

# 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), it is my honor to introduce its forty-eighth issue. *Mester XLVIII* welcomed submissions for articles, interviews and book reviews written in Spanish, Portuguese, and English in the fields of Spanish, Portuguese, Spanish American, Brazilian, Latinx and Chicanx Literatures, Linguistics and Cultures, as well as a focus theme featuring topics pertaining to rhetorical practices of walls and divisions in the Luso-Hispanic world. The idea of a physical wall(s) has become a relevant point of discussion in the current political climate in the United States as well as within the fields of Latin American and Iberian literary and cultural studies. The concepts of walls and divisions go beyond their literal meanings and were interpreted in many forms by the authors included in this issue. The interpretations featured in this issue portray topics such as the migrant journey, displacement of time and space, and the question of self-identity. Select articles included in this issue showcase innovative interdisciplinary approaches combining other academic disciplines and drawing knowledge from other fields such as History, Philosophy, Urban Studies and Visual Arts. In addition, we are delighted to announce that for the first time, *Mester* is including conference proceedings from the 16th Annual Spanish and Portuguese Graduate Student Conference, “Taking It to the Street: Politics, Aesthetics, and Representations of the Street.” This collaboration is a culmination of two main objectives: first, *Mester XLVIII*’s goal was to promote the journal and extend its scope to the interdisciplinary theme proposed by the conference and second, to give another platform to graduate students to share their work and get feedback through the journal’s peer review process. We believe that the partnership created through this process solidifies *Mester*’s reputation as one of the most prestigious student-run journals in North America.

The collection of articles, conference proceedings, interviews and the book review selected for *Mester XLVIII* are a combination of General Interest and Focus Section on topics about rhetorical practices of walls and divisions. The project of building a wall along

the U.S.-Mexico under the Trump administration has resulted in an increase of literary and cultural representations of a politically divided country. Additionally, this divide—imagined literally and metaphorically—has encouraged new ideas and critical approaches necessary to understanding what separates us or unites us as human beings. The Focus Section provides a space for some of these representations. Therefore, we are pleased to open *Mester XLVIII* with the essay “*Las tierras arrasadas*, de Emiliano Monge: la frontera en movimiento,” by Emily Celeste Vázquez-Enríquez. In her study, Vázquez-Enríquez challenges the static notion of the Guatemala-Mexico border. She argues that the border is constructed in a more dynamic way suggesting that the borderlands are a conglomerate of the artificial and the natural element of the jungle. Her article is followed by Félix Miguel Rosario Ortiz’s “Escritura y escrutinio paranoico en *La invención de Morel* de Adolfo Bioy Casares.” Rosario Ortiz explores the notions of entrapment and persecution represented by the mysterious events that surround the protagonist in Bioy Casares’s novel. In lieu of a physical wall, the entrapment is represented by the dystopian world where the protagonist decides to live, condemned for eternity.

Opening the General Section, Juliana Espinal proposes an original reading of a classic novel by Carlos Fuentes in “La memoria de lo perdido y de lo que nunca fue. Notas sobre la nostalgia en *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*.” Espinal explores the nostalgic element present in the novel. Her article argues that the novel displays at least two types of nostalgias: one associated to the narrator’s voice of *Tú*, and the other associated to the narrator’s voice of *Él*. Both nostalgias are represented through the dying Artemio’s reflections at different stages of the narrative. In “Rhetorical Self-Fashioning in Aramburu: A Contemporary Take on Cervantine Techniques,” Alison Posey uses the framework of rhetorical self-fashioning as a theoretical concept and seeks to explore the use of this strategy across two characters in two very disparate texts: the character of Marcela in *Don Quijote*, and in a modern context with the character of Miren in Fernando Aramburu’s novel *Patria*. Furthermore, in “Contraviniendo el relato hegemónico: mito y manumisión de los esclavizados en Medellín-Colombia durante las primeras décadas de formación del Estado republicano,” Juan José Espinal-Palacio rethinks the hegemonic discourse of La Ley de Partos, a legislation that passed in Antioquia, Colombia in 1814, which proposed to free all slaves and children born to enslaved women. Through

a comparative study between primary and secondary sources, this article offers a counter-narrative of the emancipation process and questions twentieth century historiographical accounts that position Antioquia as something similar to a “before and after” reference of the freedom from slavery in Colombia.

In the first conference proceeding entitled “Santiago neoliberal en la narrativa de Alberto Fuguet,” Paula Thomas offers a panoramic reading of the works by the Chilean novelist Fuguet which represent the development of the capital from the eighties to the beginning of the twenty-first century. Thomas draws from Urban Studies to argue that works such as *Sudor* portray the urban changes resulting from the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in Chile. In “Crisis del capitalismo y potencia de lo común. Expresiones gráficas, universidad y movimientos estudiantiles en Bogotá – Colombia,” Luis Fernando Sierra explores graphic representations as a students’ response to the defunding of university programs by government cutbacks. Sierra reflects on the collective imaginaries of urban interventions—mainly graffiti and banners—to appropriate the public space as a forum for political contestation. In “Morality in the Aesthetics of Violence: Political Denunciation in *La Virgen de los Sicarios* (1994, 2000) by Fernando Vallejo,” Annie Robinson analyzes the aesthetic shift between the novel and the movie, *La Virgen de los Sicarios*. Highlighting that both pieces were created to denounce widespread socio-political violence in Colombia, the aesthetics of rupture and the sublime determine that the movie adaptation was more effective in communicating Vallejo’s message. The last article, in “Os lugares transeuntes da performance de brincantes LGBTQ+ na dança de Reisado: o espetáculo aberto do teatro popular brasileiro,” Ribamar José de Oliveira Junior and Lore Fortes analyze the emerging public spaces in the performance of *brincantes* LGBTQ+ in the Reisado dances of Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, Brasil. Using performative theory of assembly as a point of departure, this essay seeks to relate the form in which aesthetics and representations on the street communicate with sexual and gender dissidence in the context of a manifestation of popular culture.

The two interviews and book review included in this issue address relevant topics within the fields of Latin American and Iberian literary and cultural studies. In a very interesting interview conducted by Ernesto Arciniega, Professor Brad Epps opens up about his

interpretation of intersexuality in visual narratives and literature. Film and television director, producer and screenwriter, Matías Lira is interviewed by Jesús Galleres where he discusses the abuse of power portrayed in films such as *Drama* and *El Bosque de Karadima*. Verónica García Moreno closes *Mester XLVIII* with the book review *El perfume de la existencia, Sufismo y no dualidad en Ibn ‘Arabī de Murcia* by Fernando Mora suggesting the work of Ibn ‘Arabī as an encounter and dis-encounter of the process of construction of Spanish national identity.

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