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Literary *Arpilleras*: Textiles as Place-Based, Creative Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This article is a reflection on the experience of using textile making, *arpilleras*, as a creative practice to stimulate engagement with literature and the lived environment in a course on Latin American literature. The discussion will illustrate how, by recognising the body as another place of learning, this approach can help students engage at a deeper and more personal level with ecological fiction and relate their reading to personal experience.

Textile making as place-based pedagogy recognises the body as another place of learning & engages students with Latin American fiction.

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> La sensación de armonía y bienestar que experimenté durante mis caminatas no las he vuelto a conocer después. Un mundo seductor y diferente, un mundo frágil e indefenso ante a los cambios que se hacen en nombre del progreso.
>
> Tatiana Lobo, *Tiempo de Claveles*

> The word, the spoken or written word, has the most immediate impact on human beings; in contrast, matter speaks more slowly.
>
> Alvar Alto, *Alvar Alto: Synopsis*

INTRODUCTION

This article reflects on the experience of using textile making as a creative practice to stimulate engagement with environmental issues in Latin American literature, outlining some of the benefits and challenges of engaging in non-traditional assessment methods within the academy.[1] I shall illustrate how, by recognising the body as another place of learning, this approach can help students engage at a deeper and more personal level (McCutcheon and Boudreaux 212) and that the overlap of syntactical structures of craft and storytelling can be clearly mapped onto the intertextual space between the short stories and the story cloths that students create in their interpretations (Adamson 186). I hope to show that the physical experience of crafting/sewing *arpilleras* can advance socio-ecological awareness, that it is a haptic, vibrant means to engage with place-based learning as well as a sense of communal creative practice among students. A key element in understanding how textiles can be used in this way hinges on the changing understanding of the meaning of "place", or the "where", of learning, and how textiles can act as a "pivot point" between reading, sensation, and critical thinking (McKenzie 362). At the core of this practice lies the desire to promote a community-based, creative, or "play", space that is stimulating yet safe and facilitates a response to the written text that is both physical and intellectual (Isen 10; Nussbaum 101).

Through engaging with innovation and creative practice, I also seek to address what Ball and Lai have termed the failure of universities to "cultivate in students the desire and ability to be good 'caretakers' of the local natural and human community" (263) through the rigidity of their structures, what Eisner has called a pedagogy wherein "much is formulaic and prescriptive" ("Artistry" 16). The course that I discuss in more detail below, serves as an introduction to the many ways in which the arts and humanities have their own unique role to play in any protest or consciousness-raising movement. I relate the student work in particular to the growing interest in *craftivism* as a means of "slow activism" and "gentle protest" (Corbett 21–43). Finally, I will reflect on how, for the tutor, creativity that engages with a critical pedagogy of place means "challenging each other to read the texts of our own lives and to ask constantly what needs to be transformed and what needs to be conserved" (Gruenewald 320).

The approach I shall follow in my discussion builds on the methodology for understanding visual culture espoused by Gillian Rose; using sites of production, image, and audiencing (Rose 24–47). My main focus falls on the "site of production", that is, the process the students follow as part of the learning experience. I will engage briefly with elements of the "site of audiencing" when I discuss how text and textile work together to engage the viewer with narratives about art, increasing the empathetic impact, and why this is important within the context of a literature course. The "site of the image" itself, the product that the students create, will be illustrated with some examples, but extended discussion of the images falls outside of the remit of this article. Differentiating between the three sites helps us engage with a clear picture of which elements of the process are most impactful in different contexts, and then to ask questions as to why that may be the case.

ARPILLERAS: TEXTILE TRADITION AND ACTIVISM

The choice to incorporate textiles into the study of Latin American literature originated from an opportunity to collaborate with curator and collector Roberta Bacic in 2011, curating an

1 I would like to thank the *Modern Languages Open* reviewers, and Jane M. Haladay and Scott Hicks for their comments on a very early version of these reflections, and Roberta Bacic whose friendship, encouragement, and support with the student participation has been invaluable.

exhibition of *arpilleras* as part of a Latin America festival.[2] The tradition of the *arpillera*, three-dimensional appliquéd textiles, developed in Chile under the regime of Augusto Pinochet in the 1970s, a time when thousands were "disappeared", imprisoned, tortured, and forced into exile.[3] They became a means of giving a voice to the repressed, a space to bear witness to the atrocities taking place, a space for camaraderie in difficult conditions (Bacic "Trail"). Bacic has described them as "acts of resistance in the way in which they broke with traditions", resisting "the traditional format of rural idyll by depicting images of political oppression and more urban reflections of daily life" and allowing "women to resist traditional roles making them economically more empowered—something that was especially relevant when many of the traditional breadwinners had disappeared or were imprisoned" ("Art of Resistance" 68). *Arpilleras* are, as material objects, transgressive by nature, traversing spaces and ideas, moving to and fro, between the individual and the communal, giving a voice to the voiceless (Compton). The "Disobedient Objects" exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2014 highlighted that "the imagination and creativity of making within social movements has played a key role in achieving social change", yet "the role of material culture in social movements is a mostly untold story" (Flood and Grindon 9). Within what Flood and Grindon term an "ecology of agency" (16), what stands out more than anything in these textiles is their ability to destabilise:

> They represent what might be considered a "folksiness" or lesser genre of art and yet they are exhibited, without apology, in art galleries and embassies. In every step of their journey the *arpilleras* have demonstrated resistance: resistance against poverty by creating a grassroots export; resistance against the regime by telling the story of daily life under Pinochet; resistance against the very idea of resistance by making sewing an act of subversion; and resistance against the expectations of the art world by being exhibited as if they are works of classical art. (Bacic "Trail" 1)

In equally evocative terms, Marjorie Agosín has reflected that:

> The *arpillera* is made of many things, not just fabric. The process of its creation is similar to composing a poem or planting a tree to commemorate a death. The *arpillera* is born from deep inside of us, in a zone of intimacy, but it embodies the public voice and allows hands, previously used for caressing and loving, to tell their story. (15)

Introducing the art of *arpillera* making within an academic context serves to bring together these ideas of resistance, intimacy, and personal engagement in response to a literary text and life experience.

TEXTO-TEXTIL-TIERRA: A BRIEF COURSE OVERVIEW

"Protecting paradise: the art of protest", is a short course, a *cursillo*, offered to final-year Spanish language students, that plays on the theme of the New World or paradise described by early European accounts of the Americas, and centres on a collection of short stories by Tatiana Lobo situated in Costa Rica. Few, if any of the students, have been to Latin American. It is an 11-week course, one hour per week, during which time we consider how art and fiction can act as potential forces for environmental change, agents in shifting attitudes to keep "the environment

2 Details on the *arpillera* exhibition organised via the Latin American Studies Forum at Queen's University Belfast in 2011 can be found at: cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts2/fullevent1/?id=77.

3 "The backing of strong hessian, 'arpillera' in Spanish became the name for this particular type of sewed pictures. Empty potato or flour bags have also been used for the backing, and this has given them their typical size—a quarter or a sixth of a bag [...] Cloth figures were made separately and, with other little memorabilia, they started to be sewn onto these '*cuadros*' (pictures) which gives them a three dimensional effect and a special personalized quality [*sic*]" (Bacic, "Contested Spaces" 392). In recent years there has been an increased interest in these textiles and their uses in a variety of contexts. See, for example, the University of Aberdeen, Patience Schell has successfully introduced *arpillera*-making into student assessments following a workshop led by Bacic where she shared the practices outlined in this article: www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/researchbased-arpillera-9497.php; or consider the resource pack designed by the University of New Mexico: laii.unm.edu/info/k-12-educators/curriculum/stitching-resistance.html or the very successful range of events and blog at Aberystwyth University organised by Christine Andrä, Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, Lydia Cole and Danielle House, 'Stitched Voices': stitchedvoices.wordpress.com/; as well as all the events linked to the Conflict Textiles collection at Ulster University curated by Bacic, see the Conflict Textiles database CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet), Ulster University: cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts2/fullevent1/?id=129. For scholarship on the activist element of *arpilleras* see, for example, Andrä et al.; Adams 2013, 2005, 2002; Dillon; Eshet; Goggin; Strycharz, 2014; Young; Zeitlin Cooke.

in the discussion, to chip away at the ignorance of and indifference toward the nature that always lies at the base of culture" (Tittler 20). The course seeks to foment an awareness that we live entangled lives, that our choices impact on individuals and environments far from us, and that literature and textiles have a particular way of speaking these realities.

Tatiana Lobo is one of a growing group of Latin American authors who came to prominence in the latter part of the twentieth century, who engage in ecologically focused literature.[4] In her introduction to the collection of short stories *Tiempo de Claveles* she highlights the fact that the stories originate from a period of close, personal contact with the Talamanca region and its people. Although the collection is very much framed by the changes taking place within Costa Rica and the impact of industrialisation and big business investments (bananas, coffee, sugar cane, mining companies, etc.) on the *campesino* [land-working] communities and indigenous Bribri people, not all of the stories are, strictly speaking, place-based. They may retain some specifics suggestive of a Latin American environment and culture, such as intimate and familiar description of the movement of the woman's hands making tortillas in "El Enjambre" or the undulating sea of *chayote* trellises, yet they address issues and experiences pertinent to many other environments across the globe. Barbas-Rhoden has argued that Lobo's narratives "return subaltern lives to history, recreating a dialogue from the silences and lacunae of previous texts", within an understanding of the subaltern as the "ethnic other of Latin America" (122). These short, evocative, and accessible stories provide excellent material for a course exploring the impact of environmental and social change. They reflect Lobo's recognition that while she is critical of the environmental and social impacts of industry, she does not idealise the world of the *campesinos*, which is often harsh and particularly difficult for women (Lobo 14). As background to the course theme, we study the development of eco-criticism as a critical framework and explore a range of examples where textiles and art have been used as part of protest, community action, and consciousness-raising around environmental and human rights issues.

ECOCRITICISM, PLACE-BASED LEARNING, AND CREATIVE PEDAGOGY

Initially, designing this *cursillo*, I was very aware of the praxis and loco-centric elements that are often discussed as central to the ethos of an ecocritical approach in teaching. It is seen as a potential force for environmental change (Glotfelty), with the idea of loco-centric ecocritical pedagogy "founded in a romantic conception of the redeeming and educative possibilities of epiphany in nature" (Garrard, "Problems" 234).[5] Graham has also noted the importance of critical place-based ecology in art education due to its blend of "local and ecological with cultural awareness and social critique" (378). From an environmental justice perspective, loco-centric practice also serves to "engage our capacity as moral agents" not only to understand injustices involved but also to engage with "the potentialities for alleviating and meliorating the injustices" (Figueroa 325).

4 Tatiana Lobo Wiehoff is a prize-winning author but has received surprisingly little scholarly attention to date. Her main novels and short story collections include: *El Puente de Ismael* (2014), *El Corazón del Silencio* (2011), *Candelaria del* Azar (2010), *El Año del Laberinto* (2000), *Calypso* (1996), *Entre Dios y el Diablo. Mujeres de la Colonia* (1993), *Asalto al Paraíso* (1992), *Tiempo de Claveles* (1989). Other Latin American authors whose work includes a more explicitly environmentalist focus include, but are not limited to, Luis Sepúlveda, Homero Aridjis, Gioconda Belli, Anacristina Rossi, Fernando Contreras Castro, and Rómulo Gallegos. For recent discussion of these authors within the broader context of environmentalism and the work of Latin American authors, see, for example, Lesley Wylie, *The Poetics of Plants in Latin American Literature* (2021); Scott DeVries, *Creature Discomfort* (2016); Mark Anderson et al., *Ecological Crisis and Cultural Representation in Latin America* (2016); Scott DeVries, *A History of Ecology and Environmentalism in Spanish American Literature* (2013); Laura Barbas-Rhoden, *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction* (2011); Adrian Taylor Kane, *The Natural World in Latin American Literatures* (2010); Carmen Flys Junquera et al., *Ecocríticas* (2010); Beatriz Riera-Barnes and Jerry Hoeg, *Reading and Writing the Latin American Landscape* (2009); Jennifer French, *Nature, Neo-Colonialism and the Spanish American Regional Writers* (2005).

5 There is a very wide body of work dealing with ecocriticism and many are the descriptions of its different manifestations. For the purposes of the courses I teach, I would generally follow the description as outlined by Mambrol in her blog "Ecocriticism: An Essay": "Ecocriticism investigates the relation between humans and the natural world in literature. It deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment and attitudes towards nature are presented and analyzed. One of the main goals in ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react in relation to nature and ecological aspects" (n. pag.). As Zapf points out, we are now in what is considered the third wave of ecocriticism, in which the "activist strand of ecocritical work became stronger, as did attention to the ecological implications of personal and communal lifestyles" ("Introduction" 6). And there is talk of a fourth wave.

For an educator in the United Kingdom seeking to engage fully with the lived experience and literary expression of the environment in Costa Rica, the sheer geographical distance makes loco-centric learning, place-based in the form of physically visiting an area, impossible. I have previously attempted to engage in this form of learning by taking the students to the Tropical Ravine in Belfast's Botanical Gardens or by organising a course on survivalist training in the local woods. These attempts to introduce them to the strangeness of new environments close to those depicted in their reading and to test their understanding of the local flora, if not fauna, were not, admittedly, completely successful! One tentative botanical expedition with a group of bewildered second-year students was sufficient to prove that this would not be a long-term approach to heighten student engagement. Arranging activities outside of class time in such a way that all students could attend also proved challenging due to timetable clashes, external commitments, and part-time jobs. The broader dilemma of introducing place-based learning in classes using both postcolonial and ecocritical theories (Eco-Poco) has also been noted by Erin James. She argues that whilst most courses "can assume a general familiarity with cultural traditions, histories, and geographies", postcolonial ecocriticism courses must allow for the fact that students may be unfamiliar with "terrains, languages, and customs" (James 64). Yet these factors can provide the creative tension within which we should seek to work in a modern languages (ML) programme if, as Antunes and Gadotti contend, "eco-pedagogy is a pedagogy centred on life: it includes people, cultures, *modus vivendi*, respect for identity, and diversity" (137).

The changing perceptions of the idea of "place" and the variety of theoretical frames attached to the term recognise that multiple and contested conceptions of belonging and identity can give us greater flexibility to adopt innovative approaches in the classroom (Gradle 2007). Robert Stevenson raises this issue by asking whether by "place" we refer to:

> The physical, biophysical, social, or cultural, or all of these? Which aspects or dimensions of the local and place are important pedagogically to engage students? The connotation of "local" with the biogeographical and socio-cultural boundaries of "place" clearly warrants exploration as they each shape how place-based pedagogies are defined and practised. (354)

Place-based, then, can be much broader than the geographical, creating a space for other interpretations that are helpful in the ML context. If viewed as the "where" of learning, as outlined by McKenzie, we could argue that these can be "particular places but can also be in and of experiences of friendship, art, literature, irony, cultural difference, community" (362). She also contends that by engaging in a range of intersubjective spaces, we can enable a heightened awareness and connection to place with additional "opportunities for other modes of learning"—a framework that enables us to grapple with socio-ecological issues (McKenzie 369). In addition, if we are seeking to introduce meaningful place-based learning, we should not presume that the "physically proximate local" is more familiar and meaningful to a student. Working with language students who have just returned from living abroad for a year, I have seen that they often interpret the stories we discuss through the lens of something they have experienced or learned while in a different culture and country. For meaningful engagement, it is necessary to consider "not simply the places where students live, but also how interested in or concerned about those places they are likely to be" (Ball and Lai 268, 273). As I will discuss later, through conversations as we craft/create together, we can help elicit these connectors to "place" that may open further socio-ecological thinking.

It is also important to note that there is not one single understanding of what is called a "critical pedagogy of place" and that there are tensions behind the use of terminology and its application in the learning context: Is it a coherent concept? (Bowers) Does it evaluate the appropriateness of our relationship to each other and to our socio-ecological places? And to what extent does it encourage teachers and students to "pursue the kind of social action that improves the social and ecological life of places, near and far, now and in the future"? (Gruenewald 314). For my purposes, I have approached the concept of place-based learning as a means to deepen engagement with social and environmental issues in regions that are geographically remote from the reader but connected to us through our consumer choices. To bring depth, I have sought a way to create a fuller sensory dynamic connecting ideas in

the text with individual lived experience. Through textiles, I aim to encourage use of all the senses in the act of reading, to imagine, smell, and feel the world of the story, even if the student has never physically experienced that location. And, by extending this sensory element of the environment and linking it to personal experience, I aim to enable a more empathetic connection with the characters and the ecological challenges they face. This approach builds on Nussbaum's idea of the "narrative imagination", the ability to be "in the shoes" of another person (95). As Gruenewald states, "[a] critical pedagogy of place aims to (a) identify, recover, and create material spaces and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments (re-inhabitation); and (b) identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonization)" (318). I would include within this the need to challenge students not to generalise against the oft-perceived villains of our societies, such as big business or patriarchy, where it is too easy to attach blame unthinkingly and to see fault in the other and not reflect closer to home and the daily personal choices that entangle us all with lives across the globe.

WHY *ARPILLERAS* IN THE LITERATURE CLASSROOM? CRITICAL MAKING AND CRAFTIVISM

Agosín argues that the *arpillera* "unites the vast traditions of artists who sing, inform, paint, and weave hope. Retelling history from the voice of the dispossessed is to rewrite history and envision a better future" (36). Such a sentiment reflects the process learning envisaged by McKenzie as we challenge ourselves to explore the "where" of learning. The *arpilleras* offer us the opportunity to engage in tradition and art to retell an element of a story through the prism of our own individual experience. In this way, textile becomes "place", traversing time and space while still indelibly connected to a particular moment and person—that piece of their mother's tablecloth or grandfather's old shirt, the location where these materials were made, all hold memory and history of place of their own (Jefferies "CONTEXTILE2020"). Location becomes the material object that is the focus of critical making and learning becomes a "doing activity", a performative base wherein creative practice is both corporal and intellectual (Okello and Quaye 44). Using textiles becomes a "memoral critical incident" in student learning wherein the student is "required to "come at" their learning in a new way, when they are "jerked out" of the humdrum by some unexpected challenge or unanticipated task" (James and Brookfield 7).

On a wider scale, recounting through fiction and through textiles can serve to symbolically express traumatic and often horrifying experiences. Research has shown that in many cases, textiles serve as a less direct and less confrontational means of processing experiences than either oral or written art (Andrä, "Textiles Making Peace" 4). As such, creating an *arpillera* in this course reflects Lobo's use of metaphor to process difficult experiences as she tells the reader, "[a]lgunos de mis relatos, 'Abacá' y 'El Enjambre', son metáforas de esta masacre demasiado real para contarla sin la ayuda de la ficción" (Lobo 14). By engaging in this process in response to the short stories, the students are creating their own "communicative textiles". That is, textiles where imagery creates a visual narrative; a typography that can be read to derive meaning; symbols, images, or decorative motifs that have a specific meaning; colours, textures, or patterns that evoke a mood or feeling in the viewer and communicate through the contextualisation (Andrew 34). We consider that cloth is socially engaged and socially enacted and that "[p]lace can also be defined through virtual rather than material spaces, and through contact points that become new places" (Kettle 335). The physical act of creation through textiles has been powerfully illustrated in work with students in the US in connection with the craftivist collective Bordeamos por la Paz, who work to memorialise victims of disappearance and violence. In this case, the textiles become an "embodied connection" between the students and the missing bodies of the dead or disappeared (McCutcheon and Boudreaux 212).

The blend of critical thinking through engagement in eco-critical theory and critical making that results in the final *arpillera* encourages the student to develop a new language as they process and communicate their understanding of the text and their personal interaction with core elements of the stories we read and discuss in class. They must, quite literally, slow down

to sit and stitch, gather materials, work out how to hold a needle for easiest use, and develop an awareness of space and the symbolic meaning of their choices. McCutcheon and Boudreaux argue that it is a "slow process that requires the students to *be with* the names and stories of victims for an extended time" (229; emphasis original), or in this case, the characters of the stories. They are intellectually and physically pushed beyond their comfort zone, in an act of complex neurological activity, and an action as seemingly simple as working with a new tool, the needle, to communicate their thoughts. Such critical making is an act of learning to "speak the language of the material through the embodied process [...] each gesture adding to the tale [...] The process of making is as critical and element as the product itself (similar to the theory of experiential learning)" (Schwartz 238). This is a key factor to bear in mind in a course that is not part of a textile or fabric design programme. The assessment cannot be judged primarily on the elegance or intricacy of the needlework but on evidence of the process in which the student has engaged and the creative ideas that come out of it. I will pick up on this aspect again when discussing the format of the assessment. Creative work, then, can be a space where there is a transformative impact on the sense of self (Parker 303) and where:

> a powerful identification and projection takes place; the entire bodily and mental constitution of the maker becomes the site of work [...] we are both inside and outside the conceived object at the same time. Creative work calls for a bodily and mental identification, empathy and compassion. (Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* 13–14)

Critical making, as Pallasmaa notes, is a process in which "the hand grasps the physicality and materiality of thought and turns it into a concrete image" (*The Thinking Hand* 16). Contact with textiles, the energy and tension involved in finding ways to speak one's thoughts through materials, demands a slowing down and a centring, a new form of living with the text, letting it reside in body and mind before becoming action. Hand-sewing our way into a story adds another dimension to the eco-critical reading of a text and opens a physical as well as an intellectual route to greater empathy and compassion by slow association and internalisation of the story (Pajaczkowska 2015).

The choice to use *arpilleras* as the creative form also brings the students into contact with a long tradition of textile activism in the Latin American context. For the student in the twenty-first century, this activism can also relate to the growing field of "craftivism". Using textile making to raise consciousness around environmental issues as part of a gentle protest links to the description provided by Betsy Greer, who highlighted that:

> the very essence of craftivism is creating something that gets people to ask questions; we invite others to join a conversation about the social and political intent of our creations [...] we foment dialogue and thus help the world become a better place, albeit on a smaller scale than activists who organise mass demonstrations [...] It turns us, as well as our work, into vessels of change. (8)

More recently, Sarah Corbett reminded her readers that "craftivism should start with envisioning the sort of world we want to live in [...] Focus on the world you want to help craft, not the one you want to eliminate [...] Craft is our tool for activism not our taskmaster" (17–18). I find this reflection on envisioning a different world particularly helpful as a pedagogical focus as I have often been struck that, in our bid to highlight how literature, art, cinema, etc. seek to engage with injustice and human rights abuses in Latin America, we often concentrate on the negative at the cost of ignoring the vibrancy, beauty, and strength of that continent and its people. And I have wondered at the lasting image I have helped build in the minds of students who may never travel to these countries. Indeed, Gruenewald (315) warns against over politicising pedagogy due to the risk of increasing a sense of fear and hopelessness that will lead to passivity instead of agency. In an age of "percepticide" (Taylor) and often violent protests, these slow activities offer alternative ways of engaging with society that should not be overlooked. In the face of such negative potential, the role of creative communities is key.

In the preliminary stages of the course, all students are given the opportunity to attend a practical workshop to learn more about this textile tradition and to have a hands-on experience at making the figurines. All the students take part in a workshop where they have the opportunity to craft a figurine. I provide basic materials that we share across the class. This group sharing is an important part of group cohesion; however, under Covid-19 regulations this

had to become a more individual activity with students bringing their own resources where possible and not sharing, for example, scissors. The workshops are a very experimental space. The anxiety, reluctance, or embarrassment that sometimes accompanies the initial stages of the session soon gives way to an experience of laughter, sharing progress, and imaginative additions to our less-than-human-looking creations. Engaging with the *arpilleras* as a group activity in the workshop also encourages sharing of "crafterthoughts" around the subject of the project (Corbett 57–66). As we sit and make together, conversation flows freely, moving between the themes of the class and life experience, the choice of materials and how these link with the students' experiences and hopes for the future. In their homes, they discuss their projects with family members, often involving them in the process of gathering materials. A number of these students will not continue to make an *arpillera* yet, for everyone involved, this space in the middle of the academic day brings a change of pace and dynamic that leads to much discussion after class.

Reflecting on her experience of running the workshops and introducing the students to some of the rich collection of *arpilleras* she curates, Bacic has reflected that:

> The *arpilleras* could not have chosen a better space to present themselves than in a Latin American literature class. For that, they need somebody to invite them and give them space to interact and challenge assumptions as to who will be at the centre of a lecture and what role and space they are supposed to take. It seemed appropriate to bring them in a suitcase and take them out as if from Pandora's Box. They emerged one by one, were placed on the students' desks and occupied different spaces so as to make it possible to see, touch, and smell them. At the same time, a short film about them, accompanied by catalogues, leaflets, scraps of materials, needles, and other sewing implements created a sense of collective and shared space. There was no escape, it was impossible to ignore them. They exposed themselves and their stories and invited the participants to engage with them through Tatiana Lobo's stories and the connections they could make to their own world.
>
> Tuning in with some of the students' appreciations, I would reflect on the word of James Young who, in connection to Conflict Textiles, remarked that, "In thinking of these story cloths [...] we need to be mindful of both ways of 'living with' such memory, day in, day out [...] This needlework expresses such memories outwardly and how it gives the storyteller an inward time and space to work through such memory." It has felt like fresh air to share and be challenged at the same time, contest and occupy, bring to and be empowered by the *arpilleras* that came to the class and the ones that were sewn by the students as living testimony of a way to communicate what seems difficult or impossible just in words.[6]

In addition to the workshops, I have had the opportunity to run an extra series of meet-ups over six weeks open to any students who wish to come along and craft for a short time over lunch. Students were free to bring a personal project with them or to continue practising their figurines and experimenting with materials. It is necessary to set some limitations and pre-plan for these extra-curricular sessions. It is important that no student should feel disadvantaged in the course if they cannot attend. For this reason I ensure that the conversation stays general and does not focus on the specific content of the course or the assessment and that students who do not participate know they can contact me outside of the class or lunch sessions if they want further advice or feedback. I also open the session up to all students in the year group, not only those involved in the course. Moreover, I engage in crafting a personal project along with the students so that I am there as a participant and not a facilitator or tutor, which also creates a more open dynamic and allows everyone to share whatever expertise they might have in needlecraft. Students have commented that these sessions became a space apart in a busy week where they could step outside of the normal demands of academia and thus served not only to encourage them in their making but also helped de-stress before re-engaging with their courses. The positive comments substantiate Adamson's argument that the "rhythmic quality of craft" brings a comfort in what can otherwise be the "disruptive experience of modernity" (186).

6 Personal communication written by Bacic on facilitating workshops in this course in 2011 and 2012.

ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

In the previous sections, I have discussed why the introduction of textile creation can be considered an aspect of place-based learning and how critical making links to craftivism and actions of hope. The following sections focus on the context of the assessment and highlights the students voice through three samples of their work and their reflections on the process.

Students choose one of three stories discussed in class to interpret by textile or essay. To give the assignment a "real-world" context, the students are set a scenario in which they have been commissioned to create an *arpillera* for an exhibition examining how literature can serve as a means of environmental protest and highlighting concerns relating to the impact of social and environmental change in Costa Rica.[7] To fulfil the remit, their *arpillera* should reflect their understanding of key elements of the story and be accompanied by a written reflection on the process followed in the creation of the work, analysing key elements of the story that link to their textile, and where they have incorporated their own personal elements to the textile. This reflection, either typed or hand-written, is then inserted into a "secret pocket" in the *arpillera*. This could be incorporated into the image or simply attached to the back of the textile.[8] Finding the secret pocket in each work is one of the most entertaining aspects when the *arpilleras* are submitted. Students show an impressive amount of creativity when incorporating text and textile in a meaningful and playful manner.

To maintain a creative space that is stimulating yet safe, it is particularly important to assure students that the assessment is not based primarily on sewing skills, rather, that there are three elements under consideration: general technique (labour and creativity), narrative (ability to reflect understanding of core elements of the story), and personal reflection (evidence of individual engagement and incorporation of their own lived experience). The emphasis on understanding the "site of production" in addition to the "site of image" is an important element given that the course is focused on the process of connection and not primarily the technical quality of the final textile (Rose 24–47). Indeed, those pieces that initially seem to provide a very simple visual or technical approach are often accompanied by a written response of depth and insight. This draws the viewer back to reconsider the interaction between text and textile with greater attention and to understand the making process. This process reflects the idea of the "third life" of the good reader, the "reflective" life (Wolf 190). There is a nervous excitement among the student group when they submit their finished *arpilleras*. As mentioned above, students express a greater connectivity between their studies, home environments, and each other, as a result of the "crafterthoughts" exchanged in the making process and this creates an emotional resonance that is longer-lasting than the intellectual engagement. Although they may at times comment on the level of challenge and the time taken in creating their *arpillera*, their words are coloured by a *joie de faire*, that "sheer enjoyment of making something exist that did not exist before, of using one's own agency, dexterity, feelings, and judgement to hold, form, touch, and craft physical materials, apart from anticipating the fact of its eventual beauty, uniqueness or usefulness" (Dissanayake 40).

Student responses highlight the importance of nurturing spaces where they can join communities of creation where they can discuss the themes of their work and how it touches on their lives. We might look to the Swedish school system of *slöjd* or *sloyd*, that is, handicraft-based education, for such an example. Siri Homlong (26) has shown how the process enables students to develop design and communication in three main elements: *logos* (technological reasoning about composition, construction, and material as well as attitudes and values of potential users), *ethos* (character of the design), and *pathos* (emotion). Illum and Johansson concluded that cultural socialisation and learning through *sloyd* highlights how students build their own "world of experience" in what becomes a process of creating a collective memory (qtd. in Hofverberg and Kronlid 3–4). Ingold takes this a step further when he argues that making is not simply a matter of a process imposed on something but is a process of growth between material and human forces (Ingold). The act of critical making is a distinct experience

7 For some students, this scenario has gone on to become a reality and they have exhibited their work in the Chilean Embassy, Dublin, as part of the "Arpilleras viajeras: Chilenas y de otras latitudes/Wandering Arpilleras: From Chile and Beyond" exhibition. See the images "No to Corporativism" and "Return to Home and Harmony" in the Conflict Textiles database: https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts2/fullevent1/?id=159.

8 In the original *arpilleras* of the 1970s, these secret pockets served to allow their makers to communicate with the recipients.

physically and intellectually from that of the individual drafting an essay and can offer "a balance for the cognitive and analytical mind" (Campbell and Dalton 35). It is also a gentle process of consciousness-raising. As Anthony McCann reflects:

> Crafting activities are understood as reminders that we can become aware of how we always-already make a difference, at any time, in any situation [...] We always-already have an influence on how we and others experience life. We can become more aware of how we always-already matter ... There is nothing more personal, political, or relevant than attending to the ... character of our own attitude as we engage in crafting our experience and our relationships. (qtd. in Gauntlett 58)[9]

CRAFTING A TEXT/ILE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The three written samples that follow evidence the personal interests of individual students, ranging from a more political engagement inspired by experiences during the year abroad placement (Example One) to a rewriting of the story that reflects a personal vision for the future (Example Two). Example Three, comprises a student reflection that was submitted as part of a feedback from an end-of-course questionnaire to ascertain student perspectives on taking part in this form of assessment. It highlights the impact of engaging with manual skills and how such a task becomes communal and can move outside the classroom environment, creating a new space where the student becomes the facilitator. All work is submitted anonymously as part of the assessment process.

The samples that follow are explorations of "Abacá", Lobo's short story or fable that reflects on the idea of what Hoeg has termed a "landscape of the consumer society". It offers a post-apocalyptic vision of a community destroyed by their own drive to accumulate wealth through the exploitation of the land by the over-cultivation of a plant that is not indigenous to the region, the *abacá*.[10] Images of the fertility of the environment before the period of excess are juxtaposed with the actual and metaphorical aridity of both environment and people forced to live with the consequences of their actions. The *abacá* takes on a central role and agency in the story, slowly taking control of the village and ultimately ingesting the youth of the village in cocoon-like pods until the mothers awaken to the threat, the loss of their children (the future), leading the villagers to engage in a battle to end the domination the *abacá* has established. The ensuing destruction, however, means that the environment has been so harshly impacted by their choices and actions that they can never return to the paradisiacal state they once enjoyed.

STUDENT EXAMPLE ONE

Example One is an extract from the work of a student on an International Politics and Spanish degree programme, who had spent his year abroad in Mexico (see Image 1). The block capitals in the reflective text are in the original and pick out the words sewn into the textile. The secret pocket can be found on the back of the textile, as indicated in Image 2. In this example we find a strong identification with place, but it is not the local context of Northern Ireland. It relates back to the impact of place through the relationships the student formed during his year abroad in Tehuacán. The connection between this lived experience, the story, and the textile is symbolically present through the inclusion of money (Mexican *pesos*) sewn into the image. We can also see interdisciplinary interests coming through in his more political stance and awareness.

Student Example One—Reflection

In this *arpillera* I have attempted to paint a vivid picture of the story [...] the distortion of nature is depicted in the red sky, the grey dust clouds and the feeble sun that is neither rising nor setting. The rest of the piece then juxtaposes the domination of the *abacá* plant with the desolate blanket of ash left behind following its destruction. I was able to add an extra dimension to this part by using real ash and dry brown leaves to give the effect of destruction

9 This quote was originally taken from McCann's blog site "Crafting Gentleness" that is no longer available but further work on this theme by McCann can be found at "A Politics of Gentleness: towards a critical vernacular ecology" https://www.anthonymccann.com/2014/10/a-politics-of-gentleness-towards-a-critical-vernacular-ecology-2/.

10 *Abacá* or manila hemp (*musa textilis*), is a banana-like plant that originates in the Philippines. It is one of the strongest natural fibres with a wide number of uses including rope making and woven fabrics.

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and infertility. The women are also present, one of them setting fire to an endless bundle of thread while the other brandishes a machete. I tried to personify the *abacá* as much as possible by portraying the leaves spitting fire back and arranging the shapes almost like hands or paws. I was also able to use real money to enhance the branches of the plant, a modern, green 200 Mexican peso note and an old one peso note, also from Mexico, which I bought from a market seller in Tehuacán [...] the way money looks may change but the desire for it and the greed it creates still has a devastating effect on small self-sufficient communities [...] I often heard from friends in Mexico that farmers often look for new ways of selling their goods in order to avoid the exploitation of large corporations [...] The message "NO TO CORPORATISM" at the top of the *arpillera* is as much a symbol of solidarity with the Mexican farmers who still battle with large drinks companies [...] as it is [a reference] to the history of exploitation by conglomerates [...] in places such as Costa Rica and other parts of Latin America and the world. The message is clear, we must stop these corporations from exploiting people and their lands, MONEY AND GREED ARE NO REPLACEMENTS FOR CULTURE AND TRADITION.

Image 1 Abacá: Example One: front detail. Photo: Michael Clark.

Image 2 Abacá: Example One: back detail. Photo: Michael Clark.

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STUDENT EXAMPLE TWO

Example Two is an extract taken from the work of a student on a French and Spanish degree programme, who spent her year abroad teaching in a school in France (see Image 3). The secret pocket can be found on the back of the textile, as indicated in Image 4. In this case, a very personal element has been incorporated into the textile: the student has taken on the role as a character from the story, the crying mother, and there is a strong connection with the local setting in her use of local charity shops, etc., to gather her materials. There is also a strong sense of the use of colour as metaphor, agency, and connection with broader environmental issues. We should also note the fact that she has chosen to "rewrite" the ending of this story as a symbol of hope for the future. This example is reminiscent of McCutcheon and Boudreaux's reflection that embroidery occupies the hands and leaves the mind free to imagine, "Who were you? Who mourns for you now?" (229). It is reminiscent of the Andean tradition that there is a special level of communication inherent through textiles and the person making them, that "el espíritu textil encarna un aspecto vital de la persona" (Tocancipá and Romero 200).

Image 3 Abacá: Example Two, front detail. Photo: Michael Clark.

Image 4 Abacá: Example Two, back detail. Photo: Michael Clark.

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Student Example Two—Reflection

This *arpillera* is a representation of the penultimate scenes of the short story "Abacá" [...] in which the local children have been cocooned by the plants and are slowly dying while their crazed mothers desperately try to burn the plants to the ground [...] The dark colour black emphasising the finality of the death of nature; human interference has destroyed the delicate balance of death and birth, which can never be rectified. The words "greed" and "capitalism" are sown into the scene connecting the plants to the entrapped children. Through this I hope to portray that it is not the plants that are the source of devastation but when humans misuse them for their own personal benefit [...] The children are the representation of all the future generations who are now also trapped in the modern-day consequences of exploiting the land for personal wealth: global warming.

The reason I have chosen not to include any of the crying mothers in the *arpillera* is because I have chosen to take on that role myself, in the making of the project. As the mothers frantically try to undo their crimes by the cutting down of the plant, I am trying to undo the damage done to the earth by recycling and reusing old clothes. All materials used in the project are second hand and much of it is children's clothes bought from charity shops [...] I do intend my *arpillera* to bring some small sense of hope. I specifically chose not to portray the very last scene in which the children may have died and the last is lost forever. While the children in my scene are crying, they are quite clearly still alive. While the land is ruined and the fires are still raging, the mothers have not given up and are still fighting [...] By continuing to do what this *arpillera* has done, reduce, reuse, recycle, perhaps we can have a different fate to that which befell the children in "Abacá".

STUDENT EXAMPLE THREE

The final example (Images 5 and 6) is taken from the feedback to the course by a student on a Spanish and Portuguese degree programme who had spent his year abroad studying in Spain and Portugal. The choice of image structure does not follow the more traditional *arpillera* format but shows a creative use of household items in making a story come alive and is rich with symbolism. The feedback he provided is a striking example of the "crafterthoughts" and conversations that take place around the creation of an *arpillera*, broadening the learning experience to include others in the home setting and reflection on how these story cloths create their own sense of life and community. This example shows how these students employed what Eisner terms "flexible purposing", that is, "the ability to shift direction, even to redefine one's aims when better options emerge in the course of one's work" (*The Arts* 77). This reflection also highlights sensitivity to the processing of trauma through textile creation. We note the importance of the class workshop in the student's experience of the course, not only in giving hands-on practice but also in making possible new conversation among his peers. The ludic quality is also evident as is the engagement in textile making that lifts the activity outside the realm of assessment to an interaction that is more holistic. The final line reflects how the textile, much like the *abacá* in the story, takes on its own agency.

Student Example Three—Feedback Response

I decided to choose the *arpillera* because I was drawn to the concept of an event or memory being too painful to put down in words and the only way to convey the true depth of pain is through an *arpillera*. The workshop was excellent as it showed me what it like to create a collective piece of work [...] we were talking and the conversation was mainly of memories of our grandparents, and how they would be knitting or sewing. It was also great to see a group of "today's youth" so engrossed in an activity that no Whatsapp, Facebook or Twitter was required. With our creations in our hands instead of mobile phones, for hours we talked and told stories and found out more about each other, it was a lovely experience. When making my assessed piece I tended to forget that was actually assessed strangely enough. I had to really engage and understand Tatiana Lobos' work and decide what aspects I wanted to highlight and how I would effectively do so. The *arpillera* took a lot of time but I didn't mind as my girlfriend and her daughter helped me, which added to the experience as we talked throughout. I told them all about the *abacá* plant and they too were able to share the experience and once again, not a mobile or tablet in sight [...] My lack of sewing skills was an issue at the start and I nearly opted for the essay because of it, but decided to persevere, and although it may have meant more time and the final product not turning out like the image I had in my mind, the final creation almost took on a life of its own.

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Image 5 Abacá: Example Three, front detail. Photo: Michael Clark.

Image 6 Abacá: Example Three, inside detail. Photo: Michael Clark.

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FINAL REFLECTIONS

As indicated in the samples above, the process of taking up a needle (or in some cases a glue gun!) provides a means to engage in "slow learning", enabling students to enter a process wherein curiosity supplants "urgent strategy" (Garrard "A Novel Idea"). Not only are the students thinking about the relationship to the environment as recounted in the stories, they also frequently transform the environment in which they undertake the assignment. Unlike the essay, which requires extended periods of isolation, the *arpillera* is often created within the family or home environment and involves an exchange of ideas with housemates or family members. In this simple way, the stories and the ideas are brought into conversations outside the classroom space and the themes and methods become more than theory. There is ample room here to explore what Fiona Magowan has elicited in her work on Australian aboriginal art, examining the complexities of empathy embodying "basic" and "reenactive" elements:

> "Basic" mechanisms are those that enable one person to recognize and identify with the emotional states of others while "reenactive" capacities are those that provide an explanatory model about why another person responds and acts in a particular way in relation to their environment [...] it informs differences between narratives *of* art and narratives *about* art [...] It is only as artists provide broader narrative contexts for the art that the "reenactive" potential of empathy comes into play. As artists explain the catalysts behind the work, rather than the meaning of the work per se, viewers also draw upon the "reenactive" dimension of empathy to appreciate the motivating factors and modelling responses that shape artistic expressions. (188–9)

This is an important factor when considering the impact of the textiles as story cloths on the "site of audiencing", even for the instructor undertaking the final assessment. The short reflections that the students write engage these re-enactive capacities in the viewer. The *arpilleras* tell their own story but the written narrative that gives context to the creative process elicits another level of understanding and empathetic response from the viewer. If we who teach literature do so on the basis that it can encourage empathy, then creating space for such narratives *about* art must surely be central to our goals.

While the questionnaires completed by the students provide ample evidence that they found the course interesting and thought-provoking, I can as yet provide no concrete evidence that this approach has led any student to engage more deeply in sustainable living in an ongoing manner outside of the classroom environment. To what extent, then, should we consider such concerns when assessing the final value of our approaches? Should we be content to have opened a world of possibilities for a brief time in the hope that one day it will make a small difference in an individual student's life? These are questions that reach beyond the parameters of the normal teaching evaluation questionnaire but should keep us constantly re-evaluating and re-engaging with the spaces, people, and ideas in our courses, retaining what Major and McMurry have referred to as a "spirit of desperate optimism" (1).

Over the years that I have taught this course, the textile element has grown in importance and my understanding of our interactions with material objects and the creative process has deepened. Looking to future developments and revisions in such a course, I recognise scope for working more specifically with materials to engage with the physical nature and hapticity of the process. I am also aware of a set of ongoing tensions in the creative aspect of this course due to the academic context in which it is set. Below I outline several questions and issues for further consideration in designing such a course.

MATERIALITY

How can we best encourage students to develop a consciousness of the materials they use and inhabit so that this also highlights how they create and use their environments with all the entangled connections? Such considerations would also include their choice of materials for the story cloths and could engage with questions around the origins of their materials; an awareness of materials they encounter in their daily lives; how textures affect them either on a personal or symbolic level and what connection they incite; the repurposing and recycling of materials where possible. Another element would be to consider how cloth handles, how it is constructed, dyed, or printed, what was its former function or origin history and what environmental impact this might involve. Cas Holmes (36) terms these the narrative aspects of cloth.

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OBEDIENT DISOBEDIENCE

How do we as instructors/facilitators/tutors deal with the tension between *arpilleras* introduced as "disobedient objects", but within the context of a course retain awareness that the students are creating in obedience to a set of requirements and formal strictures? Increasing scrutiny of assessment practices within institutions and requirements to map out every detail of what is required of students may bring administrative security but can also infringe on the space for creativity. Limitations can be a great artistic impulse yet we may also lose freedom of initiative in this process and a fruitful balance should be sought to benefit the student. This consideration also involves us retaining awareness that although we are supporting the creation of a creative community there are power dynamics at play. Critical making is taking place within the context of assessment overseen by the instructor and in the final analysis, the student will be awarded a grade that specifies how "good" their creative efforts have been. How do we assess the appropriate balance between guidelines set to helps students meet requirements and think through the process but at the same time allow for freedom to let them find ways to express their ideas without being overtly conscious and undertaking a "box-ticking" exercise? At times, the classes that receive more guidance become more anxious and less willing to act with agency.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

How do we best introduce alternative assessments in a way that is engaging and exciting but does not overshadow the traditional form of assessment when both options are offered in a course? We want all students to experience that their work is valued yet the "buzz" created around a new experience can sometimes distance students who choose not to engage with it. I have also found that it is important to take considerable time to ensure a balance in marking practices when dealing with diverse submissions, not only for the students' benefit but also for clarity for second markers and external examiners. I have only once had critical feedback from a student who complained that they had not chosen to study an "arts and crafts" course; hopefully, they chose the essay option. For this reason, it is important to have the choice of assessment type and to give equal import to them, and for this to be made clear to the student body.

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

I have mentioned the experience of running a lunchtime "create and connect" workshop linked to the course. While this is an enriching experience for all involved, I am also aware that it forms part of the "silent" workload that many academics continue to perform that cannot be factored into workload models. This is a significant issue that we need to take into account. In addition, although it has not thus far been possible within the structures of the academic year and assessment restrictions, I would ideally introduce a space where the students could respond to each other's work and have an opportunity to enter into dialogue with each other—considering how to encourage empathy along with optic and haptic awareness. I have attempted this in a limited manner, using Padlet to upload photos of the anonymous *arpilleras* and allowing students to submit comments. This was initiated in response to student interest in sharing their work among the group, but because this did not take place in a physical space and sat outside of the course, there was little to encourage the students to take the initiative and engage with each other, especially as they are normally engaged in new modules by this stage in the assessment and feedback timetable. Time to share ideas and experiences remains an important goal to pursue.

CONCLUSION

Seeking innovative means of engagement between literature, society, and the environment without the certainty of long-term impact is part of the process of participating in a form of pedagogy that "understands the human being in evolution, as an 'incomplete, unfinished, and non-conclusive' being [...] a being in continuous development interacting with others and the world" (Antunes and Gadotti 137). The creative talents of students when given the opportunity to take risks and reach beyond normal academic limitations never cease to amaze me. Courses

such as the one outlined here become "a learning society [...] where we [are] permanently prepared to be taken by surprise by the way things turn out" (Foster 39) while at the same time recognising that, as Eisner (*The Arts* 70) has argued, students learn both more and less than they are taught. For that reason, as tutors, we should hold our intentions lightly. Engaging with this innovative form of assessment continually opens new spaces from the perspective of the educator, the students, and the practitioner. The inclusion of elements of touch and smell, the opportunity to handle testimony of lived examples of stories woven by men and women from across the globe, all bring new dimensions to the holistic learning process that seek to provide a tactile memory link to the issues and arguments put forward in our search for a sustainable living environment. I have had the opportunity to share the student work with the author, Tatiana Lobo, and to communicate her very positive response to the students in turn. As such, the process can become more than a reading of environmental literature, turning instead to communication, interaction, and depth of expression that comes full circle when the author sees the interpretation of her own work in an alien environment.

Creative pedagogy and risk-taking are elements that go hand in hand in the engaged learning process, sitting somewhere between complete risk and complete certainty (Adamson 192). Catherine Camden Pratt (7) has noted that creating an innovative form of assessment sets the lecturer and student both in the position of having to take their own learning risks, becoming an active learner, and trusting, as Paulo Freire posited, in the learners' creative power. Consideration of this element of risk is particularly important in any academic culture where the weight of student course questionnaires and satisfaction surveys hang like a sword of Damocles above a lecturer's head: why risk a negative response from a student cohort who may not wish to deviate from the tried and tested means of assessment they have learnt to expect? Why take on the extra challenge and time for planning, implementation, and reflection necessary in any process of innovation? Why engage emotionally as well as intellectually in the creation of a space for learning that will test the lecturer as much as the student? Perhaps one response lies in bell hooks' assertion that "engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow and are empowered by the process. Empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks" (7). Empowerment, therefore, lies in the element of risk for both lecturer and student, and I would argue that both should form an integral part of pedagogy that seeks to promote sustainability and examine who and where we are in relation to the world around us.

When I consider why I chose to incorporate *arpilleras* into my classes, I come back to Stephen Brookfield's words about a "community-based" creative space:

> We teach to change the world. The hope that undergirds our efforts to help students learn is that doing this will help them turn toward each other, and toward their environment, with compassion, understanding, and fairness. But our attempts to increase the amount of love and justice in the world are never simple, never unambiguous [...] One of the hardest things teachers have to learn is the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice. (1)

As educators in the Latin American literature and ML classroom, we have great opportunities to engage with a global setting. As universities move towards greater focus on environmental issues as core components of their institutional strategies, we would do well to bear this in mind and highlight the specific role that ML can play in critically engaging students in their discipline. In this process, we should guard against conceiving of environmental education in a holistic, single cross-disciplinary grand narrative (Ontong and Le Grange 34) and look instead to what our specific courses and disciplinary interests can bring. We can cultivate that ability to see the world through another's eyes, especially worlds that are geographically, culturally, and linguistically diverse (Nussbaum 95, 108). We may create our own cultural ecology where, in Zapf's words, "literature and art represent an ecological force within cultural discourses, which is translated into ever new aesthetic practices" ("Cultural Ecology" 149). In their own way, creative pedagogical practices, such as textile interpretations, are "culture jamming" (Darts 324). They resist the corporatisation of academia, confront aversion to risk, and new spaces for dialogue.

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