



This space in the air between two mouths is a relational diagram of ebb and flow, where the voices—autonomous—transform and acquire meaning, and where they recede as they go through you and through others, inside and out of bodies. What if we were to encapsulate the voices in this moment of passage? Is it a you without a body who hears this voice without a body? If it is, it wouldn't matter whether what we hear is real, a memory, or a small glitch in our imagination. Nevertheless, I have always wanted my ear to perceive this/the voice, so that the expectation of hearing is not just fantasy but also the clicking of lips and teeth.

A voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices. A voice involves the throat, saliva, infancy, the patina of experienced life, the mind's intentions, the pleasure of giving a personal form to sound waves. What attracts you is the pleasure this voice puts into existing: into existing as voice.<sup>5</sup>

I wonder if communication is an interval of perceptions and emotions, where you become aware that someone is talking—perhaps you—in the instant the voice becomes a body inside the head. In Italo Calvino's "A King Listens" (1986), the third in a series of short stories about the importance of sensorial experience, a dictator seated in his throne develops the mental ability of absolute hearing. Without moving an inch, he can hear all: words, whispers, silence. But the stream of sounds causes him great anxiety, as each cadence elicits an interpretation of malevolence. In this state of acoustic paranoia, it becomes no longer important to know the source. Then all of a sudden, a voice—a woman's voice—resists being consumed with all the rest. This voice, unlike the others, remains outside his head, in an invisible and relational space where no reply is required. The visual and the conceptual open up to the king upon hearing it, becoming a voice-body that could be him (or you) or an intruder all at the same time: an external body, or perhaps a prosthesis.

5 Italo Calvino, "A King Listens," in *Under the Jaguar Sun*, trans. William Weaver (London: Vintage, 1993), 56.

Those voices that remain outside move playfully in a terrain of beautiful uncertainty, blindly advancing and bumping into others, folding space into nonchronological time.



The king, who listens, can sense tonal singularity. It goes beyond what words tell us, overthrowing the supremacy of semantics, and of language over the phonic (one of the principal paradigms of Western philosophy); that is, beyond the message that, in order to communicate, has to be pronounced, distilled, understood, and assimilated through a determined code. In Western thinking, shaped in large part by Greek philosophy, the voice has held meaning as a sonorous substrate that, upon leaving the mouth-brain, obediently orders itself into words, which are in turn part of a language that is, by definition, human.

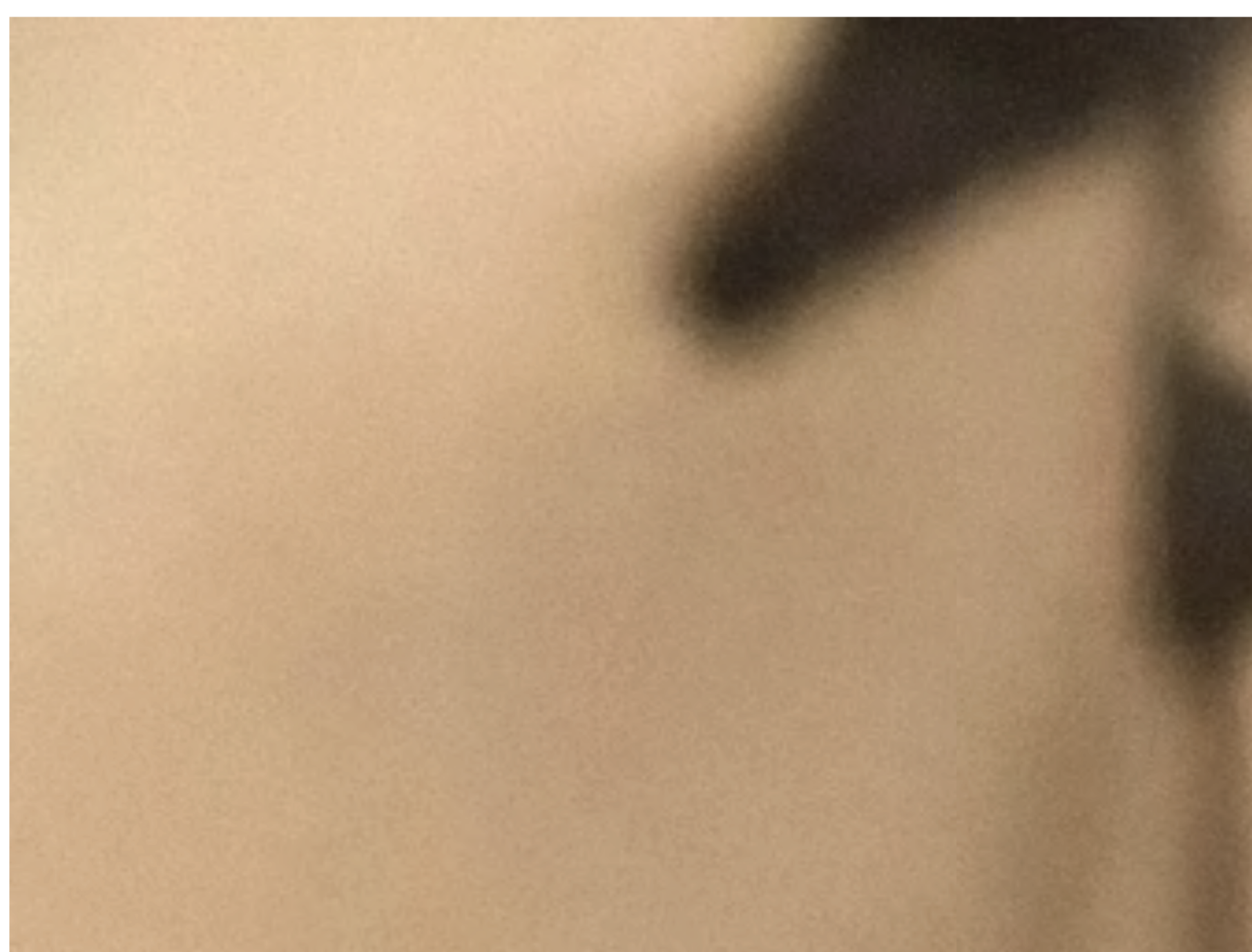
More than simply anthropocentric, this choice can be defined as logocentric. It goes back to the complex point at which Greek philosophy is seen to privilege the connection between voice and speech, thus imprisoning voice in the realm of *logos* and in the cluster of questions that characterize the development of the philosophical tradition as a continuous reflection on language.<sup>6</sup>

This is a tradition that, as Adriana Cavarero goes on to note in her essay “The Vocal Body” (2012), has its “roots in a conceptual history of the voice based on a philosophical stance that holds speaking to be dependent on thinking.”<sup>7</sup>

A phonetic nonverbal language can’t achieve the category of voice, given that it “perverts” any form of human interpretative thinking. Yet it is not by chance that the sonorous expression that breaks the auditory monotony of Calvino’s king is a human voice and distinctly a woman’s. Under the reign of words, certain nonmale voices, represented as sensuously auratic, can call forth bodies at once sonic and tangible, interrupting, on occasion, the patriarchal wisdom of the invisible logos.

6 Adriana Cavarero, “The Vocal Body: Extract from A Philosophical Encyclopedia of the Body,” trans. Matt Langione, *Qui Parle* 21, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2012): 72.

7 *Ibid.*, 73.



Entertained by melodies that function as an antidote to the worries and headaches of interpretation, the logos can briefly relax, set free from having to find logical explanations for everything it hears.

(Here would be the time to hear a sonic story where the message becomes diluted as it opens us up to the candid suspicion that forms of communication capable of activating, alerting, touching, and modulating the senses may exist.)

What voices dare to overcome the immaterial semantic dominance? To come close to this new world of sonic and vibratory knowledge is to engage in a complex exercise of hearing. I picture myself going through a space covered in sound-absorbing panels, dense soft murals, where hearing halfway is not an impediment but rather a prompt for the imagination. In this space, other kinds of rhetorical figures appear, irresistible obstacles that disarm consciousness, wooing us with songs not necessarily heard.