

forces. In this regard, might we speak of the musicalities found in the nurturing look, and the common life fostered through the sightlines of Deaf space, as the figuring of a certain unifying tendency—the ability to literally *carry* meaning, and to make meaningful the body as it lives linguistically? And that, in turn, makes language less a force to be reckoned with?

Gestural Voice

In her philosophical work, Adriana Cavarero argues for the voice as an essential sound, where the “vocalic” is never always already destined to speech and language, but rather first and foremost exposes the “uniqueness” of one’s singularity (I speak and therefore expose my uniqueness: my voice captures my singularity, expresses it). In vocalizing, in resonating by way of voice, individuation essentially *stands out*, is made apparent. While Cavarero aims at undoing understandings of “the rational self” as being divorced from the primary vocalization of corporeality (*logos* as driven by articulated thought, a certain metaphysical authority), she proceeds by way of an overarching phonocentrism; as such, the “ontology of uniqueness” is expressed (if not founded) through sonority.

In fact, the vocalic helps not only to think in ever more radical and corporeal terms the ontology of uniqueness, but it helps above all to conceive of politics in terms of a contextual relation, entrusted to speech, which does not appeal to territory or identity myths of community. The protagonist of this politics is a speaker who, leaving aside his or her belonging to this or that identity group, this or that language, communicates him- or herself first of all as voice. Thus, this speaker does not correspond to the universal, disembodied individual of the modern political fiction that relies on the communicative rationality of language. The reciprocal communication of voices implies the figure of a speaker who exposes first of all herself as a singular body. This is also true—as Levinas would say, and in a certain sense, Arendt too—for the face to face of those who, by looking at each other, expose their embodied uniqueness to the other’s gaze. But as I have emphasized repeatedly, the acoustic sphere, unlike the visible sphere, is characterized by an essential adherence to Saying. And it is thus the most proper manifestation of that uniqueness and relationality that are announced as already inscribed criteria for the political essence of speech. It is therefore worth insisting on this decisive point. The voice is sound, not speech.⁵⁹

What becomes of “uniqueness,” and the sonorous essence of the political subject, when the voice is no longer sound but gesture? In what sense might individuation be retuned, even rethought, by complicating even further the philosophical and metaphysical views Cavarero seeks to challenge by widening “voice” toward that of looking, kinesthetic-picturing, and the dexterity of Sign—a “speech” centered around D/deafness? What type of “acoustic sphere”—as the sphere of uniqueness—emerges by listening to the Saying enacted by way of gestural voice, a listening enacted through the body, in the muscles, a “listening through the bone”?

David McNeill argues for understanding the relation between verbal speech and gesture as a form of “co-expressivity,” highlighting the ways in which gestural movements participate in the articulation of thought. In doing so, he extends linguistics as being bound to worded meaning, suggesting instead that an “imagery-language dialectic” is at play in verbal speech (imagery being the “picturing” that gesture comes to create). As he states, “to make a gesture, then, is to iconically materialize a meaning in actional and spatial form.”⁶⁰

Importantly, gestures do not only assist in the work of language, aiding the articulations of semantic meaning; rather, gestures *are* language, constituting meaning in and of themselves. McNeill highlights the imagery-language dialectic then as co-expressive, underscoring the ways in which each (gesture and speech) destabilize *and* support the other: acts of communication become a processual work, a performative enactment of bringing thought into the world (thinking-worlding). Gesture and speech form a rich “dance” by which meaning, and the making of a social space (figured by the matters of language) emerges, is tensed and then resolved; where speech pushes gesture, drawing the body into play, and where gesture punctuates speech, leading thought, giving way to an organic “dialectic” continually at work (language as a movement: a *doing*).

This leads McNeill to engage with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of language as a “house of being”: as a question of inhabitation, of dwelling in the world, emphasizing language as a physical materialization which is continually shaped and constructed by way of linguistic acts. Although voice is often posed as being in tension with language (not only in Cavarero, or de Certeau, but also in the writings of Mladen Dolar in which voice is emphasized as being between the body and language: voice as a *paradoxical thing*—never strictly in one or the other⁶¹), the notion and expressions of gestural voice seem to suggest other views: where the body *is* language, and language is articulated by way of kinesthetic expression: a voice always already *figured*, bound to an expressive body.

Dorothy Miles' poem "Language for the Eye" (1972), originally presented on BBC TV Open Door program, captures the particular qualities of signed-voice, and the ways in which gesture and thought are interwoven.

Hold a tree in the palm of your hand, or topple it with a crash.

Sail a boat on finger waves, or sink it with a splash.

From your fingertips see a frog leap,
at a passing butterfly.

The word becomes the picture in this language for the eye.

Follow the sun from rise to set,

or bounce it like a ball.

Catch a fish in a fishing net,

or swallow it, bones and all.

Make traffic scurry, or airplanes fly,
and people meet and part.

The word becomes the action in this language of the heart.⁶²

As a signed poem, "Language for the Eye" utilizes both English and British Sign Language and poignantly captures a sense for having language at the fingertips.

D/deaf voice may be understood less as a paradox, less an experience of "ventriloquism" as Dolar suggests (as what speaks *through* me by way of an "order of power and discourse," which is never fully myself). Rather, voice stays close to the body, *as* the body. It is embodiment itself: a body in action.⁶³ Such an approach puts into question dominant understandings of voice, along with understandings of D/deafness, upsetting oralist and audist positions by showing voice as uniquely articulated beyond a strictly acoustic sphere.

The Agency of Hands: Transformation Lines

There is a dynamic sense of simultaneity in signing, where the hands collaborate together, lending support from one to the other that work in parallel to the eyes, the face, the mouth: an elaborated "gesturology" that forces a reordering of linearity. Written language and verbal speech are profoundly linear, finding orientation along the "articulated path" of a "forward progression": writing, reading, and speaking follow a form of expressivity that takes its cue from the pen, the pressing out of letter by letter placed one after the other; in this regard, the line figures as a dominant principle and comes to direct patterns of thought,

articulation, and feeling, setting relations along a linear course: of singular steps that work at temporal and spatial advancement. One first starts here, and then progresses, step by step, one after the other, figuring a past and a future upon a single line.

Verbal speech additionally sounds itself phonetically, along the course of a breath: this ribbon of speech that unfurls from the mouth. Yet, when turning to the hands, and the operations of Sign, the line is immediately multiple: one must proceed by way of parallel lines, simultaneous phrases, a spatial dispersion and regrouping, at the same time, in the same moment: "speech" is freed from breath. The line instead becomes "an assemblage."⁶⁴ Within such assemblages, lines unfold kinesthetically, defining "movement paths" that crisscross from center to margin, left to right, up and down, across the body and across the picturing of Sign—taking shape as "transformation lines," a poetic technique within ASL poetry where one picture transforms into another without a break, creating a progression of nuanced overlaps or superimpositions.⁶⁵ Lines are always "in relation" to others, and in the work of ASL poetry, become the basis for visual-spatial-kinesthetic compositions, a threading work "where lines, handshapes, movement paths, location, palm orientation, and all the other linguistic ingredients are not ends in themselves but, in their various ways, generators of the *moving image*."⁶⁶

The assemblage of lines proceeds as a form of montage, figuring close-ups, cuts, juxtapositions, that constitute a type of "refraction"; a spatialization, a picturing, a poetics of movement paths that cinematically figure a range of viewpoints. Following Tim Ingold's reflections on the nature of lines, transformation lines may be understood to create a dynamic sense of flow by bridging distinct phrases or pictures. Stretching or pulling the line gives a sense of continuity that is also a type of "flourishing"—leading into a continuous becoming of meaning, a form of "anthropogenesis," where poetry is just as much a picturing as it is an articulation of bodily vitality: the flourishing of meaning by way of transformation lines is equally an unfolding of the body as a craft.

Tim Ingold, in reflecting upon a range of lines, provides a suggestive distinction between "doing" and "undergoing," as well as between the "labyrinth" and the "maze." These distinctions allow for probing the notion of "anthropogenesis," which captures "the life of lines" as they lead us into particular experiences. By way of anthropogenesis, Ingold aims at unfolding the line as an experience and vitality of life lived, as not only the organization of time upon an axis of past and

future, but equally as what happens along the way, for "where there is human life there is never anything but happening."⁶⁷ Life, following Ingold, is always "life-in-the-making" and as such, lines become the basis for a range of makings or undergoings. Whereas one may dedicate oneself to various tasks of "doing," often setting one's sights on the accomplishment of things, life's creativity is equally "without beginning or end"; rather, "human beings both grow and are grown, undergoing histories of development and maturation."⁶⁸ In this sense, we may come to appreciate "doing" as also what one "undergoes" in the crafting and making of things, reminding of the ways in which things also shape the body, the mind, and our social relations. As Ingold asks: "Are we not always with things before we do anything to them?"⁶⁹

The process of such meaningful experiences lends to the "anthropogenic" paradigm Ingold argues for, which is less about "mastery" and more about "humanifying" our place in the world, turning the line away from the "maze" of getting things done and toward the "labyrinth" of creative flow, of "doing-in-undergoing" that supports attuning one's perception to the signs around. While one may follow a path in the labyrinth, that path is less about a "walker's intention" (as in the maze), and more about paying "attention," and staying close to a multiplicity of views.⁷⁰

Moving by way of the walker in the labyrinth, I'm curious to consider the gestures and expressions found in ASL poetry as an arena where lines also take on life; where one stays close to the "signs" found along the way, asking of one to pay attention within the creative process of "doing-in-undergoing." Jim Cohn, in his insightful studies in ASL poetics, highlights the differences between writing, or text-based poetics, and signed poetry. For Cohn, writing is always an abstraction, a work of concepts that may refer to entities in the world yet do so by way of abstract forms, or static lines, on a page. In contrast, ASL poetics is always situated, and as such "remain close to the living human life world."⁷¹ Such a difference, for Cohn, acts to "liberate" language and one's relation to it, turning the "line of poetry" into a "vivid rhythmic form."⁷²

Within ASL poetry, the poetic line is pulled into the air, stretched across a D/deaf space that is not so much nonlinear as it is "anthropogenic"; by putting the line into perennial motion, a stitching of pictures whose thread is continuously extended, looped over and then back, from picture to picture, ASL poetry figures an assemblage of lines that is precisely a space of living. As such, it keeps us in the labyrinth, where we walk, accompanying the movements of the poem, bringing attention to the transformative power of lines.

Haptic Life, Holding Touch

From peripheral visions and gestural voice to the tactility of bodily hearing and the lines of expressive poetics, the experiences and articulations of Deafhood open up a range of theoretical and cultural perspectives that move understandings of sound and listening, voice and language. To follow along this diagrammatic map, this labyrinth, I continue by way of a reading of Erin Manning's *Politics of Touch* (as "touch" comes forward, is dramatically at play within Deafhood: the touch of sound, of language, the touching that is movement, that is also a grip of the political).

Manning outlines touch as that which manifests a deeply processual relationality in which any form of "pre-constituted" subjectivity (Being) is overturned, placed instead within a framework of encounter, interaction, choreography: a dance of engaged pressings, brushings, caresses, of prodding as well as resistance, a pushing back. Through the highly suggestive framework of touch, Manning emphasizes how one emerges as a subject, is individuated, yet never to solidify fully. Rather, one remains malleable, processual, always already *in touch*. "Touching you, I propose to you to receive, to touch. To touch is not to manipulate. I cannot force you to touch, I cannot coerce you. . . . To touch is to tender, to be tender, to reach one tenderly."⁷³

Touch is posed then as a tender theory of subjectivity and relationality, where touch is underscored as a worlding gesture giving way precisely to a ceaseless becoming, where touching "takes place as a trace, a detour, an erring."⁷⁴ To touch is to open the limits of the body, as a bordered self. Touch, therefore, is a politics, a question of power; the becoming that sets the scene for an encounter with the unknowable: "the moment when I recognize that to touch an other is to touch the impenetrable."⁷⁵

Within D/deaf experience, touch is profoundly at work: from the tactile sensation of feeling sound ("touch-hearing"), the vibrational stirrings and movements of things that race across the skin, pressing the body, slightly or deeply, to the ways in which the hands touch language, and themselves, in the act of signing—the hands that give language a material form, a spatial expression, moving over and into words, expressions, across the body and onto the eyes. Touch is a dynamic sense, a gestural category, a perceptual, social, and linguistic capacity (leading to the notion of the "tactile mind").⁷⁶

What becomes of a politics of touch within a framework of D/deaf experience and by way of Deafhood? In what sense does "touch as erring" occur as one

signs? While Manning emphasizes touch as a gesture that "opens us to a story we have not yet heard, to an unworked work, a narrative without beginning and an end,"⁷⁷ Deafhood, in contrast, moves us toward a story that we firmly see; that, I would suggest, unworks touch precisely as what the hearing world may evoke in order to upset the capture of subjectivity. Rather, Deafhood might be seen to locate touch precisely as what grounds subjectivity within a culture—touch as what resists being stripped of language. Touch, in other words, might be what allows for defining oneself, and the stories one carries (or have been forced to carry), enabling a "telling" that may then articulate touch within a politics aimed at countering the constant figuring of oneself (by the hearing world) as having *erred*. ("I call you out for refusing to acknowledge / sign language in classrooms, for assessing / deaf students on what they can't say / instead of what they can, we did not ask to be a part / of the hearing world"⁷⁸)

Whereas Manning poses a politics of touch as that which productively "throws us off balance,"⁷⁹ a D/deaf politics of touch may be what works at equilibrium and knowability: a touching that signifies, that narrates, that figures one within communicability, a meaning (a wording, a culture) carried between subjects. A D/deaf politics of touch interrupts audism as it positions touch as what may detour subjectivity, as what may throw one off balance, allowing for alternative relations to the body. In contrast, touch articulated by D/deaf experience and culture becomes a gesture of balancing: a holding onto, giving way to something both figurative and concrete. "While the formal properties, the deep structure, of Sign allow the most abstract concepts and propositions to be expressed, its iconic or mimetic aspect allows it to be extraordinarily concrete and evocative, in a way, perhaps, which no speech can be."⁸⁰

Haptic Narrative: Firmness

I'm led to think of firmness, and the quality of continuity: touch is what contributes to trust, reliability, restraint. Returning to Manning (in which touch is underscored by way of the desire for movement, envisioned as a constant becoming, a politics of touch as an insistence on destabilization): What becomes of becoming by way of D/deaf experience and culture? By way of the D/deaf diagram I'm sketching? Politics of touch is posed as a question of bodies in movement, bodies as movement, of departures, and yet, there are other stories touch gives. Touch is also about arrivals (ground, a terrain, a touching down);

touch as the establishing of fixed points from which to move. In this sense, identity is not so much a continual movement (as Manning insists), rather, it is an oscillation; a *gravitation* around certain points, places, relations; the making of worlds (the worlding taking place) that Manning underscores by way of touch is also about figuring a constellation of stops, rests; identity as an itinerary consisting of departures as well as arrivals: a dance that is more tension than release; that pauses even as it flies.

Identity might be something that is captured, that is housed within a system (of references, institutions, communities: "the nation" as Manning highlights); yet, it is also a process of inhabiting such fixed points: of making a home, of fighting for home. Identity is something one must rely upon in the fostering of relationships: I know you as an identity, and I trust you as an identity. I may also *take on* identities given to me (as a son, as a husband, a teacher), but I also move within and through them—I adopt them just as they adopt me; I grow into these identities, and they may also allow me to grow, as they touch me and as I touch back. As such, I am also changing along the way; my identity changes as I inhabit it: I may also grow out of particular identities, as I search for the next step, or am taken along, giving way to further points—rest stops—from which to extend myself.

And further, I also rely upon the identities of others to feel secure in the relationships that touch me and that deepen as we move together, as we go along. The processual body is therefore not a completely splayed body, but a vibration hovering around a center (a heart, a set of concerns, a name); a series of oscillations that leave the body, pulling it forward while also returning. The body, as such, is not necessarily impenetrable (as Manning poses); rather, it *gives way* to my touch, as I to it, and as such, the body is no longer figured as an impenetrable or inaccessible depth, but rather, a series of surfaces; it is not something to *get into*, but rather, by way of touch, it shows relations as a process of surfacing (rather than penetration). It may resist, in forms of self-preservation, but still, the body recedes under my touch; it is soft as it is hard—it flexes, this body, to press back upon me even as I resist: even as I question. This is precisely what I carry, in the memory of someone: the degree to which touch has given way to something else, to something less physical, less bodily in fact; a knowing, over time; intimacy, emerging over the time of the movement we are, in the taking and giving one experiences, together; and in the folding and unfolding of surfaces. (This is how we become dance partners: knowing the way another moves, will move, anticipating each other by way of a history of movement.)

Potentiality—this becoming—then sits within a framework of actuality; while potentiality is always already present, in the touching we perform, and that defines us, it nonetheless resides within a set of ordinary rhythms that give pace to such potentiality; that defines, through its weak or strict structures, such as the state, the institution, or language, the processes of emergence—the potential (and politics) of touch is precisely how it gains movement from the actual, from within the coordinates of a given framework.

Touching, being touched, being involved in touch . . .

And, then, I also touch myself: while touching another (you, this thing, matter, sound) may rupture and fulfill me precisely by way of relationality, reminding of my contact with the world as a defining performance, an intensity (shattered, interrupted, loved), I also return to myself, in the touching I give to myself as myself; while I am brought into shape by the touch of others, in the passing of contacts, in the lessons of the caress, the bruise, the aging, I also come back to myself, by touching myself: I speak to myself; I wrap myself in myself, I resist the world and the touch of others; I hover around myself, even while others take of me for themselves.

The politics of touch is precisely the “haptic articulations” that enable both becoming *and* being, both flight *and* rest, a movement away that may also return us, precisely to the firmness of relation: this moment when, during the night, I reach over knowing your hand will be there, knowing the feeling of your hand precisely as what I will feel again, what I search for, in this moment of needing your touch: knowing what your touch is precisely because I have touched it before, as it responds under my hand, again and again.

I know by way of touch because touch also stays the same.

* * *

Reading and re-reading Erin Manning's *Politics of Touch*, I'm led to consider how D/deaf touch is profoundly firm, linguistically articulated, leading toward a multimodal sensory world that is poignantly narrated as a drive toward identity, toward a recognized cultural identity working at community. As such, D/deaf touch contrasts sharply with Manning's approach. Consequently, I would say that I learn from both these forms of touch; from the erring potentiality Manning works at in order to reorient a sense for language and nation, for being a citizen, keeping one in touch with others, to the cultural experiences

and visions articulated by Deafhood, that lives a politics of touch precisely as a fight for the right to live in the world, as a stable ground—what Jacobus tenBroek would argue for, challenging legal assumptions around disability.⁸¹ I learn from both these forms of touch, and accordingly, I'm led to speculate as to their meeting and overlap—which may give way to a “listening through the bone” that equally enables new “bilingual” or “bihaptical” constructs: a citizenry that works at those interdependencies and tender worlds Manning suggests and that may also reorient the world of the hearing by grounding theory within the haptic narratives of signed subjectivity.

Vibrational Worlding (Pedagogy)

I want to approach the question of haptic life, and following what Jim Cohn terms “sign mind,”⁸² as an articulation of touch, a politics of touch, and also as a vibrational worlding, which D/deaf experience and D/deaf subjectivity seems to articulate: a haptic form of mind, which also emerges in ever new ways within contemporary life, from social media to the smart device. A vibrational worlding figured in the state of connectivity, giving way to a cognitive materiality.

A set of (vibrational) notes: . . . haptic listening, haptic media / online, texting, etc. / voice in the device; in artificial bodies: question of an acoustics of network culture; acoustics of digital experience and processes (fake news, online dating, network identities) / voice recognition politics (Siri, Alexa, Google) / touchscreen, touchpad: “cognitive capitalism” under the hand / typing, texting, touching always already linked to the algorithm / what becomes of “mind” (by way of vibrational worlding: the “ecology of feeling” and the economy of affect) / tap . . . tap . . . / voice in the hand, the listening hand / a new “grapheme”: grammarology of the finger (the finger-print: another form of publishing, a being-public: press, tap, press, tap: access) / these sensations that pass across the tiny grooves of the hand, as the network responds (Tiziana Terranova: “the network as affective vibration”⁸³) / Aaron Williamson, in his performances, undercuts the ear as an “aspirational” organ, as the heart of poetry; rather, what of the breath? (recalling Gil J. Wolman's breath-poems—before language, after language: breath as poetic vehicle) / Williamson gestures, and leads us: what of the wind in the lungs, the beating heart, the blood behind the ear? (John Cage's anechoic experience: “hearing” the rush of blood and nerves within the body: a silence that may give way to Deaf music?) to the thrush and rush, flutter and

shudder, as a respiratory refrain: this vibrational humming of the body—the vocal folds threaded through the handshape handspun handbreath: sculpting air / and then the knees, the feet, which Williamson performs, follows, writes with: the feet across the floor like a gauze giving way (ripple bend flex),⁸⁴ the throat of the feet / it travels upward, along the tendons, the calf and behind the knee, upward along the thigh tensed with stillness, a language of the muscle, to bloom with the sudden about face and then down, back twisted shoulders raised / “to be at the edge of language” / at the edge of hearing / this is where Williamson starts, listens, moves: vibrating poem.

[break]

José Gil, in his book *The Metamorphoses of the Body*, gives a description of the body by way of “exfoliation”: the spatial transfigurations inaugurated by a body in movement, where the body “spatializes space,”⁸⁵ gives it articulation. A type of “shedding” continually at play and by which spatio-corporeal limits are stated and then modulated, breached, reworked, for the body is always already “in touch” with things, scraping against, brushing past, being pressed upon. For Gil, the body is always already a question of space, and of movement: a bodily schema/figure-ground. The body is therefore articulated by way of “levels of language,” a grammar that fluctuates, moving from articulation to the “below of language,” where the body speaks—an “infralanguage” of sensation, of transductions, of passages and of gesture, what Gil terms a “preverbal meaning matrix.”⁸⁶ From within an infralinguistic framework, the body emerges, is emergent, articulated, leading Gil toward notions of “dance” as that arena where exfoliations, and the rhythms of transfiguration, are drawn out, showing the “intelligence of the body.”⁸⁷

[and then, back, connect]

A breath/a respiration/which is the constant extension, and then return, that is always the crossing, this breath/Where are the limits of the body then? In this constant dance of respiration that draws the air into oneself (which is always unimaginable: I can never comprehend the air that is already in my lungs), and then pushes it back out (to where, for whom?): I must pause here, on this border that is only constituted by being breached, by being moved—the metamorphosis of the body as it respire, as it lives, figuring a body-space that brings touch into a framework of breath (a biopower): the touch of the wind upon the ear, the touch of breathing as my chest rises, then falls/such is

the “intelligence of the body”—this dance, this infralanguage, this vibrational worlding that is breath always already at work: a sensing oneself as always already respired, a movement that is steady rhythm, an infrarhythm, that is more *figureground*/as Aaron Williamson opens his mouth to show his breath in place of voice: to turn the deaf ear into a lung, a breathing by way of the cochlea.

His movements that draw from the infralinguistic, drawing it through infrarhythms: the Deaf vibrational poetics whose dance is radically exfoliant: inhabiting and articulating the frequencies of haptic life.

Deaf Science: The Haptic Mind

What might emerge here, within this vibrational worlding, by way of infralanguage, as what may give expression to a synesthesia of the senses, a poetics of plasticity, and the cross-modal currents always passing within the brain, across the ear, along the hand? What type of mindfulness may be harnessed, or practiced, by attending to vibrational worlding, the sightlines of Deaf space, the peripheral attunements and dynamics of touching as both flight and rest? To listen by way of the bones—a listening that becomes suggestive for considering the “haptic mind” of D/deaf subjectivity and textured by the infralinguistic. And which seems to find correspondence with the mind emerging by way of haptic media and the liquid, vibrational economies traversing the globe. The biopolitical foundation of contemporary capitalism, as that which figures life itself as a form of labor, as currency—the endless event which, as Franco “Bifo” Berardi poses, puts the soul to work.⁸⁸ Such “biocapitalism” finds its operative footing through an intensification of precarity, which exhausts the body and undermines conditions of (public) support, as well as through a form of cognitive capture, suggesting a new class which Berardi terms “the cognitariat.” Cognitive capitalism, as an instrumentalization of biopower, figures “the mind” within a systemic flow (or bombardment) of energy and information—an affective capture manifesting in a cognitariat wedded to and stressed by the network. Hence, we may appreciate the intensification of concerns for “mindfulness” and mindful learning today.⁸⁹ From meditation practices to new articulations of somatic care which circulate increasingly through the cultures of the cognitariat, all point to the ways in which the haptic mind relates itself to contemporary life and politics: that in the biocapitalistic matrix, which houses the body and mind