Hispania: An Iberian Union for the New Millennium

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Abstract: This essay looks back at exemplary moments of the first 100 years of Hispania and uses this history to glean ideas for the future of the journal. The publication’s fate has been tied to that of the United States, its world languages programs, and US understandings of the Iberian world. I examine the terms “Hispania” and “Hispanic” as means of commemorating the broad, interdisciplinary scope for the journal and advocating for its continued expansion. Diasporas are examined as a growing point of contact between the Americas. The insights of the Global South are presented as an approach that contributes to a more diverse and democratic future for the journal.

Keywords: Brazil/Brasil, comparative literature/literatura comparada, Diaspora/diáspora, Hispania, inter-American languages/linguas inter-americanas, inter-American literature/literatura inter-americana, Portuguese/Português, Spanish and Portuguese language teaching/ensino das línguas espanhola e portuguesa, Spanish for Specific Purposes/ensino para propósitos específicos

“Hispania is here! Hispania!” I would say to myself in my Peggy Hill Spanish, thrilled as Christmas morning to find the thick, glossy volume lying in a pile of bills at the end of a long day at work with the students at the Georgia high school where I taught for five years. The journal was always a way to stay connected to the greater world and big ideas. Today, I teach Spanish language and Latin American literature centered on the African Diaspora at a research university, but it is still a way to get out of my professional bubble and learn from Peninsularists, linguists, pedagogues, and the many kinds of teachers that make up our diverse organization.

1. Hispania is part of US History

I would like to reflect on some of the past meanings of “Hispania,” “Hispania,” and “Hispanic,” as well as a few historical moments and representative articles from the journal’s past. I hope these will shed some light on where it goes next as a journal in the tradition of Friedrich Nietzsche’s “On the Use and Abuse of History for Life.” Its history is not a list of occurrences but a reserve of ideas to inspire us to be even better.

The instruction of Spanish as a world language is a recent phenomenon. According to historian Helen Delpar, the second half of the nineteenth century produced exactly one US PhD in Latin American Spanish (28), though H. Jay Siskin shows the US invasion of Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898 modestly boosted study of Spain (155). In 1910, only 5,000 high school students studied Spanish, 0.7% of language courses (Delpar 28). By 1915, the number skyrocketed to 33,172, and by 1922 there were a whopping 263,000 students (28). Why? Because of another centennial we have been celebrating recently: World War I. The United States was at war with
Germany, so even German-Americans did not want to speak German! Many German professors actually began to teach Spanish (Siskin 157). Colleges saw a similar boost: 1917 saw 1,736 Spanish students explode to 9,579 in 1918. The American Association of Teachers of Spanish was formed in 1917, and *Hispania*, the oldest consistently published US journal in the study of Spanish, came into being as the United States came into being as a true global power in 1918 (Siskin 154).

The reasons given for the “Spanish craze” of the Great War period still sound familiar: it is useful for doing business in Latin America (Siskin 153). "Others maintained that Spanish was easy to learn and therefore attracted fraternity boys and others in search of ‘snap’ courses. Defenders of Spanish were quick to refute such canards, denying that it was easy and extolling the merits of Spanish literature" (Delpar 28). From the beginning, people were reading *Don Quijote* (or pretending to, if they are like the students in Delpar’s quote) because they wanted to sell soft drinks in South America. *Hispania* has always had at least two audiences: a practical one and a lofty one, the bills and the gloss. Today, as tenure-track positions are drying up in literature and departments are turning to Spanish for the Professions and Specific Purposes (SPSP, or EPPE—Español para Propósitos Específicos—in Spanish) (Business, Medicine, Law, Agriculture, STEM) to attract career-minded students, we must continue to work together or, soon enough, no windmills will be felled and no customers will be satisfied. *Hispania* has been at the forefront of specific purposes scholarship, as Karol Hardin’s article on medical Spanish curricula attests (640). Michael Scott Doyle’s recent article details not only the history and institutionalization of SPSP/EPPE, but also its centrality to the future sustainability and growth of Spanish language and the study of Hispanic cultures in the United States (95). These courses, developed over the last thirty years (Doyle 95), reaffirm Siskin’s dual caution that we must provide proof that our classes do lead to more job opportunities, as we often state, but to not forget that we are producing a greater interest in and understanding of the cultural “others” of the world, which is priceless (161). These two goals are not mutually exclusive. Siskin shows that Spanish saw a boom in enrollment during the Great War, but a bust afterward, and we cannot give up our ideals because the market ebbs.

While embracing innovation and expansion, *Hispania* should not deny its Iberian roots. When Lawrence Wilkins called a meeting of high school teachers to form what was called the American Association of Teachers of Spanish in 1915, he received a letter of support from none other than the eminent Spanish philologist Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Siskin 153). Another defense of the Spanish presence in US curricula are gifts of unfortunate circumstances: Spaniards exiled from Franco’s Spain and today’s well-trained professionals who come for economic reasons. Anna Caballé Masforroll and Randolph Pope have compiled biographies of these intellectuals and teachers who helped build post-secondary Spanish into what it is today, as one can see in Edward Hood’s review (341). *Hispania*’s close relationship to the Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española (ANLE), an associate of the Real Academia Española, is clear in ANLE Director Gerardo Piña-Rosales’s guest editorial in 2011 (ix). The journal has not homogenized Spain, either, as Eileen J. Doll’s article on African immigrants in Spanish drama shows that the marginalized are part of Europe as well (15). Naturally, the morphology dossier in issue 100.4, based on the proceedings of the Universidad de Málaga’s MÓRFEMÁLAGA 2017 conference, and AATSP’s 2018 centennial at the Pontificia Universidad de Salamanca on the 800th anniversary of this, the country’s oldest university reaffirm the journal’s Spanish roots (Spaine Long 503).

There continue to be debates over how much Spain is too much Spain when Mexico and nineteen other countries are right next door, and whether or not students should order zumo de naranja like a Spaniard or jugo de china like a Puerto Rican when they are thirsty on a hot day. *Hispania* has been an important source of information on Latin America since at least 1919, to which I will return, and which continues today as Google Scholar ranks the journal among the top 15 high-impact publications on the region. For example, Elaine Shenk argues for
teaching the voseo (vos instead of tú), a basic linguistic structure for much of Spanish America, in intermediate Spanish classes (368). Robert D. Cameron notes that, even though two thirds of Spanish America used it during the first half of the twentieth century, it took twenty years for the first *Hispania* article on it to appear and the form is still not widely taught (67). Special issues on the literary Boom (1959–1970) generation, such as Mario Vargas Llosa (2011) Carlos Fuentes (2012) and a eulogy for Gabriel García Márquez (2014) have chronicled and honored the authors that put Latin American literature on the map in the United States (Wiseman ix; Rosser 1; Hernández 315). The superpower's intelligentsia sought to understand Latin America, a region of strategic importance during the Cold War, which became vitally important when the Soviets were pointing nuclear warheads at Florida from bases in Cuba in 1962. Kevin Anzzolin’s essay relating Octavio Paz’s cold war diplomacy in *El laberinto de la soledad* to the Anti-Mexico rhetoric of the “Build-the-Wall” Trump Era is an excellent example of literature and language’s roles in US-Latin American relations (395). Latin American Studies centers were part of this military-diplomatic effort (Delpar 153).

These centers, to return to students’ concerns of how to order orange juice, added a third option: why not suco de laranja? *Hispania* has been at the vanguard of Brazilian studies, publishing an article by geologist John Casper Branner on how it would help businessmen to learn Brazilian Portuguese in 1919, at a time when all of Latin America was still called “Spanish America” in academia, including the Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) half of South America (29). Spanish and Portuguese have always been family, dependent on one another but not always seeing eye-to-eye (29). Some of today’s Latin American studies programs would not exist without Brazil. It took the United States another world war to figure that out. *Hispania* was part of the war effort as we became the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese in 1944. Vanderbilt University opened a Brazilian studies program, one of only six Latin American programs (notice the name change) to support our troops and their strategic allies south of the border in 1947 (Delpar 147). Brazil helped implement the invasion of North Africa and Italy (McCann n.pag.). Once again, Latin America changed the study of Europe and vice versa. *Hispania* grew in World War Two as we sought to understand Brazil, a strategic US ally (Delpar 123). We sought to understand strategic US ally Brazil. The journal has been a part of our country’s history and identity since its inception in the years following the Great War, the memory of which we are still learning not to abuse as conflicts continue in our country’s politics and, sometimes, in our academic departments and disciplines.

2. “Hispania,” “Galicia,” and “Iberian Union”: Terms of Unity in Diversity

With this trans-Atlantic, inter-American history in mind, I would like to focus on two words that are closely related to *Hispania*: “Hispania” and “Españas.” When the Americas, (or América, as many Spanish Americans prefer), were “discovered” (a term understandably not favored by the indigenous) by the Conquistadors, neither Spain nor the Western Hemisphere were as unified as one might expect from looking at a modern-day map. For example, Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera*, a key chronicle of the conquest of Mexico, addresses it to “Felipe IV, Rey de las Españas” (814). The Conquistadores saw themselves as different, but somehow together in a way they did not before América, when their outlook was much more focused on local issues in their provinces. “Las Españas” can be imagined as an amalgamation of “patrias chicas,” as Willis Knapp Jones discusses (427). Or, they can be seen as “Hispania,” the name of the Roman province that encompassed most of the Iberian Peninsula, including today’s Lusophone territories. Due to a series of invasions, the Roman province, which included Galecia and Lusitania, modern Galicia and Portugal, roughly speaking, fragmented into much smaller kingdoms, including Galicia. *Galego* is the origin of modern Portuguese, since the area that is now Portugal was occupied by the Moors and gradually retaken during the Reconquista,
leading eventually to the official division of Galicia and Portugal in 1179 (Areán-García 7), though Portugal would reach its modern borders only in 1297 (9). National borders and cultural differences have since divided Portugal and Galicia. The Portuguese language has been a close neighbor and, because of Galicia, part of Spain. Just ask any frustrated student who cannot understand the writings of Alfonso el Sabio, who was mentioned in the journal as recently as Francisco Carriscondo Esquivel’s 2012 essay (258). As Gonzalo, of Tirso de Molina’s Burlador de Sevilla (1630), extols, Portugal was seen as a treasure trove when Spain married into it from 1580 to 1640, forming the Iberian Union (1.721–857). A teacher cannot say s/he is giving students a holistic image of Spain if s/he ignores Galicia, one of its oldest provinces, considered the “most” Spanish due to a supposed lack of contact with the Moors (Irigoyen García 117), though the New Millennium should have no room for an obsession with purity. Nor can one claim to have a thorough understanding of the empire’s past if s/he ignores the Iberian Union. Hispania has, since Branner’s humble 1919 article on Portuguese for business, been a home for a new Iberian Union—in the Peninsula, the Americas, and elsewhere.

3. Diasporas that Unite the Americas

To “Hispania” and “Iberian Union,” I now add the terms “diaspora” and “Hispanic” and explore a brief genealogy of them like Nietzsche might. In the New Millennium, we tend to view identities, collective and individual, as global and trans-national. Hispania has successfully avoided being trapped in nationalist paradigms of literature, and it should continue along these lines. Historically, “Diaspora” refers to people who have been torn from their peoples’ native lands. But if we consider the etymology of the term, “Dia-spora,” we see it refers to the scattering of cultures like seeds, which brings me to the next aspect of Hispania’s diversity and expanse (Kenny, chap. 1). As I argue in “The Place of the Forge,” the African Diaspora ties together Spanish America, Luso-America, and even Franco-America (231). A few examples are Sonja Watson’s article on teaching Cuba’s Partido Independiente de Color through documentary, Rosario Swanson’s analysis of trailblazing Afro-Peruvian poet Nicomedes Santa Cruz, and David Wiseman and James Krause’s comparison of, arguably, Brazil’s greatest writer, the mixed-race Machado de Assis, to Mexican Juan Rulfo (576). Elise Dietrich recently analyzed race and class in a 1960s Rio de Janeiro samba bar (439). Afro-Colombian Manuel Zapata Olivella wrote in his masterpiece, Changó el gran putas (1983), that Africans and the indigenous, their fellow oppressed people of the Conquest, must give the gift of freedom to all peoples of the American continent, and the journal should continue to seek knowledge among understudied populations.

Though they are not a traditional diaspora, indigenous peoples of the Americas certainly have been scattered by the Conquest and other genocidal projects. But Thomas Ward continues the decade-long struggle to allow the subaltern Guatemalan human rights icon Rigoberta Menchú to speak (400). Swanson illuminates a new side of one of Mexico’s most important indigenista writers, Rosario Castellanos, through her theater (437). A recent example of indigenous language in Hispania is Vitelia Cisneros’s analysis of Guarani in Lucia Puenzo’s film El niño pez (2009) (51). Cisneros analyzes Quechua (51) in Claudia Llosa’s cinematic lament La teta asustada (2009), and Mariela Silvana Vargas discusses the link between language, melancholy, and musicality in the film (431).

As Antonio Luciano de Andrade Tosta argues eloquently in his Confluence Narratives (2016), other diasporas link the Americas and form confluences of cultures. He discusses not only the indigenous and Afrodescendants, but also Jewish, Muslim, and East Asian writers in the Americas. Hispania has been publishing articles that support his inter-American, intercultural vision for literature and culture, and they should continue and strengthen this practice.

The oldest group called “diaspora,” the Jews, have made important cultural contributions to the Americas. One example is my favorite novel about a Jewish Brazilian centaur, Moacyr
Scliar’s *O centauro no jardim* (1980), which Laura Pirott-Quintero describes as the protagonist’s cultural negotiation to be seen as a “normal” human (768). Solomon Lipp’s article shows the importance of Jewish exiles and remembering the Holocaust in Argentine poetry (536), in this way demonstrating how the shared tragedies and victories of World War II brought the Americas and Europe together.

But World War I brought an influx of different exiles, those of the crumbling Ottoman Empire who came to be known in Latin America under the blanket term “turco.” They often worked as travelling merchants or “mascates” in South America, where the term came to be applied to Jews, who often did the same work, as well: “the salesman.” Jeffrey Lesser outlines the cultural crossovers between Jews and Muslims in Brazil, indicating that the Americas can, at their best moments, be a place for Muslims, Christians, and Jews to live in harmony. These cultural crossovers change how we see classic works, such as Heba El Attar’s analysis of the turco in García Márquez’s *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981) (914). Her work also provides a larger public to the less studied but still prolific Honduran Jorge Luis Oviedo, author of *La Torca* (1988) (914). *Hispania* has published not only on national traditions but also on diasporic ones, and it should continue along those lines.

Beginning with mass immigration after the abolition of African slavery, people from China and Japan have influenced the Americas as well. São Paulo has the largest Japanese community outside the United States, for example, and the brutal Alberto Fujimori rose to be president of Peru. *Hispania* has not overlooked trans-Pacific Voyages. Koichi Hagimoto adopts this approach to analyze José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s classic *El Periquillo Sarniento* (1816), perhaps the first Latin American novel (389), and José Miguel Blanco Peña, a professor in Taiwan, analyzes linguistic interference of Chinese in learning Spanish (97). Rachel ten Haaf explores a former Portuguese colony in China in João Pedro Rodrigues and João Rui Guerra da Matta’s film *A última vez que vi Macau* (2012) (461). In the future, *Hispania* could add articles on texts that speak to the Asian presence in the Americas. A few examples are Marta Rojas’s novel *El equipaje amarillo* (2009) on the Chinese in Cuba and Vicente Amorim’s film *Corações Sujos* (2011) on the Japanese in Brazil. The authors of the *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* on “Asia in the Hispanic World” are already doing innovative work in this growing area.

4. “Hispanic” *Hispania*

Perhaps the most relevant diaspora to *Hispania* readers in the United States are those lumped together under the term “Hispanic.” The US Census Bureau began to use the term in the 1970s to congeal Spanish-speakers and their descendants that previously had little to do with one another, particularly Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans in the continental United States. Many readers may not expect this, but Spaniards and Brazilians were included in the term when it was first used, in part because many Anglo Americans did not know Brazil was never a Spanish colony (Oboler 428, 432). However, many US activists of the 1980s rejected the US Government’s top-down label “Hispanic,” preferring the term “Latino,” which to them reaffirmed their roots in Latin America, not Spain (428–29). On the other hand, to this day, Brazilian immigrants continue to ask, a bit confused, “Latino eu?” like Tosta does in his 2004 article on Brazilians and Latinos in the United States, since the community is not as longstanding as Mexican-Americans, for example (576). Latinos, or Latinxs, a term many prefer in order to avoid sexism or heteronormativity, also open a new line of thought: is one Hispanic if s/he does not speak Spanish (Oboler 432)? What if one speaks the great American hybrid, Spanglish, the topic of ANLE member Domnita Dumitrescu 2012 special issue of *Hispania* (ix)? *Hispania* should continue discussing the fronteras of Spanish and Portuguese, as it does in Flavia Belpotini’s review of *Visiones europeas del Spanglish* (2015) by Silvia Betti and Daniel Jorques-Jiménez (698).
5. “American” and the Global South

The journal should also continue questioning and extending those borders. Now sitting at my desk in Birmingham, Alabama, I think back on my twangy Southern reverie from years ago with which I started this article, and I recall that the US South is itself a sort of frontier zone. It has much in common with the greater Global South that calls into question linguistic borders, interpretations of literary works, and literary theory. Critic Debora Cohn has argued that inter-American literature—which ties Spanish and Portuguese to English and American Studies—and most post-colonial theory in English has focused entirely on nations that have been colonized by European nations, not the neocolonial status of many in Latin America in relation to the United States (38–39). On the other hand, the US South occupies a liminal space. Here people were colonized and exterminated, like many Native Americans, and enslaved, like many African Americans. However, its elites had ambitions of conquering territory in the Caribbean, making it more like the developed, imperialist Global North in many ways (40). On the other hand, many white Southerners see themselves as inhabiting occupied territory due to the Civil War (39). Cohn argues that formerly plantation-based societies should be studied in a way that allows for comparisons between the Caribbean, Brazil, and the US South (40). I would add to her argument the Latinx presence in the US South and the current prison industrial complex that generates profits from disproportionately arresting minorities and ramping up immigration enforcement, a common occurrence in the US South that is spreading to Brazil and other Latin American countries (Wacquant 58). Prisoners of today are continuing the carceral literary tradition of Graciliano Ramos that Joanna Courteau analyzes, a phenomenon *Hispania* should explore further (46).

Cohn also seeks to address accusations of US scholars ignoring Latin American scholars’ work on their own countries, something *Hispania* will do well to avoid in the future by including ample Latin American authors (41). South-South comparisons (between the US South and Latin America and between Latin American, African, and, especially in the case of Portuguese, Asian countries) and attention to how Latin American scholar-teachers see themselves and their compatriots will keep the journal innovative and attenuate accusations of treating the United States’ neighbors to the south as objects, not subjects, of study. Robert Patrick Newcomb’s article on Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó’s theory of a pan-Latin American identity that includes Brazil in cultural and political opposition to the United States is a step in the right direction, though the subcontinent also has profound thinkers today that need more fora in the United States (368). Otherwise, many Iberians and Latin Americans will wonder if the journal serves only a US American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, a realistic concern as the organization enjoys continued growth and success in countries beyond the United States. The Global South is not just of interest to lofty theoreticians—as Dieter A. Waldvogel and Ismênia Sales de Souza argue, Brazil is of vital importance for the interests of the United States armed forces and business leaders, a continuation of the Global South’s role in shaping the future world order (289).

I wish to thank *Hispania* for being a place where the histories, literatures, and languages of the peninsula and the Americas converge. It has made my South Global. Metaphorically, it is a new Iberian Union where scholar-teachers can find common ground with the highest quality and most diverse studies in Spanish, Portuguese, and the intercultural seeds that have taken root wherever they have been spread.

NOTES

1 On Mike Judge and Greg Daniel’s television series *King of the Hill* (1997–2009), Peggy Hill is the wife of the working class protagonist, Hank Hill. While a devoted and passionate substitute Spanish teacher, her Southern-tinged Castilian is delightfully less than perfect. I like to think mine is better than hers now.

2 See also J. H. D. Allen, Junior’s 1942 article in *Hispania*.

3 *Hispania* even notes the centrality of Brazilianists in developing inter-American literature and cultural studies. See Charles Perrone and Margo Milleret’s tribute to Fred P. Ellison (526).
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