

MUSICAL WORDS ALPHABET IN FREEDOM

Futurist Manifesto

Following the manifesto 'Destruction of Syntax – Wireless Imagination – Words in Freedom', published 11 May 1913, we declare today that a total revolution in the linguistic sphere is poetically possible.

Poetry must be detached from the scaffolding of traditional literature, and thus liberated from the conventional expressions of language, in order that it might recreate itself with new words, invented and modulated by the poet. Italian Futurism, rich in thirty years of free-word / noise-making experience, today creates **MUSICAL WORDS**: a linguistic revolution destined to generate a new, typically musical, form of poetry unburdened by prescribed meanings and uncontaminated by translations; a poetry which will grant our primitive pleasure pure vocal expression.

With half a century of lively artistic experimentation behind us, and endowed with a renovated aesthetic sensibility – more complex than before, and expanded by the development of mechanical civilisation – we have reached the point at which we are able to transcend the catalogued word and enjoy the poetry of vocal sounds, noises, and the phonetic orchestrations derived from these, in which the space-pause plays its chief role of providing compositional harmony.

Musical words are appreciated by the aerial sensibility: that is to say, musically indefinite, mysterious, infinite and dynamic, where sounds and noises – isolating themselves and overlapping one another, varying in timbre and in volume – become meaningful, cautionary, menacing, persuasive, etc., independently of the natural or mechanical phenomena that suggest them.

Any settling down in the too-soft armchair of the earth, where the cultural pregnancy of 7000 years distends the civilisation of reason and symbols, is thereby abolished.

Centuries of tradition have reduced poetry to a procession of words dragging themselves along on the crutches of orthopaedic meanings, and too many customs have tormented poets, hemming them in with sentence structure, and stifling them with the obligatory psychological chronicle and the weight of rhetoric. Finally, we have restored to the word its pure musical space.

Words in freedom and aeropoezy have attained great heights, but the thirst for innovation and originality is inexhaustible. Now, with a paradoxical acrobatic leap, it is necessary to return to our origins and discern the first voice of the poet of the machine in the cry of the new primitive man.

Just as the painter invents chromatic tones, so the poet creates and modulates his own words, and in creating vocal symphonies combines them like a composer. The natural progress and linguistic development of civilisation – as well as the considerable contribution of the sounds-noises provided by machines and technology in more recent times – has led us to this point.

In issuing his first cries primitive man instinctively created certain sounds that had a direct relationship with the phenomena to which they referred. The phonetic expression of the word was born of nature: wind thunder pain laughter waves water trees silence warmth fire avalanche, etc., are the primitive sources of words and language. Alongside these natural words there quickly arose others, no longer constructed from instinct but from reason. Every word guarded a precise meaning; every race developed its own characteristic forms of expression; words crossed one another and no longer coincided: languages were born, and with languages, poetry.

At the same time that the vocal-sound-as-word emerged, the litany and the rhythmical song were also born, marking the development of music and poetry from the beginning. Later, the invention of instruments rendered music completely autonomous, but poetry never abandoned its musical character, even if measured with the compasses of logic and guided by the rails of vocabulary, laid down on sleepers of verse and rhyme. The need was felt to organise words according to laws of harmony, creating the rhyme and the fixed verse – that is, sound framed within rhythms and cadences. Even outside verse, poetry did not detach itself from vocal or instrumental music. On the contrary, it continued to be associated – and at times fused – with it, creating the recitative: one of many lyrical forms, and the first attempt at the creation of a

musical language.

Free verse signified a rebellion against poetic regulation, aiming at the conquest of a symphonic atmosphere. It constituted a prelude to the polysymphonic character of words in freedom, where syntheses of simultaneous analogies, onomatopoeias, phonetic abstractions, repeated, blended or elongated words and contrasts in tempo achieved a distinctive sonority absent from every other form of linguistic expression.

From its rhythmic, cadenced origins, to melodic versification and crepuscular symphonies, there has always been a delicate musical weft to poetry that was brutally torn asunder with the noise aesthetic¹ of Marinetti.

Poetry is now able to rid itself entirely of its burden of literature, philosophical musings, symbols, linguistic contortions, stereotypical images and formal traditions, and reacquire – by means of a more agile and profound research into the forces of nature and technology – the values of its vocal expressions. Therefore:

1. Destroy the archaism of vocabulary (rigid permutations of letters in logical arrangements) and throw the way open to new words (vocal harmonies) generated and discovered by the individual lyrical sensibility. The poet must be free to forge his own poetic expressions. Always new, and unable to be catalogued, they will assume the characteristics of his temperament, varying in time and space in accordance with a law of perpetual transformation and transcendence.

2. Musical words are a sequence of harmonies generated by ever-new, varied and infinite combinations of vowels, consonants and phonetic inventions. Onomatopoeia – which has its source in the life of phenomena, and which constitutes a spontaneous emotional expression – must perfect itself in a musical lyricism able to render the autonomy of the word more agile.

3. Musical words, liberated from every literary bureaucracy, and invested with an ever-more original lyrical energy that carries within itself the personality of the author, will find understanding and integration within any nation of any people of any tongue, as with any other

¹ *Rumorismo*.

musical work. The title will be the sole guide, and will be sufficient to eliminate any misunderstandings deriving from racial and cultural differences.

4. Musical words demand declamation. Mute reading, being unable to free itself from the aridity of the musical pentagrams, merely allows the reader the plastic pleasure of the typographical forms. Only a delivery that unites the musical sensibility with an abundant range of vocal and other sound effects, as well as an emotional intensity, can develop an atmosphere of poetic resonance. Declamation will therefore become a highly specialised art, free from the bravura of professional actors and the elephantine pomposity of lecturers.

5. It is possible to obtain a more perfect orchestration of delivery through the use of musical and sound effects created with instruments or any other means selected by the author, drawing on technology and experience in concert performance, both in the theatre and on the radio. This will constitute the most fitting glorification of the art of noises conceived by L. Russolo and its most natural symbiosis with music and poetry.

6. Musical words find in the Futurist free-word tables already realised by Marinetti, Soffici, Carrà, Buzzi, Depero and others their most advanced development and their most appropriate form in print. Outside the traditional layout of the page musical words will be able to adapt their graphic physiognomy to a more organic architectural lyricism, each letter and each word having its own distinctive space form volume colour and material. Musical symbols and graphic indications will complete the layout, allowing – as with any other score – a reasonably precise interpretation.

7. We Futurists believe that with the birth of musical words a new era of poetry is beginning. Conscious of this, we invite all young revolutionary poets to unearth from their instincts – perhaps stifled by too much of this century's culture – the melodious images of the primitive sensibility that smoulders deep within the heart of mankind.

Venice, 4 February 1944

T. Crali – F. T. Marinetti

Futurists