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# Trans*formations*: Re-imagining Identity
# Spanish & Portuguese Graduate Student Conference

# Conference Abstracts

## Music and Urban Space in Brazil

### *Belle Époque* Tropical: A Ambigüidade do Momento Histórico, Político e Social no Universo de Olavo Bilac, Lima Barreto e João do Rio

*Vanina Eisenhart*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

O Rio de Janeiro na primeira década do século XX representa um mundo em transição, pois sofre um grande processo de urbanização que culmina na gestão do prefeito Pereira Passos. Este processo é o resultado de uma nova classe burguesa formada a partir de uma nova economia capitalista que surge em meados do século XIX, e que possibilita a passagem de uma estrutura colonial a uma estrutura industrial. Se no plano físico e econômico a cidade evolui, faz-se necessário a remodelação do plano social também. A elite burguesa deseja uma nova identidade social que tem por fundamentos uma cultura européia fruto de uma herança colonialista. Dentro deste novo contexto essencialmente urbano, os intelectuais da época se dividem. Se Olavo Bilac, através de sua revista *Kosmos*, exalta as transformações pelas quais o Rio de Janeiro sofreu neste período, Lima Barreto e João do Rio (pseudônimo de Paulo Barreto) são capazes de criticar, denunciar e satirizar as conseqüências do novo espaço urbano, através das obras *Os Bruzundangas* (1923) e *A Alma Encantadora das Ruas* (1908).

Além de apresentarem o quotidiano e o comportamento social dos elementos da burguesia, Barreto e João do Rio também oferecem um retrato dos símbolos dos marginalizados por este ideal identitário: o submundo e os subúrbios. Neste novo universo social, João do Rio e Lima Barreto têm como função uma análise dos novos ideais burgueses representados pelo grupo intelectual do qual Olavo Bilac fazia parte, proporcionando assim uma visão crítica da formação da identidade social e cultural da *belle époque* brasileira.

## Viagens do Ritmo: Da África ao Brasil

*Diane Gunn*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Quase todos nós reconhecemos o samba brasileiro cujo nome e estilo vieram a ser conhecidos como a música nacional do Brasil por volta da década de 20, juntamente com o advento do movimento Modernista. Sabemos também que seus ritmos inerentes têm origens africanas. Pois o que requer um pouco de investigação é que os ritmos desta música trazem mensagens complexas, desde suas origens até sua recriação no século atual pelos grupos afro-brasileiros da Bahia. Começando nos anos 70, vários grupos, como Olodum, Ilê Aiyê e outros, oferecem uma nova interpretação de tais ritmos, através de uma busca pela identidade. Nesta pesquisa, baseada na de vários etnomusicólogos eminentes, descobri duas características específicas na música afro-brasileira que contribuem para a sua posição única e distinta da música européia. Tais ritmos podem ser seguidos desde sua chegada com os escravos, até interpretações atuais. Nota-se que eles contêm mensagens específicas, sejam com propósitos religiosos, comunicativos ou sociais. Vários etnomusicólogos e historiadores estudaram esta música com ênfase na mensagem que transmite, como observa Peter Fryer em seu estudo *Rhythms of Resistance*.

Primeiramente, este trabalho segue as "viagens" de duas características da música afro-brasileira: o intervalo da quarta nota e da nota tônica da escala musical, que aparece no dundun (talking drum), e o aspecto poli-rítmico que pertence à musica religiosa do Candomblé. Além disso, exploro o argumento do Professor Ladzepko, especialista em música africana, o qual ilustra a função original de cada ritmo, concluindo que tais ritmos são baseados nas línguas tonais africanas. Já Professor Fink opõem-se a isto, dizendo que a música antiga ou indígena é um produto da "natureza de chance ou espontaneidade dos materiais disponíveis" ("Stages in the Evolution of Musical Scales and Harmony," http://www.webster.sk.ca/GREENWICH/stages.htm). Tento demonstrar e ilustrar os sentidos originais destes ritmos e compará-los com os usos atuais na música dos blocos-afros.

### *Rock Brasiliense*: Towards an Alternative Narrative of *Brasilidade*

*Jesse Samba Wheeler*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

For well over half a century, samba, especially in the styles *pagode*, *carnavalesco*, and *bossa nova*, has been associated with Brazil in an almost homologous way. Although a national symbol until today, I have sensed from my own ethnographic research in recent years a distance between the identity-images projected by samba and current ideas Brazilians have of "Brazil" and of themselves. Samba appears to remain a force of national and local identity; however, it seems to be associated with the past, to an era when Rio de Janeiro's cultural and political hegemony was stronger than it is today. In my studies I have sought to understand how communities express themselves through popular music. In this paper I examine the need for alternative narratives of *brasilidade* and propose that the expressive arts, and popular music in particular, are a place where such alternatives may be found. I suggest the rock scene in Brasília as a locus of identity negotiation, where musicians and audiences generate and express strong feelings about themselves and their environment. Within Brasília's rock milieu I argue that cover and tribute bands (those that play other bands' music), despite their almost *de riguer* denigration by critics, scholars and the at-large public, may play a substantive role in identity formation and performance. Paying my own tribute to Bertolt Brecht, Roberto Schwarz, and José Miguel Wisnik, I consider the issues of authenticity, authorship, and fantasy, as well as the implications of an identity (re)produced through overt imitation.

## Transformation through Language

### The Representations of the Term "Mozarabic"

*Yasmine Beale-Rosano Rivaya*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

The choice to highlight certain aspects of the identity of particular ethnic groups or speech communities has often led scholars to contradictory conceptualizations. The term "Mozarabic," as defined by different academics has been diversely used to identify diverse national, ethnic, social, and/or linguistic phenomena. The Mozarabs are usually defined as Christians living under Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula from the 8th to the 15th centuries (Simonet, F. 1867). However, *The Oxford Companion to Spanish Literature* (1978) defines the Mozarabs as:

"Hispano-Roman Christians of Andalusía who *preferred* Islamic domination by the Arab-Berber invaders of 711-12 to the rule of the Visigoths, and so accepted Islamic customs and the Arabic language [...]." The existing data about the Mozarabic peoples and language come mainly from medieval documentation archived in repositories throughout the Iberian Peninsula. However, a "Mozarabic document" can be defined as: 1) a document written in Latin by a Christian from al-Andalus; 2) a document written in vulgar Romance using Arabic characters by a Christian from al-Andalus; 3) any document written in Andalusí-Arabic that makes reference to any Christian resident of al-Andalus. The recurrent tendency among scholars to concentrate only on one document type has contributed to perpetuate an inaccurate portrait of the Mozarabic speech community. Similarly, the absence of an unambiguous definition of what is meant by "Mozarabic text" has led scholars to misleading generalizations. In this paper, I propose to overview different scholarly definitions and uses of the term "Mozarabic" as well as analyze the singular representations of Mozarabic identity resulting in each case.

**Tradition and Transition in Manuel Perez's *Arte de el idioma mexicano***
*Catherine Fountain*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Colonial or "missionary" grammars should occupy an important place in the history of linguistic thought, though they have previously been regarded as unworthy of study. In Manuel Perez's *Arte de el idioma mexicano*, written in Mexico in 1713, we can see elements that hearken back to the Latinate tradition of Nebrija, and before him Donatus and Priscian, but at the same time he uses concepts and ideas which are uniquely Mexican. Examples include his treatment of Nahuatl phonology, in which he documents Nahuatl adaptations of Spanish words, his *notas necessarias*, which cover aspects of Nahuatl morphology and syntax, which are particularly different from Latin, and his description of different dialects of Nahuatl, which demonstrates a nascent interest in language variation. It is also evident that Perez's most immediate influences are previous studies of Nahuatl rather than those of Latin, as he makes frequent references to the *doctissimos Authores* of earlier Nahuatl grammars. In this grammar we can see the beginnings of new areas of study which will come to occupy an important place in Mexican linguistics, such as language contact and dialectology, as well as the birth of a uniquely Mexican linguistic dialogue.

### Heritage Language Learners and Identity

*Patricia Villegas-Silva*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

While the terms 'heritage language' and 'heritage language learner' have yet to be convincingly defined, there are several of these languages and a very large amount of these speakers in the United States. Among these, Spanish is the most common and the most likely to be retained. Guadalupe Valdés provides the most well-known and convincing definition to date, stating that a heritage language learner is a "language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (2001: 38).

Is the exposure to a language other than English truly the only thing that makes up the identity of these speakers? I believe that there are other factors that need to be considered in defining who these students are, for example, ethnicity. Lucy Tse (1998) believes that ethnicity has a great deal to do with these individuals' identity and that this identity 'struggle' is a deciding factor in whether these students develop their heritage language. Tse (1998) suggests that there are four stages in ethnic identity development: 1) Unawareness; 2) Ethnic Ambivalence or Evasion; 3) Ethnic Emergence and 4) Ethnic Identity Incorporation, all of which have different effects on a person learning their ethnic/heritage language.

In this paper I discuss how heritage language learners are defined and how this definition needs to be worked on to create a well-rounded definition that includes more aspects of these speakers. I also discuss the need to support these speakers and their languages, not only because these languages are important to our greater society, but also because they are important for a child to grow into and understand his/her own ethnic identity.

## Citizenship and Nationality

### Translating the Stereotype: Exoticism and National Identity in *La Gaviota*

*Michelle Tenenbaum*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Spain emerged in the nineteenth century as an important exoticized literary *topos* for many French Romantics, who portrayed it as an alluring space of danger that fulfilled what they found to be lacking in the

conformist bourgeois society of contemporary France. France's cultural hegemony allowed its writers to fashion and propagate the image of an exotic Spain in their works, which flooded the Spanish marketplace.

Inundated with external misrepresentations of their nation, Spanish writers of the nineteenth century grappled with the dilemma of how to portray their country in their own works. Although they chafed at the stereotypes associated with their nation, Spanish writers also had a certain investment in promoting this Romantic view, since, among other reasons, it was Spain's picturesque image that allowed the otherwise marginalized nation to remain in the international spotlight.

My paper examines the ways in which the writer Fernán Caballero negotiates this quandary in her novel *La Gaviota* (1849). Caballero's work, which is considered the first modern Spanish novel, confronts the issue of (re)defining national identity in the face of foreign stereotypes about Spain. In the Prologue to *La Gaviota*, Caballero declared that she composed her novel in order to correct foreign mischaracterization of Spanish culture, but her novel illustrates, in fact, that it was not easy to repudiate these foreign representations. Using the metaphor of translation and analyzing narrative structure and certain images throughout the text, I examine the way in which the novel negotiates between the author's stated goal of rejecting foreign stereotypes of Spain and her need to foster this foreign exoticized image.

**Joaquin Beleño's *Gamboa Road Gang*: Rethinking Identity within the Boundaries of the Panama Canal Zone**

*Paolo Matteucci and Sabrina Ovan*
*University of Southern California*

Our paper aims to understand the close relationship between politics and identity as it is portrayed in Joaquin Beleño's novel *Gamboa Road Gang: Los Forzados de Gamboa* (1961). Set in the passageway of the Panama Canal Zone, the novel focuses on the treatment of a contaminating—hence desecrating—agent enacted by a "sacred" and sovereign entity. The Canal Zone, a politically anomalous space that surrounded the Panama Canal for most of the twentieth century, established political, social and jurisdictional borders, which separated its inhabitants from those of the Panamanian isthmus. Besides foregrounding the cultural, political and linguistic boundaries that the Canal Zone enforced, *Gamboa Road Gang* narrates the story of the lives of a number of inmates from the Canal Zone Penitentiary. As the

title of the novel suggests, the prisoners are convicted inside the Canal Zone precisely because they have violated its boundaries.

We read *Gamboa Road Gang* as a depiction of the implications of the physical segregation the Canal Zone enforced. In this sense, the novel allows us to discuss the notion of border as a cultural construction aimed at "preserving" the identity of the Zonians from the fear of coming into contact with the non-Zonians.

Beleño's text, which is first of all hybridized in the very language it is written in (a mixture of Spanish, English, Caribbean English, Kuna dialects, Haitian French), allows us to understand the process of identity formation as a continuous movement of re-signification. On the one hand, the establishment of the Canal Zone is experienced by the Zonians as a construction founded on the fear of dialectical contact with alterity. On the other hand, the deconstruction of both contamination and its fears allows the "contaminating" agents of the story, the Panamanian characters, to contemplate an eclectic and hybridized re-conceptualization of identity.

## Negotiating Citizenship: Body Politics in the Writing of Diamela Eltit

*Heidi L. Kinsley*
*University of California, Berkeley*

The military dictatorships that overcame several Latin American democracies in the 1960's and 70's forever altered both the political and the social landscape of their respective countries. The use of torture, the widespread practice of political killings and disappearances and the general dissolution of human rights served to silence those who voiced opposition to the regime. In addition to threats of bodily harm, however, the military regimes maintained strict control over the very identity of its citizens. In Uruguay, for example, the population was classified into one of three categories, according to each citizen's degree of support for the government. The assignment to a particular category determined the degree of constitutional privileges allowed: while supporters of the military maintained full rights, those who had protested publicly were prohibited from holding government jobs and denied other rights, including holding a passport.

As citizens struggled to regain their rights and identities under dictatorship, writers and intellectuals began to articulate their dissent in new modes of literary expression. In Chile, Diamela Eltit wrote during the Pinochet dictatorship, beginning with her first novel, *Lumpérica*. It

is my intent to show how Eltit's depiction of the limitations on citizenship disrupts the patriarchal discourse by providing possible processes of re-identification. In particular, I examine issues of embodiment and disembodiment, in which certain individuals remain visible while others become invisible. My goal is to highlight the narrative strategies employed by Eltit to reconstruct notions of identity and reassert claims to citizenship under dictatorship.

## Countering Perceptions

### Writing outside the Lines: Garcilaso Inca and the Transformation of León Hebreo

*Damian Bacich*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Many of the ideas of *amor* that appear in the works of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Camões, and Calderón de la Barca can be traced to León Hebreo's *Dialogues of Love*. First published in Rome in 1535, this curiously encyclopedic work encapsulated Renaissance Neoplatonic concepts of love and harmonized them with biblical and kabbalistic teachings. By 1605, when Cervantes mentions the *Dialogues of Love* in his acerbic prologue to *Don Quixote*, three distinct Castilian translations of the work were in circulation, including one by the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega of Peru. Each of the Spanish translators of the *Dialogues of Love* re-fashioned the book and the author's identity so as to channel the reader's experience toward a particular cultural project. Guedalia ibn Yahya, the Sephardic scribe who first made the *Dialogues* accessible in Spanish, dedicated his translation to Philip II of Spain, and at the same time subverted the dominant interpretation of the *Dialogues* as a work of Christian Neoplatonism by highlighting the Hebrew identity of the author and his text. The second translator, Aragonese nobleman Carlos Montesa, attempted to render the work more intelligible by writing in a more polished Castilian and unpacking some of Hebreo's more obscure concepts, while re-casting León Hebreo's work as a Christian philosophical treatise. Finally, the *mestizo* humanist Inca Garcilaso de la Vega created a version of the *Dialogues* that would return the ambiguity and polyvalence to the text, but through creative use of margin notes added parallel reading of León Hebreo and his *Dialogues of Love* in function of Garcilaso's own self-fashioning. Garcilaso's translation therefore constitutes a uniquely auto-referential appropriation of León Hebreo, fittingly entitled *La traducción del Indio*.

**Mestizaje y redención en un sermón barroco sobre Santa Rosa de Lima**

*Lizy Moromisato*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

La investigación histórica rosariana ha considerado el proyecto de canonización de Santa Rosa de Lima (1586-1617) como el germen del "protonacionalismo" e identidad criollas en el Perú del siglo XVII. Sin embargo, estudios recientes como los de Ramón Mujica Pinilla señalan que el culto a Santa Rosa tuvo alcances sociopolíticos más extensos que sugieren la validación de una identidad mestiza. En mi trabajo analizo un sermón pronunciado por el padre franciscano Gonzalo Tenorio y publicado en 1670 con motivo de la beatificación de Santa Rosa. Partiendo de la premisa de que Rosa no era criolla sino mestiza, Tenorio traza un argumento retórico por medio del cual diviniza el mestizaje y lo propone como instrumento redentor y unificador de la religión cristiana.

Primero, demarco el contexto sociopolítico que permitió el proyecto de canonización de Santa Rosa. Luego, analizo el sermón de Tenorio y sus implicaciones para la posible inclusión del grupo mestizo dentro del aparato político-imperial del virreinato. En la Rosa mestiza se materializa la unión espiritual de España y las Indias conversas, y por consiguiente la redención masiva del Nuevo Mundo. Asimismo, discuto en qué medida el sermón de Tenorio sirve como ejemplo de las posibilidades persuasivas del discurso barroco hispanoamericano. Tenorio sigue fielmente el método retórico de un sermón barroco al introducir el significado espiritual del descubrimiento y de la conquista de América en términos bíblicos. Sin embargo, inserta un elemento novedoso al revelar que Dios había elegido a Rosa por ser mestiza. El mestizaje se introduce así como un nuevo tópico dentro del aparato discursivo rosariano. En la plenitud de los movimientos de extirpación de idolatrías en el Perú, el sermón de Tenorio representa un intento para el surgimiento de una naciente identidad, y la creación de una conciencia y subjetividad mestizas.

**De chinos de la China a chinos aplatanados: hibridez cultural y étnica en lo cubano**

*Alejandro Lee Chan*
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Con la llegada de los culíes chinos, o colonos contratados, en junio de 1847 a La Habana, la composición étnica y cultural de la isla

se enriquece significativamente. Es cierto que la trata africana precede a la trata amarilla y que el número de culíes chinos es menor, pero no por ello el aporte de este nuevo ingrediente al ajiaco, metáfora acuñada por Fernando Ortiz, es menos valioso.

Si bien se ha observado una palpable ausencia de lo oriental en el discurso hegemónico de la formación de la identidad nacional, intelectuales cubanos contemporáneos dentro y fuera de la isla ponen de manifiesto la contribución que este grupo étnico ha ejercido en la creación cultural del país. La de mayor atención es un nuevo tipo híbrido sexualizado, la mulata china, cuya belleza proverbial y exótica sensualidad aparecen en novelas y cuentos de Mayra Montero, Leonardo Padura Fuentes y Antonio José Ponte.

La temática no es exclusiva de escritores caribeños de habla hispana. Autores de origen cubano que escriben en inglés también llevan consigo la nostalgia de esta pluralidad étnica, como Cristina García y Armando F. Gutiérrez. Incluso autores de la diáspora china en los EE.UU., como Maxine Hong Kingston y Lisa Yun, se apropian de la temática al hacerla parte de su obra. El carácter transnacional y lingüístico de la contribución china a Cuba se refleja ineluctablemente en su representación literaria.

Este trabajo presenta una visión panorámica de la presencia china en lo cubano demostrando que en efecto, como ya lo había sugerido Fernando Ortiz, no es nula la huella de la contribución de los chinos en Cuba.

**Just the Tip of the Iceberg: The Truncation of the Mexican American Identity in *My Family/Mi Familia***

*Phillip Serrato*
*Fullerton College*

The film *My Family/Mi Familia* represents Mexican Americans as a recognizably distinct, culturally autonomous group within the multicultural United States. A fundamental problem with the film lies in its method of defining and asserting Mexican American identity through a process of differentiating Mexican American culture and people from Anglo Americans. With an excessively strict notion of cultural integrity, the film dangerously delimits the parameters of acceptable Mexican American identity. Because the film cuts off the possibility of Mexican Americans' positive transcendence of social places and identity categories, I ultimately suggest that its portrayal of Mexican American identity and cultural integrity is unfortunately complicit with the social, political, and economic containment of Mexican Americans in the United States.

# Review