

## TITULADA Teaching Guide

### Preliminary Questions

The first poem of *TITULADA* introduces themes developed throughout the book. With this in mind, it may be useful to analyze the first line ("Their dramas are cast like stone that shatters its blood for irreparable impact") because minor will continue to speak to and about this collective group ("they"). The author, as a complicated but ultimately singular figure, seems to observe and narrate the history, activities, and even customs of this group – we can see this happening in the first line with its reference to "Their dramas cast like stone." To what is minor referring to with this "they," and how does it relate to the poet (as "I")? You may also want to consider the dedication "For all those upon whose shoulders I stand" at the beginning of the book.

As you read *TITULADA*, pay particular attention to elena minor's wordplay. It isn't exactly "play" as we normally understand it. Considering that minor fluctuates between different modes of narration (first, second, and third person), varying degrees of identity (the singular "I," the collective "we," even the romantic or interpersonal "you"), and writes in multiple languages, her book seems remarkably cohesive. Why? There is a source of poetic inspiration at work that is at once comprehensive, spontaneous, and illusory - what is it?

On a line-to-line basis, many of minor's images and phrases may be hard to understand. For example, if we isolate the lines "word the swan / preen the note / scoop the quill" in "Sanctofication," they add up to very little. However, minor favors such priority of sound over sense quite often in *TITULADA*, so much so that we can begin to understand her poetic aesthetics by analyzing her poems' "sound" moments. How does sound shape or complicate meaning in *TITULADA*? How does it undermine or reinforce the poems as they develop?

Though many of the poems in *TITULADA* break from conventional formal techniques, not all of minor's poems scatter words and ideas around the page. Some are almost straightforward, operating in a poetic geography that is comparatively linear. What significant differences can you find between these "straightforward" poems, such as the title poem "Titulada," and the poems written in radical free verse? How does the prose poem or paragraph form in the formally conservative poems contradict, affirm, or complicate the poems at the opposite end of the spectrum, like "rrs FEED" and "[Olvido] Like A New Century?"

### Discussion Prompts

What was the most challenging aspect of the book? How did you adjust to or account for this difficulty as a reader?

What did you admire the most about the book? If you were to write your own book of poetry, what devices, themes, or imagery from *TITULADA* would you look to for inspiration?

What is the context of elena minor's *TITULADA*? Which contemporary political and social concerns does the book reflect? What is minor saying about these concerns?

If there were a primary posture or effect in elena minor's work, how would you describe it? What consistent thematic or formal attributes can you find in this work? Though *TITULADA* is quite complex and dense with meaning, it may be useful to trace a linkage of themes and formal devices throughout the book.

How do non-sequiturs and absurdity contribute to minor's poetic project? Consider lines like "Pour me some hot sliced coffee" (from "Estimad@ Poeta") or "¡Wet the gongs and / snoot the players!" (from "Squared Off (Hexalacious)"). Why does minor operate in absurdity so often?

What does elena minor achieve by dissembling language? In particular, how do the major themes in *TITULADA* reflect her open-form poems and enigmatic language choices?

## Assignments

minor injects her poems with dissonance (or dissidence), using letters in brackets and words in italics to make it impossible for her poems to be understood without considering the alternate meanings such deviations reveal. For example, when she writes "yours is not/but for thi/s/mattered world" in "A Dispatch To Or From Home," she embeds multiple readings into one line of text – and no one reading of this line is more accurate or conclusive than another. Why is it so important for minor to sustain this multiplicity throughout her book? Analyze her decision to split her poems into multiple meanings. Can you reconcile this decision with other variable aspects of the book, such as language (English and Spanish) and form (radical and conservative)?

minor's language fluctuates from poem to poem, and quite often even from line to line. Pick a poem written in more than one language and analyze it. Try to understand the meaning of the poem by considering the tension between the two languages and how this tension (as a visual, aural, and semantic disturbance) contributes to the overall effect.

Discuss the dialogue between Esterhaus and Olmedo in the poem "On This Day." How does this compare with the poetic narrative in "Loosed Ends?"

Read *TITULADA*'s third section and discuss the relationship between the Spanish and English poems.

## Creative Projects

Translate one of *TITULADA*'s Spanish poems into English, or translate an English poem into Spanish. Compare your translation with another student's.

Write a poem using two languages.

Write a poem in free verse and then try to rewrite the same poem in prose – do not just delete your line breaks!

Write a poem with signs or symbols borrowed from the sciences, using poems like "Juxtaposition" as inspiration.

Write a poem in a consistent but unconventional form, like minor's "Suspiro." Stick to a consistent stanzaic procedure throughout the poem.

Write a short dialogue between two or more voices. Just as minor illustrates in "On This Day," your dialogue can be more abstract than realistic.