



Distirak#5

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Decirnos algo. [Say something]

I always wonder why people do what they do. This understood as something in motion, as actions, which I (almost) always relate to the body and what emerges from it. In the KINU session with Imogen Stidworthy, one of the phrases the artist said stuck with me: *"A voice is not something I have, it's something I do"*.

In this workshop-seminar we did a couple of exercises proposed by the artist, one of which was to get the voice out through only one sound. Avoiding speech and trying to overlap one voice with another, we tried to manage the different sound variations of each others' bodies. The reactions were very diverse. In my case, I stayed silent, just listening. Emitting a sound made it impossible for me to hear the others' sounds and manifested a certain intrusive and perhaps voyeuristic character (I don't know the adjective used only for listening) of the voice. My silence also allowed me to pay attention to the auditory experience that was projected from each one of us. It was strange to attend to a kind of guttural white noise synthesis and to emphasize the splitting feature of the voice; to produce a sound without meaning, outside of linguistics, and to get it out from within without hardly moving our mouth (there where it originates).

Stidworthy presented a large part of her work, but also brought concepts, ideas and different theoretical approaches to voice, including a quote from Beckett:

"...perhaps that's what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside, that can be as thin as foil, I'm neither one side nor the other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind on the other the world, I don't belong to either, it's not to me they're talking, it's not of me they're talking"¹.

¹ Samuel Beckett (1979). The unnamable. The Beckett Trilogy. p. 352.

Beckett refers to the voice as something that detaches from the body when it is made and in the same way reveals itself, something that goes beyond the sense and meaning of the words it carries, something that opens up in different directions and tells more about itself, than the very rhetoric it establishes. As Labelle said², listening to a voice opens up the possibility of moving and oscillating (like the sound itself) between knowing and feeling. The voice has no thickness, it is something both foreign and intrinsic to the body, it has its own tone, its timbre, its accent (its singing), and all those features derived from the formal analysis of a sound, likewise it is wrapped in the construct of the cultural and exposes one's own subjectivity. Speech is an irreversible fact. Once the voice is out of the body, it reveals us and questions us. The voice is heard and requires us in that act. From the relational realm, raising one's voice is to appear, and many times not raising it, the absence, reveals its own presence to us. After all, the voice puts bodies and affects into action.

Stidworthy talked about various works. In one of them, *[(.)] (2011-2012)“(.)”*, the linguist Sacha Van Loo, a voice analyst from Antwerp, blind from birth, works for the police analyzing and investigating telephone testimonies. Van Loo uses echolocation to guide himself, to read and interpret different spaces and voices from acoustic recordings. The timbre of the voice, the specific brand of a motorcycle that starts, a car that passes or a fridge that vibrates, everything that remains in the background of a recording, all those background noises are what Van Loo looks for and can decipher. He can reconstruct the spaces and conditions in which the recording he listens to has taken place, providing keys and clues that allow the police to advance in their investigations. In this work the artist uses different audiovisual pieces to place us in Van Loo's listening , in order to access his auditory experience, where his interpretation goes beyond the so-called "prison of language".

Van Loo's work reminds me of the experience of acousmatic listening, where one listens without knowing the source that originates the sound, hearing voices without bodies, sounds without causality. Desire and meaning mediate this kind of listening. In acousmatic listening, our acoustic experience determines the path of going beyond what is heard, and the acoustic action overflows the body and its apparent desire to say. The voice that is heard never belongs (completely) to its body; it is here where acousmatics emphasizes the psychic aspect, where the presence is inhabited with its own delay. Many times when analyzing listening, the term "schizophonia" is used, where "schizo" means to split or separate and phono refers to the voice, which presents the separation between what is heard or a sound, and its re-transmission.

²Brandon Labelle (2018). *Sonic Agency. Sound and Emergent forms of resistance*. Goldsmiths Press p. 65.

"I turn to the other, with a voice shaped by this other one: I speak in order to locate myself near you³".



Iris a Fragment installation at Azkuna Zentroa (2021)

The texture of a voice is made of intimacy turned to sound, made exterior, a sound event that carries words, irreversible and with a certain desire to say something about something. From the desire to say, as Jane Bennett pointed out, we are vibrating matter, desiring to enter into resonance, to vibrate. Two surfaces and both refractory, to say and to tell ourselves is never effective, in any case (and fortunately) it belongs to the affective, it betrays (us) and reveals itself (to us) again and again. In blindness, acousmatics, technological opacities and in all that is able to hide the source from where a voice originates, there is always a delay; from thought to word, from word to voice, from voice to body... in this deferred time the (dis)appearance of the body comes into play, we want to see that the voice is someone's voice, a sound of something... we want to "see" that this sound "exists" (it appears, it is placed, it takes shape, it cannot be sustained in nothingness). As Irigaray said, all sound can exist, appear without the imposition of form, the sound emerges beyond the word, the body, the code and the contour. That is to say, the voice, the sound, would move in interstices between appearing and remaining invisible, between acousmatization and deacousmatization.

"There is no truth on our lips. Everything can exist. Everything deserves to be exchanged, without privilege or rejection. Everything is exchanged, but without trade- How to say it?"

³Brandon Labelle (2014). *Lexicon of the mouth*, Ed. Bloomsbury academic, London. p.3.

The language we know is so limited... Speak even so. Between us "the hard" prevails. We know the contours of our bodies well enough to love fluidity⁴."

⁴Irigaray, Luce (1999). Ser dos. Ed. Paidós. Madrid. p41