

## TO PICK UP THE ECHO FROM LOOSE LIPS

Álvaro Chior

In the process of sowing *Escribir como un jardín* (To write like a garden), Spi asked me for a sound piece for her installation *hug*. Once there, in that dark room, the black walls were absorbing the little light they had decided to leave, as well as bouncing the sound waves from the piece, which seemed to embrace the sculptures, almost making you feel that you were interrupting an intimate act when opening the curtain to enter. I thought it was nice that this hug was in the same place where, in the previous exhibition, Mònica's heart was, and also the fact that the audio file came from Clàudia's old iPod, which surely still contained songs from another time, from another age. I suppose that the file also felt that it interrupted something when it entered there, as an intruder in that memory.

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When she invited me to participate also in the publication, we came up with the idea of an intervention that would take place in the middle of the book, on paper of another color, also interrupting, and that would have to be broken to discover its interior.

The word 'break' means 'crack', but also 'interruption' or 'respite', so I thought that the intervention could work a bit like the dark room, generating a respite of another color, which was activated by breaking the paper, interrupting, like opening the curtain of the room, and what was there, could have to do with that sound piece, with that *hug*.

When I think of 'break', I find it impossible not to start humming *The Breaks* by Kurtis Blow. In this case, the word refers to a DJing technique used in the dawn of Hip Hop, which consisted of selecting short fragments of songs in order to, using simultaneously two copies of the same album, repeat and repeat that part, generating a musical base on which sing, dance or cheer on those attending those first block parties. The parts selected for this used to be the so-called breaks, instrumental interludes very common in jazz and funk, related to a time of rest or respite from the main parts of the song.

It is difficult not to think about the importance that this technique, the precursor of sampling, had and still has in the way of approaching and understanding culture in contemporary times, picking echoes of previous language

articulations and repeating them ad nauseam, but I had never thought of it attending to the fact that they were respites, to the power of those pauses.

In relation to this idea of pause, there is a concept that is always flying over me, in one way or another, which is the 'suspension of disbelief', the phenomenon that occurs when we temporarily turn off the critical sense towards verisimilitude or other elements of a narrative, with the aim of enjoying and getting into the game of the fiction represented in it.

I usually imagine that suspension, the heavy textual apparatus, its rigor and its discursive capacities suspended in the air, floating, with half-spoken words and the remains of glyphs hanging, allowing us to get lost in a poly-rhythmy of linguistic comings and goings and bad translations, where language is not constructed from the rigidity of meaning, but rather sprouts, like a flower in an open field, dropping its petals and spores on others, affecting them, sowing them, writing a garden.

' (pause)

Musical writing originated in alphabetic symbols, which were sometimes twisted and flipped to indicate variations. The symbols associated with current musical keys also come from a deformation and ornamentation of the letters that gave name to these notes in the Anglo-Saxon notation system.

The nomenclature of the notes: ‘Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Si’, has its origin in a notation system that used the Arabic alphabet called *durr-i-mufassal* (that means ‘loose pearls’), which in a process of christianization, was used in the Middle Ages to write a song in Latin in honor of Saint John the Baptist, whose lyrics contain at the beginning of each sentence a note, which would be called after its first syllables.

*Ut queant laxis  
mira gestorum  
solve polluti  
resonare fibris  
famuli tuorum,  
labii reatumm  
Sancte Ioannes!*

Later ‘*Ut*’ was replaced by ‘Do’, pursuing its Arabic influence and looking for a better sound. The note ‘Si’, was included later because it was considered the cause of the tritone (or “the devil in music”), was named after the initial letters of the last two words of that first paragraph of the song.

After discovering this information, I had the idea of picking the notes in the melody of *hug*, the piece from the dark room, and trying to translate them using these words that so many years ago had given them their name. I remembered something that I once heard and noted, that spoke of “recovering the name, polishing the verbiage and decanting the word that comes close to the name.” I don’t know, it seemed playful to me to look for a remote translation in this origin of the name, even if it did nothing more than, far from polish it, add verbiage.

The melody of the piece *hug* is: ‘Fa, La, Sol, Re, Re, La, Fa, Mi’, so isolating the words whose first syllables gave the notes their names, the melody would be something like this:

*Famuli, labii, solve, resonare.*  
*Resonare, labii, famuli, mira.*

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After an automatic translation in a consciously clumsy way without any rigour, I repeated it and played adding and removing commas between the words. The result was this:

*To pick up the echo from loose lips.*  
*Echo of language and retakes wonderful.*

*Your lips, loose, resonance.*  
*Echo and lips are picked wonderful.*

Suddenly, “to pick up the echo of loose lips” reminded me of those “loose pearls” of that durr-i-mufassal, but also of something I wrote recently, where, approaching the etymology, I spoke of language as a set of tongues and other organs and bodies in motion.

Then, what would those “loose lips” be but remnants of language articulations, petals from that garden, from those flowers to pick up?

Your lips, your hug and your garden. Its echoes, resonating. Loose, suspended. Dropping its petals on the ground. Flooding itself, writing itself.

Cristina Spinelli

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