

Heard and Unheard Voice in Human Discourse

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The paper is a study of art that can shape, contain, reproduce feeling and sensitivity in such a way others can share it. The excellence of art includes media, patterns of speaking, repetition, recollection, the pattern of images which contributes to an effort to convey meaning. Tongue, eye, feet, hands, hips are all equally engaged in and equally necessary to the machinery of memory – a gift through which, in language and thought, art achieves the union of past and future and makes one realize the power of talking tongues and speaking gestures in performance. It seeks to implant a new strength in the sentiment of freedom by placing it in the heart of our need.

This paper will consider a voice as a character in its own right, may belong to a character on stage or outside, may refer to a silent voice or exist as a personification in its own right. Voices have been taken from here and there to examine the performative voice in relation to the spoken and written discourse because human communication begins with the primary orality- the ability to speak with others.

The endeavour is also to provide a forum for the unheard voices, the feel that there is an outlet where they can be heard. All performances are communicative and my concern in this paper is to address some:

What tongue does my gesture speak?

I invite a gestural response in finding an answer to this question. When you listen to me, it is like, what I am talking about? When you listen you don't just listen to the tongue, you listen to the content, intent, the heart and the mind i.e, the spoken and the unspoken and understand it. This language is performative in the sense that it is seeking a voice to repeat it – 'listen to me', 'you listen', 'listen to the'. Articulation speaks and gives the listener a fair opportunity to gain access to the code. Thus in this paper you not only find a voice, heard and unheard but also a reference to the gestural implications, as this is where the performative voice originates.

This paper points a metaphor which must be voiced. It summons memory to relive the experience, to perform a gestural replay. In order to recognize an event as a historical one, it is necessary to relate that event to some present perception that situates it in the context of having already occurred. Virginia Woolf rightly said that nothing has really happened until it has been described. The descriptive devices bring to the mind for the audience a constellation of personal and traditional connections and recollections:

"Fog everywhere. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners... for cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck ... with fog all around them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging the misty clouds (Dickens, 1853)."

There is a specific type of descriptive evocation, which provides the audience a familiarity of form, to connect to a specific time and place and to be drawn into performance. The Bleak House is a metaphor of the divided modern consciousness. The "fog" refers to the court of chancery as corrupt, life destroying. Here law has little to do with justice. The metaphor of location currently echoes through a number of contemporary social, political and academic discourses. From the infinite number of past happenings, the

Fig.2 Articulated hand gestures by artist Derek Besant

What is the gesture of a building? Five articulated hand gestures point out towards the street from the wall, spelling the word DREAM in sign language. Dreams, too, are constituted of memories. A dream is a resurrection of the past, although it is a past that we sometimes fail to recognize, since it may have to do with a remembrance which had apparently disappeared, but in reality lay concealed in depths of memory. The gestures in the figure can be read from both traffic directions and form a hand gesture language metaphor. The sculpture suggests an implied activity echoing the exchanges among people along the street. The already lost voice through performance, through the sign language, through the articulated hand gestures, opens art to the common stuff of daily life, providing a stage on which the voices of history may interact. Oral history mediated by memory and shaped by performance offers a multiplicity of voices able to bear witness to events. History is by its very nature performative. Because we cannot be there to witness historical events in their states of original actuality, we must rely on what are essentially performative recreations of these events.

The paper discusses the crucial ways that make gesture communicative. It attempts to suggest, quite metaphorically, a certain grammar or aesthetic of gesture. In medieval civilization signs of the cross were gestures of faith; joined hands, raised hands, hands outstretched in a cross were gestures of prayer. In many performance cultures, visual signs communicate the creation of legal relationships. In early medieval Welsh, English, French, and Spanish law, a hand clasp indicated the making of a contract. But what meaning does history have in a cultural context if it cannot be recalled in some form into the present consciousness of the observer? The significance of past if it is to be remembered must be performed. This can be codified and held in common- as ritual, theatre, media; quotidian. Perhaps most importantly, we collect and preserve stories and artifacts as reminders, telling and retelling them, booking them into museums, galleries and archives that are both cultural and private.

Through repetition we hear the echoes of oral performance. During trials, law is recalled. Performance gives law a here that makes the rules of distant legislature near and a now which makes past precedents present. The here and the now of performed law command attention and respect while rendering law accessible to human understanding. In other words voices make the law. The case record exists in the aural memories of those present. In this context, legal performance transforms the ordinary into the identifying these connections between law and performance. It is the re-enactment of conventional words,

gestures and other behaviours which establish order as much through their rearticulating. As we perform we are also historical.

Gesture falls under the umbrella of performance and forms the discourse structure characteristic of explanations. We live in a world of close contact acted out through various means of communication and interrelated sharing of moments. Gesture can be considered a performed symbol, a sign that communicates some meaning. Communication fluency frees the hand and the tongue. It can be said that its meaning rests entirely on social convention and acceptance. When we speak, the words we use are inherited from the vast reserves of time and cultural interplay. Oral culture are interactive. Interactivity is what creates them. When talking stops the culture vanishes. Let us observe the difference between the gestures of Italians and the gestures of US. The Italian gesture meaning “come here” is the same movement that in the US means “go away”. The knowledge of cultural framework in which the gesture is acted is necessary to understand the meaning behind this performance. Gestures bear metaphoric relations to the things they represent. Let us take the statement as an example: “We have grown apart” while separating two hands. Here gestures speak more than the talking tongue.



Fig.3 Come here



Fig.4 We have grown apart

Orality is a forever, moving element and expands through the merging with modernity. We look for scholars for chronological accounts, to the media for cultural analysis, to performers and artists for interpretive regenerations. It provides with many standpoints, such as a base to merge ancient stories, myths, and performances with modern ideas, networked hypermedia. And also promises to restore the dialogic features of orality. Blogs, Web 2.0 sites and wikis all rely strongly on community to both discuss and contribute content. Networked multimedia is not only a shared collective memory, but is also a kind of collective dream. Meaning and narrative is always changing with the context. Rather I would say the nature of human communication itself is changing, to where content is mutually negotiated through mediated system. Negotiations with images, sounds, codes shift perceptively. A complex process of association, linking and connecting sense information is always active. It updates the relationships, which are constantly being changed. Identities are redefined in the light of changing art worlds- thus they stand to gain, not lose, status from the influence of these new constantly evolving art forms. We can say that the place of gesture has expanded with interactive digital media.

I really believe that the purpose of art is to serve the community and to tell people's stories that we wouldn't hear. Korean Yohangza takes on Elizabethan theatre. Yohangza is a south Korean Multiaward- winning physical theater company (best production at 15 Cario International Festival of Experimental Theatre for Karma in Sept.2003).We are going through the recycling bin. A Midsummer Night's Dream- a multilingual performance is

narrated in a foreign tongue using the modes of gestures, movements and facial expressions with a mix of energetic dance and music. It refers to as making Shakespeare “our contemporary”. Its performances have struck a chord with audiences, both Korean and international. Their plays take the audience through the passage of life that every human being experiences - birth, growing up, marriage and death. Yohangza’s work presents an exciting collision of the past and the present; a reworking of existing Korean styles and themes infused with contemporary elements.

Gesture is analyzed as embodied communication act. Kutiyattam (a mode of Sanskrit theater from Kerala) is a remarkable example of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. Kutiyattam, which means ‘combined acting’, endows great significance to facial expressions, and the face with its delicately-wrought eye, cheek, brow and lip movements and the elasticity of facial muscles. The power of communication through the eyes is so refined, pervasive and wide-ranging that it can portray any situation, thought or activity. It reflects the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity.

Fig.5 Kutiyattam - Kapila nangiari in a sublime pose during a performance at JITM, Parlakhemund



The performance is built on the mimesis of communication. This paper deals with a specific type of performance energies that stem from body, performance, identity techniques that I would apostrophize as realist. Our body acts as an application filter between “what’s there” and “what’s perceived as being there”. For Proust, the experience comes up spontaneously to repeat itself in the present. In T.S Eliot’s “Four Quartets” we find a parallel sense to this experience. We can hear through memory the unheard music of the early days, which through present holds them alive. There is a glad note that reality has after all been grasped.

“Quick now, here, now always”

“The unheard music hidden in the Shrubbery

And unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses

Had the look of flowers that are looked at”. (Eliot, BN)

It can be said that the tree is already to be heard when it falls in the forest, but it does not actually make a sound unless the body is there to perceive that sound and embody it. Sound is

a subjective interaction with matter. All that sound is, is vibrations through a medium. Sound doesn’t exist, since no conscious being was there to interpret those sounds. May be there is a there there, but the real there is here!

I end this performance – with a literal call to action.

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