

*An article by:*

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# Uruguayan

## Visual Poetry

Jakobson's image characterizing the poetic function of language as the projection of the paradigmatic axis on the syntagmatic axis seems ideal for explaining the phenomenon of experimental poetry. He says: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence of the axis of selection on the axis of combination." Equivalence alludes to repetition or reiteration of accents, rhythms, phonemes, syllables, structures and so on. The projection of the paradigmatic recurrence is concretized on the syntagmatic plane, even if in poetry.

si raspara .....  
 .....haría signos  
 izando el cero innato  
 del vacío inhalador ..  
 .....nieve roja

atrás ..... leche oscura ..... envés visible  
 más atrás ..... sol en negro .....

fallas entre letras .....

citas .....

..... K. Lasswitz .....  
 ..... T. Wolff .....  
 ..... L. Carroll .....

iniciales .....

..... J. L. B. .... transfnito  
 ..... G. G. ....

..... y .....la irrestricta ya.....engomado

.....  
 al sonar .....  
 ..... lo evaporado  
 .....  
 frotada .....  
 escritura transparente  
 del espectro insoluble

EXCITANTE  
DESINTERESADA  
EXTRAVIADA  
DESTELLANTE

CASTIGADA  
DESTELLADA  
ARRASTRADA

SUBSUMIDA EN LO VAGO

CONSECUENTE  
ELOCUENTE  
OBSECUENTE  
SOBRESALIENTE  
DISPLICENTE

SUMERGIDA

470

INFRINGIENDOTE  
TU POEMA GRAFICO  
MOJON DE KILOMETRO CON OJOS EN BLANCO

SAXO  
CRUEL  
SADICO  
SEXOPATA  
IRONICO  
IRONSIDE  
IRON MAIDEN  
BLUES  
BLUE JEANS

ARRASTRADA  
CASTIGADA  
CON LOS OJOS BIEN EN BLANCO

**Gustavo Fernández Insua**  
*Sin título*  
Untitled

In Peirce's words, in poetry icons or non-verbal codes (or analogical signs, those that work by similarity) are projected on words or symbols (or signs by contiguity) — in other words, the projection of codes that are not specifically verbal or linguistic transforms “words” into icons or figures.<sup>1</sup>

The experimental poem wants to be not only grammatically analogical, in the manner of Chinese ideograms, but also requires a syntax, an ordering in discrete units just as does logical thought or discursive language. (In reality, the classical poetic forms, such as the sonnet, the ten-line stanza or haiku, do not possess a totally logico-formal “corpus” because words must be ordered analogically in verses, tercets, quatrains, rhythms, rhymes, in formally rigorous structures.)

If we follow Hjelmslev's point of view, we see that the formal aspect signals a poem, that is, the form in which a determined content is expressed. Whatever this form may be, that which denotes the poetic is the special characterization that takes the form of expression.<sup>2</sup> For example, let us suppose that we have a referential content that denotes “full moon” and that it can assume this linguistic form. Nevertheless, if we refer to this as “silver plate” (“plato de plata”) we already have at least two formal features that modify the expression, leading to the poetic: metaphor (substitution of one element by another) and the repetition “plat” and “plat.” We can even further transgress expression and say, for example, “needle-hole of thirst” or to use iconic codes:



Note that the form of the content follows the same “full moon”; what has changed is the form of expression.

IR  
 IRSE  
 OIRSE  
 HUIRSE  
 REIRSE  
 MORIRSE  
 SALIRSE  
 MENTIRSE  
 DILUIRSE  
 REDIMIRSE  
 REVIVIRSE  
 DESTRUIRSE  
 DESVIVIRSE  
 TRANSIGIRSE  
 SUBVERTIRSE  
 TRANSGREDIRSE  
 PERVERTIR  
 RETRIBUIRSE  
 MALDECIR  
 PORVENIR  
 DECIDIRSE  
 ADHERIRSE  
 PARTIR  
 DECIR  
 SALIR  
 NOIR  
 OIR

IR, Ir, ir

cuestio - saurio  
 ind. nac.

N  
 S O S  
 E O S  
 R O S  
 S E S  
 E O S  
 R O S  
 S O S  
 E O S  
 R O S  
 S O S

**Celma García** |  
*Promesas*  
 Promises

**Dardo Vилleverde**  
*Cuestio - saurio*  
 Cuestio - saurio

## EN BLANCO Y NEGRO

Estar o no estar



ESTAR en  
la luna  
o  
en  
la lona  
(ignorando si la cuenta es progresiva o regresiva)

PARECER un animal de bruces  
siendo sudor y polvo  
y por lo tanto tierra

SER cielo o suelo

Ser o no ser      más que  
arena  
s  
o  
b  
r  
e  
ARENA

## ZONA

Con la cabeza rapada se arropan  
 cuerpo sobre cuerpo  
 sobre cuerpo  
           cuerpo  
           cuerpo

sobre/el/ajedrez/de/la/plaza/custodiada

ZONA ZONA ZONA

zona

zona

zona zona zona

y se lluen  
 como viejos pilots de cuero negro  
 encorvados  
 mugiendo  
 con sus caras de niños

**Luis Bravo** |  
*Zona*  
 Zone

(a uno de ellos se le cayó un papel escrito  
 con sangre,  
 como un pañuelo que periera en la  
 última huída,  
 antes que el gas lo suicidara:

“como ángeles  
 resistiendo los embates del Oscuro

desde la atroz alegría  
 les estamos cambiando el mundo”

P+L+BR+S  
 -A-A--A-  
 -+--+--+

**Celma García**

*Palabras*

Words

Because of these arguments much criticism holds that poetry, in its essential being, takes its origin from these formal “figures” and not from content. Just as rhyme and alliteration, for example, are phonic operators and metaphor is a semantic operator, so also image or the disposition of verses, words, syllables or letters, whether or not including iconic figures, is a visual operator with its power of expression whether or not determined by linguistic sense itself.

Finally, does the term “poetry” connote the determination of the semantic in the literary work? This is a crucial point on which there is no agreement. For some, if the poem is not capable of signifying or expressing a literary meaning, whatever its form may assume, it is not poetry. For others, to limit the poem exclusively to the literary is to grossly limit its possibilities of expression. This anthology of experimental Uruguayan poetry in 1990 exemplifies both positions.



## Poet Notes

**Amanda Berenguer** was born in Montevideo. His published books include *Joint Declaration* (1964), *Prime Matter* (1966), *Composition of Place* (1976), *Identity of Certain Fruits* (1983), *The Lady of Elche* (1987) and others. Julio Cortázar has said of his work, "Each page lead me on a vertiginous fugue on the immediate and measurable, displaced me to this territory where at times — a few but sufficient — we feel that it would be worth the trouble to have lived to encounter reality." In 1973 he published a record *Dictions*, which signified a new level of experimentation with the spoken word. He has participated in various conferences of visual poetry, among them the III Biennial of Visual, Alternative and Experimental Poetry put on in Montevideo and Mexico.

**Luis Bravo**, poet, critic, performer and professor of literature, has published *Put around the Heart in Flames* (1984), *Claraboya, You Are the Moon* (1985) and *Rain* (1988). He has put on poetic shows and recently offered courses on Uruguayan literature in Madrid, Spain.

**Jorge Echenique**, born in Durazno in 1957, is a visual artist, poet, composer and performer, who works at the National School of Fine Arts. He has organized events as well as interdisciplinary exhibitions, blending the most diverse experimental languages (video, computer, graphics, installations, performances, etc.). Editor of the magazine *MC5*, coeditor, in São Paulo, of the magazine *Odradek*, he has put on countless performances of poetry as well as collective and individual exhibitions.

**Celma García**, born in Montevideo in 1970, is a professor of literature. She participated in "Experimental Poetry Conference" (Uruguayan-Brazilian Institute, 1989); in the III Biennial of Visual, Alternative and Experimental Poetry in Montevideo and Mexico (1990); and in "Retinas and Improvisations" (Macintosh Institute of the Book, 1990); and has various publications in literary magazines and poetic performances to her credit.

**Gustavo Fernandez Insua**, born in Montevideo in 1966, is an instructor of sociology. He is a graduate of the "Artigas" Institute of Education with texts published in various magazines, including *Subterranean Gas*, *Wall*, *MC5*, among others; coproducer of the multimedia "Retinas and Improvisations"; and coordinator of the weekly "Comic Culture."

**Clemente Padín** has published *Open Horizons* (1969, second edition 1989), *Angles* (Italy, 1971), *From Representation to Action* (France, 1975), *Signographics and Texts* (U.S.A., 1990) and regularly travels abroad to give courses on Latin American art.

**Carlos Pellegrino**, born in Montevideo, directed the journal *Maldoror* (1971-1984). He is author of *I Play You a Fist of Dogs* (1971), *Versatorio* (1973), *Clear* (1976), *Box* (1983), *Yod* (a novel, 1984) and *Zarpa* (1988). He is also a musician and videomaker.

**Eduardo Roland**, born in Rosario in 1958, is a poet, musician and professor of Spanish and education through literature. In 1986, he traveled to the United States having won first prize in a literary competition sponsored by the United States embassy in Uruguay. He has recently published his first book of poems *Leaves in White and Other Shades* and participated in the III Biennial of Visual, Alternative and Experimental Poetry in Montevideo and Mexico (1990).

**Dardo Villaverde**, a poet, journalist and a visual artist, studied painting with Gustavo Alamón in Tacuarembó. He resides in Paso de los Toros.

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