FEELING THE GAPS:
ECHO AS METAPHOR OF VOICE-EAR-WORLD PERSPECTIVES

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Echo lives between parody and melancholy; it acts as a remainder of otherworldly dimensions, and as a reminder of the limits of human perception, of the mystical element: 'the sense of cosmos as a limited whole' (Wittgenstein 1978: 130). Echo resembles a watery wavy mirror that transforms its sounding idols by revealing in them grains of eternity. It resides in the gaps of our dualistic mentality, in the slippery grounds of language; it resounds within the self while its vocal quality also 'feels' the gaps with a repairing, consolatory sense.

This article is a dérive[1] of thoughts, experiences and information in which I examine echo as acoustic phenomenon in nature, as a mythical figure linked to numerous stories and as a metaphor. I organise this dérive on three levels, each in relation to the notion of distance: 1. The macro-level of the natural landscapes, where echo as an acoustic phenomenon alludes to the 'poetics of nature'. 2. Paraphrasing John Cage's famous 'unechoic chamber' (in Mossman dir. 1973), the meso-level addresses the head space which is conceptualised as an 'echoic chamber' that sustains the distance between the ear and the mouth (vocal utterance) and redirects intersubjective experience by 'feeling' the multi-semiotics of sound. 3. The micro-level of distance, connected to the 'relational ontology' (Born 2012) between human-machine interaction, is grounded in my experience in the role of the nymph Echo in the digital opera 'Echo and Narcissus' by the group MedeaElectronique (Onassis Foundation 2018) after the Ovidian version of the myth.[2] These levels of echo's conceptualisation create a cycle of interchangeability between the roles of the voice and the ear, underpinned by the negotiation between technology and myth.
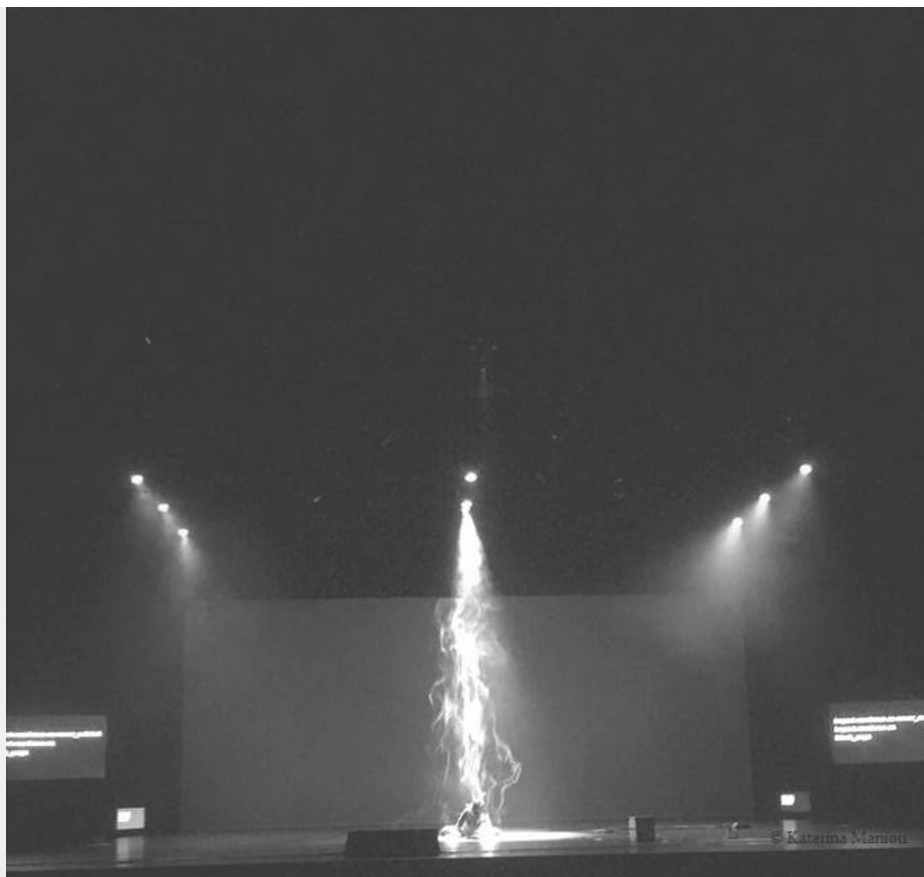
Figure 1. Last scene: Echo's death

1. Macro-level of distance: Echoic poetics

Echo could be theorised as a pre-technological schizophonia: 'the split between the original sound and its electroacoustical transmission' (Schafer 1977: 90), as well as a 'proto-anthropomorphic' vocality whose 'act of speaking is not speaking but rather an imitation of the sound of the human voice' (Dante in Kane 2015: 96). Here, echo is bonded with what I am calling the 'poetics of nature'. It imposes a vocal quality on the sounds it reflects and provides interchangeable impressions between subject and object. By displacing the vocal sound from its original source, by neutralising the inherent multi-semiotics of vocality and by liberating sound from the 'meaning saddle of the words' (Sun 2019: 18), echo produces a meaning-unmaking as well as an identity-unmaking effect, which bears and 'objectifies' the subject. Echo renders 'the' voice into 'a' voice; it decentralises the self and questions human perception. At the same time, echo lends vocal attributes to the sound of objects, revealing 'the voice of things' creating between zoetic and soulless beings an interplay that alludes to the animistic roots of cosmic perception. This different 'voice-over effect' causes objectification of the subject and subjectifies the objects, alluding to a liminal space in which each given truth becomes refutable.

Echo hangs as a sounding mirror of between beings and the world, momentarily revealing the universal chronology beyond self-temporality. According to Agamben: 'a mirror is the topos in which we discover that we have an idol and at the same time that this idol can be detached from us, that our image does not belong to us…the idol has no individual topos but it takes place within a subject. The being of the idol is a perpetual birth' (Agamben 2005: 92). Echo is revealed both as

idol and a mirror; as a sound-object, a piece of mirror or of time, and at the same time as an ethereal lake on which sounds are by chance reflected. Echo seems to reside in the culturally conceived space of silence, partially revealing its own face, through the voice of the other. If, according to a Cagean logic, music spatialises silence, echo 'facialises' space. Through a distant view, self and echo seem to reverberate like thoughts in the skull of the world, challenging the unanswered question, 'who is the real one?', and bringing forth issues of materiality and dreams (of 'mate-reality'). At the same time, the echoic temporality awakens inner hidden temporalities by reflecting 'the non-linear time of psyche which resides between conscious and the unconscious' (Zabriskie 2000: 435).

Echo's mystical ambiguity creates narrative associations. Echo could stand as a sonic remnant of the 'harmonia mudi', as a futural hologram, or even as an allusion to the 'mirrorpeople' story. According to Borges, in Chinese mythology people and mirrorpeople lived in harmony, passing freely through mirrors until the Yellow emperor trapped the mirrorpeople behind a glassy surface. Condemned to mimic the shape and gestures of people, these creatures are expected to one day smash the mirrors, become autonomous and take revenge (Borges 2021: 219). This eschatological story not only reflects unmanageable worldly dimensions but also the awareness of a 'hubris'; that millions of voices have been marginalised from official history.

I value the impenetrable communicational membrane of the mirror and echo's distant dreamy delay, to theorise it as a voice that tries to become audible through means of existing language by opening its frames to include the extrapolated voices and speak the unspeakable. As 'echo' is a female noun in Greek language, as well as a female creature—a nymph—in literature and mythology, I have always attributed a feminine sound quality to the echoic phenomena. Through this subjective view, the feminine overtones of echo act as sonic remnants of a female vocality marginalised from language, the social nexus, from grand narratives and historical becoming. As, in my view, even the darkest poly-echoic manifestation retains a feminine reverb, it additionally alludes to matriarchal times, encapsulates suffocated gender aspects and reinforces the interplay of temporalities by inviting wild pre-historical paths. Echo alludes to the voice of the 'real witness': 'the one who cannot confess' (Agamben 2000: 180), yet whose testimony not only eludes history but frequently exceeds the human cognitive and expressive limits. Finally, through its distorting nature, echo opens the noematic fabric of language to set reminders about an ungraspable element: 'a supplementary element that remains inaccessible to all categorisations and linguistic determinations, one that linguistics cannot grasp' (Lazzarato 2009: 1). If, according to Bloom, 'poets write to collect what remains' (Bloom 1989: 60), the echoic phenomenon acts both as a sediment that the artist listens to stress an ultimate meaning and as a cosmic poet who collects sonic remainders in a constant endeavour to utter an inaudible song.

Linked to a poetic aura that exceeds human perceptional and linguistic horizons, echoes can be also associated with creative thought, functioning as whispers of otherworldly dimensions. The scientific and philosophical heaviness of music, as attunement to ecumenical harmony, self harmony and song harmony, is older than Platonic philosophy (Goer 2005: 232-33). Ranging from metaphysics to eastern philosophy and spiritualism, the compositional praxis for many composers is equalised to listening and transcribing the echoes of sonic heterotopias. Schoenberg's 'basic shape' (Grundgestalt), as an instantly grasped work-schema along with his 'idea' concept, or Schumann's unintended musical equilibriums constitute such examples. For Schoenberg: 'ideas may invade the mind as unprovoked and perhaps even undesired…an idea never perishes' (Schoenberg 1984: 122). Schumann notes, 'it is most extraordinary how I write everything in canons, only detecting the imitation afterwards' (Epstein 1980: 20). The conceptualisation of compositional schemas as instant representations that embed unintentional clarity and equilibriums from non-perishable space-times becomes systematised by many twentieth century

composers. Not far from hauntology[3], this artistic ontology flirts with the 'unknown', transferred by echoes that reflect, remind and inspire artworks. Alfred Schnittke visualises the 'world of shadow-sounds' (Schattenwelt), a transcendental sphere of co-existing sonorities extending from past to future, which imposes to him the task of attentive listening: 'I am not the result, I am the medium' (Borchardt 2002: 31). Giacinto Scelsi correlates his recorded improvisations with supernatural voices and attunes his musical thought to cosmic forces: 'sound exists in itself and furthermore it possesses a third dimension…Sound can be thought of as a cosmic force which is the origin of everything' (Molia 1984: 269).

As a quasi-metaphysical phenomenality, echo perplexes the fundamental call-response instrumentality (Titon 2021: 3) by a sense of 'falling'. Recalling my engagement with a downward glissando in my role as Echo during the performance 'Echo and Narcissus' by MedeaElectronique, I assume that I instinctively illustrated my vision of Echo as a falling figure. A fall, like a call, situates Echo between two primordial cries of birth and of lament, both alluding to intermediate, passing processes inseparably connected with the life cycle. As such, Echo makes audible the constrained temporal distance of human life and acts as melancholic reminder of 'the loss of the divine community' (Griffiths 2010: 272). Echo also 'falls' in love with Narcissus.

Figure 2. First Act. Echo observes Narcissus. /Marios Sarantidis, Narcissus. Katerina Maniou, Echo

Finally, I grasp a specific algorithmic manipulation that reversed, in real-time, my word's letters during the first praxis of the mentioned work, to make a link between the pronunciations of echo in Greek and the word 'no'. In Greek, echo sounds as 'ihó' which equates to the reversed sound for the

Greek 'no' (ohi, όχι). Considering the fact that even when having memorised whole phrases in reverse no-one could make sense of my sayings, I conceptualise the mythical Echo, along with the 'echoic species', as a reversed opposition, dwelling in between affirmation and negation. This approach epitomises my imaginary feeling of it; residing in the gaps between 'yes and no', Echo brings to consideration the ungraspable, it performs a missing materiality and an intermediate 'falling' sense of voice, represented by an 'intermediate creature': a nymph.

2. Meso-level: Echoic procedural spaces

In Italian operatic technique, the word 'gyro' (round) implies the circular movement realised in the head resonance between the ear—the reception of intonation—and the mouth—the emission of the tone—through the unique voice. As voice fills the cavities of the head, echo 'feels the gaps' by the visual, affective and semantic qualities of sound. Metaphorically, the head space becomes an 'echoic chamber': an intermediate field where the vast complexity of inner-outer interlocking stimuli amalgamates to produce a monophonic ephemeral enunciation in the restless circular interplay of experience. In this version of distance, echo is located in the absence of clear-cut boundaries between bodily permeability, psychic transfer, singular plural notions[4] thereby enhancing 'communication between parts of the self' (Schulz 2020: 12). Echo is thus conceived as a means towards the integration of multi-leveled external and internal information which translates it into worldly manageable qualities and meaningful structures, in a constant feedback between 'motion and emotion' (Thrift in Souza 2020: 10) As such, echo is related to affect: 'it is always affect that has the ability to 'transversalise' this heterogeneity of elements, to give them colour, a tone that makes them converge, in time, towards the singularity of the utterance' (Lazaratto 2009: 8). Simultaneously, by the time echo fills distances, it establishes new ones by the specificality and the borders of the ubiquitous voice and logos.

Today, the polysemy and polyphony of sound, the words and the voice are extensively theorised through different disciplines. The recent affective turn is partially engaged with grasping immaterial liminal spaces between self(ves), others and world(s). 'Third' immaterial spaces composed by exchanged human experience, extend from subjective and intersubjective to collective and cosmic escalations and have been variously defined as ranging from Bakhtinian dialogism and his 'triadic nature of the utterance' in linguistics (Bakhtin 2014: 122-23) and 'relational unconscious' in psychology (Schulz 2020: 22), to aspects of the 'sense of place' in geography (Seddon 1972), 'third place' in urban sociology (Oldenburg 2000) up to the universal level of Whitehead's process philosophy (1927-8). The ear-voice-world circulation could stand as the elementary stage for such concepts, which implies an urge towards the 'premonitory experience of wholeness' which Jung associates with myth structuring (Zabriskie 2000: 444).

I link the relation between ear-voice-world by theorising 'ear' through three prisms: 1. 'Ear as entrance', acting like the mirror or a watery surface. 2. 'Ear as hearing sense' which bears world-structuring reflexes; the symbolics of sound mobilise imaginative and synesthetic processes, producing spatiality out of sonority and vice versa: 'sound is inherently spatial because the process of audition attaches a spatial "narrative" to each sound' (Eisenberg 2021: 1). To take a step forward, the practice of 'listening to the master's lecture behind a curtain' (Kane 2007: 17), engaged in the Pythagorean 'akousmatikoi', can be seen as an early affirmation of the world-structuring attributes of the hearing sense. For Gadamer, 'hearing has a kind of priority since it forms the basis of the hermeneutic phenomenon; hearing points to the whole, while other sense experience is specific' (Bø-Rygg 2015: 141). If hearing instantly structures worldly-like spaces and awakens linear narrative along with synthetic temporalities, then the previous reinforce the motto 'the voice is for the ear' (Derrida in Cavarrero 2005: 178). It is through this sense that voice

acquires its whole 'metaphysical' potential and intrigue new vocal emanation out of this process ('an answer'). 3. 'Ear as voice'. When not externalised, voice and ear are two sides of the coin. The 'voice of thought, totally sonorous by itself' (Magnat 2021: 84) maintains vocal flexibility along with the speculative sense of the ear. The Socratean 'voice of conscience' (Bø-Rygg 2015: 143) functions as an internal spirit that listens to thinking in a constant process of self-ethics modulation. More simply, in 'inner sociality' (Bakhtin 2014: 207) voices are interactive faces, with mouths and ears. As 'listening is by itself sonorous' (Nancy 2007: 5), echo in the head space becomes at once ear and voice, mirror and idol; it is a 'vibrating ear' living on the edge of vocality.

For Nietzsche, the ear is like 'a tiny envious face' (Derrida 1986: 3). It is the face of the speaker, of the receiver and its own face. Recalling the scene depicting a spiral corridor of mirrors from Cocteau's film 'Orpheus', one may assume that, according to the above triptych, the ear functions at once as the mirror, as the corridor—the procedural deepening—and as a voice composed by the 'echoes' in the corridor. The ear is like an ancient mask that filters voices to become a compositional voice in its own right. Paradoxically, what Echo as nymph misses is the intermediate 'third space' of processing external stimuli and formatting internalized pluralism into a singularised voice. Through mimicking repetition, the mythical Echo stands as the smallest distance of the ear-voice-world cycle. At the same time, she outlines the largest distance between ear, voice and self.

As bodily, internal and intersubjective 'third spheres' are permeable by the attributes of sound and unsound, Echo stands also as a useful metaphor for the valorisation of the unsound by the contemporary politics of frequency, which colonise and haunt the individual. Sound politics, along with such concepts as surveillance, cognitive and A/I-Driven capitalism, grasp the contribution of the sonic, ultrasonic, and vibrational sound qualities in redirecting, predicting, and homogenising human experience. 'The future is pre-emitted and colonised in advance' (Shaviro 2019: 170) by 'echoic implanted memories which create acoustic anomalies and impose a sense of past futurity' (Goodman 2010: 32). Internalised echoes constitute a parallel shadowy stream that secretly expands and affects humans.

Visualised as an atemporal stasis revealed by the passing sound fragments of the Other, echo is a mirror waiting to reflect, an ear

Figure 3. Act Two: Echo in the woodspace (surveilling and confusing Narcissus)

waiting to absorb or a metaphysical consciousness waiting to vibrate. As a sound object or idol, echo symbolises a soul searching for habitat, alluding to Platonic philosophy.

As a voice, echo follows the said. As an ear she is a preexisting dimension. Ear and voice become deactivated through a series of paradoxes to give hegemony to another sense; predominantly, echo is a seeing-voice.

The 'feel of surveillance' (Nancy 2007: 10) has been associated with the echoic—semiotic—attributes of sound itself and with hauntology: 'the opening through site and having visions and being seen by ghosts' (Galacher 2015: 481). In the second act of the work 'Echo and Narcissus', Echo appears as a hegemonic creature, totally aggregated with nature, which notices, pursues and intrigues her object of love. Her phenomenally disembodied sounds inflame Narcissus' insecurity. Her 'singing surveillance' evokes to him feelings of estrangement and converts the forest environment of this scene into a metaphysical field. Remaining hidden, Echo becomes an eye that sings.

'Among twenty snowy mountains
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird'
$$\text{(Stevens 2007: 24)}$$

3. Micro-level: The In(the)ear world

Four years ago, I interpreted the role of Echo in the digital opera 'Echo and Narcissus' produced by MedeaElectronique. The team, aligned with a collective spirit based on interchangeable duties, engaged with improvisational approaches so as to valorise the authentic and unique attributes of the two performers, searching beyond operatic conventions. Our corporeal imagination, prosody and rhythms, as well as our notions about the two mythical personages, formed the primary material on which the musico-kinetic features of the roles were built and gradually stabilised. This process enhanced the incarnation of many facets deriving from my sense of echo; as a phenomenon, a creature and a metaphor, however, I would be more sincere if I said my sense of echo as a word. Reversely, it enhanced echo's theorisation, contextual expansion and sharing.

In MedeaElectronique's conceptualisation, Echo has the vocal flexibility of a bird, the wildness of a natural entity and the restless kinesis of the eye. In contrast to the damned Ovidian Echo, this version incarnates a child-like monstrous and playful creature which is an integral part of nature's 'we-ness'. She is characterised by vocal omnipotence, free to reflect the whole realm of sound. Her communicational impotence is still felt as endless potential. Seeing sense is the dichotomy and the fall: the moment Echo *sees* Narcissus she "*falls*" (in love?). She falls from her omnipotence to inaudibility, from desire to reality, from 'pre-individual we' to self, from vibrating womb-like wholeness to a dualistic world. According to Laplache: 'where there is id there will be always and already another' (Schulz 2020: 31). This Echo is psychologically revealing. As Echo lends its name to the state of 'echoism' linked to 'infant childhood's linguistic development which is based on repetition of what is heard' (Davis 2005: 4), she speaks without communicating, exiled from self-formation.

The performance followed the sequence of the Ovidian master text, : the narration of the protagonists' stories,: meeting point to Narcissus' death to Echo's death. During their unfolding, Echo is metamorphosed from a 'Shakespearean Puck' to a woman and eventually, to a maenad. Instead of the gradual disembodiment that portrays the Ovidian Echo, this Echo follows a course of constant grounding towards an embodied—if not 'carnivorous'—voice. The evolution of the role

materialised along with the special voice effects produced by interactive electronics, and the engagement with different registers and extended voice techniques. I started with an insect-like head-voice and passed to a 'female' voice, by using a mixed-chest voice, to end up in a pluralistic earthly vocality.

Figure 4. Last act: Echo's death ; lament

I focus here on the last scene which deals with Echo's death. We meet Echo at Styx, the poisonous lake that separates the upper from the underworld. Her repetitive nature obliges her to reflect on the curses the other nymphs place upon Narcissus and her lament is, consequently, overlapped by their hostility. From this, an interesting noematic constellation emerges. In parallel to Narcissus' sinking in the watery-mirror, Echo is sunk in a fragmentary sounding mirror of vocal alterities. I feel that, by passing through this ear-like metamorphotic space, Echo attains real self-identity embedded in the collective unconscious. Enhanced by the interactive mediation, I felt as if I was within a cauldron of voices from which the 'mythological voice' (Petman 2011: 143) emerged: ululation, dirge, ironically accentuated prosody, siren effects, microtonal lullaby-like whispers or heavy-voice cries along with traces of classically trained voice, indicated a soma of ancient vocality.

By rendering the lament into a schizoid delirium expressed through extended vocality and gestural chasms, this Echo alludes to Greek lament tradition. In funeral rituals the female voice becomes visible. Bursting into extended fragmentary vocalisations beyond the gendered agreeable voice, this 'paralirimatic' liberation has been considered dangerous, able to 'raise revolution', since early antiquity and was constantly faced with constricting laws (Alexiou 2008: 64). The curses of the others become symbols of internalised, socio-politically restricted 'banned voices' of self. Beyond being (a partially constrained) 'singular plural', here Echo is also a 'voice that

becomes the alterity of the said' (Lacan in Nancy 2007: 28) and corresponds to issues of self-identity, alterity and metaphysics of presence.

Figure 5. Echo's metamorphosis in the Styx underworld waters.

Considering the minimalistic aesthetics and the allusive a/v scenery produced by interactive electronics, the term 'aural architecture' seems an ideal fit for this opera. 'Musical space became increasingly fluid, flexible, abstract and imaginary. Electronic music is an application of aural architecture without assuming physical space' (Blesser 2007: 179). The collective logic of the group made everyone conscious of their role as an 'aural architect', creating a positive feeling of co-creation. My responsibility as Echo was to paraphrase, improvise and repetitively distort my symprotagonist's prosody, thus producing an 'oral architecture' out of both oralities which had the synthetic qualities of music. This oral architecture was infused into the aural one, contributing to the mythic all-inclusive experience. The performers' orality was amalgamated by an echoic procedural space that also embedded them.

Enhanced through scenic immateriality, live coding and real time narration, the scene was transformed into a living abstract entity, a Jungian 'living symbol'; 'the raw material shaped by thesis and antithesis, in the shaping of which the opposites are united, is the living symbol' (Aversa 2004: 562) that provided a ramification of associations. I draw analogies between myth as 'living symbol' and the 'live coding' used. Both protagonists are deprived of intersubjective entanglement which is completed by the mythic narration that renders them into a transcendental entity—a symbol. By reading subtitles in real-time, both heroes were turned into echoic puppets of 'the voice of the author' (Barthes 1977) and revitalised the ancient concept of fate, facilitated by the mythical context itself. The space that encompassed them was transformed into a story unfolding in actual time and an autonomous organism. Using the Bakhtinian concept of the 'third presenter' according to which 'each dialogue seems to take place in front of the responding understanding of an invisible presented third person, who is above all the partners' (Bakhtin 2014: 181), Echo and Narcissus appeared as residents of a hyperconsciousness, which may allude to inner

consciousness, natural environment, or a cosmic thought. This technologically mediated ontology stretched from myth to tragedy, as both figures seemed victimised in a realm of referrals that failed their limited perceptual grasp.
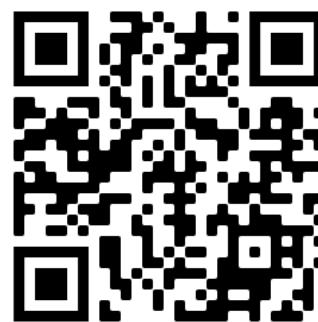

Figure 6. Act One: Echo and Narcissus (surrounded by the real-time dialogues projected on the monitor screens).

Having been theorised as light and shadow, as well as temporal (Echo) and spatial (Narcissus) aspects within the self, both heroes are attached to different senses. They also seem imprisoned in different lapses of time, chasing one another as parts of the same phenomenon, like lightning (Narcissus/Image) and thunder (Echo/Sound) that never concur. The in-ear feeling reinforced the above by regenerating a sense of residing in 'isolated sonorous bubbles' (Bull 2004: 2), which highlighted our associational identity, mis-formation, sensual isolation and temporal displacement, an impression which was transmitted to the audience by the different algorithmic manipulation of each protagonist's vocality. The in-ear feeling created a series of peculiarities situated between alienation and proximity. It composed a common space for collaboration for the two performers, inaudible to others, but at the same time alienating us, functioning as a reflecting ethereal medium. My personal sense of voice was externally imposed and at once contextualised in a real-time multi-sonic processing. 'My voice' was perceived by me as 'a voice' absorbed into the 'sonorous bubble'. Simultaneously, the chronological trajectory from the internal polyphony towards the singularised linear vocal logos was altered by the interesting sense of emitting all-embracing soundscapes instead of one voice: the singular voice remained in the in-ear world, while a sonorous pluralism was projected on space. This estranged me from my inner listening and the subjective sense of the externalised voice, as well as of the final aesthetic result perceived by the audience. Considering both audience's feedback and video evidence, the sonic outcome was distanced from my in-ear soundscapes, as my voice was thoroughly translated into electronic sounds. This produced an impression of self-echoing that eliminated the ear/voice distance, rendering me into a 'vibrating ear' and a procedural part of the digital environment.

Interactive mediation, vocal distortion, sound spatialisation, visual representation of sound and kinesis were poured into a different sense of self, requiring a different self-assembly: certain vocal/kinetic manipulation, posture and breathing control, as well as altered reflexives towards the received stimuli. I and my voice acquired the labyrinthine depths of the ear. As if living in a metabolic, intangible place, a feeling of wearing a loud, voluminous costume arose, which facilitated a quasi-archaic immediate access to the cyclic interaction of the body/voice/ear/surroundings. Contextualised in the opera's theme, human and non-human composed a non-dualistic neo-mythological entity, wherein the Cartesian body-mind split was bridged within a new wholeness. The dwelling in a liminal field of sensorial processing regenerated a mythical feeling of being lively extended within a space of infinite potential. My almost literal sense of residing within the body/mind gap equalised to inhabiting a space of becoming, alluding to this article's reference to headspace as an echoic amalgamating topos. In-between hearing and voicing, this feeling of being a non-dualistic hyper-entity was thoroughly produced, manifested and embraced by sounds. As such, it raised associations to the pre-individual womb experience, to the indigenous' engagement with the hearing sense in ways that facilitate a belonging to 'the intimate acoustic immensity' of natural spaces and their cosmic awareness.[5] Connected with the human's residence in sonorous spaces of becoming, sound becomes a medium of sustaining an undivided feeling as a lively unit of cosmos. In both voicing and listening, sound is linked to the Jungian 'premonitory experience of wholeness' by reinforcing a sense of human as being 'not a subject but a talking extract of cosmos' (Axelos 1992) releasing from the heavy idea of self as linear chronology and highlighting common aspects of human experience. The non-human elements of the performance, based on vocal and listening dislocation, acted as a means of realising the link between myth, wholeness and sound, of regenerating a primitive, even mythical sense of 'being in the world' and of rediscovering inherent human potential.

This interesting, if not refreshing, feeling of neoanimism becomes problematic when filtered through my recent research interests. I engage with my experience as an innocent yet eloquent paradigm that highlights issues of human nature's 'petification' within the posthuman perspectives,[6] and concerns the usage of human experience by algorithmic intelligences as a fuel for unearthly realities.

I begin with the voice's detachment from bodily resonance to resonate in the 'digital body' of the opera: the human/non-human dialectic was a relationship of absorption and transformation, based on human's adaptability. Noted by vocal practitioners and researchers (Klein 2007: 49), this adaptability does not promote vocal wellbeing and so reconceptualises

Video of extracts from Act four: Echo's metamorphotic death

artistry into real-time manipulation: 'objects use us' (Arendt 1986: 132). Considering the accelerating development of synthetic voices—icon tech and digital immortality industries, where voice becomes a mere fuel for ethereal realities—this dialectic becomes less uncanny. Voice maintains a constellation of material and immaterial, individual, collective and primitive trails that co-vibrate through personalised utterance. This abstraction, neutralisation and liquidation constitute reductionism and essentialism, and indirectly produce types of dehumanisation, realised through intangible human facets. In Barthes' terminology, the voice loses its 'grain', the bodily seal that encapsulates a human's experiential constellation to become 'pneuma' (Barthes 1977: 183) and infuses its soul on the digital world. The detachment of voice from its corporeality,

segregates the body from its sense of interactive self, identity and presence: 'by losing our bodies …. we lose what makes us human…that is the experience of our multi-sensory engagement of being in the world' (Henriques 2019: 164).

A further issue concerns the absorption and translation of immaterial permeable spheres of human consciousness, communication and vocal semantics into novel a/v materiality. Through vocal sound's noematic, symbolic and visual dimensions, along with breathing and gestural dynamics, the energy of performative interaction enhances the construction of recognisable yet mystical virtual surroundings that regenerate the all-inclusive sense of the physical environment. Voice itself, as well as immaterial individual, relational and collective spaces of human interaction related to the ear-voice-world association, becomes raw material enhancing the transmission of the vicissitudes of human life into echoic heterotopias, removed from corporeality, spatiotemporal notion and interrelation.

Issues of human stature along with a total dislocation of meaning relate to vocal de-contextualisation biologically, cognitively and culturally. By fusing the terminologies of Arendt and Nancy, it would seem that self-revelation through praxis is inseparably connected to speech (Arendt 1976: 245) and the voice, through which the sonorous presence (Nancy 2007: 16) is re-presented in the world of existing things, becomes visible within social spaces and keeps active the immaterial network of human communication. Abstraction and depersonalisation render the human voice into a bare sonic element, anonymise action and life and symbolise the subject's objectification. Through setting human outside the linguistic, the social and his corporeal nexuses, the notion of risk is eliminated which, according to Arendt, contributes to the maintenance of meaning (Villa in Born 2012: 177). Imprisoned in a liminal space of becoming, human is vaporised into an echoic tool attached to the techno-scientific narcissism. It is deprived of materialised appearance and of becoming shaped ('being'): 'How an actual entity becomes, constitutes what an actual entity is' (Whitehead 1928: 15).

Could an 'echoic culture' follow the narcissistic media culture of image, as one more step towards 'falling into empty idols' (Stavridis in Poulou 2012: 246) and form a long postlude of human history?

'By losing their subsistence, beings and things enter in the increasingly problematic and catastrophic process of their conservation…while the human and his existence, the objects, their constitution and their conservation are from now on radically metamorphosed towards a fatal but not dithyrambic analepsis.'
Axellos (2005: 106)

If, for Aristotle, 'the voice is a particular sound emitted by something with a soul', the human voice becomes the soul of the objects, albeit a breathless one. What is the distance between a breathless and a soulless voice in the posthuman debate? If, according to Freud's handling of myth, 'fantasies are simply filing the gaps between individual and pre-historic truth' (Aversa 2004: 557) then the recent turn of high technology to myth and ancient drama seems to fill the gaps between human history and posthuman new-born cosmology. Nymphs and mythological creatures were vivid, fleshy and metamorphotic, they were 'more-than alive' in contrast to the less-than-alive ('undead') of the digital world. What remains from the liminal space of silence when crowds of lo-fi anthropomorphic frequencies are increasingly expanded? Is there a 'real echo'? And where does it reverberate in a world without arrival, departures and distance in which 'time does not appear but as a potential play of allocation of elements in space' (Foucault 2012: 257). The 'poetics of nature'

become the metaphysics of techno-science. Within its mimetic holistic immateriality, the human becomes exiled from the house of being and like an echo 'falls' in-between processes.

4. Postlude like prelude: Rediscovering Orpheus.

In connection with the 'audio and video" (Poulou 2021: 248), I had considered Orpheus and Euridice as a reversed complementary myth to that of Echo and Narcissus. Having performed Euridice's aria from Gluck's opera 'Orpheus', I set off to draw parallel lines between Echo as sound and Euridice as vision, both as 'women-followers' of men. The beauty and dignity of Euridice's grief in Gluck's aria links her to the seeing sense also by outlining herself as a well-framed idealised vision of male desire. MedeaElectronique's Echo acts as a vocal remnant of matriarchal chaotic facets, trying to retain a place within language, communication, and history. In short, in the death of Orpheus, I discovered striking similarities to the initial myth of Echo. He/she possesses supernatural musical and poetic power, he/she is dismembered by rejected lovers (maenads and shepherds), his/her bones are scattered yet continuously emitting an 'endless song' (Zabriskie 2000: 445). The passage from matriarchy to patriarchy and the gender-power altered equilibrium is expressed through criteria of sound-possession. However, in both cases, it is the 'endless song' that remains unaltered: a prelude and postlude that resides in the slippery space of human perceptual imperfection, 'feels the gaps' and flies away.

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Endnotes

1. Dérive is a term coined by the situationist Guy Debord in 1956. Debord defines the dérive as 'a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society, a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances' (Debord 1958). Literally meaning an 'aimless walk', I use this term to imply an associative wandering through thoughts. Passing through personal performative experiences, 'echoic phenomenology', beloved readings, stories and remarks about the 'forthcoming', this text may constitute a 'rapid passage through varied ambiances' (Debord 1958) in light of echo's notion.

2. Nymphs were young beautiful female creatures who existed between divine, human and environmental substance and were expected to live up to 9720 years. Their vicissitudes and feelings often caused their metamorphosis into various forms; from a woman one may become a tree, a bird, a lake. Two main stories about Echo as nymph exist. Mostly famous is the Ovidian

version, according to which Echo loses her material dimension and is evaporated into a voice due to her pain over Narcissus' rejection. In the third and the fourth parts of this article both myths about Echo are briefly described. Echo was a mountain nymph, particularly lively and talkative. She was entangling Hera, the queen of gods, to lengthy conversations to provide the other nymphs with the necessary time to escape and avoid getting caught in affairs with Zeus, the king of gods and Hera's husband. Discovering this entanglement, Hera punished Echo, rendering her unable to start any conversation and damned her to repeat only the last words that were addressed to her. Echo falls in love with Narcissus, the son of the water-nymph Liriope and god Cephissus. Famous for his extraordinary beauty and condemned for his pride and constant rejection of his admirers, Narcissus fulfills the prophecy given to his mother that he will 'grow old, unless he knows himself' (Ovid 2018: 349). Narcissus' metamorphosis —drowned chasing his own idol—is well-known. In the Ovidian version of the myth, once Echo notices and orbits Narcissus, an exceptional dialogue is composed through misunderstandings, ending up with collision and despair. This instigates Echo's metamorphosis: 'Ashamed in the leafy forests, in lonely caverns/But still her love cling to her and increases/And grows on suffering, she cannot sleep/She frets the pines, becomes all gaunt and haggard/Her body dries and shrivels through voice only/ And bones remain, and then she is voice only/ For the bones are turned to stone. She hides in the woods/And no one sees her now along the mountains/ But all may hear her, for her voice is living' (Ovid 2018: 395-406).

3. Hauntology is a term coined by Jacques Derrida in his book 'Specters of Marx' written in 1993 as an answer to Francis Fukuyama's proclamation about the end of history. As the philosopher Carl Raschke remarks; "The end of history for Derrida is not the dismissal of history, nor is it a dismissal of the human tendency to dream a big history. It is the entrance to a history that is differed from the type of language and finality we use in any kind of metanarrativity in the end of history. What Derrida calls "the impossible" (Raschke 2015). According to Davis and Coverley, Derrida introduces "an openness to the unthinkable and the unheard other" (Collins 2005, 376) and "expresses his belief that being and haunting are interwoven concepts, the ghostly coming to invade every aspect of our lives, from the political and technological to the cultural and the literary: to be is to be haunted" (Coverley 2021, 4). Finding an interplay between ontology and hauntology Derrida expounds a general state of being—an ontology— linked to western civilisation, in which specters will 'return repeatedly, disputing the present and continuing to remind us of another possible future' (Coverley, 2021: 5). As such hauntology continues to undergo pluralistic manipulations in a wide epistemological spectrum, for example, psychology, anthropology, literary ghost studies, music, visual arts, sound studies, philosophy, political theory.

During the 20th century, composers like Alfred Schnittke, Iani Christou, Giacinto Scelsi "land" an increasingly spread-out reality fueled by a "technologically saturated world" (Kramer, 2002: 19) on otherworldly all-inclusive dimensions. To evade sovereign problems of continuity, authorship, material's social(media) saturation, they attempt to re-structure chaotic informative reception and re-establish purity by turning to archaic philosophies, ritualism, sound-gesture-silence relational re-invention or the supernatural. These enhance the conceptualization of whole-embracing temporalities, in which the historical continuity is often replaced by transgenerational associations, and the fragmentary information is undergone novel coherence in search of meaning-making processes, towards deciphering the derridean "impossible".

4. My engagement with 'singular-plural' derives from Nancy's 'Being singular plural' (2000), which, in claiming existence as inherently co-existive, reforms major philosophical concepts linked to ontology, language and meaning. Quoting Nancy: 'That which exists, whatever this might be, coexists because it exists. The co-implication of existing is the sharing of the world. A world is not something external to existence; it is not an extrinsic addition to other existences; the world is the coexistence that puts these existences together' (Nancy 2000: 29). Below, I select specific

quotes from the original to underscore echo's non-oppositional function within the ear-voice-world relation.

In terms of this article, this notion is referred in relation to oppositions such as: body/mind, inside/outside, identity/alterity, by envisioning echo as the immaterial essence which provides a recycling inconceivable blending. Such aspects correspond to metaphysics of perception, of presence, to affect and body/mind theories. Echo's perspectives in the second part of the present text engage with a spatial sense of self, where Nancy's notion reverbs; 'Self' defines the element in which 'me' and 'you' and 'we' and 'they', can take place. 'Self' determines the 'as' of Being: if it is, it is as it is. It is 'in itself' prior to any 'ego' (Nancy 2000: 28). The 'singular-plural' is also used to underline 'the plural fold of the origins', as vocal plurality is treated here as a manifestation of the ear-voice-world cycle beyond the borders of self (see third part): 'Prior to "me" and "you, " the "self" is like a "we" that is neither a collective subject nor "intersubjectivity," but rather the immediate mediation of Being in "(it)self," the plural fold of the origin' (Nancy 2000: 94).

Nancy's concept sees the world as a scene of constant creation of presence; 'the coming of something: of its coming into the world where the "world" itself is the plane or the exposing of every coming' (Nancy 2000: 95). The philosopher supersedes dichotomies by (re)inserting an archaic anonymity, which re-defines the roots of worldly experience as an alive, procedural, and pluralistic appearance: 'the plurality of origins essentially disseminates the Origin of the world. The world springs forth everywhere and in each instant, simultaneously. This is how it comes to appear out of nothing and 'is created' (Nancy 2000: 52).

For the transformative, intermediate, intangible or haunting characteristics of echoic species and of mythical Echo, the idea of 'being singular plural' produces a skillful set of reflections. From a psychological viewpoint, the Jungian projection of non-manageable internal otherness on the world provides one more type of non-dualistic melting between self-other, inside-outside, human-world, inevitably connected with creatures like the nymphs. Here, the limits between the internal and the external become vague through their 'constant coessence' (Nancy 2000: 37).

5. Specifically, Steven Feld refers to Kaluli, in Bosavi of Papua/New Guinea, where he conducted long-term ethnographic research that enhanced the materialisation of his vision about an anthropology of sound – Honorary doctorate nomination to Steven Feld. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (2022). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKItTPzCMLo (accessed July 2022)

6. I borrow the concept 'petification of nature' from Augustino Cera from his presentation 'The Technocene: Ethical Challenges for the Anthropocene' during the Conference: 'Logos Techne and (Neg) Anthropocene' (9-10 December 2021, TU Dublin). According to Cera: 'Anthropocene can be defined as an era where technology becomes the subject of both history and nature…[its] main consequence consists of the 'petification of nature', the metamorphosis of it from the idea of major nature from an object standing reserved, that is from something to be exploited, into a pet which corresponds to an entity needing total absolute care. This produces a new ethical change concerning the link between human and nature. It challenges the limits between responsibility and respect: The respect of the otherness as well as of difference, given that no authentic responsibility is possible without release' (Cera 2021).

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