

# Speaking – Writing – Representing

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**Résumé:** *L'article part de la relation entre parole et représentation, en insistant sur les formes que la communication peut emprunter. La parole est instantanée, s'adresse surtout au corps à travers l'intonation, rythmique variable, tandis que l'écriture, en tant que communication assistée par le graphème, s'adresse prioritairement à l'intellect et sa finalité est la contemplation, parce qu'elle valorise plutôt la prononciation au détriment du langage.*

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Nowadays, our soul (*anima*) may be slower than our mind and this speed gap is mirrored by what we call speaking. The soul's more visible expression lays in the vocalic chain, signifying depth and volume, while the consonant sends to the contour. The modern individual, always in a hurry, seems as if he is no longer able to speak, that is to communicate: in the class, for instance, the man shaped by the educational system speaks more "from the head" or from the chest upwards instead of using his entire body, as he should. We realise right away that the transmission and its correlative reception are related to the face, where the chest, the mouth, the front are placed. However, the utterance becomes a whole when both terms of the relation – the emitter and the receptor – convey the feeling that speech, *la parole*, comes also from the back of the communicator. The genuine act of speaking starts from the feet soles, goes upwards through the body and exits through the mouth, wherefrom the soul also expiates, it is said, so that the communication track is almost circular, including our body is an integrating part. However, to become aware of this truth we need to learn again how to utter, giving priority to the vowels, by tracing back the intensity accents, extremely present in the old languages, for instance. Then the link with the consonants leads to the organic *r h y t h m*, paced up by breathing, by the systole and diastole beats, etc. Therefore, the body is a Unitary Whole, although we overlook the back, the heels, etc. There are statistics to prove this – we do not know how telling they are, but they are symptomatic. Hence, if it is true that an audience remember from an allocution only 3%, 60% being the intonation and the remaining 37% the body language, we can grasp the difficulty of mastering a large group of people through the utterance attached to the speaker's image. There are charismatic speakers who do it intuitively; although – after a long exercise – they follow *volens-nolens* a grill of complex techniques, which we usually call **rhetoric**. The discipline, now losing momentum, despite its partial rebirth – we have in mind the **neorhetoric** –, has nonetheless found its way into **stylistics**, which, in its turn, is divided into several types. Anyway, rediscovering body

language, becoming aware of the volumetric vowel and the contour traced out by the consonant will still maintain the balance, so fragile today, between *the written word* and *the spoken word*, which still particularises literatures and by extrapolation the South-Eastern European cultures. On this groundwork, aesthetics, wavering when it comes to studying, let's say, the interstitial areas of artistic communication, is called to circumvent the homologies and the basic relations inside the mechanism **producing** and **receiving** the literary imaginary and not only.

What I said above is a reminder of what Paul Zumthor called **orality**, i.e. the way in which the voice works as a carrier of language. Things get complicated once orality is separated from **vocality**, understood as “the entirety of its activities and own values, independent of language” (Zumthor, Preface 15-16). The infant babbles but does not speak yet. The voice as the will to speak and implicitly as the will to live was associated by Barthes, in a sketched aesthetics of textual pleasure, to writing aloud: belonging to the genotext, led by the “*grain* of the voice, which is an erotic mixture of timber and language, and can therefore also be, along with diction, the substance of an art: the art of guiding one's body (whence its importance in Far Eastern theaters)” (66). As a *sound*, the voice is the most sensible element of the perceptible matter. A place where the universe and intelligence blissfully encounter one another, the voice “before manifesting itself and being perceived, is almost dissimulated into the body's quietness. The body – we do come back to it (our emphasis) – is its matrix; the voice may be born anytime, but unlike us, it may return anytime to that matrix, retrieving its energy for an afterlife”. Aesthetics took small but necessary steps to circumvent the *v o i c e* as an archetypal force, endowed with a creative dynamism on the various scores of the daily, artistic or communicational act. Corrado Bologna's research is, in fact, a restitutive inroad into the metaphysics and the anthropology of the voice, it is a meritory attempt to outline the aesthetics of the pre-artistic or, more exactly, of the artistic object in its genuine state. Understood as a “biologic – ontologic prius” and assimilated with the “whirl of body pulsations that escapes consciousness since it precedes it” (Bologna 42), the *v o i c e* “tends to be articulated, but in its very articulation it is annulled as a pure potentiality, generating the differentiated and significant word” (108). The voice, according to the aforementioned interpretation, pulsates in the blood and the breath, as the mystics argued, even more, it is an active element of the body and a body in its own power, according to the Indian and Roman grammaticians, reduced, nonetheless, by the sensorial and epistemological schemes of the alphabetic-textual cultures to the rank of a simple communicational tool. The primeval voice exists and ekes out as an intarsia into artistic representation, inter alia. Its “traces” are more or less visible, anyway deductible through an anamnestic effort made also to circumvent an auroral state accompanying our existence, tied up by the straps of the polis and by all sorts of logocentrism. Therefore, to the *oral* and *written* communication which maintains – manifestly or implicitly – the paradigmatic relation between *the ear* and *the eye*, we should add the art of choreographic movement (where the voice does not need the mediation articulated by the word!), the art of the sound itself (music) or the fine arts maintaining – through the line duct and the cold or warm colour – the pulsations of the same *v o i c e*.

In this line, the aesthetic discourse must be hermeneutic and unfold – from a methodological viewpoint – in analogy with solar spectroscopy. As the photographic emulsion retains, due to the spectroscopic techniques, the fine structures of the solar spectrum, likewise, *the sound, the word and the colour* are – even if processed and assembled in keeping with various criteria – the depositaries of the Voice<sup>1</sup>, neighbouring, not by chance, the Transcendence and the Silence (Agamben). General aesthetics, capitalizing on the gains of applied aesthetic, would be facing a threefold challenge, namely:

- a. The deduction of a possible object – **the voice** –, asymptotic to the periodic table of aesthetic categories;
- b. The argumentation, from the perspective of a disseminated vocalism, of the essential syncretism of arts, leaving aside the thematic dialogue among various artistic genres, currents and creations;
- c. The ontologic restitution of the language, seen in its integrality, existing, in fact, in various degrees in the artistic artefact.

The existence, *in statu nascendi* for the time being, of a science of vocality will help aesthetics shape a dynamic environment for itself, in an age when – if we are to credit Ong – “it reinvigorated the oral and the auditive” (27). Jewish scholars argued that **the written Bible** is worthless without **the oral Bible**, and this on the grounds of the osmotic link between oral language and vocality. If we agree that “s p e a k i n g and not w r i t i n g is primarily involved in changing a spiritual state into thought” (247), the latter’s distinctive marks are better highlighted within this oppositional-complementary relation. Therefore, **speaking** is instantaneous; it addresses itself more to the body through intonation, a rhythmic variable a.o.; it does not go beyond a limited circle; lastly, it is function of the materiality of the sound, it disseminates in time, that is why it is so alive and, consequently, more dialogical. In exchange, **writing**, as a grapheme-assisted communication, addresses itself predominantly to the intellect and its finality is contemplation; as a result, it does not preserve the speech but rather the utterance, and that is why it tends to abolish the materiality of the sound, it is a mute sound, seemingly abstract and universal, as if it were somehow independent of the speaker or listener; finally, writing is more monological, and reading is an individual act. Nonetheless, the word does not die while passing through the pen as Goethe asserted in *Faust*. In fact, the complementarity between **orality** and **writing** sends, ideally speaking, to the perfection of the language establishing a mediation between *emotion* and *idea*, namely between this ineffable source wherefrom all our most intimate thoughts spring and the abstract form they take apart from us, like strangers entering a world that is nobody’s and yet still ours. The idea makes its way up here only through the mediation of the i m a g e which, it has already been remarked, is the sensorial figure of the idea, shaped to a certain extent by the emotion which gave birth to it. But what is precisely that idea still unspoken? It is an emotion wrapped up for the time being in the semiobscurity of the consciousness – and here we are at the prelogical level of the structure of the work, where a category like rhythm, which has not known the state of ripe fruit, is still. The emotion cannot truly surface unless it takes the shape of an idea, but it is common knowledge that there is no crystalised idea without form, and that is why

for the Hellenic Antiquity the Idea and the Form were one and the same thing: the *logos*. Language, in other words, this “spiritual flesh”, as Plato called it, is at the interstice between two worlds, allowing them to communicate with each other. That the language proves to be an interstitial reality comes from its threefold functionality, revealed by George Steiner, i.e. it may have, concomitently, a *communicative* function per se, a *hiding one* and an *imaginative* one. Therefore, it is no surprise that, in the process of reception, anamnetic up to a point, the artistic artefact takes the place of an often extinct reality, which leads to phrases as “Balzacian world”, “Flaubertian character”, “Rembrandtian light” and so on. What should aesthetics do in this context?

- a. Examine the continuities, the discontinuities respectively, between the *oral* and the *written* language or, let me exemplify, among the various source and weight pulsations translating, all the same, into that *line* which, as Kandinsky felt, “goes for a stroll”, irrespective of the painter’s choice or will. In the case of literature, this is “the writing hand”, acting on command of our deeper self; a good place to find this manifestation of the deeper self is Liviu Rebreanu’s *Diary*;
- b. Follow, at the level of capillaries, the conjunction of the **poietic** and the **aisthetic** track, marked by specific transtextualisations on the **vocality – orality – writing** alignment and the other way round;
- c. The illustrations should be a subsequent plea for a reunification of the three artistic domains – *the literary*, *the musical* and *the fine arts*;

From this equation, the **image**, as previously mentioned, cannot be absent, i.e. a systematic mental association serving to identify an object, subject or institution by attributing socially construed qualities to it. Hence, the danger of stereotypes such as “the image of the Balkans”, “the politician’s image”, etc. In general, however, the **image** makes things representable, “illustrates” what the context asserts, while the text makes them conceivable, “tells” what the image shows (11). In other words, the image signifies nothing by itself; nonetheless, it is a related sign, (e.g. the publicity image), and its double articulation – through *drawing* and *colour* – is echoes somehow the two facets of the linguistic sign: *fonetic* and *semantic*. The essential polarity cannot be overlooked, of course: “the grapheme advises the mind, while the image informs the sensibility”<sup>2</sup> (42). The image creator or *eidolon demiurgos* (from Gorgias to Plato) eventually knows that its product is a simulacrum which may gradually eliminate the lived reality, and here it is worth remembering the aforementioned syntagms. Aside the substitutive intentionality, the artistic image as *r e p r e s e n t a t i o n* of the self or the outer world is organically linked to the much-discussed **mimesis**. As in the history of aesthetics the **Beautiful** was competed by the **Sublime**, likewise, starting with the Prague School, **semiosis**, the accent put on textual immanence respectively, erodes the foundation of **mimesis**. The latter – placed on the borderline between *imitation*, *representation*, *perception* and *performance* – sends to a process which gives birth to something new, based however on something known beforehand. For semiotics, mimesis raises questions about how the new structures are formed through semiosis. Leaving aside the circumscribed polarity (transcendence, reflexivity for **mimesis** and immanence, autoreflexivity for **semiosis**), a parallelism may

be drawn between the two competing concepts today. Thus, semiosis seems to be made, like a process, of three basic components: one which functions like a sign, another to which the sign sends and, finally, that which has an effect on the interpreter, by virtue of the fact that it is a sign for the interpretant. **Mimesis**, in its turn, informs us that something new is created starting from the perceived properties of an existing object or phenomenon, so that the outer acts become as many *signs* to their interpreter. Briefly, mimesis is also a semiotic opening of the cognitive category perceived by the creative subject; that is why it is also used in contemporary semiotics. Today, on the other hand, the Aristotelian category is more thoroughly analysed, which results, for instance, into a gradual shift from the resemblance paradigm, derived from the Greek *eikos*, toward cultural resemblance, having as its landmark the *doxa* or, mentalities, group opinions (111-160). Consequently, the representation of an object mostly refers to a mental model, like in the paradigmatic case of *still life paintings* – displays of virtuosity in fine arts akin to poetic fixed forms. Furthermore, understanding mimesis as a “sui-specularity”, based on representation (*anâgnorisis*) – an idea conveyed by the Aristotelian term and inspired by the myth of Narcissus (Morar) –, is a major step in the process of readjusting this category. The traditional and also the modern readings of mimesis raise a twofold challenge: on the one hand, changing writing into **representation** and, on the other, the latter’s absorption into the **alphabetic culture**, if we agree that we cannot become aware of the image without the help of any explanatory linguistic commentary whatsoever. The representation sends, indeed, to a thing or a being through a recognizance process; nonetheless it is also made up of forms, colours or masses seen per se. Therefore, we also represent (i.e. describe) fictional beings, like in Mediaeval bestiaries for instance. Moreover, representation is not synonymous with **significance**, to which I shall come back (the word *man* signifies a human being without showing a human being). In general, however, the image foreshadows the linguistic sign, so that the route **image-word-image-word** is made up of alternations which, with the accent on rigorousness, specify and pace up to the same extent the ages of European culture. Coming back to mimesis now, its definition as “self-alienation, followed by a restoration of the Self” (Georg Lukacs) induces the stenic, even fertile belief – which we also find in aesthetics – that “the work of art signifies an increase in being” (Gadamer 35). For instance, the entry **into** and the exit **out of** the fictional universe in Liviu Rebreanu’s novel *Ion* perfectly covers the Lukacsian meaning. More exactly, Rebreanu’s construction foreruns by a few decades the aesthetic conceptualisation: “The reader – we are told in *Confessions* – who went to Pripas village taking a byroad, crossing the Someş and the Jidovița, returns on the same road, until he exits the fictional world and goes back into his real world.” Here we find the same idea, amplified by the aesthetic discourse, which the writer grasped as a basic law of literature and of the imaginary in general: “...if we liken daily life to a wide river, then science and art ramify as higher forms of reception and reproduction of reality, they differentiate themselves and develop in keeping with their specific finality, they reach their pure form in this specificity, and later on, due to the effects, their influence on people, *they flow back into the river of daily life*” (our emphasis) (Lukács 77). Aesthetics becomes both sensible and explanatory



regarding the way images build words which, according to Roland Barthes, create images in an endless circular-spiraled movement. Does this mean that the **vocali** and the **oral dimensions** are lost forever? To venture a possible response to this question, I would like to bring to mind R. Colingwood's opinion, quoted in the 7<sup>th</sup> thesis on "the reconstruction of the horizon of expectation", in H. R. Jauss' *The History of Literature as a Challenge of the Science of Literature* (1967): "one can only understand a text when one has understood the question to which it is an answer". My first remark is that the *anamnetic* sense of reading gets clearer only now and, by extrapolation, the reception of the artistic product as well. What would therefore be the question whose answer took shape in – to take a literary example – *The Old and the New Boyards* (1863)? Did this first and paradoxical urban novel in our literature confirm the horizon of expectation of Nicolae Filimon's age? The strong vibe of orality, the direct interventions respectively, today disturbing, interspersed by the narrator (such as "we shall see what will happen to Kera Duduka!") or the use of paremiology ("...what else would the cat's son do except kill a mouse?") offer us hints, completed by the genologic solutions to the absence of crystalised epic forms in an early bourgeois society. More exactly, Filimon's novel makes use of the broader pattern, in late fashion with us, of classical constitutive "characters". It is announced in the author's dedication about "the boyard of all times", seen therefore as a universalium from the gallery sketched, in Romanian literature, by Barbu Paris Mumuleanu. It is only within this typological framework that the Balzacian destiny *sui-generis* of the growing type represented by Dinu Păturică develops. In other words, the first part of the diptych epic elaborated by Nicolae Filimon ("the old boyards") becomes the reflex of an aesthetic sensibility merging the characteriologic legacy established of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Classicism with the typology of the so-called Realism. Certainly, the diffuse orality is just one element belonging to the horizon of expectation of that age, confirmed more or less by the artistic reflex. Starting from here – and I choose an example from the field of music –, Theodor Adorno, in his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1962), draws up the method of *mediation*, which examines the effect of existential conflicts and social issues not so much on the production and consumption conditions of artistic works, but rather on their inner structure. If Beethoven's symphonies illustrate "the triumph of humanity as a whole" and "the harmonious spontaneity in the age of great Classicism", Brahms's creation, in exchange, is faithful to the great classical forms, whence the academic aspect of his music, while the lyrical subject is singled out, the compromise with the language of traditional forms being more and more difficult to reach.

In the examples above – a literary one and one taken from music – vocality and orality are naturally absorbed into the *poietic* act. With respect to the work of art, the aesthetic, hermeneutic test (which is preponderantly explicative and less demonstrative) involves a twofold option. Therefore, the brief comments I made above may constitute the onset for a *hermeneutics of recovery*, to use Jonathan Culler's syntagm. The hermeneutics of recovery tries to reconstruct the original context of creation and the meaning it might have had for the initial addressees. The other option – the *hermeneutics of suspicion* (68), essentially projective – outlines the neuralgic point of general aesthetics, often mistaken

for the historical name of art theory. Indeed, in time, the discipline turned its back toward the future and its face toward the past, experiencing the obsession of classifications. It gradually built itself a grill which various trends – formalist, psychologic a.o., with the exception of the phenomenologic one – did nothing but rediscuss and possibly amplify. On this secondary, largely futurologic, dimension, aesthetics, like metaphysics probably, must be re-invented closer to the *Dasein* of the being. For instance, it will be called to explain how a r t (or what we deem to be art) takes over the magic function of teleporting the body image, leading instead to a loss of life energy. In a novel pertaining to English decadence, Dorian Gray notices that the painting remains eternally young, as a revelation of his beauty, while he, the real subject, grows old and dies. Nonetheless, art is not only a defiance of the imminent end. In universal poetry, the shell cohabits with the being of the snail: the cosmic endlessness is drawn inside and thence emanates the force of the creator, reordering the world of the text. Aesthetics should work in the same way, if we want it to acquire a mediating dimension in the co-presence of the being with eternity. And this is not to be taken as a *solus contra omnes* stand, but the projective function of the aesthetic discourse, in the difficult hypostasis of a modern Janus. Placed in-between the **creator** and the **addressee**, it mediates between possible meanings, all the while circumscribing the quality of the artistic work against the background of a generalised alterity.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The method of the analogy with solar spectroscopy in Scrima 25-27.
- <sup>2</sup> Also: “The alphabetic culture boosts the development of thinking, reason and civic spirit; the image civilisation feeds our sensibility, emotional life, and receptivity” (Wald 38).

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