

Sound poetry

Many socialist realist novels included political sermons and speeches delivered in high-flown rhetorical language. The list of canonical works that exhibit the particular conventions associated with the socialist realist tradition include Dmitrii Furmanov's 1923 novel *Chapaev*, Maksim Gorky's *The Life of Klim Samgin* (1925–36), Nikolai Ostrovsky *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1934) and Mikhail Sholokhov's novels *Quiet Flows the Don* (1928–40) and *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1932–60). Not all Soviet novels followed the master plot, however, and as Regine Robin has argued, due to its theoretical contradictions, socialist realism may be seen as 'an impossible aesthetic'.

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SOUND POETRY

Sound poetry is poetry, music or sound-art in which the sonic qualities of language or vocal utterance are of central importance and in which semantic meaning may be complicated, downgraded or erased as a result. Though generally understood as a twentieth-century phenomenon, by many accounts it emerges from ancient, trans-cultural traditions of oral performance, RITUAL and play, and is related to the perpetuation of those traditions, notably in non-Western and folk communities. Nineteenth-century precedents include much of the literature of French SYMBOLISM, which aspired towards the qualities of music, and Victorian nonsense verse. But the most striking steps towards defining a poetry based on sound were connected to Italian and Russian FUTURISM. In 1912 F. T. Marinetti published his 'Technical MANIFESTO of Futurist Literature', defining the concept of *parole in libertà* ('words in freedom'), wherein words would be freed from conventional grammatical structures, leading to the use of telegraphic syntax, onomatopoeia and typographic EXPERIMENT. The following year, Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh published *Declaration of the Word as Such*, calling for a poetry of trans-rational language later defined as 'ZAUM' language, involving sonically charged neologisms. These conceptions, expressed in works

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such as Marinetti's *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1912–14) and Kruchenykh's 'Dyr bul schyl' (1913), were iconically advanced in the first performances of the Zurich DADA poets, including Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara, at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916. Their recitals, including cacophonous 'simultaneist' poems of layered vocal noise, relied like much subsequent Dada sound poetry upon shock and spontaneity. However, a more orchestrated monument to the energies of early twentieth-century sound poetry was the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonate* or 'Ancient Sonata' (1922–32), a symphonic, fully scored work in four movements.

Much early twentieth-century sound poetry made use of buried, multi-lingual semantic suggestion and pseudo-grammatical structures: it was thus a fundamentally literary art, overlapping with sonically preoccupied modernist works such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). However, a distinct renaissance of sound poetry occurred during the 1950s–1970s, as a result of which the term was concertedly defined and historicised for the first time. Germinal to this re-emergence was the obscure French movement of LETTRISM, launched in 1945, which re-engaged with language's aural and visual qualities. In the early 1950s the Lettrist poets François Dufrêne, Gil J. Wolman and Jean-Louis Brau started creating vocal compositions surpassing SYLLABIC and phonemic sound structures, an imperative pursued under the banner of 'Ultralettrism', and aided from the mid-1950s by the poet Henri Chopin's use of tape recorders to manipulate and overlay vocal noise.

Across the 1960s, correspondences for the Ultralettrists' non-linguistic, technologically augmented sound poetic sprang up across North America and Europe, notably in Sweden, where the artist Öyvind Fahlström's early 1960s sound compositions influenced the 'text-sound' studio compositions of Lars-Gunnar Bodin, Bengt Emil Johnson and others. In London from around 1965, the poet Bob Cobbing's Writers Forum became a hub of sound-poetry-related activities, including improvisatory group compositions incorporating extra-linguistic utterances and gestures which mirrored the activities of Toronto-based poets such as Steve McCaffery and bpNichol. A peak of cultural visibility was reached in the 1970s, with twelve International Sound Poetry Festivals held across Europe and North America during 1968–80. This new sound poetry occupied the interstices of literature and other media, especially music, more fundamentally than its predecessors, and was thus related to 1960s intermedia and Fluxus art, and to contemporaneous experimental

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music, notably *musique concrète*. It was also related to, and often conflated with, CONCRETE POETRY, because of the comparable attention it placed on language's non-semantic substance, and to CUT-UP poetry in its use of COLLAGE techniques. One might posit an essential dichotomy in all sound poetry between PRIMITIVIST and futuristic traits: those intended to recapture an atavistic sense of human subjectivity or community, and those intended to pay homage to the augmentation of modern sensory experience by new TECHNOLOGIES of communication, travel, information transmission, WAR and so on.

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SOUTHERN AGRARIANS

The Southern Agrarians were a group of US writers and academics from the former Confederate states, among them John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren. Born between 1881 and 1903 and raised in the postbellum South, they were much influenced by the traditionalism of Southern society and the legacy of the Confederacy's defeat, including a sense of cultural marginality. In response to criticisms of Southern culture, the 'Twelve Southerners' published an essay collection, *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), advocating an agrarian economy and way of life, which they saw as threatened by industrialism and urbanisation expanding from the North.

In spite of this reactionary stance, many of the Agrarians were progressive in other fields. Ransom, Penn Warren and Tate were modernist poets and exponents of the NEW CRITICISM (although its