Daniel Martin

George Catlin's *Shut Your Mouth*, the Biopolitics of Voice, and the Problem of the "Stuttering Indian"

The stutter persists as an unwanted excrescence in most cultural or critical/theoretical accounts of the voice, and sometimes even the most rigorous scholarly approaches still rely on powerful assumptions that link voices to personal or collective agency. What does it mean to find a voice for people who stutter? Sonically, stutters and stammers rupture time frames; conceptually, they do similar work halting the fluency and fluidity of histories premised on personal and collective identities, and institutional developments. Following Michel Foucault's earliest outlines of biopower and the biopolitical production of manageable populations, I argue that the modern science and therapeutics of dysfluent speech emerged in the nineteenth century through "the controlled insertion of bodies in the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes".[1] Put simply, fluency in voice became foundational to modern regimentation and training in speech and communication. In recent years, scholars such as Josephine Hoegaerts and Riley McGuire have begun to examine the material histories of stuttered or stammered speech, each positing that the "science" of speech disorders emerging in the nineteenth century was implicated in powerful cultural narratives of fluency's privilege and prestige.[2] At the core of the explosion of curative and therapeutic techniques in early elocutionary and medical approaches to stuttered speech persisted a productive fantasy of a lost "natural" voice that could paradoxically be rediscovered through biopolitical instrumentation. The fantasy of this lost voice – a voice that experts believed existed elsewhere in space and time than the "civilized" nation states of the modern West – functioned biopolitically as an impossible "normal" that nevertheless became the goal of speech training, management, and production.

As a supplement to emerging critical scholarship on stuttering and stammering, my aim here is to introduce an historical dimension to current scholarship concerning social or political/relational models of dysfluency, not so much to counter hegemonic medical models of speech and voice but to demonstrate how deeply implicated the science of speech and voice is in Eurocentric, eugenic, and

1 Foucault, 1990, 141.

2 See Hoegaerts, 2020, 129–146; McGuire, 2020, 6–9.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111079370-005

fundamentally racist narratives of a "natural" vocality. More specifically, I examine a throwaway statement about stuttered speech that appeared in the appendix of a strange book that ran through numerous editions beginning in the early 1860s. I am referring to the American ethnographer, painter, and exhibitionist George Catlin's *Shut Your Mouth and Save Your Life*, which first appeared in London in 1862 as *The Breath of Life*, a hand-written (on stone) "manu-graph" reminiscent of self-published treatises and manifestos in our own times. *The Breath of Life* received harsh criticism and mockery by the periodical press in Britain and the United States. Its unabashed disorganization and promotion of a simplistic panacea for the maladies of modern life echoed the quackery of British and American elocutionists throughout the century who marketed their own quick-fix remedies to stuttered or stammered speech. Under the new title of *Shut Your Mouth,* the book went through numerous editions in the following decades.[3] In all iterations of the book, Catlin recounts his ethnographic experiences among Indigenous populations of the Americas and argues that virtually every ailment or illness of Western "civilization" could be alleviated by following Indigenous practices of ensuring the mouths of young infants remain closed during breastfeeding, sleeping, and breathing. In the appendix to later editions, Catlin contrasts the open-mouthed breathing and sleeping habits of "civilized" nations in the West to the "natural" breathing, sleeping, and articulatory habits – the closed mouths – of Indigenous peoples. Referencing stuttered speech in particular, Catlin writes, "I have never (to my knowledge) met or even could hear of, a stuttering Indian. Their lips and teeth are habitually, firmly closed; their articulation prompt, and their words clearly spoken".[4] This passing reference to stuttering echoes a vast network of elocutionary and medical theories in the early nineteenth century about the etiology, symptomatology, and therapeutics of speech disorders, the most significant being that stuttering is the result of either improper breathing or glottal control or a "loss" of a natural habit of speech that could only be rediscovered through extensive retraining of vocal coordination. Catlin's ethnographic belief was also by no means innovative, as numerous speech experts in the 1850s and 1860s had already begun to debate the existence of speech dysfluencies in populations worldwide, and especially Africa and Asia.[5] Unlike his contemporaries, however, Catlin posited North American Indigenous vocal and breathing habits as a panacea for the modern world's troubles with speech, voice, and general health.

3 The text was rightly criticized in the periodical press. An anonymous short review in *Vanity Fair* even referred to Catlin's "board-bound book" as one by which "more people are bound to be bored than any other of the season". See "Our Book Review," 1861, 216.

4 Catlin, 1873, 98.

5 See especially Hunt, 1870, 349–355.

Much has been written about Catlin's place in Western ethnographies of Indigenous populations.[6] Catlin's assumptions about the uncorrupted "natural" habits of speech in Indigenous populations contributes to long-standing Western romanticized – and thoroughly racist – accounts of the noble savage. Joshua J. Masters refers to Catlin as the "self-proclaimed historian of 'uncontaminated' American Indian tribes".[7] As Masters writes, Catlin's aspirations during his extensive travels were "marked by a transcendental desire to regain an imminent connection to nature: to be released from the life of the rationalizing white mind into the life of the idealized, immaculate Indian body".[8] Masters is but one of numerous scholars in the last few decades to interrogate Catlin's status as one of the foremost amateur settler ethnographers of Indigenous peoples. As Stephanie Pratt argues, Catlin's exhibitions of his "Indian Gallery" throughout Europe in the 1840s perpetuated the profoundly damaging myth of the disappearing Native.[9] Similarly, Nilak Datta examines the "micro-politics" of Catlin's touring exhibitions, in which his gallery of artworks became a backdrop to his employment of live performers. Datta writes further that Catlin's publications and exhibitions, especially of the Plains Indigenous peoples of the United States, emphasized "their 'pristine purity' now being sullied by contact with 'civilization'".[10] At the heart of Catlin's vast career as a traveler, writer, painter, curator, and exhibitionist was a sustained preoccupation with memorializing the lives, experiences, and customs of peoples that his readers and audiences perceived were on the verge of extinction.

In the extensive body of scholarship on Catlin's major exhibitions and publications, *Shut Your Mouth* remains a minor work, a rambling, dislodged, albeit sustained plea for the rediscovery of a lost "natural" habit of breathing that he believed remained pristine and uncorrupted in Indigenous breathing and speaking habits. There is something more at work – something more troubling and complicated – in Catlin's passing statement about stuttered speech in *Shut Your Mouth* than a perpetuation of racist theories of Indigenous extinction or romantic beliefs about the "uncontaminated" speech of Indigenous populations, especially considering the book's influence in British medical and elocutionary communities of the 1870s and 1880s. Catlin's theory of the uncorrupted speech of Indigenous populations both perpetuated a prominent causal theory of stuttered speech in early

6 For more critical scholarship about Catlin's ethnographies of North American Indigenous populations, see Crapanzano, 1986.

7 Masters, 2005, 64.

8 Masters, 2005, 65.

9 Pratt, 2013, 277.

10 Datta, 2018, 315.

elocutionary theories by such self-professed "experts" as John Thelwall, Henry McCormac, and Neil Arnott. In the "Introductory Essay" to *Illustrations of English Rhythmus* (1812), Thelwall argues that stammering often occurs because of a lack of "proper attention to the rhythmus" of the English language.[11] Thelwall writes further "that our native English is frequently both spoken and read unrhythmically, and sometimes written, also, without proper attention to the rhythmus [. . .] there can be no doubt; and therefore it is – that we have so much hesitation and stammering, harshness and incoherence".[12] Such early-century elocutionary beliefs that stuttering and stammering were caused by a loss of "proper" rhythm and an acquisition of bad habits of speech were by no means confined to elocutionists. Medical experts beginning in the 1840s also identified the cause of stuttered speech in a "lost" and a "natural" voice that required rehabituation through sustained and extensive retraining of speech. Catlin's title was so well-known in British medical communities that Dr. James Patterson Cassell borrowed it for his own paper on the etiology of ear-disease before the Glasgow Medico-Chirurgical Society in 1877, arguing that "shut mouths and open nostrils are conducive to good health".[13]

A simplistic and scientifically inaccurate panacea, Catlin's thesis that "civilized" societies need to reacquire a lost habit of "natural" breathing demonstrates how critically and historically complicated the most fundamental bodily processes become once we examine and interrogate them. Catlin's passing reference to stuttering – a disorder of speech that results in frequent disruptions, repetitions, and involuntary pauses in the flow of speech – reveals a broader cultural fantasy in "civilized" nations of the voice as a simple and manageable expressive medium. *Shut Your Mouth* is essentially a rambling, defensive, and repetitive book composed as a "communication" to readers for the purposes of "enjoyment and prolongation of their lives".[14] Catlin sets out to complicate the binary categories of "savage" and "civilized" through evidence from statistical accounts of life in London and Manchester that reveal a "lamentable fault" in the "sanitary economy of civilized life".[15] Catlin writes that the citizens of "civilized" nations are exceptions to the ideal "sanitary condition" required for the advancement of the human species, although "the Native races oftentimes present a near approach to it, [. . .] amongst whom, in their *primitive condition*, [. . .] diseases are seldom

11 Thelwall, 1812, viii. Thelwall's contributions to early nineteenth century elocutionary thought are well-established in literary study of British Romanticism. For more on Thelwall's contributions as an elocutionist, see Andrew McCann and Judith Thompson.

12 Thelwall, 1812, viii.

13 Cassells, 1877, 728.

14 Catlin, 1873, 1.

15 Catlin, 1873, 3.

heard of; and the almost unexceptional regularity, beauty, and soundness of their teeth last them to advanced life and old age".[16] Catlin writes further that

> In civilized communities, better sheltered, less exposed, and with the aid of the ablest professional skill, the sanitary condition of mankind [sic], with its variety, its complication, and fatality of diseases – its aches and pains, and mental and physical deformities, presents a more lamentable and mournful list, which plainly indicates the existence of some extraordinary latent cause, not as yet sufficiently appreciated, and which it is the sole object of this little work to expose.[17]

In order to prove the veracity of his theory, Catlin challenges "exaggerated accounts" of Indigenous populations ravaged by illness and excessive mortality, which lead "the world to believe that the actual premature waste of life caused by dissipations and vices introduced, with the accompanying changes in the modes of living in such districts, were the proper statistics of those people".[18] Relying on his own ethnographic observations, Catlin counters prevailing assumptions of premature mortality rates among Indigenous peoples with the double claim that "the Native Races [. . .] are a healthier people [. . .] than any Civilized Race in existence" and what evidence there is of illness and disease such as Small-pox is a direct result of colonial encounters and conflicts.[19] Such an argument sets the parameters for a lengthy and repetitive defense of Indigenous health, and in particular Indigenous practices of child-rearing.

In its historical context, Catlin's argument is complex because it desires two seemingly incommensurate outcomes: like much elocutionary thought in the nineteenth century, it posited the attainability of a "natural" habit of speech that exists *outside* the epistemologies of "civilized" cultures, but it also attempted to bring that outside within the purview of Western statistical projects. Despite its intentions to reconceptualize the lives of Indigenous populations through biopolitical data, *Shut Your Mouth* perpetuated an assumption about "natural" breathing and vocality that was foundational to the emerging medicalization of stuttered speech beginning roughly in the 1830s and 1840s. Catlin's address to the mothers of "civilized" nations, for example, echoes James Wright's theory in the 1830s and 1840s that healthy speech habits require diligent and vigilant role models in the form of parents and nurses. In *A Treatise on the Causes and Cure of Stuttering* (1835), Wright argues that "the qualifications of nurses, servants, and tutors, as far as fluency in the utterance of children is concerned, are patience, kindness, and gentleness,

16 Catlin, 1873, 3–4.
17 Catlin, 1873, 4.
18 Catlin, 1873, 6–7.
19 Catlin, 1873, 7.

combined with steadiness, firmness, and perseverance," as well as "distinctness of articulation, and slowness and deliberateness of speech".[20] Wright assumes that children learn fluency not "by rule, but by imitation," so exemplary models of healthy speech are essential as good pedagogy.[21]

Given Wright's status as one of the earliest British experts to develop a medical approach to stuttered speech, it is no coincidence that Catlin develops a similar theorization of speech modeling by positing the Indigenous Mother as the ultimate model of "healthy" breath and voice:

> When I have seen a poor Indian woman in the wilderness, lowering her infant from the breast, and pressing its lips together as it falls asleep in its cradle in the open air, and afterwards looked into the Indian multitude for the results of such a practice, I have said to myself, 'glorious education! such a Mother deserves to be the nurse of Emperors'. And when I have seen the *careful, tender mothers* in civilized life, covering the faces of their infants sleeping in overheated rooms, with their little mouths open and gasping for breath; and afterwards looked into the multitude, I have been struck with the evident evil and lasting results of this incipient stage of education; and have been more forcibly struck, and shocked, when I have looked into the Bills of Mortality, which I believe to be so frightfully swelled by the results of this habit, thus contracted, and practiced in contravention to Nature's design.[22]

Catlin believes that this fact of the open mouths of infants at rest – this "habit against instinct" – is the cause of many of civilization's ills.[23] The "smothered atmospheres" of infants in "civilized" nations require correction primarily by mothers.[24] Catlin's language is hyperbolic and bizarrely poetic, as evidenced by his claim that, while many individuals in "civilized" societies do adhere to the designs of Nature, many also develop "a second Nature" of bad habits.[25] These individuals breathe through constantly open mouths "while the nasal ducts, being vacated, like vacated roads that grow up to grass and weeds, become the seat of Polypus and other diseases".[26] For Catlin, the mother's tender affections toward an infant emerge as the "latent cause" of poor breathing habits in "civilized" societies.[27]

Catlin returns to this belief in his Appendix when he addresses the prevalence of stuttered speech in the cramped, stuffed urban environments of cities such as London. "Affectionate and doting mother," he writes, "look at and observe

20 Wright, 1835, 26.
21 Wright, 1835, 26.
22 Catlin, 1873, 18.
23 Catlin, 1873, 19.
24 Catlin, 1873, 19.
25 Catlin, 1873, 46.
26 Catlin, 1873, 46–47.
27 Catlin, 1873, 4.

the connection of the two, – see what fondness and kindness, without discretion, have done, – behold the twig that you bent and the tree that you have made".[28] Catlin's correlation between "civilization" and speech dysfluencies was common to many elocutionists, doctors, and scientists of stuttered speech. Catlin writes that, "like most of the diseases and deformities of mankind [sic], [stuttering] is undoubtedly the result of habit, and what habit so likely to produce it as the one condemned in this little book, of allowing the under jaw to fall, and to be carried in a hanging position, to be raised by a jerk (instead of being lowered) in the effort to speak".[29] Catlin was no expert on elocution or the science of speech dysfluencies, but his panacea emerged within a vast network of similar quick-fix therapeutics, such as always ensuring the lungs have a full supply of air before speaking, always ensuring that the glottis remains open while speaking, and speaking to the consistent beat of a metronome or baton.[30]

If *Shut Your Mouth* is such a ridiculous and reductionist book, why dwell upon it in this chapter, and what is its use for historical and critical examinations of speech, voice, and orality? For starters, it anticipates a foundational debate among American experts on stuttered speech in the twentieth century at the heyday of the first institutionalization of the field we now commonly refer to as speech-language pathology (SLP) or speech-language therapy about the presence of stuttered speech in North American Indigenous populations. Joshua St. Pierre and Charis St. Pierre argue that the foundation of SLP in the early twentieth century aligned with an increasing encroachment of biopolitical regimentation of bodies and voices in modern life. "Speech correction," they write, "is accordingly best conceived not as a discrete institution, but as an overlapping set of practices that both free the circulation of speech within society and integrate disabled speakers into the productive flows of communication".[31] Such overlapping practices include colonial knowledge production and the fantasies of voice that sustain them. The famed American speech pathologist Wendell Johnson published essays in the 1940s and 1950s about the supposed absence of stuttered speech in American Indigenous populations, in response to anthropological accounts reported by Adelaide Bullen in 1945.[32] Johnson argued in particular that the Bannock and

28 Catlin, 1873, 96.

29 Catlin, 1873, 97.

30 Such common elocutionary techniques for "curing" stuttered speech are present in treatises by McCormac, Arnott, and others. For a Victorian medical repost to such quack cures, see Monro, 1850, 1–20.

31 St. Pierre and St. Pierre, 2018, 152.

32 Textbook histories often refer to anthropological debates about the frequency of stuttering in Indigenous populations. For example, see Bloodstein, Ratner, and Brundage, 2021, 78–79.

Shoshana communities of the Northern Great Basin did not have a word in their language for stuttering, thus supposedly proving his theory that Indigenous communities did not stutter. Similarly, Johnson's student John C. Snidecor failed to find "one pure-blooded Indian who stuttered" in his own research.[33] Researchers and ethnographers such as Bullen, Johnson, and Snidecor postulated that stuttering was rare or absent in Indigenous communities because of what they saw as a lack of parental restrictions placed upon children, thus confirming Johnson's foundational diagnosogenic theory that parental attitudes play a significant role in the frequency of stuttering among children.[34]

Anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s eventually disproved such claims through evidence of stuttered speech in American Indigenous communities, especially among the Bannock and Shoshana and the Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Salish of the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada.[35] Curiously, evidence of stuttered speech in Indigenous populations, it seems, had always been known, as evidenced by American linguist Edward Sapir's research for the Geological Survey of Canada about 'abnormalities' in Nootka speech in the early twentieth century, and even further back in time in the work of British expert on stuttering James Hunt. Once American anthropologists and SLPs begrudgingly acknowledged instances of stuttered speech in Indigenous populations, Joseph L. Stewart's study *The Problem of Stuttering in Certain North American Indian Societies* (1960) attempted to address the broader anthropological and linguistic problem of stuttering across cultures. Stuart emphasizes "the need for adequate bases of comparison between cultures with respect to such complex behavior as that associated with child development and training".[36] Ann Packman and Joseph S. Attanasio's historical overview of such causal theories of stuttering link Sapir's training in the cultural relativism of Franz Boas and the development of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic determinism to Johnson's foundational theory that stuttering emerges in part through parental (and communal) diagnosis.[37]

As a disability studies scholar, I see explicit correspondences between speech-language therapy and colonialist and eugenic discourses concerning the management, regulation, and production of "normal" bodies and voices. While Oliver and

33 Snidecor, 1947, 493.

34 For more on Johnson's diagnosogenic theory of cause, see Shell, 2005, 12–14.

35 Catlin visited these latter regions of the United States and Canada in the 1850s and documented his experiences. Madonna L. Moss examines Catlin's own travels among the Tlinget, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples of the Pacific Northwest, and particularly his observations about labrets (distinctive lip ornaments) adorned by women. See Moss, 1999.

36 Stewart, 1960, 10.

37 Packman and Attanasio, 2017, 49.

Barnes argue that Edwin Lemert's study of stuttering in Pacific Northwest Indigenous populations in the early 1950s was in part foundational to the emergence of Disability Studies because it concluded that social controls and conditions are a main causal factor in "deviant" behavior, this kind of historical research still emphasizes institutional histories over the lived experiences of people who stutter.[38] Even Bloodstein, Ratner, and Brundage suggest in their latest edition of *A Handbook of Stuttering* (2021) that the "entire enterprise" of early debates about the evidence of Indigenous stuttering is "rather difficult to interpret".[39] What interests me is a second, albeit related, layer of significance pertaining to Catlin's *Shut Your Mouth* for histories of speech and voice, namely the widespread cultural promotion of simple physiological theories of cause in treatises on speech dysfluencies in the century prior to the "official" foundation of speech-language therapy. In particular, Catlin's panacea does not emerge *ex nihilo*; it is not simply a product of generalized and sporadic "quackery" in nineteenth-century thought about dysfluent speech. Rather, it reflects a broader desire in nineteenth-century elocutionary and medical theories of speech and voice to rediscover "natural" breathing or speaking, a cultural desire that is still very much with us in our own times, as evidenced by James Nestor's recent bestseller *Breath: The Science of a Lost Art* (2020). Nestor even refers to Catlin as an "adventurous artist and researcher" who essentially introduced Western populations to the "glories of nasal breathing".[40] Nestor's retelling of Catlin's ethnographic travels romanticizes this discovery of the health benefits of nasal breathing and positions him as both "chronicler" and "practitioner" of nasal breathing.[41]

We do not know what motivated Catlin to add the Appendix to later editions of *Shut Your Mouth*, but its inclusion coincided with the popularity of Hunt's editions of *Stammering and Stuttering: Their Nature and Treatment* in the 1860s.[42] In the modern age, the only way to return a "natural" vocality that people who stutter have somehow lost is to "obey" the instrumental logic of Nature's laws. The celebrated Victorian intellectual Charles Kingsley summarized Hunt's system of cure, which he learned from his father Thomas Hunt, most concisely in a review essay for *Fraser's Magazine*, arguing that stammering is the "loss of a habit (always unconscious) of articulation." Moreover, Kingsley writes, the secret of the Hunt system

38 Oliver and Barnes, 2012, 43–45.

39 Bloodstein, Ratner, and Brundage, 2021, 79.

40 Bloodstein, Ratner, and Brundage, 2021, 46.

41 Bloodstein, Ratner, and Brundage, 2021, 48.

42 Well-known public figures who stuttered such as Lewis Carroll and Charles Kingsley were clients of Hunt's celebrated establishment at Ore House in Hastings. For more on this see Martin, 2022.

is "to teach the patient to speak consciously, as other men spoke unconsciously".[43] The binary collapses. Nature itself becomes instrumental and essentially biopolitical. Neither Hunt nor Kingsley cite Catlin's ethnographic writing, unlike some of Hunt's contemporaries in elocution and speech training. Yet the connections between Hunt and Catlin are significant, given their respective contributions to prominent debates about whether or not "savage" populations stutter or stammer. Hunt was, even by Victorian standards, a virulent racist. As President of the London Anthropological Society in the 1860s, Hunt advanced the theory of polygenesis in the study of race and racial difference.[44] Moreover, the final edition of *Stammering and Stuttering* concludes with a section entitled "stuttering among savages," in which Hunt retracts reluctantly claims he had made in earlier editions of his book that there is no evidence of stuttered or stammered speech in "savage" populations. Hunt performs a curious maneuver by arguing that new-found anecdotal evidence of disease and illness (including stuttered speech) in the West Coast of Africa does not actually refute his earlier beliefs that "uncivilized" nations do not stutter. Hunt concludes *Stammering and Stuttering* by arguing that ethnographic evidence of stuttering and general illness in Sierra Leone are not properly medical evidence of stuttering or stammering, but rather of performative imitation or mimicry of the fashionable dysfluent voices of European colonizers.[45] This strange line of reasoning anticipates theories of mimicry and hybridity in postcolonial criticism,[46] but it also complicates Hunt's most foundational belief in *Stammering and Stuttering* that dysfluent speech is often caused by a susceptible child's "imitative propensity" to mimic or mock the speech of other people who stutter. For children of "civilized" nations, poor habits of speech occur through a tendency to imitate the bad habits of speech of other stutterers or stammerers; for African populations, such poor habits are merely "affected" and "*fashionable*".[47] Like Catlin, Hunt attempts in the conclusion of his book to maintain the fantasy that the "uncivilized" do not stutter in any medical or diagnosable sense, despite a wealth of evidence to the contrary. Their respective theories of a lost "natural" habit of speech require an *elsewhere* in which that missing factor can be rediscovered.

British elocutionists and medical experts on speech and voice cited Catlin's observations as evidence for their own still-emerging claims about the etiology and treatment of stuttered speech. Despite interventions by medical experts and scientists of vocal production, elocutionary theories of breath and glottal control proved

43 Kingsley, 1859, 9.
44 See Challis, 2013, 43; Harris, 2001, 93.
45 Hunt, 1870, 210.
46 See Bhabha, 1994, 121–131.
47 Hunt, 1870, 351.

resilient even into the early twentieth century, as evidenced by the rise of the Delsarte method and related theories of vocal gymnastics in the United States. In Lecture IV of *Kings College Lectures on Elocution*, which ran through numerous editions between the 1870s and 1890s, Charles Plumptre argues that "few persons out of the medical profession reflect on the enormous space which the lungs occupy in our frames, and how all-important their sound and healthy condition is to us".[48] Citing Catlin's theory, Plumptre posits a golden rule that speakers breath through their nostrils instead of the mouth at all times, whether in the context of public speaking or not. In another lecture, Plumptre refers again to Catlin's ethnographic claims, but this time through reference to Dr. Abbotts Smith's research into stuttered speech, which suggested that diagnoses of stuttered speech were on the rise especially in European urban environments. Plumptre writes elsewhere in his lectures that various dysfluencies and ailments of the voice are the result, fundamentally, of a disconnection from the "natural" wonders of the mechanism of the human body. Echoing Thelwall, Plumptre argues that "there is a *measure* in speech, marked out and defined by a regular succession of action and reaction in the organs of the voice, just as really and truly as there is in music." Like other automatic functions of the human body, such as the beating of the heart or the "ordinary" process of respiration, speech becomes "disturbed" when a new habit – a new time-frame – intercedes. Plumptre borrows from Catlin's beliefs, and indeed in the beliefs of many nineteenth-century elocutionists, when he argues fundamentally that "the Law of Nature enjoins regular time-keeping" and any violation of this law would be "offensive and strange," especially in cases of stuttering and stammering.[49]

The broader field of SLP and scientific research into cause and cure of stuttered speech today still have not completely surmounted the problems resulting from this assumption of a "normal" or "natural" vocality. What do we make of Catlin's claim about the absence of people who stutter in Indigenous populations if we approach it through the critical frameworks of Disability Studies and Indigenous Studies? Why does it matter whether or not Indigenous peoples stutter? Lavonna L. Lovern argues that Disability Studies has yet to fully examine "Indigenous paradigms involving human difference," and when the field does perform this kind of work, "Indigenous concerns have been limited to primarily Western interpretations of Indigenous cultures and issues".[50] At the core of Catlin's *Shut Your Mouth* remains a powerful romanticization of an absence of dysfluencies in Indigenous populations, one that

48 Plumptre, 1895, 25.
49 Plumptre, 1895, 233.
50 Lovern, 2017, 303–307.

remains in our own times, albeit in skewed form as a general desire to *rediscover* a supposed lost "natural" breath and embodiment. Catlin's praise of the closed mouths of Indigenous populations ultimately perpetuates what Jodi A. Byrd calls the "processes through which the Native self has been transformed into a blank Otherness that can be controlled and consumed".[51] In setting up Indigenous habits of the mouth as a panacea for the ailments of "civilization," Catlin contributed to one of the most deliberately violent fantasies of settler colonialism. In praising the wonderful mechanism of Indigenous vocal and breathing habits, Catlin naturalized "the European order as dominant in the land by imaginatively transforming the Native Other into an empty referent".[52] Empty referents can be colonized in the same way as "empty" or "pristine" lands.

By way of conclusion to this chapter, I turn to an argument by Marjorie Fee about Indigenous "cosmopolitics" and English literacy in the Pacific Northwest of Canada and the United States. Expanding upon Sneja Gunew's argument that ethical decolonization requires that Western nations "put the world views [. . .] of the excluded at the center",[53] Fee writes that as settlers arrived in the Pacific Northwest with their insistence on teaching Indigenous communities the English language, the Coast Salish peoples adapted a story genre called the "Bungling Host" to their experiences with settlers' monomaniacal beliefs in the powers of English literacy. As Fee observes, Bungling Host stories "feature arrogant attempts by Coyote, or further north, Raven, to outdo the hospitality of various other animal-people, attempts that invariably lead to the humiliation of the boastful Bungler".[54] As stories that introduced comic relief "without direct disrespect", Bungling Host stories mocked attempts to make, in the words of the Salish peoples, "all the crooked ways straight".[55] While Fee's scholarship does not refer specifically to settler concerns about stuttered speech among Indigenous populations, such mockery of settler beliefs concerning language, voice, and speech introduce a possibility of rethinking the fundamental fantasies of fluent and homogenized communication that inform settler cultures and their communicative industries. Cultural and material histories of stuttered speech introduce their own kind of Bungling Host stories about Eurocentric monomania for

51 Byrd, 2006, 87.

52 Byrd, 2006, 87.

53 qtd. in Fee, 2019, 580.

54 Fee, 2019, 583.

55 Quoted in Fee, 2019, 583. Both Fee and Gunew wrote their scholarship as faculty members of the University of British Columbia, which sits on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nation in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. On a personal note, I first came to identify as a person who stutters in a nearby spot in the world–in the traditional, ancestral, unceded, and shared lands of the Stó:lō people and of the Qwó:ltl'el, Leq'á:mel, Matheqwí, Sq'éwlets peoples, about an hour East of Vancouver.

compulsory fluency and desires to eradicate the nuisances, maladies, excrescences, stutters, stammers, and glitches that constantly corrupt our speech. Such stories have remarkable potential to *unsettle* long-standing desires in the West for standardization in the science of fluency. Byrd writes in the Preface to *The Transit of Empire* that one of the foundational premises of Indigenous studies is that place matters, and that "in a world growing increasingly enamored with faster, flatter, *smooth*, where positionality doesn't matter so much as how it is that we travel there, indigeneity matters".[56] Byrd writes of the arrivals and transits of peoples across colonial spaces and argues that "our contemporary challenge is to theorize alternative methodologies to address the problems imperialism continues to create".[57] Historical and critical approaches to stuttered speech have the potential to temporalize what Byrd calls the "cacophonies of colonialism".[58] Catlin's decision to romanticize Indigenous habits of speech and breath removed Indigenous peoples from the transits of Empire, and thus from these cacophonies that Byrd and other Indigenous scholars and writers see as essential to the possibilities of both "rejuvenation and destruction" in a radical transformation of the world.[59] Rather than solely a malady or ailment of "civilized" populations, the stutter has the potential – especially in Indigenous cosmologies and phenomenologies – to perform the work of critically encountering settler fantasies of straight-talk or fluent/rational/homogenous communication. Like the story of the Bungling Host, the cacophonies of colonialism challenge the biopolitical production of disciplined and manageable speech and voice. Such cacophonies, bungles, and crooked modes of speech and voice also remind us that there is nothing "ordinary" that comes from our mouths.

Bibliography

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Bloodstein, Oliver, Nan Bernstein Ratner, and Shelley B. Brundage. *A Handbook on Stuttering*. 7th ed. San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2021.

Byrd, Jodi A. "(Post)colonial Plainsongs: Toward Native Literary Worldings." In *Unlearning the Language of Conquest: Scholars Expose Anti-Indianism in America*, edited by Wahinke Topa (Don Trent Jacobs), 81–93. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.

Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit in Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

56 Byrd, 2011, xiii.
57 Byrd, 2011, xxvi.
58 Byrd, 2011, xxvii.
59 Byrd, 2011, xxvii.

Cassells, James Patterson. "'Shut Your Mouth and Save Your Life': Being Remarks on Mouth-Breathing, and on Some of its Consequences, Especially to the Apparatus of Hearing." *Edinburgh Medical Journal* 22 (1877): 728–741.

Catlin, George. *Shut Your Mouth and Save Your Life*. 5th ed. London: Trübner & Co., 1873.

Challis, Debbie. *The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Crapanzano, Vincent. "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus, 51–76. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Datta, Nilak. "The Museum as West and West as Museum: The Micro-Politics of Museum Display in George Catlin's Vanishing American Indians." *Western American Literature* 53, no. 3 (2018): 311–338.

Fee, Marjorie. "Indigenous Cosmopolitics and English Literacy in the Pacific Northwest." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 40, no. 5 (2019): 580–594.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol. 1 translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.

Harris, Marvin. *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2001.

Hoegaerts, Josephine. "Stammering, Stuttering and Stumbling: A Transnational History of the Pathologization of Dysfluency in Nineteenth Century Europe." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 129–146.

Hunt, James. *Stammering and Stuttering; Their Nature and Treatment*. 7th ed. Edited by H.R. Rivers. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1870.

Johnson, Wendell. "The Indians Have No Word for It." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 2, no. 2 (1944): 65–81.

Kingsley, Charles. "The Irrationale of Speech." *Fraser's Magazine* 60 (1859): 1–14.

Lemert, Edwin M. "Stuttering Among the North Pacific Coastal Indians." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 8, no. 4 (1952): 429–441.

Lovern, Lavonna L. "Indigenous Perspectives on Difference: A Case for Inclusion." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 11, no. 3 (2017): 303–320.

Martin, Daniel. "Speech: Dysfluent Temporalities in the Long Nineteenth Century." In *A Cultural History of Disability in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Joyce L. Huff and Martha Stoddard Holmes, 113–128. London: Bloomsbury, 2022.

Masters, Joshua J. "Reading the Book of Nature, Inscribing the Savage Mind: George Catlin and the Textualization of the American West." *American Studies* 46, no. 2 (2005): 63–89.

McCann, Andrew. "Romantic Self-Fashioning: John Thelwall and the Science of Elocution." *Studies in Romanticism* 40, no. 2 (2001): 215–232.

McCormac, Henry. *A Treatise on the Cause and Cure of Hesitation of Speech, Or Stammering*. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1828.

McGuire, Riley. "The Queen, the Assassin, the Stammerer." *Victorian Review* 46, no. 1 (2020): 6–9.

Monro, Henry [Bacc. Med. Oxon]. *On Stammering, and its Treatment*. London: John Churchill, 1850.

Moss, Madonna L. "George Catlin among the Nayas: Understanding the Practice of Labret Wearing on the Northwest Coast." *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 1 (1999): 31–65

Nestor, James. *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2020.

Oliver, Michael and Colin Barnes. *The New Politics of Disablement*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

"Our Book Review." *Vanity Fair* 3 (4 May 1861): 216.

Packman, Ann and Joseph S. Attanasio. *Theoretical Issues in Stuttering*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Plumptre, Charles. *King's College Lectures on Elocution*. 5th ed. London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner, & Co., 1895.

Pratt, Stephanie. "Objects, Performance and Ethnographic Spectacle: George Catlin in Europe." *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 272–285.

Sapir, Edward. *Abnormal Types of Speech in Nootka*. Ottawa: Canadian Government Print Bureau, 1915.

Shell, Marc. *Stutter*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Snidecor, John C. "Why the Indian Does Not Stutter." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 33, no. 4 (1947): 493–495.

Stewart, Joseph L. "The Problem of Stuttering in Certain North American Indian Societies." *The Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders* Suppl 6 (1960): 1–87.

St. Pierre, Joshua and Charis St. Pierre. "Governing the Voice: A Critical History of Speech-Language Pathology." *Foucault Studies* 24 (2018): 151–84.

Thelwall, John. *Illustrations of English Rhythmus*. London: McCreery, 1812.

Thompson, Judith. "Re-Sounding Romanticism: John Thelwall and the Science and Practice of Elocution." In *Spheres of Action: Speech and Performance in Romantic Culture*, edited by Alexander Dick and Angela Esterhammer, 21–45. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Wright, James. *A Treatise on the Causes and Cure of Stuttering, with Reference to Certain Modern Theories*. London: Whitaker & Co., 1835.

Zimmermann, Gerald N., et al. "The Indians Have Many Terms for It: Stuttering Among the Bannock-Shoshoni." *Journal of Speech & Hearing Research* 26, no. 2 (1983): 315–318.