

## Screening, recording and repeating the voice

The 2013 movie *Her*, picturing a man falling in love and starting a relationship with an artificial-intelligence virtual assistant personified through a female voice, was not only announcing a revolution in our cognitive and emotional relations with AI, but was also suggesting a possible revolution concerning the interface of our devices and media. In the last few years, we've been witnessing a progressive return of the audio on the visual. Are we going from a visible to an audible mediasphere? If it is too soon to affirm the advent of a paradigm shift, for sure we can observe that the prevalence of the visual in our media culture has progressively undergone a transformation, discovering itself as an *audiovisual culture*.

In David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, the narrative and emotional core of the film is represented by the well known sequence of *Club Silencio*, where the playback performance of the female singer stages a meaningful dissociation of the audiovisual itself, a dissociation between images and sounds. It is in this precise moment, explains Slavoj Žižek, when the reality seems unreal because of this audio-visual discrepancy, that takes place the emergency of the Real (Lacan). A disorganised voice – produced by an *organ without a body* – is then the mean through which the traumatic and unrepresentable libidinal core of our existence can appear. The status of a voice without a subject has always been, in fact, in a peculiar relation with the expression of an unbearable truth, or an unbearable desire (Žižek, Caravero, Dolar). The screen, to be understood as the surface introducing a gap between images and sounds, it is precisely what give shelter to the spectator, on the one hand, from what is unbearable in this truth, in this desire, and mitigates its traumatic nature, and that increases the acousmatic nature of the voice on the other.

Since the telephone (Ronell), technology has played a fundamental role in the expression and reproduction of this libidinal surplus weirdly embodied by a somehow inhuman and acousmatic voice. How do new technologies (the expanding use of vocoder and autotune in pop music) and new (social) media (Whatsapp vocal messages, *Instagram* and *Snapchat* stories) present this libidinal surplus? What's the relation in between these pure and inhuman voices and their subjects? What's the status of their confessional narration? Are they building new spaces for a shared intimacy, or new audio-windows for a further exposure?

To answer to these questions, I will consider the constitutive relation between the audio and the visual components, and their increasing discrepancies, by study cases taken also from contemporary audio-visual contents (*Her*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Twin Peaks*, *Black Mirror*).