

ARIADNE'S ECHO | An exploration of musical hauntings

The voice of Ariadne lamenting on the shore of Naxos has been an obsessive presence in poetry and music since Catullus and Ovid attempted to record it in their works. Abandoned by Theseus after helping him defeat the Minotaur and exit the labyrinth, Ariadne complains about her fate, moving abruptly from anger and regret to hope and forgiveness. Through poetical and musical reenactments, Ariadne's voice has been resonating across time and space. Key to the diffraction of her lament has been – and still is – the echo produced by the many voices that, over the centuries, have kept it alive. Apparently lost once they are uttered, these voices perpetuate their presence by being echoed through other voices, which join a never-ending chain of performative memory until today.

It all began, so to speak, when the opera Arianna, set by composer Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) to a libretto by Florentine poet Ottavio Rinuccini (1562–1621), opened at the court of Mantua in 1608. Ariadne's contagious outburst became extremely popular: it was imitated, pirated, done and redone in many ways, paving the way for the extraordinary success of the lament as one of the most influential musical genres of the seventeenth century. As the only surviving fragment of Monteverdi's opera, Ariadne's lament remained, so to speak, open-ended. Isolated from the original narrative, the lament proved a most productive textual space, conducive to forms of experimentation across both poetry and music.

Instead of going back to Monteverdi's original, we have decided to revisit the voice of Ariadne through a musical arrangement that bears witness to the long-lasting echo triggered by the first performance of the piece: namely, the arrangement included by Alessandro Parisotti (1853–1913) in his collection of Arie antiche (1890). On this occasion, we will hear it sung to the harpsichord: this is how the voice of Ariadne was reimagined by Italian novelist Gabriele D'Annunzio in one of the most remarkable scenes of Il fuoco [The Flame of Life] (1900). At a lavish party in a Venetian palazzo, the performance of Ariadne's lament comes as a demonstration of the dramatic and expressive power of the human voice.

The somewhat eclectic inspiration that animates D'Annunzio's revival of early music invites us to reconsider the ways in which we approach music and voices from the past. How do voices from different time periods respond to one another? How does a given character evolve through the various performances that enable her afterlife?

In order to tackle these questions, our own exploration moves back to the earliest imitators of Ariadne in the seventeenth century. The scope of our selection, which draws on unknown sources from mid-seventeenth century Rome, is twofold. On the one hand, it chases Ariadne's echo through the laments of other characters who, in a way, respond to the model by ventriloquizing it. On the other hand, it aims to revoice those laments using new forms of communication, with the awareness that any attempt to revive voices and sounds from the past is indeed a form of reinvention.

Eugenio Refini & Andrés Locatelli, 2025

Lamento d'Arianna

Lasciatemi morire! E che volete voi che mi conforte In così dura sorte, In così gran martire? Lasciatemi morire!	Let me die! And whom do you want to comfort me in such cruel fate, in such ordeal? Let me die!
--	--

Potesti i lini sciogliere

Potesti i lini sciogliere e me, crudo, lasciar su l'erme arene de la mia fede a cogliere fior, di vano sperar frutto di pene? Va' pur e sian con te de l'aria tutti i turbini, del mare tutti i fremiti del cielo tutti i fulmini, poiché legge d'Amore in te non è. Le vele tue sommergansi, mentre col pianto mio fo crescer l'onda; le membra tue pergansi, ora che 'l vento de' sospiri abbonda. Errante va' pur, va' tra fiumi che trabalzino, tra balze che traripino, tra ripe che trabocchino, novo mostro d'inferno in crudeltà. L'empio tuo nome tolgasi dal tradito mio cor dove s'annida; il mio dal tuo disciolgasi or ch'a guerra d'horror l'alma lo sfida. E dove sarai tu, il foco il calor nieghiti, il sole il lume ascondati, la terra il varco chiudati; poi calor, lume e varco habbi laggiù. Ma dove, ahi lassa, spronami il furor, il dolor che l'alma accora? Idolo mio, perdonami;	How could you sail away and leave me, you cruel, on these solitary shores where I pick the flower of my faith and the fruit of my vain hope? Just go away! and may you be accompanied by all the whirls of the air, all the shudders of the sea, all the thunderbolts of the sky, for there is no law of Love in you. May your sails be submerged, while I grow the waves with my tears; may your limbs warp now that the wind abounds with sighs. You go, errant, go through foaming rivers, through steep slopes, through overflowing banks, novel monster of cruelty from hell. May your name be eradicated from my betrayed heart, where it has nestled. May mine be untied from yours now that the soul challenges it to a horrible fight. And wherever you will be, may the fire deny you the heat, may the sun conceal its light, may the earth block your path; may you have heat, light and path down there in hell. But, alas, what do my fury and the pain that weighs my soul down spur me to? My idol, forgive me;
--	--

se la lingua t'offese, il cor t'adora. Ogni mal sia con me, con te Giunon tranquillisi, per te Nettun incalmisi, da te ria Parca fuggasi. Ma che parlo, che prego e per qual fe'? S'al cielo i preghi salgono, sol prego il ciel che vendicar mi possa; se le mie preci vogliono, prego ch'a questo fin mi chiuda in fossa. Che morta ch'io sarò, con sogni al veder torbidi, con larve al mirar squallide, con urli al sentir horridi, nova Furia d'amor t'aggrirerò. Armida in gran rammarico queste voci spargeva in vari toni, tenendo a grave incarico che si parta Rinaldo e l'abbandoni. Poi cadde e tramortì. Dei tristi augelli al gemito, dei crudi venti al sibilo, del vicin lido al frangere, torva il guardo si scosse indi, partì.	if my tongue offended you, my heart adores you. May all evil come to me, may Juno be appeased with you, may Neptune calm down for you, may you avert the pitiless Fate. But what do I say and pray for, and to which faith? If my prayers go to the heavens, I only beg the heavens to avenge me; if my pleas allow for it, I beg to be buried in a grave. When I will be dead, with fearful dreams, with bleak phantoms, with horrible cries, novel Fury of Love I will pursue you." Deeply saddened, Armida delivered these words in various tones, burdened by the thought that Rinaldo may depart and abandon her. Then she fell down and fainted. The sobs of the birds, the whistles of the cruel winds, the waves shattering on the shore woke her up; and with surly eyes she left.
---	---

Abbattuto dal duolo

Abbattuto dal duolo, quasi in grembo di morte, un amante giacea languendo al suolo quando con sì pietosa e mesta voce palesava del cor la pena atroce: "Con volontaria mano il piè m'involsi d'amoroso ritegno, e all'infida beltade quest'alma diedi in pegno amor fede costanza e libertade.	Overwhelmed by grief, almost in death's embrace, a lover lay on the ground lamenting, when with such pitiful and sad voice disclosed the harsh pain of his heart: "With willful hand I wrapped my foot in amorous discretion, and to this unfaithful beauty I pledged this soul, as well as love, faith, perseverance and freedom.
--	--

Ma di sua crudeltade sempre maggiori mi convien di soffrir gli empi furori; e di veder m'è dato ch'ella nieghi al mio cor breve conforto e doni la mercede a un mancator di fede? Così gira nel ciel l'iniquo fato a nostri danni intento. Chi desia dunque il contento mentre serve un bel sembiante prima impari a tradir ch'esser amante. In amor gode Bireno, che nel seno non alberga fedeltà; Arianna è poi tradita che l'aita all'infido Theseo dà." Si del Tebro su la riva piangea Tirsi il suo tormento; Ma a che pro? solo arricchiva Co' pianti l'onde e coi sospiri il vento.	Yet I must suffer the ever growing wicked furies of her cruelty; and have I to endure seeing that she denies brief consolation to my heart, while she rewards someone who lacks in faith? This is how the unjust fate moves in the heavens entirely focused on offending us. Whoever wishes to be happy while they serve a beautiful face should learn how to betray before loving. In love rejoices Bireno who, in his bosom, does not house any faith; Ariadne is then betrayed, she who helped the unfaithful Theseus." This is how on the banks of the Tiber Tirsi cried his pain out aloud; but to what benefit? It only grew the waves with tears and the wind with sighs.
--	--

O me infelice

O me infelice! Ahi quanto son più fieri de' vostri i miei tormenti, alme dannate al sempiterno pianto. Sperai dal vago viso del bellissimo Adon gioie e contenti, ma degli occhi lucenti mi si cangiò in Inferno il Paradiso. Misera Falsirena d'ogni speranza ignuda, ahi quanto amara e cruda del temerario ardir paghi la pena. Garzon vago, io te 'l confesso: troppo inver presumer volli, ma incolpa sol de l'amor mio te stesso.	O wretched me! Alas, my torments are much fiercer than yours, souls damned to sempiternal tears. I hoped I would receive joy and happiness from the delightful face of beautiful Adonis, but the Paradise of those shining eyes turned into Hell. Miserable Falsirena, deprived of all hope, alas, a bitter and cruel punishment you receive for your reckless audacity. Cheerful boy, let me admit it:
---	---

Che, se ben d'amor rubello, rimirar da sguardo umano senz'amar non si può volto si bello. Ma che dich'io "da sguardo uman," se sei possente ancora a innamorare i dei? Ahi, con che doglia acerba mi viene in mente or Venere che le speranze mie sul più bel verdeggiar ridusse in cenere. O che invidia crudele il cor mi strazia pensando a sua ventura, a mia disgrazia. Folle! Che mi giovò per mio scampo chiamar l'ombre d'Inferno, se la forza del Ciel mi saettò? Vano incanto se fra tanto disperata, fulminata resto qui misero scherno, e di sdegno e d'amore in pianto eterno. Ma pur nel mio gran duol, nel mio gran male ben per doppia cagione superba ancor mi glorio che una Venere alfin fu mia rivale; e che a dispetto suo il bel viso d'Adone se non in seno almeno in mente accoglio e 'l miro quando voglio. E per mio strano conforto, che accresce le mie pene, l'imgo del mio bene l'ombra del mio bel sol nel core io porto. Porto in core il mio tormento, ma pur dammi alcun contento che mirando a sua beltade, così dico, o stelle amate: Folle non fui se in voi cercai salute, che qual nuovo gigante	I took too much for granted, but please blame yourself for my love, Indeed, though unresponsive to love, it is impossible for a human gaze to see such beautiful face without falling in love. But why do I say "human gaze" when you are powerful enough to make gods fall in love too? Alas, with harsh pain Venus comes to my mind; my blooming hopes, she reduced them to ashes. Alas, what cruel envy tortures my heart when I think about her fate and my disgrace! Fool! What benefit did I get from summoning hell's spirits for my salvation if the force of the heavens shot me? Vain charm, if meanwhile, desperate, light-struck, I stay here, miserably mocked, shedding perpetual tears of disdain and love. Yet, in my great pain, in my great sorrows for a double reason I glory with pride in knowing that Venus was my rival; and that, to her spite, the beautiful face of Adonis, if not in my heart, I have it in my mind, and I can look at him whenever I wish. And as a strange consolation, which increases my sorrows, it is the image of my love, the shade of my beautiful sun that I keep in my heart. I carry my torment in my heart, yet some pleasure comes from knowing that, looking at his beauty, I may say, o beloved stars: I was not fool if I sought salvation in you;
--	--

fatta d'un cielo amante alfin provai sol per troppo salir le mie cadute. Caddi è ver ma non mi pento e porto per mia gloria dolce ne la memoria il mio tormento. Che soave è la mia pena perché l'ombra del mio core con l'amato suo splendore il ritratto di lui pur rasserenà. Non mi pento, no no no, se bramai beltà celeste e se n'ho cure moleste: non si neghi l'applauso a l'ardimento. Luci belle ancor v'adoro, senza speme ancor v'inchino. De' bei guardi che son dardi viva pur nume divino ch'io contenta per voi moro. Adon non mi negare, già che neghi l'amor, almen la lode. Degnati di pensare che se Venere gode le tue bellezze rare Falsirena per te gode penare. Raduni pur Amore, e se non basta Amore anco l'Inferno, per mio dolor tutti i tormenti suoi: rote, augelli voraci, fame, cibi fugaci, rigor di gelosia, tema importuna, sogni, chimere, inganni, inusitati affanni, odio, invidia crudel, rabbia e rancori, miserabil follia, vani furori... Che tutte queste pene con un guardo addolcir potria il mio bene.	as a novel giant, in love with the heavens, eventually I did fall because of my attempt to rise too high. I did fall, but I do not regret it and, to my glory, I bring my sweet torment in my memory. My pain pleases me, because the shade in my heart is, with its beloved splendor, cleared up by his portrayal. I have no regrets, no, I do not, for desiring heavenly beauty and obtaining tedious grief: my bravery should not be spared some applause. Beautiful lights, I still adore you, without hope I bow down. On your beautiful gazes, veritable darts, may such a divinity live, while I die happy for you. Adonis, do not deny me your praise, since you deny me your love. Deign to consider that if Venus enjoys your rare beauty, Falsirena enjoys suffering for you. May Love gather, and if Love is not enough, may Hell be of help, all its torments for my suffering: wheels, predatory birds, hunger, fleeting food, jealousy's harshness, tiresome fear, dreams, chimeras, deceptions, unheard of sorrows, hatred, cruel envy, anger and resentment, miserable folly, vain furies... May all these punishments
--	--

Amor, per questo sangue
che il cor versa dagli occhi,
sì prega l'alma mia, che a morte langue,
che con un dardo il crudo cor gli tocchi.
Tu rasserena il lagrimoso ciglio,
e provi questa misera dolente
se la madre crudel, pietoso il figlio.
Ma che folle, vaneggio, o me infelice,
tanto sperar non lice.
Altro sperar da la mia dura sorte
non posso che la morte.
Adon l'ultimo addio ti do morendo
e già che vuoi ch'io mora
son contenta di morire:
pur che a te cresca il gioire
colei che per te more e pur t'adora

sweeten my belove with a gaze.

Love, for the sake of this blood
that my heart sheds through the eyes,
my soul begs you so intensely that it is about to die, asking
that you may hit his cruel heart With your dart, clear up
your eyes,
and may this miserable wreck find that
the son is pitiful, if the mother is cruel.
But what am I ranting about, O wretched me,
I am not allowed to raise such hope.
From my harsh fate I cannot wish
other than death.
Adonis, dying I bid you my last farewell
and since you wish me to die,
I am happy to die.
as long as your joy gets bigger,
I die for you, yet I love you.