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On Poet-Scholars: Un Taller de Poesia

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On Poet-Scholars: *Un Taller de Poesía*
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Since 2010 I have been teaching a poetry workshop in Spanish for intermediate and advanced undergraduate students at the College of William and Mary. Distinct from other courses in our curriculum, the *taller* invites students skilled in cultural criticism and translation to tap into their creative capacity for invention, linguistic exploration, and performance to yield an original body of work while deepening their understanding of Spanish American poetic traditions, their contexts of creation and expression. Our point of departure stems from a simple question: why write? And students develop their particular, situated responses to this prompt—why write *poetry*? why now? why here?—by considering how poets in Spanish America and Latino poets in the United States engage this question in the contexts of political activism and human rights. While similar prompts could guide a traditional seminar dedicated to the critical study of poetry, by activating the vital creative force within my students I hope to advance a different kind of learning—one derived from practices that, in the words of Brian Massumi, “might not have so much to do with mastery and judgment as with affective connection and abductive participation” (cited in Zournazi 220). I am convinced, moreover, that the risk, self-discipline, collaboration, openness, and sensitivity this work requires can make it transformative. In coming to voice as part of this larger conversation, students not only refine their linguistic competencies and affirm their ways of being in the world; they do so by deepening their cross-cultural awareness, their understanding of the literary form, and their appreciation of the tools for change the public humanities can offer.

The idea for this course grows out of my own experience and practice. As a cultural

studies scholar with expertise in post-dictatorship Argentina, I have spent most of my career in the US academy teaching Spanish American literature and culture to non-native speakers. Over the years I have found ways to express different facets of my own voice as scholar, poet, and translator in my published work. I also have integrated these various modes of engagement in my pedagogy, primarily through creative assignments in issues-driven, interdisciplinary seminars. My *taller de poesía* builds on these experiences to explore largely uncharted territory. A brief review of curricular offerings in departments of Spanish and Hispanic Cultural Studies suggests that creative writing classes taught in Spanish are few and far between. I believe this represents a missed opportunity to harness the awe-inspiring, revelatory, and critical capacities associated with second-language acquisition, including the joys of linguistic discovery and experimentation. While the idea of teaching a poetry workshop in Spanish to non-native speakers may seem misguided—is there a literary form, after all, that requires greater precision and linguistic mastery?—it attracts me *because* of the demands poetic language makes of us. Aspirational and exacting, poetry calls us to attention; it turns on a detail and opens up new worlds. Exercises in reading and writing poetry can help sharpen even more the usual focus required of students by the foreign language classroom while simultaneously re-activating deep-seeded memories of when they first tried new sounds, discovered speech through a different alphabet, moved from estrangement to recognition and back again. A focus on poetry makes immediately evident the difference an error in conjugation or spelling can make; how choices in punctuation, gender, a pronoun or form of address can impact meaning; and why, while many options could be grammatically correct, poets might choose one over another. But even more than the language skills students refine with such practice, I am interested in the ways unfamiliarity, the strangeness

of Spanish—as an oblique, disruptive element that introduces a welcome randomness—can serve to enhance creativity, problem solving, and learning.¹ While working through this language filter is only one layer of the experience, it sets the stage for the ways in which we engage the course questions that bring us together.

The discussion that follows draws on Diana Taylor’s theorization of the archive and the repertoire to analyze the contents and processes that constitute my *taller*. By organizing my remarks in this way I hope to capture the multiple levels on which the course operates, “the live and the scripted” (32) forms of knowledge it facilitates. The archive on which I draw familiarizes students with great works from the Spanish American canon and includes scripted assignments designed to advance their critical, linguistic, and poetic capacities. My approach to the repertoire explores how I prepare for “those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible [forms of] knowledge” (Taylor, 20) that correspond to students’ embodied memories of the course. While my remarks are necessarily limited by my perspective as facilitator and guide, I hope they nevertheless convey some of the ways in which the collaboration, contemplation, and invention students practice might remain with them, encouraging them to seek new creative challenges and shaping how they choose to face them.

An Archive

So why write? And why write poetry? Half of our time in class is focused on how published poets have responded to this question. Assigned readings correspond to the Spanish American literary tradition—in which I include US Latino poets—and foreground the ways in which history and social location shape utterance, in both method and message.

Our archive features works by canonical figures like Ernesto Cardenal, Alejandra Pizarnik, and Pablo Neruda, as well as lesser known poets like Juana Goergen and Andrea Cote. Short texts by John Berger, Carolyn Forché, Martín Espada, Julio Cortázar, and Eduardo Galeano provide the theoretical frameworks for approaching our interpretive and creative work.

Specific writing prompts invite students to identify other works they like or find particularly compelling in the only required textbook, an anthology of Spanish American poetry, and unpack why. In discussing our choices, we focus on beauty and lyricism, on composition and mechanics, and on how these poems speak to the issues and debates of their time.

A favorite touch point in the course is the poetry of Juan Gelman, not only because of the mastery with which he wields his craft, but because his poems lend themselves beautifully to conceptualizing the poetic gesture as a form of activism or *militancia*. Full of idiomatic expressions and neologisms, they can prove challenging for undergraduate students with limited proficiency. And yet, reading his work together offers an opportunity to deconstruct it while addressing the histories of repression in the Southern Cone, details of Gelman's own biography, and his response to the defeat of the political project that accompanied the massacre of his generation at the close of the twentieth century. I prepare students for engaging Gelman's work by asking them to read John Berger's essay, "The Hour of Poetry," paying particular attention to the evidence behind his claim that "poetry can repair no loss but it defies the space which separates" (249). Berger's assertions that "Poetry addresses language in such a way as to . . . incite a caring" (249) and that its "unceasing labour is to bring together what life has separated or violence has torn apart" (249) guide our analysis of one of Gelman's poem's in class. Addressed to his disappeared son, "Si dulcemente" begins with a series of questions:

si dulcemente por tu cabeza pasaban las olas
del que se tiró al mar/¿qué pasa con los hermanitos
que enterraron?/¿hojitas les crecen de los
dedos?/¿arbolitos/otoños
que los deshojan como mudos?/en silencio
(*Si dulcemente* 79)

[If waves from someone who threw himself into the sea/
came to mind gently/what about our brothers who were/
in-earthed?/do leaves sprout from their
fingers?/saplings/autumns/
soundlessly losing their leaves?/silently]
(Hardie St. Martin 87)

In our discussion I guide students' attention to the way Gelman's poetic voice conjures through these questions the bodies of the disappeared, their bones, in their final resting places. We note his point of departure—the image of a cadaver at the bottom of the sea, rocked by waves generated by a diver—and how this singular death leads the poet to wonder about those other “little brothers” disappeared as a result of State Terrorism, those buried in the ground, in *fosas comunes* and unmarked graves.² Unpacking the metaphorical language this reverie evokes helps students see how it operates, how the image of leaves sprouting from their fingers like little trees growing gives way to the natural cycle of life and death, to Autumn's decay and the silence of a figurative winter. And then we turn to consider how this opening stanza sets up the rest, breaking that silence to conjure the voices of those gone, to

name them, to reconstruct their militancy and their humanity with tenderness, effectively remembering the shared hopes of a shattered collective before closing again with the muteness of bones disintegrating in the summer night.

Reading the poem closely together facilitates a discussion of Gelman's craft—how his expert use of metaphorical language transforms the scene of annihilation into something more, and how he creates pockets of intimacy vital both to the construction of collective memory and to the future work this memory might engender. With students I spend some time addressing those pockets Gelman opens through language, pausing to consider as an example his use of the word “entierraron” [in-earthed] in line three. Students don't always notice the erroneous conjugation in Spanish of “to bury” or understand why Gelman has chosen to retain in the past perfect conjugation of the verb both the word “earth” (tierra) and the present tense (entierran). Pausing together to consider it helps them recognize how it functions to interrupt the poem's gentle flow of questions. Like a snag or a slap after the caress of the opening lines, it is a deformation that demands addressees pay attention, revisit what is stated there in order to grasp the very finitude of death and simultaneously the never-ending and also creative nature of mourning. This understanding leads, in turn, to a discussion of the way Gelman's poetry processes trauma to tap into the liminal, the not-yet-available to culture, and communicate a deeper truth: the incomprehensible, almost inassimilable reality of a loved one's body buried deep under ground, rendered mute in humid darkness, but also in the very medium from which through their recollection a life-nurturing energy might be harvested. Referencing the physical matter of the tomb, it is as if the metaphor of the tree and the genealogy of resistance it images had sprouted from

Gelman's poetic unconscious, a gift that when spoken also generates community through the intimacy of shared understanding.

If I have chosen to share this classroom exercise in some detail it is because it captures the workshop's general approach to the archive. Studying poems like Gelman's alongside Berger's theory helps students appreciate the sort of purposeful, directed intervention poetic language pursues while at the same time identifying what is distinctive about the forms it takes; it makes visible strategies they may want to borrow and nudges them to take risks with the formal freedom to experiment it invites. Appreciating poetry's "continual labour of reassembling what has been scattered" (Berger 249) through metaphor helps them see the tool and some of the reasons poets might choose to deploy it in practice. While the circumstances that bring *them* to voice likely will diverge substantially from those addressed by Gelman and the other poets mentioned in Berger's text, I have found that his formulation of the problem, the call to poetry, proves scalable.

All the readings I select for the workshop speak to the labor of poetry. Each example we discuss in class answers in its own distinct way the central course question; each provides an opportunity to situate poetic utterance in a particular historical moment, social experience, or debate, and to focus on the formal elements that make up that particular poet's toolbox. Brought together as a series of case studies, they lay the foundation for our semester-long curriculum. What is more, while the archival elements chosen may vary in different iterations of the course, their selection is always guided by the recognition that in the workshop environment they must serve a double function: familiarize students with a body of work corresponding to Spanish American poetic traditions and prepare students to make the leap from reception to action as they seek to answer the central course questions for themselves

and in their own voice. In other words, students must be given enough historical and contextual information to make sense of the poet's social location; and the study of each work must make visible the range of choices available to the poet, how voice and silence, rhyme and repetition, line breaks and enjambment, imagery and metaphor, linguistic innovation and even punctuation are used to greatest effect. But equally important, workshop facilitators must remain attentive to the ways in which the live and the scripted might optimally come together to encourage students' development of their own poetic language. The course archive must, for this reason, also include another sort of script, one made up of exercises and assignments designed to maximize other ways of knowing through the affective creative charge the embodied workshop experience is able to generate. In practice this means understanding the course as a form of experiential learning and, following Spinoza, understanding affect as a bodily operation aligned less with feeling or emotion and more with transformative potential—the “capacity of *affecting* and being *affected*” (Massumi cited in Zournazi 212), of moving and being moved. If, as Brian Massumi claims, “Affect is this passing of a threshold, seen from the point of view of the change in capacity” (Zournazi 212), the repertoires folded into the workshop are vital to the learning experience. Not because every student will one day become a published poet, but because what they feel in the course of engaging this medium will stay with them long after the workshop is finished. For this reason, the scene must be primed with particular assignments and exercises designed to give “the body's movements a kind of depth that stays with it across all transitions—accumulating in memory, in habit, in reflex, in desire, in tendency” (Massumi cited in Zournazi 213). *How* the course's affective architecture helps structure this passage is what I turn to next.

A Repertoire

So how do “the archive and the repertoire work [together] to constitute and transmit . . . knowledge” (Taylor 33) in the particular scenario that is the Spanish language creative writing workshop? What difference might this approach to engaging poetry make? One way to begin answering these questions is to describe what students are called upon to *do* as part of this class, both in terms of formal assignments and in our face-to-face encounters. The students I work with are generally very comfortable with the structure of intermediate and advanced Hispanic Cultural Studies classes that require them to apply a range of theoretical paradigms to literary analysis and develop close textual readings. They are also accustomed to detailed grading rubrics that incorporate objective measures into evaluation criteria, such as adherence to MLA format, grammatical accuracy, and use of textual evidence. Given this, I include in our program of study an assignment that is relatively standard in our discipline, a short analysis of a poem or series of poems that enables students to demonstrate the critical expertise they have developed in previous courses and helps build their confidence as they venture into less familiar terrain. But I also build in hybrid assignments that require students both to identify and experiment with techniques expertly deployed by published poets. Working within the relatively safe confines (formal and linguistic) of a pre-existing text helps students make the leap from the familiar to the unfamiliar and provides the necessary scaffolding for them to develop their own poetic voice.

A favorite hybrid assignment is an annotated translation of a poem originally written in Spanish. I prepare students by discussing with them published examples, the choices translators are called to make, and how cultural expertise and historical context necessarily

condition these choices. We analyze together how very challenging works like Vicente Huidobro's "Golondrina" ["Swallow"] have been rendered into English and discuss my own translation of Juana Goergen's poem, "Reconquista" ["Reconquest"], along with the translators' notes.³ I also ask them to consider how the creative labor of translation aligns with our central course question: in this case, not simply why write poetry, but why translate, why make the effort to recreate a particular poem in another language? Before they go off to attempt this on their own, I make sure they are armed with detailed instructions regarding what factors to consider in their selection process (such as length, theme, format and difficulty, their familiarity with the poet's cultural background) and what to include in their annotations and commentary. I also reserve time in another class before the assignment's due date for them to fine tune their first draft with guided feedback from other students. When all is said and done I find that students tend to select poems for personal and for political reasons, mostly in free verse and often from lesser-known authors, and to fret most over challenging turns of phrase and idiomatic expressions. In almost every case, however, the critical and creative attention this effort entails helps them understand not only the way the text they are translating has been put together and why, but how the creative choices they make contribute to the final product expressed as their own poem. The exercise reminds them that writing and translation do not occur in a vacuum, that they are powerful interventions in the public sphere, and that they can be strategically deployed to act in the world, touch a community of readers, and shape our collective imagination.

A second hybrid assignment I have found very effective in the first part of the course focuses on the genre of "blackout" or "found" poetry. It entails having students identify a newspaper article or other brief text in prose (manifestos work well, as do short canonical

pieces) published in Spanish that they would like to express as a poem. I explain it is up to them to find the poem within what is already there by blacking out all the extraneous words and punctuation without changing the order in which the words appear. Their task is to apply what they have learned about poetic language in their selection process in order to distil new meaning from their found text. As with most exercises, the blackout poems they generate fall along a continuum reflecting the combination of poetic sensibilities, skill, and chance involved. But they always include lovely surprises, powerful juxtapositions and metaphorical expressions that are worth exploring further; and once in a while a blackout poem comes along that is so beautifully composed it easily could be publishable. One of the more memorable examples from the last time I taught this course is Lydia Hurtado's "Demandarán regresar" [They will demand to return]. Lydia takes as her point of departure a newspaper story about a protest organized by the National Immigrant Youth Alliance published in the Mexican daily *La Jornada*.⁴ In her brief introduction, she explains she chose to focus on this particular subject because of its timeliness and because of her desire, as a first-generation U.S. citizen, to intervene in the conversation about "dreamers," children of undocumented migrants born in the United States. Crossing out most of the words, she begins and ends her poem with the same affirmation, "intentarán" (they will try):

Intentarán

reunificar familias

separadas

por la deportación.

Tijuana, México

San Ysidro, California—

parte del movimiento

“Llevarlos a casa”.

“Dreamers”,

(traídos cuando eran niños

criados y educados en este país)

deportados.

Intentarán.

[They will try

to reunite families

separated

by deportation.

Tijuana, Mexico

San Ysidro, California—

part of the movement

“Bring them home.”

“Dreamers,”

(brought as children,

raised and educated in this country)
deported.

They will try.]

Lydia extracts from the prose description of the organized protest what she wants to make visible, what she believes matters most: the hope and determination the choreographed protest underscores. And she uses repetition, one of the poetic tools we discuss, to convey the conviction that underlies the participants' attempt.⁵ What is more, she enacts what Carolyn Forché calls a "poetics of witness"—a poetics situated in "the sphere in which claims against the political order are made in the name of justice" (*Against Forgetting*, 31). Having been introduced to Forché and other writers who make explicit the links between humanistic pursuits and civic responsibility, Lydia activates her own creative and cultural agency to turn theoretical principles into practice. Her blackout poem not only recognizes how powerful "the work of art in the world" (Sommer) can be; it demonstrates how assignments like these can spark students' imaginations and offer them the ways and means—the words, the mechanism, the tools—to become "judicious citizen artists" (Sommer, 9) and agents of change.

While hybrid assignments prime students for coming to voice, most of our energy throughout the semester is focused on the development of an original body of work: a series of poems authored by students in Spanish. In this sense, the exercises that structure our time together in the workshop environment are as important as the kinds of assignments students complete outside of class. I deliberately choreograph every class meeting to balance our critical and creative engagement with poetry. Our very first encounter sets the tone for what

will follow. After brief introductions, I ask each student to take two minutes to think about and write down a word or phrase in Spanish that they really like. I want them immediately to reconnect with what drew them to Spanish, the sounds and cadences that sparked their imagination. Students come up with all sorts of things, from verses learned in a middle school Spanish language class to words spoken by grandparents and phrases overheard while studying abroad. I share with them my own early fascination with Federico García Lorca's *Romance sonámbulo*, and particularly the verse "verde que te quiero verde" [green, how I want you green]. But I also introduce songs like "Canción para mi muerte" [Song for my death] by the Argentine rock group Sui Generis that captivated me as a teenager, with its haunting opening lines: "Hubo un tiempo que fue hermoso/y fui libre de verdad,/guardaba todos mis sueños/en castillos de cristal" [There was a time that was lovely/and I was truly free,/I kept all of my dreams/in crystal castles]. Once everyone has had a chance to weigh in, I explain some of the reasons for the exercise: I want them to see that poetic language is everywhere, and that we often have a visceral connection to its sounds and rhythms.

Attending to what provokes this response within us is not only a first step to figuring out how we might mold this instrument to shape our own poetic expression; it also can transform the way we relate to our everyday. Practicing an openness to what may come is part and parcel of activating the poetic imagination; and welcoming the unexpected can lead, with care and labor, to extraordinary results. I also take this opportunity to underscore how much of the workshop experience hinges on a climate of mutual respect and to establish some ground rules about listening and offering constructive feedback. Having their writing discussed by their peers can make students feel vulnerable and exposed, even under the best of circumstances, so creating a safe space for sharing our creative work must be a top priority.

Before ending the class, we review the syllabus, and I give them their first writing assignment: a mnemonic exercise that involves recalling in detail their first memories of Spanish. I also ask them to bring to our next class an object for show and tell, and to begin noting in their “cuaderno de anotaciones” (writing journal) those images, words, phrases, questions, dreams, and bits of overheard conversations they encounter in their everyday lives that might find their way into future poems. By the time they return for our second class, I find they are “in it,” invested in the work that lies ahead and cognizant that they will demonstrate their mastery of course materials not in the usual ways, but rather by becoming practitioners of the craft. They will learn by doing—by striving, by failing, by revisiting and revising in pursuit of their own creative vision.

If day one sets the tone, other elements in my toolbox help to shape the encounters that follow. I bring to these a set of “Oblique Strategies” adapted from exercises commonly used in poetry workshops taught in English and from exercises developed for the foreign-language classroom.⁶ The trick, I’ve found, is to mix things up, following the principle that disruption, frustration, and unforeseen obstacles rather than block creativity can enhance it. My own set of Oblique Strategies is designed to shift students’ attention, help them relate to the language they are utilizing in a new way, and reinforce the formal aspects and poetic techniques we are covering. Some of these are scripted while others are improvised. Anne Waldman’s “Intriguing Objects” exercise is a good example of the first. Its point of departure is the collection of objects students bring to our second class for show and tell. As students take turns sharing the stories of their objects, their classmates take notes. Once everyone has had a chance to present, students are asked to write a poem based on one or more of the objects presented, not necessarily their own. Pairing this writing exercise with readings of

Pablo Neruda's *Odes to Common Things* like "Oda a los calcetines" [Ode to socks] or "Oda al pan" [Ode to bread] further helps students understand how metaphors are constructed, with one thing standing in for the other, and how images and objects can operate in a poem to convey meaning. Students often choose to write about a fellow student's object, projecting their own interpretations as gentle offerings. And I borrow each of their first lines for a derivative exercise that asks students to choose an opening verse they like and write a poem to follow.⁷ Our "Poetic Snapshots" exercise is structured in a similar way. Inspired by Maggie Anderson's "In a Dark Room: Photography and Revision," it draws on photographs instead of objects that students bring to class. I ask only that students select an image to share that captivates them for some reason: it can be a personal or family snapshot, an artistic photograph by a renowned artist, or a newspaper image of a scene or event. I then ask that they write three different poems inspired by the photo from three different perspectives and with three different audiences in mind. Before doing so, they must think about what is visible within the frame and what has been left out; what is blurry and what is in focus; what details jump out at them and how these relate to the feelings the photograph elicits. This exercise works especially well to help students think about the differences between narrative and poetic forms of expression, the evocative power of image details, and questions of perspective and voice—from where and to whom the poetic voice is addressed. Follow-up exercises like Robin Behn's "Letter Poems"—"Write a poem in which a particular speaker who refers to him or herself as 'I' is addressing a particular 'you'"—help students develop their own poetic voice further, a task once again informed by examples of published works. All of these efforts work together to help students assimilate and synthesize a range of

techniques and strategies; and students demonstrate their understanding of how such poetic choices shape outcomes by putting them into practice.

In addition to all the necessary work these scripted poetic encounters accomplish, I would be remiss not to mention the ways in which more spontaneous collaborative exercises inspired by the foreign language classroom round out the workshop learning environment. Participants, after all, are not just undergraduate students operating in their native language, but language learners who already experience a certain amount of estrangement vis-à-vis the Spanish they are called upon to use. Approaching the language filter as an asset rather than a hindrance means practicing a form of pedagogical jujutsu, and bringing in an element of play is key to helping students wrestle with the blank page. Given this, I often ask students to work in pairs or in teams and have them respond to prompts under ridiculous constraints. This formula paradoxically seems to mitigate their stress and maximize their enjoyment. I call on them, for example, to transform idiomatic expressions and “dichos” (sayings), or a set of unrelated words generated through a “lluvia de palabras” (brainstorming), into a poem in ten minutes; to string together existing lines of verse in new ways that generate new meanings; to write “class poems” in real time via the progressive addition of a single line of verse, often to great comic effect; and to move between English and Spanish, using translation, to help fine tune their efforts. Peer feedback, opportunities to read their poems out loud and to hear them read by others, and open discussion about what is working, what needs work, and why, round out most of our class sessions. Rather than finding students’ imperfect mastery of Spanish to be an obstacle in this creative process, I find it enhances their creativity and willingness to collaborate. Indeed, at its best, this melding of workshop environment and foreign language classroom confirms Brian Eno’s observation that “The

enemy of creative work is boredom . . . And the friend is alertness . . . what makes you alert is to be faced with a situation that is beyond your control so you have to be watching it very carefully to see how it unfolds, to be able to stay on top of it. That kind of alertness is exciting” (cited in Harford, *Messy* 22). Full of “attention-grabbing challenges” (Harford, *Messy* 22) the foreign language poetry workshop invites students to engage in pleasurable linguistic play, to attempt new formulations, to share their creations in a climate of mutual support and open discovery. And in so doing it fulfills “a special mission by keeping aesthetics in focus, [and] lingering with students and readers over charmed moments of freely felt pleasure that enable fresh perceptions and foster new agreements” (Sommer, 3).

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the *taller de poesia* is its insistence on valuing process as much, if not more, than discreet outcomes or final products. This emphasis is reflected not only in the ways we work together in class but also in the course’s evaluation rubrics that include categories like development and growth. Measuring these means recognizing students’ openness to risk and experimentation while insisting on the importance of correction and revision. In evaluating the course’s culminating assignment—a portfolio composed of six to eight original poems they consider their best work—I make clear that all of their creative pieces should have been through at least one re-write following feedback from me or from a peer review. I also ask that they write a short introduction that establishes the parameters through which they would like me to approach their work; that they reflect on the development of their own poetic journey; and that they make explicit where it began for them and where they find themselves at its end. Lastly I caution them that this self-reflection also should function like a position paper in which they develop and defend, given their own experience, newfound expertise, and location, their view of what the work of poetry entails,

what poetry can do for those who write it and those who consume it, and what they consider special—or not—about its labor. I regard the workshop a success to the extent that most students arrive at “a conception of poetry in strong relation to — or as a form of — knowledge-production and knowledge-work . . . that conceives of learning, researching, interpreting, as forms of *poiesis*” (Ronda); and that they leave with a deeper appreciation not only of the beauty of this art form, but of the small and transcendent ways in which the poetic imagination can “reframe experience, offset prejudice, and refresh our perception of what exists so that it seems new and worthy of attention” (Sommer 10). I am convinced, moreover, that the workshop provides excellent training in cultural agency. By following “a model of poetic production as grounded in inquiry, instruction, and labor (rather than, say, the expressivist ideals of natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity)” (Ronda), the foreign language creative writing workshop can play a unique role not only in Hispanic Studies curricula but more generally in a liberal arts education, broadly conceived. As part of a comprehensive program of study, it can offer students the necessary space to pause, listen to one another, take risks and find joy in acts of creation, while simultaneously recalibrating their approach to the academic enterprise and preparing them for public life. And it can help form “poet-scholars” whose experience of making art will stay with them as a memory of the possible through creative challenges and transformations to come.

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¹ I draw here from Tim Harford's September 2015 TED Talk, "How frustration can make us more creative." He expands on these ideas in his recent book, *Messy: The Power of Disorder to Transform our Lives*.

² The addressee is most likely Gelman's son, his immediately prior referent, whose body was identified in 1990 in a cement-filled drum found in the San Fernando River. Among the "little brothers" he goes on to name later are Paco Urondo, Rodolfo Walsh and Haroldo Conti, all writers and militants assassinated during the dictatorship. Walsh and Conti's remains were never recovered.

³ For the Huidobro translation, I rely on *Thinking Spanish Translation: A Course in Translation* edited by Sándor G.J. Hervey, Ian Higgins, and Louise M. Haywood.

⁴ "Demandarán este lunes 150 inmigrantes deportados regresar a Estados Unidos."

⁵ See appendix for a visual representation of this blackout poem.

⁶ I borrow the idea of "Oblique Strategies" from Tim Harford ("How frustration can make us more creative"). I rely on Robin Behn and Chase Twichell's *The Practice of Poetry. Writing Exercises from Poets who Teach* for most of the exercises I use in class.

⁷ See Michael Waters', "Auction: First Lines (For a Group)," for more on how this exercise works.