

Daniela Cascella

Searching for Eusapia. A solitary séance.

----- ... *Eusapia, I can't hear you...* ----- Here. Voices on voices, in this hall of crumbling walls, sonorous shell, half-broken reliquary of whispers, and music, and melod... ----- *Who knows what evil lurks into the heart of men? The shadow knows* (a shadow might tell) ----- Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep. Hotspur: Why, so can I, or so can any man, But will they come when you do call for them? ----- I am Radia, I am your medium, I contain and exhale multitudes of frequencies, knots of voices, storms of interference ----- Eusapia Paladino: renowned Italian medium, who lived between 1854 and 1918 and who claimed, in the rise of Spiritualism, to be able to communicate with the dead. She was known to materialise the hands and faces of spirits in clay, levitate tables and mandolins, give voice to presences from the other world ----- ...*Eu-sapia, You-sapia, You-radia...* ----- *La Radia* is the title of the 1933 Futurist Manifesto of Radio Art by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Pino Masnata. Not 'radio', as in the correct Italian spelling, but 'radia', which in Italian does not exist, but which doubles up and highlights the female nature of the word ----- Hear, I look for a female voice... *Eusapia? I can't hear you!* ----- Here? *Eusapia. You-sapia*, domina-sapiens, you knowing woman. *You-sepia*, fading picture from long-gone days. *I can't hear you*. I can't *here* you. I can no longer find your place here, in this hall. The channel is lost, the medium is lost ----- In my awkward attempts at channeling this transmission, I believed at some point that I could have a glance of your presence. A glance? Well, rather, an overheard trace of your presence. Not because you ever really made that connection with 'the region of the shadows', but because your image stands as a gateway into an elsewhhhhhhere - hear! - a screen to pass through, with sounds, with speech ----- So, when you were born, wireless telegraph was being introduced in your country... ----- This connection today is only possible across this page ----- I am hoping to reflect onto your distorted, half-guessed, half-imagined voice, the persistent buzz of words that populate this transmission. You could be the aural spectrum onto which all these voices would be laid out to interfere. Here you will hear: questions and unrelated answers, unrelated questions and the attempt to connect the answers in a continuum, a continuum of questions in an unrelated attempt at answering, answers to the unrelated continuum of attempted questions.... ----- Do you hear what I'm talking about, or thinking of talking, of thinking of being channeled into talking? ----- Here are words, worlds and minds of the voices around here (around, hear), over the past few weeks ----- *Rosabelle — answer — tell — pray, answer — look — tell — answer, answer — tell* ----- Hear. A record is playing in the hall. It is titled *Transmissions*. Swarming particles in slow motion, repeated patterns in a dreamlike dance ----- *I am in the middle of a mass of thousands of very small particles that are brilliantly lit up like they are luminescent. They are bright yellowish green, about the size and intensity of a fire-fly on a real dark night. I have never seen anything like it. They look like little stars. They swirl around the capsule and go in front of the window* ----- Here, this sonic substance hovers and dances around the room, as I read those words, pronounced by John Glenn during his first transmission from space in 1962 ----- Hear Glenn's sense of wonder, of immersed contemplation. Heightened listening, across shimmering particles of sound ----- These words are in the inner sleeve of *Transmissions*, a cd by Steve Roden: his translations too, imply transmissions.... He also released a cd called *The Radio*, its sound as a presence evoked across the pensive, circular musings of poetic listening --- '...to re-direct the listener away from the traditional intentions and meanings of words to a more poetic and abstract kind of listening. Text as sound.' --- *As you listen to this transmission, watch those moving particles* ----- Early theories of particles, as reflections on medium. Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media*. At some point he discusses Democritus, and his theory of atoms: *'The streams that emanate on the one side from the perceiver and on the other from what is perceived compress the air between them. The various constellations of atoms in motion are impregnated on the air and appear there as "idols" (eidolá), images of real objects, which are identified by the sensory organs as different configurations'* --- transmission --- *'The associations and connotations of the Greek word eidolon range from "knowing, recognising, seeing, and appearance" to "shadow" and "illusion". For Democritus, perception that takes place is not necessarily true. Of the things that are, only the atoms in motion and the void are true - the material elements and the medium --- mediumship --- 'In media we move in the realm of illusion. Etymologically, it does not just relate to feign or simulate, but also includes the sense of risking something. This is of crucial importance to media: the relevance of fortuitous finds'* ----- Here, hear, listen to fortuitous finds, fortuitous sounds, fortuitous fortunes channeled by this flowing voice. Just like the act of tuning in, and across the radio dial - you need to explore, and who knows what will be found ----- In an autumn afternoon of 2006 in Berlin, I found Maryanne Amacher - herself and her music like an antenna, a site of transmission and reception of a primeval hum, fundamental to all forms of life. She spoke to me of molecular theories of sound, and of the graviton, and of experiments around this hypothetical, massless particle that escapes measure and gravity. *'Nobody understands what these particles are, although they surround us, and stream through our bodies... But even if I don't understand these phenomena, I still try to communicate the theme of the research. It's a matter of channeling an idea across: not only a way of knowing, but looking at what is so beautiful. There's this theory that the graviton leaks, escapes: I connect it to sound'* ----- Searching for Eusapia. More words,

another book, another clue. The author is Giorgio Manganelli. The book is *Le interviste impossibili*: impossible interviews with dead people. The written word enacts the dialogue, a transmission from the underworld. These interviews originally took place in the non-place of radio. As if, inextricably tied, written words and radio were similar, shifting sites of a same reality, which appears as a mutating shade of what is possible: a make-believe. Among them, right in the middle, like an open slit, Eusapia appears, a medium of transmission through written words on a page. And this page cannot be but a narrative that entails and encompasses listening, combination, projection, mediumship in its very sense ----- Writing is deception, Manganelli would say. It is the place where you receive a discontinuous, ever-changing transmission. The 'subtle noise of prose' belongs to shadow ---- The Shadow knows --- Think of this idea of being deep inside a field of waves ----- Think of Leonardo Da Vinci's intuition: *'The air is full of infinite straight and curved lines, altogether crossing each other and textured with no interference, which represent to any object the real shape of their cause'* ----- So, particles vs. continuum. Specific events in the continuity of radio spectrum ---- As Christoph Cox reflects on noise and music, he turns to Leibnitz and his theory of 'minute perceptions'. Each conscious perception exists in a complexity of unconscious elements. Each event actualises this complexity in a specific place and time, yet retains an element of indistinctness. Just like the vast deposit of memory. Just like noise, the condition out of which speech and music emerge, and to which they go back. Just like radio transmission – a hovering site, that unhinges any coherent symbolic image and at the same time embeds each single channel, each single event ---- A sense of dissipation ----- The value of what the ear hears - a fictive Thomas Alva Edison says in Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's *Tomorrow's Eve* - can't be increased by technology: it falls back onto the listener. 'It is in ourselves that the killing silence exists' --- *Listen to the silence, let it ring on* ---- The space of transmission as space of voices from another dimension: it's not much their reality at stake, but the fascination with an idea, that has generated numberless creative moments across time ----- There's loss in transmission, yet a sense of connection and persistence throughout intermission. Presences in the ether which do not have a voice of their own but may appear in hiss and crackling ----- Carrier waves, wells carrying wells, war of worlds, of words, words and music. Ghosts as orchids. 'A no place where the living can dance with the dead'. *Dance, dance, dance, dance, dance to the radio*. Lizard Point, Finis Terrae, Pool of black, Gugl... ----- *Eusapia..... Can you hear me? Can you, here? ...* and hear, here is all the rest in between -----

References, in order of appearance:

- The Shadow*, radio drama, MBS radio, 1937-1954.
 William Shakespeare, *Henry IV. Part One*, Oxford, Oxford World's Classics, 2008.
 Harry Houdini, secret code agreed with wife Bess to communicate from 'the other side'.
 Steve Roden, *Transmissions (voices of objects and skies)*, cd, Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fresno, CA, 2005.
 Steve Roden, *The Radio*, cd, Sonoris, 1999.
 Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward An Archaeology Of Hearing And Seeing By Technical Means*, translated by Gloria Custance, Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, 2006. © MIT 2006.
 Maryanne Amacher, interview with Daniela Cascella, Berlin, September 2006 (published in Italian, *Blow Up*, issue 103, December 2006).
 Giorgio Manganelli, *Le interviste impossibili* (1976-77), Adelphi, Milano, 1997. © 1997 Adelphi Edizioni S.P.A., Milano.
 Leonardo Da Vinci, quoted in Paul Valéry, "Introduction to the Method of Leonardo Da Vinci" (1894), in *Selected Writings of Paul Valéry*, New York, New Directions, 1950.
 Christoph Cox, "Sound Art and the Sonic Unconscious", in *Organised Sound*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 14, issue 1, 2009.
 Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, *Tomorrow's Eve* (1886), translated by Robert Martin Adams, Champaign, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 2001.
The Ghost Orchid, cd, Ash International, 1999.
 Gregory Whitehead, "Radio Play Is No Place. A Conversation Between Jérôme Noetinger and Gregory Whitehead", in *Experimental Sound and Radio*, edited by Allen S. Weiss, Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, 2001. © MIT 2001.