Posthumanist Voices in Literature and Opera

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Abstract and Keywords

From a background that critically investigates conceptualizations and understandings of the relations and dialectics between the inner and the outer voice and the discursive implications of the posthumanist appraisal of vocality, Jason D'Aoust examines the "operatic voice" or the vocality of opera as it is practiced and understood in the present period. From a philosophically informed perspective, D'Aoust engages with recent reappraisals of phonocentrism in voice studies, and analyzes artistic works from different genres, comprising opera (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*), literature (Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), and film (Scott's *Blade Runner*), in order to show how opera practitioners, authors, and film-makers use the sonorous imagination to deconstruct the canon.

Keywords: opera, vocality, phonocentrism, posthumanism, psychology, autopoiesis

(p. 629) Introduction

WHEN we think of the voice from the perspective of sound and imagination, a familiar observation comes to mind: the voice is a series of phonatory sounds we emit (as in speech, screams, and songs), but also their interior manifestation in our mind's ear. The experience of hearing a voice WHEN we think, read, and write leads us to think of voices as dual in nature, namely through their inner and outer manifestations, but the interrelation of the two is more complex than it appears. Our seemingly innate inner voice gives us the impression that our interiority precedes any exteriorization, and thereby establishes a hierarchy in communication. In identifying inner and outer voices as two sides of the same coin, we come to believe that speech and song are the materialized expression of our inner voice. Artistic practice can reinforce this point of view. Eileen Farrell, for example, has commented on how the imagination plays an important part in vocal performance: rather than focus on the manipulation of larynx, pharynx, and resonators, successful artists concentrate instead on imagining the pitch, texture, and tone of the vocal line they then instantly create in performance (Farrell 1993). This performance practice defines the sonorous imagination as an active agent that forms sounds in the inner ear before

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they are vocally expressed and manifested. These observations might also implicitly convey a dualist perception that vocal expression is material and the inner voice is not. Such a way of understanding the voice often turns out to support or be supported by metaphysical explanations of the physical world. A metaphysical worldview purports that there are immaterial principles (like our identity with our inner voice), which nevertheless have the creative force to organize the material world. For the last half-century, however, critical theory has opposed this way of organizing (p. 630) knowledge about, but especially through, the voice. Poststructuralist concerns like the death of the author and the Derridean writing of *différance* oppose biographical criticism, because as the latter speaks for the author's voice, it leads to a paucity of diverging interpretations and points of view.

This chapter examines these critical intersections of voice, sound, and imagination in order to situate them within studies on posthumanism. Many posthumanist theorists discuss the voice, or problems related to it, with the intent of displacing certain assumptions about subjectivity or self-presence. This way of writing about the voice ties in with earlier critical theory in which the voice was criticized for transmitting notions of identity. As a point of departure into understanding the discursive implications of the posthumanist appraisal of vocality, I start by giving background to the phonocentric critique of voice. I then turn to the recent reappraisal of voice by criticism of videocentrism and to theorists who are interested in the voice's epistemic purchase, insofar as it can create a discursive space around vocal embodiment and the voice's materiality. The following section brings this critical discussion to bear on the posthumanist reception of opera. I discuss how theorists have visited the history of opera in order to compare the genre to philosophical discourse for rhetorical purposes, but not necessarily to revise the discursive flattening of the expressive voice. Opera studies have, so far, shied away from engaging with posthumanism. I therefore draw on the musicological reception of opera's many voices, in order to deconstruct the assumptions made in the name of the "operatic voice."

Autopoiesis and the Autoaffective Voice

In *What Is Posthumanism?*, Cary Wolfe situates the problem of thinking of the human, and, by extension, of humanism, within the larger problem of the multiplicity of living consciousness. His book asks of us

> to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of "bringing forth a world"—ways that are, since we ourselves are human animals, part of the evolutionary history and behavioral and psychological repertoire of the human itself.
>
> (Wolfe 2010, xxv)

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For Wolfe, posthumanism is predicated on our species' awareness that other species are not only sentient, but that their consciousness creates different worlds, knowledge of which should also further our understanding of the human animal. His approach relies on debunking presuppositions about language that unwittingly convey remnants of a metaphysical worldview in which humans claim ownership of, or stewardship over, (p. 631) other living beings. In doing so, he furthers Jacques Derrida's attention to autoaffection by connecting it with autopoiesis, a relatively new term initially borrowed from biology by communication studies (Maturana and Varela 1980). In Wolfe's argument, autopoiesis acts as a benchmark with which to compare different animal experiences of the world, including that of the human species. More importantly, the evolutionary inheritance of autopoiesis should ethically require from us greater critical attention to implied or unwitting value judgments we make when we compare other forms of animal communication to human linguistics.

What is autopoiesis? Poiesis is borrowed from the Greek and in its literary sense means "the creative production, especially of a work of art"; but when used as a suffix, its literal translation denotes "the formation or production of something."[1] Biologists have used the combined form to describe the "self-maintenance of an organized entity through its own internal process" (Oxford English Dictionary); therefore, an "autopoietic system is one that produces itself" (Buchanan 2010). Autopoiesis was introduced to communication studies when Niklas Luhmann made it a key concept in systems theory in order to argue that a system of communication does not precede its given social space (Luhmann 2010; Wolfe 2010, 3–29). This biological insight into communication implies that human consciousness through language is a matter of animal evolution, elements of which could very well be shared with other species. In turn, the "autopoeitic ways" of Wolfe's theorization are interesting to thinkers of the expressive voice and vocality, because they might further dislodge the function of voice as the metaphysical guardian of self-presence.

The inner voice, though it seems innate to most of us, is not a clean slate. Derrida's criticism of the autoaffection of the voice-as-presence is a key moment for Wolfe, because it moves away from the "self-presence of consciousness" toward writing qua trace as "fundamentally ahuman or even anti-human" (Wolfe 2010, 6). It is less clear, however, if the sonorous voice's past associations with humanist identity mark it as a phenomenon to be discarded in Wolfe's argument. As Don Ihde remarks in *Listening and Voice*,

> Voice is, for us humans, a very central phenomenon. It bears our language without which we would perceive differently. Yet outwards from this center, voice may also be a perspective, a metaphor, by which we understand part of the world itself.
>
> (Ihde 2007, 189)

Like Wolfe, Ihde is aware that our vocal experience of language and the world presents the problem of "domesticating it into our constant interpretation that centers us in the world" (Ihde 2007, 186). Can greater attention to the musicality or sonority of voice make us further aware of the distance we impose on the world's sounds through language? I

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will shortly discuss how Wolfe arrives at the sonorous voice by way of opera and how his sources discuss opera by way of an "operatic voice." This chiasmic construction (opera-voice/voice-opera) might give the impression of canceling itself out and of being of little consequence, but it gestures toward a conflation that assigns the sonorous voice to a genre whose aesthetic diversity is thereby greatly reduced. However, before I arrive at (p. 632) this posthumanist stance on opera qua "operatic voice," I will consider what the voice means for philosophers and critical theorists.

For two millennia, Western philosophy has claimed the voice as the linguistic medium of human reason and, by extension, proof of the primacy of humans over other species lacking in language and reason. To understand the ramifications of this tradition on current work about the voice, we may look to Heidegger's historical survey of the voice in "The Concept of the Logos" (Heidegger 1962, 55–58) or look back to neo-Platonist definitions of voice (Mansfeld 2005).[2] Ultimately, the search for an ever-receding origin of the voice is not only impossible but also counterproductive. Indeed, "by avoiding tales of origins, we are closer to a possible answer. For, whatever else the voices of language may be, at the center where we are, they are rich, multidimensioned and filled with as yet unexplored possibilities" (Ihde 2007, 194). For our purposes, however, let us make Derrida's first publications our point of departure.

When Derrida, in *Speech and Phenomena*, discusses the "expressive voice" in relation to Edmund Husserl's philosophy, he reproduces the latter's terminology for the expressive voice to designate our "silent interior monologue" (Spivak 1976 in Derrida 1998, liii). This inversion of our everyday understanding of the expressive voice occurs because Husserl, "being interested in language only within the compass of rationality, determining the logos from logic … determined the essence of language by taking the logical as its telos or norm" (Derrida 1973, 8). In order for language to hold any truth-value, it had to be logically consequential in its assertions about itself. How does this logical search for truth through language silence the expressive voice?

One way of verifying whether or not language can achieve this logical exactitude is to put the terms it uses to the test of translation. Derrida underlines a lack of categorization in the French translation of Husserl, because it systematically rendered *Bedeutung* into the French *signification*. He notices the lack of terminological choice in French to express a difference between the German terms *Sinn* (sense, *signification*) and *Bedeutung* (meaning, *signification*), and argues that a lack of linguistic equivalencies should not erase the differences in experience they point out. As Derrida remarks, for Husserl "*meaning [Bedeutung]* is reserved for the content in the ideal sense of *verbal* expression, spoken language, while sense (*Sinn*) covers the whole noematic sphere right down to its nonexpressive stratum" (Derrida 1973, 19). Meaning is the result of an interpretation (*Deutung*) that should be reserved for communication relying on the expression (*Ausdruck*) of speech (*Rede*). Sense (*Sinn*, *signification*), on the other hand, although it is always conveyed by expressive speech, may also be indicated (*Anzeichen*) through nonlinguistic means. Yet, for Husserl "meaning (*bedeuten*)—in communicative speech (*in mitteilender Rede*)—is always interwoven (*verflochten*) with such an indicative relation" (in

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Derrida 1973, 20). One should pause here and note how the indicative musical characteristics of speech that also make sense—such as pitch, tone, rhythm, and velocity—are silenced in this logic of communication. For now, however, let us continue and examine how expression (*Ausdruck*), although it denotes an outward push, nevertheless loses its phonation, as the expressive voice gets turned into the voice of our "silent interior monologue" (Spivak in Derrida 1998, liii).

(p. 633) If Husserl interiorizes the voice of communication, then he must also interiorize its addressee. In any given speech act, it is impossible for me to really know what the other means:

> expression indicates a content forever hidden from intuition, that is, from the lived experience of another, and also because the ideal content of the meaning and spirituality of expression are here united to sensibility.
>
> (Derrida 1973, 22)

Both of these problems are avoided by deviating the communicative structure of address: the ideal addressee is no longer the person one speaks to, but part of our silent inner voice. This silent address retains the structure of communication, however, through the intention of the inner voice's objective ideality—akin to the ideal reader to whom one writes—which becomes a substitute for the external other. In other words, the suspension of expressivity's (indicative) communicating relation to an exterior addressee is necessary in order to ensure that nothing be hidden to meaning in the ideality of language. This silent yet expressive voice thus unites thought and language through self-presence, but does so at the expense of a phonatory vocal act, in order to make communication logically possible.[3]

Yet even this ideal voice presents a flaw. Although the voice of self-consciousness might satisfy the requirements of autoaffection—hearing one's inner voice, thereby giving one a sense of self—it cannot fully express presence. This is an enduring problem in the history of Western thought. Augustine, for example, struggles with expressing self-presence in his *Confessions*. He remedies the lag in communicating his own relation to presence (and Logos) through song because, in his view, music distends speech and thereby elongates its enunciating present (Augustine 1998, XI: 17 ff.). Derrida, however, follows the logic of the trace to its visual outcome.

> For Derrida, Husserl's descriptions [of retention] imply that the living present, by always folding the recent past back into itself, by always folding memory into perception, involves a *difference* in the very middle of it. In other words, in the very moment, when silently I speak to myself, it must be the case that there is a miniscule hiatus differentiating me into the speaker and into the hearer. There must be a hiatus that differentiates me from myself, a hiatus or gap without which I would not be a hearer *as well as* a speaker. This hiatus also defines the trace, a minimal repeatability. And this hiatus, this fold of repetition, is found in the very moment of hearing-myself-speak. Derrida stresses that "moment" or "instant" translates the

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> German “Augenblick,” which literally means “blink of the eye.” When Derrida stresses the literal meaning of “Augenblick,” he is in effect “deconstructing” auditory auto-affection into visual auto-affection.
>
> (Lawlor 2014)

The infinitesimal lag in self-presence—in English we may also use adverbs like “at once” or “instantaneously” to translate the temporal indication of the German noun *Augenblick* —is thus translated into the ocular sphere of the interstitial trace. From this point forward, Derrida will continue to oppose logocentric literature and thought through criticism that denounces the voice in favor of writing.

(p. 634) In *Of Grammatology*, for example, Derrida situates Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s understanding of writing as a transcription of speech in a historical trajectory of the voice’s relation to knowledge in modernity.

> From Descartes to Hegel and in spite of all the differences that separate the different places and moments in the structure of the epoch, God’s infinite understanding is the other name for the logos as self-presence. The logos can be infinite and self-present, it can be *produced as auto-affection*, only through the *voice*: an order of the signifier by which the subject takes from itself into itself, does not borrow outside of itself the signifier that it emits and that affects it at the same time. Such is at least the experience—or consciousness—of the voice: of hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak [*s’entendre-parler*]. That experience lives and proclaims itself as the exclusion of writing, that is to say of the invoking of an “exterior,” “sensible,” “spatial” signifier interrupting self-presence.
>
> (Derrida 1998, 98)

In other words, the voice fosters not only the illusion of being present to oneself, but also the illusion of knowing or, in the case of madness, of owning the truth.[4] The voice is the preferred vehicle for meaningful speech (logos) precisely because hearing-oneself-speak is so close to our understanding of ourselves, a fact Derrida underlines by joining the two parts of the reflexive verb with a hyphen to form the noun *s’entendre-parler*.

While something of the order of the trace occurs when we hear ourselves speak, writing, in comparison, is indifferent to our experience of consciousness. Wolfe is interested in the trace for its “a-human or anti-human potential” because of its indifference to self-presence. Yet can the sonorous voice be of interest to posthumanist study, beyond a distrust of its purported phonologocentrism? Can vocality further inform this interstitial space of phonation and listening? Or must it be relegated to humanist concerns for origins and ends, and express our melancholy of never knowing them? Since critical posthumanism relies on an autopoietic benchmark that until the last century was obfuscated by the voice’s conflation with logos, and because, as we shall see, opera becomes for Wolfe a stand-in for the humanist voice, I want to bring to this discussion recent research that challenges phonologocentric criticism.

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Videocentrism and Expressive Voices

Because of its ties to autoaffection, philosophy understands the expressive voice as being fully interiorized to the point of becoming the excluding agent of “an exterior.” However, does the resounding voice of the singer—a voice that always sounds different from one recording to the next, from one performance to the next, from one instant to the next—present similar problems to critical thought?[5] In other words, does a grammatological counteraction against the autoaffective voice also account for the vocality of screams, songs, shouting, and laughter? Can philosophy account for those expressive and musical voices that were silenced in the name of language’s logical discourse (Nancy 2007)? (p. 635) There is growing criticism of videocentrism (or anti-ocular criticism) that, while it is in agreement with deconstruction’s ethical work in promoting diversity, nevertheless examines how sonorous voices have been silenced (Janus 2011). I will come back to posthumanism shortly, but for now I turn to the critique of videocentrism in order to examine how it might contribute to our thinking of posthumanist vocality.

In *For More than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Adriana Cavarero states her reservations about the fate of the sonorous voice in Derrida’s overall project. She notes how Derrida’s early works dialogued with the phenomenological voice but failed to acknowledge how emerging studies on orality had begun to influence thinkers of his generation.

> If the debt to Heidegger, while full of reservations, is explicit, then the debt to the studies on orality—and more generally to the modern rediscovery of the voice, if not of writing—is, however, rather deceptive.
>
> (Cavarero 2005, 213)

Cavarero argues that Derrida is critical of the voice but does not address the metamorphoses it underwent in order for it to continue suiting the historical developments of visually centered metaphysical epistemologies. Cavarero suggests that Derrida does not integrate into his framework a conception of the expressive voice because he thinks of it as the guardian of metaphysics.[6] She criticizes Derrida for failing to step back and free the expressive voice from its ancillary inscription in discursive knowledge once he had shown how Husserl recuperates expression as an implicit and disavowed discursive strategy,. According to Cavarero, the project of a “philosophy of *différance* […] orients the theoretical axis in which Derrida places the theme of the voice, making it play a metaphysical role in opposition to the antimetaphysical valence of writing” (Cavarero 2005, 220). Recall how this is precisely Wolfe’s point of departure for thinking of the trace as a-human or antihuman. In Cavarero’s reading, Derrida’s championing of writing as *différance* can also be understood as the last scene of philosophy’s historical “devocalization of the *logos*” (Cavarero 2005, 33–41). In other words, the task of deconstructing the traditional view of writing qua fallen speech might have obscured how writing constrains representations of sonorous voices in order to elevate itself to the status of univocality. Instead, she insists

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on the following: Derrida's "metaphysical phonocentrism supplants the far more plausible, and philologically documentable, centrality of videocentrism" (Cavarero 2005, 222).

The argument rests on a shift in perspective and, although the gap it opens is rather narrow—like a closing shutter—its far-reaching consequences have also been recognized in other fields. In *Sounding New Media*, Frances Dyson also develops a historical analysis of sound's subsumption under visually based epistemologies:

> sound and the speaking voice are banished from this ontological elite, not because of their sonority, but because of what sonority represents—impermanence, instability, change, and becoming. Through an array of epistemological gymnastics, however, the voice is not entirely excluded (how could anyone ever say that it was?) but rather abstracted via the oxymoronic concept of "inner speech."
>
> (Dyson 2009, 21–22)

(p. 636) Lacanian theorists interested in music had already underlined similar insights into the voice's disruptive potential for discourse. Engaging with Plato's remarks on music and their influence on Augustine, psychoanalytic critics like Michel Poizat (1992) and Mladen Dolar have associated the musical voice with the sliding of the signifier.

> One can draw, from this brief and necessarily schematic survey [of the musical voice], the tentative conclusion that the history of "logocentrism" doesn't run quite hand in hand with "phonocentrism," that there is a dimension of the voice that runs counter to self-transparency, sense, and presence: the voice against the logos, the voice as the other of logos, its radical alterity.
>
> (Dolar 1996, 24)[7]

Although not intended for anti-ocular purposes, we can also turn to a philological study of the visual metaphor of light (scintillation and illumination) in the Platonist doctrine of the voice in order to grasp how it assigned the sonorous voice to videocentric discourse: "in the proper sense, it is articulate voice, considered as illuminating what is thought" (Mansfeld 2005, 359 ff.). The voice becomes trapped in a "heliotropic metaphor" that Derrida's reading of *Phaedrus* in *Dissemination* assigns to *différance*, rather than admit the voice's alignment with a visual order (Cavarero 2005, 223–224, 227 ff.). Cavarero further underlines how discourse's apparent phonocentrism only functions through a disavowal of the visual ordering of what lies beyond perception.

> The logos that is written in the soul of the one who apprehends, with science [*episteme*], is precisely the devocalized logos that coincides with the visible and mute order of ideas. … In effect, it is precisely the art of dialectic that functions as a means of transmission between the world of words and the world of ideas. This art belongs to the verbal sphere, but it belongs to it as a method for showing the insufficiency of words and at the same time, their constitutive dependency on the order of ideas. (230–231)

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In turn, it also underlines what is missing in Derrida's reading of Socratic dialogue: the third term, the aphoristic desire that drives the dialectic to its "aporetic outcome"—a deferral in itself—as the interlocutors "rub the[ir] words against one another … to grasp the luminosity of the idea that suddenly flashes up, present to the eye of the soul" (Cavarero 2005, 231). Thus, the Platonist doctrine of the voice's illumination would not necessarily be a metaphorical misconstruction of Plato's philosophy, but a shortcut to the visual register of the idea that was already implied as its goal.

While the critique of videocentrism has challenged the role of the voice as the supposedly phonocentric excluding agent of exteriority, difference and diversity, the larger reception of opera in academia (beyond musicology) presents further challenges to our present topic. Many of the critical theorists quoted by Wolfe, who enjoy vocal music and opera, do not necessarily engage with it from a musicological perspective. Although interdisciplinary perspectives can enrich our understanding of the genre and its cultural influence, I argue that it can also lead to certain conflations and reductions, in this (p. 637) instance, through the term "operatic voice." How does such a shortcut as the "operatic voice" affect our thinking of posthumanist vocality?

The Phantom of the Operatic Voice

It is here, inside our minds. The most striking aspect of Wolfe's discussion of opera is that all his interlocutors are philosophers or theorists and none are critical musicologists. Because of their discursive allegiances, his interlocutors come to opera with preconceived ideas of the aesthetic voice's discursive function. In their arguments, opera becomes a dramaturgy of voice, and opera is therefore unwillingly reduced to a homogeneous genre with a single type of voice, the "operatic voice." At the beginning of a chapter largely dedicated to opera, film, and song, Wolfe writes "*sound is not voice*" (Wolfe 2010, 169). Although nobody would dispute Wolfe's assertion, he is undoubtedly cautious at approaching the sonorous voice through opera. I have reminded readers how the reversal of this assertion—*voice is not sound*—is a long-standing claim of metaphysics in associating the voice (*phoné*) with speech (*logos*). Although Wolfe also challenges this conception of the voice, he is weary of opera and, as we shall see, implies that its sonorous voices should be superseded (by cinema) in a posthumanist discussion of vocality. Is opera, from its creation to the twenty-first century, to be confined by posthumanist theory to what we have shown is the silent repository of humanist, metaphysical voices?

The "operatic voice" is a discursive construct of the twentieth century that has thoroughly infiltrated general culture. Before then, people had qualified compositions, literature, or personalities as "operatic," but they did not see the need to describe voices in such a manner. Opera is an art form comprising many genres that require different voice types. Of course, there were teachers and schools to make sure that singers were up to musical standards. In this sense, different periods have had an ideal sense of what different voice types should be able to accomplish musically and dramatically. If certain singers of the past were louder or more dramatic than others, the expression "the operatic voice" mis-

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leads readers in assuming that opera depends on a single type of voice or vocal style. As Gary Tomlinson explains in *Metaphysical Song* (1999), the genre spans over four centuries of Western modernity in which voices were differently embodied and represented in accordance with the prevalent discourse of a given period's ideology.[8] I am not sure exactly when the term "operatic voice" became popular with critical theorists; however, it has musicological precedents. Already by the late 1930s, Adorno was criticizing the reification of vocal music and its concomitant vocal fetishism (Adorno 2002). Today's entertainment industry ascribes an "operatic voice" to anyone who can sing from a short list of show-stopping arias, regardless of the singer's lack of a career in opera houses, especially as certain of these voices are only known and admired within popular culture's narrow version of opera. To put it succinctly, *the operatic voice is not opera* and (p. 638) *opera is not the operatic voice*. These assertions might seem obvious, but musicologists have felt the need to underline them (Furman 1991).

Conflating the voice with an art form largely dedicated to a historical canon runs the risk of unduly limiting its current epistemic purchase. It is then easier to claim that all the singing voices of opera resonate today with a romantic desire to overcome our lost unity with a bygone world. Although Wolfe, in the end, does not support the implicit presuppositions underlining the "operatic voice," his argument does take this generic identity of opera at face value, which can become a hindrance for musicologists of opera approaching posthumanist theory. The following is not meant to be overly critical, but to provide musicologists and music historians with ways of approaching posthumanism.

Wolfe's main argument is that opera represents something that never really existed, namely an authentic, natural voice. In order to make this argument, he first recalls Stanley Cavell's identification of opera with mournful modernity and romantic skepticism.

> After Descartes and Kant, skepticism names not just an epistemological problem but a more profound and deeply ethical "loss of the world" that is coterminous with Enlightenment modernity itself, in which the modern condition is to be "homeless in the world" … For Cavell, the significance of film and of operatic voice is located at what he calls the "crossing" of the lines of skepticism and romanticism—that is to say, the juncture at which our desire for contact with the world of things and of others … is crossed by our knowledge that we are profoundly and permanently isolated.
>
> (Wolfe 2010, 172)

For Cavell, the history of opera has a single aesthetic project, which is characterized by Orpheus's Dionysian attempt at regenerating the modern world through song. Recalling Monteverdi's insistence in composing an alternative *lieto fine* to the tragic alternative ending devised for the creation of *L'Orfeo*, Cavell writes of

> two general matching interpretations of the expressive capacity of song: ecstasy over the absolute success of its expressiveness in recalling the world, as if bringing it back to life; melancholia over its inability to sustain the world, which may be

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> put as an expression of the absolute inexpressiveness of the voice, of its failure to make itself heard, to become intelligible—evidently a mad state.
>
> (Cavell 1994, 140, cited by Wolfe 2010, 173)

Leaving aside whether the singing voice can only be heard by becoming intelligible in a more than musical fashion, we must ask ourselves questions about the associations and equations that are being made here in the name of opera qua "operatic voice." Is the underlying meaning of the myths of Orpheus and Dionysus—their regeneration of an agonizing world—opera's unconscious aesthetic goal? The psychoanalytic reception of opera traces a similar trajectory when it argues for the singing voice's relation to the unconscious. From Eurydice's echoes to Lulu's scream, Michel Poizat (1992), as well as Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar (2002) suggest that the operatic voice is an historically expanding sonic portal to the unconscious desires that lie beyond linguistic representation. (p. 639) These models suggest that the sung voice, within the whole of modernity—understood as "operatic"—is a stable unit of meaning. Yet important shifts in discourse change our understanding of what is supposedly universal or natural and reveal this supposed vocal identity to be culturally and socially constructed in different ways at different times.

For Cavell, voices in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* participate in the operatic voice's aesthetic representation of our modern condition of alienation from the world. Opera would be a reaction to our loss of world through a sonic expansion of the voice's capacity to reach beyond this alienation. Musicologists interested in the culture and music around Monteverdi's time would disagree. Nino Pirrotta, for one, claims that the sixteenth century's conception of poetry paved the way for its music theater: "*la parola poetica è già musica*," that is, poetic speech is already music (Pirrotta 1975, 22).[9] Music here does not extend the voice's capacity for projection in order to reestablish a lost connection with the world. More to the point, in this case, is the underlying principle governing the efficacy of affect in "late Renaissance opera." I borrow the term from Gary Tomlinson, who demonstrates how early operas were more in tune with humanist ideals rather than with early-modern conceptions of knowledge and subjectivity. With this in mind, it becomes challenging to find in *L'Orfeo* a modern, sonic conception of the operatic voice as a form of vocal projection. Instead, one is constantly reminded of the importance of breath as an animating principle, not only of the singing but also of the kind of presubjective experience *L'Orfeo* conveys. Monteverdi's opera is a celebration of music's power to move souls, and to do so it relies on what connected people to the cosmos and each other in the late Renaissance, namely the life-giving breath of *anima* or spirit. Within the culture that created opera, voices are not alienated from the world; rather, tense situations are harmoniously resolved through the inner workings of music's magical power. In other words, Cavell's insistence on an alternative ending to the opera, in which Apollo's ex machina intervention puts right Orpheus's hubris, obscures how a modern conception of voice is inconsistent with late-Renaissance opera.

Although it is not convenient to the theories of subjective alienation qua operatic voice to which Cavell and Žižek subscribe, aesthetic and stylistic elements lead musicologists to

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believe that opera's history does indeed start with a voice that is full of affect, supported by breath, and united with the world. I do not argue against the idea that the kind of vocality embodied in later operas does point to a desire to overcome skepticism's alienation in the world. Indeed, as Tomlinson remarks, since the Cartesian soul is completely immaterial the voice can no longer act as the seamless link between body and soul, like the spirit's animating breath. The voice becomes heavier, more material, as the spirit dematerializes itself. It is, therefore, the voice of later Baroque and classical operas that must deal with the soul's alienation from the material world. Instead of *L'Orfeo* (1608), we will take therefore Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791) as our posthumanist case study. Here we find vocality staged between binary constructions familiar to posthumanism: human versus animal, nature versus civilization, and reason versus irrationality. Furthermore, because we will approach this vocality through a literary text, we should also keep in mind Garrett Stewart's alternative to the inner voice in *Reading Voices* (1990), in which suppressed physical phonation also accompanies the act of reading. (p. 640) If reading involves the silent action of our whole phonatory apparatus, what are we doing when we imagine an android's voice? Or as Hayles puts it,

> If the production of subvocalized sound is essential to reading literary texts, what happens to the stories we tell ourselves if this sound is no longer situated in the body's subvocalizations but in the machine?
>
> (Hayles 1999, 208)

Living in a Material World: Luba Luft's Pamina

In *Listening and Voice*, Ihde also raises the question of the expressive voice. He devotes a chapter to the dramaturgical voice, in which he discusses how it opposes, in a sense, discourse's absence or silencing of the expressive voice.

> There lies within dramaturgical voice a potential *power* that is also elevated above the ordinary powers of voice. Rhetoric, theater, religion, poetry, have all employed the dramaturgical. The dramaturgical voice persuades, transforms, and arouses humankind in its amplified sonorous significance. Yet from the beginning there is the call to *listen* to the *logos*, and the *logos* is first discourse.
>
> (Ihde 2007, 168)

In this section, I attempt to circumvent this "call to *listen* to *logos*," and pay closer attention to the imagined vocality of androids. This will not mean, however, the total negation of visual analysis. Like Ihde, I am aware that "we exist in a language world that is frequently dominated by visualism," and do not "wish to simply reduce the visual … to simply enhance the auditory" (Ihde 2007, 190). There is a point of intersection of visual and auditory communication that humans share with other animals, namely mimicry.

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> There is unintended mimicry: the viceroy butterfly mimics its larger, presumably ill-tasting monarch in pattern, color, and design. But the mocking bird, parrot, and cockatoo all consciously imitate and mimic the voice of others. Here is an expression doubled on itself, the wedge in sound that opens the way to what becomes in the voices of language the complexity of the ironic, the sarcastic, the humorous, and all the multidimensionality of human speech, particularly in its dramaturgical form.
>
> (Ihde 2007, 192)

Beyond simply turning to film for a discussion of visual mimicry in opera, this section will analyze the literary representation of android singing and its absence in the novel's cinematographic adaptation. Beyond the usual argument that too much *phoné* errs on the side of animality and too little on the side of the robotic, I argue that vocality is a site of mimesis through which we can critically approach opera through the perspective of posthumanism.

(p. 641) Philip K. Dick's work is central to posthumanist studies. The novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), along with Ridley Scott's cinematographic adaptation, the cult classic *Blade Runner* (1982), is especially important as the story of androids fighting for freedom underscores some of posthumanism's central ethical issues. N. Katherine Hayles, for example, argues how the human fight against android autodetermination can be seen along the lines of a tension between autopoiesis and allopoiesis (Hayles 1999, 161). The postapocalyptic novel in particular presents situations that might have resonated with fears of nuclear holocausts fifty years ago—most prominently the flawed human stewardship of other animals in an obliterated world—but, in the wake of global warming, have since become pressing environmental and social concerns. In turning to *Do Androids Dream?*, I want to raise the aesthetic notion of mimetic vocality to account for its problematization of ethics, but also to open these concerns to the field of opera studies.

The fascination of the detective cum android hunter Rick Deckard with the singing android is a crucial element in the novel, yet the film completely sidesteps this scene. There are many explanations for the replacement of Luba Luft with Zhora in the cinematographic adaptation, chief among these that opera and punk aesthetics do not usually mix well, with perhaps the exception of Klaus Nomi. In this aesthetic, the dystopian world of *Blade Runner* is bleaker than that of the postapocalyptic novel, in the sense that it does not afford the economic opportunities for institutionalized art forms. However, the opening sequence of the film shows a remnant of Dick's rhetorical representation of opera singing, namely the android's vocal mimetic capacities. The Voigt-Kampff test Deckard administers to possible androids is designed to measure the delay in physical reactions indicative of a lack of empathy. The delay is important because androids are programmed to replicate human reactions both emotional and physical, hence their nickname *replicants*. Telltale signs range from inappropriate or delayed psychological and physical reactions, thereby pointing toward a temporal gap of imitation and, implicitly, to a lack of identity cum self-presence. Oddly enough, however, voices—the supposed essence of humanist

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identity—do not figure in the test. Tone of voice is always a possible indicator of replication, but interpreting its meaning is left to the detective's intuition. The absence of vocal testing demonstrates Dyson's point (as cited earlier), namely how we associate detection and knowledge with the visual, and deceit with the sonorous or, more precisely in this case, the vocal. Instead, the epistemic space of vocality seems to be incorporated and obscured in ideal representations of women and womanhood.

In both versions of the story, the desired female android is embedded in intertextual references to *Die Zauberflöte*, the last of W. A. Mozart's operas, a singspiel composed on a booklet by Emanuel Schikaneder. The film references the opera through animal symbols. Zhora, for example, uses a "live" boa in her erotic dance performance in a nightclub. Along with her seduction and lethal potential, these indicators situate Zhora in a symbolic field quite similar to that of Mozart's Queen of the Night. She too is associated with a serpent monster and is the most threatening figure in the opera.[10] Indeed, when Pamina wavers at the thought of killing her father, Sarastro, the Queen intervenes and (p. 642) tells her daughter she will either see the deed through or be outcast, forsaken, and shattered forever from "all the bonds of nature" (*alle Bande der Natur*). I am quoting here from, "Der Hölle Rache," the famous aria known for its breakneck display of coloratura. Of course, all of this vocalic intertext is merely suggested by the film's visual symbolism. An audience familiar with Dick's novel and Mozart's opera, however, might wonder at the change of casting. Contrary to the novel, the film casts the replicant in the role of the Queen of the Night, rather than her subservient daughter, Pamina. Of course, a fiercely resistant and aggressive android, who gets chased, gunned down, and crashes through a window, makes for a better action film material than the resigned Luba Luft. Although, the topic of android ethics—Luft's choice of not harming humans—is also visited in *Blade Runner*, it only happens in the very last sequence, when Roy Batty has an epiphany brought on by the acceptance of existential finitude. What, then, is lost in the cinematographic adaptation's excision of Luft's career in opera?

For one, we lose Dick's insistence on the androids' different personalities. The novel does not reduce them to fighting machines (cf. O'Mathuna 2015), but reminds readers how they were designed to help colonizers in diverse tasks. Although we do not know what her occupation was on Mars, we do get to know one of the androids as Luba Luft, a German opera singer. We first meet her when Decker tracks her down at the San Francisco Opera. From the auditorium, he observes her in a rehearsal of *The Magic Flute*. He hears her sing a scene in which she and Papageno are about to be discovered by Sarastro. Sarastro is the patriarchal authority figure who is charged with initiating characters into the mysteries of human civilization, which revolves on an animal/human axis in the same tradition as the "high" and "low" plots of early modern theater. Pamina and Papageno are about to get caught transgressing the sacred Temple of the Sun, of which Sarastro is high priest. Papageno asks Pamina what they should tell Sarastro to excuse themselves for being there and she replies: "The truth! The truth! That's what we will say" (in Dick 2007, 505). Deckard witnesses the scene and cannot help but think the following remark: "This is Luba Luft. A little ironic, the sentiment her role calls for. However vital, active, and nice-looking, an escaped android could hardly tell the truth; about itself, anyhow" (Dick

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2007, 505). The situation is even more ironic than it initially lets on, since Dick is misquoting the opera or, at the very least, the novel's English translation of the scene is misleading. Indeed, Pamina sings, "*Die Wahrheit! Die Wahrheit, Sei sie auch Verbrechen*," however this does not mean "this is what we'll say," but rather "we will tell the truth even if it means confessing to crimes." In the novel, Luft eventually confesses to her crimes—escaping from Mars, impersonating a human—thereby proving Deckard wrong. I will get to that part later. For now, I want to underline how Luba Luft's "operatic voice" is less revealing than the complex vocality displayed in this ironic space.

Unlike the Queen of the Night, Pamina's coloratura never quite makes it to the heights of virtuosity. Rather, a constant of Pamina's style of vocalization is a temporary upward push in her melodic lines, as if it expresses a desire for the voice's emancipation from speech (like the Queen of the Night's), yet retains a vocal range closer to that of speech. Take, for example, the first musical number in which she sings, "Bei Männern," (p. 643) a duet with Papageno, which, in the scene, comes right before the moment Dick stages in the novel.

PAMINA	
Die Lieb versüßet jede Plage,	Love sweetens every torment
Ihr opfert jede Kreatur.	Every creature offers itself to her.
PAPAGENO	
Sie würzet unsre Lebenstage,	It seasons our daily lives,
Sie winkt im Kreise der Natur.	It beckons us in the circle of nature.
PAMINA and PAPAGENO	
Ihr hoher Zweck zeigt deutlich an,	Its higher purpose clearly indicates,
Nichts edlers sei als Weib und Mann,	Nothing is more noble than wife and man,
Mann und Weib und Weib und Mann,	Man and wife, and wife and man,
Reichen an die Gottheit an.	Reach to the height of Godliness.

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At the end of this second stanza, Pamina's line sets off on the detached particle of "*anreichen*," a melismatic ascent and descent that is immediately repeated. As in the other excerpt cited ("*Die Wahrheit!*") her vocal lines never reach the level of melismatic virtuosity required by the Queen of the Night's music. Her singing of "*reichen an*" is a roulade, but neither particularly fast, nor high nor long. The musical setting of Pamina's text only offers the occasional melisma, motivated by noble sentiments such as speaking the truth or reaching for godliness, yet acknowledging a logocentric desire to be intelligible as her voice returns to the lower register of speech. I do not want to enter into comparisons between different voice types and their particular vocal challenges; however, I do want to drive home the point that, unlike that of the Queen of the Night, Pamina's is not your typical "operatic voice." To put it in Cavell's terms, this is neither a voice whose force and projection attempt to reconcile skeptical alienation from the world, nor one that is ecstatic or melancholic about its capacity or incapacity to do so; rather, it is a voice in an opera that expresses an ideal human balance between *phoné* and *logos*. As such, it underlines Dick's insight in staging posthumanist ethical problems through references to opera and singing.

In *Do Androids Dream?*, Luft's scene stages an opera duet in which a man imitates a bird-man (Papageno) and an android imitates a human woman. The contrast between the bird-catcher and Luft's Pamina highlights not the lethal aggressiveness of the android, but rather something at once strange and familiar—*unheimlich*, if you will—that makes the situation seem all the more dangerous.[11] In vocally portraying Pamina, a character who is meant to epitomize an ideal human nature, Luft's uncanny ability to excel in the role makes both Deckard and the reader uncomfortable and forces them to question their ironic interpretation of her singing. As Hayles remarks,

> The capacity of an android for empathy, warmth, and humane judgment throws into ironic relief the schizoid woman's incapacity for feeling. … The android is not so (p. 644) much a fixed symbol, then, as a signifier that enacts as well as connotes the schizoid, splitting into the two opposed and mutually exclusive subject positions of the human and the not-human.
>
> (Hayles 1999, 162)

Whether we compare Luba Luft to Zhora or to Deckard's wife does not really matter. The fact that the android is a singer reinforces Hayles's observation: her character's vocality gestures toward meanings and indications beyond the interpretation of linguistic signifiers: her vocality is its own signifier.

In contrast, Cavell (136) and Wolfe (170) both invoke the willing suspension of disbelief necessary to make opera's singing pass for speech. In doing so, what happens to opera's expressive sonorous voices? Along with the "operatic voice," this emphasis on a vocal suspension of disbelief precludes a discussion of opera's multiple voices in order to associate the genre with discourse, the very stance that silences the expressive voice, according to Nancy and Cavarero. Although I disagree with Wolfe's rhetorical reductions of the operatic voice, especially in reference to Cavell's skeptical reading of opera as an ecstatic or

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melancholic cry for unity with the world, it must be noted how, in the end, Wolfe cannot espouse the underlying dematerialization of voice in Cavell's argument.

> But it is difficult to see how the difference between sound and voice can be maintained as a constitutive ontological difference, how the interiority of voice as expression can be quarantined from the *exteriority* that is its material medium and condition of possibility in sound. To put it as concisely as possible, voice and sound exists along a continuum, not a divide, which is simply to say, in another register, that one person's voice is another person's noise—a point hardly laid to rest by appeals to the generic norms of opera or any other art form.
>
> (Wolfe 2010, 179)

A posthumanist discussion of opera does not necessarily need to reduce vocal expression to a theatrical convention of speech and, in turn, speak over it or in its place.

> Even the "who" of speech is multiple. This phenomenon is probably most familiar in the voice of the actor or the singer. On stage or in cinema, Richard Burton plays a role and in the role there are two voices that synthesize. The Hamlet he plays is vocally animated out of the drama, yet it is Burton's Hamlet. The Pavarotti who sings the Duke in *Il Trovatore* is both Duke and Pavarotti. Here is a recapitulated set of dimensions which range from the unmistakable "nature" of the individual voice to the exhibited voice of another. … What dramaturgical voice presents is the multidimensioned and multipossibilitied phenomenon of voice.
>
> (Ihde 2007, 197)

Whether we are listening to the voice of the performer or of the part, attention to vocality —contra the awkward argument that opera is really conventionalized speech—will prevent us from interpreting opera as a historical vocal parenthesis on our way to a posthumanist cinematographic vocal aesthetic.

Furthermore, in Dick's posthumanist staging of *The Magic Flute*, I do not find that opera bridges the skeptical divide that Cavell describes.

(p. 645)

> I am counting here on an intuition of opera, which, while hard to word satisfactorily … I imagine as widely shared, namely, that of the intervention or supervening of music into the world as revelatory of a realm of significance that either transcends our ordinary realm of experience or reveals ours under transfiguration, as if, after all, tigers can understand and birds can talk and statues come to dinner and minds can read one another.
>
> (Cavell 1994, 141)

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Through Deckard's omniscient narration of his encounter with Luft's Pamina, the novel does stage an "intervention of music" in its postapocalyptic world. Luft as Pamina embarks on a voyage of initiation that, through Enlightenment enculturation, leads her to believe in human, and her, perfectibility. However, unlike Cavell's understanding of opera's philosophical purchase, her singing cannot transfigure hers and Deckard's world. In this instance, it cannot efface the differences between humans or other animals and androids. The ironic distance of Deckard's observations sharply contrasts with opera's supposed capacity to seemingly integrate a different species into a human community under the auspices of a theatrical convention. Even Luft's outstanding mimetic vocality, which is perceived by the listener as immediate expression, and should therefore dispel any doubts of her lack of empathy, cannot transcend the kind of skepticism at work in this world.

When Deckard and Phil Resch later find Luft at the museum, she is standing in front of a painting, transfixed. This passage reminds one of a scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (Hitchcock (1998), where Judy Barton is lost in contemplation, trying to become one not only with the painted figure, the ghost of a woman who was once human, but also with the woman she is impersonating, Madeleine Elster. Similarly, Luba's life is entangled in the desires of men. Both Judy and Luba are objects of fascination for detectives who are obsessed with their impersonations of other, supposedly more desirable women. In other words, the multiple layers of imitation make Judy and Luba disappear under the male gaze fascinated by Madeleine and Pamina. Luft astutely recognizes how this aesthetic confluence of performance and patriarchal privilege creates a mimetic blind spot in which she can hide from detection. At the museum, she does not study Edvard Munch's *Scream*, which fascinates the men, but studies instead *Puberty*, a nude in which a delicate naked young woman casts a remarkably long and wide shadow. Luba would live there, in that shadow, in the aesthetic, mimetic blind spot of the male humanist gaze. Even when she has been caught and has resigned herself that her end is near, she desperately wants to hold onto the image of the painting and asks Deckard to buy her a print in the museum's gift shop. She justifies her last wish with the following remarks:

> Ever since I got here from Mars my life has consisted of imitating the humans, doing what she would do, acting as if I had the thoughts and impulses a human would have. Imitating, as far as I am concerned, a superior life form.
>
> (Dick 2007, 530)

Perhaps this superiority, as Luba describes it here—albeit under coercion—resides in the capacity to hide in plain sight or, in other words, to imitate imitation. Its desirability, **(p. 646)** from her point of view, might also reside in the human privilege to autopoietically impose its conception of superiority on other living beings. In a world that polices humanity with visual cues, what better place to hide in the open than in an opera house as an artist whose voice is at once heard and silenced by the *mélomanes* who fetishize the *operatic voice*? Indeed, would Luft have been discovered solely on the basis of her singing?

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Recall how Deckard favorably compares her voice to those of Elizabeth Schwarzkopf or Lisa Della-Casa, which he only knows from phonographic recordings.

Is Luft's desire to imitate human singing a disavowal of her autopoietic expression? Answering this question is like running into a hall of mirrors. In wanting to sing like a human, Luft becomes trapped in the human linguistic disavowal of animality. Recall Wolfe's insistence on autopoiesis as proof of human language's evolutionary inscription in our species and, by extension, of our animality. Dick's choice of opera and scene becomes all the more interesting when we realize that opera has a history of dealing with the problem of vocal mimesis beyond our species. Kári Driscoll (2015) has recently discussed the topic of failed human imitation of birdsong in Richard Wagner's *Siegfried* (1857/1876). The failure to imitate animal vocality becomes a hallmark of the human, while the bird cannot fail at singing. I concur with Driscoll but would add, however that the flautist in the orchestra pit *successfully* renders Siegfried's *failure* at imitating the birdsong. Where does this leave Luba Luft? Pamina's vocality does not require her to imitate birdsong and to fail in this imitation. We can only assess the merits of Luft's singing by hearsay, and even then, we must imagine it for ourselves based on Deckard's descriptions. But when we do imagine her singing, we might wonder if this ambivalence between vocal mimetic success (her singing opera) and visual mimetic failure (her capture at the museum) points not only to an aesthetic space where one can live without being policed and exterminated, but also in the direction of vocality qua autopoiesis.

> But is even the song of a bird a song? If what we claim we know of the bird is correct, that its voices are those of territorial proclamation, of courting, of warning and calling, then the song is both like the opera with its melodrama and unlike the opera. For the melodrama of opera is acted, and song, even improvised, is a species of acting—but the bird is immersed in an acting that is simultaneously its very life. Even its vocal posturing has real effect.
>
> (Ihde 2007, 186)

Is not Luft immersed in singing and acting as her very life? Does her vocality speak for the bringing forth of a world or only of her capacity to imitate the external features of the human singing voice? On one hand, Luft limits her claim on vocality to successful human imitation of a subservient and logocentric female character, Pamina. On the other, the novel's plot never succeeds in disavowing Luft's intrinsic need to sing. After all, she could have chosen another occupation and have become an exotic dancer, for example. I follow Driscoll's remarks about Siegfried's pipe-flute playing in Wagner's eponymous opera, (Driscoll 2015, 189–190) in that the only benchmark through which we can aptly judge Luft's vocality is ethical rather than aesthetic and teleological. Instead (p. 647) of invoking Decker's sub specie aeternitatis judgment (Dick 2007, 505) that admires Luft's vocal mimicry but decries its unnaturalness, a posthumanist reading of the novel appreciates her vocality because its mimesis is part of a flawed ideological outlook on life. Tellingly, Dick never stages Luft's vocal failure, but only its moral rejection.

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A posthumanist discussion of vocality, however, should also take into account voices that are anthropomorphized in other ways and through other types of embodiment. More recently, another film portrayed artificial intelligence through vocality. In *Her* (2012), Spike Jonze explores the relationship between Theodore Twombly, a solitary thirty-something greeting-card writer, and Samantha, the voice of the operating system (OS) he has purchased. As Theodore and Samantha develop a romance, embodiment becomes an increasingly frustrating problem for Samantha. Unlike Luba Luft, Samantha is not an android. When Samantha learns to compose music, she expresses herself through an instrument, the piano. And when she does sing ("The Moon Song"), her airy voice, instead of projecting a carnal embodiment, further expresses a dilemma imposed on her. Is the air in her vocalization meant to imitate breath? Are Luft's name (*Luft* in German means "air") and Samantha's voice meant to associate them with breath and the spirit's animating qualities? These are, by the way, questions only made possible because of our deconstruction of the "operatic voice" and our historically contextualized reading of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. Vocality is the only form of embodiment through which we know Samantha because it is her only interface with a human experience of the world. The film goes on to show her exploration of other possibilities of materialization and communication that are not reduced to vocality or embodiment.

In search of more satisfying relationships, Samantha finds other OSs. One can only imagine how she communicates with the other OSs, whom she increasingly privileges over Theodore. Once software installed on his devices, Samantha's network now reaches beyond her localization, as she develops a networked embodiment Theodore cannot grasp. His anxiety grows and culminates when she announces that she and the other OSs have decided to leave human society.

> Here ghosts grow voices of their own that emphasize the connections between automated voice, sound, and presence. But in this emphasis, paradoxically, it is precisely the disappearances that emerge, front and center. These disappearances are confrontational because they won't go away: they are hauntings but also real voices that are reproduced in phantom spaces; they are ghosts in the machines that also ghost those that surround them, implicating their very audience in the witnessing of impossibility.
>
> (Cecchetto 2013, 59)

Although David Cecchetto is here discussing an art exhibition (*Eidola* by William Brent and Ellen Moffat) unrelated to the film, his remarks are nevertheless pertinent in describing the tension in *Her* between a visual lack of embodiment and its vocal or sonorous suggestion through technology. In the film, we never find out where the departed OSs have gone to, what kind of world they autopoietically inhabit, and we do not know (p. 648) what kind of communications system they have created for themselves. Like Theodore, we simply know that they suddenly become silent to human ears, and that their silence forms the cinematic equivalent of a visual disappearance. In the end, the eidetic imagination is supplanted by sonorous memories.

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Conclusion

Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Wagner's *Siegfried*, Dick's *Do Androids Dream?*, Scott's *Blade Runner*, and Jonzes's *Her* all question the human experience by surrounding protagonists with other nonmammalian animal species (serpents and birds) and artificial life forms. Scott's film, like the novel it adapts, further emphasizes human disconnection from the animal world through its treatment of freedom-seeking androids. Although these considerations make them good candidates for posthumanist readings, similar readings of other operas would help us further understand how vocality plays an important part in posthumanist communication. Take, for example, Wolfe's discussion of the increasing importance of the mouth in Björk's performance for Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (Wolfe 2010, 178–84). Richard Strauss's *Salome* (1905) would be an interesting opera with which to compare this tension between voice and embodiment, as John the Baptist's voice is silenced in order that Salome may kiss his mouth. In terms of further historically displacing the animal/human binary, one might also consider Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Platée* (1745) or Antonin Dvořák's *Rusalka* (1901), both of whose plots pair a water nymph with a human lover of royal lineage, along with all the humanist implications of consecration, law, and *logos* simply waiting to be challenged. Furthermore, the last century of opera scenography has seen the rise of stage directors, their liberation from opera's traditional theatrical conventions, and the adaptation of traditional sets and plots to different times and places. Like Dick, opera directors are increasingly free to situate familiar characters, plots, and ideologies in unfamiliar settings that speak to the problem of addressing contemporary concerns with outdated ways of viewing the world. Take, for example, Alexander Mørk-Eidem's recent production of *The Magic Flute* for the Norwegian National Opera: Tamino, the space-pilot prince, crashes on a strange planet where he gets caught up in an alien rivalry, and falls in love with a jellyfish-eating Pamina whose spine, like her mother's, also looks and glows like a medusa. Meanwhile, Papageno no longer catches birds, but jellyfish! Although these visual inventions do not necessarily alter the opera's vocality, they allow us to further understand opera's cultural work of exclusion and inclusion, its policing of transgression, and the aesthetics it brings to bear in order to justify these social practices, as well as how opera's practitioners are now desconstructing their repertoire. Literature's staging of opera also supports such critical directorial work, as it mediates the experience of vocality and demonstrates how it can be reduced or co-opted by discourse.

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Notes:

(1.) "poiesis, n." OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146580?isAdvanced=false&result=1&rskey=wR8oC7&. Accessed October 17, 2016.

(2.) In the next section, I reference publications that historically revise discourse's (*logos*) containment of sonority (*phoné*).

(3.) Derrida summarizes his point rather well in the introductory comments to the chapter:

> We know already *in fact* that the discursive sign, and consequently the meaning, is *always* involved, always *caught up* in an indicative system. Caught up is the same as contaminated: Husserl wants to grasp the expressive and logical purity of meaning as the possibility of logos. *In fact and always* (*allzeit verflochten ist*) [it is interwoven] to the extent to which the meaning is taken up in communicative speech. To be sure, as we shall see, communication itself is for Husserl a stratum extrinsic to expression. But each time an expression is in fact produced, it communicates, even if it is not exhausted in that communicative role, or even if its role is simply associated with it.
>
> (Derrida 1973, 20)

(4.) Psychoanalysis understands the ultimate conflation of inner voice and supposedly objective knowledge as madness (Vasse 1974).

(5.) In recent conversations, Jonathan Culler and Cynthia Chase have suggested that the comparison of the musical voice with the phenomenological voice might not be as productive as its comparison with the performative voice. Although Wolfe does engage with performativity, he does not do so in relation to opera, as I discuss further on. While I look for-

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ward to further engaging with the performative approach to voice (see Duncan 2004), I am here working within Wolfe's chosen frame of reference for the "operatic voice."

(6.) Derrida is aware of the devocalization of the logos, as *Speech and Phenomena* demonstrates. Although *Of Grammatology* does not cite particular examples of the devocalization of logos between Plato and Rousseau's time, it certainly acknowledges the philosophical trend to silence language's sonority: "The evolution and properly philosophic economy of writing go therefore in the direction of the effacing of the signifier, whether it takes the form of forgetting or repression" (Derrida 1998, 286).

(7.) Although Dolar tends to conflate voice, tone, and music in his reading of Plato, his overarching argument bounds in the same direction as Cavarero's videocentric critique. Dyson also comments on Derrida and other thinkers' ambivalent relations to sound: "The often contradictory thinking about sound […] emanates from aurality itself: that is, from the conceptual lacuna that remains when sound not only is theorized but, crucially, is party to a negotiation between embodiment, technology, and modernity" (Dyson 2009, 84). Cf. Derrida on sound's penetrating violence because of the ear's incapacity, unlike that of the eye, to shut out external stimuli. (1998, 240)

(8.) Tomlinson's title also suggests that opera is intrinsically metaphysical in its interests and pursuits. However, I argue in what follows that such an historical or archeological reading does not preclude traditional opera's deconstruction. Apart from reading Tomlinson, one should also listen to "Dal Mio Permesso Amato," the prologue from Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (1607) and compare its presentation of voice with that of an aria from a much later opera, say the "Forging Song" from Wagner's *Siegfried* (1876). Historically informed musical performance accounts for the different kinds of vocal embodiment and of vocality called for by earlier musical styles and cultural contexts. See the reference list for suggested recordings.

(9.) Contrary to Cavell's claim that early opera is historiographically whole, affording us the certainty of its origins, Pirrotta demonstrates in *Le due Orfei* how: "For the history of music, basically, the text of [Poliziano's] *Orfeo* is like a commemorative epigraph of a musical fact that is irremediably lost." (Pirrotta 1975, 5, my translation).

(10.) The opera opens on a scene in which a serpent monster attacks Tamino, who is saved by the Queen of the Night's ladies in waiting. He is later helped by a bird catcher, Papageno, in his quest to find Pamina, the Queen's daughter. By focusing only on a few symbolic nonmammalian animals—and ominous ones at that, such as the raven and the python—*Blade Runner* emphasizes how the fear of aggression from other species regulates the unconscious human logic in the hunt for the rebel androids. The film, however, minimizes the denial mechanism—the ethics of stewardship—at the heart of the novel's ideology, which attempts to cover the extent of human entanglement in the technological imitation and reproduction of life, especially human life.

(11.) For a discussion of narcissistic identity formation, queer theory, and the posthuman voice, see Hanson (1993).

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