



# HOW DOES THE VOICE TRAVEL?



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## How Does the Voice Travel?

*Voice* is not merely a theme; it is a structural property. It is shaped, distorted, permitted, revoked. It doesn't travel freely; it moves through systems—legal, academic, artistic, linguistic—that decide what counts as speech, as worthy of visibility, what counts as a *person*.

I speak from a specific tension: I am Taiwanese born and was trained throughout my life in Mandarin, Japanese, and English—languages shaped by different imperial histories. But my later education, artistic formation, and literary influences have all been shaped by English, which now functions as the dominant global language of empire. Though it is not my native language, it has become the structural channel through which I work, exhibit, publish, and articulate. My voice exists in tension between the languages that formed me and the one that legitimises me.

This voice was shaped by institutions not built for non-native speakers, and rarely for native ones. These are structures built around a language of

authority that few are born into. My formation as an artist and writer has been a negotiation of structural proximity to empire, gaining visibility through fluency in its codes.

This piece begins from that contradiction. It investigates how voice moves—not only across geographic or linguistic borders but through structures of legitimisation that extract meaning while denying rootedness. This is not simply a reflection on an individual voice; it is an interrogation of scaffolding. Every moment in which voice becomes safe and legible—through migration, exhibition, or publication—risks distortion.

Working through a personal lexicon of materials and myths, of displacement and collapse—these are not just motifs, but exercises in demystification, in offering, in holding what resists translation. What survives the journey? What was spoken (and what was silenced) in order for something else to be understood? What speaks without needing to be named? What passes through me that never belonged to me? What refuses to be translated?





### Instruction for Navigating the Sections:

This is a map. Each section is composed of questions on layered fragments, titles, lexicon drift, coded language, geographic, and literary references. *Voice* moves through form, through systems, through fracture. Ask: Where does *voice* originate? What carries it? What distorts it? What silences it? These questions are not only thematic, they are structural joints. Each can become a section, a repeated device, a modular part of mapping. You are invited to read non-linearly. Each section asks how *voice* travels through displacement, through material, through mythological application, through structural power.

### THE SECTIONS:

#### A. Migration and Language

- ‘Ethical migration’: Who is allowed to move, and under what conditions? Who is forced to move, and by what coercive systems—war, poverty, climate, policy? What makes a migration ‘ethical,’ and from whose perspective? What voice is carried in movement, and what is lost in translation—linguistically, culturally, politically? When the self moves, do all its voices move with it, or do some remain rooted elsewhere, fragmented, untranslated?
- Education as an inheritance of empire; language as the architecture through which power replicates itself: Who teaches, in whose language, and toward what ideal? How does education become a vehicle for assimilation, obedience, or extraction? How do the educated become instruments of translation?
- *Voice* traveling not just across space, but through systems of translation, distortion, and extraction: pedagogical, bureaucratic, aesthetic, systems that shape what is preserved, misheard, or never registered at all.





## B. Material Lexicon Drift / Public Without Housing

- Exhibitions and works are not just outputs—they are *residues of voice* placed in the public without being canonized. Material functions as a linguistic and structural carrier: burnt birch, red oak, cypress, neem, cherry wood, linen, copper, brass—each holds structural, historical, and symbolic weight.
- Titles as published beings yet unhoused—named, visible, and circulating, yet lacking institutional shelter or canonization. A title might enter the public sphere without a publishing house, archive, or institutional seal. What does it mean for a work to be ‘published’ when visibility is no longer tethered to protection? Who decides what is held, preserved, or erased? What happens to a word when it is shown but not housed? Is the voice amplified or exposed?
- Reflect on the colonial nature of naming: taxonomy, zoology, the studied object made legible to the empire. What vocabulary reappears? What migrates, and where to? What disappears? This is not only iconography—it is *voice-leakage* through materials and geography.

## C. Somatic and Structural Displacement

- ‘How do I separate mind and body?’ This is not rhetorical. Dissociation emerges as a response to trauma—sometimes individual, often historical or collective. The fragmentation of self through mental, physical, emotional means is not abstract, but a condition that is lived and carried, shaped by colonial residues, epigenetic memory, and cultural amnesia.
- Myth in this context is not only a structural metaphor, but a private system—a machine for abstraction and survival. Examples of recurring mythological motifs: *Lethe* (forgetting), *Prometheus* (theft of fire), *The Transported Man* (sacrifice of self to illusion). These are structures of internal logic, an architecture for orientation and fracture. They function as encoded systems of meaning.
- Who is ‘you,’ ‘he,’ ‘I’ in the poem? Shifting pronouns reveal the displacement of speaker and listener, unsettle fixed positions, and trace fractures in address, perception, and intimacy.





#### D. Structural Violence as Background Environment

- *Voice* moves through conditions it did not choose. It passes through policy, disaster, border, and decree. It is shaped by what is withheld, by who is refused, by the architectures of fear.
- There are structures built to mute, to vanish, to render unspeakable. Some bodies are heard only in translation, others only in the aftermath. Bureaucracies absorb them, campaigns narrate them, economies benefit from their silence.
- Structural violence operates quietly and persistently. It is not always named, but it shapes the field of what can be spoken, where, and by whom. In this context, to ask how voice travels is to ask what survives transmission. *Voice* emerges not despite this structure, but through it, and what structure, if any, holds it in return?

#### Title / Coda:

Titles and artworks are not only illustrations of ideas; they are thresholds. Each opens to a lexicon, a coded vocabulary embedded in material, metaphor, and geopolitical, spatial, temporal, and relational scaffolding. Each entry from the template may be housed in one of these sections, chosen for its structural or thematic resonance —across topic, tone, urgency, or historical inflection. This is a container of a voice mapped across architecture. The reader is invited to follow each question, each word, each reference, and iconography into further disassembly. This is one of the ways in which the voice travels: through refusal, distortion, fracture, and morphology.





## Material:

**Red oak:** North America. The red oak distinguishes itself with specific symbolic attributes derived from its unique botanical features. Its most striking characteristic is the vibrant autumn foliage, which transforms into brilliant shades of red, russet, and orange. This fiery display symbolizes passion, transformation, and the beauty found in cycles of change. Rooted in the temperate forests of North America, it also stands as a witness to ongoing entanglements between land, resource extraction, and colonial expansion.

**Cherry:** A Real Boy. Cherry wood is significant in the story of *Pinocchio* as it is associated with the character Master Cherry, who discovers the magical piece of wood that becomes *Pinocchio*. The name 'Cherry' symbolizes the connection between the wood and the themes of creation and transformation in the tale.

**Birch:** New Beginnings. For many Native American cultures, the birch tree is a symbol of purification and renewal. Its bark was used for canoes,

containers, and shelter, underscoring its practical and spiritual significance. The tree's presence in seasonal ceremonies emphasized physical and spiritual cleansing, while its early spring leaves marked hope and survival.

**Linen:** Gauze. A thin, translucent fabric with a loose open weave. In technical terms, 'gauze' is a weave structure where weft yarns are crossed in pairs before and after each warp yarn. The term is believed to derive from Gaza, historically a center of textile production. Gauze has long been used in both clothing and medical dressing.

**Copper:** Translation Tool. Copper has been central to printmaking since the 15th century, especially in intaglio techniques like engraving and etching. Its historical use dates to 9000 BCE, making it one of the earliest metals used by humans. Today, it is integral to the energy transition, electric vehicles, and data infrastructure. Its growing demand mirrors a shift in global material politics and technological dependence.





**Brass:** Weapon / A Mystery Word. Brass, an alloy of copper and zinc, emerged by the 9th century BCE. Its etymology remains uncertain—possibly linked to French *brasser* ('to brew') or Old Swedish *brasa* ('fire'). Over centuries, brass has symbolized hardness, defiance, and impudence. By the 20th century, it also became slang for military or government officials, tied to insignia and status.

**Aluminium:** Salt of New Earth. Rare in native form, aluminium was unknown to most ancient societies until the 19th century. Its early compound, alum, was used in dyeing practices as early as the 5th century BCE. Aluminium gained industrial prominence only after the development of large-scale extraction methods in the late 1800s. It became emblematic of modernity and domination of the skies: Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite, was encased in aluminium, marking the start of the Cold War space race. Since then, aluminium has underpinned aerospace, infrastructural expansion, and global extractive economies—its lightness carried both signal and conquest.

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A s h e t h i n k s a n d m o v e s p a s t s a p l i n g s ,  
h e b e c o m e s s o m e t h i n g d i f f e r e n t ,  
u n a b l e t o f o r m w o r d s a r o u n d m e m o r i e s  
o r t h e p e o p l e h e l o v e d .

H e r e i s a s t a s h o f p r o m i s e ,  
t h e p o w e r o f e x p r e s s i o n ,  
o r p o w e r a s e x p r e s s e d ,  
l i k e R e d w o o d s , l i k e l i v e d e x p e r i e n c e ,  
l i k e a t r e e n e e d s n o w i t n e s s , l i k e t h e d y i n g s e a .

N o t b e i n g r e a d y ,  
m e a n i n g m o v e m e n t h u r t s ,  
h a s t o d o w i t h p r e s e n c e , c o n s u m e d b y f l a m e s .

O f a l l t h i n g s , h e w o n d e r s a b o u t t h e t r i v i a l ,  
t h e o t h e r n e s s o f o t h e r s ,

a s i n h o w t o b e a p e r s o n ,  
h o w t o w i t h h o l d y o u r a p o l o g y a t t h e c r o s s i n g ,  
a s i n c r u e l t y a s u n i v e r s a l ,  
a s a p p l e p i e ,  
a s A m e r i c a ,  
p r o u d t o s e r v e t o d i e .

o f a l l t h i n g s ,  
m a t t e r s o f h e a r t a n d m i n d .

Red Oak, Cherry, Copper, Brass, Aluminium





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*When it comes to memory,  
About his place in the world.*

*The rules of the game  
have held for decades now:  
gravity, electricity.*

*He wishes he had known that  
traveling lived inside  
so many conditionals.*

*Like politics and poetry.  
Like love and stimulus.  
Like taut and ready.*

*That afternoon at the red sunset,  
  
when he said 'ready,'  
what he meant was 'willing.'*

Red Oak, Cherry

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*In the darkness of the cave,  
they lit fire  
to cook tender roots—*

*the blind eyes in the dark cave  
filled with salt tears.*

*The blind eyes of  
the mother and the father  
filled with salt tears.*

*In the darkness of the dark cave,  
the blind eye of  
the bison  
filled with salt tears.*

Linen





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*'Before the law stands a doorkeeper,'his mother makes sure he firmly memorizes this— the mechanism of existence, the linguistic life of a single person. Each night, he marches on a long journey outside the language so that the garden from the history house remains alive.*

Birch

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*Suddenly, we were going.  
Above him were drapes of burning vines  
and branches of torched pines.*

*They lit up the sky  
and rained incessantly.*

*Throughout the long night,  
rain, rain, rain, rain, rain,  
without letting up for an instant.*

*The hard rain fell through the night,  
rain, rain, rain, rain, rain,  
the rain falls and falls,  
more rain and then  
more rain and then  
more rain.*

Birch





