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Introduction: voice(s) as a method and an in-between

Konstantinos Thomaidis and Ben Macpherson

Oskar is a young boy who cannot let go. He has hidden an answering machine with the final six messages from his father still on the tape; he plays them repeatedly just to hear his father's voice, although he is no longer there, and is not coming back. In an effort to understand the loss he suffered on 9/11, Oskar scours New York, on a journey to reconnect with his dad. His grandfather often accompanies him on trips around the city, yet he is silent, communicating only through the written word, gesture and facial expression. This focus on voice is central to the drama of Jonathan Safran Foer's 2005 novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Its importance to the way in which Oskar mourns his father's passing, and bonds with his grandfather, suggests something about voice as a powerful entity of connection, emotion and support—whether material, mediated or mute.

In any of these forms, voice has the power to create what Erika Fischer-Lichte terms a “liminal space of permanent transitions, passages, and transformations” (2008: 128). It is voice that allows Oskar to stay connected with his father. Considering the centrality of recorded and silent voices to Foer's narrative, Fischer-Lichte's observation that voice is in a state of *permanent* impermanence—an aural space,

defined only by its evanescence—is telling. This sense of voice as the “in-between”—as the space that allows Oskar to hold on to his past while dealing with his present—in many ways represents the starting point of this collection, through which the transitions, passages and transformations made possible through voice are brought together and explored. Before introducing the volume as a whole, further perspectives on voice as an “in-between” will provide a context for this collection, and establish certain positions assumed at the outset.

Conceptualizing the “in-between”

This sense of “in-betweenness” pervades discourses about voice. Mladen Dolar has previously explored this “in-betweenness” of voice in vividly Lacanian terms.

Conceptualizing voice as the nexus of body and language, Dolar suggests it represents “the place where what cannot be said can nevertheless be conveyed” (2006: 31). Ben Macpherson (2012) reconsidered Dolar’s paradoxical hierarchy of voice, body and language with reference to sung voice, but in this case, the place that “conveys” rather than “says”—the embodied in-between of vocality—implicitly relies on Fischer-Lichte’s suggestion of transformation and transition. Roland Barthes famously defined the “grain of the voice” as “the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue,” while asserting it is not linguistic, timbral or tonal (1977: 182). The “grain,” then, might be permanent, whilst the aural space it activates is rendered transitional.

In each case, whether through song, speech or silence, voice becomes complex and ineffable, with scholarship of the past two decades challenging the fetishized voice-as-object (Abbate 1991, Cavarero 2005). The voice of Oskar’s grandfather is certainly ineffable in its absence, yet in contrast to the mediatized recordings of his father, can

silence be understood as a vocal act? What kind of aural space does it inhabit? Conversely, Oskar's treasured answering-machine messages are technologically reproduced, "fixed" by a date stamp, and representative of a moment in time. With the panicked reassurances of his father's messages now historical utterances, does the voice of his father "convey" something, rather than "say" something, facilitating Oskar's passage from the past to the present? Might Oskar's grandfather and father occupy the same aural space, the same "in-between," in their silence and their mediated utterance?

One possible way to begin answering these questions is to consider the point at which voice becomes "in-between." With further reference to sung performance, musicologist Simon Frith has observed that listeners hear voice all at once as a musical instrument, a body, a person and a character in performance (2008: 68). Voice, then, is a plurality—and the aural "in-between" is the junction point for multiple encodings of experience to be negotiated and understood. This is the first position of the book.

Despite their ontological or sonic disparities, the voices on Oskar's answering machine and his mute grandfather may occupy the same space, enabling the young boy's journey. In short, the "in-between" of voice offers an interdisciplinary space for such plurality, wherein multiple renderings work together in a process of transition, passage and transformation. In this important sense, then, when seeking to ask what voice *is* and what voice studies *might be*, there is no definitive answer and no definite article: *the* voice does not exist. This is the second position that led us to develop this volume.

This collection responds to a growing academic interest in voice, encapsulated in the proliferation of recent publications (Neumark, Gibson and van Leewen 2010; Karpf 2011; Kreiman and Sidtis 2013; Utz and Lau 2013; Bernhart and Kramer 2014; Connor 2014), and the establishment of related degree programmes in the UK, the US, and Australasia. However, until now, there has been little concerted attempt to bring together the disparate disciplinary scholarship that effectively addresses voice, not merely as a theme, but as a discrete area or critical methodology. Taking our cue from Paul Barker's Foreword, we wish to ask what it means to reflect on "voiceness" in its own right, and what efforts are needed to disentangle ourselves from the "tyrannies of understanding" voice in strict musicological or linguistic terms. In concluding Part 1, Konstantinos Thomaidis deconstructs the epistemologies of voice in training and research programmes, seeking "to find a voice for voice" within the academy. If the voices of Oskar, his father and his grandfather occupy the same space in a state of "in-betweenness," is there a way to reorganize this space to make its analysis less hierarchical?

This volume is a decisive step towards such a reordering, arguing for voice studies as an inter-discipline with distinctive approaches and concerns. It proposes such a turn by questioning and exploring the concepts and practices of "voice" in the following three parts: Process (Part 2), Performance (Part 3) and Experience (Part 4), which we understand as interrelated and interconnected.

"Process" might allude to such creative practices as composition, dramaturgy, and devising. Part 2 interrogates "the *makings* of this making" (Thomaidis 2013: 61;

original emphasis); the vocational training of voice and cultural assumptions associated with mundane and extra-daily voice(s). In Chapter 2, Päivi Järviö focuses on the vocal studio for Baroque music. She uses Michel Henry's non-intentional phenomenology to bring the singular experience of the singer—in their contingent dialogue with the teacher's bodied self—to the forefront of learning as experiencing. Tim Kjeldsen, in Chapter 3, revisits Sartre's concept of internal negation through Merleau-Ponty's critique, to examine the singer's facticity through application of the Alexander Technique. Tara McAllister-Viel's contribution then critically interrogates her experiences of drawing on Linklater's techniques to teach voice in a South Korean university. Her intercultural/interdisciplinary methodology derives from her students' and her own training in traditional *p'ansori*. Jan Mrázek unpacks the complexities of another form of in-betweenness. His writing attends to the space occupied by spoken voice in Javanese *wayang*, as it resonates between music and text, the puppet, the puppeteer and the audience, or tradition and in-performance innovation.

“Performance” (Part 3) might therefore refer to musico-theatrical practices where voice is the primary means of expressivity, or it may be seen *as* a performative agent in-and-of-itself within its own socio-political context. Mikhail Karikis foregrounds—from a practitioner's perspective—two concerns around generating material for devising; the acoustics of a lived space in site-specific performance and the unsettling potential of nonsense, as proposed by Cage or Connor. In Chapter 7, Piersandra Di Matteo traces voice as a consistent preoccupation in Romeo Castellucci's theatrical work. Her analysis of physical, textual and sonic dramaturgies unfolds against a palimpsest of theoretical discourses that debate voice as present *and* disembodied. Chapter 8 sees Nina Sun Eidsheim revisit an earlier article in which she uses Juliana

Snapper's underwater singing performances as a nodal point towards an expansive web of critical associations on the sensuality and materiality of voice. Marios Chatziprokopiou roots his live art practice in his study of the Krahô Indians' ritual lamentation, alongside his personal experiences of mourning and protest in the urban Greek context. In the final chapter of Part 3, Norie Neumark frames the voices of seminal Australian sound artists within questions of enchantment. In weaving together their compositional strategies and conceptual preoccupations, Neumark simultaneously lends an attentive ear to the performative and affective qualities of voice.

In Part 4, "experience" is understood as multi-modal engagement with voice in process, in practice, and in performance. Yet it is also understood as listening, receiving and documenting. Ben Macpherson conceptualizes an intricate dialogue between "body musicality" and neumatic, cheironomic, orthochronic, graphic and mediatized notation. His analysis centres around Alexander Truslit's notion of the inner motion of music as a key to unlocking the interface between the visual, the virtual and the visceral (in) voice. Pamela Karantonis, in Chapter 12, traverses a broad historical and geographical landscape, focusing on the cultural politics of classical singing as exemplified in key pedagogic manuals, international initiatives, and opportunities afforded by technology—including Berberian's radio show. Ella Finer asserts that voice "carries a body and no body simultaneously: existing as vibrations through space and simultaneously as the aural promise of *somebody*," interrogating cases whereby voice as an acoustic property emanated from a female voicer. Concluding Part 4, Johanna Linsley advocates the methodological benefits of eavesdropping as a research strategy. Listening-in and overhearing are critically

approached as fertile tools in analysing differing performance settings, in which the spectator is first and foremost invited to occupy the in-between place of the (intentional or inadvertent) auditor.

Vocal multiplicities

Let us, however, return to Oskar. Stephen Daldry's screen adaptation of Foer's novel (2011) does not merely address voice as paradoxical; it celebrates its in-betweenness. What could be termed the ontological ineffability of voice is presented, not as something to be marvelled at—presupposing an essential topos of voiceness—but as an “in-between,” a unique point of departure; remarkable, omnipresent, but a given nonetheless.

In many ways, Daldry fashions a self-conscious meditation on the cinematic voice—expanding or even challenging the thinking of Doane (1980) and Chion (1999) on audiovisual body-voices. It is not just that Oskar's dad has become a series of secret voice messages, or that his mute grandfather scores and communicates his utterances through copious amounts of notes. The key for characterization throughout the scripted plot is vocality. Oskar and his mother do not talk frequently; a whispered “I love you” behind a closed door—without any certainty of reciprocity—is the closest they come to vocal exchange. Oskar, resorting to legal terminology, accuses her of being “*in absentia*”; the un-heard voice, the absent mother. His grandmother responds to his late-night walkie-talkie calls from across the street but when they find themselves in the same flat, what fills the acoustic sequence is the disparity in their accents. They share the same lineage but inhabit different cultural milieus and moments. Daldry's sublimation of the (historical, psychological, biological, mediated)

voice denies the existence of a single subject as its bearer. There can be no undeniable protagonist in this unfolding of vocal fragmentation and excess.

This evidences a further concern of this volume: methodology. The dramaturgy of the film is itself metonymic of methodology, revolving around a (lost-and-found) key and Oskar's development of strategies that could help turn the enigma of his father's loss into something manageable. It is not merely the plot that abounds with vocal references; voice is also deployed as a core filmic device. The all-familiar tactics of the acousmatic narrator and the dialogic exchange persist in this case too. However, as a child on the autistic spectrum, Oskar is oftentimes overwhelmed in his perception of the world, particularly when wracked with guilt and grief, conveyed as a tide of acoustic waves—alluding to Oskar's internality—or as bouts of extra-linguistic cries, sobs, and gasps—framing his inter-relationality. Oskar's voice is a problem and Daldry's approach is to resort to a *variety* of techniques and representational tools.

Acknowledging the in-betweenness of voice is a provocation to methodological multiplicity. Approaching voice as an emerging field of creative and scholarly practice, this collection therefore refocuses a wide array of lenses drawn from cultural studies, musicology, performance studies, ethnography, visual studies, somatics, sound studies, and training and pedagogy, to establish voice as an area of study and a methodological tool. Voice is taken here to be at once between existing disciplines and an emerging enquiry. All authors' writing embodies a relation to the praxical, that which is in-between the practical and the exegetic. Järviö, for example, interlinks philosophy with first-person accounts of teaching. Eidsheim reads Snapper's performances as an observer and delves into the practice through experimentation.

Chatziprokopiou journeys from anthropology to artistic practice through an auto-ethnography of loss. At the same time, voice is used as a method and a tool. Barker and Thomaidis use voice—either voiceness or revocalization—to question epistemic categories. Neumark and Fret remind us that voices engender *doing* but what they do is not easily accounted for, or tangible. Linsley proposes a type of listening to voices—eavesdropping—as a research methodology and a tool for documentation.

The content responds to this multifaceted engagement with voice, foregrounding a move away from understanding voice as a singular or unquestioned category. A stimulating mixture of leading voices in the field combined with cutting-edge work from emergent academics balances scholarly enquiry and empirical contributions by practitioner-scholars. Moreover, in bringing together contributors from Finland, Italy, Greece, Poland, Nigeria, Canada, Singapore, Australia, the UK and the US, and presenting case studies from the above geopolitical contexts along with those from South Korea, Indonesia, Brazil, Germany, France and the Czech Republic, this edited collection is avowedly international in its scope. We aim to reflect on the globalized contexts within which voice is produced and circulated.

This multiplicity of content translates into the format of the volume. Several contributions (Kjeldsen, Karikis, Neumark, Macpherson) tightly weave analysis with the use of scores, diagrams, rehearsal photos and illustrations, allowing for multimodal engagement with the authors' concerns. In a similar vein, we developed the final section (Part 5) as an invitation to new modes of enquiry. Presenting the volume as a platform of interrogation and not a final statement, we asked researchers and practitioners to share their personal experiences prompted by the question “what

is voice studies?” In lieu of more traditional concluding remarks, their responses, alongside our own reflections, form what we have called the “polyphonic conclusion” to this collection.

In the chapters that follow, twenty-two voices from six continents offer divergent, disparate and interdisciplinary perspectives on voice, enlivening each section with a multiplicity of experiences, arguments, concepts and opinions. The richness, praxicality and in-betweenness of the material invites a plurality of thematic journeys. Readers interested in intercultural voice will source relevant information in the extensive discussions by McAllister-Viel and Mrázek, and in the texts by Fret, Karikis, Chatziprokopiou or Adedeji. Alongside Part 2, pedagogy is a concern of Eidsheim, Karantonis, Smallbone, Thomaidis and Darnley. Psychoanalytic perspectives thread through Di Matteo or Burrows; a multidisciplinary interest in the biomedical and expressive characteristics of voice is forged in Sidtis or Kjeldsen; and Barker, Macpherson, Bonenfant, Neumark and Linsley reflect on technology and voice. Therefore, this sense of interdisciplinarity is not only to be found within each chapter, but “in-between” them, and we invite you to find your own connections as you engage with the range of topics and ideas that follow.

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