E Pluribus Unum?

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FORTY YEARS AGO, WHEN MY DEPARTMENT was established as one of the first departments of the new San Diego campus of the University of California (UCSD), its founders had a free hand to construct a new model for literary study by recasting the institutional infrastructure that traditionally divided the field by language or language group. The initial vision, as summarized in the introduction to an early graduate program review, was relatively abstract:

> The Department of Literature was founded [. . .] on the uncommon but quite logical assumption that there are habits of mind and methods of inquiry peculiar to literary study, whatever the language, and that the literatures of the world have more in common than the usual departmental divisions acknowledge. [. . .] From the standpoint of research and teaching interests, [its structure] runs counter to the provincialism that afflicts many departments of single national literatures.
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> ("Graduate Program Review")

The emphasis was on literature; the languages necessary to study the literatures of the world would be taught in a basic languages program run by the linguistics department, whose founding chair had collaborated closely with three literary scholars in devising this partition. The purity of the initial conception was soon challenged, however, by historical and pragmatic realities whose pressures have shaped the department's subsequent evolution. Thus, as a case study for thinking about future institutional models for bridging the divide between English and foreign languages, I want to offer a few comments about the advantages and persistent problems that have emerged in four decades of our existence as a single Department of Literature.

From the start, the department has conceived the undergraduate literature major as a transcultural and translinguistic course of study; it requires concentration on a primary literature, plus upper-division work in a second literature in a different language. Not surprisingly, the first problem encountered was the difference between the linguistic competence required for the study of literature and the basic oral proficiency that satisfied college graduation requirements. It became apparent early on that unless the department got into the business of language teaching at the intermediate level, students could not develop the reading and writing skills needed to succeed in upper-division courses taught entirely in a language of which they were not native speakers. Consequently, the department now teaches two full-year lower-division sequences—a second-year language course and an introduction to literature course—in Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Korean. It also teaches first-year Russian, Korean, Greek, and Latin. The original model holds only for Chinese and Japanese, which are taught as languages in other programs, while the department offers one or two literature courses per year in the original language for the few students who have achieved the necessary competence.

To staff and run these intermediate language and bridging language and literature courses, the literature department now has the typical foreign language department's apparatus of adjunct coordinators who supervise graduate student TAs and teach some courses. Though teaching different languages, these coordinators have worked collaboratively to set up a smoothly running, well-articulated set of courses leading to upper-division literature classes. Nevertheless, the territory of language teaching in the department is defined by two fault lines. One is the familiar tension between the ladder-rank faculty members who teach literature courses and the adjunct

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faculty members in charge of language teaching. No matter how congenial relations across this divide may be, the structural tension inscribed by differences in rank and working conditions remains. Yet the department has rejected the possibility of dedicating tenure-track, research-oriented lines to language-acquisition specialists who coordinate the bridging courses. The other area of friction is the articulation between the first-year language courses taught in the linguistics department and the literature department's second-year sequences. Dividing language instruction between two departments with different disciplinary approaches and perspectives inevitably makes articulating their relation difficult. Since language learning is such a complex enterprise, differences in approach are not necessarily negative, of course. Our challenge is to make such differences work productively for our students.

Another practical reality that our founders did not envision was the impact our language requirement would have on the number of literature majors. Since all majors must take at least one upper-division course in a second literature, those students who at another university would be English majors usually have to take a year of intermediate language and two lower-division foreign literature courses before they can succeed in an upper-division course, and it takes even longer if they have to start at the elementary language level. Consequently, the number of English majors at UCSD is much smaller in proportion to the total student body than at institutions in which majoring in English does not require advanced knowledge of another language. This situation definitely works to the department's disadvantage in garnering resources from the institution. We are convinced of the intellectual correctness of our insistence on competence in more than one language and culture for the major, but to survive we may eventually need to consider creating some kind of monolingual track for students who don't have the background or the time to reach upper-division competence in a second language.

Writing instruction is another area that was not envisioned in the initial blueprint for the Department of Literature. The UCSD campus is based on a college system in which undergraduates are admitted to one of what are now six colleges, each with its own general education plan and its own writing program. As the number of colleges grew, the literature department took on the function of coordinating and overseeing the writing programs. For a time, the department recruited and housed a director for each writing program, who would design, administer, and train TAs for the college writing program and teach either literature or graduate-level composition studies courses in the department. This plan has proved extremely difficult to maintain because of the stress of dividing responsibilities between two quite different entities, a college-based program and a department. Some directors have chosen to teach full time in the literature department, leaving the writing program to be run by an adjunct hired by the college. Others have resigned and have not been replaced by a ladder-rank professor housed in the literature department. The trend is toward the increasing independence of the writing programs from the department, which seems appropriate since their objective is writing instruction across the curriculum rather than preparation for literature courses.

At the same time, a creative writing program has emerged within the department in response to the interests of both faculty members and students. A writing major was established in the mid-1980s, when several department members who publish imaginative literature as well as literary scholarship recognized that many undergraduates were seeking a creative writing option. Even though the writing major, like all other literature majors, requires upper-division literature courses in a second language, it rapidly became the most popular major in the literature department, outstripping even the English major. The department therefore established three ladder-rank lines specifically for creative writers and set up a writing section to organize

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the writing curriculum. It has been easier to integrate creative writing into the department's mission than language instruction or composition, yet still there are tensions, largely because the creative writing has as yet no graduate-level program. It is likely that an MFA in writing will be established in the next few years, but there will be much debate about the redistribution of resources such a move would require.

As this brief history suggests, the ideal of a department unified by its focus on literature across national and linguistic traditions has developed in practice into a rather heterogeneous and internally divided conglomerate. The single-department structure has not enabled us to avoid or to overcome the persistent divide mentioned in this conference between teaching literature on the one hand and language and composition on the other. But at the same time, my department's trajectory shows a countertrend, an organic historical development of the opportunities offered by the initial concept of putting the study of all literatures into one department. In the beginning the literature department internally reproduced the departmental boundary lines found at other universities: there was an English section, a French section, a German section, a Spanish section, as well as a comparative literature section that incorporated groups too small to form a section, such as classics, Italian, Russian, Chinese, and so forth. Most faculty members were affiliated with just one section, and some straddled comparative literature and another section. The curriculum was structured by section, PhDs were awarded by section, and battles for resources were waged across section lines. Yet at the same time, faculty members from different sections worked together on many different committees, both administrative and academic. Because searches and reviews were conducted on a department-wide level, we ended up learning a great deal about and from the work of our colleagues from other sections.

Over the decades, consequently, the sectional structure has begun to dissolve. New section names such as Literatures in English and Literatures in French reflect a certain dissolution of the sense of internal sectional unity, while the addition of two new sections that are not defined by language reveals the formation of new multilinguistic affinity groups. Writing is one of these: the section includes an Italianist and a Latin Americanist along with the usual English-speaking suspects. The other is the cultural studies section, which formed about a decade ago to bring together those interested in developing a curriculum focused on issues of colonialism and postcolonialism, formation of social identities, and the significance of popular culture. Many different language traditions are represented in this section—English, French, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, and Italian. The majority of department members now belong to more than one section, some as many as three. We have a Latin Americanist, for example, who began in the Spanish section, but was one of the founders of the cultural studies section, and is now also a member of the English section because she teaches a course on Chicano literature in the core lower-division sequence of that section.

One catalyst for this evolution was no doubt the department's decision in 1988 to realize its original ideal by establishing a single PhD in literature instead of awarding the doctorate in the different national literatures. The new program centers on a core theory sequence that all PhD students must take in their first year, after which they have a great deal of flexibility in working out their programs. They may concentrate most of their coursework and their dissertation research in a given national literature, develop comparatist projects, or trace the cultural impact of migrational flows across national and linguistic boundaries. We took a risk in making this move, a risk that our new PhDs in literature might not be hired by more conventionally structured departments seeking specialists in specific national literatures. But the change has not had a negative effect on the placement of our graduates, and in fact the cross-cultural perspective

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that our students develop has worked to their advantage in many cases. The breaking down of sectional boundaries in the graduate program, moreover, has pushed the faculty to design courses and programmatic options that cross disciplines and boundaries. The resulting intersectional dialogue and contact has produced scholarship that, although often still focused on a national literature, is no longer defined solely by strictly national concerns. The increasing permeability of sectional barriers has also enriched the program by permitting the formation of affinity groups among faculty members who, working in various national and language traditions, share theoretical, methodological, or period interests.

We have not, I must concede, been able to resolve the language question in an entirely satisfactory way: some theory courses are taught in Spanish, but the core sequence is in English, as are department meetings. Most painfully, our French and German faculties have begun to give their graduate courses in English to attract more students. A related problem is the difficulty of building critical mass in a specific field such as classics, or even American studies, because of the department's commitment to sharing resources over a broad area of studies. An unintended consequence of the efficiencies produced by combining smaller units may in fact be that we have ended up with fewer faculty lines than we might have had if divided into several departments.

Yet, on the positive side of the ledger, because of the flexibility and structural openness that have evolved, the department has been able to respond dynamically to new opportunities as the field of literary studies develops. Let me conclude with two examples. When the discipline began to register the significance of emergent literatures within the United States, our faculty was well positioned to develop courses, concentrations, and programs in these areas because intellectual dialogue had already developed. Three scholars in the Spanish and Latin American section, who had already worked on various aspects of United States literature in Spanish, saw it as a natural step to develop courses on Chicano and Latino literature in English. Thus the department's courses on this emergent literature can take full account of its bilingual character. Furthermore, this cross-fertilization has stimulated faculty research, graduate student projects, and ultimately programmatic expansion in the area of literatures of the Americas, an area that registers the transnational currents of culture and cultural artifacts across the Americas in several languages. Last year we made two new hires that reflect the direction in which we are moving: one of the new appointments specializes in the relations among Caribbean, Spanish, Latin American, and Filipino literatures; the other in links between the American South and the French- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

The emergence of Asian American literature presents a similar case. As rising student interest prompted us to develop curriculum in this area, conversations among Americanists interested in the western United States, comparatists working on orientalism, and specialists in Japanese culture and South Asian literatures in English soon began to produce new research interests not only in Asian American literature but also in transnational Asian cultural studies. This cluster is now one of the growth points in our department. We have recently added to the group a specialist in Korean literature and a senior scholar of contemporary Chinese culture and comparative East-West studies.

To attempt a provisional conclusion about the success of this forty-year experiment with a single-department model, I would say that the structure of the Department of Literature has not eliminated the asymmetrical connection of literature to language and composition teaching, but it has permitted us to develop curricula and research that respect linguistic heterogeneity without being constrained by national boundaries. In this era of a new and virulent form of globalization, I believe we are well positioned to offer a historically informed, linguistically complex,

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and multiperspectived alternative to the limiting constraints of nation-centered literary studies on the one hand, and on the other to the instrumentalized vision of world culture increasingly offered by international studies programs. Meanwhile, perhaps in these early years of the twenty-first century, a new institutional and disciplinary configuration is germinating somewhere, poised to create more satisfactory options for teaching and studying the connections among language, literature, and culture.

Work Cited

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What's Foreign and What's Familiar?

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One of my favorite anthropological anecdotes is one Renato Rosaldo tells from his fieldwork among the Ilongots in the highland Philippines in the late 1960s. He was interviewing a very elderly woman about kinship and marriage and raised the topic of adultery. Did it ever happen, he wondered, that a married person became the lover of someone other than his or her spouse? The woman, uneasy and embarrassed, acknowledged that she did recall a few occasions when this had happened among the Ilongots:

> At one point she stopped short in mid-tale and asked, "Does this kind of thing happen in your country?" I laughed. Hoping to reassure her, I said that Americans committed adultery much more often than Ilongots. [. . .] A look of shock spread over her face as she asked, "You mean it's spread?" (101)

One of the things I love about this story is that it reminds us that the cosmos, the world, humanity can always be centered anywhere. It also reminds us that for most people in the world today, the United States, despite being the new monopolar imperium that it is, remains very far away. I found it important to recall both these things as I contemplated the MLA's bicameral mapping of our scholarly and professional world into the foreign and the . . . the what? the domestic? the familiar? English? I began to think of this conference as an act of linguistic adultery.

Whether they work in the domain of that which is designated foreign or that which is designated familiar (English), MLA members today are generally aware of and uncomfortable with the way this bicameral mapping reproduces the normativity of English and the foreignness of everything else in ways that are difficult to question. We are aware of how that mapping has been destabilized now by new levels of domestic multilingualism and especially by the emergence of Spanish as a recognized second language of the United States. For those of us who work in Spanish, the equation of foreign with non-English has become not just inaccurate but unbearable, as I imagine it has long been for people in French studies in Canada or speakers of indigenous languages in either country—unbearable because we see the effects on our students of the psychic violence of what another speaker at the conference called the "xenophobic monolingualism" of the United States. This

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