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Speech Is Dead; Long Live Speech

Joshua Gunn

Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), xxv + 264 pp. \$25.95.

Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), viii + 216 pp. \$19.95.

Clifford Nass and Scott Brave, *Wired for Speech: How Voice Activates and Advances the Human–Computer Relationship* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), xvii + 296 pp. \$17.95.

Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, reprint (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002, orig. pub., 1967), xi + 360 pp. \$37.00 (paper).

There is something about speech that defies theory. After all, the Greek *theoria* bespeaks “a viewing of,” and perhaps this meaning explains the longstanding tendency to transcribe speech when we study it. Even when rhetorical scholars attempt to detail the affective dimensions of the human voice in terms of inflection, tone, pitch, volume, and so on, we are still condemned to use the “poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective.”¹ Obviously, in moving from one mode of communication to another—from the musical to the linguistic or logico-mathematical—something gets lost in translation. With reference to current departmental nameplates, a case can be made that this lost something is speech itself: in the move away from speech communication toward departments of communication and communication studies, scholars and teachers have literally—perhaps inevitably—envisaged speech to death.

As each of the books reviewed below makes plain, however, the titular death of “speech” suggests only a displacement of scholarly attention in word, for if we listen more closely to conversations about communication technologies, we discover that

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the object of speech continues to haunt like a ghostly presence, murmuring for theoretical engagement. In the spirit of the work of the late Walter J. Ong, in this review essay I argue that new communicative technologies have “stepped up the oral and aural” in pursuit of Ong’s now-famous thesis: “Voice, muted by script and print, has come newly alive” (88). The learned Jesuit is most known for arguing that the transition from an oral culture to a print culture effected profound epistemological changes, yet perhaps contrary to the assumptions of some readers, in the 1960s and 1970s Ong argued consistently that new visual technologies only increased the significance of voice and speech. “Recordings and tapes have given sound a new quality, recuperability,” said Ong, and, interestingly enough, he said it at the same time that Konstantin Raudive was capturing voices of the dead on his tape recorder, a practice that would eventually inspire the EVP or electronic voice phenomena movement that flourished in the 1970s (88).² Ong also heralded the resurrection of voice at a moment when historians began the project on oral history “from below,” an endeavor to cheat death by capturing the verbal stories of the isolated and forgotten who lived through history’s worst hits, an endeavor only made possible by increasingly smaller, portable recording machines.³

Perhaps because we are overwhelmed today with the screens on our desks, on our walls, and in our pockets, much scholarly labor has been devoted in recent years to theorizing the visual in rhetorical studies.⁴ By rehearsing Ong’s major project in the reprint of *The Presence of the Word*,⁵ however, we are better equipped to engage a series of newer books devoted to what we might call a speech revival in the theoretical humanities, various philosophical and theoretical attempts to rethink the concepts of voice and speech in the wake of the project of the posts (posthumanism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and so on).⁶ Together, these books can help us to re-sound Frank E. X. Dance’s seldom-heeded call for studying speech as a central, complex, robust, persistent—and in our times, altogether haunting—object of daily life.⁷

Of Speech between Media Ecology and Religion

Because the first printing of Ong’s *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* preceded his more widely read *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* by over a decade, it reflects a different focus and approach: whereas the latter is more programmatic and helped to found so-called orality-literacy studies,⁸ the former advances a more phenomenological understanding of the object of human speech that underwrites much of Ong’s subsequent work.⁹ *The Presence of the Word* is a masterful expansion of a series of lectures delivered at Yale in 1964 into six meaty, wide-ranging chapters that take up the human voice in respect to pre- and post-typographic economies, the “electronic age,” sound, the sacred and the profane, world politics, and, of course, religious thought. Although Ong concedes to Heidegger that “language itself is at its deepest level not primarily . . . a system of sounds” (2), the book opens with the argument that “communication, like knowledge itself, flowers in speech” (1). This is because, Ong

suggests, “words are always primarily spoken things” as well as the basic unit of human communication (3). Later in the book the author reveals that the reason spoken words are considered the most fundamental unit of human communication is because *sound as such* connotes “presence”:

Sound, bound to the present time by the fact that it exists only at the instant when it is going out of existence, advertises presentness. It heightens presence in the sense of the existential relationship of person to person (I am in your presence; you are present to me), with which our concept of present time (as against past and future) connects: present time is related to us as is a person whose presence we experience. It is “here.” It envelops us. Even the voice of one dead, played from a recording, envelops us with his presence as no picture can. (101)

The example of the dead voice is crucial to Ong’s argument because it underscores the significance of the perception and experience of presence, contrary to critics who have suggested his understanding of speech is animistic.¹⁰ The uncanny experience of feeling the presence of a dead person after hearing a recording of her voice does not mean a ghost has been conjured: “Presence does not irrupt *into* voice,” clarifies Ong; voice, rather, “simply conveys presence as nothing else does” (114). Admittedly, Ong’s Platonic position on presence here is tricky, for it seems that the experience and feeling of human presence, however illusory, is ultimately akin to an inferior copy or extension of God’s presence (287–324). Nevertheless, for the remainder of the book, Ong traces the fate of this *human* affect of interpersonal here-and-nowness through three stages of technological development: the “unrecorded word” of oral culture, the “denatured word” of print and typology, and the electronic “sensorium” of the mid to late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (22; 35; 87).

In addition to providing a frame for historical work, Ong’s signature move in *The Presence of the Word* is his elaboration of the concept of the “sensorium”:

Sound and the word itself must . . . be considered in terms of the shifting relationships between the senses. These relationships must not be taken merely abstractly but in connection with variations in cultures. In this connection, it is useful to think of cultures in terms of the organization of the sensorium. By the sensorium we mean here the entire sensory apparatus as an operational complex. The differences in cultures [regarding notions of “taste” geographically and over time] which we have just suggested can be thought of as differences in the sensorium, the organization of which is in part determined by culture while at the same time it makes culture. (6)

Much of *The Presence of the Word* is dedicated to mapping changes in the sensorium by examining past speaking and reading practices. For example, Father Ong relates a well-known anecdote from the Middle Ages that he suggests indexes a shift from oral to writerly forms of thought: St. Augustine apparently caught Ambrose reading to himself in silence and wrote about it, which indicates that the practice was “certainly singular and deserving of comment” (58). *The Presence of the Word* is teeming with similar anecdotes and stories as Ong traces the sensorium to the middle of the twentieth century, where he finally locates a “new orality” and organization of the senses hastened by “the present electronic media,” which are “bringing the whole

globe into continual contact with all of itself at once and thus tending to minimize ingroup feelings” (301). In contrast to the central thrust of another book also first published in 1967—Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*—*The Presence of the Word* argues that the increasing openness of people to exteriors, to the world outside, and to foreign cultures (Ong’s mentor Marshall McLuhan and co-author Quentin Fiore would later dub this the “global village”) was catalyzed by the telepresence of speech.¹¹ Spectacle may represent one culture to another, or it may be *the* mask of capitalism, but because of the way in which speech alone conveys presence beyond representation, speech imbues cross- or trans-group communication with a feeling of intimacy that no (moving) image possibly can.

Over the next decade, Ong recast the sensorium as an “ecological concern” that called attention to interactivity and an emergent form of consciousness intercouring with an increasingly electronically mediated environment. Attention to this congress

echoed earlier . . . thinking culminating in Darwin’s work, which had shown how species themselves . . . are not fixed but develop though natural selection brought about by open interaction between individuals and environment. The new philosophical attention to openness appears not unrelated to the opening of previously isolated human groups to one another fostered by electronic communications media, telephone, radio, and ultimately television.¹²

In other words, nascent in Ong’s notion of the sensorium is a focus on what Neil Postman eventually termed “media ecology,” defined as “the study of media as environments.”¹³

Ong’s notion of the sensorium bears the mark of bio-evolutionary thinking; however, we would be remiss to downplay (as many commentators have done) the theological understructure of media ecology. For Ong, the ways in which we listen with and through electronics—and, by extension today, the digital gadget—bear directly on our relation to Deity. Ultimately *The Presence of the Word* is an evocation of God’s presence, an attempt to show how the “modern means of *communication* . . . have annihilated *time* and *space*” in such a way that “man’s word[,] . . . [as] a primary point of entry for the divine,” has enlarged and intensified the feeling of God’s here-and-nowness (312–13). Ong admits that the human feeling of presence is an affective perception; however, he also believes that a concert of such perceptions hastened by prayer furnishes “the matrix, the womb for his [Christ’s] coming, as Mary’s body once did.” Ong insists that “if the group calls and waits on him, he is there” (311).

At the conclusion of the book, Ong warns that the auditory matrix of the sensorium can be lost to “visualism” if we are not careful, for we have already become desensitized to the “auditory character of the word,” a character that he consistently maintains is the specificity of the human (322–23). Whether or not one believes in Deity, Father Ong’s final remarks about the inherent mystery of the word are central for understanding not only why the fantasy of speech-as-presence has only intensified in our time (and perhaps why the “secularization thesis” of Weber and others was misguided), but also why there has been a modest, contemporary revival of interest in

the object of speech that counters a longstanding and misleading reduction of “word” to “sign”:

In the strict sense, the word is not a sign at all. For to say it is a sign is to liken it to something in the field of vision. . . . The word cannot be seen, cannot be handed about, cannot be “broken” and reassembled. Neither can it be completely “defined.” To want to define the word . . . is somehow to want to remove it . . . from its natural habitat and place it in a visual field. . . . the word remains for us at root a mystery, a datum in the sense-world existing in closest association with that other mystery which is understanding itself. (323)

The word denotes a blind spot that contemporary technologies of telepresence help to amplify but fail to capture, a blind spot that locates speech at the intersection of the human and the divine, a mysterious locality that both inspires and frightens. The word needs speech to animate it, but when it is His Word, the source of enunciation, that specific, human medium of articulation—the Preacherman and the Revelator—is destroyed.¹⁴ What is left is either that Absolute Presence of Plato or, as Mladen Dolar argues, just more and more of the no-thing of the blind spot, something that he designates as the “object voice” (4).

From Word to Voice: Speech and the Object Voice

In sharp contrast to Ong, Dolar begins *A Voice and Nothing More* by banishing God. The book opens with reference to Walter Benjamin’s famous parable of the automaton and the dwarf in “On the Concept of History” in order to underscore the implicit teleology of the voice explicit in Ong’s work: the religious ambassador is really only the vocal vehicle of God’s Word (logos).¹⁵ Dolar then cites a passage from St. Augustine in which “the voice gradually loses its function as the soul progresses to Christ” in order to suggest that “there is only a small step from linguistics to theology” (16). He argues that we must break with the implicit “theology of the voice as the condition of revelation” in the opposite direction, from

the height of meaning back to what appeared to be mere means; to catch the voice as a blind spot of making sense, or as a cast-off of sense. We have to establish another framework than that which spontaneously imposes itself with the link between a certain understanding of linguistics, teleology, and theology. (16)

Dolar moves on to suggest that what Ong specified as the uncanny presence of the word is really the voice, or rather, something more in voice than voice, the “object voice.” He compares both the word and the Word alike to the attempt of linguistics to repress the object voice in semiology and phonology. Because the voice harbors a mysterious and elusive quality, “the voice is the impeding element that [linguists] have to be rid of in order to initiate a new science of language” (17). Just as Augustine urged the eclipse of the voice of John the Baptist by God’s Word, so did Saussure and Jakobson jettison the voice with the signifier and phoneme respectively. After this interesting set-up in chapter 1 (“The Linguistics of the Voice”), *A Voice and Nothing More* becomes an attempt to recover the unrecoverable, something that human

speech evokes yet that is beyond our ability to represent, something that is conveyed by voice yet that is beyond *meaning*: the object voice.

So what *is* the object voice? Dolar's answer to this question spans nearly 200 pages and assumes a modest background in psychoanalytic theory. Although space limits any thorough discussion, to understand Dolar's argument about the "object voice," it is important to mention that in psychoanalysis an "object" usually refers to a person, either directly or indirectly, and more specifically, to an outside other that makes it possible for a subject to become self-conscious as a subject. For example, the first "object" for an infant is a parent, often the mother, and the infant only becomes conscious of itself as a discrete being when it realizes that "I am not my mommy." When the infant realizes there is more than one parent (the end of so-called primary identification), her object domain begins to expand concurrently with her sense of self. Eventually things can represent objects or others for the infant, becoming "part-objects." A classic example of a part-object is the breast, of course, which re-presents "mommy" in the form of a part of her. In this respect, the object voice is a kind of part-object, a synecdoche that represents another person in the abstract, or the Other.¹⁶

The object voice is experienced in one's own voice as well as that of another, but it is itself not a substitute. Rather, for Dolar there are substitutes for the object voice, or things that repress this disturbing and elusive element of voice. These consist of anything that disciplines voice in respect to meaning. In the history of Western music-making, for example, Dolar argues that "music, and in particular the voice, should not stray from words which endow it with sense; as soon as it departs from its textual anchorage, the voice becomes senseless and threatening—all the more so because of its seductive and intoxicating powers" (43). Musical instruments, something like a flute, for example, represent a literal, material substitution for the voice in a manner that muffles the ambivalence of the object voice.

Dolar's description of the object voice as both a seductive and threatening (no)thing is an indirect intervention in a psychoanalytic debate between those who advocate the "drive model" and those who advocate the "relational model" of human motivation. Dolar sides with the (presumably) more radical theories of Jacques Lacan, who advocated a revised version of Freud's theory of the drives (71–74). This debate concerns the function of objects and part-objects in respect to what energizes people to work, reproduce, live, and destroy. So-called object-relations theorists like W. R. D. Fairbairn argue that human motivation is hardwired toward specific objects and is not sexual in character.¹⁷ In the schools of thought that maintain a link to Freud (classical psychoanalysis), including the Lacanians, part-objects are at the center of pleasure-seeking drives; they are things that energy pulsates around and that set the psychical apparatus into motion (i.e., they are what make us "go," or as Mick Jagger might put it, things that start us up so that we never stop). So, for example, the "oral drive" pulsates around the breast, the anal drive the feces, the scopophilic drive the gaze, the invocatory drive the voice, and so on. Lacan later revised the theoretical function of the part-object in Freud's model with what he calls the *objet petit a* or simply the *objet a*, which is a formal term that refers to any object that causes desire

or starts up and maintains a drive. For Dolar, the object voice is the most important *objet a*, something that both stimulates desire and sets drive into motion. Unlike the part-objects that can represent another as an inanimate thing, sometimes even becoming fetishized (e.g., a woman's high-heel shoe), the object voice is neither seen nor heard. We can only know of its effects.

Dolar clarifies his understanding of the object voice as an attempt to advance a vocabulary for voice in a way that does not reduce it to "the vehicle of meaning" or "the source of aesthetic admiration":

[T]here is a third level [to voice]: an object voice which does not go up in smoke at the conveyance of meaning, and does not solidify in an object of fetish reverence, but an object which functions as a blind spot in the call and as a disturbance of aesthetic appreciation. One shows fidelity to the first by running to attack [when called to war]; one shows fidelity to the second by running to the opera. As for fidelity to the third, one has to turn to psychoanalysis. (4)

As with Ong's focus on the sensorium, Dolar's psychoanalytic approach to this third element is phenomenological and cumulative, so descriptions of the object voice shift from one perspective to another chapter by chapter. After he demonstrates that the object voice is not reducible to the signifier with various examples (hiccups, infantile babble, screams, and laughter), Dolar then locates its function in philosophy and musicology in chapter 2 ("The Metaphysics of the Voice"), its relation to the body and the materiality of sound in chapter 3 ("The 'Physics' of the Voice"), its guise as the "voice of reason" and the "voice of conscience" in chapter 4 ("The Ethics of the Voice"), its role *vis-à-vis* the law and governmentality in chapter 5 ("The Politics of the Voice"), its centrality to psychoanalytic practice in chapter 6 ("Freud's Voices"), and finally, as the skeleton key to Kafka's bizarre stories in chapter 7 ("Kafka's Voices").

In every chapter, the object voice is discerned as a paradoxical in-betweenness that upends common assumptions and facile binaries. For example, while Dolar admits that "[t]here is no voice without a body," disembodied voices are nevertheless ever-present, especially in the wake of various technologies of speech telepresence like the cell phone (60). In the cinema, voices often seem to come from nowhere, or do not quite match up with the bodies they are associated with, like the mother's voice in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the wizard's voice in *The Wizard of Oz*, or the English overdubs in some martial arts films (these represent the "acousmatic voice" according to Michel Chion) (60).¹⁸ Dolar even goes so far as to suggest a "basic quality of the voice" is that "it always displays something of an effect emancipated from its cause" (67). Although there is a material basis for the voice, the object voice is not reducible to the body because we cannot see the origin of *any* given voice:

it [the voice] stems from an undisclosed and structurally concealed interior, it cannot possibly match what we can see. This conclusion may seem extraordinary, but it can be related even to banal everyday experience: there is always something totally incongruous in the relation between the appearance, the aspect, of a person and his or her voice, before we adapt to it. It is absurd, this voice cannot possibly stem from this body, it doesn't sound like this person at all, or this person doesn't

look at all like his or her voice. Every emission of the voice is by its very essence *ventriloquism*. (70)¹⁹

The voice consequently is both inside and outside, something that fires “like a bodily missile which separates itself from the body” (70), at the very same time as it indexes an interiority, that “hidden bodily treasure beyond the visible envelope” (71).

The ambivalence of the object voice helps Dolar to confront directly the now widely assumed critique of the dreaded “metaphysics of presence” by Jacques Derrida.²⁰ Originally published as a chapter in one of the *SIC* collections helmed by Slavoj Žižek, Dolar’s critique of Derrida amounts to the late deconstructionist’s lack of Lacanian know-how (so to speak).²¹ According to Derrida, Western thought can be characterized as metaphysics of presence based on the Platonic assumption that speech presences the thought of the speaker.²² “The voice is *heard* (understood)—that undoubtedly is what is called conscience—closest to the self as the absolute effacement of the signifier,” argues Derrida, as a “pure auto-affection that . . . does not borrow from outside of itself.”²³ This logocentric conceit “offered the illusion that one could get immediate access to an unalloyed presence . . . a firm rock against the elusive interplay of signs which are anyway surrogates by their very nature, and always point to an absence” (Dolar 37). Dolar argues, however, that Derrida (at least in his earlier work) overlooks the bad and threatening voice in Western thought, the voice that upsets and troubles, from the terrible voice of God to the sexual frenzy threatened by music. “[T]he history of ‘logocentrism’ does not quite go hand in hand with ‘phonocentrism,’” argues Dolar, for “there is a dimension of the voice which runs counter to self-transparency, sense, and presence: the voice against *logos* . . . its radical alterity” (52).²⁴ Contra Ong, Dolar agrees with Derrida that the presence of speech is an illusion, yet he nevertheless refuses to equate the voice with *logos*.

An Ontology of Voice

For Dolar, the voice is ultimately “an opening to a radical alterity” that Heidegger suggested issues “a call eluding self-appropriation and self-reflection” (102). In a qualified sense, Dolar advances an understanding of the human voice that provides an ontological basis for ethical being toward others:

The voice is the element which ties the subject and the Other together, without belonging to either, just as it formed the tie between body and language without being part of them. We can say that the subject and the Other coincide in their common lack embodied by the voice, and that “pure enunciation” can be taken as the red thread which connects the linguistic and ethical aspects of the voice. (103)

In rhetorical studies, Eric King Watts has also underscored this binding tie and argues consequently that voice is “constitutive of *ethical and emotional dimensions that make it an answerable phenomenon*.”²⁵ Likewise, drawing on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Diane Davis has argued for “a rhetoric of the *saying*—that is, an elaboration of rhetoric’s explicitly nonhermeneutic, ethical dimension” that does not flatten human relations into “the Said.”²⁶ Although their projects and vocabularies are

different, Dolar, Watts, and Davis all tacitly emphasize that pure enunciation is an ontological nexus of individual uniqueness and speech that has important implications for communicative ethics. Adriana Cavarero's *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* endeavors to provide a book-length elaboration of these ethical implications with a *telos* in the political.

From multiple vantages, Cavarero advances a "vocal ontology" or "phenomenology of uniqueness" by beginning with the "simple truth of the vocal," which announces a number of

elementary givens of existence: uniqueness, relationality, sexual difference, and age—including the "change of voice" that, especially in men, signals the onset of puberty. There would therefore be any number of reasons for making the voice a privileged theme of a speculation on the problem of ontology. But, surprisingly, authoritative precedents for this kind of speculation are lacking. (8)

Cavarero attempts to remedy this lack by investigating these givens in three themed sections: part 1, titled "How Logos Lost Its Voice," is a philosophical history of voice and speech consisting of nine short chapters; part 2, titled "Women Who Sing," takes up the centuries-long association of woman with embodiment, speech, and music in seven longer chapters; and part 3, titled "A Politics of Voices," comprises four chapters that link voice to politics by way of Hannah Arendt's work.

Whereas Ong and Dolar are largely concerned with a phenomenological approach to voice, speech, and language, Cavarero couples her phenomenology with a philosophical history rooted in the thought of the ancient Greeks. Assuming that readers are familiar with Derrida's critique of logocentrism from the outset (and perhaps because her book never really engages that critique, Cavarero has added an appendix "Dedicated to Derrida"), the author opens *For More Than One Voice* by announcing that she intends to trace the "devocalization of logos" in the history of philosophy in order to rethink "the relationship between voice and speech as one of uniqueness" (13). For a number of the early chapters, Plato takes center stage in this respect (especially because "it has been said that the entire history of philosophy is nothing but a series of footnotes to Plato" [42]). Cavarero argues that Plato inaugurated "videocentric thought" by subordinating speaking to thinking and cleaving voice from logos: "logos concerns itself with saying, but not with the human world of singular voices that, in speaking, communicate the speakers to one another" (43). Because he aspired to the timeless and universal in the domain of thought and the "intelligible world," Plato muted the unique individual designated by a given voice.²⁷ He did this through the imagery of allegory and by projecting

onto speech itself the visual mark of thought. The result is the firm belief that the more speech loses its phonic component and consists in a pure chain of signifieds, the closer it gets to the realm of truth. The voice thus becomes the limit of speech—its imperfection, its dead weight. The voice becomes not only the reason for truth's ineffability, but also the acoustic filter that impedes the realm of signifieds from presenting itself to the noetic gaze. (42)

Of course, this dead weight of philosophy presumes a relationship to speech. As with Dolar, voice here represents a “sphere” that is “constitutively broader than that of speech: it exceeds it” (13). Voice is the sound that registers the singularity of every individual that has one, whereas speech concerns the domain of meaning and signification that is the “essential destination” of voice. Perhaps because their relation changes over time, Cavarero avoids any precise definitions of speech and voice.²⁸ Forcefully, repeatedly, and, regrettably, somewhat like a broken record, however, she does argue that “logocentrism radically denies to the voice a meaning of its own that is not always already destined to speech” (13). Whereas for Dolar, theology and philosophy have sought to kill off voice in the name of God or Language because of its unstable ambivalence and threat to self-presence and transparency, for Cavarero, voice has been subjugated to the signifier because it interrupts and violates universal aspirations with the demand to recognize a particular, unique person with a “throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices” (4). Indeed, voice is a dead weight because it intimates the singular uniqueness of an individual life at the same time as it confirms the meaninglessness of mortality.

Central to Cavarero’s vocal ontology of uniqueness is Levinas’s distinction between the Saying and the Said, which she argues foregrounds uniqueness as the precondition of any communicative encounter:

Saying is in fact understood by Levinas as “anterior to verbal signs, anterior to linguistic systems and to semantic reflections—preface to languages.” Again, this is not the phonetic aspect of speech, not a voice that reverberates. Rather, Saying is here—at least in its simplest meaning—the act of speaking, the event by which human beings speak to each other one by one, without regard for what they say. This Saying is distinguished by Levinas from a Said that is, at the same time, that which they say to one another and that which the entire knowledge of the west says. But the Said is above all the system that organizes speech. (28)

The Saying necessarily involves *a* someone who speaks, neither an “I” nor a “thou”—since self- or other-awareness is a re-presentation and thus in the domain of the Said—but a uniqueness-in-relation that Cavarero says is best captured by the notion of voice. Although she briefly questions why Levinas has a “surprising tendency” to ground sonorous metaphors in the visual (e.g., “the face”), she extends from his work the idea that ethics is not an epiphenomenon of self-consciousness (the Said), but rather a Saying better expressed in the voice beyond speech (27). In other words, for Cavarero the vocal ontology of uniqueness *is* the ethical. Alternately cast: there is no choice in hearing, only a kind of default, radical passivity (30–31).²⁹

This default passivity of the ear hailed by the mouth is also necessarily a dependency, one that each of us encounters “[o]n the scene of infancy,” where it is “the mother who links the sphere of the voice to that of speech” (179). When the infant cries, it is the parent who must assign meaning to that phonetic excess; a scream requires another to hear it and register it as a demand (for food, for a diaper change, and for other basic needs). After ruminating on the figures of the muses and sirens in Plato and Homer, the second part of Cavarero’s book takes up those parts of the work of Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous (and while not explicit, there is the

discernible murmur of Kaja Silverman's work, too), which focus on the dependent relationality of voice.³⁰ She focuses in particular on the "pre-Oedipal" relations of primary identification, which Freud suggests are initially with the mother by way of her breast.³¹ Kristeva and Cixous, however, argue that prior to the breast is the (mother's) voice:

By insisting on the libidinal register of the vocal, these thinkers trace vocality back to the pre-Oedipal phase. That is, they trace it back to the originary scene in which the fusional relationship between mother and child also works to frustrate the category of the individual. From this perspective . . . the pleasure rooted in the acoustic sphere has above all a subversive function: that is, it destabilizes language as a system that produces the subject. Rather than stand in opposition to writing . . . voice stands in opposition to language—that is, to the disciplining codes of language, to grammar and syntax, to the "Law of the Father" that separates the child from the mother by consigning the child to the logic of individuality. (131–32)

Again, we read the influence of Lacan, who referred to the self-consciousness made possible by representation (language) as the intervention of the paternal metaphor or the "Law of the Father." The basic idea of primary identification is that there is an affective relation of immediacy—a primary mother–child dyad—that is eventually triangulated with the onset of language represented culturally by "the father," who lays down the law ("no, you cannot have Mommy to yourself"; "don't touch that or it will fall off"; and so on).³² "Language" is interchangeable with "the law" because it is an order, a system of codes founded on the simple command, "No!" Cavarero suggests that both Kristeva's conception of a preverbal *chora* in her *Revolutions in Poetic Language* and Cixous's powerfully poetic critique of phallogocentrism in Western thought articulate an ontology of voice that situates relationality before sexual difference. In this, the writerly and readerly side of language, voice is gendered feminine and renders the originary Other as mother, "the source of language and its rhythm," and yet ultimately these "women who sing" remind us that voice as such exceeds the meaning of speech; it is consequently without sex or gender (145).

Finally, springboarding from the (apparently) phonocentric philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig, Cavarero closes her book with a third section devoted to the relation between an ontologico-ethical conception of voice and the domain of the political as conceived by Hannah Arendt and Jean-Luc Nancy (174).³³ For Cavarero, a recognition of the preverbal, dependent relationality expressed by voice is also the core of the political, which she defines, following Arendt, as a plurality of individuals expressing their uniqueness. For Arendt, argues Cavarero,

the political lies entirely in the relational space between human beings who are unique and therefore plural. The faculty of speech is political because by speaking to one another in a relational space and communicating themselves, men at the same time communicate the political nature of this space. What they communicate—contents, signifieds, values—might be congruent with this space, but however it is secondary with respect to the political act of speaking. It is in fact the relational plurality of the unique beings that constitutes the criterion on which the congruence of "what gets communicated" can be judged. . . . The political, the

exclusively human sphere of the world, consists in the “in-between,” in what relates and separates men at the same time, revealing their plural condition. (192)

Cavarero contrasts her understanding of Arendt on the political with Nancy’s work on community to help characterize the relational space of communication. She asserts that Nancy substitutes relationality with the term “knot” and uniqueness with “singularity” in a way that foregrounds community as a scene of a “politics in the *with*, the *among*, the *in* . . . that is, in any particle that alludes to the original, ontological relation inscribed in the plurality of singular beings” (193–94). Politics is not, then, merely a space of judgment *vis-à-vis* the proper recognition of the singularity announced by a voice; for Nancy, at least, politics is “the seizure of speech” or, as Anne Dufourmantelle has said elsewhere, a “pact with speech,” a thirdness, a relational bond of utterance (194).³⁴

In distinction from Arendt, Cavarero points out that for Nancy there is no “proper sphere to politics” because the political, as a register of knotting singularities, is inscribed in any ontology (195). Despite Cavarero’s own collapse of the ethical and the ontological throughout her book, however, Nancy’s conflation of ontology and politics troubles her: without the communication and the interactive recognition of unique voices within a given community, suggests Cavarero, “uniqueness remains a mere ontological given—the given of an ontology that is not able to make itself political” (196). Judgment and recognition seem central to Cavarero’s politics. Perhaps it is in this respect that Cavarero chose to conclude *For More Than One Voice* by relating the story of a three-year-old child, mute and without name, discovered at Auschwitz after the liberation. Drawing heavily on the account of Primo Levi, Cavarero reports that fellow survivors named him “Hurbinek,” and he did attempt to speak and make sounds for his short life. The child had a voice that registered his uniqueness, recognized and named by others, a voice that mimed “the musicality of speech, the relational fabric of resonance, the echo that comes from the mouth for the ear of the other” (212). Cavarero ends by suggesting the inarticulate cries of Hurbinek implicate the political in the recognition of a voice on its way to its final destination in speech.

Vader’s Voice, or, Cyborg Trouble

Cavarero reports that Aristotle’s famous characterization of human nature in the *Politics*, “*zoon logon echon*,” has been wrongly and commonly mistranslated as “rational animal,” but to the letter it means “the living creature who has *logos*” (34). Coupled with Aristotle’s insistence that humans are the only animals who signify, Cavarero suggests it is better to understand Plato’s prized protégé as having specified human beings as the *speaking animal*. Such is the opening argument of Clifford Nass and Scott Brave’s fascinating study *Wired for Speech: How Voice Activates and Advances the Human–Computer Relationship*. Although the authors unabashedly announce their interest in the commercial implications of their work—an ambition that overtly drives their research and that some readers will find troublesome—*Wired for Speech* nevertheless lends empirical support to many of Ong’s, Dolar’s, and

Cavarero's philosophical claims. Whereas Cavarero helps us to contend with the ethical and political implications of an ontology of voice, Nass and Brave would have us modify Aristotle's definition and support it with social scientific research.

Nass and Brave open *Wired for Speech* with the foundational claim that human beings are distinct from all other animals because we are "the only species that is wired to understand speech fully," meaning that we depend on speech as a (if not *the*) primary means of social identification: gender, personality, similarity, competence, and other personal attributions are made involuntarily by attending to the sound of someone's voice (1). Brain research on infants demonstrates just how early humans begin to process vocal information:

Even before birth, a fetus in the womb can distinguish its mother's voice from all other voices (demonstrated via increased heart rate for the mother's voice and decreased heart rate for strangers' voices). Within a few days after birth, a newborn prefers his or her mother's voice over that of a stranger's and can distinguish one unfamiliar voice from another. By eight months, infants can tune in to a particular voice even when another voice is speaking. (2)

Because for newborn infants the "voice is the alpha and omega of social life," Cavarero's more abstract claims about the primacy of voice for subject formation, and more specifically, her argument that the voice of the mother is the first interface of the social, finds qualified, empirical support in *Wired for Speech* (47). "Hearing voices is also the first way in which babies identify other people's gender and emotions," continue Nass and Brave, which implicates voice as a primary locus of difference and, eventually, the emergent seat of self-consciousness (47).³⁵

Although early infantile vocal encounters do not rely on a distinction between "inside" and "outside," Nass and Brave's work suggests Ong's argument, that speech is the primary index of attributed interiority, does find qualified support in the social and brain sciences. Research for decades has demonstrated that the human brain—and more specifically, the left side—is so deeply "hardwired" to attend to speech that "[p]eople even process nonsense syllables and speech played backward as if they were normal speech" (11). The brain's "very liberal definition of *speech*," they argue, predisposes us to regard "[a]ll speech . . . as a communicative act, and people will struggle through assigning meaning to sounds even when they are garbled or unclear" (11–12). In other words, where there is sound there will be an attribution of presence, and when that sound remotely resembles speech, there will be an attribution of a consciousness or an agent. Nass and Brave suggest that as a consequence of "200,000 years of evolution, humans have become *voice-activated* with brains that are wired to equate voices with people and to act quickly on that identification" (3). In short, most of us are predisposed to perceive non-human and non-existent voices as real because we cannot help it. Even when we consciously "know" that a given sound is not a human voice calling our names from the computer speaker or whispering to us in the dark, such intellection does not keep us from getting goosebumps: our brains and the unconscious mind, Nass and Brave argue, simply cannot tell the difference.

Having argued that the involuntary attribution of personhood to speech is a powerful, autonomic, and usually unconscious habit, Nass and Brave then show, by

way of a number of experiments detailed and woven into chapters throughout the book, that “the human brain rarely makes distinctions between speaking to a machine—even those machines with very poor speech understanding and low-quality speech production—and speaking to a person” (4). Although they never mention the figure of the cyborg, the fear of forgetting that one is talking to a machine (for example, when calling any customer service phone number these days) buoys the justification for *Wired for Speech* and the need for more studies like it; the threat of voice mail is Hal 2000 and the Terminator. More important to the authors, however, is the idea that synthetic and recorded speech technology can increase consumption, commercial and otherwise: “Because humans will respond socially to voice interfaces, designers can tap into the automatic and powerful responses elicited by all voices, whether of human or machine origin, to increase liking, trust, efficiency, learning, and even buying” (4). Because social identity begins early in life with gender, age, and race distinctions, the authors tackle “learning” in the first half of the book by self-consciously and carefully navigating essentialism and (social) constructivism with empirical studies. The second half of the book is devoted, more or less, to helping speech-based software and machine designers make money.

Nass and Brave’s study ranges across a terrain of issues related to voice and identity in order to arrive at a series of observations and prescriptions in the conclusion: first because “people do not have separate parts of the brain for human speech and technology-generated speech,” technology designers can capitalize on our hardwired tendency to attribute agency to voices; second “[s]ocially inept interfaces suffer the same fate as socially inept individuals: they are ineffective, criticized, and shunned”; third with a better understanding of how the brain attributes social identities, interfaces should, on the one hand, attempt to be as similar to the primary audience as possible, yet, on the other hand, “should present a consistent social ‘face’ to users: voices that talk, behave, and look like they sound are much more desirable, intelligent, and comfortable interaction partners” (183). To reach these conclusions, the authors designed experiments to answer questions such as these: How do people attribute personality (introversion or extroversion) to a voice? What effect does accent and racial attribution have on different audiences? How is vocal emotion perceived? Which is better, synthetic or recorded voices? Should machinic voices use the term “I,” signifying human status, or refer to themselves in the third person? Although the answers to each of these questions are interesting and thoughtfully composed in each of the book’s fifteen chapters, I think the best summary of the kind of analyses Nass and Brave offer is a description of a case study referenced in multiple chapters: BMW’s “gender fender bender.”

Nass reports that he was brought in by Germany’s BMW to participate in a “multidisciplinary team” charged with developing a new voice persona for their car navigation system. The exigency was consumer discontent over the original voice:

When BMW first introduced its in-car navigation system in Germany, it provided highly accurate information about the car’s location and how to get to almost all city and street addresses. Unfortunately, a large number of drivers had a strong negative reaction to this model of engineering excellence and demanded a product

recall. The German drivers felt uncomfortable with, and untrusting of, a “female” giving directions. In what has become known as the “gender fender bender,” BMW acquiesced and agreed to provide a male voice. (55)

In order to explain what happened in Germany, Nass and Brave identify a number of biological, psychological, and cultural reasons for consumer dissatisfaction.

The authors first discuss the gender fender bender by rehearsing research findings on the attribution of gender to voice. Not coincidentally, in a manner that mirrors Lacan’s theory of sexual difference (“sexuation”), the authors note that

[f]rom the age of two or three years old, children identify themselves and others as exclusively belonging to a group called “female” or a group called “male.” In all cultures, the majority of people spend the majority of their time with people of the same gender, and even very young children show a striking tendency to segregate by gender when choosing with whom to play. This sense of membership provides the lens through which every perception, of both observer and observed, is filtered. (9)

The authors stop short of claiming, however, that hearing gender in voice is hardwired, for this fundamental basis of human identity is isolated in the “language-related areas of the brain” (10) and is “a reflection of learned social behaviors and assumptions” (15). Studies consulted by the authors, as well as the results of their own experiments, however, indicate that people are more likely to trust and conform to male voices. BMW’s disgruntled drivers were thus reacting to a cultural stereotype, not a hardwired preference. Nevertheless, Nass and Brave argue that gender “is one of the first attributes that people identify in a human voice,” and that the “brain is so cued to gender categorization that when people are asked how similar voices are, the most important criterion is whether the voice is male or female” (9–10). The reason the brain is so cued—and why we are prone to stereotypes—is that “humans have limited processing capabilities” at the largely unconscious level of sensory perception (20). It would seem that although our brains are not hardwired to discern gender in speech, they are nevertheless hardwired to perceive simple dichotomies—the most basic of which being “like me” and “not like me” (10). In the medium of human speech, recognizing that one is not the same individual as one’s parent seems to be the first instance of social recognition (the acoustic mirror); the second, for better or worse, is the language-based binary of gender.

A Broken Pact

The gendered dynamics of human speech are characteristically ambivalent, but as Dolar, Cavarero, and Nass and Brave indicate in different ways, they are secondary to a more primary ambivalence. One may be tempted to argue, for example, that gender (or even sex) is premised on a distinction between the paternal and maternal voice; however, both social scientific and psychoanalytic theories tend to suggest there is a prior understanding of difference—of social identification—based on the originary parent-child dyad. The parent is typically identified as “mother” for biological and cultural reasons; however, it is possible that a male could fulfill the function of mother in the theories considered here. In other words, the chorus on the infantile

scene initially features only the voices of mother and child; metaphorically speaking, the father's "No!" and the binary of gender comes later (e.g., secondary identification, the Oedipus Complex, and so on).

A number of the books featured in this essay foreground the temporality of social identification in infancy, either literally (Nass and Brave) or metaphorically (Dolar and Cavarero), in order to emphasize the representational bases of social discrimination. Cavarero, for example, stresses that the maternal voice is initially peaceful and is the first "good voice," both developmentally and culturally, that we encounter. Or, to modify a Kate Bush song, the mother's voice stands for "comfort"; it represents an original pact with voice prior to the arrival of speech or the so-called Law of the Father: "With this voice I shall respond to your cries, nurture, and protect you, as you cannot do so yourself; with this voice I will speak for you."³⁶ Such a promise is reflected in the etymology of "pact," which shares a root in the Latin *pax*, a tranquil relation among two people or parties. The original voice pact, as with all subsequent speech pacts, stands for the security of peace. Echoing Dolar's history of the unsettling voice beyond word, however, Steven Connor argues that the infant's own voice contrasts with the maternal voice in a cacophony of displeasure:

The cry is the response to the hunger and the means employed to defeat it. . . . The voice is the means—the sole means—that the baby has to escape from so much suffering, and reach and fetch to it the comfort and sustenance. . . . But the voice is also the voice of the infant's suffering and need. When the cry does not bring instant relief, it becomes itself the symbol of unsatisfied desire, even the agency of the frustration of this desire.³⁷

Such is the origin of the "bad voice" for Connor, which seems analogous to the threatening side of Dolar's "object voice" and the uncanny element of Chion's "acousmatic voice." As she ages and matures, argues Connor, "[t]he child gradually comes to recognize its own voice as the good voice," a necessary and elementary form of narcissism as Dolar suggests, and the "bad voice" becomes the speech of "the self become other."³⁸ Whether or not one is inclined to favor the psychoanalytic or social scientific accounts of voice and gender, the books reviewed here collectively suggest that voice and gender are so proximate because both intersect at the site of infantile discrimination: the paradigm person begins in infancy as a crying and hearing subject. Cries give way to speech at the birth of self-consciousness, an arrival to language that is both comforting and terrifying, a fundamental, affective ambivalence of social being.

Reading across the books considered here, from media ecology and psychoanalytic theory to philosophy and social science, two ideas are constantly intoned. First, there is a kind of vocal fundamentalism that maintains human speech is *the* token of our uniqueness as animals and *the* most fundamental element of social being, biologically, psychologically, and culturally. Second, with perhaps the exception of Ong (who does not discuss the voice that unsettles presence), there is the idea of an irreducible vocal ambivalence. Each in their own way, the authors discussed here specify the existence of good and bad voices, of self-positive, self-conscious voices (*cogito ergo sum*) as well as those that silence others in non-inclusive speech. In keeping with the project

initiated by Ong, however, I have also suggested that the more recent revival of speech as a theoretical and critical object in the humanities has been goaded, in a kind of homeostatic manner, by the overwhelming attention given to the image and the technologies of its (re)production. In this respect, Nass and Braves's work echoes what Dance has been arguing for decades: "speech is uniquely human," the "infant's oral-aural experience initiates" cognitive discriminations that are "considered the root of conceptual thought and reason," and thus, the study of communication should be fundamentally grounded in human speech.³⁹ The books reviewed here yield new theoretical perspectives in support of Dance's arguments, providing fresh vocabularies for taking up speech and voice in new ways: returning to Ong reminds us that in our image-saturated environment, speech has taken on a new aura of authenticity; in addition to suggesting that the object voice is irreducible and escapes various regimes of intelligibility, Dolar outlines the centrality of speech and voice to the psychical/cultural fantasies that sustain our sanity; Cavarero's vocal ontology of uniqueness provides a philosophical basis for recognizing speech at the center of ethical and political being toward others; and Nass and Brave detail a number of counterintuitive insights about our brain-based habits of identification. In concluding this review essay, I want to point out a tension between the ideas of vocal fundamentalism and ambivalence that are common to the affective registers of these books: yes, speech is fundamental, but this is not necessarily always a good or comforting thing. Together, Ong, Dolar, Cavarero, and Nass and Brave seek to unsettle our habitual assumptions about voice, speech, and bodies: these books begin with the claim that speech and voice are fundamentally relational, but then proceed to undermine, in various ways, schemes of intelligibility that call us to forget our fundamental dependency and response-ability.

Is not a similar tension also reflected in the decades-long debate among members of the National Communication Association over the term "speech"?⁴⁰ As Gerry Philipsen has demonstrated, "speech" was a master term for our field, now loosely collected under the aegis of communication studies, from at least the 1920s until the beginning of its decline in the 1970s.⁴¹ Arguments for retiring the term were many, and there were various failed votes for its assassination throughout the 1980s, but the demands to kill off speech only found an official hearing when 69 percent of the membership of the Speech Communication Association successfully voted to change its name to the National Communication Association in early 1997.⁴² According to various polls, the dominant argument for ridding our professional organization of the master term "speech" was that it no longer reflected the interests of the majority: "The problem has been that while speech does characterize the work of members in divisions such as public address and argumentation/forensics," argued SCA president Judith S. Trent, "it does not in areas such as health communication, mass communication, organizational communication, interpersonal and small-group communication, and intercultural and international communication."⁴³ In keeping with the claims of Ong, Dolar, Cavarero, and Nass and Brave, Dance has consistently rebutted this argument by insisting on the ontological primacy of speech, on which all other communicative forms are based.

Obviously many members of SCA bridled at any vocal fundamentalism and opposed granting speech or voice ontological primacy. What if, however, the ambivalence of voice, and thus the speech toward which it is destined, also has something to do with the term's demise? Speaking as the outgoing president of SCA in 1996, James W. Chesebro argued a change was needed not simply to reflect the interests of members, but also because of a professional burden: "[W]e are and will continue to be confronted with questions about our association's constituency and scope," reasoned Chesebro. "We are constantly asked to explain and to justify our 'place at the table.' . . . We don't know how many times we're not even asked to participate in relevant discussions because others involved don't know who or what we are."⁴⁴ Apparently the table in question was that of academic and commercial publicity:

[P]erhaps most importantly, the purpose of our name is to represent the organization externally as well as internally. We have, for example, complained for years that our scholarship is not well represented publicly. We dislike it when a political scientist is selected, and we are not, to provide televised comments on the Presidential Debates. We feel underrepresented in public policy discussions about national communication policies, or even distance learning decisions on our campuses.⁴⁵

It seems the discipline formerly known as speech communication despaired of not having a voice. In this respect, Dance has argued that the teachers and scholars of communication studies have ironically turned against the goods internal to our history and practice in favor of external recognition.⁴⁶

Whether or not one believes that speech undergirds all communicative phenomena, once we recognize the perceived inferiority of "speech" as a master term for disciplinary publicity, we can add to Dance's diagnosis of ironic betrayal: the metaphysical history and psychical economy of voice advanced in these books teaches us that speech was also abandoned because of its ambivalence, and more specifically, because speech is aligned culturally with the body and the feminine. Speech was jettisoned because the voice it bespeaks threatens our senses of self-presence and autonomy. Speech was killed because it echoes the softness of the maternal voice in the steely, manful corridors of academic industry. Speech was killed because it represents the threatening cry of need and a dependency on and responsibility to the Other.⁴⁷ Speech, the stabilizer and achievement of voice, was killed because the voice it carries cannot be quieted or stilled. Even in silence, voice simply will not shut up.⁴⁸

Owing to the rooted-ness of speech in the first maternal murmurs of that blissful, intrauterine symphony, Dance's apology for speech—as well as the call of Ong, Dolar, Cavarero, and Nass and Brave for a kind of speech revival—are quite literally nostalgic. Consequently, in many senses, it is too late to recover speech as a master object. Yet the continued, haunting relevance of speech and voice in everyday talk, in voice mail, and in fantasies of immortality, in our longings for love and recognition, in our desire for understanding, in our imagined futures of peace (and war), in public address on screen and online, recommends its continued study, and not simply as a medium but *as such*. At the very least, those who would craft a usable history of

communication studies, just as much as those who would forge the “interdisciplinary frontiers of rhetorical theory,” would do well to consider the ambivalence of voice, dead and alive, for all the reasons these books suggest, but also for reasons that are both explicit and implicit in the work of our forebears.⁴⁹ In the name of speech, reckoning with the ambivalence of voice is not merely an academic exercise of “perspective by incongruity,” but an affective and ethical working-through among our communities as people answerable to each other as people. As scholars in communication studies, and as discrete singularities replete with our own mouths, ears, lungs, and brains, we have a pact with speech to honor. We cannot help but honor it.

Notes

- [1] Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), 179.
- [2] Konstantin Raudive, *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead*, trans. Nadia Fowler (New York: Taplinger, 1971).
- [3] See Staughton Lynd, “Oral History from Below,” *Oral History Review* 21 (1993): 1–8; and Alistair Thomson, “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History,” *Oral History Review* 34 (2007): 49–70.
- [4] For overviews, see Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers’s edited collection, *Defining Visual Rhetorics* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004); and Lester C. Olson, “Intellectual and Conceptual Resources for Visual Rhetoric: A Re-examination of Scholarship Since 1950,” *Review of Communication* 7 (2007): 1–20; for notable studies, see Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999); Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 2003); and Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
- [5] Yale moved Ong’s book to print-on-demand status in 2002.
- [6] In addition to the books reviewed here, other notable and foundational studies on speech and hearing include Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); and Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). In rhetoric, studies of speech and sound are vastly outnumbered by those devoted to images. For a recent exception, see Samuel McCormick, “Earning One’s Inheritance: Rhetorical Criticism, Everyday Talk, and the Analysis of Public Discourse,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89 (2003): 109–31.
- [7] Frank E. X. Dance, “Speech and Thought: A Renewal,” *Communication Education* 51 (2002): 355–59; also see Frank E. X. Dance, “Ong’s Voice: ‘I,’ the Oral Intellect, You, and We,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9 (1989): 185–99. Dance has been the most visible and vocal opponent of eliminating the term “speech” from our departments and professional associations; see Frank E. X. Dance, “Opposing a Change,” *Spectra* 25 (1989): 4–5. For

- a history of the use of “speech” as a titular object, see Gerry Philipsen, “The Early Career Rise of ‘Speech’ in Some Disciplinary Discourse, 1914–1946,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 352–54.
- [8] See Walter J. Ong, “Orality-Literacy Studies and the Unity of the Human Race,” *Oral Tradition* 2 (1987): 371–82.
- [9] For an excellent overview of Ong’s career *vis-à-vis* that of others associated with media ecology, see Lance Strate, “A Media Ecology Review,” *Communication Research Trends* 23 (2004): 3–48.
- [10] U. Milo Kaufmann, review of *The Presence of the Word* by Walter J. Ong, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 3 (1969): 162.
- [11] See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995); and Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2005).
- [12] Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 324.
- [13] Strate, “Media Ecology,” 4; also see Neil Postman, “The Reformed English Curriculum,” in *High School 1980: The Shape of the Future in Secondary Education*, ed. Alvin C. Eurich (New York: Pitman, 1970), 160–68. For exemplary rhetorical work conducted from a media ecology perspective, see Kenneth Rufo, “The Mirror in the Matrix of Media Ecology,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20 (2003): 117–40.
- [14] See Dolar, *Voice*, 16.
- [15] See Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 289.
- [16] This is a necessary oversimplification of the term. The Other is frequently capitalized to emphasize that it is not simply another person, but a special “not me” that is, for example, worthy of justice or hospitality (Derrida, Levinas), or the principle figure of the symbolic order (Lacan), and so on.
- [17] See W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976).
- [18] Also see Chion, *Voice in Cinema*.
- [19] Steven Connor describes this uncanny awareness as the product of “vocalic bodies,” fantasy bodies that we mentally conjure for the voices we hear. See Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35–43.
- [20] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
- [21] Mladen Dolar, “The Object Voice,” in *SIC 1: Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 7–31.
- [22] The critique of phonocentrism is only one example of the metaphysics of presence for Derrida; however, it remains the most widely known. I have sometimes wondered if the assumption of this critique in the humanities—assuming assumptions also signify simplifications—contributed to the abandonment of the speech object by rhetoricians.
- [23] Derrida, *Grammatology*, 20.
- [24] Dolar is focused specifically here on the critique of phonocentrism as logocentrism. Derrida’s late work *does* take up the issue of the “bad voice” in other places: see Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), esp. 53–81; and Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 59–71. My thanks to Ken Rufo for this insight.
- [25] Eric King Watts, “‘Voice’ and ‘Voicelessness’ in Rhetorical Studies,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 180.
- [26] Diane Davis, “Addressing Alterity: Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Nonappropriative Relation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38 (2005): 194.

- [27] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 222–23.
- [28] Cryptic definitional statements such as the following are typical: “To put it formulaically, speech refers to speakers, and speakers refer to their voice.” Cavarero, *More Than One Voice*, 9.
- [29] For a book-length treatment of hearing—and, in a sense, a kind of counterpart to Cavarero’s project—see Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. Christie V. McDonald (New York: Schocken Books, 1985); and Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).
- [30] See Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*.
- [31] Sigmund Freud, “An Outline of Psycho-analysis,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (SE) 23, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 141–208. For a lucid explication of primary identification, see Diane Davis, “Identification: Burke and Freud on Who You Are,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38 (2008): 123–47.
- [32] For Lacan, primary identification and the arrival of the Law of the Father (which thereby creates new object choices) are both *prior* to the Oedipus Complex in Freud, which represents sexual difference or what Lacan refers to as “sexuation.” The reason primary identification is important to gender scholars is that it implies relationality is *prior* to sexual difference, which has important implications for ethics, social theory, and so forth. See Charles Shepherdson, *Vital Signs: Nature, Culture, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2000), esp. 115–51.
- [33] See Franz Rosenzweig, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000).
- [34] Anne Dufourmantelle, “Invitation,” in Derrida, *Hospitality*, 122. The related Lacanian term is the “paternal metaphor,” which implies the pact was more or less a forced choice.
- [35] In the theoretical humanities, the notion of speech as the originary locus of relationality is known as the “acoustic mirror,” a concept developed by the psychoanalytic theorist Guy Rosolato in the 1970s and extensively elaborated by film theorist Kaja Silverman. The acoustic mirror is an event of pre-verbal identification (if we can call it that) that precedes image-based identification (e.g., the “mirror stage”). Although Nass and Brave’s work is keyed specifically to the market place and theories regarding the acoustic mirror are nested within cinema studies and musicology, in a qualified sense one can characterize the former as the empirical counterpart to the latter; both projects can be profitably read across one another. See Guy Rosolato, “La voix: entre corps et langage,” *Revue française de psychanalyse* 37 (1974): 75–94; Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*.
- [36] Kate Bush, “Mother Stands for Comfort,” perf. by Kate Bush. *Hounds of Love* (New York: Sony, 1985). Compact Disk.
- [37] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 30–31.
- [38] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 32.
- [39] Frank E. X. Dance, “A Speech Theory of Communication,” in *Human Communication Theory: Comparative Essays*, ed. Frank E. X. Dance (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 129–33.
- [40] In this regard, the present essay is an expansion of an argument I originally advanced in a very short “provocation” essay in the previous volume. See Joshua Gunn, “Gimme Some Tongue (On Recovering Speech),” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 361–64.
- [41] Gerry Philipsen, “The Early Career Rise of ‘Speech’ in Some Disciplinary Discourse, 1914–1946,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 352–54.
- [42] “Membership Changes Name to National Communication Association,” *Spectra* (May 1997): 1.
- [43] Judith S. Trent, “A Name Change to Bring Us ‘Ahead to Our Roots,’” *Spectra* (May 1997): 2.
- [44] James W. Chesebro, “Why We Need to Change Our Name to the National Communication Association,” *Spectra* (Nov. 1996): 2.

- [45] Chesebro, "Why We Need," 22.
- [46] Frank E. X. Dance, "Opposing a Change," *Spectra* (March, 1989): 4–5.
- [47] Or as Connor, following Melanie Klein, would have it, to the mother.
- [48] See Cheryl Glenn, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); and Robert L. Scott, "Rhetoric and Silence," *Western Speech* 36 (1972): 146–58; and Robert L. Scott, "Dialectical Tensions of Speaking and Silence," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993): 1–18.
- [49] William Keith, "Crafting a Usable History," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 345–48. For a number of essays devoted to reviving interest in the history of our field, see the recent forum "On the History of Communication Studies" in the same issue, esp. David Beard, "Out of the Aerie Realm of the Intellectual Firmament," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 349–51; Pat J. Gehrke, "Historical Study as Ethical and Political Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 355–57; and Darrin Hicks, "The New Citizen," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 358–60.