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Author

Ortiz-Loyola, Brenda

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Introduction

We are very proud to present *Mester* XLI, 2012. Two main sections compose this year's volume: one of general interest and a second one that focuses on Caribbean studies and literatures. The original aim of the current volume was to incorporate articles that drew attention to the rich literary and cultural tradition of the Hispanic Caribbean by means of presenting new ideas and critical approaches. However, as our work progressed we realized that, with the exception of Cuba, the Caribbean region—including its continental portion—is still not sufficiently studied. Aesthetic considerations and the restrictions imposed by the canon seem to be—at least in part—the origin of this lack of representation within the field of literary studies. As a result, an imbalance is constantly created among the Caribbean nations. Conversely, this deficiency also reveals the vast potential that the Caribbean studies offer to scholars and critics. In this context, more attention should be given to the Dominican Republic, a country with an increasing number of residents in the United States and homeland of distinguished writers such as the Pulitzer award winner Junot Díaz.

Hoping to contribute to the revitalization of Caribbean literature, we are pleased to open our volume with an article on the Puerto Rican play *Los soles truncos*. In “The Unwilling Orphan: Trauma and the Decaying Bourgeoisie in *Los soles truncos*,” Daniel Arbino approaches the canonical work of René Marqués by way of a theoretical framework that focuses on the trauma caused by the orphanhood of the female characters. He argues that Marqués's orphans function as metaphorical bridges between cultural and personal trauma, allowing the representation of the bourgeoisie as the only victimized group—of the U.S. occupation—despite their history as aggressors. Furthermore, his article asserts that because of trauma the protagonists adhere to a master narrative by favoring an outdated colonial mindset, spreading hate towards other sectors of the population. Arbino's article is followed by two works on Cuban literature. The first of them, “Creating Revolutionary Cuba's National Hero: The Cultural Capital of the *Cimarrón*” by Lindsay Puente, delves into the manners in which radical anti-slavery has been remembered and appropriated into national narratives. Using *Biografía de un cimarrón* as an example, Puente underscores the contradictions that emerge as a result of the efforts of the revolutionary government to incorporate

marginal narratives into the construction of Cuba's national identity. In the course of her analysis, Puente affirms that the value of Esteban Montejo's history resides in the fact that it gives voice to alternative forms of resistance without subverting completely the westernized molds of the national hero. The last article of this section focuses on the narratives of the so-called Cuban Special Period. In "La Habana de Antonio José Ponte y Pedro Juan Gutiérrez: el mapa de una ciudad marginal," Damaris Puñales-Alpízar attempts to trace new maps of Havana that have been marginalized from the official history, as well as from the fictional narratives of the nation in the last decades. In her article, Puñales-Alpízar explores how taking as main characters men and women who live outside of the logic of the political discourses, Cuban contemporary narrative underscores the grueling ordeal that constitutes surviving in contemporary Havana. The Caribbean cultures and literatures section closes with an interesting interview with the Cuban writer Pedro Juan Gutiérrez.

Mariška A. Bolyanatz opens the General Section with her article "Ahora, por ejemplo": *ahora* as a discursive deictic in Chilean Spanish." In her article, Bolyanatz provides evidence supporting previous assumptions regarding the changes that the discourse marker *ahora* has undergone, transformations that are related to a process of grammaticalization or subjectification. From Chile we move to Argentina, where Ingrid Norrmann-Vigil conducted research on Porteño Spanish. In the paper "Accounting for Variation of Diminutive Formation in Porteño Spanish," Norrmann-Vigil suggests that although highly productive in Spanish, diminutive formation is not uniform even within a specific dialect. Using a Maximum Entropy Model, her research shows a very significant account for the variation of diminutive formation in the Spanish of Buenos Aires. Closing this section an interview with Rose Mary Salum, founder and director of *Literal: Latin American Voices*, uncovers the challenges of publishing a bilingual and transatlantic literary magazine. Lastly, reviews of the book *La tristeza de los tigres y los misterios de Raúl Ruiz* by Verónica Cortínez and Manfred Engelbert, and the novel *Felicitas Guerrero* by the Argentinean writer Ana María Cabrera accompany our collection of articles and interviews.

I would like to thank the UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Stacey Meeker, Director of the Graduate Student Association Publications, for their support. I also would like to

express my gratitude to this year's Editorial Board, to our faculty advisors—Jorge Marturano and Ana More—, and to Belén Villarreal for her unconditional help. Being Editor-in-Chief of *Mester* has been an incredible academic opportunity and an extremely satisfactory experience. We hope that the readers benefit from our work and the articles, interviews and reviews included as part of this volume.

Brenda Ortiz-Loyola
Editor-in-Chief
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