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Beyond Genres and Authorship: The Affective Archive and Migrant Writing in Dani Zelko's Work

Ornela Barisone, Valeria Ansó

Abstract • This article analyzes *Reunión* (2016-2020), a project by Argentine artist Dani Zelko, as a paradigmatic case for rethinking literary genre from a comparative, expanded, and transmedial perspective. Conceived as a poetic-political device, *Reunión* combines oral dictation, handwritten transcription, artisanal publishing, and collective reading, generating an affective archive between voice, body, and language. Focusing on the first two seasons of the project, the article interprets *Reunión* as a migrant and relational practice that subverts literary hierarchies and enacts textual hospitality. It explores the tension between lyric and testimony, the performativity of communal reading, and co-authorship as a critical gesture. In this way, genre emerges as a space of displacement, resonance, and collective invention.

Keywords • *Reunión*; Performative Poetry; Literary Genre; Affective Archive; Migrant Writing; Comparative Literature

Abstract • Il presente articolo propone una lettura del progetto *Reunión* (2016-2020) dell'artista argentino Dani Zelko, come caso esemplare per interrogare il genere letterario da una prospettiva comparatista, espansa e transmediale. *Reunión* è un dispositivo poetico-politico che articola pratiche di dettatura orale, trascrizione manuale, edizione artigianale e lettura pubblica, generando un archivio affettivo tra voce, corpo e parola. L'analisi si concentra sulle prime due stagioni del progetto e interpreta *Reunión* come una pratica migrante e relazionale, capace di sovvertire le gerarchie del campo letterario e di attivare un'ospitalità testuale. Il testo esplora la tensione tra lirica e testimonianza, la performatività della lettura collettiva e la coautorialità come gesto critico. Così, il genere si configura come uno spazio di transito, dislocazione e invenzione comunitaria.

Parole chiave • *Reunión*; Poesia performativa; Genere letterario; Archivio affettivo; Scrittura migrante; Comparatismo

Beyond Genres and Authorship: The Affective Archive and Migrant Writing in Dani Zelko's Work

Omela Barisone, Valeria Ansó

Con qué simpleza se unen la poesía, el relato, la crónica, la improvisación, el contacto entre personas, el acto público, la deriva, la charla, lo íntimo, lo colectivo, la edición, la publicación, el intercambio, la idea de autor, la vida del mochilero, el artista comunista, etcétera, etcétera, etcétera (Santiago, *Reunión* 2, p. 75).

I. Introduction: Genre as a Moving Frontier

In the context of an ongoing redefinition of Comparative Studies, the theory of literary genre has ceased to function as a classificatory tool and has instead become a heuristic instrument, a space of mediation, and even a form of critical intervention. As Claudio Guillén points out, genres are not rigid structures but “transit zones, zones of change, zones of interaction” (1971, p. 107. Own translation). Their function is not only to order, but also to produce: they make visible the ways in which texts insert themselves into, deviate from, or reconfigure their own traditions.

Issue 10 of *Comparatismi* explicitly invites us to consider genre as a “transformation place”, affecting both artistic production and theoretical reflection. Within this framework, the present article examines *Reunión* (2016-2020), a project by Argentine artist Dani Zelko, as a paradigmatic case from which to interrogate genre from a comparative, expanded, and transmedial perspective.

Reunión is conceived as an artistic device¹ that articulates oral dictation, handwritten transcription, artisanal editing, and collective reading. Each book emerges from a face-to-face encounter between the artist and a participant who dictates, in a single session, an autobiographical or fictional text, which is transcribed without recordings or questions. These texts are then edited as small book-objects that circulate within specific communities and are publicly read by spokespersons. The project thus presents itself as both poetic and political, combining testimony, poetry, chronicle, and performance in a collective gesture of listening, archiving, and visibility.

¹ The term *device* is used here in the Foucauldian sense of *dispositif*, that is, as a network of practices, discourses, and institutions that organize what can be said and seen. “A decidedly heterogeneous set comprising discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions... in short: what is said and what is not said” (Foucault, 1985, p. 128. Own translation). This notion has been further expanded by Agamben: “io chiamo dispositivo tutto ciò che ha, in senso lato, la capacità di catturare, orientare, determinare, intercettare, modellare, controllare e orchestrare i gesti, le condotte, le opinioni e i discorsi degli esseri viventi” (2008, p. 38), and applied to artistic and archival practices by Cámara (2022).

This article explores the intergeneric and intermedial dimension of *Reunión*, as well as the ways in which the project challenges the boundaries of traditional literary genres – particularly the lyric and the testimonial – in order to reconfigure a situated practice of migrant writing. Rather than treating migration as a theme, Zelko activates it as a formal logic and an aesthetic-political gesture. His work implies not only transnational circulation (Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, Paraguay, Bolivia), but also a movement among languages, voices, media, and bodies.

The hypothesis guiding this study is that *Reunión* embodies a form of “migrant poetics,” one that displaces the limits of genre, subverts the hierarchies of the literary field, and activates an affective and performative archive in which writing is produced between bodies. In this sense, Zelko’s work is positioned at the crossroads of diverse traditions – oral literature, expanded poetry, relational art, independent publishing, testimony – and offers a privileged opportunity to think of genre as a “comparative place” (Gnisci, 2002), as intercultural mediation, and as a practice of community invention.

The article is organized into five sections. Following this introductory moment, the second develops the theoretical and methodological framework from which the corpus will be addressed, bringing together contributions from genre theory, archival studies, contemporary art, and comparative literature. The third section offers an analysis of *Reunión* as a poetic device, focusing on the operations of listening, transcription, editing, and public reading. The fourth examines the forms of foreignness, translation, and collectivization of the voice at play, and proposes a comparatist reading of genre from the perspective of migration. Finally, the article concludes with a reflection on genre as a possibility of critical openness in a situated key, from the Global South.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework – Genre, Archive, and Critical Ethnography

In recent decades, comparative studies have expanded the notion of literary genre, shifting it from a traditional normative and prescriptive conception to a more dynamic, relational, and performative model. Far from considering genre as a closed form or stable classification, contemporary approaches understand it as a mobile institution, a form of intercultural mediation, and a codified practice of reading and writing. From this perspective, genre becomes a space of transit and cultural negotiation (Guillén, 1971, pp. 107-134), more a contact zone than a limit.

Armando Gnisci proposes a conception of genre as a privileged mediator in intercultural contexts between different literary languages and also between the production and reception of texts (2002, p. 133). This comparatist function of genre is vividly rearticulated in projects that, like Dani Zelko’s *Reunión*, unfold expanded writing practices, poetic archives, and situated listening that exceed the conventional contours of the literary system.

2.1 Expanded Literature and Interarts

At present, comparatism is conceived as a field in constant redefinition and renewal, extending the adjective “comparative” to the various artistic modalities (Wellek and Warren, 1966, pp. 149-161; Glicksohn, 1994, pp. 218-235; Vicente-Yagüe Jara, 2013, pp. 38-44). As Remak classically defined,

Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature and other fields of knowledge

and belief, such as the arts (for example painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc. (1961, p. 1).

Research on interartistic relations – especially those linking word and image, archive and testimony – has been fundamental in questioning the notion of literature’s self-sufficiency. Along these lines, María Teresa Gramuglio identifies three key displacements in the comparatist field: “from text to discourse, from author to practice and from the literary system to cultural constellations” (2006. Own translation).

Zelko’s work partakes of this expanded logic. Through a practice that combines orality, writing, artisanal editing, public reading, and situated distribution, *Reunión* is inscribed in a genealogy of intermedial writings that resist generic closure. The project situates itself in the line of what Hal Foster calls “the artist’s return as an ethnographer”, a figure who no longer operates from representation but from contact, cohabitation, or situated mediation (1996).

The practices that give rise to *Reunión* are related to oral literatures and verbal arts, insofar as they are forms that have their own aesthetic, involving words, voice, gesture and memory as their media (Granados, 2012, p. 289). In this case, however, this cultural manifestation does have a material support – the book that is printed almost immediately after the writing encounter. Oral literature itself implies the circulation of intertexts and the dissolution of the traditional notion of authorship, insofar as it arises from the necessary interaction of two or more people engaged in a communicative system. “The crossroads at which the factors that make interaction possible (the poetic message involved, the interlocutors, the circumstances surrounding communication) converge is performance: the core of literature transmitted orally” (Granados, 2012, p. 293. Own translation).

We may consider the texts of *Reunión*, in a broad sense, as *oral materials*². This notion proves more flexible than the categories of testimony, interview, or non fiction, and makes it possible to account for the diversity of voices and discourses present in the project. Zelko acts as an ethnographer: he records³, translates, and transmits cultural signs. He gathers diverse oral materials, decodes them, and presents them as poems and as literary or meta-literary texts. As noted earlier, he becomes a kind of translator and produces a “interpretative montage” (Granados, 2012) that allows us to understand *Reunión* as an eminently literary text. While the figure of the author, in poetic terms, becomes blurred, there is nevertheless an interpreter who constructs this montage, gives it book form, circulates it first within the community and then on the web, and does so with intention.

In *Reunión* 1, a comment from Diana to Dani Zelko reads:

Pareciera que esta obra fuera un plan de reconocimiento de algo que no sabemos qué es. Truman Capote, por ejemplo, cuando escribió A sangre fría, tenía bien claro qué quería. [...]

² The concept was proposed by Santiago Cortés and Berenice Granados, coordinators of the Laboratorio Nacional de Materiales Orales (National Laboratory of Oral Materials) at the Universidad Autónoma de México, founded in 2013. Oral materials comprise “all those productions of speech that are generated in communicative acts in which the sender and receiver are present at the same time-space, and whose meaning depends on the interaction between verbal, non-verbal and contextual factors” (Cortés Hernández and Granados Vázquez, 2020, p. 36. Own translation).

³ Basic data of the interaction include: the circumstance, information about the speaker, the place where it takes place, and the year. He carries out an operation of translating cultural signs, as Lévi-Strauss (1978) explains, in which he decodes the information he receives, interprets it, transmits it, and thus generates a cultural dialogue that entails, in turn, an approach to and a knowledge of the other (Granados, 2012).

Vos también pareciera que tenés un plan, pero en este caso parece un plan más armado para rodear una visión que para llegar a un lugar específico. [...] No te da lo mismo nada. Ni a quién elegís para escribir, ni dónde, ni a quiénes invitás a que lean, ni cómo se disponen los objetos, ni cómo se arman los libros. Intuyo que tiene que ver con rastrear de dónde vienen las palabras, algo medio bíblico, y también con algo de las épocas de las utopías, ese cliché de que todos tenemos palabras (Diana, *Reunión* 1, p. 84).

2.2 Affective and Performative Archive

Another key notion for understanding *Reunión* is that of the archive. In contrast to the classical conception of the archive as a passive repository, contemporary approaches invite us to conceive of it as a situated practice, a performative gesture that activates memory in the present. Diana Taylor distinguishes between “archive” and “repertoire”: while the former refers to durable documents, the latter refers to “actions, gestures, bodies and affections that transmit memory in the present” (2012, p. 155. Own translation). Zelko’s procedure – which avoids recordings, transcribes by hand in real time, and culminates in a collective reading circle – can be understood as a form of affective repertoire that generates an archive in action.

Mario Cámara, for his part, emphasizes that the archive in *Reunión* is not merely a means of preservation, but “a gesture that gives rise to margins, which produces an affective cartography of silenced or displaced voices” (2022, p. 45. Own translation). The artisanal dimension of writing – the hand that writes, the body that listens, the circle that reads – creates an embodied, affective archive in which the testimonial becomes performative and the poetic is articulated as a collective act.

As Silvio observes,

en vez de hacer cosas con palabras, *Reunión* hace mundos con afectos. Otro desplazamiento. [...] La maquinaria *Reunión* restituye el continuo que hay entre palabra y afecto, porque las personas que hablan lo hacen desde una dimensión afectiva. Esa es la prueba concreta y palpable de que para las personas las palabras son afectos. [...] Se restituye también el continuo entre palabra y cuerpo, [...] el cuerpo es el soporte material para la lengua y para el pensamiento (Silvio, *Reunión* 2, p. 11).

In line with this reading, Georges Didi-Huberman has argued that images – and by extension, we might say, poetic forms – should not be read as representations but as acts of resistance, as “that which burns on the surface of the visible” (2019, p. 21. Own translation). The *Reunión* books function as image-texts that touch the real, not only through the migrant or marginal content of the voices they gather, but also through the material form in which those voices are restituted within a scene of public reading, in community.

Dani Zelko’s procedure is to write in pairs: he listens to the narrators and writes. He does not record or otherwise document the encounter; instead, he transcribes by hand what he hears, does not correct the poems, rewrites them on the computer, and prints them in the form of books (“fotocopiados y abrochados/ con ganchitos/ los poemas son en verso/ dos o tres páginas de computadora/ impreso bifaz en la tapa el nombre de pila/ del escritor invitado/ los poemas/ al final, un retrato del escritor/ y una biografía (cuenta quién es)” (*Reunión* 1, p. 97). Both parts – the one who speaks and the one who writes – are necessary for the poem’s existence: “quizás esta forma de escribir pueda disolver un rato los límites del propio cuerpo y suspendernos en un cuerpo compartido” (*Reunión* 1, p. 31). The interpretive montage also includes group reading, in community, preferably in public space: “la sorpresa es el procedimiento:/ al otro día lees los poemas/ por primera vez/ y lo

hacés frente a tus vecinos” (*Reunión* 1, p. 97). The private narrative becomes public, the poem returns to orality in the moment of reading. Finally, the record of each meeting

son fotos de las sillas/ vacías antes de la presentación/ las fotos de los encuentros con la/ gente ahí pueden generar conjeturas/ y predisposiciones// las presencias y los cuerpos/ aparecen en las palabras/ las fotos de las sillas vacías reflejan/ que la situación está creada/ está la hora, está la disposición,/ están los libros (*Reunión* 1, pp. 98-99).

2.3 Mode of Analysis

The approach taken in this article combines tools from comparative literature, genre theory, archival studies, and relational aesthetics. The analysis of the corpus focuses on *Seasons 1* and *2* of *Reunión*, with particular attention to the materiality of the books, the procedures of writing and reading, and the poetics of encounter. It adopts a reading that does not separate form from content, but instead conceives of form as a politics of enunciation.

At times the analysis will take the shape of a close micro-reading of fragments, while at other times it will be more structural, considering the device as a whole. Priority will be given to observing the transgressions and fusions of genres – between lyric, testimony, chronicle, and performance – and the ways in which these tensions generate a migrant, decentered, and collaborative poetics. The aim is to show how *Reunión* not only represents experiences of displacement, but also embodies in its very form a migrant logic: in transit, in translation, in relation.

3. Reunión as a Poetic-Political Device

3.1 Procedural Drift

Reunión is neither a book nor a series of texts, nor even a publishing project in the strict sense: a poetic-political device that shifts the centrality of the author toward a relational, situated, collaborative, and affective practice. Its structure follows what Dani Zelko simply calls “el procedimiento”: traveling through cities, towns, and communities; meeting someone, inviting them to narrate and to write together; listening to what is said and transcribing it by hand, without recordings or questions. The texts are then printed as books and presented in public readings where the person who dictated the text – or a spokesperson chosen by affinity – reads it aloud. Each book thus produced becomes part of a “Temporada [season]” of nine encounters, which introduces a serial and rhythmic logic, while remaining open to the unforeseen. The book is also published on the web, and the digital edition is open access.

Zelko describes it as follows:

Caminando sin rumbo, conozco a estas personas. Las invito a escribir unos poemas. Compartimos un rato, a veces varios días, y me dictan, y les hago de escriba. Una vez escritos los poemas, se imprimen en libros. El escritor lee su libro en una reunión en el lugar donde vive y regala los libros a sus vecinos. Cada escritor cuenta con un portavoz, elegido por afinidad, que es el responsable de leer en voz alta sus poemas cuando se completa una temporada de Reunión. Al principio, en un encuentro, la palabra hablada se transforma en palabra escrita.

Al final, los poemas hacen posible un encuentro que se vuelve palabra oral. Los poemas contentos: están entre dos personas y no entre dos hojas (*Reunión* 1).

This procedure is situated at the intersection of multiple traditions: oral poetry, testimonial chronicle, independent publishing, performance reading, relational art, migrant

writing. *Reunión* can be conceived as an art of drift. Drawing on the Situationist concept formulated by Guy Debord, drift⁴ is a technique of unpredictable, playful, and affective transit: “It is presented as a technique of fleeting transit through various environments [...], a playful-constructive behaviour, which places it in complete opposition to traditional notions of travel and sightseeing strolling” (Debord, [1956] 1996, p. 22. Own translation).

In Zelko’s case, this drift implies walking without a predetermined plan, yet with openness toward encounter and listening. It is not about observing or representing the other, but about exposing oneself to the irruption of a bond. The procedure is open and collective, in contrast to the “work,” closed and belonging to an author external to it (Giorgi, 2022, p. 7).

Cámara suggests that Zelko’s work responds to a “affective cartography” that “maps the voice of barely audible lives, located in popular neighborhoods of large cities or small towns in Latin America, collected from a series of random displacements” (2021, p. 316. Own translation). In this way, the procedure destabilizes the traditional figure of the author as creative subject and replaces it with a mobile figure: a scribe, a listener, a transcriber, a facilitator of voice. This dehierarchization of authorship – which shifts the focus toward relation – introduces an ethical and aesthetic displacement that directly impacts the literary genres at play.

The performativity of the procedure is key. This turn is fundamental, since, as Giorgi observes, *Reunión* “no representa la vida pública, la produce”; it constructs a scene in which bodies and voices gather to produce meaning, affect, and community. “La posibilidad de que individuos y grupos desconocidos se reúnan en torno a un problema común” – writes Giorgi – “se vuelve en Reunión una forma de arte público, de laboratorio político” (2022, p. 3). This gathering is, at the same time, an archive in action and an embodied repertoire. Oral materials are not documents but events: they emerge from contact, are textualized, printed as an artisanal book-object, circulate among neighbors, and are read aloud as a shared act. Each of these stages is part of a poetic economy of textual hospitality, in which the poem is the result of co-presence rather than individual authorship.

Furthermore, the implementation of this “procedimiento” entails a poetic-political stance, in the vein of Fernando Birri (Franzoso, 2019), since the voices presented in *Reunión* are both marginal and representative; they are “stories situated between personal and collective” (Cámara, 2021, p. 315. Own translation). The public dimension that the event acquires:

conjuga planos de igualdad posibles, encarna en los cuerpos, sus palabras pero también (y quizá fundamentalmente) en sus gestos... una potencia de igualdad que resulta cada vez más intolerable para sectores que apuestan su propia existencia a la perpetuación y profundización de las inequidades sociales (Giorgi, 2022, p. 5).

In *Reunión 2*, Roberto says that the device

es una idea, una acción para salir. Lo que vos le proponés a las personas tiene un principio de acción, da un instrumento de acción, y eso es muy importante [...] si vos decís: “Bueno acá tenemos estos materiales, hagamos algo juntos y lo llevamos a la plaza”. Por ahí no lleva a ningún lugar, pero esa gente tuvo un instrumento concreto para transformar su bronca, o su demanda, o su necesidad, o su opinión, o su deseo, en un acto. Si no hay acto no hay salida. Sin acto no hay afuera. Sin acto no salís. Sin acto no hay apertura. No pasa nada. No se puede

⁴ In Situationist studies, *dérive* is generally translated as drift. In this article we use drift, while also retaining the original French term (*dérive*) to highlight its theoretical lineage.

hacer una transformación ideológica del mundo. El mundo se transforma con acciones. Acciones al alcance de las personas (p. 30).

From a formal standpoint, the serial and performative structure of *Reunión* proposes a reconfiguration of genre. What we encounter are not poems in the classical sense, but rather “poemas-testimonios” situated between lyric and chronicle, between conversation and speech act – oral materials that, through montage, are transformed into written poems. As Cámara notes, the encounter is something that happens and at the same time is a construction, a fiction, a co-production (2021, p. 318).

The poem is not only what is said, but the way in which it is said, where it is said, to whom it is addressed, who produces it, and how it circulates. The poem entails, at the same time, a decentering and an estrangement of the self, which hears itself in an unexplored form, in someone else’s voice. It is a poetry made possible by encounter;

es el momento en el que la vida de estas personas se intensifica y queda escrita, el momento en el que el poema se inscribe como terreno concreto de la vida. Cada poema implica un trastorno, una transformación [...] Si no hay viaje, no hay poema; si no hay salida de sí, no hay poema; si no hay desplazamiento de la propia geografía, no hay poema; si no hay encuentro no hay poema. El poema acá es un ejercicio espiritual que te cambia la vida. El poema como forma de vida (Silvio, *Reunión* 2, p. 74).

Thus, *Reunión* constitutes a poetic artifact that subverts the boundaries between genres, media, and forms of legitimation.

Finally, the method also reconfigures the figure of the reader. Those who access the books are not only readers of a text, but potential participants in a community circuit. The public readings – organized in circles of nine chairs – activate a choreography of listening, a performative scene in which the voice is shared and unfolds. As Santiago Villanueva observes, that circle “no era una pasarela de lectores, era un engranaje, todo era unido a lo otro [...]. Se volvió un coro [...]. Una obra de voces que generaba un tiempo solo para ella” (2016, s/p). This autonomous temporality, this time of the common, is perhaps the most radical aesthetic effect of the device.

3.2 Migrant Archive

The migrant character of *Reunión* is not limited to the biographical condition of some of its participants, nor to the geographical itinerary of its circulation. Contact with the other, interpretation, and the intercultural dialogue implied by migration constitute both the origin and the aim of that great device of translation that is *Reunión*:

Encontrarse con un desconocido es una forma de reingresar al mundo. Un encuentro inesperado siempre incluye una sorpresa, una conquista, una renuncia. Una pausa de lo que estabas por hacer, una salida del plan, un corte en la lógica del mundo. Cuando un encuentro sucede, te corrés de lugar. El encuentro es otro lugar. El encuentro es algo que sucede y a la vez es una construcción, una ficción, una coproducción.

[...] La palabra no existe sin el cuerpo que la materializa, y a través de la escritura, las palabras juegan a distanciarse de él. Una vez que está en un libro, el escrito se aleja del cuerpo del que lo escribió. Se vuelve un hecho colectivo. Deja el terreno íntimo y se convierte en un vehículo impredecible, que pasa de mano en mano y participa en contextos diversos.

Hay una distancia implícita en esos movimientos. Y esa distancia trae un lujo: leerle (*Reunión* 1, p. 42).

More profoundly, migration operates as a formal and affective⁵ structure: it manifests itself in the drift of the procedure, the movement of voices, the interweaving of languages, the hybridization of genres.

The archive produced in *Reunión* is, in this sense, a migrant archive, understood not as a documentary accumulation but as a constellation in movement, as a gesture that displaces the hierarchies of canon and authorship in order to produce poetic forms at the margins.

The books of *Temporada 1* and *2* compile texts that oscillate between life narrative, fragmentary lyric, spontaneous orality, diary, and metadiscursive commentary. They are the poems of each “writer”, who recounts what they wish or what they need. The themes of these stories are diverse: life histories, fictions, religion, dictatorships, rituals, violence. These poems intersect with metaliterary fragments that reflect on *Reunión*, the procedure, and the meaning of the actions that bring those voices together, and at times address Dani directly in the second person. Finally, other prose texts – without proper titles, all named *Reunión* – narrate in the first person the encounters, the journeys, and the circumstances of the poems’ writing, a voice identified with Dani Zelko and a register close to the personal diary or travel diary. All voices hold the same hierarchy and the same weight; all are included in an act of poetic-political resistance and are “spoken by poetry”:

¿Hay voces que valen más que otras? ¿Cuáles son las escuchadas? ¿Cuáles son las voces que llegan a escribirse y publicarse? ¿Cuáles son las voces rescatables para este sistema que se impone y nos vigila en nuestra manera de hacer hábitats y de vincularnos? (Mariela, *Reunión* 1, pp. 73-74).

Reunión 1 opens with the testimony of Akim, a Guatemalan child, a text that emerges as a poetic form in which the childlike and the fantastic intertwine: “Tengo un perro invisible / que se llama Trueno / y me acompaña a cazar tigres” (Zelko, 2018: s/p). The child’s voice, transcribed without corrections, produces an effect of syncopated lyricism that resists categorization: is it a poem? a conversation? a game? In its singularity, this text overflows generic taxonomy and activates a zone of aesthetic indeterminacy.

Another significant example is that of Crespo, with whom *Reunión 2* begins. He introduces himself as follows: “Mi nombre es José Luis Crespo Jacobino, pero todos me conocen como ‘Crespo, el animal’. No sé escribir, soy criminal, soy retrasado” (*Reunión* 2, p. 7). He is a marginal musician from the city of Santa Clara, Cuba, whose rhythmic orality is organized as monologue and chronicle: “Hace 15 años/ que no tengo, ni uso documento/ y vivo como se me da la gana” (p. 4). He continues: “Ahora hago música rap y música reggae. /Estaba buscando una puerta para salir /y la música apareció [...] La música es el grito/ el golpazo/ el volcán poseído/ diez mil demonios adentro/ haciendo erupción” (p. 5).

⁵ This formulation is connected to the affective and archival turn that has made it possible to conceive of migration not only as geopolitical displacement, but also as a sensorial experience inscribed within aesthetic and performative *dispositifs*. As has been outlined, Taylor distinguishes between the “archive” and the “repertoire” in order to conceptualize how certain memories – especially those of displaced, vulnerable, or non-hegemonic subjects – are transmitted through oral, gestural, or visual performances that do not always translate into traditional documents (2003). Likewise, Mario Cámara suggests that artistic intervention on archives of violence tends to articulate forms of affectation and listening that reconfigure traditional representational genres, approaching a poetics of the unstable and the impersonal (2022, p. 19). In the visual field, Georges Didi-Huberman proposes that images can “take a stand” not only by showing pain but also by altering the regimes of sensibility that organize the visible (2008).

Here, hybridity is not only formal: it is an enunciation excluded from the institutional circuit – because of its marginality, its alcoholism, its “inadequacy” to the Cuban revolutionary model – that finds in the *Reunión* device a form of poetic irruption. The poem thus becomes a vehicle for a presence that usually has no place.

In the case of Lucía, an Afro-Cuban doctor and healer, the dictated voice intertwines with accounts of rituals, recipes, prayers, and dreams:

Mi familia era católica/a pesar de que soy negra/y que los negros/traíamos la religión Yoruba.
/ Así viví 50 años de mi vida/ creyendo en Dios/ a la forma de los católicos. /Ahora tengo
56./ Pasó que me enfermé/ y me di cuenta/ que hay cosas más allá,/ y que hay personas en
este mundo/ que se dedican al mal/ a enfermarte/ a hacerte brujerías y hechicerías (*Reunión*
2, p. 22).

Here, the text recovers ancestral knowledge that combines popular medicine, Yoruba spirituality, and poetic vision, articulating a hybrid form of enunciation that recalls Afro-American oral narratives, where body and voice function as archive. As Taylor has pointed out, the body is a form of knowledge, an embodied encyclopedia that transmits practices, affections, and languages (2003, p. 16). In this sense, *Reunión* does not simply document migrant or subaltern narratives; it activates them in a scene of speech, in a materiality of embodied and affective archive.

La forma de hacer público lo privado que practica *Reunión* está constituida a partir de relaciones entre cuerpos, de un montón de vínculos de carne y hueso. Es una invitación a una humanidad, una invitación antinteligencia artificial (Andrés, *Reunión* 2, p. 90).

From a comparatist perspective, literary genre is transformed here into a zone of indeterminacy and foreignness. The dictated texts do not follow metrical norms or specific rhetorical conventions; their forms emerge from the rhythm of speech, from silence, from the shared gesture. As Gnisci reminds us, genre functions as a mediator between stories of forms and stories of themes, allowing for the articulation of dissonant voices within a common horizon of reading (2002, p. 133). In *Reunión*, that horizon is built at the intersection of languages, knowledges, ways of life, and corporealities that normally remain outside the traditional literary system.

Zelko's procedure also subverts the logic of linguistic ownership. Writing does not “belong” to either the author or the transcriber; rather, it is shared, lent, ceded. In many cases, the texts include grammatical errors, repetitions, truncated sentences, and hesitations. Far from being corrected, these marks are preserved as traces of living enunciation. This decision introduces a dimension of intralinguistic foreignness: the Spanish that is written is neither homogeneous nor neutral, but charged with accent, inflection, orality, and interference. Comparative literature has historically emphasized the role of genre as a site of translation and intercultural contrast (Guillén, Miner). In this corpus, translation does not occur between different languages, but within the language itself, as fracture, variation, and deviation.

The writers of *Reunión* “usan una forma de hablar que suele estar vedada. Como si en algún momento la palabra escrita se alejó de la palabra oral. Coloquial, sencilla, cercana, sin pretensiones” (*Reunión* 1, p. 71). The register of orality becomes poetry through Zelko's mediation and prompts reflection on the distance or proximity between the language of poetry and oral speech, on the mediations required to construct cultural meanings.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the migrant dimension of *Reunión* operates not only at the textual level but also in its editorial form. The books are produced in limited

editions, distributed in non-conventional spaces – squares, schools, community centers – and activated through communal readings. This circulation dehierarchizes spaces of consecration and redefines the literary field as a field of action and affect. In this vein, Boris Groys proposes thinking of art as a gesture of “become public”: not representing the other, but making visible what has no place, intervening in hegemonic regimes of visibility (2014, p. 17). *Reunión* fully inscribes itself in this logic: as a migrant archive, as a collective act, as a writing situated among bodies.

3.3. Poetics of the Circle: Reading as Collective Act

The reading circle is the culminating gesture of the *Reunión* project and one of its most significant operations in poetic, performative, and political terms. After the individual encounter, the handwritten transcription, and the artisanal editing, each text returns to the voice in a public scene of collective reading. The circles are spaces in which hierarchies dissolve. In them, the person who dictated the text, or a spokesperson chosen by affinity, sits alongside eight others and reads their book aloud. The circular arrangement, with nine chairs aligned in a circle, introduces a communal choreography, a form of horizontal spatiality that subverts the logic of spectacle or of authorial presentation.

Reunión took place in different spaces, towns, and cities. In all cases, Zelko begins the search for narrators through direct address:

Llegué a Domínguez a la hora de la siesta. Llovía sobre las calles anchas del pueblo y había una bruma que parecía la del mar. Caminé un poco con las manos en los bolsillos de la campera, hasta que me encontré con un vecino y le dije, “hola, soy Dani, ¿conocés a alguien del pueblo que pueda tener ganas de escribir unos poemas conmigo?” (*Reunión* 1, p. 15).

At the moment when the gathering and the reading take place, the entire town becomes involved: people contribute chairs, lights, and help organize the space. In Domínguez, they chose the town’s central square, but on the scheduled day it dawned raining, so the event was moved to a warehouse, where

se había armado una escenografía acorde a una reunión. Sillas dispuestas en forma circular, simulando un aro, rodeadas con otras sillas de igual forma que invitaban a que cada asistente tuviese un espacio para escuchar y también para opinar después; porque es una reunión (Osvaldo, en *Reunión* 1, p. 16).

Santiago Villanueva affirms that “la ronda no era una pasarela de lectores, era un engranaje [...]. Se volvió un coro [...]. Una obra de voces que generaba un tiempo solo para ella. No había modo de considerar cada texto por separado. El formato le daba algo de totalidad” (2016). This collective form of enunciation dissolves the figure of the single author, while at the same time introducing a choral and plural dimension into the reception of the text. The voices intertwine, modulate, repeat, and sustain one another. Reading thus becomes a communal experience rather than an individual or private interpretation.

The circle as a spatial structure recalls ritual and pedagogical forms of transmission: the circle as a place of equality, of affective circulation, of resonance among bodies. María Moreno underscores this aspect by comparing the *Reunión* circle to a “ceremonia” in which what is transmitted is not only content but also a way of being together, a possibility of recognition. “En cada lectura se crea un lugar nuevo: un espacio-tiempo de atención compartida, de escucha activa, de presencia múltiple” (Moreno, 2018, s/p). This performativity of reading transforms the poetic act into an event: poetry happens, is embodied, is heard, and is returned to the world as a living gesture.

No importa si la que escribe es Juana, Andrés, si la que habla soy yo o Ari. O quizás sí importa, pero el foco no está puesto ahí. Si vos estás conversando con alguien no hay autorías, no es una obra de teatro en las que unas líneas de diálogo son tuyas y otras mías. Está bien, hay alguien hablando y alguien escribiendo, pero, ¿qué importa? Estos libros suceden porque se juntaron. Las reuniones suceden porque nos juntamos. [...] Creo que *Reunión* tiene el espíritu de disolver quién dice qué. Es una nebulosa, gente hablando, escribiendo, leyendo, hablando. No creo que a esta obra le interesen las palabras en términos de propiedad. La propiedad es un robo. *Reunión* es una práctica. Una práctica que no se inscribe en contra de nada, que va por otro camino (Laura, *Reunión* 1, p. 43).

The circle also introduces a mechanism of doubling voices and bodies. In some cases, the person who dictated the text is not the one who reads it, but delegates the reading to someone else: a relative, a friend, a neighbor. This delegation introduces a politics of representation not as substitution but as resonance. The voice is lent, embodied in another body, turned into an echo. In Giorgi's words, "*Reunión* trabaja con la respiración del otro. Lo que se pone en escena es una forma de relacionalidad corporal en la que despunta otra idea de lo público" (2022, p. 2). Reading, then, is not only a semantic act but also an affective and political practice that rehearses modes of living together.

From a comparatist perspective, this gesture activates a decentering of the traditional lyric genre. If the modern poem is defined by a singular, interior, subjective voice, *Reunión* proposes a choral, testimonial, collective lyric. It is a poetry that does not arise from the self but from relation; that is not spoken in solitude but in company; that is not printed to be read in silence but to be uttered aloud, in community. This relational poetics challenges the boundaries between lyric and performance, between poetry and archive, between art and action, between literature and orality.

The circle as a format, finally, challenges the conventions of the hegemonic literary circuit. The reading scene does not usually take place in auditoriums or poetry festivals, but in squares, schools, neighborhood centers, village corners. These are public or semi-public spaces that enable another kind of reception – more horizontal, less mediated by devices of prestige. The poetry of *Reunión* does not seek institutional consecration but situated listening. In this sense, as Didi-Huberman argues, what matters is not only visibility but also the sensitive exposure to the other: To make an image – or a poem – burn is to expose it to the reality of its transmission: to make an image – or a poem – burn is to expose it to the reality of its transmission (2019, p. 25). In *Reunión*, that burning takes place in the circle: in the body that speaks, in the ear that listens, in the book that passes from hand to hand:

Tanto en los encuentros de a dos como en las rondas, se emiten voces. La voz es la carne de la palabra. Cuando alguien habla o lee en voz alta, el sonido viaja por el aire. Cuando las palabras suenan son el aire, que entra en los demás, a través de los oídos, a través de la piel. Cuando lees, el texto está enfrente, cuando escuchás, estás en el texto. El que habla está en lo que dice, y el que escucha está en lo que escucha, y ahí estamos juntos (*Reunión* 1, p. 58).

4. The Comparatist Dimension of Genre: Foreignness, Co-authorship, and Situated Publishing

If literary genre operates as a comparatist tool – as a mediator between forms, languages, and cultural traditions, as Gnisci (2002) suggests –, *Reunión* can be read as a critical practice that directly addresses that function. The texts that compose *Seasons* 1 and 2 of

Dani Zelko's project do not correspond to stable generic categories: they are not poems in the strict sense, but they are read as such; they are not documentary testimonies, although they narrate real experiences. Rather, they are migrant poetics, in which foreignness is not simply a theme but a structural condition of form. The generic hybridity in *Reunión* does not constitute a mixture of styles, but an active rupture with genres understood as normative devices.

From a comparatist perspective, this operation displaces the focus from the text to the relation: between languages, voices, traditions, subjects. As Guillén reminds us, genre is not an essence, but a historical and intercultural mediation (1971, p. 111). *Reunión* radicalizes this postulate by articulating its texts through linguistic foreignness, listening to the other, the multiplication of registers, and community circulation. Foreignness – as distance, variation, translation – here becomes the very condition of possibility of the poetic gesture.

In this sense, the figure of the author is thoroughly decentered. Zelko does not write the texts, but transcribes them; others write through his hand; he does not edit them in conventional terms, but arranges them according to a material and affective logic; he does not appropriate the voices, but enables them within a scene of collective enunciation. As Cámara argues, “the project promotes a policy of listening and an economy of co-authorship, in which writing is not owned by anyone but is a common place” (2022, p. 59. Own translation). This multiple co-authorship – among the one who dictates, the one who transcribes⁶, the one who reads, the one who designs, the one who prints, the one who listens – constitutes a form of the common in practice. As Silvio says to Dani Zelko,

Vos fabricás escritores y en ese proceso te fabricás vos como escritor y como persona. Desdibujás tu imagen de vos mismo mientras el otro se cuenta [...]. Todo eso es activado por esta maquinaria de escritura y de afectos que crea escritores. Y el escritor que crea esta maquinaria es una multiplicidad. No es el escritor como una identidad sino como una multiplicidad que está todo el tiempo en mutaciones sensibles (*Reunión 2*, p. 41).

Foreignness also manifests itself in the way the texts disrupt linguistic norms. The voices that compose the *Reunión* books are traversed by accents, idioms, repetitions, local oralities. Although all participants are Spanish speakers, children invent words, and pronunciations can make comprehension difficult; later the stories simplify them, and Zelko transcribes without modification. In Cuba, when he meets Crespo, Dani Zelko notes:

Crespo me dice que él quiere hacer su libro, que tiene unas historias para contar. Dudo. Me cuesta mucho entender lo que dice. Casi no pronuncia las consonantes y habla con la boca muy abierta. Imposible transcribirlo. Le digo que si quiere probamos [...] Nos sentamos en una mesa y arrimo mi silla a la de él. Le digo, “Perdón que me acerque tanto, necesito entenderte bien”. “Cuando te cuente esto me vas a entender” (*Reunión 2*, pp. 8-9).

The language appears fractured, full of deviations and modulations. This internal variability approaches what Pascale Casanova calls “intralinguistic foreignness,” that is, the way in which a language reveals its internal heterogeneity when it becomes a site of

⁶ “Es un hecho: en este caso el encuentro de a dos incorpora el encuentro de a muchos. El momento de escribir y el momento de presentar el libro se juntan. Pirge está diciendo su libro, lo está componiendo, lo está escribiendo con mi mano, lo está leyendo en voz alta, lo estamos escuchando” (*Reunión 2*, p. 40).

struggle (2004). In *Reunión*, each poem is also a linguistic performance: a way of speaking that destabilizes the notion of a neutral, universal Spanish.

This dehierarchization extends to the sphere of publishing. The books produced by *Reunión* do not circulate through the conventional channels of literary legitimization (commercial publishers, prizes, festivals, fairs), but are instead distributed in community spaces and activated through public actions. This editorial gesture, close to independent and activist publishing practices in Latin America, configures a material politics of reading that subverts the author-editor-reader-consumer model and replaces it with a chain of affects, exchanges, and concrete relations. As Groys argues, “Art becomes political not because of its thematic content, but because of the way it is exhibited, because of the way it alters the regime of visibility” (2014, p. 18. Own translation). In this framework, the situated publishing practice of *Reunión* becomes a political gesture, insofar as it produces another scene of circulation for the written word.

Finally, the crossing of genres, bodies, languages, and media proposed by *Reunión* can be understood as a gesture of poetic and discursive hospitality. By opening the lyric-testimonial genre to multiple forms of life and speech, the project enables a constellation of writings in transit, which do not subordinate themselves to the norms of the literary system but instead place it under tension from its margins. This hospitality – at once aesthetic, ethical, and political – redefines the very notion of literary genre as a space of resonance among alterities, as a site of translation, and as a comparatist field par excellence.

5. Conclusions: Listening as a Comparatist Method

In a context where the theory of literary genre is being redefined as a field of friction, mediation, and transformation, Dani Zelko’s *Reunión* emerges as an exemplary case for rethinking critical categories from a situated, affective, and performative poetic practice. Throughout this article it has been argued that *Reunión* does not merely represent migrant or displaced experiences, but embodies migration as poetic form, structural logic, and editorial politics. In this sense, the project goes beyond generic taxonomies and challenges traditional forms of production, circulation, and reading of the literary text.

The analysis of *Temporadas 1* and *2* has shown how the texts emerge from relation rather than from the self, and how genre here becomes a zone of transit between orality and writing, testimony and poetry, archive and performance. This hybridity is not a simple stylistic mixture but a productive tension that reveals the comparatist potential of genre understood as a space of translation, foreignness, and cultural resonance. As Guillén and Gnisci have argued, literary genre cannot be dissociated from the historical regimes of reading and the material conditions of its circulation.

In *Reunión*, these conditions are thoroughly reconfigured: the poem is born in an encounter, printed as an artisanal book, activated in a reading circle, delivered free of charge to the other, and finally made available on the web.

From a comparatist perspective, this project critiques the centrality of the text as a closed object and of the author as a legitimating figure. Instead, it rehearses a poetics of listening, co-authorship, and textual hospitality. As Roberto states,

Este es un proyecto de desescritura: vos sos el escritor que no escribe, que se describe para que escriban los otros. Aunque cuando anotás vas haciendo una lectura, una síntesis y una propia manera de ver la cosa. Ningún registro es inocente. Y lo que queda es una asamblea, un parlamento. O un collage, donde distintos recortes de voces forman una voz (Roberto, *Reunión 1*, p. 49).

In this practice, the archive is not a memory repository but a gesture in action; the poem is not a closed form but a choreography of voices; genre is not a fixed category but a moving field of intervention and rewriting. As Giorgi has suggested, *Reunión* can be read as a “laboratorio de formas políticas,” where public life is reinvented through the affects, presences, and bodies that normally remain offstage.

Thus, *Reunión* not only expands the thematic repertoire of contemporary literature but also interrogates the very status of the literary. Rather than consolidating a new form, what it proposes is a constant displacement: among languages, subjects, genres, and media. In this movement, poetry becomes listening, archiving, editing, and openness. To listen, in this context, is to practice critique, to exercise comparatism, to intervene in the present through the word of the other

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