

## UbuWeb Papers: Christof Migone

# Phonic Gaps and Gasps

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Skull partitas, glottal toccatas, ear arias, bone blues, heart sonatas, nerve operas, blood symphonies – the audio inventions of Christof Migone evoke the disrupted and degenerate inner voice that so disquietingly haunts our thought and our speech. Through the piercing and obsessive acoustics of *Hole in the Head*, the possibilities of audio montage permit vocal organisms and electronic circuits to intersect, reflect and infect each other. These works therefore exist in a highly charged state of paradox and contradiction: they are impish and lyrical, nightmarish and enlightening, abrasive and soothing.

Here, creativity occurs at that threshold where language disintegrates and electronics peaks out; where codes are transgressed and nonsense elaborated; where sonorous distortions, interferences and noises establish a delirious, crazed, *schizophonic* art. The analysis of such works demands a teratology of the voice, whose monsters arise by means of liberating all those vocal “accidents” that hitherto blemished the pure sounds of bel canto and belles lettres: moans, screams, sighs, cries, chokes, roars, gasps, mumbles, whistles, yelps, slurps, groans, chortles, snorts, pops, clicks, wheezes, babbles, hisses, hums, whimpers, hoots, whines, puffs, drones, stutters, lisps, rattles, and countless other imperfections.

As Roman Jakobson suggests in his celebrated psycholinguistic studies on the relations between aphasia and linguistic structure, the pathological breakdown of quotidian speech – culminating in either the incoherent jumble of word salad, the inarticulate

simplicity of one-word sentences, or the utter silence of aphasia universalis – proffers new modes of poetic form.

This research provides one paradigm for considering the origins and intricacies of *Hole in the Head*. But even more perturbing and compelling is the fact that Christof Migone's work is inspired by, and inflected with, those *écrits bruts* – the varied schizophrenic and paranoid languages of madness – which so fascinated Jean Dubuffet, and which necessitated a thorough revision of contemporary aesthetics.

As such, *Hole in the Head* is not so much in the lineage of the linguistic experiments of sound poetry and *poésie sonore*, with their surface effects, but rather participates in that aesthetic and epistemological rupture exemplified by Antonin Artaud's *To Have Done With the Judgment of God* and Gregory Whitehead's *Pressures of the Unspeakable*. What is so disturbing about this genre of audiophonics is that it reminds us, with auditory brilliance and existential terror, that holes – real and metaphoric – exist in each of our heads, and that madness, just a mere psychic slippage away, is the sign of a radical alterity potentially within us all. *Hole in the Head* constitutes a contemporary panpipe that entices us ever inwards. What we must remember is that Pan was the god who incites panic, and that his death, as Nietzsche reminds us, ended an entire civilization. For millennia he survived, hidden within our bodies. Now in a fin de siècle reappearance, he creates new possibilities of voice and new phantasms of the resonant, throbbing, noisy body expressed in Christof Migone's oral and aural contortions, ruins, lacerations, abrasions and ruptures. This is the voice of a pandemonium that is, after all, the chaotic ground of all art.

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