

Andromeda's Howl

Adam Kaasa

Performance at 'Mad About Justice', Copy Press, Swedenborg Hall, London, 23 September 2023.

//

Find your voice.
Make your voice heard.
Speak up.
Use your platform.
Shout from the rooftops.
Voice your concerns.
Voice your opinion.
Give voice to the voiceless.
Use your voice.

I wonder about voice and its source.

Oh it's the breath I've been taught – the intercostal muscles, the cords, the diaphragm. Or as my grandfather, the actor, would say, its in the tip of the tongue, the lips the teeth, the hard and soft palate and the alveolar ridge.

But where does it come from?

We have mouths at the end of long flowing tubes from deep within our bodies. So too do rivers have mouths, and are long flowing canals. And we trace the river's mouth to its source. So what of voice?

Is it here? In here? From here? My voice traps me in geography. Tells people where I'm from, I'm told. It's a kind of clumsy cartography. So is my voice from there. Not from here, but there? Is it from the there I grew up in? The spruce trees? The lake? The alleys and asphalt? The snow? The malls? The friends car? The underground pedways I ditched class for? The people who taught me? The people who hit me? The people I slept with? The people I didn't? The ones that left me? The ones I left behind? Is my voice them? Is it from there? Is my voice sandcast by river-valley mud? Or etched by the acid petrochemical ice?

Is it a wave form from that progenitor of energy waves, the Sun?

Does my voice come from a ray of light 8 minutes away; A ray that morphs and transforms until at some point after being heat in a water droplet, a flap of fat in an emu's neck, the light of a laptop screen, a current in mycelium, the drift of a stream, the crow of a crow, a line on the dance floor, a 'I forgot, but I won't do it again', the transgression of grief and consent in the looking through of a dead person's things, carbon life pulped as paper

stored in an archive in Shropshire, it arrives deep in my mitochondria, and it bursts, converts, and compels and pulses nerves and muscles in my living corpse to burst out of a balloon-like sack some shapes to the otherwise voicesless shifting of air from one place to another.

[Breath in, breathe out.]

Maybe voice is the project of moving air from one place to another.

[Breath in, breathe out.]

Maybe that's the point. It's in me, then it's in you, and it's been in all of us. All of it has been in all of us.

So maybe I want to hear your voice.

And I want your voice, from its source, to help bring forth a kind of source of another mouth – the mouth of Andromeda – a word, a myth, a constellation, a galaxy.

If you listen closely, we are hearing now, a call from Andromeda – from the galaxy, landing in infinitesimal radio waves. Blue, red, yellow, hush hushing their way through deep deep thickness of dark matter and picking up frequencies and dust, morphing the message, as it moves from source to ear – like the breath in our bellies, moving up to the alveolar ridge and out out out to another ear drum's thump thump thumping rhythms to a knowing, aware, being's brain.

I need a bit of your help for this part. When I gesture to you, I need you to say 'ANDROMEDA' because it makes no sense to speak of it with a singular voice, when clearly this is a message of a collective.

[GESTURE] is a myth that has been a relay of oral histories, material sources, images, representations and morality.

[GESTURE] has been papyrus paper at one point in time and an iron sculpture at another, cast by John Bell and bought by Queen Victoria at the Great Exhibition in 1851.

The language, the word, the semantics and the etymology of [GESTURE] is like an anniversary. Each time it is repeated, it reinforces some origin.

But just what is that origin, or source, when [GESTURE] is a myth? And like all myths, is sourced and sourceless, save for its repetition, its relay.

The constellation [GESTURE] has been drawn, configured, photographed and measured, once even by Michel Scot the 12th Century medieval scholar, appearing in Dante's Eighth Circle of Hell, and described in that text as one whose ribs are thin and small. What small intercostal muscles you have.

Visible to the naked eye, the [GESTURE] galaxy is a smudge, a blur, something like a cluster or cloud not dissimilar to the Great Nebula that inspired Kant's 'island universes'.

[GESTURE] has been a glass plate taken on Mount Wilson Observatory in 1923 and the classification system developed by Henrietta Swan Leavitt to look at variable stars at the Harvard College Observatory.

[GESTURE] is also our closest neighbour, and in a cosmic love dance with us; the Milky Way and [GESTURE] will, after all, collide in an epic embrace in about 4.5 billion years.

[GESTURE] the myth is relayed in time, through story, to us.

[GESTURE] the galaxy is relayed in time, through space, to us.

The light of it we see is already 2.5 million years old when it reaches our eye, and so acts as a perpetually updating archive, or an impossibly slow telegraph line between two galaxies.

So why does it feel like this message from two and a half million years ago is really a message from the future?

Do you hear it now?

[song?]

The message is one of waves.

And the wave is a song.

And the song asks for a reply.

The love letter, this two and a half million year old love letter, wants one back.

And so I ask if you will, help me craft it's opening note. Here now today.

It goes like this. And for this, I'll need voice, as in tone, as in your sandcast geographies,
your acid etches, those who've shaped what comes out of your river mouths forming
deltas in this vast vast lake, and all your mitochondria to sing with me now.

We break down Andromeda, to call back to it in song.

An

Dro

Me

Da