In the late 1880s, a Boston company was preparing the mass shipment to British consumers of Thomas Edison's recently patented female phonographic doll, Euphonia, designed to voice pre-recorded songs and poems. Her wide-open mouth displayed "artificial gums, teeth and [...] organs of speech" (Wood 2002, 116), mimicking the physiological source of the human voice. Recent cultural analysis has associated the mechanical vocalization of these early robotic females with the uncanny effect of "sound embalmed" (Wood 2002, 117), an association which extends the metaphorical and conceptual link between technological reproduction, mass communication, and death that was already fully established by late-19th-century commentators who referred to phonographic recordings as "A Voice from the Dead" (Picker 2007, 44). Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* surveys a range of such responses to the phonograph, both fascinated and repelled by the machine's potentially "endless repetition of a disembodied voice" (Picker 2003, 127), among them Horatio Nelson Powers' poem "The Phonograph's Salutation" (1888), commissioned by Edison's agent in Europe, which addressed the mechanically reproduced voices as "souls embalmed" (Picker 2003, 117). Fictional writings, negotiating the new age of "media ubiquity" (Colligan and Linley 2011, 1), abounded with similar vocal monstrosities, from Jules Verne's *Carpathian Castle* (1889), which fetishizes a dead female singer's recorded voice, via Dr Seward's ghostly recordings in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), to Arthur Conan Doyle's "Story of the Japanned Box" (1899), where the narrator comes under the spell of a mysterious "gasping" voice (6), "whispered" into a phonograph with the "last breath" of a dying woman (11). Even more gruesome is the "voice clogged with clay and worms" issuing from a phonograph propped up behind the decaying corpse of a female poisoner in M.P. Shiel's 1901 dystopia *The Purple Cloud* ([1901] 2012, 129). The dissociation of sound from its origin, which in all these narratives suggests invisible presences and sets in motion an oscillation between the mechanical and the supernatural, is addressed as 'schizophonia' in Schafer's work on soundscapes (1994, 90-91), and more recently, van Elferen has developed the concept of 'sonic monstrosity' to describe the "cognitive dissonance" created by unlocatable sound (2016, 308). However, Roland Barthes's well-known analysis of the "grain" of the voice has alerted us to the fact that where the sound of the 'voice' is concerned, dissociation is an inherent feature: immaterial and ephemeral, the voice is both a product of the body and transcending the body, linking life and death: "This phantom being of the voice is what is dying out [...] it is of those objects which exist only once they have disappeared" ([1977] 2002, 114). Van Elferen's main instances of 'sonic monstrosity' are 20th- and 21st-century horror movies and video games, where the sonically monstrous produces the *frisson* of "dorsality" (a term she adopts from Wills 2008, 12): the fearful urge to turn around and
look at the dark threat behind our back, "which forces us to reconfigure our cognition of ourselves in relation to the world around us" (van Elferen 2016, 315). Indeed, because it is disembodied, sonic monstrosity reinforces monstrosity's inherent "ontological liminality" (Cohen 1996, 6) and its questioning of preconceived cultural assumptions.

Historicizing such recent theoretical interventions, this article re-examines representations of 'dislocal' sound and sonic monstrosity in 19th-century fiction and science writing. Glancing at mid-century Gothic beginnings, my main emphasis is on fin-de-siècle negotiations of mechanically reproduced, or mesmerically induced, sound. In its attention to the sonic and more specifically to vocal sound the article also promotes ongoing endeavours of readjusting the "critical focus on the visual [which] has become entrenched in 19th-century studies, […] obscuring historical research on other forms of media and mediation" (Colligan and Linley 2011, 9). Attending to the frequent (metaphorical and conceptual) trafficking between 19th-century technological advancement and developments in science, medicine and psychology, I examine vocal monstrosities across a plethora of texts spanning the period from the middle of the century to around 1900: Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" (1838) and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" (1859) and Daniel Deronda (1876), Edward Byron Nicholson's "The Man with Two Souls" (1882), Henry James's The Bostonians (1885-1886), T.B. Russell's "In My Lady's Service" (1893), Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Parasite" (1894), George Du Maurier's Trilby (1894), E.E. Kellett's "The New Frankenstein" (1900), M.P. Shiel's The Purple Cloud (1901), Elizabeth Robins' The Convert (1907), Evelyn Sharp's Rebel Women (1910), and Constance Elizabeth Maud's No Surrender (1912). As apparent from this list, sonic monstrosity was by no means exclusive to the genres of Gothic and horror but was also woven into sensational and science fiction stories, nudging them into the area of the Todorovian fantastic (1975), finally to be reinvented, as this article goes on to show, in turn-of-the-century New Woman fiction where the 'dissociated' voice becomes a powerful political instrument.

My first three sections touch upon scientific and literary representations in three distinct but connected areas: firstly, new conceptions of the embodied (Bourne Taylor and Shuttleworth 1998) and androgynous mind; secondly, physiological habit formation and automatization; and thirdly, states of altered consciousness like hysteria and hypnotic trance. In all these cases, pre-Freudian physiological psychology or mind science complicated notions of human identity and agency, and the texts combine scientific models of automatic behaviour with the (almost predictable) technological tropes about telegraphs and phonographs that spread quickly across 19th-century discourses. Most of the texts are built around plots of mesmerism, converting human beings into speaking automata – or indeed, as Galvan observes about Du Maurier's Trilby, into human phonographs (2010, 101-102). Mesmerism had been discredited by the late 19th century but continued to function as a powerful metaphor in many cultural areas. Fascination with delocalized voices was linked to a sense of the pressures of modernity, anonymous (mass) communication and information overload (Shuttleworth et al., 2019); the mechanical reproduction of the voice also reconceptualized the boundaries of space and time and assumptions about sensory function. Yet in fact it merely added a further dimension to the dissociation between print and voice (and the
artificial feedback loop between them) that was an intrinsic feature of late-19th-century mass print culture (Zwierlein 2015a).

Most importantly, representations of sonic monstrosity were emphatically gendered, and as I argue, they offered a space of heterodoxy which could become empowering for the represented female subject. On the one hand, ‘monstrous’ voices raise questions about human autonomy (and, at one remove, authorship), and the dissociation of voice from volition, during this "period […] of hyperbolic gender difference" (Michie 1999, 409), chimes in with assumptions of disempowered femininity: Galvan surveys medical treatises proposing that "women's […] relative lack of personal agency helped them to […] succumb to the suggestions of the usually male hypnotist" (Galvan 2010, 100). On the other hand, as Schlauraff affirms, the entranced subject could gain (potential) "access to otherwise inaccessible knowledge […]. shifting to a mode of internal perception" (2016, 66). The mesmerised female subject could thus turn into a woman visionary, tapping into new sources of power, removed from the norms of late-Victorian social life. In attending to female speaking automata, this article traces both victimization and empowerment. While 19th-century female public speech acts were always-already monstrous, because always-already voiced from a source lacking in autonomy, I explore how scenes of female automatized speaking and hysterical vocalization also had the potential of fusing visionary mesmeric power with female acts of transgression – because representations of vocal sound always resonate with a collective body, social settings as well as the readership.

As I show in my fourth and last section, sonic monstrosity is emphatically a co-creation between performer, subject, and audience/readership who function as "sounding board" (Stewart 1990, 3), and even Trilby, the mechanized singing machine, is not entirely "excluded from the network of bodies created by her performance" (a reading suggested by Schlauraff 2016, 80), because the source of her public voice is not only her mesmeriser's manipulative force. It is also, at least once, a sudden (metaphorical) connection with an otherworldly "race more puissant and nobler than ours" (Du Maurier 2009, 250), which bestows on her a different – oratorical – kind of influence. Of course, in Du Maurier and James, the speaking female automaton is linked to both fascinated and sceptical representations of 'monstrous' mass mediation – underlining the lost 'authenticity' of a popular culture that, as Huyssen has shown, was "obsessively gender[ed] […] as feminine" in political, psychological and aesthetic discourse, "while high culture […] clearly remain[ed] the privileged realm of male activities" (1986, 47). Yet, I finish on a more uplifting note by delineating how the popular platform also generated new forms of female visibility and vocality, ambivalently depicted in Du Maurier and James, and developed more fully in New Woman and suffragette writing – which redeployed creatively both the sonic monstrosity of the female speaking automaton and the function of the audience and readership as sounding board, reintegrating both into a new vision of collective (female) agency and political resonance.
1. Female Undead Speech and the Embodied/Androgynous Mind from Poe to the 1890s

As a Gothic device and "different form of double" (Botting 2015, 83), the voice accentuated the vanishing boundary lines in 19th-century physiological psychology between 'mind' and 'body' as notions of the embodied mind began to take hold – Lord Henry asserts as much in *Dorian Gray*: "Who could say where the fleshly impulse ceased, or the psychical impulse began?" (Wilde 1994, 47). Ancestral experiences resurfacing in atavistic traits and moments of bodily insight preempting rational understanding were ubiquitous features of mid- to late-Victorian scientific and literary writings (Flint 2005; Bourne Taylor and Shuttleworth 1998, part 2), and the proliferating fictional pieces about mesmerism, hypnotism, and telepathy drew on this new perception of the body as medium and "data bank, housing information in excess of consciousness yet potentially accessible to others" (Colligan and Linley 2011, 5).

William Carpenter's concept of unconscious cerebration proposed that in states of suspended consciousness, humans could become "mere thinking automata – their whole course of thought and of action determined by suggestion conveyed from without" (1855, 30) but that such states could also produce instinctive discernment unattainable via rational thought alone. While William James, in "Are We Automata?" (1879), saw the mind as more than a "passive faculty of sensation" (13), both medical and literary writings energetically exploited the hyperbolic scenarios of mesmerism and hypnotism. The famous unearthly voice of Poe's M. Valdemar in the 1845 tale is an example of this author's particular brand of horror fiction. Configuring the dead, vibrating tongue as a broken automaton (Botting 2015, 77) and a Gothic translation of telegraphic communication (Frank 2005), the story can be read as the primal scene of sonic monstrosity reverberating through countless subsequent Gothic renderings. Poe's earlier story "Ligeia" (1838), where the ghostly sounds of desire, dead Ligeia's "sob[s]" and "sigh[s]," are voiced from the dead body of Rowena (1980, 49-50), is the precursor of many later uncannily autonomous female revenants. Implicitly it is Ligeia's will-power (and, judging from Poe's preoccupation with mesmerism during these decades, her act of self-mesmerisation), which enables her to transcend death: larger than life and "majestic" (39), she resolves to vanquish the human weakness before death which, as the text asserts via a made-up quotation, had already been deplored by 17th-century natural philosopher Joseph Glanvill: "Man doth not yield himself […] unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will" (38; 44).

The unearthly voice in Gothic, according to Dolar, functions as a "missing link" (2006, 10), similarly to the monster figures that register the fault lines of modern subject formation, including gender norms. The conceptual function of 'monstrosity' has been described as questioning "the validity of binary pairs such as visible/concealed, moral/physical and internal/external" (Six and Thompson 2012, 238); in the same way, 19th-century mind science and literary interventions revolved around a new tension between embodiment and disembodiment, and conscious and unconscious processes of thought, thus both expanding and collapsing the conceptual reach of the 'monstrous.' At this intersection of scientific and literary thinking, Eliot positions her novella about an unearthly female voice, "The Lifted Veil" (1859), which revisits Poe's Gothic tales.
within the framework of a (gendered) "jeu de melancolie" (Eliot 1955, 3:41), told from the perspective of the hyper-sensitive Latimer. The brief resuscitation of his wife's dead maid, Mrs Archer, via blood transfusion and "artificial respiration" (Eliot 2001, 41), allows the revenante to give vent to her final curses (disclosing her hated mistress's intended crime), in a "gasping eager voice" (41) seen by the narrator as a mechanical reflex action, stored up in the muscles at the moment of death: "Great God! Is this what it is to live again … to wake up […] with our unuttered curses rising to our lips, with our muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins?" (42). In this text, as Shuttleworth comments, "life and death shade into one another; […] and inner psychic life is externalized" (2001, xx). Eliot here renegotiates scientific inquiries into nerves as transmitters between 'body' and 'spirit,' complicating the distinction between "sense by impressions, derived from inward conditions, [and] those which are directly dependent on external stimulus" (Eliot, 1955, 5:280). Importantly, however, this dramatic scene of female sonic monstrosity can be seen as the "culmination of the general misogyny of the text" (Shuttleworth 2001, xxx), linked to Eliot's own "struggles with the gender politics of her own bid for authorship" (xxxi): the 'immortal' voice of the (female) writer is fused with the artificially induced voice of hatred. But the misogyny might also be an effect of the unreliable narrator's own twisted perspective. After all, the monstrous female speaker now wields an uncanny power which leaves the male doctor, experimenting on a seemingly 'less autonomous' (female and socially inferior) subject, in a state of "paralys[is]" (Eliot 2001, 42). He had, in fact, been anxious about such a possible loss of control: "There are always insuperable difficulties with women in these matters" (39).

Late-19th-century narratives published in popular periodicals return to plots of mesmerism and sonic monstrosity with some routine; frequently, the power games of the mesmeric act destabilize gender norms, producing startlingly authoritative female voices. A pertinent example is Russell's short story "In My Lady's Service" (1893), published in the popular penny weekly Bow Bells, where an ancient philosopher's voice resounds through the body of an auto-hypnotized trance lecturer (father to a mysterious daughter, the narrator's love interest). The trance lecturer poses as an (implicitly feminized) 'vessel' for the deceased speaker, explaining in conversation that "the controlling spirit uses my body, my lungs, my vocal cords, the organs of articulation, […] to express his thoughts" (1893, 16); he also uses the (unconscious) lecturer's living "brain, now his own is decayed" (16). The monstrous dead voice issuing from an alien brain and vocal apparatus here models a Cartesian fantasy of 'mind' using 'body,' although physiological psychologists of the time – most prominently G.H. Lewes – conceived of mind as a "constant process of interaction between the whole organism and a physical and social medium" (Shuttleworth 2016, 5). The story goes on to send the narrator himself on a hypnosis-induced voyage through time. Recognizing in a revenante woman's face which he encounters throughout all historical epochs the trance-lecturer's daughter and his own female soulmate, he obviously ends up marrying her after his 'return' but also metaphorically becomes his wife's 'vessel' as the entire narrative now turns out, in a last twist, to have been penned by him at her instigation, taking her dictation: "In My Lady's Service." Combining trite chivalric language and a more unusual scenario of automatic (will-deprived) speaking and writing, the story
offers an attempt at revisiting hyperbolic gender difference, reaching out, via the trope of sonic monstrosity, towards a scene of ‘monstrous’ speech as male and female joint creativity (see Zwierlein 2010 on gendered theories of creativity in cultural history).

Even more ingeniously, Nicholson’s short story "The Man with Two Souls" (1882), published in Belgravia, offers a twist to the usual sensational stories about double consciousness with a complex androgynous scenario of two minds (and two voices), male and female, coexisting in the same body: a young woman, Violet, succumbs to her heart disease during one of the mesmeric trances induced by her fiancé. As an updated version of Poe's strong-willed Ligeia, Violet had been carefully planning her next move (the mesmerised subject instrumentalizing the mesmeriser): her mind, from that time onwards, starts to co-habit in the fiancé's body, moulding it into an androgynous entity whose possible impropriety is ventilated by the narrator with both alarm and fascination. Like the ancient philosopher who uses the trance lecturer's vocal apparatus and brain, Violet now employs her fiancé's "machinery [...] for mental operations" (1882, 73), thereby causing it to do "double duty" – like "telegraphists [...] send[ing] two messages along a wire at once" (75) – and wearing it out at an immense pace. Sonic monstrosity is central to the plot as the male protagonist now has a second, female voice, "speaking [to people] with my lips" (77). While the story seemingly operates with traditional ideas of a mind-body (and male-female) dualism, the trope of mesmerism, as Scott Brewster maintains, is "an unstable site of power [...] to 'possess' another's thought is perilously close to inducing or confirming one's own delusion or derangement" (2012, 492). The conceit of androgyny destabilizes gender difference, and the woman here becomes the controlling spirit of the new entity. In the inconclusive conclusion, the narrator (the fiancé's friend) attempts to preserve some orthodoxy by refusing to decide on the truth-value of the story, creating a moment of 'hesitation,' analysed by Tzvetan Todorov as characteristic of fantastic narratives, where distinctions between the supernatural and the psychological become impossible.

2. Female Automatized Speaking and Social Habit Formation in Kellett, Conan Doyle, and Shiel

Speaking automata in literary writings also functioned as allegories of scientific and sociological visions of humans as 'creatures of habit': research into physiological processes of habit formation (via association, repetition, and conditioning of reflexes) seemed to point up how, "paradoxically responsible for both human individuality and mechanicaity, habits make people unique while simultaneously threatening to transform them into things" (Vrettos 1999, 413). Again, it is women, considered as less autonomous, who take centre-stage in descriptions of humans-doubling-as-automata; and again, it is women who through their automatic performances undermine and destabilize received social normativities. A humorous article in Bow Bells (1889) about "Edison's talking dolls" describes the almost vampiric invasion of this new commodity into London society (anticipating Dracula's fantasies in Stoker's novel): "we may soon expect to see London swarming with them, and a new terror thus added to metropolitan life." Connecting human habitual and conventional behaviour with the recorded "poetry, songs, and whistlings" of these toys, the anonymous author claims they would
merely be adding to the "mechanical chattering" already going on in social circles (Anon., "Society" 1889, 223). Yet such conventions of seemingly automatic female behaviour in (middle-class) social settings were subjected to scrutiny, and in fact defamiliarized, in numerous contemporaneous texts: sonic monstrosity, which alienates the female voice from its source, also calls into question received orthodoxies such as the mechanical championing of feminine virtues and women's purported civilizing influence. A prominent example is Conan Doyle's aforementioned "Story of the Japanned Box" (1899) where the ghostly female voice turns out to be a deceased wife's recording of a temperance lecture on a phonograph, produced on her deathbed in order to keep her husband from drink. As represented by the intradiegetic narrator, this virtuous campaign upholding bourgeois values from beyond the grave is deflected into monstrosity: the endless repetition of phonographic sound underlines the mechanical nature of accepted social behaviour – continuing mindlessly in its grooves – and turns the female voice of virtue into the voice of a demon.

Lehmann's work on stage hypnotism, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance* (2009), shows how female mediums' allegedly unconscious channelling of deceased celebrities (or family members of their audience) also prompted questions about simulation and role-play. Morus likewise points to the complex "distribution of performative authority" in the mesmeric "scientific theatre" (2017, 208). Medical accounts of hysteria emphasized how after a primary hysterical disturbance, further attacks could develop, sometimes even deliberately induced by the patient's recalling of the original emotions (Scull 2009, 68-69). Forms of automatized and/or self-induced behaviour thus overlapped with the conventional role-play demanded of women in Victorian (middle-class) society, as Dolar argues: "the mechanical doll only highlights the mechanical character of 'intersubjective' relations" (Dolar 1991, 9). Botting, likewise, detects here an instance of the more general phenomenon of socially induced deformations, "[c]ustoms, language, norms and rituals produc[ing] unthinking beings as effects of their repetitions and habits" (Botting 2015, 80). The automatic female voice (hypnotized or hysterical) thus channels inquiries into political and cultural authority, probing assumptions about agency, selfhood, and the gender system. As Easley asks: "Were women simply wind-up toys designed to follow patriarchal commands? Or were they masters of self-control, whose domestic roles were mere performances?" (2011, 52).

The scandal of female speech reverberates through Kellett's story "The New Frankenstein" (1900; republished as "The Lady Automaton" in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1901), which presents a life-sized female talking doll equipped with an internal phonograph, also rendered capable, by "various [technical] processes" (1900, 81), of engaging in conversation: "a creature that will guide herself, answer questions, [...] in fact, perform the part of a society lady as well as any duchess" (84). This automaton-woman, a mechanized *femme fatale*, is getting the most out of her uncanny powers of attraction – before she is destroyed on the steps of the altar, in the nick of time, about to enter into matrimony with an infatuated (human) suitor. The inventor's rather conventional friend distils the experience into a moral sermon about (middle-class) women as "puppet[s] dressed up to go through a number of motions on the stage of London life" (86); yet the story probes more deeply, tackling the problem of female
agency under a constrictive gender regime: is the speaking female always already an automaton, or a manipulative performer? Through its ambivalent conclusion, which reveals the narrator to be the inmate of a mental institution, the story also positions itself as fantastic literature in a Todorovian vein while simultaneously, as Picker argues, "expos[ing] Victorian gender conventions as psychologically damaging" (2015, 96).

One of the most damaging gender conventions, the moral and sexual double standard, is addressed in Conan Doyle's short story "The Parasite" (1894), where a monstrous voice resounds from scientist Professor Gilroy's body: because of his invasion by a female mesmeriser, his incoherent lecture performances and pledges of love towards the hypnotist are – as he claims – ventriloquized: "it was your voice which spoke, and not mine" (1930, 39). Indicting the mesmeriser as a "monstrous parasite" who "project[s] herself into my body" (27), turning him into an automaton – a "frame" without "soul" (27) –, Gilroy's narrative (composed of diary entries) is, in fact, a scapegoat construction by the male medium: "those odious impulses for which I have blamed myself do not really come from me at all. They are all transferred from her […]. I feel cleaner and lighter for the thought" (26).

Higham addresses the subtext of "neurotic sexual obsession" in the story (1976, 124), and Cranny-Francis reads Gilroy's projection of his own guilt "onto the woman involved in the act" (1988, 102) as a parallel to the 1860s' debate about the Contagious Diseases Acts which, by implicitly subjecting all women to allegations of impurity, codified the moral and sexual double standard. According to Hillis Miller, 'parasites' evoke simultaneously "proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority" (1979, 219), and in Conan Doyle's story, the "monstrous parasite" is revealed as a psychological displacement mechanism, which brings to the fore what is already there. The monstrous voice of desire resounding through the text is co-created between mesmerised and mesmeriser (and reader). Similar gender-ideological faultlines are traceable in the deep misogyny of Shiel's The Purple Cloud and especially the aforementioned "horrid" scene of a murderous femme fatale who at first seems attractive to the male intradiegetic narrator, with her "clinging dress of red cloth […] and […] reddish hair float[ing] loose" (2012, 129), but then turns out to be a putrefying corpse uttering the "ghastly speech of the grave" by means of a hidden phonograph (129). Like the female parasite in Conan Doyle, this female poisoner, voicing the "thick-tongued" sound of death (129), is both supremely disempowered and supremely threatening. Late-19th-century fictional explorations of the mechanized voice thus routinely engage with the gendered dimensions of 'dislocal' sound, and increasingly examine new forms of mass mediation where sonic monstrosity is forged between performers, subjects, and audiences, sometimes reinforcing but also potentially destabilizing social hypocrisies and the mechanisms of gender conventions.

3. Female Hypnotized Vocalization and Mass Mediation in James and Du Maurier

In congruence with the perception of mass culture as female, audiences were constructed as feminized, automatized collectives; theories of neuromimesis and crowd hysteria (Vrettos 1995) assumed a reciprocal dynamic between performer and audience where voice, as Straumann argues, "can be treated as an effect of resonance" (2008,
Conceiving of resonance as automatic reflex rather than intellectual response, sceptical commentators saw mass print and mass performances as contributing to new versions of sonic monstrosity – and here too, active and passive states could easily shade into each other: Cray shows how historical psychologies of attention highlighted difficulties of distinguishing between focused attention and deep trance (2001, 1-2).

Debates about an Arnoldian divide between 'high' and 'low' (or popular) culture and legitimate versus illegitimate modes of cultural representation (and reception) run through James's novel *The Bostonians* (1885-86), which revolves around a young women's rights lecturer, Verena Tarrant, whose gift of oratory is apparently induced by her father's mesmeric powers. Focusing on the female performer, the novel simultaneously scrutinizes her audiences. The first description of Verena's rhetorical routine interlinks her mesmeric trance with a slow awakening into eloquence (still under the spell – or possibly not): "She began incoherently, almost inaudibly, as if she were talking in a dream" ([1885-86] 2009, 55). The passage is shot through with the male focalizer (and secret admirer) Basil Ransom's suspicion that Verena plays a part, as a role-playing automaton typical of the scientific and domestic 'theatres' of the time; yet her performance is mesmerically diffusive as it soon has "the whole audience […] under the charm" (56).

And again, the novel allows for the possibility that some deeper, visionary powers are put at the disposal of the mesmerised subject, "talking in a dream." While the text has often been read as discarding Verena's oratory and feminism as too "hollow" (James 2009, 57) and tracing her re-education into matrimony, it does probe relentlessly the legitimacy of all viewpoints, and also suggests that Verena's visionary insight might be genuine. 'Women's rights' and female hysteria are associated closely – most prominently in the character of neurotic Olive Chancellor, who declares that she "can't speak" (32) but has "the voice of [women's] silent suffering […] always in her ears" (33), and Verena's own speech remains possibly automatic, non-volitional, as with Kellett's phonograph woman. But her performance, mediated by the omniscient narrator and various intradiegetic observers, also presents a more empowering, socially transgressive version of sonic monstrosity. On the one hand, her performances leave her "exposed to the gaze of hundreds" on public platforms (327), and Ransom sees her as a "passive maiden" (55) subject to her father's "grotesque manipulations" (55); but on the other, he attributes intentionality to her when musing about the "inflated little figure […] whom you [Verena] have invented and set on its feet, pulling strings, behind it, to make it move and speak, while you try to conceal and efface yourself there" (325). Offering both the possibility of genuine visionary insight and of routine performance, the novel uses the term "monstrosities" to convey ironically the male and female protagonists' indigation about each other's world view (see, e.g., 316; 327), thus implicitly acknowledging that the actual 'monster' in the text is the pressure of late-19th-century (middle-class) social and gender conventions. Fascinated with, and repelled by sensation-hungry modernity, the narrator (and at several removes, the author) addresses as 'monstrous' the new environment of mass culture, symbolized by the leering crowds which rally around platforms and ogle Verena's mass-produced photographs in metropolitan shop windows.
The Bostonians can be counted among the most important intertexts of Du Maurier's (a close friend of James's) 1894 novel Trilby, which revolves around an uncanny female "apotheosis of voice" (2009, 213). Mesmerised by Svengali, a sinister Jew figure of late-19th-century anti-Semitic fantasies, Trilby becomes an exceptional singer—a monstrous compact of mesmeriser and mesmerised: "the one who has got the voice, and the one who knows what to do with it" (299). When Svengali dies in the middle of a performance, he leaves her "physically a wreck" (261) with only a short time to live. Trilby's vocal apparatus is celebrated as a marvellous "sounding board" by Svengali (51); the physiological basis of the voice is here eroticised (and severed from selfhood), similarly to Barthes's description of "the tongue, the glottis, the teeth, the sinuses, the nose" as the locus of vocal "jouissance" (1985, 283; original emphasis). As Svengali's assistant explains after Trilby's death, the performances were those of an automatic woman, the "other Trilby" (298): "just a singing-machine—an organ to play upon—[...] a voice, and nothing more [...] When Svengali's Trilby [...] was singing [...] our Trilby was dead" (299; original emphasis). The climax of the novel presents dead Svengali, a revenant in the shape of a photograph, making Trilby give her last singing performance on her deathbed. The "ventriloqual explanation" for this sensational scene is that "Svengali is still 'singing with her voice' (299) from beyond the grave" (Wyse 2015, 126)–as the "demon" (Du Maurier 2009, 92) or "incubus" (93) of Trilby's earlier fears. The scene could also be viewed as "a mesmeric state autonomically induced in a [...] conditioned response to the gaze in Svengali's portrait" (Wyse 2015, 126). A parallel case is recounted in an 1895 Bow Bells article about a female hypnotised patient who, when thrown back into the "state of somnambulism, [...] was able to repeat [a] whole lecture word by word [...] reproducing like a phonograph the very tones of [the lecturer's] voice," while unable to do so "when once awakened" (Anon., "Hypnotism" 1895, 56). Yet Du Maurier seems to settle not for the automatic woman but for the incubus: the Gothically monstrous. Narrative indeterminacy is created around Trilby's final words, "Svengali... Svengali... Svengali..." (Du Maurier 2009, 284; original emphasis), as her doctor implies that she had died a few minutes earlier (284); thus her (or rather, Svengali's) words would have been spoken, like those of Poe's M. Valdemar or Ligeia, from a region beyond death—realism shading into the fantastic.

Similarly to the scenario in The Bostonians, however, the central culprit of the story is not Svengali but collective social pressure: as Showalter reminds us, "Trilby is the victim of puritanism, the double sexual standard, normative views of gender and class, and established religion" (2009, xvii). Her consciousness voided, she provides "marketable reproductions" of only seemingly unique experiences (Galvan 2010, 103): while "to all appearances, [she] basks in the ardor of her spectators, returning the warmth of their gaze 'with her kind wide smile' [...] in truth [...] [the] automaton cannot reciprocate another's regard," as Galvan maintains with reference to Walter Benjamin's concept of the lost aura of mechanically reproduced art and the sightless gaze of the cinema actor (2010, 103). Yet, the audiences of Trilby's packed shows, while being manipulated into accepting the mass-produced as authentic, are represented as exploitative in their own turn. Similarly to Verena's photographic image in The Bostonians, Trilby's image is commodified as "presentments" for the "crowd[s] of people [...] assembled in front of the windows of the Stereoscopic Company in Regent
Street" (Du Maurier 2009, 243). And while Trilby's gaze is sightless, the audience's own gaze repeatedly hardens into a monstrous, "gorgon-like" stare (164). Rather than forming a "unique community" through their shared experience (Schlauraff 2016, 63), they become automatized consumers: their "frantic applause" (214) and "ecstatic delight" (215) are generated irrespective of whether Trilby performs 'high art' (for instance Chopin) or popular songs. Concepts of neuromimesis saw the crowd as "an instrument of communication," and as with the 'resonance' that Verena produces, Trilby communicates "not just music […] but the mesmeric state itself" (Galvan 2010, 105 and 106) – the paradoxical combination of potentially deepened sensing with the loss of autonomy. Ironically, it was a penny fiction periodical, the already-mentioned Bow Bells, that in 1893 anticipated this plot in a nutshell (Anon., "Musical Echoes" 1893, 144) when it discussed designs by "American speculators to produce an automatic "Patti" (one of the historical Italian sopranos also mentioned in Trilby): "another" Patti, but "not a living one," anticipating Du Maurier's "other Trilby" (Du Maurier 2009, 298) (and Kellett's phonographic female). A "life-sized wax doll" housing a "powerful phonograph" plays the late Patti's recordings, and will "be rendered capable of walking on to a platform, […] making certain graceful gesticulations, retiring, reappearing again, courtesying, and finally withdrawing with a pleased smile" (Anon., "Musical Echoes" 1893, 140). The fraudulent performer evokes and imitates pleasure while being unable to see and feel herself; yet implicitly, the audience is satisfied with the sonic monstrosity of automatized performances. By means of the phonograph, the article concludes, the speculators "can now command the real Patti's voice" (Du Maurier 2009, 140) – in a phrase that, despite the humour, anticipates Svengali's, and Trilby's audience's, sinister 'command.'

4. "Monster Audiences" and New Resonances in New Woman Writing

While the sections on androgynous minds and female (habitual and/or performing) speaking automata acknowledged potential agency, my account of hysterical vocalization in James and Du Maurier so far would seem to merely reinforce ideas of the vulnerability of the female mesmerised subject – and indeed, such a reading can be contextualized with James's well-known ambivalence about indiscriminating, sensation-hungry audiences (Rubery 2009). Reminiscing about an 1890s lecture by Du Maurier, James described half-admiringly, half-sceptically his friend's successful manner of "addressing the many-headed monster […] makin[g] the mass (as we know the mass), to vibrate" ("George Du Maurier" 603, qtd. in Galvan 2010, 111-112; original emphasis) – criticism which perhaps unwittingly reiterated earlier conservative prevarications about sensation novels as "electrifying the nerves of the [female and impressionable] reader" (Mansel 2005, 57). Apprehensive about the new social inclusiveness of the 1867 Reform Act and 1870 Education Act, cultural commentators had found themselves faced with a new "monster audience," according to Wilkie Collins (1858, 221), and James's narrative of Trilby's victimization would seem to chime in with such fears about cultural decline.

Yet there were other ways of conceptualizing the audience as sounding board which did not automatically denigrate popular culture and female participation in cultural
performance. New Woman writing proposed a radical break which saw the female public speaker not as an automaton, not as a hysteric, not as remote-controlled and pliable, but as assertive and transgressive, embodying her own authority and simultaneously that of a collective of women. With its characteristic strategies of redeploying cultural norms and textual and performative practices (Shaw and Randolph 2007, 2), New Woman and suffragette writing presents new, less conflicted versions of automatic (or inspired) female speaking. This once again questions the meaning of 'monstrosity' for a new, potentially more inclusive social context, envisaged by Eliot in Daniel Deronda (1876), where the opera singer Alcharisi, who chose her vocation over her family, states defiantly to her son: "I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel – or say they feel" (1998, 539). The vociferous female speakers of the New Woman tradition (incipiently acknowledged in James and Du Maurier) are linked historically to female mystic and preacher traditions, and the 'conversion' narratives of suffrage fiction and autobiography, with their reiterations of the 'first speech' trope as a moment of awakening, also have roots in the biblical accounts of Pentecost: the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, making them speak in tongues.

Indeed, we can see the emergence of such a shift towards the empowered, visionary woman in Du Maurier's and James's own highly complex texts. While up to here this article's narrative would seem to have retraced an Arnoldian suspicion of popular (mass) culture and Benjamin's pessimism about mechanically reproduced art, I would like to revisit the popular 'resonance' created by the female vocalists and speakers at the centre of James's and Du Maurier's texts, emphasizing that they also create a surplus of meaning and communicative energy which is not contained by the apparent silencing of their voices in death and matrimony. The popular appeal of their voices also attains a new political dimension, redefining sonic monstrosity as a fusion of female unconscious susceptibility and deliberate transgression. When Trilby – after Svengali's death – speaks publicly for the first time, delivering a hurt complaint to the audience, they are startled by "the depth and splendour of her voice […,] the voice of some being from another world – some insulted daughter of a race more puissant and nobler than ours; a voice that seemed as if it could never utter a false note" (Du Maurier 2009, 250). Awaking from hypnosis into a different kind of spiritual fervour, castigating the injustices committed against her sex, Trilby here implicitly gestures back to Verena's public speaking performances in The Bostonians, which are at least partly cast as a form of spiritual response to a (female) collective body: "She proceeded slowly, cautiously, as if she were listening for the prompter, catching, one by one, certain phrases that were whispered to her a great distance off, behind the scenes of the world" (James 2009, 55).

Both of these fictional voices, I argue, participate in a slow literary-historical transformation, from the mid- to the late-19th century, of the Gothically monstrous undead female voice into the politically assertive female voice. Discovering – and hearing – their own voices for the first time, the female protagonists of New Woman and suffragette writing are often both surprised and delighted by its unfamiliar (and alien) sound, as when Millicent Garrett Fawcett reminisces about "the first time I ever heard my voice in public" (Fawcett 1888, 4). Cognitive dissonance is resolved in moments of conversion when, as in Evelyn Sharp's collection Rebel Women (1910), a female speaker unearths her own self-assured voice, creating a new kind of mesmeric
influence over the audience: "a voice that no longer faltered or apologised, a voice that was pitched exactly right and held her listeners strangely" (2016, 45). Towards the end of this trajectory, another technological invention, the megaphone, came to dissociate sound and selfhood – as when the "giant voice of the megaphone" (330) replaces the female speaker's personal identity in Constance Elizabeth Maud’s No Surrender (1912), a suffragette novel which juxtaposes the fight for women's rights with the Brahmin spiritualism of an Indian observer, and simultaneously puts the technological device of the voice-amplifying (and alienating) megaphone centre-stage in order to add to the women fighters' public authority and vocality.

Elizabeth Robins' 1907 novel The Convert, my last example, which was based on her own play Votes for Women of the same year, is an important point of reference where deliberate political redeployments of sonic monstrosity are concerned: the novel turns its upper-class heroine, Vida, into the eponymous 'convert' taking up a platform career and propelling audiences into action by the force of her vocal delivery. Despite her personal tragedy (abortion and separation), she remains steadfast in her resolve, and her speaking voice is central to how the novel depicts her inner turmoil and her spiritual sense of responsibility towards the collective cause: "But as suddenly as she had faltered, she was forging on again, repeating like an echo of a thing heard in a dream […]" (Robins 1980, 267). Vida's symbolic function as revenante, both victim and activist, transforms a Gothic device – the monstrosity of the ghostly or automatized voice – into a vehicle of female empowerment and political agency (Zwierlein 2015b; 2016). Late-19th-century representations of inspired women speaking, like Trilby, with "the voice of some being from another world," thus produce a last twist to the historical trajectory recounted in this article: the psychological and cognitive dissonance of automatized speaking, the absence of a definable source for the represented voice which generates 'schizophrenia' (Schafer) and 'sonic monstrosity' (van Elferen), is here recast by larger-than-life speaking women as gesturing towards an invisible collective of women both living and dead. Corresponding to Jacques Derrida's concept of "hauntology," the ghostliness of these female voices might be seen as paying tribute to the voiceless dead and yet unborn (Derrida 1994; Zwierlein 2016, 55-56). Conflating agency and automatization in the very act of abdicating (individual) agency, these fictional women characters are presented, and present themselves, as channelling larger political accountabilities, thereby recapturing the masculine tradition of the embodied and performed authority of platform speakers (Hewitt 2002, 10).

Like the literary and (auto-)biographical texts on the women's rights' movement which described moments of quasi-religious conversion and fervent discipleship (Strachey 1928), these fictional texts (even James's novel about the women's rights movement, despite its distancing irony) gesture towards an almost sacred sense of duty, mobilizing, once again, the visionary insight always potentially inherent in the trope of mesmerism. Beyond mechanical repetition, the human phonograph is now inspired by a different force, speaking with the "voice of some being from another world" like Trilby, prompted from "behind the scenes of the world" like Verena, and "echo[ing]" a distant "dream" like Vida. Redeploying the appeal of Gothic fiction and popular serialized narratives, New Woman writing, capitalizing on popular culture's potential as a site of social intervention (Hall 2012), thus revisits the gendered history of sonic
monstrosity, replacing the cultural pessimism and fin-de-siècle anxiety inherent in many previous representations of monstrous voices with a new political potency. All the texts examined in this brief survey show how cultural and technological "mystifications of orality" in a mass print culture on the one hand displaced, and on the other enshrined, the "voice[,] both troubling and an object of desire" (Kreilkamp 2005, 29, 32). By redefining, in their highly marketable, popular writings (Heilmann 2000, 9), the problems of (individual) agency, "ontological liminality" and social transgressiveness which are at the centre of sonic monstrosity, New Woman writers sketch a society that is no longer hierarchically ordered along gender lines, and a cultural field that is no longer divided by Arnoldian assumptions about 'high' and 'low' culture, about 'proper' audiences and "monster audiences." They offer female voices that are both individual and collective, both source and vehicle. Mesmerised and mesmerising, inspired and inspiring, these women speakers create their own resonance, employing sonic monstrosity for a new, powerful kind of audience interpellation.

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Works Cited


