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Introduction

On behalf of the Editorial Board of *Mester*, the academic journal of the graduate students of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California (Los Angeles), I am honored to introduce its fifty-second issue. *Mester* LII welcomed submissions for articles, essays, and interviews written in Spanish, Portuguese, and English from transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches related to Identity and Borders. *Mester* LII also encouraged submissions focused on – but not limited to – the representation of Identity(ies) through Migrations, Language, Belonging, and Borders in the 21st Century. We invited submissions that explore the relationship between (re)formulating and (re)imagining the complexities of identity and its representation in contemporary times, where mobilizations and migrations challenge the dominant identity discourse in space and time.

In the contemporary global landscape, the intersection of identity and borders has emerged as a multifaceted and dynamic area of scholarly inquiry. The intricate interplay between individuals' sense of self and the physical or metaphorical demarcations that define their spaces is a subject that transcends disciplinary boundaries, necessitating a comprehensive exploration. Understanding the impact of borders on identity is not merely an academic exercise but a critical endeavor with profound implications for individuals, communities, and societies. The global surge in migration, displacement, and transnational connections underscores the urgency of inves-

tigating how borders shape, challenge, and redefine identity constructs. In fact, *Mester* LII received texts from a wide range of fields, such as Literature, History, Anthropology, Education Studies, Linguistics, and Cinema, as detailed below. This issue aims to contribute to a deeper comprehension of these dynamics by bringing together cutting-edge research, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies that span disciplines and methodologies.

Opening the General Section on Identity and Borders, in “Liminal Bodies: Boundaries, Transgression, and Gender in Pan-Mediterranean Chapbooks”, Roxanna Colón-Cosme studies the depiction of gender in Iberian and Sephardic chapbooks. Colón-Cosme showcases the liminal experiences of women in the context of warfare and conjugal relationships. Through an enriching analysis of medieval *romances*, she argues that women shift between passive and active performances where they often transgress imposed gender roles. Colón-Cosme’s fluid prose offers a stimulating introduction to the subject.

In the second article, “A chuva nunca foi o problema”: Memory, Indigeneity, and Decoloniality through Uýra”, Logan A. Krishka studies the video-performance “Manaus: Uma cidade na aldeia” by Uýra Sodoma. Krishka explores Uýra as an *alter-political* and *decolonial* figure, arguing that she presents a path not necessarily predicated on *adversarial schemas* where Uýra prefers to *contar outras histórias* by physically becoming something else. Through an anthropo-

logical approach, Krishka explores how Uyra's body serves as the immanent/imminent site of perspectival differentiation. Krishka additionally offers that the video performance points to the messiness of memory, history, colonial violence, and other forms of being, and achieves a different outcome for nature and indigenous communities in and outside Brazil.

In the third text and last article of this section, "Irrupciones de la memoria en el cine documental sobre el conflicto armado interno peruano: *Tarea Pendiente* (2003) y *Lucanamarca* (2008)" María Claudia Huerta Vera transitions to 1983 Peru. Huerta Vera analyzes two documentaries that portrait the consequences of the Sendero Luminoso's massacre: *Tarea pendiente* (2003), by Carlos Cárdenas, and *Lucanamarca* (2008), by Carlos Cárdenas and Héctor Gálvez. In the first half, she explores how these documentaries are produced in two irruptive moments of the memory of post-conflict Peru and are representative of their genre. In the second half, Huerta Vera focuses on *Lucanamarca*, where she argues that this documentary presents a counter-hegemonic narrative as it moves away from the narrative of a "civic memory".

Transitioning to current immigration issues, "Los restos del camino: el territorio transnacional en el *Libro centroamericano de los muertos de Balam Rodrigo*", Zyanya Dóniz Ibáñez opens the section on mobilization discourses. Dóniz Ibáñez proposes, through Deleuze and Guattari and Edouard Glissant's approach, that the *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* discursively produces the territory by extending geographical, linguistic, and literary limits to (re)configure a Central America image that transcends political borders through the figure of the migrant. Additionally, Dóniz Ibáñez analyses that the *poemario* is indeed related to the *crónica de viajes* not only because of the inclusion of Las Casas as co-author of the text but also visible through the showcase of Central America's 'kingdoms'.

The second article of this section is "Urban Numbness toward Mexican Domestic Workers from the 1970s to Present Day: A Spiral of Instability in *Roma*, *Hilda*, and 'Esperanza número equivocado'" where Estefanía R. Morales compares the aforementioned works to the domestic workers' situation in Mexico during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify the oppressive conditions described in literature and film and to highlight the urban numbness that has lessened solidarity. Morales interconnects recent films *Roma* and *Hilda* to Poniatowska's "Esperanza número equivocado" through the domestic worker's historical instability from a historical and political standpoint that occurred in The Corpus Christi Massacre in 1971. Morales additionally compares this issue to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, where domestic workers were affected due to the ongoing spiral of instability.

In the third text of this section, "Entornos hostiles, deserción escolar y migraciones," María del Consuelo Martínez Berber proposes an analysis of the hostile environments currently faced by young people within their families, their school environment, and their place of origin, which cause school dropout, family uprooting, and consequently, migration. Martínez Berber's reflection arises from the experience(s) of elementary and high school students in marginalized populations in urban and indigenous areas of Mexico. Her work, from education and pedagogy approaches, offers to open the doors to a new perspective of youth with their own identity as agents of change in their communities of origin, a role that rightfully belongs to them as people and citizens.

In the fourth and last text of this section, Cristina G. Vázquez explores in "Percepción y narrativa: inmigración, adopción del dolor y agentes circulantes en *Biutiful* (2010) y *La Promesse* (1996)" a range of interpretations regarding immigration and historical memory in contemporary Spain and Belgium.

Through a series of techniques, *Beautiful* interweaves the lives of Senegalese and Chinese immigrants with those of Spanish citizens in a dark Barcelona, outside of the city's iconic tourist image but within the parameters of reality without losing the sense of the fictional elements. On the other hand, *La Promesse*, projects the image and reality of pain as seen through the eyes of a young teenager from Belgium towards and with the immigrants who work for him and his father. Vázquez argues that these films fulfill their purpose of formulating an intrinsic discourse on their own vision of immigration in Spain and Belgium with the aim of creating a reconciliation with the spectator and the protagonists.

A preface, “A Linguistic Perspective,” by César Hoyos Álvarez opens the section on Identity and Language. It is followed by the article “Botiflers and Betrayal: Heraldic Semiotics and Linguistic Landscape on Catalonia's National Day” by Marguerite Morlan, who analyzes the Linguistic Landscape and Catalan heraldic imagery of the 2022 *Diada*, Catalonia's National Day. Morlan takes us to an interesting qualitative content analysis that complements her quantitative coding scheme and reveals that *Independence* was the dominant theme in signage, followed by *Betrayal*, *Solidarity*, and *Catalan Cultural Identity*. Through a series of photographs and graphs, Morlan argues that the 2022 *Diada* shed light on the evolution of secessionist sentiment and the role of traditional Catalan symbols in the tense socio-political climate of post-referendum Catalonia.

The second text of the linguistics section is “Identity through Gaming in the L2 Classroom: Contextualization and Narrative” by Kyle Patterson, who offers a linguistic approach to teaching second languages and a pedagogy study on EdTech competencies. Through contextualization and narration, Patterson discusses the impact of video games on student identification in the L2 classroom.

He also presents a few examples of various forms of identification through students' creation of avatars in the video game *The Sims*. Through his discussion of this approach, Patterson hopes to inspire future studies and discussions on video games and identity in the language classroom.

The last text of the Linguistics section is “Using *Nearpod* for Pronunciation Training in Elementary Spanish Courses” by César Hoyos Álvarez. In this article, Hoyos Álvarez presents a qualitative study that examines the first impressions of 18 second-language learners of Spanish to an online pronunciation activity completed during class. In his study, Hoyos Álvarez uses the digital and interactive platform *Nearpod*, arguing that enhances instruction and supports student language learning. Additionally, the author proves that using tools such as *Nearpod* provides valuable insight into the global utility of an in-class pronunciation task. Although Hoyos Álvarez evaluates *Nearpod* as part of the student learning experience, he also argues that these online platforms provide blueprints for instructors looking to implement pedagogies that harness technology for language learning.

The following section comprises Verónica García Moreno's interviews with Salvador de la Torre and Rocío Rojas Marcos. The “The Visual Poetics of the Border: A Conversation with Salvador de la Torre” introduces us to Salvador de la Torre, a Mexican-born Texas-raised artist, educator, and storyteller based in Southern California, whose performance works engage with political activism and migration. In the second interview, “Tánger multiplicada en los espejos: La otra orilla de Rocío Rojas Marcos”, Moreno introduces Rojas Marcos, author and researcher whose interests revolve around contemporary Moroccan literature and literary multilingualism, as well as the Spanish presence in the international city of Tangier from the late 19th to the mid-20th century.

In conclusion, the LII issue dedicated to the theme of Identity and Borders seeks to unravel the nuanced connections between human identity formation and the geographical, cultural, and political borders that shape and redefine it. The articles presented in this issue offer diverse perspectives and insights into the ways in which borders shape human identity and, reciprocally, how identity influences the conceptualization and reinforcement of borders. By examining this dynamic interrelationship, we aim to enrich academic discourse and foster a deeper appreciation of the lived experiences of individuals navigating the complex terrain of identity within the context of borders.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the authors whose rigorous research, expertise, scholarship, and innovative perspectives have enriched the content of this volume. The successful realization of this LII issue owes much to the dedicated efforts and commitment of the 2022-2023 Editorial Board, comprised of Adela Mckay Villegas, Cristián Mora, Erin Mauffray, Gabriela Cruz, Ícaro Carvalho, Jesús Duarte, John Carter, José Galindo Benítez, Julia González, Raquel Zandomenighi, Pedro Cuevas, and Saraí Jaramillo from the University of California, Los Angeles. Additionally, this year I had the opportunity to work and collaborate with Associate Editor, Verónica García Moreno (Montana State University) as well as with Guest Contributing Editors César Hoyos Álvarez (Northwestern University) and Mara Uriol-Garate (UC Davis), all of who reviewed submissions, provided constructive feedback, and shaped the intellectual direction of this issue.

I would also like to give special thanks to Leandro Hernández, the previous Editor-in-Chief of *Mester*, and to José Galindo Benítez, the current Editor-in-Chief, for their support throughout the editorial process.

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Cristina G. Vázquez

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