

more strongly, in fact, that a reinvestment in canonicity cannot take us where we need to go. Some—myself included in a co-authored response to Brown in the *ADFL Bulletin* in 2014 (Fraser, Larson and Compitello)—have argued that the notion of canon is problematic at the least and perhaps even untenable, once we recognize how much Hispanic Studies has already changed from its traditionally literary form.

The changing course of academic life over the past two to four decades is one that—drawing on a reading of Mary Burgan's *What Ever Happened to the Faculty?* (2006)—I would describe as education's loss of its relative autonomy to a so-called economic realm. One major response to this loss of relative autonomy has been for researchers in the humanities to entrench themselves in disciplinary positions that reflect priorities of an earlier and traditionally literary period in our histories. But if we employ narrow disciplinary definitions to express the value of our discipline, we risk pushing all else besides literature itself to the margins. Rather than risk repeating the list with which I began my comments, I will say that the move toward entrenchment adversely affects: other forms of cultural production, other methods than textual analysis alone, work in or across interdisciplinary fields, and disciplinary work carried out in fields other than Hispanic Studies proper.

The opportunity we have is to be more intentionally open as a discipline. If we are open not just to other content but to other methods and other disciplines we must act accordingly. Our action must unfold simultaneously in different areas of academic life: we must change the structure of our undergraduate curricula, we must allow graduate students more flexibility in directing their advanced study, we must compose ads for departmental positions differently, and, on the path toward tenure and promotion, we must value scholarly work that takes place across disciplines or even fully within the boundaries of other disciplines. All of this, it should be emphasized, will require much more consensus than any individual department can muster alone. Our most prominent professional associations—the Modern Language Association and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese among others—must continue to lead us forward in this respect. But individual faculty and individual departments, conference organizers and journal editors, must also commit to a process of transformation. To wit, a recent collective interview by journal editors

in Hispanic Studies reveals some interesting and productive friction evident in the field regarding non-traditional subjects and methods (Fraser and Henseler).

Can we move beyond the traditional boundaries of our collective discipline without experiencing that move as a loss, a betrayal or a transgression? Can we see innovation not as something imposed upon us from the outside but rather as an inherent part of our own tradition? The reason I feel these questions require our attention so urgently is that, one way or another, our centrality as a discipline in the twenty-first century depends on our ability to self-direct and exploit our own connections with other disciplines. Hispanic Studies has lacked the urgency that has driven disciplinary change in other language and literature fields. We have, it is clear, enjoyed increasing numbers during the same time in which German and French, for example, have seen declining enrollments. But I believe this has led also to a certain complacency. And over all the years during which we have remained relatively isolated from disciplinary shifts, the stakes of the interdisciplinary game have been steadily, and dramatically, increasing.

In closing I will say this: Hispanic Studies can quickly and decisively move to the forefront of the interdisciplinary humanities and social sciences. We have the chance to make ourselves fundamental to university curricula in the second half of the twenty-first century—whatever they look like. But to do this we must think more expansively about how we define our discipline, and we're just not there yet.

Hispanic Studies in the 21st Century: Literature and Its Role in an Evolving Curriculum

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Faced with rising tuition costs and mounting student loan debt, today's perception of higher education has shifted. Students place more value on their education based on their job prospects post graduation. In "Why College Is Not a Commodity," Gary Gutting notes: "Current thinking about education [. . .] assumes that college is a natural place to acquire the relevant instrumental knowledge [. . .] for the vast majority

of good jobs.” And while this is evident for degrees in the professional schools, the humanities, and particularly language studies, are often viewed in diametrical opposition to this thought.

Recent publications such as *In Defense of a Liberal Education*, “Humanities Studies Under Strain Around the Globe,” and “Don’t Dismiss the Humanities,” just to name a few, demonstrate the humanities’ constant battle for recognition. This continual attack coupled with the consumerism model of higher education increases the stock value of translation studies. Language students can visualize the tangible benefits of this coursework better than they can with literary studies. With increased course offerings in Spanish translation and interpreting, what is the role of literature in the Hispanic studies curriculum?

In the 2000 “Report on The National Forum on The Future of Spanish Departments on College and University Campuses,” Orlando R. Kelm identifies the three-tiered mission of Spanish departments: (1) to prepare students for graduate school; (2) to prepare students to teach the language; and (3) to fulfill general education requirements. But, he notes, a future challenge to this system includes: “How do we meet the needs of students who are learning Spanish for specific instrumental reasons?” (524). This challenge from 2000 becomes part of the new paradigm shift as identified by Michael Doyle in 2010. He notes that the Modern Language Association and the U.S. Department of Labor along with U.S. congressional legislation “provide us with examples of a roadmap for responsive curricular development, the ongoing paradigm shift in languages for specific purposes [. . .]” (80). The beginning of this paradigm shift parallels the entrance of the Class of 2008 into the work force during one of the worst economic recessions (New). With rising tuition costs and a bleak job market, translation and interpreting programs become prevalent on college campuses and in the eyes of the students, they appear more financially lucrative than literary studies.

At my own small, four-year public state university, we have embraced the paradigm shift as well. With increased student interest in translation and interpreting, our Spanish offerings look quite different than when I started in 2007. Continual debates about the inclusion of modern languages in the general education curriculum prompted the department to rethink how it serves the professional schools. Now nursing and business majors can enroll in specialized first-year Spanish classes. They still learn the basics of the language, but acquire

vocabulary pertinent to their future vocations. As for the Spanish major, we have moved from a literature-based curriculum to a more flexible model, where students are able to select their main emphasis from literary, culture, and language studies. With the more open curriculum, enrollment numbers in the literature classes have decreased. Future high school Spanish teachers cannot visualize the importance of literature when they foresee themselves only teaching grammar. Future interpreters question why they should read novels when they want to work in the medical profession. Future law enforcement officials only want to learn to speak the language so they can use it while out in the field. When faced with these attitudes, I often find myself having to provide justification as to why literature courses matter. Students, particularly non-native speakers, need to be reading, for reading in the target language will improve one’s knowledge of that language. In *Teaching Literature in the Languages*, Kimberly A. Nance notes that:

In *Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use*, Stephen Krashen (2003) reports research findings that the time students spent simply reading in the second language showed a higher positive correlation with the acquisition of vocabulary and structure than did time spent on formal language study or in residence abroad. Richard Day and Julian Bamford (1998) report similar benefits in *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*. (6)

This excerpt now accompanies my syllabi for literature classes, and first-day introductions now include a discussion of why students need literature. While I acknowledge the importance and popularity of languages for specific purposes, I also believe, as Dr. Seuss so eloquently penned: “The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go” (27).

While literature assists students in building their vocabulary and increasing their understanding of the target language, literature also provides additional cultural benefits. A 2013 study demonstrated that people who read literary fiction have better social skills. These readers: “performed better on tests measuring empathy, social perception and emotional intelligence—skills that come in especially handy when you are trying to read someone’s body language or gauge what they might be thinking” (Belluck). Michael Eisner, former CEO of Disney, received a bachelor’s degree in English literature and echoes these

sentiments. He notes that: "Literature is unbelievably helpful, because no matter what business you are in, you are dealing with interpersonal relationships. It gives you an appreciation of what makes people tick" (Linshi). While interpreters need to speak the target language and be fluent in their specialty's lexicon, there are also soft skills that they need to possess. Social perception, emotional intelligence, and the ability to create interpersonal relationships are imperative.

Additionally, being a successful interpreter requires a personal connection with the client, one that can be acquired through cultural understanding. Gwendolyn Barnes-Karol observes that: "Even for those students who 'just' want to talk to native speakers, conversation will be at best superficial if it grows only out of putting words together in sequences to satisfy immediate communicative needs without an appreciation of the vast cultural horizon out of which engaged communication emerges" (90). Literature provides insight into a culture; describing how people act, relating history, illustrating specific perspectives and worldviews. It becomes necessary to contextualize literature so that students see the cultural value of it in their future professions. This can, as Barnes-Karol observes "[. . .] enhance the feeling that language learners are truly having an *experiencia compartida* with other Spanish speakers and readers across the globe" (93). Literature provides connections with the target culture that thereby makes communication possible.

Current culture dictates that a college degree is a necessary component to securing a career. Students driven by a consumerist model of education enter the university expecting to acquire the skills that future employers desire. Students studying Spanish perceive languages for specific purposes as having a better return on investment than literary studies. In spite of literature's inherent benefits, this perception translates into decreased enrollments in literature classes while languages for specific purposes flourish. However, according to Gutting:

[. . .] students need to see how academic subjects are intrinsically interesting. It is more a matter of students' moving beyond their current interests than of teachers fitting their subjects to interests that students already have. Good teaching does not make a subject more interesting; it initiates students into a fascinating part of intellectual culture—and so makes them more interesting.

Unfortunately as this consumerism model floods into academia, we lose sight of one of the main goals of higher education: to create global citizens. This idea of continuing on to college merely to receive a specific occupational skill set misses the mark. As a professor, whether I am teaching an introductory language course or introducing my students to the literary works of Miguel de Cervantes, it is my job to initiate students into this intellectual culture. While translation and interpreting classes meet the students' interests and provide them with a recognizable skill set to be used post graduation, it is the literature classroom where these students can truly become part of this intellectual culture. It is where students can gain soft skills, or people skills, that allow them to become better translators and interpreters. If I can convince students to take this literary journey, I can demonstrate how literature will make them better in their future professions.

A New Model for the Humanities in Hispanic Studies

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Higher education is accountable to its constituencies for a dual bottom line: sustainability on the one side, impact on the other. Both are intertwined and inseparable: a mission cannot be achieved without resources, and resources have no meaning without purpose. The arts and humanities are losing ground on both fronts, and this includes Hispanic Studies. This is not another quick obituary or gaudy lament. It is rather a suggestion that a different way of thinking about the role of the various units and hierarchical levels, a view that involves metrics and strategic recalibrations, can unveil untapped avenues and open the path to a brighter future.

The Crisis in the Humanities is often presented as a drop in majors, job placement and fiscal income starting in the 1960s and direr in the aftermaths of the financial crisis of 2008. Higher education reacted to the reduction in fiscal income and related decline in endowment revenue and annual gifts by cutting budgets, increasing tuition and swelling admissions, which in turn has resulted in larger class sizes, heftier student loans and precarious working conditions for teachers. To