Material Metamorphoses: Barbara Köhler and Anja Utler Rework Ovid

Georgina Paul¹

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This essay examines works by two contemporary German women poets, Barbara Köhler and Anja Utler, which re-use figures from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In her essay 'After Ovid, After Theory' that closes this volume, Victoria Rimell discusses the hazards for women writers and scholars of engaging with Ovid, invoking feminist critics from the 1980s on as 'Resisting Readers' who have recoiled from Ovid's representations of violence against women or trawled his texts for traces of female agency.¹ Nonetheless, she notes, too, that the 'intertwining and juxtaposition of gendered perspectives' in Ovid's works 'open up space for thinking about female experience despite being male creations', a feature that will be of interest in the approach to Köhler's and Utler's revisiting of Ovidian texts.

Rather more important for situating my own work here, though, are Rimell's observations concerning the passing of 'postmodern Ovid', the gradually discernible ending of a critical phase, predominant since the late 1980s, of reading Ovid through poststructuralist theory for his ludic textuality. Rimell herself seeks to break new ground as she recuperates the materiality and embodiedness that is always more self-evidently implicated in poetic speech than in poetic text. In her interest in vocality, in particular, Rimell develops a line of enquiry initiated at the millennium by Lynn Enterline, whose identification of 'a kind of phonographic imaginary',² inter alia in Ovid, in turn inspired Shane Butler's more recent engagement with the 'ancient phonograph', the vocal tracks delivered down the ages to our present ears by the poetic writing of the classical past.³ This shift of critical attention towards

¹ See especially her third section, 'Excess', and her notes 36 and 37 for references which illustrate differing trends in feminist scholarship on Ovid.

² L. Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 12.

³ S. Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph*, Brooklyn, NY, 2015.

✉ Georgina Paul
georgina.paul@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk

¹ St Hilda's College, Oxford OX4 1DY, UK

sound and voicing in Ovid's poetry, not out of keeping with a recent revived interest in the sonic dimension of poetry more generally,⁴ provides a useful context for the exploration in this essay of the responses to Ovid of two poetic practitioners. The close readings offered here are, however, framed more specifically by the work of the Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero on vocal expression and the history of the 'devocalization of logos'. Cavarero, likewise in revolt against the longstanding pre-eminence of the written and thought over the spoken and heard word, is, as I shall seek to demonstrate, a particularly productive critical companion in the approach to the specificity of Köhler's and Utler's work with their Ovidian pre-texts.

I begin for the benefit of those not familiar with contemporary German poetry with a word of introduction to the two poets. Barbara Köhler (b. 1959) started her writing career in the samizdat scene in the German Democratic Republic in the 1980s, making her publishing debut shortly after German unification with the collection *Deutsches Roulette* ('German Roulette') in 1991. This first collection already displayed her interest in working with classical material, for example in the notable cycle 'Elektra. Spiegelungen' ('Elektra. Mirrorings').⁵ Her publication in 2007 of a major poem cycle responding to Homer's *Odyssey* entitled *Niemands Frau* ('Nobody's Wife') confirmed her classicist credentials.⁶ The work develops Köhler's long-standing fascination with grammatical gender and its implications for the female poet taking up a position within a poetic tradition predominantly shaped by male writers, while also displaying her growing interest at that time in the vocalicity of poetry. Her 2006 work for the radio, *ECHOS. QUELLE* ('ECHOS. SOURCE'),⁷ was her first to explore a Latin (as opposed to a Greek) source text, though Echo is among the figures from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* invoked in the densely intertextual poems of *Niemands Frau*. Anja Utler (b. 1973) made her debut in 1999 with the collection *aufsagen* ('recite'), but it was with her second collection *münden*

⁴ See, for example, *The Sound of Poetry, the Poetry of Sound*, ed. M. Perloff and C Dworkin, London, 2009, and J. Culler's attention to what happens when poems are recited in his *Theory of the Lyric*, Cambridge MA and London, 2015.

⁵ B. Köhler, 'Elektra. Spiegelungen', in her Köhler, *Deutsches Roulette. Gedichte 1984-1989*, Frankfurt am Main, 1991, pp. 23-31; 'Elektra. Mirrorings', transl. G. Paul, *Comparative Criticism*, 21, [=Myth and Mythologies], pp. 224-8. See G. Paul, 'Multiple Refractions, or Winning Movement out of Myth: Barbara Köhler's Poem Cycle "Elektra. Spiegelungen"', *German Life and Letters* 57, 2004, pp. 21-32; G. Paul, *Perspectives on Gender in Post-1945 German Literature*, Rochester, NY, 2009, Chapter 8.

⁶ B. Köhler, *Niemands Frau. Gesänge*, Frankfurt am Main, 2007. See *An Odyssey for Our Time: Barbara Köhler's Niemands Frau*, ed. G. Paul (*German Monitor*, 78), Amsterdam, 2013; Elena Theodorakopoulos, interview with Barbara Köhler, *Practitioners' Voices in Classical Reception Studies*, Special issue 2013: *Contemporary Women Writers*, http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/pvcrs/2013/k%C3%B6hler#_ftnref1 [accessed 11 July 2017].

⁷ Köhler's work is characterized by her interest in polysemy, and the title *ECHOS. QUELLE* is symptomatic of this. It suggests both a plural – 'Echoes. Source' – and a possessive 'Echo's source' (Köhler often omits punctuation in order to increase the potential of reading lines or phrases in more than one way). In order to retain something of that ambiguity, I have chosen to give a translation that avoids the standard English plural 'echoes' but likewise omits the apostrophe that would signal the possessive. 'Quelle' can also be read in more than one way. It appears in the text as a reference to Ovid as the source of the story of Narcissus and Echo and also as a location: the source or spring that produces the pool in which Narcissus sees his own reflection.

– *entzündeln* (2004), translated by Kurt Beals into English as *engulf – enkindle* (2010), that she began to attract notice as a remarkable new voice in post-millennium German poetry.⁸ Since then, her highly original work, combining radical experimentation with syntax and punctuation, dense intertextuality, and above all a characteristic interest in poetic speech as sound performance,⁹ has been universally well received by critics, though to date there is, surprisingly, almost no scholarship on her work. Attention here will be given to the final sequence of three poems in *münden – entzündeln* which re-use figures from Ovid.

Köhler's *ECHOS. QUELLE* was commissioned by the Austrian radio station ORF for their series *Kunstradio-Radiokunst* ('art radio–radio art') and broadcast on 9 July 2006.¹⁰ Invited to create a work specifically for radio performance, Köhler chose as her basis the story of Narcissus and Echo as told by Ovid in Book III of the *Metamorphoses* (III.339–510). Undoubtedly the subject-matter was prompted by her work on *Niemands Frau*, in particular the fourth poem in that cycle, 'TURNING/TURING', which plays through variations on the theme of transformation and genetic mutation, opening with Echo 'turning to stone'.¹¹ In Ovid's striking pairing of two previously separate tales, the mirroring in water of the image of the beautiful boy Narcissus is matched with the acoustic reproduction of his speech by Echo who, as Ovid's preamble tells us, has been deprived of power over her own speech by Juno, wife of Zeus, as a punishment. What Ovid's pairing draws out of the two tales is the confrontation of two different forms of reproduction, the visual and the acoustic, and, in Köhler's retelling, their entanglement in alternative, arguably gendered, ways of conceiving of human subjectivity. The present essay is the first to consider Köhler's work with Ovid, though Köhler's use of Ovidian material in *Niemands Frau* is not examined here and remains to be explored.

⁸ A. Utler, *münden – entzündeln. Gedichte*, Vienna, 2004; *engulf – enkindle*, transl. Kurt Beals, Providence, 2010. Quotations from Utler's poems in this essay are by kind permission of Edition Korrespondenzen, Vienna, and from Beals's translations by kind permission of Burning Deck Press, Providence, R. I. Beals's translation of Utler's title emphasizes – not inappropriately – the fire imagery in Utler's collection. Utler's own title suggests perhaps primarily water imagery. 'münden' means 'to issue into', especially of a water course or river (the image on the book jacket depicts the course of the river Naab in the area around Schwandorf, where Utler was born); the proximity to 'Mund' (mouth) simultaneously suggests the meaning 'to form in one's mouth' or perhaps by association 'to speak'. 'zündeln', meanwhile, means 'to flicker' or 'to dart' (deriving from 'Zunge', meaning 'tongue'); it can be used of a (tongue of) flame or a snake's tongue, but also of water lapping; adding the prefix 'ent-' (usually meaning 'away') creates a neologism suggesting the removal of the tongue but also, simultaneously, the initiation of the process of flickering, darting (by analogy, for example, with 'entzünden' meaning 'to ignite') or perhaps the unleashing of the tongue.

⁹ See Anja Utler, 'Sprache = Dichtung = Performanz? Oder: Was heißt hier "a"?', <http://www.babelsprec.h.org/lyrik-im-livemodus/> [accessed 11 July 2017]; Anja Utler, "manchmal sehr mitreißend": Über die poetische Erfahrung gesprochener Gedichte, Bielefeld, 2016.

¹⁰ I am grateful to ORF for providing me with a recording of the broadcast (also available on MP3 at http://www.kunstradio.at/2006A/11_07_06.html [accessed 11 July 2017]) and to Barbara Köhler for granting me access to a typescript of the text that provided the basis for her recorded performance. Quotations from the text given here are from the 4-page typescript by kind permission of the author © Barbara Köhler.

¹¹ Köhler, *Niemands Frau* (n. 6 above), pp. 18–19.

Utler's collection *münden – entzündeln* presents in certain respects as landscape poetry: discernible is the movement, as one follows the course of the first sequence of poems, through a riverscape, taking in a murmuring stream, nettle patches, reed beds, carp pools with muddy banks, pine groves, an escarpment covered in frost¹² Yet the boundaries between the lyric subject (who as her translator Kurt Beals points out is not always clearly discernible as a lyric subject)¹³ and the landscapes evoked are radically blurred: speech organs are invoked as part of the landscape, sound emits indeterminately from natural source or human body. Crucial to the poetry is its aurality. Bypassing rational grasp, intensely corporeal images conveyed in dense sonic sequences appeal directly to the body of the listener, a deliberately placed reminder of a lost relation between human sounds and nature. The final three poems in the volume have a clearer narrative aspect than the others that precede them because they have as their object mythical figures familiar from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This means there is a recognizable story underlying the dense lyric composition, although there are also multiple verbal links back to the earlier poems in the collection (not unlike the way in which Ovid's *Metamorphoses* work), linking the figures to the landscape invoked. The three figures are all victims of the god Apollo: Marsyas, Daphne, and the Cumaean Sibyl. While Beals has written on his translation of Utler's work,¹⁴ and the New York-based magazine *triple canopy* has published a recording of Utler reading the Sibyl and Marsyas poems, together with Beals's translations and an introduction, on their website,¹⁵ there has been no previous scholarly work on these poems beyond critics' reviews.¹⁶

Both Köhler's and Utler's reworkings of Ovid take place under the sign of a reversal. In retelling Ovid's tales, both poets are interested in the stories' capacity to retain a trace of what preceded the transformations they recount. If all that is left of Echo at the end of Ovid's tale is her bones that have turned into stone (III.496-7), Köhler's *ECHOS. QUELLE* is intent on recollecting the lost body of flesh and blood that produced the particularity of Echo's voice. At the same time, Köhler intriguingly interprets the stone that is left at the end of the story as 'hardware', a materially present sound storage medium from which (like the poetry book, too) the 'nunc' or Now of a re-voicing can be activated. In drawing this aspect out of Ovid's telling of the story, Köhler's text dovetails with the work of Enterline and Butler who argue for Ovid's self-identification with Echo as the figure of poetic voice, as will

¹² Utler, *münden – entzündeln* (n. 8 above), pp. 11-19; *engulf – enkindle*, pp. 13-21. On the transformative use of landscape in Ovid's poem, see C. P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol*, Wiesbaden, 1969.

¹³ K. Beals, 'Play for Two Voices: On Translating the Poetry of Anja Utler', *TransculturAI*, 1, 2009, pp. 68-80 (68).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Anja Utler, 'Sibyl and Marsyas: Two Sonic-Mythological Poems Written and Read, transl. and introd. K. Beals, https://www.canopycanopy.com/contents/sibyl_and_marsyas [accessed 11 July 2017]. Utler's collections *brinnen*, Vienna, 2006, and *jana, vermacht*, Vienna, 2009, that followed *münden – entzündeln* were accompanied by the poet's voice recordings on CD.

¹⁶ See T. Poiss, 'Wie Atem zur Stimme wird', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 June 2005; P. Jandl, "'bin murmeln bin'", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 4 June 2005; Jörg Drews, 'So gliederlösend muss die Liebe klingen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 September 2005.

be discussed below. Utler is similarly interested in vocality in her treatment of the Marsyas tale in particular. Her collection is intensely preoccupied with the relationship between poetic speech and the speech organs as well as with the traces in language itself of its origins in spontaneous pre-verbal expression. In prioritising sound patterning in a way that tends to override the reader or listener's habitual drive to derive meaning from words, Utler takes us on an imaginative journey backwards through our history as speaking beings, back to before the victory of the Apollonian order which erected barriers between the human and the natural worlds to an awareness of the intimate link between sound and corporeality (albeit a paradoxically intellectual awareness in this post-Apollonian present).

The title of this essay, 'Material Metamorphoses', is thus meant in two ways. On the one hand, both poets take Ovid's material or subject-matter and transform it through their own poetic reworkings; on the other hand, and more crucially for my purposes here, both use the space of their written texts and the accompanying voice recordings to engage with and imaginatively to reverse the cultural-historical process by which artificial media have divorced words from the corporeality of the speaker, separating sense from the senses and articulation from the material conditions for the production of sound. For both Köhler and Utler, Ovid's tales of metamorphosis are found to preserve crucial traces of the transformation of living entities into disembodied forms, enabling a memorialization of that dematerialization.

Barbara Köhler: Listening to Echo

Poetic work with mythical material raises questions of both repetition and variation. Retelling and repetition are never exact. Rather, shifts and changes occur, legible as the effect of the recasting of the material under different historical circumstances or from a notably new standpoint. The following lines from Köhler's *ECHOS. QUELLE* are suggestive:

Echo wird echo, sie wird es wird sie: ihre stimme gehört ihr nicht, hört sie, sie kann nur wiederholen was sie hört, was andere sagen: zustimme sein. Echo, die keine eigenen worte hat, die nur worte aus andrer quelle, die worte der anderen wiedergeben kann: anders.

Echo becomes echo, she becomes it becomes her: her voice does not belong to her, she hears, she can only repeat what she hears, what others say: a voice concurring.¹⁷ Echo, who has no words of her own, who can only reproduce words from another source/others' source, the words of others: differently.

Spoken by Köhler herself in her recording of the work, they point to Köhler's self-conscious awareness of herself as a woman poet reproducing the words of Ovid, who

¹⁷ 'Zustimme' is a neologism, consisting of the noun for voice, 'Stimme' and the prefix 'Zu'. The similarity with the verb 'zustimmen', 'to agree' or 'to concur', has suggested the translation given here. But equally, the prefix 'zu' might denote something added, so a 'voice that is an addition'.

serves her as he has served others as their source. Her retelling is not a repetition of the same, however. Rather, it introduces a difference into the tale of the order of Echo's difference from Narcissus: 'In dieser, seiner geschichte ist Echo die andere' (In this, his story Echo is the other [fem.]/is the different one [fem.]). The difference marked by the gendered voice in Köhler's retelling is an important one, to which I will return in the context of an examination of two other differences in Köhler's treatment of the material: her striking attention to temporality, and the insertion of passages of flowing, rhythmic, highly repetitive speech akin to lyric language into the more prosaic re-narration of Ovid's tale.

Jetzt ist es schon so lange her. Und war immer: eine alte geschichte.

Now it is so long ago. And was always: an old story.

These opening sentences of *ECHOS. QUELLE* signal the significance of temporality to Köhler's retelling. The first word 'Jetzt' (now) draws attention to the gulf between the poet whose recorded voice we hear and Ovid, the poet in the past, of whose own retelling of the story it is stated that it is:

Erzählt von einem, zu einer zeit um den nullpunkt unserer zeit herum, von dem damals noch keiner wusste, wer immer auch wir damals war: wusste von keinem jahr eins, von keinem augenblick, in dem jemand jetzt gesagt hätte... .

Told by someone [masc.], at a time around the zero point of our common era,¹⁸ of which no one was aware at the time, whoever we were at that time: was not aware of an anno one, of a moment in which someone might have said now

'At the time', in the 'now' of Ovid's writing, there could as yet be no awareness of a new system of dating – this is applied retrospectively – and certainly no awareness of the future 'now' of the one reading this now 'old story'. Paradoxically, however, by opening up the gulf between Ovid's time and the 'now' of the speaker, Köhler prepares the way for the contemplation of the poetry's presentness, as one possible reading of the opening phrase suggests: 'Now it *is* so long ago.' The use of the present-tense 'is' here points to a paradox: what is long past can be made to be present again through narration. Notably, Ovid himself shifts into the present tense in the course of the narration of the encounter between Narcissus and Echo. The pluperfect verbs 'dixerat' (he had cried) and 'responderat' (she had responded) (*Metamorphoses* III.380) give way to present-tense verbs as Narcissus calls out and Echo repeats his words back to him from 'hic stupet' (III.381) onwards. Since 'hic' can be understood both as a pronoun, 'he', and an adverb, 'here', we read alternatives: 'He is astonished' or 'Here he stands amazed.' The text, written in the long-distant past, ascribes to itself the capacity to make the time and place of the events it describes present again, at least before our mind's eye. The time that has lapsed between the composition of the text and the 'now' of reading is erased. This is not something

¹⁸ The German equivalent of the 'Common Era' (CE, as the secular variant of AD) is 'unsere Zeitrechnung', literally 'our calculation of time'.

new or surprising; indeed, it is so customary an aspect of reading that we might not even register it as a feature. Köhler, too, tells the story of Narcissus and Echo in the present tense:

So treffen sie aufeinander in Ovids geschichte trifft sie Narziss, mitten im wald, ihn allein, ohne alle anderen.

In this way they encounter one another in Ovid's story she encounters Narcissus, in the middle of the forest, him alone, without all the others.

Is there a difference, though, between reading a story narrated in the present tense in this way and hearing it spoken, voiced? Isobel Armstrong argues that the mirror relation between visual and acoustic perception in Ovid's tale of Narcissus and Echo addresses two different temporal models. The image of Narcissus, mirrored in the surface of the water, is necessarily bound to its moment in time: 'A reflection is always simultaneous with its object. It is always caught in Time. ... It can never be other than *literal*. Passive, specular, coercive.'¹⁹ In the case of an echo, the relationship between the original and its reproduction is different:

an echo does not have this simultaneous and immediate manifestation. There is a gap between its manifestation and ordinary sound. And an echo never is a literal reproduction of sound but a vestige or variant made by shadowy harmonics.²⁰

When reading and listening to a story are compared, however, the temporal models exactly reverse. If I see the text in black-and-white in front of me, see its 'here' and 'now' in print, I see the distinction between my Now and that of the text; I see that this was written and typeset in an earlier Now; and it is part of the game of re-presentation that I go along with the text when I read of past events narrated as if they were present and happening now. By contrast, when I hear a voice saying 'now', that Now is shared; speaking voice and listening ear inhabit the same Now. In *ECHOS. QUELLE* Köhler raises the matter of the presentness of the voice in a passage in which the re-narration gives way to one of the lyrical inserts:

In dieser, seiner geschichte ist Echo die andere, ist eine: andre. Eine unerhörte, die stimme.

Die, der sie zuhören. Der, der Sie zuhören. Die, die sie zuhören. Er und sie: sie. Und die, denen sie zuhören.

In this, his story Echo is the other [fem.], is one [fem.]: [who is] different. One unheard [of], the voice.²¹

¹⁹ I. Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic*, Oxford and Malden, MA, 2000, pp. 244, 245.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 245.

²¹ The choice of the word 'unerhört' creates an interesting ambiguity in the German. The verb 'erhören' means 'to answer' (as in answering a prayer or a request), so 'to listen to' in a manner that includes response. To call Echo's voice 'unerhört', using the past participle form of the verb 'erhören' with the prefix 'un-', indicates that her voice went unanswered by Narcissus. But the adjective 'unerhört' also means 'outrageous', 'incredible', 'unheard of'.

The one they are listening to. Of the one [fem.] you are listening to. They, who are listening. He and she: they. And those they are listening to. [Italics in the original]²²

Here the listeners are addressed directly by the broadcast voice to whom, in the Now of the radio broadcast, they are listening as they listen to the story of Narcissus and Echo. The time of speaking and listening are the same, even if in this case, as in the case of reading a text, there is a medium in play. It is significant, moreover, that the voice the listeners hear is a female voice, a voice in which the gender shared with the narrative figure Echo can be heard. Does it make a difference, to hear the tale of Narcissus and Echo voiced by a woman poet rather than a male one? Does it shift the emphasis?

The case is different again when there is no medium, when the voice emerges audibly from a given body, audibly the product of specific vocal cords, larynx, lungs, not in black-and-white on the page, nor as a radio wave, but emanating from a person of flesh and blood present before the listener in whom her gender is on clear display. This is how Köhler presents Echo in her retelling:

Coeamus: sie tritt aus dem wald, auf die lichtung, tritt zutage als differenz, sichtbar, ein gegenüber aus fleisch und blut. Als differenz erscheint (*erscheint ihm*) ihre gestalt, die seiner offensichtlich nicht gleicht.

Coeamus: she steps out of the wood, into the clearing, coming to light as difference, visible, a person before him of flesh and blood. Her form appears (*appears to him*) as difference, visibly different from his. [Italics in the original]

In the passage that follows on this appearance of Echo, temporality is once again emphasized:

Es ist das nu, das nunc, das nun, in dem sich alles dreht, das hand-, das wort-, das bildumdrehen im augen-blick, im nu, im nun kein jetzt in dieser tagesmitte sieht sie nur ihn, ihr hier, seines und ihrs: ihn, der mit ihr, die ihm die worte aus dem mund nimmt und verkehrt, ihr zugesagtes gegen ihn verwendet, der er mit ihr nicht teilen mag, vermag es nicht, sein echo, seine Echo nicht, seine nicht sein: sein nein, das gegen sie gerichtet sie richtet gegen sie als beide, als zwei, als einige und sich.

²² The English translation cannot reproduce the grammatical play with homophones in this passage. The principle underpinning the passage is that the German words for 'you', 'she', and 'they' are all the same: 'sie' (or 'Sie'). Moreover, because 'sie' ('they') and 'Sie' ('you') are homophones, listeners would hear more possible meanings than my translation conveys (a listener might, for example, hear: *'The one you are listening to. Of the one [fem.] you are listening to. You, who are listening. He and she: they. And those you are listening to'*).

It is the instant, the nunc, the now on which everything turns, hand, word, and image in the twinkling of an eye,²³ in the instant, in the now [nun] no now [jetzt] in this midday she sees only him, their here, his and hers: him, with her, who takes the words out of his mouth and turns them, turning what's said to her against him, who does not want to share with her, is not able to, his echo, not his Echo, does not want her to be his: his no cast at her casts her out is cast against them both, as two, as a couple united and themselves/himself.

'Nunc' in Latin (related to the German word for now, 'nun'), unlike the word 'iam' (German 'jetzt'), can only be used in the present tense and to refer to a quite literal presence in the here and now. In this passage, the 'nunc' speaks to the risk of relationship in real time, the relationship between real bodies, male and female, in time and space. Rejected by the male beloved, however:

versucht Echo die differenz, fleisch und blut, ihre gestalt zum verschwinden zu bringen, sich zu verflüchtigen, in luft aufzulösen ... und es gelingt, gelingt bis auf die knochen, gebein, das zu stein wird, vielleicht auch vinyl, bis auf die hardware.

Die stimme, das flüchtige, wird, fleischlos, zu bleibendem, wieder und wieder zu wiederholen: *vox manet*.

Echo tries to make the difference, flesh and blood, her form disappear, dissipate, dissolve into air ... and she succeeds, succeeds save for the bones, the bone that turns to stone, perhaps also to vinyl, save for the hardware.

The voice, ephemeral, becomes, without flesh, what remains, to be repeated, over and over: *vox manet*. [Italics in the original]²⁴

Köhler's retelling draws out emphatically the differences in the respective ends of Narcissus and Echo and in their reproductive media. In Narcissus's case, the beautiful body of the sixteen-year-old transpires to be transient, dissolving as it does into the medium in which he sees his own beautiful reflection, the water (the flow of time, perhaps). At the end of his narrative, he is an image, but a shadowy one, a simulacrum still observing his image in the waters of the Styx in Hades while, in the world, his image is substituted by a flower, the narcissus, 'vervielfacht von jedem frühling, erneuert, vergänglich' (of which each spring makes multiple copies, renewed, transitory): the beautiful boy, though a particular image, is also a replaceable image. Echo, by contrast, likewise no longer a body, remains as voice, as sound, multiplying the voices of the nymphs and dryads who lament the death of the beautiful boy. Echo's voice becomes 'die stimme aller', the voice of all; 'ihre

²³ Köhler plays on the phrase 'im Handumdrehen' here, which literally means 'in the turning of the hand', and is equivalent to 'in an instant', 'in the twinkling of an eye' in English. In Köhler's phrasing, the compound noun 'Handumdrehen', 'the turning of the hand', is broken up through hyphenation, and 'word' and 'image' added as possible alternative parts of the compound, so that one understands: 'the turning of the hand, the word, the image'. 'im augen-blick' presents the word for 'moment', 'Augenblick', as a hyphenated compound, drawing attention to its constituent parts: 'in the glance of an eye'. My translation is only an approximation of the word-play here.

²⁴ 'Vox manet' quotes Ovid directly: III.399.

stimme' (her voice) is 'ihre stimme' (their voice). Moreover, the 'hardware' of her bones-become-stone is the medium for the reproduction of the story of them both; it is the 'grund' (basis) from which 'die stimmen, die bilder sind abrufbar' (the voices, the images can be called up), 'wieder und wieder' (over and over again).

Köhler's reworking of the story of Narcissus and Echo emphasizes it as a story pervaded by the problem of time and transience. As such it is the site of a conflict which, with the help of the work of feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero, we might grasp as one between the different answers of philosophy and poetry to the human fear of mortality: on the one hand, philosophy's 'devocalization of logos',²⁵ and on the other, poetry's affirmation of the voice. In her 2003 work *A più voci: Per una filosofia dell'espressione vocale*, translated into English in 2005 as *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Cavarero presents the history of Western philosophy since the ancient Greeks as a history of the privileging of the sense of sight above the sense of hearing. 'Logos', meaning speech in which 'the one who speaks joins words to one another, one after the other, gathering them in his discourse',²⁶ becomes in the course of this history separated from vocalization, equated instead with the 'silent activity of the mind' in the process of ratiocination.²⁷ The acoustic aspect of rational discourse becomes subordinate to the visual:

This is expressed in Greek by terms such as *noema* and *idea*. What we call 'signified' is, in fact, for metaphysics an object of thought that is characterized by visibility and clarity. ... The *noema* and *idea* are basically mental images.²⁸

Why this privileging of sight? Because, Cavarero suggests, 'sight permits a position of autonomy that is at once active and detached' while 'the hearer is completely exposed to sonorous events, which come from an exterior that the hearer does not fully control'.²⁹ The philosopher, in short, desires autonomy based on detachment more than sonic relationship where the individual is not in control. This accords with Barbara Köhler's presentation of the genesis of the singular male subject in her poem-cycle *Niemands Frau* (2007) as one who strives to remain detached from the object of his observations.³⁰ The result, Cavarero argues, is a refusal of relationality in the present:

²⁵ A. Cavarero, *For More than One Voice. Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, transl. P. A. Kottman, Stanford CA, 2005, Chapter 1.3, pp. 33-41.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 33. Cavarero is referring here to the Greek verb 'legein', related to the noun 'logos', meaning 'both "speaking" and "gathering," "binding," "joining"'.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 35. The advent of writing is crucial to this process. See W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982), London and New York, 2002.

²⁸ Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* (n. 25 above), pp. 35 and 36.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁰ See Köhler, *Niemands Frau* (n. 6 above), in particular the poem 'POLYMORPHEM', pp. 16-17. See also Helmut Schmitz's commentary on Köhler's poems in 'The "nachseite des abendlands": Barbara Köhler's *Niemands Frau* and the Dialectic of Enlightenment', in *An Odyssey for Our Time*, ed. Paul (n. 6 above), pp. 139-61, especially his discussion of the emergence of the scientist as distanced observer and the concomitant exclusion of the feminine, p. 142.

In the theatre of consciousness, the natural relationality of the vocal ... is pre-emptively neutralized in favour of a silent and internal voice that produces a self-referential type of relation, an ego-logical relation between the self and itself. The price for the elimination of the physicality of the voice is thus, first of all, the elimination of the other, or, better, of others.³¹

This description evokes Ovid's Narcissus who, caught in his videocentric world, can only contemplate relationship with himself. Repudiating corporeal relationship with all others, he exhausts his beauty in the ego-logical relation of self with the representation of the self in a manner reminiscent of the relation of the beloved to the lover in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a plausible intertext for Ovid's tale of Narcissus.³² Interestingly, the sterility of his situation occurs to Narcissus at the moment when he realizes that, although he can see the image of the beloved reflected in the pool, he cannot hear him. This leads to his moment of epiphany, 'iste ego sum' ('I am he') (III.463), by which his love is thwarted so that he gives up his life. In Platonic philosophy, self-referential love for an ephemeral beauty of form can be overcome through the transference of the emotional bond onto eternal forms not subject to the flux of time, in a move that leaves behind this world in an act of ego-logical sublimation, perhaps figured in Narcissus's continued self-contemplation in the river Styx in Ovid. The poet's *legein*, by contrast, the joining together of words into the poem, generates the 'hardware' from which, even after the ephemeral body has melted away, the voice can be re-activated in such a way as to draw others into relation with it. In becoming 'the voice of all', Echo becomes, in short, the voice of poetry through which, re-voiced, the story is made present again – in the material present of this world rather than in an imagined eternity beyond. In casting Echo as the voice of poetry, Köhler approaches from the angle of the poet what Shane Butler, following Lynn Enterline, approaches from the angle of the reader/recipient. In *The Ancient Phonograph*, Butler criticizes those scholars who have equated Narcissus with the poet and sides instead with those who see Ovid's resemblance to Echo: 'As Lynn Enterline deftly observes, already in Ovid's own poem-closing bid for immortality as a disembodied, endlessly repeating voice, he "resembles no character in the poem so closely as his own Echo"'.³³

Cavarero's discussion of the 'devocalization of logos' can also come to our aid in thinking about sound-patterning in poetic speech that acoustically exceeds or resists rational discourse's focus on semantics. As an example, we might turn to a passage from Köhler's *ECHOS. QUELLE* already part-cited above, one of a number of densely rhythmical insertions into the narrative in which Köhler, in a manner characteristic of much of her recent work, plays through grammatical possibilities.

³¹ Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* (n. 25 above), p. 47.

³² I am grateful to my former colleague William McKenzie, expert in all things to do with Narcissus (see W. McKenzie, *Narcissus, Modernity, and the Comparative Study of Shakespeare and Montaigne*, Oxford, 2017), for this insight and a very helpful conversation that left its mark in other ways on this essay.

³³ Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph* (n. 3 above), p. 84. Jonathan Culler discusses poetry's tendency to recreate presence through voicing: J. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (n. 4 above), e.g., pp. 14 and 37.

In dieser, seiner geschichte ist Echo die andere, ist eine: andre. Eine unerhörte, die stimme.

Die, der sie zuhören. Der, der Sie zuhören. Die, die sie zuhören. Er und sie: sie. Und die, denen sie zuhören. Sie, die sie hören, der sie zuhören, die eine, der sie zuhören, der einen; der eine, der einer zuhört (oder die), die ich sagt, ich sagt wie sie, der oder die sie zu oder hören, hören wie sie, die ich ich sage, sage sie, sage hören, hören Sie. [Italics in the original]

For those readers who can read German, it is possible to work through this passage making grammatical sense of it. The story of Narcissus, this passage conveys, is about two figures, an ‘er’ (he) and a ‘sie’ singular (she). If they were to come together as a couple, they would form a ‘sie’ plural (they). The story is told in the voice of a narrator who makes it grammatically clear that hers is a female voice: the voice that listeners are listening to (‘die, der sie zuhören’) is grammatically gendered feminine (the noun for ‘voice’ is a feminine noun in German) but it also belongs to a female subject: it is the voice ‘of the one you are listening to’ (‘der, der Sie zuhören’). ‘Removed from the dynamic flux of the vocal, and consigned to the fixity of the written sign, language becomes an object of observation’, Cavarero states,³⁴ and this makes sense of what we are doing when we start to parse the phrases of Köhler’s text presented in written form. However, when it is not read, but spoken and heard, the passage becomes something that has very little to do with semantic understanding (hence my omission of a translation on this occasion; the meaning is not paramount here; observe instead the patterning of sounds in the proximate words). Audially, it is received as a flow of words in which homophones and near-homophones and patterns of repetition create the main impact on the listener.³⁵ Cavarero’s comment on Plato’s condemnation of poetry, ‘the form of orality par excellence’, is relevant here:

The philosopher obviously understands very well that this is not spoken speech but rather a song where the musicality of the voice dominates speech, forcing the poet and the audience into ‘an absolute, emotional coparticipation through inebriation and pleasure’.³⁶

Where the poet no longer or not even narrates, but rather sets in train a rhythmic, sonorous, incantatory flow of words, it is possible that the barriers erected by rationality will be torn down, unleashing something other: the human capacity for communicative relationship between speaker and listeners, the Dionysian permeation of the boundaries between self and other(s), the intermingling of bodies in the real time and real space of the present.³⁷

³⁴ Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* (n. 25 above), p. 82.

³⁵ Butler stresses the vocalicity of phonemic repetition in *The Ancient Phonograph* (n. 3 above).

³⁶ Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* (n. 25 above), p. 83. The quotation is from B. Gentili, *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica*, Rome, 1995, p. 15.

³⁷ Köhler’s rendering of the song of the sirens in the poem ‘SIRENEN’ in *Niemands Frau* pits Odysseus, tied to the mast and intent on the mastery of speech, against incantatory song. See *Niemands Frau* (n. 6 above), pp. 46–8; my English translation is available at <http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poem/item/27039> [accessed 11 July 2017].

Anja Utler: The Victims of Apollo

This interest in the principles of sonorous speech links Köhler's work with that of Anja Utler. Utler's poems engage expressly with phonetics and largely avoid semantically unambiguous syntactic units that lend themselves to instantaneous interpretation by the reading eye or the listening ear. Characteristic, rather, are the dense 'Verflechtung' ('interweaving'), as she calls it, of diverse lexical fields, polysemy, and the prominent use of alliteration and assonance which suggest word associations that are nonetheless not necessarily rationally self-evident or graspable in the moment of reading. Given the importance of performance to her work (or its approximation in the sound-recordings which accompany her poems), the aspect of pleasure in sound, of 'emotional coparticipation' in the hear and now of the reading is also brought to the fore.

Of the three poems that treat the victims of Apollo at the conclusion of *münden – entziungeln*, the poem 'für daphne: geklagt' ('for daphne: lamented') is the most conventionally narrative. In the poem's seven short sections, the naiad Daphne speaks in the first-person, reversing the perspective in Ovid, whose narration of the tale of Apollo's pursuit of the nymph includes an extensive section of first-person speech by Apollo (*Metamorphoses* I.504–24). The opening of Utler's poem gives us a breathless, fearful voice and an anxious body, 'der gehetzte/schweiß' (literally: 'hunted sweat'), springing through brambles, trying to reach the river in order to escape the god Apollo in ardent pursuit (section one). As her father (in Ovid the river god Peneus) fails to conceal her in the water (sections two and three), she sticks fast in the mud of the river bank and here transforms into wood (section four). Referencing the use of laurel to decorate the brow of the victors in poetry contests (section five), Daphne laments her violation by the god Apollo who, as in Ovid, is represented as embracing (in Utler more explicitly raping) her even in her form as a tree (section six). In the final section, Daphne calls on her own now dry leaves first to singe ('senge[n]') the god, then to hiss out an instruction to eat of her berries. In an interesting twist to customary interpretations of Ovid's tale, one of Utler's two epigraphs to the poem states that laurel is highly poisonous, so that far from yielding herself to the lover-turned-poet, assenting to the use of her leaves as the poet laureate's crown – an interpretation by the German literary scholar Karlheinz Stierle quoted by Utler as her first epigraph – in this new variant Daphne is intent on exacting her revenge for her violation through poisoning her assailant.³⁸ Utler's poem works closely with elements from Ovid's version of the tale, but her decisive change of perspective brings out an interpretation that superimposes a rape victim's desire for vengeance and an undoing of the image of Apollo as the patron of poetic performance, emphasizing instead Apollonian poetry's instrumentalization of the natural world.

³⁸ It is to be noted that the ancient daphne used in garlands will have been sweet bay (*Laurus nobilis*) rather than laurel, and as such not poisonous. Utler is taking poetic licence here. See Andrew Feldherr's discussion of the ambiguity in Ovid's text as to whether Daphne assents or whether 'the attempt to claim her participation ... marks merely the final stage in her possession': A. Feldherr, *Playing Gods: Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Politics of Fiction*, Princeton, 2010, p. 44.

This purpose also resonates in Utler's 'marsyas, umkreist' ('marsyas, encircled'), the first poem of her Ovidian sequence. Marsyas, whose tale is also recounted in Plato's *Symposium*, is a flute-playing satyr or woodland spirit; he is defeated in a musical contest by Apollo who accompanies his own singing upon the lyre. Apollo, as the victor in the contest, is permitted to do what he wishes with the satyr and flays Marsyas alive; the music of the flute is substituted by Marsyas's screams. The contest of Apollo and Marsyas has been subjected to a wide variety of interpretations,³⁹ but as Joanna Nizyńska argues, Ovid's succinct treatment of the material is both sympathetic to Marsyas (whose punishment in some versions is presented as just reward for his hubris in challenging the god) and gives unusual emphasis to the relationship of the satyr with the bucolic setting, 'describing the beings of the region lamenting the satyr's death and forming a river named Marsyas from their tears'.⁴⁰ As with the demise of Narcissus, Ovid invokes a collective of mourners at the end of his tale. Cavarero reads the myth as marking a stage on the pathway to the devocalization of logos, the transition from a form of musical performance that places the body at its centre – 'Whoever plays [the flute] renounces speech and evokes a world in which the acoustic sphere and expressions of corporeality predominate'⁴¹ – to the Apollonian logos. Following Nietzsche, she notes:

This is not simply the triumph of the cithara over the flute, but rather the triumph of visionary reason over musical experience. Letting Dionysus preside over the acoustic sphere, Nietzsche understands Apollo above all as the god of figurative art, and thus of the eye and vision, of beautiful and luminous appearance, of form.⁴²

Anja Utler's Marsyas poem in *münden – entzüngeln* consists, once again, of seven parts: a prologue, five sections numbered from one to five, and an epilogue. Of the five numbered sections, three are divided into two halves, of which the part printed on the upper part of the page represents the flaying of Marsyas in predominantly visual images (notable are the verbs of seeing, suggesting perhaps the perspective of Apollo), while the text printed on the lower part of the page, drawing on images that shift between the sense of touch and the sense of hearing, present the process of cutting a stick, peeling its bark, and shaping a reed in order to make a flute. Non-verbal elements given in phonetic script are included in these sub-sections, as also in the epigraph:

³⁹ See E. Wyss, *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Images*, Newark and London, 1996 for a detailed discussion.

⁴⁰ Joanna Nizyńska, 'Marsyas's Howl: The Myth of Marsyas in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Zbigniew Herbert's "Apollo and Marsyas"', *Comparative Literature*, 53, 2001, pp. 151–69 (155). See also the reading of the Marsyas episode in Feldherr, *Playing Gods* (n. 38 above), pp. 99–104. Feldherr, however, sees Ovid as 'participat[ing] with the internal narrator in framing Marsyas as legitimately punished victim' (p. 103), in marked contrast to Nizyńska's reading and Utler's poem.

⁴¹ Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* (n. 25 above), p. 69.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Occasionally sound is also produced ... by inhaling (ingressive speech). E.g. an ingressive [f] is sometimes used to express a sudden, mild pain.

R. Arnold/K. Hansen⁴³

In other words, Utler deploys in her poem pre-verbal sounds that give spontaneous expression to pain as well as sounds that evoke splitting and tearing in densely sonic passages. Remarkably, these sounds are used in those parts of the poem concerned not with the flaying of Marsyas but with what is suggestively presented as the parallel flaying of plants. This leads to a subliminal transferral of the horror evoked by the violence enacted on Marsyas in the upper part of the page to the treatment of these elements of the natural world in its lower part. An act of culture – the making of a musical instrument – becomes an act of violation, felt corporeally by the reader/listener who responds viscerally to non-verbal sounds associated with pain. Thus the poem participates in the Apollonian tradition's visual mode while simultaneously deploying sonic elements to expose the violence underlying its severance from and objectification of the natural world. This radically reverses the Renaissance understanding of the myth in which, according to Edith Wyss's research, the victory of Apollo marked the triumph of divine art over human skill and of heavenly wisdom over terrestrial shortcomings.⁴⁴ Utler returns song definitively to earth.

The final poem in the sequence, and the closing poem of the volume, is 'sibylle – gedicht in acht silben' ('sibyl – poem in eight syllables'). In the myth as recounted by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* XIV.129–53), the prophetess tells Aeneas how she, as the object of Phoebus Apollo's desire, struck a deal with the god: pointing at a heap of dust, she requested as many years of life as there were grains of dust in it in return for her virginity; but having been granted her wish, she refused the god, whose revenge was in turn to refuse her the gift of eternal youth so that she is condemned to ageing. Ovid's sibyl contemplates the eventual withering of her body, leaving only her voice, but by that voice she will be known: 'vocem mihi fata relinquent' ('the fates will leave me my voice') (XIV.153). As with the tale of Echo – 'vox manet' ('the voice will remain') – it is possible to read this reference to voice as the poet's self-conscious contemplation of the vocality of his poem outliving his physical body. Utler's treatment of the myth owes as much to Marina Tsvetaeva's 1922 three-poem cycle 'СИВИЛЛА' ('SIVILLA') as it does to Ovid.⁴⁵ As Olga Peters Hasty has compellingly argued, the Sibyl became for Tsvetaeva a female figure through whom she could negotiate her own distinctively gendered relationship to her poetic vocation, an alternative to the figure of Orpheus as the archetypal poet. Eschewing embodiment and erotic desire, the Sibyl as voice 'assumes [for Tsvetaeva] a mediatory position between mortality and divinity, between temporality and eternity, and between the external and the internal':⁴⁶

⁴³ Utler, *engulf – enkindle* (n. 8 above), p. 74.

⁴⁴ Wyss, *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas* (n. 39 above), p. 144.

⁴⁵ See Anja Utler, 'Zur Entstehung von "sibylle – gedicht in acht silben"', in her *Von den Knochen der Sanftigkeit: Behauptungen, Reden, Quergänge*, Vienna, 2016, pp. 111–12.

⁴⁶ O. Peters Hasty, *Tsvetaeva's Orphic Journeys in the Worlds of the Word*, Evanston IL, 1996, p. 85. I am grateful to Izabela Rakar for bringing this article to my attention and for our discussions on Utler's work.

The Sibyl departs from the perceptual dictates of the phenomenal world of sense and mere appearance. The blocking out of external stimuli signaled by the lowered eyelids – an image that recurs persistently in Tsvetaeva's lyrics – effects a transition from exteriority to interiority. ... The kenosis or 'emptying out' of the Sibyl that is described in this poem marks her departure from the ready-made world which can at best be a stimulus to reality, but not reality itself. This departure culminates in her apprehension of divinity – the creative, intuitive realms of imaginative thought. The 'entry' of the god signals the appearance of the divine within the Sibyl's newly cleared perceptual field, a divinity that may be apprehended when the limits of the finite world are superseded.⁴⁷

As is to be anticipated from everything that has been said about Utler's poetry so far in this essay, Utler's treatment of the material profoundly resists Tsvetaeva's Neoplatonic (and in the third poem in the cycle, overtly Christianized) account of the Sibyl. Tsvetaeva's disembodied interiority, with its primacy of visually imagined forms, corresponds to Platonic Narcissus's self-contained gaze as he contemplates his own image in the mirror of the Styx, after the finite world of phenomena is left behind and to Cavarero's devocalization of logos.

What Utler draws from Tsvetaeva's version, though, is the image of fire. Utler's poem begins with the first lines of Tsvetaeva's quoted as an epigraph:

*Сивилла: выжжена, сивилла: ствол.
Все птицы вымерли, но бог вошел.*

*Sibylle: ausgebrannt, sibylle: Stamm.
Die Vögel ausgelöscht, Gott aber kam.*

Sibyl: in cinders, Sibyl: a trunk.
The birds incinerate, but God has come.⁴⁸

In the eight-part poem that follows, Utler's Sibyl is consumed by the fire that in Tsvetaeva's poem roars through the lone tree in the forest that is the symbol of the girl visited by Phoebus Apollo, god of light. In lines that spit and splutter, Utler gives us discomfiting images of the human body burning (a palpable matter of flesh and fat) until there emerges from the conflagration a voice, vibrating with emotion:

ist: geborsten, sibylle, der: splitter im fleisch ist sie – blutet noch? –
spreißelt – entzweit, klappt: den lippen gleich, strunk – ist: lamelle, verholzt
sie: durchschneidet das licht, trieft: sie knarzt, das: entquillt

sibylle so: gähnt sie, ächzt: schwingen die: stimmlippen, -ritzen sie
kratzen: hinweg übern kalk, scheuern, reißen ein: krater vom
becken zur kehle der: stimmschlund, sibylle, sie: zittert, vibriert

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁸ Utler, *münden – entzüngeln* (n. 8 above), p. 88; *engulf – enkindle*, p. 90.

has: burst open, sibyl, the: splinter in flesh is she – bleeding still? –
tinders – is severed, she gapes: like the lips, stump – is: lamella, lignified
slices: the light, drips: she screeches, it: springs forth

sibyl so: yawns so she, sighs: vocal lips, folds they: swing they
scrape: off over limestone, they scrub, rip a: crater from
basin to gullet the: voiceleft, so sibyl, she: oscillates, shakes.⁴⁹

The poem's final part arrives at the image of the burnt out tree-trunk with which Tsvetaeva's poem begins: the site of the conflagration is now still, save for the rustling of leaves or perhaps of the thrown-off skin of the snake that darts away ('entzüngelt'!) in the penultimate section:

Und still. bloß die witterung: brandstätte rodung vernehmbar – ist
ehemals knistern – und fäulnis: die zehen befigern den strunk:
eine pilzige höhlung, bestochern die ab- geworfene haut: sie zerfällt
an den schuppigen sohlen und: raschelt auf

and still: just the scent: fire site clearing to hear – once
a rustling – and spoilage: toes finger the stump:
fungous hollow, they probe cast-off skin: it breaks down
on the scaled soles and: crackles out⁵⁰

While what remains after the drama of the conflagration is putrescence and decay ('fäulnis', Beals's 'spoilage') and a 'fungous hollow', the site retains the trace of the fire ('ehemals knistern', once the crackling of fire⁵¹), perceptible to the sense of smell ('witterung', 'scent'). Utler's poem has re-enacted for us a terrible corporeal destruction that precedes Tsvetaeva's sign of the lone poetic voice visited by transcendent divinity, reversing her forerunner's rejection of the phenomenal world, reminding us of its, and our, vulnerable materiality. In the final lines, she places a memento of nature's eternal ability to transform and renew itself in the image of the snake escaping from the site of the fire, leaving behind its cast-off skin. But there is also a gesture towards the rustling leaves of the book before us from which the sounds of the poem can be retrieved, like the leaves on which, according to legend, the Cumaean Sibyl left her prophecies, to be visited again and re-voiced. Poetry, as the written word printed upon the pages before us, is in this account the relic of its origins as voice, emanating from the fleshy, sentient body of the poet.

Both Utler and Köhler find in Ovid's figures traces that enable a post-Apollonian remembrance of the mortal, transient body as the origin of poetic voice. It is possible to read in both of them the woman poet's vested interest in and identification with the female perspective, and thus to read their work against the backdrop of

⁴⁹ Utler, *münden – entzüngeln* (n. 8 above), pp. 89-90; *engulf – enkindle*, pp. 91-2.

⁵⁰ Utler, *münden – entzüngeln* (n. 8 above), p. 91; Utler, *engulf – enkindle*, p. 93.

⁵¹ Beals translates 'knistern' with 'rustling' where my argument here depends on the association of 'knistern' with the crackling of fire and the final words of the poem, 'raschelt auf', with the rustling of leaves.

what Rimell identifies as the capacity of Ovid's poems to 'open up space for thinking about female experience'. But this is, I would argue, to read their work reductively. As Tsvetaeva's treatment of the Sibyl shows, a woman poet is just as capable of pursuing the Neoplatonic transcendence of material presence to reach the realm of eternal forms as is the Neoplatonic male poet – or scholar, insisting on classical poetry's disembodied textuality. What Köhler and Utler identify in Ovid, by contrast, is his commitment to voice and to the body's trace in poetic voice. In reversing the Apollonian (and Platonic) commitment to transcendence, to ego-logical self-contemplation and to the truth of ideas detached from their embeddedness in fleshy presence, they simultaneously commit to poetry not as contemplated image or silently read text but as vocal performance. Köhler is interested in both the capacity of the voiced poem to 'make present' again and the potential of rhythmic, sonorous, incantatory speech to dismantle the barriers between selves in the instant of vocalization; Echo's transformation into the 'stimme aller', the voice of all, signals poetry's ability to transcend time not as disembodied idea, like the shade of Narcissus contemplating his insubstantial image through all eternity, but as sonic materiality, reactivating corporeality in its appeal to the bodies of listeners. Utler's is the more radical work, in that her poetry is not a reflection on these circumstances, as is Köhler's radio piece on Ovid's Narcissus and Echo, but an enactment of them: a shocking, visceral incorporation of the listener into the poems' emotive scenarios. Both poets articulate a discomfort with the historical severance of human culture, thought and 'truth' from its origins in the life of the body in the here and now, even as they self-consciously acknowledge the impossibility of a return to nature except through the work of the imagination in which they participate.

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