THE TICKET THAT IMPLODED—IN THE (ELECTRO)MAGNETIC INTERSTICE

Laurent Schmid

THE RABBIT HOLE

When Filippo Marinetti claimed that "Time and Space died yesterday" in the Futurist manifesto appearing in *Le Figaro* on February 20, 1909, they had already been dead for nearly fifty years. At first, the impact of the space-destroying effect that went hand in hand with the development of technology had been perceived physically, for the most part. Brought about by the railroad, this initial shock was profound. And when the second wave hit the masses in the form of the audio media, the impact was similarly drastic. The invention of the telephone and later the radio irrevocably changed space-time. After Philipp Reis introduced a prototype of his telephone to the public in Frankfurt in 1861 and explained it in his lecture "On the Reproduction of Tones at Any Desired Distance by Means of the Galvanic Current," the relationship between the body and space was no longer as clearly determinable as it had been before. Marinetti, of course, was referring primarily to the physical-mechanical negotiation of distances in a short time—a new phenomenon back then, which served to shrink those distances. The changes brought about by the media, however, encompassed a further aspect. Not only had it become possible to experience space in a different way physically; now it was even possible to detach

a certain part of the body—the voice—and transport it into other spheres. An immaterial part of the self could be taken to a far distant place virtually the instant it came into being.

PINK ELEPHANTS ON PARADE

The experience of this separation bordered on magic, while at the same time outclassing everything the art of magic was capable of. It was also accordingly difficult to accept. Houdini, who had always spoken out against a spiritualist understanding of the magical arts and sought to communicate magic as a rational art of deception, had an entire elephant disappear before an audience—but without questioning or redefining the existing conception of space. The animal remained in the same space, simply concealed from the audience by a black cloth. *The elephant was in the room.* The fact that we are surrounded by things we cannot perceive was, in and of itself, nothing fundamentally new. Already more than a hundred years earlier, William Herschel and Johann Wilhelm Ritter had known about tones in frequencies we are not yet or no longer capable of hearing and light in wavelengths that do not correspond to our eyes. The discovery of further forms of electromagnetic waves, for example X-rays and radioactivity (both not so very long before Marinetti's manifesto), had made it clear that there are realms of our world that are accessible only with technical aids.

Heinrich Hertz first succeeded in transmitting and receiving electromagnetic waves —that is, waves consisting of interacting electric and magnetic fields—in

1886. In so doing, he confirmed James Clerk Maxwell's electromagnetic theory and laid the foundation for the concept that later led to the actual separation of message and sender, signal and body. The new, invisible and immaterial space thus formed had not been conceivable before the new inventions. Now, however, it was experienceable, accessible from different sides and at different times. And incidentally: waves do not adhere to the idea of an environment surrounding the subject, but make radically clear that we ourselves are a part of space. The fact that waves and particles travel through us means that we are not only recipients of information, but at the same time a part of the ether. A mini Copernican revolution. Victor Franz Hess discovered cosmic radiation during a balloon ride in 1912 and wrote about it in: *Physikalische Zeitschrift,* vol. 13, Leipzig, Verlag S. Hirzel, 1912, p. 1084.

A few years later, in collaboration with Pino Masnata, F. T. Marinetti wrote his "La Radia" manifesto (appearing in the *Gazetta del Popolo* in 1933) dedicated to radio— "LA RADIA, the name that we futurists give to the great manifestations of the radio…"—once again formulating decisive observations on space:

"LA RADIA abolishes

1) the space…
2) time
3) unity of action
4) dramatic character
5) the audience as self-appointed judging mass…

LA RADIA shall be […]

3) The immensification of space. No longer visible and framable, the stage becomes universal and cosmic
4) The reception amplification and transfiguration of vibrations emitted by living beings living or dead spirits dramas of wordless noise-states
5) The reception amplification and transfiguration of vibrations emitted by matter. Just as today we listen to the song of the forest and the sea so tomorrow shall we be seduced by the vibrations of a diamond or a flower
6) A pure organism of radio sensations
7) An art without time or space without yesterday or tomorrow. The possibility of receiving broadcast stations situated in various time zones and the lack of light will destroy the hours of the day and night. The reception and amplification of the light and the voices of the past with thermoionic valves will destroy time
8) The synthesis of infinite simultaneous actions …"
http://www.kunstradio.at/2002A/27_01_02/laradia-e.html (last accessed August 18, 2014).

This space is formed by the listener's imagination—or by the collective imagination of all listeners—and is not compelled to adhere to any topographical or architectonic situation. It exhibits the potential to contradict logical, rational, and objectively measurable facts. It is capable of creating a temporality all its own, in which the radiophonic conception and the transmitted material create a fluid, quasi anti-Hegelian space-time. In "Towards a Philosophy of

Sound Art," Salomé Voegelin points to the fact that commercial radio avoids this situation and does not function in this manner. "It does not use the potential of its own medium to question objective time, but paralyzes temporality in its strict schedule. It creates an über-objective time, the time all clocks can measure themselves by, and it demands of our body to bow its timetable. And it does not respond to the spatiality of its own medium either, which has the potential to create a possible world rather than insist on relaying what we see." In Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*, New York, Continuum, 2010.

This non-space of radio exists simultaneously in my kitchen and in my car. But also in the homes of people I don't know. The quality of being everywhere is at the same time a quality of being nowhere. And nevertheless it is capable of creating ties, facilitating common experiences, and uniting the private and collective realms. One aspect of this simultaneity—the reception by multiple parties in the same instant—was initially described by Marconi as a problem: anyone who wanted to could receive his broadcasts. Artists such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Boccioni, Carrà, Delaunay, and Marinetti, however, recognizing the potential that lay in this circumstance, developed "Simultaneism" around 1913.

The wireless transmission of voices not only points to invisible forces and interrelationships in our universe, to realms that evidently exist alongside the directly experienceable world. As early as the seventeenth century, scholars such as Athanasius Kircher recognized that there are such forces as magnetism binding the world together in "secret knots." It is to Kircher—who hardly distinguished between the directly experienceable and the indirectly experienceable universe—that we owe the term "electromagnetism." Athanasius Kircher, *Magnes sive de arte magnetica opus tripartitum*, Coloniae Agrippinae,

Apud Jodocum Kalcoven, 1643, p. 640. What is more, in the same work he discussed an unexpected link with language. Fascinated by the invisible force of magnetism, he went a step further and fantasized about the development of a "Machina Cryptologica," a kind of magnetic telegraph. In a later book devoted to linguistic theory and cryptography, he even went so far as to promise in the first two chapters: Athanasius Kircher and Lazzari Varese, *Polygraphia nova et universalis ex combinatoria arte detecta : Quàquiuis etiam linguarum quantumuis imperitus triplici methodo prima, vera & reali, sine ulla latentis arcani suspicione, manifestè*; secunda, per technologiam quondam..., Romae, Ex typographia Varesij, 1663. Also see Haun Saussy, "Magnetic Language, Athanasius Kircher and Communication." In Athanasius Kircher: *The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 263.

Section I: The Reduction of All Languages to One. Section II: The Extension of One Language to All.

ANEWTHOUGHT MUST COME OUT IN A NEW LANGUAGE.—JACK SMITH Jack Smith in an interview with Sylvère Lotringer: "Uncle Fishook and the Sacred Baby Poo Poo of Art." In *Semiotexte*, vol. III, no. 2, 1978, p. 195; reprinted in Sylvère Lotringer, *Schizo-Culture: The Event, the Book*, Los Angeles, Semiotexte[e], 2013. In the same interview, on page 198: Sylvère Lotringer: "That's why Burroughs uses cut-ups: to try to prevent words from being twisted around." Jack Smith: "Oh, that's one way."

Marinetti, likewise, progressed in his manifestoes from space created with rays to linguistic space and availed himself of means

already employed previously by Velimir Khlebnikov and the Russian Cubo-Futurists. New space is created by fragmentation of language, redefinition of syntax and language patterns, the formation of neologisms, etc. For Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who coined the term "wireless imagination" (in his manifesto of May 11, 1913: "Destruction of Syntax—Wireless Imagination—Words-in-Freedom" / "Distruzione della sintassi—immaginazione senza fili—parole in libertà"), this not only included the collapse of syntax and the free interpretation of orthography, but went a step further than his "parole in libertà." The unbelievable speed also brought about the breakup of traditional structures and conventions and thus the formation and definition of fundamentally new types of connections. At about the same time, under the title "Lettre Océan," Guillaume Apollinaire published poems written in "liberated words" he referred to as "ideograms" or "calligrams" in the magazine *Soirées de Paris*, which he directed. In collaboration with Aleksei Kruchenykh (with whom he, Mikhail Matyushin, and Kasimir Malevich realized the first Futurist opera, *Victory over the Sun*), Khlebnikov even developed a new language: "Zaum." It was to be a universal language, a language of the stars or of the birds. The name "Zaum" ("заум") is ambiguous: idiomatically it means "nonsense," but it can also be understood as "located behind the mind, transmental." Language is always ideology and defined by value systems. A violation of the boundaries of conventional language is thus always a violation of fundamental orders and viewpoints. The negation of the norm, the bursting of the bounds of language, is always also an avowal of opposition. Differences in language point to differences in value systems. Half a century later, within the context of the counterculture movement in the U.S. and Europe, these tactics were once again widely employed.

Among other things, they were an important aspect of Radio Alice, which after the events of March 1977 had become a symbol of free radio: As Klemens Gruber demonstrates in his *Die zerstreute Avantgarde: strategische Kommunikation im Italien der 70er Jahre*, Vienna, Böhlau, 2010, p. 98. "Poliziotti, magistrati, giornalisti hanno detto che Radio Alice è oscena." Franco Berardi, *Alice è il diavolo: storia di una radio sovversiva*, Milan, Shake edizioni underground, 2001, p. 47. The collective A/traverso was initially surprised by this accusation, but then assimilated it— "Language, when it is freed from the sublimations which reduce it to the code and makes desire and the body speak, is obscene (literally: obscene)" Hedi Kholti, *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, 2nd ed., Los Angeles, CA, Semiotext[e], 2007, p. 131. —and its opponents referred to the language of Radio Alice as "creative-demenziale." Ugo Volli later called it "Demenziali-creative come Radio Alice di Bologna." In "Mode, modi, modelli," in Ernesto Galli Della Loggia. [u.a.] *Il trionfo del privato*, Rome-Bari, editori Laterza, 1980, p. 151. The qualities that distinguished the political hopes of the Autonomia movement were mirrored on the level of language: it was experimental and imaginative, rhizomatically organized, and equipped with a dash of humor.

Radio Alice frequently made explicit reference to Dada, and thus to sound poetry and collage, and also exhibited an undeniable affinity with Futurism. Visually in Radio Alice's leaflets or in their flyer of 1976 "Abasso la vostra morale. Abasso la vostra religione. Abasso la vostra politica. Abasso la vostra arte." In Franco Berardi and Gary Genosko, *After the Future*, Edinburgh, AK Press, 2011. Franco Bifo Berardi points out the common belief in the concept of the future. It should be recalled in this context that, already in the early twentieth century, a number of methods and linguistic attributes were making the rounds

among the different artistic and literary currents. Raoul Hausmann, in his text on the history of the sound poem (1910—39), mentioned that Kandinsky had been familiar with Khlebnikov's "inventions" and had also had phonemes by Khlebnikov recited at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich in 1916 in the presence of Hugo Ball. Raoul Hausmann, "Zur Geschichte des Lautgedichts." In *Am Anfang war Dada*, Steinbach/Giessen, Anabas-Verlag G. Kämpf, 1972; reprinted in 1992, pp. 35—47. Since then, and after the success of Kurt Schwitter's Ursonate in the twenties, there were several parallel forms developed on these roots, as the lettrism in France and also later movements of sound poetry or abstract poetry often giving preference to tape recorder to capture it.

A MIRROR

The technology of sound recording—likewise developed in the 1880s—contributed yet another aspect to the detachment of the voice from the body and its subsequent multiplication in that context. With the aid of a method based on magnetism, the experience of time in its entirety was redefined. Voices, which had been considered an inseparable part of the human body until the advent of radio technology, could now be stored and played back at a later time. Because of the fact that radio and sound recording shared certain characteristics—both were based on electromagnetism and both detached the voice from the body—they were considered related media. After the advent of mechanical gramophone techniques, a recording device based on magnetization was introduced by the Danish engineer Valdemar Poulsen at the Paris World Fair of 1900. Marconi had also been involved in the development of this method, which came into wide

use in the 1930s. Both G. Marconi and T. A. Edison evidently believed in the possibility of making contact with deceased persons with the aid of telepathy. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/4185356.stm, accessed on 19 August 2014).

In the 1950s, the opera singer Friedrich Jürgenson recorded singing chaffinches outside Stockholm. When he played the recordings, he heard strange voices he had not noticed during the recording process. He and Konstantīns Raudive developed the technique of telepathic voice recording, thus making further advances into the world created by this technology. Jürgenson accordingly called his book Voices from Space (1964). Raudive spent much of the last ten years of his life exploring EVP (electronic voice phenomena). With the help of various electronics experts, he recorded over 100,000 audiotapes, most of which were made under what he described as "strict laboratory conditions." He occasionally collaborated with Bender. Over four hundred people were involved in his research, and all of them apparently heard the voices. *This culminated in the 1968 publication of Unhörbares wird hörbar ("What is inaudible becomes audible"). Friedrich Jürgenson, Rösterna från rymden, Stockholm, Saxon & Lindström,1964. Konstantīns Raudive, Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead, New York, Taplinger, 1971.* Since they knew that the voice could be separated from the body and heard at a later time, they were convinced that they were entering a realm where they could hear the voices of the dead. Both Jürgenson and Raudive were certain that these voices did not proceed from randomly recorded radio signals. It was theorized that sounds could take on illusory qualities when they were repeated. The British psychologist Richard M. Warren dubbed the process by which unintelligible sounds supposedly evolved back into meaningful

words "the verbal transformation effect." For Raudive, fragments others described as "glubbo," "buduloo," or "vum vum" actually formed the word "Lenin." In one of Elli's experiments described by Roach on p. 187: Mary Roach, *Spook: Science Tackles* the Afterlife, New York: W. W. Norton, 2005.

These investigations influenced artists like Öyvind Fahlström who created hybrid bird-human languages like "Birdo" or "Whammo, based on similar sounds he developed during a stay in New York for his two radio plays 'Fåglar I Sverige' and 'Den heilige Thorsten Nillsson'. The idea of creating a major work came with the tape recorder he was given by his wife, Barbro Östlihn. In a postcard he wrote to Billy Klüver in 1965: "Working on 'The Holy Torsten Nilsson', all my film sound tapes, and a Nova-type story about Sweden' Undated postcard from Fahlströhm, in Billy Klüver's archive, in: Teddy Hultberg, *Öyvind Fahlström on the Air—Manipulating the World*, Stockholm, Sveriges Radio förlag, 1999. The tapes he was referring were his recordings of film soundtracks he recorded himself mostly from his TV in New York. The 'Nova' reference is to William Borroughs' cut-up novel "Nova Express".

WONDERLAND

Genesis P-Orridge, in search of affinities and similarities between art and magic, found his way to William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin. In the early 1980s (the period in which P-Orridge and Peter Christopherson founded *Psychic TV* and the *Temple of Psychic Youth*) the three of them experimented with recording the voices of dead people on magnetic tape without a microphone. Taking Konstantīns Raudive's theories as

a point of departure, they proceeded on the assumption of a hypothetical link between spoken language and the world. William S. Burroughs, Electronic Revolution, 2nd enl. ed. by Feedback from Watergate to the Garden of Eden, S.l.: Expanded Media Editions, 1976. Burroughs had already been working with Raudive's technique for quite some time. Entirely in keeping with the ideas of anti-psychiatry and schizoanalysis, he argued that this method disproved "the whole psychiatric dogma that voices are the imagination of a sick mind." William Burroughs, "It belongs to the Cucumbers." In The Adding Machine, New York, Seaver Books, 1986, p. 59. Since Gysin and Burroughs had already come to conceive of recording tape as a magical tool in connection with their use of the cut-up technique, these experiments did not represent anything fundamentally new in their work. Genesis P-Orridge recalled: "What Bill explained to me then was pivotal to the unfolding of my life and art. Everything is recorded. If it is recorded, then it can be edited. If it can be edited, then the order, sense, meaning and direction are as arbitrary and personal as the agenda and/or person editing. This is magick [sic]." Genesis P-Orridge, "The Magical Processes and Methods of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin." In Richard Metzger, *Book of Lies: The Disinformation Guide to Magick and the Occult*, New York, NY, Disinformation Co., 2003, p. 106. There was no doubt in their minds about the relationship between technology and the occult: "Burroughs and Gysin both told me something that resonated with me for the rest of my life so far. They pointed out that alchemists always used the most modern equipment and mathematics, the most precise science of their day." Idem, p. 113. Gysin's use of the cut-up technique—a concept that can be traced

to the Dadaist writer Tristan Tzara—had initially been confined to paper. He and Burroughs then expanded on it by fragmenting and rearranging words on magnetic tape. Burroughs was convinced that, on the level of text, the true meanings behind words could be discovered and the time barrier no longer applied: "When you cut into the present the future leaks out."

Cf. "Origin and Theory of the Cut-Ups", the recording of a lecture delivered in 1967 at Naropa University in Boulder, on the LP Break Through in Grey Room. William S. Burroughs, Break Through in Grey Room, Vienna and Munich, Sub Rosa, 2001.

For Burroughs, it followed that reality could be modified with the audio cut-up method. Without batting an eyelash, P-Orridge referred to this as "altering reality." Since, as Burroughs insisted, everything had already been recorded, it was entirely possible to make changes.

The influence of Gysin and Burroughs was initially limited to a small group of artists, musicians, and writers. In addition to biographical and personal aspects, they apparently also shared certain conceptions of space-time and the effect of language. The city of Tangier—the "Interzone" in which they had gathered—moreover gave them a sense of being exempt from the conventions and constraints of society.

The group comprised various counterculture legends such as Ira Cohen—who in collaboration with the Living Theatre members Mel Clay and Petra Vogt had also experimented with cut-ups—and Angus and Hetty MacLise. They had arrived at spoken language from a wide range of media: Cohen from photography and film, Vogt from the theater, MacLise from music. What they had in common, however, was their interest in the voice, the relationship between the world and the body, the meaning of the (mass) media,

and the word as a tool of illusion and control. They were strongly influenced by Burroughs's language theories: he proceeded on the assumption of a system that functioned in like manner in ancient cultures and modern society. The "disembodied voices"—of priests or the mass media, depending on the context—infiltrated the individual and occupied his brain.

OFF SCENE

By the time of his death, Félix Guattari had not found time to set forth his promising ideas about creative and political resistance and what he called the liberated, "resingularized" subjectivity of the post-media era in any detail. Félix Guattari and Sylvère Lotringer, *Chaosophy: Soft Subversions*, New York, N.Y., Semiotext[e], 1996. Yet even his sketchy notes on the subject point in the direction of an anti-hierarchical, anti-representative structure in what is meanwhile an entirely new media situation, a structure whose fragmentary quality serves to liberate it from authoritarian forces.

As strategies for resistance, the fragmentation and reassembly of existing linguistic forms and invention of new ones do indeed appear to be among the very few remaining tactics for efficiently opposing new forms of (mass) media control.

How do I know what and how much information about me is floating around in the data clouds, where it comes from, how up to date, and how correct it is? Ultimately, my only way of preserving and protecting my privacy and identity is to create parallel identities and apply the above-described imaginative techniques of language destruction and reinvention. Neologisms,

fragmentation, and multiplication can help me restore my freedom and uniqueness in this realm. Algorithms have no sense of humor and don't know how to deal with inventiveness. In the world of data, fantasized parallel worlds protect my freedom on a physically experienceable level. Even if Internet radio has substantially simplified access to radio and is thus very democratic in nature, it is located on terrain that is subject to a dangerous degree of control. Everything can be retraced; a lot is stored. How would Bertolt Brecht have reacted to this situation—a man who once dreamed not only of producing and broadcasting radio, but also of recording everything? Likewise in the area of metadata, even the smallest web radio can reveal a great amount of information about ourselves. Every listener can be identified and traced; his consumer behavior can be analyzed, patterns be looked for in it, and linguistic analyses carried out. It is all completely exposed and there for the construal. The precision of the name of the free radio station *Alice*, in which Guattari was involved for a time, is nothing short of amazing. It makes reference not only to a fantastic tale in which the space-time continuum is thrown into complete disarray, but also to the author, Lewis Carroll, who in the sequel *Through the Looking Glass* of 1871, published *Jabberwocky*, a nonsense poem that—discovered by Alice in a book in the parallel world behind the mirror—uses neologisms and nonsense words to dissolve linguistic structure.