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‘VOICE-TRACE’ IN JAMES CHAPMAN’S *HOW IS THIS GOING TO CONTINUE?* (2007)

MARCIN STAWIARSKI

Introduction

The aim of this article is to consider the concept of voice in James Chapman’s experimental novel *How Is This Going to Continue?* (2007)¹ in relation to Bernd Alois Zimmermann’s composition *Requiem für einen jungen Dichter* (1969).² While Chapman’s text borrows directly from Zimmermann’s composition, the latter is also a work that draws on many external sources. Inevitably, this fosters a sophisticated network of intertextual and intermedial connections. Chapman’s novel resorts to quotes from vocal performances and other sorts of citations, fragments of which are scattered on the page. It could be said that the novel is wholly made up of scraps of voices. Likewise, in Zimmermann’s composition abundant use is made of musical, literary, or historical sources.

The voice in this novel can be conceived of as a mechanism of traces of former performances, a set of vocal remnants transformed into a peculiar literary object. However, Chapman’s work cannot stand on its own – the references included in the novel are not solely a list of tracks to be listened to while reading the text. Nor is the musical an illustration of the textual. As I will develop at length in this paper, the text is, instead, music yet to be voiced, a call for interactive performance that contains a semblance of a vocal trace, which I call *trace-to-be*, while exposing this very illusion as an aporia.

¹ I quote from James Chapman, *How Is This Going to Continue?*, New York: Fugue State Press, 2007.

² Bernd Alois Zimmermann, *Requiem for a Young Poet – Requiem für einen jungen Dichter* [1967-1969], SWF Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden (Michael Gielen), Paris: Sony, 1995.

The first part of this article focuses on the notion of voice by concentrating on the specific intertextual and intermedial links of *How Is This Going to Continue?* to the genre of the requiem mass. The second part centers on the notion of the *voice-trace* by defining the concept and analyzing some instances of its use in the novel.

The lamenting shriek of the requiem

Chapman's text was published by Fugue State Press in 2007. Its intermedial character is immediately striking, since the novel refers to music from the very start by presenting us with its cover showing a quasi-illegible musical score of a rather complex nature.

The novel tells a very simple story. A fictitious, eccentric composer, Unruh Eckhard Rabindranath, begins to work on an oratorio when his wife, Ulyssia, is diagnosed with breast cancer and dies shortly after. Unruh himself suffers from a series of strokes thereafter. The main body of the novel – the oratorio – is hence a double requiem, at once the composer's testament and a tribute to his wife. Chapman's novel is thus founded on the exploration of the death theme and the way in which death haunts the living.

The genre of the work in question is announced at the very outset, since, as the title-page informs the reader, it is meant to be:

The memoir of Eckhard Unruh's final year as a musician, composed by him for narrators, prerecorded tapes, contralto and baritone soloists, two choirs, chamber orchestra, percussion orchestra, electronic and concrete sounds, electric ukulele, and pipe organ. (3)

The structure of Chapman's text draws largely on the programme of Zimmerman's *Requiem* at Carnegie Hall on 20 April 1999.³ A booklet was put together for the occasion, presenting the work in English, graphically approximating the structure of the *Requiem*, thus simplifying and condensing the original work.⁴ In its turn, Chapman's text indicates: "[w]e have therefore introduced some simplifying

³ Chapman quotes Zimmermann's *Requiem* both in the text proper (58-59) and in the references at the end of the book (69). See Bernd Alois Zimmermann, *Requiem for a Young Poet*, Carnegie Hall Programme, 20 April 1999, Schott's Soehne, Mainz, 1999. <<http://audiolabo.free.fr/revue1999/content/zimmermannl.htm>>.

⁴ The simplification consists in replacing the musical score by a text, thus substituting one system of signs by another, *overwriting* the presence of the voice inscribed in the score.

features into the apparatus of this version” (7). Thus, musical notation is almost totally eliminated from both the Carnegie Hall version and Chapman’s novel. The only residue of musical notation is to be found in the part-layout and time indications, present in both works (left and right margins of the page). The voice is partly precluded, but it remains on the page as a mere trace, inasmuch as its presence is visible in the use of tracks, as in the original musical score.

Both works resort to performing groups composed of choirs, soloists, speakers, instrumental parts and 4-track audio-tapes, meant to be played through loudspeakers. In both cases the voice constitutes a mixture of live and recorded sung or spoken voice.⁵ Although Chapman reduces polyglotism, (limiting his text to the English translation just like the Carnegie Hall programme), he follows in Zimmermann’s footsteps by intimating the original composition’s recourse to multiple languages.⁶ The soprano voice is replaced by a contralto.⁷ Both works make use of intertextuality by resorting to a high degree of sampling, sequencing and collage.

The type of work under which all the traits of Chapman’s novel can be subsumed is that of the funeral homage through its numerous references to music, its obvious link to Zimmermann’s *Requiem* and the 1999 Carnegie Hall performance, as well as its treatment of the death theme, revolving around the idea of suicide.

Zimmermann’s *Requiem* went through different stages before reaching its final form. It can be traced back to the drafts for his cantata, *Omnia Tempus Habent*, and to the project of an oratorio that he had been working on since the late 1950s. The composer gradually focused on the figure of the artist, by adding Vladimir Mayakovski, Ezra Pound, and Kurt Schwitters to his work. It then became a *Mayakovski-Kantate*, but soon incorporated the poets Sergei Esenin and Konrad Bayer, thus turning into a requiem for three poets – a

⁵ This mixture is reminiscent of earlier forms of spoken voice used in music, such as Arnold Schönberg’s *Sprechgesang* and *Sprechstimme* (‘speech song’ or ‘speaking voice’).

⁶ Zimmermann makes use of excerpts in Latin, German, Czech, English, Greek, Old Greek, Russian, Hungarian. Chapman’s text states that the original score incorporated excerpts in German, Greek, Czech, Hungarian, Mandarin Chinese, French, Italian, Bengali, Sindhi, Hindi, Kannada, Sanskrit, Sumerian, Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese, and English.

⁷ Owing to the central role played in Chapman’s novel by the English contralto Kathleen Ferrier. See part II of this article.

commemoration that ended up taking on a more universal value. According to Zimmermann himself, the requiem should be apprehended as a work about a young poet *in general* rather than any particular poet.⁸ The figure of the poet represented by the three writers in the *Requiem*, to whom Chapman alludes,⁹ shares a similar fate, having committed suicide.¹⁰ Like Zimmermann, the fictitious composition by Unruh started off with an oratorio that finally became a requiem. In Chapman, suicide is clearly ancillary to the main theme, recalling Zimmermann, as is evidenced by the allusions to Esenin¹¹ and Mayakovski.¹² Zimmermann's suicide is also mentioned.¹³ Death and suicide come to characterize voice not only through the spectral presence of the deceased, through their traces, but also as a variation on the theme of mourning and funeral tribute.

Therefore, both works, steeped in the funeral tradition of the requiem, are intertwined. There are many examples of how the tradition that dates back to the early ages of Christianity and the Gregorian chant continued well into the 20th century.¹⁴ Based on the mass, the requiem implies an inherent theological relationship between the living and the dead, made possible by the voice, which bridges the gap between life and after-life. There is a latent rationale behind the voice that turns into an act. It is a prayer that allows the living to "assist the escape of their deceased family members from the netherworld of Purgatory",¹⁵ so that the voice becomes *votive*.

The voice in the requiem is a shriek, a shrill cry of the lamenting bereaved. One can recall the professional mourner's task of lamenting the dead that can be encountered in some cultures, like the *keening*

⁸ See Laurent Feneyrou, "...à quoi bon la sanction de la vérité", *Filigrane*, 6, (2007), *Musique et inconscient*, <<http://revues.mshparisnord.org/filigrane/pdf/199.pdf>>.

⁹ Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Eulogy to Sergei Esenin, With Full Voice*; Konrad Bayer, *The Sixth Sense*.

¹⁰ Esenin cut his wrists and hanged himself in 1925; Mayakovsky shot himself in the heart in 1930; Bayer committed suicide in 1964.

¹¹ "Sergei Esenin, suicide note" (58).

¹² "Mayakovsky has just shot himself in his room at Lubyansky Lane" (59).

¹³ "Zimmermann, Bernd Zimmermann ... killed himself" (59).

¹⁴ For more details, see Donald J. Grout, Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, New York/London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988, 47-50, Ulrich Michels, *Guide illustré de la musique*, Paris: Fayard, 1988, 127, and Robert Chase, *Dies Irae: A Guide to Requiem Music*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003, 2.

¹⁵ Robert Chase, *Dies Irae: A Guide to Requiem Music*, xvii.

during the ceremony of the wake in Ireland.¹⁶ The text of one of the early *deplorations* states: “Change your voices so clear and proud/To sharp cries and lamentations”.¹⁷ This prescription is reproduced in one of Chapman’s excerpts: “the sound made by the vocal cords, were it possible to detach the head, would be a squeak” (18). The voice relies on this articulation between the vocal folds and bodily resonance, since the head acts as a resonator. The shriek, then, appears as the consequence of such severance by means of the symbolic beheading which lays waste to the complex combination of the vocal organs. By so emphasizing the interconnectedness of parts within the vocal system, the novel points to another tie, that between subjectivity and otherness.

There is no isolated voice, but only voice within the relationship, torn between the self and the Other, from where springs the whole issue of call and address.¹⁸ Mladen Dolar points out that “the voice is something which tries to reach to the other, provoke it, seduce it, plead with it”.¹⁹ Interestingly, the requiem laments the de-voiced body by the dismembered, disembodied voice – the squeak, precisely – the sound that makes light of the resonating parts of the body. The subject, the person – Lat. *per-sonare*, to sound through, as through a mask – is this resonating, amplified voice, concealing the shriek.

But then Zimmermann’s composition does not pertain to the traditional genre of the requiem. Although the composer keeps excerpts from the typical mass for the dead, he works beyond convention. Chapman’s re-writing is an intermedial metaphor drawing on a modern form of requiem. The use of voice is quite peculiar in Zimmermann, hinging on three concepts that allow us to better understand and correlate the two works: *language as game*, *collision* and *interference*.

¹⁶ “To keen” is to lament, “to wail shrilly over the dead”, and a “keener” is “a professional mourner at a funeral or wake” (Terence Patrick Dolan, *A Dictionary of Hiberno-English*, Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 2004, 131).

¹⁷ Grout, Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 211.

¹⁸ See Mladen Dolar, “Freud’s Voices”, *A Voice and Nothing More*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006, 161. Also, Darian Leader “La voix en tant qu’objet psychanalytique”, *Savoirs et clinique*, 7/1, (2006), 151-161, and Marie-France Castarède, “Les notes d’or de sa voix tendre”, *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 65/5, (2001), 1657-1673.

¹⁹ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 28.

Zimmerman's *Requiem* begins with the "Prologue", where a male choir is interspersed with four spoken parts. The tapes play audio fragments, either recorded or sampled from historical recordings. The "Prologue" is a mixture of the requiem mass, an excerpt from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and a citation from James Joyce's "Monologue of Molly Bloom" from *Ulysses*. Equally important are the historical recordings: a speech delivered by John XXIII at the Ecumenical Council in Rome in 1962, along with Alexander Dubček's speech to the Czech people following the entry of troops of the Warsaw Pact in 1968.

It is noteworthy that Zimmermann's *Requiem* should begin with a quote from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* dealing with the nature of language. Wittgenstein impugns Augustine's view of language as pure *designatio*.²⁰ Designation, according to Wittgenstein, is tantamount to a primitive understanding of language. The requiem, thus, tellingly starts with a meditation on language and what Wittgenstein called a *language game*. Zimmermann's requiem is thus meant to be of a new genre. The composer calls it a *lingual*, so that the very definition of the type of requiem revives deep-rooted intermedial questions, especially those related to the history of the often difficult relationships between the voice and music when it comes to the setting of religious texts to music. It seems obvious that as far as Western vocal traditions are concerned, precedence is given to words rather than to the voice, itself.²¹ Dolar emphasizes the "philosophical distrust for [the] flourishing of the voice at the expense of the text"²² and points to the metaphysical history of the voice alternative to Derrida's in which it is considered to be a menace to the word. Indeed, music could make vocal performance "stray away from words which endow it with sense".²³ One way of envisaging the relationship between words and music, here, would be to consider that words are

²⁰ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1953, 2-5.

²¹ See Paul Zumthor, "Considérations sur les valeurs de la voix", *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 99-100/25, (1982), 233-238. See Lambert Colson, "De la musique servant du texte à la polyphonie fleurie", *La pensée de midi*, 28/2, (2009), 143-152, Françoise Escal, *Contrepoints: musique et littérature*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1990, and James A. Winn, *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and Music*, New Haven/London: Yale UP, 1981.

²² Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 30.

²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

partly detached or severed from music, so that the point of contention between the arts is heightened.

Furthermore, one of the sources of inspiration for Zimmermann's *Requiem*, interestingly enough, belongs to the literary tradition, namely, interior monologue; hence the references to Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and also to *Finnegans Wake* (1939). The latter adds yet another layer to the already complex intermedial nature of the work. And it seems possible to interpret the work through the prism of the correlation between the voice and the unconscious, seemingly sounding as an incomprehensible, piecemeal conglomerate of voices which assail and haunt the subject as vocal spectres that are no longer decipherable, as though they were self-erasing traces of voices within the unconscious. What I call the vocal-trace, then, becomes a metaphor of a fractured self.²⁴

By emphasizing the relationship between language and music, Zimmermann's *Requiem* highlights the voice. It is at once a work about the voice and a work of voices, where sung and spoken voice, recited and recorded voices, overlay each other. Modes of utterance constitute a hybrid aggregate. For example, the prayer, with its implorations and its specific mode of engaging with divinity, is sharply contrasted with the philosophical *logos*, the oratory mode of the religious sermon and the specific features of the political speech. However, much as all the forms of discourse commingle, at once mirroring one another and contrasting with each other, they are irreducible layers forming a multiple construct that cannot be apprehended as a wholly transparent set of sources, but rather as a work of splinters and scatterings. And since in Zimmermann's *lingual* the spoken cohabits with the sung, rather than forgetting the voice and listening to its musicality, as one might be apt to do in hearing a purely musical work, one is constantly reminded of the voice and its coarseness. The voice stands in the way of meaning and comes to signify sheer presence rather than signification.

The "Prologue" presents us with the voice as an *outburst* and a *shard* – the voice erupts, cuts and severs, as though it were a splinter

²⁴ One way of getting farther in this direction would be to envisage the fragmented voice through the parallel between the use of vocal heterogeneity in contemporary music and fragmented subjectivity (Castarède, *La voix et ses sortilèges*, 192).

stinging the subject (*éclats/bris*).²⁵ In Chapman, one comes across the text of Berio's *Sequenza III*, which is a work about the voice, embedded in an array of effects the voice is capable of creating – a voice fully re-allied with the body, with all sorts of sounds and noises it gives precedence to, instead of articulating meaning through words. Therefore, the voice *dis-articulates*, and it is never forgotten or transparent. But neither is language. Like the voice, it becomes a prominent feature as an aesthetic *voice-object* which the readers are clearly encouraged to engage with.

As to the text taken from Wittgenstein, one realizes that within Zimmermann's "Prologue", it is the voice that adds a new layer of nuance to language. The citations sounded in tandem with the excerpt from Wittgenstein run counter to Augustine's view on language – language is not purely meant to designate, since the voice allows language to turn into an act of faith or to prop up religious and political persuasion. If it is true that, by means of the voice, language is shown to be operating in keeping with social and anthropological concerns, follows that the voice also exposes the body. Dolar writes: "[t]he voice ties language to the body, but the nature of this tie is paradoxical: the voice does not belong to either".²⁶ The tension between pure physiology and meaning is thus underlined by the fragmentation – the fragmented voice and the shattered body dramatize the question of persistent presence.

This implies a clash of worlds and ideologies. By reappearing in several contexts, the same word, "peace", for instance, acquires a plurality of meanings, connotations and evocations that erode the

²⁵ The word "shard" suggests both cutting (Old English *scaeran*) and the result of it, i.e. a splinter. This is the idea of *éclat* in French, related to both fragmentation and explosion. David Le Breton speaks of *bris* (from French *briser*, to break up) and *éclats* (from French *éclater*, to explode). He states that emotion breaks the voice (*briser la voix*). So does mourning through the shriek and lament. (David Le Breton, *Éclats de voix: une anthropologie des voix*, Paris: Métailié, Traversées, 2011, 223). There is a close relationship between *explosion/de-tonation* of voice (*voice-shard/shattered voice*) and *shatteredness* of self (Donald Wesling, Tadeusz Sławek, *Literary Voice: The Calling of Jonah*, New York: State U of New York P, 1995, 186). Interestingly, to shatter comes from Middle English, *scateren*, to scatter – *scaeran/scateren* (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, <<http://www.etymonline.com/>>). Jacques Derrida, too, uses the word *éclat de la présence* when speaking about the Icarus-like rising of the voice toward the sun of presence (Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1967, 1973, 104).

²⁶ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 72.

integrity and univocity of the signifier. Due to this use of the voice – the *voice-outburst* and *voice-shard* that detonate and sever, creating an effect of coarseness and annihilating fluidity – *logos*, meaning, wholeness, teleology are all undermined, bringing about the *un-reassuring* implications that the fragmentary entails.²⁷ The voice allows language to fully operate as something more than pure designation, and language allows the voice to designate. However, their fusion is brought to pieces within Zimmermann’s fragmentary, multifarious *lingual* operating by the logic of collision and interference.

The *Requiem* features intermittent voices, appearing and disappearing within its mode of irregular discontinuity – the libretto indicates that parts are sounded “simultaneously, often blending in and out”.²⁸ *Logos* and *telos* are wrecked because there is no gradual, dramatic increase, but zones and phases of sporadic, never fully definite presence. Dolar points out that “the objet voice is the pivotal point precisely at the intersection of presence and absence”.²⁹ By their intermittent and simultaneous eruptions, voices collide and partly mask each other, leaving in their wake an effect of *interference*.³⁰ If the voices do not combine as a single, unidirectional construct – such as, say, a polyphonic work of art, whereby, despite the density of texture, the voices would be part of a unified system (harmony) –, then, they are made to remain separate fragments that are brought together, without ever coalescing. As such they are bound to remain only partly intelligible and can only be grasped beyond harmony. Collision and interference operate without such a system of reference. While collision may be described as a violent conflict of voices, interference may be defined as a mode of aggregating voices together so as to produce an effect of disruption. In other words, sounds come together only as scraps – *voice-shards* – that are constitutive of a disruptive force.

²⁷ I refer to the idea of *désassurance* proposed by Ralph Heyndels in his study of the fragmentary as the result of what discontinuity dismantles within Western metaphysics (Ralph Heyndels, *La pensée fragmentée. Discontinuité formelle et question du sens*, Bruxelles: Pierre Mardaga, 1995, 41-48).

²⁸ Zimmermann, Carnegie Hall programme, 4.

²⁹ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 55.

³⁰ Wesling and Sławek use the same metaphor for the literary voice with a slightly different nuance (Wesling, Sławek, *Literary Voice: The Calling of Jonah*, 204).

There is, then, a form of violence intrinsic to the voice. Voices and sounds come from different sources at a time, as though they were projectiles targeting the listener from all sides.³¹ One feels attacked, assailed by the voice. The voice is strangled, muffled, decomposed. The listener is bombarded by electronic sounds that are added to recitation, like in “Requiem I” (21’22). As an instance of interference one could mention the use of delays: that is, when two voices are slightly out of line with one another, as in “Requiem I” (20’31), where a taped female speaker sounds out of kilter with the male speaker, or in the “Ricerca”, where the same text manifests a scalar unfolding (*fig.1*):

RICERCAR	Track II	Track III	Track IV
Track I 29’03 Konrad Bayer (1932-1964) <i>(the sixth sense, p.104;</i> <i>spoken voices of various</i> <i>characters; only</i> <i>loudspeaker groups):</i> [Taped male speakers (4 individual tracks) – German] question: why hope? there is nothing to be achieved but death [...].	Konrad Bayer (1932-1964) <i>(the sixth sense, p.104;</i> <i>spoken voices of</i> <i>various characters; only</i> <i>loudspeaker groups):</i> [Taped male speakers (4 individual tracks) – German] question: why hope? there is nothing to be achieved but death [...].	Konrad Bayer (1932-1964) <i>(the sixth sense, p.104;</i> <i>spoken voices of</i> <i>various characters; only</i> <i>loudspeaker groups):</i> [Taped male speakers (4 individual tracks) – German] question: why hope? there is nothing to be achieved but death [...].	Konrad Bayer (1932-1964) <i>(the sixth sense, p.104;</i> <i>spoken voices of</i> <i>various characters; only</i> <i>loudspeaker groups):</i> [Taped male speakers (4 individual tracks) – German] question: why hope? there is nothing to be achieved but death [...].

Fig.1. Excerpt from Zimmermann’s “Ricerca”

Chapman, too, suggests this technique in the use of partial superimpositions of voices.³² This produces a *scalar* echo effect.³³ The

³¹ The use of multiple sources of sound, what Umberto Eco calls “stereophonic effects” (Umberto Eco, Jeanne Imhauser, “La musique et la machine”, *Communications*, 91/2, [2012], 65-75), is not out of keeping with the ancient use of polychorality as in *cori spezzatti* (David D. Boyden, *An Introduction to Music*, London: Faber and Faber, 1971, 153). The term comes from Italian *spezzatto*, broken.

³² This is one of the reasons why Chapman’s text may be considered as an instance of what is usually described as *musicalization of fiction*, that is to say a transferral of forms and techniques from music to literature. See Werner Wolf for ampler definition (Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality*, Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999, 51).

³³ Wesling and Slawek speak of such a “strangely reverberating voice”, saying that “[t]he essential feature of this figure is that it forms an acoustic palimpsest in which

novel displays an intimate familiarity with Zimmermann’s techniques, as other sorts of superimpositions come into existence, some of which are listed in *Fig.2*:

	Zimmermann		Chapman	
overlap of languages	Mayakovsky, <i>With Full Voice</i> , 33’24 [Taped male speakers – German and Russian]		Mann, <i>Story of the Novel</i> , 37’00 [Taped male speaker – German and English]	
overlap of texts	Mass for the Dead, 61’00 [Soprano soloist – Latin] “In those days”	Mass for the Dead, 61’00 [Baritone soloist – Latin] “Blessed are the dead [...]”	Ivashkin, <i>Schnittke</i> , 32’00 [Taped female speaker – Russian] “He had forgotten [...]”	Ivashkin, <i>Schnittke</i> , 32’00 [Taped female speaker – Russian] “He understood [...]”
overlap of voice types	Mayakovsky, <i>Eulogy to Sergei Esenin</i> , 54’00 [Soprano soloist – German]	Mayakovsky, <i>Eulogy to Sergei Esenin</i> , 54’00 [Baritone soloist – German]	Burton, <i>Leonard Bernstein</i> , 31’00 [Male speaker – English]	Burton, <i>Leonard Bernstein</i> , 31’00 [Contralto soloist – English]
overlap of sources	Nagy, 15’28 [Historical recording – Hungarian]	Nagy, 15’28 [Taped male speaker – German]	Mahler, <i>Memories</i> , 25’00 [Taped female speaker – German]	Mahler, interview, 25’00 [Historical recording, female speaker – German]
overlap of voice and music	Sándor Weöres, <i>Drum and Dance</i> , 16’19 [Taped male and female speakers – Hungarian]	Milhaud, <i>La Création du monde</i> , 16’19 [Taped performance]	Schubert, <i>Die Winterreise</i> , 43’00, piano	Schubert, quoted last words, 43’00 [Baritone soloist – German]
delay and part-overlap	Aeschylus, <i>The Persian</i> , 20’31 [Taped female speaker – Old Greek]	Aeschylus, <i>The Persian</i> , 20’33 [Taped male speaker – Old Greek]	Berio, interview, 6’15 [Male speaker – Italian]	Berio, interview, 6’16 [Female speaker – English]

Fig.2. Types of superimposition in Zimmermann and Chapman³⁴

If interference and collision thus operate beyond the system of harmony, we must stress the fact that interference is not simple dissonance. One sound prevents the full deployment of the other, but remains a playful conglomerate, suggesting at once collision and collusion.³⁵ Interference leads to a vagabond play of surfaces for the reader, who is unable to concentrate on more than one track and has to jump from one surface to the other. What is meant is that one entity does not totally annihilate the other; it simply temporarily withholds

one pronouncement is not distinguishable from another and several meanings occur at once” (Wesling, Stawek, *Literary Voice: The Calling of Jonah*, 90).

³⁴ Emphasis mine.

³⁵ Lat. *colludere*, to play with.

it, partly erasing it. Interference is hence a form of *con-ference*,³⁶ co-presence, *collusion*, but not a unified whole. The very act of following voices without fully grasping the meaning of the message gives an impression of a dream-like distance to the voice, as though interference were accompanied by a play of screens and filters.

Interference is the mode of the crowd, of only partial hearing and partial understanding.³⁷ The requiem is the mode of the crowd, too – a collective voice, an antiphonal voice, a voice of the many, especially in the 20th century, when memorial requiems, or war requiems, dedicated to the many, became common ground,³⁸ and where the voices slash through time and exceed themselves as a work of the timeless singing crowd on behalf of the timeless victim crowd.³⁹

In Chapman's novel, the protagonist Unruh states that his work is made up of "musical quotes, speeches, songs, poetry, a trash-heap" (11). According to the composer "all music can only be about previous music" (52). It is "non-music" (11) not only because it is *unlistenable* (11), but also because one can neither sustain the articulation between the voice and language, nor haul oneself out of it completely, but only surrender to their clash. In Chapman's text, too, interference and collision seem to be the only possible operating modes.⁴⁰

³⁶ Lat. *conferre*, to bring together.

³⁷ Since language carries meaning, a synthesis of several meanings unfolding at a time seems unfeasible. Spoken excerpts cannot coalesce like lines in polyphonic music precisely because there is not one text but many, so that the articulation between voice, music and language becomes problematic. Hence, the need to speak about interference/collision rather than dissonance.

³⁸ *Requiem of Reconciliation*, a collaborative work in memory of the victims of WWII, or Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, dedicated to the victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima.

³⁹ See Chase, *Dies Irae: A Guide to Requiem Music*, xxiii. It is interesting to note that the voice of the crowd in war requiems has something to do with what Wesling and Ślawek call the "bardic voice", insofar as it operates as a "myth of national memory" and "brings the voice into the public sphere", but at the same time it keeps the bardic at bay, by disintegrating the voice and turning it into the crowd mode, evading the nostalgic and utopian overtones of the bardic by highlighting the dystopian catastrophe within the manifold voice-shriek.

⁴⁰ In dealing with contemporary music, Castarède speaks of disintegrative music that highlights a fragmentary subjectivity ("On parlera d'une musique disintegrative, témoin d'une conception de la subjectivité humaine brisée, morcelée, sans prise sur son histoire" [Castarède, *La voix et ses sortilèges*, 90]). Wesling and Ślawek speak of *de-tonation* – loss or disruption of tone, whereby the subject becomes a fragmentary,

By virtue of the rapprochement with Zimmermann's *Requiem*, the intertextuality in Chapman's novel is shown to be a sophisticated system of intermedial circularity which evinces both network-building and cross-reference. It is not rewriting, not a form of adaptation, but a form of intermedial *writing-from* in terms of theme and structure, posing the question of the voice at its hub.

In this way, it is a book of sources, offering multiple origins, rather than destinations or finalities, as though everything were already out there at our disposal. It would seem that the structure of intertextuality runs counter to the teleology arising out of the very theme of death, as though to emphasize the tension between etiology and eschatology, dramatizing the tension between what one stems from and what one ends up at: "I'll wander to my homeland, my origin/I will never leave again" (43). Undoubtedly, a mirroring effect accompanies a *ricochet* effect here, whereby one is made to freely read through the book following similarities and differences between citations, comparing and confronting them, grasping their mutual reflections, as with that mention of the crow in both Das's "Before Death" and Schubert's "*Die Krähe*" (61).

Such *ricochet* and mirror effects are also clashes of references that not only make us abandon any attempt at synthesizing, but also lead us astray, out of the text, where continuation is seemingly made possible, yet where we get lost in a rhizome of links and networks. The proliferation of discourses and types of discourse seems indicative of the aporia of death. Perhaps our grasp of dying boils down to such multi-vocal, polyphonic, contradictory mechanism. Perhaps, too, the juxtaposition of opinions, personal truths, tautologies, syllogisms and beliefs, affords a metaphor for democratization of the voice understood as inescapable parataxis. The subject is inherently tied up with otherness and liable to seize only shards and shatters of the voice through a collision that leaves but a *voice-trace*. To a large extent, the text lays bare its own deconstruction and revels in it – the philosophical discourse ranting the "strange masochism" of elevating death into an "existential privilege" (27) ironically jars with the striking vision of an elephant grieving death (27). Memory and the trace of the living show through

cacophonous subject: "The subject is de-toned – exploded – but also deprived of one general tone and given many" (Wesling, Slawek, *Literary Voice: The Calling of Jonah*, 151).

this interference that is not only a collision of parts within a system, but a clash of systems themselves.

The act, the trace and the aura

As a system of references, Chapman's text constantly engages with the voice, be it musical or spoken. The narrative is reduced to the minimalism of the introductory notices. The voice is not narrated, but simply posed there, like a score, to be acted out, calling for its *re-production*. There is no doubt that the use of multiple intermediality – especially the score-like layout – calls for an enactment of the voice, endowing the text with a performative turn. I contend that the work is inconceivable without justice being done to its vocal performativity, which constitutes the crux of its paradoxical nature, since it can only be seen as a work of fiction that in contemporary cultural practices is apt to remain unvoiced, yet pretends to be incomplete without a living voice.⁴¹

The voice raises questions springing from within the articulation between representation and presentation. In his study on *The Novel as Performance*, Kutnik shows that the performative model stresses both the non-mimetism of the work of art and its dynamic character. By presenting rather than representing, a performative work: “(1) has an indeterminate and playful character [...] (2) focuses attention on the physical properties of the medium [...] (3) has an open form (invites the audience's collaboration in making the work complete)”.⁴² Kutnik's analysis is perfectly applicable to Chapman's novel. However, the performative turn here comes upon a stumbling block. This is precisely the paradox of unperformed performativity, which I call the *voice-trace* – the very paradox of performativity that lies at the

⁴¹ This is what happens when we face a silent page that is only a blank suggestion of voices. Zumthor says that the voice takes on a symbolic nature as soon as it sounds (“[...] dès qu'il est vocalisé, tout objet prend, pour un sujet, au moins partiellement, statut de symbole” [Zumthor, “Considérations sur les valeurs de la voix”, 236]). Therefore, *a contrario*, does the voice in Chapman run the risk of compromising the text as such if it is not wed to sound? To an extent, indeed, the text seems not to make much sense without being voiced, and plunges us back to the commonplace of poetry aspiring to a voice and the debate of orality (“Le désir de la voix vive habite toute poésie, en exil dans l'écriture. [...] Tout poésie aspire en effet à se *faire* voix; à se *faire* entendre” [*ibid.*, 238]).

⁴² Jerzy Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance: The Fiction of Ronald Sukenick and Raymond Federman*, Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1986, 229.

core of Chapman's novel. The very paradox of the notion of *voice-trace* – an idea that gives full vent to incompatibilities, since the trace immediately evokes a materiality of which the voice is devoid, presenting itself in a written, thus still rarely performed medium. The word derives from a concrete act of leaving a mark, as in Latin *tractiare* or French *tracer*, i.e. to delineate. The ineffable voice leaves no mark, but the voice itself seems to be marked by a trace of a minute presence, undoubtedly that of subjectivity, which is eroded by its very impossibility. This tallies with the Derridean concept of trace that works towards its very erasure and that of full presence.⁴³ David Le Breton states that the voice is a trace of presence.⁴⁴ The concept of voiceprint, related to voice recognition through voice spectrograms or other technological tools, means no less than subjectivity itself. In her book about the voice, Anne Karpf writes: “[w]hile fingerprints are an infallible method of identification, voiceprints in the end always come down to opinion, [...], there's inevitably an interpretive element to voice identification”.⁴⁵ A voiceprint as a voice-trace seems to disallow objectivity, as though identification were attainable only through subjective recognition. In fact, there is definitely something that strikes the reader – something that seems to have filtered to us – not only from Zimmermann's *Requiem*, but also from the other works which compose the network of references in the book. And that constitutes the paradoxical presence of a trace – a trace of subjectivity that could barely have been expected.

In 1877, at the time when efforts were being made to invent a machine capable of capturing the voice, Charles Cros invented the *paléophone*, literally a voice from long ago, a “voice of the past”.⁴⁶ This is not far from archeology and the historical trace deposited somewhere to be unearthed and reconstituted. By the invention of the

⁴³ “The trace is the erasure of selfhood, of one's own presence, and is constituted by the threat or anguish of its irremediable disappearance, of the disappearance of its disappearance. An unerasable trace is not a trace, it is a full presence”. (Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1967, 1978, 230). In my view, Derrida's use of trace seems to crystallize within the very voice-object that embodies the paradoxical presence/absence relationship.

⁴⁴ “La voix est une trace de présence, une part du corps que ne limite pas l'espace” (Le Breton, *Éclats de voix: une anthropologie des voix*, 81).

⁴⁵ Anne Karpf, *The Human Voice*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2006, 258.

⁴⁶ See Arnaud Bernadet, “La voix et la machine. Petite histoire matérialiste et antimatérialiste”, *Le français aujourd'hui*, 150/3, (2005), 9-17.

recording the voice was transformed into a mechanical trace. Chapman's text is, first of all, a trace of its Other – both as a theme and as a remnant of its intertextual and intermedial paragon. Thematically, the text emphasizes the notion of trace as memory, viewed from the perspective of the historical trace, but also from that of the *trace-to-be* understood as the persistence of the voice (“Who are you, reader, reading my poems a hundred years from now?” [55]). The trace comes to light with the mediation between the dead and the living, it is *voice-trace* as the spectre of presence: “Yet my dead wife Johanna still sings to me” (57). From there, it is only a short way to the question of relationships, as the trace is conceivable on the sole condition of being deciphered, but also erased, implying a necessary bond between the viewer and the viewed.⁴⁷ In Chapman, the voice-trace lays bare its own incompleteness, so that it starkly points to the very absence of voice within it – the trace of absence of the voice – the requiem of the voice. In fact, the word performance comes from Old French *parformir*, to provide completely. By bearing the trace of its own contradiction – that of its text being merely provided (*fourni*) –, Chapman's novel bears the trace of its *différance*, its *performance*, severed from the possibility of its completion as a presence of absence.

The trace operates on yet another level – both Zimmermann (literally) and Chapman (metaphorically) – make use of live voice and taped, pre-recorded or sampled voices, so that the contrast between them leads readers to consider two forms of *voice-traces*, one that is related to the living voice, its aura, and another that refers to the recorded voice as a historical trace. This brings us to recall the question of the mechanical reproduction of the work of art and Walter Benjamin's loss of aura⁴⁸, which is all the more topical in the light of contemporary technology and the novel's use of it.

In Chapman's novel, *performance* is only possible because readers are given an extraordinarily easy access to reproduced works, and by this token, the possibility to *re-produce* the voice *ad infinitum*. In other words, Chapman's text is only possible because mechanical

⁴⁷ Derrida emphasizes this by affirming the trace as the locus of his *différance*, due to the “double force of repetition and erasure, legibility and illegibility” (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 226).

⁴⁸ See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the End of Mechanical Reproduction”, *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken, 1968, 217-251.

reproduction is possible. Mechanical reproduction is inscribed as part of the text itself that denudes and emphasizes it – this is what sampling and collage are all about. In Zimmermann’s work, this is already partly the case, insofar as the work is rendered possible by the very reproducibility of taped voices⁴⁹, but also the historical reproducible trace of the political – historical – voice used in the work⁵⁰. Time shows through the imperfect coarseness of the historical recording’s grain the imperfections of which disconcert us, making time palpable within the corrosion of the reproduced voice. The very inaudibility of the voice in the text contributes to this problem of *voice-trace* as an unsettling presence. Chapman’s work makes us literally face the notion of reproducibility by *dis-playing* scraps of recordings.

But then, in a recording, the voice remains delusively alive – the body keeps breathing, as it keeps speaking to us from afar – as a sort of *paléophone*,⁵¹ and, whatever the distance, the recording seems to capture that emanation. Aura – etymologically breath – is a bodily emanation.⁵² Voice is breath – literally emitted within the instant of breathing out. The paradox of trace resides in this very notion of a recorded breath – that of the living body *breathing out* the voice – the trace of an aura. The *voice-trace* is that semblance of trace as aura, i.e. the emanation of the living.

The ordinary spoken voice may be turned into a script, translatable into a trace. The musical voice may be turned into a script as a score, thus as a promise or index of that *breath-to-be*, into the future performance. The trace has that indexical power, capable of pointing to something. The recording seems to partly circumvent the loss of aura and form a *punctum*. What reproduction captures in a photo is different from what it retains of the voice. In a way, the recorded voice functions as photography inasmuch as, here too, it seizes the

⁴⁹ The voices recorded for the purposes of the composition.

⁵⁰ The voices sampled from available historical sources, voice ready-mades, as it were.

⁵¹ There is a link between the paleophone and the telephone, a quasi-rivalry between *palaios-*, ancient, *tele-*, afar. Olivier Leplatre examines voice-aura in Proust. See Olivier Leplatre, “L’aura de la voix. La (s)cène téléphonique dans *À la recherche du temps perdu*”, *Poétique*, 136/4, (2003), 405-418.

⁵² Le Breton underlines this aspect by saying that the voice is detached from the body to become emanation (“La voix se détache du corps, elle devient une émanation sensible [...]” [Le Breton, *Éclats de voix: une anthropologie des voix*, 183]).

trace of what *was*. But what *pricks* and *pierces*⁵³ the listener, here, is not only the shrieking shout of “heil” following Hitler’s speech that stands out, in Zimmermann, among other voices. What assails us is the sound that creates an illusion of *voice-trace* – at once a trace of breath and a spectral absence – as a technologically *re-produced* illusion of a living voice. Hence, the recorded sound leads us to envisage the *punctum* from a vocal point of view, not only as a trace – Roland Barthes’ detail, shred or hole which point at the viewer form the past – but also as the illusion of a living spectral presence. Penderecki’s *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960), played exclusively on strings, *re-produces* that breath of the (dying)living as though there were shatters and detonations of agonizing voices. So the instrument too – not solely the voice – points out at us as an illusion of voice and *pricks* us as a delusive shriek.

The requiem is precisely predicated on that which *is no more*, that which *was*, focusing exclusively on death. It is a requiem for a voice, through that indexical power of death inscribed within the voice.⁵⁴ In Chapman, one reads: “Whatever she sings seems to have a shadow across it” (19). The trace reads as the anteriority of the future – as an index of what *was* deciphered after its erasure, belatedly. While the three poets are the central figures in Zimmermann’s *Requiem*, it is the contralto, Kathleen Ferrier, who constitutes the chief figure in Chapman’s text. The novel may be read as a tribute to the singer, just as Unruh’s oratorio pays homage to his deceased wife.⁵⁵ The 53-minute composition recalls the date of Ferrier’s death, 1953, when she passed away of breast cancer, at the age of 39, like Unruh’s spouse. Ferrier’s voice is given a prime section in Chapman (Track I, tape⁵⁶). Her performances run on from 0:00 to 11:00, where silence finally comes to intimate her demise. The end is inscribed, as it were, within the list of performances, as the trace of the singer’s future death.

⁵³ Roland Barthes’s *punctum* is “that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)”. (Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, London: Vintage, 1980, 2000, 27).

⁵⁴ Le Breton emphasizes the link between voice and fragility by saying that the voice is deeply rooted in the sense of death (“Mince filet de sens mêlé de souffle, la voix est profondément enchevêtrée à l’intuition de la mort” [Le Breton, *Éclats de voix: une anthropologie des voix*, 217]).

⁵⁵ “This would be Unruh’s final composition, a two-part, 53-minute vocal collage on the subjects of his wife’s death and his own illness” (11).

⁵⁶ Tracks and tapes refer to Chapman’s page layout.

The text offers two interesting instances of the indexical power of the trace: one to Leonard Bernstein's last performance and another to Ferrier's last concert. Both hold traces of death within the performance. Bernstein's performance is mentioned: "Beethoven, *Symphony n°7*, Allegro, conducted by Leonard Bernstein, 19th Aug. 1990" (50). It is precisely a clue to the conductor's last performance, when he had a coughing fit that almost ruined the performance.⁵⁷ It was recorded and can, apparently, be heard on a Deutsche Grammophon disc. The other trace is the one recalled in the novel by Maurice Leonard, exactly at the point when Ferrier's *performance* draws to an end: "Barbirolli also conducted the orchestra for Purcell's 'When I am laid in earth,' which Kathleen had often sung. That night a solitary cor anglais played the singer's part" (29). While the voice is thus supplanted by the instrument, the novel alludes to the substitutive, instrumental performance of Purcell's "When I am Laid in Earth".⁵⁸ The English horn is hinted at as well. Tellingly, Track I in Chapman remains empty after Ferrier's last performance, that is to say from page 30 on, only interrupted by Mahler's funeral marches on page 44. The silence becomes a trace of death running throughout the text.

The trace of presence becomes, paradoxically, a trace of absence, as an index of death, as in the case of Bernstein's historical recording. In Ferrier's case, the instrument is an ersatz of the voice and a trace of Ferrier's demise. Ironically, Ferrier's last performance, Delius's *Mass of Life*, was never to take place.⁵⁹ Thus the last composition she was to have sung was an anti-requiem to which Chapman pays tribute with his own requiem. This double paradoxical question of *voice-trace* – as both a historical trace of the living, a form of aura, and that anterior indexical trace of what is to have come – pertains to the very genre of the requiem, dramatizing the articulation between the living and the

⁵⁷ "He was seized by a coughing fit he grabbed the rail behind him for support" (49).

⁵⁸ "Bassoon and organ" (23).

⁵⁹ In Ferrier's diary, the entry for 8 October 1953, the day she died, reads "Leeds. *Mass of Life*. Delius" (Christopher Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003, 305). Christopher Fifield comments: "The diary anticipates the last pair of these days with uncanny prescience. The 8th reads: 'Leeds. *Mass of Life*. Delius,' but contrary to the work's optimistic title, Kathleen died peacefully on the morning of that very day. On 10 October, the words, 'Leeds Festival' are scored through, and the diary for the rest of 1953 is completely blank" (*ibid.*, 205).

dead, which shows in a quote from Chapman: “I will live forever, I have lost you forever. I *can still* hear Jane singing. Jane is *still* dead” (52). This is an instance of the *undead*, of a voice’s spectrality.

When I once showed Chapman’s text to a friend of mine, he told me: “What are you going to *make* of it?” *Make of it* seems to have echoed in me ever since. There must have been something that brought me into *making something* of it, rather than passively deciphering the text. When rereading Chapman’s novel and thinking about the notion of voice, I decided to turn it into something, not only to listen to Ferrier’s performances, but to listen to the text as it is suggested it should be read, that is to say, by respecting its score system and both its linear and simultaneous unfolding. I decided to use audio software in order to partly re-create what Chapman’s text evoked. It took me several hours to look up all the references on the internet, searching for the exact recordings mentioned in the text, sampling them and reassembling them one by one into a newly enacted text, a sung text, made of fragments of Ferrier’s performances. I focused on the first part of the novel, not only because re-creating the whole would have taken days, but also because I had come to a standstill. I felt I had arrived at a point where something was beginning to emerge pointing at me and taking on a life of its own. That moment was the very crux of the text – that articulation between the dead and the living, that aporetic tension between the trace and the aura. It was precisely when I came across the reference to Ferrier’s singing Purcell’s “When I am Laid in Earth”, the very end of her presence as a textual construct, that I was at a loss, unable to find Ferrier’s interpretation of the song. I *made do* with Jessye Norman’s interpretation. But that song meant the end of my work – Chapman’s requiem came to an abrupt end with the last reference to Ferrier, as a requiem to Ferrier, ending halfway through the text, whose reference, ironically, was nowhere to be found, and, just like in the case of its substitution by the English horn, had to be substituted again by another voice.

Once I had finished and started listening, what struck me was that suddenly I was listening to something at once totally different from and perfectly similar to the text. I had produced something intermedial and by doing so breathed life back into a voice. And what struck me, too, was that something else stood up, a trace of Ferrier’s presence in the new construct I had brought to life. Chapman’s text was made

anew. But within this renewal, it was also Ferrier's eerie presence – Ferrier's voice through Chapman through Zimmermann and back into my own hands that re-produced it, produced again, as though I was singing Ferrier, since what I was producing was a separate composition about her own death, her sickness, her own understanding of death. There was undoubtedly a spectral, uncanny presence there, created by my imperfect sampling.⁶⁰ That presence was the absent voice that suddenly presented itself; not only as a vocal sound, but also as something I actively made *mine*, as though I possessed it. The multiple *voice-trace* that stood up was that illusion of breath, a voice that for an instant was repossessed of its aura. But it was also, paradoxically, the trace of death. That gesture was not merely a vague form of interactivity, but active re-voicing, managing to re-enact a voice that had been disembodied.⁶¹ Only through re-producing was the voice-trace apprehensible, perhaps as a remnant, perhaps as delusive emanation, an “effect of presence” or intensity beyond sheer meaning,⁶² or, better, a form of sonic *anamorphosis*, an aural *trompe-l'œil*, by which an “effect of gramphony” feigns preserving a living presence “archived in the very quick of its voice”.⁶³

Conclusion

This intermedial exploration of the voice has allowed me to emphasize the ambiguous and paradoxical phenomenon I have called the *voice-trace*. While Zimmermann's composition has significant bearings on the linguistic, oral, literary aspect of the musical voice, Chapman offers us a musical treatment of the literary voice object, so that an intermedial loop spirals to and fro between the two works. Whereas Chapman's novel shows us that reading alone – voiceless, silent reading, reading for understanding – is deficient as long as it not

⁶⁰ Dolar points out that it is “the mechanical voice which confronts us with the object voice, its disturbing uncanny nature, whereas the human touch helps us keep it at bay” (Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 22).

⁶¹ Interestingly, Wesling and Sławek state: “The more the author as person is abdicated, the more the reader as co-creator is necessary” (Wesling, Sławek, *Literary Voice: The Calling of Jonah*, 198).

⁶² See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004.

⁶³ Jacques Derrida, “Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce”, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge, New York/London: Routledge, 1992, 276.

performed in the sense of *completed*, Zimmermann's work tells us that it is reading music – listening to language rather than sounds – that is flawed. The voice is severed from the word, insofar as the myth of union between sound and meaning is shattered. Zimmermann's overlaps, outbursts and interferences are profoundly antithetical to the plenitude of meaning as it becomes ungraspable in its suddenness and intermittence. We are literally catapulted back to the menace of Babel, as the use of polyglotism suggests. But the signifier is preserved as a fragment – as a shattered voice/*voice-shard* –, as though a trace of the plentiful meaningfulness remained possible solely as a threat to a fragmented subject, as though meaninglessness along with all that runs counter to the *logos* were unthinkable, as though a total annihilation of the voice – a requiem not for a voice, but for the voice – were unimaginable.

Georges Didi-Huberman begins his book on traces by saying that art often begins *backwards* – where life begins with birth, the work of art can start with destruction, ashes, mourning, spectres, absence.⁶⁴ In both works analyzed in this article, such reversal is dramatized and stands out as if in exposure – traces of voice, spectres of auras, the very heart of requiem arising precisely from an absence. It is through this trace of voice and trace within the voice that the novel focuses on death within the dynamics of relationships. But it is within the structure of relationships, too, that it underlines its very impossibility. There is no trace that cannot be erased: “As if the things the young couple said were marks in a piece of clay. All you see is the gesture, the attempt by two humans to make marks in each other; trying to exist. It's a farewell, a hand above the surface” (52). This is the trace as not yet deposited: a hand above the surface, a *trace-to-be*, a trace that will never hold fast, that is always already erased, the irreducible absence within the trace that keeps deluding us by giving off a spectral presence.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ “Les choses de l'art commencent souvent au rebours des choses de la vie. La vie commence par une naissance, une œuvre peut commencer sous l'empire de la destruction : règne des cendres, recours au deuil, retour de fantômes, nécessaire pari sur l'absence” (Georges Didi-Huberman, *Génie du non-lieu. Air, poussière, empreinte, hantise*, Paris: Minuit, 2001, 9).

⁶⁵ Chapman's text seems to point to this irreducible absence within the presence of the trace Derrida speaks about (“The absence of *another* here-and-now, [...] presenting itself as irreducible absence within the presence of the trace”. [Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1967, 1997, 47]).