Giovanni Fontana

EPIGENETIC POETRY
Hypervox and electrophonic mask

Contamination (a very disturbing term in as much as it is full of significance) always permeates my poetic work. The confluences of several artistic disciplines and the intersections of the languages distinguish it. I have always aimed at poly-dimensionality and not at the mere sum of the elements. When the body, gesture, noises, sound, lights, colours, architectures enter my poetic game, they play inter-linguistic roles. But I always assign a fundamental role to the voice. A structural one. The voice not only mediates, catalyzes; it also forms, organizes, constructs, re-textualizes.
My poetic project that has roots in experiments of "sound poetry", which began in the late '60s, is founded on a close interaction between vocalism and writing, in the sense that the former interacts with the latter and vice-versa, creating continuously transforming areas of intervention, in which electronics occupies all but negligible spaces. My writing no longer produces texts, but *pre-texts* as places to transfigure acoustically and visually, *pre-texts* as territories of action to re-frame, beyond the page, in spatio-temporal terms, generating *writings in motion*, *poetic performances*, capable even of re-generating writings.

The text has never played such an important role with the image, the sound and the voice as during these past years. This is an era in which the role of the "new orality" is becoming more and more central. And the direct influence of the *phono-sphere* on contemporary poetry is an unquestionable fact. Besides, the sound (as well as the voice) is particularly fluid; it can easily cross time and space. Mediated by modern technologies, it can follow you always and everywhere.
But vocalism, in particular, even if it is supported by technologies and by the important role that the presence of sounds assumes in the frame of aesthetic communications, has to undergo writing which is already in the phase of the poetic project. In other words, it is necessary to assign a renewed function to the voice in the literary ambit. But it's not a matter of vocalism adhering to the text, or supporting vocalism that is transferred onto a pre-written text; it's a matter of a sound dimension which strongly influences writing in the technical ambit. This connection has nothing to do with what traditionally links the voice to oral poetry (developed over the years on the techniques of natural memory), because here orality is based on the artificial memories of writing, on the one hand, and on electronics on the other hand.

Moreover, the media panorama has already conditioned text elaboration to a great extent. It is quite common to see texts that, on the one hand, recuperate the rhythmic dimensions typical of some 20th century experimental techniques (from "cut up" to simultaneity), and on the other hand the "sound" of the street (from *jam hip hop*, to *rap*, to "*toast*", from *dozens*, to *scat*), and the mass media and technological "pop" scansions (from rock to the commercial slogan and to the *jingle*), but for other reasons even popular and archaic ways (ethical rhythms, oral storyteller's verses, litanies and apotropaic formulas). In short, all those text structures intended as "scores", that started out with great difficulty at the beginning of the last century, in which writing, in its search for a rhythmic form that suits the sound dimension better has to consider the vocalism of the very poet or of any other hypothetical executors, today assume roles that are more and more significant.
In our hypermedia society the voice and the vocal text play central roles both in poetry (sound poetry, poetic performance, theatre-poetry, slam poetry, etc.), as well as in prose (radiotext, audiobooks, videoliterature, etc.).

Also, if we consider the rhythmic dimension (even if in specific forms) as common denominator of poetry and prose, the use of confluences and of digressions, if conditioned and supported by what I would call vocal *imprinting* of the project*,* might even single out the "ultra-textual" directions that I have been preaching for years.

Since the beginning of the 80s, in fact, I have been sustaining new functions in writing that lead to the conception of text intended as **integrated text**, like **polytext in resonance**, like **multi-poetic sonorous hyper-text**, like **transversal ultra-text** that can live on **intermedia and inter-linguistic polyphonies**, based on action languages.

Therefore, what I defined as pre-text, in its typographical form contains metamorphic germs capable of achieving the complexity of subsequent dynamic structures (hyper-hyphos), beyond the page. In this way it is possible to look for new connections with the forms of the text within the performative intermedial ambit, so as to render it multidimensional and multidirectional, multivalent and multipotential, polycentric and multilateral, polyrhythmic and multisounding.

So the poet transforms himself into a poly-artist: he takes possession of electronic, videographic practices, of the cinema, photography, of the sonorous universe (besides music), of the theatrical dimension (besides the theatre), of the rhythmic universe. He acts poetically using all the techniques, all the supports, all the spaces, without having to renounce his very body and therefore his gesture and his voice to the creative ambit: elements that, connected to new technologies, nourished by the energetic substratum of electronics, constitute the basis of a new poetic attitude.

The figure of this poly-artist widens and enervates the boundaries of poetry, of the type of poetry that creates tensions by playing on the contamination of the systems, on the penetration of the separate universes, on the use of new media and new supports, conjugating the immense energies offered scientifically to the energies of the memory and of the body, through a different conception of the materiality of language, supported by the voice, but by a voice which, on the one hand reconnects us to the reign of a long lost orality, and on the other hand, thanks to the new tools of sound synthesis, puts itself in the position of an unheeded vocality.

The polyartist, then, is the creator and the actor of "Hyperpoetry". With his gesture, his energy, his relentless pressure, the poetic body undergoes subsequent processes of reorganization and it is subject to a progressive plastic modeling, so that, in reference to the "genotypic" structure of the score and to the evolutionary phases of the action poetry, one might speak of "**Epigenetic poetry**".

Worth mentioning is also the relation with technologies with regard to their specificity. The artist's technological sensibility, in fact, is revealed in the very way the artist relates to the means. The more the specificity is exalted, the more the range of technological signifiers is enriched in support of the work. In the case of *Poema Larsen* (1983), for example, the use of the microphone does not simply aim at amplifying the sound, as it usually does, but at producing and articulating it. The sound, in fact, is fruit of a relation between the voice, the gesture and the geometric space. The action gives rise to the modulations of the *feedback* caused by the reactions that feed the microphones articulated in performances. On the one hand these pick up *phonic* units, on the other hand they produce *microphonic* units, while the text (limited to the word "microphone", fragmented in its phonematic components) acts, as a percussor of the masses of air, to put in vibration the acoustic space. Controlled by the modulating gesture (the microphones are "moved" in the space in a sort of structuring dance), the interference acts as a real and proper generator of sounds. The only word used is in fact the pretext to trigger the L*arsen effect* which is modulated in the action by the very action itself, during which each sequence of movements models a sequence of sounds.

Starting from here up to my last *pièce*, my *voice in motion*, sustained and mediated by modern technologies (which consent to highlight the imperceptible sounds of the body, to amplify the innermost flatus and even to generate new vocal universes, by using more and more sophisticated software, up until the total devastation of the initial acoustic diagrams), produces sounds and draws spaces, becoming text and ultra-text, body and ultra-body, *animus* and *anima*, becoming a real and proper **hypervox.** So, we can talk of "electro-phonic mask" (and/or "digital form"), behind which the sound is articulated as one of the fundamental aspects of language, for what looms as a genuine hyper-poetic form: the **Epigenetic Poetry.**