

The Frenzy of the Audible: Voice, Image, and the Quest for Representation

Silence here resonates differently.
(Trinh T. Minh-ha)

A mouth opens, a voice flows out to embrace the audience – inside and outside the screen, this sound both effaces and supports the image, seducing the spectator to the realm of the aural while giving consistency and texture to the cinematic, two-dimensional image. But where does this voice come from? Does it come from the open mouth I see on the screen? And what if I see no mouth at all? Indeed, the loudspeakers give away the illusion that this voice may be bound to the body on the screen without any residue, any trace left by the machine creating the cinematic illusion of unity between image and sound. And still this technology guarantees an ‘authentic’ representation of reality through the ‘suture’ of sight and sound, achieving what Kaja Silverman calls the “representation of a homogeneous thinking subject whose exteriority is congruent with its interiority”.¹

¹ Kaja Silverman, “Dis-Embodying the Female Voice”, *Re-Vision. Essays in Feminist Film Criticism* (Los Angeles: The American Film Institute, 1984), 132-133 (see Del Villano’s essay, this issue, 155).

Yet Del Villano, who quotes Silverman in relation to the scene at the Club Silencio from David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive*, underlines how cinema may make use of this device to undermine the very technology of identity it is supposed to guarantee. Following this and other cues coming from contributions in this volume, this essay pursues the voice of cinema, a voice that may authorize as well as question accepted notions of identity and authenticity. Cinema technology allows for a complete separation of the voice from the body that originates it, with both disruptive and creative consequences. Yet, while feature films suture image and voice to create a unitary body for its characters and stories, in documentary film the audience is led by a voice apparently coming from outside the frame, sutured to no body at all. Paradoxically, though, this disembodied voice-over also works as narrative device to give continuity and consequence to the ‘documenting’ image, supporting its reality effect through a strictly unrealistic apparatus – a bodiless voice, both literally and metaphorically ‘giving voice’ to the Other, the foreign, non-Western subject of documentary filmmaking.

This essay takes heed of different voices from film criticism (considered as criticism of mainly Western feature cinema) and documentary filmmaking, where the voice is discussed in its narrative and technical function. Following their trail, it endeavours to listen to cinema, rather than watch it, straining to hear the mechanism that makes this social and cultural technology work. It strives to hear the machine that gives voice and texture to the *emotion* of motion pictures, seeping from the screen through the

sound system right into the audience's ears.² At the same time this voice can taint the representation of the 'real' with the uncanny voice of the machine, as in the work of experimental film- and documentary-makers from Lynch to David Cronenberg, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Chris Marker, plunging deeper and deeper into the displacing qualities of the voice of cinema.

The acousmatic voice

In his seminal essay "Machines of the Visible", Jean-Louis Comolli identified the 'frenzy of the visible' as a fundamental feature of cinematic societies. Here he conflates social with film technology, relating these representations of 'the real' to the constant need of a society to represent itself. Hence the 'cinema machine' is not only the technology that makes it possible to realize the moving image; in order to perform its emotional impact, it has to be supplemented by a cultural *dispositif* that allows the technological product to acquire social and cultural relevance.³ Comolli also conflates 'visible' with 'appropriable', as the nineteenth century frenzy of the visible partakes of the social technology of colonization, shaping the world outside into an object that can, with some effort, be made transparent, known and hence possessed. Since Comolli, this stress on the act of looking and its ethical implications has become part of Western cinema criticism, especially through a psychoanalytic approach that makes use of Lacanian notions of 'look' and 'gaze'.⁴ The eye/I that cinema borrowed from Renaissance perspective supports the central role of the image in filmic representations, eclipsing the role of sound in filmic representations of reality.

Sound here is inextricably bound to the moving image because of course, as the entry "Soundtrack" in Routledge's Key Concept series on cinema studies reads, "we pretend, accept that [sound] comes straight from the screen; if it is not in synch we notice it and do not particularly like this instance of sound drawing attention to itself and pointing to the fact that what we are seeing up on screen is an illusion".⁵ Still, what we see on the screen *is* an illusion – a representation of reality through technological means. Cinema, in this sense, is a speaking machine much as eighteenth-century automata, of which Mladen Dolar writes that "there is an uncanniness in the gap which enables a machine, by purely mechanical means, to produce something so uniquely human as voice and speech".⁶ Cinematic sound then, and the human voice in particular, shows a sort of uncanniness: as with Hoffmann's singing doll Olympia, to discover that the source of the voice is not a human body but a technological apparatus, a machine, may have disastrous consequences.

² See Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotions: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (London: Verso, 2002), on "Emotion picture".

Although Bruno's work, with its focus on cinema and mapping, is almost exclusively concerned with the visual dimension, her interdisciplinary terminology and methodology may be usefully applied to other ways of watching/listening to/feeling cinema, including my own.

³ See Jean-Louis Comolli "Machines of the Visible", in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1980), 121 and ff.

⁴ For an example on the use of these categories also outside feature film criticism, see Nisco's essay, this issue.

⁵ Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts (Routledge Key Guides)* (London: Routledge, 2006), 361.

⁶ Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 2006.), 7-8.

Actually, Freud's reading of Hoffmann's tale "The Sandman" (in his well-known essay on "The Uncanny"), devotes little attention to the automaton doll, dismissing the hypothesis that she/it may be the primary source of the uncanniness of the tale itself, and centring his reading on the three male characters.⁷ On the contrary, and rather interestingly for the centrality of the voice in my argument, it is Jacques Offenbach's opera *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1881) that exploits Olympia's uncanny rendition of femininity as "phantasmatic technology", as Nadia Setti recently argued.⁸ The problem with Olympia's voice is that one cannot trace it back to a human body (let alone a *female* body), while at the same time it is impossible to reduce her voice to the realm of the non-human. Olympia's voice *is* a voice in the emotional effect it has on Nathaniel, who falls in love with it; on the other side, it is the *representation* of a voice in the sense that it *reproduces* a human voice, but does not find its origin in a body of flesh and blood. This being on the borderline between human and machine, reality and representation, marks the uncanniness that Michel Chion, in his *La voix au cinéma*, attributes to the "acousmatic voice". Technically, the acousmatic voice is the voice whose source remains hidden to the spectator; psychoanalytically, in Chion's reading, it represents the mother's voice, the voice whose body is forever out of reach.⁹

In much the same way, Guy Rosolato speaks about the maternal voice as "the first model of auditory pleasure", that of being enveloped in "a sonorous womb, a murmuring house" – a sort of ancestral cinema.¹⁰ Silverman, who refers to both Rosolato and Chion in her *Acoustic Mirror*, best explores the implications of this relationship between the voice and the mother's body for cinematic representations:

in its phantasmatic guise as "pure" sonorousness, the maternal voice oscillates between two poles; it is either cherished as an *objet (a)* – as what can make good all lacks – or despised and jettisoned as what is most abject, most culturally intolerable – as the forced representative of everything within male subjectivity which is incompatible with the phallic function, and which threatens to expose discursive mastery as an impossible ideal.¹¹

The exposure of the master discourse of cinema as ideal or, worse (as in Olympia's case) simply as 'not real', is embodied in the very disjunction between voice and image. In this dichotomic imagery, the voice inevitably conjures up the feminine as what counters phallogocentric strategies of representation. Cinema fascination with the visual aspect of performance may be associated, as Luce Irigaray insists, with phallogocentric culture: here, as she puts it, "the privilege of unity, form of the self, of the visible, of the spectacularisable, of the erection" has a pervasive influence.¹² On the other hand, the centrality of feminist theory for any discussion of voice and cinema is so explicitly made by Silverman that there is no point

⁷ See Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, translated by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003).

⁸ "Writing the Body", lecture held at the University "Roma Tre" during the conference *corpo/grafie* (December 14, 2007; unpublished paper).

⁹ Michel Chion, *La voix au cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1982); for this and further references see Dolan, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 61-71.

¹⁰ Guy Rosolato, "La voix: entre corps et langage", *Revue française de psychanalyse* 37.1 (1974), 8; English trans. in Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror. The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 84-85.

¹¹ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 86.

¹² Luce Irigaray, "Woman's Exile: Interview with Luce Irigaray", trans. Couze Venn, *Ideology and Consciousness* 1 (1977), 64. For a discussion of phallogocentrism in Irigaray's sense as used in cinema see Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 141 ff.

in further repeating it here. Dolar also devotes many pages to the disruptive qualities of the feminine voice whose main goal is not language, but rather “the voice beyond sense”.¹³

It must be clear, at this point, that any discourse about the voice in cinema must necessarily be a *gendered* discourse; still, this does not mean that any discourse about the voice in cinema has to be a discourse *about gender*, in the sense of a discourse that puts a gendered body at its missing centre. In cinema gender attributions may be troubled by the absence of the body, by the cuts that paste any voice over any body, sometimes in blatant contradiction with the gendered body we see. If, as Dolar writes about Chion’s argument, “the acousmatic voice proper is the one which we cannot locate, and its paradigm is the mother’s voice in *Psycho*”,¹⁴ it must be noted that neither Dolar nor Silverman, whose reading of Chion I am following here, note that the mother’s voice in *Psycho* is actually a man’s voice – i.e., although it clearly *sounds* like a woman’s voice, the disembodied voice of the mother is visually sutured to Norman Bates’ body as well as, more generally, referring back to Hitchcock’s own voice as dystopian director and *deus ex machina*. The ‘gender trouble’ here is due not necessarily to the Butlerian ‘drag’ that this voice performs: there is another body that comes into play in cinema – the body of the machine, biologically ungendered but not exempt from gender attributions.¹⁵

As Barbara Engh notes in relation to another *dispositif* for vocal reproduction, the gramophone, “feminist psychoanalytic criticism is itself ill-equipped to encounter this other reproductive body – not of the mother but of the phonograph, productive of another uncanniness – without subsuming it into the binary paradigm of gender”.¹⁶ Again as with Olympia, femininity here works as one signifier among others, capitalizing cultural investment on Woman as Other to project it onto other bodies – fleshy or otherwise. In this process, the ethical responsibility of cinematic representations of reality suddenly emerge; in their overview of the intersections between cinema and deconstruction, Brunette and Wills write:

...one can no longer doubt that at least partly because of the work of ‘realistic’ Hollywood films, which inculcate a certain predetermined reality in the spectator and which create that spectator as subject, the world is seen as natural rather than constructed and therefore as beyond the reach of political change.¹⁷

Not all directors mentioned in this volume take an avowedly political stance; nonetheless, their work actively undermines the reality effect of cinematic representation, hence rewriting the staple material of filmmaking to make the audience face the constructed quality of what we are watching. The presenter’s claim at David Lynch’s Club Silencio that the performance of ‘La Llorona del Los Angeles’ is “all a tape-recording”, unveiling the suture between ‘female’ body image and voice, echoes the end of David

¹³ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 43.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and The Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁶ Barbara Engh, “Adorno and the Sirens: Tele-phonographic Bodies” in Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, eds., *Embodied Voices. Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994), 130.

¹⁷ Peter Brunette and David Wills, *Screen/Play. Derrida and Film Theory* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 17.

¹⁸ Rey Chow underlines how, in this scene, “played on a cassette, music has ... become a portable object”: “The Dream of A Butterfly”, in *Ethics after Idealism. Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 91. For an in-depth analysis of this point in Cronenberg’s *M. Butterfly* see my “Sonic Drags: Fe-Male Impersonators in *Farinelli* and *M. Butterfly*”, *ecloga* n. 6.2007, <http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/departments/englishstudies/ecloga>.

¹⁹ Teresa de Lauretis, “Popular Culture: Public and Private Fantasies: Femininity and Fetishism in David Cronenberg’s *M. Butterfly*”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 24.2 (1999), 304.

²⁰ Rosolato, “La voix”, 79; Engl. trans. in Silvermann, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 80.

²¹ Silvermann, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 80.

²² Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Outside In Inside Out”, in Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, eds., *Questions of Third Cinema* (London: BFI, [1989] 1991), 134.

Cronenberg’s *M. Butterfly* (1994), where the tape-recording of an aria from Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* pastes the myth of the ‘Oriental woman’ from John Lone’s *en travesti* performance over to Jeremy Iron’s ostensibly white male body.¹⁸

De-lubricating the fit

Both Lynch’s *latina* and Cronenberg’s Oriental woman mark the place where femininity overlaps with ethnic and cultural difference in its role as constructed ‘others’ to the Western cinematic gaze. Both expose the self-conscious artificiality of public fantasies of identity and otherness of such a popular cultural form as cinema. The bodiless voice of cinema may disrupt the filmic reality-effect, revealing the constructed nature of its narratives; it shows the breaks in the visual, in the montage of images that make up the story, and so in the story itself. At the same time, though, these voices seduce the audience into the film’s narrative through the power of these stories which, in Teresa de Lauretis’s words, are “*deeply felt and experienced*, and yet they are *fictional* representations”.¹⁹ The voice lubricates the suture between reality and representation, making them fit.

At least, this is the role of the acousmatic voice of the mother in Silverman’s reading of Rosolato’s theory of the ‘acoustic mirror’. Rosolato argues that, in opposition to the eye/I articulating the identity of body and mirror image in Lacan’s mirror stage, “the voice [has the property] of being at the same time emitted and heard, sent and received, and by the subject himself, as if, in comparison with the look, an ‘acoustic’ mirror were always in effect”.²⁰ The voice, both inside and outside the body, puts into operation dynamics of identification that differ from and supplement those of the Lacanian gaze. Yet, according to Silverman, this voice works in concert with patriarchy, compensating for the fragmentation of the mirror image by the eye: “within the traditional familial paradigm, the maternal voice introduces the child to its mirror reflection, ‘lubricating’, as it were, ‘the fit’”.²¹ So the mother’s voice speaks for the still voiceless subject, ‘subjecting’ it to socially acceptable ways to identity.

The limits of such psychoanalytic criticism may easily be perceived in its own appeal to universality, where ‘mother’ and ‘child’ are universal categories with no need for contextualization. Yet, these self-same categories may migrate to an elsewhere of cinema and criticism, exposing the strategies that authorize the representation of the real in another, maybe not so different context, that of documentary filmmaking. Here too, as Trinh Minh-ha writes, “to many scientifically oriented film-makers, seeing ironically continues to be believing”;²² yet, Trinh also underlines how, to

make seeing and believing ‘fit’, a voice must necessarily come into play, both technically and metaphorically:

Factual authenticity relies heavily on the Other’s words and testimony... [H]ence, for example, the prominence of the string-of-interviews style and the talking-heads, oral-witnessing strategy in documentary film practice. This is often called ‘giving voice’, even though these ‘given’ voices never truly form the Voice of the film.²³

²³ Ibid.

Trinh here makes a subtle but radical distinction between the ‘voices’ of native informants that punctuate documentary filmmaking, and the Voice – the continuous voice-over that makes sense of documentary montage. Writing about Cavalcanti’s documentary *Coal Face* (1935), Marina Vitale pairs eye and voice in the representation of what she defines “an ‘imagined community’ held together by links of mutual recognition of the vital role each local community or social section played inside the overall body of the Nation and the Empire”.²⁴ While the all-seeing eye pretended invisibility and non-interference, the voice guarantees the reality of what is shown, of the tale that is told, and the consequent dynamics of identity: “the voice-over is impassive, impersonal, professional. It is the voice of science. It knows the truth, all the Truth”. It is an acousmatic voice that requires identification, a sort of collective acoustic mirror leading the audience to accept the truth of what is ‘documented’.

²⁴ See Vitale’s essay, this issue, 46-47.

This acousmatic voice may remind one of another voice, the one Dolar defines as the “voice of the Father accompanying the Law”.²⁵ In discussing this ‘other’ voice, counterpart of the uncanny mother’s voice, Dolar mentions the HMV label known as “His Master’s Voice”, where the power of the mechanical voice is expressed in the attitude of unconditioned obedience expressed by the dog. Here Dolar, bypassing Chion’s and Rosolato’s arguments on the acousmatic voice as maternal voice, comments that “in an embryonic way one always listens to one’s master’s voice, no matter how much one opposes it afterward. There is something in the very nature of the voice which endows it with master-like authority...”.²⁶ This voice exploits its bodiless power to invest itself with unchallengeable authority: it is the Voice called into question by Trinh, the voice that ‘knows the Truth’ and conveys it to the audience, smoothing the fit between documentary image and reality. Yet, what happens when cinema makes this voice undergo what Chion calls a process of ‘disacousmatization’, the revelation of its source or what may be otherwise call its positionality? What happens when cinema goes astray of accepted notions of representing reality, severing the suture between image and voice?

²⁵ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 55

²⁶ Ibid., 76.

I have already mentioned some instances in which feature film directors, such as Lynch or Cronenberg, have played with the artificial nature of the voice of cinema; here, though, the suspension of disbelief shapes a narration

that, however 'realistic', does not aspire to the status of Truth (with the capital T). Documentary filmmaking, from this point of hearing (if not of view), makes a more complex case, with its investment in the truth of its representation of the 'Other'. Of course, this distinction between feature and documentary film may in the end prove somewhat preposterous; yet it is useful for the ends of this argument, as it marks the difference between Western filmmaking as a sort of acoustic mirror for the audience, and documentary as an act of negative identification through the representation of an object self-consciously represented as 'Other'. This is the place where the uncanny voice of the 'mother' and the all-powerful voice of the 'father' overlap, opening cinematic narration to the uncanny power of an-other voice. Here a different power of the voice comes to the fore, that Dolar (following Lacan) defines as "the fact that it is so hard to keep it at bay – it hits us from the inside, it pours directly into the interior, without protection. The ears have no lids, as Lacan never tires of repeating".²⁷

²⁷ Ibid., 78.

Seeing silence

Because in the end, if the ear has no lids, neither has the mouth (even the invisible one). The vulnerability of the audience is mirrored by that of the performer who opens him/herself to the scrutiny of the audience's ears; opening up, as it were, the boundaries between external and internal, outside and inside. In these terms, as Dolar writes, the voice cannot but sound uncanny: "the call, the cry, the voice, the appeal – their proper location is *unheimlich*, with all the ambiguity that Freud has given this word: the internal externality, the expropriated intimacy, the *extimacy* – the excellent Lacanian word for the uncanny".²⁸ This intimacy echoes the one discussed by Trinh in the relationship between the 'outside in' and the 'inside out' of documentary filmmaking, regulated by "a form of (neo-) colonial interdependency".²⁹ This power relationship may be problematized by cinema technology in the exposure of the silence behind the voice.

²⁸ Ibid., 96.

²⁹ Trinh, "Outside in Inside out", 135.

There are different ways to voice this need to perform a disacousmatization of the voice of cinema. In her essay Marina Vitale notes the "whispering voice-over" that delivers the by now well-known appeal in Trinh's *Reassemblage* "not to speak about/ just speak nearby".³⁰ Admitting a plurality of voices in one's own discourse is imperative for postcolonial artists, and charges the voice of cinema with a different ethical responsibility. The suture cannot be definitely severed, as language itself (human language as well as the technological language of cinema) cannot be abolished; still, the suture can be exposed, manipulated, and made to weave other narratives. The voice may refuse to 'lubricate the fit' between representation and reality, making 'reality' itself a porous and unstable

³⁰ Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Reassemblage", in *Framer Framed* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 96.

category. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam suggest: “the concept of voice suggests a metaphor of seepage across boundaries that, like sound in the cinema, remodels spatiality itself”.³¹

A dialectic between image and sound may imply, as Isaac Julien suggests, a ‘re-articulation’ of cinematic language, as in Derek Jarman’s last, ‘imageless’ film *Blue* (1994), where “the non-representational image retained poetic and factual information which Jarman sonically produced with precision – documenting his eventual blindness during his battle against AIDS ..., portraying the truth of his condition and indeed a part of our queer history”.³² In this rearticulated language, truth loses the capital T and gains a deeper ethical resonance. Voice can still shape the narrative of film, but its non-diegetic referentiality is exposed and made to uphold multiple significations: as in Werner Herzog’s *The Wild Blue Yonder* (2005), where Henry Kieser’s footage from beneath the Antarctic Ocean is presented by the voice-over as documenting the voyage of two astronauts exploring a foreign planet, called “the wild blue yonder”. Here, though, the audience can easily recognize the ‘truth’ of the images, and hence give the lie to the voice telling a rather incredible story about human exploration of other planets and the consequent attempt by dispossessed aliens to silently colonize the earth. Still, the voice in the end seduces the audience into a narrative that slowly acquires its own consistency and truth – a poetic truth traceable in the resonances between this tale and the stories of colonization and dispossession that Herzog, without any explicit mention, echoes through his narration. The voice still authorises the images and the story they tell, but the story is more of a unfolding telling, and less of a stable history.

If, again, the ears have no lids, then it is not possible for history to “plug[...] its memory as one plugs one’s ears”, as the narrator of Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil* (1982) says.³³ Its multiple voice-over is maybe the best embodiment of Chion’s deacousmatization, where the end of the process is not the pinning down of the voice to its own body (or any other, for that matter), but the multiplication of bodies and voices. Relying from the beginning on more than one means of technological reproduction, the bodiless narrator in *Sans Soleil* reads the letters of director Sandor Krasna, whose words overlap, and tries to make sense of the assorted footage the films shows. The voice has been cast as a woman’s in order not to be mistaken for that of the director himself, and the relationship between the two voices, masculine and feminine, heard and not heard, is not to be known. What irremediably unsettles the narrative is the silence haunting both voices: of the masculine under the feminine we hear, of the feminine under the masculine who (supposedly) wrote the words we hear.

These silences expose the suture that makes narration possible without bridging it, so that the narration itself is broken, fragmentary, and does

³¹ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Untinking Eurocentrism, Multiculturalism and the Media* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 214.

³² See this issue, 64.

³³ For this and further reference to the English script of the film see Chris Marker, *Sans Soleil / Sunless*, http://www.markertext.com/sans_soleil.htm.

not 'document' anything consistent about anything, including Japan and Guinea-Bissau, the two 'other' places from which the footages are taken. This allows for the images to gain an evidence of their own, without the pressure to 'signify', while the voice weaves tale after tale, interlaced by many reciprocal echoes but refusing any definitive version of the 'truth' of what is said. In this way the seemingly exotic setting of the clips is not allowed to stay at a distance, in the safe 'elsewhere' of documentary filmmaking. On the contrary, it requires a sharing of horizons, of emotions, of affects, of memory.

The continuity of the filmic image is broken up by the insertion of sequences manipulated by digital artist Hayao Yamaneko, where a wide repertoire of images, from clashes between police and activists in 60s Japan to Krasna's own material, enters "The Zone", a place where the distortion of sound and image makes the machine visible and audible. This process exposes how, in Iain Chambers' words, "memories are indivisible from the media that record them"; the machine makes itself visible, and the voice makes it audible. So we are told that "at least they [the images] proclaim themselves to be what they are: images, not the portable and compact form of an already inaccessible reality".³⁴

³⁴ This issue, 10.

We are told these words as commentary and interpretation of the images processed through "the Zone" by Krasna himself, or better by the narrator quoting Krasna quoting Yamaneko (echoing Tarkovsky). It is this sort of endless deferral that embodies the effort not to "give voice to the Other, but lend their ears to others", as Vitale writes in this issue. The refusal to exploit the power of the acousmatic voice in order to guarantee the authenticity of representation does not deprive the voice itself of its power to weave narratives, to tell tales: on the contrary, tales multiply and interlace, words are pronounced and repeated, and in the repetition the audience is made aware of their changing meaning. This silence, "resonat[ing] differently" as Trinh writes elsewhere,³⁶ also leaves its mark on the film, in the black leader accompanying the opening clip, the three blonde children that according to the voice-over should be "the image of happiness". Still, Krasna writes, the voice says, I hear, "he had tried several times to link it to other images, but it never worked. He wrote me: one day I'll have to put it all alone at the beginning of a film with a long piece of black leader; if they don't see happiness in the picture, at least they'll see the black". But what will the woman, what will the audience, what will I see? Once silence is there, once the black leader is there, I cannot but hear the black, see the silence.

³⁶ Trinh T. Minh-ha (in conversation with Annamaria Morelli) "The Undone Interval", in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, eds., *The Postcolonial Question. Common Skies, Divided Horizon* (London: Routledge, 1995), 8.