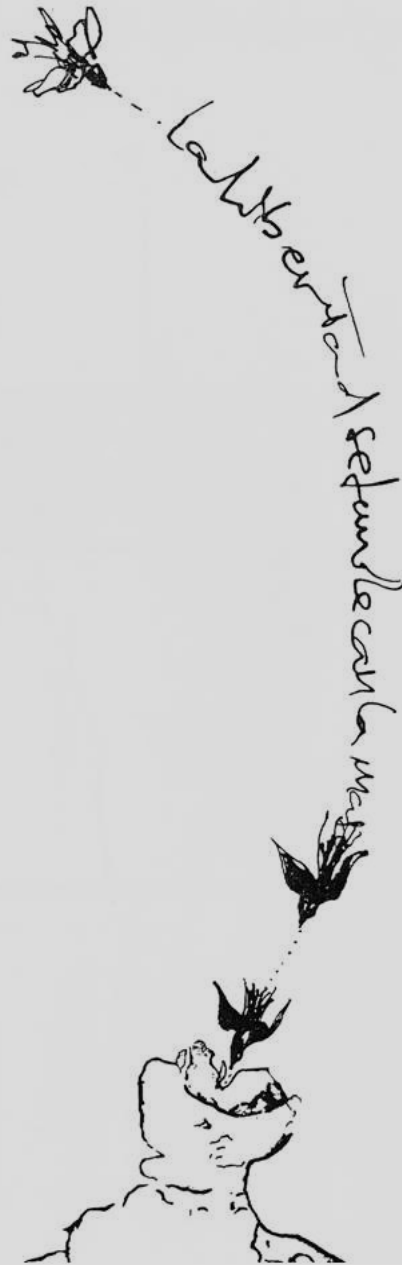


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**Experimentación poética y contracultura**  
en contextos dictatoriales ibéricos y latinoamericanos  
(1960-1990): colectivos, acciones y reacciones  
Coordinado por Mercè Picornell y Maria Victòria Parra Moyà

EXPERIMENTACIÓN POÉTICA Y CONTRACULTURA EN CONTEXTOS  
DICTATORIALES IBÉRICOS Y LATINOAMERICANOS (1960-1990):  
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Monográfico coordinado por MERCÈ PICORNELL Y MARIA VICTÒRIA PARRA MOYÀ

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JUAN GONZALEZ GRANJA. Los tzánticos amenazan la ciudad: la performance poética de la indig-nación en el Ecuador moderno.	229-251
MALENA LA ROCCA. "Rompiendo la piñata del Mundial". Los usos de la fiesta en montajes teatrales, recitales y acciones callejeras durante la última dictadura cívico-militar argentina.	253-271
PAULINE MEDEA BACHMANN. Poesía en circulación. Estéticas politizadas entre exposición, documentación y lectura en el Cono Sur.	273-290
JÈSSICA PUJOL DURAN. Beau Geste Press: a Liminal Communitas across the New Avant-gardes.	291-312
ALBERTO VALVERDE OTERO. El Grupo Rompente (1975-1983). Un viaje inesperado por la Transición en el campo literario gallego.	313-332
IRATXE RETOLAZA. Poéticas experimentales en la resistencia cultural vasca: 'Isturitzetik Tolosan Barru' (1969).	333-369
MERCÈ PICORNELL. Campo literario y reconstrucción democrática. Dos poéticas estratégicas y una interpelación en la poesía chilena.	371-404
MARIA VICTÒRIA PARRA MOYÀ. Una cata de 'Sopa de letras' (1976).	405-432

# BEAU GESTE PRESS: A LIMINAL *COMMUNITAS* ACROSS THE NEW AVANT-GARDES

Beau Geste Press: una *communitas* liminal en la nueva vanguardia

JÈSSICA PUJOL DURAN

UNIVERSIDAD DE SANTIAGO DE CHILE (CHILE) FONDECYT

jessica.pujol@usach.cl <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0875-2162>

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article I will examine how a few Latin American avant-garde artists and poets in exile became part of Fluxus, an international constellation of artists whose ideas revitalised the concept of the avant-garde after the war. This constellation became an active collaboration through the makings of the Beau Geste Press, founded in Devon (UK) in 1971 and active until 1976. The press, co-founded by Felipe Ehrenberg, Martha Hellion and David Mayor, not only published and disseminated the work of Cecilia Vicuña, Ulises Carrión, Claudio Bertoni, and Ehrenberg himself, but also operated as “a community of duplicators, printers and craftsmen” that replaced the concept of individual creation with a practice of communal production. I will refer to Victor Turner’s concept of liminality to contend that the Beau Geste Press, which represented the beginning and end of this *communitas*, developed in a space that was liminal on different levels: at the level of the subjective experience of exile; of artistic production, which can be inferred from their emphasis on procedural techniques over finished artistic products; and at the level of language, because they are Spanish-speaking authors in England, who turn that potential problem into hybrid forms.

**KEYWORDS:** Liminality, New-avant-garde, Fluxus, Independent Presses, Exile.

**RESUMEN:** En este artículo examinaré cómo un número de artistas y poetas de la vanguardia latinoamericana que vivían en el exilio pasaron a formar parte del grupo Fluxus, una constelación internacional de artistas cuyas ideas revitalizaron el concepto de vanguardia después de la guerra. Esta constelación devino una colaboración activa a partir de las producciones de Beau Geste Press, una editorial independiente fundada en Devon (Reino Unido) en 1971, activa hasta 1976. La editorial, cofundada por Felipe Ehrenberg, Martha Hellion y David Mayor, no solo publicó y difundió el trabajo de Cecilia Vicuña, Ulises Carrión, Claudio Bertoni y el propio Ehrenberg, sino que también funcionó como “una comunidad de duplicadores, impresores y artesanos” que reemplazó el concepto de creación individual por una práctica de producción comunal. Me referiré al concepto de liminalidad de Victor Turner para proponer que Beau Geste Press, que representó el comienzo y el final de esta *communitas*, se desarrolló en un espacio liminal a varios niveles: por la experiencia subjetiva del exilio; por la producción artística –por su énfasis en las técnicas de procedimiento sobre los productos artísticos acabados– y por el lenguaje, puesto que son autores de habla hispana en Inglaterra, quienes transforman ese posible problema en formas híbridas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Liminalidad, nueva vanguardia, Fluxus, editoriales independientes, exilio.

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In 1969, the Mexican artists Martha Hellion and Felipe Ehrenberg fled to England in the aftermath of the Tlatelolco massacre.<sup>1</sup> In 1971, the Mexican couple set up the Beau Geste Press with the British artist and art historian David Mayor and a group of artists, musicians and thinkers who gathered in Langford Court, a rundown farmhouse in Devon. The press, which operated as a local community but had an international reach, was active from 1971 to 1976 producing books, pamphlets, leaflets and eight issues of the internationally recognised Fluxus magazine, *Schmuck*. In fact, according to Erica Segre, curator of the recent Cambridge exhibition “Radical/Basic/Actual. 1970s Experiments in Print Media: Felipe Ehrenberg, Latin American Artists and the Beau Geste Press (Devon, 1970-1976)” (2016), the Beau Geste Press was “one of the most significant transnational collaborative projects of the 1970s” (Segre, 2016: 1), disseminating work by Latin American artists and writers such as Chileans Cecilia Vicuña and Claudio Bertoni; Colombian Raúl Marroquín; Argentinean Edgardo Antonio Vigo; and the Mexicans Ulises Carrión, Pepe Maya and Hellion and Ehrenberg themselves. This “community of duplicators, printers and craftsmen,”<sup>2</sup> as they describe themselves, thus precedes the exchanges between the Latin American and the international avant-gardes of the 1970s that I will be looking at in this article, at the same time that it constitutes a liminal space of resistance for many politically engaged Latin American artists, writers and poets who had left their country of origin by either their own choice or under duress in order to preserve their personal freedom.

The concept of liminality that I will relate to in this article stems from the reading made by the anthropologist Victor Turner of Arnold van Gennep’s “liminal rites” in the *The Rites of Passage* (1909). Van Gennep explains that rites of passage are present in all societies and involve an individual’s passing from one state to another: i.e. from one age to another or from one occupation to another (van Gennep, 1960: 3). Moreover, he proposes that these passages are accompanied by special rites that have the function of preserving the unity of society: they consist of “actions and reactions to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury” (van Gennep, 1960: 3). The rites tend to follow a three-fold structure: separation (or preliminal rites), transition (or liminal rites) and incorporation (or postliminal rites) (van Gennep, 1960: 11). Describing their characteristics, he claims that the

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<sup>1</sup> The incident took place on the 2nd of October 1968 in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, in Mexico City, and it was perpetrated by the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) in order to put an end to the ongoing social protests against the government. The Tlatelolco massacre was part of the Mexican Student Movement of 1968. In 2006, the Movement was included in an important report about the Mexican Guerra Sucia [Dirty War] by FEMOSPP (Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado) as part of the internal conflict between the government of the PRI and guerrilla groups and left-wing students in the 1960s and 1970s. The Dirty War has recently been described as follows: “La guerra sucia fue [la] puesta en marcha de una estrategia de Estado. En ella no sólo hubo [...] ideologización y criminalización. Hubo, además, detenciones ilegales, reclusión en cárceles clandestinas, tortura, ejecuciones, exilio y desapariciones. Una combinación de combate ideológico y político-militar por parte del poder. Toda una estrategia de represión, de terror, que intentó el aniquilamiento de la guerrilla por parte del Estado mexicano. Así se ha ido viendo en cada trozo de reconstrucción de este pasado tortuoso en la historia de México.” [“The Dirty War was (the) implementation of a strategy by the State. In it there was not only (...) ideologization and criminalisation. There were also illegal detentions, imprisonment in clandestine prisons, torture, executions, exile and disappearances. A combination of ideological and political-military combat exercised by the power. A strategy of repression, of terror, in its own right, that attempted the annihilation of the guerrilla by the Mexican State. In this way it has been revealed by every piece of information that reconstructs this tortuous past in the history of Mexico” (Mendoza García, 2016). The report can be found in the [National Security Archive](#).

<sup>2</sup> Slogan of the press printed next to the Beau Geste Press stamp in all their catalogues.

transitional or liminal rites, can “sometimes acquire a certain autonomy” (van Gennep, 1960: 191-192), that is, an independent space of transition in which the individual dwells for a period of time.

Turner, in *The Ritual Process* (1967), develops this autonomy further: explaining that individuals who find themselves in a liminal space, “neither here nor there,” become entities who “are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 2017: 95) in a given social structure. These individuals are ambiguous and indeterminate since their social status becomes blurred; while among themselves they develop “an intense comradeship and egalitarianism” (Turner, 2017: 95). Thus, at a moment when these individuals access a liminal space, they find themselves both inside and outside of time and social structure, in the tense position of not belonging that, nonetheless, allows the development of some sort of recognition among themselves, something like “a generalised bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties” (Turner, 2017: 96). In other words: these individuals are separated from their social structure, which tends to be differentiated and hierarchical, with political, legal and economic positions, and access a liminal period, “unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated” in which a multiplicity of things can happen and where they can find a transitory *communitas* of equals (Turner, 2017: 96). Turner uses the Latin term *communitas*, instead of community, because he wants to emphasise the spatial quality of the community, what he describes as an “area of common living” (Turner, 2017: 96). Liminality consists, then, in a blurring of the invisible boundaries that contain and are contained by the prevailing social structure and the opening up of a space “neither here nor there” in which a marginalised *communitas* thrives.

In the first section of this article I analyse the social structure that surrounded the co-founders of the Beau Geste Press, whom I read as liminal individuals, and their coming together as a *communitas* in Langford Court linked to the international movement Fluxus. In the second section I focus on some Latin American authors published by the press and the experimental bilingualism of their works, which I argue illustrate that liminality. Finally, I propose that, despite the closure of the Beau Geste Press and the revitalised incorporation of some of its members into society, their transient encounter left a sense of liminality that persists in their works and transcends their experience, allowing for an understanding of the sort of artistic and literary dynamics that these Latin American artists were able to develop at times of political persecution.

#### SOMETHING IN COMMON

In 1968, revolutionary movements were hastening deep social and cultural changes in many countries around the world. In Mexico City, on the 2nd of October –ten days before the Olympic games– a massive student demonstration in the neighbourhood of Tlatelolco put an end to a year of escalating conflict between the government of the PRI and students who opposed their policies and economic decisions. The protest, in which students and civilians had initially gathered to listen to speeches, ended in a massacre, in which it is estimated that hundreds were killed by the police and the national army. This dreadful event ended the student demonstrations and also closed an era of relative tolerance towards experimentation in the arts,

leading to a period of cultural repression and political authoritarianism (Debroise and Medina, 2007: 28).

The internationally recognised Mexican avant-garde magazine, *El Corno Emplumado / The Plumed Horn*, was forced to close due to this cultural expurgation. *El Corno Emplumado* was a bilingual magazine that dedicated almost a decade to publishing experimental poets from the United States and had been paving the way to a prolific exchange between Spanish American and Anglophone writers. However, due to their editors' involvement in the protest of Tlatelolco they had to put an end to their activities, after publishing 31 issues of the magazine and more than ten books (Debroise and Medina, 2007: 168). The editors, the poets Margaret Randall and Sergio Mondragon, had been connecting artists from around the world since January 1962, to the extent that, according to Hellion, they had developed "a guerrilla training in self-sufficient thinking" (Hellion, 2006) or, as Turner would put it, a *communitas* "neither here nor there" that exceeded national and cultural borders. Cuauhtémoc Medina writes a piece about *El Corno Emplumado* in which she quotes an archival note by Randall, where the latter explains that the title of the magazine alludes to this intention to reconfigure the cultural borders between the United States and Mexico, as it incorporates the horn, an instrument used by some jazz musicians, and the Mesoamerican plumed serpent, Quetzalcoatl (Debroise and Medina, 2007: 150). In fact, *El Corno Emplumado* published most of the Latin American authors who were later collaborators of the Beau Geste Press, such as Claudio Bertoni, Cecilia Vicuña, Felipe Ehrenberg and Ulises Carrión, establishing a model of transnational poetics that Hellion and Ehrenberg would follow in exile.<sup>3</sup>

Hellion and Ehrenberg were also involved in the Tlatelolco protest and, for fear of persecution, they decided to flee Mexico with their two children (Ehrenberg et al, 2007). After a short stay in New York the family settled in London, which Ehrenberg describes as "the most exciting, stimulating and democratic place" (Ehrenberg et al, 2007). Hellion also states that England, by then, had become "the place to be" thanks to the support of the British Arts Council and the inclusion of Latin American studies on university syllabuses nationwide (Hellion, 2006). Once there, Ehrenberg began performing some actions around concepts of the ephemeral, the transitory and decay inspired by the Situationists and the writings of Guy Debord (1967). Among these is a *dérive* that Ehrenberg entitled *A Stroll in July, or One Thursday Afternoon, or Half a Day in London, or (The) Afternoon, or... Topology of a Sculpture* (1970).<sup>4</sup> This *dérive* lasted six

<sup>3</sup> They also published Beat poets, Brazilian concrete poets and key figures such as Leonora Carrington, Octavio Paz, Julio Cortázar, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Nicanor Parra and William Carlos Williams. They published 3,000 copies of each issue, which thanks to subscribers covered "an astounding territory: from Cuba to the United States, from Peru to Spain and [...] Australia" (Debroise and Medina, 2007: 155).

<sup>4</sup> Guy Debord wrote "Theory of the Dérive" in 1956. In this article he explains that the concept of *dérive* needs to be differentiated from the classic notions of stroll historically linked to the *flâneur*, because a *dérive* can include more than one person and chance is not so important: "In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. But the *dérive* include this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities" (Debord, 1956).

hours during which he dropped postcards of notes, drawings, maps and collages in mailboxes he encountered in the streets along the way (Debroise and Medina, 2007: 156). Later, in 1970, he co-founded an art group called Polygonal Workshop with the Austrian artist Richard Kriesche and other occasional collaborators. Their first exhibition, “The Seventh Day Chicken,” at the Sigi Krauss Gallery, in Covent Garden, consisted of piles of decomposing garbage that they had been systematically collecting from the street at the time of the binmen’s strike in London.<sup>5</sup> This exhibition put them in contact with David Mayor, who, according to Felipe, “saw, or thought he saw, similarities between [Fluxus] and the PW’s doings” (Ehrenberg et al, 2007).

This moment was important as it opened a gateway to a series of exchanges that brought together the lives and works of Mayor, Ehrenberg, Hellion and the other members and collaborators of the Beau Geste Press. By then, Mayor was studying for a Ph.D. in art history at the University of Exeter, where he was also working for the American Arts Documentation Centre and had been given the task of setting up an exhibition about the Fluxus movement under the supervision of Mike Weaver, the Centre’s director, and Fluxus West’s American representative, Ken Friedman (Motard, 2017: 17). The similarities that Mayor identified between Ehrenberg’s work and Fluxus, therefore, triggered the group’s future relationships with Fluxus, a bigger constellation of artists known for their transnationalism.<sup>6</sup> The artists who considered themselves part of Fluxus shared an interest in the ephemeral and transitory similar to the concepts Ehrenberg was working with in his *dérives* and installations in London. They gave more importance to the process of making than to the finalised objectification and artistic value of the work, to the extent that they produced works that were *just* process, i.e. when the process of the work was finished no object was left other than a blurb or commentary to document the event.

Soon after this encounter in London, the Mexican couple decided to move to Langford Place, but what first encouraged them to buy a mimeo machine was their involvement in a show called “FLUXshoe.” What started as a recognition, turned into an idea for a Fluxus exhibition and ended up becoming a travelling show (it was, in fact, a typographical mistake what turned “Fluxshow” into “Fluxshoe”), a “travelling circus,” as Ehrenberg describes it (Ehrenberg et al, 2007), around England that lasted almost a year, from October 1972 to August 1973. It involved more than a hundred artists, most of whom were directly related to the Fluxus movement. They included Eric Andersen, Ay-O, David det Hompson, Alice Hutchins, Takehisa Kosugi, Carla Liss and Takako Saito, who, after this trip, would become an integral part of the Beau Geste Press. Ehrenberg designed and printed the catalogue, which became one of the first Beau Geste Press’ publications, and other graphic materials such as leaflets and posters for the show. Later on, with Mayor and Terry Wright, they published a compilation of works, photographs, press clippings and highlights of each stage of the trip, which they entitled *FLUXshoe ADD END A* (1974), where we can glimpse the sense of *communitas* that they were beginning to build at the time:

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<sup>5</sup> Ehrenberg’s video about the strikes, entitled “La Poubelle” (1979) is available on the *Tate* website: [www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/felipe-ehrenberg-la-poubelle](http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/felipe-ehrenberg-la-poubelle).

<sup>6</sup> The name “Fluxus” was first coined by the artist George Maciunas as a title for a magazine, but it never materialised. Maciunas did not abandon the idea and planned the publication of six issues of another magazine that he also called *Fluxus* dedicated to the arts, scheduled to come out in February 1962 and then on a quarterly basis in New York (Phillapot, 1988).

what was important, and what remains important now, afterwards, is not the *work* so much as the *attitudes* which most of the fluxshoe artists share, despite widely differing activities and backgrounds, the fluxshoe was not only a showplace for these people's artworks, but a *meeting place* for them, a changing and impermanent traveling community where they could come together, which could act as a catalyst for further work together and hopefully as a model for other similar cooperative ventures in the future.<sup>7</sup>

This "*meeting place*," characterised by its changing qualities, reminds us of Turner's no-place, where these liminal "non-artists"<sup>8</sup> meet and identify something in common. Zanna Gilbert, in "Something Unnameable in Common," *Translocal Collaboration at the Beau Geste Press* (2012), presents an interesting reflection regarding this communality that brought the members of the press together. She argues that the interests that connected Ehrenberg, Mayor and the other individuals were, in fact, "unnameable" because they did not consist of "a shared ideology with a set of fixed principles based on grand narratives, but instead denoted a group of artists who were committed to artistic experimentation and who positioned themselves against the state and the art market" (Gilbert, 2012: 48). She develops her thesis from a quote by George Brecht that Ehrenberg, under the pseudonym Kyosan Bajin, transcribed in the introduction of the "FLUXshoe" catalogue: "Individuals with something unnameable in common have simply naturally coalesced to publish and perform their work."<sup>9</sup> I think this statement needs some unravelling because what Mayor saw between Ehrenberg's work and Fluxus' aesthetic concerns gives us a clue to the liminality that they all shared.



Cover of FLUXshoe Catalogue

<sup>7</sup> Note found in *General Schmuck*, pre-publication materials (January 1975). Beau Geste Press, Tate Gallery Archive 815/3/4/10.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Found in "Fluxshoe Catalogue," *The Fluxshoe Exhibition, 1972-1973*. Beau Geste Press, Tate Gallery Archive 815/2/2.



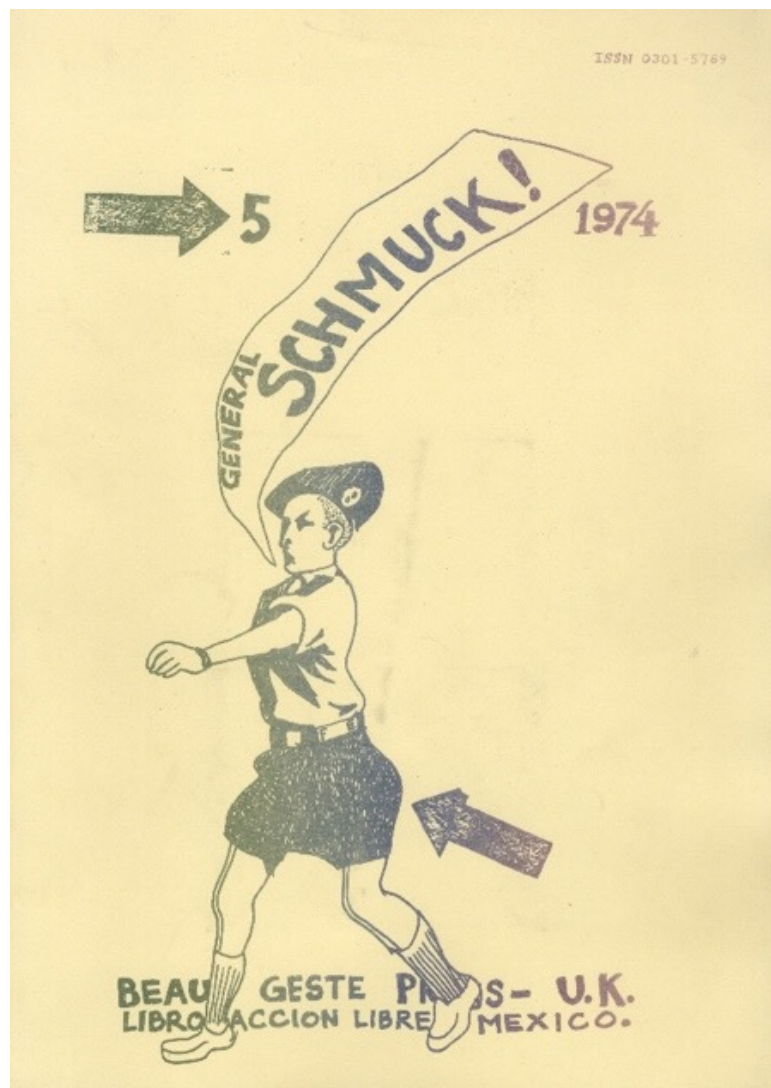
The Fluxus movement appeared during the second half of the twentieth-century, after the second world war, when grand narratives were under severe scrutiny and any closed ideology tended to be avoided. Maciunas wrote two manifestoes, one in 1963, and another in 1971, but more than a set of aesthetic dos and don'ts these were a cry to purge the arts from "bourgeois sickness" and what he calls "EUROPANISM" (Phillapot, 1988). In the first manifesto, Maciunas introduces a few dictionary entries for the word "Flux" in order to remind us of its ephemeral and volatile qualities. He states the need to "promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art," for instance, emphasising that they have to make things as long as they are not art (Phillapot, 1988). Fluxus was against art as a commodity; for them, objects were not made to be commercialised. The sort of rules that Maciunas put forward had to do with conceiving Fluxus as a collective, not as individual artists. Hence, in his *Conditions for Performing Fluxus Published Compositions, Films & Tapes* (1965), he establishes that a show in which more than half of the works are by Fluxus artists should be called "Fluxconcert," while one in which less than half are Fluxus artists should include "By Permission of Fluxus" or "Flux-Piece" in the programme, thus, "even when a single piece is performed all other members of the group will be publicized collectively and will benefit from it," because Fluxus "is a collective never promoting prima donnas at the expense of other members" (Phillapot, 1988). They wanted to kill the author in a Barthean sense,<sup>10</sup> made him/her anonymous or part of a bigger *communitas*, liminal by its wish to remain at the outskirts of the social structure, as the artists were made to position themselves in a "nonprofessional, nonparasitic, non-elite status in society" (Phillapot, 1988), a non-place proud of its autonomy; a liminal space, in Turner's sense, that connects the *communitas* with a powerful idea of the fragile: "there is a certain homology between the 'weakness' and 'passivity' of liminality in diachronic transitions between states and statuses, and the 'structural' or synchronic inferiority of certain personae, groups, and social categories in political, legal, and economic systems" (Turner, 2017: 99-100).

Langford Court was spacious. According to the British painter and poet Allen Fisher, who collaborated with the Beau Geste Press, "the house at Cullompton had very many rooms, maybe 15. It was falling down, and the farmer-owner had moved to a centrally-heated bungalow on the edge of the site. The house was an activity (sic) of laughter, printing, collating, binding books, cooking, eating and drinking."<sup>11</sup> Thus the artists who moved there, such as the illustrator Chris Welch and his partner, Madeline Gallard, and, slightly later, Mayor and many others who came and went, such as Terry Reid, the aforementioned Saito, Wright and Fisher himself lived in a community, sharing the house, their artistic interests and the printing projects. Their main focus was producing artist's books, although they also printed pamphlets, magazines, flyers, postcards, and made all sorts of objects, using various techniques and materials, including collating, stencil signage, folded pages, book binding, collage, photography, stamps, inserts, etc. They relied on printing devices such as mimeo machines, electronic stencil scanners and photocopiers. One of their most well-known publications is the magazine *Schmuck*, of which they published issues dedicated to Iceland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Japan and Latin America

<sup>10</sup> See Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" in *Image. Music. Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977: 142-148).

<sup>11</sup> They printed, for instance, Fisher's *Taken the Days after We Had Beef Curry between 28/7/72 & 28/10/72* (South Cullompton: Beau Geste Press, 1972). Personal email correspondence between Allen Fisher and the author of this article, received on the 18th January 2018.

(although, as I explain in the third section, the last issue came out under a different imprint a few years later in Mexico).



Cover of *Schmuck* N° 5

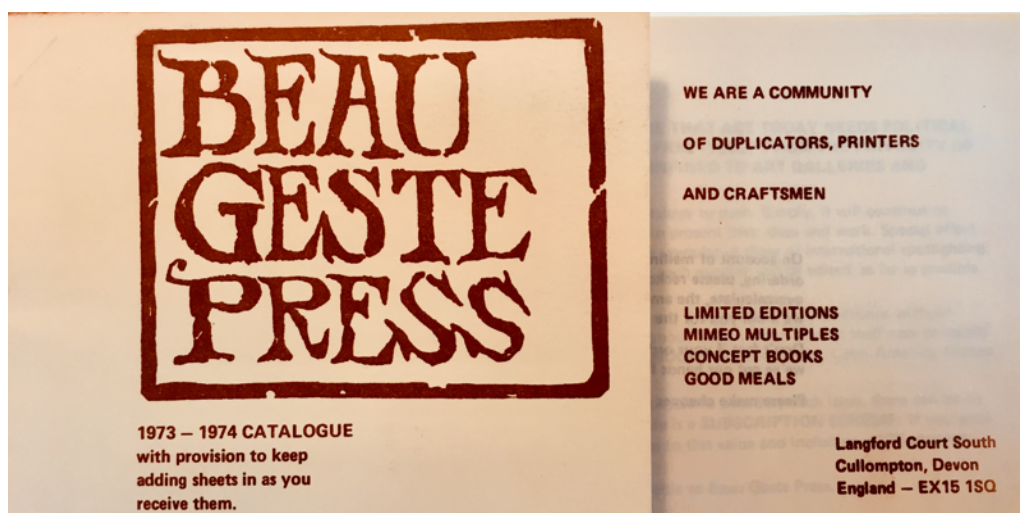
At the press, traditional demarcations between the hierarchised roles of author, editor and printer blurred, as did the power relations attached to them, because all members were interested in learning skills from each other and performing a wide variety of tasks. Concomitantly, the labour carried out at the press also subsisted in a liminal space against mainstream art market. Thus, this community –here understood in Anthony Cohen’s sense as a *relational* idea that embodies a “sense of discrimination, namely, the *boundary*” (Cohen, 1985: 2)<sup>12</sup> is what enabled

<sup>12</sup> Cohen says that “[a] reasonable interpretation of the word’s use would seem to imply two related suggestions: that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups. “Community” thus seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference. The word thus expresses a *relational* idea: the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities. [...] It seems appropriate, therefore, to focus our examination of the nature of community on the element which embodies this sense of discrimination, namely, the *boundary*” (Cohen, 1985: 12).

their members to, simultaneously, “interact in some way or other with entities from which they [were], or wish to be, distinguished” (Cohen, 1985: 2); namely, the capitalist system that sustains art trading. A statement written in a “Joint Communiqué” (1974) between the Beau Geste Press and Libro Acción Libre (the name that Ehrenberg gave to the press in Mexico when he moved back in 1974), published to announce the decentralisation of the Beau Geste Press and the formation of the Beau and Aloe Arc Association (B.A.A.A.), helps to understand the consolidation of that community and *communitas*, as the group makes clear that they have “grown not so much as a business (ha!) but as a working association with friends.”<sup>13</sup> They describe the nature of that association as follows:

In most cases, Press and artists not only worked together but lived together the whole time it took to produce the edition. This made it possible for us, the Press, to prove how easily and viable it is to ignore publishers and producer-galleries because at the finish of any given production, each author had become fully aware of how to produce anything like it, even outside our own workshops and using only easily available office hardware, or with the help of an independent printer (Mayor et al, 1974: 1).

This *communitas* of artists, therefore, found themselves in a liminal phase that blurred their roles at the same time that it multiplied their skills. On the one hand, they did not have definite assigned positions but learned from each other in an intuitive rotating system and, on the other hand, they developed new skills (printing, coping, collaging...) that multiplied their individual potentialities. Some of their members (Ehrenberg and Hellion) were exiles, while others chose to live and work at the margins of their society as a political act, but they all shared aesthetic and political views, characterised by forsaking the stable, enduring and rational values of capitalism and working with the precarious, marginal and ephemeral concepts emerging from practices of liminality.



Catalogue of Beau Geste Press (1973 – 1974)

<sup>13</sup> Found in BGP England/Libro Acción Libre/Mexico. Green Library, Stanford University, Special Collections: M0702, Beau Geste Press Ephemera, 1970-1976, Box 3, Folder 10.

Gilbert proposes the model of translocal collaboration as opposite to a more general understanding of transnationalism, which, according to her, “merely suggests that cultural production can cut across national boundaries.” The concept of translocal collaboration enables the collective of the press to express “both the particular and the local, while it simultaneously propagated a sense of shared artistic and ideological goals and values, regardless of geographical context” (Gilbert, 2012: 46-48). This suspension of concepts of nationality and space could also be read as that position inside and outside of time and social structure that I relate to Turner’s liminality, and which, as a matter of fact, I think that it also permeates their artistic practices and even the language they use and the way they organise it on the page, e.g. their focus on the visual and structural elements of the books, and their experimental bilingualism, as many of the artists and writers published by the press were from Latin America, especially from Chile and Mexico, countries where artistic freedom was restricted at the time. Thus, the Beau Geste Press was a *communitas*, a meeting place, but also established boundaries and a sense of differentiation against an overruling capitalistic society and various Latin American repressive governments, giving an opportunity for these artists and writers to address the international community from an alternative and liminal standpoint.

#### LATIN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS

In 1972, the Chilean couple Cecilia Vicuña and Claudio Bertoni arrived in London thanks to a British Council scholarship awarded to Vicuña to study at the Slade School of Fine Art. Like Ehrenberg’s and Hellion’s, their work had appeared in an issue of *El Corno Emplumado* in 1967.<sup>14</sup> They both also had links with Fluxus; that is how they got invited by the Beau Geste Press to publish their firsts books with them.<sup>15</sup> They first published Bertoni’s *El cansador intrabajable* (1973), an object-book of poems that he wrote between 1968 and the 11th of September 1973 – with just one exception, as he writes on the Prologue (Bertoni, 1973: 1). They printed 250 copies. It was printed with mimeograph and its composition reminds of a notebook, although they used cardboard for the cover. It was published in Spanish and the poems were later reprinted in further expanded editions in Chile. On Bertoni’s acknowledgements we can also see the reach of the collaboration taking place at Langford Court:

Gracias a Takako que cortó el papel, a David que puso mis poemas en el mimeógrafo, a Martha que cocina el pan tibio y grueso como una frazada, a Mathias que toca el tambor africano cuando Felipe toca el acordeón, a Felipe sin el cual este libro no se habría hecho, a Cecilia que ayudó a seleccionar los poemas y a Yaël que una vez bailó como una uva. (Bertoni, 1973: 1)

[Thanks to Takako who cut the paper, to David who put my poems in the mimeograph, to Martha who cooks warm and thick bread like a blanket, to Mathias who plays the African drum when Felipe plays the accordion, to Felipe without whom this book would have never been made, to Cecilia who helped to select the poems and to Yaël who once danced as a grape.]

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<sup>14</sup> *El Corno Emplumado* N°22. *Open Door Archive* (1967).

<sup>15</sup> Vicuña states: “Felipe Ehrenberg knew my work from *El Corno Emplumado* in Mexico, and invited me to produce a book for Beau Geste Press as soon as he heard I was in London” (Vicuña, 2013).

Vicuña's book *Sabor a mí* (1973) is also an object-book involving various mediums but, what I want to unravel here, is the editors' sudden decision to present it in a bilingual edition due to the political and social crisis that had begun in Chile by the time it was due to be published. But first, in order to get a better insight into the significance of this book, it is worth tracing the history of Vicuña's efforts to publish it earlier in Chile. Before leaving Santiago, in 1970, she tried to publish a first book of poems entitled *Sabor a mí* (meaning "tastes like me," after a Mexican bolero). This first collection of about a hundred poems was written while she was studying at the University of Chile. She gave the manuscript to Alfonso Alcalde, director of Editorial Quimantú, the publishing house of the Chilean political party Unidad Popular, but Alcalde was only interested in foreign authors and handed it to Oscar Luis Molina, director of Ediciones Universitarias, the publishing house of the Catholic University of Valparaíso, who liked the poems and gave Vicuña a contract to publish 3,000 copies of about 65 poems under the title *Sabor a mí* (González Ríos, 2013). This contract was signed in 1970, but the book was never published. The poems of this first collection are political and erotic, with an interest in Zen philosophy and the revolution:

ANATOMÍA DEL PAPEL

Lo raro es que la hoja  
se paró sola  
No tenía el fierrito  
erecto detrás  
Esto me sorprendió  
en el mismo estilo  
de tu sexo  
que no tiene hueso  
y es más duro  
que una rodilla  
que tiene varios huesos  
cinco o seis creo yo.

PAPER ANATOMY

It was strange  
For the typed sheet  
To stand on its own  
Without the erect  
Paper support  
To hold it.  
This surprised me  
In the same way  
Your sex does:  
It has no bones  
And is harder  
Than a knee  
Which has several bones,  
Five or six  
I believe.

As "Anatomía del papel" (1968) –which would later appear in the Beau Geste Press' bilingual edition translated as "Paper Anatomy" (Vicuña, 1973: 111 and 145)– the poems of the collection are written in a naked and direct language that attempts to shake both the representation of the body and politics in poetry. "Anatomía del papel" has several sexual references to male's sexuality that were probably shocking to most of her Chilean contemporaries, who were not used to women's poetry, much less women talking openly about sex and men's bodies. The reason why the book was never published, in fact, came down to the Rector of the Catholic University, who after reading the manuscript exclaimed "sobre mi cadáver" ["over my dead body"], considering the poems indecent and not suited for publication (González Ríos, 2013). Moreover, after the Military Coup, the new regime persecuted Molina and

Ediciones Universitarias, and many books, including Vicuña's manuscript, were thrown into the sea.<sup>16</sup>

The *Sabor a mí* published at Langford Court, however, is very different from that earlier version. At first, Vicuña planned to publish her “Diario de objetos” [“Diary of Objects”] or journal of *precarios* with the Beau Geste Press –stressing the precariousness I was addressing before. It was a collection of objects and small texts gathered in support of the Socialist cause in Chile and Cuba. However, a few days before it was due to come out, on the 11th of September 1973, the Chilean army led by General Augusto Pinochet deposed Salvador Allende and took La Moneda (the Chilean Parliament), causing a violent change that had a deep impact on Vicuña's body and work. She describes it as “un desgarró, un grito espeso y maloliente en el vientre” [“an anguish, a thick and foul-smelling cry in the abdomen”] (Vicuña, 1973: 104), a physical pain that made her change the physical contents of her publication, as we have seen that politics and the body are not understood as separate entities by the Chilean artist. In an interview with Alcalde, she states

No sólo es una cuestión de ideas, es una cuestión del cuerpo. [...] No comparto la idea de que alguien me diga que la poesía y la política están separadas. De hecho, una poesía en que se trata el cuerpo como yo lo trato, es política. Una poesía en que la mujer y el hombre son iguales, es política. Una poesía en que los indios, los negros, y toda esa gente es igual a los blancos, es política [...] lo personal es político (Lynd, 2015: 52).

[It is not only a question of ideas, it is a question of the body. [...] I do not share the idea of someone telling me that poetry and politics are separate. In fact, poetry about the body like mine is political. Poetry in which women and men are equals, is political. Poetry in which Indians, black people and everyone else are equal to white people, is political (...) the personal is political.]

The press, in fact, also makes clear that they are a political organisation: “We've stated our, the Press's functioning as political though not politized (sic)” (Mayor et al, 1974: 1); and Fisher notes that the “politics were [...] wrapped in and out of our lives and poetry” (Fisher 2017) – suggesting that liminal permeability or threshold proposed by Turner. Vicuña's decision to make a book-object out of her personal diary and other materials was, then, also a political action; a quick and unplanned decision, adhering to the narrative of urgency and immediacy of the avant-gardes.

The new version of *Sabor a mí* would include the “Diary of Objects,” but also paintings, some poems from that first unpublished manuscript, a letter, a dry leaf stuck onto a page, and more. She describes it as “un testimonio del Golpe militar” [“a testimony of the military coup”] which had “un impacto tremendo y fue extraordinariamente recibido por lo violento e inmediato” [“a tremendous impact and it was extraordinarily received for the violence and immediacy”] (González Ríos, 2013). They also printed 250 copies of *Sabor a mí*. The book was handmade and then reproduced with a mimeograph and offset machine, keeping a sense of that craft and precariousness. Vicuña describes it as a tactile book: “Era un libro táctil, una basurita impresa a mano, (sic) seis clases de papel diferente, una hoja de otoño pegada y un sobre

<sup>16</sup> This lost manuscript was partly recovered a few years ago, thanks to Vicuña's rewritings and the work of Juliet Lynd, her primary scholar in the U.S., and published under the title *El Zen Surado* (Santiago: Catalonia, 2013).

diferente en cada ejemplar que guardaba una carta enviada desde Chile” [“It was a tactile book, a little piece of garbage printed by hand, with six types of paper, an Autumn leaf stuck onto it and a different envelope in each copy that contained a letter sent from Chile”] (Fuentealba, 2007: 10).<sup>17</sup>



Cover of Vicuña's *Sabor a mí*

Adding to this plural, though rather singular publication process, *Sabor a mí* is also a bilingual book with a particular approach to translation. The Beau Geste Press decided to present a bilingual edition in English and Spanish, partly due to their location, but also to the violent political and social events that were taking place in Chile. Vicuña and the other members of the press felt the need to share these events with the wider public: to inform the world about the brutality of the Chilean national army and find solidarity with fellow artists. Ehrenberg and Vicuña translated some parts of the text in a rush, in the process of assembling the new book-object. Ehrenberg, in the Foreword, states that the whole book is, in fact, “an untranslation from the Spanish” (Vicuña, 1973: 2). This “untranslation,” which I read as part of the creative process of the book because it stresses its urgency, and thus unfinishedness and precariousness, places the text in a liminal space between its original language (Spanish) and its target language (i.e. some sections of the texts are missing in English, others are adding information to the Spanish

<sup>17</sup> The paintings were previously exhibited at London's ICA earlier in 1973, under the title “Pain Things & Explanations.” The “Diary of Objects” is a small part of her on-going series “Precarious.” Another section of the book, entitled “Autumn,” refers to her previous installation at the Museum of Bellas Artes in Santiago, in 1971. And, finally, the *Sabor a mí* publication by Beau Geste Press was reprinted in an A4 format, in black and white, in 2007, by the University Diego Portales, in Chile, and again in 2011, in A5, with some pages in full colour by the American publishers ChainLinks.

version, and so on). Marcela Fuentealba, in the Prologue to Vicuña's second edition of *Sabor a mí*, also describes the translation of the book as “una ‘no-traduccion’ instantánea” [“an instantaneous ‘no-translation’”] (Fuentealba, 2007: 11) referring to the negative aesthetics of Tribu No, a group that Vicuña, Bertoni and others had created in Chile before leaving the country, characterised by a return to the life-art project of the historical avant-gardes. The freedom suggested by this “untranslation,” therefore, not only places the text in a liminal space but also recovers the idea of the liminality of the avant-garde against the dominant language and narrative of capitalism.

*Sabor a mí*, then, depicts a particular historical moment: the rise and fall of the Socialist government in Chile, an experiment that is also linked to Vicuña's singular revolutionary aesthetics drawing from the fragile, ephemeral and precarious in connection with the destruction of the Latin American continent and the efforts to communicate and preserve its history (Sepúlveda, 2015: 71). As Ehrenberg states in the Prologue, the book has to be “the first of the many real windows [Beau Geste Press] will be opening to English speaking people. We hope these windows give a clearer vision of the mammoth energies that are forced to bubble just under the controlled surface of a large, great continent” (Vicuña 1973: 2); although it is significant that in the Spanish version he writes that the book “[s]ubraya el hecho de que Latinoamérica no puede hablar en plena libertad más que desde el exilio” [“underlines the fact that Latin-America cannot talk in freedom other than in exile”] (Vicuña, 1973: 3). This particular Ehrenberg's “untranslation,” although not far in meaning, evidences that the Beau Geste Press was a liminal space of freedom where these writers were able to share their work, but it also flags the cultural and political repression Chile and Mexico, as well as other Latin American countries, were experiencing at the beginning of the 1970s.

Another Latin American published by the Beau Geste Press was the Mexican experimental artist, writer and book-maker, Ulises Carrión, member of the collective In-Out Center in Amsterdam (1972-1975) and founder of the bookshop Other Books and Co also in Amsterdam in 1975. Carrión also spent some time making books with the Beau Geste Press at Langford Court, and came up with a different variety of bilingualism which I think stresses that liminality from a different standpoint.

In 1972, Carrión was studying for a Master's degree in English Literature at the University of Leeds when he made contact with the press. He already knew Ehrenberg and Hellion from a circle of artists that used to meet at a cultural centre in Mexico City, where Carrión directed a library (Reijnders 2017). According to Donna Conwell, he was impressed by their publications (Conwell, 2002) and they all agreed to collaborate on some projects together. Among these projects, Carrión published two of his early art-books with them: *Looking for Poetry: tras la poesía* (1973) and *Arguments* (1973). In the Beau Geste Press's Catalogue, *Looking for Poetry* is described as a “tiny book” (of 57 pages) in “bilingual publication” which “explores (explodes) the meanings contained by single words” (Mayor et al, 1973: 1). But I would argue that it is more than a bilingual publication; it is an experimental translation, a different variety from Vicuña's one, but one that also unveils a structural liminality. The poem is made of consecutive single words in red ink placed at the centre of the brown pages in Spanish and English; both words are printed close together, one on top of the other. The translation does not come on a different page, on a parallel column or in a different colour or typography, or even in italics, but both words are



presented successively on the page and with eight horizontal purple lines below that run from cover to back-cover across the whole book. These vertical signs and horizontal lines make me understand the book as whole; instead of a book containing two poems (the original and the translation), I read it as a composition of spaces where signs are not equivalent but successive. In his article “The New Art of Making Books” (1975), Carrión describes the book as “a sequence of spaces” (Carrión, 2003: 311), something we can clearly see in *Looking for Poetry*, where the words’ distribution establishes a spatial relation between Spanish and English, and between these languages and the purple lines below. Consequently, meaning in this poem not only arises from the signs but from the blank spaces between them, which also address what separates the two languages. This thinking of the structure as a whole opens up a liminal space where the relationships between signs and signifiers become the poem itself; the text, thus, becomes decentralised in a Derridean sense, because “the structurality of the structure had to begin to be thought” (Derrida, 1970: 353):

Lines  
líneas.

Wires  
alambres.

Strings  
cuerdas.

Cables  
cables.

Hairs  
cabellos.

Canals  
canales.

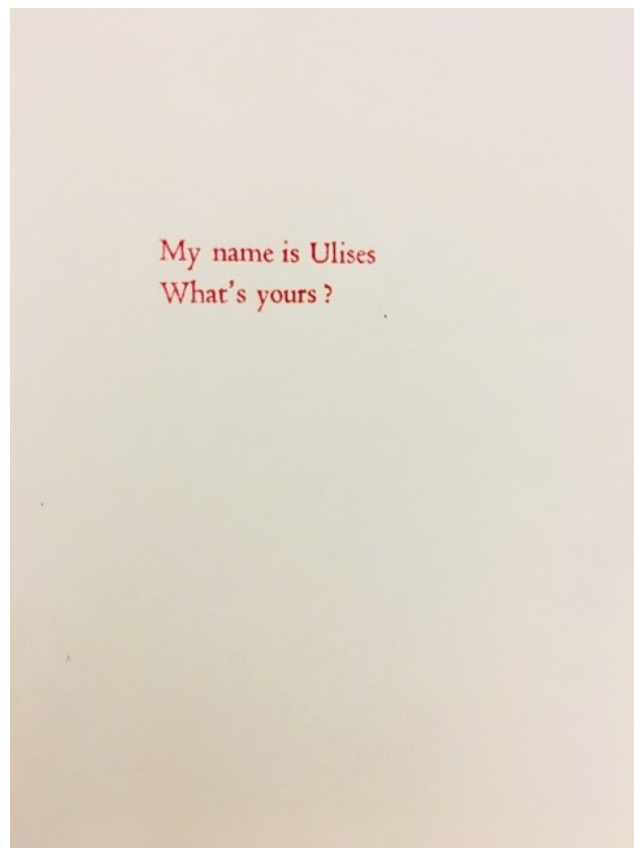
Rivers  
ríos.

Roads  
caminos. [...] (Carrión, 1973b)

The second book Carrión published with the Beau Geste Press, *Arguments*, is also a slim and colourful volume, consisting of 25 “arguments” or poems. Carrión conceived it in Amsterdam, but Ehrenberg contacted him to say that he had to go to Cullompton to make it in collaboration with the Beau Geste Press (Reijnders, 2017). Carrión accepted their invitation, as for him “[i]n the old art the writer writes texts” but “[i]n the new art the writer makes books” (Carrión, 2003: 312). Even though money was scarce, it was Ehrenberg’s idea to produce a luxury edition that could seduce book collectors and contribute to resolve their financial issues (Reijnders, 2017). They ended up publishing 400 copies of the book, 200 in colour and 200 in black and white.

*Arguments* consists of a number of people’s forenames forming different shapes on the colourful pages. Art critic Tineke Reijnders describes it as “a mix of concrete poetry and a

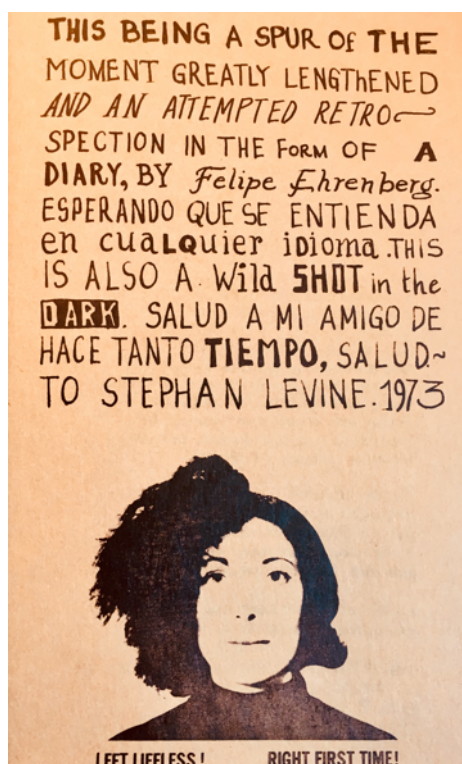
theatre play, minimised to only include the names of the actors” (Reijnders, 2017), but I believe these names also explore identity, or the blurring of it, by the way they are arranged on the page and their relationship with the blank spaces. A forename is a word that is given to us when we are born; we do not choose to be born in the same way we do not choose to be called this or that, and yet we are given that name, that structure that will accompany us for the rest of our lives. A book of names that interact through their position onto the page, being part of the structure but also making us conscious of it, has also the objective of decentralising an order. Carrión’s names, in fact, explore the role of language itself: “it returns to itself, it investigates itself, looking for forms, for series of forms that give birth to, couple with, unfold into, space-time sequences” (Carrión, 2003: 318). Even the conclusion of the book is an open question: “My name is Ulises, what’s yours?” (Carrión, 1973a) stressing the work’s unfinishedness, its character of work in progress, making the reader part of that scaffolding of anonymous people’s names that, nonetheless, relate to each other, being exchangeable and yet unique, existing on a liminal space that we can all understand: as we all understand names, they connect us all. As Carrión says: “[t]he new art appeals to the ability every man possesses for understanding and creating signs and systems of signs” (Carrión, 2003: 323). Carrión studied in Paris, Germany and England in the late 1960s and early 1970s, thus his work is also impregnated of theories around post-structuralism and semiotics that were circulating at the time: connected to Fluxus, Debord, Barthes and other French post-structuralist thinkers.



Last page of Carrion’s *Arguments*

The description of *Arguments* written on the Beau Geste Press' Catalogue is also significant, as the printers say that the poem "breaks linguistic barriers" alluding to Carrión's statement: "I believe good literature in Spanish can be written using English" (Mayor et al, 1973: 2). Here we come across yet another way of understanding experimental or creative translation: writing good Spanish literature in English. This is very appropriate, as Carrión was a Spanish native-speaker that wrote most of his texts in English, but it is also an experiment that perhaps only bilingual writers can understand because it involves writing in one language (English) with the structure of a different one (Spanish). Moreover, regarding linguistic barriers, the fact that Carrión's texts are exploring other structures that not only involve the text but also the book and its making and reading processes also represents a breakthrough from conventional writing, what he calls "the old art of making books," and the entering of a liminal space where ambiguity and indetermination reigns.

Finally, I would like to end this section with Felipe Ehrenberg's *Pussywillow: A Journal of Conditions* (1973), because it is also a book-object presented in a non-traditional bilingual edition. *Pussywillow* is a collection of newspaper clippings, letters, journal entries and photographs printed on wrapping paper and bound in used corrugated cardboard. The journal, like Vicuña's "Diary of objects," also contains explicit allusions to the Pinochet's military regime and the Socialist cause, although Ehrenberg does not include his inner thoughts, just clippings and observations, in an attempt to blur his subjectivity through the objectivity that surrounds him. In fact, it is through this accumulation of images and texts that the readers can access the author's identity: his transculturation, bilingualism and social conscience, which positions himself in a liminal space of transition, "neither here nor there," and yet in both places at the same time.



First page of Ehrenberg's *Pussywillow: A Journal of Conditions*

On the second page of *Pussywillow* he includes a handwritten note, entitled “Parallel Note,” where he explains that the modern understanding of art is against all notions he had been taught. He insists in the need to depose the artists from their throne because their role is no longer needed: “El artista, al situarse dentro de la definición, se autocondena a servir intereses culturales, emocionales y psíquicos rotundamente reaccionarios y caducos” [“The artist, positioning himself inside that definition, self-sentences himself to serve entirely reactionary and outdated cultural, emotional and psychical interests”] (Ehrenberg, 1973: 3). He claims that the social structures are too rigid, and that change is inevitable, but the artist is not above or ahead of that change (Ehrenberg 1973: 4). There is a need for an individual and collective expression, but the channels that enable those expressions have also changed, “especialmente en nuestros terceros mundos” [“specially in our third worlds”] (Ehrenberg, 1973: 4), thus, his diary is a medium for the demystification of those roles in a Barthean sense, and for opening up towards a more communal and ambiguous liminal position in Turner’s sense. He claims: “nos revelamos más por lo que nos rodea que a través de lo que producimos” [“we reveal ourselves more through what surrounds us than through what we produce”], and this is what his diary does: the accumulation of newspaper clippings, photographs, drawings and ephemera that surrounds him becomes the testimony of his liminal existence.

Following his poetics, the journal also includes another note, also handwritten in irregular capital letters, that says: “This being a spur of the moment greatly lengthened and an attempted retrospection in the form of a diary, by Felipe Ehrenberg. Esperando que se entienda en cualquier idioma. This is also a wild shot in the dark. Salud a mi amigo de hace tanto tiempo, salud-to Stephan Levine, 1973” (Ehrenberg, 1973: 1). Here again, Spanish and English are combined in what we call today Spanglish, and their combination produces a defamiliarising effect that, nonetheless, has the ultimate purpose to be understood by everyone, “[e]sperando que se entienda en cualquier idioma” [“expecting to be understood in any language”], democratically. In a different, more prosaic way to Carrión’s *Looking for Poetry*, Ehrenberg breaks the political and class hierarchy between languages to present a horizontal message that most people are able to understand. Interestingly, on the “Parallel Note,” he then explains that he first wrote the text in English but, “como siempre pienso comentarios a lo que hago, en español” [“as always I think annotations to what I do in Spanish”] (Ehrenberg, 1973: 2), he thus created something different, liminal and unique. This is similar to Carrión’s statement: “I believe good literature in Spanish can be written using English” because the two languages end up intertwining to form a third hybrid one. Ehrenberg describes this intertwining as a “rara y dicotomizante experiencia porque mis pensamientos en inglés son invariablemente distintos a los que pienso en español. Algo así como un continuo diálogo entre dos culturas” [“strange and dichotomising experience because my thoughts in English are invariably different from the ones I have in Spanish. Something in the lines of a perpetual dialogue between the two cultures”] (Ehrenberg, 1973: 3). This dialogue, which forms a third language, is a clear example of that liminality that overcomes definite structures or, as Gilbert underlines, “to overcome the inherent limitations of such language (theirs or foreign), the creator invents their own alphabets” (Gilbert, 2012: 48). I would add, these alphabets are the product of a transitory *communitas* that shared something undefined and yet flourishingly becoming.

All these books are experimental bilingual editions, but they do not present themselves as fully and faithfully translated. On the contrary, they become quick “untranslations,” as Ehrenberg puts it; or juxtapositions of two languages that reveal a liminal relation or connectivity between them; or hybridisations written in one language using another language’s structure, subverting a grammatical order and creating new and unprecedented configurations in Carrión’s sense. We have seen that not only the way these authors/makers understand the production of a book is somewhere beyond the limits of traditional book structure, but also their conceptualisation of language reaches a threshold between meaning and materiality, or signified and signifier, in a Derridean sense, never quite being one or the other and yet descentering and exposing the power relations and potentiality of their relationships.

#### AFTER LIMINALITY

In March 1974, the Beau Geste Press sent a “Joint Comunicé” to their readership announcing the decentralisation of their operations from Europe; this happened as Hellion moved to Holland and Ehrenberg decided to go back to Mexico. This move was the beginning of the end of the Beau Geste Press. Soon after, Saito and Mayor moved nearby to another house in Cullompton, where Saito did a great deal of printing and binding, and they continued to produce books until 1976, when they finished printing the remaining issues of *Schmuck*. The Latin American issue of *Schmuck*, however, would not come out until 1978 thanks to a Guggenheim award that combined the publication with an exhibition at the Museo Carrillo in Mexico City. Ehrenberg admitted that “[t]hanks in part to a Guggenheim award, it finally became possible to convert the Latin American material I had filed away into an impressive show [...] at the Museo Carrillo Gil in Mexico City” (Ehrenberg and García Canclini, 2013). The National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA) printed 260,000 copies of a two-volumes cultural supplement under the title, *Testimonios de Latinoamérica*, including contributions from mail artists, conceptual artists and writers from across the continent such as Antonio Caro, Clemente Padín, Victor Muñoz, Regina Silveira and Harry Gamboa, focusing on issues around semiotics, communications media, language and translation.

Certainly, *Testimonios de Latinoamérica* reached a larger number of people than the books made by the Beau Geste Press in England because of its reproducibility. At the same time the one-off books and other materials produced at Langford Court had become too expensive to keep the press alive, and in the end, they ended up in the hands of collectors. This return to institutional platforms is indicative of a return to “normality,” something that Turner suggests regarding the paradoxical nature of liminality when he describes its dialectics, since liminal individuals “are released from structure into *communitas* only to return to structure revitalised by their experience of *communitas*” (Turner, 2017: 129). The Beau Geste Press involved a constellation of individuals who at a determinate place and time recognised something in common, something unnameable, but related to the political and cultural liminality that I have described in the first part of this article; something that made them feel part of a larger *communitas*. These artists and writers shared a symbolic reality beyond their national borders and strived to ensure their practices resisted the wave of repressive violence sweeping Latin America, in a house in Devon that was falling apart, resisting in a liminal space, with no definite status.

The return to social structure is partly a result of resignation, co-optation or surrender, but it can also be read as a reinvigorated reincorporation, as what the members of the Beau Geste Press experienced during those years of collaboration consolidated an understanding of art as a collaborative production in perpetual flux still practiced nowadays, where experimental poets turn to collaboration to make sound poems, creative translations, and new media art where the interface functions to give the user the role of active participant. The members of the Beau Geste Press continued to produce mail art, handmade books and a wide variety of conceptual pieces after the dissolution of the press. Concomitantly, the books they produced at the press do not go unnoticed either: thanks to their testimony we can get a sense of what these artists and writers were living at the end of the 1960s and beginning to the 1970s, amidst an international political turmoil that hit especially hard in many Latin American countries. They left, thus, a significant legacy of prolific connections between the UK, Latin America and beyond. These individuals, some of whom were in a transient exile, created a communal space in the margins of their social structures where, as Turner elucidates, new common bonds were “formed through the cathartic experience of *communitas*” (Turner, 2017: 169).

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