

Preface

The enigmatic photograph on the cover of this book is the work of the Chinese photographer and engineer Jin Shisheng (1910–2000). Entitled “Self-Portrait in Darmstadt” and taken between 1939 and 1940, it’s one of a series of experimental self-portraits he made contemplating the role of the photographer and photography as “a visual technology.”¹

Here, two figures wear dark suits, white shirts, and roundish, dark-rimmed spectacles, but the man on the left holds up a camera half blocking his face. It’s aimed at a man foregrounded on the right, whose mouth is stretched wide open in a wordless shout, scream, or song. Wordless to us, because as viewers we cannot hear the voice in the image, only imagine it. The photograph calls to us to fill in the empty “O” of his mouth, the conjured presence of this exaggerated voice, all the more powerful because it is elusive and ungraspable.

The disorienting composition, augmented by a second camera lying slightly out of focus on the table, also demands that we come up with a scenario that explains the unusual setup and the identity of the figures. The man holding the camera must be Jin Shisheng himself, but then he had to have taken the photograph in a mirror. Jin’s oeuvre shows that he was fond of including multiple self-images and cameras in a single photograph, and at first glance the two figures do look deceptively similar. Upon closer scrutiny, however, the second man is clearly someone else. Who was he, and what were the two of them doing in Darmstadt then?

According to the photographer’s son, the man with his mouth open was a German friend of his father’s, who was mocking Hitler giving a speech.² This piece of information completely transforms our view of the photograph. The aggressive gesticulation, grimacing brow, and roaring mouth all fall into place now. The visuals suggest that photos or newsreels of Hitler would have



FIGURE 0.1. Jin Shisheng, “Self-Portrait in Darmstadt,” 1939–1940. Courtesy of Jin Hua.

furnished a model, but for the sound of the speech, the disembodied voice of der Führer inundating the radio waves—the ghost in the machine—was terrifyingly inescapable in Darmstadt in 1939–1940.

This photograph is a fitting entry point into *The Voice as Something More* because it resonates with many of the approaches to voice explored in this book. The photo compels us to reflect on the role of technology in mediating the voice and in framing it as an “object” available for study. Yet it also exposes the limitations of both technology and the objectification of voice. It suggests the extent to which all voices can be assumed, borrowed, or ventriloquized, and points to the paradoxical status of voice as something that hovers between embodiment and disembodiment, and thus raises the

uncertainty of determining to whom a voice belongs.³ The story behind the photo and its caption reinforces the need to situate specific voices within a specific historical time and place, yet the overall puzzle of capturing voice that this visual image so cunningly stages can't be solved solely by recourse to history, biography, politics, or technology. There's always something more to the voice—a remainder, a gap, a reverb, an echo. To get at these more phantasmatic dimensions requires additional modes of inquiry, including the psychoanalytic, the literary, the mythic, and the philosophical.

This photograph also appeared on the poster and program for a three-day international conference entitled “A Voice as Something More,” held at the University of Chicago in November 2015. Organized by the present editors, the conference served as a staging ground for the rethinking of voice studies that engendered this volume. Berthold Hoeckner's paper was committed elsewhere and regrettably does not appear here, but we thank him and panel chairs Jim Chandler, Jacob Smith, and Paola Iovene for contributing so much to the intellectual success and liveliness of the proceedings.

The conference in turn grew out of the Voice Project, a faculty research seminar initiated by an interdisciplinary group of faculty and sponsored by the University of Chicago's Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society between 2013 and 2016. In addition to the three principal investigators of the Voice Project—Martha Feldman (2013–2016), David Levin (2013–2014), and Judith Zeitlin (2014–2016)—the core participants included Seth Brodsky, Daniel Callahan, Tom Gunning, Sarah Nooter, Jessica Peritz, Marcelle Pierson, Steven Rings, and Neil Verma. For two years, we met several times per term, each of us taking turns curating one of these meetings. Jim Chandler, Nicholas Harkness, and Jacob Smith also presented to the group, while Nina Sun Eidsheim and James Q. Davies gave presentations at a one-day Voice Project symposium held in spring 2014. Naturally, contributors to the present volume represent a broader range of institutions and fields.

Our book is greatly enriched by contributions from the French film scholar and composer Michel Chion and the Slovenian philosopher Mladen Dolar. Both reprise their respective roles at the 2015 conference, Chion as keynote speaker and Dolar as conference respondent. Zakir Paul's English translation, initially commissioned for use at the conference, preserves the spoken quality of Chion's lecture, with all its digressions and wit.

By happy coincidence, Dolar turned out to be teaching at the University of Chicago during the fall of 2013 when the Voice Project began meeting in earnest, and he joined our group. His presence affected the kinds of questions we were asking from the inception, and while the group moved on in other

directions after his departure, we periodically returned to these questions with fresh insights. As should be clear, the title of this volume is an affectionate riposte to Dolar's field-shaping book *A Voice and Nothing More*. His latest reflections on the chapters published here appear in the form of an afterword, which offers a major commentary on his highly influential book, ten years and more after its publication, while providing a gracious and fitting conclusion to the Voice Project and this book.

A project of this duration and magnitude inevitably runs up a sizeable debt to many institutions and individuals. We gratefully acknowledge the indispensable support of the Neubauer Collegium, which sponsored not only the Voice Project but also the 2014 symposium and 2015 conference. We also thank the Franke Institute for the Humanities and the Department of Music for providing substantial additional funding for the conference. In recognition of the interdisciplinary value of voice studies, an impressive number of other entities on campus contributed further support or in-kind help: the departments of Cinema and Media Studies, Classics, Germanic Studies, and East Asian Languages and Civilizations; the Center for East Asian Studies; the Center for Theater and Performance Studies; the Film Studies Center; and the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts.

We would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the hard work and important contributions of several other key individuals: first and foremost, the Voice Project's two graduate research interns, Marcelle Pierson (2013–2014) and Jessica Peritz (2014–2015), as well as Anne Rebull and Yiren Zheng, the graduate student coordinators for the conference, and Zhuqing (Lester) Hu, who served as rapporteur.⁴ At the Neubauer, successive faculty directors David Nirenberg and Jonathan Lear, along with their then-staff Jamie Bender, Madeline McKiddy, and Matt Hess, deserve particular thanks.

We're grateful to Seth Brodsky for a canny reading of parts of the introduction to the book. For dropping everything at the last minute to help whip the manuscript into shape for submission, we wholeheartedly thank Shawn Marie Keener. To Marta Tonegutti, our editor at the University of Chicago Press, for her acumen and vision in shepherding this project from beginning to end, we express our deepest gratitude. Editorial director Alan Thomas saw the book through a crucial stage in its evolution. Editorial associates Susanah Engstrom and Tristan Bates, marketing director Levi Stahl, our designer Natalie Sowa, our copyeditor Marianne Tatom, and our production editor Tamarah Ghattas all deserve thanks for their keenly intelligent contributions and enthusiastic support, along with others at the press. Finally, we thank Dean

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Notes

1. Wu Hung, *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 126. For this photograph, see *Zhongguo sheying: ershiji yilai* [Chinese photography: Twentieth century and beyond], ed. Rongrong (Beijing: Three Shadows Studio, 2015), 152.
2. Private communication between Judith Zeitlin, Wu Hung, and Jin Hua, November 2015.
3. It's even possible to speculate that although no radio appears in the photo, Jin's friend was lip-synching Hitler's voice as it was being broadcast.
4. For his review of the conference, see Zhuqing (Lester) Hu, "A Voice as Something More: An International Conference," *Opera Quarterly* 32, nos. 2–3 (2016): 233–37.

