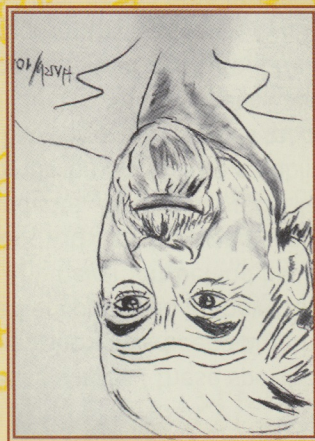


Background graphic: Bustriazo Ortiz's signature. He signed his work with elaborate sketches, sometimes coded with the titles of future books.



POET'S SPIRIT LIVES ON IN TRANSLATION

From left: portrait of the poet Juan Carlos Bustriazo Ortiz; from left, Roman Antopolisky, husband of associate professor of English Michelle Gil-Montero; Sergio DeMatteo, editor of the selected poems of Juan Carlos Bustriazo Ortiz; Gil-Montero and daughter Annika Antopolisky at the museum of poet Olga Orozco, a contemporary of Bustriazo Ortiz.

By Adam Reger

The poet walks down the street, his briefcase full of poems, greeting friends and neighbors. Although the poet, Juan Carlos Bustriazo Ortiz, passed away in 2010, for associate professor of English Michelle Gil-Montero, his spirit is alive in Santa Rosa, in Argentina's remote La Pampa region.

With the aid of a prestigious Fulbright U.S. Scholar Grant, Gil-Montero spent much of the spring 2017 semester in Argentina, translating the poet's works into English and teaching a graduate-level course on translation and North American poetry at the Maestría de Escritura Creativa at the Universidad Tres de Febrero, the country's only creative writing MFA program. Gil-Montero was drawn to Bustriazo Ortiz's work by the "linguistic surprise and musical intensity" of his poetry. "Bustriazo Ortiz's work is eccentric and profoundly unique," Gil-Montero said. "It is not only 'out of the mainstream' but 'out of nowhere,' suggesting the uncharted margins of experience and language." Bustriazo Ortiz often "mashes together" Spanish with dialects and names, such as those of local foods and plants specific to the remote La Pampa province in central Argentina that he called home. Gil-Montero's translation of Bustriazo Ortiz's collection *Libro del Ghenpin* will mark the first time any of Bustriazo Ortiz's work has been available in English. Just as remarkable, Gil-Montero said, the book is one of only six titles—out of approximately 40 manuscripts written by the poet during his lifetime—to appear in his native Spanish.

"I've become increasingly troubled, in the course of my research here, by how a work of such incredible magnitude and literary value could remain so marginal in Spanish, and utterly unknown in English," said Gil-Montero. "It's a perspective that highlights the often-underappreciated role of the translator. In Gil-Montero's case, much of her work in La Pampa involves going through the poet's unpublished manuscripts, acting partly as editor. Translation also involves far more than finding simple equivalent phrases, said Gil-Montero, who has sought to enter Bustriazo Ortiz's imagination and intellect by familiarizing herself with the world in which he lived. In December 2016, with the support of a Howard Foundation Grant, Gil-Montero traveled to Santa Rosa, taking part in a panel discussion and talking with experts on the poet's work. That experience was crucial to translating his poems, said Gil-Montero. "He walked, he wrote in cafes, he stayed out late at night collaborating with musicians," she added. "The people I've met have been eager to share anecdotes—like how he always covered his wine glass between sips so that the 'spirit' would not escape." I've learned so much about the spirit, the voice of his poems by visiting his town." Gil-Montero has brought this broad perspective on translation to Saint Vincent College. In fall 2016 she offered an upper-level creative writing course focused on literary translation, exploring issues surrounding the art of translation and guiding students through their own semester-long translation projects.