

# **UCLA**

## **Mester**

### **Title**

Introduction. Focus: Translation, Travel, and Circulation

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0zv3h908>

### **Journal**

Mester, 45(1)

### **Author**

Gómez, Isabel

### **Publication Date**

2017

### **DOI**

10.5070/M3451037519

### **Copyright Information**

Copyright 2017 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

# Introduction

On behalf of the Mester Editorial Board and the UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese, I am honored to introduce this forty-fifth volume of Mester. For our focal theme, we invited submissions that consider the Iberian, Latin American, and Lusophone worlds as translation zones, as sites of meaningful encounter and transfer in which translation, travel, and circulation play a central role in the fashioning of identities and cultural forms. I am delighted by the responses of the authors included in this issue: in many cases, they moved beyond our initial framing of the theme to also consider translation from an intersemiotic perspective in addition to the interlingual and intercultural levels. Multiple articles discuss the capacity of visual culture to effect translational repercussions in literary works and the societies that produce them; several others consider musical transpositions and lyric translations as key elements to understand the cultural implications of the global circulation of musical forms. As a result, this volume of Mester includes nine rich articles that cover a diverse range of material and critical approaches with a shared focus on the themes of “Translation, Travel, and Circulation.”

Giulia Riccò analyzes a nineteenth-century “Brazilian translation” of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* by José Xavier Pinheiro to demonstrate the intellectual and political influence within Brazil of Italian Risorgimento ideas of national unity. Through detailed analysis of his translation choices, Riccò demonstrates the ways Pinheiro reconciled the divergent political and literary reception histories of Dante and used translation as field through which to build a Brazilian literary canon as distinct from Portuguese literary history. Kevin Anzzolin draws on the history of the daguerreotype as introduced in Latin America as a tool of both political representation and oppression or surveillance to understand Echevarría’s “El matadero” as reproducing the camera’s eye on the level of political and social space. Drawing on the spheres of print journalism and forms of image-driven propaganda, Anzzolin contends that the short story articulates a deep anxiety around the increasingly visual form of ordering society in Rosa’s Argentina. Carolina Beltrán draws on commodity visual culture to examine the representations of absinthe in *modernista* poems by

Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Delmira Agustini. Her analysis focuses on the particularly gendered performance of consuming absinthe: contradictory and ambivalent in Nájera, rewritten and transformed in Agustini to be self-authorizing. Cheri Robinson studies a short story by Reina Roffé through theories of traumatic memory to consider Argentine modes of control during the military dictatorship that draw on strategies of intimidation and control from the Holocaust as a form of what she calls “recycled violence.” The narrative by Roffé positions experiences of present day violence, invisible though it may be, as redoubled and recirculated through memories of other systemic enactments of a violent state doctrine seeking to extirpate an “other” deemed undesirable.

Azucena Hernández Ramírez uses Román Jakobson’s category of intersemiotic translation and the concept of translation as a “third space” to analyze the translational relationships between the large-scale installations and poetry by Brazilian artist Nuno Ramos. Her analysis of *Maremobília* as a third margin between life and death, waking and sleeping, liquid and solid connects this installation piece and the subsequent photographs to Ramos’s later poetry collection *Junco*. Daniel Montero Fayad analyzes a series of Mexican remakes of USA-based monumental installations and video art which were translated into new forms through dynamics of reduction, modification of material, size, or location. He concludes that these pieces not only produce locally responsive Mexican artworks but that they also represent a specific critique of a contemporary global art culture from the perspective of Mexican art. Andrés F. Ruiz-Olaya argues that the sociological urbanism of Columbian writer Darío Ruiz Gómez, in which he analyzes the successive economic and spatial restructurings of Medellín, informs his fictional narratives in *Crímenes municipales*. The crimes depicted in these short stories are not those of the great actors of society but rather the minor figures who people the city, and their experiences of urban space determine their horizons of choice, sometimes leading to violence or victimization, sometimes traveling a new pathway through the familiar spaces of everyday life. Drawing on postcolonial theories of identity formation and structures of traumatic cultural memory, Daniel Arbino analyzes the lyrics of reggae music in post-independence Jamaica as a form of intercultural translation and rewriting. He connects the Rastafarian vision of a collective homeland far

from the “Babylon” of Western colonial experience with a revision of the Caribbean encounter with Christopher Columbus as a crime that contemporary Jamaicans now authorize themselves to judge and convict. Alexei Nowak examines psychedelic rock music in *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* as a reorganization of sounds, sights, and the sense of color, changing perceptions of the Chicano body from a presumed but unaccessible whiteness to a visible and legally representable brownness. Including translations of rock lyrics into Spanish, Nowak considers the way a new forms of sensing produce the novel’s transition from the “normative” countercultural touchstones of Gonzo journalism to participate in the emerging discourses of Chicano activism enacted by its author.

The two interviews included in this volume provide two perspectives on activism and social change as related to the work of humanities scholars within the broad fields of Latin Americanist, Latinx, and Iberian literary and cultural studies. In an interview with the Chicana Motherwork Collective with questions by Carolina Beltrán and Isabel Gómez, the five members of this group comment on the structural challenges, institutionalized invisibilities, and language politics involved in being Chicana mothers in academia. Constantin C. Icleanu interviews Santiago Gómez-Zorilla Sánchez, a representative from a Spanish NGO dedicated to using cultural forms including food, comics, and film to increase interpersonal understanding and sensitivity toward refugees living in Spain. Helga Zambrano contributes a review article on the work of Luis “Lucho” Hernández, a Peruvian poet recently translated by Anthony Geist in *The School of Solitude: Collected Poems*. Zambrano draws out the musical themes embedded in his work, and even finds one of Hernández’s own translations of rock lyrics. Lastly, our volume concludes with six book reviews covering books on Mexican cultural memory of 1968, the field of linguistic landscapes, the Cold War in Latin America, twenty-first century Latin American film, a work of fiction by Carme Riera, and the myth of progressive thought in Spain.

Completing this volume of Mester would not have been possible without the dedicated participation of the Mester Editorial Board, the contributing guest editors, and the other past and future editors-in-chief of Mester. I am also grateful to our Faculty Advisor Efraín Kristal and to the directors of the GSA Publications Office Stacey Meeker and David Pederson for their guidance; for the support of

the Graduate Student Association and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese; and for the impeccable work of our layout editor Bill Morosi. Lastly, I thank and congratulate the authors included for their contributions and for their scholarship; it has been my pleasure to work with everyone involved in this volume.

*Isabel Gómez, UCLA PhD 2016  
Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts Boston  
Editor-in-Chief of Mester Volume XLV (2016/2017)  
University of California, Los Angeles*