

Acousmatic-Creationism: A creative method for acousmatic music inspired by Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro's aesthetic theories

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This article assembles and summarises the main ideas presented in the doctoral thesis entitled 'Voice and Poetry as Inspiration and Material in Acousmatic Music' by the author and describes his idiosyncratic method for acousmatic composition based on Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro's aesthetic theory, which is a system that aims at creating artistic works by taking materials from reality and combining them in unexpected ways. The objective of this combination is an equilibrium between rationality and intuition in order to obtain a poem independent of the real world, in the sense of a poetic outcome which avoids traditional mimesis. This creative system, known as *Creacionismo*, has a central role between various other theoretical, artistic and mainly poetic sources informing the author's creative process. Huidobro's creative system has been applied by the author to acousmatic composition procedures generating the notion of *acousmatic-creationist* as a nomenclature for the process. This particular creative strategy balances rationality and intuition within acousmatic composition and places poetry as a driving force in the use of voice, merging artistic practice and theory in a recursive action.

1. INTRODUCTION

Electroacoustic music repertoire addressing voice, poetry and text has been an influence in shaping my compositional outcome since I started acousmatic creation in 2004 (Albornoz et al. 2006; Albornoz 2016). Over the years, my artistic practice has been nurtured by several forms of experimental poetry, ranging from authors of the historical avant-garde to electroacoustic poetry¹ and hybrid art forms such as media poetry² or

¹*Electroacoustic poetry* is a notion proposed by Nicholas Zurbrugg (2005) and is part of what he defines as *electroacoustic literature*: 'an avant-garde postmodern genre characterized by its dependence upon recording technology, both as a means of production and as a means of reproduction' (Zurbrugg 2005: 2).

²According to Kac (2007: 11), *media poetry* is part of what is called *experimental poetics* and is based on different approaches of the avant-garde movements in the early twentieth century, which are both 'rational and anti-rational'. These movements are 'Futurism, Cubism, Constructivism, Dadaism and Lettrism', but include paths from the print-based works within 'Spatialise, Concretism, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, Beat, Visual Poetry, Fluxus, and Process/Poem' (Kac 2007: 11).

electronic literature.³ In particular, this article focuses upon a selection of specific ideas that are of high relevance for the composer's practice, including aspects of the historical avant-garde where Vicente Huidobro's aesthetic theory, named *Creacionismo*, stands out as the main driving force.

2. VICENTE HUIDOBRO AND THE CREACIONISMO

The Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro was born on 10 January 1893 in Santiago de Chile. He was the son of an aristocratic family and his mother, María Luisa Fernández, was an active writer, artist and feminist. Indeed, it was her support and inspiration that pushed him in 1911 to publish his first text at the age of eighteen (Goic 1975). Until 1916, his poetry was very close to *Modernismo*,⁴ but it was starting to expose some personal ideas regarding the creative process, claiming the need for an art avoiding *mimesis* and favouring instead an intermedia approach to creation to achieve this avoidance. In fact, in 1914 he gave a presentation at the *Ateneo*⁵ de Santiago entitled 'Non Serviam'⁶ (Arenas 1975), a manifesto which inaugurated his new ideas. The manifesto was published originally in

³According to Scott Rettberg (2008: 1, 9), *electronic literature* is a confluence of artistic paths with no defined common programme, a heterogeneous creative area where different disciplines and techniques are mixed, interleaved or part of an exchanging grid which operate within the domain of digital media, namely computer technologies and internet.

⁴Literary movement of Spanish America which its main figure was the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. The main characteristics of this movement were the liberation from strict rules tending to free use of themes and poetic elements such as verses shapes, rhyme, rhythm and other experimentations. It had as sources the European movements of *Parnassians* and *Symbolists* (Jrade 2012: 894–5).

⁵Name of a certain type of cultural group (scientific or literary) and at the same time the name of the place where the group used to meet. *Ateneos* were very common in several capitals of Spanish-speaking countries during the twentieth century, particularly in the first half of it. Famous in the biography of Huidobro are his presentations at the *Ateneos* of Santiago, Buenos Aires and Madrid (1914, 1916 and 1921 respectively).

⁶Latin for 'I will not serve'.

1925 in *Manifiestos* (Huidobro 2009: 15–16). This book, reprinted in 2009, is a collection of various theoretical texts covering his aesthetic ideas, including his notions of the creative process, the role of the poet in the twentieth century, and analysis and comparisons with the previous literature and others artistic movements of his time, such as futurism and surrealism. Some lines of the manifesto are extremely direct in terms of the transforming aesthetic of Huidobro:

The poet says to his brothers: ‘Up to now we have done nothing but imitate the world in its aspects, we have created nothing. What has come out of us that was not previously in front of us, around our eyes, challenging our feet or our hands? ... Non serviam. I do not have to be your slave, Mother Nature; I shall be your master ... I shall have my trees which will not be like yours, I shall have my mountains, I shall have my rivers, I shall have my sky and my stars. And you will not be able to tell me: “This tree is bad, I don’t like that sky ... mine are better.”’ (Huidobro 1999)⁷

This passionate statement against *mimesis* is consistent with his will of autonomy for art with regards to real-world objects and entities as models to be imitated: ‘For Huidobro, the aesthetic phenomenon should exist like a plant, a star, or a fruit, with its own reason for being’ (Sarabia 2012: 316). At the same time, Huidobro emphasises the crucial role of the poet as an individual, a demiurge creating worlds and beings: ‘The poet is a little God’ (Huidobro 1999).⁸ Creation is personal, therefore its outcome, the artwork, is independent of the way the world works; in this way, the artist creates a new world. Argentinian architect and art researcher Alejandro Crispiani, explains Huidobro’s theory:

the poet ... gives birth to a universe that is his own and that is closed in a certain way. The creationist poem represents a parallel world that is not touched with the real; is installed in reality as a different reality, absolutely resistant to it and its operating principles. (Crispiani 2011: 66–7)⁹

⁷All the quotations from (Huidobro 1999) correspond to the official website www.vicentehuidobro.uchile.cl, and because of that there are no page references. In order to provide the sources, the original texts in Spanish are included as footnotes. The original text for this quotation is: ‘El poeta dice a sus hermanos: ‘Hasta ahora no hemos hecho otra cosa que imitar el mundo en sus aspectos, no hemos creado nada. “Qué ha salido de nosotros que no estuviera antes parado ante nosotros, rodeando nuestros ojos, desafiando nuestros pies o nuestras manos?” ... Non serviam. No he de ser tu esclavo, madre Natura; seré tu amo. Te servirás de mí; está bien. No quiero y no puedo evitarlo; pero yo también me serviré de ti. Yo tendré mis árboles que no serán como los tuyos, tendré mis montañas, tendré mis ríos y mis mares, tendré mi cielo y mis estrellas. Y ya no podrás decirme: “Ese árbol está mal, no me gusta ese cielo ... los míos son mejores.”’. All English translations by A. Albornoz.

⁸‘El Poeta es un pequeño Dios’. This verse is part of the poem *Arte poética* first published in the book *El espejo de Agua* (1916).

⁹Original text in Spanish: ‘el poeta ... da nacimiento a un universo que le es propio y que está en cierta forma cerrado. El poema creaciónista respresenta un mundo paralelo que no se toca con lo real; se instala en la realidad como una realidad diferente, absolutamente resistente a ella y a sus principios de funcionamiento.’

In this way both poetry and art more generally would imitate nature not in its realisations and constructs but in its way of acting, that is, as a creative entity (Sarabia 2012: 316). In other words, if nature creates original things that are placed in the world, Huidobro asks to avoid imitation of these objects and rather encourages us to create as nature does.

In a conference given in 1916 at the *Ateneo* of Buenos Aires, Huidobro claimed: ‘the first condition of the poet is to create; the second, to create, and the third, to create’ (Huidobro 1999).¹⁰ This statement motivated the Argentines to baptise him as a *creationist* in a foundational moment where the name of the theory was coined: *Creacionismo*, thereby summarising Huidobro’s ideas of avoiding imitative art in the search for sheer invention.¹¹ Huidobro’s goal, namely the invention of new facts and new objects, is tackled by him through the exposure of unexpected relationships between pre-existing elements (things from the real world) (Huidobro 1999). Thus, the artist uses elements of the objective world and, by means of combining and transforming them, obtains new facts to be added to the world (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 1311). From this, we might identify a range of key procedures advocated by Huidobro, including the relocation, re-contextualisation and transformation of concepts, images and sounds. These procedures are realised by creating new words, combining pre-existing ones, connecting adjectives to nouns in unexpected ways, and ultimately through the dislocation of language in pursuit of a pure sonic content of syllables and phonemes.¹²

In addition to what has been discussed earlier, Huidobro claimed to have identified a conceptual path for his theory, which is different from the guidelines of two of the most relevant avant-garde movements of the twentieth century: Italian futurism and surrealism. With futurism, the poet maintains a certain distance, especially regarding specific principles by considering them as old or absurd (the admiration for recklessness, the exaltation of war, contempt for women), although he valued the idea of liberation of words and verses (Huidobro 1914: 163–71).¹³ Regarding

¹⁰This quotation is part of the manifesto *El Creacionismo* (*The Creationism*) first published in French in 1925 as part of the book *Manifiestos*. In this text, the author explains his aesthetic theory and reviews several moments, including conferences and facts. The Spanish text reads: ‘la primera condición del poeta es crear; la segunda, crear, y la tercera, crear’.

¹¹This aesthetic programme would have a great impact on later Latin American literature and arts (Crispiani 2011).

¹²As is easy to appreciate, these procedures are similar to *musique concrète* and *media poetry* techniques, which in turn, are inspired by the previous avant-garde methods; see footnotes 13 and 19.

¹³Balilla Pratella and Russolo, famous for having contributed to the musical wing of Italian futurism, attempted to create a new music where noise (understood as non-traditional musical sounds) is aesthetically central. These conceptual directives are an integral part of futurism and its subsequent influences in the forthcoming music

surrealism, the Chilean poet rejects the advocacy of the subconscious as the main engine for artistic creation, since he considered this surrealist premise impossible and also an attempt to fragment the human mind. In fact, Huidobro believed that humans act according to both, reason *and* the subconscious (Huidobro 1999).¹⁴

In accordance with the aforementioned, Huidobro argues that poetic activity involves two aspects: *reason* and *imagination*. This duality, he argues, is representative of the dual nature of human beings. Consequently, he states a condition that enables one to achieve the *creationist* goal: the *poetic delirium* or *superconsciousness*. This is a particular state in which *delirium* involves fluctuations between *reason* and *imagination*, producing a conjunction: 'a kind of intensive convergence of our entire intellectual mechanism' (Huidobro 1999).¹⁵ The poet's *delirium* allows for the discovery of unexpected relationships between elements (words, images, sounds) by means of the different techniques mentioned: creation of new words, connection of adjectives to nouns in unexpected ways, and highlighting of sonic content of words and phonemes. Section 3 of this article describes the way this procedure is applied to acousmatic composition and section 4 gives a specific example of it. It is interesting to note that the outcome of this procedure, the unexpected relationships, is coherent with several notions and findings established by researchers on creativity and cognitive science in the last decades of the twentieth century. This is the case of ideas by David Gelernter (1994: 16–17) and Keith J. Holyoak (1995: 286–9), who state the central role of restructuring information and creation of unexpected analogies as tools of creative thinking.

Although Huidobro refused to describe his poems as *cubist* (Castro Morales 2008: 153), certain techniques associate his works with cubist poets such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Pierre Reverdy and Max Jacob; techniques such as fragmentation and juxtaposition are heavily used in their works, and these became cornerstones of the cubist style. Having arrived in Paris in 1916, Huidobro joined the avant-

movements of the twentieth century. From the perspective of this article, it is interesting to note that futurist poetry used the spoken word beyond communicational use of language. With its craving for noise as a disrupting element in music, futurism encouraged the use of onomatopoeia in poetry, as a means to highlight agitation and dynamism of nonsense sounds, the pure din of modern life, elements that should be highlighted to replace the old bourgeois social order, according to Marinetti (Poggi 2009: 826). Thus, he established *Parole in libertà* ('Words in freedom'), a style with words liberated from meaning, where poems had a free form and were expressed and experienced through integration of text, visual art and the performance of the poem in a theatrical manner.

¹⁴This is explained in his text *Manifiesto de manifiestos* published in 1925.

¹⁵Part of the *Manifiesto de manifiestos* published in 1925: 'una especie de convergencia intensiva de todo nuestro mecanismo intelectual'.

garde circle, interacted with various artists and released several poetry books (Arenas 1975).¹⁶ Albeit keen to pursue his own artistic agenda, in his endeavour there are clearly connections with dadaism, surrealism and futurism, and these connections are reflected in some ideas and techniques, such as *calligrammes*,¹⁷ *painted poems*¹⁸ and *simultaneism*,¹⁹ which were used in his poetry or enunciated in some projects (Huidobro and García-Huidobro 2012). All the ideas reviewed so far coalesce in his masterpiece, *Altazor* (Huidobro 2016) also known as *Altazor o el viaje en paracaídas*.²⁰ This poem in seven sections named *chants* was started in 1919, but only published in 1931 in Spain. *Altazor* is a sky voyager, described by Sarabia (2012: 315–16) as 'an anti-poet and a "high-hawk" aeronaut ... (travelling) into the realms of nothingness, the "infiniterity"'. The poetic journey is in fact a metaphysical trip in seven stages corresponding to each *chant* of the poem, gradually leaving behind an old language in favour of a new one and, eventually, leading to the disintegration of

¹⁶These books were *Horizon carré*, *Tour Eiffel*, *Hallali*, *Ecuatorial* and *Poemas árticos*.

¹⁷A type of visual poem where the text is arranged to form images which had antecedents in texts from ancient times (Karasfi 2016). Guillaume Apollinaire published his collection *Calligrammes* in 1918 including poems written between 1913 and 1916. Around the same time, Huidobro published *Canciones en la noche* in Santiago de Chile, including four *calligrammes* entitled 'Japoneñas del estío', his early experimentations with visual texts. These ideas were later developed in the book *Horizon Carré*, originally published in 1917 and included in the complete works collection *Obra poética* (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 407–80). *Horizon Carré* includes two *calligrammes*, 'Paysage' and 'Moulin'. In 1922, he exhibited thirteen '*painted poems*' at the Théâtre Edouard VII, Paris. In this way blurring the central distinction between poetry and visual arts. According to Sarabia (2010: 41), these works focus viewers' attention towards the material exposed, guiding them by overlapping writing and visuals, an action which allows the image implied in the writing to be addressed and to accentuate the abstraction of the image. A similar idea is addressed within the author's compositions, particularly where there is a clear intention to move between semantic and non-semantic materials.

¹⁸*Painted poems* are a type of intermedia works of art which combine elements of writing, *calligrammes* and painting.

¹⁹According to Kahn (2001: 51–6), *simultaneism* is a variant of dadaism which applied the phenomenon of simultaneous occurrence of events in life to poems and performances; as in life related or unrelated events happen concurrently, producing a certain amount of noise (Kahn 2001: 51), poems and dadaist performances might operate similarly. This aspect, typical of music (polyphony), is also transferred to poetry by futurism, both Italian and Russian. For instance, Russian futurist Ilja Zdanevich used phonetic texts in his theatre plays as a way of producing textural sound in an operatic manner (simultaneous recitations) (Janacek 1996: 274–5) and his use of gramophone predate ideas and intentions of the forthcoming *musique concrète* and *poésie concrète*. There were diverse manifestations around the same idea of *simultaneism*, which precisely gave name to the mentioned type of poetry within the dadaist environment in Zurich and Paris (Howarth 2011); an example of this are the poems for four voices 'Fievre puerperale' and 'Église' by dadaist Tristan Tzara and unanimist Jules Romains respectively, both called by Huidobro as *simultaneist* poetry (Huidobro and García-Huidobro 2012: 29–30).

²⁰*Altazor or a Voyage in a Parachute*.

meaning through the use of only the sonic semblance of Spanish words and, at the very end, just phonemes lacking any linguistic meaning. According to Cussen (2014), this famous poem is regarded as one of the foundations of *sound poetry*²¹ in Chile and Spanish America by several authors and it has been the subject of much analysis. Beyond this, there are numerous musical pieces inspired by the poem; although various *chants* have drawn critical attention, most have focused upon the final *chant*, due to its sonic properties (Cussen 2014: 82–6). I have avoided using *Altazor* as direct source or to undertake the task of a new musical version of it.²² As result of the previous idea, my compositional process during the last years was influenced only by the idea of language fragmentation present in *Altazor*.

Summarising, the *creationist* artwork has three characteristics: independence from the real world, resistance to the real world and action according to its own other-worldly rules (Crispiani 2011: 66). Considered in such a way, the poem can be understood as a device that functions as a system of elements or actions (words, images and sounds evoking an aesthetic reaction from the receiver) or, perhaps, as a machine. In his manifesto *El Creacionismo*, Huidobro stated parallels between artistic activity and the creation of machinery: ‘What has been done in mechanics has also been done in poetry’ (Huidobro 1999).²³ In the manifesto *La Creación pura*: ‘Is not the art of mechanics also the humanization of nature ...?’ (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 1311).²⁴ According to Crispiani (2011), poetry, under the light of Huidobro’s ideas, is able to articulate new human potentials afforded by machines. In this way, poems and machines share the same function; one has as much artificiality as the other (Crispiani 2011: 66).

3. CREACIONISMO APPLIED TO ACOUSMATIC MUSIC

The compositional method I have, intentionally draws upon a number of these concepts. The *system*, both subjective and heterogeneous, has been described

²¹Feinsod (2012: 1327) defines this artistic domain in this way: ‘If poetry is the verbal art in which sound and sense are arranged in ideal tension, sound poetry ... alters this relationship by multiplying, reducing, or denying semantic reference, while amplifying the phonetic and aural properties of language.’ *Sound poems* can have a written version which is performed in real time or recorded on a support (tape, digital medium) or exist as a combination of these two options; the written version can be a sort of graphic score with some traditional texts included (sentences, words, phonemes, letters), only images (both connotative and abstract) or a combination of these two.

²²In fact, use of this text has become a platitude in the Spanish-speaking world and consequently a challenge due to the diverse nature of the musical versions.

²³‘Lo realizado en la mecánica también se ha hecho en la poesía.’

²⁴‘¿Acaso el arte de la mecánica no es también la humanización de la naturaleza [...]?’.

thoroughly in my PhD thesis (Albornoz 2018), which included eight acousmatic compositions and can be summarised as a combination of planning general notions and conditions with an experimental and intuitive approach to sound objects (Schaeffer 1966) and spectromorphologies (Smalley 1997) production. This combination of intense *rational* and *imaginative* actions led to:

- Selection and rejection of materials from the real world according to a personal *system* (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 1311–13). In this way, the elements from reality enter the artist’s subjective world.
- Transformation and combination of selected elements from the world (images and sounds), by means of techniques appropriate to their nature, the aesthetic intentions and expected concrete form of a given piece. Since the main part of my work corpus deals with voice and poetry as inspiration and material, this implied the recording of recitations in the studio, the subsequent selection and edition of them and the use of sound transformations applied to them. In this way, the combined elements were delivered back to the real world in the form of a piece. Again, although there are some systematic actions carried, the general procedure was open, not rigid and specific to each piece. The establishment of adequate techniques appropriate to the nature of each element, the aesthetic intentions of the author and the concrete form of the pieces require a longer text, which in fact is a detailed description provided in the doctoral thesis previously mentioned.

In Figure 1, Huidobro visualises the creative process through a diagram in his manifesto *La Creación pura* (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 1312).

As Marta Rodríguez explains:

In Huidobro’s scheme ‘two bridges’ of interaction are considered: system and technique. The first includes similarity and abstraction operations, by means of which some elements are selected, i.e., some properties are chosen while others are eliminated. The second bridge is technique whose function is to combine those elements. (Rodríguez 2000: 22)

Poetic delirium or *superconsciousness*, the special human condition described by Huidobro in his *Manifiesto de manifiestos* (Huidobro 1999), is the essence of the pair *system-technique*, first and second bridges respectively. Since *poetic delirium* involves fluctuations between *reason* and *imagination*, the poetic production process ‘could be originated by sensibility or intuition, but when it sees the light, intelligence starts to function’ (Rodríguez 2000: 23). The second bridge, *technique* combines and transforms the selected elements and shapes the poem in doing so. The criteria which guides the processes of abstraction

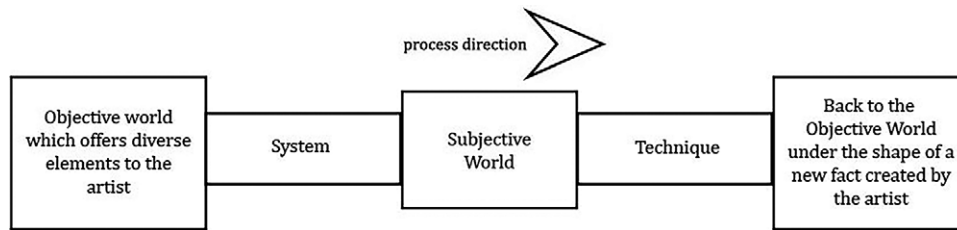


Figure 1. Huidobro's diagram of poetic production (the arrow signalling the process' direction is not in the original).

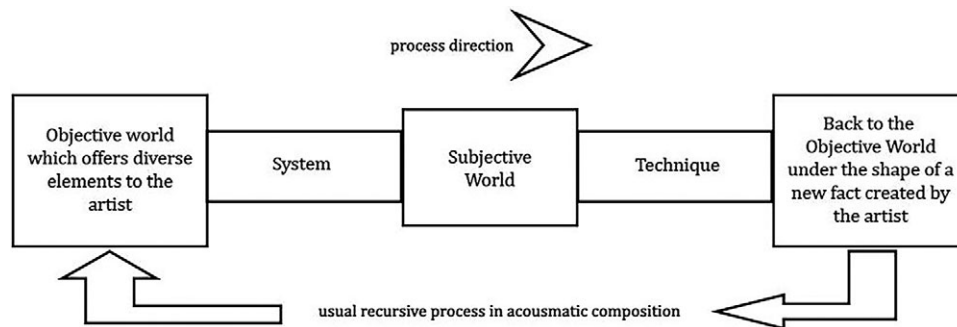


Figure 2. Huidobro's diagram adapted to acousmatic compositional process.

and similarity within the *system* would depend on the poet as an integral human being, with his or her specific sensibility, intelligence, interests and cultural background. What exactly constitutes the second bridge, *technique*, depends on the poet, his or her skills, concrete means and ultimately his or her knowledge. According to Huidobro (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 1312) the degree of concordance between poet's technique and the selected elements from the objective world, determines his or her artistic signature, the style.

Having considered this scheme, its functionality and definitions can be applied to acousmatic composition. Since the acousmatic creative procedure implies the creation of sound and structures at any point during the composition, the resulting sounds (and even the final piece) can be incorporated into a recursive process as many times as the author thinks necessary to conclude a specific work or to generate materials for different pieces (Moore 2016: 7; Chion 2017: 15–16). This can be represented as in Figure 2, slightly changing Huidobro's original diagram.

According to this, the compositional method produces a novel outcome (a *new fact*,²⁵ an artwork) each and every time it is used. Furthermore, this outcome is deemed to be self-sufficient, in other words, its own existence constitutes its purpose. Following

the manifesto *La Creación pura*, the *new fact* given back to world is an aesthetic phenomenon completely free and independent, 'like any other phenomenon of the external world, such as a plant, a bird, a star or a fruit, and like these, has its reason of being in itself' (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 1311).²⁶

Accordingly, in reference to the development of this method drawn from the ideas of Huidobro, the term *acousmatic-creationist* has been adopted to define the pieces I have composed from this period and on.

4. ACOUSMATIC-CREATIONIST NATURE OF THE OCTOPHONIC CYCLE *LA LUMIÈRE ARTIFICIELLE*

The cycle *La lumière artificielle* was composed between 2015 and 2018 and was inspired by an idea of a specific project by Vicente Huidobro and includes five octophonic pieces dealing with voice, poetry and non-semantic materials provided by four feminine performers speaking in three languages: French, Spanish and English. Thus, this cycle deals with voice and poetry as inspiration and actual sonic material addressed through the acousmatic-creationist procedure described and influenced by both electroacoustic music background and avant-garde poetry.

²⁵Huidobro (Huidobro and Goic 2003: 1311) used 'hechos nuevos' ('new facts') to describe the artistic outcome of the creative process described.

²⁶'como cualquier otro fenómeno del mundo exterior, tal como una planta, un pájaro, un astro o un fruto, y tiene como éstos su razón de ser en sí mismo'.

The idea emerged from an interview with Huidobro by Ángel Cruchaga Santa María for *El Mercurio* newspaper on 31 August 1919, where the poet talks about the avant-garde artistic environment in Europe within the first two decades of the twentieth century. The interview reveals his panoramic vision of poets and artists and, at the same time, outlines some of his own activities and projects. There is an interesting statement in this document, referring to a project, an idea that was never released. When the interviewer asks him ‘¿Qué obras tiene en preparación?’ (‘Which pieces are you preparing?’) (Huidobro 1919 cited in Huidobro and García-Huidobro 2012: 34), the Chilean poet discusses some of his later completed works, but his comments on the non-implemented work are particularly inspiring:

The creationist and simultaneist poem *La lumière artificielle*, for three voices on gramophone with new procedures. (Huidobro 1919, cited in Huidobro and García-Huidobro 2012: 34)²⁷

It is possible to see similarities with techniques and notions already developed by Huidobro’s contemporaries, including Ilja Zdanevich, Tristan Tzara and Jules Romains, Russian futurist, dadaist and unanimist, respectively.²⁸

At the same time, the project suggested a physical setup, namely three voices on gramophone evoking a multi-channel distribution. Since in Huidobro’s statement there is a proposal of *simultaneism*, it was imagined that there would be three gramophones surrounding a central space, as in multi-channel setups for acousmatic music.

As has been mentioned, Huidobro was a pioneer in the creation of intermedia pieces and a referent for *sound poetry* and *sound art* in Spanish America. The fact that the poet lived in Santiago de Chile and Paris and wrote in both Spanish and French is a central inspiration for the cycle *La lumière artificielle*. Huidobro valued the translation of poetry from one language to another and, as a matter of fact, in his manifesto *El Creacionismo* (Huidobro 1999) the artist explicitly articulates this idea and gives an example of the same verse in French, Spanish and English.²⁹ In this manifesto, the poet points out that it is impossible to translate the sonority of a poem, the inner musicality of words. But if the central element is an image or

²⁷El poema creacionista simultaneista *La lumière artificielle*, a tres voces en gramófono, con nuevos procedimientos. It is interesting to note that the title of the project is a combination of words in Spanish and French, being *La lumière* the French for *The light* and *artificielle* the Spanish for *artificial*, since in French the correct word is *artificielle*. This detail confirms the natural bilingual thinking by Huidobro, widely developed in his poems.

²⁸See footnotes 13, 17 and 19.

²⁹La nuit vient des yeux d’autrui ... La noche viene de los ojos ajenos’ (‘Night comes from others’ eyes’) (Huidobro 1999).

an image/idea, it can be translated to any language. In doing so, the poem is enriched with different sonorities of the different languages (Huidobro 1999).

Considering this and the theoretical framework defined, the driving ideas of the project as a whole were to:

- Compose using words and speech sounds from three languages: French, Spanish and English. This was motivated by the concepts explained earlier (‘three voices on gramophone’ statement, *simultaneism* and the valorisation of translation).
- Compose in a multi-channel format. The motivation for this was the implicit spatiality in Huidobro’s concept of ‘three voices on gramophone’, from where it was assumed arbitrarily each of them located in a different gramophone. The octophonic format was selected for two reasons: it was available in the University of Sheffield Sound Studios where the cycle was composed and it is considered one of the most widely implemented standards (Vande Gorne 2010: 165).
- Use vocal materials, ranging from *semantic* content expressed through words to *non-semantic* materials by means of word fragmentation and disintegration; in other words, to compose using the movement between these two poles, semantic/non-semantic as an articulatory and structuring procedure. This is one of the core aspects of the cycle and the rest of the PhD portfolio. The first two minutes of *Hundreds of milliseconds (Finale)* can be listened to in Sound example 1, providing an idea of some of the ways in which these procedures have been addressed.³⁰
- Use extensively simultaneity or juxtaposition of sounds in the immersive space provided by the octophonic format. Sound materials can be clarified, interweaved, densified through multi-channel composition, while at the same time spatial configurations and movements can be defined and traced respectively. Those possibilities were used to generate unexpected relationships between the intersected and juxtaposed materials. Again, this is widely supported by the previous theoretical notions.
- Encompass the use of simple audio editing techniques alongside sophisticated digital processing, such as cut and paste and granular synthesis. Sound example 2 shows a typical development transiting from a discreet materials montage to a complex texture that includes cross-synthesis between voice and electronic synthetic sound, an example taken from *La Luz*, from 3’28” to 4’28”. This characteristic, typical of this artistic

³⁰All sound examples from the pieces are provided in stereo reduction versions, except the original recordings samples which are originally in stereo format.

genre, allowed a *creationist* approach to the compositional process, crafting and extracting unexpected relationships and new objects respectively.

- Use of pre-existent texts, taken from philosophical and scientific sources, in order to enrich the conceptual content and, at the same time, show that the use of already-existing cultural products is possible following the *acousmatic-creationist* diagram (Figure 2).

The cycle is made up of five pieces: *Overture*, *La Lumière*, *La Luz*, *The Light* and *Hundreds of Milliseconds (Finale)*. Each of these five sections of the cycle engages with a range of specific and general ideas. This pentalogy can be listened to as whole, in the order proposed or not, or as individual pieces. The sound source material for the entire cycle was generated from the original Huidobro interview and the phrase 'la lumière artificielle' recited by three female voices, each in one of the three languages defined: French, Spanish or English. Sound materials related to the gramophone as direct samples with connotative features were also used.

Two more texts were added to form the initial sound/conceptual palette:

1. A text by Friedrich A. Kittler, taken from his book *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, a publication translated from the original in German by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Kittler, Winthrop-Young and Wutz 1999). The book is a historical review of the techniques for sound and image recording and of the printed word, and at the same time is a theoretical discussion of the ontological, artistic, linguistic and discursive aspects generated by these technologies. Some sentences, featuring ideas related to aesthetical and communicational implications of recording and reproduction of sound and image, were selected from the introductory paragraph of the book. The original sentences and words in the English version of the book are:

- 'What phonographs and cinematographs ... were able to store was time ... Time determines the limit of all art ... To record the sound sequences of speech, literature has to arrest them in a system of 26 letters, thereby categorically excluding all noises sequences' (Kittler, Winthrop-Young and Wutz 1999: 3).
- 'Gramophone'
- 'Phonograph'.

These words were subsequently recorded in English, French and Spanish.

2. A selection of paragraphs, sentences and words from a scientific article on human language by Colin Phillips and Kuniyoshi Sakai; this text, entitled 'Language and the Brain' (Phillips and

Sakai 2005: 166–9), was recorded after the first four pieces were finished; the reading was done by a new female voice and only in English. Originally, the text was part of an alternative project to this cycle. That project, entitled *Ruido*, consisted of a dance-theatre play directed and performed by Sheffield-based dance artist Lucy Haighton, involving acousmatic music and live electronics by myself and carried out between October 2016 and February 2017. Some sounds derived from this text were added to the previously composed sections (especially to the *Overture*); the main paragraph was slightly adapted by the performer by including the words 'such as'; the text and words from this article are:

- 'Many species have evolved sophisticated communication systems' such as '(birds, primates and marine mammals), but human language stands out in at least two respects which contribute to vast expressive power of language. First, humans are able to memorize many thousands of words, each of which encodes a piece of meaning using arbitrary sound or gesture ... Second, humans are able to combine words to form sentences and discourses, making it possible to communicate an infinite number of different messages and providing the basis of human linguistic creativity. Furthermore, speakers are able to generate and understand novel messages quickly and effortlessly, on a scale of hundreds of milliseconds' (Phillips and Sakai 2005: 166).
- 'Evolve'
- 'Humans'
- 'Sound'
- 'Expressive'
- 'Communication systems'
- 'Encodes'
- 'Species'
- 'Arbitrary'
- 'Linguistic'.

The appropriation of these theoretical texts and the subsequent re-contextualisation of them into a poetic environment allowed the generation of an expressive artistic process propitiated by the *acousmatic-creationist* approach. The intention was to provide ambiguous material, situated in a blurred frontier, where it could be possible to assume them to be scientific, philosophical or poetic texts. This was possible thanks to the intuitive selection of the texts combined with a rational focusing in specific content related to human language. This selection process is part of what it was defined as the *system* in the *acousmatic-creationist* scheme in Figure 2.

The directive for the three women was to record the sentences in different ways, in an attempt to form a diverse palette containing both neutral and more expressive versions. Sound examples 3, 4 and 5 are

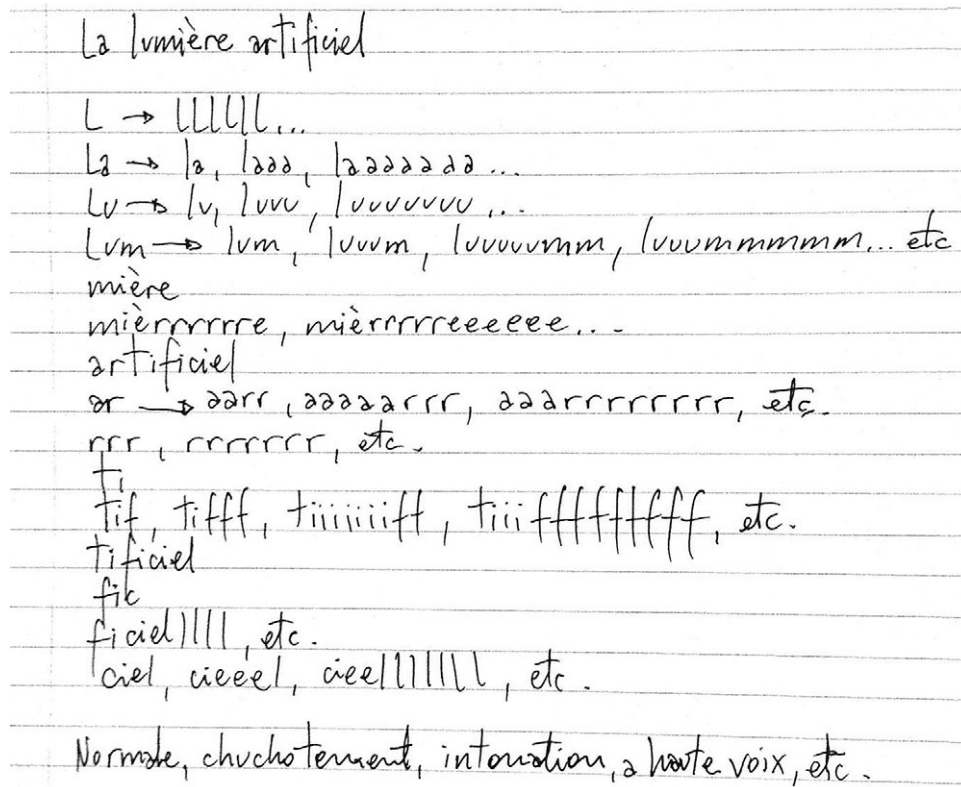


Figure 3. Handwritten text with the instructions for the French speaker.

samples of the original recording sessions, showing a normal speech in English with different intentionality, vocal games around syllables and non-semantic materials by the Spanish-speaking performer and vocal intonation of vowels in French, respectively. A significant degree of freedom was granted in the recordings, in agreement with each of the three speakers. Nevertheless, specific instructions were provided as general guidelines and some particular actions were requested as well. General instructions included speaking normally, in whispers, toned and aloud, emphasising certain aspects of their own natural intonation. Fortunately, each of the speakers delivered original propositions from these starting points. These vocal actions and ways of speaking were applied to all the texts, but special instructions were given for Huidobro's sentence. In addition, it was requested of each performer to vocalise *words*, syllables and letters separately using the previous characterisations. In a natural way, some specific features of each language emerged in the process, prompting a request for the performers to accentuate these and to explore them freely, leading to the extension of durations and shifting of frequencies of some sounds, all of this during the direct recording of the performed voice.

Using instructions inspired by Trevor Wishart's own directions for *Red Bird* (Wishart 2012: 17–27), the initial set of commands can be seen in Figures 3 and 4.

All these sounds were arranged by a montage procedure, during which sequences, *mesostructures* and the pieces' macro-forms were composed. As is proposed previously, by following the procedure described in the adaptation of Huidobro's diagram (Figure 2), new sounds emerged in a recursive dynamic from this process. Additional *non-vocal* sounds, specific for each piece were produced by means of new recordings or synthesis and classified in similar ways (*short*, *long* and so on). Finally, all these techniques, conditioned by the concrete means used and the actual composer's skills on this procedures, constitute the second bridge in the *acousmatic-creationist* scheme (Figure 2), which is precisely named *technique*: its use was through a hybrid action, guided by the balance between *reason* and *imagination*. This can be appreciated in the equilibrium of planed actions and the free space for improvisation and game, both during the recording sessions and afterwards during the acousmatic studio work process, all of which created a new fact, the piece, from elements taken from the real world combined in imaginative ways, following Huidobro's guidelines.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has shown how the octophonic cycle *La lumière artificielle* was conceived, developed and

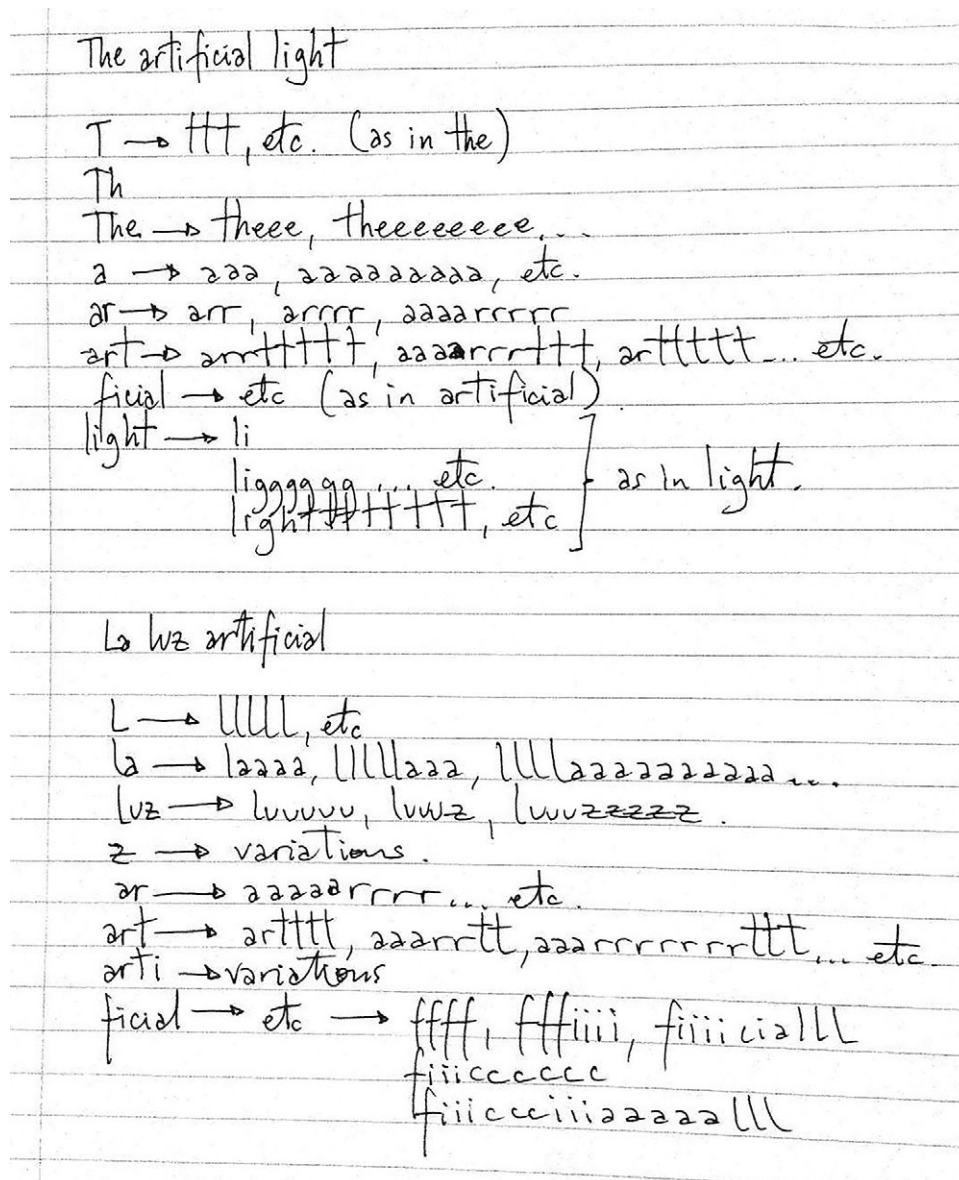


Figure 4. Handwritten text with the instructions for English and Spanish speakers.

forged into its final shape following the central notions of Huidobro's *creationism*. During the selection of sound materials, composer's imaginative intuition and rational thinking acted combined (*superconsciousness* state according to Huidobro). This is the first bridge, the *system*, in the *acousmatic-creationist* scheme. The same applies for the second bridge, the *technique*, which corresponds to the crafting process described in the previous section. At the same time, it has been stated that the convergence of several artistic notions, ranging from electroacoustic music to *sound poetry*, operating by the multi-layered intersection of cultural trends, including musical, poetic and scientific ideas, are implied by the texts present within the pieces. Accordingly, the idea of acousmatic

composition in a multi-channel format has been shown to be efficacious to give a concrete multi-layered structure, where the concept of *juxtaposition* has a prominent function, thus connecting this formal aspect with the theoretical background addressed. Alongside juxtaposition, other techniques were key procedures, such as relocation, re-contextualisation, transformation, creation of new words, combination of pre-existing ones, connection of adjectives and nouns in unexpected ways and ultimately dislocation of language in pursuit of a pure sonic content of syllables and phonemes. These procedures were used in order to obtain the raw material ('*materia prima*' in Spanish) for the cycle according to *creationism*, namely with the intention of finding unexpected

relationships between ideas, forms and sounds, through a creative process carried by merging *reason* and *imagination*.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771820000291>

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