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# The Iberian Turn: an overview on Iberian Studies in the United States

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**Topic:** The current state and future development of the discipline of Iberian Studies in the U.S.

**Abstract:** The objective of this report is to examine the current state of the discipline of Iberian Studies in the United States and consider the challenges facing this emerging field in an institutional context that is largely dominated by national, monolingual traditions. Following in Chandler's footsteps, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the various institutional frameworks in which Iberian Studies is mediated in the US and the intellectual practices that influence its configuration.

**Keywords:** Iberian Studies, Iberian turn, Iberian Peninsula, Iberian space, Iberian cultures, Iberian literatures, literary polysystem

## Introduction

This report will offer a summary of Iberian Studies as an emerging epistemological, academic, and institutional field focused on relationships between the Iberian Peninsula's cultures and literatures with a methodological perspective that conceives of the Iberian space as a “complex, multilingual cultural and literary system” (Pérez Isasi / Fernandes 2013: 1). In creating an approximate map of Iberian Studies in the United States, where the discipline has gained considerable momentum and visibility in recent years, the report will consider a number of recently published takes on the new field, which range from acceptance to skepticism or even outright rejection. Building on Chandler's hypotheses (2009), it will offer a comprehensive overview of the institutional frameworks in which Iberian Studies is currently mediated and the intellectual practices and academic publications that are influencing its development in the United States.

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As Resina has noted, even though interest in the Iberian Peninsula is not new, it has only recently been incorporated into academia as a field of knowledge (2013: 1). Iberian Studies' intrinsically relational and multilingual focus encourages an approach to the Peninsula's languages and literatures that transcends the traditional national disciplines, which have been predominantly monolingual in scope and have usually corresponded to nation-states formed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The consolidation of Iberian Studies as an academic field must be considered within the context of recent supranational realignments in Area Studies and in disciplines within Comparative Literature, such European literature and World literature<sup>1</sup>, which Pérez Isasi views as symptoms of the inadequacy of national literary models to explain the complexity of literary phenomena (2017: 347). In the United States' case, it is also important to acknowledge the influence of poststructuralism and Cultural studies, as well as the crisis in Hispanism, and Peninsular Hispanism<sup>2</sup> specifically, which has led to a re-conceptualization of the study of the Peninsula's literatures and cultures (cf. Newcomb 2015; Pérez Isasi 2017).

Iberian Studies, as Santana has pointed out (2008: 42 and 2013: 54), does not merely expand Peninsular Hispanism's focus to include new authors or topics of analysis in the canon<sup>3</sup>; rather, it represents an alternative paradigm that reformulates the field's theoretical and methodological framework as much as its object of study. In this way, Iberian Studies' point of departure is the relational

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<sup>1</sup> See Marta Puxan-Oliva's report "Frictions of World Literature" (2016).

<sup>2</sup> The term *Peninsular Hispanism* is taken from Resina (2005: 172). Though this is not the appropriate venue for a detailed discussion, it is worth mentioning the widespread misuse of the term Peninsular studies (or Peninsularism) in US academia, which is generally used to refer almost exclusively to the study of the literatures and cultures of the Spanish territory, leaving neighboring Portugal aside.

<sup>3</sup> Winston R. Groman's 2016 report on the Hispanic literary canon in US universities is a thoroughly worthwhile read on this topic. Without forgetting that subjectivity plays a key role in the formation of any literary canon, the report offers interesting facts about the representation of Spanish authors in US academia. A similar study focusing on Iberian authors would be enormously useful to trace a more detailed map of Iberian Studies in the US and to determine the extent to which universities that house Iberian Studies departments or programs have adopted the epistemological shift proposed by the most prominent voices in the field, as opposed to using the field's name merely because it is currently in vogue.

study of Iberian cultures and literatures, and it distances itself from any single monolingual perspective or national context (Pérez 2016: 266). This paradigm opens up new polycentric perspectives that encompass aspects of literature, culture, and language that have historically been relegated to marginal positions. To cite Olaziregi, the discipline of Iberian Studies “rigorously analyzes the relationships, convergences, tensions, exchanges, dependencies”<sup>4</sup> between the Peninsula’s diverse literatures and cultures<sup>5</sup> (2015: 540).

It is worth noting that, as it establishes itself as new discipline, Iberian Studies—and particularly its Anglo-Saxon tradition—will need to move beyond the presentism that Cultural studies has so often been accused of. This criticism is not unfounded, as Cultural studies has almost exclusively limited itself to the analysis of contemporary periods (Delgado 2013: 48). Iberian Studies encompasses a broader range of currently relevant topics than could possibly be enumerated here: the origins of Catalan Iberianism (cf. Martínez-Gil 1997), Fernando Pessoa’s relationships with Spanish writers and intellectuals (cf. Sáez Delgado 2015), Miguel de Unamuno’s admiration for Portuguese culture and his influence on Portuguese authors such as Miguel Torga (cf. Newcomb 2012), the multifaceted modernist Almada Negreiros’s time in Madrid and his relations with Spain’s cultural luminaries (cf. Sáez Delgado/Soares 2016), the multilingual and

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<sup>4</sup> “[...] analiza rigurosamente las relaciones, convergencias, tensiones, intercambios, dependencias [...].”

<sup>5</sup> In her original text, Olaziregi only mentions literature, but for the purposes of this study, Iberian cultures have also been included. As seen below, Iberian Studies is understood here in the broad sense put forth by Jorge Pérez (2016).

multicultural dimension of memories of exile and diaspora (cf. Faber 2017), and cinematic portrayals of the ongoing economic crisis in Spanish and Portuguese films (cf. Álvarez/Gimeno Ugalde, in press), to mention only a few examples. At the same time, the field is also able to answer the criticism of presentism, and its body of literature has covered topics ranging from medieval Iberia through the Siglo de Oro and the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as Cervantes' influence on Portuguese romanticism (cf. de Abreu 1997) and the history of the picaresque novel's reception in Portugal (cf. Bueno Maia 2012). Some topics in Iberian Studies transcend the categories above to cover wider spans of time—the literary bilingualism of Catalan, Basque, Galician, and Portuguese authors (cf. Arnau i Segarra *et al.* 2001; Wright 2010); the phenomenon of literary self-translation and its effects on the Peninsula's literary polysystem (cf. Dasilva 2013; Santana 2016); the role of translation in the dissemination and internationalization of Iberian literatures (cf. Olaziregi 2015).

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One of the most frequently cited sources in the emerging field of Iberian Studies is Joan Ramon Resina's 2009 book *Del Hispanismo a los Estudios ibéricos. Una propuesta federativa para el ámbito cultural*, a revised and expanded collection of several of his previous publications. This work is seen not only as the most thoroughly articulated and elaborated expression of Iberian Studies as an

alternative to Peninsular Hispanism, but also as a kind of starting point for the field in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Though it is difficult to refute Resina's foundational premises, it is possible to add nuance to them. For one thing, his book was preceded by a number of publications—including several by scholars in the US—that questioned the contemporary model of Peninsular Hispanism and advocated for an academic approach to the Iberian space that was less tied to the Spanish state (in keeping with the country's own constitution, which has recognized Spain as a multilingual country since the end of the '70s), and non-hierarchical in focus. Co-authored volumes such as *Spain Beyond Spain: Modernity, Literary History, and National Identity* (edited by Epps and Cifuentes) and *Ideologies of Hispanism* (edited by Moraña), both published in 2005,<sup>7</sup> as well as articles by Sebastiaan Faber (2008) and Mario Santana (2008), among others, speak to an interest in revamping the traditional, hegemonic fundamentals of Hispanism in the US. For instance, even though Santana did not explicitly label his article as belonging to Iberian Studies, the paradigm shift he was proposing has much in common with what is today known as Iberian Studies, both in terms of theory and methodology. In "El hispanismo en los Estados Unidos y la 'España plural,'" he summed up his contribution in these words:

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<sup>6</sup> More detailed studies related to Resina's proposal include articles by Gabilondo (2013-2014) and Pérez Isasi (2017).

<sup>7</sup> The latter has a broader focus, which also includes critical reflections about Latin America. In spite of the fact that it was a later publication (2010), it is also worth mentioning the volume *New Spain, New Literatures*, which was edited by Martín-Estrudillo and Spadaccini.

This paper examines how these processes and debates have promoted a revision, and even a reconfiguration, of North American Hispanism's institutional life, and proposes to transform the study of Peninsular literature (which has traditionally been centered on Spanish-language works) into a broader discipline that would prioritize the study of inter-literary relations and the internal complexity of the Iberian Peninsula's multilingual culture.<sup>8</sup> (Santana 2008: 33)

On the other hand, even if it is certain that Resina's 2009 proposal represents the most developed theoretical formulation of Iberian Studies in US academia to date (and likely beyond that context as well), the practical implementation of what is today known as Iberian Studies has a long trajectory in universities in the United States.

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In a 2016 essay, Silvia Bermúdez highlighted the pioneering efforts of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California-Santa Barbara (UCSB) to search for ways to reconfigure the analytical approaches to the Iberian space. This department was one of the first in the US to include the study of all five of the Iberian Peninsula's official languages and their respective literatures in its course offerings. As examples of the department's seminal

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<sup>8</sup> "Este ensayo examina cómo estos procesos y debates han promovido la revisión e incluso la reconfiguración de la vida institucional del hispanismo norteamericano, y propone una transformación del estudio de la literatura peninsular (centrado tradicionalmente en la producción en lengua castellana) en una disciplina más amplia que tenga como objeto prioritario las relaciones interliterarias y la complejidad interna de la cultura multilingüe de la Península Ibérica."

achievements, Bermúdez offers up the establishment of the Center of Portuguese Studies in 1979, the launch of the first Catalan language course in 1988-89, the establishment of the Joxemiel Barandiaran Chair of Basque Studies in 1993, and the Center for Galician Studies (which existed from 2000-07 under the direction of Harvey Sharrer). She argues that:

[...] any inclusive account of this history [of *Iberian Studies*] must recognize the role of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UCSB as a forerunner in the implementation and development of the field. It is a question of recognizing that my department has participated, since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the practical and theoretical reconfiguration of the modes of representation and interpretation of the Iberian space in both pedagogy and research in North American academia through the implementation of courses and projects that acknowledge the cultural, linguistic, and national complexity of the Peninsula's geopolitical space.<sup>9</sup> (Bermúdez 2016: 24)

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Another addition to Bermúdez 2016 list of Iberian Studies milestones at UCSB, would be the Center for Catalan Studies (CCS), a collaboration between UCSB and the *Universitat d'Alacant* (<http://www.cativitra.ucsb.edu/>) that was launched in

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<sup>9</sup> “[...] cualquier relato inclusivo de dicha historia debe registrar el precursor papel del Departamento de Español y Portugués de la Universidad de California-Santa Bárbara en la implementación y desarrollo de dichos estudios. Se trata de reconocer que junto a las reflexiones teóricas, ha sido desde la praxis como mi departamento participa, desde finales del siglo XX, en la reconfiguración de los modelos representativos e interpretativos en la enseñanza y en la investigación académica norteamericana con la implementación de cursos y proyectos que reconocen la complejidad cultural, lingüística, y nacional del espacio geopolítico conocido como la Península Ibérica.”



2017. Along similar lines, the Department of Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center has for decades been a leader in the study and teaching of Iberian languages, literatures, and cultures. CUNY hosts a Center for Galician Studies—established in 1988 and later renamed the Xoán González Millán Center in Galician Studies, in honor of the late professor who coordinated the original chair in collaboration with Galicia’s *Secretaría Xeral de Política Lingüística* (Rei-Doval 2016: 6-7)—and the more recently established Mercè Rodoreda Chair (established in cooperation with the *Institut Ramon Llull* in 2003) and Bernardo Atxaga Chair in Basque Literature and Linguistics (established in cooperation with the *Etxepare Euskal Institutua* in 2011)<sup>10</sup>. The list of renowned literary specialists and linguists who have passed through the department—including Enric Bou, Anxo Lorenzo, Henrique Monteagudo, and Dolores Vilavedra, as well as writers of the caliber of Bernardo Atxaga, Kirmen Uribe, Manuel Rivas and Teresa Moure, among others—offers irrefutable proof of the department’s Iberian focus<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, in the effort to have a more precise cartography of Iberian Studies in the United States and trace

<sup>10</sup> Stanford and the University of Chicago also have Chairs in Catalan studies, established in 2005-06 and 2007-08 respectively. Chairs in Basque Studies currently exist at the University of Nevada-Reno, the University of Chicago, Boise State University, and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. CUNY’s Chair of Galician Studies, which is directed by José de Valle, is currently the only such visiting professor position in the United States, though the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Galician Studies Research Group is worth mentioning here. Formed in 2014, the group is currently one of the epicenters of Galician studies in the United States. More information about Galician studies in the US can be found in Rei-Doval’s report (2016).

<sup>11</sup> Basque Studies have a long history in the US. As early as 1967, the William Douglass Center for Basque Studies was founded at the University of Nevada-Reno. Today, the Center has three permanent positions and a vacant assistant professorship. Boise State University also has five faculty members in its Basque Studies Program, and both institutions offer a minor in Basque studies. Furthermore, Basque lecturerships or TA positions exist at UCSB, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, UCLA, and Boise State. See <http://www.etxepare.eus/es/universidades-mapa> for more information.

its origins, it remains to be determined which other institutions have already made, or are currently making, important contributions to the field, whether or not a departmental name change has occurred. The UCSB and CUNY departments already stand out—they are the only two that currently include all of the Peninsula’s five official languages in their course offerings—but other departments, such as those at the University of Chicago and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst<sup>12</sup>, among others, should also be added to the map of US institutions that are contributing to the field.

In keeping with Chandler’s theories on the concept of disciplines (2009), it is necessary to note the increasing academic output that has, in recent years, contributed to the configuration of Iberian Studies as a new disciplinary field. As has been anticipated, Resina’s proposal (2009) has been followed by a non-negligible list of researchers within US academia who have reflected on Iberian Studies from a theoretical perspective, laying out several critical and methodological questions: Delgado (2013), Santana (2013), Newcomb (2015)<sup>13</sup>, Bermúdez (2016), and Pérez (2016)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> UMass-Amherst has offered a minor in Catalan studies since the 2014-15 academic year (<https://www.umass.edu/spanport/catalan-minor>).

<sup>13</sup> With Ângela Fernandes and Santiago Pérez Isasi (University of Lisbon), Robert Newcomb (UC Davis) is preparing a special issue about Iberian Studies, entitled “Iberian Studies: New Spaces of Inquiry,” which is forthcoming in the *International Journal of Iberian Studies (IJIS)* in 2018.

<sup>14</sup> On a different note, Gabilondo’s contribution (2013-2014) is also worthy of mention. He submits the field to harsh criticism, arguing that it is a product of Spain’s excessive nationalism and a reincarnation of Hispanism.

Among these voices are some who have called attention to the challenges involved in implementing Iberian Studies (Santana 2013; Bermúdez 2016), which be discussed further below. Others, like Jorge Pérez’s 2016 paper, have even sounded the alarm about the establishment of new epistemological hierarchies that, in the effort to recover lost academic prestige, end up privileging the study of literature over other manifestations such as cinema or other cultural artifacts. Pérez’s proposal emphasizes the benefits of broadening the cultural archive beyond literary texts to make room for the visual arts, television, and cinema, among other forms of cultural production. In his view, a broader archive would help the discipline generate professional attachment, i.e. the sense of belonging necessary to find the appropriate niche within the institutional context that surrounds it. In this sense, Pérez reminds his readers that many researchers in the United States include in their academic work the analysis of a cultural archive that is not limited to literary forms of expression, and that “if we are trying to reconfigure the field, we cannot conceptualize it around literature alone and assume that we will later be able to broaden the archive by adapting the same methodology to other cultural objects and considering them only *a posteriori*” (2016: 279, my translation)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> “[S]i pretendemos reconfigurar, no podemos conceptualizarlo sobre la base única de la literatura, y asumir que más adelante podemos ampliar el archivo adaptando la misma metodología a otros productos culturales que son considerados solo *a posteriori*”.

In spite of the deliberately political nature of Resina’s proposals (2009)<sup>16</sup>—which is absent in Santana (2008) and Bermúdez (2016) and has also been criticized by other researchers (Gabilondo 2013-2014; Pérez Isasi 2017)—it does not seem misguided to trace a line of continuity between most of the proposals mentioned here, as they all define the “Iberian turn” first and foremost as an epistemological shift.

### The Institutionalization of Iberian Studies in the US

In order to better understand the current state and future prospects and challenges of the field, it is necessary to examine the US institutional frameworks in which Iberian Studies is now being developed as a discipline that—like every supranational approach—must compete with dominant models that focus on national literatures, on both an organizational and ideological level (Pérez Isasi 2017: 348).

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Although discourse about the crisis of Hispanism (and particularly Peninsular Hispanism) in the United States was common in the first few years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the last decade has witnessed the gradual institutionalization of Iberian

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<sup>16</sup> In Resina’s own words: “What I am proposing is evidently a political agenda, or more precisely, an epistemological project without any pretensions of political impartiality” (2009: 92, my translation).

Studies. A similar phenomenon has occurred in the European context,<sup>17</sup> albeit with notable differences.

During this period of major transitions, more than a few units that focus on Spanish and/or Portuguese languages and cultures have adopted broader denominations in recent years, such as Iberian Studies or Latin American studies, offering programs of study at both the graduate and undergraduate level that tie those denominations together (Santana 2013: 55). Some notable examples include Ohio State University's Iberian Studies Program; the University of Notre Dame's Iberian and Latin American Studies program; New York University's Iberian Studies program; the Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies Program (LACIS) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; the program in Iberian and Latin American Literatures and Cultures at the University of Texas-Austin; and the Latin American and Iberian Studies program at Bard, all of which are either housed within departments of Spanish and Portuguese or departments of Romance Languages and Literatures or offered as interdisciplinary programs within their respective universities.

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Along with these changes in nomenclature, there has been an observable effort to offer courses—generally for undergraduates—that reflect the Peninsula's

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<sup>17</sup> In a recent published article (2017), Pérez Isasi offers an excellent overview of Iberian Studies' Anglo-Saxon and European traditions, in which he also highlights the gradual institutionalization of the field in Europe.

cultural and linguistic diversity. To name only a few examples,<sup>18</sup> Stanford offers “Introduction to Iberia: Cultural Perspectives” and “Modern Iberian Literatures,” and Trinity College students can take “Iberian Culture I (Middle Ages to the 19th Century)” and “Iberian Culture II (The 20th Century)”. There are also graduate-level courses that introduce Iberian Studies as a new epistemological and disciplinary field, as is the case with “Introduction to Iberian Studies” at UC Davis or “Iberian Studies: Rethinking National Literatures” at the Universidad of Chicago. If the former are crucial because they foster awareness of and sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic plurality of the Peninsula, the latter—which are still in the minority, if not nearly nonexistent, in most master’s and doctoral programs—are essential for the formation of future generations of specialists in the field. Such training would contribute, at least in part, to promoting critical study of the discipline’s history, which would, in turn, enable it to foresee future scenarios and avoid becoming fossilized:

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[...] it is after all thanks of Hispanism that we are now at a point where we can think critically about that past and formulate new proposals. Future scholars will need a similar understanding to be able not only to implement but, more importantly, to imagine new future challenges to avoid the potential fossilization of Iberian Studies (which, like all new paradigms, will eventually become an old one). (Santana 2013: 59)

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<sup>18</sup> This is not intended as an exhaustive list, but rather as a few illustrative examples.

In this Iberian turn, some universities have even modified departmental names to express a broader focus: the Department of Iberian and Latin American Cultures at Stanford; the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures at Columbia; the Department of Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Studies at the University of Richmond; and the Latin American and Iberian Studies Department at UMass Boston. Of the four departments mentioned, only the first three currently offer courses in languages other than Spanish and Portuguese, and only the first two offer graduate studies (master's and doctorate)<sup>19</sup>. These transformations have also gone hand in hand with the appearance of new professional designations such as “Assistant/Associate Professor Iberian Cultures and Literary Studies” (Ohio State University) or “Assistant Professor in Iberian Studies” (Johns Hopkins), which replace other, more common titles that refer to Hispanic studies, Peninsular studies, etc.

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As Santana noted (2013: 55-57), even if these changes in academic-administrative nomenclature are important for the institutional recognition of Iberian Studies, their impact will be minimal if it is not accompanied by a restructuring of the material conditions in which research and teaching are carried out. In effect, the symbolic relevance of the recent changes cannot be denied, but subsequent studies will have to interrogate whether these institutional changes reflect a genuine desire to reconfigure the field, versus

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<sup>19</sup> At Stanford, it is necessary to demonstrate knowledge of Catalan, Portuguese, and Spanish to obtain a PhD in Iberian Studies.

responding to matters of style and trends or, as Santana himself suggested, an interest in distancing themselves from the image of simple “service” units or “language-teaching” departments in order to establish an alternative basis for legitimacy and intellectual prestige. Additionally, it will be essential to consider the extent to which it will be possible to implement the institutional changes—both structural and ideological—needed to achieve complete institutionalization for Iberian Studies within US academia.

Among the intellectual practices that are contributing to the field’s establishment in the United States, it is worth emphasizing a string of recent symposiums and colloquiums: at Stanford (2011), at Ohio State University (2013), and the colloquiums organized by the UC Comparative Iberian Studies Working Group, which have met every May since 2011 at the University of California (Newcomb 2015: 196 and 2017).<sup>20</sup> No less important is the integration of panels with Iberian scope into the annual Modern Language Association (MLA) conventions. A quick review of the programs of these conventions between 2004 and 2017 is enough to illustrate the increasing interest in Iberian Studies across several distinct perspectives and time periods.<sup>21</sup> At the 2015-17 triennial alone, a total of

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<sup>20</sup> There have also been a significant number of recent symposia in Europe: the international seminars “Looking at Iberia from a Comparative European Perspective: Literature, Narration, and Identity” (2011) and “Iberian Studies: New Spaces” (2016), both organized by the University of Lisbon (Portugal); and the two Iberian Cultural Studies Conferences in Germany (the first took place at Philipps-Marburg University in 2014 and the second at Chemnitz Technical University in 2017). A third conference is slated to take place at the University of Bamberg.

<sup>21</sup> Source: [https://apps.mla.org/conv\\_listings?msg=syn](https://apps.mla.org/conv_listings?msg=syn) [Consulted in June 2017]. Along the lines of the above comments, an exhaustive analysis of these proposals and the comparative nature of these initiatives remains to be undertaken.



17 panels whose titles included the terms “Iberia” or “Iberian” were registered. The MLA conventions have also given rise to interest groups with an Iberian focus, including the “Medieval Iberian” group and the “Iberian Studies” group, whose commitment is “to promote scholarly research and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the peninsula from a multicultural and multilingual perspective” (<https://mla.hcommons.org/groups/iberian-studies/>).

Equally worthy of mention is the establishment of work groups and research groups at different universities, which offers clear evidence of an effort to advance and institutionalize the field. One might reference, for example, the Midwest Iberian Studies Group (<https://huminst.osu.edu/iberian-studies>), the University of California Comparative Iberian Studies Working Group (<https://uchri.org/awardees/comparative-iberian-studies/> (co-directed by Silvia Bermúdez and Robert Newcomb), and the Iberian Studies Initiative at the University of Minnesota (<http://iberianstudies.umn.edu/>). Even though all of these advances contribute, without doubt, to the generation of a sense of belonging within the discipline (Chandler 2009), it is only fair to acknowledge that the creation of a wider network would be helpful both in promoting the field and in implementing it in institutional contexts that are largely dominated by national traditions<sup>22</sup>. It is precisely this need that the IStReS project (Iberian Studies Reference Site, <http://istres.letras.ulisboa.pt/>) intends to meet. A collaboration

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<sup>22</sup> Although, in the British context specifically, it is worth mentioning the pioneering work of the Association of Contemporary Iberian Studies, which was founded in 1978 and is closer in its focus to Area studies (Pérez Isasi 2017: 348).

between Boston College (PI: Esther Gimeno Ugalde) and the *Universidade de Lisboa* (PI: Santiago Pérez-Isasi), the project aims to contribute to the visibility of Iberian Studies by offering a relational database that compiles and systematizes an international corpus of academic work from the last two decades in the field of Iberian Studies. The website includes a directory of the most relevant researchers in the field on both sides of the Atlantic. The project was officially launched in fall 2017 at various academic conferences<sup>23</sup>.

Santana (2013) and Bermúdez (2016) have offered relevant reflections on the challenges of implementing Iberian Studies at US universities. In Bermúdez's interesting summary of the pioneering role played by UCSB's Department of Spanish and Portuguese in the development of what is today known as Iberian Studies, she notes that practical experience (rather than theory) has taught her department that many of the difficulties involved in implementing programs focused on Spain's languages and cultures do not have to do with administrations and/or departments within US academia but with the governments of Spain's Autonomous Communities. She argues that universities in the United States ought to search for alternative ways to finance themselves that do not depend exclusively on institutions within Spain's Autonomous Communities. To illustrate this point, she summons the failed attempt to institute

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<sup>23</sup> The 39th Annual ACIS Conference (September 4-6, 2017, University of East Anglia, Norwich, England); the *III Congreso de Humanidades Digitales Hispánicas* (October 18-20, 2017, *Universidad de Málaga*, Spain); and the Second Iberian Cultural Studies Conference (November 16-18, 2017, Chemnitz Technical University, Germany).

a Chair in Catalan Studies at UCSB—a project that was under consideration in the beginning of the ‘90s—and the cancellation of the agreement between the *Xunta de Galicia* and the Center for Galician Studies during the 2005-06 academic year (Bermúdez 2016: 25-27).

For his part, Santana (2013) highlighted linguistic competency as one of the greatest challenges involved in implementing Iberian Studies in US universities and suggested that the teaching of languages has been left “off the radar”—as demonstrated by the fact that there are hardly any Ph.D. programs that integrate advanced language learning into the training of doctoral candidates. He offers an astute reminder that even in the midst of a paradigm shift it is essential to pay tribute to one of the most important legacies of the philological tradition: attention to languages. If the Iberian Studies researchers of the future are to have access to literary and cultural traditions in languages other than Spanish and Portuguese, substantial curricular changes will be necessary:

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Ideally, in order to do the work that will be expected of scholars of Iberian literatures and cultures, we would need to be able to access materials in all the languages of the peninsula, not just in one of them. In cases where we lack language ability, however, we need to acknowledge the need and indeed the benefit of translations in our teaching and research [...]. (Santana 2013: 58)

Although it is true, as Santana posits, that an understanding of the limits and risks of translation should not impede the commitment to reading about,

exploring, preserving, and understanding differences, it cannot be denied that training researchers who can work in several Iberian languages is also a matter of disciplinary coherence. However, how to create institutional settings that promote and facilitate such multilingualism is another question.

## Challenges and Future Possibilities

In the last decade, Iberian Studies has experienced marked growth in the United States and become an established academic discipline with ever-increasing reach. Nevertheless, like any new paradigm, it will have to consider its own limitations and encourage critical self-reflection if it is to avoid falling into the unproductive simplicity of establishing itself as the “Trojan horse” of Peninsular Hispanism, or the blind illusion that it represents a panacea for the study of Iberian literatures, cultures, and languages.

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One of the main challenges facing Iberian Studies is precisely that of remaining loyal to its polycentric and multi-relational focus, in order to avoid incurring the risk of generating new centers and peripheries. Therefore, much of the discipline’s success will depend on its ability not to form new hierarchies—or, in other words, on the talent and sensitivity with which it avoids making specific

languages, cultures, and literatures “uncomfortably visible”<sup>24</sup>. Definitively, it is a question of whether or not the new configuration will promote new visibilities that ultimately end up subordinating other areas of study to lower positions that they will find uncomfortable.

Along this line of thought, another major challenge that Iberian Studies must confront is the need to create communal spaces where it can interact with other disciplines on grounds that are not necessarily comparative. Particularly relevant will be the discipline’s relations with Hispanic, Portuguese, Basque, Catalan, and Galician studies and its ability to respect them as their own disciplines. With regards to Catalan studies specifically, Fernàndez and Martí-López (2005: 12) have pointed out the challenge of establishing intellectual dialogues with other disciplines and re-envisioning their relationships with the new field of Iberian Studies. Olaziregi and Arana Cobos (2016: 1056-1057), for instance, maintain that international interest in Basque studies has benefitted to a certain extent from the overhaul of traditional Hispanism and the gradual establishment of the new paradigm. Even though the premises of these two essays differ from the premises of this one, since they are focused on Catalan and Basque studies respectively, all three proposals emphasize the importance of dialogue between these fields.

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<sup>24</sup> The term “uncomfortable visibility” is borrowed from Fernàndez and Martí-López (2005: 10), who have used it to refer to the newfound visibility of Catalan studies in modern language departments in the United Kingdom.

In spite of all the advances that demonstrate Iberian Studies' emergence and its gradual institutionalization in the academia, both in North America and Europe, the need for continual reflection by and about the discipline remains evident. It will also be essential to explore Iberian Studies' potential through fruitful intersections with other established or emerging fields (Translation studies, Genre studies, Queer studies, Trans-Atlantic studies, Migration and Diaspora studies, Digital humanities, etc.). And logically, it will also be necessary to create collaborative networks among institutions and researchers to promote the field and overcome "the conceptual and practical difficulties of implementing Iberian Studies in institutional contexts predefined by national traditions" (Resina 2013: vii). All of this indicates, as Pérez Isasi has already suggested (2017: 361), that there is still along road ahead of us in the coming years.

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