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## **The Sounds of Progress: Words, Humans, and Machines in Eça de Queirós and Luigi Pirandello**

Dissertation Chapter III, Section 3

Dear Workshop Participants,

Months of reading and taking notes are now finally turning into more or less coherent Word pages. Yet the basic terms of my project are still entangled, and I cannot tell whether my reasoning on paper can be easily followed, and, on a more basic level, whether the topic is intriguing and presented in an engaging, logical way. For this reason, I would like to kindly ask your help in clarifying the following:

- 1) "Man," "man," "human beings," "humans." These terms are highly problematic when dealing with texts that paid little to no attention to gender equality. Any suggestions about how to best employ them?
- 2) The paper is divided into two parts: a philosophical one and a literary one. Do you find that the first informs and helps the understanding of the latter or is it more confusing? Should I cut the first part and include it in the introduction to the thesis? Or do you think that the first part could constitute its own chapter, if properly and fully developed?
- 3) The paper ends abruptly because I will need at least twenty more pages to complete the analysis of both Eça's and Pirandello's novels – I did not want to inflict on you the pain of reading fifty pages during eleventh week at the University of Chicago. But, given how much you have read of this section, what are your expectations for the rest of the paper? What does it tell you about how the rest of the dissertation project is structured? What do you think precedes/succeeds the section you read?
- 4) Does anyone know of a Heidegger expert who answers e-mails? Or do they all reside in a technology-free, metaphysical hut somewhere in the black forest of academia?
- 5) How does my use of English sound to you? Does it flow? Is it idiomatic enough? Are the sentences too long (I was educated in Germany and still write accordingly)?

The footnotes are still in an embryonic stadium and are there more as a mnemonic device (notes to self) than as precise references. The translations are also not complete: sometimes I provide the English translation, other times the original. I will have clarified this by the time the chapter is done, and would like to apologize for any difficulty they might have caused you while reading the paper.

Ideas, I believe, are born in the mind of the individual, but they come of age in the minds of a collective. In this spirit, I look forward to the discussion of my paper and to your constructive criticism and further reading suggestions.

I thank you all immensely for your attention, and for taking the time to read these pages,

Ana

"[O] fonógrafo!.... Só o fonógrafo, Zé Fernandes, me faz verdadeiramente sentir a minha superioridade de ser pensante e me separa do bicho"  
Eça de Queirós, *A Cidade e as Serras*

"Ma questo ronzio, questo ticchettio perpetuo..."  
Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio Operatore*

"Bruit interrompu de machines."  
Deleuze et Guattari, *L'Anti-Œdipe*

## Background

In his *Scienza Nuova* (New Science),<sup>1</sup> Giambattista Vico writes that "the Egyptians reduced all preceding world time to three ages; namely, the age of gods, the age of heroes, and the age of men." (§173) This, for Vico, is "the design of an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the histories of all nations" (§7). He then sets out to trace back this history and distill its universal laws by means of a philological inquiry into the languages and fables of the most ancient of peoples. What the Egyptians and Vico could not have predicted was that history had yet another age in store: the age of the machine.<sup>2</sup> Comte announced it, Carlyle baptized it, Marx outlined it; Heidegger warned against it; Deleuze and Guattari proclaimed that "[t]out fait machine"<sup>3</sup>; and Ted Kaczynski even went as far as to kill in order to free human beings from the "technological slavery" it purportedly brought about.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1725, 1730, 1744. References here are all from the 1744, third edition. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, transl. by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca/London: Cornell UP, 1984). [1725, 1744<sup>3</sup>] My own Italian edition seems to be lacking crucial chapters.

<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I conceive of the "machine" as the empirical manifestation of and inseparable from "technology." The two terms will be used interchangeably. For a problematization, see the general introduction. Age of the Machine largely corresponding with the anthropocene. Think also of Cassirer, p.285: technological vs. magical will. Homo divinus vs. homo faber. According to Simondon, though, magical will precedes technological will and gives birth to technological and religious thinking. [Durkheim, Weber] For various definitions and indications of the Age of the Machine, see: Auguste Comte, *Introduction to Positive Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Frederick Ferré (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), Ch. II, p. 41. On Carlyle, see Leo Marx's essay, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept," *Technology and Culture* 51:3 (2010), p. 563.

<sup>3</sup> D&G, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.2: "Everything is a machine."

<sup>4</sup> Ted Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery. The Collected Writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski, a.k.a. "The Unabomber"* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010): "The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for

With its contours roughly sketched out since the First Industrial Revolution at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Machine Age took a visible, tangible, and audible shape in the 1870s, with the Second Industrial Revolution, and finally asserted its iron-clad existence at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> During this time, machines of all kinds – steam boats, trains, telegraphs, phonographs, telephones – penetrated into and changed the day to day dynamic of cities and villages; they impacted the ways human beings perceived themselves and their place in society and the world; they divided the nations into industrialized and non-industrialized ones, remodeling landscapes, perceptions, and social interactions. From hope, belief in progress, and superiority, to anxiety, alienation, surrender, and physical violence, machines have provoked and still provoke a broad range of human actions and emotions, even leading humans to doubt and question their own humanity. And yet, as Heidegger wrote, no matter how opposed we are to machines and technology or how enthusiastically we embrace them, "everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it" ("überall bleiben wir unfrei an die Technik gekettet").<sup>6</sup> In the face of such an unalterable fact, it remains an imperative that human beings continuously engage with and question the essence, role, and various manifestations of technology. This "essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it" ("die wesentliche Besinnung auf

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the human race. [T]hey have destabilized society, have made life unfulfilling, have subjected human beings to indignities, have led to widespread psychological suffering (in the Third World to physical suffering as well) and have inflicted severe damage on the natural world." Branko Bošnjak from the Praxis School, wrote: "*Die Techne, verstanden als Maschine und in der Form der Maschine, hat den Menschen unterjocht.*" See his essay, "Techne als Erfahrung der menschlichen Existenz: Aristoteles – Marx – Heidegger," in *Kunst und Technik: Gedächtnisschrift zum 100. Geburtstag von Martin Heidegger*, ed. by Walter Biemel and Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann, 93-108 (Frankfurt a. Main: Kostermann, 1989), 100.

<sup>5</sup> Read and contextualize historically with Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), p.311.

die Technik und die entscheidende Auseinandersetzung mit ihr [muß] einerseits mit dem Wesen der Technik verwandt und andererseits von ihm doch grundverschieden ist."). One such realm, for Heidegger, is *Kunst* (art).<sup>7</sup> Taking art to be the umbrella term for various creative activities and works, literature – to the extent that it is simultaneously a *techne* and a form of *Wahrheitsentbergung* (revealing of truth) – emerges as one adequate place for the confrontation with and reflection upon technology.<sup>8</sup> To quote Ernst Cassirer: "Technology does not primarily inquire into what *is*, but into what *can* be" ("Die Technik fragt nicht in erster Linie nach dem, was *ist*, sondern nach dem, was sein *kann*."<sup>9</sup>) This, we will recall, overlaps with the way Aristotle defines poetry – as that which relates and asks after the possible; after what *might* have happened, and not after what *had* happened.<sup>10</sup> Pursuing this line of reasoning, we will ask the following two questions in the first part of this essay: How do literature and technology relate to each other? What is the role of sound in it? Heidegger's "Die Frage nach der Technik" ("The Question Concerning Technology," 1954) provides the philosophical background, and we will test its propositions on Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuova* (1744).<sup>11</sup> Max Eyth's "Poesie und Technik" ("Poetry and Technology," 1905) offers the engineer's perspective for the time period of interest in this section. This first theoretical part will allow us to then systematically analyze in

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.340.

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, see discussion in Thomas Zoglauer, ed. *Technikphilosophie* (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2002), p.12: "Aristoteles überträgt offenbar die teleologische Struktur menschlichen Handelns auf die Natur und projiziert in alle Naturvorgänge eine Zielgerichtetheit. Da technisches Handeln zielgerichtet ist, müssen auch die Naturvorgänge zielgerichtet sein. Die Natur 'handelt' wie der Mensch. Wir würden dies als einen Anthropomorphismus, als eine ungerechtfertigte Übertragung menschlicher Eigenschaften auf die Natur, deuten. Aristoteles nimmt aber den entgegengesetzten Standpunkt ein: Das teleologische Modell wird nicht vom menschlichen Bereich auf die Natur übertragen, vielmehr sieht er im technischen Handeln eine Nachahmung natürlicher Prozesse. Die Technik ahmt die Natur nach."

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Cassirer, "Form und Technik," p.80. My translation. See also Zoglauer, p.22.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, ch. 9.

<sup>11</sup> See Ernesto Grassi on the connection between Vico and Heidegger, *Heidegger and the Question of Renaissance Humanism: Four Studies* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1983).

the second part the role of technology, machines, and their sounds in the works of Eça de Queirós and Luigi Pirandello.

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Nineteenth-century writers almost immediately picked up on the transformations brought about by technology and the newly invented machinery. The train with its imposing black locomotive and its shrieking whistle, for instance, pierced with steam and fury, but also with pastoral tranquility, through the pages of novels, poetry, and plays alike, influencing dialogue, structure, and not least the plot itself. The so-called telegraphic style and panoramic writing emerged while an entire genre of train-literature was created: novels that had the duration of a specific train route and explained to the reader-traveler the history and importance of noteworthy sites as they could be seen through the window.<sup>12</sup> Literature, thus, did not only respond to the emerging technologies by describing and incorporating them into the fictional worlds of novels. It was also profoundly influenced by machines *qua* objects, namely, by the way machines occupied, rearranged, and redefined space and time, phenomenologically speaking.<sup>13</sup> It is in this sense that Leo Marx's seminal study on the American pastoral and its relationship to the emerging technologies can be understood as being "a minority report on the national psyche."<sup>14</sup> The way in which writers from a certain country or region incorporate or resist the incorporation of technology into their works can be seen as indicative of a more general, national, attitude that

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<sup>12</sup> Discussed in the previous section of this chapter: Carlo Collodi's novel-guide, *Un romanzo in vapore: Da Firenze a Livorno. Guida storico-umoristica* (1856). Cf. Katia Pizzi, "Introduction" to *Pinocchio, Puppets and Modernity: The Mechanical Body*, ed. by Katia Pizzi (New York & London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The U of California P, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Charles S. Sanford, review of *The Machine in the Garden*, *American Quarterly* 17:2 (1965), p.274 [272-276]. Just as for Vico languages offered a common "mental vocabulary" that allowed him to distill from it the common principles of the histories of all nations, the eruption of the machine in, here, American writing, allowed Leo Marx to address something like a "national psyche" of the time.

throws light onto both literature and technology at a given time. In geometrical terms, the radical axis at the intersection of literature and technology is where the process of *Entbergung* (revealing) takes place. It is along this axis that the present investigation into the sonic dimension of machines moves. Moving along this axis, we will have to be equidistant to literature and technology, neither overly technological nor overly literary but resolutely holding focus just between the two in order that "disclosure" might appear.

### ***Wort and Werkzeug***

In his 1904 address to the general assembly of the Verein Deutscher Ingenieure (Association of German Engineers) in Frankfurt am Main, Max Eyth, a German machine engineer and writer, identified a basic distinction between the word and the tool (*Wort und Werkzeug*, or *Sprache und Werkzeug*), insofar as they relate to knowing and doing (*Wissen und Können*). According to Eyth, this distinction has been present since language, that "fleeting sound," was first fixed through writing:

seitdem man gelernt hatte, das Wort, den flüchtigen Schall durch die Schrift festzulegen, trat eine eigentümliche Änderung in dem Verhältnis zwischen Wort und Werkzeug ein. Die Sprache, eben weil sie sprechen konnte, wusste sich eine überragende, man wird wohl sagen dürfen, eine ungebührliche Bedeutung zu verschaffen. Das stumme Werkzeug wurde im Empfinden der Menschheit immer mehr in den Hintergrund gedrängt. Das Wissen herrschte, das Können diente; und dieses Verhältnis [...] ist bis in die Gegenwart allgemein anerkannt geblieben.<sup>15</sup>

*Sprechendes Wort and stummes Werkzeug*: Language, or the word, "speaks" because it is set down in writing, but the tool is "mute." Following Eyth's reasoning, it is this "speaking" ability that allowed language to establish itself as the keeper of knowledge and the essence of

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<sup>15</sup> Max Eyth, "Poesie und Technik, 1905, pp.15-16. "Since we learned how to set the word, the fleeting sound, down in writing, a curious change has taken place in the relationship between word and tool. Language, precisely because it could speak, knew how to procure for itself a superior, one will be allowed to say, undue importance. The mute tool was evermore pushed into the background in the opinion/sensibility of humanity. Knowing reigned, doing served; and this relationship [...] remains widely acknowledged until our present day." My translation.

*homo sapiens*, relegating the mute tool and the skills associated with it to a secondary, servile position. But *Wissen* and *Können*, as Eyth writes, both resulted from that same primal force that had made the animal *homo* into the human *homo sapiens*. For Eyth, the two are intertwined in such a way that *Können* is what makes *Wissen* possible.<sup>16</sup> According to Heidegger and his analysis of *techne* in “Überlieferte Sprache und technische Sprache” (1962), “to know one’s way in something and definitely in the producing of something” (p.135) is a kind of knowing. *Techne*, and, by extension, technology, is thus “not a concept of making, but of knowledge” (Ibid.). *Techne* sets something that was concealed “in the manifest, the accessible and the available, and [brings it] to its position as something present.” Heidegger calls this process “herausforderndes Stellen” (positing that challenges forth). Technology “asks that its own kind of knowledge be expressly developed as soon as a science corresponding to it unfolds and presents itself.”<sup>17</sup> If for Eyth the tool (*Können*) is what informed the word (*Wissen*), for Heidegger the tool becomes a form of *Wissen*, a form of language. What kind of language could this be? And what kind of knowledge does technology asks that it be developed? How, if at all, does this knowledge reveal itself in literary works from the nineteenth century – the time when a science corresponding to technology had finally unfolded and presented itself? These are some questions that we will address by means of the literary analysis in the second part of this section.

Going further into Eyth's argument, we can derive the following: if, with the codification of language through writing, language's fleeting sound was fixed<sup>18</sup> and thus gained primacy over the mute tool in matters concerning knowledge, then there must have been a time when the word

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<sup>16</sup> “Aber beide, Wort und Werkzeug, sind ein Erzeugnis derselben geistigen Urkraft, die das Tier 'homo' zum Menschen 'homo sapiens' gemacht hat, wie ihn die Gelehrten nennen, die natürlich auch hier wieder allein auf sein Wissen anspielen und sein Können, das all dieses Wissen ermöglichte, vergessen.” p.16.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, “Traditional Language and Technical Language,” p.136 ENG.

<sup>18</sup> Plato, of course, already discussed this.

and the tool, *Wissen* and *Können*, were equals, that is, both equally "mute" and both equally participating in *herausforderndes Stellen*. Such a time resonates with Vico's first, poetic age, or the Age of the Gods, when men spoke a language "la qual si truova essere stata una lingua muta per cenni o corpi ch'avessero naturali rapporti all'idee ch'essi volevan significare".<sup>19</sup> Vico's giants, *gli uomini gentili*, of the first divine age spoke a mute language, *lingua muta*, by means of *cenni* (signs) or *corpi* (bodies, objects, physical entities).

When, as Vico narrates, heaven started thundering and lightning two hundred years after the flood, the giants, "frightened and astonished by the great effect whose cause they did not know, [...] raised their eyes and became aware of the sky."<sup>20</sup> Since they were like wild beasts who "expressed their very violent passions by shouting and grumbling," they imagined that the great force in the sky was animate and was trying to communicate with them by "the hiss of his bolt and the clap of his thunder." (§377) This was the birth of religion,<sup>21</sup> and, as Robert Harrison notes, the birth of *logos*.<sup>22</sup> The generating instance is Eyth's "primal force" (*Urkraft*, see fn.15) that had awoken in the giants the desire to pursue knowledge and truth and that had made *homo* to *homo sapiens*. This force the giants called Jove. With Heidegger, let us call the desire, drive or

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<sup>19</sup> Vico, *Scienza Nuova*, English version: Idea of the Work, p.20, §32: when "gentile men were newly received into humanity [and spoke] a mute language of signs and physical objects having natural relations to the ideas they wished to express." Just as there are three ages, there are also three languages that compose the vocabulary of Vico's *Science*: (1) **a mute language** spoken at the time when "gentile men were newly received into humanity" after having roamed earth's great forest like wild beasts; (2) **the heroic language** spoken by means of "heroic emblems, or similitudes, comparisons, images, metaphors, and natural descriptions"; and (3) **Human language** using words agreed upon by the people, a language of which they are absolute lords, [...]; a language whereby the people may fix the meaning of the laws by which the nobles as well as the plebs are bound." [PD suggestion: Peirce's tripartite division where the index (working by way of an existential compulsion or brute force) goes with the 'first age,' the icon (working by way of a shared structure – like the land's topography and a map of it – or a similitude – goes with heroes and symbol, etc.)]

<sup>20</sup> Vico, p.117, §377.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Gilbert Simondon, "On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects," p.408: "the phase that balances technicity is the religious mode of being. Aesthetic thinking emerges at the neutral point between technics and religion, at the moment of division of primitive magical unity".

<sup>22</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992).



mandate to pursue and reveal knowledge and truth, Man's *Ge-schick zur Entbergung* (mandate to reveal).<sup>23</sup>

In order to gain an unobstructed view of the sky so that they could properly receive and interpret Jove's word and thus create their own language, the giants had to make a clearing in the primeval forest that they inhabited and that was "an obstacle to visibility [and] an obstacle to human knowledge and science."<sup>24</sup> Vulcan, the god of fire who, as Harrison writes, was "[t]he master of technical skill,"<sup>25</sup> revealed the first technology by setting fire to and creating a clearing in the forest, "per osservar a cielo aperto donde i fulmini fussero mandati da **Giove**." Harnessed by the giants, fire, translated into a technology can be called the "first moment" of challenging (*Herausfordern*) of nature by technology.<sup>26</sup> We read this passage in Vico's *Scienza* as follows: The word, mute at the time, was then a means of communication with the gods, a way of *Entbergung*, as was the tool. But the word was not able "to keep the eye of knowledge open",<sup>27</sup> ensuring proper divination and thus proper practicing of religion, without the help of the tool. "Technics and religion are contemporaries of each other," Gilbert Simondon writes.<sup>28</sup> Yet, although the word and the tool had the same technological origin (Eyth's *Urkraft*, Jove's thunder and lightning), once they were separated and hierarchized, the word laid claim to the "why?" and to the essence of technology without ever paying tribute to the tool, while the tool was relegated

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<sup>23</sup> Heidegger, *Frage nach der Technik*, GER, p.25.

<sup>24</sup> Harrison, p.10

<sup>25</sup> Harrison, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> Vico, *Libro II, sezione IV, cap. 2*: "perché Vulcano aveva dato fuoco alle selve, per osservar a cielo aperto donde i fulmini fussero mandati da Giove." Chapter missing in the Garzanti edition. Check English.

Yet this challenging was not one of imposing onto nature the status of a stand-by, on-call resource (cf. Heidegger, *Question concerning Technology*, 320, ENG). It was simply a first step in the manipulation of nature for man's needs.

<sup>27</sup> Harrison, p.11.

<sup>28</sup> Simondon, p.420.

to the “how?” as a mere refuse of technology: an unwelcome reminder of the common origin of the word; a souvenir from the times of primitive grunts and bodily drives.<sup>29</sup>

The clearing in the forest became the giants' first cultivated field – a second moment in the challenging of nature. These fields "were called by the Latin people *luci*, meaning burnt lands within the enclosure of the woods" (§16).<sup>30</sup> If we look at the allegorical image (see appendix) that Vico employs to illustrate his method and ideas for the *Scienza*, we notice the abundance of objects in it – these are, to use Lorraine Daston's words, things that talk.<sup>31</sup> They are Vico's gesture towards the original “mute language” of the giant in the form of hieroglyphs.<sup>32</sup> Among them, coming out of the woods, we find a tool that is usually overlooked by interpreters of the *Scienza Nuova*. Vico's allegorical explanation of this tool is, for instance, entirely omitted from the Garzanti edition of the work. We are referring to the plow (*aratro*).<sup>33</sup> The first gentile nations used the plow to cultivate the clearing in the woods, challenging nature for the first time. Vico used the only partially visible pictorial representation of the plow to illustrate the plow's chronologically early role in the rise of nations, but also the tool's marginality in this process. For it is barely discernible in the “dipintura,” covered up as it is by a Corinthian column on which a stone alphabet table leans – written language. The plow's share, "before the use of iron was known, [...] had to be made of a curved piece of very hard wood, capable of breaking and turning the earth. The Latins called the moldboard *urbs*".<sup>34</sup> Let us recall that the same word in Latin also means "city." While the Word was in dialogue with the sky, essential in the making of Man's

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<sup>29</sup> Think about why this change in attitude occurred. Provide proofs. [RR suggestion:] Read Ernesto Grassi's essays on Heidegger, Humanism, and Vico's clearing.

<sup>30</sup> Grassi here.

<sup>31</sup> Lorraine Daston, ed., *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Soccio, Intro to Vico's *Scienza Nuova*, p.214: “Si potrebbe aggiungere che il linguaggio simbolico dei primitivi (barbari ed eroi) spingeva il suo ‘scovritore’, in un certo modo, a un analogo ricorso figurativo.”

<sup>33</sup> Vico, §14, pp.10-14.

<sup>34</sup> Vico, §16, p.11.

first laws and creating Man's first myths and fables, the Tool was keeping the channel for this dialogue open, down on the ground, by maintaining the clearing in the forest and creating the first cities where laws would be implemented.. Both the word and the tool, as noted above, were then in their own different ways means of *Entbergung*. Thus when Heidegger claims that "the essence of technology is nothing technological," and that art is a realm simultaneously most akin to and fundamentally different from technology and thus most suited for the essential reflection upon technology, he is going back to these primeval ancestors of the novel and the machine – the word and the tool. These had a common initializing condition (the sky with its thunder and lightning), were directed at a common goal (maintaining unobstructed communication with the sky), and each was not possible without the other. At the same time, while they are both *techne*, or modes of *Entbergung*(revealing, *alētheuein*),<sup>35</sup> they are fundamentally different methods, one pertaining to immaterial expression and the other to material form: "Technik ist alles," the engineer-poet Eyth summarizes, "was dem menschlichen Wollen eine körperliche Form gibt. [...] Poesie ist, was uns den geistigen Gehalt der uns umgebenden Körperwelt offenbart."<sup>36</sup>

After the Age of the Gods and the giants' mute language, came the Age of the Heroes with their emblematic language, followed by the Age of Man and his "human language [that uses] words agreed upon by the people, a language of which they [humans] are absolute lords, [...]; a language whereby the people may fix the meaning of the laws by which the nobles as well as the plebs are bound." (§32) It was in this age that language's "fleeting sound," as Eyth calls it, was fixed in writing and the love for the word, φιλολογία (*philologia*), was born. Language, as an ordered and fixed sequence of sounds, had thus learned how to speak for itself and became

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<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 319. ENG

<sup>36</sup> Eyth, pp.3-4, see also Simondon. "Technology is all that gives bodily form to human wanting/willing. Poetry is what reveals the spiritual content of the bodily world that surrounds us."

almost exclusively identified with *Wissen*, as the primary *Werkzeug des Geistes* – of Philosophy, Theology, Law, and not least of all Literature – in the process of *Wahrheitsentbergung*. The tool with its inarticulate noise-making, still resembling the primeval shouting and grumbling of the giants tied to their bodies,<sup>37</sup> remained mute and pushed further into the material background. Since then, so strong has the identification of the word, *logos*, with knowledge been, and so strong an anthropocentrism has this identification brought about, that human beings became used to the forced absence and to the supposedly silent, servile role of the tool and technology. This is one of the reasons why the machine's rise in the nineteenth century was perceived, in literature among other word-based, truth-seeking fields, as an unprecedented threat to Man and language.

It will then not come as a surprise that Vico's *Scienza* is entirely rooted in the word and in language – it is a philosophy through philology aimed at the reconstruction of universal historical principles. Furthermore, it might also not come as a surprise that Vico's argument throughout the *Scienza* is fraught with metaphors and analogies from the realm of vision and the eye: luminous triangle, seeing eye, the aspect of His providence, clearing, sky, light, lightning, contemplation, enlightenment, etc.<sup>38</sup> The visual semantics is well rendered from the Italian: *triangolo luminoso, occhio veggente, contemplare, aspetto, provvidenza, il raggio [...] ch'alluma*. The emphasis in the *Scienza Nuova* is on the fact that the giants *look up* and become aware of the *sky* presumably because of the *lightning* that Jove's thunderbolts produced. In order to gain *unobstructed view* of the *sky*, they then make a *clearing* in the woods by means of Vulcan's *fire*. The book's frontispiece, succinctly and *visually* representing the goals of the *Scienza*, is hierarchically structured such in a way that *written language* is at its center, with the *divine eye* occupying the

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<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, "Überlieferte Sprache und technische Sprache," p.140: "The kind of language is determined by the technology."

<sup>38</sup> Robert Harrison has aptly shown how vocabulary derived from Man's interaction with forests, trees, plants, and the soil – in short, nature – is at the core of the terms concerning human institutions. And how did the giants clear the forest and cultivate their fields if not with the help of technology and the tool?

position of absolute superiority, and the ray of knowledge reflecting from Metaphysic's breast onto the writer's shoulder. Knowledge (and thus Truth) flows from God's eye through Metaphysic's chest into the writer's word that eventually is fixed on paper. All else is elevator music.

This association between vision and knowledge, the predominance of vision-related vocabulary in matters of knowing and of the word was already a well-established fact at the time when Vico was writing. It still persists today in philosophy, among many other fields, as well as in the way we express ourselves on a daily basis.<sup>39</sup> Plato's main philosophical tenet revolves around shadows and reflections even though he was skeptical of the written word; the sixteenth-century writer George Puttenham had allotted "instruction and discipline" to the audible, while vision was reserved for the knowable;<sup>40</sup> at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nietzsche complained that "[d]er Deutsche liest nicht laut, nicht für's Ohr, sondern bloss mit den Augen: er hat seine Ohren dabei in's Schubfach gelegt";<sup>41</sup> in reading, writing, and speaking, things become *clear* and – as if reminiscent of the giants' mute vocabulary – matters are *evident*, we express points of *view* that are a matter of *perspective*, and so forth *ad nauseam*.

In a masterful analysis of the *Scienza Nuova*, Robert Harrison aptly shows how vocabulary derived from man's interaction with forests, trees, plants, and the soil – in short, nature – is at the core of the terms denoting human institutions. Yet how did Vico's giants clear the forest and cultivate their fields if not with the help of Vulcan's technology and the tool? How

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<sup>39</sup> The bibliographical references on the topic are manifold. Cf. Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993), or the volume edited by David Michael Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> George Puttenham, *The Art of Poesie*. Page number missing. Check Gaston, Park et Galison's, "Bacon, Galileo, and Descartes on Imagination and Analogy," *Isis* 75:2 (1984), 287-289.

<sup>41</sup> "The German does not read aloud, not for the ear, but merely with his eyes: he has put his ears away in a drawer." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. In *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (München: DTV, 1980), §247.

did they express themselves if not by making noises and by *corpi*, the tool's "mute" language? By coincidence, this latter expression by *corpi* instead of words happens to be exactly what the members of the "grand academy of Logado" had proposed be reinstated in the third chapter of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), published just a year after the first edition of Vico's *Scienza* (1725): "since Words are only Names for *Things*," the academy's expedient asserts, "it would be more convenient for all Men to carry about them, such *Things* as were necessary to express the particular Business they are to discourse on."<sup>42</sup> And, finally, what are Jove's thunderbolts if not a phenomenon that produces lightning *and* thunder at the same time?<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, what we quippingly called "elevator music" above is made out of various objects, tools, and things from which Vico is extorting (and how appropriate here the German *ver-hören* would be!) the words that make history. And yet these things are mute for him, signifying but allegedly *soundless*, like hieroglyphs buried under the sands of Egypt. As language learned how to speak, all else was silenced, and language and vision became the dominant Western paradigm for the pursuit of knowledge and for *Entbergung*.

A careful (re-)reading of the above mentioned passages and indeed of the entire *Scienza*, brings to the fore the fact that light *and* sound, vision *and* hearing, the eye *and* the ear, the word *and* the tool, were crucial in that moment when the embryonic desire to pursue knowledge and truth was first instilled into the minds of human beings. Jove's divine commands were simultaneously visible (lightning) and audible (thunder). And these two instances were the "primal force" that gave birth to the word *and* the tool. Only after the deforestation was completed, the fields cultivated, and language chiseled into stone, was the sonic aspect of

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<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* [1726] (Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 2005), p.173. Cf. Schwenger's article in *Critical Inquiry*.

<sup>43</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Thunderbolt," 1.a: "A single discharge of lightning with the accompanying thunder." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thunderbolt>, last accessed May 11, 2017.

phenomena forced to descend, alongside the allegedly mute tool, into the dark mines of human *Können*, as if it were the bad twin. This was, then, not a relationship of rivalry or a "murder," as Peter Schwenger frames it,<sup>44</sup> but one of (man-)imposed hierarchy – the domination of one (the word) and the subordination of the other (the tool). It is also not about the relationship between humans and objects, humans and things, framed as the subject/object dialectic in Western thought – for those cannot be conceived as belonging to categories that can be thought of as opposed or as similar to one another in the first place; it is, and the *Scienza* abounds in examples of it, about the word and the tool and their relationship to vision and hearing, and about their role in *Dasein's Entbergung*.

In its philosophical application, the word/tool dichotomy is rendered by the Cartesian dualism between mind and body, and, further, that between the human and the non-human;<sup>45</sup> in terms of perception, it is rendered by vision/hearing, the latter appearing to subsume touch, smell, and taste; in the disciplinary application relevant to Eyth, Heidegger, and our present endeavor, it corresponds to the relationship between literature and technology, or, in Eyth's word choice, *Poesie* and *Technik*; finally, in its socio-political form, it corresponds to the relationship between the bourgeois and the worker, viz., between the upper, literate classes for whom learning and writing were an exclusive privilege and a means of domination, and the lower, illiterate classes whose survival depended on the use of the tool and the machine. Within the

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<sup>44</sup> Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," p.11: "Although words and things have long been considered deadly rivals, as Peter Schwenger details [...]." Peter Schwenger, "Words and the Murder of the Thing," *Critical Inquiry* 28:1 (2001): 99-113.

<sup>45</sup> Vico endorses this dualism, §18: "This plan of commonwealths is founded on the two eternal principles of this world of nations, namely the mind and the body of the men who compose it. For men consist of these two parts, one of which is noble and should therefore command, and the other in which is base and should serve. [...] Therefore divine providence ordered human institutions with this eternal order: that, in commonwealths, those who use their minds should command and those who use their bodies should obey." See also, §630, p.236: "Hence this second eternal property of commonwealths: that some men must employ their minds in the tasks of civil wisdom, and others their bodies in the trades and crafts that are needed in peace as well as in war. And there is a third eternal property: that the mind should always command and the body should have perpetually to obey." ----> These are the *famuli*, the weak, the prisoners, the slaves.

European context, this separation and hierarchization persisted until the dawn of the Age of the Machine in the nineteenth century when the machine was finally revealed and made available.<sup>46</sup>

This is not to say that at that time language had become mute again, but that *the machine had learned how to speak*.<sup>47</sup>

## Speaking Machines

How can the machine speak? And, if it starts speaking, what can it say that the word already has not? As we saw in Vico, who had all but fetishized language and the word,<sup>48</sup> the tool is hidden in the background; silenced by the “speaking language;” servile; almost insignificant in the humanistic pursuit of truth; overshadowed by the altar, and by the gigantic figures of metaphysics and Homer.<sup>49</sup> Although Jove himself had communicated with the giants through what we might call a tool that was both visible and audible (the thunderbolts manufactured by Vulcan), *logos* prevailed; and although Vico himself points out the multisensory nature of this first interaction, vision prevailed. Finally, although both *logos* and technology both came from the sky,<sup>50</sup> the former gained the upper hand in the understanding of things divine. Vulcan was an ugly god, and his forge inarticulate. Offensive both to eye and ear, unpalatable and reeking of

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<sup>46</sup> Clarify Heideggerian terms here.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, “Traditional Language and Technical Language,” p.137, ENG: one way of seeing this ability to speak is in the sense that “modern technology could speak forth a demand [einen Anspruch sprechen].”

<sup>48</sup> And so did, and how!, Heidegger.

<sup>49</sup> The quote by Jean Baudrillard that Bill Brown brings to attention summarizes to the point this process of denigration of the tool in terms of the subject/object relationship: “[W]e have always lived off the splendor of the subject and the poverty of the object.’ It is the subject,’ he then goes on to write, ‘that makes history, it’s the subject that totalizes the world,’ whereas the object ‘is shamed, obscene, passive.’” “Thing Theory,” p.8.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Harrison, p.10: “Fire itself came from this divine celestial source. Technology appropriated its uses for the purpose of deforestation. Hence technology too takes its origins from the sky. Vulcan forges the lightning bolt for Jove, fashions the giants’ arms of war, and launches the missile through space by mastering the powers of the sacred fire.”



manual labor, he was hidden and silenced until the Industrial Revolution when he returned in the form of the machine.<sup>51</sup>

In 1904, the Ottoman Empire was entering its final stage of dissolution; technology and machines were becoming a familiar sight even in the most remote and rural of European regions; and workers were beginning to strike all over the continent. At this moment, Max Eyth, an engineer turned writer, declared that a "fierce struggle" was taking place that endeavors, if not to restructure, at least to restore the proper, common foundation of the relation between *Wissen* and *Können*, between language and the tool.<sup>52</sup> There is poetry in technology, just as there is technology in poetry, Eyth claimed, firing up the crowd of engineers. Just four years later, decidedly opposing Benedetto Croce's distinction between art and science, in an essay entitled "Scienza e Arte" (1908) Luigi Pirandello writes, echoing Eyth: "[O]gni opera di scienza è scienza e arte, come ogni opera d'arte è arte e scienza."<sup>53</sup> The machine sounds, but, in music and in literature alike, "kleinere Geister hoeren noch nichts," Eyth continued his complaint.<sup>54</sup> Yet around the same time when Eyth was pronouncing these words, Luigi Pirandello in Italy and Portugal's Eça de Queirós had been and were in fact listening carefully.

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<sup>51</sup> One might suggest the printing press and various other early modern devices as examples of previous machines. This is a legitimate observation. Yet let us remember that the printing press – one of the key revolutionary inventions of humanity – only served the further codification and distribution of the written word and posed no threat whatsoever to Man or his language. One could perhaps say that the difference between the tool and the machine, the plow/printing press and the steam locomotive could be formulated in terms of agency: while Man almost exclusively uses the former, the latter (also) uses Man. The object goes subject, if only partially and conditionally, and together they partake in *Entbergung*. With Simondon, "On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects," p.423: Subject and object, man and machine "striv[e] to attain unity" as separate elements "each of which is inferior to unity". This is how, in D&G's words, "tout fait machine" – reminiscent of Douglas Adams' conception of Earth as one giant computer that is calculating the ultimate question to which 42 is the answer. See also Marx, ch.15 of the *Capital*, on the difference between tool and machine.

<sup>52</sup> Eyth, p.16: "Heute stehen wir inmitten eines heftigen Kampfes, der bestrebt ist, das Verhältnis der beiden, wenn nicht umzugestalten, so doch auf seine richtigen [sic] Grundlage zurückzuführen."

<sup>53</sup> Pirandello, "Arte e Scienza," p. 605. "Every work of science is science and art, just as every work of art is art and science." The essay is a reworking of a previous work with the title "Scienza e critica estetica" that was published in 1900 in a homonymous collection of essays (published or just edited?). For Croce, art was a precondition for science, but science could not ever lead to art.

<sup>54</sup> "Smaller spirits do not hear anything yet."

As we saw in the previous chapters of this thesis, until the nineteenth century and the triumph of the steam engine, the European soundscape was a fairly unified, lo-fi environment:<sup>55</sup> Human voices, the tolling of bells, the squeaking of cart wheels, and horses clacking on stone pavements – these sounds of everyday life, natural sounds, and the sounds of war were among the most important sonic events a human being could experience in a lifetime.<sup>56</sup> With the Industrial Revolution – the explosion of factories, the locomotive and its whistle, and various machinery onto the European stage – all of this changed for good. Chronologically, the machine first started "speaking" in England, France, and Germany. Yet we will concentrate here on the speaking machines of such peripheral, late-industrialized countries as Italy and Portugal. This precisely because, by the time technological advancements had become, if not accepted then at least a familiar occurrence in these rural regions, the machine was becoming part of the *sensus communis* or common "mental dictionary"<sup>57</sup> of most European nations. The works of such authors as Eça de Queirós or Luigi Pirandello are thus not incipient inquiries into technology and its noises (e.g., as in the works of Dickens). To a greater degree, they are observations of well established phenomena set against new backgrounds. To use a chess metaphor: in this chapter, we are not interested in the aesthetic modifications – color, size, or material – of the pieces or of

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<sup>55</sup> R. Murray Schafer, p.43: Hi-fi: "[a] soundscape...in which discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level." Lo-fi: "Individual acoustic signals are obscured in an overdense population of sounds. [...] In order for the most ordinary sounds to be heard they have to be increasingly amplified."

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, R. Murray Schafer, *Soundscape*; John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes*; and Alain Corbin, *Village Bells*; Stefano Pivato, *Il secolo del rumore*, etc.

<sup>57</sup> Vico, §161, p.67: "There must in the nature of human institutions be a mental language common to all nations". Cf. also Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

"Vico sees this common nature reflected in language, conceived as a store-house of customs, in which the wisdom of successive ages accumulates and is presupposed in the form of a *sensus communis* or 'mental dictionary' by subsequent generations. Vico defines this common sense as 'judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, and entire nation, or the entire human race' (Element XII, §145, pp.63–4). It is also available to the philosopher who, by deciphering and thus recovering its content, can discover an 'ideal eternal history traversed in time by the histories of all nations' (Proposition XLII, §114, p.57)." <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vico/>, last accessed on May 5, 2017.

the chessboard - those are simply variations on a theme. We are interested in the players, the place where they're playing, and the way they deal with the rules of the game.<sup>58</sup>

A machine is a tool<sup>59</sup> is an object is a thing. A machine can be seen, touched, smelled, heard, and, if one pleases, tasted too. Again: A machine is a tool is an object is a thing. But the Russian doll parsing does not work in the reverse: not all things are objects, nor is every object a tool, neither is every tool a machine.<sup>60</sup> However, a thing could take on a concrete form, which could be the object we call book, and a book, finally, could be a novel. Thus, when we speak of “the machine” in this chapter, we are keeping in mind its genealogy as machine→tool→object→thing. Every attempt at precisely defining the machine will either lead to a frustrating aporia or will entail the analysis of so many different points of view as to deserve its own treatise. The same goes, without a doubt, for that slippery thing we call “the novel.”<sup>61</sup> Starting, then, from the lowest common denominator of the machine and the novel as things – vague and universal enough to encompass many different things, and yet intuitive and particular enough to be easily graspable<sup>62</sup> – let us now think through things and what their language could possibly be in the works of Eça de Queirós and Luigi Pirandello.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," p.9, quoting Cornelius Castoriadis's *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 1975, p.334-35: "The 'perception of things' for an individual from one society, for instance, will be the perception of things 'inhabited' and 'animated'; for an individual from another society things will instead be 'inert instruments, objects of possession' [...]." This line of thinking about objects is interested precisely in the modification of the pieces and of the chessboard, in the *how?* and *why?* of the variation of the theme. I don't want to talk about the machine itself, its parts, workings, construction, but about the ways that Eça and Pirandello, writing from Portugal and Italy, perceive and incorporate them into their work and society.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. the Macedonian word for "thing" – работа (rabota) which actually means "work."

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. and intro. by Albert Hofstadter, 163-184 (New York: Harper, 2013), 164. ["Das Ding," 1950]

<sup>61</sup> "Artworks have often been accorded a special status as midway between the objective and subjective, things that purportedly incarnate selves (both individual and collective) as objects, the word made flesh." Daston, Intro to *Things That Talk*, p. 22. See also Bruno Latour's "Why has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30/2 (2004): 225-248.

<sup>62</sup> Nod to Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. Brown: "Thing Theory," p.4: "[T]he word *things* [...] denotes a massive generality as well as particularities, even your particularly prized possessions". Brown talks of "things" as if they

Both of these authors were born at the European periphery and on the margins of industrialization: José Maria de Eça de Queirós in Póvoa de Varzim, Portugal; Luigi Pirandello in Sicily's Agrigento, Italy. Yet both of them spent significant time abroad (France, England, and Germany), Eça as consul, Pirandello as student. There they had the opportunity to witness firsthand the advancements of technology and to become acquainted with the latest philosophical and literary movements. In other words, they are what R. Murray Schafer defines as reliable "earwitnesses."<sup>64</sup> Despite their cosmopolitanism, they were both dedicated to their national causes, and wrote extensively on Italian and Portuguese society, capturing effectively the anxieties and hopes of their nations. At the same time, the theme of humankind confronting modernity pervades their novels, plays, and non-fictional works. Here, we will concentrate on two novels that overflow with talking things: telegraphs, phonographs, trains, cameras, and many other devices that interact with the novels' characters – serving, interrupting, but also exploiting human beings in various ways. The structures of Eça's *A Cidade e as Serras* (1901, posth.)<sup>65</sup> and of Pirandello's *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio Operatore* (1915)<sup>66</sup> both rest on a sonic armature<sup>67</sup>

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were *Sein* and not *Dasein*. Heidegger would not agree (Ding is a part of Dasein and both together they are Sein, among many other, I was going to write, things – which just confirms that Ding/things are Dasein and thus Sein).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Miguel Tamen, *Friends of Interpretable Objects*. Crucial for this part of the chapter, Bill Brown, Lorraine Daston, and, as always, Heidegger.

<sup>64</sup> R. Murray Schafer, p.8f: "for the foundation of historical perspectives, we will have to turn to earwitness accounts from literature and mythology, as well as to anthropological and historical records.... [A] writer is trustworthy only when writing about sounds directly experienced and intimately known. Writing about other places and times usually results in counterfeit descriptions. [...] *All quiet on the Western Front* is convincing because the author was there. [...] In such ways is the authenticity of the earwitness established." We problematized this attitude towards literature and writers in the first chapter on sounds and technology in science fiction.

<sup>65</sup> Unless otherwise noted, for all quotations from the novel, we will be using the following translation: Eça de Queirós, *The City and the Mountains*, transl. by Margaret Jull Costa (New York: New Directions Book, 2008). References from the original will be taken from the following Portuguese edition: *A Cidade e as Serras* (Porto: Porto Editora, 2015). For page references, the English title is abbreviated as *CM*, and the Portuguese as *ACAS*.

<sup>66</sup> Luigi Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio Operatore* (Milano: BUR, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> Expression coined by Niall Atkinson, "Sonic Armatures: Constructing an Acoustic Regime in Renaissance Florence." *Senses & Society* 7:1 (2012): 39-52. See also his *The Noise Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life* (University Park, PA: The Penn State UP, 2016).

that propels the narrative forward by means of an opposition between sound and silence, the human voice and the machine's noise, being heard and becoming mute. Here, the word and the tool, the city and the country, human beings and the machine, are all manifested in a somewhat grotesque but deadly struggle for superiority. In this sense, the two novels offer yet another, but most elaborate, example of the anxiety surrounding Man's growing dependence on machines, the cities' deafening modernities, and the resulting *loss of voice* from which human beings seem to have suffered. At the same time, they reveal the demand that technology poses on human beings, in general, and on writers, in particular, precisely at a moment when technology was re-establishing its role in Western art and thought, and when coexistence with and dependence on machines was hard to avoid, even in the most rural of European regions.

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The nature of the thing, Heidegger wrote, "never gets a hearing."<sup>68</sup> Neither do objects, which are science's mute lab rat. The tool, as we saw in Vico, was spoken *with*, it was *verhört* (both in the sense of *interrogate* and *mishear*) in its purported muteness immediately after that initial moment of thunder and lightning. But it was deemed neither adequate for the pursuit of humanistic truth nor capable of making (meaningful, ordered) sounds itself. But what about the machine as a form of tool? What about this daughter of Vulcan and steam?<sup>69</sup> If the machine speaks, then it is quite literally making sounds that are open to interpretation. *Homo sapiens* is also a *homo interpretans*, which means that, ultimately, human beings are listeners to things. Human beings, so it goes, think, and "thinking is hearing."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "The thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten. The nature of the thing never comes to light, that is, it never gets a hearing." English in, "The Thing," p.168. German, "Das Wesen des Dinges kommt nie zum Vorschein, d.h. zur Sprache." Monoscope, "Das Ding," p.172.

<sup>69</sup> With this, I make a claim regarding the nature of the machine. What is a machine? What characterizes it as a form of tool? Are devices and gadgets machines? Or tools? Or all of that? Clear up the status of "machine."

<sup>70</sup> Heidegger, "Was heisst Denken?" (1952): "Das Denken ist ein Er-hören."

In 1871, while commenting on contemporary Portuguese events, Eça de Queirós wrote that "ouvir ou ler dá os mesmos resultados para a inteligência, para a memória, e para a acção: é a mesma entrada para a consciência por duas portas paralelas."<sup>71</sup> For Eça, then, hearing (through the ear) and reading (through the eyes) produce the same results for intelligence, memory, and action albeit entering consciousness through two different, yet parallel, doors. In listening, he seems to suggest, one also sees; and in reading, one also hears. And one hears a lot while reading the last novel that Eça wrote in his lifetime – the somewhat underappreciated, *A Cidade e as Serras*, composed in 1900, and published posthumously in 1901.<sup>72</sup> This work relies on a very simple plot structure: a man of Portuguese noble descent, Jacinto, is born in Paris where he grows up surrounded by all the comforts and inventions that human society could have offered in the second half of the nineteenth century; he surrounds himself with objects, books, devices, ideas, and friends from the high Parisian society, firmly believing that,

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Suma ciência} \\ \times \\ \text{Suma potência} \end{array} \left. \vphantom{\begin{array}{r} \text{Suma ciência} \\ \times \\ \text{Suma potência} \end{array}} \right\} = \text{Suma felicidade}$$

A maximum of science and a maximum of power yield a maximum of happiness.<sup>73</sup>

Jacinto spends the first half of his life pursuing the fulfillment of his "*Equação Metafísica*" (metaphysical equation) as his closest friend, Zé Fernandes (also the first-person narrator),

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<sup>71</sup> José Maria de Eça de Queirós, *Uma Campanha Alegre: de "As Farpas"* (Lisboa: A Editora, 1908). Entry no. XII from July 1871: "Hearing or reading produce the same results for intelligence, for memory, and for action: it is the same entryway to conscience through two parallel doors."

<sup>72</sup> Here cite the secondary sources on the fact that this novel is underappreciated. Structure and plot are purportedly too simple in comparison to *Os Maias* or *A Ilustre Casa de Ramires*, etc.

<sup>73</sup> Margaret Jull Costa translates the formula as: "Absolute Knowledge x Absolute Power = Absolute Happiness"

keeps him company in the palatial residence at No. 202 Champs-Élysées. In order to live up to the ambition of his formula, Jacinto, a super-civilized human being, extends the abilities of his mind with "all the philosophy acquired from Aristotle onwards" while fortifying his bodily organs "by using all the mechanisms invented since Theramenes created the wheel" (*CM*, 10f).<sup>74</sup> Unsurprisingly this "prince," as the narrator lovingly calls him, fails to achieve happiness in the French capital. Spurred on by the patriotic Zé Fernandes, he decides to return to Portugal and move into an old family castle in the beautiful but secluded mountain village of Tormes, in the Douro Valley. There, Jacinto finds peace of mind and tranquility of body in living simply, farm work, and a rosy-cheeked Portuguese wife. Civilization, technology, and the city thus lose the battle for his soul. Agrarian, provincial, but ultimately fulfilling, Portugal with its countryside intact, and nature emerge triumphantly. Yet, apart from this predictable outcome, the fictional world of the novel is densely populated by the most diverse collection of things, objects, machines, and devices that could be found at the end of the nineteenth century – belying, against the moral of the novel, a fascination with technology. The sounds and noises of Paris and Portugal, of humans and machines alike emanate from the pages of *A Cidade e as Serras* as if cut into a vinyl record – one that we are about to play, stretching the analogy a bit, on the turntable of literary criticism.

Now, simply put and without resorting to metaphor, the machine's language are its noises. Not the various allegorical meanings that Vico imposes on his objects, ordering them

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<sup>74</sup> "And by 'civilized' my friend [Jacinto] meant the kind of man who, by honing his thinking skills on all the philosophy acquired from Aristotle onwards and multiplying the physical strength of his organs by using all the mechanisms invented since Theramenes created the wheel, could make of himself a magnificent, near-omnipotent, near-omniscient Adam" (*CM*, p.7). Portuguese: "E por homem civilizado o meu camarada entendia aquele que, robustecendo a sua força pensante com todas as noções adquiridas desde Aristóteles, e multiplicando a potência corporal dos seus órgãos com todos os mecanismos inventados desde Terâmedes, criador da roda, se torna um magnífica Adão, quase omnipotente, quase omnisciente, e apoto portanto a recolher dentro de uma sociedade e nos limites do Progresso (al como ele se comportava em 1875) todos os gozos e todos os proveitos que resultam de Saber e de Poder..." (10f, *ACAS*).

chronologically and teleologically to be the counterpoint of his vertiginous philological dance; not the human voice being reproduced by a phonograph or transmitted by telephone devices.<sup>75</sup> Rather the vibrations caused by the friction of the machine's parts in motion that translate into sounds – disruptive, indifferent, relentless. Scholarship abounds in these “unwanted sounds” or noises,<sup>76</sup> and on the efforts to which human beings and governments have gone in order to contain, discipline, and domesticate them.<sup>77</sup> The point will not be recapitulated here. For we are not interested in the ways of silencing the machine, but in instances that involve listening to it and understanding its sonic impact on human beings generally and literature specifically; in approaches, that is, that go beyond an analysis of representation and regulation. Our analysis takes place on the narrative level of the novel as opposed to the descriptive.<sup>78</sup> For, as we will see demonstrated in Eça's and Pirandello's novels, machines are not just part of the novelistic landscape – they are talking things and speaking machines that interfere with x and intervene in z, creating depth of y, ultimately breaking through the surface of mere description.

Already the first chapter of *A Cidade e as Serras* is a ragbag of things: Jacinto's grandfather, D. Galeão, slips on a piece of orange peel while walking down a street in Lisbon,

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<sup>75</sup> Daston mentions this in the Introduction to *Things That Talk*.

<sup>76</sup> "Noises are the sounds we have learned to ignore," writes R. Murray Schafer in his seminal *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (1977), 3. In the glossary of the same work, he lists four different definitions of the term "noise" and concludes: "Of the four general definitions [unwanted sound, unmusical sound, any loud sound, disturbance in any signaling system], probably the most satisfactory is still 'unwanted sound.'" p.183. Following information theory, Yuri M. Lotman defines "noise" as "the intrusion of disorder, entropy or disorganization into the sphere of structure and information. Noise drowns out information." Art, however, "is capable of transforming noise into information." *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, trans. by Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: [Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures], University of Michigan, 1977), 75. Following Mário Vieira de Carvalho, I will only insist on the distinction when the specific literary text under analysis requires it or posits a distinction in the first place. Otherwise, the category of sound, or sounds, widely defined and subsuming "noise", will be at the center of my discussion.

<sup>77</sup> Many references here.

<sup>78</sup> Georg Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?" in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays*, ed. by Arthur Kahn, 110-148 (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005).



and is picked up from the dirt by none other than the Infante Dom Miguel; from there, an adoration for the monarch awakens in him that results in the hanging of a portrait of "his saviour,' adorned with palm leaves as if it were a *retabla*, and displayed beneath it the walking stick which those same magnanimous royal hands had raised up from the dirt." (*CM*, 2)<sup>79</sup> An orange peel, a portrait, a picked up cane – these three things, abandoned, placed, and picked up at the right moment by the right hand create a forward moving force without which the plot would be spineless. When Dom Miguel is exiled from Portugal, Jacinto's grandfather runs "through his house, shutting all the windows as if for a family funeral" and decides to go into voluntary exile in support of his monarch. The journey on sea and land is disastrous: the ship battles with rough sea, a coach axle snaps, the noble family has to knock "like beggars at various silent doors" in search of shelter (*CM*, 3), ends up sleeping on tavern benches, Dom Galeão "steps with his bare foot on a sliver of glass" (*Ibid.*, 4) until, roaring, he decides to buy the magnificent palace in the Champs-Élysées. A shoe slips on a peel, a hand picks up a cane, windows are shut tight, a shard pierces a bare foot, and in the meantime an entire family has uprooted its existence and moved from one country to another. The unruly things accompanying and disobeying the family on its journey from Lisbon to Paris are admittedly neither eloquent nor autonomous, but they possess a certain agency that Eça de Queirós places in foreground as an apparently banal yet actually crucial force for the development of the story. Indeed, even in his previous novels, Eça showed a predilection for things – a predilection that manifests itself in the way he allows "a coat" or "a hat" to enter a room before the human being associated with them is revealed, in a kind of a reverse synecdoche.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Portuguese text here.

<sup>80</sup> E.g., in *CM*, 141, referring to the train conductor: "Then, many hours and miles later, I noticed standing by my bed, in the pale morning light sifting in through the green curtains, a uniform and a cap, which murmured very softly and very sweetly in Portuguese: [...] The uniform noiselessly disappeared, like a beneficent shadow."

In Paris, Jacinto's father, the sickly child of Dom Galeão, becomes the leading character of about a paragraph and a half. He is characterized as "a silent, lank-haired, large-nosed youth permanently bundled up in baggy black clothes a size or so too large for him." (Ibid., 4). If Dom Galeão was a sturdy, loud, and somewhat grotesque Portuguese man who slips on orange peels and makes friends with the monarch, his son is a wallflower in a badly lit room. The servants call him "The Shadow," *a Sombra*, for he wanders the palace at night, in a nightshirt, a lamp in his hand, always silent, always in the background. The only active involvement he has with things and matter is an interest that he develops in woodturning: entirely unnecessary given his social status, circular – both mechanically and conceptually – , non-threatening, non-consequential.

From this "silent shade" (*CM*, 5), Jacinto is born in Paris "with all the confidence, vigor and sap of a pine tree growing in the dunes" (Ibid.). Light and fortune surround this child of the century of progress. His ideas are immediately accepted and applauded, his presence coveted, and "[e]ven inanimate objects serv[e] him with docility and affection" (Ibid., 6). "Inanimate objects" in the original Portuguese are simply "coisas," *things*.<sup>81</sup> If shards pierced Dom Galeão's bare foot, axles snapping under his obesity, and things were unaffected by the father's existence, not even buttons pop off Jacinto's shirts, nor do pieces of paper dare hide from his gaze, nor perfidious drawers jam when challenged by his haste and vivacity (Ibid.). Fortune, knowledge, and things, *Wissen* and *Können*, "technicians and philosophers" (Ibid., 8), all conspire in making his life a perfect symphony of which he is conductor, composer, and star performer at the same time. Dissonance and noise have no

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<sup>81</sup> "Era servido pelas coisas com docilidade e carinho; - e não recordo que jamais lhe estalasse um botão da camisa, ou que um papel maliciosamente se escondesse dos seus olhos, ou que ante a sua vivacidade e e pressa uma gaveta pérfida emperrasse." *ACAS*, 9.

place in it – everything is meaningfully, harmoniously arranged, from the seating in the performance hall to the quality of the cello's bow hair.

As the chapter progresses, more and more machines and mechanical metaphors begin entering the narration as Jacinto explains to Zé Fernandes the superiority of civilization and of the City: "Jacinto's idea of Civilization was inseparable from the image of the City, an enormous City with all its vast organs in powerful working organs." He admires the intestiniform, organ-like network of buzzing,

telegraph wires and telephone wires, [...] gas pipes and sewage pipes, the thunderous lines of buses, trams, carriages, velocipedes, rattletraps, and deluxe coach-and-pairs, [...] the banks clinking with universal gold, the factories frantically spewing out smoke and smart new inventions, the libraries bursting with the paperwork of the centuries [...]. (CM, 10)<sup>82</sup>

The City is a majestic, organic-mechanical body, Man's greatest achievement and a visible manifestation of the ultimate victory of mind over matter. The City, like Heidegger's *Ding*, gathers in itself sky, earth, gods, divinities, and mortals, in one form or another. It is the ultimate clearing and the ultimate watchtower from where Jove's thunderbolts can be observed, mixed with the smoke of Man's factories.

But Jacinto does not stop there, and Eça's ear for the speech of machines becomes further evident in the following phrase: "[T]ake the phonograph!" Jacinto says in another spur of civilized enthusiasm, "the phonograph, Zé Fernandes, gives me a real sense of my superiority as a thinking being and distinguishes me from the beasts" (11).<sup>83</sup> Jacinto's symphony cannot be

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<sup>82</sup> ACAS, 13: "Por uma conclusão bem natural, a ideia de Civilização, para Jacinto, não se separava da imagem da Cidade, de uma enorme Cidade, com todos os seus vastos órgãos funcionando poderosamente. Nem este meu supercivilizado amigo compreendia que longe de [...] fundas milhas de ruas, cortadas, por baixo e por cima, de fios de télégrafos, de fios de telefones, de canos de gases, de canos de fezes; e da fila atroante dos ônibus, *tramways*, carroças, velocípedes, calhambeques, parelhas e luxo; e de dois milhões de uma vaga humanidade, fervilhando, a ofegar, através da Polícia, na busca dura do pão ou sob a ilusão do gozo – o homem do século XIX pudesse saborear, plenamente, a delícia de viver!"

<sup>83</sup> ACAS, 14: "Aí tens tu, o fonógrafo!... Só o fonógrafo, Zé Fernandes, me faz verdadeiramente sentir a minha superioridade de ser pensante e me separa do bicho. Acredita, não há senão a Cidade, Zé Fernandes, não há senão a Cidade!"

perfect if it cannot be set down, eternalized, and replayed *ad inf.* In the phonograph, Edison's "talking machine," he sees the culmination of Man's ingenuity: sound, Man's voice – those two most fleeting of phenomena have finally caught up with the written word in the millennia-long, unequal race of *Wahrheitsentbergung*. Technology and the tool have revealed themselves in the form of the machine, in the form of a sound-recording and sound-reproducing device that is in the condition not only of obeying Man, but of demanding that humanity reconsider established hierarchies.

When in 1889 the British poet Robert Browning was first recorded reciting his poetry, he made a mistake: He could not recall one of his own verses, revealing thereby the imperfection of human utterances that could now finally be registered, unfiltered by the written word, bare, *unheimlich*. Immortality is a coveted commodity, and, as such, its astronomical price tag is hidden in the details. While the voice of Browning, who had died a few months later, when played back was the first time anyone's voice "had been heard from beyond the grave,"<sup>84</sup> it was also the first instance of language becoming reproducible independently from the written word and vision, in the form of a lapse still replayable today. "The phonograph does not hear," Friedrich Kittler writes, "as do ears that have been trained immediately to filter voices, words, and sounds out of noise; it registers acoustic events as such."<sup>85</sup> Vulcan's revenge on *logos*? Indeed, but for Jacinto it is the interplay between the word and the tool that matters, the fact that the reproducibility of sound is what indisputably pulls Man and Animal asunder. He is not

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In terms of theory, think Friedrich A. Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter* (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 1986). Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz as *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999). Also, Angela Frattarola's "The Phonograph and the Modernist Novel," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 43:1 (March 2010): 143-159.

<sup>84</sup> John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes*, page? Also, Picker, "English Beat: The Stethoscopic Era's Sonic Traces (Mr. Browning Forgets: Close Listening to a Lapse)," in *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, ed. by Daniel Morat, 25-45.

<sup>85</sup> Kittler, 23.

interested in the rude sounds of nature, in the "silly solemn muttering of leaves." (CM, 13) Once in the forest or in the countryside, he becomes bestial to the extent of becoming stupid, for "in the silence of the woods he heard only the gloomy depopulation of the universe." (Ibid.) Zé Fernandes describes their walk in the woods:

After an hour in that honest Montmorency forest, my poor friend was left terrified and gasping for breath, already experiencing the slow shrinking and vanishing of the soul that would soon reduce him to being a mere beast among other beasts. He only cheered up when we returned to the flagged sidewalks and gas-lamps of Paris, where our victoria was almost smashed to pieces by a near-collision with a rumbling omnibus [...]. And he demanded that I go with him to the Théâtre des Variétés so as to drive out with a few choruses from the operetta *La Femme à Papa* the importune memory of the blackbirds singing in the tall poplars. (CM, 13f.)<sup>86</sup>

The rumbling of omnibuses and the arias of primadonnas to chase away the uncanny sounds of the forest. In the original text, what Jull Costa has translated as "importune memory" is actually a "rumor importuno," an importunate noise. For Jacinto, the chirping of birds and gurgling of creeks are the meaningless noises of the depopulation of the universe. They are an unwelcome reminder of the primordial times when Vico's wild giants roamed the great forest of the earth, word-less, tool-less, truth-less. Only the glissandos of an aria, the buzzing of the telegraph, and the screeching of omnibuses testify to Man's awakening to *Wahrheitsentbergung*. And Jacinto is "a seeker after truth."<sup>87</sup>

Yet he does not co-exist with the objects he is surrounded by – he is the Beast enchanted by civilization, the factory owner served by his machines as if by a loving, albeit mischievous, army of Oompa-Loompas. Throughout the first half of the novel, despite his efforts and idealism, Jacinto does not manage to find satisfaction in his way of life, for, in Goethe's words, "[w]er

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<sup>86</sup> Portuguese, p.16: "Depois de uma hora, naquele honesto bosque de Montmorency, o meu pobre amigo abafava, apavorado, experimentando já esse lento minguar e sumir de alma que o tornava como um bicho entre bichos. Só desanuviou quando penetrámos no lajedo do gás de Paris – e a nossa vitória quase se despedaçou contra um ónibus retumbante [...]. E reclamou que eu o acompanhasse ao teatro das Variedades para sacudir, com os estribilhos de *Femme à Papa*, o rumor importuno que lhe ficara dos melros cantando nos choupos altos."

<sup>87</sup> Jull Costa's Afterword to *The City and the Mountains*, p.280.

fertig ist, dem ist nichts recht zu machen,/ Ein Werdender wird immer dankbar sein." (*Faust I*)<sup>88</sup>

The more he surrounds himself by books and by the latest inventions of his century, the more Jacinto's body degenerates and his mind becomes numb. Nothing pleases him, nothing excites his imagination. When, after a seven-year stay in Portugal, Zé Fernandes returns to Paris in 1887, he finds a limping, thin, bored-to-death Jacinto who is even no longer capable of articulate speech:

I noticed then that my friend had grown thinner, and that his nose, flanked by two deep lines, like those on the face of a weary actor, had grown more pointed. The locks of woolly hair tumbling over his brow were now sparser, and his brow itself had lost its look of serene polished marble. He was no longer curling his moustache, which drooped in pensive threads. I realized, too that he had a slight stoop. [...] He glanced around with eyes that no longer sparkled with their old vivacity. (*CM*, 19f.)

Only the objects have thickened the landscape (and obstructed the clearing?) of No. 202 Champs-Élysées. Right at the entrance to the palace, Zé Fernandes is confronted first with a Corinthian vase, then with two stone statues, glass lamps, and then, triumphantly, with a lift in a two-story house. The latter "offered numerous comforts during the seven-second journey: a divan, a bearskin rug, a street map of Paris, and a cabinet containing cigars and books" (*CM*, 18). Once in the house, Zé Fernandes finds a thermometer with its own servant for regulation (a man-machine air conditioning device), and then more than thirty thousand books in "a most disturbing room [where] the damask wall-coverings, the divans, the woodwork, were all green, a dark laurel green." (19) Jacinto's servants have in the meantime become the machines' servants, and it appears that a peculiar relative of the primeval forest has established itself inside Jacinto's super-civilized home. "The somber carpets", Zé Fernandes continues, "were so thick that the sound of our footsteps vanished [...]. And everywhere, among all these greens, on pedestals and pillars, glinted the most extravagant array of machinery – gadgets, blades, wheels, tubes, gears, spindles,

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<sup>88</sup> "What's finished you can never alter after: Minds still in growth will be grateful, though." This is more of an interpretation than a translation. "One cannot do right by those who are complete. Only those in becoming will be grateful always."

all made of cold, rigid metal." (Ibid.) As the machines take over more and more functions, the human body and mind deteriorate and fall into idleness. Nothing is new here. What is interesting, though, is the fact that, with the taking over of human bodily and spiritual functions, machines gain a foothold in the quest for truth, in the revelation of world, in the mandate of *Dasein*. In other words, they gain agency. And they gain it by superimposing their noise onto Man's voice.

Jacinto, we said, is at this point becoming inarticulate. This part of the novel that takes place in Paris is saturated with his "murmurs." "To murmur"<sup>89</sup> is the one verb almost exclusively employed by the narrator to qualify Jacinto's (and his own) speech.<sup>90</sup> But his machines are more eloquent and talkative than ever: A "strange legion of miniature machines in nickel, steel, copper and iron, all equipped with teeth, blades, rings, hooks and pincers – all highly expressive, but whose uses remained a mystery", Zé Fernandes brings it home (20). The semantic field is that of war, of a legion armed to the teeth and ready to attack (whom?). A telephone bell alarms the *ennui* Jacinto and "rustic" Zé Fernandes, followed by the "frantic tick-tick-tick" of the telegraph that is described as "a lively, diligent machine," in opposition to its ever more passive owner, "busy dribbling onto the carpet a long tapeworm of paper with letters on it" (20). The word, now, is in the hands of the tool that slowly but steadily establishes its sonic regime. "Thick speaking tubes" (*gordos tubos acústicos*) hang from either side of Jacinto's chair, apparatuses "[prop] up the gaping mouth of a tube, wide open to the voices of the invisible." Zé Fernandes escapes, "breathless, into the Library." (22) But even there he cannot find peace:

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<sup>89</sup> *OED*, "to murmur":

1. **a. intr.** To complain in low muttered tones; to give voice to an inarticulate discontent; to grumble.

2. **intr.** To talk in a hushed or indistinct voice; to make a low continuous sound.

3. **trans. a.** To utter (sounds, words) in a subdued or indistinct voice.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123933?rskey=Wd2EvA&result=1#eid>, last accessed May 22, 2017.

<sup>90</sup> Used about fifteen times, and very perspicuously so in the absence of other, stronger, verbs to qualify utterances, just during the first half of the novel that does not entail much dialogue. "Murmurar" in Portuguese.

I could hear beside me an odd buzzing sound, like the noise of some insect borne on harmonious wings. [...] Then I noticed that this distant, drowsy whisper was coming from that apparently innocent mahogany box. [...] Out of curiosity, I held the funnel to my trusting ear, which was still attuned to simple, country sounds, and suddenly, a very gentle yet very confident voice – taking advantage of my curiosity in order to invade and take over my mind – whispered slowly [...]. I shrieked and leaped to my feet: " Jacinto, there's a man in here! A man inside the box, talking!" (CM, 23f.)

Buzzing sounds, trusting country ears, and a man in a machine. In other words, the "Conferencephone," which is similar to the "Theaterphone," but, instead of arias, it transmits university lectures, on par with Open Yale Courses. Yet Zé Fernandes, fresh off the Lusitanian boat, is not ready for so much Civilization: "But Jacinto, what *is* the point of all these machines? One of the wretches even pricked me. They seem almost malevolent. Are they of any real use?" he urges Jacinto to respond. The latter makes a "vague, languid gesture indicating their sublime utility," and says first, as if challenging John Stuart Mill: "They're essential, my boy, absolutely essential, because they do so simplify one's work." (26) Only to admit seconds later that Zé Fernandes is right, and that they are "a terrible bore. All those springs and pointed ends do inflict the occasional wound." (Ibid.)

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Appendix: Frontispiece of Vicos's *Scienza Nuova* (1744)

