

MUTE WORDS
Silent Spectres of Speech
Sigil-Skeletons of Sound
THE ECSTASY OF SPEECH

JONATHAN OTT



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MUSHROOMS
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BY

VALENTINA PAVLOVNA WASSON
AND R. GORDON WASSON

VOLUME I



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EXEGESIS

*Silent Spectres of Speech/Sigil-Skeletons of Sound:
The Ecstasy of Speech*

I felt myself enlarged by this work I bore within me
(like something precious and fragile, not belonging
to me, which had been confided to my care and
which I wished to hand over intact to those for
whom it was destined).

Marcel Proust

À la recherche du temps perdu [VII: 3, 1922]

DEAR READER, I write to *you* [READERS *are* dear to me—a Writer, *sans* READERS, is like a vessel stranded aground; has no purpose.] OF A PLACE YOU NEVER WILL SEE NOR KNOW (irrelevant, its terrestrial *locus*—its LINGUISTIC *locus* is everything). Although I employ WORDS, these are MUTE; are, for this moment, SILENT: indeed, they never *have been*, and mayhap never *will be* given voice; unless they chance, some day, to be read aloud. My discourse, then, is—and might remain—in some curious type of manual sign-language: yes, I transmit these SPECTRES through the tips of the three fingers I use to type upon my portable computer. [Actually, I do not *type*, since no <type> is involved: what I do is <lavish manual key-caresses>.] We communicate—at least *I* do, although I am not speaking—in *silence*... owing, not merely to the fact that we are not within earshot; or that, most probably, we are unacquainted, have never so much as glimpsed one another; but, very plausibly, in consequence of my death, a long time past... hence, I might have nothing further to say! It may be, that *you* and *I* never roamed Planet Gæa at the same time—*you*, reader, can never know whether *I*, or *any other* Writer remain/s in the <REALM OF THE LIVING>. Yet communicate I do, *via* SIGIL-SKELETONS, that transcend TIME and PROPINQUITY... and through this intermediary of WORDS or particles of SPEECH, which never were spoken! What does it signify, to communicate through WORDS, that in essence are sonic... when said WORDS had been emitted, and now are absorbed, likewise are digested, *in the silence of the grave*: perchance, never once having passed through the medium of SOUND? Aye, «there's the rub»... that, indeed, is our *conundrum*...

You may begin to imagine or suspect that my discourse is circular (but not circumlocutional: this I promise you!): forsooth, you still cannot conceive just how circular it might become! I sha'n't, and as a rule don't, beat around the bush, but purpose to penetrate the very centre of that shrub... TO A REALM at once NOWHERE and EVERYWHERE; a Dimension beyond the scope of human vision and (at least so

I fancy) beyond human imagination: until now, that is (the moment I *wrote* this, in a coherent and a cogent fashion). For, you see... I am WRITING, about WRITING ITSELF... neither HOW, nor OF WHAT, one might write... but WHENCE COME THESE MUTE WORDS... WHENCE COME THESE SILENT SPECTRES OF SPEECH... WHITHER THESE SIGIL-SKELETONS OF SOUND? Whence comes *this*... my ECSTASY OF SPEECH?

At first blush, this may strike you as *Much Ado About Nothing*—what could be more mundane, and oftentimes boring, than reading? *Much Ado* I do make, aye, and it is *About Nothings*—about tenuous ghosts of WORDS, alienated from their living essence—which itself is ephemeral and evanescent: mere vibrational waves on the air, which swiftly fade, then die. Although they travel at 'round 1,235 kilometres *per* hour, spoken words travel not far: a few kilometres, at the extreme. They are much more perishable, even, than are WE! My optimal recourse is, *to write about myself, writing about myself, writing* (I sought to forewarn you, of a vertiginous circularity): to proffer you <REAL TIME>-examples of the *genesis* of the very MUTE WORDS you are reading. I trust I can show clearly, that these are PARTHENOGENETIC, that they have not parents of thought. That these WORDS come through my fingers, I've already declared, and this in incontrovertible. My mouth, my organ of speech, withal is inactive, dumb—not even ruminating *COCA!* It was hyperbolic of me, to tell you these words were emitted in *the silence of the grave*; for, assuredly, I'm not (yet) in my grave: I *can* hear the cheery cacophony of a circumjacent cloud-forest... what I meant is that I am silent, except for the silken clicks of my fingertips, caressing the keyboard of a μ -computer. Silent, that is to say, both inside, and out-: my literary COMPOSITION proceeds, collateral to MENTAL QUIETUDE, what you might call a meditative, thoughtless state. I don't <hear> those WORDS in my head, as naughty children of thought, then transduce these into alphabetic SKELETONS: there are, for that moment, no WORDS there at all! They emanate, as noted, from my fingertips: *unspoken*; neither *imagined* as having been spoken. I know not a reader's aural environment; save that most probably s/he is digesting my *Mute Words* in kindred *silence*—neither *pronouncing* my WORDS out loud; nor *imagining* their being heard.

[DEAR READER, you not only CANNOT HEAR these MUTE WORDS... forsooth, you CANNOT SEE them even either! That is: you CANNOT SEE even the SIGIL-SKELETONS of their SOUND (that never was!), which we so matter-of-factly call, <WRITTEN WORDS>. All you CAN SEE are *SILHOUETTES*, of the SHADOWS, of the *fundamental particles*, of these *atoms of speech*—or the individual LETTERS of these my MUTE WORDS you are reading this instant—against a blank, some whitish canvas: which either *reflects* or *emits* light (according to whether you read them upon paper or—as do I—upon a

computer-screen). I might also tell you that, in fact, YOU CANNOT SEE that blank canvas, either; but only PHOTONS or particles of ‹light› (Electro-Magnetic Energy) bounding from it; and furthermore, that these do not re/bound from anything SOLID, but rather from the energy-fields of the outermost ELECTRONS, of the ATOMS of which it is composed; and that *there really is nothing solid there*, anyway: at least nothing VISIBLE, by any means nor technology. But that is a subject for another *Essay*, which I have written already. OK, let us step-back a pace. I have been quite frank with you: I've acknowledged right-off, that I'm communicating with you in *a manual sign-language*; that I am ‹palming-off› SILENT SIMULACRA OF SPEECH, in the SKELETAL form representing SPECTRES OF SOUND that never was, which we call ‹WRITTEN WORDS›. Come to find-out in this dumb-show (I mean no disrespect: the show is mine) YOU REALLY CAN'T SEE even the pallid signs I'm emitting, of WORDS that never were spoken, mutely expressing IDEAS that never were thought! As Alice said, in her *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, all this is becoming: «Curiouser and curiouser!» We are truly all like Plato's troglodytes: chained forever in a dark cavern; seeing only a blank wall, upon which are projected fluctuant shadows; IMITATIONS, of the REAL, which is invisible, and which *he* called ARCHETYPES OF IDEAS. WE call the proportionately insignificant SOLID REAL, FERMIONS (QUARKS and ELECTRONS) being ‹cute› sometimes I call these QUARKETYPES and EIDECTRONS. If *you* see this World, as boring, mundane and MATERIAL, it only can be that *you* are focusing on Plato's IMITATIONS and not seeing WHAT WE CAN, of the REAL, which is ENERGY—as Wm. Blake noted: «Energy is Eternal Delight». It is because, as Blake also engraved: «For [wo]man has closed himself up, till [s]he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern». However, he preceded this by inscribing: «If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, INFINITE». I *have* a hidden agenda: I am striving to prise-open *your* ‹doors of perception›, if only ever so little. That is occulted no longer... more frank, I cannot be! To be sure, Plato's famed parable is from *Republic* (ca. 375 B.P.: Before the Present Æra). He meant the TYPE of the ‹ARCHE›—which was some postulated *fundamental particle* of THE UNIVERSE.]

[I promised you ‹REAL TIME›-examples, of the PARTHENOGENESIS of the very MUTE WORDS I emit: permit me to commence. As you will learn two paragraphs on, this *bizarre* topic arose ALL OF ITSELF, in *Correspondence*, some few days ago: and then burgeoned. Its MUTE WORDS overflowed *here*—so much so, that I had foregone the finishing and sending of that *Epistle*, to correspond with *you*. In the belated process of finalizing and sending said *Missive*, I noticed I had mentioned the fact that MUTE WORDS, not only could not be HEARD, but neither SEEN... this struck

MUTE WORDS

me as important. So, when I returned to *you*, this foregoing paragraph emerged, by way of *Digression* (from *my fingertips*... but its *impetus* had come from *my head*.)]

If not from *the organ of speech*... neither from *the head*, from thought-processes, then, whence come these *Mute Words*? We have here a quite quizzical *conundrum*, a most *Mercurial* MYSTERY, enwrapped within an elusive ENIGMA! I wish I could tell you... *I do!* For a couple/few decades I've pondered this question; almost daily, watched MUTE WORDS fairly erupt from my fingertips—and still I haven't a clue, that might hold-up in Court. I can (and most likely will) *speculate*, as to the Native Land/s of these MUTE WORDS, but this would be «mere smoke of opinion» (being Henry David Thoreau's words, from *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1854)—which you, naturally, will be quite free, at your pleasure, to take or leave. Suffice that I can demonstrate their parthenogenetic essence—their spontaneous generation, independent of conscious thought-processes. That alone is a tall order—any success, would lend weight, to those fumacious speculations!

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