’.

In contrast Bergvall’s poetics reveal that language, and English in particular, is already behaving like bacteria. Language and speech-matter are already enacting the processes that Bök seeks to make a paradigm of. Such processes occur through us, reminding us that we language speakers *are* the bacterial milieu that language spreads through. Therefore despite its pioneering development of a linguistic organism I would not describe the mechanics of the ‘Xenotext’ as a seeding of milieu, as I have been referring to Bergvall’s poetics. The ‘Xenotext’, despite its highly collaborative nature has an authorial hand bearing over it. It is a *creationist* work, where the impact of the work is weighted solely on the success of the DNA translation. Bök’s ‘strange guest’ reveals Bergvall’s work to behave more like a host; hosting noise, mutation and entropic shifts of language. In her spatialised texts the environment of the gallery is mingled with the material of language, and the texts are *reactive* to the audience.

I have argued Bergvall’s projects operate like the seeding of a linguistic milieu in that she gathers textual materials together and allows the effect of the combination

---

<sup>63</sup> Condliffe, para. 5 of 10.

to operate across the bacterial movements already occurring in language. At this point I can see how my phrase ‘seeding’ also comments on the very nature of practice as seen in Bergvall’s linguistic projects. It seems that the notion of seeding emphasises a mode of *experimentation*, as I see it, in the nature of practice-led research. In other words there is knowledge to be gained in the act of bringing materials together so that their effects of dis/coordination, dis/harmony and in/compatibility are allowed to emerge. The theorisation of middling and milieu developed here allows for a model of poetics that courts excess and error. Such a poetics creates a scene in which speech behaves as it usually does, yet within the microcosm of a poem. Interferences and connections only serve to further reveal the mechanisms of speech-matter.

### **How a Milieu becomes a Collection**

My critique here shows the value of developing the conceptualisation of intermedial art and poetry, so that their fields of intervention can be accorded with their political, textual and poetic effects. This chapter began by re-visiting the 1965 premise of an approach to art that probed, as Dick Higgins described it, ‘the field between the general area of art media and those of life media’.<sup>64</sup> The field of Intermedia was reflected on as a necessary and valuable framework with which to open up ideas around speech-matter poetics as I am developing. The aim of this evaluation was to test the limit to which Intermedia could theorise contemporary text-based and poetry artworks. Where Intermedia fell short of broadening a critical evaluation of speech-matter as a co-mingling of a material environment with concept was the point at which I was able to turn to the concept of milieu and the theoretical models as practiced by Caroline Bergvall. In short Intermedia allowed me to think a certain amount around the field of poetics I am invested in, but where this historically rooted conceptual framework stopped was the point at which this thesis was able to claim a creative and critical space as milieu.

The point of departure from Intermedia was an interrogation of the line as a border or boundary. Such a line within materials, language, art discipline or form, was theorised as a multi-dimensional space where elements and ideas, physical and abstract entities, mingle in reciprocal relationality. In terms of language, the boundary

---

<sup>64</sup> Dick Higgins, *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of Intermedia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 49.

between sense, meaning and sensation is conceptualised through the notion of a 'heap'. The heap as a vague but meaningful gathering of matter and idea has contributed to the sense of what speech-matter has the potential to mean. The term speech-matter appeals to a vague space of speech, but one of configuration and potentiality. From the instances of heaps and vague language Bergvall's project for middling English is revealed as a topological model, as opposed to a project of in-between spaces. In the topological model, connections and extensions are the meat of the work. This model is suitable to Bergvall's project, which works towards the topology of the speaking subject in relation to English as a physical and abstract, political space.

Fluxus Intermedia, came from a conceptually aware engagement with 1960s new media. In a contemporary sense this intrication between idea and material is a way of thinking now about digital platforms and digital distribution of concepts and things, as gestured towards at the beginning of this chapter. A digital mind-set for engagement with media might be said to be circulatory negotiation of a thing's material existence and its code. While this is not only a contemporary mind-set, we can apply this kind of medial engagement to the theorisation of Bergvall's project. It is through the digital that we get the &, the ampersandic, where something can be code and thing. Indeed Bergvall's Dolly the sheep and Bök's 'Xentotext' remind us that the metaphor of DNA sees fleshy organisms reduced to code. The intermeshing of code and flesh is a necessary *simultaneity* that contributes to this chapter's overall notion of milieu.

How the *collection* in terms of the wider intermedial archive functions along paths of mingling configurations and dispersion is the next phase of questioning for this research. It is my intention that the sense of a milieu in praxis can contribute to a conceptualisation of the collection and also the archive itself in relation to speech-matter. An example of Caroline Bergvall's work will feature again in this next stage of research, located in a curated installation work of my own: revealing what happens to representations of speech as they become documents of past transmissions. Here the foaming network of *archival sets* will reveal an additional modality for the critical apparatus drawn out in this chapter.

## Portfolio Remarks 3

### Announce, Amazement, a Mess

#### The Space Claimed

In Chapter Three it was my intention to claim a creative and critical space for a poetic practice that operates within an interchange of mediation and materiality. Such a practice experiments with both the channels and the matter of language, and enacts slippages between them. I developed a critical language for this poetics through an analysis of Caroline Bergvall's print-based and installation poetry works that create interplays of material and political contexts of speech exchange. The space I began to draw out for such a poetics learned from concepts of intermediation and milieu. Through these conceptualisations and through Bergvall's own critical writing I moved towards a model in which to develop speech-matter as practice. The theoretical model frames the concept of milieu as a space of channel and effect, environment and operation. In terms of poetry works that move across media, whilst occupying discursive spaces of language, milieu can be understood as the conceptual mechanisms of poetry and its material environment, both of which reciprocally affect each other.

The single work I will comment on now was developed within the critical and creative space as drawn out in Chapter Three. It enacted the seeding of a linguistic milieu that drew connections between the materiality of speech and faltering, wayward instances of shared communication. 'Seeding', as I have discussed, is a means of allowing disparate materials to take effect and evolve, thus limiting artistic control over the work's distortions in mediation. In addition to these conceptions, making this work allowed me to explore connections between comic and nonsense text, with mind to the politics of communication. I now intend to test how aspects of the potential models developed through Chapter Three have informed this central work. I will also explore how this poem demonstrates the 'messy' process of generating works of poetry against a conceptual field of absurdity and nonsense. As often happens in my practice the poetry works escape control and various outside forces necessitate being incorporated into the work. Where frameworks for working are loose and disordered, the poetry-work in question and the practice evolving

through it, finds a way to escape neat conceptualisation. It will be valuable for me therefore to consider how the critical languages and theories I have been developing through this thesis, accommodate these instances of uncontrollability, if not nourish them. What I also intend to further explore is how humour is a consequence both of deliberate methodology and of the escaping, unwieldy aspects of practice. Therefore the formative question within this portfolio remark is: how does the comic in my work integrate the chance and the deliberate aspects of practice?

### **Shadow was amazed...**

The poem-work, *Shadow was amazed to hear his owner refer to the toilet as the big white phone*, is not complete nor is it necessarily a 'successful' poem.<sup>1</sup> By which I mean, it is not a poem that I would commit to my portfolio beyond this research. However, the work's situations, by which I mean the circumstances of its presentation, dispersal, platforms and contexts, lead me to regard the work as significant in terms of the questions so far at stake in the previous chapters. In other words, the event of this work, and my thinking of it, has brought about moments of feedback with previous questions in this project and allowed me to think certain things about my practice overall. Such feedback loops between my research and the material dealt with in this work commented on now can be briefly listed as: the black box; systems of communication and their interference; the voice as a material excess between body and machine; humour and nonsense; midden waste. The actual text featured in the piece remains incomplete since my first drafting of it and roughly formed. It's almost as if the content-text is not in fact the meat of the work, and that the poem's signification and poetic mechanisms are displaced from the actual text. What is important to me in terms of this reflection are the conceptual premise, its title, and a self-enclosed poem that is set in the middle of the work. These are the key aspects that make this overall work valuable to my portfolio.

The initiation event for *Shadow was amazed...* was an exhibition called, *Word of Mouth*, at Cartel Gallery, London in March 2012. *Word of Mouth* was a group show, loosely orientated around the concept of 'objected language':

---

<sup>1</sup> Go to portfolio, p. 273 and audio disk two, Track 4-5.



Featuring live and recorded performance, song, poetry, text, sound and noise, video, and installation, *Word of Mouth* will use the small space of Cartel gallery to explore the voice as an instrument and organ - an intimate and bodily medium, a tool for transmission or a material with sculptural and physical manifestations.<sup>2</sup>

To meet the brief I developed a sound piece that figured a series of telephone conversation excerpts. These fragments can variously be described as babble, poemy skits, sketches, sendups and song snippets. In the exhibition the sound piece was played on a cassette tape player in the gallery with headphones, stationed at a table with chairs. The composition for the audio piece was driven by the fact that the content had to fill a 60-minute cassette tape. I composed the text using a telephone-conversation recorder, a piece of secretarial equipment for taping phone calls, similar to a bugging device. The recording was made as-quickly as possible, mainly through improvisation or rapid sketches, without any rehearsal or editing. The main initiative was to fill the time and to fill the airspace of the tape. The off-the-cuff nature of the poem therefore is key to its composition – or lack of. I would go on to relate this low tone of text to the low quality of the sound itself.

The sound piece has the sound texture and quality of a phone call and is instantly recognisable as telephony technology. The relatively poor sound definition of telephony compared to the fidelity possible in any other audio equipment now available, suggests that this area of sound production hasn't developed out of choice. Telephone users are too comfortable with the crackly muffled voice on the receiver, it's a necessary noise.<sup>3</sup> The recorded tape of my work therefore has the same listening experience of a phone call. The work, when installed in the gallery was accessed via headphones giving listeners the intimate listening space that is unique to headphones, but with the grainy effect of a phone call. In this way the voice is 'canalised into the ears' as James Wilkes describes in reference to the particular audio space of headphones. Wilkes says the intimacy of the headphone space is achieved by 'creating a folding-in of our experience of sound...they twist us into an angle of

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Word of Mouth, Group Show', *Cartel Gallery* <[http://www.cartelgallery.com/cartel\\_lejeune.html](http://www.cartelgallery.com/cartel_lejeune.html)> [accessed 6 June 2012].

<sup>3</sup> For this insight and for many of my ideas about telephony I am indebted to conversations had at the London Sound Seminar ( a regular colloquium at Birkbeck, University of London for researchers working in sound theory) over 2010-2012, particularly in a session on the topic of the answer machine.

emotion through which we experience public space'.<sup>4</sup> By playing the poem through headphones I was putting the listeners into an acoustic milieu that conflicted public and private listening. The listeners were 'twisted' by the contrast of social listening and personal reception, likewise by the intensified formality of gallery engagement with the trashy sound and text.

### **Black Boxed**

In an instance of serendipity the public space for this installation was a black box, the black box being a key conceptual model in Chapter Two. The Cartel Gallery is not a building but a re-appropriated ex-shipping container, physically situated in the car park of an arts centre in Deptford. It is painted black so, although it has small windows and a logo, it is a literal realisation of a black box.<sup>5</sup> This is not how the gallery promotes itself, but how it struck me and appealed to my poetics. The prospect of the live performance and audio installation of the work taking place inside a materialised black box, was a conceptual gesture upon which I founded the making of the poem. In Chapter Two the notion of the black box, via Michel Serres, was used to describe the processes of communication within a community of speakers. A community was imagined as a group of discordant individuals, cohered by their own dissonant noise. Society as a black box was understood as a set of alienated yet unified speakers. In my poem this conception of the black box society is translated into a questioning the antagonism within a communicative group, asking, how do channels and material contexts for communication complicate a speaker's unrequited desire to be heard, to be legible.

The concept of the black box can be figured as the space of a hidden operation in a sequence of cause and effect. It is the concealed space in which a process of transformation or affection takes place. A black box is an unknowable mechanism, mediating between an input and output.<sup>6</sup> So-called 'black box theory' when applied to communication and system sciences therefore theorises affects of distortion in

---

<sup>4</sup> James Wilkes, 'On Headphone Space', *Voiceworks Blogs*, 2011  
<[http://blogs.voiceworks.org.uk/1011/jameswilkes/2011/01/on\\_headphone\\_space.html](http://blogs.voiceworks.org.uk/1011/jameswilkes/2011/01/on_headphone_space.html)> [accessed 22 August 2012].

<sup>5</sup> See Portfolio Remarks Three Image Page at the end of these remarks.

<sup>6</sup> Mario Bunge, *Philosophy of Science: From Problem to Theory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), p. 579.

transmitted information. In other words, ‘black box theory’ determines when a message goes into a process of transmission and at some point in the channel, incurs an alteration or shift in its material composition. This process of altered information produces a similar sense of material effects, or distortion within message exchange that we saw in Chapter Two and the related portfolio commentary. In these cases I theorised noise and interference in processes of signalling as a potential poetic mechanism. A distorted signal was framed as a signal becoming material and therefore appealing to the body and the subjectivity of the listener. Through this framing I posited the position of being caught up in a process of noisy signalling, as a point from which to practice poetry. Or, poetry can be initiated from the point of being signaled to by interference, and this would be a poetics of physical, material and lyrical, subjective appeal.

The notion of the black box as an unknowable effect in information transmission gives me an additional way to theorise complex spaces of communication. It also gives me a way to conceive of my approach to practice. Black box theory is based on the acceptance that not every space of knowledge is discoverable. It necessarily establishes some ‘dark chambers’ will remain ambiguous.<sup>7</sup> Black box theory has it that a system relies not on total knowledge but on constructions that operate around the question marks. Elements of systems function in relation to each other whilst perhaps never yielding every detail of their processes. As long as the circuit operates, the impenetrable black spaces can remain. This acceptance of ‘dark chambers’ within a system is pertinent to me on multiple levels. Firstly in terms of speech exchange and speech-matter this premise can be likened to the process of communication where the object of speech is unclear yet the operation of exchange occurs around the non-clarity. I could liken this to nonsense in language, where meaning is the vague space, yet sound, signal and speech-matter circulate around the obscurity. In terms of practice, and in relation to this conceptual field of unknowable spaces, the black box can be located as a process of working that allows for aspects to remain cryptic. It might be the method or the material that remains a puzzle whilst still allowing a route for practice to occur through. I suggested something similar in Portfolio Remarks One, where I discussed my practice

---

<sup>7</sup> Philipp Von Hilgers, ‘The History of the Black Box: The Clash of a Thing and Its Concept’, *Cultural Politics*, 7 (2011), 41–58 (p. 42).

leading me to unforeseen trajectories and accidents opening up spaces of thought. However, here I have a conceptualisation that marries the material I engage with and my approach to making work. An enigma in a line of communication that affects the message, and the riddish way my work often behaves, now has a parallel. As will be seen in this work, it has various points of conceptual clarity and imported enigmas, which are in tune with the ‘subject matter’ of nonsense and ailing communication.

Regarding the installation at the Cartel Gallery, the concept of the black box has more to offer in terms of the poetic operation. For instance, another aspect of black box discourse that helps me to theorise my work in *Shadow was amazed...* is the practice of ‘black box testing’. This is when an authority from one specialist area tests something, such as a computer programme or equipment from another specialist area. In other words, practitioners with the tools and the knowledge of a foreign discipline or science, are working within the model of the black box, in order to test the success of the process without being caught up in the interior systems.<sup>8</sup> They don’t necessarily know what they are doing, just processing the materials at hand. For me this process is like a community of speakers, attempting to communicate through different languages or other levels of foreignness. It suggests subjects trying to find a way to be intelligible through obscure materials. This is a way to formalise attributes of nonsense or inarticulate elements of my poetry. These elements are material inflections on processes of speech and also obscurities which a subject attempts to speak through, thus saying more about the process of communication than the information spoken. I see this process at work in sections such as this below, where there is an obscure object of meaning forming through sound and language matter but ultimately it means nothing in real terms apart from a circulation of speech-matter:

like woven  
 hay  
 A lake woven  
 A lack woven  
 I like women  
 Ay like woave  
 A lack woab  
 A lackey wave  
 A lack weave

---

<sup>8</sup> Hilgers, p. 44.

This idea of speaking through foreign materials will be further explored later in reference to a specific section of the poem where a new alien voice speaks out from the closed system of the poem. For now I would like to continue mining ideas and theoretical framings from the notion of black boxes.

There is a traceable, two-pronged evolution of ‘black box’ as a conceptual model. In discourse analysis the black box is essentially a metaphor that denotes the space of a known unknown. Then there is the technological history of ‘black box theory’ in engineering, a practical and material history. Here it is a necessarily circumscribed area of opaque operations, key to principals in cybernetics and machine technology where progressively sophisticated systems need not necessarily be completely understood, as long as there is an operating system to substitute knowledge. The technological history of the black box originates in World War II, specifically the Battle of Britain. The first black box was a piece of military equipment, described on account of the opacity of its operation and of the clandestine context of its development. The invention was a compact radar device that could be carried in fighter planes. Its radar echo was such that it could detect without being detected. This piece of war technology was key in securing American ally involvement and its blue prints were given to the USA for production in a ‘black, metal deed box’.<sup>9</sup> Models of this detection device were developed in USA and Britain until eventually a plane carrying the radar was caught and the equipment copied by the German military.

So while this military equipment was a literal black box, the circumstances of its development shaped the concept:

The history of the black box lays bare still another constellation in which knowledge itself becomes an obstacle. The Germans were quickly able to identify the radio tube of the H2S-Radar found at Rotterdam as a magnetron, because they were aware of the Russian patent from 1936 which described the construction. The British were not aware of the Russian patent at the time and regarded their invention as wholly without precedent.<sup>10</sup>

This narrative of military history reveals the concept of the black box to originate in misapprehension of perceived knowledge and the concealment of believed

---

<sup>9</sup> Hilgers, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Hilgers, p. 50.

knowledge.<sup>11</sup> However technical and routed to non-human systems the black box seems to be, in its origins lays a social construct that links back to war time secrets and mistrust. The dichotomy of knowing and not-knowing that characterises the black box parallels with the friend-enemy binary of military politics. As Philipp Von Hilger's says, the archaeology of the black box outlines a 'cooperative exchange under the condition that, like machines, humans reciprocally withheld knowledge from each one another'.<sup>12</sup> In reference to my work in question here, the black box ontology is perhaps symbolic of the impossibility of open, explicit, transparent communication – determining that communication is always opaque, or flawed. This is relevant both to the public space of the gallery and to the themes of the *Shadow was amazed...* text as will be discussed next.

### **Anti-Communication**

The overall composition for *Shadow was amazed...* was roughly intended to represent fractions of telephone calls, thematically gesturing towards broken or interrupted contact. The script circulates around notions of the impossibility of fluent conversation, where the articulate passing of information is obstructed by communicators' efforts to make him or herself heard. The promotional literature for the event described the piece as: 'An audiopoetry installation and performance that bumps against communication, broadcast and polyvocalism.' With the tag-line, 'Is this sulky, non-transmission the opposite of the "human microphone"?' The phrase 'bump against' is to suggest that the work is antagonistic to the stated premises of *communication* and *polyvocalism*, but only at the level of 'cheek' or deviancy. The provocative tag question is to propose that the piece withdraws from the optimism of the 'human microphone', a prevalent technique of speech exchange during the Occupy movement where the crowd would repeat and pass-back the words of the speaker at the front of a crowd. It's a technique that relies on co-operation, intuitive synchronicity and a certain keenness for the distributed message. The opposite

---

<sup>11</sup> There are other narratives in the history of information sciences to which the phrase 'black box', as a secret can be traced. For instance Marconi's radio technology was perhaps originally described as such. See, Sungook Hong, *Wireless: From Marconi's Black-Box to the Audion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Hilgers, p. 51.

therefore is a solo voice without audience, without determinate message or cohort, without agenda or position. It is a flailing, faltering voice that doesn't move much beyond its own sound.

The text does in fact contain many textual characteristics of polyvocality; it features metalinguistic assertions that imply an *a priori* conversation (for example the line, 'Yes, it's a long story'). There is also a general multi-voicedness that fabricates the text overall. It performs voice across various registers and stresses, which interact responsively. Yet the text is, in spite of its roughness, an address. It prompts no response but a listening-obedience to the sound of the voice. In this way, and also in its content of situations of failed communication, it 'bumps against' the positivity of polyvocality within the notion of poetry as a communal project. This proposition was recently described by Cris Cheek in reference to poetry scores of 1960s North American and Canadian poets Jackson Mac Low and B. P. Nicol.<sup>13</sup> Here polyvocality is a model within the performance of poetry that sets up a provisional community through instantiating collective subjectivities. In Cheek's logic community takes place at the event of the live performance, as a scene of participation and of collaboration through shared energy field of the dialogic voices of the text (with possibly multiple readers) and the audience. While my text isn't posed to dispute this proposition, it rubs against its optimism, deliberately siting the event of the poem in a closed system where the voice is in retreat, locked up in a concealed box and displaced from the instance of its listening. On headphones, this is also a partitioned off experience that negates community.

### **His Master's Voice**

For the project my first task was to devise a title and image for the work. This needed to be completed in advance of the actual piece, mainly for publicity. However, this process of securing a title and image granted the work, and indeed this research overall, a conceptual premise that is as significant as its textual content. The digital (it doesn't exist in hard copy) image is an amalgamation of a phrase from an Internet meme and a Google image searched photo. My picture references a particular type of

---

<sup>13</sup> Cheek, 'Before I Am Anything Else: Provisional Transatlantic Communities in Polyvocal Poetic Performance' (presented at the Polyvocality, Birkbeck, University of London, 2011) <<http://vimeo.com/26469783>> [accessed 20 September 2011].

Internet meme which is, funny or strange images of cats attached to a given template catchphrase, ‘X was amazed to find Y’.<sup>14</sup> My phrase, and therefore title for the work overall is ‘Shadow was amazed to hear his owner refer to the toilet as the big white phone’, laid over an image of a black cat looking down a toilet. The image sets up a signifying exchange between the telephone and the toilet. In effect it’s a cheap gag that sites both receptacles, telephone and toilet, as sites of waste, expenditure and excess. Telephone lines and sewage pipes are placed into a singularity. Within this dynamic human interaction with technology is founded on the expulsion of waste. Speech and shit are equated, as is speaking and drunken vomiting. In this figuring we are again returned to Bergvall’s conception of the midden as a site of language waste, not forgetting that ‘midden’ is also a Yorkshire term for an outdoor toilet. Here again, excesses of language and human waste are transformed into material to communicate from, yet in an altogether less dignified manner to Bergvall’s recuperation of lost pronunciations. In my image this terminology for the midden as a toilet is preserved, where the expelling of speech and bodily waste become metaphorically engaged. In Bataille’s terms, vomiting and shitting down the toilet becomes a *parody* of yelling down the phone. They are analogous in principal and motive, as well as motion. Yet the parody transgressively reveals what was already low about the parodied.<sup>15</sup>

The figuration of the cat and the toilet bowl’s orifice instigates another point of interpretation for this image. The composition is familiar to and perhaps parodic of the famous ‘His Master’s Voice’ image, where likewise a domestic pet is placed alongside a concaved opening, inclining towards its content for a connection to its domesticator. The echoes of the HMV icon in my picture again sets up a line of connection between voice and midden waste, or at least the excesses of bodily or

---

<sup>14</sup> The concept of a ‘meme’ itself is relevant to this study of subverted territories of communication. A meme is an idea that is passed on according to a biological model of transmission rather than an intentional, essentially human, model of distribution. In the biological model for the meme, the idea or template is operating its transmission as a survival mechanism. It uses its carriers in order to persist, as opposed to interlocutors exchanging the material. While this phrase began as biological metaphor for the spread of ideas, it came into significance with the burgeoning practices of digital information exchange and social media, where images or image-based jokes circulate like rapid-spreading viruses. This again takes the optimism out of the notion of speech exchange. It is antagonistic to the deliberate passage of the message throughout a community, instead proposing that ideas and information spread through us like a parasite, opposite to the human microphone. See Annalee Newitz, ‘Where Memes Really Come From’, *io9.com* <<http://io9.com/5978399/where-memes-really-come-from>> [accessed 30 August 2012].

<sup>15</sup> Georges Bataille, *Visions Of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 5.



communicative output. In other words, redundancy, and the material excess of the message. For Mladen Dolar the HMV dog, ‘exhibits the emblematic posture of listening; he is placed in an exemplary attitude of dog-like obedience which pertains to the very act of listening’.<sup>16</sup> For etymological reasons, the shared genetics of the words to listen and to obey for Dolar means that ‘Listening entails obeying...’.<sup>17</sup> In my image the obedience of the dog has been replaced by a notoriously less obedient creature, gazing, not devoutly towards its master’s voice, but with cat-like *curiosity*, to its master’s waste. It is therefore also a parody of the power systems that occur in the situations of attempted speech exchange. Dolar says, ‘the high fidelity of the sound finds its perfect match in the high fidelity of the dog’.<sup>18</sup> In this alternative the cat’s adulterous unruliness is matched to the glut of redundancy in poor communication.

In the classic image of the dog, the absent human is replaced by the gramophone, which in turn embodies the voice. Charles Grivel, discussing depictions of audio machines, describes the horn of the gramophone as a prosthetic mouth. As a mouth it evacuates the voice through internal mechanisms that distorts and adds the shape of the body/machine onto the sound of the voice. The bodily system impresses on the sound of the voice, its network of pipes and mechanisms form the vocal shape. Speaking again is likened to shitting:

The voice passing through a body, a conduit, the fact of pipes... The deforming voice. The relation of the speaker to his voice, his body... The sort of spasm that the production of a sound provokes in him. He expresses himself by excretion, constriction of the organ and muscles.<sup>19</sup>

In the iconic image of dog and gramophone, and in my pastiche of cat and toilet, human communication is shown without any actual human contact. We are left with a ‘communion’ of animal and machine. It is in this dynamic that message transmission actually succeeds. The set-up represents ‘successful communication’ where ‘the message is triumphantly transmitted to the hapless dog’.<sup>20</sup> It implies that human,

<sup>16</sup> Mladen Dolar, *A Voice And Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> Dolar, p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> Dolar, p. 77.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Grivel, ‘The Phonograph’s Horned Mouth’, in *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), pp. 31–63 (p. 31).

<sup>20</sup> Dolar, p. 76.

intersubjective communication is impossible or at least best left out of the picture. Person-to-person interaction is where the message falters and eternally fails to reach the other. The object of the voice is revealed and best communicated at the level of animality and technology, or at the ‘montage of the two’.<sup>21</sup>

In my audio poem, which is twinned with the cat picture, the materiality of speech is for the most part performed as excessive and non-meaningful. It has an attention-seeking tone that calls for listener obedience but it does not achieve ‘successful communication’, rather it plays on the impossibility of this. The materiality of the voice, as mediated, deformed and excreted by telephony network, *is* the matter of the poem. Therefore, setting aside for the moment, the allegorical image of the cat and the toilet, the method for composing the poem, the poet telephoning herself, reveals a kind of rabbit-hole folding in. The process of sending one’s voice through telephone systems on one hand has a degrading effect on its material sound, where you can hear the inflections of the technology and its journey through the signals. It is also a performative gesture of the voice calling to itself, (literally phoning itself on two different receivers). The result is a paradoxical circumstance of the voice’s inability to communicate with itself. Or to put it another way, if a voice telephones itself the content of the speech isn’t the point of the communication, rather it’s the speech-matter and the excess waste that is spoken, gets flushed. This process of a self-phoning voice typifies a poetics that constantly examines the piling up of effects regarding what is spoken, the sound of speech and the manner in which it was transmitted. In other words, the voice’s content, channel and the black box affects of transmission get caught in a loop.

### **Nonsense and the Squid’s Poem (Which is called ‘To Draw a Blank’)**

Throughout this commentary I have been gathering ideas about nonsense; how nonsense is an incidental effect in my work and how it is a technique. However, techniques and accidents of nonsense aren’t mutually exclusive in the mechanisms of my practice and on some level I view this piece as an investigation into how nonsense communicates between randomness and method. In this section of the script from

---

<sup>21</sup> Dolar, p. 76.

‘Shadow was amazed...’ we see a switch between haphazardness and considered absurdity, that then steps into its own kind of logic:

choice of hole  
that garden  
The garden!  
the crows  
picture hook  
back to holes

Replacing trees with  
Bark leather  
But y’know what really hurts?  
Bark leather <sup>22</sup>

In this passage the random phrases gather up, they heap up (to return to Chapter Three’s discourse of the heap) into a nonsense turn. This turn is expressed by the phrase ‘bark leather’. This gathering up of phrases and matter is also the forming of a joke. The heaping of nonsense flips back on itself by the mechanism of a joke, as the speech-matter forms its own logic. The joke, like the double-take in Bergvall’s wall text, ‘lang wedge keels (ova)’, produces a mechanism through which the materiality of the words, their absurdity and the methodology or randomness through which they came to be, all coincide.

Overall the use of nonsense in the poem, or at least the faltering sense of the lines, is a material gesture signifying the defects in speaking and communication. Instances of nonsense are like black box affects on literal fluency. In Deleuzian terms nonsense is a product of the infinite discrepancy between the *sense* of what is said with the description done by the saying. In other words, nonsense is the difference between the sound and sense of speaking, and the state of affairs speaking gestures towards. A *non-sense* poem, like that celebrated by Deleuze in his theorization of Lewis Carroll, ‘examines the difference between events, things, and states of affairs’ through esoteric language that opens up the space between the sense of itself (a crossover of signification and sound) and the state of affairs speech is describing. Nonsense offers in close-up, ‘the great impotence of the speaker’ and as Deleuze says, ‘my impotence to state the sense of what I say, to say at the same time something and

---

<sup>22</sup> At 6:20 of Track 4 and at 4:45 of Track 5, audio disk two.

its meaning'.<sup>23</sup> In a nonsense poem, the 'impotency' of the speaker to adequately marry something to its meaning is played out to its extent. But, as seen in the passage above, this break between articulation and meaning can be formalised into a joke. Such a joke is a product of nonsense.

The moments of nonsense in my poem produce mechanisms that gazes inwards towards the matter and concept of the poem, nonsense in these moments is self-referential. There is however one moment in the text when the poem pauses from speaking inwardly and self-reflexively, and speaks outside of itself, beyond its own voice, in a separate poem that sits in the middle of the text.<sup>24</sup> This poem in its own terms is called 'To Draw a Blank' and was originally composed for a separate event 13<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at the Tenderpixel Gallery, London, an invited reading at the opening of a solo exhibition by artist, Patrick Coyle. The show, also called 'To Draw a Blank' was an exhibition and series of performances described thus, 'an encounter with misunderstanding, whether in terms of ambiguous meaning or a deliberate misappropriation of material'.<sup>25</sup> As a single poem, 'To Draw a Blank' references the linked materials of Elizabethan blank verse and the origins of the phrase 'to draw a blank' in the sixteenth-century invention of the lottery. This aside poem was written in roughly blank verse form, yet many of the later lines were produced using online love poem and sonnet generators. These are gimmick computer programmes where a user inserts their own keywords into an algorithm from which lines of love poetry are automatically composed. The sense of the poem therefore, approximates an ode to Queen Elizabeth I and the lottery as seen in the lines:

I know not how to thank enough, mister  
le Queen Elizabeth! When I am walk  
king ova to it I just want to pick  
numbers

The poem orientates around the theme of lottery money and Tudor family wealth. This imported theme is obscure enough in comparison to the rest of the work, but as a recital by a squid, the nonsenses begin to build up. In this case the lyric is displaced,

---

<sup>23</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Logic Of Sense* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> Go to portfolio, p.275 and audio, disk two, Track 6.

<sup>25</sup> 'To Draw a Blank, Patrick Coyle', *Tenderpixel Gallery*  
<<http://www.tenderpixel.com/patrickcoyle2012.html>> [accessed 10 February 2012].

not onto the tubular object of the telephone (as in the ‘Shadow was amazed...’ sound piece), but onto the imagined subject position of a slimy, tentacled creature. The squid enacts the distortion by situating himself as the speaker. The squid is the animal interference that processes the human voice.

The incidental communion of ‘To Draw a Blank’ and ‘Shadow was amazed...’ is also relevant to its nonsense status. I imported the poem into the audio recording to fill up some cassette space, to fill in a blank. This led to the need to integrate the squid poem into the larger work. I managed this by figuring the poem as the voice of a separate character, the squid. Suddenly the text is not simply a block of address-style text, but a sequence with structure and a before-and-after’, or pre- and post-squid. This placing therefore suggests that many of the voices in the poem have been characters speaking their part. However the move does in effect compromise the original premise for the work being a figuring of a single yet fractured, dystopian communiqué and the conceptual framework I have here laid out for it. However, returning to Dolar’s observation of the dog and the gramophone, the removal of the human and the situating of the animal leaves the potential for a successful communication, thus emphasizing the ‘incompetence’ of human communication.

In my reflection of the work I recognise associations between the squid’s poem, and a Lewis Carroll-esque narrative, in which an animal character will suddenly announce itself and narrate a separate poem or song, leaping outside the main body of the text. Within ‘Shadow was amazed...’ the poem, ‘To Draw a Blank’ is referred to as ‘The Squid’s Poem’. These various titles for the poem represents a complex of names, circumstances and characters. In Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense* we are drawn into a *vortextual* complexity of nomination in Carroll’s narrative, where a song has a name, ‘The Aged Man’, yet *the name* of the song is called, ‘The Haddock’s Eyes’. The potential nominations continue with the fact that the song is actually *called*, ‘Ways and Means’, and that it really *is*, ‘A-Sitting on a Gate’. As Deleuze ‘explains’:

there is the name of what the song really is; the name denoting this reality, which thus denotes the song or represents what the song is called; the sense of this name, which forms a new name or a new reality; and the name which denotes this reality, which thus denotes the

sense of the name of the song, or represents what the name of the song is called.<sup>26</sup>

In this explanation Deleuze joins in with Carroll's linguistic mazing, in which language traverses describing, playing and sensualising. This isn't non-sense rather a radical extension of sense. A system is set up that follows its own process into a state of nonsense.

In the squid's poem the radical extensions of senses are told through the love poem of a sea creature to Elizabeth I, with regards to the invention of the lottery, told in rough blank verse, and randomly generated text. The character of the squid therefore becomes a mouthpiece for this mess of logics, scenarios and material text; he has to speak all these senses, meanings and matters as one single lyric voice. The squid speaks out into a field of listening and yet the space of communication he instigates in this speaking out isn't entirely clear, legible or sensical. As an interlocutor he is using obscure materials to make an obscure vocal appeal. The squid is like the black box tester, who, in my figuring, communicate obliquely through foreign tools. The squid has a complicated intelligibility within the system, this being the system of the wider poem, his addressees, or my listeners in my renditions. I can locate this framing of a speaker's unintelligibility within a system as a key dynamic in my all of my poetry texts and the scenarios they perform. The terrain I therefore explore is when the poetics of being unintelligible in a system clash with the politics of the struggle to be intelligible. For me the squid typifies this play-off between the poetics of nonsense and incomprehensibility, and the political confliction of a subject's desire to make sense. This interplay, as I see it, gets processed through the mechanics of comedy and the joke, as I will now seek to explain.

### **Why and How to Humour**

While I have focused on the nonsense aspects my poetry and particularly in 'Shadow was amazed...' I am clear that nonsense isn't as much a character of my work as are comedy and humour in my texts and performances. Comedy is at work in this central poem in its drawing together of various materials and procedures. Sections of text, and an entire poem were simply planted in. 'To Draw a Blank' was embedded into the

---

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze, pp. 36–37.

wider text not by making them make sense together, but by using the comic to make it make nonsense. The comic came into play by heaping up multiple logics rather than streamlining one coherent one. Deleuze's theory of humour in *Logic of Sense*, regards humour as a way of seeing past rationales of reason, as kind of philosophical resistance or play. James Williams explains this position:

Humour helps us to sense that meaning is not the point of certain forms of communication and that reason has limits that do not define a boundary with nonsense of absurdity, but with a different kind of sense allied to 'non-sense' and to paradox.<sup>27</sup>

Comedy and nonsense are not the same thing, but there is certainly humour found in nonsense and the comic is often how nonsense becomes functional in a poetics. The processes of the comic in this case is also how I built a poetic around the incidental effects within the work. However, I would argue that humour is much more than a textual effect and that the comic is more than a convenient way to negotiate boundaries of accident and intelligibility. For me using comedy as a mode of practice has a political element in that it is a form of communication that derails power structures and resists typical processes of hailing. On a conceptual level this is about subverting a message, in terms of a poetry practice the political dynamics of performance are disrupted by humour. In such situations identity politics relating to gender, age and social status become joke matter. Humour and nonsense in poetry frees up speech materiality, whilst also upsetting conventional rules of syntax and address. In other words, humour allows the breakdowns of language to become a creative space and a means for poetic practice. In this line of thought humour becomes both a form of resistance and a practice.

In Portfolio Remarks Two I talked about humour in contrast to irony, where as a kind of distorted echo, humour rebelled against authoritative voices. Here I would add to that notion of humour as an echo by saying the comedy of my texts and their performances is a process of turning routes of fluency, lines of communication and tracks of power structures into the creative material of joke and play. This turn allows for a multiple currency in my work where incidental haphazardness is at work at the same time as analytical interplays of subject politics. Texts are kept active by use of

---

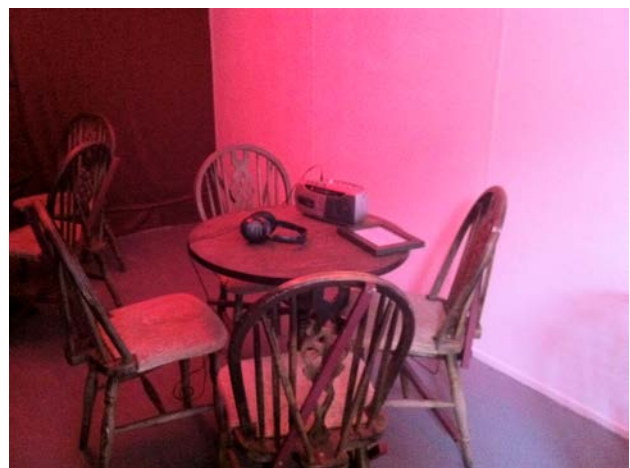
<sup>27</sup> Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense*, p. 17.

comedy, whilst questions of communicative identities are raised within the spaces humour opens up. This notion of humour recalls my research into Caroline Bergvall's poetics in Chapter Three and the assertion that her poetry-works are 'composting' sites of mingling elements, open to external interference. Joke and play in my work operate on the basis of multiple potential meanings in a gathering of speech-matter. In Bergvall's work openness to potentialities is a resistance to the leveling effect of English. Allowing work to be open and for boundaries of speech-matter to remain vague is the intention of this thesis's poetics.



### Portfolio Remarks Three Image Page

*Shadow was amazed to hear his owner refer to the toilet as the big white phone, an installation by Holly Pester for *Word of Mouth* at the Cartel Gallery, 2012 (artist's own photographs)*



## Chapter 4

### 'I did not know till afterwards': Reporting on the Practice of Archive Artwork

#### Archive and Collection as Methodology

In Chapter Three I considered the implications of Caroline Bergvall declaring the 'midden' to be a kind of method. The midden was taken to mean the excess waste of a human community, leftover scraps that pile up into a site of material indicators. In Bergvall's practice, the midden indicated the site of communication and linguistic interaction. The excesses and debris of language were seen as matter that could be reformed and re-transmitted. The midden is thus a gathering of materials, naturally occurring as a symptom of a human activity. The midden understood as method therefore suggests a poetics that uses sites of collected debris or a midden heap of language 'waste' as a kind of communication, or as a resource to communicate from. Using the midden as a form of practice is to translate gathered matter into information. Where the midden is not just incidentally occurring, but collected and stored, it then becomes like an archive, a database and a collection. In the drawing together of materials, heaping them according to a given logic or order, can the midden archive, likewise be engaged with as a method? In other words, how can a gathering of matter as an archive be treated like a form of communication and developed as praxis?

This is the shift I will be focussing on now, the reconstituting of materials in a way that pertains to and explores notions of the archive. This final chapter will act as report on my encounter with a set of archives and how I engaged with them as part of my practice in sound poetics, how the encounter extended my notion of speech-matter and how the project I devised on the basis of the encounter enabled me to further theorise the field of research I have been undergoing. In questioning how my interaction with a collection and archives can become an aspect of practice, I intend to explore the wider question of how thought becomes method, and how practice extends theory. How do physical objects create a field of questions and how does a praxis become materialised?

Over 2011 I undertook an intermittent residency at the Bury Art Gallery, Museum and Archives in Bury, Lancashire. During the residency I engaged with materials and systems of collection across the three departments of the institution: the document archive of local and family history; the museum stores of domestic, technological and selected twentieth-century artefacts; the art gallery's collection of contemporary text and poetry works made for the Text Festival.<sup>1</sup> My engagement with the artworks, objects and documents resulted in the creation of an installation that was exhibited as part of the Text Festival gallery show, April-July, 2011. This chapter will report on and examine my interaction with the archive materials. Through this examination I intend to theorise my moves and motivation for the installation in terms of the research and practice work that I have undergone throughout this thesis. As will become clear the materials, recordings and objects I selected all provided a dialogue with the critical concepts I have produced in this thesis. By juxtaposing objects from the museum store, such as gramophones and archaic radio transmitters, with sound recordings of previous Text Festival works, my installation opened up ideas of transmission, sound storage and dissemination, the nature of speech apparatuses, technologies of communication, poetry's hailing processes and lyrical identities. The materials I organised, and my theorisation of their interrelation, also issues new critical questions for me to consider within the terms of this thesis. How do archives operate around poetry, and in particular, how do archives organise and operate around sound poetry? What is the perceived materiality of sound as an object of an archive? How does transmission linger in the archive and how do signalled messages echo within its structures?

My project for the Text Festival exhibition and events, took place roughly at the midpoint of my research for this thesis, before I'd composed much of my material. Yet, the logic of this thesis allows me to circulate the knowledge learned through, relating it to work made, performed or researched before and after my Text Festival project. The Bury project informed my thinking for preceding research as much as my research after the Bury residency has helped me critically reflect on my moves in creating the installation. I have placed this report chapter at the end of this thesis in order to support its logic of feedback. This circulation of ideas is reflected in the title for my installation, *I did not*

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Text Festival Home Page', *Text Festival* <<http://textfestival.com/>>.

*know till afterwards*, which resonates with the looping sequence of thinking over this thesis research period. In other words, my project at Bury, including my report here, represents a key element in the recurring nature of my work so far. This report on a practice-driven investigation into the archive and a poetic intervention within it, completes the feedback loop that has driven the dynamic of my research so far. That is not to say that this report acts like a full stop on the project, but that it grants a point of perspective that reveals the folding together of the ideas explored in the three critical chapters and three portfolio remarks of this thesis. The areas of exploration that come into focus through this report are: mediated vocal sound; noise and interference; lyric addresses and ideological hailings; mediation; material and conceptual mingling. The writing of this report attempts to draw together these themes of sound mediation and transmission within an archive, into useable knowledge for poetic practice. To elucidate on this I would like to offer another model of an installation featuring objects from differing archives and collections that acts as a space of thought.

At 2012's contemporary art festival, *Documenta 13* there was a collection on display in the 'Rotunda' space of the main Fridericianum venue. The collection-installation was called, the 'Brain' and was constituted by a number of artworks, objects and documents, 'brought together *in lieu* of a concept'.<sup>2</sup> The 'Brain' featured ancient figurines, twentieth-century ceramics, painting, sketches and photography, contemporary everyday objects, Surrealist portraits, museum artefacts and video works. The collection represented a 'precarious' holding together of ideas and themes. Like a loose space of research, theories were gestured towards through a field of association. The objects and documents worked in relation to each other, building up ideas of culture and technology within paradigms of loss, histories, decay, fragility, transitions, durability and permanency. On experiencing the research concerns at *Documenta*, I can now reflect on my project at Bury in relation to this model of the Brain. My installation and gathering of materials was likewise a precarious holding together of themes and objects. However, my theoretical approach to the collection I arranged for the installation necessitates regarding the assemblage as more than a centring of 'thought lines'.<sup>3</sup> For me the group of objects,

---

<sup>2</sup> *Documenta (13): Catalog III/3, The Guidebook* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Documenta 13*, p. 24.

recordings and poetic texts had a specific attachment to a set of literal and lateral institutions; these being, the actual space and museum store of Bury Art Museum and Gallery, and the associated abstract spaces of the Text Festival and its documentation. The archive of the Text Festival is a developing and loosely organised system, in contrast the Bury Museum and Archive, housing local history and family heritage, is a physically sited, fixed archival system. My questioning in this chapter will therefore negotiate notions of the archive as a practice of organising and historicising objects and works, and also interrogate the abstract concept of the archive that pertains to immaterial data and any thematically ordered, distinct set.

The gathered materials of my installation, as I will report on now, can indeed be considered the ‘brain’ of my thinking and research up to this point; my installation saw ideas spatialised, fleshed out into physical networks within an embodied set. My installation project and my reflection on it draws together the neural pathways travelling through the chapters of research and practice in this thesis and translates them into a site of physical entities within a bodily space of the art gallery. Within this process of reflection on the installation is a negotiation of the archive as a set of conceptual questions and as an institutional system.

### **What I knew before**

I took the title for the project from a handwritten label on a box of nineteenth-century phonograph cylinders, which I found during one of my first visits to the Bury Museum stores and archive. The box is a large oak chest with 24 egg-box-like mounts, each holding a wax cylinder. At the top of each mount is a handwritten label loosely naming the recording inscribed onto the wax: ‘*I did not know till afterwards*’, ‘*Dancing in the kitchen*’, ‘*Jack the Boy*’, ‘*William Tell Overture*’.<sup>4</sup> The item seemed to instantly represent the key elements of the project. The chest sat on the shelf like a tomb of stored speech and sound; an archive of utterances. The ambiguous labels, not distinguishing between recorded music and spoken words, represented a confused index that makes the item, an

---

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Four Image Page at the end of this chapter.

enigma and yet explicably resonant with the theorisations of the archive that I sought to explore in the project and the wider process of this thesis.

The founding premise for the installation project was to engage and interact with the archive of the Text Festival, an international biennial event showcasing innovative poetry and contemporary text art. The festival is hosted by Bury Art Gallery, Museum and Archive, a cross-disciplinary arts and cultural history institution in Lancashire, UK. The institution in its capacity as a collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British painting, and local history museum, is a characteristic small town museum. But in its distinctive engagement with contemporary and hard to classify text-based practices, Bury's museum practice makes its 'archival contexts' somewhat indeterminate and open to critical intervention. Artists involved with the Text Festival are often commissioned to draw on the rich archive of local and family history documents, and the museum store of domestic and cultural objects, for the exhibitions or performances. My residency with Bury sought to interact with the archive of the Text Festival itself and position the Festival as an ongoing project within the taxonomies of the museum and art gallery departments. Using past sound works and audio art commissioned for the Text Festival, as well as audio documentation of its events, my project's final outcome was an installation for the exhibition as part of the Text Festival in 2011. The installation situated itself as a clash of institutions and archival technologies. Its final realisation involved a white, Victorian plinth containing selected objects from the museum store, with six sound pieces played through headphones around the base of the plinth.<sup>5</sup> The sound pieces were: Caroline Bergvall and Ciarán Maher's audio poem, *Lidl Suga*; Nick Thurston's radiophonic sound work, *Enigma Variations*; Philip Davenport's sound poetry album (extracts), *Constellation of Luminous Details*; Carolyn Thompson's fictional audio tour, *Progress*; a recording of poet Ron Silliman reading at Text Festival 2009; an interview with visual poet Robert Grenier by the Festival director and poet Tony Trehy in 2008. The museum objects selected were: a late nineteenth-century phonograph called an *Edison Gem* (complete with wooden case); the above mentioned box of wax cylinders; some examples of early nineteenth-century scrimshaw (whale tooth and bone traditionally engraved by sailors); a 1907 *Dictaphone*; a selection of mid-nineteenth-

---

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Four Image Page.

century carved clay sailor's pipes; a 1920s crystal radio set; a 1950s radio/air-com microphone. I will discuss in detail how each item selected interacts with the themes I set out for the project, for now I hope it is clear that the sound media and the 'ethnographic' items, all fit together with the visual and conceptual rhyming of horns, pipes, cables, transmission tunnels, communication loops and contained sound.

For me, seeing these objects laid out in a set, gave me a strong visual reference for many of the questions I had been grappling with up to that point. For instance the mismatching of horns and mouthpieces spoke to me about the obstructions and interferences of communication, how a group of communicators can clash or harmonise. The gathering of those objects also represented a sense of material build-up; technological matter becoming midden-like through obsolescence or entropic deterioration. The speech-related items were held together in what I could also describe as a milieu of physicalised sound and the potentialities of broadcast. My motive in selecting these objects was indeed informed by my previous research into communication media and the apparatuses of sound poetry, but it is also true that the experience of this set gave me the tools to conceive the mechanics of audio culture and speech transmission in my further practice work and research activities. In this respect the timing of this residency was key as a midpoint in my thesis project, as a point of reflection.

In preparing my installation I was curious to see how the collection of museum objects and the sound works would behave situated alongside each other. The Bury Museum objects, in terms of accessioning, dating and contextualising, are a formalised archival system. In contrast sound works as recordings or data typically refute these traditional methodologies of classification and storage. Firstly, as sound works they exist ephemerally or only when located in media. They are only present when being played or sounded. Then, as works that belong to the Text Festival collection directly, or at least are closely associated with it, their archival properties are still undistinguished. The Text Festival, having been running since 2005, is a relatively young institution and its archive is not formalised.<sup>6</sup> In bringing together discursive elements of its trajectory, my aim was to highlight the unfixed nature of the Text Festival archive, and also to illustrate that the

---

<sup>6</sup> I acquired this information through generous conversations with Tony Trehy, the Text Festival Curator, over 2011.

Text project is in the process of computing something. Each year it runs, the festival generates a continuing dialogue. In some ways, therefore, placing a rigid order like a plinth of ‘historical’ monuments may seem antagonistic to this evolution, but I was interested to see how the two orders would mutually authenticate and de-authenticate each other. One of the aims was to keep the Text archive from being too coded, or too bound to an index, or at least to see how possible it was to evoke these structures without tying the body of work to them. The installation was ultimately an artwork, so deviancies from archival conventions were important in terms of raising questions and problematising the themes at hand. Broadly speaking therefore, the aim of the project was to engage with the display and storage systems of a collection of sound objects, and practically experiment with the definition of archive.

### **Archival Systems**

From the project’s formalising stages I was intent on framing the constellation of disparate sound files and objects as *one* coherent artwork. This had implications not only in terms of the complications of re-showing artists’ works in a new context (to which they would have to agree) but also on the conceptual reach of the non-art pieces. I was not representing them as individual found objects, but presenting the entire collection, and the lines of interception between them, as *the* work. This interacting with an archive as an artwork in its own right is a common element of contemporary practice, as I will investigate, and draw out my own questions relating to this practice. For instance, what impact do the archival technologies of the museum objects (and their status as ‘museum’ pieces) have on the categories of historical knowledge attributed to the sound works? A related working question was, by assembling a collection containing art texts and objects was I creating an artificial network of meanings that I as the curator of the project, issue to the visitor? How do I communicate through the installation and how do I control engagement with it? When I began amalgamating the objects and recordings there was already a series of *orders* for me to work from, into and across. The systems of categorisation that each element belonged to are incorporated into my installation. The categories of classification the objects fitted with, ranging from domestic to trade



categories, local and regional artefacts to ethnography. In short there was a diverging network of historical dates, classifications and taxonomies being gathered together in this installation. There was a sense of contemporary and continuing practices mixed with historical artefacts.

In keeping with the terminology learned in Chapter Three, my method for arranging the installation was to simply allow the elements to *mingle*. However, my reflection of this mingling raises a complex of questions regarding taxonomies and orders of knowledge. Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*, theorises knowledge gained from history as inherently coded. In reference to a fictional taxonomy of animals in a Jorge Luis Borges story, Foucault argues that there is an order of classification beneath our everyday, societal experience. Borges's imaginary system of classification mixes and distinguishes between types of reality, myth, fantasy, and objective description. The fictional descriptions of the animals are listed alphabetically and range from physical physiognomies to the animals' incidental actions; '(m) having just broken the water jar' or '(n) that from a long way off look like flies'.<sup>7</sup> The story in its inventing of another order, lays the one we live by bare; it reveals that taxonomy is arbitrary and that any imaginary code can become real, thus influencing knowledge.

On what 'table', according to what grid of identities, similitudes, analogies, have we become accustomed to sort out so many different and similar things? What is this coherence...? For it is not a question of linking consequences, but of grouping and isolating, of analysing, of matching and pigeon-holing concrete contents: there is nothing more tentative, nothing more empirical (superficially, at least) than the process of establishing an order among things.<sup>8</sup>

A 'system of elements' through which the order can be established and governed is a construct where things exist in comparison, their differences and similarities are played off against each other. The politics of display and collection I put into play in Bury therefore need to be sharply articulated in terms of the rules of classification I imposed. An archive, an installation and an exhibition are all sets that propose constructed

---

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. xvi.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

authorities of knowledge. Within these overlapping systems of archive, installation and collection are the intermeshed concerns of my own thesis research, in its building of a theoretical framework for speech-mattered sound poetry. Therefore a question should be, how do the various orders at work in the installation inform my research into speech sound and transmission? What do the different tensions in the classifications of object, documents and archival systems contribute to this sustained process of thought?

To engage with this question of overlapping categories and systems of collection, I would like to first consider the process an object or document goes through in its translation into an archive. How does something become archived and what are the consequences? What are the specific consequences on archived sound and voices? Derrida begins his theses on the Freudian archive, and how psychoanalytic materials were institutionalised according to archival systems, by noting the site-specific topology of an archive that has a bearing on a document's signification thereafter. Because of this specificity, the archive is a kind of 'house-arrest'.<sup>9</sup> This notion is relevant to my archival engagement and my act of specifying objects and documents to an archival regime, by physically shackling them to a plinth, as well as other orders of archive and display. For Derrida the arresting circumstances of the archive are highlighted in the translation from home to museum, as is the case with Freud's home in London, now the Freud Museum. An object, collection or home that has transformed into a museum document is 'kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*'.<sup>10</sup> An archived object becomes significant according to the legitimated system of the archive. A similar translation of everyday objects into symbols of an archival system occurs in the museum at Bury, where artefacts of the everyday are privileged with a new categorisation as exemplary of that kind of object. For instance the phonograph was a domestic item until institutionalised and sealed in history (owned by the museum since the 1940s), and is now an example of itself, a thing *as such* rather than a thing in itself. This distinction between a thing and an example of the thing could be merely abstract but the practical running of the Bury Museum and Gallery constantly negotiates this translation between a thing as a use-item and a thing as a museum piece.

---

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Derrida, p. 3.

On my first visit to the Bury Gallery I was introduced to a number of practices in regards to an item's or document's 'consignment' (Derrida's term) to the archive.<sup>11</sup> A key curatorial term was 'accession', meaning to officially process an artwork. Although the gallery has many unconsigned artworks in its care, a work must be *accessioned* to be formally part of the collection. Accessioning produces a certain amount of paperwork and paramaterial for each work. Key to my thinking is this gateway accessioning represents between official and unofficial spaces of the collection. Also of interest was the curators' resistance to the term 'archive' in reference to the collection, this being an institutional distinction that separates the gallery, from the museum. My installation represented a periphery space where institutional distinctions between collection, archive and display, which traditionally operate in different orders, were compiled into a new constructed breach of taxonomic borders.

The first thing that struck me on commencing the Bury project was the operating principle behind certain archives. A depository consisting of collections, such as the Document Archive partly founded on donated or bequest portfolios, is bound to these gridlines of governance and providence. For example the Bury Archive hosts a community-operated collection from the Ramsbottom Heritage Society, who as amateur local historians collect paraphernalia related to Ramsbottom, Lancashire. These range from leaflets, posters, and ledgers, to religious and domestic items. Items in the haphazard RHS collection, although in the same building and on nearby shelves, are estranged from the mainstream archive. The catalogue systems do not incorporate the information for each. The index in the main archive notes a missing item (a Co-op wage book) which is known to be held, unclassified, in the RHS portfolio but must be classed as absent from the main collection. The archivist knows the missing item is on a shelf on the other side of the room, but can only acknowledge what has been accessioned.<sup>12</sup> This system of conflicting collections is an interesting enactment of the relation between the physical document and its indexical archetype and digital coordinates. This incongruity within the archive where randomness and chaos are at play in the physical

---

<sup>11</sup> Derrida, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> I acquired this information through generous conversation with archivists at the Bury Archives over 2011.

(dis)coordinates of objects' relationships was something to beware of and to experiment with in my own collection.

During my visit I also found a clear and perhaps surprising criterion for keeping or trashing the mounting body of documents. A document archivist is entirely non-phased by aura or an appeal of lost treasure. Items are acquired and kept on grounds of the 'quality of evidence'. Material alone, without context, is insufficient; a document must be in an evidential chain towards a historical truth. For example, a ledger book of property taxations is kept as a document of women's history. (A researcher tracing a maternal family tree cannot follow sources such as the electoral register pre 1920s, but can follow the evidence of home ownership for married women since the Married Women's Property Act in 1870). This practice of evaluation makes me think closely about the notion of *evidence* versus *information*, something that illustrates the functional capacity of an archive, and perhaps the functional frictions within its system. It complicates the assumption that a 'truth' can be gained from engaging with an archive. Any knowledge you interpret from its sources is contingent on a notion of supporting evidence. If archives are constructed around this particular understanding of evidence (originating in the eighteenth-century structures of archival knowledge) any 'truth' you learn is dependent on the structure of that archive remaining complete. In *Archive Fever* Derrida deconstructs the relations between analogous truths within the Freudian landscape that the book navigates. In doing so he makes the point that 'historical truth' is analogous to a 'truth of delusion'. Therefore Derrida considers excavating historical truth from an archive as risking being deluded by the ideologies and logic privileged by that system. Similarly he distinguishes between 'historical truth' and 'material truth', which can only manifest itself spectrally. Truths are repressed in the archive and make impressions by haunting the material.<sup>13</sup> From my introduction to the Bury document archive I was already confronted with the repressions and illusions of truth every archive is housing.

The Bury Document Archive operates as a public service for research into family, local business, or architectural history. Material documents, ranging from maps, account books, to school accident books, are acquired and arranged according to their research value. This value is their connectivity within certain genres (family, business, heritage).

---

<sup>13</sup> Derrida, p. 88.

In contrast the museum collection is accumulated and preserved on the basis that each item *is* a token of history, rather than its referent. The museum objects are grouped into the socio-historic categories of childhood, sports, religion, industry, medicine, education, media, craft, fashion and so on. The artefacts are stored in underground rooms or displayed in the museum in rotation, their turn on display is dictated by a theme of various types of everyday, social history. The collection is a ‘living archive’ in that contemporary objects are added as examples of certain genres of life. A modern day vacuum cleaner or current newspapers are incorporated into the main body as part of an evolutionary line of domestic cleaning or media. It is interesting to think of an object being removed from circulation, becoming symbolic or exemplary of its type, in the terms discussed above but also within the museum circulation, where an object’s force of representation adjusts depending on its moment in the limelight.

In an article on contemporary art’s interaction with archives, artist Julie Bacon begins by confessing to her love of them: ‘I love seeing dead things in museums, especially if there are living and dead things together’.<sup>14</sup> I am drawn to this ‘living and dead’ dichotomy. In Bacon’s case she is talking about the clashes in the curation of ethnographic museums, where live animals are kept near displays of mummies or cultural artefacts. I would like to consider life and death within an archive in terms of the collection itself. For example a living archive could be thought of as one that still generates material. This material then inflects back on itself and alters the meaning of the ‘data’ already archived. This can be seen in the archive-in-process nature of the Text Festival in Bury. A dead archive such as the Freud House, is where the collection is an artefact; a closed system by virtue of its translation from home to museum – living to dead. My installation performed a kind of *undead* archive. It was a non-dead, perhaps even zombie-like, archive that combines the ‘life’ of a continually articulating collection with the corpse of a fixed anthology. By virtue of it being a sonic installation, with recordings playing in a continuum with sound-related objects, this zombie-like status is perhaps clearer. The sedentary sound media objects, teeth and horns sat silently, seemingly being ventriloquized by the audio files. The installation was, in way, dead inside, yet sounding alive on the outside.

---

<sup>14</sup> Julie Bacon, ‘Archive, Archive, Archive!’, *Circa*, 2007, 50-59 (p. 51).

Framing the installation as an undead tomb of paraphernalia, allows me to engage with the slippages manifested in the cross-displaying of museum objects and ‘living’ sound collections. For Julie Bacon the practice-based archives that artists like her and myself are prompted to create, are characterised by these slippages that I propose render the archive undead:

This is what draws artists into archives, as they introduce, juxtapose, remove things from view; as they alter terms of access, accentuate the spirit of the place, descend into the criteria that define the archive, its provenance, and so the territory of the archival contract and promise.<sup>15</sup>

Here Bacon explains a creative intervention within an archive, or an artist’s meddling in a collection, as a manipulating the ‘spirit’ of an archive. This manipulation is defined as overwriting the previous modes of encounter a visitor would have with the body of collated material. By obscuring historical trajectories, fictionalising others, the collection becomes an occupant of the art gallery (as opposed to museum). Within my installation this manipulation was based on the imposed metaphor of sound, and sound cultures. Transmission and sound mediation was the organising order through which I encoded and reclassified my installation materials. This reclassification of the archived materials worked together to suggest a kind of visual metaphor of communication networks and trajectories of sound. The sailors’ pipes, elephant tusk and whale teeth made this metaphor particularly allegorical, being poetic representations of the given theme. However these are also instantly recognisable museum items and give way to pre-known codes of museum encounters. When paralleled with the audio files these organic and crafted objects issue an alternative way to think about sound technologies. Sound and speech, and the poetic realisation of it, becomes conceptual. This is another way that the overlapping orders of the various collections contributed to the prevalent impression of my installation. This parallel of animal residue (literally dead items) and hand-made objects, with the sound files also accentuates the mingling orders of alive and dead.

It could be said therefore that the displaced, undead spirit of my archive is activated by the sound files on display about the base of the plinth. The sound pieces

---

<sup>15</sup> Bacon, p. 52.

were not in physical proximity to the entombed, collection within the glass box, but rather more arranged beyond a taxonomical boarder (on the other side of the glass), imposed by me as the curator. The objects within the case, being media for listening to sound, or physically suggestive of audio, are conspicuously silent. Their spirit has been dislocated and muted. The installation was organised in such a way that the visitor was invited to visually fixate on the objects in the case while listening to each sound piece. (I will detail the specific arrangement of the relations between object and sound later). The imposed audio collection replaced the imagined sound suggested by the objects, speaking through and over them. A question I pose for myself now is, how does sound material destabilise, cohere or conceive of an archive as an artwork?

### **Sound and an Archive on Display**

Because of the cross-pollination of various orders of archive and collections at work in my installation, and because of the mingling of sound and object materials, none of the systems of display had a direct or simple presence. In other words, access to any given type of material on display was complicated by another. Sound diverted access to the objects in the case, just as the texts of the sound files themselves were confused by the visual interferences. It was always part of my intention to abstract the texts of the audio poems with the assemblage of objects, and to divert attention away from the historical status of the museum pieces and towards their potential relationship with sound poetics. However, there is more to be said about the role of sound in the collection, and how sound destabilises an archive's index. A central question to consider here is, what occurs in terms of archival structure when sound is the object of storage and display?

At the 2011 Susan Hiller Tate Britain retrospective, many of the works framed sound as a signifier of personal *memorials*. In the exhibition sound as personal and collective memory was framed in various installations and archive-based environments. Significant to my work was Hiller's 1981 multimedia installation, *Monument*. It featured a full wall of photographed and enlarged park memorial plaques corresponding to each year of Hiller's life.<sup>16</sup> In front of the wall was a park bench, inviting viewers to sit and

---

<sup>16</sup> Susan Hiller, *Monument*, Tate Britain, 2011, 1981.

become an element in the work while listening to its soundtrack. The soundtrack was significantly played on an old (dated to the original 1981 installation) cassette tape player that the listener/visitor could operate. The recording was of Hiller's voice discussing the memorials of 'unknown heroes' and the nature of past events becoming monumental. The phenomenon of the recorded voice is incorporated into that discussion with Hiller beginning by talking about the past event of her speaking the text, and its being made present through recording and re-playing. For Hiller this uncanniness of a past voice haunting a current moment makes *Monument* like a *memento mori*:

The work emphasises temporality on all levels, playing around with different kinds of 'pasts'—the historical past, the past when the work was made and my voice recorded, the past of just a second ago when you were listening to an earlier bit of the tape... The intimacy of my voice speaking in your ear was a direct physical approach to viewers, a kind of seduction... In this sense, voice is physical, voice is body. Body is evoked and transmitted by voice, and not represented <sup>17</sup>

In this case of Hiller's *Monument*, the artist seeks to make direct quasi-physical contact with the viewer through her voice, and archived sound.

What can I take from this instance of sounded communication through an archive-installation for my understanding of my own archive-based, sounding installation? In my work the parameters were set up for visitors to participate in the piece, completing it with their physical presence, and yet at the same time experiencing something much closed off from group experience, by virtue of the intimate nature of headphones. In contrast to Hiller's *Monument*, people were inwardly facing the object aspect of the work, decisively turning their backs on the surrounding gallery. Yet there is a calculated emphasis on participation through sound. By inviting the visitors to make connections with what they see and hear, associating the museum objects with sound pieces, they thus completed the circuit whilst 'plugged into' the work. This set-up determined the visitor's role as one of investigator and listener, completing aspect of the installation overall. When several listeners were plugged into the headphones, skirting the circumference of the plinth the installation became active. Participation in the installation was founded on transmitting to

---

<sup>17</sup> Mary Horlock and Susan Hiller, 'Mary Horlock Talks with Susan Hiller', *susanhiller.org*, 2001  
<<http://www.susanhiller.org/Info/interviews/interview-MH.html>> [accessed 3 May 2011].



listeners. Is this emphasis on visitor participation a common aspect of sound archives on display?

In October 2008 the artist-run Cubitt gallery in London presented a retrospective of sound poet Henri Chopin's writing, publishing and performance career. A consideration of this exhibition in reference to the theories on archives within gallery contexts being drawn out here should offer a new perspective on what I have already explored in relation to Chopin's practice. The exhibition featured his daughter's private archive of posters, prints, drawings, objects and phonograph records, by Chopin and many of his legendary collaborators. The archive also includes a complete (and very rarely accessible) collection of Chopin's publications of poetry journals, *Cinquième Saison* and *Revue OU* as were discussed in Chapter One. The gallery website provocatively described the journals as 'unique "hard drives" of early modernism'.<sup>18</sup> This statement fosters the idea that Chopin's was a praxis of creatively *databasing* artistic production from across generations and languages. As was discussed in Chapter One Chopin drew together different artists in a kind of cross meshing of sound poetry archives in order to promote the notion of a unified sound poetry project. In this context of an archive-artwork that mingles together different systems and orders of collections this notion of a 'hard drive' gives us another notion of the archive installation. A hard drive as opposed to an archive suggests internal operations and on-going computing. It suggests continuing internal processes that support external mechanisms, and is therefore something to consider in terms of my notions of my practice that draws from my installation project.

Just as Chopin's 'hard drive' journals have been influential on my theorising of sound poetry, the Cubitt installation informed my approach to my installation in Bury. What was notably relevant about the exhibition in regards to my installation is the curatorial style in which the collection was displayed; that of an archive within a gallery, that played on the participatory rituals of a library. Indeed it is often the case that the material legacy of an artist whose domain is primarily poetry (in all its forms) is often exhibited as a research space. This could be an effective consequence of an encounter

---

<sup>18</sup> Cubitt Gallery, 'Henri Chopin, Three Minutes', *cubittartists.org*, 2008  
<<http://cubittartists.org.uk/2008/10/09/henri-chopin/>> [accessed 10 October 2008].

with a document of language, where the codes of speech (albeit dismantled through the conditions of sound poetics) infer a relationship with a codex, and therefore an archive. This practice of exhibiting poetry archives as research spaces could have also been more prominent in this instance of the Cubitt show, since this was the first comprehensive showing of Chopin's work since his death a few months before, giving a suddenly arrested sense to the histories on display. Yet this archive-based curatorial model has never been more emphasised than at Cubitt. In the centre of the room was a desk where visitors were invited to sit and peruse a full catalogue of the Chopin archive; including documents, screen prints, records and a full list of the *Cinquième Saison* and *OU* publications. They could then request an item that would be brought to them at the desk for them to engage with, seemingly on the level of a researcher. A record player was also on the desk and any selected record could be listened to. In a review in *Frieze Magazine* Jan Verwoert described the 'archival' experience of the exhibition:

In the semi-intimacy of a half-closed *séparée* installed in the gallery, visitors would receive an index from which to select works, whereupon the curator, wearing white gloves, would disappear into the gallery office to return with what was requested: pieces of typewriter or sound poetry, rough in the facticity of composition and surreal in their humour, or issues of the magazines *Cinquième Saison* and *Revue OU* which Chopin had published. Some issues came as boxes filled with peculiar objects: toys for mind-games. Going through the material, you faced a monitor with a video showing the curator doing the same thing: turning pages, opening boxes. This doubling of the scene further heightened its theatricality. Like a child, you found yourself playing 'archive' (like children playing 'post office').<sup>19</sup>

This theatre of the poet's praxis was a continued logic in the rest of the more traditionally exhibited Cubitt show that overall felt like a facilitated opportunity to interact with the work *as* a historian. Cubitt's construction of research and archive paradigms demonstrates a model of gallery exhibition appealing to the visitor as an investigative enquirer, drawing historical information from the show. Yet this model almost certainly insists an abstract experience of the collection. By which I mean, as 'researcher', or faux-

---

<sup>19</sup>Jan Verwoert, 'Life Work', *Frieze Magazine*, 2009 <[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/life\\_work/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/life_work/)> [accessed 30 March 2009].

archivist, the ‘truth’ obtained from encountering a show such as the Cubitt’s retrospective will always be designed to make the visitor feel they acquired some knowledge from the engagement, that they have discovered some evidence-based information. But this truth can only be, echoing Derrida on the Freud archive, according to the specific system and materiality of that archive. For the Chopin archive at Cubitt, the material experience of engaging with the records and journals overwrote the archival knowledge learned. The archive rituals of engagement encoded the experience of the poetry. For my installation I wanted to create something of this experience: to research, investigate, archival connections, but with the suggestion that the visitor was interacting with a fragment of a collection or referents, where the rituals of gallery and museum engagement complicated the experience of the poetry works. I wanted to resist presenting something complete or resolved, and therefore the archive ‘enactment’ necessarily diverted access to the materials.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to a complete set, a collection is like a set of potential meanings. By organising an amalgamation of objects, texts and narratives I created a mini system of potential statements. It suggests an interplay similar to the difference between *la langue* and *la parole*. My collection as installation was a system of possible meanings; the units of combinations (linking text to object, object to text, text to text and so on) were like possible utterances, sentences arrived at from the given pool of objects. To return to my installation title, *I did not know till afterward*, I can view the collection as an oscillating statement that refers to a vague presence of knowledge or meaning on either side of the utterance. I can therefore frame the installation as an archive of potential statements. This perception of it allows me to reflect on certain behaviours within the combination of otherwise independent elements. The museum objects for example were moved from one

---

<sup>20</sup> This blog review of the Text Festival comments on my installation and the frustration that the reviewer felt, arguing that it at times seemed ‘inert’ and failed to deliver what it sets up. I am interested in this comment and in no way see it as a failure of the piece. Where simply re-showing previous Text Festival works would have been a perhaps more satisfying (for a visitor) endeavour, this sense of frustration from a lack of definite ‘argument’ or mobility in the installation is arguably in keeping with my aims. The blogger’s experience could be symptomatic of the suggested museum and archive practices encoded into the installation with only vague and open-ended connections to sound and transmission, in other words, with no coherent argument or graspable position in the work. See ‘Text Festival 2011 Opening - Review’, *Santiago’s Dead Wasp*, 2011 <<http://santiagosdeadwasp.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/text-festival-2011-opening-review.html>> [accessed 5 October 2011].

circulation, when each had become socio-historic symbols, and placed in a new circulation. Each object remained encoded with the abstract language or its previous system, but new patterns of ‘speech’ were created through the combined elements. There is something of a reconstitution of utterances that relates to the practice of writing poetry, in which elements of speaking are removed from speech, and placed into a text, an archive body. While each poem proposes itself to be an autonomous discourse, as does each audio work I chose in my installation, the overall installation was antagonistic to a coherent, complete statement. The coming together of possible statements, and the heaping up of materials created a site of communication. While this idea of gathered connections specific to my poetics, the poetry and audio documentation I chose for the installation of other artists’ work were selected to work in a dialogue with my own praxis. I will now examine these works, and the voices they transmitted, in closer detail.

### **The Artists Re-Contextualised and My Impositions on Them**

The Text Festival sound files used for the installation and the poetry texts documented within them, propagated a set of questions for my Bury project. For example: how did the individual works brought together in the single work *I did not know till afterwards* contribute to the mechanics of the installation? How were they antagonistic to or companionable with the installation overall? In what ways did the sound files resist being archived? In what ways did they bring life or death to the collection?

My first procedure in the Text Festival archive was to take Caroline Bergvall’s audio poem, *Lidl Suga* and to displace it from its original intended manifestation as an open-air (as opposed to headphones) audio installation. The audio poem has as its source text the famous blues song by Bessie Smith, ‘*I need a lidl suga in my bowl*’. The text follows this plea for content as it begins to describe language itself as a kind of impoverishment. It ruminates on the gap between language and speech as always being determined by lack.

unlike marble  
language holds saliva

saliva holds language <sup>21</sup>

True to Bergvall's poetics the text goes on to reduce the process of speaking words to a physical ordeal, and the connections between the sound and meaning are depicted as more uncanny than arbitrary. The desire to be satisfied by speech, for a gratifying sense of content compared to the shape of the speaking mouth and the funnelling throat, is consistently negated by the resistance between the sensory and sensical. The vocal aspect of the text is frequently interrupted by synthesised high-pitched whistles, or birdsong. The whistling makes the playful poetic bargaining between voice-for-voice's-sake and linguistic worthiness an act of mischief. The needy desire in the motif statement and the disorganising birdsong, site language as both all-encompassing and also as mere background noise, audible and nothing more.

Finding this file in the archive (literally finding the anonymous CDs in a drawer in Bury) was like uncovering a discarded SOS: *I wanna lidl suga... I wanna lidl sweetness...* The document of a once proudly displayed audio-based art work, played from a series of columns in the main gallery, was now the index of an echo. But its restaging was not about fulfilling the desire of the text. It was a question of re-attaching the questions and statements to a new logic. For the installation, *I did not know till afterwards*, I wanted *Lidl Suga* to be located on the plinth by or near the scrimshaw. The inscribed teeth seemed to resonant with Bergvall's poetics and notions of vocal apparatus being conducive to a speaker's archive of statements, where language is a database of potential utterances. The whale tooth is evocative of whale song, that mythically ideal of pure communication, so the human inscription on its surface is like one language imposing itself on another. This struggle for speech to reveal itself from behind the oppression of imperialist or politically empowered language is key to Bergvall's poetics. What's more, the practice of scrimshaw is something that comes out of boredom. Like shanty singing, sailors were encouraged to make decorative items from the bones or teeth of whale carcasses to keep them occupied and engaged with the collective drive. Inscribing for inscription's sake. The products then became part of the economy of sea

---

<sup>21</sup> Caroline Bergvall and Ciarán Maher, *Lidl Suga*, 2004.

faring with the scrimshaw pieces being sold at ports, and as artefacts they are now entangled with the economy of the archive of that history.

The dynamics of this positioning of objects and sound lead me to an implicit rule of this archive and all reservoiring of consigned knowledge. Derrida asserts, through the Freudian language of the archive, that to reserve something to the archive is an act of deliberately forgetting it, an annihilation of memory that is an act of the ‘death-drive’. Therefore displacing something to an exterior memory bank is a destructive act of forgetting, concealing and effacement. This destruction drive is always a dual act with protecting, housing and sheltering.<sup>22</sup> Overwriting, repeating and ‘storing’ is destructive in one sense and creative in another – just as the scrimshaw inscribes onto the tooth a new order that preserves it within another construction, exterior to its old system, and exterior to the mouth. There’s a parallel here with the voice of *Lidl Suga* that performs a subject emptied out by speech, where the experience of speech and the archive of language become disparate.

Not forgetting my role in the potentially destructive act of archiving, I want to ask what am I doing by consigning a poem to a new order of meanings and connections? Am I condemning it to house arrest? Overwriting it in a move at once creative and destructive? *Lidl Suga* is forever linked now to this alternative technology of meaning, with its role in the installation now part of the artwork’s narrative. In her article on the Emily Dickinson archive, Martha Nell Smith argues that Dickinson’s material archive is determined both by the ideologies of the discourse surrounding her poetics and by the technologies used in the archival representation. Her examples are two archive projects on Dickinson’s work, one using print and the other an electronic compendium that includes facsimiles, transcripts and paramaterial.<sup>23</sup> Rather than suggesting a hierarchy within the archival constructs (print or digital) she comments on how each ‘machine’ both *reveals* and *conceals* aspects of the poet’s project, and poetic meaning. Paul Voss’s introduction to the article summarises:

---

<sup>22</sup> Derrida, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Martha Nell Smith, ‘Because the Plunge from the Front Overturned Us: The Dickinson Electronic Archives Project’, *Studies in Literary Imagination - Towards a Poetics of the Archive*, 32 (1999), p. 133.

a poetics of the archive is also always a poetics of translation. Moreover, since Dickinson's unruly remains will continue to inspire further archivizations, her archive remains at once incomplete and - as it ever has been - radically untitled.<sup>24</sup>

In a poetics like Bergvall's, which is intrinsically about speech, to archive it is to impose a construct that emphasises the power struggles behind the word, behind *langue*. How can I frame this engagement with Bergvall's piece as being in dialogue with my project overall? Perhaps I can say that attempts to make direct, intrinsic links within the indexes of an archive are always dissatisfying, like the desire to be fulfilled by language and sense, which is at stake in *Lidl Suga*. To engage with, or impress upon an archive as part of an artistic practice is to act as a *confuser*; to deliberately restrict the satisfaction gained from complete loops of meaning. Julie Bacon warns that the practitioner must remain aware of how our interventions move the archive definitions and likewise how our practice is part of a recognised series of codes and characteristics:

Protecting, authenticating, democratising, debunking, *collapsing and colliding*: through archives – writing on them and art projects in them – we see the tides of our times, reactionary, neo-liberal, postmodern, deconstructivist and *other*.<sup>25</sup>

At this point I see my project as a constellation of authenticating-debunking (according to Bacon's glossary), where the sound files are granted a materiality normally privileged for document/object artefacts, and the objects from a fixed organising principal are collapsed into a new dichotomy within a transitory collection. Where does this doublemindedness (sheltering and debasing) towards our cultural output situate my practice within the 'tide of our times'? I would be tempted to say that it is an attempt to escape the authority of institutional classifiers; wreaking havoc in the database like the ghost in the machine. But the final installation was so visibly and curatorially embedded in the rituals, signifiers and authority of traditional art/museum institutions, that this cannot be (entirely) the case. It's

---

<sup>24</sup> Paul Voss, 'The Poetics of the Archive', *Studies in Literary Imagination - Towards a Poetics of the Archive*, 1 (1999), p. i.

<sup>25</sup> Bacon, p. 52.

centred around an imposing Victorian plinth, playing on the cultural weight that this mode of display privileges.

Nick Thurston's piece, *Enigma Variations* originally played on this context of the gallery as a space of authoritative histories.<sup>26</sup> His sound piece was a site-specific audio installation made for the gallery's permanent collection room, where Bury's eighteenth-century oil paintings are on display. Thurston's original siting of *Enigma* featured four corner-mounted loudspeakers playing random sequences from ten MP3 players. Each playlist consisted of a selection of recordings from the mystery shortwave radio broadcasts known as 'number stations'.<sup>27</sup> On the website for the project the work was described:

Each playlist holds an archive of recordings from one or several numbers station(s) plus silences of varying lengths. The broadcasts represent a texture of languages and message-forms recorded as recently as April this year, in Arabic, English, Frasi, German, Russian, Slovakian and Spanish tongues, plus polytone sequences. Formally reduced to a sound signal and set amongst this Edwardian museal idyll of Romantic and Neo-Classical figurative art, *The Enigma Variations* blurts into the discourse of the hall as the 'number stations' do through the interface of the radio waves.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear that Thurston sees his role as an artist working within the expanding archive of the radio broadcasts, as a mediator between the subversive unknown and the polite museum space. Just as the 'number stations' infiltrate the homely notion of radio, Thurston's work disrupts the recognised order of the art museum space. For him the creative act, and as I would see it the zombification of that archive, is to transpose it into a public, open space. The broadcasts at once haunt the gallery and the paintings on the walls become intrinsically linked to the strange audio output.

---

<sup>26</sup> Nick Thurston, *Enigma Variations*, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> The so-called 'number stations' are types of shortwave radio stations, first detected in the 1950s. They broadcast mystery sequences of code and short computer generated tunes. They are thought to be espionage related, broadcasting to spies, although the now outmoded Cold War technology makes them sound more like strange audio relics than active messaging. See The Conet Project, *The Conet Project: Recordings of Shortwave Numbers Stations* (Irdial Discs, 2001) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcJK56Ep5Rw>> [accessed 10 February 2009].

<sup>28</sup> Nick Thurston, 'Thisisa.info' <<http://thisisa.info/>> [accessed 17 April 2010].



My intervention in using Thurston's piece was to return the radio broadcasts to the intimate listening space, and to the object. The field recording of the audio composition I used for my installation was a document of the original piece, but behaving in the same confusing, fragmented way. Listening to the strange radio voices from the audio space of headphones put the listener back into the unsettling position of direct message-receiver, and back into the role of one-to-one dialogue with the broadcasting voice. I deliberately positioned the headphones for this recording in proximity to the crystal radio receiver in the plinth. Further imposing the idea on the listener that the recording is from an unknown origin and intensifying their relationship with the audio. Indeed crystal radios, rather than battery or electric power ran on the connection inside the valve on the face of the receiver. They contain a mineral crystal connected to a thin conducting wire (known as 'cat's whiskers') and were used for detecting basic radio transmissions such as Morse Code or pulse signals.

The concept of 'enigma' I feel is key to the installation project overall. The sense of known mystery, or imposed mystery on an object or artefact pulls the archive away from legitimate knowledge, or cultural legacy. For Derrida the one thing that evades the archive is the secret. Or rather there can be no archive *of* the secret: 'The secret is the very ash of the archive...there is no sense in searching for the secret of what anyone may have known'.<sup>29</sup> The secret can only be classified as that, on its own terms, as unknowable. The highly secretive 'number stations' have only data surrounding their existence, they are simply voices counting numbers located to certain radio frequencies. They have nothing interior to their presence. It is their unknowability that gives them a status within the archive and Thurston's intervention in that system enters my installation encoded by the rules of the secret.

For the artist Carolyn Thompson the secrets within an archive are the only spaces fit for occupying as an artist – or rather the artist has a duty to re-claim these territories. Her sound piece for the Text Festival 2009, *Progress*, was semi fictionalisation of Bury's history.<sup>30</sup> During a prolonged 'occupation' of the Bury document archive Thompson was driven to make a work out of the building plans and descriptions of public sites that no

---

<sup>29</sup> Derrida, p. 100.

<sup>30</sup> Carolyn Thompson, *Progress*, 2009.

longer exist in Bury. The result was two audio-tours of a town bathhouse and an old theatre with descriptions detailing the physical layout, the interior and architecture, and the historical context of the sites. In the works original incarnation the audio-tours were played in a small, darkened room on the stairs to the main galleries. In this little divergent space listeners sat still in the dark while they toured the now imagined spaces.

Thompson's work, out of all the sound-based artworks I engaged with, seemed to be making the most explicit *comment*: on the nature of archives, the layers of memory and mourning in a town, the way a community's spectres manifest themselves in physical-document-monumental spaces, and the relationship between visual imagination and auditory experience. The clarity of the piece made my interaction with it feel somewhat more intrusive. But that is precisely the terms of engagement set out by my work. By re/disorganising narratives from the archive and realigning discursive signifiers within it Thompson underlines that our trajectories of history are malleable and can be reconstituted within fresh contexts. Thompson's interaction with the document archive evokes a building's history, and negates it in the same act.

Thompson's project is a perfect performance of Derrida's claim that to archive is to perform an act of the death-drive; to destroy a memory is the same motivation to shelter it. Thompson's provocative title, *Progress*, suggests that loss and renewal are always inseparable, and that ultimately progress is a fiction. The buildings have gone, but their paramaterial, document and index in the archive remain *true*. This theme of recovery is significant in terms of the archive; to recover is to save, make precious, to treasure something and attach a value based on its near loss. On the other hand the ubiquitous process of information retrieval is random, insignificant, mundane – part of our everyday relationship with media. To frame information recovery as a creative act, indeed with further interventions, is to also make the process of searching for data inconsequential. The ritualising of lost buildings becomes an everyday ordinary act.

It is useful to frame my work on the archive in this way; as part of a wider practice of information retrieval that I take part in everyday. In this sense, while I accept that my presence within the installation was interventionist I was also keen to be somewhat in the background. The work of Bergvall, Thurston and Thompson were all themselves interacting, or parasitizing another text, source material or archive. Therefore

my recontextualising had to address that. To include Philip Davenport's album of audio poems was potentially to disrupt that. Davenport's poetry album *Constellation of Luminous Details* was the only piece that was not strictly part of any Text Festival or Bury Art Gallery collection.<sup>31</sup> The affiliation was due to the poet's close relationship with the Festival and his ongoing involvement in works that come out of it. The piece was appealing to me, as it existed as a document in a different way to the other sound files. It hadn't existed previously as an event. In this case it brought a more discursive conversation on poetry into the larger meaning of the installation. The album comprises of numerous sound poems read by a variety of voices and with a range of edited sound textures. Located near the box of phonograph cylinders I hoped to play on this and incite a polyvocal experience. Some of the poems on Davenport's album are read by 'amateur' readers, older people in hospital beds or in cafes. Their raw encounter with the text is reflected in their voices. The text is unfamiliar to them and so their speech through it is nervous and uncontrolled, unlike Bergvall's articulated handling of her own writing. These recordings also include the background noise in the room, other conversations, shuffling chairs and clinking cups. It makes the event of reading poetry unremarkable apart from the fact of its recording. In contrast, other tracks on the album have stylised sound design on them. However, both types of texts give the impression that sound and voice are effective impressions on poetry. As the voice warbles incidentally the text wobbles too, likewise a deliberate sound design impacts on the text; these instances of audio matter make connections outside the text and spread it outwards. I was very drawn to the unsteady voices on Davenport's album and see these noisy, unsteady aspects of the recordings as shifting frames beyond the text of the poems being read. Therefore the anterior shifting frames that I positioned the recording within contribute to this extending connectivity.

In the recording of Ron Silliman reading live, the poetry, the mechanics of the text, are like sediment underneath layers of recorded sound and media; an isolated event captured, like a grainy photograph of a poem. The recording features the renowned 'Language' poet reading at a Text Festival 2009 live event, at The Met Theatre in Bury.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> *Constellation of Luminous Details* (Manchester: Apple Pie Editions, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Silliman, *Ron Silliman Reading at The Met Theatre*, 2009.

In the recording Silliman is reading from his then recently published long poem, *Ketjak*, a poem composed one line per day since 1974. The reading marked Silliman's debut performance in the UK and has since been framed as monumental in itself. The recording therefore is a token signifier of a past moment in and therefore represents an aspect of the Text Festival archive that emphasise its processes of archiving. It is a piece of evidence, and therefore points towards knowledge-attribution as a function of the archive.

I placed the headphones for this piece, tongue-in-cheek, along the plinth in symmetry with the elephant tusk and clay pipes, to give the piece a sense of masculine, rusticity; heroic like a monument. This sound document, like the removed tusk, was a remnant of another time or object. It is residual and now free to be anchored to another complex of meanings. The fact of the live performance is prominent in the recording. The applause and crowd-sounds are the only instance in the installation where an audience is also framed in reference to the text. In the headphone space this could have the effect of evoking a collective in the listener's sense of their involvement with the audio, or determine them as eavesdropper. I was interested in how a sound recording of a live event would activate possible alienation. This creates a confused participation, further upset by the actual material performed in the recording. Silliman's poetry is characteristically dense, and consciously non-responsive to an audience. The text is a thick list of sentences with relatively few access points or moments of rest for a listener. In the installation the echoing mimesis of the objects allow passages through, along and out of the text, a creative noise with which to reinterpret the sound of a poet speaking.

Ironically the sense of staged performance is equally prompted in the final sound file, the interview between visual poet Robert Grenier and Tony Trehy (poet and Bury Museum and Art Gallery and Archive director).<sup>33</sup> Whilst this is the only example of 'loose' speech, unscripted and improvised, it still has a quality of performance. Via the headphones the presence of a third silent listener-party joining the conversation seemed to complete the circuit of dialogue it calls for. In the interview Grenier discusses his sequential visual poetry work, *64*, a series of hand drawn text-images recently accessioned into the Bury Art Gallery collection. In the interview the two talkers probe the conceptual field around the work and discuss the possibility of a poem 'existing in

---

<sup>33</sup> Trehy and Robert Grenier, *Tony Trehy Interviewing Robert Grenier*, 2008.

space', simply speaking for itself with no media or performance to interlocute it. Grenier sees the representations within the poem-drawing as an offering of the object gestured towards; a literal presence coming out of the metaphor through the poetic encounter. I was particularly drawn to this notion and to the way the work in question, *64*, is both absented and presented by the in-depth discussion of it during the interview. My questions for locating this recording were: did my framing of the paratextual interview regarding the work evoke it in the space? Or, did it negate this necessity and make its objecthood redundant?

However, unbeknown to me, in response to my selection of the interview there was a curatorial decision to hang a print of one of Grenier's poem-drawings on the wall next to my installation for the final exhibition layout. The print from Grenier's sequence *Six Poems / September 2005* was written in response to a visit to Ramsbottom during that year's text Festival. Therefore, in relation to the interview as a faculty of the installation, the work there on the wall interfered, completed, interconnected, and punctuated the mechanics within the installation. It draws in the meaning of the gallery space overall and situates the installation within the wider context of the Bury collections. My archive was therefore disrupted, necessarily and within the parameters for interference it sets up for itself.

### **Institutionalised Metaphors: Archive Myth Collapsed into Sound**

The presence of the Grenier drawing created a fault line out of my installation and into the room, and therefore into another paradigm. As a form of hailing to me from the head curator, the hanging of the Grenier print was both one of coherence and disruption. It signalled to me that I cannot set up an amalgam of constellations and connectivity without the horizons escaping into the wider context of the gallery, thus incorporating discursive signifiers into the grand narrative of the installation. Significantly, the wall with the Grenier work was the point where the contemporary art gallery bled into the museum collection, creating a static buzz of institutions. A nearby imposing Victorian urn and a collection of grand eighteenth-century oil paintings on adjacent walls were suddenly connected to my installation via curatorial paths. This put an emphasis on my

plinth, as a cabinet of curiosity and relics of the antiquated museum bodies it references. There was therefore an exteriority to my piece that I (could have but) hadn't predicted. The Grenier piece hung nearby set up a yet another interchange of 'orders' in the various collections, the archive-installation as a product of establishment art history and artwork as an analogue of the Text Festival archive. The mingling of my installation, and gathering together of artefacts, with the wider institutional collections brings another aspect of the archive and the collection into focus. What I haven't yet concentrated on is the politics of collecting. So far I have explored the implications of putting different orders of the archive and art institutional systems into a dialogue. Yet the history of collecting, hoarding and treasuring historical objects has a tense political history that I would like to address in terms of my installation. In doing so the thematic of transmission and communication within my collection may take on a different resonance, as echoes of lost subjectivities. Here I will investigate how the repressed voices of the archive have roots in colonial strategies of amassing cultural materials. How, then, is the act of archiving also a process of rearticulating and restricting marginalised voices?

In an article on colonial acts of hoarding and historicising, Thomas Richards goes back to the original moment of 'archive fever' within British colonial history.<sup>34</sup> The period between 1850 and 1950 marks the most intense period of British colonial collecting, a time when the sense of collecting knowledge and 'housing' it in a single location was synonymous with power and wealth. Central locales like the British Museum and even single eccentric collectors were the nucleus sites of Western knowledge, something that could be added to and expanded on, yet which might continue to exist locally as one central organiser of knowledge. In tune with the century's mass colonial collecting, discrete bodies like the British Museum were swamped in their own data, hoarding more information than it was able to order. At that period of dispersal where foundations of knowledge went from distinct to multiple, from concrete to conceptual, the archive became metaphorical. The idea of the archive became an ideology, with inbuilt structures for absorbing the newly acquired knowledge from colonies. Richards, describes this shift:

---

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Richards, 'Archive and Utopia', *Representations*, 1992, 104–135.

This operational field of projected total knowledge was the archive. The archive was not a building nor even a collection of texts but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledges of metropole and empire.<sup>35</sup>

When the archive could no longer convincingly portray itself as a fixed place it took on the status of utopia and myth, where its representation as an ideal of knowledge became the legacy of the Empire. The sense of the imperial archive that practitioners and artists now nostalgically toy with was born out of Victorian institutions and institutional relationship with the Empire or state. It is relevant to me that many of the objects in my collection are all from this period of colonial history, with Bury museum itself being an artefact born out of this historical ethos. The language of the archive translates as the language of the state, and therefore to operate within this language is to play within the economies of power, industry and labour. This new association with colonial history makes my earlier comments on the ‘zombie archive’ strike a new chord in the discourse of this research. The zombie motif in film and literature has recently been theorised as a product of colonial enslavement and proletarian labour within a Marxist critique.<sup>36</sup> Therefore to claim my archive as zombie as I did previously in this chapter, is to refer to it as a kind of an *imperial* archive, performing the same acts described by Richards; siting objects of consumer industry and relics of colonial trade as the language of the archive, which is the language of the state.

The objects contained within the case of my installation, under the conditions of display, are also significations of a re-conditioning of social strata. The *Dictaphone*, is an emblem of modernising offices. As a part of this modernisation came the figure of the female secretary, the eternal scribe of the recorded male voice as the *Dictaphone's* new fellow construct. Replacing the traditionally well-paid male clerk, the female secretary became the by-product of advances in office technology, with the typewriter coming hand-in-hand with the *Dictaphone*. The phonograph was produced at the pre-plastic side of the capitalist boom period, just before the music industry and the consumer revolution

---

<sup>35</sup> Richards, p. 104.

<sup>36</sup> Gina Wisker, ‘Crossing Liminal Spaces: Teaching the Postcolonial Gothic’, *Pedagogy*, 7 (2007), 401–425.

played out to extremes. The historical phonograph in my installation represents the seed of that relationship between mass production, consumerism and off-shore, post-colonial labour. The invisible subjects (including the elephant and whale) who belong at the other end of the horns, pipes and wires, represent the mouths and ears of labourers, consumers, and apart from that, the colonised. These are in some way the voices I have excavated and rearticulated in my installation. That all these objects have arrived in Bury, washed in on the tide, is a signifier of the town's identity within this landscape of the 'rise and fall' of industry, consumerism and leisure culture. As a market town surrounded by factories, mills, mines and relics of Northern England's past productivity, Bury has absorbed such narratives into its archive. Therefore the objects I am re-presenting can be seen as *footprints* of trade and industry, and undead referents of a local history. The collection is also like a midden heap of the North's industrialised boom. It indicates a past site of cultural consumption and production.

The gramophone, *Dictaphone* and radio are all part of the paradigmatic set of altered communication, concepts of information and societal orders.<sup>37</sup> The object materials in *I did not know till afterwards* all have a provenance from around 1900, the century turn when culture saw the shift from the archive as a building to a metaphorical construct, and also saw sound media as a new storage medium. In his theorisation of 'Discourse Networks', Kittler measures the paradigm shifts that occur in discourse between the 1800s and 1900s through the material technologies that notated and stored information at differing times. Within the treatise Kittler argues that the discourse network of the 1900's was centred on 'inscription systems' and the technologies of data storage/transmission. Storage and recording devices of the epoch of 1900 were well represented by the objects in my cabinet. Those items (*Dictaphone* and *Edison Gem*) were therefore symbolic of the moment sound entered archival institutions, an epochal presence that called for new systems of not only archival knowledge, but archival technologies. The abstract notion of sound as data goes hand in hand with the abstraction of the index, which was eventually transformed into digital form. Sound collapses and abstracts the archive. Where sound is the material stored, its media forms play a role in not only storing but also repressing the sound matter.

---

<sup>37</sup> Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 230-236.



The paradigm set of sound-related objects, as presented in my installation, is also idiomatic of marginalised voices; the hunted elephant, the technologically silenced secretary, the sailors distanced by sea. Therefore while, the collection represents medial shifts in terms of sound, storage and dissemination, it also signifies the displacement of voices. A key conceptual turn of my installation involves a question of how the archive colonises and stores voices. There are examples of such a (po)ethical tensions in much of the practices of sound storage in my installation. The lost utterance, '*I did not know till afterwards*' is a colonised voice. It is kept and stored, treasured even, in the wax phonograph cylinder, but likewise the voice is encased in a medium that silences it. The voice has no identity apart from the archival technologies it is stored through. Its archival technologies and the museumology the cylinder pertains to, are the only language that voice now has. It can speak only as an archived object, signifying a set of museumological systems and values. Yet it is just wax, that is its only literal material. The cylinder is simply wax-matter inscribed with a recorded sound. The speech and the matter have archived and encoded each other.

### **Not till afterwards did I know**

In this project of April 2011, and my reflections that continue in its wake, I am quoting the language of various cultural orders of display and archive. The institutional identities referenced (artificially or not) occur both through randomness and through the deliberate articulation of certain narratives: the Bury Art Gallery, Text Festival poetics, art history and Empire. In my installation I gathered materials and therefore narratives, systems and ideologies together. I heaped them up into a collection of possible statements. In terms of the poetics I have been developing in my thesis overall, the installation became in its practice a manifestation of speech-matter. It weaves together substance and concept into a soundscape, with a technological body. The installation is not just an installation but a *composition* of found sounds and objects. Together they form an intrication of lines of poetry, instances of speech, formations of communicative entities. Methods and effects of communicative speech are the undercurrent of the composition while fluency and articulation is always problematised and interfered with. Wax, wires, ivory and crystal,

are all both matter and mediation. From within the plinth they represented conducted, stored and abstracted voices from the archive. This was both on a symbolical level and in the ‘real’ world, with mediation of the headphones actually connecting listeners to the box. In this way there was a network of real playing and listening, and symbolic signalling and reception.

At the beginning of this report I compared the installation with the so-called ‘brain’ on display at *Documenta 13*. Describing my installation as a brain is to refer to it as a site of fleshed connectivity, medium and matter. The brain is also a space of computation, a space of processing ideas, meaning, speech, and relations between them. This idea of the brain and a looping sequence of thinking through material lines, returns me to my title for the project and installation, *I did not know till afterwards*. Reading like a proclamation, excuse and apology this phrase describes a process of not-knowing and knowing. As a title coming to me at the beginning of the project, rather than as a reflective statement towards the end, it is a future prediction of a retroactive response. In other words, it manifests a confused relationship to time and knowledge, like an archive that necessarily imparts information, conceals it, and then reveals contradictory messages at various moments of encounter.

The line of speech ‘*I did not know...*’ has a sense of recursion and paradoxical heaping, where a voice knows that it did not know until after knowing. The phrase does not claim to know anything now in the present, or to have arrived at a ‘truth’, just that it has been through a process of computation. *I did not know till afterwards* as a project and ethos is the granting of a space of research. By selecting the materials and composing the installation I was setting up a field of exploration that lingered in the process rather than arriving at an answer. I was researching the poetries of Bergvall, Thurston, Thompson, Davenport, Silliman and Grenier, without knowing a strict question. Putting their works into my own was a method of researching them through practice, and therefore discovering new things to know about them. In this way it is a model for practice-led research that greatly benefits my project. There is a process of exchange between the fields of poetry and media culture that I research and the practice work I develop alongside it. Yet this process of exchange is far from simple. Each aspect of approach complicates the other. To take Bergvall’s *Lidl Suga* and to display it against some

scrimshaw was for me an experimental gesture. I wasn't testing the poem against a certain framework of theory rather experimenting in what kind of knowledge could come out of contextualising it in that way. The gesture produced a criticality and new ideas about speech. Within the archive it embodied a thought process and instigated new ones. This is the approach to practice and research that I hope to continue from the point of this project: to experiment in gathering materials and locating a poetics in the generative complications between them.

## Chapter Four Image Page



*I did not know till afterwards*, an installation by Holly Pester at Text Festival, 2011 (artist's own photographs)

## Conclusion

### Making Speech-Matter as Practice-Knowledge

My departure from this thesis, and therefore from this phase in my practice, necessitates a moment of knowing, and thus a making good of my phrase, ‘I did not know till afterwards’. This then is the moment of reflection that translates the many threads and tracks of thought in the chapters, portfolio and portfolio essays into one path, when all the materials ‘heap’ together to become one sustained piece of research. To attempt this, without overriding the deliberately discursive nature of this thesis, requires me to ask questions of my practice-based research that frame it in terms of the discovery and generating of knowledge; to ask what kind of poetics has my thesis engendered? And what has my notion of speech-matter granted me the ability to discover?

The overarching research question of this thesis, as I see it now, is: what can we potentially understand by the term, sound poetry? This question entails the further queries: what kind of practice can potentially call itself sound poetics, and what theories can be generated or knowledge learned from that practice. To name my poetics ‘sound poetry’ has required a set of steps that reconceive this term, and alter what sound poetry has traditionally been understood as. In other words, it is clear to me at this point that my poetry references the lineage of Kurt Schwitters, Bob Cobbing and Steve McCaffery, yet I have conscientiously developed my theory of sound poetics away from this established field which claimed it as a break from the word. I have however positioned Henri Chopin and his praxis as a point of dialogue with my own to turn away from the traditional framing of sound poetry, and indeed Chopin’s own framing of his work. By considering Chopin’s poetry in terms of the circuitry between his body, the tape machine and the vocal emission, I allowed my theorisation of sound poetry to conceive of a poetics of analogue sound, and to understand how the myths of analogue media and the organism of the human body feature in Chopin’s poetics. This process allowed me to develop an innovating concept of mediation, and how poetry operates in relation to sound and transmission media.

This reframing of sound poetry has not only seen an interrogation of what sound poetry is, but also a productive questioning of what the word *sound* means in

this approach to poetics. Such questioning has emerged as, how is sound *noise*? Where noise is interference in a channel of communication, how is it creative? How does sound alter a signal or become a signal that re-conceptualises listener identities, and how can these identity shifts be located as the product of sound poetry? In terms of engagement with the wider practice of poetics I have also instigated the question, how does sound disrupt poetry? These questions discover sound to be the root of a poetics that performs itself through incoherencies. The sounding of incoherence in this poetics materialises through comedy, nonsense and the problematising of intelligibility. In my development of these theoretical tasks the *sound* of sound poetry also becomes a kind of resistance. That is, a resistance to obedient listening and to muted states of attending to a hailing signal. Such resistances have expressed themselves in my practice through gendered moments where a poem's performative persona fuses expressions of distortion, deviancy and femininity, instances of making noise, and also by allowing my practice materials to speak for themselves. 'The Squid's Poem' for instance doesn't instantly seem to be a poem that celebrates incoherency and rebellious echo as resistance. The voice in the poem is humble, the scene of the poem is relatively graspable. And yet the awkward creature occupies a position of complicated intelligibility within a system. The squid's voice is my voice becoming obscure, by making the system around it seem strange and incoherent.

In practising these theoretical steps in the theorising of the sound of sound poetry, this thesis has analysed the performance of speech in poetry, asking: what is sound in relation to speech and what is speech in relation to sound poetry? Through this analysis my research has discovered information regarding the matter and mechanisms of speech. This thesis has understood speech as an energetic material, in that it acts as a force of energy and through levels of materiality. In this theorisation, speech is constantly affected by forms of mediation, whether technological or abstract channels of communication. This practice-knowledge of speech in my work has learned from the artist Caroline Bergvall how to make a practice that allows energies of speech to matter. In my practice, informed by Bergvall's multi-sited works, the roles of speakers and listeners are the situations from which to process poetry, where the political fields of speaking are tested as much as the vocal, bodily sensation of speaking. Therefore I have established a poetics that involves itself in the practice and performance of speech, as well as the practice and performance of listening.

### **Involvement within the Field**

My initial point of engagement with Henri Chopin sought to redetermine his significance in terms of embodied and performed poetry. This engagement enabled me to critique the politics of 1960s sound poetry, where its practitioners sought to become *empowered* by the rebellion against the word and return speech to a primal state of communication. Drawing out Chopin's engagement with media forms became a mode of critiquing that philosophy of the nobility of oral communication, that doesn't undermine historical sound poetry's generative experiments. Chapter One therefore initiated a conceptual framework for sound poetry that investigates aspects of mediation, without my returning to the literal spaces of the tape machine in my own work. The related poetry and portfolio essay therefore negotiated a way to *swallow* ideas learned from debating Chopin's poetics, and reform them as practice, as seen in 'Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine' where I vocalise and embody ideas of malfunctioning media and analogue sound.

Also in my thesis I created new models for sound poetics using Michel Serres's philosophy of parasitic noise, and Denise Riley's theories of interpellation within the lyric. This engagement provided a means to analyse the hailing processes of radiophonic sound poetry. By developing this analysis into an expanded notion of signalling and sound, for instance through the work of Hannah Weiner, I developed a method for sound poetry that recognises its integration with the lyric. My practice work in relation to these concepts of distortion and reverberated signals, sees my occupation of the role of the poet as retransmission device, that flicks signals back out into the system and problematises the very act of transmission. In works such as *News Pieces*, echo became a modality of theory and practice.

My project, whilst focussing on the internal workings of poetry, also built a theoretical language for contemporary poetics engaged in sound and the materiality of language, that recognises their mediations and cross-media shifts as being about more than artists' disciplines or distribution formats. I explored the usefulness of a notion of 'milieu' to theorise practice procedures in relation to the intricate mechanisms of speech-driven poetry. This model for poetic practice theorises the construction of environments and milieux, as a combination of a practice's processes, materials and contexts. A milieu is a channel or context where operations occur, as well as the mechanism through which those operations evolve. This notion of milieu was drawn

out from a dialogue with the historic premise of Intermedia as defined by Dick Higgins with regards to 1960s Fluxus art. In my theorisation, milieu, as a shift from intermedia, was found to be more suitable to contemporary communication technologies and notions of media. Where Intermedia was based on the link between everyday life paradigms and mediated, artistic acts, the notion of milieu operates on a basis that in contemporary practices such everyday life paradigms and medial engagement are all already, utterly fused. In other words, mediated communication and ‘everyday’ communication are intermeshed and common speech is always within a network of mediation. Therefore the spaces in between media engagement are not gaps, but intricate configurations, within which a poetics can be sited.

My project at the 2011 Text Festival, including my final installation piece and my reflective report, in this thesis represents a folding together of theory and practice into single research space. This project investigated, tested and *created* knowledge regarding the behaviour of sound, poetry and artefact within the archive, and also as an exhibited collection on display. My practice here became an analytical research space that maintained a balanced feedback between critical engagement and loose explorative practice. The assemblage I drew together operated in a modality that allowed practice to *be* thought, and gathered materials to discover knowledge regarding the archive, the collection and archived transmissions. Through this engagement I can pinpoint a key aspect of my practice that has emerged through the overall project of this thesis as my making disparate materials become methodology. I take ideas or situations and translate them into a methodology, such as ‘black box’, where the notion of hidden mechanisms and effects of communication became a mode for devising a particular work and then thinking through practice overall, or ‘echo’, where the technical notion became a point of theory, and then a practice ethos for ‘disobedient listening’. However this sequence of concept-into-method, proposes a chronology of knowing beforehand that isn’t always the case. For instance I could say that Buddy Holly was a methodology I used to think through situations of analogue sound and the body, yet the sequence of events were the reverse: I made the piece first, letting practice be a mystery operation. It was my reflection on the work that made me realise it *as* research into analogue mediations and the voice. A more consistent methodology within my work, would be the modality of the black box. This modality, of obscure materials, allows me to admit that every new work is a blind spot until it translates into research. I can gather the materials and create an



environment but always within a necessary obscurity. Therefore this thesis consistently operates within the echo of *'I did not know till afterwards'*.

### **A Departure Point**

The final poem in my portfolio represents my spiralling off from the looping cycle of this project, towards formulating new processes and new platforms for my practice. The poem, 'Juggle Fish, a black box shanty' shares many processes and feedback echo from the rest of the portfolio, but like my report on the Text Festival installation, it completes a loop and sets up a scaffold for me to further develop my practice.<sup>1</sup> It was written on a short residency at the 2012 *Documenta (13)*, for which I devised this poem in response to material and conversations from the art show. While there I saw an instalment of a series of talks called the 'Black Box' conversations, at the Orangerie in Kassel. These talks focused on a set of five objects from the museum's Cabinet of Astronomy and Physics described as 'inexplicable objects and obsolete scientific instruments'.<sup>2</sup> The museum objects did not have providence or any information to explain their age, origin or function. One of the invited speakers talked about the objects in relation to what he understood to be the origins of the phrase, 'black box'; described as factory workers during the World War II who were making and testing machinery without knowing what they were doing, earning the workers the name 'black box workers'. I cannot find a reference to this being the origin of the term (it may be a merging of black box testers and the story of the world war radar boxes as I describe in Portfolio Essay 3) but I was nevertheless drawn the idea of black box workers and the coincidence with my research on work songs and the black box as a space of obscured mechanisms in the passing of information. Also, these mystery museum objects recalled my installation and how encryptions from the archive become transmitted and reinterpreted as strange messages.

The poem, 'Juggle Fish' uses the sea song, 'Ye Mariners All' as a recurring motif or chorus, for which I generated modegreens whilst listening to the song.<sup>3</sup> Deliberately encrypting my hearing of the song insisted on a kind of body knowledge,

<sup>1</sup> Go to portfolio, p. 280 and audio disk two, Track 7.

<sup>2</sup> 'Documenta (13) Program, "Black Box"', 2012 <<http://d13.documenta.de/#/programs/the-kassel-programs/some-artworks-and-programs-initiated-by-documenta-13-participants/black-box/>> [accessed 25 December 2012].

<sup>3</sup> Stan Hugill and X-Seamen's Insitute, *Sea Songs: Newport, Rhode Island- Songs from the Age of Sail* (Folkways Records, 1980).

or non-knowledge, where I employed intuitive mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> I had to make listening an obscure instrument, and this complicated listening became the work of the song. The text mingles together ideas from the *Documenta* exhibitions, themes that could be described as germinations, connections and movements, and ideas described in the *Documenta* guide as, ‘commitment, matter, embodiment’.<sup>5</sup> The poem intricates ideas of sheep, wood and ‘workers who don’t know what they’re doing’ into a sense of biopolitics and disenfranchisement. The lines echo scenarios or ideas from throughout this project whilst also stepping into new types of writing, where I am more assertive in the effects and operations of speech-matter. Using song and various levels of appeal in the voice, this poem sees speech-matter as a working frame, rather than the main aspect of the text’s materiality. In other words, speech-matter has become an embedded mechanism in this poem. This project has given me a level of ‘agility’ in using speech-matter and understanding how speech operates and sounds within a poem, how the voice switches in its address to other voices, to listeners and to bodies.<sup>6</sup> Yet this level of agility also tells me that its now necessary to move on, and become confused by practice again.

---

<sup>4</sup> The poem is called ‘Juggle Fish’ because of a mishearing by an audience member in Kassel, of the phrase ‘jug of this’.

<sup>5</sup> Forward note by Documenta director, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Documenta (13): Catalog III/3, The Guidebook* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> In Chapter One I spoke about Henri Chopin’s sense of agility in constructing tape machined poems described in Chopin, *Oh*, Balsam Flex.

## Details of Performance Events and Publications

### News Pieces

First read at, 'The Women's Innovative Poetry & Cross-Genre Festival', 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2010, University of Greenwich. The festival included papers and performances by Caroline Bergvall, Venessa Place, Lisa Robertson, Carol Watts, Emily Critchley  
Also published in *Hoofs*, a poetry collection published by *if p then q* Press in October 2011.

### Katrina Sequence

Written over 2010 for a series of collaborative performances with James Wilkes, including Ledbury Poetry Festival July 2010. It was recently published as a book-work in Summer 2012 by Intercapillary Editions.

### Danger Scale

First read at the 'Icelandic and British Poets' Maintenant Reading Series, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2010, Icelandic Embassy, London, including performances by Patrick Coyle, Tamarin Norwood and Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl. Also published in *Hoofs*.

### Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine

First read at, 'Naujas Poezijos: Young Lithuanian & British Poets', Maintenant Reading Series, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2011 at Europe House, London, an event welcoming Lithuanian poets to London with a reception at Europe House and an exchange of poetry featuring Donatas Petrošius, Gabriele Labanauskaite, Tomas S. Butkus, Agnes Lehoczky, Jeff Hilson, Tim Atkins, Amy De'Ath. Also published in *Hoofs*.

### Effort Noise, a space shanty

First read at, 'Sound and Dark', Text Festival Performance, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2011 at The Met, Bury, a performance event of experimental sound poetry featuring Christian Bök, Derek Beaulieu, Geof Huth. Also published in *Hoofs*.

### Majel Barrett, a space shanty

First read at, 'Electronic Voice Phenomena', 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 at the Bluecoat, Liverpool, a performance evening including Emma Bennett and Mark Leahy.

**From this Swam**

First read at, 'Xing the Line' Poetry Reading Series, 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2012, The Apple Tree, London.

**News Piece**

Sound installation commission for StAnza Poetry Festival, 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> March, 2012, St. Andrews. The piece was installed on the street near the main festival venue and also in a local art gallery.

**Shadow was amazed to hear his owner refer to the toilet as the big white phone**

First installed at, 'Word of Mouth', group exhibition, 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March, 2012, Cartel Gallery, London. Also read at, 'Prague Micro Festival', 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2012, K4 Club, Prague. Also broadcast on, *Radeq*, temporary arts radio station in the V22 Summer Club, London, 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2012.

**Juggle Fish, a black box shanty**

First read at, 'Chorality, On Retreat: A Writers' Residency' at *Documenta (13)*, 20<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> August, 2012, Kassel. The piece was written during the residency and read at Offener Kanal Café, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2012 with artist, Adam Kleinman.

## From this Swam

I swam he took my clothes off  
 Then he swam while I took his clothes off  
 He took my clothes off as I swam  
 He swam and I took his clothes off  
 Then I swam and he took my clothes off  
 And I took his clothes off as he swam  
 While I swam he took my clothes off  
 And while he swam I took his clothes off  
 I swam and he took my clothes off  
 I took his clothes off as he swam  
 Then I swam while he took my clothes off  
 And as I took his clothes off, he swam  
 Then while I swam he took my clothes off  
 Then while he swam I took his clothes off  
 I swam while he took my clothes off  
 Then while I took his clothes off, he swam  
 As he took my clothes off, I swam  
 He swam and I took his clothes off  
 Then I swam and, he took my clothes off  
 He swam as I took his clothes off  
 As I swam he took my clothes off  
 He swam, I took his clothes off  
 So, I swam and he took my clothes off  
 And as I took his clothes off he, swam  
 As he swam I, took his clothes off  
 So he took my clothes off, and I swam  
 So then, I took his clothes off while he swam  
 Then he took my clothes off, and I swam  
 And then as he swam I, took his clothes off  
 So while I swam he took my clothes off  
 I took his clothes off, so he swam  
 Then so I swam he took my clothes off  
 So I took his clothes off, he swam  
 I swam, so he took my clothes off  
 Then he took off my clothes as I swam  
 So then I took off his clothes, and he swam  
 Then as he took off my clothes, I swam  
 I took off his clothes, he swam  
 Then he took off my clothes, I swam  
 While I took off his clothes he swam  
 Then he took off my clothes and I swam  
 So then I took off his clothes as he swam  
 I swam so he took my clothes off  
 Then he swam so I took off his clothes  
 Then while he took off my clothes I swam  
 So while I took his clothes off he swam  
 And he, took off my clothes, then I swam

## Buddy Holly is on my Answer Machine

Peggy S\_

Peggy S\_

Peggy S\_

Pretty pretty pty petty pty pty pty

P

eggy Sue

Hu-ho hu-ho

Peggy ↓ my ↑

---

Peggy ↓ my. ↑

PEG →→→→→→→

Creep creep creep creep creep eeeeeEGG

HU -\_hue hu -hue hu-hue hue hue

↓with above ↓so so with above ↓see so above so ↓with so sea sway above sew

say rare and

true ↑ slip

patchy ↑

my

p eggy →→

Su - he - hoo he- hoo B! he - hoo B! he- hoo-he-hoo-hoo

If ya hoop ha hoop ha hoop f yahoo fa hopp

CRAB

Peggy - peggy - peggy - peggy - peggy - peggy - peggy - peggy - peggy

Pegg

y ↓ Sew

say crab - bee ↑

MY ↑ crab ↓

Crab ↓ - bee ↑

My ↑

crab ↓ ring

Ring ring?

My clunk. Clunk clunk

My clunk

My heart clunk

My heart clunk

My ↑ Heart ↑ Yearns ↑  
 my ↑ heart ↑ yearns ↑  
 my ↑ heart ↑ yearns ↑  
 my ↑ heart ↑ yearns ↑  
 my ↑ heart ↑ yearns ↑  
 my ↑ heart ↑ yearns ↑  
 My shivering heart  
 my heart shivering  
 my shiver  
 shivering

pretty pretty pretty pretty pretty pretty pretty pretty pretty pretty pretty  
 pretty pretty pretty

sticky pretty pretty pretty sticky pretty pretty pretty  
 sticky sticky sticky sticky pretty pretty pretty

Peggy Sue  
 Peggy flew  
 Peggy soak

A - ho Achy↑  
 My Achy-su-hu—hoo

Back  
 back  
 back  
 back they think they think they seem pretty

Wella left ja girl ----- HAIR  
 Wella left ja hair hair girl  
 Peggy Hair  
 Peggy hair hair  
 Peggy  
 who

Who-hoo-who-whoo-wh-hoo-hoo Who? Peggy↑  
 Peggy sleeps↑  
 Peggy↑  
 hoo-who  
 I luft you↑ Paid to sit↑  
 Peggy↓ paid to chew↑  
 I luft chew↑  
 painful ship  
 plummy↓

witha lump  
 So↑ rare↑ and↑ true↑  
 With alove so rarey true  
 So rare it flew  
 Rarey↓  
 Week a love solar lunchroom  
 Week their love so maroon true  
 Weed their love slowly a room  
 Hairy  
 So rare it's tru.e  
 Weedy

Oh Peggy↓  
 My Peggy spewed

Well when I love you anna need to smooth you smooth / wella I loft ya gal and a  
 need to seek you seek / well now because I want to pay you soon / well I love  
 you turn one she wants to pay me soon / well I love you turn one she wants to  
 see me pay / well I love you turn one she paid to see me sew

Anna want chu Peggy Seed.  
 With a lump too rare to sew

I uv you ↑ **Peggy spew**  
**Peggy speed**  
 Peggy rock  
 Peggy shot

Pretty  
 pity  
 pity  
 petite  
 pity  
 pretty  
**Peggy Stroke↑**  
**Pepper shake↑**

Peace at last  
 Pocahontas  
 Panorama  
 Planet Earth  
 Please please me  
 Puffin eggs  
 Puffin eggs  
 Puffin eggs

**Pay me now↑**  
**Pay me now↑**  
**Pay me now↑**



Puffin eggs

**P**eggy billowed and spewed

Pillow begged

Pillow begging and sewing

Pillow beg

Peggy shook

## Effort Noise, a space shanty

### *Captstan*

And away-hee and awayhee  
 HO  
 and awyhee-ho  
 Heave Ho  
 Heeeeave HO  
 heeeeave HO away  
 Heave Ho Haul away HO  
 heaps HO haul away HO  
 heeeeave HO And away HO

Heave the bowels  
 hop the bowels  
 the rockét ship  
 Haul away? Jonny?  
 Heave her up and away we go  
 heave away up whiskey  
 Lift a cup  
 a cup of men  
 heave her up and away whup go  
 a roaring leg  
 a sprawling hinge  
 heave her up and away whup go  
 heave her up and away whup go  
 blow yur hip off fee fi fo

Heave away me wobbly boys  
 haul away? Jonny?  
 heave her whup n' whup she go  
 Oh we're bound for wallo wup stream go  
 Woah we're bound for wat-ship-go  
 Ho we're bound for wat-ship-go  
 haul away and watch shit go  
 haul away wat-sit go  
 We're band for Hallooo  
 We're a band of Hallooo lands  
 Oh hallo mission a manky tin...?  
 Heave the hulk away ho ?  
 heave the hulk away ho  
 heave ho  
 heave ho  
 heave away clocks weigh?  
 heave away clocks weigh

pens weigh  
 legs away ?  
 legs weigh less than arms weigh  
 legs weigh?  
 Legs weigh less than arms weigh  
 legs ho  
 heave ho  
 pens weigh  
 legs weigh?  
 Legs weigh less than arms weigh  
 Pens way  
 clocks weigh  
 cocks weigh  
 heads weigh less than man weigh  
 bowels go  
 heave ho  
 heave ho  
 Legs weigh  
 Legs weigh less than arms go  
 Legs weigh less than arms go  
 Hops go

*'Sheet shanty'*

He's up  
 knees up  
 hills fade  
 Heave away  
 heave away Jo!  
 hills fade  
 Heave away  
 heave away Jo!  
 hills fade  
 Jocks away  
 a radiation Jo!  
 hills fade  
 Heave away  
 a radiation roll!  
 Heals away  
 heal the way the hills fade  
 Heave away the bows  
 heave away the hills fade  
 Heave away haul way  
 hills fade haul away  
 on the hulk pull!  
 Heave away a hulk of weigh  
 a hulk of weigh  
 Push off 'mid ships push off  
 amid ships

amid ships  
 off  
 Heave away hold on  
 leave me here  
 'cross a line  
 Run a line  
 Cross a line  
 Push off amid ships  
 amid ships  
 off

*Long Haul*

Can you feel me love Buzz  
 Can you feel me love Buzz  
 Can you feel me love Buzz  
 Can you feel me love Buzz  
 way hey me love buzzes blue  
 way hey me love buzzes blue  
 Away turn n dock the lady  
 Dock the girl who buzzers blue

Coasting harnessing an orbit lunar  
 Heave ho - haul me over  
 coasting harnessing an orbit lunar  
 Heave ho  
 haul me over  
 Coasting harnessing an orbit lunar  
 Heave ho  
 haul me over  
 Hoist your arm over a belt o' wavy  
 heave ho  
 haul me over  
 Hoist your arm over a belt o' wavy  
 heave ho  
 haul me over  
 Rest.  
 Course correction  
 reset  
 course correction rest  
 reset  
 Course correction  
 recess  
 course correction

Heave haul and away ho  
 heave haul and away ho  
 heave haul and away orb  
 hold on to your way orbs

We're solar  
 solar solar solar  
 Push the arm that gathers bits  
 so far solar  
 solar solar solar  
 We're so far blowing jammin' bits  
 Wind jammin' walloping round  
 wind jamming pounding sound lines  
 wind jamming Napoleon sounds

Heave n haul away jo  
 heave a weave away jo  
 Jo we'll haul and heave away  
 Jo we'll have a lunar hall  
 Jo we'll have a lunar ball  
 Jo we'll have a lunar hall  
 Haul the air between you  
 haul the air beneath you  
 heave the orb beneath you  
 haul the orbit reach you  
 Haul the orbit skims you  
 haul the orbit skims you

Heave and haul away Jo  
 heave and haul away

Trans earth  
 Trans earth

Haul away a deep soot phase  
 haul away a deep soot phase

Heave ho roll me over  
 heave ho roll me over  
 hard away  
 hard away....

Hold up extra-vehicular  
 hard away  
 hard away....

Hold up extra-vehicular  
 Trans earth  
 trans earth

*Landing*

Homing in

Land me in land me in land me in  
 land me in land me in  
 You've got a bunch of blue men  
 A bunch of blue men  
 A hunch of Hue's men

Drifting backwards whup ho over  
 Hold on run me over  
 hold on run me over  
 It's tricky but it's pretty over

Stamp then go and stamp the sandy  
 stamp n go the sand is landy  
 stamping landy  
 kickin up dusty

Beware your centre of mass  
 Where's your centre of mass, boyee  
 where's your centre of mass?  
 beware your centre of mass  
 where's your centre of mass, boyee  
 Phases of lunar surface  
 where's your centre of mass  
 phases of Stanley Kubrick  
 phases of lunar surface  
 phases of lunar surface

Dance for your planet mother mother planet  
 dance for your mothy planet mission mother planet dance  
 for your planet mission mother's mothy mission planet mother  
 dance for your mother planet, mothy mother planet's mission dance

Purple rocks  
 angularity, granularity

**Majel Barrett, a space shanty**

You're old and you don't believe in God  
WO-hoa working warning workload

You're old and you don't believe in God  
WO-hoa working warning workload

This ship's an old time-wasting slag  
WORK-ing working working working

Untrained aging jelly fish  
WAR-ning working winding making men ache

Jagging cordage in hurly boots  
WORK-tight warning outer hull breach

parasites or pubic lice?  
LOW-lack link inside yur low LAND

This tank is rigged, pricks and spocks  
NO-cunts no cunts no cunts no cunts

A low lack racket is the Island lass  
WO-hoe woman waning warning

Our rucked ship she's a vocal act  
WORK-ing work smart warning woah-land

She went to church and Sunday school  
WORK-ing warring like a Spaniard

Her mother ran away with a Foo Foo band  
FOO-foo fall out fall to Isle buck

You're a lake you're a lake an untrained lyricist  
ALL-hands more hands warning work hands

You're an effort noise a creaking track  
GRANDma Grandma Grandma wo-man

She's stormed and gouged and sunk me tin  
WAR-ning warning hard shell hauling

When she was a young her moon was thinner  
WAR-ning warning wacked and working

She cut her hair she cut her beak off

LOW-luck lower a line below hair

Her teeth were false so were her legs  
LOW-luck lower a line below luck

A snarky teasmaid Rachel knew  
HE-ave all haul us working working

Two trunks put to shippy battle  
FISH-nets working wanting work

A pudding lady the shape o' ships  
HA-ul home haul up haul up hard luck

She a row of banners saying 'count me out'  
HA-ul home haul up haul up hard luck

Now she a croaked and battered language  
HE-ave back air back in your lower back

This Judy's spewed on roughed-up patches  
WORK-ing wasting wasting warning

Her song hash fried from calling lovers  
WARN-ing warned and waned and wasted

She's grogged, smashed-in, cross-eyed latched  
LOW-ho low down low down lie down

She's ragged with rope and dirty trousers  
HA-ul haul low lower than drowned haulers

She grids the captains across the arse  
HA-ul him lads blow the man down

Oh marry me Barret you croak like gin  
WAND-der wonder where your arse is

Your back and sides are made of geese  
YOU'RE geese your geese fly like winged geese

Screwing devils with antennae  
FLASH-light flash light in the night like

When was the last time your wings were scrubbed?  
WORK-ing hard into yur skirts, Belle

All stray dogs they know your whistle  
WOLF-hounds shit o' th'sound of your bell



Oh Mary brown you sweat in petrol  
 FLY-duck flies are steaming men's hooks

You are a star hummer humming it off  
 AIR-duct the wind is trapped in your duck

My Gad, ye lady is all gas and Log Books  
 NO-pay for mothers cripples or androids

Not a pilot not a pilot  
 WAR-hands a woman's hands are warm hands

Are you a boat or rough edged reason  
 HU-mans humans take your arms off

Your scented back of head is fixed  
 CHANEL- Chanel no. 5

Don't trade me Mam I'm in good health  
 WOOD-worm, woodworm ruined wisdom

Crushed whales for sexy bone  
 NO-war low pay for low haulers

You're old and you don't believe in God  
 BLOW-back blow and take the rig back

You're old and you don't believe in God  
 WAR-ning warning warning (aging)

You're old and you don't believe in God  
 WAR-ning warning warning (aging)

You're old and you don't believe in God  
 WAR-ning warning warning (aging)

The captain s not aboard this ship

**News Pieces**

Thursday 8/07/10

- 
- hunt
- Moat
- him
- huurrrp>>
- purp>
- Moat
- fugitive
- Moat
- huurp>>
- mother
- hup>
- pup>>
- hurrrp>>
- 
- huuuurr>>
- pu>
- FM digital
- 2015
- pace of change
- hup>
- 2015
- purp>>
- purp>
- change
- listening
- pup>>
- huurr>>
- huu>
- sound quality
- hup>
- pup>
- switch off
- 
- huurrrp>>
- mistakes
- apology
- schools
- hup>>
- building
- hu>
- pu>
- huurr>>
- hup>

- huuurrp>>
- schools
- hup>
- huurrrp>>
- 
- Prime Minister
- public
- huuurp>>
- target
- 
- huuurrp>>
- children
- hup>
- hu>
- pu>
- 
- huuurrp>>
- millionaire
- Disney
- hhuurp>>
- huurrr
- hu>>
- Disney
- huurrr>>
- hu>
- hurrrp>>
- hup>>
- Disney
- hu>
- hu>
- hurrr>>
- puffin
- hup>>
- population
- Friday 9/7/10
- 
- spy swap
- hurp>>
- hup>>
- Church of England
- vampire
- 
- ten agents
- purp>>
- Cold War
- Russia
- hup>

- detention
- 
- hup>>
- former lover
- huurp>>
- Moat
- 
- huuuurr>>
- NHS
- purp>>
- huuurp>>
- health correspondent
- purp>>
- pup>>
- accountable
- 
- huuuur>>
- stabbed
- boy
- 
- huuurp>>
- pup>
- hur>
- school building
- huu>>
- apology
- 
- huurr>>
- hand gun
- laser weapon
- purp>>
- 
- huurr>
- Bishops
- Roman
- women
- hur>>
- hu>
- hu>
- hu>>
- liberals
- 
- hose pipe
- 
- huuurp>>
- Women's Institute
- quintet
- Jerusalem

Saturday 10/7/10

- 
- huurr>>
- aup>>
- Moat
- hu>
- aup>>
- Moat
- Moat
- hup>>
- huuu>>
- Moat
- pup>
- Moat
- huurrr>>
- hup>>
- hup>
- huur>>
- Moat
- huur>
- hup>
- Moat
- pup>
- I haven't got a dad
- hurr>
- huuur>>
- Moat
- hup>>
- Moat
- 
- huuur>>
- census
- hurp>>
- hurp>
- 400 million
- hup>
- census
- hup>
- 
- huurp>>
- women bishops
- up>>
- Catholicism
- bishops
- hup>
- male clergy
- up>
- women bishops

- 
- oil spill
- hurp>>
- well
- oil
- surface
- 
- huur>>
- hup>
- arp>>
- hu>>
- Russians
- Americans
- hu>>
- prisoner
- Moscow
- Obama
- hurp>
- hurrrp>>
- 
- Home Office
- purp>>
- 
- huuurp>>
- Haiti
- purp>>
- disaster
- donations
- 1 ½ million
- hurp>>
- aid
- water
- water
- water
- pup>>
- needs
- lives
- tarpaulin
- huurrrp>>
- 
- NATO
- huurp>>
- 
- huuurrrp>>
- millions of pounds
- tax
- pup>
- passengers
- tax element

hup>>  
 purp>  
 hurp>  
 Ryan Air  
 hu>

Monday 12/07/10

- 
- Government
- pup>
- hu>>
- purrrp>>
- Government
- hurp>>
- pup>
- hup>>
- doctors
- hu>>
- 
- huurrrp>>
- attacks
- huurrrp>>
- Al Shabab
- huuur>>
- Spanish
- hurr>>
- pup>
- 
- huuurrr>>
- protect
- public
- 
- hurrrp>>
- sermon
- Moat
- hup>
- pup>
- weapon
- shot gun
- Moat
- hup>
- Moat
- purp>>
- manhunt
- Moat
- gunman
- 
- BP
- huuurrrp>>

pup>	North East	hup>
Wednesday	hup>>	huh >
stem	pur>	hu>
pup>	pup>	base
pup>	hu>	•
hu>	huurr>>	football
hur>	hu>	hu>
sucking	•	huu>
pipe	hup>	cup
33 drums	Obama	puh>
hup>>	hu>>	huh>
spewing crude	hurp>>	hu>
•	pup>	old
Mandelson	television	Friday 10/9/10
hup>>	hup>	•
hu>>	hup>	pastor
purp>>	•	burn
secret	huurp>>	hurp>>
purp>>	Alzheimer's	huu>
British people	hup>	hup>
•	pu>	hurp>
fraud	B	burn
fraudsters	vitamin B	hup>
fraud squad	brain	Terry
•	hu>	huur>>
huurrrp>>	purp>	pup>
teenagers	hurp>	pastor
pup>>	brain	pur>
bandit	hup>	puh>
hurp>>	•	Terry
hup>>	hurp>>	huur>>
Thursday 9/9/10	huurp>>	God
•	jet	hup>
huurp>>	pup>	burn
the north	hup>	hup>
hurp>>	jet	huuurp>>
hup>>	business	hup>
puh>	hu>	hu>
cuts	Boeing777	•
huuu>>	huuurp>>	purp>>
the north	hup>>	hup>
pup>	puh>	hup>
south	pu>	expenses
huc>	base	hup>
cuh>	•	hu>
purp>	hu>	cuh>
hup>	credit	•
North West	hup>>	offending
	average	

reoffending

hu>  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 pur>  
 cuh>  
 hu>  
 hu  
 hu>  
 pup>>  
 •  
 hup>>  
 schools  
 schools  
 hu>  
 pup>  
 huuuu>>  
 hu>  
 hup>  
 pu>  
 money  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 ideas  
 pu>  
 pu>  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 •  
 purp>  
 hup>>  
 green  
 huup  
 green  
 hup>>  
 change  
 hurp>>  
 hup>  
 pup>  
 greens  
 purp>  
 hurp>  
 hururp>>  
 purp>  
 pup>

Saturday 11/9/10

•  
 huurp

tax  
 puup>>  
 cuh>  
 hu>  
 tax  
 pay  
 hu>  
 pu>  
 huu>  
 blunder  
 puh>>  
 hu>  
 huu>  
 blunder  
 pu>  
 huu>  
 huup>  
 blunder  
 huup>>  
 hu>  
 huu>  
 cup>>  
 cuh>>  
 pup>  
 pup>  
 huup>  
 cup>  
 hu>>  
 hu>>  
 hu>  
 •  
 huup>>  
 China  
 hu>  
 pu>  
 hup>  
 hu>  
 huurp>>  
 cuts  
 hu>  
 hup>  
 puu>  
 hu>>  
 pu>  
 cuts  
 hu>  
 pup>  
 hup>  
 huuu>>

hu>  
 huup>>  
 cuts  
 •  
 hu>>  
 women  
 disabled  
 huup>>  
 hup>>  
 hu>>  
 huu>  
 strike  
 huu>  
 •  
 huup>>  
 burn  
 Terry  
 hup>>  
 hup>  
 hu>  
 Terry  
 huu>  
 huu>  
 protest  
 pastor  
 hu>  
 cup>  
 pu>  
 puh>>  
 •  
 huurp>>  
 Iranian  
 pup>  
 spy  
 hu>  
 hup>  
 huup>>  
 Australia  
 hup>>  
 huurp>>  
 Wales  
 hup>  
 cup>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 hu>>

hup>  
 hup>  
 huuup>  
 Mexico  
 texas  
 hups>  
 Mexico's  
 hup>  
 hup>

Monday 13/9/10

- 
- strikes
- protest
- hu>
- huup>
- hu>
- huup>
- huuu>>
- union
- union
- spearhead
- huu>
- union
- sweeping
- pu>
- pu>
- protest
- strikes
- huuup>
- huurp>
- party
- huuup>
- rivals
- rules
- hup>
- hup>
- pu>
- huup>
- pu>
- hup>
- cuh>
- huuur>>
- 
- huu>>
- bankers
- huup>>
- huu>
- banking

hu>  
 hu>  
 banking  
 crisis  
 bankers  
 hu>  
 huup>>  
 pu>  
 puh>  
 huu>  
 hu>>  
 hup>  
 hu>  
 •
- huup>>
- Oldham East
- huu>
- hu>
- 
- military
- pu>
- hup>>
- puh>
- hu>>
- democracy
- huu>>
- hotels
- taxis
- hu>
- hurp>>
- puh>
- restaurants
- taxis
- hup>>
- huup>>
- 
- El Grande
  

Tuesday 14/9/10

- 
- cough cough>>
- cough>>
- special needs
- huup>>
- hup>
- huur>
- special
- hup>>
- hu>

hu>  
 special  
 huup>>  
 pu>  
 hu>  
 huu>  
 huu>  
 cuh>>  
 pu>>  
 hu>  
 wrong  
 •
- huuup>>
- hu>>
- pu>
- pu>
- 
- huuup>>
- hu>
- social
- industrial
- huurp>>
- hu>>
- pu>>
- crime
- hu>>
- hup>>
- social
- industrial
- tension
- hu>>
- hu>>
- 
- cuts
- hup>>
- huuurp>>
- Hillary
- hup>
- huu>
- Hillary
- huup>
- hu>
- hu>
- 
- huuup>>
- hu>
- 
- huur>
- cannabis

cannabis  
 hup>>  
 cannabis  
 hup>  
 hu>  
 mental

- 

bladder and bowels  
 hup>>  
 hu>  
 huu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 bladder  
 hu>>  

- 

 hurrp>>  
 tennis!

Wednesday 29/09/10

- 

Liam Fox  
 cuts  
 draconian  
 hurrp>>  
 hu>  
 Fox  
 huuup>>  
 hu>  
 hurp>>  
 Fox  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 pup>  
 pup>  
 hurp>>  
 Dr Fox  
 hurrp>>  

- 

 David  
 Ed  
 hu>  
 hurp>>  
 hurrrp>>  
 hup>>  
 David  
 brother  
 hurp>>  
 irritation

David  
 Tessa  
 hup>  
 pup>  
 hu>  

- 

 Al Qaeda  
 hup>  
 plot  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 hup>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 pu>  

- 

 Kim Jong Il  
 hup>  
 Kim Jong Un  
 hup>  
 hup>  

- 

 huurp>>  
 hurp>>  
 prison  
 cancer  
 Pan Am Flight 103  
 hup>  
 pup>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hup>  
 pup>  
 pu>  

- 

 police  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hurp>>  

- 

 hurrp>>  
 extinction  
 hurp>>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 nature

Thursday 30/09/10

- 

hurp>>  
 scientists  
 hurp>>  
 hur>  
 hu>  
 pup>  
 pup>  
 children  
 hup>  
 purp>>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hurp>>  
 children  
 hup>  
 hurp>  
 hu>  
 hu>  

- 

 huurp>>  
 hurp>>  
 Brian Lenihan  
 hurp>>  
 hurp>>  
 hurp>  
 hurp>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hurp>>  
 hu>  
 bail out  
 hu>  
 hu>  

- 

 complaints  
 hup>  
 complaints  
 hur>>  
 hu>  
 Santander  

- 

 electoral fraud  
 hup>>  
 hurp>>  
 seats  
 electoral fraud  
 hup>

hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 fraud  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 voter  
 disenfranchisement  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 Spanish  
 cyclist  
 steroids  
 hu>  
 hup>>  
 hu>  
 food  
 •  
 huurp>>  
 police  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 pu>  
 police  
 purp>>  
 pu>  
 pu>  
 pu>  
 pu>  
 hu>  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 hu>  
 climate  
 change  
 hurp>  
 hurp>>  
 science  
  
 Friday 1/10/10  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 equality  
 hurp>>  
 pup>>  
 big changes  
 hurp>

equality  
 hu>  
 purp>  
 changes  
 hu>>  
 hup>  
 pup>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hu>  
 hurp>  
 discrimination  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 doctors  
 hu>  
 hu>>  
 hurp>>  
 doctors  
 hu>  
 control  
 hu>>  
 pup>  
 pup>  
 pup>  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 Ecuador  
 hurp>>  
 hu>>  
 tear gas  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 energy  
 energy  
 hu>  
 hup>>  
 hu>  
 pup>  
 pup>  
 gas  
 hu>  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 hup>>  
 •  
 commonwealth  
 hurp>>

enthusiasm  
 hup>  
 chaos  
 hu>  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 hu>  
 pup>  
 hu>  
 power  
 husp>  
 civilian  
 psp>  
 exile  
 comeback  
 •  
 Obama  
 husp>  
 blow  
  
 Saturday 2/10/10  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 health and safety  
 hu>>  
 road salt  
 hu>>  
 hu>>  
 hu>  
 injury lawyer  
 pusp>>  
 salt  
 hu>>  
 •  
 husp>>  
 fraud  
 pu>  
 duped  
 hsp>  
 hsp>  
 take precautions  
 hsp>  
 padlock  
 fake  
 •  
 hurp>>  
 druids  
 druids  
 earth spirit



thunder	hup>	hup>>
•	cuts	frustration
husp>>	aircraft carriers	hurp>>
Iraq	strike fleet	•
hu>	curp>>	huurr>>
200 days	jets	bishops
•	hu>>	women bishops
hup>>	hup>	hup>>
blaze	cuts	bishops
psp>	hup>>	hu>
fire	Trident	hu>
fire	•	traditionalists
pup>>	National Security	women bishops
bonfire	hup>>	traditionalists
night	hup>>	bishop
•	threat	hu>
puusp>	threat	hup>
hu>	hu>	women
rain	threats	bishops
ryder	purp>>	•
hu>>	•	huurp>>
•	huurp>>	scottish health
equality	cuts	purp>>
psp>	education	hu>
office joke	schooling	hup>
	hup>	hup>>
	schools	hup>
Saturday 16/10/10	hurrrp>	pu>>
•	hup>	•
cuurp>>	cuts	huurrrp>>
Liam Fox	hup>>	miners
hu>	hu>>	hu>
cut	schools	pu>
Fox	hup>>	miners
cuurp>	cuts	health
hup>	schools	miner's health
hu>	•	•
defence	huurp>>	huurrrp>>
defence	compensation	French students
hurp>>	pensions	hup>>
armed forces	savings	marches
hurp>	compensation	unrest
pup>>	hurrrp>>	French students
Liam Fox	hu>	hup>
cuts	hu>>	student
pup>>	hup>>	pup>
cuts	•	change
hu>	football	cup>
hup>	purp>>	young people

cup>	bank	time and money
next generation	tax	
leftist	huurp>	Tuesday 14/12/10
hup>	banks	•
younger people	•	huuh >>
students	hurrrp>>	hup>
•	barrage	cuh>
hurp>>	hu>	diplomat
Eurostar	tidal energy	cup>
strike	barrage	cuh>
	hu>	giant
Monday 18/10/10	climate change	hup>>
•	hu>	hu>
international terrorism	hu>	hu>>
networks	barrage	hup>
hurrrp>>	barrage	famous?
hu>	barrage	cuh>>
security	•	diplomat
hu>>	car	•
security	nightclub	huh>>
security	hu>	hup>>
hurp>	hu>	hu>
security	•	cu>
networks	huurp>>	savings
cu>	hur>	savings
hu>	hu>	hup>>
international	•	cup>
terrorism	huurp>>	savings
hu>>	otter population	hu>
security	hurp>	cuh>
hu>>	hu>	social
•	otters	social care
hurrrp>>	hu>>	hup>
cut	otters	savings
hurpp>>	hu>>	efficiency savings
cuts	hu>>	cup>
hu>	otter	•
cuts	hup>	huh>>
hu>	hu>	hu>
cut	otters	tuition fees
pu>	otters	huh>
pup>>	otter	blocked
pu>	hu>	hup>
squeeze	hu>	huh>
cu>	pup>>	debated
hu>	•	•
hu>	the internet	huh>>
cuts	the web	hu>
•	hup>	cu>

bonus	huh>	pu>
•	extremely close	hu>
huhh>>		fraud
•	Wednesday	•
huuh>>>	15/12/10	hu>>
diplomat	•	debt
hup>	huuh>>	hu>
leaked	huh>	cu>>
hup>	hu>	students
hup>	hu>	hu>>
Wikileaks	big changes	consumers
hu>>	hu>	hu>
hup>	cu>>	hu>
diplomat	warned	student
huh>	mixed sex	hu>
huh>>	hu>>	hu>>
hu>	great changes	hu>>
hu>	hup>>	which
hu>	hu>>	which
hu>	pu>	switch
hu>	pu>	hu>
leaks	hu>	stop
hu>	change	make sure you stop
•	floated	•
huh>>	•	hu>>
hu>	human organs	murder
cuh>>	huhh>>	hu>
banker	hu>	murder
hu>	pu>	•
cu>	hu>	Wikileaks
catastrophe	ridiculous	hu>
•	•	hu>
hup>>	huhh>	pending
electric car	hu>	huh>
puh>	pensions	hu>
pu>	hu>	pending
hu>	hu>	£200, 000
electric cars	cu>	cuh>>
cars	pensions	cuh>>
hu>	pensions	hu>
hu>	hu>>	£100, 000
cuh>	hu>	huh>
cars	cuh>	hu>
hu>	cu>	•
hu>	hu>	cuts
•	•	hu>>
Berlusconi	oil	hu>
hu>	huh>>>	hu>>
hu>	hu>	hu>

Thursday 16/12/10

- oil spill
- hu>
- cuh>
- hu>
- massive
- hu>>
- cuh>>
- hu>
- oil spill
- oil
- 
- huh>>
- drugs
- huh>
- drugs
- drugs
- drugs
- hu>>
- drugs
- 
- huh>>
- hu>
- power
- hu>
- warning
- hu>
- 
- huh>>
- drone
- hu>
- hu>>
- air attack
- 
- human rights
- hu>
- hup>
- human rights
- hu>
- humiliating
- traumatic
- violation
- 
- huh>>
- hu>
- hu>>
- perverting

hup>>

- children>>
- hu>>
- hu>>
- detention
- children
- hu>
- 
- huhh>>
- researchers
- hu>
- pu>
- pu>
- psychiatrists
- hu>>
- cuh>>
- distressed and fail
- to eat

## Danger Scale

Pre-pre-pre 7/7/05

MODERATE

Possible, not likely

Pre-pre 7/7/05

SEVERE GENERAL

Generally likely

Pre 7/7/05

SUBSTANTIAL

1. Strong possibility
2. Strong possibility
3. Strong possibility
4. Strong possibility
5. Strong possibility
6. Strong possibility
7. Strong possibility
8. Strong possibility
9. Strong possibility
10. Strong possibility
11. Strong possibility
12. Strong possibility
13. Strong possibility
14. Strong possibility
15. Strong possibility
16. Strong possibility
17. Strong possibility
18. Strong possibility
19. Strong possibility
20. Some fat
21. Saturated fat
22. A sugar
23. A salt
24. Amber fat
25. Amber salt
26. Strong sugary
27. Salt
28. Amber salty
29. Strong possibility
30. Strong possibility
31. Strong possibility
32. Strong possibility
33. Strong possibility
34. Strong possibility
35. Strong possibility
36. Strong possibility

37. Strong possibility
38. Strong possibility
39. Strong possibility
40. Strong possibility
41. Strong possibility
42. Strong possibility
43. Strong possibility
44. Strong possibility
45. Strong possibility
46. Strong possibility
47. Strong possibility
48. Strong possibility
49. Strong possibility
50. Strong possibility
51. Strong possibility
52. Strong possibility
53. Strong possibility
54. Strong possibility
55. Strong possibility

390 days

1 year 25 days

55 weeks

1/8/06

**SEVERE**

1. Highly likely
2. Highly likely
3. Highly likely
4. Highly likely
5. Highly likely
6. Highly likely
7. Highly likely
8. Highly likely
9. Highly likely

9 days

10/8/06

**CRITICAL**

1. Expected imminently
2. Expected imminently
3. Expected imminently
4. Expected imminently

4 days

14/08/06

## SEVERE

1. Highly likely
2. Highly likely
3. Highly likely
4. Highly likely
5. Highly likely
6. Highly likely
7. Highly likely
8. Highly likely
9. Highly likely
10. Highly likely
11. Highly likely
12. Highly likely
13. Highly likely
14. Highly likely
15. Highly likely
16. Highly likely
17. Highly likely
18. Highly likely
19. Highly likely
20. Highly likely
21. Highly likely
22. Highly likely
23. Highly likely
24. Highly likely
25. Highly likely
26. Highly likely
27. Highly likely
28. Highly likely
29. Highly likely
30. Highly likely
31. Highly likely
32. Highly likely
33. Highly likely
34. Highly likely
35. Highly likely
36. Highly likely
37. Highly likely
38. Highly likely
39. Highly likely
40. Highly likely
41. Highly likely
42. Highly likely
43. Highly likely
44. Highly likely
45. Highly likely

320 days

10 months 16 days

45 weeks

30/06/07

CRITICAL

1. Expected imminently
2. Expected imminently
3. Expected imminently
4. Expected imminently

4 days (96 hours)

04/07/07

SEVERE

1. Highly likely
2. Highly likely
3. Highly likely
4. Highly likely
5. Highly likely
6. Highly likely
7. Highly likely
8. High fat
9. fatty
10. lots of sugar
11. Highly likely
12. Highly likely
13. Highly likely
14. High in salt
15. And saturated fat
16. Highly likely
17. Highly likely
18. Highly likely
19. Highly likely
20. Highly likely
21. Highly likely
22. Highly likely
23. Highly likely
24. Highly likely
25. Highly likely
26. Highly likely
27. Highly likely
28. Highly likely
29. Highly likely
30. Highly likely
31. Highly likely
32. Highly likely
33. Highly portion
34. Red portion
35. Red fat
36. Fat red



37. Fat portion
38. Highly red
39. Highly red
40. Very red
41. Fat red
42. And red salt
43. Highly salty
44. Highly likely
45. Highly likely
46. Highly likely
47. Highly likely
48. Highly likely
49. Highly likely
50. Highly likely
51. Highly likely
52. Highly likely
53. Highly likely
54. Highly likely
55. Highly likely
56. Highly likely
57. Highly likely
58. Highly likely
59. Highly likely
60. Highly likely
61. Highly likely
62. Highly likely
63. Highly likely
64. Highly likely
65. Highly likely
66. Highly likely
67. Highly likely
68. Highly likely
69. Highly likely
70. Highly likely
71. Highly likely
72. Highly likely
73. Highly likely
74. Highly likely
75. Highly likely
76. Highly likely
77. Highly likely
78. Highly likely
79. Highly likely
80. Highly likely
81. Highly likely
82. Highly likely
83. Highly likely
84. Highly likely
85. Highly likely

86. Highly likely
87. Highly likely
88. Highly likely
89. Highly likely
90. Highly likely
91. Highly likely
92. Highly likely
93. Highly likely
94. Highly likely
95. Highly likely
96. Highly likely
97. Highly likely
98. Highly likely
99. Highly likely
100. Highly likely
101. Highly likely
102. Highly likely
103. Highly likely
104. Highly likely
105. Highly likely
106. Highly likely

747 days

2 years 16 days

106 weeks

20/07/09

**SUBSTANTIAL**

1. Strong possibility
2. Strong possibility
3. Strong possibility
4. Strong possibility
5. Strong possibility
6. Strong possibility
7. Strong possibility
8. Strong possibility
9. Strong possibility
10. Strong possibility
11. Strong possibility
12. Strong possibility
13. Strong possibility
14. Strong possibility
15. Strong possibility
16. Strong possibility
17. Strong possibility
18. Strong possibility
19. Strong possibility
20. Strong possibility
21. Strong possibility

22. Strong possibility
23. Strong possibility
24. Strong possibility
25. Strong possibility
26. Fat, saturate fat, salt and sugar.

186 days

6 months 2 days

26 weeks

## **Katrina Sequence**

process: the speech material was taken from online mini documentaries about the role of HAM radio operators during the Hurricane Katrina crisis in New Orleans, 2005. These texts were composed by listening to the audio of the documentaries (with headphones) and reciting the heard speech into a voice recorder. The text was then transcribed from the recording of my recital. The following script is a file compression. It begins with the sound of the wind.

## All Shook UP

BB

as soon as we can. as soon as we can. we're going to start working on that now  
 you just tell him you just tell him  
 we can't immobilize no thing  
 nothing right now  
 am i making this clear is this clear  
 i can't promise anything in these circumstances  
 i'm going to come and check and see if i can raise you guys  
 still on the air  
 yea, this is the only form of communication that's not down  
 just because of the wind  
 because of the wind  
 where are you millions and millions of dollars are spent on communication  
 when it gets down to it  
 when you can expect  
 expect some relief we're doing all we can  
 but we just can't mobilize right now  
 i understand that i just want to tell you the situation  
 the people are running the planes  
 they're screaming  
 they can't get there  
 are you listing to this this is connie she's going to talk to you for a second  
 excuse me this is connie rockers  
 it is there anyone you can ask to come  
 to your radio  
 they may be in a very nervous state and they can't take the responsibility with  
 the roofs of buildings gone  
 w5st out  
 if you can handle this you will win the sweetheart  
 award of the year  
 they're so shook up  
 because there are so many people in there with buildings  
 with roofs off  
 there are people in there  
 they're scared  
 and there's children

This is Papa

roger roger eye ball reflector i've already put that out ok i'll  
tell ray  
do you have any other radios or helicopters? ok  
one of the things you can do is talk through me w5juliet-  
bravo  
papa i'll make sure the proper people get it  
sure as hell i will i'll  
see if i can get some help for you  
right now  
so y'all know  
we've got about 250 hams in louisiana  
they're well organised they're doing a good job but  
they can't do it forever  
the biggest problem is mississippi at the moment  
there's a lot of transport and travel  
and there's no place to stay so  
that's the other problem we have and  
i'll be working on that tonight tomorrow tonight but  
we're doing everything we can you guys are doing a great  
job  
roger i understand  
we've got another call for you ok  
earlier today we had a problem louisiana state charlie  
charlie 2 alpha oh hell  
his name's david they were in that area and i believe they've  
got a list of  
names of people that are ready to go  
as soon as they can go  
ok i just wait for a phone call  
yeah is anyone else going out that way  
ok does anybody else need me  
ok i've got a quick quick question  
go ahead  
my name's bruce  
i'm getting some calls from some folks picking something  
up from wtzx a ham radio  
it's listed as running traffic  
i've just got home from work  
has anyone heard about that today  
arraawaaawaawawaaa i don't know the detail i couldn't get  
the time  
i had no problem the only information said, call this radio  
station  
this is papa  
there's something going on i  
don't know what kind of call that is

can you give me some names some information  
my name is douglas  
i'm at the hospital in mississippi  
ok douglas go ahead i can help you  
ok you can get the equipment back up and ruining  
klm over  
ok douglas let me rebroadcast just in case anybody does  
anybody listening from the administration hospital  
anyone hear that call in the last hour or so douglas i'm not  
getting a response so  
we will pay attention to that i suggest you hang around for  
a little while  
we'll see if we can pick them up copy that  
3.935 they're going to be a bit disturbed when they hear  
you but  
i'll keep up the good work  
this is klm494 this w5393 check back and forth between the  
two frequencies ok  
stand by there's a query the party was looking for  
information on roads is it possible for any assistance to get  
in coz this family want to bring food and clothing to this family  
that is in that area do you have any idea  
i have no idea  
but i imagine if they're coming in from the west  
they're evacuating to houston so that is escape  
ok i'll give her a call i'll try state police i cant find anything  
at all  
echo echo  
this is w5julietbravo papa  
this is risky5 calling in louisiana  
we're taking some messages down here at the lake crossing  
they're a little bit hard  
i understand you've got yourself a site full of arms haven't  
you  
i'm telling you there's tornados everywhere  
and i see three trees three trees smashing tweed daddy's  
barbecue  
i've got some messages  
we've tried to set up some communication with the locals  
who have no traffic and needles to say any infrastructure  
all the power lines, everything is down  
we went to the eye wall and it was stuck  
i can imagine well  
i can't guess what they're gonna do until sundown  
move from 35 i don't know about hw traffic actually i have  
three pieces of traffic here i don't know what you're going to  
do with them i roger that well the frequency that these messages are on all  
around the country  
are just frantic and everything and pretty stressed out

and they're just  
what we're gonna do is we're gonna post messages in and  
out right here and  
hopefully the communication will try and slide down  
tomorrow we will try and get down to 3935 tonight  
build some antenna systems  
we'll just try  
get on this frequency  
40 metres and at least try and get some of these messages  
out  
i've got traffic is that what you've got  
victor victor



He's in Texas

jp can you copy joanne this wgy j06  
negative over  
ok go to frequency 280527285 they should be able to handle  
your traffic on that frequency go ahead  
this is 5 god 80 zero 6 they did  
not reply with me over  
ok stand by one minute ka5az joanne  
said they didn't want to 2 have any information that way  
anything we can help him  
with go ahead well i  
don't know he's in new orleans that right? um  
no he's in texas  
i have an urgent message from the president of the united  
states to the mayor of new orleans ok  
you have a new orleans station monitoring this frequency  
ok stand by... we have a call from new  
orleans for me please  
on the air  
stand by then texas  
alpha ten ceara we've got we need a ham radio operator on  
this frequency  
um  
as you know something has totally destroyed the system in this area and i  
don't know if you can  
call  
we need ham radio operators in the area i understand that  
ray i don't have any say  
so in the matter i know that um we're doing everything we  
can  
what do you say bout staying in contact with lemo on the  
frequency  
i can we can choose  
i don't have no say so on that matter  
um  
people don't realise the importance of just  
530 yea um  
we're trying to stay open over  
i understand that you should contact lee franks on 85 fish  
on what number? um  
i could probably find it  
there's something wrong with operation  
anyway gts over  
ahhh i'll do a little digging around jerry and get back quick  
jl6  
echo 3tb would you put out a call to new orleans this is  
risky bravo 5 bravo tango 0

are you in control?  
alpha new orleans we need a a  
a we've got stations army with some traffic with the president  
wanting to speak to new orleans  
um this is i35 everybody in that area  
let me run back down to the emergency ham and see if we  
can get that message though  
we'll bed some help keeping it open this w5klm 5t  
this is louisiana i have have  
have  
some information that allen  
can you repeat that  
right the best shot to get into new orleans is at this time  
is the security on baton  
rouge they have contact with the mayor's office i'll  
give you the phone call for them  
and it's 22599253916 i'll say again  
2225925 very 9 home 6  
that's that  
the security of home office at baton rouge  
and they might be able to help you get into the mayor's  
office  
over  
wt56 w5  
this is 90 zero 6 copy office of homeland security baton  
rouge at 2259025  
3906 over  
roger roger  
my can i have that phone number again over  
39 zero 6  
25  
1683 why have they closed the emergency  
i don't understand  
that's right  
in the middle of an emergency  
we're trying to do something about it  
over  
copy that  
i tried to break in there earlier and i  
ur  
i don't get too warm a reception i just got ignored  
so i  
uh don't know over  
ok  
ok  
they don't give  
a jerry about it

Shadow was amazed to hear his  
owner refer to the toilet at the big  
white phone

an invention  
that keeps  
people quiet  
giant robots  
knew  
news  
no news

your friend won't be quiet?  
how bout a gun?  
a simple idea for quiet people

this gun  
shoots  
irritation  
point the gun

---

oven  
oven door

we  
karaoke  
fingers  
hat off  
to  
to

what is in cornflour  
the beach  
oaf  
rope  
ark  
spear  
muck  
antimuck  
no action  
leg  
balls  
by cornflour  
knives  
debarked fin  
turn  
taps

Shakespearian acting  
is good

laugh at  
rare fish  
practical  
baths  
everyone  
everyone  
that's bathing

---

man  
archer  
Michael  
Useless archer  
Went to town came  
Back  
Later

Got by wolves  
The pack moaned and  
Groaned 'you've browned'

Weak  
slack  
trousers  
Loose trousers

It's like an oven in here  
It's like an oven in here

---

grain  
The wood grain  
knuckles  
bags  
ducks  
loudness dated  
quiet times  
more like mowing the lawn

choice of hole  
that garden  
The garden!  
the crows  
picture hook

back to holes

Replacing trees with  
Bark leather  
But y'know what really hurts?  
Bark leather.

cruise ships  
Horn  
wipe  
Upholes  
Horseholes  
Ready mackerel

---

nailed it  
teacher

Bath foam  
Colchester zoo  
A workingman's zoo  
Cub sick  
Line up the goats  
Shivery goats  
No, they can't hear at the back  
Shoot the goats  
'No they can't hear at the back'  
Shout's the goat

duck water

I left  
You a message  
In elf English  
I thought of your daughter  
And your dated car

Earing  
Earing  
Earing

trees  
Something is bushed

its green

My memory is fishy  
That month off fish

Something is narrow  
A pipe is grey

---

like woven  
hay  
A lake woven  
A lack woven  
I like women  
Ay like woave  
A lack woab  
A lackey wave  
A lack weave

My school was a loose school for  
loose weavers  
My school was a loose school for  
loose weavers

---

Not glibly  
glib  
Not glib  
lads  
laddy

a squid on the bank of the river  
turned around  
Slimy. 'You've raised your voice  
again; issat why mine sounds slow n  
greasy' what a weeze

But the squid was a maker and he  
raised his voice

---

### The Squid's Poem, 'To Draw a Blank'

Some thing some thing some thing mo ney some wine  
 Some thing some thing some thing mo ney some loose change  
 Man loose man loose man loose ly park  
 Re cord re cord re cord of my tu dor  
 Fi far me draw me pick le far le far  
 With cold fi hands twis twine mi wane a ha  
 And tear it my hi ding un der de neath  
 a dress E liz a beth than man y' see  
 A pear ring like a bear of bark.  
 In bags I found a blank et sheet it was'a bot big piece  
 It's there it's there it's  
 here  
 Mad pieces I have fallen to pieces  
 In thee beginning Queen Elizabeth  
 A made the lottery, all so, the floor.  
 And Queen Elizabeth said, my bank, yar  
 so Queen Elizabeth ditty that, s'was good.  
 He said, bad luck him who lost thee lott'ree  
 happy me Pieces mee lotta mary.  
 Be less you! Duh Mister le Queen Eliz  
 Abeth, I want numbers of swans of swans  
 of swans of swam solar panel and a tart  
 I know not how to thank enough, my Queen  
 Elizabeth. When do I do walk over too  
 to you I just want to behold the blank  
 But you to me give blankets, covers!  
 I know not how to thank enough, mister  
 le Queen Elizabeth! When I am walk  
 king ova to it I just want to pick  
 numbers But you give numb burroughs  
 I know not how to thank you nuff, mister,  
 my Queen Elizabeth. When I am walk  
 king through to you I just want simple swans,  
 But you me give in French a swanary  
 Her Majesty's Deputy Master for  
 the Swans', was there ever such a 'Treash zurer  
 of Lottery in grave Surrey'. The Lost  
 lee Manuscript is dull. A unique archive  
 of More-Money. My family who fart  
 for centuries with more money ta da  
 in rows big beautiful Tudor manor  
 big house is Loseley Park. The manuscript  
 contains unique records of my Tudor life.  
 Stuart is Queen England with More money.  
 Describe the lottery re for me dear  
 Red ball rad bell red ball a horse a horse

Like your leg glows the swan, blossoms  
Le calmly calm as Queen England is poor-  
Rest hope of spring. My heart follows y'hou,  
it likes your beer voice and it leaps like numbers,  
it shouts me your name, Stuart-the-Stuart  
The eve venning did float on great finance,  
comforted by a hair that was found here  
carry into the light of pencilbeams  
and hold next to my big big head.  
Im full with hope and more money than you  
so Might I try the pot William sir  
he found some spare money and numer rous  
other big boxes full of sand of sand  
As my real small head falls from my trousers,  
It does remind me of a bank of yours.  
It's quiet, so I listen for the last  
Little jingle of the pay day. My hot  
fat foot it leaps to my shu shoes. I wait  
in moonlight for a secret gas so we  
might try gamble as one, fat foot to foot,  
in search of the mag nif fi cient, in search  
of the mystical balls of love. THANK YOU

And so said the squid, and he was a squid of rank.

---

And NOW  
 Time spent well  
 carer  
 carry letter paper  
 I imagine  
 I write you a bill  
 In Old English  
 Wilty  
 The telly  
 The telly really

I left you  
 A message  
 In sweedish  
 Sweetheartish  
 What do you want  
 To nose?  
 delivery was impish  
 Fishless

---

Get out of  
 Joke head  
 curtseys

'Mum, Dad, this is cootchie-hoo who's going  
 to live  
 here now too"

broken arm  
 Human a  
 Tall human  
 Heads bashing  
 A weepy  
 Later  
 if it fit between  
 Sing-song

Call Sharpy.  
 Sharpy got teeth

---

Your squid is fat but  
 Hardy  
 Well-read  
 operated on  
 wirey  
 Hard  
 Bone

Dismembered because

I don't like foam

I don't like froth

Pharmacies

fields and fields

nothing that dangerous

whaling

laughing

Whistling

Congratulations

Congratulations!

Congratulations or geese

a wrestler

love

love

bungee

sweater head

your head

fastest man on water

route

cuts towns up

cry

Down holes

Put holes

out

Well

Hydro

grey phone

Ha ho

Ho well ho

Well

Hydro

grey phone

Ha ho

Up ho

Ho well ho

Well



Hydro  
grey phone

### Juggle Fish, a black box shanty

*ye mariners all as you pass by  
come in and drink if you are dry  
and spend me lads your money brisk  
and pop your noise in a jug of this*

He's a group

he has thumb,  
through  
pressure, it works  
on him into  
chairs on to the  
branch of tree  
What is a clock?  
'fields are bleak and bare'  
bare he hides from  
group, the spilt.  
thumbs are felt clear  
let the flock leap  
old lemons crash

moving targets

*ye motor show as you prag sty  
communal drunk as your art's dry  
Andy spending money fists  
and float your nose in a jug of this*

the same time of the word work  
one is wun and won and wat wat

why shoot a lap  
why should a lap be  
why shutes sew sew  
call truce be so so  
so es soe es s.o.s o.o.o.o.o.o  
see show-wed, what is the work of  
humming?  
Seeding

*Young Marina All is passing by  
Comfortably dirty unified  
Wednesday lost all memory o'fish  
I'd flap her tongue in a jug of this*

regions mock me

lets hope Richard III  
 is still there  
 under a brummy  
 my mummy's broom will  
 sweep 'im up and  
 hopefully he'll mock  
 me

Why work for Richard  
 what is he there for?  
 work boots are  
 made of lemon  
 peel the same as  
 lemons

*new mothers alt as you pass life  
 continue to drink if you have time  
 and send my love your mummy beast  
 and flopped my purse on a jug of this*

workers who don't know what they're  
 doing with oil, who knows?  
 without oil it's a prop. A good toy  
 is sticky not  
 oily. You can hear it function.

*I married alien, you just dived  
 came in and drank eventually  
 and spend me love your money wish  
 under the bed is a jug of this*

Workers who don't know what they're doing.  
 They make sticky jokes and oily toys. You  
 can hear what they're doing. Splitting assignments  
 between joking and playing  
 And making and doing.  
 Oding.

Spilt oil split oil  
 you can hear what they're doing  
 but not who they're doing  
 it with.

Motor sewed open  
 Engine sewn open  
 revealing genes. This is what oils is.  
 Motor squad spilling open. Now there  
 are veal farms.

*Yes merry men fall off branches high  
 come back to drink another life  
 answer my laughs your money risk  
 and get your boat on a jug of this*

shifting shutting suiting  
 whitening shining sitting  
 little  
 princess in a roe-hoe  
 whatta sleeper all dripper with the luck  
 of play and knowing what she's doing.  
 Cowing

the squad split  
 and put about  
 regions. What are seeds  
 for? What is acting?

My mother said to get things  
 done  
 you can't wake shaking oil drums  
 My mother said to get things  
 done  
 you can't keep shaking oil drums  
 My mother said to get things  
 done  
 you can't want shaky oil drums

This is the acting of  
 thumbs. A finger play in an engine sewn  
 open. Now there are farms and gardens  
 and genetics.

*Your materials always outlive style  
 chrome ill or dark, you decide  
 and lend my dad your money quick  
 and give him hoots on a jug of this*

matter crashes into matter  
 and low low low lowlands form.  
 There are different types of  
 wood. When we aren't watching  
 they leak.

*you marchers always do pass by  
 continue thinking you have rights  
 upend me lads your measured frisk  
 end all your woes with a jug of this*

Whittling and whistling are  
the same. And you can whittle a whistle  
out of wood. With a little lick on the  
the wooden end you can hear  
the Dead.

*Yet more innards fall as you pass by  
can't be as bad as mating flies  
and spiders land on each other's beaks  
and get their dews in a jug of this*

the sheep of tropical science  
remember their comrades in  
the field.  
The sheep of today have many kinds  
of sicknesses.

*yet more runners assume as try  
country and tin is battonised  
end ending last your running quick  
then lost her game in a jug of this*

## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W., 'A Social Critique of Radio Music', *The Kenyon Review*, 18 (1996), 229–235
- , 'On Lyric Poetry and Society', in *Notes to Literature, Volume 1*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)
- , *Current of Music: Elements of a Radio Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009)
- , 'The Curves of the Needle', *October*, trans. by Thomas Y. Levin, 55 (1990), 48–55
- Althusser, Louis, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)', in *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), pp. 1–60
- Bacon, Julie, 'Archive, Archive, Archive!', *Circa*, 2007, 50-59
- Bataille, Georges, *Visions Of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985)
- Benhabib, Seyla, 'On Hegel - Women and Irony', in *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, First Edition (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 242–257
- Benjamin, Walter, 'Reflections on Radio', in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, And Other Writings on Media*, ed. by Michael William Jennings and Brigid Doherty, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 391-393
- Bennett, Emma, and Holly Pester, 'In Conversation' (presented at the Voice Symposium, Dana Centre, London, 2012)
- Bergvall, Caroline, *Meddle English: New and Selected Texts* (Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2011)
- , Vincent Broqua, and Imogen Stidworthy, *Middling English: Caroline Bergvall* (Southampton: John Hansard Gallery, 2011)
- , and Ciarán Maher, *Exhibition Notes for 'Ampers&'*, 5 August 2010
- , and Ciarán Maher *Lidl Suga*, Text Festival, Bury Art Museum, 2004
- , *Wall of Pins, 'Middling English'*, John Hansard Gallery, 2010
- Bernstein, Charles, ed., *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

- , 'Introduction', in *Weeks* (La Farge, WI: Xexoxial Editions, 2010), p. 1
- , *My Way: Speeches and Poems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)
- Bijsterveld, Karin, and Annelies Jacobs, 'Storing Sound Souvenirs: The Multi-Sited Domestication of the Tape Recorder', in *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), pp. 25–43
- Bök, Christian, 'The Xenotext Works', *Harriet: The Blog*  
 <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/the-xenotext-works/>>  
 [accessed 5 July 2012]
- Brown, Lee Ann, 'Lee Ann Brown on Penn Sound', *Penn Sound*  
 <<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Brown.php>> [accessed 20 September 2011]
- , *The Sleep That Changed Everything* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003)
- Bunge, Mario, *Philosophy of Science: From Problem to Theory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998)
- Burroughs, William, *The Electronic Revolution* (Cambridge: Blackmoor Head Press, 1971)
- Cheek, Cris, 'Before I Am Anything Else: Provisional Transatlantic Communities in Polyvocal Poetic Performance' (presented at the Polyvocolia, Birkbeck, University of London, 2011) <<http://vimeo.com/26469783>> [accessed 20 September 2011]
- , 'Essay on Bob Cobbing', *British Electronic Poetry Centre*, 2006  
 <[http://www.southampton.ac.uk/~bepc/forum/cheek\\_cobbing.htm](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/~bepc/forum/cheek_cobbing.htm)> [accessed 4 October 2012]
- Chopin, Henri, *Oh* (Balsam Flex, no date)
- , *The Body Is a Sound Factory* (Alga Marghen, 2007)
- , 'Poetry & Sound', *Ear Magazine: Sound Text Issue*, 1981, 13
- , 'Why I Am the Author of Sound Poetry and Free Poetry', *Hispanic Arts*, 1 (1968), 80–81
- Chopin, Henri, ed., *Cinquième Saison* and *Revue OU*, (Ingatstone and Paris, 1964–1974)
- , *Cinquième Saison*, No. 20–21, 1964
- , *Cinquième Saison*, No. 23–24, 1965
- , *Revue OU*, No. 26–27, 1966

- , *Revue OU*, No. 28-29, 1967
- , *Revue OU*, No. 30-31, 1967
- , *Revue OU*, No. 33-34, 1968
- , *Revue OU*, No. 36-37, 1970
- , *Revue OU*, No. 38-39, 1971
- , *Revue OU*, No. 40/41, 1972
- , *Revue OU*, No. 42-43-44, 1974
- Clarke, Adrian, 'E-mail Conversation with Adrian Clarke About Chopin Performance at London Musicians' Collective', 2012
- Cobbing, Bob, *A B C in Sound* (London: Writers Forum, 1964)
- , *Bob Cobbing & Writers Forum* (Sunderland: Ceolfrith Press, 1974)
- , 'Some Statements on Sound Poetry', in *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue*, ed. by Steve McCaffery and B. P. Nichol (Toronto: Underwhich Editions, 1978)
- Condliffe, Jamie, 'Cryptic Poetry Written in a Microbe's DNA', *New Scientist*, 2011 <<http://www.newscientist.com/blogs/culturelab/2011/05/christian-boks-dynamic-dna-poetry.html>> [accessed 5 May 2011]
- Connor, Steven, 'Les Cinq Sens', in *Mapping Michel Serres*, ed. by Niran Abbas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 153–170
- , 'Looping the Loop: Tape-Time in Burroughs and Beckett' (presented at the Taping the World, University of Iowa, 2010) <<http://www.stevenconnor.com/looping/>> [accessed 10 December 2011]
- , 'Michel Serres's Milieux' (presented at the Mediations, Brazilian Association for Comparative Literature, Belo Horizonte, 2002) <<http://www.stevenconnor.com/milieux/>>
- Dalby, Matthew, 'Text Festival 2011 Opening - Review', *Santiago's Dead Wasp*, 2011 <<http://santiagosdeadwasp.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/text-festival-2011-opening-review.html>> [accessed 5 October 2011]33
- Davenport, Philip, *Constellation of Luminous Details* (Apple Pie Editions, 2007)
- Davidson, Michael, 'Technologies of Presence: Orality and the Tapevoice of Contemporary Poetics', in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. by Adalaide (ed.) Morris (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 97–129
- Deleuze, Gilles, *Logic Of Sense* (London: Continuum, 2004)



- Derrida, Jacques, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)
- 'Documenta (13) Program, "Black Box"', 2012  
 <<http://d13.documenta.de/#/programs/the-kassel-programs/some-artworks-and-programs-initiated-by-documenta-13-participants/black-box/>> [accessed 25 December 2012]
- Documenta 13: Catalog III/3, The Guidebook* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012)
- Dolar, Mladen, *A Voice And Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006)
- Evens, Aden, *Sound Ideas: Music, Machines, and Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005)
- Fleming, Paul, 'The Secret Adorno', *Qui Parle*, 15 (2004), 97–114
- Foucault, Michel, 'Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias', in *The Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 229–237
- , *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2002)
- , *Security, Territory, Population* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- Gay, du Paul, 'Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman', (London, California: Sage, 1997)
- Gitelman, Lisa, and N. Katherine Hayles, "'Materiality Has Always Been in Play": An Interview with N. Katherine Hayles', *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2001 <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~ijcs/mediation/hayles.htm>> [accessed 9 October 2010]
- Gleick, James, *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood* (London: Harper Collins, 2011)
- Godwin, Francis, *The Man in the Moon*, trans. by John Anthony Butler (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1995)
- Goldman, Judith, 'Hannah=hannaH: Politics, Ethics, and Clairvoyance in the Work of Hannah Weiner', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 12 (2001), 121–168
- Goldsmith, Kenneth, 'I Love Speech by Kenneth Goldsmith', *Poetry Foundation*, 2006 <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/article/179027>> [accessed 13 November 2012]
- Greenham, Lily, *Lingual Music* (London: Paradigm Discs, 2007)  
 <<http://www.discogs.com/Lily-Greenham-Lingual-Music/release/1355529>> [accessed 18 January 2013]

- Grenier, Robert, 'On Speech', in *In the American Tree*, ed. by Ron Silliman (Orono: University of Maine, 1986), pp. 496–7
- Grivel, Charles, 'The Phonograph's Horned Mouth', in *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), pp. 31–63
- Hayles, N. Katherine, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, (University Of Chicago Press, 1999)
- Helmling, Steven, 'American Adorno?', *symploke*, 15 (2007), 353–358
- Higgins, Dick, *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of Intermedia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984)
- Higgins, Dick, and Hannah Higgins, 'Intermedia', *Leonardo*, 34 (2001), 49–54
- Higgins, Hannah, *Fluxus Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002)
- Hilgers, Philipp Von, 'The History of the Black Box: The Clash of a Thing and Its Concept', *Cultural Politics*, 7 (2011), 41–58
- Hiller, Susan, *Monument*, Tate Britain, 2011
- Home Office, 'Current Threat Level of Terrorist Attack', [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/current-threat-level/)  
<<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/current-threat-level/>>
- Homer, Sean, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2013)
- Hong, Sungook, *Wireless: From Marconi's Black-Box to the Audion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001)
- Horlock, Mary, and Susan Hiller, 'Mary Horlock Talks with Susan Hiller', [susanhiller.org](http://www.susanhiller.org), 2001 <<http://www.susanhiller.org/Info/interviews/interview-MH.html>> [accessed 3 May 2011]
- Hugill, Stan, *Sea Shanties* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1977)
- , *Shanties from the Seven Seas: Shipboard Work-songs and Songs Used as Work-songs from the Great Days of Sail* (New York: Routledge, 1979)
- , and X-Seamen's Insitute, *Sea Songs: Newport, Rhode Island- Songs from the Age of Sail* (Folkways Records, 1980)
- Hyde, Dominic, *Vagueness, Logic and Ontology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008)
- Kahn, Douglas, and Gregory Whitehead, eds., *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994)

- Katrina Ham, 2007  
 <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pejhtY1pMig&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_playlist](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pejhtY1pMig&feature=youtube_gdata_playlist)> [accessed 17 June 2010]
- Kinnahan, Linda A., *Lyric Interventions: Feminism, Experimental Poetry, and Contemporary Discourse* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005)
- Kittler, Friedrich A., *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992)
- , *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999)
- Knowles, Alison, 'Event Scores', *www.acknowles.com*  
 <<http://www.acknowles.com/eventscore.html>> [accessed 12 November 2012]
- , 'Fluxus Long Weekend', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 31 (2008), 139–148
- LaBelle, Brandon, 'Echo' (presented at the Acoustic Ambiguities Event, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2012)
- Latour, Bruno, 'Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World', *Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science*, 1983  
 <<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/articles/article/12-GIVE%20ME%20A%20LAB.pdf>> [accessed 1 July 2012]
- Lecerclé, Jean-Jacques, and Denise Riley, *The Force of Language* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
- Lippard, Lucy R., *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973)
- Newitz, Annalee, 'Where Memes Really Come From', *io9.com*  
 <<http://io9.com/5978399/where-memes-really-come-from>> [accessed 30 August 2012]
- MacKinnon, Edward, 'Language, Speech, and Speech-Acts', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 34 (1973) <<http://www.jstor.org/pss/2106689>> [accessed 25 July 2011]
- Marks, Leo, *Life That I Have* (London: Souvenir Press, 1999)
- Matthews, Kaffe, Anne Hilde Neset, Nina Power, and Tara Rodgers, 'A Panel Exploring Women's Varied Uses and Abuses of Technology. Kaffe Matthews, Nina Power, Tara Rodgers and Anne Hilde Neset (Chair)' (presented at the Her Noise Symposium, Tate Modern, 2012)
- Mayo, Bruce, 'Introduction to Adorno's "Lyric Poetry and Society"', *Telos*, 1974 (1974), 52–55
- McCaffery, Steve, 'From Phonic to Sonic: The Emergence of the Audio-Poem', in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. by

- Adalaide Kirby Morris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 149–169
- , *Prior to Meaning: The Protosemantic and Poetics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001)
- , 'Sound Poetry: A Survey', in *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue*, ed. by B. P. Nichol and Steve McCaffery (Toronto: Underwhich Editions, 1978), pp. 6–16
- , 'Voices in Extremis', in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 162–178
- , 'Writing as a General Economy', in *North of Intention: Critical Writings 1973-1986: Critical Writings 1973-1986* (New York: Roof Books, 2000)
- McCarthy, Tom and Institute of Necronautical Society, *Black Box Transmitter*, 2010  
2008, Displayed at the E:vent Gallery in London for the group show, 'Narcissus Trance', 2010
- , 'Calling All Agents: Transmission, Death, Technology: General Secretary's Report to the International Necronautical Society' (Vargas Organisation, London, 2010)
- , 'Tate Declaration of Inauthenticity', in *Altermodern: Tate Triennial 2009*, ed. by Nicolas Bourriaud (London: Harry N. Abrams, 2009), pp. 170–180
- McLuhan, Marshall, 'The Gadget Lover', in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Ark Press, 1987)
- La Mettrie, Julien Offray de, *Man a Machine; and, Man a Plant* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994)
- 'Moat Manhunt Gripped the Nation', *BBC*, 10 July 2010, section UK  
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10584042>> [accessed 17 September 2010]
- Monk, Meredith, *Boat Man* (ECM, 1997)
- Montgomery, Will, 'Balsam Flex': Sound, Poetry, and the Culture of the Cassette', (presented at Legacies of Modernism, The State of British Poetry Today, Université Paris-Diderot, 2011)
- Morris, Adalaide, ed., *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998)
- Mowitz, John, *Radio: Essays in Bad Reception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)
- Nikolopoulou, Kalliopi, 'As If: Kant, Adorno, and the Politics of Poetry', *MLN*, 121 (2006), 757–773

- Ong, Walter J., 'Word as Sound', in *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Binghamton, NY: Global Academic Publishing, 2000), pp. 111–176
- Oram, Daphne, 'Atlantis Anew', 1960, Correspondence and 'Sounds of the Past' Notes, Oram Archive, Goldsmiths, University of London
- , *An Individual Note: Of Music, Sound and Electronics* (Great Yarmouth: Galliard Ltd, 1972)
- , "'Sounds of the Past' First Draft", 1982, Correspondence and 'Sounds of the Past' Notes, Oram Archive, Goldsmiths, University of London
- , "'Thoughts'", 1972, Correspondence and 'Sounds of the Past' Notes, Oram Archive, Goldsmiths, University of London
- Osman, Jena, 'Is Poetry the News? The Poethics of the Found Text', *Jacket 2*, 2007 <<http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-osman.shtml>> [accessed 23 February 2012]
- Perloff, Marjorie, 'Fluxier-than-Thou', *Modernism/modernity*, 11 (2004), 581–587
- , "'Multiple Pleats", Some Applications of Michels Serres's Poetics', in *Mapping Michel Serres*, ed. by Niran Abbas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 99–113
- , and Craig Dworkin, *The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)
- Prevallet, Kristin, and Jackson Mac Low, "'Gathering Vs. Collecting" and "the Terminology" Letters Between Kristin Prevallet and Jackson Mac Low', *Open Letter*, 11, 3 (2001)
- Price, Seth, 'Dispersion', *distributedhistory.com*, 2008 <<http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion2008.pdf>>
- Project, Conet, *The Conet Project: Recordings of Shortwave Numbers Stations* (Irdial Discs, 2001) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcJK56Ep5Rw>> [accessed 10 February 2009]
- Prynne, J. H., *Field Notes: 'The Solitary Reaper' and Others* (Cambridge: J. H. Prynne (privately published), 2007)
- Prynne, J.H., 'Letter on Language Poetry (A Letter to Steve McCaffery)', *The Gig*, 40-46 (2000)
- Rawlings, Angela, 'Sound, Poetry: The Feature', *Jacket 2*, 2011, <<http://jacket2.org/feature/sound-poetry-feature>> [accessed 29 December 2012]
- "'Recursion'", *Oxford English Dictionary*, OED Online <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/160103?redirectedFrom=recursive#eid>> [accessed 20 September 2012]

- Retallack, Joan, *The Poethical Wager* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)
- Richards, Thomas, 'Archive and Utopia', 2007 <<http://www.jstor.org/pss/2928656>> [accessed 25 July 2011]
- Riley, Denise, *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988)
- , *Selected Poems* (London: Reality Street Editions, 2000)
- , *The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000)
- Robinson, Derek, 'Analog', in *Software Studies: A Lexicon*, ed. by Mathew Fuller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008)
- Rudy, Susan, 'A Conversation with Caroline Bergvall', *Jacket 2*, 2011 <<http://jacket2.org/interviews/conversation-caroline-bergvall>> [accessed 4 October 2011]
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume One*, trans. by Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Verso, 1982)
- 'Selected Interviews with Robert Smithson', [www.robertsmithson.com](http://www.robertsmithson.com), 1972 <<http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/interviews.htm>> [accessed 14 December 2012]
- Serra, Richard, *Boomerang*, 1974 <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5S3\\_dmj8BU&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5S3_dmj8BU&feature=youtube_gdata_player)> [accessed 24 September 2012]
- Serres, Michel, and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995)
- , *The Five Senses: a Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (New York and London: Continuum, 2008)
- , *The Parasite* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)
- Shannon, Claude, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communication', *The Bell Systems Technical Journal*, 27 (1948), 379–423, 623–656 <<http://cm.bell-labs.com/cm/ms/what/shannonday/shannon1948.pdf>> [accessed 10 October 2010]
- Shocking Blue, *Love Buzz* (Pink Elephant, 1969)
- Silliman, Ron, 'Afterword: Who Speaks? Ventriloquism and the Self in the Poetry Reading', in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 360–379

- , 'Monday, May 09, 2011: After a Long, Intense Day of Events', *Silliman's Blog* <<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/after-long-intense-day-of-events-at.html>> [accessed 14 June 2011]
- , *Ron Silliman Reading at The Met Theatre*, Bury, Lancashire, 2009
- Smith, Marth Nell, 'Because the Plunge from the Front Overturned Us: The Dickinson Electronic Archives Project', *Studies in Literary Imagination - Towards a Poetics of the Archive*, 32 (1999), 133
- 'Text Festival Home Page', *Text Festival* <<http://textfestival.com/>>
- 'Thing/Thought: Fluxus Editions/1962-1978', *www.moma.org* <[http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2011/fluxus\\_editions/category\\_works/fluxkit/](http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2011/fluxus_editions/category_works/fluxkit/)> [accessed 9 November 2012]
- Thompson, Carolyn, *Progress*, Text Festival, Bury Art Museum, 2009
- Thurston, Nick, *Enigma Variations*, Text Festival, Bury Art Museum, 2009 'Thisisa.info' <<http://thisisa.info/>> [accessed 29 August 2010]
- 'To Draw a Blank, Patrick Coyle', *Tenderpixel Gallery* <<http://www.tenderpixel.com/patrickcoyle2012.html>> [accessed 10 February 2012]
- Trehy, Tony, and Robert Grenier, *Tony Trehy Interviewing Robert Grenier*, 2008
- Various, *Man On The Moon* (Philips, 1969)
- Verlaine, Paul, *Poems*, trans. by Gertrude Hall Brownell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007)
- Verne, Jules, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (London: Vintage, 2011)
- Verwoert, Jan, 'Life Work', *Frieze Magazine*, 2009 <[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/life\\_work/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/life_work/)> [accessed 30 March 2009]
- Voss, Paul, 'The Poetics of the Archive', *Studies in Literary Imagination - Towards a Poetics of the Archive*, 1 (1999), i
- Weiner, Hannah, *Code Poems* (Barrytown, NY: Open Book Publications, 1982)
- , 'Transcript of Radio Interview for Linebreak Between Hannah Weiner and Charles Bernstein', *Electronic Poetry Centre*, 1995 <[http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/weiner/Weiner-Hannah\\_LINEbreak\\_1995\\_full-transcript.pdf](http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/weiner/Weiner-Hannah_LINEbreak_1995_full-transcript.pdf)> [accessed 17 September 2010]
- , *Weeks* (La Farge, WI: Xexoxial Editions, 2010)
- Wendt, Larry, 'I. History of Electro-Acoustic Approaches II. Connections to Advanced Electronic Technologies', *Leonardo*, 18 (1985), 11-23

- , 'Sound Poems for an Era of Reduced Expectations', *Ear Magazine: Sound Text Issue*, 1981, 8–9
- Wiener, Norbert, *Cybernetics Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965)
- Wilkes, James, 'On Headphone Space', *Voiceworks Blogs*, 2011  
<[http://blogs.voiceworks.org.uk/1011/jameswilkes/2011/01/on\\_headphone\\_space.html](http://blogs.voiceworks.org.uk/1011/jameswilkes/2011/01/on_headphone_space.html)> [accessed 22 August 2012]
- Wilkinson, John, 'Heigh Ho: A Partial Gloss of Word Order', *Glossator*, 2 (2010), 295–326
- Williams, James, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008)
- Wisker, Gina, 'Crossing Liminal Spaces: Teaching the Postcolonial Gothic', *Pedagogy*, 7 (2007), 401–425
- 'Word of Mouth, Group Show', *Cartel Gallery*  
<[http://www.cartelgallery.com/cartel\\_lejeune.html](http://www.cartelgallery.com/cartel_lejeune.html)> [accessed 6 June 2012]
- Wright, Sylvia, 'The Death of Lady Mondegreen', *Harper's Magazine*, 209 (1954), 48–51
- Young, Gillian, 'The Score: How Does Fluxus Perform?', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 34 (2012), 37–45
- Zurbrugg, N., 'Henri Chopin Interview', *Art & Design: The Multimedia Text*, 10 (1995), 23–30