

[...]the stutter is an ensemble, it is a polyphony of the oral register. This plural amidst the singular marks a shift from the monophonic to the polyphonic and brings to presence the foreigner active at the very heart of language. Deducible from a presence of the collective and the foreign in the singular is the work of porosity; as echoed by Eduard Glissant: “From the steady localized scream, unfurls an arid, difficult speech. Tune your voice to a world time. Exit from the skin of your scream. Enter the world’s skin through your pores.” The performance of porosity activates a zone of transition, a permeable zone impeding successful implementation of a hermetic seal. Leakage, of any magnitude, from the insidious drip of the gushing torrent, undermines any xenophobic impulse. In this context, the stutter perforates, disseminating (s)pores to all within range. The stutter, as staccato rhythm which radically interferes with legato is that foreignness which is active from the inside.

Christof Migone

The particular breach the stutter creates in the communicative act serves as a remainder that misunderstandings, mis-translations, are constantly undermining the success of the transmission. Furthermore, the stutter renders present and unerasable the soma in its full spasmodic mode. Deleuze would seem to be describing precisely this moment in the following: “Creating has always been a different thing from communicating. In order to escape control, the most important thing is perhaps to create vacuoles of non-communication, interrupters.”

Christof Migone

More common, however, is the correlation between stutter and doubt, weakness, imperfection, awkwardness; just to cite two on numerous examples, Rousseau: “When the memory vacillates, the tongue stammers” and Wittgenstein: “often my writing is nothing but ‘stuttering’”. Non-fluency is regarded as a hindrance to full participation in a society where functionality is measured by degree of communicability. This premise has to be examined within a relation to power. Language is wielded, it has shifting barometers of exclusion, it is not a neutral utility. Access to knowledge, for the *homo loquens*, transpires by the way of speech, the stutterer is easily dismissed by the presumption that “if you can’t say it, you don’t know it”.

Christof Migone

We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger. But also because abjection itself is a composite of judgment and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives. Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be —maintaining that night in which the outline of the signified thing vanishes and where only the imponderable affect is carried out. To be sure, if I am affected by what does not yet appear to me as a thing, it is because laws, connections, and even structures of meaning govern and condition me. That order, that glance, that voice, that gesture, which enact the law for my frightened body, constitute and bring about an effect and not yet a sign. I speak to it in vain in order to exclude it from what will no longer be, for myself, a world that can be assimilated. Obviously, I am only like someone else: mimetic logic of the advent of the ego, objects, and signs. But when I seek (myself), lose (myself), or experience *jouissance* — then “I” is heterogeneous. Discomfort, unease, dizziness stemming from an ambiguity that, through the violence of a revolt against, demarcates a space out of which signs and objects arise. Thus braided, woven, ambivalent, a heterogeneous flux marks out a territory that I can call my own because the Other, having dwelt in me as alter ego, points it out to me through loathing.

The lung, a stupid organ, swells but gets no erection; it is in the throat, place where the phonic metal hardens and is segmented, in the mask that significance explodes, bringing not the soul but *jouissance*.

Roland Barthes

Julia Kristeva

In order to further elaborate on the argument outlined thus far, it is necessary to situate the stutter in the haptic space - a type of relation *to* and engagement *with* space which included the tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive senses. The sonic circuitry of voice and ear (particularly in terms of self-hearing) inserts itself in this haptic realm and is at the crux of the tension between the individual and the community. In a critical reading of Husserl, José Gil refers to self-hearing as “an act of ‘absolute reduction’ of space”, and this engenders Gil’s reflection that the body “in its very ‘organicness’, in its being-one, is differentiated from other organic unities [...] because it speaks about its meaning - and hears itself - we live our bodies in an immediate ‘nonthetic’, unquestionable presence.” The results of some neurological studies seem to indicate that what occurs in a stutterance is a (mal) functioning of self-hearing. Thus, the stutter disturbs this self-referencing mechanism and can be argued to constitute a questioning of the unquestionability of presence, and while remaining a reduction of space, it is now crucially non-absolute. Factoring the stutter into Gil’s reading, the following paradoxical formulations emerge: *The stutter as a space of fluidity. Claustrophobia as a time of porosity*. Here fluidity is uncannily arid, stuck in a claustral space, nevertheless it enables porosity to become part of the theoretical weave whereby community and language are considered at a somatic level.

The term *claustrophobia* has less currency than the stutter, yet it underpins the movement of porosity. Entwined with its opposite, *claustrophobia*, I would like to focus on the *-philia* on the other side of the *-phobia*. As with the stutter, the claustral space presents itself as an oscillation; the fort/da of a fortress in constant self-siege. This entwining of a constant return upon departure is activated by a desire, a desire of community. But a community only in its potentiality; its actualization remains framed by factors of alienation. So the contracture, the urge to retract, to recoil remains active even as the opposite movement is displayed. Referring to his 1992 installation *Soft Cell*, James Turrell advises that it is “not for the claustrophobic or the impatient, [it] is both solitary confinement and infinite space.” Turrell’s Pascalian depiction of the anechoic chamber which comprised his installation echoes Bruce Nauman’s succinct phrase for the extensive body of work he did featuring corridors - “withdrawal as an art form.” The stutter engenders a withdrawal, literally, which is to say that the words are triggered but trapped, the mouth cavity holds and harbors them. As a consequence, the stutter is a threat to coherence, to the established course, to smooth flow; it proliferates in the mouth that utters even when idle. In this context, the stutter is the eruption which reminds us of the already existing stutter. The somatic stutter reveals the metaphoric one. As Barthes states regarding the music of a text, “It is both what is expressed and implicit in the text: what is pronounced but not articulated.”

Christof Migone

Listen to a Russian bass (a church bass - opera is a genre in which the voice has gone over in its entirety to dramatic expressivity, a voice with a grain which little signifies): something is there, manifest and stubborn (one hears only that), beyond (or before) the meaning of the words, their form (the litany), the melisma, and even the style of execution: something which is directly the cantor’s body, brought to your ears in one and the same movement from deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages, and from deep down in the Slavonic language, as though a single skin lined the inner flesh of the performer and the music he sings. The voice is not personal: it expresses nothing of the cantor, of his soul; it is not original (all Russian cantors have roughly the same voice), and at the same time it is individual: it has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no ‘personality’, but which is nevertheless a separate body. Above all, this voice bears along directly the symbolic, over the intelligible, the expressive: here, thrown in front of us like a packet, is the Father, his phallic stature. The ‘grain’ is that: the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue; perhaps the letter, almost certainly significance. [...] The pheno-song (if the transposition be allowed) covers all the phenomena, all the features which belong to the structure of language being sung, the rules of the genre, the coded form of the melisma, the composer’s idiolect, the style of interpretation: in short, everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything which it is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural values (the matter of acknowledged tastes, of fashions, of critical commentaries, which takes its bearing directly on the ideological alibis of a period (‘subjectivity’, ‘expressivity’, ‘dramaticism’, ‘personality’ of the artist). The geno-song is the volume of the singing and speaking voice, the space where significations germinate ‘from within language and in its very materiality’; it forms a signifying play having nothing to do with communication, representation (of feelings), expression; it is that apex (or that depth) of production where the melody really works at the language - not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sounds-signifiers, of its letters - where melody explores how the language works and identifies with that work. It is, in a very simple word but which must be taken seriously, the diction of language.

Roland Barthes

The ‘grain’ of the voice is not - or is not merely - its timbre; the signifi-ance it opens cannot be defined, indeed, than by the very friction between the music and something else, which something else is the particular language (and nowise the message). The song must speak, must write - for what is produced at the level of the geno-song is finally writing.

Roland Barthes