

JUST VOICES (from AURAL CONTRACT: FORENSIC LISTENING AND THE REORGANISATION OF THE SPEAKING-SUBJECT, LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN)

For the law to acquire its performative might, it must be delegated to the voice. For the law to come into effect it must be announced and it must be heard. As a site where speech acts, the trial allows us to understand how the voice serves to activate certain forms of governance and control, and how the ways in which we are heard.

In the United States Supreme Court there is a vocal tradition that I find quite revealing: when the clerk enters the courtroom at the beginning of the day they inaugurate the proceedings by striking the gavel onto the woodblock then waiting for silence, before announcing, “the Honourable, the Chief Justice, and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States”—and then, for four seconds, they interrupt their own speech and sing out “OYEZ OYEZ OYEZ”—before returning to the declaration that the court is now sitting and that God is now blessing the honourable court. Then with a second strike of the gavel the clerk sits down.

These announcements, in combination with other oaths and speech acts, function as a juridical amplifier, the switch that makes legally inaudible speech audible. These acts operate through the voice in order to transform words from the normal conditions of communication to the extraordinary conditions of testimony. And yet something more than the speaking of words is found in the clerk’s call. In those four seconds when his annunciation shifts from a prescribed set of spoken words to the ineffability of non-verbal sounds—“OYEZ OYEZ OYEZ”—we see that it is not simply language that legislates but also the extra-linguistic elements of the voice itself.

The legal action habeas corpus offers us some insight into the use of the voice as both a verbal and a non-verbal instrument. This ancient writ, which translates to “may you have the body,” stipulates that a person under arrest must be physically brought before a judge. The judge must see and hear the suspect live. The voice is a corporeal product that contains its own excess, with this corporeal excess announcing to the court the absolute presence of the witness. This bodily excess of the voice resides not in its linguistic functions, but in its non-verbal affects; such as its pitch, accent, glottal stops, intonations, inflections, and impediments. As byproducts of the event of language, these affects reveal other kinds of evidence, evidence that may evade the written documentation of legal proceedings but does not escape the ears of the judge and of those listening to a trial in the space of the courtroom.

These paralinguistic elements of testimony produce a division of the voice, which in turn establishes two witnesses within one voice: one witness speaks on behalf of language and the other on behalf of the body. Often the testimony provided by each of these two witnesses is corroborated by the other, but they can also betray one another—an internal betrayal between language and body, between subject and object, fiction and fact, truth and lie. This betrayal exists in a single human utterance in which the self gives itself away. This splitting of the voice into two selves, or into two witnesses, can also be seen as an extension of the well-established legal principle of “testis unis, testis nullus”, which translates to “one witness, no witness,” and which means that testimony provided by any one person in court is to be disregarded unless corroborated by the testimony of at least one other. The law, it seems, requires a certain doubling of testimony, and this doubling even extends to the single witness. In the eyes of the law, the testimony of the single witness, whether the suspect or the survivor, has to be split into language and its bodily conduit for it to be considered testimony at all.

This doubling of testimony marks the terrain which became occupied by forensic linguists and acousticians within the field of law after 1984. In the cases of forensic listening these professional listeners became the expert witnesses speaking on behalf of the paralinguistic attributes of a person’s testimony. After 1984 these were the people called in to corroborate and resolve the inherent division of the legal voice, formalizing an acoustic practice inherent to jurisprudence.

## PARANOID READING (from TOUCHING FEELING, EVE SEDGWICK)

I am saying that the main reasons for questioning paranoid practices are other than the possibility that their suspicions can be delusional or simply wrong. Concomitantly, some of the main reasons for practicing paranoid strategies may be other than the possibility that they offer unique access to true knowledge. They represent a way, among other ways, of seeking, finding, and organizing knowledge. Paranoia knows some things well and others poorly. I'd like to undertake now something like a composite sketch of what I mean by paranoia in this connection—not as a tool of differential diagnosis, but as a tool for better seeing differentials of practice. My main headings are: Paranoia is anticipatory. Paranoia is reflexive and mimetic. Paranoia is a strong theory. Paranoia is a theory of negative affects. Paranoia places its faith in exposure.

### PARANOIA IS REFLEXIVE AND MIMETIC

It seems no wonder, then, that paranoia, once the topic is broached in a nondiagnostic context, seems to grow like a crystal in a hypersaturated solution, blotting out any sense of the possibility of alternative ways of understanding or things to understand. I will say more later about some implications of the status of paranoia as, in this sense, inevitably a “strong theory.” What may be even more important is how severely the mimeticism of paranoia circumscribes its potential as a medium of political or cultural struggle. As I pointed out in a 1986 essay (in which my implicit reference was, as it happens, to one of the essays later collected in *The Novel and the Police*), “The problem here is not simply that paranoia is a form of love, for—in a certain language—what is not? The problem is rather that, of all forms of love, paranoia is the most ascetic, the love that demands least from its object. . . . The gorgeous narrative work done by the Foucauldian paranoid, transforming the simultaneous chaoses of institutions into a consecutive, drop-dead-elegant diagram of spiralling escapes and recaptures, is also the paranoid subject's proffer of himself and his cognitive talent, now ready for anything it can present in the way of blandishment or violence, to an order-of-things morcelé that had until then lacked only narratibility, a body, cognition”

### PARANOIA PLACES ITS FAITH IN EXPOSURE

Whatever account it may give of its own motivation, paranoia is characterized by placing, in practice, an extraordinary stress on the efficacy of knowledge per se—knowledge in the form of exposure. Maybe that's why paranoid knowing is so inescapably narrative. Like the deinstitutionalized person on the street who, betrayed and plotted against by everyone else in the city, still urges on you the finger-worn dossier bristling with his precious correspondence, paranoia for all its vaunted suspicion acts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known. That a fully initiated listener could still remain indifferent or inimical, or might have no help to offer, is hardly treated as a possibility.

It's strange that a hermeneutics of suspicion would appear so trusting about the effects of exposure, but Nietzsche (through the genealogy of morals), Marx (through the theory of ideology), and Freud (through the theory of ideals and illusions) already represent, in Ricoeur's phrase, “convergent procedures of demystification” and therefore a seeming faith, inexplicable in their own terms, in the effects of such a proceeding. In the influential final pages of *Gender Trouble*, for example, Butler offers a programmatic argument in favor of demystification as “the normative focus for gay and lesbian practice”, with such claims as that “drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself”; “we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance”; “gender parody reveals that the original identity . . . is animation”; “gender performance will enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself”; “parodic repetition . . . exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity”; “the parodic repetition of gender exposes . . . the illusion of gender identity”; and “hyperbolic exhibitions of ‘the natural’ . . . reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status” as

well as “exposing its fundamental unnaturalness”. What marks the paranoid impulse in these pages is, I would say, less even the stress on reflexive mimesis than the seeming faith in exposure.

from TEN THESES ON TOUCH, OR, WRITING TOUCH, HYPATIA VOURLOUMIS

TOUCH 2. TO TOUCH IS ALWAYS TO BE TOUCHED IN RETURN. CONSENSUAL TOUCHING IS COALESCING EMPOWERMENT. TO KNOWINGLY TOUCH AND BE TOUCHED IS TO BE IN A STATE OF WAKEFULNESS.

This state of wakefulness is an erotic and political one. Audre Lorde speaks of the political power of the erotic that is oppressed, has become suspect. In her piece “The Uses of the Erotic” Lorde thinks through the usefulness of the erotic as expansive immersion and the extension of limits. To tap into the erotic is to tap into information, into an “internal requirement toward excellence” (Lorde 2007, 54). To live erotically is the conscious decision to refuse disaffection in all vital endeavors: “For the erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely we can feel in the doing” (Lorde 2007, 54). Erotic pleasure and satisfaction touches all forms of being and expression and can be a resource for change. If we do not deny this joyous sensuality to ourselves and others then how can we not seek it in everything we touch and touches us? For Lorde the erotic is deep knowledge, self-connection, and when not feared and sequestered to the private domain, a provocative creative life force, a guide, an illumination that is social. Acquiescence: “It feels right to me” (Lorde 2007, 56).

TOUCH 3. UNREQUITED TOUCH IS AN UNREQUITED WORLD.

A popular anarchist website in Greece publishes love letters on a page linked to its site titled “Hidden.” Underneath the polemics and cries against foul play lie shimmering interfaces calling out for touch. Prevalent within these countless romances is the convergence of eros, struggle, and the city. Many letters echo each other, torn over the dilemma of whether to gaze, when the time surely comes, at the blazing fire or one's lover's glowing face as the city burns. Many letters attempt to locate a desired object last seen at that meeting or that demo that has since disappeared. All these sites and moments of resistance are named, dated, marked by acronyms, significant locations, events, histories. The letters reveal the commons, language, landscapes, and sociality of anarchist spaces and practices entwined with yearnings galvanized by and galvanizing a revolutionary ideal. Desire to touch and be touched by the amorous other is always also the desire to touch another world.

from COMPOSITION AS EXPLANATION, GETRURDE STEIN

The time of the composition is the time of the composition. It has been at times a present thing it has been at times a past thing it has been at times a future thing it has been at times an endeavor at parts or all of these things. In my beginning it was a continuous present a beginning again and again and again and again, it was a series it was a list it was a similarity and everything different it was a distribution and an equilibration. That is all of the time some of the time of the composition.

Now there is still something else the time-sense in the composition. This is what is always a fear a doubt and a judgment and a conviction. The quality in the creation of expression the quality in a composition that makes it go dead just after it has been made is very troublesome.

The time in the composition is a thing that is very troublesome. If the time in the composition is very troublesome it is because there must even if there is no time at all in the composition there must be time in the composition which is in its quality of distribution and equilibration. In the beginning there was the time in the composition that naturally was in the composition but time in the composition comes now and this is what is now troubling every one the time in the composition is now a part of distribution and equilibration. In the beginning there was confusion there was a continuous present and later there was romanticism which was not a confusion but an extrication and now there is either succeeding or failing there must be distribution and equilibration there must be time that is distributed and equilibrated. This is the thing that is at present the most troubling and if there is the time that is at present the most troublesome the time-sense that is at present the most troubling is the thing that makes the present the most troubling. There is at present there is distribution, by this I mean expression and time, and in this way at present composition is time that is the reason that at present the time-sense is troubling that is the reason why at present the time-sense in the composition is the composition that is making what there is in composition.

And afterwards.

Now that is all.