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Remediating the Female Voice in Extremis(m): The Human Voice (1966)

Pamela Karantonis

The notion of an artwork that is in the process of becoming, through duress, is also the story of a number of experimental genres, synonymous with the twentieth century. In referencing Hegel's concept of *sublation*, Slavoj Žižek proposes that a reality in which new forms emerge, do so from the negation and diminution of other possibly earlier forms. From the beginning of European avant-garde art movements in the early 1900s (and the unstable gendering of vocality-as-other implicated there) to the feminisation of performance art that took a corporeal turn towards the end of the last century, women and women's voices have been the material reality, and also the cultural agency, that has shaped the terrain of vocality when it has come to experimentation (Dunn and Jones 1996). It can become too tempting for commentators to approach vocal experimentation, including notions of 'extended vocal technique', with the effecting of an abject identity ascribed to woman as animal/hysterical/other/extremist in ways that are not politically progressive (Cavarero 2005; Dolar 2006). This chapter intends to address a 20th-century-specific response to female vocality via a chain of remediations of Jean Cocteau's play *La Voix Humaine* (1930)¹, ending with a case study of the overlooked but exemplary vocal performance by Ingrid Bergman in *The Human Voice* (1966) (Kotcheff 1966). The British experimental television drama, *The Human Voice* (1966) can be read as a songless and technological updating of the operatic undoing of women (Clément 1977). It can also be read as a model of a new medium (experimental television) determining itself in tension with the waning immediacy of the analogue telephone handset, given an audience's updated approached to soundtrack technologies.² The casting of the Swedish actress and Hollywood icon, Ingrid Bergman, activates a number of theories regarding cinema's errant voices too. Her character appeared

¹ Acknowledgements: I wish to Jason D'Aoust and Francesca Placanica for their generous and expert suggestions on various points on Poulenc, mediation theory and translated updates on Denis Vasse's work.

Throughout this article, the use of the title *La Voix Humaine* will always be accompanied by a date to show the particular iteration to which the analysis refers. The exception to this is when *La Voix Humaine* is mentioned more broadly as a paradigm that is subject to repeated iteration, and the citation without a date acknowledges the totality of its history. Everist (2010): 195-231. For the purposes of this article, *La Voix Humaine*, as a dramatic and musical paradigm, begins with Cocteau. It can be acknowledged for historical interest that there was an opera, *La Voix Humaine* (1861) by composer Giulio Alary and librettist Melésville (pseudonym of Anne-Honoré-Joseph Duveyrier), which bears no thematic relationship to Cocteau's work. It was what was known in French nineteenth century opera history as a *petit opéra* – an occasionally maligned genre through which *operetta* and *opera-comique* composers broke through to operatic ambitions.

² Slavoj Žižek is cited in Bolter and Grusin (1999: 55) in terms of his consideration of Hegelian *sublation*.

scripted as generically British, despite her distinct accent. While the French origins of the work and its operatic weight were under erasure in this version, Bergman's spoken voice stands in for its operatic avatar. This is due jointly to Bergman's own vocal exoticism and visibility as a screen legend and the endurance of Cocteau's conception that the female voice, always on the precipice of song and entangled in technology, narrates the twentieth century's story of the human voice.

In relying upon the work of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999), it should be acknowledged that remediation has a relationship to our desire for chronology. By reading 'remediation' as an improved updating of an artwork in new media, we engage in a relationship with what appears a natural, historical chronology. Bolter and Grusin's chief observations of remediated works are that they are 'presenting themselves as refashioned and improved versions of other media' (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 14-5) and 'they are all attempts to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 11). These principles can be misunderstood when taken too broadly, as it does not always follow that each iteration of *La Voix Humaine*, for example, aims for an even more authentic result (in terms of the audience's experience of the content) in a way that is corrective of earlier iterations, simply because the new version is 'refashioned'. *La Voix Humaine* is predicated upon abstraction and estrangement in the face of the extant technology within the diegesis. The artwork determines itself when the phone is made strange, our experience as listeners is made strange, and so too our vision of the woman speaking alone. Given the experimental openness of *La Voix Humaine*, it is most useful for a discussion of the artworks to be asynchronous because resonances or affinities are contingent upon other elements.³ This may be observed, for example, in the case of the friendships and collaborations between Jean Cocteau, Francis Poulenc and Denise Duval, which span the chain of operatic iterations from the 1950s to 1970 (and for Cocteau and Poulenc, for many decades longer).

³ 'For our traits of immediacy, hypermediacy, and remediation, historical affiliations among media do indeed matter; however, there are other formal and social affiliations for which the chronology is not important', Bolter and Grusin (1999: 87). They rely upon Michel Foucault's estimation of resonances in his conception of the genealogy of events in history. See also Foucault (1977).

Table 1. *La Voix Humaine* – the life cycle.

Title	Author	Year	Country	Genre / Media
<i>La Voix Humaine</i>	Cocteau	1930	France	Monodrama
<i>La Voix Humaine</i>	Theodor W. Adorno	1931	Germany	Unfinished incidental music, radio commission.
<i>Una voce umana</i>	Rossellini	1948	Italy	Feature Film. (Part 1 of <i>L'Amore</i>)
<i>La Voix Humaine</i>	Poulenc	1958	France	Tragédie lyrique en un acte (Operatic monodrama).
<i>The Human Voice</i>	Kotcheff	1966	United Kingdom	Television drama.
<i>La Voix Humaine</i>	Delouche	1970	France	Television movie.
<i>Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown / Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios</i>	Almodovar	1988	Spain	Filmic 're-contextualization'.

To begin with our urtext, the play by Jean Cocteau starred the Belgian actress, Berthe Bovy, and premiered at Paris's Comédie Français in 1930.⁴ The timing of the play was at the twilight of the European theatrical avant-garde which began in the late nineteenth century and arguably peaked by the late 1920s: 'like Jarry, Apollinaire, and Artaud, Cocteau dehumanized his characters [...] they were types, functions, symbols, instincts, or inanimate objects' (Knapp (1985: 116). Adrian Curtin observed the staging of *woman* and *telephone* were part of the same theatrical sign system:

In effect, Cocteau wished to stage a type of tableaux vivant of woman and telephone, a modernization of Maeterlinck's static theatre that glamorized, fetishized, and made a spectacle out of telephony, despite the drabness of the scene and the alleged banality of the device. (Curtin 2014: 95-6)

Indeed Cocteau's unique philosophy in relation to the telephone relied upon the 'banality' of its use amid domestic scandal; both in real life and in staged drama.⁵ Despite Cocteau's

⁴ Miller Gottlieb (2001) details the genesis of the work in her article.

⁵ Brown (1968: 268). Numerous sources account for Cocteau's attitude to the technology of the telephone, as was indicated in his preface to the play and in subsequent translations and biographical texts about the artist. See also Cocteau (1951: 7) and Sprigge and Kihm (1968: 116), Van Drie (2016: 205-6). In what might be regarded as the nineteenth century equivalent of the 'live streaming' of opera to remote audiences/auditors, both the Opéra de Paris (Garnier) and Comédie française positioned microphones within their theatre buildings to

minimisation of it, the telephone in *La Voix Humaine* endured as one of the most persistent symbols and psychologised icons of his works. Cocteau's setting was also at a time when the telephone as an object of innovation or liberation was at an historical crossroads, more than half a century after its invention in 1876. By 1930, the novelty of the 'pleasure telephone' or the *théâtrephone* was waning and the telephone represented much more of the mundane and routine instruments of daily, direct communication, than technological innovation, although the voice of the speaker could still retain a subjective, even illicit, thrill for its listener.⁶

Another crossroads occurred with regard to further adaptations and it was signalled by a insignificant-sounding event that now places our focus largely on filmmakers. Theodor Adorno's anticipated 1931 radio drama was cancelled (Adorno and Berg 2005: 175-6, 254). It was the only notable planned remediation that did not include a visually present woman. In hindsight, perhaps a radio play could not have effectively communicated the silent presence of the stage actor, waiting for the tense pauses to be broken, which an audience could have seen, and empathised with. The telephone's visual resistance to vocal immediacy – as the word telephone means 'distant voice' – would necessarily be erased in a radiophonic treatment. This tension between eyes and ears factor into any mediation of *La Voix Humaine*'s aesthetics.

Subsequent remediations take *La Voix Humaine* in the direction of the intensified psychologisation of voice simultaneous to its remediation in the cinema. *Une voce umana* by Roberto Rossellini (1948), was in tension with Cocteau's aesthetic of dehumanisation, but it set a paradigm for Ingrid Bergman's performance. All the potential excesses of the cinematic medium are illuminated by Cocteau's reaction to the Rossellini film. Cocteau

facilitate the subscriber service known as the *théâtrephone*. Marcel Proust was an oft-cited fan of this particular experience of listening to contemporary operas staged in Paris.

⁶ Kittler (1999) details how the telephone was soon to become the precursor to forms of mediation that enabled inscription and storage simultaneous to the transmission of voices, to the point that the analogue phone (as distinct from the smartphone, with audio-visual recording capacity) is often not be regarded in contemporary media discourse as a form of mediation at all. I would like to thank Jason D'Aoust for highlighting the fact that the invention of the telephone led to the technological capacity to record the voice.

“'Hullo!' Edison screamed into the telephone mouthpiece. The vibrating diaphragm set in motion a stylus that wrote onto a moving strip of paraffin paper. [...] Upon replaying the strip and its vibrations, which in turn set in motion the diaphragm, a barely audible 'Hullo!' could be heard. Edison understood. A month later he coined a new term for his telephone addition: phonograph' Kittler (1999: 21).

declared that there was too much focus on Anna Magnani's face and in fact: 'this documentary might be entitled "Woman devoured by a girl" or "The telephone as instrument of torture"' (Grover-Friedlander 2005: 126). Anna Magnani had a creditable ability as a singer of vernacular songs within Italian cinema, so her vocal performativity was potentially subject to scrutiny during these intense visual takes by the director. This concept of 'devouring' in mediated vocality is one that is encoded in the 1966 version and will be considered in a later context, with the observations of Antonin Artaud. There is a possibility that the camera devours Magnani. Michal Grover-Friedlander explains that:

a vocal close-up, rather than a visual close-up, establishes a disproportion between the degree of intimacy that we are drawn into and the exposure resulting from an enlarged image. Cinema tends to associate the enlarged face of a close-up with the centrality and importance of the voice on the phone. (Grover-Friedlander 2005: 173, n. 34)

In the cinematic treatment, we see the impact of the telephonic voice. It seems to rattle the listener's consciousness, as if emitted from beyond the grave.⁷

Jeongwon Joe's study of the adaptation of opera to cinema accounts for a theorisation of space and bodies that underpin our relationship to absent voices (Jeongwon 2013: 203). When the voice and spectacle are at a distance, so is our sense of a material and situated reality:

Metz notes that in the theatre, 'reality is physically present in the same space as the spectator', while cinema gives reality in a 'primordial elsewhere'. (Jeongwon 2013: 104)

Cinematic remediations of *La Voix Humaine* favour these useful estrangements. They are ideally equipped to deal with both the technological estrangement of voice-body separation and/or its psychologisation. While Joe's interest in cinema includes an investigation into the sound apparatus that enables the castration anxieties of the separation of voice and body (Jeongwon 2013: 151) the debates around artworks that are open to complex acts of spectatorship strengthen the connection between the centrality of female vocality and cultures of listening.

⁷ Pero (2008): 558-73. The telephone as harbinger of death permeated key literary works in the twentieth century, including those in the mystery and thriller genres. Perhaps the most enigmatic of this was Muriel Spark's *Memento mori* (1959). In it, the unrecognised voices on the telephone, warning of death more broadly than a specific death threat, is read as a psychoanalytic symbol of a threatening sound without a body.

The 1958 operatic monodrama setting by Francis Poulenc, is a remediation that is historically read as the pinnacle of settings for Cocteau's work. Poulenc's efforts are predicated on his success as an opera composer whose works were distinct and divergent from Cocteau's artistic practices (Miller Gottlieb 2001: 89). We can regard Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* as more about his compositional indebtedness to Arnold Schoenberg's monodramas (Miller Gottlieb 2001: 87-8). Rather than innovation, this musical setting was an excursion in nostalgia: of Poulenc and Cocteau for pre-World War II France and earlier friendships. The wonder of this remediation was that it eventually becomes 'mainstream' by the early twenty-first century; a staple of either opera house repertory or concert hall programmes. Much emphasis has been, and arguably should be made, of the vocal inventiveness, dramatic ability and literary contributions (to the libretto) of singer and actress Denise Duval. Duval helped to make *La Voix Humaine* (1958, 1970) an emblem of opera's power to speak to dramatic innovation in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Most significantly, the close working relationships between Cocteau, Poulenc and Duval cemented the success of this work and its capacity for expansion into opera.⁸

The timing of the 1966 television version *The Human Voice*, sees it as an interstitial and marginal piece within the life cycle of mediations. It was contextually on the experimental fringe of television drama in 1960s Britain and it was arguably historically overshadowed by the ongoing artistic supremacy of the Duval-Cocteau-Poulenc collaboration. The work premiered after both Jean Cocteau and Francis Poulenc had died, suggesting it could now be elevated to a classic. It was interstitial also in its mediation, sitting between earlier cinematic versions and the staged operatic context. In what appears as its unlikely relationship to opera however, *The Human Voice* (1966) complements the function of the televisual, in its mediated enjoyment of opera.⁹ The 1966 version builds upon and contributes to a cinematic tradition in which vocalicity is the chief object of interest. It can be argued that once the cinematic turn of *La Voix Humaine* was achieved, there was no turning back for live iterations of the work.¹⁰

⁸ Ramaut (2005); Waleckx (1999); Chimènes (1999). Significant musicological and literary analysis of Poulenc's setting of the work can be found in these texts.

⁹ The Menotti opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951) is credited with the advent of 'television opera', which enjoyed a flourishing of works in the 1960s-early 1970s. Horsley (2018).

¹⁰ Very recently, Krzysztof Warlikowski directed Barbara Hannigan in *La Voix Humaine* at the Opéra National de Paris (Garnier) in March 2018. The staging included a television playing excerpts from Cocteau's film, *La Belle et la Bête* (1946).

The ubiquity of the small screen by the late twentieth century allowed for the soundtrack's supremacy in Dominique Delouche's 1970 opera-for-television-movie version. Delouche's estranged visual language complemented Duval's vocal and dramatic command of Poulenc's score which the singer recorded over a decade earlier in what became Delouche's entire soundtrack (Delouche 1970). What is unique about this work's adaptation as a piece of vocal remediation, is that it possibly has the longest historical 'real time' gap between the sung soundtrack and the visually recorded acting of any opera-on-film. It is not operatic ghosting in the sense of the voice of a dead singer being animated on screen by a lip-synching stand-in; rather, both versions of Duval are 'alive' and made to synchronise, when they are in reality, decades apart. This television version conforms to the codes of opera-on-film, a double-layering of the imaginary as in Christian Metz's proposal of a 'primordial elsewhere', which, in this case, is also an operatic past for the artist and the artwork.¹¹ Duval's involvement is the real-life antithesis of what Franco Zeffirelli fictionalised in *Callas Forever* (2002), because Delouche showcases vocal remediation in film as a visual enhancement of the continual work of Duval, the living performing artist and not a fictional salvage mission for an artist (Callas) who is, to the audience, fictionalised, and known to be deceased.¹² It is a testimony to Duval's legacy that these operatic version(s) of *La Voix Humaine* stand impressively alongside the spoken filmic remediations of Cocteau's original.¹³ The cinematic rendering of the telephone is as an object that is seen but has no voice – the camera imitates a vocal close-up, rendering the telephone uncanny. However, the sound emanating from it is not diegetic; rather it is the orchestrated bell of the late Poulenc's operatic score.

Finally, by 1988, chronological distance becomes parody, in a trope common to emerging late twentieth-century artists mining an ever-receding historical avant-garde for innovative material. Linda Willem's study of *La Voix Humaine* (1930) details its appropriation by the

¹¹ Clancy, Gutkin and Vágnerová (2016: 3-5). Opera-on-film, whereby an entire operatic recording constitutes the soundtrack of a film, is almost as old as cinematic sound itself. In the late 1920s, entire operas including *Pagliacci* were made into feature-length films.

¹² Franco Zeffirelli, *Callas Forever* (2004) and Grover-Friedlander (2011: 30-1). Grover-Friedlander regards Zeffirelli's film as an object lesson in the afterlife that cinema can provide for the dead diva's voice. In the diegesis of the film, a mature-aged, fictionalised Callas, played by Fanny Ardant is given two career options by those around her: to either lip-synch an earlier recording of herself for cinematic treatment or to work in a new way on a role with her present but vanishing voice. The former option would see Callas as a visual stand-in for her voice's past. Although serving as an example here on a point of vocal remediation, Callas, the once-mooted protagonist for Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* (1958), lost out to Duval in more ways than one, if we consider the latter's opportunity for vocal remediation, now integral to the operatic archive.

¹³ Delouche (1999). This documentary (DVD recording) was awarded a "Diapason d'Or" and an "Orphée Spécial" from the Académie du Disque Lyrique (2010).

auteur filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar, resulting in a new work with its own project in dealing with the centrality of the voice, amid various technologies (Willem 1998: 142). Almodóvar claimed that his film comedy *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown / Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988) was a faithful re-working of Cocteau's original. The feature-length film re-purposes the broken romance that is the central conceit of *La Voix Humaine*, so that both characters are named and given detailed relationships and motives. The character of the ex-lover called Iván (played by Fernando Guillén) is established as a vocal identity first, and in many ways, foremost, in his capacity as a voice-over and sound dubbing artist. There is humour when Iván's voice attempts to seduce the listener while speaking into a disconnected, vintage, studio microphone. Rather than the protagonist, Pepa (played by Carmen Maura), becoming subsumed by the technology as an agent of fate, she repeatedly tries to destroy it, smashing her answering machine through a window and, in time, consigning Iván to irrelevance.¹⁴

The Human Voice (1966).

Over a decade after the peak of her Hollywood career, Ingrid Bergman made a notable and powerful appearance in this remediated television version of *La Voix Humaine*. By 1950 she was denounced as an 'instrument of evil' in U.S. Congress because she had an extra-marital affair and became pregnant to film director Roberto Rossellini who had famously directed Anna Magnani in an earlier iteration of this work (McLean 1995). With Bergman's career significantly damaged and the decline of the Hollywood studios leading to concepts of divadom as being relegated to a level of camp, this work did not seek to glamorise her centrality but it instead delivered a formalist earnestness. The work screened for the United Kingdom's ITV Channel *Star Performance* Series by the production company Rediffusion. It attempted to reconcile arthouse cinematic values with celebrity box office appeal on the small screen and featured unlikely combinations of talent. The director Ted Kotcheff was better known for his subsequent cinematic efforts with more popular works in contrasting genres, all dealing with marginalised but violent masculinities.¹⁵ The British actor and writer Clive Exton adapted the work for television – he was renowned for producing comedies of menace and other genres of social critique (Barker 2007). As such *The Human Voice* (1966),

¹⁴ In a further remediation, adaptation and translation, this film was turned into a musical of the same name, premiering on the 4th of November 2010, on Broadway, with a transfer to London's West End. The playbook was by Jeffrey Lane, Lyrics and Music by David Yazbek.

¹⁵ Kotcheff (1971). This feature film was the beginning of the significant New Wave of Australian cinema. It was nominated for a Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. The opening shot of Ingrid Bergman in *The Human Voice* (1966) does indeed feature her waking in fright – emblematic or perhaps a precursor to this vein of cinematography.

is a necessary artefact that speaks to the artistic rehousing of the female voice responding to contemporary remediation that appeal to television audiences at a given time (Esser et al. 2016: 11).

Ingrid Bergman's (even somewhat faded) box office appeal would have been a consideration for the BBC's commercial competitor ITV which screened *The Human Voice* (1966). By the early 1960s, BBC managers were concerned about the Americanised content on British television and so employed a new Head of Drama, Sydney Newman, the Canadian producer of the ABC's *Armchair Theatre* series. One aspect of Americanisation was a reinforcement of a belief in the monolingual status of cinema that included a 'rejection of subtitling – and [a] more general lack of interest in foreign-language films' (Dwyer 2005: 295-6) in tandem with a declining respect for genres such as theatre and opera. This assumed monolingualism also applied to the United Kingdom, with cultural content programmers regarding any cultural continuity with Europe as the concern of only select audiences. The geo-cultural transfer of *La Voix Humaine* (1930) to Britain sees an awkwardly misplaced English relocation to somewhere West of London (with a mention of Windsor), in order to have the drama work. Translation, here, rather than being about illumination, is about erasure and the new work determines itself under this pressure, anticipating the famous female voice to carry this off as a success. By locating the work geographically in Britain however, it is as though the French theatre history of Cocteau and the operatic tradition of Poulenc are of no consequence, as the work is drained of any continuity with European traditions. This is a process with which its remediation is complicit.

There is a prevailing argument in British film history, even in the twenty-first century, that its body of works are situated in a hinterland between Hollywood and foreign-language film, that is, European art cinema. Liminal cultural spaces like these can be useful because they allow cultural exoticism. In relation to voice, the possibilities range from the choices of singing voice to the speaking voices of non-Anglophone actors. On twentieth-century screens, exotic voices signified new identities:

From the beginnings of British cinema, foreign actors have figured prominently for a number of reasons, including [...] the desire of filmmakers to exploit the stereotyped exotic appeal of certain countries [...] and the versions of national identity that they represent. (Leach 2004: 1-2)

The corollary of this is that Britishness itself can be depicted as ‘foreignness’. In many remediations and staging of major works, the British actor is assumed to rely upon tangible crafts of voice, speech and movement training.¹⁶ There is an artifice of a mythic British acting which is the opposite of the assumptions made about Britain as the centre of the Anglophone empire – British film on the world stage is inherently ‘foreign’ just as the artistic experimentation within *La Voix Humaine* (1930) is ‘foreign’. The use of a famous Swedish actress with discernible accent marked by hardened dental consonants, voiceless sibilants (where English would have voiced) and vowel shapes that have no diphthong pattern, suggests that vocality itself is a useful player in the aesthetic experiments of this remediation. A final consideration, before the three-part analysis in this chapter, will be the anticipated audience in the 1960s and their relative dis/interest in the remediation of Cocteau’s work at this juncture in British cultural history.

By the mid-1960s, it appeared audiences were jaded by a type of internal cultural imperialism that the well-intentioned and paternalistic BBC represented in their living rooms. The BBC cancelled their theatrical *Festival* series in 1964, based on London West End theatrical fare. Milton Shulman describes the audience angst in that year for the *Evening Standard*:

Some of the plays, like Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*, Max Frisch’s *The Fire Raisers*, Cocteau’s *The Human Voice*, would have found difficulty filling the smallest club theatre for a fortnight [...] Whenever the blurb spoke of a ‘bitter-sweet relationship between two confused people’ the nation heaved a convulsive yawn and switched elsewhere. (Shulman 1964)

In the wider context of British television as a medium, Jonathan Bignell refers to the ‘aim to bring the “best” dramatic work of a British and European literary-theatrical tradition to the television audience’ (Bignell 2014: 369-89, 370), that *The Human Voice* (1966) may have represented. Ultimately in its remediated setting of a British locale somewhere near London, the producers of *The Human Voice* (1966) tap into the performative strengths of the iconic screen actress. The success of the rendition rests in its combination of forms under extreme pressure: the mastery of Ingrid Bergman’s performer presence, the screenwriter’s precision

¹⁶ Cassidy and Knox (2019) account for the myth of the British actor as adopting an ‘outside-in approach’ to their craft and effectively demythologise it by focussing on the twenty-first century Transatlantic television phenomenon of *Game of Thrones* in which British, Irish, Scandinavian and New Zealand actors envoice an Anglophone world that has simultaneous immediacy and exoticism, because of multiple spoken accents and styles of delivery.

and the cinematographer's formalist creativity in delivering virtuosic iterations of cinematic codes.

This chapter will now consider the televisual adaptation and remediation of *The Human Voice* (1966) in detail. To revisit some of the approaches that frame the contexts to the female voice in the twentieth century, it is worth noting that Philip Auslander in his work on liveness and authenticity refers to 'the normalization of mediatized sound' (Auslander 2008: 38) in the speaking and singing voice in television, film and other recorded media. For all iterations of *La Voix Humaine*, the effectiveness of the remediation appears to be in the understanding between creators and audience, that the telephone is a conduit of real and authentic human communication. However, the enduring power of *La Voix Humaine* as an artwork, is that there is something ineffable and psychologically potent about the human voice, that transcends technology or mediated platforms. In a sense, 'transmission' rather than remediation, can connote the ephemeral nature of the unheard voice on Cocteau's telephone that is carried by the technology but disappears in the ear canal of the protagonist, much like any unrecorded performance. It is consigned to the senses and the mind.¹⁷ Mediatisation, after all, relies upon the dual function of many technologies to record the content while transmitting it, for the purpose of bringing it to life at a later date.¹⁸ This is not the case for the analogue telephone used by Bergman's protagonist in 1966. The strive towards vocal immediacy or realism in the work's filmic adaptations must contend with (or cannot erase) the telephone's inscription within the diegesis as being powerful but its place is ephemeral. Ultimately, we move towards the listener's approximation of the speaking Other (in a psychoanalytic sense) as both an authentic, and a striving-for, 'immediate' experience.

Our three key areas for analysis include:

1) The voice we cannot hear, 2) the protagonist's voice and 3) the television-film's approximation of female vocality itself.

¹⁷ As a broader historical context to this, Barbara Engh, in her work on 'tele-phono-graphic bodies' notes an excerpt from the *Scientific American* of 1887, referring to the invention of the telephone as rendering the space between two speakers as an empty 'airy nowhere, inhabited by voices and nothing else' in *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*, Dunn, Leslie C. and Jones, Nancy A. (eds) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

¹⁸ I would like to thank Jason D'Aoust for his point on the definition of media as inclusive of the capacity to record and archive.

1) The voice we [the audience] cannot hear.

Is the voice in *La Voix Humaine* about absence? Does Ingrid Bergman's 'Elle', like the versions that preceded and followed her, inhabit a doubled body in being the body-double of the absent man and her performing self?¹⁹ Kaja Silverman constructs a study of female subjectivity played out upon the cinematic mirror whereby the female body is implicated in the theoretical models of lack: castration, projection, disavowal, fantasy, fetishism, narcissism, melancholia and Oedipal struggles. Her very representation in cinema is therefore subject to a *lack* (in psychoanalytic terms) and that lack is dramatised by the yearning for physical presence.²⁰ The first element of this is the voice-body split of the absent lover and then it is that the absence is technologised as a voice beyond her (our) reach. For Cocteau, as it was for Rossellini, Poulenc and Kotcheff et al, the drama of the piece works because it is about the female protagonist's abandonment in a dehumanised entanglement with the telephone, rather than a completely realistic depiction of a conversation. The visual codes of abandonment in the *Human Voice* (1966), begin with the torn and defaced images of the absent, inaudible male lover which also doubles as his corporealisation. This may be seen as a cinematic shorthand, used famously in Joseph Manckiewicz's Hollywood film *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949) in which a prominent photograph of the female narrator corporealises (her) disembodied voice (Silverman 1988: 49).

The psychological dimension of the absent one's voice-as-object through the technology of the telephone, is complicit with the cinematic adaptation.²¹ However *La Voix Humaine* demonstrates to us how psychoanalytic theory too can shift the domain of interest in voices to the female voice, which becomes central to issues of twentieth-century experiences of sound, music, cinema and art. Specific to Cocteau's *La Voix Humaine* (1930), Michel Chion's work on the *Voice in Cinema* has a unique and instrumental place in explaining some pertinent aspects of this psychoanalytic theory, which Silverman successfully pairs with female vocality. Chion develops an argument based upon Denis Vasse's work *The Umbilicus and the*

¹⁹ I wish to thank Jacek Ludwig Scarso for posing the questions of the gendered nature of embodiment amidst the presence and absence in relation to *La Voix Humaine*.

²⁰ Silverman (1988).

²¹ Strahler Holzapfel (2011: 112-125). While the remediation of the works in this article see greater focus coming from cinema, this is not the case for the interest that theatre makers have in the telephone, either the historical analogue handset, or the newer networked mobile phone. Evidence of the persistence of the telephone as the centre and object of staged drama is found in the article concerning Reines's play *Telephone*, which was based upon the 1991 book *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* by Avital Ronell. The latter work considers the telephone's complicity in ideological and social organizations and refracted through the philosophies and literary works of Martin Heidegger, Franz Kafka and James Joyce, among others.

Voice / L'Ombilic et la voix: deux enfants en analyse (1974). Vasse posits the umbilical area, with its symbolic cord, as the symbolic site of a psychotic breakdown.²² For Chion, there is a convenient resonance with the physical apparatus of the twentieth-century's coil-wired handset of the telephone: 'the voice could imaginarily take up the role of an umbilical cord, as nurturing connection, allowing no chance of autonomy to the subject trapped in its umbilical web' (Chion 1999: 62). For our purposes here—it is the voice of idealisation and objectification and the voice of the art-object in theatre, opera and cinema. The interesting aspect of *La Voix humaine* from this perspective is that the female protagonist is caught in the vocal/umbilical web of the male speaker (rather than spinning it for him, Siren-like as it is usually gendered) – yet as an audience, we are hearing only her. Chion argues that this lack of autonomy in the listening subject is especially so when the voice is heard as separate from the body. Most logically for a film scholar, this is the condition of cinematic sound. However, Chion focusses specifically on the place of the telephone in relation to mediated voice (Chion 1999: 61). Vocality itself is embedded in desire and this desire is implicated at the moment of closure – the cutting or 'closing off' of the umbilical cord, often a symbol and cue for the child's first opening of the mouth and unique cry. The voice is thus inscribed in the 'umbilical rupture' – the child is assigned its own body in which it must reside and the previous physical connection with the mother is 'mediated by the voice'. Denis Vasse's work is an important milestone in theories surrounding vocality as it was a precursor to the more widely-known concept of the sonorous envelope of the self - Didier Anzieu's theory (1974; 1981) of the aural plenitude of the maternal voice as central to the infant's subject formation, implied in so many cultures of listening and can account for so much of the visceral nature of listening pleasure in opera.²³ It is from this thread of thinking that Chion develops more broadly that the voice in and of itself houses desire because it '*signifies* closure as the place of a subject that cannot be reduced to corporeal localization' (Chion 1999: 172-3). A number of the cultural phenomena surrounding the telephone and cinematic voices deal with this desire of a numinous voice that enlivens the listener, as much as it instils anxiety in the listener about that voice's indeterminate body.

²² Chion (1999: 61). For Denis Vasse, voice is Lacan's *objet a* 'a point of fixation – obturating object and reifying object of difference' – not in the materiality of the umbilical cord itself (or indeed the physical handset of phone cord), but rather in its signifying of the mother's vocality as a primal connection. The umbilical zone is 'a wound ... in its opaque materiality [which] inscribes at the very center of the infant the mark of desire that he experiences as a member of his species' Vasse (2013): 179.

²³ Poizat (1992). The tension behind aurality as pleasure through an immersion in the 'plenitude' of the voice as object is contrasted with an ordeal-by-lack. Poizat contextualises his observations in the work of Freud, Heidegger and Lacan and his language also borrows from Juranville. 192.

The anxiety can come from a sense of the uncanny about the voice. In this way, Slavoj Žižek reminds us that: ‘to see what one cannot hear is not the same as to hear what one cannot see’ [his emphasis] (Žižek 1996:94). Žižek accounts for the discrete psychological approach of each listening process: to apprehend a form, visually, that does not return our gaze, but emits sound, is an unsettling reminder of something no longer alive to our presence; as it is also unsettling to hear the vibrations of a life force we cannot see, perhaps a voice from beyond the grave. The bind is that the voice lends power to its listener too. Žižek summarises: ‘voice vivifies, whereas gaze mortifies’. The latter in that maxim, would make particular reference here to the operatic corpse, lying soundless, on the stage. Conversely, if the voice at the end of the telephone has a vivifying property, it also has an object status in terms of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory – not in terms of the speaking subject’s own voice, but in what she/he hears or experiences of the world (Žižek 1996: 90). The telephone arguably intensifies this objectifying process, it transmits the voice from a distance. From the broadest psychoanalytic perspective, when Lacan (via Žižek) pronounces that the voice ‘vivifies’ as an object of desire, it does so even in the absence of logical and corresponding visual information. The tension between eyes and ears factor into any mediation of *La Voix Humaine*’s aesthetics, including the human subject’s aesthetic and emotional experience of both the telephone and the condition of cinematic sound.²⁴

Further examination of Vasse’s work would also reveal an antidote to the malady experienced by Elle of her fixation with the voice of the Other. This comes through his reliance on the concept of a free-floating attention in listening—an *écoute flottante* in which both listening and speaking subjects retain their integrity.²⁵ The drama, however, is sustained precisely through fixation. The desire of Cocteau’s Elle for the voice beyond her physical reach is the touchstone of her psychological suffering and it seems that the telephone, with its fallible technical powers is the fraught instrument that enables it.²⁶

²⁴ One of the exceptions here is the function of opera recordings as autonomous soundtracks, which will be considered in this article in relation to the 1970 television opera version.

²⁵ ‘To listen to someone, to hear their voice, demands on the part of those that listen a given attention that does not close the interlocutor in their discourse nor in the site of their body; a “floating attention” as Freud says, which, open to the in-between of the body and discourse, does not clench to the impression of the voice nor to the expression of discourse’. Vasse (2013): 179.

²⁶ Chion (1999: 73). Fritz Lang’s film *The Testament of Dr Mabuse* (1933) implicates the telephone in the psychotic breakdown of its protagonist. In Lang’s hallucinatory ending, the protagonist uses the phone receiver, even without a cord attached to the handset, indexical to his total psychological breakdown. According to Chion: ‘For what does the telephonic fetus hang onto, if not to the voice as the cord that transmits a blind

Suffering and yearning also give way to suspicion and even paranoia in Cocteau's version and this iteration of *The Human Voice* (1966).

For Chion, the telephone is a favourite device of the suspense narrative 'because it serves in separation and disjunction; the voice travels through space, bodies stay where they are' (Chion 1999: 63). This relies on a principle known as hypermediacy—the enhanced reality that technology brings into effect (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 21). In tension with this is the effect of “suspending” a character we see from a voice of someone we don't see, who thereby gains all the powers of an *acousmètre*' (ibid.). The *acousmètre* is the person who the protagonist speaks to on the phone but who the audience never sees—strictly for Chion—a voice that emanates from beyond the camera's frame of vision. The psychological tension for cinematic audiences comes with trying to localise the source of the acousmatic voice—it needs to be anchored to a body. We then need to, we are anxious to, *put a face to that voice*: 'A telephone is the opposite of a silent movie, in that it gives us a voice without letting us see who is speaking' (ibid.). In both Cocteau's and Kotcheff's versions, accordingly, we hear none of the sub-vocalization and grunts which are the markers of the 'other' voice's monstrosity (that is, the voice's power to demonstrate) in vocal gestures, that all telephone users share and experience in a call, as an act of reassuring the other speaker that we are listening to them but without actually saying anything. In Kotcheff's *The Human Voice* (1966), we hear nothing of what the character hears telephonically throughout the film with the exception of: the ring tones, a click or two for disconnection and a prolonged dial tone at the end. These latter sounds all emanate from the ear-piece of the receiver, so the soundtrack choices therein really intensify the absence of any ear-piece sound confirming that another speaker is involved in conversation. The reality of a two-way conversation is only sonically-supported by the instances of the 'phoning back' of an outside caller to the protagonist.

Further to the uses of the depicted psychologisation of sound technology, when language is first spoken in this 1966 version of *The Human Voice*, it is a disembodied female voice, and one that the listener learns very quickly belongs to Ingrid Bergman's protagonist. The acousmatic voice is also the only one, up to that point, we hear as audience. We come to learn that there are not only psychological drives in Bergman's relationship to the telephone,

nurturing flow? The voice here is no longer “subversion of umbilical closure” [as in Vasse] but a foreclosure of closure, and paying for this foreclosure [with] terror...This, then, is what happens when you take a voice for an umbilical cord'.

but we witness the visual context of the telephone in the film's narrative, specifically, in the dreary furnishings and failing technological context that Cocteau envisaged. We also have the remediation of the telephone specifically as an unremarkable daily tool which can be regarded in this 1966 version as a symbol of media's replacement of a listening that embodies the voice by a means that confines it outside of the body.

2) The voice of the protagonist.

Rick Altman proposes that all sound film is in essence a form of ventriloquism (Altman 1980: 60, 67-79) because of a separately-imposed soundtrack and if we believe Adorno who (in)famously observed in the late 1920s before his ill-fated attempt to score *La Voix Humaine* for radio:

Male voices can be reproduced better than female voices. The female voice easily sounds shrill – not because the gramophone is incapable of conveying high tones [...] Rather, in order to become unfettered, the female voice requires the physical appearance of the body that carries it. (Adorno in Altman 1980: 54)

The mediated female voice would always require a supplemental body because it is not psychically or politically stable without that corporealization. In Barbara Engh's cultural materialist history of the subjugation of sound to technologies, she cites Adorno's observation that the gramophone (as the successor to the telephone in voice-centred technological development) is an 'obedient machine' which is 'adapted to domestic needs' (Engh 1996: 132). Placed within the context of the telephone, in *La Voix Humaine*, woman is placed as the intermediary and gatekeeper of a technology that has no capacity to return her desire for connection. Engh accounts for women's experiences in capitalist, industrialised labour as bearing witness to a disempowerment that takes a sonic turn. We can impute an overreliance on these mediating technologies as belonging at the border of hysteria. For Ingrid Bergman, in this 1966 production, this is done with all the material shabbiness of the urban English setting, but it does not sacrifice the performative power she generates as a speaking subject. She had a naturally deep voice, which can be an aspect of a voice as it ages, but suggested a capacity to empower the listener with more vocal imaginings than Adorno's original and narrow perception of the 'shrill' female voice. Bergman's first coherent utterance is the voicing of her character's fantasised vocal performance in a telephone call in which that character might say all the things she wishes she could – but the voice is estranged from her body and acts like a mask. According to Mikhail Yampolsky, whose work on Antonin Artaud's "The Torments of Dubbing" will be

considered here: ‘an extraneous sound is analogous to a face with someone else’s mouth on it’ (Yampolsky 2004: 172). When the line of thought in Bergman’s next phrase is synchronised with her mouth moving a moment later, it is as if that voice exists separate to both Bergman’s, and the character’s, embodied voice. It is a perceptible but not overtly stylised effect—as though the soundtrack is speaking for that line and Bergman’s character is visibly questioning her presence—or presence of mind. It takes the audience a moment to adjust to a naturalisation of sound codes. For Artaud, according to Yampolsky, ‘the mistrust of the audible word—the word that exists prior to its utterer—is central. Its origins are obscure, for it is as if prompted and spoken by someone else—a predecessor—and in it the speaker loses his identity. The word is always a repetition; it never originates from within the body of the speaker’ (Yampolsky 2004: 170). For Bergman’s protagonist, it is another self that was speaking for her. The flipside of a vocal exoticism that entices the listener is the possibility of a vocality that alienates, or at worse, disturbs the listener and this is a property unique to the 1966 remediation. Artaud’s anxiety about the asynchronous sound-image in cinema is always brought about by iconic female screen stars, and Ingrid Bergman was certainly one of those. Artaud attended obsessively to the movement of facial muscles of the visible actor in dubbed films, endowing them with the ability to swallow up, absorb and assimilate the voice of another. The shape and movement of the actor’s mouth was key and he was fixated upon the heaviness, pulpiness or hardness of the necessarily female cinematic mouths of screen legends such as Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford and Greta Garbo. There is an incongruity perhaps between their ideal beauty as a female screen star and their carnivory – the autonomous nature of their mouths.²⁷ In *The Human Voice* (1966) at 00:26:50, the protagonist bites her own mouth while speaking, as a way of punishing herself for saying the wrong thing. This enacts both the flesh of the voice and its subject’s fragility: ‘the voice is the site of perhaps the most radical of all subjective divisions – the division between meaning and materiality’ (Silverman 1988: 44). Although carnivory is an aspect of female vocality that the cinema can bring about, the corollary was expressed by Cocteau;

²⁷ Written in 1933 and published posthumously, this can be found among Artaud’s collected works (Gallimard). Yampolsky (2004):172 also considers the voice in relation to Daniel Paul Schreber’s (1842-1911) account of feminization psychosis and the symptoms or projections of psychophagia as revealed in the posthumous *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1968). This was influential documentation of paranoid schizophrenia, commented upon by Freud, Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari. Among other torments, Schreber feared that his body was becoming feminised by forces beyond his control and that those same forces made him experience a speech coercion, often in foreign languages - or those he perceived as foreign. Yampolsky makes the link between these studies in that Artaud’s objection to the poor synchronization in dubbing included the sexual discrepancy possible between the body and the voice. So the eating of the voice of another could effect a bodily ‘deformation’ (including an uninvited sexual-gender transformation).

it was cinematic carnivory that subsumed Anna Magnani. In relation to opera-on-film, might this distaste in the cinematic approximation of the speaking voice also reveal a squeamishness not far from the closely filmed workings of the singer's mouth?²⁸ In *The Human Voice* (1966) when this rupture of voice-body eventually subsides, Bergman's spoken soundtrack returns to a negotiated unification for much of the film, in order to give dramatic centrality to the phone conversations.

There is never a suggestion, however, in the diegetic world of this version that there is no-one at the end of the phone. When Bergman repeats the phatic 'Hello, hello' it rapidly deteriorates from a greeting to a desperate plea for the listener not to hang up. The possibility that the protagonist is disturbed and fantasising some of the content is a game played with the audience. Certainly, by the end of the scene, audiences must be questioning the state of mind of the silent male listener.²⁹

In the first three minutes of *The Human Voice* (1966), there is only non-linguistic human and animal sound, with the protagonist's dog growling.³⁰ When the first 'hello' is spoken into the phone, it is swallowed in a grimace on the actor's face, suggesting a pre-linguistic world in which primal urges are destructive but also domesticated and protected. The vocal performance that ensues is a tour-de-force of spoken vocal composition by Bergman, with virtuosic range, dynamics, chesty and soprano tones, whispers, sob-like intensities, laughter, groans and the idiomatic delivery of a crisp Transatlantic English by a native-Swedish speaker. The final sound-image is not the protagonist's but the voice of the technology. No human subject is in the camera's frame. In a Freudian sense the protagonist has become abject—neither subject nor object but in-between and defined by a relation to the phone

²⁸ Esse identifies among critics of mediated opera: "a kind of squeamishness about the uncanny proximity made possible by the camera, embodied in their preoccupation with an image they find equally grotesque and disturbing: the close-up of a singer's working mouth" (2010: 81).

²⁹ Lydia Goehr critiques the unstable material reality of *La Voix Humaine* (1930) because by 1930 'using a telephone to discuss matters of love and betrayal, when a telephone call was not only constantly interrupted by cross lines, cross noises and cross voices, but also extremely costly for someone who wanted to speak for forty minutes'—suggesting elements of fantasy and a loss of touch with reality. (2016: 104-123.). 'The Domestic Diva: Toward an Operatic History of the Telephone' in K. Henson (Ed.), *Technology and the Diva: Sopranos, Opera, and Media from Romanticism to the Digital Age*. Cambridge Studies in Opera. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁰ Driscoll (2015: 173–194). This is a study of animal vocality in opera, namely birdsong in *Siegfried*. Siegfried tries and fails to imitate birdsong and this activates a number of philosophical discourses about language and subjectivity.

receiver that now renders her invisible and inaudible. Rather than being devoured by the screen, Bergman has been erased from it.

Table 2. Analysis of the film’s narrative closure as vocal composition mapped against Poulenc’s score and Cocteau’s libretto. (Score: Francis Poulenc *La Voix Humaine*. Paris: Ricordi, 1959).

Timing	Event	Bar number in Poulenc’s score / Cocteau’s text
00:35:20	The pace of speech increases when we, the listener, must imagine the supplementary music the protagonist is hearing – when ‘his’ end of the phone is already completely silent to us. Bergman’s facial expressions and speech are demonstrative and strain against a realist framework. The artifice of her repeated line “but I can hear music” in a plea that is almost chanted, magnifies the artifice because the audience cannot hear the music.	Figure 69, 5 th bar of this section (Bars 471-475 of entire work). “Allô! J’entends de la musiq’ [...] Je dis J’entends de la musique”
00:37:10	Bergman’s voice is composed with more revelatory emotion – her hair appears wild. The narrative “Listen! Why?...” avoids realism as Bergman’s hair is transformed from one shot to the other. The monodrama’s subjectivity shifts from her to the telephone as substitute lover. The effect of this shifting subjectivity also happens in the final sound-image of the film.	There is no real correlation between the works. The closest may be at exactly Figure 25, (Bar 143 of entire work). “Chéri, écoute allô”
00:45:10	From 45:10, a realism breaks through with the dial tone being heard for the first time when the call is once again disconnected. It becomes amplified, so there is a narrative focalisation through what the protagonist hears. Then Bergman places the receiver back and it stops.	This is absent from Poulenc’s score and Cocteau’s libretto.
00:50:05	Bergman invokes her lover to “Hang up, quick!” and then repeats in a sob-like vocal onset of speech “I love you” until the only sound to emanate from the receiver is the amplified dial tone of the call’s end.	Figure 108, Bar 2 of that section to Figure 109 (Bars 762 to 766 of entire work). “Dépêche-toi. Vasy. Coupe! Coupe vite! Je t’aime...”
00:51:00	The only soundtrack is the ticking clock (heard at the film’s beginning) and the dead dial tone emanating from the receiver. A panning shot is made of the detritus on the floor of the room and the final ‘vocal close-up’ is made of the noisy phone receiver, with Bergman nowhere to be seen or heard.	This is also absent from Poulenc’s score and Cocteau’s libretto.

3) The cinematic approximation of female vocality itself.

Vocality also implies an emphasis on the performative dimension of vocal expression, that is on the dynamic, contingent quality of both vocalization and audition, and on their vital interrelationship [...] By specifying female vocality, we also assert the centrality of gender in shaping that construction. (Dunn and Jones 1996: 2)

The Human Voice (1966) was a performative milestone for Ingrid Bergman as a showcase for an exotic and virtuosic vocality, underpinned by her compelling dramatic performance. Kotcheff's remediation allowed an extension to some of the audio-visual presentations of voice on screen, as mentioned above. It was a work that emerged from pressures and limitations, like its experimental lineage. It did not however, allow for an emancipatory shift in how the female protagonist and her *voice* both metaphorically and materially might sing its triumph over its anguished desires. Bergman's voice is one that is both embodied and disembodied at various levels in the listener's consciousness. It is through an ethics of listening beyond the voice's grain to also 'what is speaking', ideologically and culturally (as well as psychoanalytically), that the female voice remediated might be better appraised.

The Human Voice (1966) was at a midpoint in the chronology of the life cycle, to date, of adaptations and remediations of *La Voix Humaine*. While it still occupies a somewhat marginal place in the chain of adaptations and an equally limited situating in the infancy of British experimental television, the work does appeal to a certain understanding of the cinematic rendering of great vocal, theatrical works. Any remediation of the work will always be overshadowed by its operatic avatar, along with the notion that any mediated vocal tour-de-force for the female voice is a genre somehow of extremes – of cultural exoticism, virtuosity of delivery, estrangement of voice and body and capacity for the voice's metaphorisation. In 1966, the avant-garde singer-composer Cathy Berberian argued for a 'new vocality', based upon the interdisciplinary ethos of her life's work and her frustration at the reductive nature of operatic divadom. Within that was the understanding that the passive listening inherent in the canon of music-drama forms was under threat in the face of a culture that encouraged what she called an 'intrusive and disordered stimuli' (and what Cocteau may have apprehended in Rossellini's *Una voce umana*) but we might call an appetite for audio-visual remediation:

[I] propose the artist as a universal fact and the voice as part of the living body, acting and reacting. In the same way recitals and concerts will have so many theatrical elements ingrained in the musical context that these elements will function like a gestural alternative—and this is something that music will endow to the intrusive and disordered stimuli of a culture predicated upon seeing and doing. (Berberian 2014: 49)

It would appear that the legacy of *La Voix Humaine* (1930) is as much a celebration of the female voice's delivery of meaning in our culture, as our attentiveness to listening, and our labours at viewing.

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