

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Almost like imitating the history of Argentina, we cannot talk about *The Blind Spot* without mentioning the tragic events surrounding its production.

In 1996, a publisher interested in Latin American visual and sound poetry offered us to publish a book on experimental Argentinean poetry. Very happy with that, some poets close to the experimental poetry movement named Paralengua put hands to work, including Jorge Santiago Perednik, who would approach the more antique relationships between visuality and literature. About three years later the book was finished, but by then the editor had lost interest, and the book was never published.

The project, which was in principle aborted by the group, was continued by Perednik, who reached deep into the 60s and 70s. But, before he could come to an end, he fell seriously ill. In his last days he let us know about the anthology, and his desire to complete and publish the work already done. Since then, our commitment was to bring the anthology to a final destination. It was not an easy task, because of the enormous difficulty involved in interpreting another person's work, and the loss of most of the graphics and many of the texts, due to an assault in Perednik's home address. So, having the incomplete Perednik's writings, a list of authors assembled by him, and files on frequently damaged CDs and DVDs, I began with Carlos Estevez the difficult task of collecting and selecting works, in order to complete what we believe is an important collection, considering the amount of works and texts, and their quality. After reviewing the original texts by Perednik, trying to keep them untouched as much as possible, we completed the anthology with our own texts and others by specialized authors, continuing the approach and the original plan of the author. A major decision was to limit the book largely to visual poetry: in his original plan Perednik also intended to include language and video poetry, which would have been impossible to fit into one volume. Anyway, we took into account the influence of technology on the genre, starting from the discovery of paintings on stone (pictographs from *Cueva de las Manos*) to recent experiments with computers and networks. The game between literature and technology has always been there, just that for centuries the "Gutenberg Galaxy" has dominated, and the technological matrix became invisible to the eyes of the readers.

"The Blind Spot" (*El Punto Ciego*) was the title of the poetry magazine *Xul* # 10, an issue entirely dedicated to visual poetry. Physiologically speaking, the "blind spot" is defined as the area of the retina where the optic nerve emerges, which does not have the light-sensitive cells, thus lacking all visual perception. Normally we do not perceive its existence because the blind spot of one eye is supplemented by the optical information provided by the other eye. The blind spot is also difficult to perceive with one eye because the brain virtually recreates and populates that area by cloning it in relation to the surrounding visual environment.* From a literary standpoint, *The Blind Spot* is also a metaphor that encourages the main objective of this book: more than revealing the modernity, avant garde or novelty of the genre, to point out the importance of what until now remained in Argentina at that exact angle in which the majority of the public has not seen it, demonstrating that visual poetry has been with us forever. We have tried to demonstrate this by establishing a "cut" that defines the genre through the works of 70 authors, and the mainstreams of visual poetry in Argentina through the ages. While most of the texts are written in Spanish, all visual poems will be undoubtedly enjoyed by readers of any language.

Fabio Doctorovich - 2013

* See for example http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punto_ciego

PRELIMINARY WORDS

When by the early 80's the magazine XUL published some manifestations of what in this book is called experimental poetry, young Argentine poets showed different reactions: some of them demonstrated interest, and were even involved in these practices and started them, but in other cases it was observed a spectrum that went from distrust to disinterest in many of them, and disapproval in others, which in extreme instances evolved in indignation and reproach: "that is not poetry". Today, some representatives of this extreme conservatism are more or less installed poets and they no longer feel the same -or do not say so in order to maintain their position. Most literary and poetry publications did not include in its pages any of these expressions -or it occurred the interesting case in which they included as a curiosity what was done in other countries, at the same time that strict silence was kept on what was being done in Argentina. Regarding this, at least in the late twentieth century, they coincided with the mass media cultural supplements, an ideological maneuver that deserves more space and dedication, as if to say: the experimental poetry is something that happens in other places (in Brazil, in Europe, in the U.S.), we (luckily? as a relief?) are exempt from it.

If this book keeps any intention or desire, beyond being what it is, is to open a space for literature in Argentina.

I want to thank to many who made possible this book:

To Xul Solar, who left this land at the time I arrived, and although I never met him I consider him my greatest teacher.

To Edgardo A. Vigo.

Jorge Santiago Perednik, ca . 2006

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THE THREE DILEMMAS OF EXPERIMENTAL ARGENTINEAN POETRY

The Argentinean experimental poetry, as if not quite problematic in itself, because of the portion of the art world that represents, has to deal with three problems prior to its existence, related to its designation: the words *poetry*, *experimental* and *Argentinean*.

The word "poetry" has a problem related to its belonging: it was used for many centuries by a tradition that prevailed in the West and was reluctant, to speak with a condescending term, to include and even tolerate the kind of works here anthologized. The mere word *poetry*, in virtue of the strength of this tradition and its educational outreach, causes in people a first and quick mental picture or association with poetry constructed from the verse and a vertical progression: a few overlapping lines with the left margin straight and the right margin ragged. And this first mental association is not only typical of those who disown or are unrelated to the subject. In 1981 I heard to some –at that time young- Argentine poets, now consecrated and not young at all, to say like if facing a scandal, while reading an extensive section dedicated to Brazilian Concretism from an issue of the magazine *XUL. Signo viejo y nuevo*, something that they would not dare to repeat a quarter century later. They said, "this - relating to the concrete texts - is not poetry." The scandal that seized them was in any case caused by their inability as readers to associate what they had at sight with poems, based on a limited intellectual formation about what a poem is, and a difficulty to overcome this failure. A quarter century later, those poets not only shamefully hide their past opinions: even the most closed and conservative minds are willing to accept that poetry is not confined to traditional verse. With a huge effort and insistence in publications and shows it was achieved that the reality of experimental poetry is now impossible to deny. Now the dilemmas are others; they crossed, it would seem, the borders; are now problems peculiar to the scope of this poetry, issues facing readers and followers, and the first one is what can be called or not called "visual poem", or "phonic" or "experimental", in other words what the differences are with a drawing, a collage, a theater play, or a musical piece. Now the problem is not so much to accept certain works within the field of poetry, but to differentiate what belongs, by vocation, intent or own right, to other artistic fields. This difficulty has necessary effects in the literary criticism: brings its mechanisms to work, encourages some of its basic practices: to establish criteria, limits, categories; however, the opposite way, that is also criticism, may consider that the difficulty of positioning with respect to the boundaries is a characteristic of this type of works, is intrinsic to this poetics and therefore should remain unsurpassed as a sign of health of its artistic production.

The word *experimental* in turn can cause various accidental errors. One is to think that the process of writing a poem can be an experiment, or that the poem itself can be an experiment. Even if certain improper meaning is given to this word, it is a mistake to think that at the time of making poems, some enrollees in certain tendency can be an experiment, and others, from other tendencies, cannot, or that some of them attempt or achieve a greater degree of experiment than others. Any poem is an experiment, even the most conservative sonnet, or none is. The word experiment is not the best name for this creative current, but no other is preferable, in my opinion, and again we are here with an interesting characteristic, that may be considered typical of this area of creation: an intrinsic resistance to accept that a word or a set of words can define the experience. The experiment, while experimental, resists even to the language at the time of trying to take account of it, *id est*, rejects even the word "experimental". But a name has to be given to this differential reality that exists, if there is to exist for others. And not having any more satisfactory name than others, any name serves in principle to the purpose. "Experimental" has an advantage in this respect: as a word associated with poetry or art has a history of meaning in which experimental opposes to traditional or normal. "Experimental poetry" easily tells any reader that this is a practice that attempts to transit

roads, if not new, other than those dictated by the dominant norm or tradition. As for the disadvantages or objections, the most important in my opinion is to take it away from the notion of scientific experiment, which goes on opposite paths than the ones intended for this kind of poetry: the scientific experiment is something reproducible that will always give the same results.

As to whether this poetry is Argentinean, it is so if the concept is not taken in a close-minded manner. By the contrary, this current usually features a tendency to opening, and looking at the reality it is seen how the necessarily Argentinean experimental poetry opens to the world, and through it, the world opens for Argentina. The dilemma of the argentinity is problematic from the outset: the mural works of *La Cueva de las Manos* (*The Cave of Hands*, located in Patagonia) are an absolutely local example, but not an Argentine invention: caves of hands similar with regard to motives, techniques and time frames are repeated in several places in almost all continents. On the other hand, how to call "argentinean" to a work made ten thousand years before Argentina existed? This is what happens to many works done in this land by Aboriginal cultures, or with *telestic* poems (*poemas telésticos*) in times when Argentina did not exist as a country, or by cultures prior to the western cultures. As important for Argentina experimental poetry as Carmelo Arden Quin, an example that is not unique, he was not born in Argentina, although in Argentina began the Madí movement along with other Argentine authors. There are practitioners of experimental poetry born in this country and then settled in another. Other Argentineans were formed in foreign countries and then returned to work in their homeland. And some of them even performed their works outside Argentina. These and other aggregated arguments are proof that the use of this location is problematic and should be brought into play as long as it opens and do not close the works to a contact with all those made around the world.

Finally, there is a fourth paradox in this book, which overcomes its name: wanting to show signs of the vast reality that is here called Argentinean experimental poetry and to use a book for that purpose. The object named "book" is a historical form, born not long ago – and everything that is born is bound to die one day. In the same way that it replaced other previous forms, such as the papyrus rolls, there will be other future forms that will substitute it; in fact, these forms already exist and the experimental poetry attempts to extend them. The important thing is that the book format, like any other, has its possibilities and limitations, and many "experimental" poetic pathways are linked to objects and experiences that the book format cannot host but poorly. Works dealing with the sound elements of the poem, or the use of voice, will never be heard by opening a traditional book, at best their written records or scores can be read. The kinetic possibilities that require media such as video, are far from being satisfied with the book format. The invention of new technologies in the areas of computing, video and sound, among others, open to poetry worlds which were unexpected and unsuspected at the time of the invention of the book, or during its heyday, which is coming to an end. This will then be, because the book determines so, a sample of experimental Argentinean poetry that will reduce the rich reality of many poems to the visual side of things.

Jorge Santiago Perednik , ca . 2007
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