

# LISTEN & LOOK

## Stimmen hören

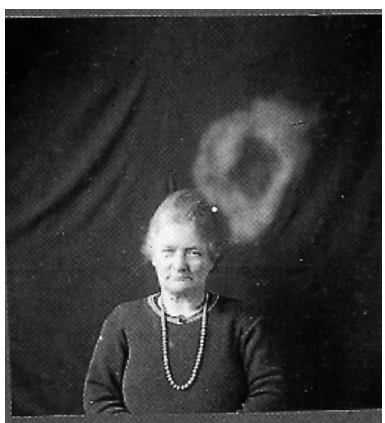
Im Auftrag des Herrn treibt „Der Exorzist“ das Böse aus, das als solches in einer spezifischen Gestalt mit Teufelshörnern und Ziegenhufen nicht einzufangen ist, sondern als eine unsichtbare Macht agiert. Im gleichnamigen Horrorklassiker hat es der Teufelsausstreiber mit einer Stimme zu tun, die als bedrohliche Substanz direkt in die Realität eingreift und diese verzerrt: Das junge hübsche Mädchen, das von einem Dämon in Besitz genommen wird, verwandelt sich selbst in ein hässliches Monster, ihr Körper deformiert und mutiert. Das eigentliche Ungeheuer aber bleibt unsichtbar, es ist allein die Stimme in ihrer obszönen, traumatischen Dimension, die bedrohlich und raumübergreifend präsent ist. Hier verbinden sich nicht nur die Gegensätze Phantom und Wirklichkeit zu einem Horrorszenerario. Es sind zwei Realitätsebenen, die mit- und gegeneinander im selben Subjekt existieren. Wem gehört die unheimliche Stimme? Wo kommt sie her? Als wäre sie ein eigenständiger Körper, der unabhängig existiert. Die Stimme zeigt sich hier als autonomes Teilobjekt, das einem fremdartigen Eindringling gleicht, dem das Subjekt nicht entgegenkommen kann. In ihr zeigt sich die psychische Energie, die den Körper — in seiner armseligen, endlichen Realität — beherrscht und ihn als autonomes, überirdisches Objekt dabei noch zu überleben scheint.

Ähnlich wie beim Bauchredner, der seine Stimme auf ein anderes Objekt, die Puppe, lenkt und den toten Körper dadurch lebendig werden lässt. Seine zweite Stimme ist eine verzerrte, unsichtbare Stimme, die als befremdliches, eigenständiges Doppelgängerphantom in den Raum klingt. Slavoj Žižek spricht von dem Effekt des Bauchredners als einer unklaren Ebene, die in jedem Kontakt zwischen mir und dem anderen mitspielt, indem der andere mir als Projektionsfläche dient. Dadurch werde ich mit meiner eigenen Subjektivität konfrontiert: was bin ich, was lenkt mich, wie ist das reale Selbst definierbar, wie wird es sichtbar und ist es eigentlich überhaupt beschreibbar?

Im Zuge der Materialisierung geistiger Phänomene, durch die versucht wurde, in die tiefen, nicht direkt wahrnehmbaren menschlichen Substanzen einzudringen, sollten Geister- oder Gedankenfotos und okkulte Tonaufnahmen von Geisterstimmen das Überirdische sichtbar bzw. hörbar werden lassen. Zwischen Spiritualität, Aberglaube, Wissenschaft und Theater entstanden hierbei inszenierte Aufnahmen, die das Zufällige, Übernatürliche und Unkontrollierte einzufangen versuchten. Wir hören das „Zungenreden“ als rhythmische Gesänge in einer unbekannt Sprache. Wir sehen geisterhafte Erscheinungen, die neben den Personen auftauchen: Gespenster oder verschwommene Doppelgänger, die sich wie ein Belichtungsfehler als Schleier oder heller Fleck im Foto zeigen; oder sie entweichen als materialisierte Seele dem in Trance Versetzten aus dem Mund, wie wir es aus mittelalterlichen Seelendarstellungen kennen.

Es ist das ungeheuerliche, unheimliche undefinierbare Selbst, das wir verstehen und sichtbar machen wollen, um es in Zaum zu halten, damit es uns nicht vollkommen kontrolliert.

B.R.



Mrs. Deane: Album mit Geisterfotos, England, 1920-23



## A Lecture on Schizophonia

Erik Büniger

### Dracula

A Romanian count travelled to Paris at the end of the nineteenth century. In Paris he met a young beautiful opera singer who he fell madly in love with. But very soon after their first meeting she suddenly died and devastated he returned back to his castle in Romania. The singer had been famous and she had recorded a couple of opera arias on phonograph cylinders; a technique that had just started to be used in those days. Determined never to forget her, he brought these recordings back with him, along with a white marble sculpture, that he had someone make after a photograph of her face. He placed the sculpture in front of the fireplace and in the evenings he sat crying, looking at the sculpture, while listening to the sound of her voice. The peasants who worked on the fields outside the castle had never heard of anyone inventing a way to capture sound – in another part of the world. When they heard this raspy woman's voice singing in the darkness they looked up at the castle and in a window they could see this ghostly, white silhouette of a woman. Then they gave him the name Dracul. Dracul means "Devil" in Romanian.

This is the true story – the true origin of the legend of Count Dracula. All the evil we associate with that name stems from the same misunderstanding.

### The Voice of the Lord

Here we see one of the world's most famous trademarks "His masters voice". The dog, Nipper, was a stray dog that a man named Mark Barraud found on the streets of Bristol in 1884. Mark took the dog home with him and they became very close friends until three years later, when Mark suddenly died. Nipper was then taken over by Marks brother Francis.

Francis owned a phonograph and he used to keep the memory of his dead brother alive by listening to recordings of his voice on his phonograph. This might seem strange today, but at that time you would look upon the phonograph in the same way you looked upon the photograph in the early days of photography; that it was first and foremost a way to capture the image of dead relatives or dead friends. Edison's first phonograph was actually marketed in radio with this slogan: *When you dear ones are no longer here, you can still keep them close to your ear.*

Every time Nipper heard the voice of his dead master he would immediately, run up to the phonograph and start howling back, into the horn. Francis, who was an artist, got so touched by this that he decided to make a painting of it. [...]

He later managed to sell this painting to the gramophone company, which produced the first gramophones, and then he had to repaint the phonograph into a gramophone. This is the more well known picture.

The main difference between a gramophone and a phonograph is not

the medium – not cylinder vs. disc – but the phonograph has a two-way function; you can both play back and record into the horn. So in a way Nipper was right when he tried to howl back to his dead master. In the older painting we also see that Nipper is sitting on the coffin of his dead master.

### Aliens

Schizophonia = That which makes dogs bark at speakers, children look for the man behind the box and savages demand their captured souls returned.

When I moved from Sweden to Berlin a couple of years ago I was struck very hard with this affliction. I went to see the movie *Easy Rider* in a theatre close to my new apartment and realised too late, that the movie was dubbed into German. What struck me was how much the German voices came to change the content of the movie. The coolness and the laconic quality of the American language were totally lost; somehow it seemed like the characters had shrunk. It became even stranger when I discovered that every famous actor in Germany has his own dubber, so that Robert De Niro always speaks with same German voice. To my ears this gave a ghostly kind of sensation – as if Robert De Niro had been possessed by a German spirit.

And I started to wonder about these people who sell their voices for money. I imagine them having union meetings and with the voices now belonging to Nicole Kidman, Al Pacino and Hugh Grant they complain to each other about having been robbed of their own souls.

Someone told me he saw the voice of Robert De Niro cutting a ribbon at the opening of a new shopping mall somewhere in Germany. Nobody in the audience knew who the guy with the scissors was until he came up to the microphone. And speaking, he only caused confusion and irritation among the audience since they knew for a fact that that voice didn't belong to him but to Robert De Niro.

Woody Allen is an interesting example since he always plays exactly the same character in every movie. And this character is very much defined by his voice. His New York accent, his nervous but still precise use of the language and so on. If you watch Woody Allen movies and continuously press the language button on the DVD-player, something strange happens; his face also starts changing.

### Legion

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus meets a man who is possessed by many spirits. And you know to drive out a demon you must be able to name it. So Jesus asks this man "What is thy name" and the man answers "My name is legion for we are many". He goes from singular to plural in the same sentence: "My name is legion for we are many."

Steven Connor writes in his book on the history of ventriloquism about something that he calls the vocalic body. "When animated by the ventriloquists voice the dummy appears to

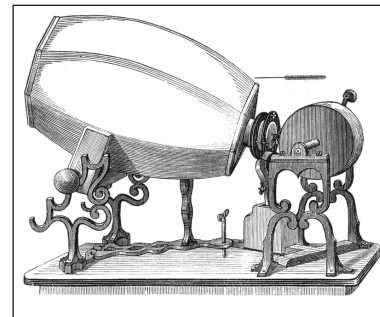
have a much wider range of gestures, facial expressions and tonalities than it does when silent. Another body..." Another body as an extension of the physical body.

So when Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda were transformed into some German-speaking midgets in *Easy Rider*, it was because of their vocalic bodies being smaller than their physical bodies. In the movie *The Exorcist* we have the opposite situation. [...]

### Martinville

There is a strange correlation between the history of possession cases and the history of sound recording: in both cases you have a total focus on the voice. And not just any voice but very often it would be the voice of a young, innocent girl.

In sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe you would drive out the voice of the demon through the quivering body of a little girl. When Thomas Edison makes his first recording on the phonograph in 1877 what he records is a little girl singing the nursery rhyme *Mary Had a Little Lamb*. This recording is now lost. It was long believed to be the first recording ever of the human voice. Until just half a year ago when American scientists, in an archive in Paris, found recordings made 17 years earlier by the French inventor Edouard-Léon Scott de Martinville. In 1860 he constructed this device –



the phonoautograph. You made a sound into the barrel and then this sound was transformed into white scribbles on a piece of paper, blackened by the smoke of an oil lamp.

This device was never supposed to reproduce sound, it was only supposed to give a graphical representation of sound. But the scientists put a scan of one of these papers into a computer and had a virtual stylus play back the scribbles; and again – out came the voice of a little girl.

She's singing a line from the French lullaby *Au Clair de la Lune*. So this recording is 17 years older than Edison's first recording. I just want to stress the fact that Martinville never had the idea to reverse the process and bring the sound back to life again. So when these scientists squeezed this voice out of a piece of paper it's almost like an act of violence. After all it was a voice never meant to be heard again.

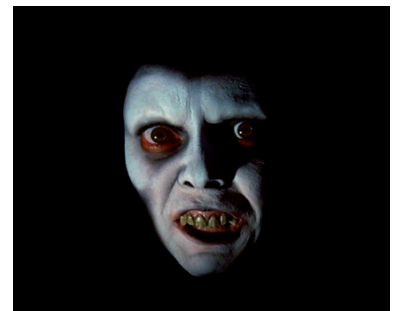
The core of the movie *The Exorcist* is multiple attempts to locate the voice inside the little girl. A voice that has been amputated and dislocated by recording technology. And whose voice is it we're hearing? Well, the girl says it's Captain Howdy who speaks from inside of her.

He only shows up in some of the versions of the movie and then only in

1 or 2 frames flashing by. So you're supposed to perceive him subliminally. Warner Brothers also put the face of Captain Howdy into other movies that they produced at the same time. When you watched *The Exorcist* and his face flashed by, it was supposed to trigger an unconscious memory of something you had already seen. [...]

### Captain Howdy

Who is this Captain Howdy? Well he says himself that he's the one whose custom it is never to go where he's not been invited. Think of him as the one you leave inside of the telephone when you hang up the receiver. When you say in your answering machine. "I'm not here right now." If you're not there, then who is it speaking?



Maybe some of you have experienced the strange phenomenon of calling up a deceased person and starting their answering machine. How sad and how haunting it feels that something of the person still lingers on, inside of the receiver.

The amazing thing about the telephone is that it doesn't breathe and still it manages to project an extreme kind of presence. So it's both more mechanical in its absence of breath and at the same time more human since it amplifies every smacking sound and every clearing of the throat. The voice can be thousand kilometres away and yet it feels like the tongue is licking the inside of your ear. So it is both more mechanical in its absence of breath, and at the same time, more human. It is some kind of half life between dead matter and living breath. [...]

Auszug aus: Erik Büniger, *A Lecture on Schizophonia*, 2011



CINEMA

### NEU IM KINO?

Welchen Reiz es haben kann, eine Ebene mit einem Schwenk im 4:3-Format nach und nach abzutasten, ist einmal gegen Ende von *Highway 40 West* von Hartmut Bitomsky zu sehen. Der Bergwerk-Distrikt am Clear Creek Canyon bei Nevada: immer wieder kamen neue Bereiche der Halde in den horizontal begrenzten Sichtraum, eine nicht endende Abfolge von Steinen und Maschinen. Die sorgfältige Kadrierung und die genau geplanten Schwenks des Kameramanns Axel Block fallen auf. Ein Beispiel: Der am Anfang der Tour gekaufte Chevrolet Impala Station im Anschnitt, Motorhaube und rechter Vorderreifen im Schnee, Eiszapfen hängen vom Radkasten – ein Stillleben. Dann zügiger diagonaler Schwenk nach rechts oben, einen Truck einfangend, der vor einem bewaldeten Berg Rücken davon fährt. D.A.